

**Interpreting Nature: Shifts in the Presentation and Display of
Taxidermy in Contemporary Museums in Northern England**

Ebony Laura Andrews

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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

Taxidermy is an organised craft which synthesises preserved animal skins with man-made materials to recreate a resemblance of living animals. As products of a cultural practice, displayed and interpreted in museums for the public, taxidermied animals are material manifestations of contingent value judgements. Despite the now widely held view in museum studies that the meanings of museum objects are constructed through their interpretation and reception, and therefore can have a multiplicity of meanings, many museums today continue to present and interpret taxidermied animals as objective species representatives. Although scientific themes continue to be privileged by many museums which maintain natural science as a discrete discipline, various social, ethical and political themes relating to the environment and to relationships between people have become more pronounced in recently redeveloped museums. Using Leeds City Museum, the Great North Museum: Hancock, and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park as case studies, this thesis investigates these changes to trace wider cultural shifts in politics, ethics, education and science. By analysing the frameworks within which museums and their staff operate, this investigation is concerned with the relationship between discourse and social practice in the form of museum exhibitions as a means of creating knowledge. It highlights how the public understanding of the natural world is more mutable than some of the enduring traditions of science may suggest, and how the discourses on science, and the objects through which they are articulated, are subject to cultural shifts which put their meanings in flux.

This study is both part of, and a response to, an expanding field in museum studies and material culture studies which re-frames taxidermy objects as culturally contingent and therefore reflective of the subject positions of their makers, and the broader contexts of their making. In collating and investigating a diverse collection of archival material, this study recovers some of taxidermy's histories, and contributes to the historical discourse on the display and interpretation of museum collections.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ALF | Animal Liberation Front |
| AMNH | American Museum of Natural History |
| BCG | Biology Curator's Group |
| BHTS | British Historical Taxidermy Society |
| BSE | Bovine spongiform encephalopathy |
| CITES | Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species |
| DNA | deoxyribonucleic acid |
| GCG | Geology Curator's Group |
| GNM:H | Great North Museum: Hancock |
| HLF | Heritage Lottery Fund |
| ICOM | International Council of Museums |
| ICOM NatHist | International Council of Museums, Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History |
| LCM | Leeds City Museum |
| LPLS | Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society |
| MA | Museums Association |
| MGC | Museums and Galleries Council |
| MLA | Museums Libraries and Archives Council |
| MSC | Manpower Services Commission |
| MS:WP | Museums Sheffield: Weston Park |
| NatSCA | Natural Sciences Collections Association |
| NHM | Natural History Museum |
| NHSN | Natural History Society of Northumbria |
| NHSNDNT | The Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne |
| PeTA | People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| SLPS | Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society |
| TWAM | Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums |
| vCJD | Variant Cruetzfeldt Jakob Disease |
| WPM | Weston Park Museum |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund) |

Table of Events

For clarity and ease of use the redevelopments listed are limited to major gallery or complete museum redevelopments, although it should be noted that other, smaller changes to displays were undertaken at various intervals. Natural science galleries that presented very little or no taxidermy, such as geology galleries, have been omitted.

| Date | Leeds City Museum | Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle upon Tyne | Museums Sheffield: Weston Park |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| 1871 | | | Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society transfer Museum collections to the corporation. |
| 1875 | | | Sheffield Corporation buys Weston Hall and opens Sheffield Public Museum (Weston Park Museum) in Weston Park. |
| 1884 | | John Hancock donates his collections to the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne. Museum opens on Barras Bridge. | |
| 1887 | | | Opening of the Mappin Art Gallery. |
| 1891 | | The 'Newcastle Museum' is renamed the 'Hancock Museum' after John and Albany Hancock. | |
| 1921 | Museum and collections transferred from Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society to the Corporation. The Philosophical Hall on Park Row becomes 'Leeds City Museum'. | | |
| 1936 | | | Weston Park Museum demolished and rebuilt, opening in 1937. |
| 1940 | | | Mappin Art Gallery building damaged by parachute bomb. |
| 1941 | Museum is bombed destroying the 'Bird Room'. | | |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| 1953-1957 | (1953) Full redisplay completed. | | Modernisation of natural history displays begins. |
| 1958-1960 | | (1959) Society leases the Museum and collections to King's College (Newcastle University) on a service level agreement. | Displays concerning extinction and bird protection installed. |
| 1966 | Museum closes. | | |
| 1969 | Museum opens in Municipal Buildings, Park Row. | | |
| 1974-1975 | | 'Zoology Room' redeveloped to incorporate 'British Mammals' display. | |
| 1980 | | 'Bird Room' redeveloped, 'The Magic of Birds' gallery opens. | |
| 1984 | | Display of Abel Chapman's trophies is redeveloped, 'Abel's Ark' gallery opens. | |
| 1986 | | | Natural History gallery redeveloped, 'Wildlife' gallery opens. |
| 1992 | | Management of Museum transferred to Tyne & Wear Museums. | |
| 1996 | | 'The Living Planet' gallery opens. | |
| 1998 | | | Management of the Museum transferred from local authority to Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust |
| 1999 | Museum closes. | | |
| 2003 | | | Museum closes for redevelopment. |
| 2006 | | Hancock Museum closes for redevelopment. | Weston Park Museum reopens. |
| 2008 | Museum reopens in the previous Mechanics Institute Building, Millennium Square. | | Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust becomes 'Museums Sheffield'. Weston Park Museum' renamed 'Museums Sheffield: Weston Park'. |
| 2009 | | Great North Museum: Hancock opens. | |

Introduction

Overview

Prior to the development of structuralist and poststructuralist approaches in the mid-late twentieth century, ideas and theories about nature were traditionally presented in museums as being empirical in that through the display of natural history specimens, particular ‘truths’ could be communicated to the public.¹ As species representatives, taxidermy mounts were presented as objective facts, as they still are in some museums today, despite the now widely held view in museum and cultural studies that the meanings of objects of material culture are constructed through their presentation, interpretation and reception, and therefore have a multiplicity of values.² Although scientific themes continue to be privileged in museums which maintain natural science as a discrete discipline, various social, cultural, ethical and political themes relating to nature, the environment, and human history have become more pronounced in the interpretation of taxidermy in museums in recent years. Using Leeds City Museum (LCM), the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H), and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP) as case studies, this thesis investigates these changes to trace wider cultural shifts which have helped shape the meaning of taxidermied objects over roughly the last century.³ By analysing the frameworks within which museums and their staff operate, this study is concerned with the relationship between discourse and social practice in the form of museum exhibitions as a means of creating knowledge. It seeks to highlight, therefore, how the public understanding of the natural world is more mutable than some of the enduring traditions of science may suggest, and how the discourses on science, and the objects through which they are articulated, are subject to cultural shifts which put their meanings in flux.

This thesis builds upon established pre and poststructuralist narratives regarding the interpretation of objects and meaning making in the field of museum and cultural

¹ Sharon Macdonald, ‘Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display’, in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-24 (p. 3). Michel Foucault, ‘Classifying’, in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. from the French (London: Tavistock, 1970), pp. 125-157.

² Macdonald, ‘Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display’, in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

³ For brevity the titles of these three museums are abbreviated after their first mention in each new chapter and the conclusion of this thesis.

studies, namely, Saussurean linguistic theory and semiotics which posit that the relationship between the signifier and signified is not fixed, and therefore that the meaning of any text is not objective, but a social construction which can shift and be pluralistic in nature.⁴ Academic fields concerned with the history of ideas, including the history of science, now widely recognise that museum objects are material manifestations of contingent value judgements and are therefore reflective of the contexts in which they were created.⁵ However, while a consideration of the production of objects of material culture may lead to a consideration of the subject positions and situated knowledges of their makers, so too does the display and interpretation of material culture in museums draw attention to the role of the curator and the museum more broadly in the production of knowledge. Framing science and our ideas about animals and the natural world as cultural constructs, this thesis adopts the poststructuralist position that since human ideas and concepts shift and develop over time in response to cultural change, the meaning of museum taxidermy has been, and continues to be, shaped and redefined by the contingency of social life. As Nicholas Thomas has suggested: 'As socially and culturally salient entities, objects change in defiance of their material stability'.⁶

A number of studies have drawn attention to how taxidermy displays reflect the particular cultural contexts of their making. In Donna Haraway's widely cited essay, *Teddy Bear Patriarchy Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936* (1989), she demonstrated how the display and interpretation of taxidermied primates in the 'African Hall' of the American Museum of Natural History were epistemologically contingent in their presentation of masculinist displays of supremacy, predation and aggression towards other species.⁷ For Haraway, the vision of nature interpreted through the taxidermy presented in the African Hall revealed an idealised and typified nature, which having been subjected to man's domination, was redolent of the patriarchal ideologies of Roosevelt's twentieth century America.⁸ In *Skin Deep: Taxidermy, Embodiment, and Extinction in W. T. Hornaday's*

⁴ Susan M. Pearce, 'Objects as Meaning; Or Narrating the Past', in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, ed. by Susan M. Pearce (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 21. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1983).

⁵ Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁶ Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 125.

⁷ Donna Jeanne Haraway, 'Teddy Bear Patriarchy Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936', in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 26-57.

⁸ Ibid.

Buffalo Group (2004), Hanna Rose Shell investigated how fluctuations in the American Buffalo population reconfigured the meaning of a group of taxidermied buffalo mounts exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution at different points in the Museum's history.⁹ At the time of its completion in 1888, the taxidermied Buffalo group figured as a memorial to a species whose numbers had been hunted to the point of extinction.¹⁰ By 1996 however, following conservation efforts which helped re-establish the Buffalo population in the wild, the meaning of the taxidermied specimens had shifted and the Buffalo group came to represent a 'regional monument to recovery'.¹¹ Shell's study exemplifies how taxidermied objects can be subject to significant shifts in meaning and value despite the fact that the objects themselves may remain materially unchanged. More recently, outdated taxidermy displays at The Manchester Museum were investigated by Rebecca Machin in *Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at the Manchester Museum* (2008).¹² Machin's study explored how the natural history galleries at Manchester had become ethically outdated and socially insensitive in their inability to satisfy the increasing demand for the equal representation of gender.¹³ This thesis compliments and builds upon the critiques offered by Haraway, Shell and Machin by investigating how wider social, ethical and political change can call into question displays which have come to 'outlive their contexts'.¹⁴ Other studies have investigated the 'afterlives', of taxidermied animals where the biographies of natural science collections have been investigated in relation to the various networks of relations informing their construction, maintenance and display. A recent example of such a study is Samuel Alberti's *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie* (2011), in which the 'careers' of a variety of natural science specimens are explored and recovered.¹⁵ Much of this work has been developed through the application of the biographical model as offered by Igor Kopytoff in *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process* (1986), whereby the trajectory of an object is traced to reveal

⁹ Hanna Rose Shell, 'Skin Deep: Taxidermy, Embodiment, and Extinction in W. T. Hornaday's Buffalo Group', *Proceedings of the California Academy of Science*, 55, sup. 1: 5 (2004), 88-112.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 107.

¹² Rebecca Machin, 'Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at the Manchester Museum', *Museum and Society*, 6: 1 (2008), 54-67.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Constructing Nature Behind Glass', *Museum & Society*, 6 (2008), 73-97, (p. 76).

¹⁵ *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Samuel J.M.M. Alberti (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

the many shifts in meaning and value it has experienced throughout its history.¹⁶ This thesis aligns with this recent influx of studies coming from a wide range of disciplines including anthropology, science, fine art, museum studies, material culture studies and the history and philosophy of science amongst others, by seeking to explore the changing meanings of museum objects. It advances the present literature by critically analysing displays across three regional museums in relation to one another, and over an extended period of time, in order to map changes in the interpretation of taxidermy against the history of museums and developments in museology and how they reflect wider cultural shifts.

Using methods drawn from material culture studies and cultural anthropology, this thesis is layered against a broader body of literature which proposes that particular epistemic conditions impose cognitive and intellectual limitations upon those operating within the social and political structures of any given episteme. Drawing upon the ideas of the cultural theorist and historian Michel Foucault, this thesis investigates how different structures of knowledge may have led to certain interpretative strategies being privileged over others at different times in the three different case study museums under analysis.¹⁷ By contrasting the contemporary interpretation of taxidermy with that of previous taxidermy displays, this investigation seeks to demonstrate how science is subject to ideological shifts meaning that its forms of 'truth' and 'reason' can change over time.¹⁸ It therefore problematises the values inherent in the classificatory and interpretative systems used by museums to ascribe meanings to objects by demonstrating how different ways of knowing taxidermy have been given precedence over others at different points in the histories of the three case study museums.¹⁹ This study adopts a poststructuralist position to emphasise that while museum taxidermy and the displays in which it features are subject to changes in meaning over time, the objects and displays themselves also reaffirm and

¹⁶ Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64-91. Chris Gosden, and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', *World Archaeology*, 31 (1999), 169-178.

For example see: Geoffrey N. Swinney, 'Granny (c. 1821-1887) "A Zoological Celebrity"', *Archives of Natural History*, 34: 2 (2007), 219-228.

¹⁷ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'What is a Museum?', in *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-22 (p. 9). Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

¹⁸ Hooper-Greenhill, 'What is a Museum?', in *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

¹⁹ Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Also see: Hooper-Greenhill, 'What is a Museum?', in *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, pp. 1-22.

produce new knowledges.²⁰ In this regard, the display and interpretation of taxidermied animals in the museum can be viewed to both reflect and contribute to discourses on animals and the natural world more broadly.²¹ Indeed, Susan Pearce has suggested that:

Objects are implicit in social action, which cannot happen without them, and explicit in that social practice can be ‘read’ from them. They are, therefore, always, both active and passive; we make them, and they influence us.²²

While taxidermy is the medium through which this investigation is framed, the subject of the study is interpretation. Specifically, the interpretation of taxidermy specimens in the museum context. It is therefore important to acknowledge the history of interpretation theory and its impact upon approaches to heritage interpretation today. In his seminal book *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957), Freeman Tilden investigated what is meant by ‘interpretation’ and its value in respect to facilitating audience engagements with cultural heritage in a variety of different contexts.²³ Tilden offered two concepts of interpretation, the first being: ‘interpretation is the revelation of a larger truth that lies behind any statement of fact’, and the second being ‘interpretation should capitalize mere curiosity for the enrichment of the human mind and spirit’.²⁴ While the terminology used in these definitions is reflective of the time of its writing, the ideas informing Tilden’s concepts of interpretation can still be considered relevant today in that they still broadly encompass what is meant by the potentially ambiguous and complex and term ‘interpretation’ in its contemporary usage in museums.²⁵ Throughout this study interpretation is framed as an act of communication concerning the possible meanings of museum taxidermy objects and the ideas that they have been used to embody and/or represent.²⁶ In *Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects* (1991), Michael

²⁰ Ludmilla Jordanova, ‘Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums’, in *The New Museology*, ed. by Peter Vergo (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), pp. 22-40.

²¹ Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power (From Power/Knowledge)’, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault’s Thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 51-75.

²² Susan Pearce, ‘Collecting as Medium and Message’, in *Museum, Media, Message*, ed. by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 15-23 (p. 15).

²³ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*, ed. by Bruce Craig, foreword by Russell E. Dickenson, 4th edn. (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33. Tilden also provided the following definition which he suggested could constitute a ‘dictionary definition’ of the term: ‘An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information’, (also p. 33).

²⁵ Also see: Sam H. Ham, ‘What is Interpretation?’, in *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets* (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992), pp. 3-32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

Baxandall identified three elements required to facilitate an exhibition: the individual(s) who made or appropriated the object, the individual(s) who exhibit the object, and those who observe the object being exhibited.²⁷ In the museum, interpretation connects these three elements through what Foucault termed, the 'space of representation'.²⁸ In *Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy* (2006), Beth Lord argues that it is the heterotopian nature of the museum, its ability to represent 'objects *in their difference* from the conceptual orders in which those objects would normally be understood' [*emphasis in original*] that enables the production of meaning.²⁹ Therefore, as Lord suggests, museums can be understood to be 'fundamentally not about objects but about representation'.³⁰ In effect, the museum presents 'the difference between objects and concepts' through the space of representation, and this difference is bridged by interpretation.³¹

While in some displays the use of taxidermy continues to be used to represent ideas and themes relating to science, nature and the environment, in the selected case study museums taxidermy is increasingly being used to interpret additional and/or alternative themes. In some instances, however, the opposite has occurred. Where a multiplicity of narratives had previously been used to interpret taxidermy collections, certain displays and their supporting narratives have been reconfigured or removed in order to form a different set of relations between museums and their audiences. These changes may evidence a heightened tension in the perceived role and function of discrete taxidermy collections, and of contemporary museums as storehouses and preservers of cultural history, alongside their more traditional function of being didactic communicators of knowledge. This study aims to investigate some of the reasons why these changes have taken place, and how they have impacted upon and shaped the representation of animals and the natural world for the public. This study investigates a proposed shift in museological and public attitudes towards taxidermy and is therefore of significance for academics and museum professionals working with taxidermy, and on a broader scale, for museums which manage, maintain and exhibit natural science collections.

²⁷ Michael Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects' in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Kar and Steven D. Lavine eds. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), pp. 33-41 (p. 36).

²⁸ Foucault, 'Classifying', in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, pp. 125-157.

²⁹ Beth Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', *Museum & Society*, 4 (2006), 1-14 (p. 5). Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias', *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (1984), 46-49.

³⁰ Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', 1-14 (p. 7).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Aims and Objectives

There are three distinct primary aims to this study, and within them, a number of discrete objectives.

Aim 1

The first aim is to reveal some of the ways in which the contingency of social life has been embedded into museum displays through the representation of taxidermy, and how the ideas that taxidermy objects have been used to interpret, have changed in response to wider ethical and socio-cultural shifts in recent decades. This will be achieved by examining the subject positions of some of the multiple authors involved in the production of past and current taxidermy displays at the three case study museums in relation to wider shifts in museology, science, ethics and social life which have shaped public expectations of museum taxidermy. Within this aim are the following objectives:

Objective 1.1). To demonstrate how the construction and content of natural science displays reflect human interactions and relationships and how they can be read to evidence paradigmatic shifts in the ideological function of the public museum.

Objective 1.2). To demonstrate how as discursive spaces, museums contribute to the cultural construction of ideas about animals and the natural environment by mediating its representation in the public museum.³²

Objective 1.3). To explore some of the ways in which the categories 'animal', 'nature' and 'environment' have been subject to revision over approximately the last century through the presentation of taxidermy.³³

³² Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*.

³³ Owing to its focus on museum display changes as a result of shifts in museum policy and audience preferences, this thesis does not attempt to resolve the problematics associated with defining 'nature', nor does it contribute to the debate concerning the construction of 'nature' as a category and its artificial delineation from culture. See: C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution: The Rede Lecture 1959* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), Terry Eagleton, 'Culture and Nature', in *The Idea of Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 87-111. Therefore, while it is acknowledged that as a concept 'nature' (and the 'natural') is a complex and often contradictory philosophical idea which has been afforded considerable academic attention, to maintain the focus of this study these debates are not attended to. See: Neil Evernden, *The Social Creation of Nature* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992). Also see: Samuel J.M.M.

Aim 2

The second aim of the thesis is to investigate the proposition that some of the challenges museums have faced in the past in relation to the display of taxidermy can be attributed, in part, to tensions between outdated museum interpretation and contemporary discourses on nature. In other words, that some of the challenges taxidermy presented for its custodians in the past may have had less to do with the medium of representation itself, and more to do with the ways in which it was being interpreted in public museums. The objectives of this aim are:

Objective 2.1). To uncover the particular ways in which the three case study museums have attributed certain meanings and values to their taxidermy collections while simultaneously silencing others.

Objective 2.2). To investigate how the three case study museums have sought to realign the meanings and values of their taxidermy collections in ways which have rendered them more relevant for contemporary museum audiences.

Aim 3

The third and final aim is to consider the contemporary status of museum taxidermy in regard to ethics, its perceived popularity with museum audiences, and its role to represent in the public museum in the face of other increasingly popular interpretative technologies. The objectives of this aim are:

Objective 3.1). To investigate the ethical positions assumed by the three case study museums in relation to the presentation of taxidermy by critically analysing if and how the materiality of taxidermy and taxidermy processes are being interpreted in the contemporary museums.

Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009) and Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution: The Rede Lecture 1959*. It should be presumed that throughout the thesis when the term 'nature' is employed it is used more generally to encompass animals along with the biological and organic elements which make up their environments, unless specified otherwise.

Objective 3.2). In a society where perception is heavily mediated by spectacles of display and visual culture, to examine the extent to which taxidermy is still being used as a mode of representation in the public museum.

Objective 3.3). To investigate if and why some taxidermy objects or collections have come to occupy a privileged position in the collective cultural consciousness of the communities which the case study museum provide for.

Outcomes

In addition to the listed aims and objectives, it is expected that this study will also result in the following outcomes which will compliment and bolster the research findings:

Outcome 1). The production of a cultural history of shifts in the interpretation of museum taxidermy collections at the three case study museums.

Outcome 2). An overview of the role and status of museum taxidermists at the three case study museums along with a cultural history of shifts in the landscape of museum taxidermy production in response to the professionalisation of museums, the rise of the commercial museum design industry, and the increased outsourcing of taxidermy from commercial taxidermists.

The methodology employed to approach the stated aims is outlined later in chapter one.

Themes and Structure

The themes of each chapter of this thesis constitute the contextual frameworks within which shifts in the interpretation of taxidermy in the three case study museums are critically analysed. For the purposes of this study it has been necessary to delineate these themes from one another, however, it is important to acknowledge that the proposed shifts under discussion and the wider contexts within which they are situated are interrelated, frequently intersect, and overlap with one another.

Chapter one provides the cultural context of this study. It outlines some of the reasons why taxidermy became increasingly problematic in the late twentieth and early

twenty-first century, and some of the questions being asked of taxidermy collections today. This is followed by an explanation of the methodological approach adopted for the study along with a discussion of how the three case study museums were selected, and how the data was collected and analysed. Chapter one concludes with a brief historical outline of each of the three case study museums and a discussion of the chronological parameters of the study and their significance in relation to the subject under investigation.

Chapter two explores some of the social, cultural, political and economic contexts which influenced the collecting agendas of museum curators, and how these served to shape the collections of the three case study museums. Shifts in museology are also shown to have impacted upon the collecting activities of museums. From the building of encyclopaedic collections in the late nineteenth century, to focussing more on regional wildlife from around the middle of the twentieth century, such shifts reflected when the focus on collecting was realigned following the professionalisation of museums and an increased focus on public provision. The diversity of sources from which the collections were derived, along with the different kinds of taxidermy collected, are reflected in the individuality of the case study museums' collections today and the various purposes they have served at different times in the public museums. In addition, different approaches to the classification of taxidermy collections over approximately the last century are critically analysed to investigate how approaches to the organisation and display of taxidermy have mediated and reconfigured its meanings in the museum. The power of the public museum in the production of knowledge, therefore, is highlighted by demonstrating how the three case study museums have contributed to the discourses on science, the natural world and wider society through different approaches to classification.³⁴ Equally, however, shifts in the organisation and display of collections are analysed to reveal how museum classification practices are also reflective of society, particularly in regard to notions of individual, collective and national identity. In tracing shifts in classification practices, from characteristically modernist, linear, taxonomic and evolutionary approaches to the thematic schemes of classification which gradually superseded them, the dilution of the authority of the curator and the increased involvement of other stakeholders in the creation of museum displays is also evidenced.

The ordering of taxidermy collections is also examined in chapter two to critically analyse how the organisation and display of taxidermy at the three case study museums at

³⁴ Foucault, 'Truth and Power (From Power/Knowledge)', in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Rabinow, pp. 51-75 (p. 61).

different points in their respective histories has shaped the interpretation of their collections for audiences. As discursive spaces the layouts of museum galleries have contributed to the interpretation of taxidermy collections in different ways, from the provision of singular narratives which disciplined visitors' movements and engagements in museum spaces, to more contemporary pluralistic, and multi-layered narratives which provide more options for visitors to shape their museum visit according to their own needs.³⁵

In chapter three, shifts in the use of taxidermy are critically analysed in relation to shifting social values focussing on the meaning of nature and the natural environment in science, the relationships between humans and animals, and the role of the museum to provide for its audiences and stakeholders. In the case of science, throughout the twentieth century the focus of the natural sciences increasingly shifted from taxonomic to ecological study, and subsequently the promotion of the conservation of species and their habitats became a primary concern for curators of natural science. The professionalisation of museums and museum disciplines also saw natural science departments assuming new roles and developing different relationships in relation to taxidermy collections, these changes impacted upon the perceived value of collections and their use in public displays.³⁶ In addition, shifts in the use of taxidermy are examined to reveal how changes in the relationship between humans and animals have tempered the meaning of taxidermy collections. As material vestiges of the expansion of the British Empire, taxidermy became increasingly politicised and problematised in the post-colonial period, this coupled with the rise of environmentalism throughout the twentieth century, and an increased concern for animal welfare, resulted in displays being reconfigured to accord with shifting ethical positions.³⁷ The accountability of the museum to act as a moral agent for society and to accord with contemporary sensibilities has seen the status, value and meaning of museum taxidermy collections change and be reconfigured in a variety of ways in recent decades.

In chapter three, the role of the museum to be accountable and to appropriately provide for its audiences and stakeholders is examined in relation to the construction and mediation of notions of identity through the interpretation of taxidermy collections. Through an investigation into the politics of display and the competing roles that the three

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

³⁶ Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*.

³⁷ John M. MacKenzie, 'The Nineteenth-Century Hunting Cult', in *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 25-53.

case study museums have been (and continue to be) expected to fulfil, taxidermy displays are shown to be contested sites for the production of meaning where particular interpretations continue to be privileged at the cost of silencing others.³⁸

Chapter four investigates contemporary taxidermy displays in relation to some of the demands being placed upon contemporary museums in an increasingly globalised and commoditised world. As audiences have become increasingly diverse, museums have endeavoured to develop interpretative approaches which are more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and increasingly focussed on human value structures centred upon human experiences and relationships than on traditional, didactic natural science displays. In this chapter, the role of the museum as a driver for social change is discussed in relation to a modest but significant rise in museums adopting more campaigning approaches in order to encourage audiences to engage with wildlife and the natural environment. Reflexive approaches to interpreting natural science collections, which are increasingly posing new questions to museum audiences concerning the role of museums in contemporary society, are also discussed.³⁹ Collectively, along with advances in technology and museum design, it is suggested that these shifts have redefined the perceived function of museum taxidermy displays and audiences' expectations of them.

In the second half of chapter four, the impact of commodity culture and the dominance of visual culture are investigated in relation to shifts in the presentation and display of taxidermy in museums in the twenty-first century. As museums have come to play a more prominent role in the tourist and leisure industry, taxidermy objects have increasingly been used to provide audiences with 'experiences' over more traditional and pedagogic encounters with natural science collections.⁴⁰ In addition, in an era where the internet has made information more widely available, museums are under increasing pressure to delineate their provision from other information sources. Simultaneously, the convergence of commerce and culture has also led museums to emulate particular elements of the commercial sphere in order to appear relevant to audiences and to

³⁸ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24.

³⁹ Sharon Macdonald, 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald, (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

⁴⁰ Andrew Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 98- 117.

promote their services in a culture which privileges images as a means of communication.⁴¹
These shifts have had a significant impact upon the use of museum taxidermy collections.

⁴¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'What is Visual Culture?', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 3-13 (p. 5).

Chapter 1

Context, Methodology and Archive

1.1 Context

Taxidermy in the Museum

To begin, it is important to detail what taxidermy is and how it functions as a mode of representation in the public museum. As a technology of artifice, taxidermy is an organised craft which synthesises preserved animal skins, and sometimes parts of skeletons, with man-made materials.⁴² Although taxidermy processes differ depending on the type of animal being used, at its centre the practice involves removing an animal's skin from its body, and then modelling it over an artificial animal form or mannequin. The term 'taxidermy' is derived from the Greek *taxis* meaning 'order' or 'arrangement', and *derma* meaning 'skin'.⁴³ The sculptural element of taxidermy practice is reflected in the terminology employed by taxidermists who often refer to the procedure of constructing a piece of taxidermy as 'preparing', 'mounting' or 'mounting up' a specimen.⁴⁴ Similarly, a completed taxidermy work is often referred to as a 'mount'.⁴⁵ Using a wide variety of modelling and sculpting techniques, and specialist and non-specialist materials, traditionally taxidermy aims to recreate a resemblance of the once living animal by seeking to replicate

⁴² For example, the skulls of birds are often left in bird mounts to avoid the replication of an artificial skull and beak. James Dickinson, 'Taxidermy', in *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials*, ed. by Marian Kite and Roy Thomson (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), pp. 130-140 (p. 131). While it is recognised that there is a wide consensus amongst the scientific community which classifies humans as animals taxonomically, human remains, taxidermied or otherwise, are not addressed in this study. In addition, when the term 'animals' is used, it should be acknowledged that unless stated otherwise, humans are excluded from this definition.

⁴³ P. A. Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste* (Ascot: MPM Publishing, 2010), p. 8. There are numerous guides on how to practice taxidermy, such as Russell Tinsley, *Taxidermy Guide*, 2nd edn., (South Hackensack: Stoeger Publishing Company, 1977), John W. Moyer, *Practical Taxidermy*, 2nd edn. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979) and Neil R. Wood, *Taxidermy For You* (Wales: Tideline, 1980). Early historical examples of how to undertake taxidermy include William T. Hornaday, *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting: A Complete Handbook for the Amateur Taxidermist, Collector, Osteologist, Museum-Builder, Sportsman, and Traveller*, 4th edn. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894) and Charles Waterton, *Wanderings in South America, etc. / by Charles Waterton* (London: Thomas Nelson and sons, 1903), amongst others.

⁴⁴ For a working definition of taxidermy see: Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, p. 8. Although 'stuffed' is a term frequently heard in the description of taxidermied animals, as indeed they often were in the very early years of taxidermy production when the technique was at its least developed, contemporary taxidermists do not 'stuff' animals. Rather, they model and sculpt animal skins over detailed anatomical forms.

⁴⁵ For a breakdown of taxidermy terminology see: Dickinson, 'Taxidermy', in Kite and Thomson, eds., *Conservation of Leather and Related Materials*, pp. 130-140 (p. 131).

its form and appearance. This is largely, although not always, the aim of taxidermy created for museum display, where the specimens presented to the public serve the pedagogic function of representing different species. In other museum spaces, however, study (or cabinet) skins are also produced using taxidermy processes but since the role of these objects is centred upon research rather than display, they are not necessarily modelled to look like the animals from which they were derived, but rather with ease of use and economy of space in mind.⁴⁶ Indeed, there are a multitude of ways in which taxidermy objects can take shape depending on their intended function. The skill of the taxidermist and the tools used can also allow for considerable diversity and experimentation. For example, items popular in the Victorian period, such as displays of birds under glass domes, ladies fashion and millinery accessories, and novelty items like fire screens, served ornamental and decorative functions and were therefore created in ways which focussed on drawing attention to the aesthetic qualities of the animals used rather than recreating their naturalism.⁴⁷ Other taxidermy such as hunting trophies or trophy rugs, where certain parts of animals' bodies may have been preserved (typically heads) but not others, can appear simultaneously naturalistic and contrived.⁴⁸ There are also hybrid taxidermy objects, where the skins of more than one animal, and sometimes more than one species, have been grafted together.⁴⁹ Typically classified as cryptozoological specimens in museums, of all the different kinds of taxidermy, hybrid objects perhaps demonstrate most explicitly how taxidermied animals are works of artifice, which like all cultural objects, have authors. As Liv Emma Thorsen has suggested, taxidermied objects 'have an origin history that connects them not only to natural history collections but also to culture and society'.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ For more information on study skins see: Dick Hendry, 'Vertebrates', in *Care and Conservation of Natural History Collections* ed. by David Carter and Annette K. Walker (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998), pp. 1-36 (p. 6-8). Also see: Sophie Everest, "'Under the Skin": The Biography of a Manchester Mandrill', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 75-91.

⁴⁷ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 225-228.

⁴⁸ For examples see: P. A. Morris, *Van Ingen & Van Ingen: Artists in Taxidermy* (Berkshire: MPM Publishing, 2006), pp. 132-141.

⁴⁹ For example, Charles Waterton's taxidermy hybrid, 'John Bull and the National Debt', currently on display at Wakefield One. Also see: Cristina Grasseni, 'Taxidermy as Rhetoric of Self-Making: Charles Waterton (1782-1865), Wandering Naturalist', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 29 (1998), 269-294 (p. 285).

⁵⁰ Liv Emma Thorsen, 'The Hippopotamus in Florentine Zoological Museum "La Specola": A Discussion of Stuffed Animals as Sources of Cultural History', *Museologica Scientifica*, 21: 2 (2006), 269-281 (p. 270).

Animal Objects

When one considers the materials and processes involved in the construction of taxidermy mounts, the synthesis of preserved animal skins with sculptural and craft materials such as glass eyes, hide paste, polyurethane forms, wood, plaster, nails and fibreglass etc., the artificiality of taxidermy becomes markedly apparent (fig. 1).⁵¹ In *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends* (1977), Kenneth Hudson seemed to epitomise the difference between living nature and the particular kind of nature we encounter in the museum in his observation that '[a] stuffed tiger in a museum is a stuffed tiger in a museum, not a tiger'.⁵² As things which are collected, processed, preserved and made intelligible in museums through interpretation, taxidermy mounts have as much in common with cultural artefacts as they do with organic entities which, in nature, are often thought of as being 'simply encountered'.⁵³ As Samuel Alberti has suggested,

to subscribe to the nature/culture dichotomy is to ignore the work that goes into rendering a piece of nature a specimen – the articulation, the preservation, the polishing, the very act of removal. If one defines material culture as matter that has been manipulated by people, then these processes, and even collecting, render specimens artefacts.⁵⁴

The nature/culture status of taxidermied objects has proven a fruitful landscape of investigation in recent years. Studies such as Rachel Poliquin's *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (2012), amongst others, have highlighted how the synthesis of organic and man-made materials positions taxidermied objects as being both organic and man-made, as hybrids which straddle the nature/culture divide.⁵⁵ In reflection

⁵¹ The work behind the making of taxidermy, which is habitually hidden from museum audiences, is explored in Susan Leigh Star, 'Craft vs. Commodity, Mess vs. Transcendence: How the Right Tool Became the Wrong One in the Case of Taxidermy and Natural History', in *Primate Visions*, ed. by Donna Jeanne Haraway (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 257-283. Also see: Stephen Christopher Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History* (Abrams: New York, 2006).

⁵² Kenneth Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 7.

⁵³ Alberti, 'Constructing Nature Behind Glass', *Museum & Society*, (p. 82).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

The hybrid status of taxidermied objects is explored in Alberti, 'Constructing Nature Behind Glass', *Museum & Society*. The article was part of the *Nature Behind Glass* symposium held at Manchester Museum in 2007, which was followed by a conference held in 2009, also at the Manchester Museum, entitled *Animal Afterlives. The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti constitutes one of the major outcomes of the Animal Afterlives event.

of taxidermy's unique material status, the terms 'taxidermied animals', 'taxidermy mounts' and 'taxidermy objects' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. Rather than suggesting an imprecise definition of the subject, this interchangeable use is intended to sensitise the reader to the problematics associated with ascribing taxidermy to either binary category owing to its material constituents and its polysemy of meanings and values.⁵⁶

Taxidermied animals are types of models. The material constituents of many models displayed in public museums however, unlike taxidermy, do not include preserved skins or other remnants from once living animals.⁵⁷ Rather, they are commonly produced from wax, plastics, fibre-glass and other types of resins using a variety of sculpting and casting techniques. This material difference renders taxidermied animals unique. In recognition of this difference, James Griesemer has termed taxidermy objects 'remnant models', as opposed to 'non-remnant' models.⁵⁸ (Also see: 3.2, p. 163). For some, it is the inclusion of animal remnants in taxidermy which render it unsettling to the contemporary sensibility. It is also, however, what affords taxidermy authority as a medium of representation in the museum. The inclusion of biological elements in taxidermy mounts renders them indexical by connecting them to the individual animals they were derived from and are subsequently being used to represent.⁵⁹ This lends taxidermied animals an aura of authenticity which suggests that they are closer to fact than fiction, despite the culturally constructed nature of all models, remnant and non-remnant.⁶⁰ The frequent restriction of the use of non-remnant models to instances where taxidermy is unavailable or otherwise unsuitable for displays in museums is reflective of the significance of the relationship between notions of authenticity and authority in relation to the

Also see: Snæbjörnsdóttir, Bryndís and Mark Wilson eds., *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears* (London: Black Dog, 2006).

⁵⁶ Furthermore, these terms are employed with the view of being reflective of the everyday terminology used by taxidermists and museum curators when referring to taxidermy which is habitually inconsistent.

⁵⁷ For more on other kinds of scientific models see: Soraya de Chadarevian, and Nick Hopwood, eds., *Models: The Third Dimension of Science* (California: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ James R. Griesemer, 'Modelling in the Museum: On the Role of Remnant Models in the Work of Joseph Grinnell', *Biology and Philosophy*, 5 (1990), 3-36 (p. 8). These terms are adopted throughout this thesis to delineate taxidermy from other kinds of museum models.

⁵⁹ Kitty Hauser, 'Coming Apart at the Seams', *Make: The Magazine of Women's Art*, 82 (1998), 8-11 (p. 9).

⁶⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211-244. (first publ. in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 5: 1, (1936)).

communication of ideas about science in the museum.⁶¹ For natural science professionals, the elevated status of taxidermy and its suitability to represent nature over non-remnant models is further supported by the possibility of deriving DNA and other biological data from taxidermy mounts for research purposes.⁶² Conventionally, to be effective in representing species in museum displays, taxidermy mounts are required to have an appearance which approximates the animal they represent in order to afford them a level of realism and authority. The inherent contradiction of museum taxidermy intended for display being that artifice is used to hide the subjectivity of artifice.⁶³ Notions of taxidermy's authenticity, and its authority as a medium of representation are, therefore, rooted in both its aesthetic and scientific values.⁶⁴ As a product of both art and science, taxidermy collapses the artificial division between the two cultures by employing both in the production of knowledge in the museum.⁶⁵ While taxidermists and model makers might seek to furnish their mounts with the 'typical' appearance of the species they are representing, ultimately models 'freeze' animals in one pose, with one look and one expression that defies the dynamism and multiplicity of animals as they exist in life. As Rachel Poliquin has provocatively questioned, 'what is a lion's typical pose? What is any animal's typical pose? For that matter, what is a human's typical pose?'⁶⁶ Therefore, while the discrepancy in the level of authority attributed to taxidermy over non-models gives rise to questions about the construction of authenticity in the museum, it also prompts more fundamental questions about the act of representation and the suitability of models, of any kind, to represent nature.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Griesemer, 'Modelling in the Museum: On the Role of Remnant Models in the Work of Joseph Grinnell', 3-36. Also see: David Phillips, 'Curators and Authenticity', in *Exhibiting Authenticity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 197-218.

⁶² Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, p. 378.

⁶³ Star, 'Craft vs. Commodity, Mess vs. Transcendence: How the Right Tool Became the Wrong One in the Case of Taxidermy and Natural History', in *Primate Visions*, ed. by Haraway, pp. 257-283 (p. 260).

⁶⁴ Lynn K. Nyhart, 'Science, Art, and Authenticity in Natural History Displays', in *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, de Chadarevian and Hopwood eds., pp. 307-335.

⁶⁵ Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution: The Rede Lecture 1959*. Nyhart, 'Science, Art, and Authenticity in Natural History Displays', in *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, de Chadarevian and Hopwood eds. pp. 307-335. Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and William R. Newman eds., 'Introduction: The Artificial and the Natural State of the Problem', in *The Artificial and the Natural: An Evolving Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 1-19.

⁶⁶ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 101.

⁶⁷ Phillips, *Exhibiting Authenticity*.

A 'Problem' with Museum Taxidermy?

The history of museum natural history reveals a distinct rise and decline in the popularity of taxidermy over the last century.⁶⁸ While punctuated by occasional moments of revival, the gradual decline in the popularity of taxidermy has also seen the number of professional taxidermists in the UK fall.⁶⁹ This is reflected in Andrea Marshall's *British Taxidermists: A Preliminary Catalogue and Gazetteer*, which lists known taxidermists working in and around British cities from the nineteenth century, the peak, as indicated by the trade directories, being between 1880 and 1920.⁷⁰ After which, as suggested by Martin Dunne, founder of the British Historical Taxidermy Society (established in 2004), '[a]ttitudes changed and the collecting of taxidermy slowly declined and with it the practitioners'.⁷¹ In museums, over a period spanning approximately one hundred years some institutions went from accumulating and classifying sizable taxidermy collections, to removing taxidermy from their collections, and in some cases, disposing of it. Indeed, instances of removal and disposal have not been a rare occurrence in British museums. Rachel Poliquin has drawn attention to the burning of part of the taxidermy collection of the Saffron Walden Museum, Essex, between 1958 and 1960.⁷² In addition, taxidermy collections were disposed of in 1982 when Salford Natural History Museum at Buile Hill was redeveloped into Salford Museum of Mining.⁷³ Previously the Salford Museum had displayed a wide selection of taxidermy, but when the Museum was converted into a social history museum, the natural history collections were removed. In 1991 the then Assistant Keeper of Biology at Leeds City Museum (LCM), Adrian Norris, described how Salford's taxidermy collections had been

⁶⁸ For a broad overview of the history of taxidermy see: Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*. For the decline of taxidermy and its perceived unpopularity see: pp. 352-378.

⁶⁹ Taxidermy has seen revivals in other cultural spheres but particularly in contemporary fine art, see: Aloï, Giovanni, *Art and Animals* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), Aloï, Giovanni, ed. *Botched Taxidermy*, *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, 7 (2008) [available at <<http://www.antennae.org.uk/ANTENNAE%20ISSUE%207.doc.pdf>> accessed 15 June 2013], Aloï, Giovanni, ed. *Rogue Taxidermy*, *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, 6 (2008) [available at: <<http://www.antennae.org.uk/ANTENNAE%20ISSUE%206.doc.pdf>> accessed 15 June 2013].

⁷⁰ Andrea Marshall, *British Taxidermists: A Preliminary Catalogue and Gazetteer* (Doncaster: The Friends of the Doncaster Museums, 2009). Martin Dunne, 'Foreword', in *British Taxidermists: A Preliminary Catalogue and Gazetteer*, by Marshall, p. v.

⁷¹ Dunne, 'Foreword', in *British Taxidermists: A Preliminary Catalogue and Gazetteer*, by Andrea Marshall, p. v.

⁷² Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 137.

⁷³ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Charles Pettitt (21st January 1991) fol. Salford. For more on the redevelopment see: Geoff Preece, 'Salford Museum of Mining, Buile Hill – A New Gallery', 78: 2, (September 1978), 73-74.

'offered to several museums in the north-west area', although 'none of the museums showed any interest in the material', and therefore, '[s]ome items, such as the mounted Elephant were sold, and others sent to the local tip' (fig. 2).⁷⁴ At the time of Salford's redevelopment, Norris took the opportunity to salvage a proportion of the taxidermy collection by transferring it into the collections of LCM, but much of the remaining material was destroyed.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in 2004 the Natural History Museum removed three extensive taxidermy dioramas which previously constituted the 'Rowland Ward Pavilion'.⁷⁶ According to the taxidermy historian Pat Morris, before their removal the displays were amongst the 'largest and most elaborate' diorama examples in the UK.⁷⁷ Following removal, Ward's taxidermy specimens were put into storage while the remaining constituents of the displays were discarded.⁷⁸

These various instances of removal and disposal suggest that there has been, and perhaps still remains, a perceived 'problem' with museum taxidermy. In a recent *Museums Journal* article Deborah Mulhearn suggested that 'stories of valuable specimens being found in skips are not uncommon'.⁷⁹ Although it appears that while some museum staff and other natural science professionals are aware of past mass disposals, many of these events remain undocumented.⁸⁰ Despite this suggested lack of documentation, however, the disappearance of some taxidermy collections did not go unnoticed. In 2005, the alteration, removal, and destruction of taxidermy collections came under the scrutiny of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History (ICOM NatHist) culminating in the formation of a working group called 'The Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance'.⁸¹ The group drew attention to the potential risks

⁷⁴ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Charles Pettitt (21st January 1991). Adrian Norris held the position of Assistant Keeper of Biology at LCM from 1964-1996, then as Senior Curator of Natural Science and Ethnography from 1996-2003. In conversation with Adrian Norris (2008).

⁷⁵ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Charles Pettitt, fol. Salford.

⁷⁶ The *Pavilion* was installed in 1960 using funds donated to the museum by the trustees of Ward's taxidermy company, Rowland Ward Ltd., as specified by Ward in his will. See: Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 328-330.

⁷⁷ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 328-330 (p. 330). For more on Rowland Ward see: P. A. Morris, *Rowland Ward: Taxidermist to the World* (Berkshire: MPM Publishing, 2003).

⁷⁸ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 328-330.

⁷⁹ Deborah Mulhearn, 'Facing Extinction', *Museums Journal*, April (2013) 24-29 (p. 26).

⁸⁰ In conversation with Adrian Norris (2008).

⁸¹ Adrian Norris, 'The Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance' *International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History* <<http://www.icom-nathist.de/icom/nh-wk12.htm>> [accessed 27 January 2009], Rachel Poliquin, 'The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy',

associated with, what they considered to be, the short-sighted alteration or destruction of museum taxidermy collections.⁸² The group lamented that ‘a great deal of exhibition material, often of great value, has been destroyed in the name of modernisation’, and in response drew up a set of guidelines for museums considering alteration or disposal.⁸³ Informed by developing museological ideas concerning the multifaceted meanings and values of objects, the group argued that:

It is very difficult to draw a line between those items which are purely of natural history interest, and those of cultural interest, cultural history interest, historical or artistic interest, when we deal with taxidermy in museums. The same object or group of specimens may fall into several of these categories and thus care should be taken over categorising what, to some, are of little interest but to others are very valuable treasures.⁸⁴

Cuts to museum funding and the loss of expertise in museums have played a significant role in the sidelining of natural history collections and museum services more broadly in recent decades.⁸⁵ While the economic recession of the 1970s contributed to the lack of funding for museums, equally limiting were cuts made across the cultural sector by the Conservative Government between 1979 and 1997, and increasingly, the Liberal-Conservative coalition of the present period.⁸⁶ As Geraldine Kendall recently argued in the *Museums Journal*, ‘Thatcher was no friend of museums and by the end of her reign in 1990, many publicly funded museums were in crisis after years of neglect’.⁸⁷ While the disposal of taxidermy collections needs to be framed within this wider social, political and economic context,

Museum & Society, 6 (2008), 123-134, (p. 124). In addition, in *The British Historical Taxidermy Society* was also established with a view to preserve taxidermy collections. See: Martin Dunne, ‘The British Historical Taxidermy Society Trust’, *Taxidermist*, 35 (2012) 8-9.

⁸² Adrian Norris, ‘Past Glories: the Importance of Historic Taxidermy’, *SPNHC Newsletter*, 20: 2 (2006) <http://www.spnhc.org/media/assets/SPNHC_Newsletter_2006_V20_N2.pdf> [accessed 26 June 2013].

⁸³ For the Code of Best Practice for the Care of Taxidermy by the working group for The Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance see: Ethics Working Group of the International Council of Museums International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History, *Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums* (Paris: ICOM, 2013), p. 8. Norris, ‘The Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance’ *International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History*.

⁸⁴ Norris, ‘The Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance’ *International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History*.

⁸⁵ Mulhearn, ‘Facing Extinction’, 24-29 (p. 26), Sharon Heal, ‘Natural Dejection’, *Museums Journal*, (October 2007), 30-33, Derek Whiteley and Maurice Davies, ‘Biologists Bite Back’, *Museums Journal*, (September 1989) 10.

⁸⁶ Mulhearn, ‘Facing Extinction’, 24-29. Pearce, ‘Museums and Communication an Introductory Essay’, in *Museum, Media, Message*, ed. by Hooper-Greenhill, pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

⁸⁷ Geraldine Kendall, ‘Assessing the Thatcher Legacy’, *Museums Journal*, (May 2013), 15.

some of the criticisms directed at taxidermy collections in the 1980s seemed to be less about their perceived museological and scientific value, and more concerned with their potential to offend audience sensibilities. For example, in *Merely Rubbish: Disposal of Natural History Collections* (1987), Penelope Wheatcroft argued that old and deteriorating taxidermy mounts were increasingly considered too abject to be presented to the public, irrespective of their potential value to science:

Many natural history specimens if not in good condition, have a context of death and decay. A piece of broken pottery is not distasteful, but a split or infested mounted animal is.⁸⁸

The Museums and Galleries Council (MGC) Museum Registration Scheme (subsequently the MLA Accreditation Scheme) launched in 1988 which set out the minimum criteria for museum activities, procedures and performance, may have curtailed further neglect or disposal of taxidermy collections owing to the imposition of more stringent disposal policies. In natural science circles, however, the sidelining of museum biological collections was of particular concern and expressly lamented in the 1980s and 1990s. Publication titles such as *What Price Natural History Collections, or 'Why do we Need all These Bloody Mice?'* and *Vanishing Herds - Large Mammals in Museum Collections?* epitomised the heightened sense of urgency and collective concern to justify the retention of natural science collections.⁸⁹ Furthermore, in other areas natural science professionals became more focussed on neglected and lost collections, particularly in smaller museums primarily owing to the lack of resources and expertise to manage them at the time.⁹⁰

A study conducted by the Natural Sciences Collection Association (NatSCA) in 2013 suggested that the impact of cuts to resources dedicated to the care of natural science collections over the last decade have been disproportional to those impacting upon other museum disciplines.⁹¹ The survey of 34 UK museums 'showed a decline of over 35% [of natural science curators] in the past 10 years', compared with a 23% decline of art curators,

⁸⁸ Penelope Wheatcroft, 'Merely Rubbish: Disposal of Natural History Collections', *Museums Journal*, 87: 3 (December 1987), 133-134 (p. 133).

⁸⁹ Charles Pettitt, 'What Price Natural History Collections, or 'Why do we Need all These Bloody Mice?''', *Museums Journal*, 91 (1991), 25-28, Adrian Norris, 'Vanishing Herds - Large Mammals in Museum Collections?', *Biology Curator's Group Newsletter* 4: 8 (1988) 148-149. Also see: Whiteley and Davies, 'Biologists Bite Back', 10, and Natural Sciences Collections Association, 'A Matter of Life and Death, Natural Science collections: why keep them and why fund them?' *Natural Sciences Collections Association* (2005) <<http://www.spnhc.org/media/assets/AMatterOfLifeAndDeath.pdf>> [accessed 20 September 2011].

⁹⁰ For example see: Gary Cleland, Velson Horie and Ian Wallace, *Skeletons in the Cupboard: A Report on the Condition of Institutionally Held Natural Science Collections in the North West of England, with Suggestions for their Care and Use* (Lancashire: North West Collections Research Unit, 1997).

⁹¹ Mulhearn, 'Facing Extinction', 24-29 (p. 24).

and a 5% decline of curators working in areas related to social history.⁹² These statistics signal that while all areas of museums have been subject to recent cuts, natural science collections in particular appear to have been subject to a difficult existence in recent years.

What were the challenges facing the custodians of natural science collections in the latter part of the twentieth century, and why was taxidermy in particular a target? These questions are timely since in the last decade, the redevelopment of a number of museums including LCM, the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H) and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP), has arguably seen taxidermy being reinserted into public galleries with a new sense of vigour (fig. 3). Moreover, in some instances, discrete taxidermy objects have experienced a significant shift in value and status. For example, some of the objects previously earmarked for disposal by Salford and salvaged by Norris, have been conserved and incorporated into LCM's redeveloped public displays. These include, a chimpanzee, a Himalayan black bear, a snow leopard, an orangutan, a three-toed sloth, a Northern sea lion and a Brazilian tree porcupine amongst many others.⁹³ Before the inception of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which was established in 1993, the lack of funding available to museums limited opportunities for redevelopment, and before the most recent redevelopments at LCM, the GNM:H and MS:WP, inconsistencies in funding throughout the twentieth century meant that alterations made to museum galleries largely took place on a piecemeal, gallery by gallery basis. Capital funding from the HLF, therefore, afforded this small group of museums a rare opportunity to redress the ways in which they display and interpret taxidermy for their audiences. Indeed, Hannah Paddon has suggested that HLF grants have helped facilitate a type of 'redisplay renaissance' in contemporary British museums.⁹⁴ Owing to the unique challenges associated with obtaining HLF funding, these changes may well have been taking place at a slower pace than museum staff would have liked. For museums that have been successful in securing funding, however, redevelopment projects have presented, what is for some, the first opportunity in decades to remove outdated taxidermy displays and realign the contents of their public galleries to be more sympathetic and reflective of contemporary concerns. Set in the context of a proposed ethical turn, whereby a small group of museums are demonstrating an attitude towards their taxidermy collections which appears to contrast with that demonstrated a few

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ In correspondence with Clare Brown (2013).

⁹⁴ Hannah Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Bournemouth University, 2009), p. 1.

decades earlier, this study draws attention to a renewed focus on taxidermy in museums. It explores the epistemology of taxidermy by looking at how three recently redeveloped museums have constructed and mediated its meaning through different systems of display and interpretation.

1.2 Methodology

Approach

In order to address the aims and objectives identified in the introduction it was decided from an early stage that qualitative analysis using case studies would be the preferred methodological approach to the investigation over other possible research strategies. This was because from the onset, it was clear that gaining an understanding of the contextual conditions of the presentation and display of taxidermy in museums was integral to addressing the aims of the study.

Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's lived experiences, are fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the *social world* around them [*emphasis in original*].⁹⁵

In addition, a case study model was considered most suitable since, as Robert Yin suggests in *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2003):

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and content are not clearly evident.⁹⁶

This study hinges on the idea that museums both inform and respond to social change. From a Marxist perspective, the base (the underlying system of economic production) informs and determines the superstructure (the political, social and cultural characteristics which constitute the ruling orders of society).⁹⁷ In addition, postmodern approaches would

⁹⁵ Mathew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd edn. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), p. 11.

⁹⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd edn. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 13.

⁹⁷ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. by Maurice Dobb, trans. by S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977) (first publ. as *Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*,

further argue that the superstructure also informs the base.⁹⁸ Therefore, while the museum can be framed as a product of society, through its various functions and activities it also produces knowledge and contributes to discourse.⁹⁹ The close relationship between social structures and how society is represented through cultural heritage in the museum suggests that one inextricably linked to the other. In his examination of the relationship between the structures of society and its frames of consciousness, Raymond Williams coined the term 'structures of feeling' ('the conjoining of "structure" and "feeling"'), in order to characterise discrete moments in history and their particular ideological perspectives and value systems.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, 'culture', in the form of museums and the objects they display and interpret could be understood to unite 'base and superstructure in a single notion'.¹⁰¹ It is in this context that shifts in the presentation and display of objects in museums can be viewed and interpreted as indices of wider societal shifts, and in the case of taxidermy, predominately (although not always), the representation of relationships between people, animals and their environments. Therefore, throughout this thesis changes in approaches to the presentation and display of museum taxidermy are viewed as possible indicators of social change, big and/or small, within the institutional structure of the museum itself, and/or outside of it. Since the understanding of context is crucial to this investigation, research strategies which 'deliberately divorce a phenomenon from its context' such as quantitative experiments and, to a lesser degree, surveys, among other methodological approaches, were dismissed.¹⁰²

A multiple rather than singular case study design was pursued.¹⁰³ One of the advantages of using multiple case studies being that phenomena occurring from discrete case studies can be compared and contrasted with one another. Yin argues that '[t]he use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader

1859), Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. by Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 91-100 (p. 95). Also see: Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993) (first publ. London: Chatto & Windus, 1958).

⁹⁸ Pearce, 'Collecting as Medium and Message', in *Museum, Media, Message*, ed. by Hooper-Greenhill, pp. 15-23 (p. 15).

⁹⁹ Foucault, 'Truth and Power (From Power/Knowledge)', in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Rabinow, pp. 51-75. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago 'General Introduction: What are Museums For?', in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, ed. by Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1-9.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. by Highmore, pp. 91-100 (p. 91).

¹⁰¹ Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*.

¹⁰² Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioural issues'.¹⁰⁴ In adopting a cross case analysis, it was viewed that comparisons and the triangulation of data would help substantiate findings since, 'a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence'.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (2014), Mathew Miles, A. Huberman and Johnny Saldaña suggest that:

At a deeper level, the purpose is to see processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, qualitative research using cross case analysis can be viewed as an effective method for assessing causation (including multiple causes and influences), which, in relation to the present investigation, is key to understanding the relationship between museum displays and wider societal conditions.¹⁰⁷ While a study using more than three case studies would produce a wider view of the subject under investigation, the three museums were chosen in order to provide a discrete window into the museological practices of a specific region. In addition, three case studies was considered an appropriate number given the time constraints of the study.¹⁰⁸

Acknowledging Bias

In *Philosophy of History: An Introduction* (1961) William Walsh observed that, 'every historian looks at the past from a certain point of view', and their point of view is unique to them as individuals.¹⁰⁹ It is important, therefore, that I briefly set out my own subject position in order to outline how my previous experiences with taxidermy have informed my interpretation of the archive and the methodological approach adopted during the development of this thesis. My interest in taxidermy stems primarily from working as an artist in the early 2000s when I sought to integrate organic materials into my practice. Learning how to perform taxidermy under the guidance of a number of professionals in the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁰⁶ Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd edn. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 1990), p. 435.

¹⁰⁹ W. H. Walsh, 'What is Philosophy of History', in *Philosophy of History: An Introduction* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1961; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992), pp. 9-28 (p. 20).

field followed, and in 2007 I took up the position of Taxidermy Assistant at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, where I prepared natural science specimens for both research and display purposes. I left Edinburgh to pursue postgraduate research in Museum Studies in 2008, with a specific focus on the histories of museum taxidermy collections in British provincial museums over the last century. Although this thesis focuses on taxidermy in its museological and theoretical frame, it is important to acknowledge that my interest and knowledge of taxidermy practice pre-dates my academic research in the field of Museum Studies. Indeed, as Robert Stake has suggested, the gathering of data for the present study is likely to have begun long before the study itself was conceptualised:

There is no particular moment when data gathering begins. It begins before there is commitment to do the study: back-grounding, acquaintance with other cases, first impressions. A considerable proportion of all data is impressionistic, picked up informally as the researcher first becomes acquainted with the case. Many of these early impressions will later be refined or replaced, but the pool of data includes the earliest of observations.¹¹⁰

In some respects it could be argued that as a researcher I am I am well positioned to undertake this study owing to my experience and knowledge of taxidermy in its various contexts. While, in other respects it could also be argued that my familiarity and personal investment in the subject could have a negative impact upon my approach to the collation of data, its analysis and interpretation. Indeed, in *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (1990), Michael Patton argues that:

the human element in qualitative inquiry is both its strength and weakness – its strength is fully using human insight and experience, its weakness is being so heavily dependent on the researcher’s skill, training, intellect, discipline, and creativity. The researcher is the instrument of qualitative inquiry, so the quality of the research depends heavily on the qualities of that human being.¹¹¹

However, while it is acknowledged that my involvement in taxidermy could increase the risk of bias, ‘distance’ from the subject of study, as Patton has also observed, does not in itself guarantee objectivity, rather, ‘it merely guarantees distance’.¹¹² Therefore, as bias cannot be eradicated from the investigation, to temper its effects, as far as was practically possible,

¹¹⁰ Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 49.

¹¹¹ Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, p. 433.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 481.

'multiple perspectives, multiple interests and multiple realities' were sought during the collation of the data.¹¹³ While the methodological approach adopted in the undertaking of this study, the interpretation of the archive, and the ideas presented will, to some extent, reflect my personal engagements with taxidermy (practically and theoretically, both within and beyond the museum over the last decade), it is intended that the consideration of multiple perspectives will have contributed to the production of a wider and more diverse discussion of the subject.¹¹⁴

Museum archives are particular to the institutions in which they are housed, and the material they contain has been, and continues to be, subject to numerous filtering, organisational and classificatory practices.¹¹⁵ An additional problem for the historian is that the process of selection simultaneously entails a process of omission, and therefore the nature of the archive is necessarily fragmentary and unbalanced.¹¹⁶ For example, in the early stages of archival research for this thesis it was recognised that throughout the history of the three case study museums there has been a tendency for museum staff and the general public to pay particular attention to document displays when their removal was imminent, but less so at other times. While the pattern of recording at moments of significant change is interesting in relation to the role of the museum as a repository for collective memory and the construction of individual and collective identities, it presents its own challenges owing to the overrepresentation of periods of change in the archive in comparison to less active periods.¹¹⁷ While there are particular historical and institutional reasons for this, this perceived gap in the archive challenged how much information concerning the display and interpretation of taxidermy, for example at LCM between the 1960s and early 1990s, could be obtained. Such gaps are noted throughout the thesis to

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ It should also be noted that during the production of this study my agency as a researcher has also had an impact upon the form and content of parts of the museum archives themselves. For example, at MS:WP, the collation of images of previous museum displays involved the digitisation of part of Museum's slide collections resulting in the reshaping and extension of a small part of the Museum's archive. Although the digitisation of the slide collection was not an intended outcome of this study, it demonstrates how the research process itself has also contributed to historical discourse in nuanced and transformative ways.

¹¹⁵ Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Also see: Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences, Inside Technology* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1999).

¹¹⁶ Edward H. Carr, 'The Historian and His Facts', in *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 7-30 (p. 12). Also see: Michel Foucault, 'The Historical *a priori* and the Archive', in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 126-131.

¹¹⁷ Patricia Davison, 'Museums and the Re-shaping of Memory', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Gerard Corsane (London: Routledge, 2005) pp. 184-194.

sensitise the reader to the partial nature of the archive and the indeed to the selection processes they entail.

Selecting the Case Study Museums

A number of factors influenced the selection of the three case study museums over other possible institutions. This study focuses on the redevelopments of regional over national museums to avoid conflation with the necessarily distinct aims, objectives and activities of municipal and national institutions. They have different organisational structures, and the visitors of regional museums can differ to those of larger institutions, as can the professional, research, and community networks they support. Of particular significance are the limitations and constrictions that extended periods of reduced funding have had upon smaller museums, which, as suggested by Kate Hill, may have necessitated smaller museums to adapt and develop in ways that diversify from larger institutions:

Despite the quite dramatic growth of interest in museums in general, municipal museums remain rather neglected both by historians and museologists. Yet there is a case for considering municipal museums as particularly worth studying because of the way they can reveal details, weaknesses and inconsistencies that are not present in national and other more prestigious museums.¹¹⁸

Hill's observations were made in 2005, however her argument remains relevant today in that studies concerning larger UK institutions should not be considered indicative of the agendas, purposes and activities of smaller museums. Museums, which Hill has suggested, are 'local institutions with local priorities', which have in the past been 'fragile, chronically and sometimes acutely short of resources, struggling to achieve a professional staff base, and dependant on the whims of a small number of councillors and donors'.¹¹⁹ In practical terms, although of varying size and levels of organisation, all three of the selected case study museums have archives where information concerning the natural science collections can be obtained. While the requirement of an archive may be considered a given for a study such as this, it is important to remember that not all museums have archives and therefore the availability of an archive significantly impacted upon the selection process. In addition, the practicality of the locations of the three case study museums was also taken

¹¹⁸ Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

into consideration since multiple visits to each museum would be required. Being based at the University of Leeds, LCM served as a logical central location with MS:WP being located to the South, and the GNM:H to the North, both of which are within reasonable commuting distance. Furthermore, of particular significance were the resources available to the three case study museums for the production, conservation and maintenance of taxidermy and its display. Unlike larger, national museums such as the American Museum of Natural History, the Natural History Museum and National Museums Scotland, formalised taxidermy departments have not generally been a strong feature of Britain's regional museums. As a result, public displays featuring taxidermy in smaller museums were often created and maintained in very different contexts to those of larger institutions that had, and in some cases still do have, designated taxidermy departments.¹²⁰ The GNM:H, however, is a notable exception to this observation since the Museum always had, up until 2010, a member of staff or associate connected to the Museum who could undertake taxidermy or preparatory work.¹²¹ In December 2010, Eric Morton, the Hancock Museum's last taxidermist retired, and post-redevelopment, taxidermy duties have been removed from the staff profile of the GNM:H (fig. 4). The fact that the Museum still had a taxidermist in the twenty-first century made the Hancock Museum unique, as the majority of museum taxidermists were largely phased out of UK museums in the late twentieth century.¹²² Neither LCM, nor Weston Park Museum (WPM) had an in-house taxidermy tradition comparable to that of the Hancock Museum, although WPM did employ a series of biological assistants, such as Doris Downend, who worked at the WPM between 1926-1945

¹²⁰ The taxidermy department at National Museums Scotland is now one of, if not the largest department remaining. For images of taxidermy and model making departments of national museums and their activities see: Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History* and Susan Snell and Polly Parry, *Museum Through a Lens: Photographs from the Natural History Museum 1880 to 1950* (London: Natural History Museum, 2009).

¹²¹ Before Eric Morton (who began c.1975), previous full time taxidermists at the Hancock Museum also included: Stephen Cook who worked at the Museum from 1928-1962, Terry Morgan, for the period 1961-1965, and David Burleigh, from 1966-1975. (In correspondence with Eric Morton and the NHSN 2010/2013). John Hancock trained in taxidermy under the supervision of Newcastle taxidermist Richard Wingate, who undertook taxidermy work for the Museum in the early-mid nineteenth century. For example see: George Townshend Fox, *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum, Late the Allen, Formerly the Tunstall, or Wycliffe Museum* (Newcastle: The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1827), p. 6. Christopher Frost, *History of British Taxidermy* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1987), p. 85. Wingate was appointed keeper of the Newcastle Museum in was 1834, see: L. Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', *Archives of Natural History*, 26: 1 (1999), 33-49 (p. 38).

¹²² Melissa Milgrom, *Still Life: Adventures in Taxidermy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), p. 145.

(fig. 5).¹²³ From the 1970s up until the management of WPM came under the control of Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, WPM also employed a number of natural history conservators and technicians. These included James Dickinson, Paul Rose, W. Jerry Lee and Paul Richards, all of whom undertook varying degrees of taxidermy work, suggesting that during this period WPM had quite an active preparators section.¹²⁴ The legacy of taxidermists at the GNM:H, which holds as its focal point the naturalist and taxidermist John Hancock (1808-1890), renders the GNM:H a particularly interesting case study within the context of the present investigation in that it is generally atypical (fig. 6). As Robert Stake suggests in *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995), '[b]alance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance' and therefore it was considered that the inclusion of the GNM:H may lead to further or alternative perspectives on the subject.¹²⁵

In addition to acknowledging the different cultures of taxidermy practice in museums, it is also important to recognise that the origins of the taxidermy collections residing in the regional museums of the North of England differ greatly from those of other countries and localities. Although this thesis does not recount in detail the particular social and cultural contexts in which voluntary museums came into existence and their significance in Victorian provincial civic life, a landscape which is well charted, it is important to underscore how the histories of the three case study museums under discussion are centred upon this shared epistemological lineage.¹²⁶ Common traits can be identified between the three museums in that they were established in a particular cultural and historical moment, founded and governed by individuals from comparable backgrounds, with analogous interests and principles. They share a common genealogy in

¹²³ Tim Riley, Steve Garland and Derek Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', *Biology Curator's Group Newsletter*, 3: 2 (1982), 71-107 (p. 73).

¹²⁴ James Dickinson worked at WPM 1971-1973, Paul Rose from 1973-1974, W. Jerry Lee from 1974-c.1985, and Paul Richards from 1986-2012 (Richards later took up the position of Assistant Curator from 1999-2001, then as Senior Curator from 2001-2012). In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013). Also see: Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 74).

¹²⁵ Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, p. 6. Also see: p. 4.

¹²⁶ For studies that explore the cultural contexts, formation and early histories of provincial museums in the North of England see: Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2000), Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Natural History and the Philosophical Societies of Late Victorian Yorkshire', *Archives of Natural History*, 30: 2 (2003), 342-358, Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Placing Nature: Natural History Collections and their Owners in Nineteenth Century Provincial England', *BJHS*, 35 (2002), 291-311 and Peter Brears and Stuart Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museums and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside* (Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council, 1989).

that their origins are rooted in a very particular social, cultural and historical movement of the early 1800s which gave rise to the development of museums in industrialised Northern towns. Undoubtedly other British museums share similar origins, but for the museums at Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield, these similarities extend to recent redevelopments which have enabled them to identify their institutional priorities and realign them to meet the demands of their respective audiences and stakeholders. An additional reason why the three case study museums are comparable is that the cities in which they are situated have all been subject to significant economic change since the decline of industry in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹²⁷ Such changes have seen previously industrialised Northern cities shift from being places of production to places of consumption, a phenomenon which, as this study will argue, contemporary museums are now heavily implicated (see: 4.2, p. 213).¹²⁸ These conditions have impacted greatly upon the identity and function of the three case study museums in relation to their audiences and the role they now play on a regional, national and international scale. These factors, amongst others, differentiate provincial museums and their collections from larger institutions, warranting their investigation.

The Archive: Data Collation and Analysis

The archive informing this thesis is broad and constituted by a range of sources in a variety of different mediums. The primary components of the archive were the contemporary taxidermy displays featured at the three case study museums during the period of study. The appearance and contents of these displays were documented on multiple occasions. This was achieved using a combination of recording techniques which included taking photographs and short videos of the displays, producing hand-drawn sketches and illustrations of the display layouts, and making notes on the displays' contents. While note taking was useful in copying down the textual content of specimen labels, it was also used to describe the displays as I experienced them. In particular, to capture a sense of the physical space, and experiential elements which could not be very effectively recoded using digital imaging techniques.¹²⁹ Following communication with field contacts at the three

¹²⁷ Steven Miles, *Spaces for Consumption: Pleasure and Placelessness in the Post-Industrial City* (London: Sage, 2010).

¹²⁸ Nick Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524.

¹²⁹ Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, p. 98.

respective museums, information was also sourced from the stored (research) taxidermy collections, and remnants from previous museum displays such as display labels and interpretative text panels.¹³⁰ In the museum archives, images of museum buildings, natural science collections, previous museum displays, museum events and museum staff were also collated. These came in a variety of different formats but were largely in the form of hard copies, slides, and digital scans. Along with photographs and digitised slide images, a select number of images were reproduced from museum guide books and other museum publications. Furthermore, a small number of images were reproduced from articles featured in the periodical press, particularly where the originals were difficult to locate in the respective museum archives. As Kitty Hauser has suggested, the indexical quality of photographs is what 'validates their claim to represent the world accurately', what enables them to operate as 'visible proof of experience'.¹³¹ Since photographs can relay a significant amount of visual information about a particular moment in time, they have been used extensively to conceptualise both the appearance and content of previous museum displays. It is acknowledged throughout this study, however, that photographs can only relay information concerning the configuration and content of a gallery space from one, very brief moment in the past. Moreover, the use of photographs to visualise historical events can be problematised by the biases embedded in their production. Rather than these issues discounting the usefulness of photographs, however, photographs can also be framed as being useful *because* they reflect the agendas of the individuals who produced them, and the particular contexts of their production. As William Walsh has suggested, '[h]istory might [...] be said to give us a series of different but not incompatible portraits of the past, each reflecting it from a different point of view'.¹³²

While qualitative data were obtained through direct observation, a considerable amount of the data was also collated from the consultation and analysis of written textual documents using a combination of photocopying and note taking techniques.¹³³ These included, but were not limited to, museum catalogues and registers, pamphlets, leaflets and other internal publications, museum committee and/or affiliated society reports, transactions and proceedings, articles from the periodical press such as local newspapers, various science journals and the *Museums Journal*, accession registers and curators' notes, collections management documents, design briefs and exhibition strategies, managerial

¹³⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 28.

¹³¹ Hauser, 'Coming Apart at the Seams', 8-11 (p. 9).

¹³² Walsh, 'What is Philosophy of History', in *Philosophy of History: An Introduction*, pp. 9-28 (p. 21).

¹³³ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 83.

and governance documents and visitor comments books and feedback surveys among others. In order to efficiently locate the textual material listed, two interviews were undertaken with museum staff in the early stages of the research project. The first interview was carried out with Eric Morton, who at the time held the position of Assistant Keeper of Biology at the GNM:H, on 14/10/2010.¹³⁴ The second interview was with Clare Brown, the current Curator of Natural Sciences at LCM on 11/02/2011.¹³⁵ The primary function of these two interviews was to direct the investigation to key areas of the archive where information could be found.¹³⁶ Although the information gleaned from the interviews helped, in part, to shape the trajectory of subsequent archival research, they are not directly quoted or referred to in this study. The primary reason for this is that it was recognised from the onset that such interviews would glean very subjective perspectives on the subject under discussion, and while useful, could steer the project in a different direction, leading to different research approaches to answer different questions.¹³⁷ Also, for these reasons, the interview approach was not repeated in the later stages of the research. For similar reasons audience research beyond the consultation of visitor feedback surveys and visitor comments books was not pursued. It should be noted, however, that spending extended periods of time in the museums' public galleries did result in exposure to audience encounters and engagements taxidermy displays.

To address the aims of the investigation, a research design was adopted which would afford particular emphasis on certain kinds of information. This approach helped identify the types of data that would be most useful while consulting the archive and collating the information.¹³⁸ The conceptual frameworks adopted were purposefully relaxed in the early stages of the research before becoming more finely tuned as the data were collated and the themes of the study began to develop.¹³⁹ Initially, a broad history of the three case study museums was constructed with a particular focus on their establishment and the subsequent acquisition of natural science collections and the key

¹³⁴ In correspondence with Eric Morton (2010).

¹³⁵ Clare Brown (previously Stringer), was appointed by LCM in 2004. In correspondence with Clare Brown (2013).

¹³⁶ Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, p. 377.

¹³⁷ In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Pierre Bourdieu drew attention to the problems inherent in using such a methodology, specifically that researchers are biased by particular privileges which govern their theory of practice and temper their interpretation of texts. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977). An ethical review was undertaken for this study project since it (initially) involved interviews with museum staff.

¹³⁸ Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, p. 13.

¹³⁹ Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, p. 20.

figures involved. Gallery redevelopments, shifts in collecting policies and target audiences, along with changes in managerial structure and funding streams were also recorded. Alongside the construction of the broader histories of the three case study museums, the cultural history of the natural science collections of each museum, with a particular focus on taxidermy, were developed in parallel. For example, any documents referring to natural history, natural science, biology, zoology (and within it discrete taxa such as mammals and birds), taxidermists or taxidermy were consulted. Once a history of changes in museum displays could be mapped out, it became easier to focus more closely on particular events and ideological positions which may have informed shifts in the presentation and display of taxidermy at the three case study museums, and investigate the wider cultural contexts in which they occurred.¹⁴⁰ Narratives were then identified which came to form the themes of the chapters of the thesis (see: p. 27).¹⁴¹

1.3 The Case Study Museums: Historical Outline and Chronology

The following section summarises the histories of the three case study museums in order to outline the wider contexts within which shifts in the presentation and display of taxidermy will be investigated. While major events such as museum relocations, changes in museum ownership, and shifts in museum management are discussed throughout this thesis, they are briefly mapped out here to provide the reader with a concise introduction to each museum, and to avoid repetition later in the study.

Leeds City Museum

The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society was established in 1818.¹⁴² In 1821 the Society opened the Philosophical Hall on Park Row, in which the Society undertook its activities and housed its collections.¹⁴³ The Park Row building was extended and re-opened in 1862 in order to accommodate the Society's expanding Museum, effectively doubling the capacity of the Philosophical Hall.¹⁴⁴ The Museum of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society was later transferred from the Society to the local authorities in 1921, from which point

¹⁴⁰ Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, p. 375.

¹⁴¹ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, p. 103.

¹⁴² Edwin Kitson Clark, *The History of 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* (Leeds: Jowett & Sowry, 1924), pp. 5-10.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.

onwards it was known as 'Leeds City Museum'.¹⁴⁵ In 1941, LCM was subject to extensive damage during the air raids of the Second World War which resulted in the Museum being dramatically reduced in size.¹⁴⁶ The Museum was later deemed structurally unsafe, necessitating that the collections were re-housed, and in 1966 LCM moved from Park Row to the Municipal Buildings on the Headrow, where it re-opened in 1969.¹⁴⁷ LCM's move to the Municipal Buildings was originally intended to be a temporary measure, however, the Museum remained there until its closure in 1999. LCM remained closed until the new Museum opened in 2008 in the old Mechanics Institute Building, located on Millennium Square.¹⁴⁸ £19.4m was secured from the HLF for the redevelopment of LCM and its new resource centre, the 'Discovery Centre'.¹⁴⁹ Today LCM continues to be managed and be predominantly funded by Leeds local authority museum service, Leeds Museums and Galleries.

Museums Sheffield: Weston Park

The Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society was established in 1822.¹⁵⁰ The Society occupied the Music Hall on Surrey Street where they also stored their collections, but in 1871, the Society voted for the transference of the collections to the City Council on the agreement that the authorities would provide suitable accommodation for the establishment of a public museum.¹⁵¹ The building selected by the Council to accommodate the Museum was previously the home of Eliza and Anne Harrison, daughters of the wealthy saw manufacturer Thomas Harrison, who left the Weston House estate to the Corporation

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁴⁶ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945).

¹⁴⁷ Peter Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums* (Leeds: Friends of Leeds City Museums, 1989), p. 30.

¹⁴⁸ During LCM's period of closure, however, some of the Museum's collections were made accessible to visitors on an 'appointment only' basis at a storage facility site located in Yeadon. Jen Kaines, 'Leeds Collections on Display', *NatSCA News*, 12 (2007), 33-35, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ Leeds City Council provided a further £9.9m, the total cost of the project being £29.4m. Smaller sums of funding also came from other invested groups and stakeholders including the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society amongst others. Information obtained through a freedom of information request.

¹⁵⁰ William Smith Porter, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society: A Centenary Retrospect 1822-1922* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1922), p. 9.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

for the benefit of the public.¹⁵² The Harrison mansion was developed with a number of alterations including the addition of two galleries, one of which became the 'Natural History' gallery.¹⁵³ Both the Museum and Weston Park opened to the general public in 1875.¹⁵⁴ The Mappin Art Gallery was then built alongside the Museum and opened to the public in 1887.¹⁵⁵ The Museum was later demolished before being rebuilt and re-opened in 1937, but two years later, the Mappin Gallery was bombed during the air raids and the damage affected the Museum and its collections.¹⁵⁶ The Museum remained under the management of the Council until 1998 when the Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust was established to take over the management of WPM along with Sheffield's other non-industrial museums and art galleries from the local authority.¹⁵⁷ While the management of WPM was devolved from the local authorities to the Trust, the Museum continued to operate using funds from the local authority. During the most recent redevelopment of WPM, the previously autonomous identities of the Museum and Mappin Art Gallery were consolidated from 'City Museum and Mappin Art Gallery' to 'Weston Park Museum'. The redevelopment of WPM was completed in 2006, and was part of a £19m project, £13.7m of which was provided by the HLF.¹⁵⁸ Two years after the Museum's opening, WPM was renamed 'Museums Sheffield: Weston Park' following the re-brand of Sheffield Museums and Galleries Trust to 'Museums Sheffield' in 2008.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Edward J. Vickers, *A Popular History of Sheffield*, rev. edn. (Sheffield: Applebaum, 1987) p. 219. Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 114.

¹⁵³ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 100. Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 114.

¹⁵⁴ William Smith Porter, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society: A Centenary Retrospect 1822-1922*, pp. 38. Vickers, *A Popular History of Sheffield*, p. 219.

¹⁵⁵ Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 114.

¹⁵⁶ Clare Scott and Ian Trowell, 'Sheffield Educated – Sheffield City Museum', *The University of Sheffield, National Fairground Archive: The Sheffield Jungle* <<http://www.nfa.dept.shef.ac.uk/jungle/index4d4.html>> [accessed 8 May 2013], p. 4.

In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013), present Curator of Natural Science at MS:WP, and previously Assistant Curator of Natural Science from 2001-2012.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Richards and Alistair McLean 'The Natural History Section of Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust - An update', *The Biology Curator*, 20 (2001), 8-13 (p. 8). The other venues included Bishops' House, Graves Art Gallery and Millennium Gallery.

¹⁵⁸ A further £3m was provided by Sheffield City Council, and 1m from the European Regional Development Fund alongside other smaller contributions. For a complete funding breakdown see: Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', 1 (2007) <<http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/pdfs/wpminfopack.pdf>> [accessed 30 April 2010], p. 14-15.

¹⁵⁹ At different stages since the Museum's inception the Museum service has been named 'Public Museum', 'City Museums', and 'City Museum', although the Museum building was largely referred to as 'Weston Park Museum' up until the rebrand of the Trust in 2008. In addition, although previously

Great North Museum: Hancock

The GNM:H, located on Barras Bridge, Newcastle, opened to the public in 1884.¹⁶⁰ The Museum's collections were initially amassed by the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society (founded in 1793), but later came under the custodianship of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne (NHSNDNT) which was established as an offshoot of the Literary and Philosophical Society in 1829.¹⁶¹ Before the establishment of the Museum on Barras Bridge, the NHSNDNT's collections were housed in the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society building located on Westgate road.¹⁶² John Hancock, an eminent ornithologist, taxidermist, and founding member of the NHSNDNT, sought to raise funds and secure land to relocate the Museum into larger premises (fig. 6).¹⁶³ As a well esteemed naturalist, Hancock was in a favourable position to make use of his personal connections with the wealthy patrons of the region who had the means to help finance a new Museum. Hancock's fundraising was successful, and after securing sizable donations for the project from patrons and the public, the development of the new Museum went ahead.¹⁶⁴ Upon the establishment of the Museum on Barras Bridge, Hancock donated his personal ornithological collection, which included a significant amount of taxidermy, to the NHSNDNT.¹⁶⁵ In 1891 the 'Newcastle Museum', as it was then known, was renamed the 'Hancock Museum' to commemorate the contributions of John Hancock and his brother Albany (1806-1873), both of whom had been prominent figures in the study of natural history and were instrumental in the development of the new Museum.¹⁶⁶

named 'City Museum and Mappin Art Gallery', in isolation, the Museum was (and still is) more commonly referred to as 'Weston Park Museum' by the Sheffield public. In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013). The Museum is therefore referred to as WPM throughout this thesis until its re-naming in 2008.

¹⁶⁰ E. Leonard Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, 1908), p. xvii.

¹⁶¹ Alberti, 'Placing Nature: Natural History Collections and their Owners in Nineteenth Century Provincial England', 291-311 (303), also see: Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p. xvii.

¹⁶² Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p. viii. Alberti, 'Placing Nature: Natural History Collections and their Owners in Nineteenth Century Provincial England', 291-311 (301-303). For more on the earlier history of the Newcastle Museum see: Russell T. Goddard, *History of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, 1829-1929* (Newcastle: Andrew Reid & Co., 1929).

¹⁶³ For more on John Hancock see: Goddard, *History of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, 1829-1929*, pp. 171-176.

¹⁶⁴ The patrons included the wealthy Armstrong and Joicey families see: Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p. xvi – xvii.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 44).

In 1959, financial difficulties led the Society to lease the Museum and its collections to King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne (which later became Newcastle University).¹⁶⁷ The Society relinquished the role of managing the Museum and collections to the neighbouring University, and in turn, in 1992 the University contracted the management of the Museum to the local authorities (now Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums) to manage the Museum under a service level agreement.¹⁶⁸ Although the NHSNDNT, which changed its name to the 'Natural History Society of Northumbria' (NHSN) in 1974, retained ownership of the Hancock Museum and its collections, the agreement opened up the management of the Museum to other organisations.¹⁶⁹ The Museum's private ownership meant that it was not funded by the authorities, and before the inception of the HLF, difficulties in securing funding rendered capital redevelopment plans prohibitive.¹⁷⁰ These challenges were overcome when a partnership was established between the NHSN, Newcastle University, the Society of Antiquities of Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne & Wear Museums and Newcastle City Council.¹⁷¹ This partnership resulted in the 'Great North Museum Project', a cultural redevelopment strategy which united three previously distinct venues, the Hancock Museum, the University's Hatton Gallery, and a newly developed Resource Centre.¹⁷² The redevelopment, which was project managed by the University, saw the integration of the collections of the Society of Antiquities and the University's Shefton Museum into the Hancock Museum.¹⁷³ In reflection of the Museum now displaying collections from other institutions alongside the collections of the NHSN, and as part of a larger cultural project dispersed over multiple sites, the Hancock Museum was renamed the 'Great North Museum: Hancock' before opening to the public in 2009. The cost of the Great North Museum project was £26m, £9.2m of which came from the HLF.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Grace Hickling, *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979* (Newcastle: The Hancock Museum, 1980), p. 19.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 'Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' is the result of a merger between Tyne and Wear Museums and Tyne and Wear Archives services which took place in April 2009. The service is funded by the metropolitan district councils in Tyne and Wear which are Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland, with Newcastle acting as lead authority.

¹⁶⁹ Hickling, *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979*, p. 30.

¹⁷⁰ In correspondence with the NHSN (2012).

¹⁷¹ The Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Natural History Society of Northumbria Annual Report*, 65: 1 (2004), p. 5.

¹⁷² The redevelopment also included the development of new offices for the NHSN plus a new library and archive which is also shared by the Society of Antiquities of Newcastle upon Tyne and the University's Cowen Archaeology Library.

¹⁷³ Following the redevelopment the Hatton Gallery remains located in the Fine Art building of Newcastle University.

¹⁷⁴ An additional £5m came from Regional Development Agencies, £4m from the European Regional Development Fund, £3m from Newcastle City Council and DCMS, £3m from the University of

Chronological Frame

The chronological frame of this study in relation to LCM and MS:WP begins at the point from which the two collections came under the custodianship of Leeds and Sheffield authorities (1921 and 1871 respectively). Funded by public money, it was from this point onwards that these two museums were required to formally adopt the role of providing for the general public. As a result of the continued private ownership of the GNM:H building and its natural science collections by the NHSN, marking a point in the history of the Hancock Museum when its focus shifted to privilege public provision has been slightly more challenging. In all three museums, however, a significant shift took place in the period following the Second World War in response to a heightened focus on public provision. Reflective of the increasing professionalisation of museums more broadly in the UK during this period, from around the 1950s onwards regional museums became further engaged in providing for their publics in ways that were more analogous with the aims and expectations of museums today. With these factors in consideration, the chronological frame for this study begins in the late nineteenth century, but it is weighted towards the period between 1950 and the present day.¹⁷⁵

In *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914* (2005), Kate Hill observed that ‘until about 1890, natural history, especially zoology, was a dominant category in most municipal museums’, thus affording natural history collections a central role in the historiography of smaller institutions.¹⁷⁶ Yet, while a number of studies have addressed some of the rhetorics informing the display and interpretation of museum taxidermy collections in museums in North America, Scandinavia and New Zealand, comparatively few studies have addressed taxidermy displays in contemporary British museums.¹⁷⁷ This situation provides further rationale for the chronological parameters of

Newcastle, and £2m from other donations. Steve McLean, ‘The Development of the Great North Museum: Hancock’, lecture read by Steve McLean (13th October 2009)

<<https://lectopia.ncl.ac.uk/lectopia/casterframe.lasso?fid=16981&cnt=true&usr=not-indicated&name=not-indicated>> [accessed 18 April 2012], 00:43:53 / 02:01:57.

¹⁷⁵ Museum galleries or parts of galleries which are used as learning and activity spaces and are therefore only available to the public at certain times, usually under staff supervision, have been excluded from this study. An example of such a space is the interior section of the new ‘Explore!’ gallery in the GNM:H, which although presents a number of taxidermy specimens, can only be accessed at certain times, and sometimes only by designated groups. The exterior of the display, however, can be viewed at all times, and a number of taxidermy specimens are presented here.

¹⁷⁶ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁷ For examples of perspectives on taxidermy in North American museums see: Haraway, ‘Teddy Bear Patriarchy Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936’, in *Primate Visions:*

this study to be set in the latter part of the twentieth century, and the early twenty-first century. For instance, although the histories of the case study museums and their collections received some academic attention around the first decades of the twentieth century, mostly on behalf of museum professionals or learned society members, in later years and particularly in the period following the Second World War, their histories remain largely under researched.¹⁷⁸ Sam Alberti has suggested that there is a gap in the twentieth century historiography of UK museums, and these omissions, therefore, may be reflective of a more general discrepancy in the historical record.¹⁷⁹ There are, however, two exceptions which reveal some of the twentieth century history of the taxidermy collections of LCM and the GNM:H. These are *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums* (1989), by the then Director of LCM Peter Brears, and Grace Hickling's *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979* (1979).¹⁸⁰ Little appears to have been written on the twentieth century history of WPM and its taxidermy collections, although the article *Sheffield City Museums: Natural Science Section*, featured in the Biology Curator's Group Newsletter (1982), and more recently, Clare Scott and Ian Trowell's article *Sheffield Educated – Sheffield City Museum*, provide a valuable insight into the history of the natural science department and its staff.¹⁸¹ In relation to taxidermy in its specificity, much of the present literature tends to focus on the peak of taxidermy production and

Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science, Karen A. Rader, 'From Natural History to Science: Display and the Transformation of American Museums of Science and Nature', *Museum & Society*, 6 (2008), 152-171, Shell, 'Skin Deep: Taxidermy, Embodiment, and Extinction in W. T. Hornaday's Buffalo Group', 88-112 and Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*. For perspectives on Scandinavian museums see: Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1993). Also see: Karen Wonders, 'Habitat Dioramas as Ecological Theatre', *European Review*, 1: 3 (1993), 285-300 and Karen Wonders, 'Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness', *Landscape Research*, 28: 1 (2003), 89-100. Australasian perspectives are few, but see: Jillian Walliss, 'Nature, Nation and the Museum: The Mid-Twentieth Century New Zealand Experience', *Museum & Society*, 9 (2011), 214-226 which provides an interesting insight into trends in display in the first half of the twentieth century in New Zealand, some of which, challenge some of the ideas purported by North American and Anglocentric literature on taxidermy.

¹⁷⁸ Clark, *The History of 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, Goddard, *History of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, 1829-1929*. Studies concerning the early twentieth century history of Weston Park Museum are few, however see: Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, and Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904'.

¹⁷⁹ Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*, p. 193.

¹⁸⁰ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, Hickling, *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979*.

¹⁸¹ Riley, Garland and Whiteley, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Science Section', *Biology Curator's Group Newsletter*, 72-105. Scott and Trowell, 'Sheffield Educated – Sheffield City Museum', *The University of Sheffield, National Fairground Archive: The Sheffield Jungle*.

collecting during the nineteenth century, a period which is often characterised as the 'heyday' of natural history.¹⁸² Indeed, some of the most recent studies in taxidermy, such as Poliquin's *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (2012) continue to focus primarily on taxidermy in its Victorian (and earlier) cultural contexts over those of the present.¹⁸³

Factors influencing recent changes in the display of biological collections in British museums have been investigated by Hannah Paddon in *An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums* (2009).¹⁸⁴ Using tools drawn from the social sciences, Paddon uses a qualitative grounded theory approach to analyse the factors and processes behind the making of museum displays.¹⁸⁵ Paddon's analysis primarily concerns museum structures, particularly in relation to management and team working in the contemporary context rather than the histories, contents or interpretation of museum displays themselves. In an earlier study, *How have Natural History Collections in Case Study Museums in Southwest England Evolved in Terms of Display and Interpretation?* (2007), Paddon adopted an approach more closely aligned to that of the present study, but focussed on natural history collections more broadly, than on particular types of specimens.¹⁸⁶ While the article does not provide an analysis of the contents and interpretation of collections in discrete displays, it does map some of the broader influences behind changes in museum displays in the Southwest of England. The present study advances the literature in this area firstly by focussing on the interpretation of taxidermy objects in their specificity, and secondly by providing a Northern counterpoint to which the influences highlighted in Paddon's Southwest study can be correlated and compared. Collectively this body of research could be viewed to constitute the beginning of a national picture of shifts in the museological display and interpretation of UK natural science collections.

¹⁸² Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History 1820-1870* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980). Carla Yanni, *Nature's Museum: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display* (London: Athlone, 1999). Grasseni, 'Taxidermy as Rhetoric of Self-Making: Charles Waterton (1782–1865), Wandering Naturalist', 269-294.

¹⁸³ While Poliquin affords some attention to contemporary taxidermy in the contexts of fine art in the study, museum taxidermy displays, particularly those developed since the turn of the twenty-first century remain underrepresented. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*.

¹⁸⁴ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums'.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

¹⁸⁶ Hannah Paddon, 'How have Natural History Collections in Case Study Museums in Southwest England Evolved in Terms of Display and Interpretation?', *NatSCA News*, 13 (2007), 22-33.

We shall now turn to the contents of the three case study museums' taxidermy collections. Through a discussion of their collation, classification and organisation, the following chapter makes the collections of each museum and their various methods of display at different points in their respective histories visible to the reader to contextualise this investigation.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ In particular, 2.2, pp. 105-109 outlines the context of the contemporary taxidermy displays at each of the three case study museums.

Chapter 2

Collecting, Classification and Order

What museums collect, and how they collect it, differentiates museum collections dramatically from one another. The collecting activities of Leeds City Museum (LCM), the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H), and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP), throughout their discrete histories served to shape their respective taxidermy collections in different ways, as indeed, has what has been omitted from their collections. The formation and content of the three case study museums' taxidermy collections reflects the relationships between stakeholders and patrons, the perceived purpose of the museums in relation to their audiences, and more broadly, the wider social, cultural, political and economic contexts which have shaped the roles of the museums at different times. In addition, museums attribute taxidermy with particular meanings and values through different schemes of classification. How collections are organised and displayed, however, depends on what scheme of classification is most useful at any given time and reflects the dominant ideologies of society.¹⁸⁸ As the roles of the three case study museums have shifted between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first century, different approaches to the classification and ordering of collections have mediated the meaning and value of their taxidermy in a variety of different ways.

2.1 Collecting

Encyclopaedic Collecting

Throughout the nineteenth century, taxidermy was acquired by Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, the Natural History Society of Northumberland Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne (NHSNDNT) and Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society. While some objects were received as gifts and donations, others (particularly as collections became more established), were actively sought through a wide variety of channels. The sources of the material were as diverse as the objects themselves, and as the collections of the societies developed, as did their particular strengths and weaknesses affording each collection particular characteristics.¹⁸⁹ Collecting was achieved through arrangements with a range of

¹⁸⁸ Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

¹⁸⁹ Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 117.

individuals from different professions; from naturalists, colonial administrators and travellers, to seafarers, and keepers of menageries and local zoos.¹⁹⁰ While some specimens were captured from the wild, therefore, others came from captive or domestic sources. In addition, while some specimens arrived already taxidermied, sometimes having served another purpose before being subsumed into collections, others arrived fresh, requiring a taxidermist to mount them up. For instance, Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society procured a Bengal tiger which had been shot in 1860 by the Anglo-Indian officer Colonel Charles Reid, C.B. in Northern India.¹⁹¹ After being exhibited in the Indian Court in the International Exhibition in South Kensington in 1862, the tiger was purchased by the Leeds industrialist William Gott for display in the Leeds Philosophical Hall (fig. 7).¹⁹² The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society acquired taxidermy specimens from a range of localities including North and South America, the West Indies, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti and India to name a few.¹⁹³ In particular, the Society developed a substantial collection of taxidermied animals from foreign sources, particularly mammals, and by the 1860s, the Society was custodian to taxidermied examples of the now extinct thylacine (Tasmanian wolf), along with an orangutan, the Bengal tiger and an illegally hunted Tibetan yak.¹⁹⁴ So diverse was the collection displayed in the Philosophical Hall that in 1862 it prompted Professor Owen to suggest during a visit to the Museum that 'no such unbroken serial exposition of the Mammalian Class was to be found elsewhere in England'.¹⁹⁵

In contrast with the collections at Leeds, the collections amassed for the Newcastle Museum were initially more orientated towards European birds owing to the collection of the earlier Newcastle Museum having being formed, in part, by the acquisition of bird specimens from the collections of Marmaduke Cuthbert Tunstall (1743-1790), son of Cuthbert Constable of Burton Constable, Yorkshire.¹⁹⁶ Following Tunstall's death, his estate

¹⁹⁰ Adrian Norris, 'The Intangible Roots of Our Tangible Heritage', in *Intangible Natural Heritage: New Perspectives on Natural Objects*, ed. by Eric Dorfman (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 16-41 (p. 23).

¹⁹¹ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Chris Rawlence (21st August 1979 and 5th September 1979), fol. William Gott.

¹⁹² Clark, *The History of 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, p. 132.

¹⁹³ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 47.

¹⁹⁴ Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 118. Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 48-52. For more on the illicit collection of the Tibetan yak see: Norris, 'The Intangible Roots of Our Tangible Heritage', in *Intangible Natural Heritage: New Perspectives on Natural Objects*, ed. by, pp. 16-41 (p. 25).

¹⁹⁵ Clark, *The History of 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, p. 132.

¹⁹⁶ Fox, *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum, Late the Allen, Formerly the Tunstall, or Wycliffe Museum*, p. 8. Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49. Newcastle Museum's collection was also particularly rich in botanical and paleontological specimens during this period.

was inherited by William Constable of Holderness, East Yorkshire, in 1790, followed by Constable's nephew, Edward Sheldon in 1791.¹⁹⁷ In 1929 the then curator of the Hancock Museum, Edwin Leonard Gill (1877-1956), noted that the Tunstall collection had been 'particularly rich in birds', although the collection also contained 'other objects of natural history and ethnology, as well as a good many antiquities'.¹⁹⁸ The Tunstall collection was split when part of it was sold at auction in 1792, and much of the taxidermy (comprising mainly of bird specimens), was purchased by George Allan (1736-1800) of Darlington.¹⁹⁹ Allen, who was also a collector, integrated the collection with his own before later transferring it to Blackwell Grange where it received numerous visitors before his death.²⁰⁰ George Townshend Fox, a member of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, purchased Allen's collection when it came up for auction in 1822.²⁰¹ In 1827 Fox reported that '[o]f this Museum it is asserted that the birds alone filled a written catalogue of two volumes', while a third volume listed numerous curiosities including objects procured by Captain Cook which included, amongst ethnographic objects, shells, fossils, reptiles and insects.²⁰² The collection was then integrated into that already amassed by the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, which already included, amongst other items, a specimen of a wombat and a duck-billed platypus.²⁰³ The Society's bird collection was then further strengthened by John Hancock's donation of his ornithological collection to the NHSNDNT upon the development of the Hancock Museum.²⁰⁴ Hancock's collection was varied, and while many of his birds were mounted up and presented quite simply in box cases, other objects were much more artistic and imposing in appearance, such as a case featuring a dramatic tableaux of a gyrfalcon posed as if overpowering a heron which had originally been created for display at the Great Exhibition of 1851.²⁰⁵ Having been created for the Exhibition, Hancock's tableaux were designed to impress and entertain by appealing to the emotions and the senses as much as they were to educate and inform.²⁰⁶ Although

¹⁹⁷ Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 34).

¹⁹⁸ Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p.vi.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 34). Fox, *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum, Late the Allen, Formerly the Tunstall, or Wycliffe Museum*, p. 32.

²⁰¹ Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 36).

²⁰² Fox, *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum, Late the Allen, Formerly the Tunstall, or Wycliffe Museum*, p. 33.

²⁰³ Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 36).

²⁰⁴ Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, pp. xvi-xvii.

²⁰⁵ Frost, *History of British Taxidermy*, pp. 84-85.

²⁰⁶ Paul Greenhalgh, 'Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions', in *The New Museology*, ed. by Vergo, pp. 74-98.

renowned for his bird taxidermy, Hancock also prepared other kinds of taxidermy for the Hancock Museum such as a Japanese spider crab which has been displayed in a variety of situations since its acquisition (fig. 8).²⁰⁷ In 1921 the Hancock Museum's collection expanded further when it benefitted from the donation of a significant collection of taxidermied foreign mammals amassed by the hunter-naturalist Abel Chapman (1851-1929) of Sunderland.²⁰⁸ Chapman's collection of game heads was the material evidence of his hunting and shooting exploits overseas, and when he died, the trophies were donated to the Museum along with the sum of five hundred pounds to fund their display.²⁰⁹

At Weston Park Museum (WPM), after the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society had transferred its collections to the authorities in 1875, the first object to be accessioned into the Museum was a duck billed platypus, its accession number being A 1.²¹⁰ The collections of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society had been smaller than those of the societies at Leeds and Newcastle, but after the transfer, the then curator of the Museum, Elijah Howarth (1854-1939), sought to develop them further acquiring animals from both wild and captive sources.²¹¹ For example, the WPM acquired a polar bear which had been collected from the Arctic in 1904 and brought over to Dundee (possibly on a whaler ship), while other animals were acquired from Bostock and Wombell's travelling menagerie which frequented Sheffield on a regular basis between the 1890s and 1920s.²¹² The Museum obtained a variety of animals from Bostock and Wombell, including a chimpanzee, an anteater, and a lion called 'Joey' which had been reared and trained by its

²⁰⁷ The Japanese spider crab was mounted by Hancock but presented to the Museum by Admiral St. John, R. N., Richard Howse, *Guide to the Museum of the Natural History Society, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*, 2nd edn. (Newcastle: J. Bell and co., 1891), p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark (Natural History Society of Northumbria).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1 (Newcastle: Northumberland Press Limited, 1932), p. 6. Also see: Anthony M. Tynan, *Guide to the Hancock Museum* (Newcastle: Unit Offset, 1984), p. 11.

²¹⁰ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2012).

²¹¹ The first curator of Weston Park Museum was Charles Callaway (1838-1915) who was appointed by the museum committee in 1874. However, due to a disagreement with one of the Committees' councillors, Callaway resigned in 1876, being succeeded by Elijah Howarth. Alberti, 'Field, Lab and Museum: The Practice and Place of Life Science in Yorkshire, 1870-1904', p. 109. Howarth held the position of curator at WPM from 1876-1928.

²¹² The 1904 polar bear was later stored at Kelham Island, Sheffield's industrial museum, then loaned to Eureka!, Halifax. In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013). For more information on the 1904 polar bear see: Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson eds. 'Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears', p. 108. Scott and Trowell, 'Sheffield Educated – Sheffield City Museum'. For more on the cultures of zoos, travelling shows and menageries see: Harriet Ritvo, 'Exotic Captives', in *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 205-2 42.

owner Martini Bartlett before its death in 1892.²¹³ Howarth also procured material for WPM from extant museum collections including non-European material sourced from the British Museum (Natural History).²¹⁴ The curator stated that, ‘the specimens [...] are chiefly foreign, and represent many groups of animals not found in Britain, thus greatly advancing the practical value of the Museum for students of general Zoology’.²¹⁵

These select examples demonstrate how the sources from which all three of the case study museums acquired taxidermy in their fledgling years were as varied as they were unique. Despite the different characteristics of the three collections however, the stakeholders of the museums shared similar goals in the collection of taxidermy which were as politically orientated as they were educational. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, taxidermied objects enhanced the reputation of museums and their patrons in relation to those of other cities by figuring as signifiers of wealth, knowledge and erudition.²¹⁶ The presentation of a wide variety of species enabled museums to simultaneously display the prestige of one learned society to another, while demonstrating the patriotic and philanthropic dispositions of museum donors and patrons. In addition, although taxidermied animals were commonly interpreted as species representatives in museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were not immune to politicisation. Rather, as suggested by John Berger in his widely cited essay, *Why Look at Animals* (1980), ‘[t]he capturing of animals was a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands’ (fig. 9).²¹⁷ It was an era in which naturalists, hunters and explorers such as Abel Chapman, sought to discover and dominate the natural life of so called ‘unexplored’ territories:

South Africa when the world was young—that is, when we were young—represented to those who had inherited an adventurous spirit, and in whose breast a love of the wild was innate, something that approached the acme of terrestrial joys. Thereaway, our earlier lessons had taught that, co-existent with the humdrum monotony of a work-a-day world, there yet survived a vast continent still absolutely unknown and unsubdued by man,

²¹³ Scott and Trowell, ‘Sheffield Educated – Sheffield City Museum’, *The University of Sheffield, National Fairground Archive: The Sheffield Jungle*.

²¹⁴ Sheffield City Council, *Annual Museum Reports 1880-1881* (Sheffield: Sheffield City Council, 1880-1881), p. 17.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Alberti, ‘Placing Nature: Natural History Collections and their Owners in Nineteenth Century Provincial England’, 291-311 (p. 292).

²¹⁷ John Berger, ‘Why Look at Animals’, in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. 1-28 (p. 19).

and across whose vacant space there sprawled, inscribed in burning letters on the map, that vocal word, 'Unexplored'.²¹⁸

Collections of hunting trophies, particularly from foreign sources, figured as indices of the power and authority of their custodians.²¹⁹ Carla Yanni has suggested that, 'nature became a medium through which to represent the state', and collectively through expansive collections of foreign taxidermy, museums demonstrated the supremacy of the British Empire over its colonised territories during the period of Imperial rule.²²⁰ This was further facilitated by the construction of cultural histories and mythologies around discrete specimens which enabled their captors to assume heroic status while simultaneously justifying the control and capture of animals.²²¹ For instance, in 1906, the then curator of LCM, Henry Crowther (1848-1937), contributed to the construction of a thrilling and dramatic mythology surrounding the Museum's Bengal tiger by suggesting that the animal had been an insatiable predator and a man-eater.²²²

This animal had a long been a terror, having destroyed forty bullocks in six weeks, and was considered so formidable that no native dare venture into the jungle where this noble beast ranged supreme.²²³

Although Crowther's suggestion was refuted in the 1970s by Adrian Norris, at the time of its creation the narrative enabled the construction of a thrilling back-story to the object in an attempt to make the Bengal tiger even more exciting in the public imagination.²²⁴

²¹⁸ Abel Chapman, *On Safari: Big-Game Hunting in British East Africa with Studies in Bird-Life* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), p. 1.

²¹⁹ Susan M. Pearce, 'Collecting the Other Within and Without', in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 308-326.

²²⁰ Yanni, *Nature's Museum: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display*, p. 5. For more on the relationship between natural history specimens and Imperialism see: John M. MacKenzie, *Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), and MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*.

²²¹ Ritvo, 'The Thrill of the Chase', in *The Animal Estate: The English and other Creatures in the Victorian*, pp. 240-288 (p. 254). On framing certain species as insubordinate and as allegories for foreign territories and their native communities see: *Ibid.*, 'The Nature of the Beast', pp. 1-42 (p. 29).

²²² Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'The Bengal Tiger in Context', *Leeds Museums and Galleries Review*, 4 (2001-2002), 13-15 (p. 15). Henry Crowther was curator of the Museum in the Philosophical Hall (then later LCM) from 1893-1928. Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 14.

²²³ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Chris Rawlence, fol. William Gott.

²²⁴ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) personal correspondence between Adrian Norris and Chris Rawlence, fol. William Gott. Norris, 'The Intangible Roots of Our

From a scientific and pedagogical perspective, all three of the case study museums also pursued two separate, but interconnected strands of collecting with the intention to develop collections representative of both native and non-native wildlife. These two approaches were reflective of the collecting activities of other provincial museums at the time, and have been identified and summarised by Kate Hill:

The first was to build a complete collection of the flora, fauna, and geology of the locality. This approach was recommended by commentators on municipal museums, such as Thomas Greenwood and William Flower. It coincided very closely with many local collectors' aims, and indeed, one of the arguments for museums focussing on local specimens was that they should act as a reference service for collectors from the town. The second approach was to form a so-called index collection illustrating the main divisions in the animal and plant kingdoms, and, as such theories developed, key concepts like habitats, natural selection, protective colouring.²²⁵

The first approach required specimens to be collected according to their spatial distribution, while the second required museums to collect an example of every species so that a world view of nature could be constructed, and specimens may be compared and contrasted with one another.²²⁶ For instance, over a number of years in the late-nineteenth century, a significant collection of birds was presented to WPM by the Sheffield steel manufacturer Henry Seebohm (1832-1895), over four hundred of which were mounted up for display.²²⁷ The Museum reported that,

it is the intention of Mr. Seebohm to present specimens of each sex of all the species of birds to be found in Europe, together with examples of the different plumages, which in many species of birds vary greatly at different ages and seasons [...].²²⁸

While all three of the case study museums pursued this direction of collecting in the first decades of the twentieth century, the collecting habits of their nineteenth century predecessors continued to shape their collections in different ways. For example, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the then curator of the Hancock Museum, Edwin Leonard

Tangible Heritage', in *Intangible Natural Heritage: New Perspectives on Natural Objects*, ed. by Dorfman, pp. 16-41 (p. 26).

²²⁵ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 83.

²²⁶ Foucault, 'Classifying', in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, pp. 125-157.

²²⁷ Sheffield City Council, *Annual Museum Reports 1876-1877* (Sheffield: Sheffield City Council, 1876-1877), p. 6.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Gill, acknowledged the continued bias towards birds in the Museum's public galleries when he stated that the contents of the 'Bird Room', was much more representative of different species than that of the 'Zoology Room':

The most celebrated section of the museum is, of course, that devoted to birds, and the special glory of that section is John Hancock's collection of birds of Britain. In the general zoology room there are collections representing all divisions of the animal kingdom, but at the present moment the different portions are of very unequal merit.²²⁹

When Hancock had donated his collection to the Museum, other parts of the collection were still being built up in a piecemeal fashion:

Although the Hancock collection of birds was fitted up in a more or less final manner, the rest of the museum was for the most part only "roughed out", and owing to the Society's poverty most of it had to remain so.²³⁰

In order to facilitate comparative scientific study, the taxidermied animals produced for the early museums were sometimes limited in expression and mounted up on standardised perches (or bases) in uniform poses. This is evident in Henry Seebohm's bird collection where many of the birds appear in a similar pose, on almost identical wooden perches (fig. 10). Although a level of verisimilitude was required of the taxidermy specimens for both display and research purposes, the specimens were primarily valued and interpreted as individual data sets, as scientific 'facts' over cultural artefacts of artistic or aesthetic value. It is perhaps for this reason that Peter Davis has suggested that 'many nineteenth-century museums did not regard habitat groups, or representations of nature, as fitting for their scientific or educational purposes'.²³¹ Contextual habitat group displays may have been considered too creative and too explicitly subjective, to support the empirical work of nineteenth century museums. Indeed, Lynn Nyhart has suggested that

²²⁹ E. Leonard Gill, *Short Guide to the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne* (Newcastle: [n. pub.], 1911), p. xxiii.

²³⁰ Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p. xviii.

²³¹ Peter Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 67. Peter Davis previously held the position of Assistant Curator at WPM between 1973-1975 and at Sunderland Museum from 1975-1980 before becoming Deputy Curator of the Hancock Museum for the period 1980-1992. Davis remains a trustee and member of the Council of the NHSN. In correspondence with the NHSN (2013).

similar views were expressed in European museums in the first decades of the twentieth century:

Many museum scientists equated the natural with high-toned 'truth' and the artificial with popular 'humbug' (or perhaps, in a more positive light, with 'artistic genius'), thus setting up an array of linked dichotomies: nature versus artifice, truth versus humbug, and perhaps even science versus art.²³²

Due to the diversity of the material collected by the three case study museums, however, habitat groups and more artistic taxidermy displays did constitute parts of their taxidermy collections. For example, ornamental, novelty, or fetishised taxidermied objects such as colourful exotic birds presented under glass domes can be seen in images of all three of the case study museums' galleries around the turn of the twentieth century.²³³ Originally created for domestic, decorative purposes, glass domes or 'shades' were ubiquitous in the private spaces of middle and upper class Victorian households, and as such, were part of a different paradigm of (re)presenting nature in the nineteenth century.²³⁴ Nevertheless, the biological constituents of glass domes and other expressly decorative or artistic taxidermy objects meant that some were subsumed into museum collections.

During Howarth's twenty-first year as curator at WPM, the Committee observed that because the Museum had been 'practically [...] developed under unchanged personal direction', the curator's reign had thus far resulted in 'a steady growth, uninterrupted by change of management or altering of idea'.²³⁵ This reflected the authority that curators held over the contents of museum collections through the selection of new acquisitions. In addition, it was observed how:

Although in some years thousands of objects have been added to the collections, very great discrimination has been exercised in selecting them, whether by purchase or by gift, numerous objects being declined as not suited to the general scheme of the museum.²³⁶

²³² Nyhart, 'Science, Art, and Authenticity in Natural History Displays', in *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, de Chadarevian and Hopwood eds., pp. 307-335 (p. 330).

²³³ See: Fig. 15: Floor standing dome topped display case of exotic birds (centre left), Philosophical Hall, Leeds. Fig. 16: Glass domes, (flanking left and right), Hancock Museum. Fig. 17: Small glass dome, (front centre right), WPM.

²³⁴ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 225-228.

²³⁵ Sheffield City Council, *Annual Museum Reports 1895-1896* (Sheffield: Sheffield City Council, 1895-1896), p. 6.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

It is important to consider, therefore, how the process of selection by curators also involved a process of omission. In his presidential address to the Museums Association in 1913 Howarth himself acknowledged his authority over the contents of WPM's collections:

[T]he position of the museum and that of the curator are unseparable. [...] for the curator is the museum, and the two components are so intertwined in amity that the museum never resents his absorbent domination.²³⁷

Furthermore, the limited number of staff at WPM combined with Howarth's long tenure, led him to state that he had 'practically lived in a museum, and for nearly the whole of that time been responsible for the growth and management of such an institution'.²³⁸ While curators such as Howarth retained authority over decisions concerning collecting in the early twentieth century, a heightened awareness of the need to provide for the general public served to gradually reshape the collecting agendas of the three case study museums. The focus on providing for the public increasingly led the academic work of museums to recede into the back rooms, or 'private' spaces, while museum galleries became more focussed on providing for less specialised audiences. This spatial delineation reflected a growing recognition of how specialised, academic audiences required different things from taxidermy in comparison to the more general visitor. As suggested by Carla Yanni, '[a]nimals wrestling with each other cannot be studied by naturalists; and row upon row of dead stuffed things bores the public'.²³⁹ This led some museums to collect with display in mind, and animals mounted into more natural looking, less regimented poses, set into more natural looking habitats, were gaining in popularity owing to their ability to better instil an appreciation of nature in the public than the systematic displays installed in earlier years.²⁴⁰ In the wider museological context, in some museums, particularly the larger eminent institutions in America and Europe, part of this new approach involved the commissioning of ambitious habitat displays and dioramas which had become increasingly

²³⁷ Elijah Howarth, 'Museums Association, Hull Conference 1913, Presidential Address', *Museums Journal*, 13: 2 (August 1913), 33-52 (p. 43).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.35.

²³⁹ Yanni, *Nature's Museum: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display*, p. 151.

²⁴⁰ A phenomenon which Lynn Nyhart has suggested was also taking place in German museums around the same period: Nyhart, 'Science, Art, and Authenticity in Natural History Displays', in *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, de Chadarevian and Hopwood eds, pp. 307-335 (p. 310). Also see: Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 67.

popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.²⁴¹ Rachel Poliquin has suggested that while the rigid forms of taxidermy intended for taxonomic study had avoided naturalistic representation,

dioramas placed taxidermied animals in meticulously created environments to mimic in every way possible the ecological habitat of the creatures. Artificial rocks, trees, and grasses blended imperceptibly into painted panoramic backdrops, giving an impression of space and distance. A total environment was created, a window onto nature offering an illusion of wilderness untouched by human artifice.²⁴²

As naturalised taxidermy displays increased in popularity, the subjective and creative nature of taxidermy practice was suppressed by taxidermists by painstakingly replicating the natural environments of real places inside museums using complex recording and modelling techniques.²⁴³ While large dioramas and habitat displays like those featured at the American Museum of Natural History may have set a global precedent for the direction of new taxidermy commissions, with such limited resources it was unrealistic for most small, provincial museums to follow suit. In 1913 Elijah Howarth lamented that habitat displays 'are too costly, too spacious for the restricted areas of most museums, and require such varied skill and workmanship that can hardly be found in the limited staff of a small museum'.²⁴⁴ Therefore, while naturalistic taxidermy dioramas and smaller habitat displays may have been popular in museological circles, they largely remained the preserve of other, larger, and better resourced museums.

In the early 1930s LCM sought to improve the appearance of its extant collections. Under the curatorship of Herbert Ricketts, a number of taxidermy mounts including a jaguar, a kangaroo, a wallaby and a lynx, were sent to a commercial taxidermist in London

²⁴¹ Most famously, the taxidermy department at the American Museum of Natural History began collecting for its dioramas in the first decades of the twentieth century, and continued to develop and install its meticulously researched and constructed diorama displays up until the early 1950s. Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*, pp. 8-23. Also see: Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History*, and Jay Kirk, *Kingdom Under Glass: A Tale of Obsession, Adventure, and One Man's Quest to Preserve the World's Great Animals* (New York: Henry Holt, 2010).

²⁴² Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 97.

²⁴³ Quinn, 'In the Studio: Anatomy of a Diorama', in *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*, pp. 149-157.

²⁴⁴ Howarth, 'Museums Association, Hull Conference 1913, Presidential Address', 33-52 (p. 37).

to be remounted.²⁴⁵ In an article featured in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* reporting on the remounting of the specimens it was commented that:

The taxidermist's art has advanced greatly since the days when these specimens were first stuffed with such crude materials as straw and shavings. To-day the skins are built up carefully round plaster models, and the life-like attitudes reproduced perfectly.²⁴⁶

Before being remounted, the taxidermy specimens had attracted criticism from the public concerning their appearance. The kangaroo had been described as a 'pitiful spectacle', the wallaby as 'an elongated rat', and the jaguar as 'a large polony with spots on' (fig. 11).²⁴⁷ The criticism levelled at the supposedly substandard appearance of the taxidermy mounts at LCM in the 1930s threatened to destabilise the authority of the objects as species representatives, and more broadly, the authority and therefore scientific credibility of the Museum itself. Motivated by a perceived need to improve the anatomical accuracy of the mounts, a sub-committee was set up at LCM to oversee the remounting of the 'sausage-like' jaguar and the other, perceptively less than lifelike taxidermy mounts.²⁴⁸ In making some of its extant taxidermy collections appear more lifelike, or perhaps, more 'lifefull', (which Gary Marvin has suggested may be a more suitable binary opposite to 'lifeless' since 'like' suggests only an 'approximation to, or an imitation of, life'), the remounted objects at LCM were made into more convincing species representatives (fig. 12).²⁴⁹ Similarly, the collections of the Hancock Museum also underwent review in the early 1930s with the NHSNDNT reporting of how 'specimens have been overhauled, poor and badly faded ones have been eliminated, and the remainder cleaned, repaired, and in many cases remounted'.²⁵⁰ The view that the taxidermy collections were replaceable, was demonstrative of the modernist conviction of the empirical objectivity of taxidermy, which was exaggerated by the formation and professionalisation of disciplines within museums in

²⁴⁵ Anonymous, 'Stiffening Up The Stuffing: Leeds Museum Specimens Benefit by Vigorous Renovation', [*Yorkshire Evening Post*(?)], [1933(?)]. Herbert Ricketts held the position of curator from 1929-1944. Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 19.

²⁴⁶ Anonymous, 'Stiffening Up The Stuffing: Leeds Museum Specimens Benefit by Vigorous Renovation'.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Gary Marvin, 'Enlivened Through Memory: Hunters and Hunting Trophies', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 202-217 (p. 204, 216).

²⁵⁰ Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1, p. 6.

the twentieth century.²⁵¹ Despite being objects of artifice, when figured as species representatives, taxidermied animals represented objective facts, scientific results, and as suggested by Susan Leigh Star, this perpetuated the notion that

[a]nyone should be able to reproduce scientific results if they can afford the equipment and follow the recipe. Research findings that are purely personal or irreplicable are just not science.²⁵²

The heightened need for fidelity in the morphology of taxidermy specimens, was demonstrative of the 'stubborn Western equation of appearance with reality', the relationship between verisimilitude and authenticity, between seeing and believing.²⁵³ One of the products of this relation was that in the early decades of the twentieth century, some museums became occupied with collecting and representing living nature. While taxidermied animals came under scrutiny for their lack of life, it was considered that '[d]ead creatures, however admirably mounted, remain dead and still. The essential quality of living things is movement', and live specimens were increasingly integrated into museum collections and displays.²⁵⁴ For example, wild flowers were collected from outside and brought inside for public display:

To excite the admiration and wonder of your visitors is the first mark of your success, but if you cannot bring nature inside, you may arouse their interest to such a degree as to make them realise it outside.²⁵⁵

The precedence afforded to encounters with nature as it appears in life combined with the appeal and entertainment value of viewing living animals led to the addition of vivaria at the Hancock Museum and WPM at different stages, and from the 1950s onwards, WPM developed a particular tradition of displaying a working honey bee hive which has endured, on and off, since being first installed with help from the Sheffield Bee Keepers'

²⁵¹ Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*.

²⁵² Star, 'Craft vs. Commodity, Mess vs. Transcendence: How the Right Tool Became the Wrong One in the Case of Taxidermy and Natural History', in *Primate Visions*, ed. by Haraway, pp. 257-283 (p. 275).

²⁵³ Hauser, 'Coming Apart at the Seams', 8-11 (p. 9). Constance Classen, 'Introduction', in *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender, and the Aesthetic Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 1-10, (p. 1).

²⁵⁴ Mary Field, 'The Film in the Museum', *Museums Journal*, 33: 10 (January 1934), 348-350 (p. 349).

²⁵⁵ Howarth, 'Museums Association, Hull Conference 1913, Presidential Address', 33-52 (p. 37).

Association.²⁵⁶ It seems that the museums were seeking to offer their audiences the opportunity to experience encounters with living nature, alongside observing it in taxidermied form. The desire to get closer to animals, however, to experience what may be characterised as more authentic confrontations with nature, has been problematised by John Berger in his observation that what we know about animals 'is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are'.²⁵⁷

Regional Collecting

A significant shift took place in the direction of museum collecting in the post Second World War period when the heightened focus on providing for local audiences increasingly led museums to develop collections and displays which were more representative of the nature of their locality. In addition, a decline in the collection of foreign species was reflective of the waning power of the British Empire following the war, along with the effects of India gaining independence in 1947.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, by the 1940s, various cultures of hunting and game sports had begun to increasingly compliment, and in some dimensions be superseded by, a developing culture of wildlife management and conservation, a shift which is explored further in chapter three (3.1, p. 125).

In 1989 Peter Brears, then Director of LCM, suggested that the Second World War 'retarded museum development in this country by between 10 and 20 years', and '[e]ven those museums which did not suffer physical damage were so disrupted that it took a long time for them to recover'.²⁵⁹ Indeed, it is possible that if museum activities had not been

²⁵⁶ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-1955*, p. 10. Also see: Sheffield City Museum, *Schools Service Department Leaflets: The City Museum* (8) (Sheffield: Sheffield City Museum, 1979), p. 2. and Sheffield City Museum, *Schools Service Department Leaflets: The Honey Bee* (2) (Sheffield: Sheffield City Museum, 1979). Although keeping live displays has become increasingly ethically charged in recent decades, and tighter legal regulations have made keeping live animals in museums more complex, the practice has endured to the present day at MS:WP and the GNM:H, although not at LCM, which no longer displays living animals. For more on the display of live animals in museums see: Ethics Working Group of the International Council of Museums International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History, *Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums*, pp. 3-4. Justine M. Aw, 'Living Specimens in England's Natural History Museums: Frequency, Use and Legislation', *NatSCA News*, 22 (2012), 22-31. Also see: Gordon Reid, 'Live Animals and Plants in Natural History Museums', in *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, ed. by Geoffrey Stansfield, John Mathias and Gordon Reid (London: HMSO, 1994), pp. 190-212.

²⁵⁷ Berger, 'Why Look at Animals', in *About Looking*, pp. 1-28 (p. 14).

²⁵⁸ Morris, *Van Ingen & Van Ingen: Artists in Taxidermy*, p. 150.

²⁵⁹ Brears and Davies, *Treasures for the People: The Story of Museums and Galleries in Yorkshire and Humberside*, pp. 116-117.

curtailed by the various limitations imposed upon them by the period of conflict various changes may have taken place earlier on in the century. The damage caused by the bombing of LCM, however, which had left much of the Museum's collections in disarray, necessitated the rebuilding of the bird collection, and therefore provided an opportunity for LCM to reconfigure its collections and displays along new lines.²⁶⁰ In this regard, the Second World War could also be seen to have prompted rather than retarded LCM to change and develop, and in 1945, the Museum's purpose and priorities were reevaluated in the form of a new collecting policy:

Broadly speaking, the collecting policy of the museums (including Abbey House) should be to provide material illustrating the history and development of the region of which Leeds is the natural, social, and commercial centre.²⁶¹

According to the terms of its new collecting policy, LCM was to actively collect taxidermied examples of regional wildlife, 'smaller specimens or collections illustrating the animal life of Yorkshire should be acquired as they become available', while ceasing to collect specimens from other geographies with immediate effect.²⁶² In addition to this new direction in collecting, the more pronounced local focus resulted in other parts of the Museum's collections being reassessed. In particular, examples of foreign taxidermied mammals came under increasing scrutiny for taking up 'a disproportionate amount of room' and for not relating 'specifically to Yorkshire, or even to the British Isles'.²⁶³ It was decided, therefore, to temporarily limit the amount of foreign material on display in the Museum's galleries, and proposed that '[n]o further large mammals should be purchased or accepted as gifts until the new building is ready for occupation'.²⁶⁴ The shift in focus was significant, since only six years previously, the Museum had made two further additions of large, foreign taxidermy to its collections in the form of a gorilla (previously kept at London Zoo), and a hippopotamus, both of which were purchased from the London taxidermists E. Gerrard and Son.²⁶⁵ While non-local acquisitions would still be made from time to time, in contrast with

²⁶⁰ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts Committee, *Leeds City Museums Annual Report 1938-39*, p. 2.

collecting habits of the past, these would only be made in exceptional circumstances.²⁶⁶ In the summer of 1950 Dr. David E. Owen, who took up the position of Director at LCM in 1947, placed an appeal in the *Museums Journal* informing readers that LCM 'would be glad to receive offers of clean mounted specimens of the commoner British birds and mammals, either for sale or as gifts'.²⁶⁷ Within the year the Museum had accessioned two hundred and fifty British Birds, replacing some of what was lost in 1941.²⁶⁸

In some museums, the shift in emphasis to collecting regional wildlife in the late 1940s and early 1950s challenged the usefulness of foreign taxidermy collections leading to their rationalisation through transfer to other institutions. For example, in 1949 a librarian at the Public Library in Radcliffe, Lancashire, wrote to the curator of the Museum at Peel Park, Salford, with the following offer:

You will doubtless have heard of the decision of our Borough Council to dispose of the Borough Museum General Collection and concentrate on local historical material.

As a result of this I have been empowered to dispose of such items as remain, and I hope you will accept as a gift to your collection one mounted leopard, female, not fully grown, in fair condition [*formatting in original*].²⁶⁹

While some taxidermied objects were successfully transferred to other museum services, in other museums more extreme methods of disposal occurred, including taxidermy collections being set aside as refuse and burnt on bonfires.²⁷⁰ While Rachel Poliquin has suggested that taxidermy collections may have been increasingly viewed as an 'embarrassment' to their custodians owing to their Imperial provenance, it should also be considered that many museums did not have the space to accommodate large taxidermy

²⁶⁶ Non-local specimens were not to be omitted entirely. In order to avoid missing out on any specimens which did not fit the regional remit but were of particular significance a proviso was agreed suggesting that such acquisitions would be considered on a case by case basis. See: Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945), p. 8.

²⁶⁷ David Owen, 'Leeds, City Museum: Material Wanted', *Museums Journal*, 50: 3 (June 1950), 73. Owen remained in the Director's role until 1957. Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 22.

²⁶⁸ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1950-51*, p. 6.

²⁶⁹ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS Disposal of Museum – Close House (26th November 1949), Salford. The taxidermied leopard later became part of the Leeds collection.

²⁷⁰ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 137. Also see: Mulhearn, 'Facing Extinction', 24-29 (p. 26).

collections.²⁷¹ The tendency of earlier stakeholders to collect taxidermed examples of large, foreign species in the past meant that in many cases, museum buildings were already occupied by taxidermy (see: 2.1, p. 62). At LCM it had been suggested that the damage sustained during the war had 'reduced the already inadequate exhibition space to about one half', limiting the space available for public exhibitions.²⁷² Reduced space and ongoing structural problems with the Park Row building may have made large taxidermy difficult to accommodate, and justifying its retention a challenge if suitable storage conditions could not be guaranteed. In addition, with museum accommodation being in short supply, curators may have found some reassurance in the new precedence afforded to local flora and fauna since much of Britain's wildlife is of a more modest and manageable size compared to that of other geographies.²⁷³

With space at a premium, and museum staff increasingly working on collections rather than building them, systems of object acquisition were reviewed with a new vigour during the 1950s and 1960s. From 1968 WPM adopted a more stringent collecting policy reflecting the professionalisation of museums from around the middle of the twentieth century onwards and the development of collections management strategies. The policy involved 'rationalising the type and origin of material collected', with the aim to 'make more efficient use of the resources available, and to generally improve the service provided'.²⁷⁴ In 1975 WPM summarised its collecting policy in relation to natural history:

- A. Whenever possible and relevant, specimens of local provenance should be collected, whether for display, reference or research.
- B. Research collections should invariably be of local origin, for it is here that staff can expect to make most contribution to their subject, and to curate collections of most value to other workers. To this end, however, occasionally it may be desirable to acquire some non-local material for comparative purposes.
- C. Reference collections should be acquired as an aid to identifying local material, and interpreting local features. They will therefore mainly be of British provenance.
- D. Display collections should relate to local aspects of natural history in the main, although there is a stronger case here for the

²⁷¹ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 137.

²⁷² Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (Leeds: Jowett & Sowry LTD., 1953), p. 1.

²⁷³ Although there are exceptions, for example, managed livestock such as cattle and deer, and also some marine species particularly cetaceans.

²⁷⁴ Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 77).

incorporation of non-local (including non-British) specimens for comparative purposes, and to provide exhibitions (perhaps of a temporary nature) to show the wide variety of biological and geological material [*formatting in original*].²⁷⁵

The shift in focus to developing collections that were more representative of regional wildlife at LCM and WPM may have been welcomed by museum curators struggling with disparate historic collections which, due to their diversity, appeared to lack specialisation and focus. In 1982, reflecting on past collecting practices at WPM, the Museum's natural sciences department stated that, '[j]udging from the material acquired, it appears that the collecting policy for almost the first hundred years of the Museum was wide and extreme'.²⁷⁶ Indeed, while there may have existed 'a suggestion that local museums should concentrate on their own geographical area', as James Bateman argued in 1975, 'too many of the nineteenth-century museums were intent on being internationally representative and every town wanted its lions, tigers, bears and elephants'.²⁷⁷ Similarly, reflecting on past collecting practices, Peter Davis has suggested that:

There were few thoughts of collaboration between museums on collecting policies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no 'National Plans' for systematic collections and and collecting emerged until the 1970s [...]. As a consequence there has been little specialization by individual institutions, and every major museum has collections which cover 'popular' taxa such as Lepidoptera, Mollusca or Mammalia. Similarly, geographical boundaries of collecting activity received only lip-service, and hence collections in most major museums reflect a haphazard and sometimes bizarre geographical distribution pattern.²⁷⁸

In the latter part of the twentieth century, curators increasingly expressed the view that it made more practical sense to develop specialised knowledge of the natural history specific to their locality. Not only was it logistically and geographically more accessible, but through the unification of expertise from different museums, curators could piece together virtual

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ James A. Bateman, David G. Erwin and S. Anderson, 'Museums and Biology', *Museums Journal*, 74: 4 (March 1975), 159-168 (p. 161).

²⁷⁸ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 136.

maps of the natural environment to form knowledge networks with a scientific value far greater than the sum of their parts.²⁷⁹

When museum collecting policies became more clearly defined and orientated towards providing for the public, in a number of instances taxidermy material was collected which, rather than being representative of regional wildlife, was representative of regional interests. In the early 1960s a taxidermied budgerigar called 'Sparkie Williams' was subsumed into the collections of the Hancock Museum on account of the bird's local significance and notoriety in life.²⁸⁰ (Also see: 3.3, p. 182). 'Sparkie' who lived from 1954-1962, was the pet of Newcastle local Mrs. Mattie Williams and gained considerable media attention in the late 1950s owing to the bird's ability to memorise and recite an extensive repertoire of words and phrases.²⁸¹ 'Sparkie', who 'talked' with a Geordie accent, became nationally known after winning first place in the International Cage Bird Word Contest in July 1958 hosted by the BBC.²⁸² A record capturing the bird's talents was later produced by the record label Parlophone, which sold on an international scale demonstrating the bird's notoriety and novelty (fig. 13).²⁸³ Similarly, despite a general focus on collecting regional wildlife WPM, purchased another polar bear specimen for display purposes in 1984.²⁸⁴ The bear was acquired in taxidermied form following twenty eight years of captive life at Edinburgh Zoo.²⁸⁵ The new polar bear, named 'Snowy', was purchased to replace the old polar bear in a new museum display. The Sheffield public had grown fond of the old polar bear, and when WPM's reviewed its collections for the redevelopment of its natural science gallery in 1985, the curators deemed that a new polar bear was required to replace the old one to keep the Museum's visitors happy.²⁸⁶ In other instances the agendas and subject positions of curators continued to mediate the content of collections in particular ways. For instance, in 1989 Adrian Norris, then Assistant Keeper of Natural History at LCM, suggested that due to the nature of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society's collecting in earlier years, the collections at Leeds had remained 'biased towards the exotic' since that

²⁷⁹ As part of the professionalisation of museums and their departments between the 1970s and early 1980s, a more professional national biological research network emerged. This is discussed further in chapter three.

²⁸⁰ The Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Natural History Society of Northumbria Annual Report*, 69: 4 (2009), p. 185.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

²⁸⁵ For more information on the specimen see: Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson eds. 'Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears', p. 122.

²⁸⁶ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

period.²⁸⁷ Indeed, objects such as the Bengal tiger, which over the years came to be known as the 'Leeds Tiger' by the Museum's visitors and staff, lent LCM's collection a perceptively strong international character. The absorption of the taxidermied material removed from Salford into LCM's collections in the early 1980s by Norris, however, increased the foreign remit of the Museum's collections demonstrating how the curator's agenda to save the objects from being destroyed further entrenched the collection's international bias.

Norris' retention of the taxidermy salvaged from Salford was, in part, reflective of the shifting ethical landscape in the conservation conscious climate of the 1980s and the fact that due to various developments in wildlife legislation, it was no longer possible (or, in many cases, ethically appropriate) to collect species in the way that museums had in the past (see: 3.2, 143).²⁸⁸ In effect, this rendered some extant taxidermy irreplaceable. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the three case study museums increasingly sought to redefine their collecting practices in ways that reflected the conservation conscious culture of the 1980s leading to a seemingly more opportunistic approach to collecting by appealing for donations resulting from accidental deaths. In 1982 the curators of the natural sciences section at WPM commented that:

An army of local body-snatchers donate a constant stream of road casualties, window-strikes, victims of severe weather, cat kills and exhausted rare vagrants, which keep our deep freezers full to the brim.²⁸⁹

Similarly, Tony Tynan, who held the position of curator of the Hancock Museum from 1958-1992, appealed to the public for donations in the 1984 *Guide to the Hancock Museum*:²⁹⁰

We still need new specimens to replace the old ones so if you ever find a pathetic little corpse, from a road accident, or a 'natural cause', please let us have it, even the most common, the spuggie, the field mouse, there's a place waiting in the Hancock.²⁹¹

These comments also indicate how the museums continued to replace old specimens for new ones. For example, in 1982 at WPM it was stated that '[i]n recent years our policy has

²⁸⁷ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 48.

²⁸⁸ Norris, 'The Intangible Roots of Our Tangible Heritage', in *Intangible Natural Heritage: New Perspectives on Natural Objects*, ed. by Dorfman, pp. 16-41 (p. 26). The shifting ethical landscape in regard to the conservation of species and the rise of environmentalism is discussed further in chapter three (3.2).

²⁸⁹ Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 97).

²⁹⁰ In correspondence with the NHSN (2013).

²⁹¹ Tynan, *Guide to the Hancock Museum*, p. 18. 'Spuggie' refers to a common sparrow in the Geordie dialect of Tyneside.

been to replace faded, worn or historically valuable specimens on display with new mounts prepared from corpses in our taxidermy workshop'.²⁹² Increasingly, however, these specimens were obtained through channels more closely allied to the contemporary conservationist sensibility, such as 'Snowy' the polar bear, who was obtained from Edinburgh Zoo.²⁹³

Today wildlife licensing continues to restrict what species can be collected by museums and through what means. Furthermore, the heightened focus on ethical practices in light of the accountability of museums to their publics has significantly shaped contemporary collecting policies.²⁹⁴ The development of the *Code of Ethics for Museums* (2008), in particular has had a significant impact upon museum collecting policies in recent years which is perhaps most explicitly demonstrated through the two following principles: 'Society can expect museums to: Acquire items honestly and responsibly', and 'Society can expect museums to: Support the protection of natural and human environments'.²⁹⁵ Based on the agreement of a number of museums professionals and governed by various collecting policies, collecting and accessioning objects today can be a much more complex and lengthy process when compared to that of the past (eg. 2.1, p. 62), (fig. 9). Contemporary museums do continue to acquire and accession taxidermy. For example, two rutting red deer stags were prepared for the most recent redevelopment of the GNM:H, while a trio of flying Canada geese were commissioned for MS:WP (fig. 14). The museums' approaches to collecting, however, are shaped by a multiplicity of factors which extend beyond the personal interests and agendas of curators. Although the collections of the three case study museums will continue to evolve in different ways in the future, the collections held under the custodianship of LCM, the GNM:H and MS:WP will continue to reflect the activities and agendas of their nineteenth and twentieth century predecessors and the decisions they made about which objects were, and which objects were not deserving of a place in their respective museum collections.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 97).

²⁹³ 'Snowy', however, was mounted up at National Museum Scotland, Edinburgh, by Phil Howard, and not at WPM. Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson eds., *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, p. 122.

²⁹⁴ For example see: Ethics Working Group of the International Council of Museums International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History, *Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums*.

²⁹⁵ Museums Association, *Code of Ethics for Museums* (London: Museums Association, 2008), p. 14-15, 19.

²⁹⁶ Pearce, 'Collecting Processes', in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, pp. 1-35 (p. 33).

2.2 Classification

While the collection of certain types of taxidermy constitutes one layer of authorship in the production of knowledge in the museum, the interpretation of taxidermy through its classification, how it is organised and displayed for audiences, constitutes another. Although taxidermy mounts are habitually presented in museums scientifically as specimens, as Sharon Macdonald has suggested,

science displays are never, and have never been just representations of incontestable facts. They always involve the culturally, socially and politically saturated business of negotiation and value-judgement; and they always have cultural, social and political implications.²⁹⁷

Through the organisation and display of taxidermy, museums play an active part in the production of discourse on nature and the natural world.²⁹⁸ Martin Prösler has proposed that, 'the museum was, and remains, epistemologically a space in which the *world is ordered*, in which, with the assistance of material objects, the 'world' is realized, understood and mediated' [*emphasis in original*].²⁹⁹ How the three case study museums have approached different schemes of classification at different points in their respective histories has largely depended on the perceived purpose and role of the museum in relation to its audiences. Over the last century, but particularly from the 1950s onwards, museological approaches to the classification of natural science collections shifted dramatically in response to a number of social, cultural, political and economic pressures. Of particular significance was an increased focus on public provision which is discussed throughout this chapter. Displays went from being largely systematic and offering a limited number of interpretations, to being largely thematic, multi-layered, and increasingly in recent years, interdisciplinary and reflexive in content (eg see: p. 113, and 4.1, p. 197). In the following section, changes in the presentation and display of taxidermy at the three case study museums are mapped out in relation to major gallery redevelopments in order

²⁹⁷ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24 (p. 1).

²⁹⁸ Foucault, 'Truth and Power (From Power/Knowledge)', in *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Rabinow, pp. 51-75 (p. 61).

²⁹⁹ Prösler, Martin, 'Museums and Globalization', in *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 21-44 (p. 22).

to investigate some of the different approaches adopted to classify, organise and display taxidermy collections and to outline the contents of the museums' public displays.

Encyclopaedic Displays

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, all three of the case study museums organised and displayed taxidermy according to taxonomic principles, although this was achieved in a number of different ways. The first was the segregation of different classes of species over different gallery spaces. For example, in Leeds Philosophical Hall (and after 1921, LCM), display spaces were used to spatially segregate taxonomic groups. Mammals were delineated from birds, reptiles from amphibians etc., in different display areas across two galleries, the 'Large Zoological Room' and the 'Small Zoological Room' (also known as the 'Bird Room') (fig. 15).³⁰⁰ Similarly, in 1911 at the Hancock Museum, the collections on display in the 'Zoology Room' were described to have represented 'more or less completely all the groups of the Animal Kingdom', but excluded birds which were presented in a separate gallery entitled the 'Bird Room'.³⁰¹ Within these divided display areas, individual specimens were classified in systematic series and displayed in serried ranks. In the Hancock Museum's 'Bird Room', taxidermied birds were organised into groups depending on their position in the taxonomic scheme, the 'systematic collection' being 'placed in the series of cases running round the walls' (fig. 16).³⁰² In 1981 Tony Tynan described the contents of the Hancock Museum's 'Bird Room':

Glass-fronted boxes (583 of them!) custom-built in a small range of sizes, filled shelves round the walls, each species separately boxed, each taxidermied bird on a small "natural" plinth or perch. Four large desk cases held skeletal material, birds' eggs and nests with cupboards below for storage. A few freestanding cases for extra large birds completed the scene in a room 100ft long, 50ft wide and 28ft to the glass lay-lights.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ H. Crowther, *General Guide to the Museum of the Leeds Philosophical & Literary Society* (Leeds: Chorley & Pickersgill, 1897), H. Crowther, *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum*, 7th edn. (Leeds: Jowett & Sowry, 1925).

³⁰¹ Gill, *Short Guide to the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*, p. 1. Also see: Howse, *Guide to the Museum of the Natural History Society, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*.

³⁰² Gill, *Short Guide to the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*, p. 4.

³⁰³ A. M. Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', *Museums Journal*, 80: 4 (March 1981), 202-204 (p. 202).

In the late nineteenth century, displays containing taxidermy at WPM were similarly classified and displayed taxonomically, although, unlike LCM and the Hancock Museum, these were largely contained within one gallery, the 'Natural History Gallery' (fig. 17).³⁰⁴ In 1883 Elijah Howarth, described how the natural history displays were organised:

[T]he Natural History Gallery, the first two table cases in which, and the stands against the wall on the right hand side, contain the Invertebrate Animals, while the wall cases, except those at the far end, contain the Fishes, Reptiles, Birds and Mammals. The Fossils occupy four table cases, and the Minerals two table cases and the wall cases at the far end of the gallery.³⁰⁵

At WPM the names of Linnaeus and Lamarck are shown to have been painted in large letters across the gallery wall in homage to the naturalists, demonstrating the perceived significance of modern taxonomy.³⁰⁶

In all three of the case study museums the serried ranks functioned as visual encyclopaedias of the variety of natural life by presenting a world view of nature. Systematic displays were a product of how nineteenth century naturalists had made sense of the natural world through the imposition of a theoretical order, and the drive to survey and represent all forms of life built upon the work of earlier taxonomists in order to contribute to the establishment of 'a coherent tradition of natural history' through the formation of a universal scientific language.³⁰⁷ Taxonomic displays enabled the apparent rationalisation of nature by facilitating the comparative study of animal attributes and anatomies to identify and exemplify both similarities and differences between species. To be effective, therefore, taxonomic displays relied on the presentation of examples of as many different species as possible.

The function of systematic displays was not only to represent nature through an organisational scheme, but also to attest to the validity of the scheme through its materialisation and spatial organisation.³⁰⁸ At WPM, the taxonomic series was presented

³⁰⁴ Elijah Howarth, *Visitors' Guide to the Sheffield Public Museum, Weston Park* (Sheffield: Sheffield Public Museum, 1883).

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

³⁰⁶ See the centre rear wall in fig. 17. It is possible that other naturalists such as Darwin were also featured, although this has not been evidenced through photographs of the old galleries.

³⁰⁷ Paul Laurence Farber, *Finding Order in Nature: The Naturalist Tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 4.

³⁰⁸ Tony Bennett, 'Organized Walking as Evolutionary Practice', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 179-186. Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 4.

with the displays 'commencing with the simplest animals and passing on to those more highly organised'.³⁰⁹ Whereas, at LCM, the order appears to have been reversed with the descriptions of the displays, as outlined in the *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum* (1925), beginning with the supposedly most developed species, before descending to the lesser developed forms of life.³¹⁰ Since the theory of evolution provides a conceptual network of relations between species which connects living things both across species and through time, rather than species existing in isolation in an unchanging state, by organising taxidermy taxonomically species could be presented in relation to one another through their ascent from a common ancestor.³¹¹ Therefore, despite beginning at opposite ends of the evolutionary tree, in the displays at LCM and WPM, taxidermied animals were used to materialise the theory of evolution through linear displays which evidenced progress. Tony Bennett has suggested that, '[t]he museum visit thus functioned and was experienced as a form of organized walking through evolutionary time'.³¹² In addition, the spatial divisions between museum rooms, such as those in LCM and the Hancock Museum, materialised the conceptual divisions imposed upon nature by taxonomy, and therefore served to further embody and validate the taxonomic project.³¹³ Alongside displays where specimens were organised taxonomically, there were other display approaches, where different schemes of classification were used, but these served to augment and underpin the same theories being communicated through the serried ranks. In particular, didactic anatomical displays were used in ways which bolstered the evolutionary narrative. For example, a case presenting different taxidermied birds' heads at LCM was used to identify and explain the functions of specific animal characteristics and adaptations (fig. 18). In LCM's birds' bills display, the diversity of the different birds' beaks was presented as evidence of evolutionary adaptations in nature. Therefore, although divergent in content, such displays were analogous to the interpretative approach used in the systematic displays in that they served to underscore and embellish the evolutionary narrative.

While systematic displays of taxidermy were prevalent in the public galleries of the three case study museum at the beginning of the twentieth century, additional display methods using different schemes of classification were also apparent. In particular were displays in which specimens were organised and presented together according to their

³⁰⁹ Howarth, *Visitors' Guide to the Sheffield Public Museum, Weston Park*, p. 17.

³¹⁰ H. Crowther, *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum*, 7th edn. (1925), pp. 11-19.

³¹¹ Bennett, 'Organized Walking as Evolutionary Practice', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 179-186.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

³¹³ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 4.

associated provenance. For example, in the 'Large Zoological Room' of LCM, taxidermy specimens from particular geographies were organised and displayed together.³¹⁴ A series of British mammals were presented at the South end of the gallery, while at the North end, an upright case displayed a collection of 'rare small mammals', 'being discovered in Borneo, Madagascar and Australia'.³¹⁵ Although the specimens within these cases may also have been classified, as best as could be achieved, taxonomically, it was the geographical provenance of the specimens that dictated how they were grouped and displayed within the gallery suggesting the perceived significance of their place of origin, or the nations they represented, to their meaning. A similar organisational scheme was used in the 'Bird Room' at LCM, where, according to the 1925 *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum*, taxidermied birds were classified under six different categories according to their place of origin.³¹⁶ The display categories were:

- 1). Birds presented by geographical distribution, divided by six global regions: Palaearctic, Ethiopian, Oriental, Australasian, Nearctic, Neotropical.
- 2). Displays of birds presented in taxonomic families accompanied by maps demonstrating which areas of the world they are from.
- 3). Wall cases presenting domesticated birds.
- 4). Two cases of birds found in Leeds.
- 5). One wall case and two flat cases of bird's nests and eggs.
- 6). The Milner Collection of British Birds donated by William Milner of Nun Appleton in 1922.³¹⁷

The variation of themes used to classify and interpret the objects at LCM reveals how different systems of classification other than biological taxonomy were used. Although the classification and display of specimens according to their spatial distribution in nature constituted a different thematic approach to interpreting the taxidermied animals on display, this approach was informed, in part, by some of the same rhetorics underlying the creation of the systematic displays. By presenting taxidermied specimens from different parts of the world together in serried ranks, systematic displays figured as encyclopaedic overviews of the natural world and therefore as political tools in the demonstration of the knowledge of their custodians, and more broadly, of Western science and erudition.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ H. Crowther, *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum*, 7th edn. (1925), p. 15.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24 (p. 3). Foucault, 'Truth and Power (From Power/Knowledge)', *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Rabinow, pp. 51-75.

(Also see: 2.1). In addition, while providing a platform for the demonstration of evolutionary concepts, the organisation and display of encyclopaedic collections also embodied notions of civilising, linear progress in which the display of Imperial rule and the power of the British Empire over other nations were implicated.³¹⁹ Similarly, by imposing artificial divisions upon the natural world by dichotomising local species from foreign species, displays themed according to place of origin contributed to the construction of identity through the binary opposition of the European 'Us', and the non-European 'Other'.³²⁰ Displays organised according to provenance facilitated the juxtaposition of local nature with foreign nature in ways which enabled the 'visualisation of difference', setting the British nation, and more broadly the supposedly 'civilised' West, apart from other nations and geographies.³²¹ This effect was further exemplified in some of the language used to interpret the taxidermy on display. For example, at LCM, a selection of birds from the 'islands of Malay and Papuan waters' were described variously as 'curious', as being 'of peculiar interest', and 'showing bizarre forms and gorgeous plumage'.³²² While such descriptions may be considered typical of the period, it could also be argued that they contributed to the othering of foreign taxidermy specimens by figuring them as strange and objectifying them as commodities through the use of phrases like 'gorgeous plumage'.³²³ As studies such as Karen Wonder's *Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness* (2003), have suggested, the display of non-native species in Western institutions in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century enabled museums to make hegemonic claims over foreign territories.³²⁴ They also figured as warnings of economic and cultural power to other nations, therefore contributing to the construction of identity through notions of nationhood.³²⁵ The classification and display of taxidermy according to country of origin implicated the display of ownership and knowledge while simultaneously reinforcing

³¹⁹ Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 59-88 (p. 77).

³²⁰ Pearce, 'Collecting the Other Within and Without', in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, pp. 308-326.

³²¹ Nélia Dias, 'The Visibility of Difference: Nineteenth-Century French Anthropological Collections', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 36-52.

³²² Crowther, *General Guide to the Leeds City Museum*, 7th edn. (1925), p. 12.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Wonders, 'Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness', 89-100.

³²⁵ Ibid. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 96. Also see: Sharon Macdonald, 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Bettina Messias Carbonell, 2nd edn. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 273-286 (p. 273).

notions of national identity by dichotomising the local from the foreign, and the known from the unknown.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, all three of the case study museums displayed a combination of various large taxidermy specimens, big game heads, articulated skeletons and mounted horn and antler trophies. Such objects were frequently too large to be accommodated into systematic arrangements and so instead, were often presented on open display, as stand-alone objects, or in isolated display cases, figuring as centrepieces or highlights of a Museum's collection. In the early twentieth century, the 'Leeds Tiger' was presented in a stand-alone display case near other visually and spatially imposing specimens including the articulated skeletons of various megafauna, such as an elephant, a giraffe and an Irish elk (fig. 19). Equally, around the turn of the twentieth century, the articulated skeleton of a whale was suspended from the ceiling of the natural history gallery of WPM (fig. 17). The sheer size and scale of such specimens, and their placement within museum galleries would have engendered notions of awe and wonder in audiences through the power of spectacle.³²⁶ Taxidermied trophy mounts were equally organised and displayed in ways which would promote aesthetic and emotional responses from visitors due to their impressive size, shape and diversity.³²⁷ At WPM, much of the available wall space on one side of the 'Natural History Gallery' was occupied by trophy mounts, the objects packed closely together, perhaps as much for economy of space as for visual effect (fig. 17). Similarly, at the Hancock Museum, trophy material was displayed in the Museum's entrance hall, and as such it would have been amongst the first objects encountered by visitors upon entering the Museum.³²⁸ Displayed high upon gallery walls, the sheer size and diversity of the horns and antlers would have impressed upon viewers the diversity of the animal kingdom as well as the courage and skill of the individuals who procured them. As suggested by Karen Wonders:

The sportsman or hunter-naturalist who ventured to far-off territories to shoot and collect the (in many instances) dangerous exotic wildlife became, in his museum of trophy displays, a national, conquering hero.³²⁹

³²⁶ Poliquin, 'Spectacle', in *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, pp. 77-109.

³²⁷ For more on the effect of viewing megafauna see: Alberti, 'Maharajah the Elephant's Journey', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 37-57 (p. 38). Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*. In particular see chapters one, 'Wonder' and two, 'Beauty', (pp. 11-42) and (pp. 43-76) respectively.

³²⁸ Howse, *Guide to the Museum of the Natural History Society, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*, p. 3.

³²⁹ Wonders, 'Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness', 89-100 (p. 98).

For the museums presenting the hunting trophies, they functioned in a similar way to the encyclopaedic displays in that they became surrogates for the index of the power and knowledge of the museums and their custodians. The display of large taxidermy, skeletons of megafauna, and hunting trophies in the three case study museums, therefore, as Kate Hill has suggested, concerned 'much more than just scientific enquiry'.³³⁰ Rather, it was implicated in the social, political and economic agendas of museums, their staff and patrons, and the wider ideologies of Imperialism. Hill has also suggested, however, that the public display of trophies in museums may also have been part of the 'harder "selling" of Empire to the British public', reflecting how in the early decades of the twentieth century, attitudes towards the domination of other cultures along with their wildlife and their environments, were beginning to shift.³³¹ (Also see: 3.2.)

Changes in attitudes towards the classification of taxidermy collections began to take place when systematic displays were increasingly problematised owing to their perceived inability, at least in isolation, to engage the general museum visitor. In 1913 Elijah Howarth stated:

[E]ven the greatest of provincial museums have no justification for punishing their visitors with unending rows of specimens that have no significance for any one [*sic*] except the rare specialist or expert.³³²

Instead, Howarth suggested that educational displays, for example showing the structure and anatomy of animals, would be much more informative for the general public.³³³ In his opinion, such displays would 'directly teach more than endless cases of serried ranks of shapeless forms, perched on unnatural stands devoid of beauty or of grace'.³³⁴ Indeed, the increased use of museums by non-specialist visitors and organised groups from different sectors of the community in the first decades of the twentieth century led curators to increasingly consider the relevance of their taxidermy displays to the general public, as well as to specialist visitors, and how they could be better organised and displayed to benefit both groups. This heightened focus on public provision, however, was adopted with varying

³³⁰ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 108. Also See: 'Foundation and Empire' in Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*, pp. 92-95, Ritvo, 'Animals and Empire', in *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*, pp. 203-288.

³³¹ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 108.

³³² Howarth, 'Museums Association, Hull Conference 1913, Presidential Address', 33-52 (p. 37).

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

degrees of success. For instance, in 1908 at the Hancock Museum, the then curator E. Leonard Gill, outlined the aims of the NHSNDNT, acknowledging that the Museum was increasingly required to provide for different audience groups:

Its public object is the general encouragement of natural history interests in its district. What we are calling by contrast its private object is the special investigation of the local natural history – of the multitudinous elements of fauna, flora, and geology of Northumberland and Durham. Work under the first head, its public work, has always been limited by the modesty of the Society's resources.³³⁵

Gill divided the Museum's audiences into specialist and non-specialist groups, which were then attributed to two distinct spheres of the Museum, one public, the other private. The NHSNDNT's continued ownership of the Museum and its collections, and the cost of maintaining the Hancock Museum, however, limited how much the Society could practically achieve:

In its capacity as an institution for guiding and inspiring the ordinary non-technical visitor it has not yet reached anything like the full development of which it is capable, for the simple reason that the Society which owns it has never yet been able to pay for the necessary specimens and the necessary work.³³⁶

These comments suggest that while there was an intention to provide for the more general visitor in the first decade of the twentieth century at the Hancock Museum, the NHSNDNT did not have access to sufficient resources to fully instigate the changes they desired. Equally, at WPM, it was reported on numerous occasions that although the Museum was regularly admitting various community groups such as schools, the Museum's staff were struggling to accommodate them on account of the Museum's lack of resources and space.³³⁷

At LCM small changes were made to how some of the collections were classified in displays containing taxidermy around the turn of the twentieth century in order to provide for particular visitor groups. The Museum's increased involvement with visiting school children under the Leeds Schools' Museum Scheme meant that by 1902, 'nearly half the

³³⁵ Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, p.iii.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Free Public Libraries and Museum Committee, *Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Libraries and Museum of the City of Sheffield 1898-1899*, p. 7, and City of Sheffield, *Report of the Public Museums and Mappin Art Gallery 1926-1930*, p. 5.

children in the higher standards of Public Elementary Schools of Leeds were brought to the museum in weekly batches of about 350, under the charge of teachers and a supervisor', and accordingly, a series of new displays were developed to provide for them.³³⁸ The new natural history displays were created to illustrate the lectures delivered by the then curator, Henry Crowther, and students were issued with printed worksheets advising which displays corresponded with which parts of the talk.³³⁹ Distinct from LCM's permanent displays, the new display cases existed as an isolated series alongside other permanent displays in the Museum's galleries.³⁴⁰ For example, between 1921 and 1922, interpreted using labels and descriptive guides which marked the beginning and end of the series, '40 special cases of exhibits - a museum within the Museum - were arranged in the Museum and each child was provided with a descriptive syllabus of the exhibits'.³⁴¹ The specimens, therefore, which would have included a variety of different objects including taxidermy, were classified according to the content of the curator's lecture. The worksheets issued were to be completed in relation to the order of the displays, rendering the pedagogical aims of the series highly formalised and prescriptive. Another small but significant change to how LCM approached the classification of parts of its taxidermy collections took place in the 1930s when it developed a new scheme for displaying objects from its collections called the 'Museum Window'.³⁴² The scheme involved presenting a different aspect of the collections in one of the Museum's windows each week to pedestrians passing the Museum on Park Row in order to more widely publicise the Museum, and provide a different way of attracting visitors.³⁴³ In conjunction with the scheme, the local newspaper, *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, featured articles on the different displays. For example, c.1935, a grey squirrel was displayed in the Museum's window to inform the public about some of the problems associated with the increasing prevalence of the species.³⁴⁴ The interpretative approach of the 'Museum Window' was not systematic but thematic, and gave new meaning and relevance to the objects on display by framing them through a topical theme.

³³⁸ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 16.

³³⁹ (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Annual Report of the Libraries and Arts Committee to the Council 1921-22*, p. 12. Also see: Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 16.

³⁴⁰ (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Annual Report of the Libraries and Arts Committee to the Council 1921-22*, p. 12.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Public Libraries, Art Gallery and Museums Annual Report to the Council 1933-34*, p. 23.

³⁴³ Ibid. 'The Museum Window', [*Yorkshire Evening Post*(?)], [20th April 1935(?)].

³⁴⁴ (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Public Libraries, Art Gallery and Museums Annual Report to the Council 1933-34*, p. 23.

In addition, the approach of the 'Museum Window' was suggestive of a change in the understanding of the nature of museum visiting, specifically, that alongside the more lengthy visiting paradigm to which museums were already accustomed, less intensive and more fleeting visits were increasingly being recognised as a different, or additional way of gaining the public's interest in museum collections. The consideration of different visitor groups was also evident at the Hancock Museum in the 1930s since the NHSNDNT was working to encourage a wider range of non-specialist groups to visit the Museum, albeit on a formalised, fee-paying basis. For instance, in 1932 the Society reported how, 'parties of unemployed men from the Unemployed Educational and Recreation Centres can visit the Museum at a nominal charge'.³⁴⁵ Other non-specialist groups were also admitted to the Museum, including children from the Royal Victoria School for the Blind who attend lessons conducted by the curator relating to natural history.³⁴⁶

One of the most significant outcomes resulting from the perceived need to provide for different specialist and non-specialist audiences in the 1930s was the increased delineation of public and behind the scenes spaces in museums. As the perceived functions of these spaces became increasingly divided, the ways in which taxidermy collections were classified and presented to audiences began to shift. The following comment featured in the local Sheffield newspaper, *The Star*, in 1939, and suggests that the number of duplicate specimens on display in the natural history gallery of WPM was gradually being reduced in an attempt to make the displays less repetitive and more engaging for the general public:

Some of the objects behind the scenes are of great scientific interest, but a collection from the public point of view would be dreary if it comprised thousands of different species each fairly similar to its neighbour so far as the ordinary eye could discern.

That is why some of these things never go in the public cases-and why the museum is a place of such variety and interest [*formatting in original*].³⁴⁷

This process of separation, which progressed throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, as will be discussed later in this chapter, had significant implications for the classification of taxidermy by privileging it with certain meanings and values according to the functions of different museums spaces. A heightened focus on the

³⁴⁵ Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1, p. 5.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Anonymous, 'Oldest Things Never Seen By Public', *The Star*, 13 January 1939, p. 11.

function, content, and increasingly, appearance of public display spaces was similarly reflected in LCM's plan for *Post War Development* (1945).³⁴⁸ It was considered that the division between public and private spaces in the Museum must be maintained in order to avoid 'overloaded display cases and haphazard reserve stores that bore the visitor and exasperate the student'.³⁴⁹ At LCM staff drew upon the function and design of commercial display spaces to identify ways in which they could improve visitors' experiences of the Museum's galleries:

The aim of the modern museum display is to catch and hold the attention of the visitor, and to stimulate his interest and aesthetic appreciation. It is, in fact, essentially similar to good shop-window display, except that it attempts to sell ideas rather than material goods. Advantage should consequently be taken of the latest designs in cases, case-fittings, and lighting.³⁵⁰

Within the plan, the 'functions of a modern museum' were identified, and these evidenced a heightened commitment to provide for different specialist and non-specialist visitor groups.³⁵¹ In 1945 the perceived purpose of the LCM was:

- (a) The provision for the general public of facilities for recreation and instruction of an intellectual nature,
- (b) The supply of information and advice on the whole range of subjects covered by the collections,
- (c) The provision of facilities for research by more advanced students, including the staff [*formatting in original*].³⁵²

These observations encouraged staff to work to develop taxidermy displays which were more finely tuned to the requirements of different visitor groups. It was considered, for instance, that an exhibition presenting examples of taxidermied British animals could be 'very valuable to children, particularly to town dwellers', since it was these individuals who 'get less chance than those of the country to see wild life'.³⁵³ Increasingly the impact and influence of children visiting the Museum outside of formalised school visiting programmes had come to the attention of the staff at LCM:

³⁴⁸ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945).

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1946-47*, p. 3.

By careful study of the public in Museum galleries, it has been noted that children bring in adults. During School Holidays, Half Terms and Saturdays, the number of adults within the Museum is greatly increased. Thus the attraction of children is doubly important – for their own sakes and for the sake of their parents.³⁵⁴

While the more formalised ‘Museum within the Museum’ scheme used at LCM in the first decade of the twentieth century had isolated particular displays of particular specimens for children visiting as part of a school group, these new suggestions, of classifying and presenting examples of local wildlife thematically, aimed to provide more integrated displays for different museum audiences.

Thematic Displays

In parallel with shifting their collecting activities to concentrate on regional wildlife in the early 1950s, WPM and LCM began to redevelop their public displays to focus more on local wildlife (eg. 2.1, p. 75) . At WPM, displays interpreting regional wildlife began to be installed in 1953.³⁵⁵ Following completion, it was reported that a ‘sombre series of cases which formerly presented the subject of invertebrate taxonomy in austere fashion and tedious detail to unenthusiastic visitors’ had been reconfigured to form ‘a colourfully attractive setting for imaginative displays on more interesting topics’.³⁵⁶ Included in the new displays at WPM were four new cases, completed between 1954 and 1955, which presented taxidermied British birds ‘in ecological groups corresponding to the habitats of field and hedgerow, mountain and moorland, lake and marsh and the sea-shore’.³⁵⁷ (Also see: 3.1, p. 129). In the redeveloped displays, taxidermy was classified and displayed thematically using the ecology of the region as the central theme. In the same period, displays were being redeveloped and reorganised at LCM along similar lines.³⁵⁸ The redevelopment of LCM’s galleries was completed in 1953.³⁵⁹ Subsequently a guide book was issued to accompany

³⁵⁴ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1947-48*, p. 3.

³⁵⁵ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-1955*, p. 9.

³⁵⁶ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1956-1957*, p. 7.

³⁵⁷ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-1955*, p. 9.

³⁵⁸ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1953-54*, p. 2.

³⁵⁹ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953). On the exterior the damaged Museum building was cement-rendered to stabilise it following the damage caused during the air raids. For an image of the building’s new exterior see: Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 21.

the interpretation of the new displays in which the rationale informing the new organisational and interpretative approach adopted was outlined:

The policy of the museum is to tell the public more about Yorkshire. Although certain exhibits are from far afield, the main displays are devoted to Yorkshire. It is felt that even in a city the size of Leeds it is more important to concentrate on Yorkshire than try to show exhibits from all over the world.³⁶⁰

In the redeveloped galleries taxidermy was presented through a number of different approaches. LCM's central gallery space was divided into bays, four of which presented taxidermied animals thematically in order to interpret the ecology and wildlife of Yorkshire.³⁶¹ Other bays in the central gallery presented 'special' taxidermied objects including the 'Leeds Tiger', while another bay was dedicated to the interpretation of a brief 'history of man'.³⁶² A further set of displays ran the length of the upper gallery in which taxidermied examples of local wildlife were organised and displayed in taxonomic groups, this scheme of classification resembled that of the Museum's previous displays, although it contained fewer foreign species and more local species.³⁶³ LCM's four centre bays were thematic and contextual, and were considered to represent 'the typical features of a region of Yorkshire', which included Wolds and Coast, Limestone Uplands, Gritstone Moorlands and the Vale of York.³⁶⁴ In the *City Museums Guide Book* (1953), each display was described to feature 'a few of the typical and rather special things which occur in each region as well as maps and large photographs of characteristic scenery' (fig. 20).³⁶⁵ Together the displays represented the ecology of Yorkshire, and the classification of their contents by geographic typography served to highlight the different relationships between animals and their habitats demonstrating a new and pronounced ecological focus to the displays.

The ways in which taxidermy objects were classified, organised and displayed in the redeveloped LCM were centred upon the perceived needs and interests of the Museum's different audiences. Owing to their increasing popularity, it had been decided that the Museum would continue to display large, foreign taxidermy specimens such as the 'Leeds Tiger' alongside the Yorkshire displays. Although in other areas of the Museum examples of foreign taxidermy had been removed rendering the inclusion of foreign species discordant

³⁶⁰ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953), p. 2.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 2, 22.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

with the overall scheme, it was stated that the Museum made '[n]o apology', for these objects, despite giving precedence to regional wildlife more generally.³⁶⁶ The inclusion of specimens like the 'Leeds Tiger' at LCM was rationalised on the grounds that '[i]nquiry amongst the visitors has shown that they have been for many years the most popular cases in the museum and their retention in the scheme is therefore justified' suggesting increased consultation with audiences in deciding upon the content of the Museum. (Also see 3.3, p. 182).³⁶⁷ A heightened focus on visitor involvement in planning the contents of the new displays was also reflected in other areas of the Museum. For example, the Leeds and District Birdwatching Club had been enlisted to support the installation of a British bird display with the intention of helping bird watchers identify bird species. (Also see: 3.1, p. 129).³⁶⁸ In regard to the content of this new display it was suggested that:

[I]t is now possible to find a specimen of nearly every bird that may be seen in Yorkshire. Thus a bird seen in the garden or on the seashore may be identified with reference to the specimens on show.³⁶⁹

Similarly, the new displays installed at WPM in the 1950s representing the ecology of the region were reported to have 'evoked appreciative comments from many visitors seeking to improve their skill at bird recognition'.³⁷⁰ By reflecting the increasingly popular hobby and pastime of bird watching, these new displays (and at LCM, the involvement of local audiences in their production), rendered them more relevant and interesting for these particular visitor groups.³⁷¹

Factors influencing the shift to representing local wildlife in the post-Second World War period at WPM and LCM were multiple and diverse. Providing for local audiences by interpreting regional wildlife reflected the educational function of the museum, however, the newly installed regional displays may also have served to reinforce notions of belonging, civic identity, and nationhood following the conflict of the Second World War. The displays may have figured as expressions of what Karen Wonders has termed, 'animal ethnicity', displays of particular, well known kinds of wildlife which symbolically define a

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1952-53*, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-1955*, p. 9.

³⁷¹ Stephen Moss, 'Learning: The Post-War Era 1945-1958', in *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching* (London: Aurum Press, 2004), pp. 172-222 (p. 174).

nation and are therefore considered to be part and representative of its 'ethnic heritage'.³⁷² In particular, contextual displays of local wildlife with painted backdrops and attractive scenery may have helped provide individuals with a renewed sense of admiration and pride in the British landscape when the surrounding urban environment remained scarred by the effects of the conflict. There are, however, a number of other political factors which could have driven the dramatic shift in focus from displaying examples of taxidermied animals from all over the world to those common to the region. LCM, for example, was under a new directorship by Dr. Owen and as the new Director, Owen may have felt driven to have his ideas materially expressed in the Museum's galleries by superseding those of his predecessors and making his mark upon the institution by developing it along new lines.³⁷³ Furthermore, the habitat groups and dioramas developed by larger institutions in the early decades of the twentieth century had set a precedent for the contextual display of taxidermy, and it is possible that by installing smaller habitat group displays into their galleries in the 1950s, LCM and WPM's new displays constituted a tribute to this wider trend.

In the *City Museum Annual Report* for WPM for the period 1958-1960, it was suggested that the Museum 'is now a service, more concerned with people than with things'.³⁷⁴ Similarly, a flyer issued by the Hancock Museum in 1968 stated that 'the business of getting things and keeping them is just a means to an end. Really we are interested in you, or rather in trying to show you what fun there is in knowing about things'.³⁷⁵ These comments suggest that the focus of museums was becoming increasingly concentrated on the experiences of visitors as individuals. The professionalisation of museums, and of natural science as a discipline in the post-war period meant that the scientific pursuits of curators and other museum staff were no longer being as readily transcribed into public museum displays as they had been in the past. Rather, as the twentieth century progressed, public education in the form of popular science and the scientific activities of museum staff were becoming further segregated between the public and back room spaces of museums. At WPM the heightened focus on public provision led to the removal of research collections from the Museum's public galleries by the mid-1970s:

³⁷² Wonders, 'Habitat Dioramas and the Issue of Nativeness', 89-1009 (p. 96).

³⁷³ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1946-47*, p. 4.

³⁷⁴ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1958-1960*, p. 4.

³⁷⁵ [Anthony M. Tynan, (?)], *Museums Week: At the Hancock Museum* (Newcastle: [n. pub], 1968).

From the earliest days [...] substantial parts of the collections were held in drawered units in the galleries and therefore immediately available for public inspection. However as displays have been modernised, material has been removed to separate stores, largely outside the main museum building in the Museum Annexe.³⁷⁶

Increasingly, public galleries became more like show spaces than storage spaces in both content and appearance, while behind the scenes spaces were increasingly regarded as the place where the scientific work of museums took place. The divided roles of the two spheres was exemplified in a comment made by Tony Tynan in 1968 when the curator acknowledged the bipartite nature of the Hancock Museum through his description of its public facing spaces as 'the shop', as opposed to its behind the scenes spaces, which he called 'the factory'.³⁷⁷ While Tynan's perception of the functions of the public and private spaces of museums may have been reflective of trends in other museums such as LCM and WPM, at the Hancock Museum lack of funding for redevelopment meant that the systematic displays remained in the Museum's public galleries. Leslie Jessop, previous Keeper of Biology for Tyne & Wear Museums and present honorary librarian for the NHSN, suggested in 1999 that following the installation of John Hancock's collection in the 1880s, the 'Bird Room' experienced a 'long period of stagnation' with no extensive alterations being made to the organisation of the gallery until it was completely redeveloped and re-opened in 1980.³⁷⁸ Despite the increasingly dated appearance of the Hancock Museum's serried ranks, however, displays such as those featured in the 'Bird Room' continued to be used by the NHSN for species identification and comparative study, although how relevant these displays were for non-specialist visitors was increasingly being questioned:³⁷⁹

Not so many years ago it was deemed adequate to present orderly ranks of specimens, accompanied by a label giving the English and scientific names. [...] There are still large areas of the Hancock Museum where this approach of 'storage-display' (now rejected as inadequate) is evident and it is being replaced by methods which not only attract attention, but also explain the real significance of objects. The display cases installed over eighty years ago are almost useless for these modern techniques, but so slender are the

³⁷⁶ Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 78).

³⁷⁷ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945), p. 9. [Tynan, (?)], *Museums Week: At the Hancock Museum* (1968).

³⁷⁸ Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 40). Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 202).

³⁷⁹ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums', p. 95.

museum's financial resources that the construction of new fittings can only proceed at a frustratingly slow speed.³⁸⁰

While it has been difficult to ascertain the exact contents of the LCM's taxidermy displays for the period 1969-1999, proposals for the new Museum, (developed in the Municipal Buildings on the Headrow), reveal that there was an intention that the new natural history gallery would resemble that of the Park Row Museum. It was suggested, for instance, that the new Museum would contain, amongst other displays, a systematic overview of the animal kingdom so as to 'show how the place of a particular biological specimen is determined according to class, order, family, genus and species', and this would be variously illustrated by diagrams, models and taxidermied specimens.³⁸¹ To compliment the scheme, a number of displays would use specimens to interpret particular animal traits and adaptations, selected to demonstrate evolutionary theory.³⁸² In addition, it was proposed that there would be 'three large dioramas featuring mammals, birds and reptiles' along with 'four smaller ones [dioramas] dealing with the wold's coast and moors of Yorkshire'.³⁸³ The gallery would then 'finish with showing some of the larger mammals from overseas'.³⁸⁴ Indeed, a series of postcards produced by LCM after the Museum reopened in 1969 show how examples of a gorilla, a giant panda, an orangutan, and the 'Leeds Tiger', amongst others, were presented in glass-fronted cases contextualised by painted backdrops and artificial foliage (fig. 21). As was the case in LCM's 1953 redevelopment, in relation to the relatively small size of the Museum these displays were large and would have taken up a considerable amount of space. Yet, their inclusion, and the production of postcards sporting their images, suggests their continued significance as highlights or focal points of LCM's collections (also see: 3.3, p. 182). The proposed inclusion of thematic displays of regional wildlife, along with systematic displays, shows how

³⁸⁰ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Annual Report 31st July (1971)*, p. 7.

³⁸¹ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS Proposed Exhibition Galleries and Displays in New Museum (c.1965), fol. Correspondence and Reports Relating to Moving of Museum and Work Undertaken at Site 1949-1966, p. 2.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

While it is acknowledged that the term 'dioramas' is used here, images of these displays show that they were more closely allied to habitat group displays, or, in many cases, were individual taxidermy mounts presented amongst simulated groundwork and foliage for context. It has been argued that the diorama is a very particular kind of display, Pat Morris discusses the differences between dioramas and habitat displays in: Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, p. 318-319.

³⁸⁴ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS Proposed Exhibition Galleries and Displays in New Museum (c.1965), p. 3.

different schemes of classification were intended for the new LCM. The proposed content of the Museum developed in the mid 1960s resembling that presented in the Museum in the early 1950s could be attributed to the relative chronological proximity of the two developments. In this regard, LCM may have been trying to maintain connections with its history by transposing the character and content of the old Museum on Park Row into the new Museum in the Municipal Buildings. One of the differences between the 1953 Museum and the 1966 redevelopment plan, however, appears to have been the intention to interpret taxonomic classification as an organisational scheme to audiences, as well as, or alongside, presenting species in taxonomic series.³⁸⁵ Indeed, a similar approach to interpreting displays containing taxidermy was evident in the public galleries of WPM in the 1970s. As curators increasingly sought to explain some of the key principles of systematics and how the study of ecology was increasingly demonstrating the importance of wildlife conservation, classification schemes themselves were being interpreted, resulting in displays that were visually reminiscent of the contents of biology text books (fig. 22). For example, in the 1970s at WPM, taxidermy specimens were presented against simple backgrounds, some of which were coloured, while others were painted in neutral tones. The specimens were individually labelled, and some were augmented by illustrations and diagrams which furthered the pedagogical aims of the scheme. The thematic approach to interpreting the principles of taxonomy suggested that the Museum had become much more focussed on explaining the scientific theories which governed how biologists viewed the natural world to the general public as opposed to just presenting them. Although the displays at WPM remained focussed on systematics, the displays also interpreted how species were classified by science, and perhaps most importantly, why this was perceived to be of significance in relation to the study of nature and the natural world in the mid-late twentieth century.

At WPM, a further redisplay was completed in 1986 which resulted in the text-book style displays being removed, and a series of less text heavy, more visually appealing thematic displays addressing topics such as ecology, extinction, conservation and pollution, amongst others, being installed (fig. 23). The new gallery, entitled 'Wildlife', featured taxidermied examples of many different species but overall retained a strong regional focus. In a review of the redisplay Geoffrey Stansfield calculated that approximately one third of the new 'Wildlife' gallery was 'devoted to exotic animals with a strong conservation

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

message and the remainder to local habitats with some really excellent mounts' (fig. 24).³⁸⁶ It was during this redevelopment that 'Snowy' the polar bear was purchased to replace the old polar bear that had previously been on display in the Museum.³⁸⁷ Displayed in a large glass case in the centre of one of the new gallery segments, 'Snowy' was presented as the centrepiece of the new 'Wildlife' gallery (fig. 25).

When the opportunity finally arose for the galleries of the Hancock Museum to be significantly redeveloped in the 1970s and early 1980s, the kinds of displays that were installed and the organisational approaches used, were both different and similar to those they replaced. The galleries were developed incrementally, the first being the 'Zoology Room' which was completed in 1975 (fig. 26).³⁸⁸ The second gallery to be redeveloped was the 'Bird Room' which was completed in 1980 (fig. 27), and the third being Abel Chapman's collection of hunting trophies (then displayed in the ground floor East corridor) which was completed in 1984.³⁸⁹ (Also see: 3.2, p. 147). A display of British mammals was added to the 'Zoology Room' giving it a more regional focus, and the redevelopment of the 'Bird Room' afforded the gallery a predominantly (although not entirely) European focus.³⁹⁰ The redisplayed collection of hunting trophies remained representative of foreign species.³⁹¹ During the redevelopment of the 'Bird Room', Tony Tynan had reflected upon a divide that he perceived to exist between the interests of bird enthusiasts, including himself and other members of the NHSN, and those of non-specialist visitors who frequented the Museum. 'Birds to us were beautiful, fascinating, musical, magical; this, the "essence of bird" we must transmit to our uncommitted client. How?'³⁹² Tynan was aware that the method by which he might accomplish this goal would require a different approach to that of the

³⁸⁶ Geoffrey Stansfield, 'Nature on Display', *Museums Journal*, 86: 2 (September 1986), 97-103 (p. 103).

³⁸⁷ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

³⁸⁸ Anthony M. Tynan and Peter Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide* (Newcastle: [n.pub], [1991(?)]), p. 6. In correspondence with the NHSN (2013).

³⁸⁹ For more information on the conversion of the 'Bird Room' into 'The Magic of Birds' see: Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204, and Geoffrey Stansfield, 'The Bird Room at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne', *Museums Journal*, 80: 4 (March 1981), 199-201. Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark. The Hancock Museum's geology gallery was also redeveloped during this period. The new gallery, entitled 'Yesterday's World', was opened in the rear gallery of the Museum in 1979. See: Alan C. Howell, 'Yesterday's World: The New Geology Gallery at the Hancock Museum', *Museums Journal*, 80: 1 (June 1980), 22-23. Susan Turner and A. M. Tynan, 'A New Approach to Geology: Hancock Museum', *Museums Journal*, 80: 1 (June 1980), 24.

³⁹⁰ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, pp. 9-10. Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204.

³⁹¹ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

³⁹² Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 203).

previous taxonomic displays, and indeed, that of the 'logical text book maze' which, in his view, 'could easily bewilder and depress' audiences.³⁹³ As a result, in the redeveloped 'Bird Room', which was renamed the 'The Magic of Birds', a series of different classification and interpretive schemes were employed with the aim to better provide for the Museum's different audiences.

When the 'Magic of Birds' was completed, both thematic and systematic displays were included in the new gallery, and these addressed a series of topics including evolution, natural selection, reproduction, flight and migration, amongst many others.³⁹⁴ Many of these themes were then broken down into sub-themes. The section on flight, for example, was divided into different types of flight such as taking off, thermal soaring, dynamic soaring, cliff soaring and landing, interpreting, according to Geoffrey Stansfield, 'almost every conceivable aspect of flight' (fig. 28).³⁹⁵ Also included in the redisplay of the old 'Bird Room' was the development of a display area dedicated to the contributions of John and Albany Hancock which Tynan called the Hancock 'shrine'.³⁹⁶ The display served to celebrate and commemorate the Hancock name more explicitly in the Museum.³⁹⁷ Through the 'shrine' display, specimens and other objects were classified thematically by their association with John and Albany Hancock, unlike the previous displays of the 'Bird Room' which had largely presented John Hancock's collection in systematic series. A systematic field guide was, however, reinstated elsewhere in the new gallery. The display, described by Tynan as 'a straightforward no-nonsense systematic series of European birds in as many different plumage stages, sexes and ages as was possible', had been fitted in the upper gallery and reflected the interests of the NHSN and the local bird watching community more broadly.³⁹⁸ The installation of the systematic series was rationalised on the following terms:

For the ever-growing army of keen bird-watchers in the north-east, the Hancock has always been Mecca. An actual specimen of the bird is always better than a picture and the impression of that suspected rare bird seen

³⁹³ Tony Tynan, 'A New Bird Display at the Hancock Museum', *Biology Curator's Group Newsletter*, 2: 5 (1979), 212-214 (p. 214).

³⁹⁴ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, pp. 9-10.

³⁹⁵ Geoffrey Stansfield, 'The Bird Room at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne', *Museums Journal*, 80: 4 (March 1981), 199-201 (p. 199).

³⁹⁶ Although this may not have been the title used in the display, Tony Tynan referred to the display as a 'shrine' to the Hancocks, on several occasions. For example see: Tynan, *Guide to the Hancock Museum* and Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 9.

³⁹⁷ Tynan, 'A New Bird Display at the Hancock Museum', (1979), 212-214.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 213. The systematic series can be seen in fig. 27. running the length of the upper gallery.

briefly through field glasses can be checked out against the real thing. This important role of the old Bird Room has been retained in the new one and the bird-watchers 3D text book fills three hundred feet of displays around the walls of the gallery.³⁹⁹

Tynan recognised, however, that '[f]or the rest of the visitor population, the collection had a different role', and this was reflected in other, less scientifically orientated interpretative approaches adopted in the gallery.⁴⁰⁰ For example, the redevelopment of the 'Bird Room' had incorporated the addition of two mezzanine floors at either end of the gallery's first floor balcony.⁴⁰¹ Further thematic displays were presented on the mezzanine floors including displays where specimens were classified and displayed according to more people centred narratives, these were described as being concerned with 'man's relationship with birds and vice-versa'.⁴⁰² Similar to 'The Magic of Birds' gallery, the redevelopment of the East corridor gallery also saw the introduction of displays where taxidermy objects were classified and interpreted through a combination of scientific, and social and historical narratives to create a display that would be more appealing to children and families.⁴⁰³ Upon completion, the new display, entitled 'Abel's Ark', ran the length of the corridor and presented a menagerie of taxidermied animals situated in and around an ark structure (3.2, p. 147). The display was also complimented by an eye-catching backdrop of hand-painted scenery (fig. 29). Previously, a gallery aimed specifically at families and younger audiences had not existed in the Hancock Museum, and the creation of one reflected increasing recognition across the museum sector more broadly of the role of museums in providing for different audience groups (also see: 4.1, p. 197). In addition to the 'Abel's Ark' display, two other smaller displays were developed at the Hancock Museum in the early 1980s which interpreted the history of the Museum and its collections. The first was a display featuring the works of the artist, engraver and naturalist Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), which was located outside the Museum's lecture theatre, and the second was a series of text panels running up one of the Museum's stairwells which interpreted the history of the NHSN and the Museum (fig. 30).⁴⁰⁴ 'Sparkie' the budgerigar was presented in a stand-alone

³⁹⁹ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 12.

⁴⁰⁰ Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', *Museums Journal*, p. 203.

⁴⁰¹ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 10.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

⁴⁰⁴ In 2003 the Bewick display was removed and reinstated in the balcony gallery above what was then the 'The Living Planet' gallery to celebrate 250 years since Bewick's birth. Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 2004*, 65:1, p. 26.

display case at the opposite end of the 'Abel's Ark' display. The taxidermied bird was interpreted through text panels and a sound recording of 'Sparkie' 'talking', so that visitors could listen to the bird while simultaneously observing its taxidermied remains (fig. 13).

A considerable number of changes took place in how taxidermy was classified, organised and displayed for audiences in the galleries of the Hancock Museum in the latter part of the late twentieth century. Although the interpretative approaches adopted were diverse, overall the Museum's taxidermy displays became much more thematic. Unlike LCM and WPM, however, at the Hancock Museum different taxa continued to be spatially segregated across 'The Magic of Birds' gallery and the 'Zoology gallery', although the new 'Abel's Ark' display presented a combination of all animal groups. A further gallery development took place at the Hancock Museum in 1996 when the Museum opened an environmentally themed gallery entitled 'The Living Planet' which replaced the Museum's previous geology themed gallery, 'Yesterday's World' (fig. 31).⁴⁰⁵ In some ways the design and approach of 'The Living Planet' could be viewed as a precursor for the approach adopted in the natural science galleries of the GNM:H's most recent redevelopment in that different kinds of specimens were presented alongside one another.⁴⁰⁶ Commissioned from Redman Design, 'The Living Planet' was interdisciplinary and featured a number of interactive displays in which, Hannah Paddon has described, specimens 'were used to illustrate extinction, endangered species and the importance of being environmentally friendly'.⁴⁰⁷ Similar to 'Abel's Ark', 'The Living Planet' gallery was thematic in its approach, although it presented fewer taxidermy specimens than the Museum's other galleries. In addition, many of the displays featured in 'The Living Planet' used interactive interpretative techniques, and these varied, as described by the NHSN, from 'simple magnetic jig-saws to computers and video-microscopes'.⁴⁰⁸ (Also see: 4.1, p. 209).

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⁴⁰⁵ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1996*, 57:2, p. 69.

⁴⁰⁶ In addition, the name of the gallery, 'The Living Planet' was retained for one of the natural science galleries in the most recent redevelopment, 'Living Planet', with the amendment of dropping 'the' from the gallery's title.

⁴⁰⁷ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums', p. 97. Redman Design are based in Ilkley, West Yorkshire.

⁴⁰⁸ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1996*, 57:2, p. 69.

Following the most recent museum redevelopments, all three of the case study museums continue to present displays which feature taxidermy specimens from different parts of the world along with those common to the UK. While the approaches used by each museum differ, all three use a number of different classification, organisation and display strategies within their natural history galleries. At the GNM:H, taxidermy is predominantly displayed across two galleries, 'Living Planet' in the ground and first floor gallery space of the Museum, and 'Natural Northumbria' located in a second gallery on the first floor. The 'Living Planet' gallery is dominated by a large panoramic display entitled the 'Bio-Wall'. The 'Bio-Wall' presents a world view of nature which is divided into four habitats which are organised by climate: desert, tropical, temperate and polar, and by their geographical topography: water, earth and air (fig. 32). The specimens in this display can be viewed from the ground or first floor gallery, and they are interpreted through a combination of text labels and interactive digital touch screen displays which are dotted throughout the gallery space (fig. 33). The taxidermy mounts on display in the 'Bio-Wall' are interpreted scientifically as species representatives, with the exception of 'Sparkie', which, although integrated into the 'Bio-Wall', is interpreted as a unique individual (fig. 34). In addition, live animals are presented in vivariums and aquariums alongside the taxidermy featured in the 'Bio-Wall', and these are equally interpreted as species representatives (also see: p. 111). In the GNM:H's 'Natural Northumbria' gallery, taxidermied examples of regional wildlife are interpreted in relation to discrete habitats characteristic of the Northumbrian landscape using specific locations such as the Cheviot Hills and Gosforth Nature Reserve as examples (fig. 35). Like the 'Bio-Wall', 'Natural Northumbria' presents taxidermy through four different habitat types, therefore replicating the approach of the 'Living Planet' gallery, but on a smaller, regional scale. While 'Living Planet' presents a universalising global view of nature, 'Natural Northumbria', is geographically specific, using maps of the region to explicitly connect the habitats represented with particular locations in and around the North East (fig. 36). Since the two galleries at the GNM:H organise the collections on display through spatial ordering, both of these galleries can be understood to have adopted quite a traditional, systematic approach to interpreting the taxidermy on display. There is, however, a small group of taxidermied objects displayed in another, smaller, side gallery at the GNM:H entitled 'Explore!' in which the specimens on display are interpreted using socio-historical narratives concerning past collecting practices and the founding of museum collections (fig. 37).

While the GNM:H has adopted two dominant and interrelated schemes of classification in its 'Living Planet' and 'Natural Northumbria' galleries, LCM and MS:WP have

both adopted a multiplicity of classificatory schemes and their redeveloped galleries are made up of numerous smaller displays which approach the classification and interpretation of taxidermy in a variety of different ways. In the redeveloped LCM, taxidermy is predominantly displayed in the lower ground floor gallery entitled 'Life on Earth'. Within the gallery, taxidermy is classified according to a number of different interpretive themes, some of which are scientifically orientated. For instance, to the rear of the gallery a selection of taxidermied primates are grouped taxonomically in a glass case. In addition, the theme of the birds' bills display featured in the Philosophical Hall around the turn of the twentieth century to demonstrate evolutionary adaptations has been updated and reinstated into the new gallery (fig. 38). (Also see: 3.2, p. 153). Other displays include a section on biomimetics, and a case containing a selection of predominantly large, foreign taxidermy specimens which have been grouped together according to their conservation status (fig. 39). By classifying taxidermy in this way, the display reflects how the conservation status of discrete species has become enmeshed in the meaning and value of particular species in the collective contemporary consciousness, an issue which is discussed further in chapter three. At LCM, other taxidermy displays have been organised according to more abstract themes. In particular, a display entitled the 'Colour Wall' presents a variety of natural science objects, from minerals, insects and small taxidermied mammals, to birds and cabinet skins together, grouping them by colour (fig. 40). In the 'Colour Wall' a scarlet ibis, which is native to South America and the Caribbean, is presented alongside a red squirrel, which is native to the more temperate climate of Eurasia and is well known in Britain. According to conventional classifications, the bright pink bird and the rust red squirrel juxtapose one another in taxonomic grouping and geographical distribution, yet, in the 'Colour Wall', they are united demonstrating how a different framework for attributing meaning to the objects has led them to be presented alongside one another (fig. 41). Throughout 'Life on Earth', taxidermied objects are interpreted as species representatives, however, a select number of specimens, a gorilla and a thylacine for example, are also interpreted through interactive digital displays located throughout the gallery space using social history narratives (fig. 42). Rather than presenting these objects according to their perceived scientific values, they are interpreted to audiences in ways which draw attention to their cultural significance, highlighting their connections to people, places, and the unique histories of the museums which house them. Similarly, the 'Leeds Tiger' is presented in a stand-alone glass case which forms the front of the 'Life on Earth' gallery and is also interpreted through a social history narrative (fig. 43).

At MS:WP taxidermy is predominantly displayed across two galleries 'What on Earth!' and 'Arctic World' which are both located on the ground floor. In 'What on Earth!', the larger of the two display spaces, approaches to the classification and interpretation of taxidermy are as diverse as they are at LCM. The gallery is divided up into display sections, and within them further sub-sections which interpret taxidermy through a range of different themes and topics. Similar to the redeveloped GNM:H, at MS:WP regional wildlife is thematically and spatially separated from global wildlife. For example, in a display entitled 'Close to Home', taxidermied examples of British wildlife are presented in a series of contextual displays to simulate different local habitats. The habitats include: 'On the Moors', 'At Home', 'In the Woods' and 'Broad-leaved woodlands'. In each of these displays taxidermy mounts are interpreted scientifically as species representatives, although the style of each display differs considerably, from a cased habitat group display, to an immersive environment display, the focal point of which, is a life-sized cast of an old oak tree taken from a living tree at the Chatsworth Estate, Derbyshire (fig. 44).⁴⁰⁹ At MS:WP global wildlife is presented in 'Weird and Wonderful', a darkened, closed-off space which presents a diverse collection of taxidermied animals of all shapes and sizes from all over the world (fig. 45). While the display has been created in a way that draws attention to the aesthetic qualities of the taxidermy featured, within it, scientifically orientated themes such as hiding, mating, moving and eating are addressed with the support of videos played on digital screens. Similarly, animal adaptations and behaviours are interpreted in a thematic display entitled 'Power', where taxidermy mounts have been grouped together owing to the unique characteristics of the particular species they represent. For instance, a North American bison is used to interpret the rutting behaviour demonstrated by males when competing with each other over females.⁴¹⁰ Further scientifically themed displays are featured in a section towards the rear of the gallery entitled 'Nature Lab', where taxidermy is displayed to interpret ideas about taxonomy through questions like: 'Classification - Why Classify?' and 'What is a Species?'⁴¹¹ Also in this area are two live displays, one containing Honey Bees, which is connected to outside of the building allowing the bees access, and the other containing a colony of Leaf-cutter ants. There are a number of other displays at MS:WP where taxidermy objects (along with other kinds of natural science objects), have

⁴⁰⁹ The focal point of the habitat group display, which interprets moorland and coniferous woodland, is a taxidermied white-faced ram, however the case also contains a number of taxidermied birds and small mammals.

⁴¹⁰ Excerpt from interpretative label in 'Power', 'What on Earth!', MS:WP.

⁴¹¹ Excerpt from interpretative label in 'Nature Lab', 'What on Earth!', MS:WP.

been organised and displayed in ways which draw attention to their aesthetic qualities. In particular, a selection of large taxidermy objects, including a jaguar, an American alligator and a Wandering albatross, amongst others, are presented high up on the walls of the gallery (fig. 46). In addition, in a 'Curiosity Cabinet' style display, taxidermy is presented alongside a wide variety of other kinds of natural science objects according to aesthetic rather than systematic principles (fig. 47).⁴¹²

While the 'What on Earth!' gallery at MS:WP is characteristically a natural science gallery, the 'Arctic World' gallery is more interdisciplinary, and presents a number of taxidermy objects (fig. 48). Themed around ideas relating to the Arctic, 'Arctic World' is a family orientated space which was devised around 'Snowy' the polar bear after visitors were asked to vote for their favourite object from the Museum's collections (fig. 49).⁴¹³ 'Snowy', therefore, is the focal point of 'Arctic World', although other objects such as a taxidermied Arctic fox and a flock of Canada geese are also presented within this space having been included in 'Arctic World' by their associated place of origin (fig. 14). In addition to the redisplay of 'Snowy', 'Joey' the lion was also reinstated into the redeveloped Museum, however, the lion was presented on open display in a social history gallery, not in 'What on Earth!'⁴¹⁴ Although it was intended that 'Joey' would remain on public display following the recent redevelopment, the object was removed for conservation purposes c.2007.⁴¹⁵

The approach adopted in the case study museums today, particularly in LCM and MS:WP, of using multiple schemes of classification to interpret their taxidermy collections differs significantly from that of earlier inceptions of the three museums where systematic arrangements dominated their natural history galleries. Linear taxonomic schemes of organising taxidermy have fallen out of favour and been superseded by more ahistorical and/or thematic schemes of classification. This may indicate that the progressive displays which represented the passing of time are now increasingly regarded as part of a past episteme of museological practice, since, as Beth Lord has argued:

It is only in the nineteenth century, when time, history, and evolution become the dominant ideas governing the organization and display of

⁴¹² On a more practical level, such displays constitute an effective way of enabling the display of many objects in a relatively small exhibition space, as does the mounting of larger specimens high up on gallery walls (as demonstrated at MS:WP).

⁴¹³ Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 35.

⁴¹⁴ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

collections, that museums become concerned with exhibiting objects as *historical* and with presenting the totality of time [*emphasis in original*].⁴¹⁶

As spaces of representation, the three case study museums have adopted numerous approaches to classifying their taxidermy collections, particularly from around the 1950s onwards. Driven to improve public provision, visitors have increasingly been afforded a wider variety of ways to engage with museum taxidermy collections. While this shift has seen museums integrate multiple and varied schemes of classification into their public galleries, some of the ways in which the three case study museums classify, organise and display their taxidermy collections have remained quite similar, and in some cases, set up internal tensions and potential contradictions. For instance, by adopting multiple schemes of classification in their public galleries, LCM and MS:WP reflexively demonstrate the subjectivity of classification practices, and therefore, how earlier and concurrent scientific approaches to interpretation constitute just one of the many possible ways of attributing meaning and value to museum taxidermy. Unlike the late nineteenth century encyclopaedic displays in which museums conceptually and materially organised the natural world in order to make visible the supposed natural order of nature, the thematic organisational approaches adopted in LCM's 'Colour Wall' and MS:WP's 'Curiosity Cabinet' openly acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of subjective authorship. The collation and presentation of seemingly random objects using ahistorical themes suggests a more investigative and experimental approach, and expression of curiosity which, as argued by Stephen Bann, 'invariably presumes an authored display, [...] a subjective act of enunciation'.⁴¹⁷ While the 'Colour Wall' and the 'Curiosity Cabinet' appear to be attempting to reinstate curiosity as a legitimate way of investigating the world, the objects displayed within them continue to be interpreted as specimens through their labels. In demonstrating the variability of classification practices by providing a variety of displays organised according to different themes, LCM and MS:WP problematise taxonomic classification and interpretation for their audiences while simultaneously privileging it through the labelling of the majority of the specimens on display. By way of comparison, since the taxidermy on display in the GNM:H's 'Living Planet' and 'Natural Northumbria' galleries has predominantly been organised using one, more traditional and systematic approach, the authority of the classificatory scheme

⁴¹⁶ Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', 1-14 (p. 4).

⁴¹⁷ Stephen Bann, 'The Return to Curiosity: Shifting Paradigms in Contemporary Museum Display', in *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. by Andrew McClellan (Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 117-132 (p. 123).

goes unchallenged by other classificatory or reflexive approaches within the gallery space.⁴¹⁸ The more didactic, scientifically authoritative approach to classification and interpretation at the GNM:H, however, gives rise to other tensions which problematise classification and interpretation practices in more nuanced, yet potentially unsettling ways. In the 'Bio-Wall', live specimens and non-remnant models are equally interpreted as species representatives. For example, the following label accompanies a vivarium containing live python specimens in the GNM:H:

Jungle Carpet Python

Morelia spilota cheynei

These pythons live in Australian rainforests. Their yellow and black patterned skin camouflages them in the jungle trees, where they feed on mice and small birds.

Conservation status: not threatened

[*formatting and emphasis in original*].⁴¹⁹

While the following information, provided through an interactive digital display, similarly interprets a taxidermied zebra:

Zebra

(*Equus quagga*)

What am I?

Zebras are African members of the horse family *Equidae*.

Story

Zebras' stripes are thought to break up the outlines of each animal in the herd, making it difficult for predators, such as lions, to single out a single zebra for attack [*formatting and emphasis in original*].⁴²⁰

Apart from the interpretation accompanying the jungle carpet pythons being specific rather than generic by using the term 'these', the tone, content and approach to the two sets of interpretation suggest very little differentiation between living and taxidermied specimens.⁴²¹ In addition, the vivariums and aquariums containing the live specimens are seamlessly integrated into the display furniture of the 'Bio-Wall' so as not to disrupt the

⁴¹⁸ In the 'Explore!' gallery at the GNM:H classification practices are investigated more reflexively in a small display which presents a box of chocolates and a collection of insects to interpret how objects can be organised in different ways according to different principles.

⁴¹⁹ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Living Planet', GNM:H.

⁴²⁰ Excerpt from an interactive digital pod in 'Living Planet', GNM:H.

⁴²¹ The non-remnant models featured in the 'Bio-Wall', for example of marine species featured in the lower portion of the display, are equally interpreted as species representatives.

visual continuity of the display's design (fig. 50). By aligning living specimens with taxidermied specimens, conceptually through their interpretation, and materially through their presentation, the inherent artifice of the taxidermy featured in the 'Bio-Wall' is silenced serving to elevate the scientific authority of the display. When observing the displays over an extended period of time, however, the habitual movements of the living animals, and the comparative uncleanliness of their enclosed environments, betray the stillness and lifelessness of the taxidermy which surrounds them. The effect of this juxtaposition is that whatever lifelike or 'lifelike' characteristics have been inscribed into the poses and expressions of the taxidermied animals featured in the 'Bio-Wall', they are somewhat overshadowed by the presence of the living animals.⁴²² By representing animals through different mediums but interpreting them in very similar ways, the 'Bio-Wall' also presents the problematic nature of the act of representation itself. This effect affords the 'Bio-Wall' an additional layer of potentially complex and contentious meanings, although to date, these remain unexplored by the interpretation available in the gallery space (also see: 3.2, p. 163).

In regard to layout, appearance and content, the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall' and MS:WP's 'Weird and Wonderful' are reminiscent of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century encyclopaedic displays which attempted to represent the natural world within the museum (see: 2.2, p. 84). While displays like the 'Bio-Wall' and 'Weird and Wonderful' still figure as demonstrations of the vast number of objects to which the museums are custodian, unlike encyclopaedic displays, they are not presented to audiences as taxonomic surveys of the animal kingdom. Rather, they could be viewed as indices of the wide variety and scope of nature's biodiversity owing to their purposeful juxtaposition of dissimilar animal forms, and knowing incompleteness. The science historian Anke te Hessen has recently described such displays as attempts to present the 'infinite amount', serving to give 'the infinite a form and structure', while using a finite number of specimens.⁴²³ There are also nuanced ways in which the GNM:H'S 'Bio-Wall' could be regarded as being reflexive of classification practices. For instance, the design of the display mimics that of contemporary storage furniture, and the repetitive forms of enclosed boxes reference storage and classification practices. Indeed, a number of contemporary museums have employed the aesthetic of the

⁴²² Marvin, 'Enlivened Through Memory: Hunters and Hunting Trophies' in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by. Alberti, pp. 202-217 (p. 204, 216).

⁴²³ Anke te Hessen, 'Displaying the Infinite Amount' (Conference abstract for Activating Stilled Lives: The Aesthetics and Politics of Specimens on Display, 17th-18th May 2012, Department of History of Art, University College of London) <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/art-history/events/culture_of_preservation/activating-stilled-lives/abstracts> [accessed 21 June 2012].

boxed-in, row-upon-row formation of Victorian museum displays in their galleries in recent years. For example, the design approach features in some of the displays of the recently redeveloped Manchester Museum's natural science gallery, 'Living Worlds'.⁴²⁴ The style and use of these displays suggests that biological classification, both as a practice and as an organisational principle, has in some way come to signify the concepts 'museum' and 'natural history' in itself. In addition, although the modular, boxed-in design of the 'Bio-Wall' references theoretical classificatory schemes, it also references physical forms of domination over nature, such as the keeping, caging, and domesticisation of animals. While the majority of specimens displayed in and around the 'Bio-Wall' are contained within the modular cases, in other areas of the display taxidermied animals have been positioned in ways which suggest that they have transgressed the confines of their cases (fig. 51). These 'escapee' animals could be interpreted as a reflexive critique of classification practices, in both the natural sciences and in museology more broadly.

The rise of reflexive and dialogic practices in museology in the twenty-first century has contributed, to an extent, to the destabilisation of the authority of science as the dominant classificatory framework through which audiences can engage with museum taxidermy collections. By demonstrating multiple or alternative ways of classifying taxidermy, other frameworks of knowledge have been made visible to audiences drawing attention to the subjective nature of the construction of value and meaning of museum objects. Despite the increasingly interdisciplinary approach being adopted in the contemporary museums, particularly at LCM and MS:WP where taxidermy is interpreted using a variety of different themes, overall all three of the case study museums continue to either explicitly or implicitly privilege scientifically orientated schemes of classification. There may be many reasons for this, but as David Phillips has suggested, curators do not 'merely [...] assess evidence', rather, 'in practice [they] are deeply involved in setting the values that they police'.⁴²⁵ As public provision has become a central concern for museums, provision for non-specialist audiences has been prioritised in the public spaces of museums while specialist audiences have been encouraged to become more involved in behind the scenes activities. As the scientific functions of collections have been increasingly diverted to the unseen research spaces of museums, the development of purpose built storage as part of the capital redevelopment of the three case study museums has further consolidated the

⁴²⁴ The Manchester Museum opened in 2011 following its most recent redevelopment. Uni Life: The University of Manchester, 'Hundreds Flock to Gallery Opening', *Uni Life*, 7: 8 (2011), 3.

⁴²⁵ David Phillips, 'The Cult of Saints and the Cult of Art', in *Exhibiting Authenticity*, p. 6.

divide between their public-facing, and research or storage areas.⁴²⁶ The use of taxidermied specimens in scientific research requires that biological classification continues to govern how they are named and classified in the behind the scenes spaces of museums, and often, how they are considered most useful for curators (fig. 52). Indeed, in other museum spaces where objects are ascribed value such as accession registers, labels and digital databases, taxidermied animals continue to be classified, understood and valued by natural science curators as specimens through the lens of biological taxonomy.⁴²⁷ It is perhaps for this reason, combined with the continued delineation of disciplines in museums, that today, science remains the dominant framework through which taxidermy is organised and displayed across museum spaces, either implicitly or explicitly. Sharon Macdonald has suggested that, '[m]useums which deal with science are not simply putting science on display; they are also creating particular kinds of science for the public, and are lending to the science that is displayed their own legitimizing imprimatur'.⁴²⁸

2.3 Order

An additional means by which museums mediate the meaning of collections is through their layout, which is informed by, and reflective of, the design and architectural features of museum spaces. Much has been written on how museum spaces shape audience's engagements with objects, and of how the organisation of space and visitors' movements within them contribute to the construction of knowledge in the museum.⁴²⁹ As discursive spaces, the layouts of museum galleries contribute to the interpretation of objects, and throughout the histories of LCM, the GNM:H and MS:WP, the spatial organisation and layout of taxidermy displays has helped construct and mediate the meaning of taxidermy in a variety of different ways.

⁴²⁶ The Leeds collections store, 'Leeds Museum Discovery Centre' was developed on Carlisle Road, Clarence Dock, Leeds. The research collections of the GNM:H are now situated in the basement of the Discovery Museum, a separate Museum site within walking distance from the Museum on Barras Bridge, and Sheffield's resource centre is located on Acres Hill Lane, Darnall, at the opposite side of the city to the Museum.

⁴²⁷ Geoffrey N. Swinney, 'An Afterword on Afterlife', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 219-233 (p. 225).

⁴²⁸ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24 (p. 2).

⁴²⁹ Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, 4 (Spring 1988), 73-102, Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Also see: Bill Hillier and Kali Tzortzi, 'Space Syntax: The Language of Museum Space', in *A Companion to Museum Studies* ed. by Macdonald, pp. 282-301, and Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis', *Marxist Perspectives*, 1: 4 (1978), 28-51.

Ordering Audiences

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, systematic displays of taxidermy presented in serried ranks, encouraged audiences to interpret collections in particular ways. Tony Bennett has suggested that such displays simultaneously encouraged audiences to navigate the interior spaces of museums in particular ways.⁴³⁰ Specifically, where collections were organised according to biological taxonomy, underpinned by the theory of evolution, the layout of the displays helped visually and spatially materialise the principles being communicated.⁴³¹ For Bennett, such systematic layouts contribute to the construction of 'an exhibitionary environment that is simultaneously a performative one; an environment that makes the principles governing it clear by and through the itinerary it organizes'.⁴³² As well as obtaining information by looking at objects, visitors would simultaneously absorb and perform the ideas being presented by being physically directed through the museum space. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have suggested that '[b]y performing the ritual of walking through the museum, the visitor is prompted to enact and thereby internalise the values and beliefs written into the architectural script'.⁴³³ There are elements of the construction and layout of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century case study museums' displays which suggest attempts to manage visitor movements and flow patterns within the public galleries. Specifically, the positioning of museum cases in rows, as demonstrated in WPM's natural history gallery in the 1880s (fig. 17). The classification of natural history may not only have regimented nature, but also regimented visitor behaviour by determining flow patterns within the museum space. Owing to the design of the WPM building and its cramped conditions, however, the extent to which visitor movements and behaviours at WPM could be controlled and mediated could be questioned.⁴³⁴ Indeed, as Kate Hill has suggested, attempts to manage visitor flow patterns in smaller museums like WPM may not have been entirely successful.⁴³⁵ This is because although the displays at WPM were organised taxonomically, owing to the spatial configuration of the Museum it was advised in the 1883 *Visitors' Guide* that:

⁴³⁰ Bennett, 'Organized Walking as Evolutionary Practice', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 179-186.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴³³ Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History*, 3 (1980), 448-469 (p. 450).

⁴³⁴ Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums 1850-1914*, p. 4.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

It has not been possible to arrange all these objects in one room, so that the visitor could see them in proper order by simply walking round, and it will be necessary to inspect the cases in the order in which they are numbered from B1 to B55, and in this manner they are described, commencing with the simplest animals and passing on to those more highly organised.⁴³⁶

Pragmatic difficulties relating to the Museum building and the space available at WPM meant that the interpretation in the gallery space (the numbering of the display cases), and additional information provided by the guide book, informed audiences of how they should move through the gallery, rather than the layout itself. Understanding how to follow the numbered sequence at WPM, therefore, played an important role in how the displays were interpreted by audiences, however, to view the collections in the way that Howarth intended, audiences would need to invest a significant amount of effort in order to intellectually access and interpret the curator's display rationale. Visitors were required to be able to interpret the numerical key to cross-reference the specimen descriptions in the guide book with the numbered cases. In addition, they may also have been required to possess a foundational knowledge of biology to interpret what was being presented in the displays and to understand the significance of the relationships between the specimens within the proposed sequence. For instance, the meanings of various scientific terms used in the guide, such as 'Zoophytes', 'Edentata' and 'Proboscidea' may have been difficult for non-specialist audiences to understand.⁴³⁷ Although the ordering of the display cases at WPM and their interpretation remained under the authority of the curator, the extent to which audiences were able to follow Howarth's directions may have been limited. This puts the extent to which visitor movements were controlled within the gallery at WPM, and how much authority was exercised over how audiences experienced the taxidermied material on display into question.

In the early 1900s school groups visiting the Leeds Philosophical Hall were also instructed to follow a numbered system which determined the order in which the Museum's displays should be viewed.⁴³⁸ In addition to the numbered scheme, however, a guide was issued for scholars and their teachers which mapped out how visitors should move through the Museum's galleries (fig. 53).⁴³⁹ By following the arrows as illustrated on

⁴³⁶ Howarth, *Visitors' Guide to the Sheffield Public Museum, Weston Park*, p. 17.

⁴³⁷ Howarth, *Visitors' Guide to the Sheffield Public Museum, Weston Park*.

⁴³⁸ The City of Leeds Education Committee and The Leeds and District Teachers' Association, *Scheme for Scholars Visiting the Museum: Third Session, 1903-4* (Leeds: [n.pub], 1903(?)).

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

the map, visitors could assimilate the information presented in the order intended by the curator. Similarly, LCM's later 'Museum within the Museum' scheme spatially delineated school groups from other visitors marking out which displays were intended for them, and the order in which they should be viewed (fig. 54).⁴⁴⁰ Just as visitors to WPM were required to view the Museum's display cases in the correct order to interpret them in the way the curator intended, so had school children completing Crowther's 'Museum within the Museum' scheme to follow a distinct series of cases in a certain order to be able to obtain the correct answers for their worksheets.⁴⁴¹ These approaches to ordering collections and the movements of visitors at WPM and the Leeds Philosophical Hall (and later LCM) between the 1880s and 1920s were demonstrative of the modernist model of communication, whereby supposedly objective information was 'transmitted' to audiences.⁴⁴² Curators such as Howarth and Crowther assumed privileged positions in the process of imparting knowledge, and museum communication was considered to be, as suggested by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'a linear process of information transfer from an authoritative source to an uninformed receiver'.⁴⁴³ This didactic model functioned on the assumption that audiences received and understood the information presented to them in the same context as to how it was communicated, and therefore, the resulting knowledge obtained would not be mediated by the prior knowledges of museum visitors.⁴⁴⁴ In addition to the ordering of displays to mediate visitor movements and behaviours in their public galleries, the amount of information made available to audiences through the numbering of cases and the labelling of specimens directly impacted upon their interpretation of the objects on displays. In 1929 LCM reported that a new series of interpretative labels had been added to the displays in the 'Large Zoological Room' which 'should prove helpful to all classes of visitors, as the common as well as scientific names are added', therefore making them easier for non-specialist audiences to understand.⁴⁴⁵ Although the labelling of objects evidences curatorial authorship, perhaps more so in the in the early twentieth century when labels were often handwritten and were therefore indexical of the curator's subjective hand, such alterations demonstrated how museums were attempting to make

⁴⁴⁰ (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Annual Report of the Libraries and Arts Committee to the Council 1921-22*, p. 12.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² Hooper-Greenhill, 'Changing Values in the Art Museum', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 517-532 (p. 520).

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ (Leeds) Libraries and Arts Committee, *City of Leeds Public Libraries, Art Gallery and Museums Annual Report to the Council 1928-29*, p. 14.

their collections intellectually available to a wider audience by diversifying their interpretation (fig. 55).

When LCM and WPM redeveloped their displays to focus on regional wildlife in the post-Second World War period, the linear layouts which had previously shaped audience's experiences of the taxidermy material on display were removed and replaced by more segmented gallery layouts. Although in some cases the layout of the displays remained linear, such as the positioning of the cases at WPM, the galleries no longer had directional routes with clearly defined 'beginning' and 'end' points. For instance, at LCM the individual themes (habitats) of each of the Yorkshire bay displays did not depend on the other displays in the Museum gallery to be interpreted by visitors. Rather, each case could be viewed in isolation, giving visitors more freedom to vary their movements within the gallery space without impeding their understanding of the information being presented. Despite this less structured approach to disciplining the movements of museum visitors at LCM, visitor access to interpreting the Yorkshire displays may have been limited in other ways. For example, in the *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953), it was acknowledged that, '[t]o understand the four bays, some knowledge of the regions they portray is necessary'.⁴⁴⁶ This knowledge was to be obtained not from the displays themselves, but from the Museum guide, which described in close detail, the habitats and ecology of the environments that each display represented.⁴⁴⁷ The first paragraph of interpretation concerning the Wolds and Coast display read as follows:

The Wolds and Coast

The coastline of Yorkshire is one of great variety. Towering vertical cliffs face the full force of the North West Sea gales while the long sandbank of Spurn Head moves with each tide. The scenery and form are completely dependent on the lie and the nature of the rocks. The white chalk, which forms a belt through England, widens in Lincolnshire to form the Wolds and these continue in Yorkshire and turn coastwards to the sea. They form the great promontory of Flambourough Head with its north facing precipice of Bempton. Here the rock ledges are peopled with birds in the nesting season.⁴⁴⁸

This description, and indeed the textual interpretation provided to contextualise the contents of the other Yorkshire displays, reveals a pronounced focus on the geological

⁴⁴⁶ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953), p. 5.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

topography of the region represented, and very little focus on the taxidermied specimens presented within the display cases.⁴⁴⁹ In the Museum guide, the lack of interpretation relating to the taxidermy specimens on display was attributed to the intention 'to replace many of them with better or more suitable specimens' when they became available.⁴⁵⁰ The implication being that the taxidermic content of the displays may change, and to avoid the interpretative content of the guide conflicting with the contents of the displays, the taxidermy specimens were omitted from the interpretation. In addition, the strong geological rather than zoological focus may also have been reflective of the interests of David Owen who had trained as a geologist before managing the Geological Department of Liverpool Museums prior to his appointment at LCM.⁴⁵¹ Without purchasing a copy of the Museum guide, at the cost of sixpence at the time of its production, visitors may have encountered difficulties in interpreting the contexts of the Yorkshire displays in relation to the specimens presented.⁴⁵² The purchase of the guide, however, does not necessarily indicate that it would have been consulted during the Museum visit. Indeed, a questionnaire sent out to members of the public by LCM c.1952-53 'proved that many people reserved their reading of guide books until after they had left the museum'.⁴⁵³ While this observation, and the existence of the questionnaire, reflects a heightened awareness of audiences and audience behaviour, it also suggests that in some cases the interpretation of displays containing taxidermy was consulted by audiences in isolation, and therefore divorced from the specimens on display and the particular contexts of the museum space. In some ways this may have enabled audiences to bring their own meanings to the interpretation as it would have been augmented by memories of the displays rather than the displays themselves. In other ways, however, it is also possible that audiences may have misunderstood or misconstrued the information offered owing to only having part of the information available to them, and particularly since the taxidermied animals on display in the Museum were omitted from the guide's interpretation.

⁴⁴⁹ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953).

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵¹ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 22.

⁴⁵² Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953).

⁴⁵³ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1952-53*, p. 5.

Fragmented Audiences

When approaches to classification and interpretation shifted in the mid-late twentieth century, changes in the layouts of museum galleries were also a reflection of the shifting understanding of museum visitors and their needs. When Tony Tynan planned the redevelopment of the Hancock Museum's 'Bird Room' in late 1970s, the curator had considered the 'solemn text-book' approach as 'inconceivable', and instead, divided up the gallery space according to 'a series of "topics", [...] which could be expressed through specimens, supported by relevant graphics'.⁴⁵⁴ Unlike the linear layout of the taxonomic displays which had previously dominated the Hancock Museum's 'Bird Room', in 'The Magic of Birds' gallery, the creation of a series of smaller display areas effectively compartmentalised the gallery into sections (fig. 56). According to Tynan, the displays were

arranged physically as to be unrelated one to another so that no didactic sequence should be apparent, and the visitor could 'bounce' around the area until something whetted his palate, attracted his eye.⁴⁵⁵

Rather than having a clearly defined beginning and end like the early taxonomic displays, the new layouts had multiple directions which could be taken by visitors in any order. The new layout encouraged individualised exploration, and allowed visitors to make more personalised choices as to which displays they chose to engage with.⁴⁵⁶ Similarly, when WPM opened its 'Wildlife' gallery in 1986, the Museum space was also compartmentalised into smaller, intimate display areas (fig. 57). On a practical level, the compartmentalisation of galleries enabled the creation of more surface areas which allowed for more material to be put on display. The dividing up and fragmentation of museum spaces during the early-mid 1980s, however, was symptomatic of other factors which extended beyond the practicalities of museum design, and indeed the increasing involvement of professional museum designers in the 1980s.⁴⁵⁷ Of particular significance was the shifting balance between the agency of the museum visitor in relation to that of the museum curator, and the increasing recognition that museum audiences have different interests and agendas, in

⁴⁵⁴ Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 203).

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Hillier and Tzortzi, 'Space Syntax: The Language of Museum Space', in *A Companion to Museum Studies* ed. by Macdonald, pp. 282-301 (p. 299).

⁴⁵⁷ The impact of professional museum designers is discussed further in chapter four.

addition to different learning capabilities and learning styles.⁴⁵⁸ As recognised by Philip Wright in 1989, '[t]he museum has to cater for increasingly fragmented publics who want to learn and do different things at different speeds'.⁴⁵⁹ (Also see: 3.3, p. 188). Since the liberation movement of the 1960s, and the rise of cultural studies in academia in the 1970s and 1980s, modernist, patriarchal and euro-centric perspectives were increasingly challenged by revisionist approaches to history which affording previously marginalised groups a louder voice in the public sphere.⁴⁶⁰ This destabilised the notion of the linear narrative and the singular history, giving rise to museum displays which evidenced multiple approaches to interpreting a multiplicity of histories.⁴⁶¹ In addition, these changes coincided with the emergence of Museum Studies, and notably, a growing discourse on museum education which increasingly informed the interpretative approaches adopted by museums in the late twentieth century.⁴⁶² The pluralistic approach to interpretation in the Hancock Museum's 'The Magic of Birds', and WPM's 'Wildlife' gallery, along with the compartmentalisation of gallery spaces in the 1980s, conceptually and spatially reflected an increasing recognition of the plurality of views and opinions that constitute museum audiences and the notion that the 'typical' museum visitor does not exist.⁴⁶³ In addition, cultures of consumption, which were becoming increasingly prevalent in the 1980s, promote a culture of individualism where consumers mark out and define themselves through choice and selection.⁴⁶⁴ The fragmentary and diverse nature of the new layouts, therefore, could also be regarded as being reflective of the impact of the rise of capitalism and its dominant ideologies. In a period when diversity and choice were becoming more integral to people's everyday lived experiences, the case study museums were increasingly

⁴⁵⁸ Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, (Routledge, London: 2005), p. 148.

⁴⁵⁹ Philip Wright, 'The Quality of Visitor's Experiences in Art Museums', in *The New Museology* ed. by Vergo, pp. 119-148 (p. 119).

⁴⁶⁰ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, 1-24 (p. 14).

⁴⁶¹ Rhiannon Mason, 'Cultural Theory and Museum Studies', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 17-32 (p. 18).

⁴⁶² Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'Museums Learning and Culture', in *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-14 (p. 2), and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, ed., *The Educational Role of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁶³ Wright, 'The Quality of Visitor's Experiences in Art Museums', in *The New Museology* ed. by Vergo, pp. 119-148 (p. 119).

⁴⁶⁴ Miles, 'The Individualised City?', in *Spaces for Consumption: Pleasure and Placelessness in the Post-Industrial City*, pp. 13-34 (p. 33).

developing displays which offered visitors the opportunity to choose how they engaged with the taxidermy material they displayed.⁴⁶⁵

The trend for compartmentalising space in museum galleries appears to have extended to the most recent case study museum redevelopments as it is evident in the layout of the GNM:H's 'Natural Northumbria', and in MS:WP's 'What on Earth!' and 'Arctic World' galleries. It is perhaps less evident in LCM's 'Life on Earth', since although the gallery space is divided up by a series of differently themed displays, few are closed off, and the circular shape of the gallery lends it a panoramic quality where the majority of the display areas can be observed from any fixed point within the gallery space. The GNM:H's 'Living Planet' gallery is perhaps the least demonstrative of the compartmentalisation of gallery spaces, since although the 'Bio-Wall' display itself is divided up into segments, the display has been constructed on one vertical and horizontal plane to create a rather flat and confrontational structure (fig. 32). This effect is bolstered by the fact that when viewed head on, the display is not obscured by any other structures within the gallery space. Rather, the visitor's field of vision is wide and uninterrupted, which further enhances the visual and spatial impact of the 'Bio-Wall'. While visitors are able to explore the 'Bio-wall' by walking around it, through it, and from the upper gallery, view it from below, the layout of the display does discipline visitor movements within the Museum space as it confers ideal viewing points which run in parallel to the display. In addition, the positioning of seating on the same horizontal plane, but set in front of the 'Bio-Wall', further attests to the suggestion that audiences are encouraged to view the display from particular positions within the gallery space.

While the layouts of the redeveloped museums appear to provide their audiences with more choice regarding how they engage with the objects on display in comparison to the formalised routes prescribed by their late nineteenth and early twentieth century predecessors, there are more nuanced ways in which some displays continue to encourage visitors to enact and internalise the principles being interpreted. This is particularly the case with evolutionary narratives which continue to govern how many natural science curators conceptualise the meaning and value of their taxidermy collections. For example, at the GNM:H, the modular design of the 'Bio-Wall' encourages visitors to walk under and through the display amongst the taxidermy, models, and the live specimens, in a way that appears to integrate them into the display's rhetoric, effectively rendering them species

⁴⁶⁵ Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98- 117.

representatives. Although audiences can decide how they engage and move around the 'Bio-Wall', the subtlety and technique of the design, facilitated by elevated display cases and casing which is transparent on both sides, is such that the integration of visitors' bodies into the scheme is nuanced (fig. 58, 32). At LCM and MS:WP, opportunities for audiences to rehearse evolutionary narratives are made slightly more explicit. At LCM, visitors are invited to become live species representatives by standing inside an empty display case labelled *Homo sapiens* alongside a group of taxidermied primates (fig. 59). By choosing to represent humans as a species in the primate case, visitors can physically enact and internalise museological classification practices by completing the taxonomic scheme. Similarly at WPM, a display associated with 'Snowy' encourages visitors to dress up in clothing of different thicknesses to encourage them to consider through touch and sensation, how the coats and furs of particular animals have evolved and adapted to their associated habitats.⁴⁶⁶ Andrew Barry has suggested that through these experiential displays, '[t]he body is itself a source of knowledge', since, by wearing the different clothes at WPM, for example, visitors can *feel* why certain animals may have evolved in certain ways.⁴⁶⁷ Barry suggests that through these kinds of interactive displays, visitors make 'scientific principles visible to themselves through the use of touch, smell, hearing or the sense of physical effects on their own bodies'.⁴⁶⁸ The theory of evolution, which opposes many religious conceptions of the creation of life on Earth and posits humans as being genetically related to other species through their descent from a common ancestor, can prove morally and ethically problematic amongst contemporary museum audiences which, it is now widely recognised, have divergent values, views and belief systems.⁴⁶⁹ Although evolution remains the dominant rhetoric underpinning the interpretive themes of a number of displays in the three case study museums, the layouts of the contemporary museum spaces no longer explicitly encourage what Tony Bennett termed, 'organized walking', in order to encourage visitors to enact and internalise the evolutionary narrative to the extent that they did in the past.⁴⁷⁰ Rather, more nuanced and implicit display designs seemingly provide audiences

⁴⁶⁶ LCM has a similar dressing up activity available in 'Life on Earth'.

⁴⁶⁷ Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98- 117 (p. 100).

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Macdonald, 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 273-286.

⁴⁷⁰ Bennett, 'Organized Walking as Evolutionary Practice', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 179-186.

with more variety and choice, while continuing to privilege the communication of evolutionary concepts through embodied experiences.

This chapter has outlined the discrete histories of each of the three case study museums in relation to their taxidermy collections. It has also made the unique collections of each museum and their various methods of display visible to the reader to enable their investigation. In the following chapter, shifts in the interpretation of taxidermy are critically analysed in relation to shifting social values focussing on the meaning of nature and the natural environment in science, the relationships between humans and animals, and the role of the museum to provide for its audiences and stakeholders.

Chapter 3

Science, Ethics and Accountability

Museums play a key role in simultaneously enforcing and reflecting the dominant opinions and attitudes of society. As Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have argued, the ideological function of the museum is 'to impress upon those who pass through it society's most revered beliefs and values'.⁴⁷¹ A significant factor influencing the interpretation and display of taxidermy throughout the histories of Leeds City Museum (LCM), the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H), and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP), has been the role of the three museums in internalising and communicating the dominant ideological positions of society through the presentation and display of their collections. In particular, shifts in science have tempered the meaning and understanding of animals and their habitats. The development of a culture of conservation and environmentalism, and a heightened awareness of issues surrounding animal welfare have also served to dramatically realign ethical positions, particularly since the Second World War. Furthermore, the role of the three case study museums to construct and reflect the identities and interests of their multiple stakeholders has further politicised the display of museum taxidermy. As Tristram Besterman has argued, 'the ethical context for museums is never fixed, but is continually evolving, both as a result of the intense analysis to which museum practitioners subject their own values, and in response to the shifting values of the society which they serve and to which they are accountable'.⁴⁷² As attitudes and opinions towards science, animals, the environment, and the roles of the museums in relation to their multiple stakeholders have shifted, so too have the ways in which taxidermy collections have been displayed and interpreted for the audiences of the three case study museums in order to reflect these significant shifts in social values.

3.1 Ecology, Conservation and Professionalisation

Over the last century, and particularly since the 1950s, the presentation and display of taxidermy in the three case study museums has changed in a variety of ways in order to be responsive to, and reflective of, the shifting focus of scientific research, the

⁴⁷¹ Duncan and Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', 448-469 (p. 449).

⁴⁷² Tristram Besterman, 'Museum Ethics', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 431-442 (p. 432).

professionalisation of the natural sciences, and developing discourses on the conservation and protection of wildlife. These changes in museum displays, therefore, are products of shifting social values in the wider collective consciousness, and as such, are as reflective of the relationships between people, as they are of the relationships between humans and the natural world.

By the late nineteenth century, taxonomic study had provided naturalists and scientists with a vast database of information, and the knowledge gleaned from describing and classifying the natural world provided the foundations upon which the study of ecology could emerge.⁴⁷³ Ecology, the study of the geographical distribution and abundance of species, along with the relationships between organisms and the environments within which they reside, became an increasingly popular field of research in museums. Stephen Asma has suggested that:

Curators in the late nineteenth century were becoming increasingly aware of ecological relationships, of the interconnections between plants and animals. The environment was not just a negligible backdrop for animal drama, but was inextricably mixed into the life of the animal and vice versa.⁴⁷⁴

While the day to day agendas of curators working with and on natural history collections in the late nineteenth century were beginning to shift in response to some of the new questions being posed from within the discipline, developments in ecological studies and a growing awareness of a need to conserve wildlife remained largely unexplored in museum galleries.⁴⁷⁵ While game hunters and sportsmen continued to hunt the wildlife of the British colonial territories in the first decades of the twentieth century, in other cultural spheres the formation of societies and organisations supporting the preservation of nature demonstrated the increasing concern amongst amateur and professional naturalists that the persecution of wildlife was becoming increasingly unacceptable.⁴⁷⁶ On a national level,

⁴⁷³ Farber, *Finding Order in Nature: The Naturalist Tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson*, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Stephen T. Asma, *Stuffed Animals & Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 42.

⁴⁷⁵ Although ecology was becoming a more central concern, with species remaining undiscovered and the frontiers of what defines a species continually shifting in light of new scientific developments, taxonomic work remained an important part of biological research, as indeed it does today.

⁴⁷⁶ David Evans, '1890-1940: Societies and Suburbia', in *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 43-63 (p. 53). MacKenzie, 'Shikar and the Safari: Hunting and Conservation in the British Empire', in *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism*, pp. 295-311. Figures illustrating the declining but continued hunting of game in the

wildlife societies like the Royal Society for the Protection Birds (RSPB), established in 1899, were already playing a significant role in the study of wildlife and championing its conservation.⁴⁷⁷ While, on a local level, various voluntary associations and natural history societies like the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne (NHSNDNT) were promoting the study and preservation of local wildlife. Although the agenda of the NHSNDNT was becoming increasingly focussed on the importance of wildlife conservation (for instance in 1932 the Society reported of how '[t]he Council deplores the continued destruction of useful and interesting birds',) this was not yet a dominant theme shaping the interpretation of taxidermy specimens displayed in the galleries of the Hancock Museum, or indeed, in any of the case study museums.⁴⁷⁸ Increasingly the serried ranks were seen as a problem, not only because they appeared less relevant to non-specialist audiences, but also because they didn't reflect the shifting scientific focus on ecology that was gathering momentum behind the scenes in museums.⁴⁷⁹ There were, however, occasional instances where displays featuring examples of rare or extinct species were interpreted in relation to the impact of human activity upon the natural world through their specimen labels. The following text label which accompanied the display of a passenger pigeon at LCM c.1930 provides such an example (fig. 55):

North American Passenger Pigeons existed in countless millions well into the 19th century, but – due to man's destructive opposition, a rapid decline set in and the last died in 1914.⁴⁸⁰

Although the interpretation of discrete species according to their conservation status did occur, such as LCM's passenger pigeon, ideas and theories concerning the relationships between animals and their environments, including the impact of humans upon the natural world, were not dominant themes shaping the interpretation of the three case study museums' taxidermy collections. In addition, although the human relationship with nature was slowly shifting in the public imagination, it remained complex and at times

colonial territories in the first decades of the twentieth century are reflected in the log books of the Van Ingen Taxidermy company, Mysore. See: Morris, 'The Paperwork', in *Van Ingen & Van Ingen: Artists in Taxidermy*, pp. 103-122.

⁴⁷⁷ Moss, 'Protecting', in *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching*, pp. 72-85 (p. 172), John Sheail, *Nature in Trust: The History of Nature Conservation in Britain* (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1976), pp. 11-16.

⁴⁷⁸ Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Asma, *Stuffed Animals & Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums*, p. 42.

⁴⁸⁰ Excerpt from a handwritten specimen label from LCM c. 1930.

contradictory. In the 1930s, for example, the perceived need to protect the environment and educate the public in the identification of species led some curators to bring freshly cut plants and flowers into museums.⁴⁸¹ While it was acknowledged by the NHSNDNT at the Hancock Museum that the collection of rare species was best avoided: 'The Council is most anxious that the continued existence of uncommon plants should not be jeopardised by injudicious picking', other more common species continued to be cut and displayed.⁴⁸² This may seem like a contradiction in relation to the contemporary ethical frame, but it was an attitude contingent to the particular contexts of the time and was not uncommon. For instance, in an article featured in the *Museums Journal* in 1933 which advised museums on how to construct a wild flower table, it was suggested that museums might accompany displays of flowers with 'propaganda against the destruction of even common but persecuted flowers'.⁴⁸³

While a public shift in opinion towards Imperialism gradually developed, it was paralleled by a number of other influencing factors which served to realign the meaning and value of nature in the collective cultural consciousness. Throughout both World Wars, rationing had encouraged households to take advantage of gardens and allotments, leading the public to become increasingly exposed to the variety and habits of their native wildlife. During the First World War, Weston Park Museum (WPM) reported that '[t]he cultivation of allotments, which the war developed on a large scale, revealed to many people puzzling problems in economic biology entirely new and strange to them [*sic*]', problems which by responding to public enquiries, the Museum attempted to answer.⁴⁸⁴ Similarly, in the decade following the end of the Second World War, LCM reported a steady increase in enquiries from the public concerning local wildlife.⁴⁸⁵ By 1955, LCM reported that enquiries to the Museum, almost half of which had been related to the natural world, had been greater that year than any year previously recorded, despite their seasonal nature.⁴⁸⁶

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the demolition and subsequent redevelopment of certain areas within Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield may have led to an increased

⁴⁸¹ Anonymous, 'The Wild Flower Table', *Museums Journal*, 33: 2 (May 1933), 39. Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1, p. 3.

⁴⁸² Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *The Hancock Museum Bulletin*, 1, p. 3.

⁴⁸³ Anonymous, 'The Wild Flower Table', 39.

⁴⁸⁴ City of Sheffield, *Report of the Public Museums and Mappin Art Gallery 1914-1919*, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁵ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-55*, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

awareness of the environment in the public.⁴⁸⁷ The local and urban environment was changing, and new housing initiatives sought to oppose and eradicate the unsanitary conditions associated with inner-city Victorian dwellings.⁴⁸⁸ In addition, on a broader scale, concerns over the thick black smog which had become the blight of industrialised towns and cities were growing.⁴⁸⁹ Air pollution caused by unregulated industrial and domestic emissions posed a significant risk to people's health, as well as that of the environment.⁴⁹⁰ The smog concerned the authorities because increasingly common respiratory illnesses like bronchitis hindered productivity and therefore the economic recovery and growth of towns and cities.⁴⁹¹ This led to the enforcement of the Clean Air Act in 1956 in an attempt to improve the air quality, as it was presumed that improved environmental conditions may lead to a healthier and therefore more productive population.⁴⁹² Although legislation such as the Clean Air Act demonstrated how political and economic agendas were at play in the promotion of environmental awareness in the 1950s, the new restrictions also demonstrated a level of environmental awareness which helped underscore the perceived importance of clean surroundings in relation to the comfort and happiness of city dwellers.

Bird Watching

While environmental and wildlife legislation may have reflected shifting ethical positions in the wider collective cultural consciousness, new laws also served to shape social norms in

⁴⁸⁷ W. R. Mitchell, 'The Twentieth Century', in *A History of Leeds* (Chichester, Phillimore & Co., 2000), pp. 128-158 (p. 143). David Byrne, 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle: Planning since 1945', in *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*, ed. by Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (West Sussex: Phillimore & Co., 2001), pp. 341-360. David Hey, 'The Modern City', in *A History of Sheffield* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 1998), pp. 212-260 (p. 230-235).

⁴⁸⁸ Patrick Nuttgens, 'The Birth of the Council House', in *The Home Front: Housing the People in 1840-1990* (London: BBC Books, 1989), pp. 47-66.

⁴⁸⁹ Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce, *Air Pollution in Leeds* (Report of a Study Group of the National Section of the Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce) (Leeds: [n.pub], 1965). Peter Brears, a previous Director of LCM, suggested that Leeds' relative success in avoiding after dark air-raids during the Second World War may have been due to the density of the lingering smog which made the city difficult to detect from the air. This suggests how severe the air pollution in Leeds may have been. Peter Brears, *Images of Leeds 1850-1960* (Derby: Breedon Books, 1992), p. 214.

⁴⁹⁰ Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce, *Air Pollution in Leeds*.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁹² Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 26. Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, p. 105. Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce, *Air Pollution in Leeds*, p. 7.

the 1950s.⁴⁹³ Although various laws passed in the late 1800s and early 1900s had served to protect birds, the Protection of Birds Act, established in 1954, more strictly enforced the prohibition of the previously widely practiced interest in egg collecting.⁴⁹⁴ The installation of displays presenting taxidermied birds aimed at the bird watching community in the galleries of LCM and WPM was almost simultaneous to the enforcement of these new laws (see: 2.2, p. 95).⁴⁹⁵ As part of the redevelopment of systematic displays into thematic displays, the two museums seized an opportunity to create topical and relevant displays which would also provide for particular groups in the local community. In 1953 the LCM reported that:

Many societies meet in the museum rooms, and many people regard the museum as their cultural centre. It is hoped that they will continue to do so and will feel even more at home as time goes on.⁴⁹⁶

The installation of the bird watching displays at LCM and WPM was also a product of the perceived social role of the museum as a moral agent invested in civilizing and edifying the general public. The displays provided a means by which the museums could promote public engagement with the natural environment, while simultaneously ensuring that enthusiasm for wildlife was channelled in the appropriate way in accordance with shifting social values and ethical positions. This political dimension in the development of the bird-watching displays was reflective of the social agendas of museums more broadly; and the promotion of an interest in the natural world was regarded as a more noble leisure pursuit in the face of other, increasingly popular but supposedly less virtuous pastimes such as visiting the public house. In the Museums Association's *Post-War Policy* (1945), an interest in nature, as facilitated by museums, was identified as an edifying pursuit which had the power to detract the public from what were perceived to be the hedonistic draws of capitalism:

The mass-produced pleasures and amusements of to-day have the ill-effects of drugs-discontent, boredom, and loss of initiative, museums and art galleries have done much, and given the necessary financial support could

⁴⁹³ Moss, 'Learning: The Post-War Era 1945-1958', in *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching*, pp. 172-222 (p. 196).

⁴⁹⁴ For more on the 1954 Protection of Birds Act see: Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, pp. 102-104. For earlier laws see: Evans, pp. 35-42. The 1954 Act was later annulled by The Wildlife and Countryside Act enforced in 1981. Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, p. 17.

⁴⁹⁵ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1952-53*, p. 2. City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1954-1955*, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁶ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953), p. 3.

do much more, to combat these evils by stimulating an interest in Nature and in man's reactions to his environment, and by inculcating the appreciation of beauty without which life cannot be complete.⁴⁹⁷

Reflecting these broader aims, in 1945 LCM reported that '[one] of the greatest needs of the present time is to provide the youth of our cities with some alternative to the commercial cinema, the street parade, and the dance-hall'.⁴⁹⁸

While taxidermy specimens were no longer organised according to biological classification at LCM, by presenting examples of many species in the bird watching displays and promoting bird watching activities, the displays could still be conceptualised as fulfilling the human drive to count, collect and classify.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, by aiming to represent one of every species, albeit within a more refined geographical range, the philosophies informing the content of the new displays were reminiscent of those which had shaped the encyclopaedic displays that preceded them.⁵⁰⁰ By 1954, collecting birds and birds' eggs was largely prohibited, but the collecting practices associated with birds remained popular, only the forms through which they were exercised had been realigned in accordance with shifting social, moral and ethical values in relation to the growing culture of wildlife conservation.⁵⁰¹ Increasingly, birdwatchers virtually collected species by recording their sightings and by taking photographs in the field - an activity known as "tally hunting", rather than acquiring the bodies or eggs of birds.⁵⁰² This may be one of the reasons why bird watching became so popular, because it built upon and extended established collecting

⁴⁹⁷ Council of the Museums Association, *Museums and Art Galleries A National Service: A Post-War Policy* (London, Council of the Museums Association: 1945), p. 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS City Museums Post War Development (1945), p. 12. The view that an interest in the natural world amongst the general public could supplant or help counteract the vices of an increasingly capitalist society remained part of the moral rhetoric of some museums well into the twentieth century. For example, in later years other groups affiliated with museums, such as the 'Saturday Morning Club', established by LCM in 1963 in association with the Wildlife Youth Service, reflected the position of the museum as a moral agent in the education and edification of younger audiences. Attendees were invited to attend lectures and to partake in nature walks and camping trips to areas of renowned natural beauty such as Snowdonia, the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales. See: Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The Story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 83.

⁴⁹⁹ The drive to collect has been explored by Susan Pearce in: Pearce, 'Collecting Ourselves', in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, pp. 159-177.

⁵⁰⁰ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1952-53*, p. 2.

⁵⁰¹ As with many wildlife laws, there were some exceptions to the 1954 Act see: Moss, 'Learning: The Post-War Era 1945-1958', in *A Bird in the Bush: A Social History of Birdwatching*, pp. 172-222 (p. 196).

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

practices by reconfiguring rather than conflicting with them.⁵⁰³ Indeed, membership to voluntary groups and societies concerned with the conservation of birds increased dramatically throughout this period, and by 1970, the RSPB boasted a 300,000 strong membership.⁵⁰⁴ A key tool of the avid bird watcher, the camera, has been viewed as contributing to the conservation of the natural world by enabling individuals to record their experiences with nature while leaving animals and their environments undisturbed. Finis Dunaway, amongst others, has suggested that the camera supplanted the gun, as ‘a machine that could remember, a machine that could preserve nature and the primitive past’.⁵⁰⁵ By the 1960s, cameras were more widely available to the public, and in keeping with the shifting philosophy towards collecting, the then Keeper of Biology at LCM, John Armitage (1900-1996), published a series of wildlife articles for the local newspaper *The Yorkshire Evening Post* using the title ‘Hunting with a Camera’ to encourage more ethical public engagements with nature.⁵⁰⁶

Habitat Groups and Contextual Displays

When LCM and WPM redeveloped their galleries in the 1950s to focus on regional wildlife, the appearance and content of the taxidermy displays they installed were reflective of a heightened focus on ecology and the perceived need for wildlife conservation. While the taxidermy mounts featured in the serried ranks had largely been isolated from one another and presented in a regimented fashion against plain backgrounds, in the new thematic displays, taxidermy specimens were presented in groups, both alongside and in relation to one another, surrounded by artificially constructed habitats. In LCM’s Wolds and Coast

⁵⁰³ Ibid., pp. 172-222.

⁵⁰⁴ Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, p. 136.

⁵⁰⁵ Finis Dunaway, ‘Hunting with the Camera: Nature Photography, Manliness, and Modern Memory, 1890-1930’, *Journal of American Studies*, 34: 2 (2000), 207-230 (p. 210). While numerous studies have drawn attention to the shared functional and representational properties of hunting, taxidermy and photography, the very semiotics of photography, to ‘capture’ and to ‘shoot’, are indicative of its conceptual relation to the hunt. See: Haraway, ‘Teddy Bear Patriarchy Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936’, in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science*, pp. 42-46, Hauser, ‘Coming Apart at the Seams’, 8-11 (p. 9), Michelle Henning, ‘Skins of the Real: Taxidermy and Photography’, in *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, ed. by Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson, pp. 136-147, James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualisation of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁵⁰⁶ Armitage worked at the Museum from 1953-1969 and wrote his ‘Hunting with a Camera’ articles under the pseudonym ‘Moorcock’. Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. JANOTES (notes on John Armitage, boxed). Also See: Adrian Norris, ‘Obituary: John Armitage (1900-1996)’, *Naturalist*, 122 (1997), 27-28.

case, taxidermied seabirds such as shags, terns and razorbills (right case) were displayed alongside waders and shorebirds such as a sandpiper, godwit and curlew (left case) (fig. 20).⁵⁰⁷ In addition, other natural history specimens such as shells and eggs, augmented the displays. Painted backdrops, each illustrating a naturalistic scene were used to depict the environmental characteristics of each locality.⁵⁰⁸ Through the simulation of naturalistic environments in the Yorkshire displays, taxidermy specimens were presented in ways that would have been more recognisable and relatable to how local, non-specialist audiences may have experienced wildlife outside of the Museum. While the locus of the scientific authority of specimens presented in systematic series had been their ability to figure as embodied data sets, as scientific ‘facts’ used to evidence an underlying order in nature, the contextual displays were authoritative because they portrayed more naturalistic looking visions of how nature actually existed in the outside world. (Also see: 2.1, p. 74). LCM’s habitat displays of regional wildlife helped visualise and facilitate the interpretation of ecological principles and the relationships between species and their environments, while simultaneously making the Museum’s displays appear more relevant to local audiences. In addition, despite their artificial constituents, the habitat displays may have evoked a sense of revoked ownership over the taxidermied animals they contained by re-inserting them into more natural looking contexts. To an extent, visually the displays were reminiscent of dioramas which, as Rachel Poliquin has suggested, were developed with a view to create ‘a window onto nature offering an illusion of wilderness untouched by human artifice’.⁵⁰⁹ Although smaller, less illusionistic and less technically complex, in principle the contextual habitat displays still enabled the species represented to ostensibly inhabit the same romanticised, wild and pristine site in the popular imagination as living nature outside.⁵¹⁰

The representation of taxidermy in more naturalistic contexts was reflective of the shifting conception of nature in the collective cultural consciousness, and was a product of increased exposure to the natural environment in a variety of different ways. Technological developments in particular increasingly facilitated public interactions with the natural world. For instance, the revolution in housekeeping, marked by the increasing availability of

⁵⁰⁷ Leeds City Museums, *Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays* (1953), p. 10.

⁵⁰⁸ (Leeds) Sub-Libraries and Arts (Museums) Committee to the Council, *Annual Report Leeds City Museums 1954-55*, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁹ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 97.

⁵¹⁰ For more on the rise of the culture of nature preservation in relation to notions of longing and nostalgia for the ‘wilderness’ (in the American context) see: Dunaway, ‘Hunting with the Camera: Nature Photography, Manliness, and Modern Memory, 1890-1930’, 207-230.

domestic appliances and white goods throughout the 1950s and 1960s freed up valuable time, which for many households, had previously been predominantly absorbed by domestic chores.⁵¹¹ Facilitated by advances in transport and the increased availability of the motorcar, walking and following nature trails and picnicking became increasingly popular, encouraging the public to explore their surroundings and develop a deeper appreciation for the natural environment.⁵¹² In some instances museums themselves helped facilitate public excursions by developing off-shoot sites in rural areas. For example, in 1965 the Hancock Museum and the NHSNDN in association with the Forestry Commission opened a small field museum in the Border Forest Park.⁵¹³ In 1965 Tony Tynan, commented on these shifting interactions between the public and the natural environment observing how:

At weekends and on holidays more and more of “us townies” are escaping to the country. Reasons for the weekly exodus may be as varied as the people taking part in it [...] but in the main people are seeking relief from the smoke, noise and artificiality of city life.⁵¹⁴

In escaping the cities, city dwellers could experience the wildlife that had previously declined in parallel with the growth of industrial towns, and perhaps more importantly, they could experience the wildlife of different environments, such as that of the countryside and that of the coast.⁵¹⁵ The development of habitat displays reflected the heightened focus on ecology amongst the natural science community, but they also depicted wildlife as it was increasingly experienced by the public, enabling museums to create displays which were visually engaging, relatable, and most of all, relevant to local audiences.

⁵¹¹ Nuttgens, *The Home Front: Housing the People in 1840-1990*, p. 10.

⁵¹² This was further facilitated by the passing of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which afforded the public greater access to the open country. Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, pp. 79-92.

⁵¹³ Hickling, *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979*, p. 23. The Museum served as a nature information centre and was described to have interpreted ‘almost every aspect of the natural history of the 128,000 acres of the Border Forest Park’, [Anthony M. Tynan, (?)], *What’s New*, (Newcastle: [n. pub], 1965), p. 1. In addition, it was reported that ‘although the museum is 50 miles out from Newcastle, over 500 people went to visit in the first two weekends following its opening’ demonstrating the Museum’s popularity despite its remote location. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ [Tynan, (?)], *What’s New*, (1965).

⁵¹⁵ For more on leisure, tourism and the consumption of nature see: John Urry, ‘Consuming Nature’, in *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 173-211.

Reframing the Image of Natural History

The 1960s saw the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) launched in Britain, as well as the establishment of other international organisations focussed on conservation such as Friends of the Earth, and campaigning groups such as Greenpeace.⁵¹⁶ (Also see: 3.2, p. 145). Through numerous culture and sub-culture movements and the media, nature was increasingly being recast as fragile, as something in need of human protection. In response to the developing discourses on conservation and the culture of environmentalism, between 1958 and 1959 WPM created a display which evidenced a more concerted effort to promote the protection of wildlife:

A more miscellaneous group of specimens, drawn from various sections of the zoology and geology collections, was assembled in another new display showing something of the variety of forms of *Extinct Animals*. With this theme in mind, the topic of *Bird Protection* was taken as the subject for two new cases and was illustrated by examples of recently extinguished species and by specimens and distribution maps showing the need for concern regarding some of the diminishing species of to-day [*emphasis in original*].⁵¹⁷

Hannah Paddon's study, *How have Natural History Collections in Case Study Museums in Southwest England Evolved in Terms of Display and Interpretation* (2007), reflects how municipal museums in other parts of England were also redeveloping their natural history displays in the 1950s and 1960s to have a pronounced focus on 'environmental and topical issues'.⁵¹⁸ This may suggest that the shift towards more conservation orientated displays at WPM was reflective of a wider emerging trend in British museums at the time. Peter Davis has also suggested, however, that 'within the museum world of the 1960s little reference was made to the loss of species, or to the museum role in conservation'.⁵¹⁹ These inconsistencies suggest that while displays interpreting conservation themes were beginning to emerge in some museums, this may not have been the case in others. Indeed, in the Hancock Museum, where displays such as those featured in the 'Bird Room' were becoming

⁵¹⁶ The WWF was launched in Britain in 1961. Friends of the Earth was established in America in 1969, and the UK division established in 1971. Greenpeace was established in 1969, originally under the name 'Don't make a Wave'. Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, p. 113, 126.

⁵¹⁷ City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1958-1960*, p. 9.

⁵¹⁸ Paddon, 'How have Natural History Collections in Case Study Museums in Southwest England Evolved in Terms of Display and Interpretation?', 22-33 (p. 29, 32).

⁵¹⁹ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 134.

increasingly outdated, it may have been difficult to see how the behind the scenes conservation activities of the NHSNDNT keyed in to the serried ranks of taxidermy on public display. While in other spaces, both in the field and the Museum, the NHSNDNT were very active in various wildlife conservation activities.⁵²⁰ For example, in 1962 when Tony Tynan founded the Northumberland and Durham Naturalist's Trust (now the Northumberland Wildlife Trust) with the curator's office doubling up as a meeting room for the Council.⁵²¹

At the Hancock Museum, the perceived social responsibility of the Museum to interpret increasingly pressing environmental issues was stifled by the Museum's lack of resources. For instance, in 1971 the NHSNDNT reported that '[g]loomy predictions of the fate of an overpopulated, polluted planet with ever-dwindling resources appear to be no longer solely the product of recent prophets and visionaries', yet constraints on funds continued to limit opportunities for these shifting attitudes to be transcribed into the Museum's public displays.⁵²² Outdated displays which perpetuated the idea that museums were out of touch with contemporary concerns about conservation could be viewed as being indicative of a much broader challenge that faced natural history as a discipline in the 1970s. During this period, the parameters and character of natural history were subject to critical assessment and revision as curators and other natural history professionals sought to carve out and reassert its contemporary relevance, while simultaneously attempting to divest the discipline of some of the more negative associations it had acquired over the years. In 1975 James Bateman suggested that the early conception of natural history had encapsulated, 'essentially, a study of anything which was not the product of human industry and embraced those sciences that we now refer to as botany, geology, astronomy and zoology, together with anthropology and medicine'.⁵²³ As museums and their staff had become increasingly professionalised and specialised in particular disciplines in the post-war period, ideas about what constituted natural history had become increasingly refined.⁵²⁴ Bateman argued that by the 1970s, the term 'natural history' had taken on distinctly amateurish connotations which lent 'less respect' to institutions and curators working under its title in comparison to those working in the 'natural sciences' and in

⁵²⁰ For more on these activities see: Hickling, *The Natural History Society of Northumbria: 1929-1979*, p. 37-35.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23. Anonymous, 'People in Focus: Tony Tynan', *Roebuck*, 123 (April -July 2011), 17.

⁵²² The Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, *Annual Report 31st July* (1971), p. 6.

⁵²³ Bateman, Erwin and Anderson, 'Museums and Biology', 159-168 (p. 159).

⁵²⁴ Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*.

'biology' using the professional title of 'biologist'.⁵²⁵ Indeed, at WPM, associations with 'natural history' were increasingly severed through the renaming of museum departments and staff titles in the 1970s and 1980s. Tim H. Riley, then Keeper (Natural History), and his contemporary Derek Whitely, then Assistant Keeper (Natural History), saw their professional titles change to 'Keeper (Natural Sciences)' and 'Assistant Keeper (Natural Sciences)' respectively.⁵²⁶ In addition, during the same period, WPM's technician, Mr. W. Jerry Lee saw his title change from 'Technician (Natural History)' to 'Conservator (Natural Sciences)'.⁵²⁷ In effect, the renaming of natural history departments, and in some cases, the further delineation of disciplines within them, served to disassociate the discipline from its traditional associations with amateurish scientific hobbyists and the figure of the whimsical and esoteric (specifically Victorian) naturalist-come-natural historian.⁵²⁸ It has been argued that these characterisations continue to be perpetuated in some circles. For example, in 2000 Paul Farber lamented how a few 'science writers and other commentators' continue to 'patronizingly treat natural history as old-fashioned; a pastime that conjures up images of men in knickers carrying butterfly nets or Victorian ladies with plant presses'.⁵²⁹ The shift, however, from natural history to natural science in the latter part of the twentieth century contributed, in part, to the realignment of public and professional perceptions of the discipline. As curators of the natural sciences increasingly eschewed old fashioned archetypes of their profession, they were better placed to draw attention to contemporary shifts and developments, in both practice and sensibility, within their respective fields. The professionalisation of the natural sciences also gave rise to the establishment of the Biology Curator's Group (BCG) in 1975 which helped unite the experience and expertise of numerous museum professionals working with UK biology collections.⁵³⁰ The association provided a platform for the dissemination of knowledge particular to the use and care of

⁵²⁵ Bateman, Erwin and Anderson, 'Museums and Biology', 159-168 (p. 159).

⁵²⁶ Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (pp. 73-74).

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Charles Waterton is a good example of such an archetype. See: Waterton, *Wanderings in South America, etc. / by Charles Waterton*, and Grasseni, 'Taxidermy as Rhetoric of Self-Making: Charles Waterton (1782-1865), Wandering Naturalist', 269-294.

⁵²⁹ Farber, *Finding Order in Nature: The Naturalist Tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson*, p. 4.

⁵³⁰ Steve Garland, 'Reminiscences: Speech made at BCG Anniversary Dinner', *The Biology Curator*, 5 (1996), 2-3 (p. 20). In 2003, the Biology Curator's Group and the Natural Sciences Conservation Group (NSCG) amalgamated to form the 'Natural Sciences Collections Association' (NatSCA). Established in 1995, the NSCG was formed from the Natural Sciences Section of the United Kingdom Institute of Conservation (UKIC) which was restructured in 1995. Natural Sciences Collections Association, 'History', Natural Sciences Collections Association <<http://www.natsca.org/history>> [accessed 15 November 2013].

biology collections amongst the British natural science network and complemented the activities of the Geology Curator's Group (GCG), which had been founded in the previous year.⁵³¹ The formation of the BCG was in response to a perceived need among museum professionals to improve the standards of use, conservation and maintenance of UK biology collections. The organisation not only enabled members to communicate via a more formalised platform, but galvanised an authoritative body through which members could collectively communicate their views and opinions to other organisations.⁵³²

David Evans has suggested that the 'European Conservation Year' in 1970, a campaign organised by the Council for Europe, which aimed at bringing conservation issues to the attention of the public, marked a turning point in the history of nature conservation.⁵³³

European Conservation Year took the message to the people in a popular and down-to-earth fashion. It was a year of exhibitions, open days and meetings; of lectures and films; of field trips, nature trails and practical projects; of publicity and media coverage.⁵³⁴

Such high profile campaigns, along with a rise in the number of conservation themed issues in the media, may have contributed to the shifting public perception of the importance of protecting animals and their environments in the early 1970s.⁵³⁵ In addition, CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) was established in 1975 to place controls on the international trade in wildlife affording threatened species greater protection.⁵³⁶ Furthermore, Evans has reported that between 1970 and 1980, membership of the National Trust jumped from approximately 200,000 to 1,000,000 members.⁵³⁷ By the mid-1970s, therefore, the social responsibility of museums to interpret and promote the protection of wildlife as well as being more active in conservation projects contrasted significantly with the collecting activities of earlier

⁵³¹ Natural Sciences Collections Association, 'History', Natural Sciences Collections Association <<http://www.natsca.org/history>> [accessed 15 November 2013].

⁵³² A perceived need to better understand the wildlife of the regions while also adding to a wider picture of the ecology of the UK also led museums to become increasingly involved in data collection and biological recording. By the 1970s many museums were working with Environmental Record Centres to collate information concerning local and regional biodiversity. Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, pp. 167-189.

⁵³³ Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, p. 135.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵³⁶ Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, p. 17.

⁵³⁷ Evans, *A History of Nature Conservation in Britain*, p. 45. According to Evans the two millionth member of the National Trust was recruited in 1990.

generations of curators. It was a shift in attitude which constituted 'a turnabout', as suggested by James Bateman, 'from an earlier situation where wildlife exploitation was not an unfamiliar acidity for the museum curator'.⁵³⁸ (See: 2.1, pp. 62 - 75). Accordingly, by 1975 a small number of more hard-hitting conservation themed displays had been installed into the public galleries of WPM reflecting the Museum's stronger position in regard to the protection of wildlife. For example, a display featuring a taxidermied fish was used to interpret the hazards of water pollution to aquatic life (fig. 60):

Water ☠️ Pollution

200 years ago in Sheffield the river Don was rich in Salmon, Trout and other fish.

Urbanisation has led to the pollution of water by sewage and industrial wastes.

Breakdown of sewage harms aquatic wildlife by removing oxygen from the water.

Organic chemicals and heavy metals, such as lead and mercury, are another hazard [*formatting in original*].⁵³⁹

The theme of the display suggests that WPM was becoming increasingly engaged in interpreting conservation topics, which helped resituate the Museum in respect to its social and ethical position regarding the protection of wildlife. The water pollution display, did not, however, appear to adopt a campaigning position. Rather, more didactic approaches to interpreting taxidermy in relation to wildlife conservation were privileged over interpreting how the behind the scenes activities of the Museum's natural science department may have keyed in to the issues being presented to the public in the 1970s.

Facing Extinction

In the 1980s and 1990s a seemingly contradictory situation arose from the conservation agenda which mediated the meaning and value of extant museum taxidermy collections in a number of different and complex ways. While the protection of animals and their environments was omnipresent in the collective cultural consciousness, museums such as

⁵³⁸ Bateman, Erwin and Anderson, 'Museums and Biology', 159-168 (p. 162).

⁵³⁹ Excerpt from 'Water Pollution' display, WPM.

Salford were cleansing their collections of taxidermy objects, despite their perceived value to science and ultimately to the conservation of wildlife.⁵⁴⁰ (See: 1.1, p. 37, and fig. 2). In 1996 Peter Davis suggested that, 'as species become rarer in the wild, the ethical argument for maintaining collections and rescuing orphaned ones, so ensuring the well-being of irreplaceable resources collected in the past, becomes overriding'.⁵⁴¹ For some, however, the presentation of taxidermy, particularly of examples of extinct, endangered, or protected species, can appear to contradict the conservation message being communicated by the very museums that present them. This perceived contradiction is resonant in the following comment by Michelle Henning in relation to the taxidermy featured in the early twentieth century dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) where dioramas are described as spaces where

a once living, healthy animal is sacrificed in order to enable its perfect reconstruction as a mannequin inhabiting its own skin, for the purposes of an exhibit intended to inspire in its audience a love of nature and a desire to protect it.⁵⁴²

The result of these seemingly conflicting forces, of the social responsibility of museums to preserve collections, to be relevant, and to reflect contemporary social values and ethical positions, had, by the late twentieth century, rendered some museum taxidermy a contested site.

Before WPM's shift to Trust status, spending controls on behalf of the local authority had resulted in the Museum experiencing a series of budget cuts, the severity of which the then curator, Derek Whiteley, had suggested brought the Museum 'perilously close to disappearing'.⁵⁴³ Similarly, cuts to Government schemes such as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in the 1980s left Tony Tynan suggesting that plans to redevelop the galleries of the Hancock Museum were 'so remote as to be a joke in rather poor taste'.⁵⁴⁴ Yet, museum redevelopments were achieved in the 1980s, and the kinds of

⁵⁴⁰ Norris, 'Vanishing Herds - Large Mammals in Museum Collections?', 148-149.

⁵⁴¹ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 152.

⁵⁴² Michelle Henning, 'Skins of the Real: Taxidermy and Photography', in *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, ed. by Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson, pp. 136-147 (p. 140).

⁵⁴³ Derek Whiteley, 'Surfing the Budget Cuts: The Range of Consultancy Work at Sheffield Museum', *The Biology Curator*, 5 (1996), 12-13 (p. 12).

⁵⁴⁴ Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 202). The MSC scheme provided work for unemployed individuals in a climate of high unemployment, although workers may have had particular skills in certain trades, it was also common for workers to have no, or very little

displays that were installed demonstrated a much stronger focus on the conservation of wildlife, and increasingly, the human impact upon the natural world. For instance, following the opening of the redeveloped 'Bird Room' at the Hancock Museum, taxidermy was used to interpret themes such as the shooting of birds and the laws associated with its regulation, while other displays warned of the dangers of ill-considered land management such as the improper or illegal use of animal traps (fig. 61). Similarly, new displays featured in WPM's 'Wildlife' gallery, displayed examples of foreign bird species to interpret the use of feathers by particular cultures and communities alongside issues surrounding the plume trade and its impact upon bird populations (fig. 62). The installation of these kinds of displays reflected how the case study museums were increasingly focusing on conservation and wildlife protection themes in their public displays, as well as more readily acknowledging the need to interpret the complex relationships between humans and animals. In 1986 Geoffrey Stansfield observed that, while in the past museums had 'a tendency to depict the natural world as being divorced from the activities of man and to give pride of place in the displays to wild and unspoiled places', activity in museums in the mid-1980s revealed a revised agenda 'to show that our natural heritage is the result of a dynamic and ever-changing interaction between man and the environment and to focus attention on man-made habitats and the human factors which have created them'.⁵⁴⁵ In addition, rather than providing audiences with idealised visions of untouched and pristine nature, as epitomised by the dioramas installed in the AMNH, some habitat group displays were developed which presented less romanticised and idealised visions of nature.⁵⁴⁶ For example, at WPM somewhat dystopian displays of urban wildlife were presented to audiences in which taxidermy objects were used to depict a version of nature that far from being removed from human influence, was entirely shaped by it (fig. 63).

One taxidermy display in particular, which opened as part of the Hancock Museum's 'The Living Planet' gallery in 1996, threw concerns about declining biodiversity and the extinction of species into sharp relief. The display consisted of an imitation graveyard where the names of various extinct species and the dates of their extinction, such as the dodo, were written upon imitation gravestones (fig. 64). A taxidermied dodo was displayed inside a case made to look like a tombstone. The dodo model was a

experience of museum work. Alberti, *Nature and Culture: Objects, Disciplines and the Manchester Museum*, p. 50.

⁵⁴⁵ Stansfield, 'Nature on Display', 97-103 (p. 102).

⁵⁴⁶ For more on the agendas influencing the romanticisation of nature in dioramas see: Michelle Henning, 'Skins of the Real: Taxidermy and Photography', in *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, ed. by Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson, pp. 136-147 (p. 140).

taxidermic fiction produced from the skin and feathers of other bird species.⁵⁴⁷ Indeed, the impossibility of representing a dodo without the use of a taxidermy composite paid testament to the message being communicated through the display. The graveyard display portrayed the irreparable loss of species, while positing humans as being the direct cause, the following message: 'All these animals are now extinct because of humans', was written in large text above the display.⁵⁴⁸ The interpretative approach of the graveyard display was polemical and solemn, but it reflected some of the anxieties of the scientific community at the time of its making. In *Museums and the Public Understanding of Science* (1992), John Durant articulated some of these concerns:

Today we are increasingly aware of our relationship to our planet. We are beginning to understand that like all living things, we are dependent on our world, not its unchallenged masters. We may indeed have appeared to conquer nature, but we find little glory in this accomplishment. Newspapers and magazines are filled with apocalyptic, perhaps exaggerated visions of a parched green-house world, seared by ultraviolet rays that pierce a depleted ozone layer, its air and water poisoned by toxic chemicals. Will these dark visions come to pass? For all our scientific achievements, we do not know.⁵⁴⁹

In the same year that the graveyard display opened to the public, Peter Davis drew attention to the slow but steady shift in the meaning of nature in the collective cultural consciousness,

we now recognize nature as fragile, not the perceived savage wilderness of the eighteenth century. We are also aware of our custodial role as guardians of the world's environment, its wild places and wildlife, and the inevitable consequences of ignoring that role.⁵⁵⁰

The Hancock Museum's graveyard display could be viewed as a product of this proposed shift. In addition, the opening of 'The Living Planet' was of particular significance to the NHSN as wildlife conservation featured more prominently in the Museum's public galleries. The Society reported that the new gallery 'shows the important environmental mission of

⁵⁴⁷ Dodo composites are not uncommon, a more recent example can be seen at Kendal Museum modelled by the taxidermist Carl Church. See: Carol Davies, 'Dodons and Partnership: A Celebration of Publication and Exhibition at Kendal Museum', *NatSCA News*, 21 (2011) 28-34.

⁵⁴⁸ Textual interpretation accompanying the extinct display in 'The Living Planet' gallery, the Hancock Museum.

⁵⁴⁹ John Durant, ed., *Museums and the Public Understanding of Science* (London: Science Museum in Association with the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science, 1992), p. 15.

⁵⁵⁰ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 2.

the museum – something of which most Society members are aware, but casual visitors less so'.⁵⁵¹ The notion that nature is vulnerable and in need of human protection was also evident in embryonic plans for the redevelopment of the natural science galleries at LCM and the Hancock Museum in the 1990s and early 2000s. Both of the designs for the new galleries focussed on interpreting the natural science collections through themes associated with conservation, and nature was framed as being fragile and under significant threat. The working title for one of the central displays planned for the Hancock Museum was 'Vanishing Earth', while at LCM, the name of the new gallery was 'This Fragile Earth'.⁵⁵² (Also see: 4.1, p. 206). Since both of the designs were commissioned from Redman Design, however, it is also possible that the attitude and interpretative approach to the two galleries may have been similar due to the same design staff working on them, applying their own subjective perceptions of nature and the environment to their designs.

3.2 Ethics, Environmentalism and Animal Welfare

'There is a crisis in the world of taxidermy', stated the then deputy Director of the Museums Association, Maurice Davies in 1999.⁵⁵³ 'Museums are under attack for displaying what seem to be regarded as symbols of humanity's cruelty'.⁵⁵⁴ This comment is reflective of one of the most influential factors informing shifts in the presentation and display of museum taxidermy, specifically, changes in the perceived meaning and value of nature itself owing to the ever shifting relationships between humans and animals. The affection and empathy people feel for animals, particularly towards their pets, has played a large part in the development of a contemporary sensibility towards animal welfare.⁵⁵⁵ In *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (1993), Stephen Kellert identified what he perceived to be the fundamental appeal of animals to humans naming this phenomenon 'Biophilia'.⁵⁵⁶ For Kellert, biophilia constitutes the 'innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other

⁵⁵¹ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1996*, 57:2, p. 69.

⁵⁵² Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS Hancock Museum Development Plan (1996-2001), fol. 2006, and Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds City Museum: Concept Design Brief (2003), fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁵⁵³ Maurice Davies, 'Save our Stuffed Animals', *Museums Journal*, 99 (May 1999), 22.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁵ Harold D. Guither, 'A Changing Philosophy for Human and Animal Relationships', in *Animal Rights: History and Scope of a Radical Social Movement* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1998), (pp. 13-23).

⁵⁵⁶ Stephen R. Kellert 'Introduction', in *The Biophilia Hypothesis* ed. by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993).

living organisms', suggesting that the appeal of animals is deeply embedded in the human subconscious.⁵⁵⁷ While humans may seek to identify certain traits they share with animals, the differences between people and animals ensures that animals remain a constant source of human curiosity. Indeed, John Berger has argued that the similarities people share with animals is what enables animals to seemingly provide humans with a kind of companionship, reassurance and affirmation which cannot be achieved through other means:

With their parallel lives, animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species.⁵⁵⁸

For Berger, the keeping of pets provides a sense of completion for owners by 'offering responses to aspects of his [or her] character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed'.⁵⁵⁹ In contrast with these explanations for the human interest, affection and concern for animals are theories which draw attention to how social, cultural, political and economic change has served to redefine the human/animal relationship. For instance, in the *Sexual Politics of Meat* (2004), Carol J. Adams suggests that the two World Wars may have brought about a new understanding of animals since the experience of life on the front line, of face-to-face combat, of injury and disease, and of the squalor of the trenches, would have rendered the animality and vulnerability of people much more apparent.⁵⁶⁰ Adams argues that: 'Corpses are corpses. How could the soldier avoid thinking of his commonality with animals as he sat in the trenches watching large black rats consume soldier and horse?'⁵⁶¹ While provocative in her questioning, she draws attention to how shifts in the proximal relations between animals and humans may have served to realign the relationship between humans and nature and shift the boundaries of normality. Other political and economic shifts have significantly impacted upon the human/animal relationship. Informed by poststructuralist and postcolonialist thought, the rise of the equality agenda in the post-war period may also have facilitated the projection of human value systems onto the natural world.⁵⁶² As the histories of marginalised groups were

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 20-41 (p. 31).

⁵⁵⁸ John Berger, 'Why Look at Animals', in *About Looking*, pp. 1-28 (p. 4).

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁶⁰ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, 10th edn. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Inc., 2004), p. 137.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

afforded more attention in the 1970s and 1980s, the histories of animals, or more accurately, as Erica Fudge has suggested, 'the history of human attitudes towards animals', were increasingly revisited.⁵⁶³ It was during this period that the field of animal studies emerged, while, in popular culture, new moral, ethical and political consumer positions gave rise to the development of pro-animal and environmentally aware sub-cultures, and an increasing popularity in vegetarianism.⁵⁶⁴ At the more extreme end of the spectrum, animal rights organisations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) were established.⁵⁶⁵ Economic shifts in particular also served to redefine the relationship between humans and animals in the twentieth century. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, capitalism and commodity culture gave rise to new modes of animal commodification in the form of intensive farming and mechanised food production. The commoditisation of animals, for labour, clothing, food, medicine, entertainment and sport, amongst other things, was paralleled by rising concerns for animal welfare.⁵⁶⁶ For example, the increasingly controversial fur trade became a primary target for numerous animal rights organisations in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁶⁷ Drawing associations between concerns for animal welfare and taxidermy, the science journalist Henry Nicholls has gone as far as to suggest that the 'politically charged' nature of 'stuffing animals' in the late 1980s may have influenced the closure of the taxidermy department at the Natural History Museum.⁵⁶⁸ In the 1980s and 1990s, the dissemination of particular animal rights and pro-green narratives in the media led to a heightened focus on discrete issues such as the elephant ivory trade, the ethicacy of wearing animal fur, and the impact

⁵⁶³ Erica Fudge, 'A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals', in *Representing Animals*, ed. by Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 3-18 (p. 6).

⁵⁶⁴ Guither, 'Vegetarianism and Animal Rights', in *Animal Rights: History and Scope of a Radical Social Movement*, (pp. 113-121), p. 114.

⁵⁶⁵ PeTA was established in 1980. The ALF has no official organisation status, however, the group became active in the US in 1982. Guither, 'Reformists and Abolitionists: Organizations and Their Leaders', in *Animal Rights: History and Scope of a Radical Social Movement*, 35-59 (p. 48, 56.)

⁵⁶⁶ Michelle Henning, 'Skins of the Real: Taxidermy and Photography' in *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, ed. by Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson, pp. 136-147 (p. 144).

⁵⁶⁷ For example, the activist group Lynx, established in 1985 (subsequently Respect for Animals) was widely known for their hard-hitting anti-fur campaigns in which provocative imagery was used to shock viewers. For examples see: Steve Baker, 'Escaping the Ratking: Strategic Images for Animal Rights', in *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 187-231 (p. 199).

⁵⁶⁸ Although cuts to funding, along with the shifting landscape of both museology and taxidermy practice are also likely to have been influencing factors. Henry Nicholls, 'The Afterlife of Chi-Chi' in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 169-185 (p. 180).

of tuna fishing on dolphin populations.⁵⁶⁹ Although these issues undoubtedly represented only a small number of environmental problems occurring in an increasingly globalised and consumer focussed society, they became points around which discourses on conservation crystallised. In addition, various food crises, such as ‘mad cow’ disease (BSE, and the associated human variation of the disease vCJD) and media coverage of salmonella in eggs in the 1990s, heightened concerns over the poor treatment of animals in the food industry and the potential dangers it posed to human health.⁵⁷⁰ Media coverage of these issues was heavily politicised and public anxieties concerning the provenance of commodified animals, the potential health risks of animal products, and the maltreatment of animals more broadly, gave shape to new discourses on the relationships between people and the natural world.⁵⁷¹ The collective result of these developments was that animal bodies became heavily invested with complex and often conflicting moral, ethical and political meanings.⁵⁷² How did these developments influence shifts in the presentation and display of museum taxidermy? As the interface between the public and taxidermied objects, museums became implicated in the moral, ethical and political debates which came to surround the custodianship and display of animals, including remnant-models like taxidermy.

As products of a sculptural practice which utilises real preserved animal skins arranged over replicated anatomical forms, ethical questions have challenged taxidermy and its proponents in recent years. Indeed, in the *Manual of Natural History Curatorship* (1994), it was suggested that ‘as concern for animal rights grows, the unease over the use of mounted animals will increase’.⁵⁷³ The indexical quality of taxidermied objects, the fact that, as suggested by James Griesemer, once sentient organisms ‘are taken to represent the whole, living individuals of which they were once part’, renders them politically charged, and for some, quite unsettling objects.⁵⁷⁴ For instance, Rachel Poliquin has suggested that taxidermy ‘makes people squeamish; it is seen by many as gratuitous spoilage, as death on

⁵⁶⁹ While the title ‘green’ was assimilated by various organisations and political and voluntary groups in the last two decades of the twentieth century, it was also used to characterise a pro-ecology, pro-sustainability ideological approach to living and lifestyle. ‘Green’ living was popular with various subculture groups, for example see: Leeds Green Action Group, ‘What is Green? - An Introduction’, in *Leeds Green Umbrella*, 3 (April-May) (Leeds: Leeds Green Action Group, 1989), p. 21.

⁵⁷⁰ Robert Mckay, ‘BSE, Hysteria, and the Representation of Animal Death: Deborah Levy’s *Diary of a Steak*’, in *Killing Animals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 145-169.

⁵⁷¹ The Animal Studies Group, *Killing Animals*.

⁵⁷² John Berger, ‘Why Look at Animals’, in *About Looking*, pp. 1-28.

⁵⁷³ Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, p. 248.

⁵⁷⁴ Griesemer, ‘Modelling in the Museum: On the Role of Remnant Models in the Work of Joseph Grinnell’, 3-36 (p. 8).

display'.⁵⁷⁵ While Poliquin has suggested that nineteenth century audiences were perhaps more able to 'sidestep death, to look beyond', in order to observe taxidermy, she draws attention to the issue that today, the act of looking can also be complicated by 'the troubled relationship between the aesthetics and ethics of taxidermy: the compelling urge to look and the worry about what made that looking possible'.⁵⁷⁶ Over the last century, but particularly in the period following the Second World War, the cultural climate has evolved in such a way that the past collecting practices of men of science, of hunters and naturalists, would be regarded as socially unacceptable. Although how the UK arrived at this subject position is complex and involves a multiplicity of factors, shifting ethical positions concerning animal welfare have directly impacted upon the treatment and use of taxidermy collections in British museums.

Abel's Ark

In 2011 Sam Alberti commented that the redisplay of Abel Chapman's trophy collection in the form of Abel's Ark at the Hancock Museum was unique in that:

Few displays demonstrate so effectively in a single glance the changing functions of natural history museums and the radical shifts in the meaning of animals: from life in the savannah to a sportsman's prize, from hunting mount to specimen to educational object.⁵⁷⁷

Through the redisplay of the Chapman collection, the Hancock Museum was not only responding to a perceived need to provide educational displays which would appeal to a wider audience, but also realigning its ethical position in a way that would be more representative of the contemporary moral and ethical sensibility of the time. In the late nineteenth century, when Abel Chapman amassed his trophy collection, the dichotomy between protecting animals and hunting animals did not exist in the way that it often does in the contemporary consciousness. For instance, although a prolific hunter, naturalist and

⁵⁷⁵ Poliquin, 'The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy', 123-134 (p. 123).

⁵⁷⁶ In this instance Poliquin is referring specifically to a nineteenth century display of hummingbirds from the NHM's collection. It could be argued, however, that the same questions could be raised of all forms of taxidermy, old and new. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 50.

⁵⁷⁷ *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, p. 1. 'Abel's Ark' has been also discussed in relation to ethics by Rebecca, M. Smith in Rebecca, M. Smith, 'Ethical Implications of the Display of Non-Human Animal Remains in Museums' (unpublished dissertation, University of Manchester, 2007), p. 28.

explorer, Chapman was also instrumental in the development of conservation measures in order to slow the disappearance of animals in the places he visited.⁵⁷⁸ He criticised those who had persecuted animals in the name of scientific study stating that '[a]fter the mischief has been done the world laments it. Herculean efforts are then made to preserve a few wretched remnants. Crocodile-tears flow in scientific places'.⁵⁷⁹ Yet, over his lifetime, Chapman developed a significant collection of taxidermied hunting trophies which constituted his donation to the Hancock Museum upon his death. Chapman's attitude was reflective of that of other late nineteenth century hunter-naturalists in that rather than dwindling animal numbers being regarded as a reason to cease procuring them for personal trophy or scientific collections, concerns over the decline of animals constituted one of the principal driving forces motivating individuals to perpetuate the hunting and collecting tradition. This attitude was expressed by the American zoologist William Hornaday (1854-1937) in *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting* (1894), in which he recommended that in the face of species extinction, naturalists should procure specimens for preservation and prosperity before it became too late to do so:

The rapid and alarming destruction of all forms of wild animal life which is now going on furiously throughout the entire world, renders it imperatively necessary for those who would build up great zoological collections to be up and doing before any more of the leading species are exterminated.⁵⁸⁰

Although hunter-naturalists may have expressed concern over falling animal numbers, they were equally concerned with the preservation of species in the form of specimens for both personal and public prosperity.

- *This is the golden rule in collecting; preserve the first specimen you collect of every species you encounter, lest you never get another.* When you have obtained too many of a kind, it is an easy matter to throw some away [*emphasis in original*].⁵⁸¹

Hornaday's comments reveal the desire to collect the few remaining examples of rare species and their perceived value, but also how quickly specimens could become valueless

⁵⁷⁸ Abel Chapman was one of the founders of the Kruger National Park in South Africa. Anonymous, *A Guide to the Hancock Museum* (Newcastle: Andrew Reid & Company Ltd., [1950(?)]), p. 8.

⁵⁷⁹ Chapman, *On Safari: Big-Game Hunting in British East Africa with Studies in Bird-Life*, p. 295.

⁵⁸⁰ Hornaday, *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting: A Complete Handbook for the Amateur Taxidermist, Collector, Osteologist, Museum-Builder, Sportsman, and Traveller*, p. vii.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20. Also see: Kirk, *Kingdom Under Glass: A Tale of Obsession, Adventure, and One Man's Quest to Preserve the World's Great Animals*.

when replaced by other, 'better' versions if chanced upon. Amongst hunting communities, this was also sometimes the case with game trophies, where the bigger and more visually impressive the animal, the greater the level of prestige afforded to the individual who conquered it.⁵⁸²

By the 1980s, however, the prestige that had once been afforded to trophy collections such as Chapman's had become increasingly problematised owing to their method of acquisition and their connection to the building of Empire. The contexts within which the Chapman collection was amassed may have bestowed the trophies with negative connotations rendering them, as suggested by Merle Patchett, 'uncomfortable reminders of past scientific and colonial practices which have sought to capture, order and control animated life'.⁵⁸³ In addition, when compared to the eye-catching (then recently redeveloped) 'The Magic of Birds' gallery, the display of trophy heads in rows at the Hancock Museum may have appeared outdated. According to Tony Tynan, '[d]angling from hooks on the long wall of a thin display gallery they looked dreadful' (fig. 65).⁵⁸⁴ The partial anatomical forms of the trophy mounts jarred with the curator in their incompleteness leading him to jokingly suggest: 'I always said that school children should be forgiven for believing that Africa was inhabited by heads, not animals'.⁵⁸⁵ As with many hunting trophies, the animals represented were largely without complete bodies. The trophy mounts would have originally been produced by removing the deceased animal's skin, paring it away from the body and down to the area between the base of the neck and the top of the forelegs, before removing it, chemically tanning it, and then mounting it up with the inclusion of a wooden backing plaque or shield.⁵⁸⁶ Tynan's critique of the partial animal forms reflects how the curator's focus on science and education influenced his perception of the trophies and may have led him to regard them first and foremost as imperfect and

⁵⁸² For more on trophy traditions see: Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, pp. 156-163.

⁵⁸³ Merle M. Patchett, 'Putting Animals on Display: Geographies of Taxidermy Practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010), p. 12.

⁵⁸⁴ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ During the production of a trophy mount the animal from which the mount will be produced is skinned past the neck, down the chest and often down and round and the upper portion of the forelegs in order to ensure the taxidermist has ample skin to manipulate when mounting up the animal and that the final piece has a balanced appearance. Although many hunting trophies take on the material form of disembodied heads, hunters do, albeit perhaps less frequently, commission taxidermists to mount up the complete bodies of the animals they have hunted. The prevalence of disembodied trophy mounts may be attributed to a number of factors, but primarily to the facilities available in the field following a hunt, the cost of the production of the mount, which anatomical features the hunter wishes to draw attention to, and the amount of display space available to the hunter in which to present his or her collection.

imprecise species representatives, than as ethically problematic or shaming examples of nineteenth century hunting prowess. Tynan's view was allied with the understanding of animals as they existed in life, this reflected his engagement in biological research, but also how animals were depicted in the media through increasingly popular wildlife films, documentaries and journals such as National Geographic. In their partial states, the taxidermied trophies did not signify with contemporary conceptions of animals in the 1980s. Moreover, Henry Nicholls has suggested that '[t]he increasing frequency of natural history broadcasting during the 1970s — and in vibrant color — resulted in far greater public awareness of and sensitivity toward the natural world'.⁵⁸⁷ Visual culture, which Nicholas Mirzoeff has described as being 'concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology', also influenced the Ark theme selected by Tynan for the redisplay (also see: 4.1, p. 209).⁵⁸⁸ Inspired by the work of the then popular children's author, illustrator and animator John Ryan (1921-2009), Tynan collaborated with the artist when planning the redisplay.⁵⁸⁹ In the early 1980s, Ryan had published a series of children's books entitled 'The Ark Stories' about the experiences of Noah and his menagerie of animals.⁵⁹⁰ Tynan adapted the Noah's Ark theme deciding to re-present Abel Chapman's collection using the widely known narrative.⁵⁹¹ In the new display, the taxidermied trophy mounts were positioned as though the animals were peering through the windows of an imitation ark, while other, full-bodied taxidermied animals from the Museum's collections inhabited the areas surrounding the construction (fig. 66). By repositioning the trophy heads as if they were looking through the portholes of an artificial boat, Tynan obscured the partial forms which materially marked the taxidermied objects out as hunting trophies. When observing the new display, therefore, visitors could conceptualise the animals as being fully formed, their imaginary bodies occupying an unseen space within the ark.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁷ Nicholls, 'The Afterlife of Chi-Chi' in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 169-185 (p. 180). For the development of wildlife films, and documentaries (from an American perspective) see: Chris Cynthia, *Watching Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006).

⁵⁸⁸ Mirzoeff, 'What is Visual Culture?', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Mirzoeff, pp. 3-13 (p. 3).

⁵⁸⁹ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

⁵⁹⁰ The author presented the 'The Ark Stories' as an animated children's series which was aired by ITV also in the early 1980s. Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

⁵⁹¹ Paul Raven, the designer who had worked on the new 'The Magic of Birds' gallery provided the design work. Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

⁵⁹² In reality, the space was allocated for storage, an additional benefit of the new design.

The redisplay of the Chapman collection at the Hancock Museum was timely in that it occurred in a period when animals were increasingly being presented in the media as dynamic biological entities to be observed and understood in their completeness, and not as alien encounters to be conquered and commodified. As Rachel Poliquin has suggested:

All taxidermy is a choreographed spectacle of what nature means to particular audiences in particular historical moments. The longing to capture an animal's aesthetic presence with taxidermy invariably exhibits not just beasts but particular ways of thinking about the natural world.⁵⁹³

The positioning of the taxidermy trophies to suggest that they may have been full bodied was an illusion which not only silenced the violence associated with the act of their effective beheading, but also reflected how wildlife was represented in visual culture at the time making the mounts look more 'real'. There is an argument, however, as posited by Kitty Hauser in *Coming Apart at the Seams* (1998), that un-lifelike or damaged taxidermy mounts may be considered equally, if not more authentic than more naturalistic mounts since their imperfections make it more visibly obvious to audiences that they have been produced from reconfigured animal remains.⁵⁹⁴ However, in a society increasingly conditioned by film and television, poorly crafted, partial, or damaged taxidermy mounts may not have met audiences' expectations of what animals looked like.⁵⁹⁵ In other words, rather than being defined by their materiality and organicism, animals were increasingly being defined by their images in visual culture, and therefore to signify with visitors, full-bodied animals were required.⁵⁹⁶

In recent years the taxidermy historian Pat Morris has criticised 'Abel's Ark' for 'mocking the cost, skill and bravery entailed' in the collection of the specimens displayed in Abel's Ark.⁵⁹⁷ For Morris, the colourful and more child orientated narrative of the display deflated the prestige ascribed to Abel Chapman as an esteemed individual, hunter-naturalist and explorer. While Morris' critique reflects his subject position as a taxidermy historian with a particular interest in the narratives surrounding older taxidermy collections, it also draws attention to some of the ethical issues implicated in the use of collections left in trust to museums by private donors (see: 3.3, p. 166). In addition, Morris'

⁵⁹³ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 95.

⁵⁹⁴ Hauser, 'Coming Apart at the Seams', 8-11, p. 10. Also see: Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2000), p. 62.

⁵⁹⁵ Baker, 'Is it Real or is it Disney?: Unravelling the Animal System', in *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*, pp. 165-186.

⁵⁹⁶ The commodification of animal images is discussed further in chapter four.

⁵⁹⁷ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, p. 268.

comment highlights a broader challenge posed by taxidermied trophy mounts in that their meaning and value as ‘trophies’, is rooted in the series of events that enabled their production. In *Enlivened through Memory: Hunters and Hunting Trophies* (2011), Gary Marvin suggests that trophy mounts enable individuals to recall and re-live their subjective and often highly emotive encounters with their quarry.⁵⁹⁸ As Morris attests, the ‘significance’, of trophies is ‘personal to the collector himself, the story of when where and how’.⁵⁹⁹ If the meaning and value of hunting trophies is dependent on the hunter and recollections of the hunt, when this connection is silenced, their meanings are reconfigured. Therefore, although the word ‘trophy’ might be used in more general terms to delineate certain genres of taxidermy from others, whether trophy mounts can conceptually exist as ‘trophies’ in the absence of the hunter who procured them, or the narratives which explain them, could be questioned.⁶⁰⁰ It should be acknowledged, however, that Tynan’s redisplay of Chapman’s trophies did not completely omit the historical narrative associated with the collection’s provenance. Although the specimens were interpreted individually as species representatives in ‘Abel’s Ark’, other interpretations offered in the corridor gallery retained the social significance of the material while simultaneously reframing it in order to better align it with contemporary sensibilities. This was exemplified through the presentation of a short biography of Abel Chapman within the gallery space:

Abel was, like all Victorians, a collector, without such men we would have no museums. He was also a conservationist. Without Abel’s finely detailed observations and reports, Spain, for instance, would have no wild lynx, nor Africa a [*sic*] Kruger National Park.⁶⁰¹

Although the interpretation offered in the gallery did point towards Chapman’s hunting exploits, more attention was focussed on Chapman’s status as a naturalist, explorer and conservationist. By being selective over what information was made available in the space, Tynan drew attention to the contemporary relevance of Chapman’s contribution to the preservation of species and the environment, while downplaying Chapman’s hunting exploits which had the potential to upset or disturb some visitors. In highlighting

⁵⁹⁸ Marvin, ‘Enlivened through Memory: Hunters and Hunting Trophies’, in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 202-217.

⁵⁹⁹ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, p. 268.

⁶⁰⁰ Rachel Poliquin explores the question ‘What do trophies become once they are parted from their hunter-creator?’ in: Poliquin *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 143.

⁶⁰¹ Excerpt from a text panel located in ‘Abel’s Ark’, the Hancock Museum.

Chapman's contributions to the early conservation movement, the curator was able to interpret the material on display through both a scientific and socio-historical register, while simultaneously aligning the content of the displays with contemporary ethical positions. This suggests that the objective of the redisplay of the Chapman collection was not an attempt to disjoint the taxidermy from its social history provenance, but rather to adapt it in a way that would make the specimens more palatable for museum audiences in the 1980s. There were, however, a number of more nuanced ways in which Imperialist notions of mastery remained replete in the re-presentation of Chapman's collection. Since the interpretative theme of 'Abel's Ark' exploited the parallels between the biblical figure of Noah and Abel Chapman as collectors of animals, notions of man's domination over nature and the categorisation of animals by science, remained central to the narrative of the display (also see: 2.2, p. 84). This was further exemplified by a hand-painted wooden effigy of a figure of Abel Chapman, depicted ticking off animals from a checklist as they entered the ark in an orderly fashion, in a similar way to how a hunter or collector may tick off specimens as they are procured in the field (fig. 29).⁶⁰² While notions of controlling and categorising nature may have implicitly remained in the display, the careful selection of what was, and what was not seen in 'Abel's Ark' rendered the continued display of a historic collection less ethically problematic for the Hancock Museum in the 1980s.

Reframed Collections

In a similar way to what we have observed with Abel Chapman's trophy collection, the recently redeveloped case study museums have reframed extant collections and reconfigured old display techniques to create displays which are more in tune with contemporary sensibilities. For example, around 1900 LCM presented a display containing examples of taxidermied bird's heads in order to illustrate ideas about animal adaptation in relation to the shape of the bird's bills (fig. 18). A display interpreting the same theme was installed in the recently redeveloped LCM. Although the concept being communicated through the contemporary display remains largely the same as that presented over a century earlier, whole bird bodies are now displayed rather than disembodied heads reflecting the contemporary view of nature as vital and dynamic, and like the creation of Abel's Ark, it avoids the display of partial animal bodies (fig. 38). The reuse of the birds' bills theme in the redeveloped LCM suggests that the theme of the display was not considered

⁶⁰² Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 17.

to be outmoded, but rather the way in which the specimens were presented needed to be updated to meet audiences' ethical expectations of the contemporary museum.

The display of trophy heads in the recently redeveloped case study museums has been managed in a number of different ways, but in all cases, the objects have been labelled in ways that serve to avoid ambiguity and therefore do not leave audiences speculating as to their meaning and function. In particular, there are few trophy mounts presented in the case study museums today in a 'trophy' context, without further interpretation of that context. For instance, although a disembodied trophy mount of a Thompson's gazelle from the Chapman collection is exhibited in the front casing of the 'Explore!' gallery at the GNM:H, the mount is interpreted as being the product of an outdated attitude towards the natural world and a past episteme of museological practice by the label which accompanies it:

Being described as a big game hunter and a conservationist may seem odd to us today, but Abel Chapman combined his love of hunting with his fascination for wildlife. [...] Many of his specimens were donated to the museum.⁶⁰³

In contrast, in other instances where trophy mounts are displayed, such as the giraffe head integrated into the 'Bio-Wall' at the GNM:H, they are interpreted in contexts which frame them exclusively as species representatives, therefore silencing their trophy function. Equally, at MS:WP, the trophy head of a red deer and an ornamental rug produced from a jaguar skin, amongst other trophy objects, are displayed on the gallery walls of 'What on Earth!' and interpreted exclusively as species representatives through their labelling (fig. 46). Since, as suggested by Martin Prösler, 'the world-wide diffusion of museums was tied in with European colonialism and imperialism', the contexts within which some taxidermied animals, particularly exotic trophy animals, were procured are bound up in their very existence.⁶⁰⁴ Yet, despite their material forms, which for those who recognise them are redolent of their original trophy function, by interpreting them as species representatives with no reference to the contexts of their acquisition, the meanings of the trophies are mediated by their contextual disassociation. Simultaneously, in displays like the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', by interpreting the trophies as species representatives the Museum draws audiences' attentions to their alternative or other possible meanings. While the approaches

⁶⁰³ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Explore!', GNM:H.

⁶⁰⁴ Prösler, 'Museums and Globalization', in *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, ed. by Macdonald and Fyfe, pp. 21-44 (p. 22).

used to interpret taxidermied trophy objects in the recently redeveloped museums differ, what is consistent is that in the majority of cases, the museums exercise heightened authority over their interpretation by not layering it, or obversely, providing none at all. In effect, this mediation helps ensure that audiences' interpretations of taxidermy trophies are orientated in directions which do not conflict with contemporary sensibilities and the ethical position assumed by the twenty-first century museum.

While taxidermy novelties, from decorative glass domes and ashtrays to narrativized scenes of anthropomorphic taxidermy and mounted domestic pets, may reside in the collections of the three case study museums, very few of these kinds of objects are displayed in the museums' public galleries today. Indeed in 1996, Peter Davis suggested that 'many museums and curators now regard such items as irrelevant to modern interpretation, even as mildly distasteful, with the consequence that most have been relegated to basement stores'.⁶⁰⁵ Expressly authored taxidermy objects, such as displays of taxidermied birds presented under glass domes, where human intervention is perhaps more obvious, may be more prone to offend contemporary sensibilities owing to the more abrasively visible manipulation of the animal body. In addition, the transformation of wildlife into domestic novelties may be seen as an unjustifiable cause for the killing of animals; not only does it appear to be in poor taste, but it may also be seen to trivialise the value of life by transforming it into commodified goods. In today's culture of consumption, where commoditised animal remains in the form of food and leather products (amongst many others) are more widely available than ever before, this is particularly significant as it reflects how audiences' ethical expectations of museums continue to differ from those of other spheres of culture, leisure and entertainment, despite the proposed 'blurring' of the boundaries between museums and spaces of consumption in other areas of museum practice (see: 4.2, p. 213).⁶⁰⁶ Where taxidermy novelties do feature in the displays of the recently redeveloped museums, they are largely interpreted using social and historically orientated narratives which, like the interpretation accompanying the GNM:H's Thompson's gazelle, frame the objects as being part of an outdated mode of engagement with the natural world. For instance, a decorative glass dome containing taxidermied birds and a small pet dog feature in MS:WP's 'Curiosity Cabinet' (fig. 47). Collectively the objects displayed in the 'Curiosity Cabinet' are interpreted in the following way:

⁶⁰⁵ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 66.

⁶⁰⁶ Saloni Mathur, 'Museums and Globalization', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 510-516.

Museums began in the 16th century as collections of assorted objects that had no real link apart from their beauty or their strangeness. The collections were known as cabinets of curiosity.⁶⁰⁷

This historical approach to interpreting the objects, and indeed the method of display itself, effectively situates the creation of these kinds of taxidermy objects in the past providing a contextual frame which serves to rationalise their existence and help justify their display in the present.

Apology, Defence or Rationalisation?

Alongside the disposal of its Rowland Ward dioramas in 2004, the Natural History Museum (NHM) has responded to taxidermy's difficult reputation in recent years by discontinuing the production of new taxidermy mounts for its public displays, and as a result, old specimens are not being replaced.⁶⁰⁸ Rather than replacing or updating parts of its taxidermy displays, the NHM interprets the increasingly dated and tired appearance of some of the taxidermy mounts on displays by presenting signs which relay the following message:

The museum is concerned about the conservation of animals in the natural world and no longer collects skins for taxidermy displays. The specimens in these displays are from the Museum's historical collections – consequently some are faded or show other signs of their age. We feel it is more appropriate to rely on these collections for display, even though they may not fully reflect the natural appearance of the living animal.⁶⁰⁹

(Fig. 67). The fading of the NHM's specimens, and the labels explaining to visitors why the taxidermy on display may not be representative of living animals, is suggestive of a tension between the status and use of the taxidermy objects as species representatives on the one hand, and as historic objects on the other. Although the objects are described as being 'from the Museum's historical collections', which suggests they have been attributed particular historical, and therefore social and cultural significance, they are not interpreted through a social or historical frame.⁶¹⁰ Rather, they are interpreted as examples of

⁶⁰⁷ Excerpt from 'Curiosity Cabinet' text panel in 'What on Earth!', MS:WP.

⁶⁰⁸ Poliquin, 'The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy', 123-134 (p. 126).

⁶⁰⁹ Excerpt from a text panel interpreting taxidermy displayed at the NHM.

⁶¹⁰ Excerpt from the signs featured in some of the display cases presenting taxidermy at the NHM.

particular species, despite the recognition that ‘they may not fully reflect the natural appearance of the living animal’ that they are intended to represent.⁶¹¹ The NHM’s decision to retain the old taxidermy displays and justify their unrepresentative appearance on ethical grounds while continuing to interpret the mounts as specimens could be seen to complicate the displays rather than explain them. Are the taxidermied animals on display at the NHM objects of particular social and historic significance with meanings which have been omitted from the textual interpretation available in the gallery? Or, in their aged and faded condition, are the specimens visually inaccurate examples of the species they are intended to represent?⁶¹² In either case, it could be argued that the perceived function of the taxidermy on display is blurred by its interpretation. Rachel Poliquin has suggested that the NHM’s ‘apologetic’ signs have enabled the Museum to distance itself from past collecting practices considered unethical by contemporary audiences by figuring the objects as products of past museum collecting practices (eg. 2.1, pp. 62-75).⁶¹³ The first sentence of the notice: ‘The museum is concerned about the conservation of animals in the natural world and no longer collects skins for taxidermy displays’, is suggestive of the notion that the production of taxidermy mounts sits in opposition to wildlife conservation, a view which, informed by outmoded collecting practices, is still shared by some members of the public today.⁶¹⁴ In the current climate, wildlife licensing protects a vast array of species and the professionalisation of museums in regard to the development of museum policies, including the *Museums Association Code of Ethics* (2008), has led to a situation where the skins used in new museum taxidermy are much more likely to have been acquired from animals which have expired due to natural causes.⁶¹⁵ The implication of the NHM’s signs, however, that taxidermy production opposes wildlife conservation, does little to dispel outdated conceptions of museum governance regarding contemporary modes of

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² For the purpose of comparison, examples of achieved and well maintained taxidermy can be seen in: Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 374-378, and Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*. For examples of contemporary practice and techniques see: Breakthrough Magazine, ‘Taxidermy’s Leading Magazine’, Breakthrough Magazine (2012) <<http://www.breakthroughmagazine.com/>> [accessed 19 July 2012] and *Taxidermist: The Journal of the Guild of Taxidermists*.

⁶¹³ Poliquin, ‘The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy’, 123-134 (p. 126).

⁶¹⁴ Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 366-368.

⁶¹⁵ Particularly from captive bred specimens, the fluctuating populations of which do not effect populations in the wild. Museums Association, *Code of Ethics for Museums*. Also see: Ethics Working Group of the International Council of Museums International Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History, *Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums*.

conduct.⁶¹⁶ While the NHM is a unique case that should be interpreted within its own historical specificity, some of the tensions which resonate in the Museum's interpretation of its taxidermy are reflective of the ongoing challenges surrounding the display of taxidermy in contemporary museums. Part of the professionalisation of taxidermy practice in the mid-late twentieth century, which culminated in the establishment of the Guild of Taxidermists in 1976, aimed to realign negative public perceptions of taxidermy along with raising the standard of the work being produced. Reflecting on the establishment of the UK Taxidermy Guild, James Dickinson, presently Conservation Officer (Natural History) for Lancashire Conservation Studios stated in 2006 that:

Fortunately all [...] were in agreement that the most important matter they needed to address was raising standards. And not just standards of work but standards that affect the way that taxidermy is perceived. In those days many in the conservation world considered taxidermists a serious threat to wildlife.⁶¹⁷

The content of the notices displayed by the NHM suggest that the aims set out by the Taxidermy Guild back in the 1970s still may not have been fully achieved. Although the allegiance between the hunter and the taxidermist largely dissolved following the fall of the British Empire, it is an association which continues to resonate in parts of the collective cultural consciousness.

At the Hancock Museum, the legacy of having an on-site, full time practicing museum taxidermist came to a close when Eric Morton retired. Before that time, however, certain shifts in the framing of Morton's professional role at the Museum were suggestive of the idea that having a taxidermist on the Museum's staff was increasingly regarded as problematic owing to the negative associations afforded to taxidermy and its practitioners. In particular, Morton's professional title was changed from 'Taxidermist' to 'Assistant Keeper of Biology' in 1992 when the management of the Hancock Museum was transferred to Tyne & Wear Museums.⁶¹⁸ Morton's revised job title reflected the change of management alongside a number of alterations to his job description, which following the takeover, was to include curatorial and education duties but significantly, taxidermy work

⁶¹⁶ It is possible that the notice implies that newly sourced animal skins are put to alternative uses than those of public display, i.e. that they are integrated into research collections which, in turn, through research can contribute to conservation causes, although this is quite an assumption to make from the information provided.

⁶¹⁷ James Dickinson, 'View from the Chair', *Taxidermist*, 33 (2006), 1.

⁶¹⁸ In conversation with Eric Morton (2010).

was largely omitted.⁶¹⁹ Despite Morton's new title and job description, however, he continued to undertake a significant amount of taxidermy work at the Museum up until his retirement in 2010.⁶²⁰ The gradual erasure of taxidermy practice from the Museum's public and professional profile suggests that there could have been an ethical dimension to the attitude taken by the Hancock Museum's management, particularly since behind the scenes, Morton's role as a taxidermist was maintained. Perhaps the idea of a contemporary museum having a taxidermist on its staff, and resources for taxidermy, was deemed old fashioned or inappropriate in light of contemporary sensibilities. An additional consideration however, is that the professional landscape of taxidermy practice had shifted. Many nineteenth and early twentieth century taxidermists had been self taught or learnt the craft by understudying other taxidermists, including John Hancock who studied under Richard Wingate in the early-mid nineteenth century.⁶²¹ By the 1950s, however, the role of the museum taxidermist, like many other museum related careers, became increasingly professionalised. For example, in 1954, training in taxidermy was offered by the Museums Association in collaboration with the British Museum (Natural History) and the Royal Scottish Museum.⁶²² Equally, in the following decade, the Museums Association advertised for taxidermy trainees funded by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.⁶²³ In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, fewer museums were employing taxidermists and an increasing number were commissioning taxidermy work out on a freelance basis.⁶²⁴ This gradually absolved museums of the need to provide space and resources for taxidermists. Indeed, during the Hancock Museum's most recent redevelopment, the old taxidermy studio was removed and not reinstated (fig. 68).

Following the most recent redevelopment of the three case study museums, the connections between taxidermy practice and its products, and what are now deemed unethical past collecting practices, have been challenged by the introduction of a number of new displays and interpretative approaches. Today both LCM and MS:WP use social history narratives to interpret and contextualise their historic taxidermy collections in ways

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Frost, *History of British Taxidermy*, p. 85.

⁶²² Anonymous, 'Training in Taxidermy', *Nature*, 174 (1954), 66.

⁶²³ Anonymous, 'Training Course in Taxidermy', *Nature*, 205 (1965), 550.

Despite the professionalisation of some museum taxidermists however, the multifaceted nature of taxidermy practice and limited staff in smaller museums meant that individuals who undertook taxidermy also often fulfilled other roles which today could be characterised as museum technicians, preparators, and/or natural science conservators.

⁶²⁴ Milgrom, *Still Life: Adventures in Taxidermy*, p. 145.

which enable them to continue to display old taxidermy, while simultaneously marking out the museums' respective ethical positions in regard to animal welfare. This is predominantly achieved through textual interpretation presented on display panels and in supplementary information available within the museums' galleries. For example, at LCM a text panel in 'Life on Earth' reads:

Many animals in our collections were killed by Victorians for display. Modern museums do not kill animals for display. We use specimens that are found dead, hit by cars or caught by cats for instance.⁶²⁵

At MS:WP a very similar ethical position is exemplified through textual interpretation in folders located in 'What on Earth!':

This museum does not kill animals just to stuff them

Any new taxidermy that is created for this museum has to have died either naturally or accidentally. Unfortunately, most of the dead animals that are brought into museums to be stuffed were still killed by humans, all be it accidentally by a car. Others are killed indirectly by humans through our pet cats. Taxidermy is a controversial subject, but is it better to use the stuffed animals held in museum collections for the purpose of protecting present and future generations of animals or to dispose of them, making their deaths utterly meaningless?⁶²⁶

The provocative question posed to visitors presents an additional or alternative point of view reflective of the agendas of natural science professionals to maintain taxidermy for future use. In addition, at MS:WP, interpretation in the loose folders addresses themes including 'Arctic animals and the world market', and 'Hunting today', prompting audiences to consider both past and present relationships between people and the natural world, while simultaneously contextualising the Museum's historic taxidermy collections. In the galleries of the three recently redeveloped museums the ethical position of the museums in regard to the conservation of wildlife and animal welfare is further bolstered by the inclusion of information which details how they each support, or are actively engaged in, the activities of their local voluntary societies. For example the Sorby Natural History Society at MS:WP, and more explicitly, the NHSN at the GNM:H.⁶²⁷ The addition of this kind

⁶²⁵ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Life on Earth', LCM.

⁶²⁶ Excerpt from additional interpretation offered in an A4 ring binder situated in 'What on Earth!', MS:WP.

⁶²⁷ This is evidenced through a variety of methods including display panels, leaflets and text labels.

of information to gallery spaces highlights the perceived need for contemporary museums to be accountable to their audiences by addressing some of the ethical challenges implicated in the custodianship and display of taxidermy in their public galleries. The inclusion of these interpretations demonstrates how wider shifts in social values, which have realigned the ethical position of the museum, have led to changes in the interpretation of their contemporary taxidermy displays.

In the recently redeveloped case study museums there are other ways in which the museums have sought to draw visitors' attentions to the practice of taxidermy itself, and therefore, to the materiality of taxidermied objects. This approach can be framed as being informed by the recent shift to reflexive interpretation in the museum, combined with an increased awareness of the need to address the kinds of questions which are increasingly being asked of taxidermy collections by museum visitors. In the planning stages of the 'Life on Earth' gallery at LCM, Clare Brown acknowledged that 'subjects like "why do we have all this stuff" and "is it all real" [...] need to be addressed within this gallery'.⁶²⁸ Brown's concerns have been transcribed into the redeveloped gallery in the form of text panels and loose information cards. While the questions: 'Why do you have all this stuffed stuff?' and 'How do you stuff something?' are addressed in the 'Life on Earth' gallery at LCM, the extent to which they are answered for audiences could be questioned as the information provided is rather limited.⁶²⁹ For instance, through the text provided, the process of taxidermy is summarised in two sentences: 'To stuff something you must remove the skin and then place it over a model of the animal's insides. The eyes are made from glass'.⁶³⁰ It could be argued that the picture accompanying the information, and the abstract nature and brevity of the statements may provoke more questions than they answer from museum visitors (fig. 69). However, this could be framed as a positive outcome if audiences are inspired to pursue self directed learning as a result, particularly since also located in 'Life on Earth' are a series of A4 'Find out More' cards, which, for the more inquiring visitor, address taxidermy practice a little further and in more detail (fig. 70). One of the 'Find out More' cards combines text and images to interpret taxidermy process in a concise manner, providing insight into a museological practice which, for the most part, remains otherwise

⁶²⁸ Clare Stringer, 'Leeds Natural Science Gallery Draft Brief 2: Themes, Story Lines and the Objects that go with them', in Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008) (2004), p. 1.

⁶²⁹ Extract from a text panel in 'Life on Earth', LCM.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

unexplored in the more readily visible interpretation available in LCM's 'Life on Earth'.⁶³¹ Similarly, at MS:WP, there is little interpretation of taxidermy processes themselves in the Museum's permanent displays. Rather, information concerning taxidermy practice is presented in A4 ring binders for visitors to investigate independently, depending on their level of interest (fig. 71).⁶³² Overall, the presentation of information interpreting taxidermy practice and some of the ethical issues which now surround it through, what may be regarded as secondary or supplementary layers of interpretation, suggests that the scientific significance of taxidermy continues to be privileged over its other possible meanings and values by LCM and MS:WP. Owing to its potentially controversial content, however, the relegation of interpretation concerning taxidermy and animal ethics to files and folders may also be the result of a more strategic decision on behalf of the museums to ensure that the information is available for inquiring audiences, but less obvious in the galleries more generally in order to avoid upsetting or offending more unassuming visitors.

Although historically the GNM:H has the strongest legacy in relation to taxidermy and its practitioners out of the three case study museums, today the Museum presents very little information about this in its displays.⁶³³ While the ethics of taxidermy and its display in the museum are not attended to, there are other more nuanced ways in which the labels of particular taxidermy specimens on display at the GNM:H evidence the artifice of the practice and process of taxidermy. For example, in the GNM:H's 'Explore!' gallery, a taxidermied wombat, is described as a 'strange creature' on account of it being mounted up erroneously on its hind legs.⁶³⁴ The specimen's label reveals: 'Wombats move around on all four legs, but the taxidermist had never seen a wombat before, so he didn't know this' (fig. 72).⁶³⁵ In addition, the interpretation accompanying a taxidermy hybrid of a 'merman', created from the conjoined skins of a monkey and a fish, also reveals the subjective hand of the taxidermist: 'Taxidermists sometimes create mythological creatures by joining parts of

⁶³¹ The taxidermist pictured on the card, James Dickinson, produced a number of the new mounts for the 'Life on Earth' gallery meaning there is a direct relationship between the information offered by the card, and some of the taxidermy mounts currently on display, although this is not explored in the gallery.

⁶³² The interpretation in the folders presents questions including: 'Where did all the museum's animals come from?', and 'With what do taxidermists stuff animals?' Here MS:WP touches on some of the ethical issues bound up with natural history collections, particularly in relation to their acquisition, in both contemporary and historical contexts. Extracts from 'Find out More' folders located in 'What on Earth!', MS:WP.

⁶³³ To date the GNM:H does not provide supplementary interpretation through cards or folders where such information may alternatively be located.

⁶³⁴ Extract from a text panel in 'Explore!', GNM:H.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

different animals together'.⁶³⁶ While the information provided by the labels interpreting the GNM:H's wombat and 'merman' points towards some of the processes involved in taxidermy practice and perhaps some of the practical challenges taxidermy poses, the interpretation consistently resists full disclosure about what taxidermy is, how and why it is performed, and perhaps most importantly, why it features so heavily in the galleries of the GNM:H. This is an interesting phenomenon, since from watching visitors examine museum taxidermy displays, it seems that some of the most frequently asked questions concerning taxidermy relate not to the themes that mounts are being used to interpret, but rather to the construction and materiality of the objects themselves. The omission of narratives interpreting taxidermy practice, particularly at the GNM:H, may be attributed, in part, to the dominant and enduring function of natural science galleries to frame collections through scientific, authoritative and therefore supposedly objective interpretations. As argued by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, '[r]epresentation tends to keep out of view the power of representation', and it is in the interests of natural science departments and groups like the NHSN to frame their natural science collections as being scientifically significant.⁶³⁷ It is also possible, however, that the GNM:H may have omitted narratives which serve to rationalise or explain taxidermy practices to avoid upsetting audiences by presenting information which could be considered unpalatable to the contemporary sensibility. It is a debate centred upon ethics and accountability, one which highlights a tension between the requirement for transparency in the museum, and the need for museums to sensitively provide for their audiences.⁶³⁸

Non-remnant Models

While non-remnant models are materially unrelated to taxidermy, their use instead of or in addition to taxidermy, as well as frequently being interpreted as species representatives in the same way as taxidermy, warrants their consideration. There is an ethical argument, as suggested by Geoffrey Stansfield in the *Manual of Natural History Curatorship* (1994), that non-remnant models may be 'more acceptable to the public than "stuffed" specimens',

⁶³⁶ Extract from a text label interpreting the merman at the GNM:H.

⁶³⁷ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'Multiculturalism and Museums', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 163-183 (p. 165).

⁶³⁸ Besterman, 'Museum Ethics', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 431-442 (p. 431).

owing to the omission of animal remains in their construction.⁶³⁹ Equally, however, it is the inclusion of animal remains in taxidermy which affords it authority in the communication of scientific ideas and theories. The contemporary condition is therefore problematic in regard to the public conception of museums as ‘trustworthy mediators between science and society’, in that it sets the ethics of presenting models as species representatives against the ethics of the display of reconfigured animal remains in the form of taxidermy in museums.⁶⁴⁰ Is it more ethical to display non-remnant models as species representatives in museums for the public, or to present taxidermy, despite the fact that it risks offending contemporary sensibilities?

Approaches to the use of non-remnant models in the three recently redeveloped museums suggest that taxidermy continues to be privileged by museums to interpret ideas about the natural world. While models are interpreted in different ways in the redeveloped museums, it appears that, in all three museums, models have only been used in circumstances where taxidermied objects or specimens created from other biological remains, such as skeletons for example, would have been unsuitable or unattainable. For instance, where a biologically derived example of the animal required was unavailable due to its cost, rarity or obsolescence, like the woolly rhino and the polar bear cubs displayed in MS:WP’s ‘What on Earth!’ and ‘Arctic World’ respectively (fig. 46 and fig. 73). In addition, models have also been used where taxidermic techniques or other means of biological preservation may have been less effective than a non-remnant specimen. For example, in order to capture the appearance of the many marine species represented in the GNM:H’s ‘Bio-Wall’ a wide selection of non-remnant models have been used (fig. 74).⁶⁴¹ Limiting the use of models to these particular instances suggests the continued preference of curators to use taxidermy to represent species where viable.⁶⁴² Where non-remnant models have been used, however, they have been interpreted quite differently in the different

⁶³⁹ Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, p. 248.

⁶⁴⁰ Besterman, ‘Museum Ethics’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 431-442 (p. 436).

⁶⁴¹ Fish and other marine species can be particularly difficult to realistically reproduce using taxidermy techniques and a considerable amount of contemporary fish mounts are now produced using casting techniques rather than tanned fish skins. In addition, due to the natural oils in fish skins, fish taxidermy using real fish skins can become unstable and susceptible to damage if not carefully maintained. Hendry, ‘Vertebrates’, in *Care and Conservation of Natural History Collections* ed. by Carter and Walker, pp. 1-36 (p. 22). Morris, ‘Fish Taxidermy’, in *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 102- 114.

LCM displays only a small number of models, most of which are models of animals’ skulls rather than replicas of full bodied animals.

⁶⁴² Indeed, this is the reason why there are very few non-remnant models in LCM’s ‘Life on Earth’ gallery. In conversation with Clare Brown, (2011).

museums. This evidences the plurality of value systems being played out through the natural science displays in accordance with different attitudes towards notions of authority, authenticity and the ethical position of the museum. For instance, non-remnant models featured in the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', are not differentiated from other kinds of objects on display, including taxidermy and live animals. Whereas, at MS:WP, non-remnant models are delineated from remnant models when they are used to represent a species. For example, the interpretation accompanying the two model polar bear cubs featured in MS:WP's 'Arctic World' reads:

Polar bear cubs

These model polar bears are the size of real bears at three months old. This is when their mother leads them out of the den for the first time.⁶⁴³

Although the traditions and cultural practices of discrete museums are diverse, for some curators, the interpretation of non-remnant models as objective species representatives may be considered a minor act of deceit on behalf of the museum, despite the fact that interpreting taxidermy mounts as objective facts is widely practiced, and taxidermy objects are also kinds of models (also see: 1.1, p. 34). The treatment of taxidermy compared to other non-remnant models in museums by curators of natural science gives rise to a number of questions about how the socially situated knowledge of museum staff mediates and negotiates notions of authority and authenticity in the contemporary museum in relation to ethics and the accountability of museums.⁶⁴⁴

While the use of non-remnant models in museums may help alleviate some of the concerns associated with the ethics of taxidermy, it also gives rise to other questions about the social responsibility of the museum to meet the expectations of the public in a number of other ways. It should be acknowledged, for example, that some audiences like and indeed expect to see taxidermy on display in their local museum (eg. 3.3, p. 182). Since the opening of the redeveloped LCM, the Museum has collected visitors' comments to gauge their responses to the new galleries. Some of the comments made by visitors reflect the complex feelings engendered through encounters with taxidermy in the contemporary Museum. For example, when prompted with the question: 'What did you enjoy most about your visit to Leeds City Museum?' amongst the responses were the following comments:

⁶⁴³ Excerpt from a text label in 'Arctic World', MS:WP.

⁶⁴⁴ Nyhart, 'Science, Art, and Authenticity in Natural History Displays', in *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, de Chadarevian and Hopwood eds., pp. 307-335.

The Animals
The displays of animals
Wildlife display lower ground floor
Natural world
Animal section
Stuffed animals / evolution
Seeing the stuffed animals displayed so beautifully⁶⁴⁵

Although when prompted with the question: ‘What did you enjoy least about your visit to Leeds City Museum?’, other respondents’ comments included:

Animals
Life on Earth (poor animals)
Stuffed animals (Life on Earth)
Stuffed animals⁶⁴⁶

While much of the feedback concerning the content of the ‘Life on Earth’ gallery at LCM is suggestive of a positive public reception to the taxidermy on display, a significant proportion of visitors also viewed taxidermy as being problematic. The brevity of the feedback left by LCM’s visitors, comments which are often no more than two or three words in length, reveals very little about why these particular visitors responded in the ways that they did to the taxidermy on display. What can be deduced from the comments left at LCM however, is that the polarity of opinions expressed demonstrates how the ethics of museum taxidermy remains a contested site for contemporary museum visitors.

3.3 Audience, Stakeholder and Museum Identities

As storehouses of material culture museums play an important role in enabling audiences to mark out and construct discrete notions of belonging, and individual and collective identity. As suggested by Steven Dubin: ‘Museums are a primary way that a society represents itself: to its own members, and to the larger world’.⁶⁴⁷ The world has become increasingly globalised throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, giving rise to shifts in how notions of identity and belonging are constructed. Accordingly, one of the most noticeable shifts in the interpretation of taxidermy in the three case study

⁶⁴⁵ Leeds, Leeds City Museum, MS Leeds City Museum Completed Questionnaires (undated [2009]).

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Steven C. Dubin, ‘Incivilities in Civil(-ized) Places: “Culture Wars”, in Comparative Perspective’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 477-493 (p. 479).

museums has been in how specimens have been reorganised and (re)presented to reflect and articulate different ideas about the identities of museums, museum stakeholders, and museum audiences. Sharon Macdonald has suggested that museums

not only exist within a particular time and space, they also help articulate particular temporal and spatial orders. It is in this respect that we can see them as not just existing within a context but also as themselves creating cultural contexts.⁶⁴⁸

It is these constructed cultural contexts of time and space which mediate how museum visitors perceive both their own individual and collective identity, and the identity of the museum itself. In relation to time, the representation of the past, along with the interpretation of the present helps situate individuals temporally. While, in relation to space, the construction and delineation of physical, cultural and ideological boundaries allows individuals and communities to mark out their identities, as well as shaping nations and notions of nationhood. In *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (1998), Macdonald also observed how:

[M]useums of science are widely conceived of as 'scientific' institutions in the sense that they are regarded as organized according to orderly and authoritative principles – principles conceived of as separate from power and politics.⁶⁴⁹

While museums may assume the role of preserving and interpreting the past and the present for their publics, what is preserved and interpreted, and how, varies depending on the perceived purpose of the museum and the interests of its audiences and stakeholders. The politics of the display of taxidermy, is therefore, as suggested by Macdonald in relation to museum objects more generally, 'a matter of (often implicit) negotiation: a dynamic power play of competing knowledges, intentions and interests'.⁶⁵⁰ By giving voice to certain ideas and agendas while silencing others, museums do not only remember for audiences, but they also forget for them too, as Susan Crane has suggested:

⁶⁴⁸ Macdonald, 'Introduction', in *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, ed. by Macdonald and Fyfe, pp. 1-18 (p. 8). Also see: Pascal Gielen, 'Museumchronotopics: On the Representation of the Past in Museums', *Museum and Society*, 2 (3) (2004), 147-160.

⁶⁴⁹ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24 (p. 3).

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

For all the solidarity of a museum's magnificent *façades* or secure basements, it is a malleable and ever-changing institution. But in the most ordinary or common-sense way, members of the public generally feel that they know what a museum is, and that it is in fact solid (not to say stolid) and permanent. For many, museums perform the externalised function of their own brains: it remembers, for them, what is most valuable and essential in culture and science. And yet generations of curators and visitors have inhabited the institution, actively shaping (and necessarily changing) those memories over time.⁶⁵¹

What has been remembered, reshaped, or forgotten through the display of taxidermy in the three case study museums in recent decades can be critically analysed in relation to the shifting role and purpose of each of the institutions in meeting the agendas of their stakeholders, and providing for their audiences.⁶⁵²

Marking the Hancock Legacy

When the Hancock 'shrine' display was installed as part of 'The Magic of Birds' gallery at the Hancock Museum, the new display framed a group of taxidermied birds as products of the material culture of science, as props through which the story of John Hancock and his brother Albany Hancock could be narrativized.⁶⁵³ The development of the 'shrine' display, and of other displays installed in the Hancock Museum during the 1980s that used social and historical narratives to interpret the Museum's natural science collections could be framed as being both implicated in, and a response to, the growth and proliferation of the heritage industry in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁵⁴ For example, 'Abel's Ark', the 'Thomas Bewick' display, and the panels used to interpret the history of the NHSN. The gradual decline of industry across Britain, particularly felt in the then heavily industrialised North East which had shipbuilding and coalmining at its centre, was increasingly leading to the prosperity and wealth of towns and cities being signified less by the scale of their industrial production, and more by the availability of culture, and the cultural facilities they

⁶⁵¹ Susan A. Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98-109 (p. 98).

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 202). Albany Hancock was an anatomist and biologist whose primary area of interest and expertise was in invertebrate zoology. Therefore, unlike his brother John, he was not involved in the production of taxidermy specimens.

⁶⁵⁴ Robert Lumley, 'The Debate on Heritage Reviewed', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 1- 25 (p. 15), R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Mansell, 1987).

could provide.⁶⁵⁵ In these social, cultural, political and economic contexts, the role of the Hancock Museum to interpret the past for its local audiences while representing the heritage of the NHSN, may have become increasingly significant.

John Hancock's influence in regard to the development of the Hancock Museum building, the Museum's collections, and the naturalist's contribution to the study of natural history more broadly, suggests that his memory is likely to be held in high regard by members of the Museum's staff, but particularly by the NHSN. Indeed, at the time of the installation of the Hancock 'shrine' display Tony Tynan described the Hancock collection as 'magnificent', 'superbly mounted', and John Hancock as 'one of the first great taxidermists'.⁶⁵⁶ The creation of the display helped celebrate John Hancock and his skill as an ornithologist and taxidermist. However, if Fredric Jameson's suggestion that the 'time-space compression' of the late twentieth century had resulted in a faltering sense of history, the creation of the Hancock 'shrine' could also be interpreted as a response to a perceived need to reaffirm notions of regional and local identity, and specifically the heritage of the Hancock Museum in an increasingly globalised society.⁶⁵⁷ Steven Hoelscher suggests that heritage is similar to faith, 'and like all faiths it originates in the deeply rooted human need to give meaning to temporary chaos, to secure group boundaries, and to provide a symbolic sense of continuity and certainty that is often lacking in everyday life'.⁶⁵⁸ Tynan's characterisation of the Hancock display as a 'shrine' warrants some attention here. The word 'shrine' suggests an object or series of objects presented in a space of idolatry where individuals can worship the subject represented in, or embodied by, that space. Albeit in different contexts, Marita Sturken has observed how memorials can become shrines according to how individuals engage with them.⁶⁵⁹ Unlike a monument, which Sturken has suggested 'most often signifies victory', [...] 'Memorials embody grief, loss, and tribute', a notion which seems fitting for the function of the Hancock 'shrine' in a period of

⁶⁵⁵ Natasha Vall, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000', in *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*, ed. by Colls and Lancaster, pp. 47-70. Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 512).

⁶⁵⁶ Tony Tynan, 'A New Bird Display at the Hancock Museum', (1979), 212-214 (p. 213).

⁶⁵⁷ David Harvey, 'The Condition of Postmodernity', in *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Joyce Appleby and others, (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 494-507 (p. 494), (first publ. In David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 284-307. Also see: Andreas Huyssen, *Past Presents: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2003).

⁶⁵⁸ Steven Hoelscher, 'Heritage', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 198-218 (p. 216).

⁶⁵⁹ Marita Sturken, 'The Wall, the Screen and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Mirzoeff, pp. 163-178. In particular see: 'The Memorial as a Shrine', pp. 172-176.

dramatic change.⁶⁶⁰ It is important to acknowledge, however, the influence of the agendas attached to part of the funding which facilitated the redisplay of the 'Bird Room', and how these privileged the celebration and remembrance of the Hancock legacy. While the gallery redevelopment was primarily funded by the University Development Trust, along with staff provided by the Manpower Services Commission, a substantial part of the refurbishment was also funded by a relative of John Hancock.⁶⁶¹ In 1976 the Hancock Museum was fortunate to benefit from a donation of twenty thousand pounds from Katherine (Kitty) Hancock (1893-1977) to help fund the redisplay of the 'Bird Room'.⁶⁶² The philanthropic gesture was reflective of one of the main strengths of the NHSN in its founding years, specifically its close associations with wealthy and influential benefactors and patrons.⁶⁶³ In *The Gift* (1954), the sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss argued that although gifts may be given 'voluntarily', they are not free.⁶⁶⁴ Rather, gifts have reciprocal obligations attached to them which require repayment, of one kind or another, from the receiver.⁶⁶⁵ Mauss suggested that:

The gift received is in fact owned, but the ownership is of a particular kind. [...] It is at the same time property and possession, a pledge and a loan, an object sold and an object bought, a deposit, a mandate, a trust.⁶⁶⁶

Without Kitty Hancock's donation, the gallery redevelopment would not have been possible, but having received the donation, the Hancock Museum was then under obligation to meet her agenda and orientate part of the content of the new gallery towards John Hancock. This may also be why a short biography of Kitty Hancock also featured in the textual interpretation of the 'shrine' display, as it was her gift which enabled the redisplay (fig. 75).⁶⁶⁷ It should be considered, therefore, that without the donation, the decision of how to classify and theme parts of the content of 'The Magic of Birds' gallery may have varied considerably to that which came to pass, if indeed, the Hancock Museum's 'Bird Room' would have been redeveloped at all during that period of the Museum's history.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

⁶⁶¹ Tynan, 'A New Bird Display at the Hancock Museum', (1979), 212-214 (p. 212).

⁶⁶² Ibid., and Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204.

⁶⁶³ For more on the early patrons of the Museum and their philanthropy see: Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, pp. xvi –xvii.

⁶⁶⁴ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1954), p. 1.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶⁶⁷ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 9.

While the creation of the Hancock 'shrine' in the early 1980s suggested a heightened focus on the Hancock brothers and the continued significance of their influence to the Museum's stakeholders, it could be argued that other factors suggested that the material traces of the Hancock legacy, particularly those of John Hancock through his taxidermy works, were simultaneously subject to a level of erasure in the same period. For instance, when recounting a visit to the completed 'The Magic of Birds' gallery in 1987, the taxidermy historian Christopher Frost calculated that the new gallery presented 'just half a dozen or so examples of his work', while having previously featured many.⁶⁶⁸ In addition to a perceived decline in the number of objects produced by John Hancock being on public display, Frost also inferred that the material integrity of a number of Hancock's works had been compromised during the production of the new gallery. Frost noted that while it appeared that the majority of the modular glass cases within which Hancock had originally presented his taxidermy had been put into storage, others had been 'opened up and a bird or two removed for inclusion in the large public display cases'.⁶⁶⁹ Frost's observations suggest that while some of John Hancock's specimens were presented as being created by him in the redeveloped gallery, others had been subsumed into the gallery displays and rendered authorless by being interpreted exclusively as objective species representatives. Indeed, in the early 1990s the Museum's curators, Tony Tynan and Peter Davis reported that approximately '80% of the birds on show [in 'The Magic of Birds' gallery] were given by John Hancock over a hundred years ago, the rest were specially mounted by our own taxidermist, old and new together total over two thousand'.⁶⁷⁰ Therefore, although many taxidermy mounts by John Hancock were still on display at the Hancock Museum, contrary to Frost's estimation of 'just half a dozen or so', many were not interpreted as his work in the Museum's new displays.⁶⁷¹ There are, however, other factors which may have contributed to a perceived decline in the amount of taxidermy being framed through the narrative of John Hancock in the new 'The Magic of Birds' gallery. Of particular significance was an incident that took place during the stripping down of the old 'Bird Room' when the old display cases, as described by Les Jessop, 'were emptied by unsupervised graduate trainees who separated all the birds from their data labels'.⁶⁷² In addition, during the same period there is a possibility that some specimens were divorced from their associated data

⁶⁶⁸ Frost, *History of British Taxidermy*, p. 88.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 9.

⁶⁷¹ Frost, *History of British Taxidermy*, p. 88.

⁶⁷² Jessop, 'The Fate of Marmaduke Tunstall's Collections', 33-49 (p. 40).

in a different way when a number of taxidermy mounts were loaned out to various places, 'often with little or no associated documentation'.⁶⁷³ During these events taxidermied birds produced by John Hancock may have become unidentifiable, lost, or both, making it harder to attribute them to the naturalist in the gallery displays.

The consignment of the Hancock legacy to the past through the creation of the Hancock 'shrine' served as a tribute to the Hancock brothers as individuals while simultaneously acknowledging their contributions to the Museum. This took place in a relatively small and isolated section of 'The Magic of Birds' gallery, whereas in the past, almost the entire 'Bird Room' had been more explicitly framed through the influence of John Hancock.⁶⁷⁴ The isolation of the Hancock narrative largely to the 'shrine' display, the perceived reduction in the amount of taxidermy produced by John Hancock being presented and, to an extent, the consignment of the Hancock influence to the past in the early 1980s, allowed for the Hancock narrative to become one identity out of a multiplicity of possible identities for the Museum. In this case, the representation and interpretation of heritage, as Robert Lumley has suggested, can 'be seen less as an inability to come to terms with change (escapism, nostalgia, etc.) and more as a strategy for enabling change'.⁶⁷⁵ The redevelopment of the old 'Bird Room' and the creation of the 'shrine', therefore, may have enabled the Hancock Museum to both celebrate and preserve a significant narrative of its past, while simultaneously allowing it to be redefined along more modern lines; a departure which was further galvanised in 2009 through the redefinition of the identity of the GNM:H.

From Local to Global

The specimens selected for display and the themes that are being used in the interpretation strategies of the three recently redeveloped case study museums are reflective of the different agendas of the various stakeholders involved in the museum redevelopments, and the perceived purposes of the museums in relation to their target audiences. LCM and MS:WP are largely funded through local authority grants, and while both museums are aimed at a wide visitor demographic, they are therefore both particularly orientated

⁶⁷³ Ibid., p. 41.

⁶⁷⁴ Particularly in the interpretation offered in the Museum's guide books, for an early example see: Gill, *Short Guide to the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne*, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁵ Lumley, 'The Debate on Heritage Reviewed', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 1- 25 (p. 19).

towards providing for their local and regional communities. For example, the following target audiences were identified during the redevelopment of WPM:

- Families with children between 5 and 11 years living within 30 minutes drive of the Museum.
- Independent adults (based in Sheffield, or visiting the city), special interest groups, secondary schools and students.
- Primary Schools teaching Reception to Key Stage Two (ages 5 - 11) located within 45 minutes drive of the Museum.
- Across all these groups, to work with and to attract a diversity of users from communities across Sheffield [*formatting in original*].⁶⁷⁶

Similarly, since LCM is owned and run by Leeds local authority museum service meaning the Museum is particularly orientated towards local provision. Part of focussing on local visitor groups at LCM involved consultations with local audiences during the planning stages of the most recent redevelopment in addition to locally orientated groups and societies such as the 'Four Societies' (which is made up of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Leeds Civic Trust, The Friends of Leeds City Museums and The Thoresby Society).⁶⁷⁷ Together these factors resulted in both LCM and MS:WP developing quite a pronounced focus on reflecting the identities of the communities of their respective regions alongside the Museums' civic identities through the redisplay of their respective taxidermy collections. This differs to the situation at the GNM:H where the Hancock Museum's change of name following the recent redevelopment is perhaps the most palpable external sign that the identity of the Museum has undergone redefinition. The integration of the collections of the Museum of Antiquities and the Shefton Museum into the GNM:H necessitated that the discrete identities of these collections, as well as the aims and objectives of their custodians, were also subsumed into the institutional identity and purpose of the GNM:H. The redevelopment of the Hancock Museum involved multiple partners, stakeholders and funders, the agendas of whom appear to have been analogous to one another at times in defining the contemporary purpose, role and identity of the GNM:H, but also conflicting at others. They have sought to balance providing a service which, as Tyne and Wear Archives (TWAM) outlined as its 'mission' in its corporate plan for the period 2009-2014, 'to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their

⁶⁷⁶ Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 16, p. 8.

⁶⁷⁷ See: Clare Stringer, 'Four Societies Consultation Meeting 9.5.2005: Natural Science Gallery', in Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008), p. 2.

self-respect and their respect for others', while simultaneously providing a service which appeals to regional, national and international audiences.⁶⁷⁸ The tension between specificity and universality, between local and global at the GNM:H is reflected in some of the agendas of the partners involved in the Great North Museum Project. The continued ownership of the Museum and its collections by the NHSN, mean that it needs to be cognisant of the Society's constitution which highlights:

the encouragement by every means of the study of natural history in all its branches and the conservation of the natural environment in the north east of England including its geology, flora and fauna.⁶⁷⁹

The NHSN's primarily regional interests are tempered by the necessity of the Museum to also adopt a globalising approach in order to attract national and international audiences. In addition, while Newcastle City Council provides for local communities, TWAM is a joint service which also represents other regional authorities suggesting its focus and approach will slightly broader and more diverse. While the University of Newcastle and the regional development agencies may seek to encourage and maintain visits from local and regional audiences, these organisations also have a vested interest in encouraging national and international audiences to the city.⁶⁸⁰ For example, in One NorthEast's Tourism Strategy for the period 2005-2010, the regional development agency stated:

For years we have captured less than 4% of tourism expenditure in Britain. This is simply not good enough. We will focus on increasing our **share of tourism** expenditure in Britain and do this in a way that increases Britain's share of European tourism. We will **maintain that increased market share** in future [*sic*], as tourism is now a fundamental, permanent component of the North East economy [*emphasis in original*].⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁸ Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, 'Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Corporate Plan 2009-2014' (2009) <http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/userfiles/file/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Tyne%20and%20Wear%20Archives%20and%20Museums%20Corporate%20Plan%202009-2014%20v4_0.pdf> [accessed 10 April 2010], p. 2.

⁶⁷⁹ Natural History Society of Northumbria, 'Constitution of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Being the Rules by which the Society Conducts its Business', (2012) <<http://www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk/news/wp-content/uploads/NHSN-Constitution-MASTER-Adopted-10-Feb-2012.pdf>> [accessed 23 June 2013], p. 3.

⁶⁸⁰ For an example of One NorthEast's strategies for maintaining and developing local audiences for the period in which the GNM:H reopened see: One NorthEast (Regional Tourism Team), *North East England Tourism Strategy 2005-2010* (Newcastle: One NorthEast, [2005(?)]), p. 8.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

These factors account in part for the negotiation and interplay between universality and specificity through the display of taxidermy at the GNM:H which has become more complex following the recent redevelopment of the Hancock Museum. For example, regional wildlife continues to be delineated from global wildlife at the GNM:H, the two being spatially segregated from one another across the 'Living Planet' gallery and 'Natural Northumbria'.⁶⁸² At both LCM and MS:WP, the natural science displays are presented within the same space, and while it should be acknowledged that the GNM:H has more display space than LCM and WPM, the creation of 'Natural Northumbria' is largely reflective of the interests and socially situated knowledges of the NHSN, and where the Society's primary object of study and organisational identity is materialised in the Museum.

There are, however, ways in which the complexity of the Great North Museum project and the number of stakeholders involved has had a diluting effect on the authority of the NHSN over the role of the new Museum. For instance, displays which previously interpreted regionally orientated social and historical themes such as the Hancock 'shrine', 'Abel's Ark', the 'Thomas Bewick' display, and the series of panels interpreting the history of the NHSN, were removed during the recent redevelopment. As a result, the amount of information audiences may glean about the various histories of the Museum, particularly in relation to the region through its permanent displays has been significantly reduced. Objects known and previously celebrated as being prepared by John Hancock, such as a Japanese spider crab, which is currently on display in the 'Bio-Wall' in 'Living Planet', have been disassociated from the Hancock narrative by being interpreted exclusively as scientific specimens (fig. 8).⁶⁸³ As a result, some of the more historically unique idiosyncrasies which characterised the previous Hancock Museum have been diluted in order to meet the requirements of its multiple stakeholders. Collectively, these factors may reflect the proposed decline in memory discourses in the galleries presenting taxidermy in the GNM:H. Apart from a few notable exceptions, such as the interpretation of 'Sparkie' the budgerigar in the 'Bio-Wall', throughout the Museum the vast majority of older taxidermy is no longer delineated from new through the textual interpretation available.⁶⁸⁴ Rather, old and new

⁶⁸² It is important to note, however, that the integration of some species common to the UK into the 'Bio-Wall', to an extent, also serves to frame local wildlife within the broader contexts of global wildlife.

⁶⁸³ This was the case at the time of the Museum's reopening although it is possible that the labels may have been revised since that time.

⁶⁸⁴ It is important to note that social and historical narratives are interpreted through different kinds of objects in other galleries in the GNM:H, although this is largely not the case for the Museum's taxidermy collections.

taxidermy mounts, along with living specimens, are presented alongside one another, as objective species representatives. In detaching the specimens from 'time and historical space', Liv Emma Thorsen has suggested that '[w]hatever social and cultural contexts the animal was once part of are not only forgotten, they are without interest'.⁶⁸⁵ The omission of historical contextualisation has a flattening effect on the taxidermy mounts on display by compressing their histories and rendering the objects entirely of the present; much like the live animals inhabiting the vivariums, they are presented as being without pasts. Moreover, the particular social and historical contexts of the development of the early Hancock Museum could also be seen as having been downplayed in the redeveloped Museum. Overall, the display of birds is no longer privileged over other taxa in the redeveloped Museum as it was in the past. Although the Hancock Museum had increasingly presented taxidermied specimens from different taxonomic groups throughout the twentieth century, the Museum's orientation towards the display of birds persisted in a number of different ways up until the most recent redevelopment. For example, the addition of the two mezzanines at either end of 'The Magic of Bird's gallery in the 1980s allowed for even more bird specimens to be put on public display, 1757 in total in comparison with 1564 in the previous 'Bird Room'.⁶⁸⁶ In the early 1990s, a 'British Mammals' display, which occupied approximately half of the 'Zoology Room' (and therefore, half the amount of gallery space to 'The Magic of Birds'), was sometimes unavailable to visitors as the space was frequently used for temporary exhibitions.⁶⁸⁷ The curators advised that if school teachers were planning to use the 'British Mammals' display during group visit, that they should call the Museum first to check that the displays would be available to view.⁶⁸⁸ While the privileging of birds over other animal groups reflected the strengths and institutional biases of the Hancock Museum, they may also have reflected the personal interests of some of the Museum's staff, as can be gleaned from Tynan's assertion that '[b]irds, we decided, were magic, beautiful, musical, fascinating'.⁶⁸⁹ By way of comparison, in the GNM:H today, the Museum presents a view of nature which is taxonomically more representative and balanced through the taxidermy featured in both the 'Living Planet' and in 'Natural Northumbria'. Despite any particular strengths or weaknesses in the GNM:H's stored

⁶⁸⁵ Thorsen, 'The Hippopotamus in Florentine Zoological Museum "La Specola": A Discussion of Stuffed Animals as Sources of Cultural History', 269-281 (p. 279).

⁶⁸⁶ Tynan, 'A New Bird Room in the Hancock Museum', 202-204 (p. 204).

⁶⁸⁷ Tynan and Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide*, p. 6.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁹ Tynan, *Guide to the Hancock Museum*, p. 8.

collections, the contents of the current public displays suggests, therefore, a Museum which is more universally representative and less idiosyncratic than its predecessor.

While LCM and MS:WP have also adopted universalising themes in their galleries, they have equally developed a heightened focus on interpreting parts of their taxidermy collections using themes which firmly situate taxidermied animals in their uniquely regional, social and historical contexts. Similar to the GNM:H, MS:WP has maintained the tradition of presenting a didactic ‘field guide’ of taxidermied birds along with other displays such as the ‘Moorland’ case which represent the wildlife of the region. In contrast, however, while local wildlife is represented at LCM, it is not delineated from that of other geographies.⁶⁹⁰ Rather, LCM has approached the display and interpretation of taxidermy to reflect upon its own institutional identity along with the regional identities of its visitors in a different way. LCM has a strong collection of foreign taxidermy, and this strength is evident in the proportion of foreign species displayed in the new Museum. While the presentation of many large and exotic species over regional wildlife may suggest that the Museum is focussed primarily on accentuating its universal appeal, the interpretation strategy employed by LCM for many (although certainly not all) of its foreign taxidermy does not. This is because while some specimens are interpreted scientifically as species representatives through their labels in the gallery, an additional layer of interpretation provided through touch-screen digital displays interprets the same specimens in ways which emphasise their unique histories in relation to the history of the Museum in its specificity. The information interpreting a taxidermied thylacine specimen provides a suitable example (fig. 42):

Tasmanian wolves became extinct in 1936 and, with only eighty in the world stuffed examples are almost as rare. The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, which ran the museum until 1921, was very active in collecting material from Australia in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹¹

Although many of the species represented at LCM are not reflective of local, or even European wildlife, by making their unique histories available to audiences, LCM

⁶⁹⁰ At LCM, although the ‘Life on Earth’ gallery does have a small locally themed display - a model reconstruction of a paved back yard characteristic of the kind of outdoor space that may be attached to an urban dwelling, few natural science specimens are presented in the display, and to date, no taxidermy.

⁶⁹¹ The text continues on the next screen: ‘They paid well to have Tasmanian wolves shipped to Leeds. We have five more skulls in the collections – you can see them at Leeds Museums Discovery Centre’. Excerpt from a digital display in ‘Life on Earth’, LCM. LCM’s thylacine was removed from public display in 2013 for conservation purposes.

demonstrates the regional significance of its taxidermy collections in relation to the various histories of the Museum and the region. In addition, to bolster this effect, the images of the taxidermied animals interpreted through the interactive digital displays at LCM, such as the thylacine, are of the actual specimens on display. The images are not generic 'stock' photographs of the species that the mounts serve to represent, rather they function as portraits of the individual mounts on display.⁶⁹²

The socially and historically orientated interpretation of the thylacine at LCM demonstrates an introspective, and to an extent reflexive, approach to attributing meaning and value to the Museum's taxidermy collections since the Museum repeatedly draws attention to its own social, cultural and historical identity through the objects on display. By contextualising the objects as both species representatives and products of material culture, the meanings of the taxidermy objects at LCM oscillate from past to present, and from nature to culture.⁶⁹³ In contrast, while specimens presented in the 'Bio-Wall' at the GNM:H are also interpreted using interactive digital displays, generic 'stock' images of the species which the taxidermy mounts serve to represent are used (fig. 33). While this may be the result of using a particular design agency, the curator's preferred approach to the display, or perhaps the product of practical constraints which made photographing the taxidermy unfeasible, the use of stock images rather than photographs of the actual specimens on display contrasts with the self-referential interpretation at LCM. At the GNM:H, visitors' attentions are drawn away from the specificity of the taxidermied objects on display and their unique relationships with the GNM:H as an historic institution, and led towards a consideration of the animals they represent in a much more general and abstracted way; effectively to animals which exist beyond and outwith the spatial and temporal orders of the Museum. This effect is compounded by the vast majority of the taxidermied objects in the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall' being interpreted solely as species representatives (eg. 2.2, p. 111).⁶⁹⁴ While the taxidermy specimens themselves may be unique, the interactive digital displays which interpret them serve an encyclopaedic function by providing generalised information which could be obtained from other media sources. Furthermore, in the vast majority of cases, the images used to interpret the taxidermy featured in the 'Bio-Wall' are of living animals, reflecting another way in which

⁶⁹² The idea that the photographs are also portraits accords with Sam Alberti's suggestion that some natural science specimens are 'not only specimens, but also personalities', *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, p. 1.

⁶⁹³ Thorsen, 'The Hippopotamus in Florentine Zoological Museum "La Specola": A Discussion of Stuffed Animals as Sources of Cultural History', 269-281 (p. 280).

⁶⁹⁴ The interpretation of 'Sparkie' remains an exception.

notions of time and history could be considered to have been compressed and erased in the redeveloped GNM:H.

While on the one hand, the meanings of the taxidermied objects currently featured in 'Living Planet' could be understood to have been impoverished by the omission of socially or historically orientated interpretative themes, on the other, the objects' interpretation as species representatives may better reflect the shifting priorities of the GNM:H as a contemporary institution. Indeed, there are arguments for and against preserving and representing the past.⁶⁹⁵ For example, it should be considered that, as suggested by Susan Crane, 'forgetting is a naturally occurring process which museums disturb'.⁶⁹⁶ In addition, remembering is an act that takes place in the present, and is therefore always contingent to contemporary conditions rather than the particular conditions of an imagined past.⁶⁹⁷ The omission of interpretation which narrativizes taxidermy through the biographies of historically significant individuals, or through other socio-historical interpretative frames, also gives raise to ethical questions concerning the accountability of museums to meet the agendas of past benefactors and stakeholders as well as those of the present. For instance, Tristram Besterman has suggested that:

Museums are the custodians of an intergenerational equity which may extend well beyond local or even national boundaries. The museum's stakeholders range from long dead benefactors and makers to future generations of users, from local audiences to overseas source communities, and from public funding bodies to private sponsors. Being accountable to such a diverse range of stakeholders inevitably involves reconciling competing claims on the museum.⁶⁹⁸

The proposed decline of the Hancock legacy, and to an extent, the presence of the NHSN in the public galleries of the GNM:H has not gone uncontested by the Society. Following the redevelopment, the Society has championed the reinsertion of a series of text panels in order to interpret the history of the Museum and the NHSN for visitors, effectively

⁶⁹⁵ Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings', in *The New Museology*, ed. by Vergo, pp. 6-21 (p. 17).

⁶⁹⁶ Crane, 'The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory, and Museums', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98-109 (p. 100).

⁶⁹⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

⁶⁹⁸ Besterman, 'Museum Ethics', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 431-442 (p. 435).

replacing or superseding the interpretation removed during the recent redevelopment.⁶⁹⁹ In 2011 the Society reported that they were involved in 'ongoing discussions with TWAM regarding additional signage and a major Society display within the museum to reinforce the Society's presence in the museum and draw more attention to [their] aims and activities'.⁷⁰⁰ Similarly, the NHSN is currently raising funds for the redisplay of 'Sparkie' so that the taxidermied budgerigar can again be showcased in a stand-alone display case, with a more obvious facility to listen to his recordings, rather than being integrated into the 'Bio-Wall' in 'Living Planet'.⁷⁰¹ Although the Society's involvement continues to be marked out through the regionally focussed content of the 'Natural Northumbria' gallery, since the taxidermy mounts featured in 'Natural Northumbria' are interpreted as species representatives, their regional significance lies in their associated geographical rather than social, cultural, or historical relevance.⁷⁰²

Whether the history of the GNM:H and its collections should feature more prominently in the redeveloped Museum remains open for debate. Particularly since organising, displaying and interpreting objects in relation to their perceived place in history is a particular way of knowing which is itself historically contingent.⁷⁰³ Andreas Huyssen is cautious of memory discourses, asserting that 'the hypertrophy of memory can lead to self-indulgence, melancholy fixations, and a problematic privileging of the traumatic dimension of life with no exit in sight'.⁷⁰⁴ Huyssen also acknowledges, however, that memory discourses 'are absolutely essential to imagine the future and to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and collapses space'.⁷⁰⁵ The process of remembering and forgetting is manifest in the redeveloped GNM:H in a number of different ways. The renaming of the Museum at the time of the redevelopment was a particular point of

⁶⁹⁹ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Northumbrian Naturalist: Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria 2011*, 70:3, p. 227.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Natural History Society of Northumbria, 'Sparkie Williams the Amazing Talking Budgerigar (1954-1962)', Natural History Society of Northumbria <<http://www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk/news/cms/sparkie-the-budgie/>> [accessed 3 June 2013].

⁷⁰² Minor mentions of the Society can be found in the textual interpretation accompanying some specimens, also a small interactive display in the 'Explore!' gallery refers to the activities of the Society more generally. Additionally, more ephemeral items such as signs, posters and flyers advertising their activities can be found dotted throughout the Museum.

⁷⁰³ Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', 1-14 (p. 4).

⁷⁰⁴ Huyssen, 'Introduction', in *Past Presents: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, pp. 1-10 (p. 6).

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

contention between the Society and the GNM Project Team with the NHSN reporting in 2008, the year prior to the Museum's re-opening, that:

One item of special concern to the Society during the course of the last year was the rebranding of the Museum, with the Society anxious that the name 'Hancock' be retained. [...] The title for the new museum has yet to be finally announced, but 'Great North Museum: Hancock' appears to be the best possible compromise.⁷⁰⁶

Hannah Paddon has suggested that the renaming involved 'heated discussions' between the Society and the Museum's redevelopment team, although the Society reported that the negotiations were 'carried out in an atmosphere of mutual respect'.⁷⁰⁷ While the most recent redevelopment saw the removal of the Hancock 'shrine' display, which, other than brief mentions in text labels of John Hancock in the exterior wall case of the 'Explore!' gallery there is presently no equivalent in the redeveloped GNM:H, a commemorative panel located in the entrance of the Museum continues to detail the significance of the Hancock brothers to the history of the Museum (fig. 76). In addition, the Hancock name remains inscribed in stone across the façade of the GNM:H, leaving the Museum building itself to figure as a monument to its own histories (fig. 77).

Political tensions also occurred during the redevelopment of LCM. During the planning stages of the 'Colour Wall' it was originally the curator's intention to display the specimens without descriptive labels so as to not detract from the aesthetic qualities of the objects themselves.⁷⁰⁸ A phrase used to characterise one of the objectives of the display during the planning stage being simply, '[b]eauty can be inspirational'.⁷⁰⁹ During the planning of the new gallery, however, a representative of Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society (LPLS) expressed concerns over the design of the 'Colour Wall' suggesting that the thematic, aesthetically orientated interpretive approach 'might be seen to be trivialising the subject', and subsequently offered as an additional or alternative approach, that 'there

⁷⁰⁶ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 2008*, 69:1, p. 8.

⁷⁰⁷ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums', p. 98. Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 2008*, 69:1, p. 8.

⁷⁰⁸ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

could be some interest in looking at iridescence and colour' through the display.⁷¹⁰ While the views expressed by the LPLS were characteristic of more traditional and didactic conceptions of the role of natural science collections, they were also demonstrative of the authority vested in scientific frameworks of knowledge over others by the Society. When LCM opened in 2008, the specimens featured in the 'Colour Wall' were presented without labels within the display case. Following a series of enquiries about the contents of the 'Colour Wall' display, however, the curator later added descriptive labels to the specimens shifting the interpretative theme of the display (compare fig. 41 with fig. 78).⁷¹¹ More recently, however, the specimen labels inserted into the 'Colour Wall' after the redevelopment were removed leaving the objects, once again, without labels as the curator originally intended. These events suggest that an ongoing tension is being played out through the interpretation of the specimens featured in the 'Colour Wall' concerning the intended purpose of the display in relation to the different expectations and social values of the Museum's multiple stakeholders and audiences; a tension which to this day still may not have been resolved.

'Star' Objects

The representation of local and global identities has been negotiated in different ways in the three case study museums to reflect different stakeholder agendas and the perceived purposes of the museums in relation to their target audiences. Similarly, the treatment of certain objects within the three case study museums, in particular LCM's 'Leeds Tiger', the GNM:H's 'Sparkie' and MS:WP's 'Snowy', reflects the museums' priorities in relation to audience provision, but also in relation to how the museums themselves seek to be perceived by their audiences. The 'Leeds Tiger', 'Sparkie' and 'Snowy' are examples of what have increasingly been termed 'mascot' specimens in museological circles.⁷¹² Hannah Paddon has recently defined museum mascots as objects which have an 'elevated meaning - whatever it may be - for visitors and museum staff alike'.⁷¹³ In the case of the 'Leeds Tiger', 'Sparkie' and 'Snowy', they are animal objects which have come to be understood and valued in relation to their unique stories and relationships with people in life, and/or in

⁷¹⁰ Clare Stringer, 'Four Societies Consultation Meeting 9.5.2005: Natural Science Gallery', (2004-2008) (2004), p. 2.

⁷¹¹ In conversation with Clare Brown (2011).

⁷¹² Hannah Paddon, 'Biological Objects and "Mascotism": The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 134-150.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

their taxidermied afterlives.⁷¹⁴ Taxidermied mascot specimens are, therefore, frequently interpreted through social and historical narratives, sometimes in addition to scientific interpretations, and presented to audiences as unique individuals of particular social and cultural significance. Part of this significance is manifest in the naming of mascots. Hannah Paddon reminds us that, 'most mascots are anthropomorphized through naming, either during life or in their afterlife at the museum'.⁷¹⁵ The naming of mascot specimens, along with the unique meanings and values attributed to them by museums and museum audiences is what enables the culturally constructed identities of mascot specimens to become embedded in, or an extension of, the identities of discrete museums and their publics. As Susan Pearce has suggested:

Objects are not inert or passive; they help us give shape to our identities and purpose to our lives. We engage with them in a complex interactive or behavioural dance in the course of which the weight of significance which they carry affects what we think and feel and how we act.⁷¹⁶

At the GNM:H, 'Sparkie's' celebrity status in life, which influenced its owner to have the bird preserved in death, was determined by its culturally constructed 'Geordie' persona which rooted the bird in the social and cultural identity of the North East of England. The display of 'Sparkie' at the Hancock Museum following the bird's death served to commemorate the bird's achievements in life, while paying tribute to its memory in a preserved afterlife. At LCM, the 'Leeds Tiger' grew in popularity with the Leeds public having been on display almost continuously since its acquisition over one hundred and fifty years ago.⁷¹⁷ Despite the South Asian provenance of the Bengal tiger, the removal of the prefix 'Bengal' and its replacement with 'Leeds' by the Museum's staff and audiences reflects the extent to which the object has become enmeshed in the history and culture of the city. It has been suggested that the 'Leeds Tiger' may have informally gained its 'Leeds' title sometime during the 1950s, however, no specific event or publication has been

⁷¹⁴ *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti. Also see: Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Appadurai, pp. 64-91.

⁷¹⁵ Paddon, 'Biological Objects and "Mascotism": The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 134-150 (p. 141).

⁷¹⁶ Pearce, 'Collecting Processes', in *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, pp. 1-35 (p. 18).

⁷¹⁷ Clark, *The History of 100 Years of Life of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, p. 132.

identified which may have instigated the change.⁷¹⁸ It appears, however, that by the 1970s the tiger had become very popular with the public. In 1979, the then curator, Adrian Norris, stated that:

The tiger has always been very popular with the public, and school parties in general, and is one of the few items in the Museum we dare not remove, or cover, for fear of being swamped with complaints from members of the public, who in some cases have travelled many hundreds of miles just to see it.⁷¹⁹

MS:WP's 'Snowy' is a relatively new mount in comparison to the 'Leeds Tiger'. However, the presentation of 'Snowy' follows a tradition of a polar bear being on display at Weston Park, and the commissioning of 'Snowy' enabled the Museum to continue that tradition for its audiences from 1904, to the present day.⁷²⁰ Similarly, another object that was redisplayed at WPM with the intention of helping established visitors draw connections between the old and new Museum was 'Joey' the lion. 'Joey' has also been displayed periodically since the object's acquisition, and was reinstated into the redeveloped WPM in 2006 with the following text label:

Joey

Panthera leo
African lion

Joey was born in 1888, and was reared and trained by Martini Bartlett of Wombell's Menagerie. The Menagerie contained live animals, like a small zoo. Joey toured the country as part of a wild animal show. When he died in 1892, the museum preserved him for future generations to enjoy.⁷²¹

Part of 'Joey's' label interpreted the object scientifically, identifying it as an example of '*Panthera leo*', however, the remainder of the label concerned the lion's unique social and historical significance. Indeed, following the opening of the redeveloped Museum, 'Joey'

⁷¹⁸ In conversation with Adrian Norris (2008). It is possible that the use of the title in the local newspapers may have been an influencing factor. For example, in: Anonymous, 'It's 100 Years Since the Leeds Tiger Bit the Dust', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 19 March 1960, 5, the object is called the 'Leeds Tiger', although it is possible that the title was also used for brevity and economy of space.

⁷¹⁹ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre), MS (untitled) (personal correspondence between) Adrian Norris and Chris Rawlence, fol. William Gott.

⁷²⁰ In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

⁷²¹ Excerpt from an interpretative text panel at WPM, 2006, obtained in correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

was presented on open display in a social history gallery, not in 'What on Earth!', although the specimen was removed from display due to conservation concerns c.2007.⁷²² If, as suggested by Hannah Paddon, '[f]amiliarity in the museum promotes a sense of security and continuity', for visitors who remember objects like the 'Leeds Tiger', 'Sparkie' and 'Snowy', the (re)presentation of these taxidermied animals in the redeveloped museums may have helped audiences draw connections between the new museums and the museums of the past.⁷²³

If the allocation of space and the spatial positioning of objects in museums are indices of their perceived value and status, the display approaches adopted to interpret the 'Leeds Tiger', 'Sparkie' and 'Snowy' in the redeveloped museums can be critically analysed to evidence the shifting social values of the three museums in relation to their institutional identities, and the identities of their respective audiences.⁷²⁴ The profile of the 'Leeds Tiger' at LCM, and that of 'Snowy' at MS:WP, appear to have been elevated following the most recent museum redevelopments. For example, in LCM's 'Life on Earth', the 'Leeds Tiger' occupies a privileged display position in a large glass case located at the entrance of the Museum's gallery (fig. 43). In addition, the adoption of the name the 'Leeds Tiger' into the object's textual interpretation has helped galvanise its civic and regional significance in relation to the Museum and its visitors. The object's current label reads:

The 'Leeds Tiger' was shot in the Himalayas in 1860. It was displayed as a rug in London before being mounted and presented to the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society in 1862.

The tiger's slightly strange and over-sized shape is due to its time as a rug. Since its arrival, the tiger has been one of our most popular exhibits.⁷²⁵

Although in WPM's previous 'Wildlife' gallery 'Snowy' occupied a primary display position, in the redeveloped MS:WP, an entire gallery is now themed around the taxidermied polar bear. The theme of the new gallery was developed in consultation with museum audiences

⁷²² To date 'Joey' remains in storage at MS:WP. In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

⁷²³ Paddon, 'Biological Objects and "Mascotism": The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 134-150 (p. 146).

⁷²⁴ Duncan and Wallach, 'The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis', 28-51. Also see: Baxandall 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects', in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Kar and Lavine eds., pp. 33-41.

⁷²⁵ Text interpreting the 'Leeds Tiger' in 'Living Planet', Leeds City Museum.

to showcase 'Snowy' in a way that would reflect the perceived significance and value of the object to the Museum's audiences:⁷²⁶

Snowy the Polar bear was selected as the most popular object in the museum and was allocated a display space which was also interpreted according to audience suggestions, thus producing the *Arctic World* display.⁷²⁷

Within 'Arctic World', 'Snowy' is interpreted by a number of different text panels which present both scientific and socio-historical information about the specimen:

Snowy was born in the Arctic. She was captured and taken to Edinburgh Zoo. She died at the old age of 28 and arrived in the museum in 1986.⁷²⁸

[On another panel]

Polar bears are the biggest land carnivores in the world. They can grow up to three metres long and are the largest of the eight species of bear.⁷²⁹

From a regional perspective, questions may be raised about the relevance of issues relating to the Arctic being explored in MS:WP. Its relevance, however, lies in its embodiment of the ideas and opinions of the visitors who informed its creation, rather than the theme of the gallery in its specificity. This approach demonstrates how the perceived social and historical relevance of 'Snowy', to the previous WPM and its audiences, helped shape the theme and content of the gallery in the new Museum. By way of comparison, although 'Sparkie' has been described by the NHSN as 'definitely one of the Society's much loved and unusual celebrities', the display status of the bird appears not to have been elevated following the GNM:H's most recent redevelopment in the way that the 'Leeds Tiger's' and 'Snowy's' have.⁷³⁰ In contrast to the previous Hancock Museum where the bird was displayed in a stand-alone display case, 'Sparkie' is now presented alongside other taxidermied animals, as one of the many objects which make up the 'Bio-Wall' display in 'Living Planet' (fig. 34).

⁷²⁶ Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 24.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷²⁸ Excerpt from an interpretative text panel in 'Arctic World', MS:WP.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁰ During the Hancock Museum's period of closure the bird's notoriety continued to develop when it was requested to feature in a musical performance composed by Michael Nyman which was performed in Berlin in 2009. The Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Natural History Society of Northumbria Annual Report*, 69: 4 (2009), p. 185.

Museum mascots become mascots for a multiplicity of reasons, and equally, there may be many reasons for the perceived demotion of 'Sparkie' in the redeveloped GNM:H.⁷³¹ For instance, in comparison to large, imposing, exotic and charismatic animals, 'Sparkie's' public appeal may have been perceived to be less universal owing to the fact that generally, budgerigars do not benefit from an elevated status in popular culture and the collective cultural consciousness in the same way that totemic species like tigers and polar bears do. In addition, the relative infrequency of animals other than mammals becoming mascot specimens may be attributed to the affinity humans feel they share with mammals, particularly large, photogenic mammals which are perhaps more readily anthropomorphised.⁷³² Culturally constructed mythologies frequently surround animals which can pose a danger to people or otherwise destabilise the supremacy of humans.⁷³³ As a domesticated species commonly kept as a pet in people's homes, budgerigars do not benefit from these kinds of exciting narratives. Rather, 'born and bred in the North East', 'Sparkie's' domesticated status was reflected in the bird being mounted up on a polished, wooden perch rather than a more natural looking branch or base as a wild bird might be.⁷³⁴ Owing to the object's local specificity, along with its overt associations with the domestic, 'Sparkie's' perceived public appeal may have been considered rather limited for the wider audiences that the redeveloped GNM:H appears to be orientated towards in terms of its public provision. This suggests that a more universalising approach has been adopted by the GNM:H, where notions of regionality and specificity have been reduced in favour of a more inclusive approach to interpreting its collections in order to broaden its public appeal. In comparison, while mascots of iconic species such as the 'Leeds Tiger' and 'Snowy' benefit from being examples of species with a broad universal appeal, they are also significant to local audiences owing to their unique associations with the museums that display them, and the audiences who visit the museums to see them.

Following their most recent redevelopments, both LCM and MS:WP appear to have sought to enhance notions of local and regional identity through the display and

⁷³¹ For other examples of why objects may become mascots see: Paddon, 'Biological Objects and "Mascotism": The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla', in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 134-150 (p. 141).

⁷³² Swinney, 'An Afterword on Afterlife' in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 219-233 (p. 222). For an example of a more unorthodox natural science specimen (a sea anemone) becoming a type of museum mascot see: Swinney, 'Granny (c. 1821-1887) "A Zoological Celebrity"', 219-228.

⁷³³ Chris Wilbert, 'What is Doing the Killing? Animal Attacks, Man-Eaters, and Shifting Boundaries and Flows of Human-Animal Relations', in *Killing Animals* by The Animal Studies Group, pp. 30-49.

⁷³⁴ Natural History Society of Northumbria, 'Sparkie Williams the Amazing Talking Budgerigar (1954-1962)'.

interpretation of taxidermy according to the history of their respective museum collections and the communities they provide for. As repositories for the social and cultural identities of their audiences, the redisplay and elevation of popular objects such as the 'Leeds Tiger' and 'Snowy' has enabled the museums to create a sense of historical continuity. This is reflective of the perceived role of the two museums in regard to their funders and stakeholders. In contrast, the proposed decline of the Hancock legacy, and of socio-historical narratives more broadly through the interpretation of the taxidermy on display in the redeveloped GNM:H, reflects a shift in the institution's identity owing to the multiple stakeholders now invested in the Museum. Competing claims over the identity and purpose of the GNM:H, and the ongoing need for the Museum to generate part of its own income, have resulted in the Museum displaying and interpreting its taxidermy collections in more universalising ways than the previous Hancock Museum. In all three of the case study museums, the various values and meanings which have been attributed to taxidermy and the ways in which those meanings have been interpreted for audiences are reflective of the influence and power dynamics of their different stakeholder agendas.

Community Co-curation and Co-creation

In 1998 Andrew Barry stated that '[t]o an extent unparalleled in the past, the museum visitor has become the object of investigation'.⁷³⁵ Indeed, throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s the professionalisation of museums and their increased accountability in regard to public provision resulted in the development of various new forms of museum practice and policy. As Geoffrey Stansfield suggested in 1994:

Museums, museum organisations and museum publications have proliferated and there has been a preoccupation with such issues as: codes of practice and of ethics; management; public accountability and performance indicators; design theory; and studies of exhibition effectiveness and visitor research.⁷³⁶

As vehicles through which governmental policies and agendas are deployed, museums became increasingly required to provide for local audiences under the premise that they may serve to improve the communities that they provide for and encourage social

⁷³⁵ Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98-117 (p. 105).

⁷³⁶ Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, p. 245.

cohesion.⁷³⁷ Under the policies of the New Labour Government, elected in 1997, museums assumed a more central role in pursuing this wider, liberal vision of social reform and edification.⁷³⁸ Museums attempted to increase their provision for so called 'disadvantaged' and 'disengaged' communities as a means of challenging social inequality through the democratisation of culture.⁷³⁹ As Elizabeth Crooke has suggested:

In the 1990s, and more recently, community development has been regarded as a means to address the problems associated with economic and social exclusion. Central to this approach is belief in the role of participation; it is argued that greater involvement of the marginalized and excluded in solving community problems will bring about more effective solutions.⁷⁴⁰

In addition, the recent redevelopment of museum taxidermy displays has also been significantly impacted upon by an enhanced focus on fulfilling specific areas of learning identified by the Government's Department for Education in the National Curriculum for England.⁷⁴¹ School groups now make up a significant percentage of museum audiences.⁷⁴² At LCM, the discrete topics of each display featured in the 'Life on Earth' gallery were formulated in relation to learning objectives outlined in the National Curriculum.⁷⁴³ Equally, at MS:WP, the narratives chosen to interpret the new displays in 'Arctic World' were informed by the objectives of Key Stages 1 and 2 of the Curriculum, whereas the content of 'What on Earth!' was informed by Key Stages 3 and 4, reflecting the galleries different target audiences:

While the available collections presented the primary focus for content, the displays were also heavily driven by curriculum topics relating to our primary education audience, particularly KS1 & 2 students. These gave a

⁷³⁷ Richard Sandell, 'Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 562-574.

⁷³⁸ Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, p. 124.

⁷³⁹ Ibid. Elizabeth Crooke, 'Museums and Community', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 170-185 (p. 180).

⁷⁴⁰ Crooke, 'Museums and Community', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 170-185 (p. 180). For an example of some of the issues raised by the lack of inclusive access to collections on display see: David S. Brown, *Report on Access to Leeds City Council's Museums and Art Galleries for Visually Impaired People* (Leeds, D. S. Brown: 1993).

⁷⁴¹ Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, p. 124.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Clare Stringer, 'Leeds Natural Science Gallery Draft Brief 2: Themes, story lines and the objects that go with them', (2004-2008) (2004), p. 1.

framework onto which to hang the themes which could also be interpreted at our other key audience of families.⁷⁴⁴

The increased use of audience consultation in museums, alongside the requirement for increased accountability and transparency of practice, has presented the museum as being more responsive to contemporary audiences and their multiple perspectives in recent years. Despite the desire to put these new policies into practice throughout the 1990s, in pragmatic terms all three museums were struggling with dilapidated or unsuitable buildings which hindered the extent to which they could achieve these goals.⁷⁴⁵ In Leeds, the Museum remained in its cramped accommodation, while in Sheffield, the Museum's shift to Trust status, budget cuts, and ongoing structural damage to the building presented a catalogue of challenges to its custodians.⁷⁴⁶ It was not until the three museums received HLF funding that they were able to begin to adopt these new inclusion strategies fully, however, there were instances where audience engagements, particularly in the form of co-creation and co-curation projects did take place.⁷⁴⁷ For example, when the East corridor gallery of the Hancock Museum was redeveloped into 'Abel's Ark', Tony Tynan considered the project to have been a very personal endeavour. At the time of its making the curator stated: 'This whole enterprise is dedicated to the young. [...] From the start I have insisted that if my little visitors don't go away happy, I will have failed'.⁷⁴⁸ Despite Tynan's level of

⁷⁴⁴ Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 24.

⁷⁴⁵ It should be acknowledged that other activities took place between the 1990s and the most recent redevelopments which provided alternative ways for visitors to engage with the taxidermy collections of the three case study museums. For instance, in 2002 WPM developed the 'Natural History Centre', a natural science themed visitor centre where audiences could participate in different learning activities, as well as hosting a temporary show called 'Go Wild', which was promoted as 'Hands on Natural History for all the family'. See: (Sheffield) City Museum, *Go Wild!: Explore the Natural World* (Sheffield: City Museum, 2002). For more on some of the temporary activities and events held at WPM in the 1990s see: Paul Richards, 'Money for Old Collections! The Sheffield Museum's Shows', *The Biology Curator*, 5 (1996) 21-23.

⁷⁴⁶ For example, before the most recent redevelopment, the Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust commented on how the Museum 'had fallen into a very poor state of repair, the displays were severely outdated and the visitor facilities were exceptionally poor'. Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 3. Equally at the Hancock Museum, the NHSN lamented that 'the roof still leaks in rainstorms, the collections remain in desperate need of more and better storage space, the heating system copes only by courtesy of global warming, the library shelves are virtually full and the full-sized *Tyrannosaurus rex* which came for the winter as a most welcome house guest was obliged to camp in a tent in the back yard'. Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1998*, 59:1, p. 6.

⁷⁴⁷ David Thelen, 'Learning Community: Lessons in Co-creating the Civic Museum', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 333-338.

⁷⁴⁸ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark.

personal investment in the project, however, during the development of the display he was assisted by a varied yet modest workforce.⁷⁴⁹ Upon completion, 'Abel's Ark' united different kinds of animals from different geographies under a thematic scheme in a way which explicitly celebrated nature's diversity and lent the display universal appeal. There were, however, ways in which 'Abel's Ark' remained implicitly regional, since during the creation of the display, local shipwrights had been employed to build the ark.⁷⁵⁰ While the display may have conceptually presented a universalising, global view of nature, materially it was inscribed with the unique traditions and tacit knowledges of craftsmen from the North East's shipbuilding industry.⁷⁵¹ Having been co-created by local craftsmen, to interpret global wildlife, through the biographical narrative of a Sunderland born individual, in diverse and nuanced ways 'Abel's Ark' held relevance and significance for both local and global audiences. While in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the display of Chapman's collection had served to 'materialize the power of the ruling classes', the inclusion of local people from the characteristically skilled working classes of the North East in the production of the ark revealed the dramatic shift that had taken place in relation to the Museum's intended audiences.⁷⁵²

A different approach to involving audiences in the production of museum displays was exemplified at LCM before the Museum closed to the public in 1999. A collaborative project entitled 'Flash, Bang, Wallop!' was conducted by the Museum which involved audiences being offered the opportunity to select their favourite objects from the Museum's collections and have their photograph taken with them.⁷⁵³ One of the primary incentives behind the project was to identify which objects from LCM's collections were the most popular with the Leeds public so that this information could then be used to inform the content of the displays of the future Museum. The resulting images from the project demonstrated that the Museum's taxidermied Tibetan yak and giant panda were reoccurring favourites, as was the 'Leeds Tiger' which continued to demonstrate its popularity with audiences by being one of the most photographed objects during the

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Newcastle, Great North Museum: Hancock Library, MS fol. Project – Abel's Ark. (The work was undertaken by a team provided primarily through the MSC which included five joiners/shipwrights, five graphic artists and a group of workers to do the industrial decorating and lighting).

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Bennett, 'Museums and 'The People'', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 109-126 (p. 109).

⁷⁵³ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. (photographs from) Flash, Bang, Wallop! ((undated [1999])). In conversation with Antonia Lovelace, currently Curator of Anthropology, LCM (2008).

project.⁷⁵⁴ Subsequently, all three of these specimens are currently on public display in LCM.

The 'co-creation' approach adopted during the most recent redevelopment of MS:WP in the form of the 'Arctic World' gallery, provides a good example of how, in a number of ways, curators have relinquished some of their authority over the production of museum displays to other museum stakeholders.⁷⁵⁵ Closely informed by governmental and local authority agendas regarding community involvement, particularly working with individuals from less privileged backgrounds to increase their engagement with museums, the content of 'Arctic World' was developed by collaborating with local schools and families in the community to create a space aimed primarily at families and younger audiences:⁷⁵⁶

Community Involvement is key to all the displays, creating a sense of widened public ownership of the collections, opportunities for contemporary collecting and new ways of utilising the museum's unique resource for socially inclusive benefit working with some of Sheffield's most deprived communities.⁷⁵⁷

By developing new narratives around 'Snowy', visitors were encouraged to forge new connections and relationships between people, places and objects with the aim of making disenfranchised groups feel more intellectually and emotionally invested and involved in the new Museum. Through the co-creation of 'Arctic World', MS:WP sought to enable audiences to shape the content of their Museum. This kind of democratisation in the making of museums contrasts with the approach adopted in previous incarnations of the case study museums where the curator's voice was more authoritative, and displays were more reflective of what museum staff thought visitors needed to know about objects than what visitors informed museums they wanted to know about objects (see: 2.1, p. 70). While universalising interpretative themes may appear more relevant and therefore inclusive for different visitor groups, their lack of specificity risks the creation of displays which can be quite generic and therefore, obversely, difficult for particular visitor groups to identify with beyond their surface meanings. In effect, contemporary museums are increasingly being

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ Thelen, 'Learning Community: Lessons in Co-creating the Civic Museum', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 333-338.

⁷⁵⁶ Patrick J. Boylan, 'The Museum Profession', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 415-430 (p. 417). Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 35.

⁷⁵⁷ Weston Park Museum, 'Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals', p. 33.

presented with a problem which is unique to the now globalised world, a problem which, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse has suggested, involves locating and negotiating a kind of ‘middle ground [...] between cultural apartheid and global standardisation’.⁷⁵⁸ The redisplay and reinterpretation of ‘Snowy’ the polar bear at MS:WP, however, may constitute a successful attempt at overcoming this challenge. The gallery covers a wide geographical area distinct to Sheffield, and interprets universalising themes, yet its content was co-created by local communities with part of the project involving a local Sheffield school forging a partnership with a school in Nunavut, Canada.⁷⁵⁹

Shifts in the perceived purpose and target audiences of museums throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century have significantly impacted upon how the three case study museums have displayed and interpreted their taxidermy collections. Although at different times all three museums have had different aims and agendas, overall the contemporary requirement for museums to provide for both local and global audiences has increasingly led to interesting mediations between specificity and universality in their gallery interpretation. In turn, this shift has shaped the meaning of museum taxidermy collections and how they are interpreted for audiences in relation to contemporary notions of identity and belonging. While curators remain heavily implicated in the development of museum galleries, the rise of the generalist curator, an increase in the number of stakeholders invested in museums, the greater focus on public consultation, and the now established system of contracting out museum design, has resulted in a decline of the curator’s agency over the contents of museum galleries. Indeed, during the planning stage for the recent redevelopment of LCM, Clare Brown acknowledged her subject position and socially situated knowledge noting how it was important that assumptions regarding visitor knowledge were challenged and reviewed. For example, following a consultation with a group of school teachers in 2005, Brown noted: ‘Must remember to start Tasmanian wolf story from scratch – I may know it very well but mostly it is met with blank faces’.⁷⁶⁰ In addition, reflecting on the consultation meetings, Brown later reminded herself through informal notes of how it was neither appropriate nor expected for her to assume too much

⁷⁵⁸ Pieterse, ‘Multiculturalism and Museums’, in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 163-183 (p. 169).

⁷⁵⁹ Weston Park Museum, ‘Weston Park Museum Information Pack for Museum, Gallery and Heritage Professionals’, p. 36.

⁷⁶⁰ ‘Teacher Consultation 2- Natural Science Gallery 12.05.05’, in Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds City Museum: Concept Design Brief (2003), fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008). p. 3.

authority over the gallery redevelopment without information and support from other sources.⁷⁶¹

This chapter has demonstrated how the social responsibility of museums to provide for the individuals and communities to whom they are accountable has significantly influenced shifts in the presentation and display of taxidermy in the three case study museums. The attribution of different values to taxidermy collections according to different stakeholder and audience agendas reveals how its interpretation is as much about people and politics as it is about science and nature, and how the meanings of taxidermy are tempered by shifting social values, both within and beyond the museum.⁷⁶² We shall now turn to the fourth and final chapter of this investigation which critically analyses how developments in technology and museum and design, and the impact of globalisation and commodity culture, have impacted upon the interpretation of taxidermy by reconfiguring audiences' expectations of the contemporary museum.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

⁷⁶² Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24.

Chapter 4

Interpretation, Visual Culture and Globalisation

The effects of globalisation, advances in travel, and increased cultural tourism, mean that the audiences of Leeds City Museum (LCM), the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H) and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP), are increasingly likely to be made up of a wide and diverse range of people.⁷⁶³ In addition, local audiences today are likely to be as diverse in interests, cultures and beliefs as those from further afield. This may be particularly true of post-industrial Northern cities, which owing to high levels of immigration, particularly during the industrial years, are now home to a wide variety of communities of different ethnicities.⁷⁶⁴ As a result, today individuals and communities increasingly identify themselves according to shared experiences, likenesses and interests across social groups rather than by nationality. Elizabeth Crooke has explored this 'turn':

Community can be constructed at local, national, and global levels and although frequently defined by geographical borders, what makes a "community" can vary dramatically from places where a person identifies as their home, to shared interests, political and religious beliefs, to shared sexualities etc.⁷⁶⁵

In an era where cities are more postnational and transcultural than ever before, identifying individuals and communities by nationhood has become an outmoded, culturally, socially and politically insensitive way of carving out individual and collective identities.⁷⁶⁶ Accordingly, in the recently redeveloped museums, notions of identity and belonging have been reconfigured through the display and interpretation of taxidermy in ways which cut across and through culturally constructed boundaries between nations, cultures and communities.

Raising standards of professionalisation and accountability in museums in the period following the Second World War, and more recently, the politicised agenda of

⁷⁶³ Dennis Kennedy, 'Interculturalism and the Global Spectator', in *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 115-132 (pp. 117-118).

⁷⁶⁴ Macdonald, 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 273-286.

⁷⁶⁵ Crooke, 'Museums and Community', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 170-185 (p. 174).

⁷⁶⁶ Macdonald, 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 273-286.

museums to act as agents of social inclusion, have also contributed a perceived need for improved standards in museum design.⁷⁶⁷ In addition, the increasing dominance of commercialism and visual culture in everyday life has simultaneously reconfigured the role of museums and audiences' expectations of them. The design and appearance of museum galleries today reflects how technology, popular culture and the culture of consumption have collectively redefined the museum, and with it, the meanings and values of the objects it displays. Along with shifts in technology and design, new approaches to taxidermy practice have equally served to shape the meaning of nature as interpreted by the three case study museums. In particular, modelling materials and advances in taxidermy techniques have greatly improved the standard of museum taxidermy in recent decades.⁷⁶⁸ The establishment of the Taxidermy Guild served to develop the standard of UK taxidermy by providing a platform where amateur and professional taxidermists can network and share knowledge.⁷⁶⁹ The Taxidermy Guild also implemented an accreditation scheme in which the work of taxidermists can be judged and awarded credits according to achievement.⁷⁷⁰ This process has afforded a level of standardisation in the quality of the taxidermy being produced by many of the taxidermists who supply UK museums today. In conjunction with these developments, the widespread availability of digital media and the internet have made it easier for taxidermists to access high quality videos and images of animals enabling them to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how animals look, move and behave. Collectively these factors have had a significant impact upon the content and appearance of contemporary taxidermy displays by making them appear more visually engaging, relevant, and accessible for museum audiences. This chapter investigates changes in the interpretation of taxidermy in relation to some of the demands being placed upon contemporary museums in the globalised world, particularly the impact of commodity culture and the dominance of visual culture, along with the increasing requirement of museums to be inclusive, interdisciplinary and experiential in the twenty-first century.

⁷⁶⁷ Sandell, 'Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 562-574. Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*. Although different in its approach, it is recognised that the social and political role of the nineteenth century museum to include audiences in order to edify, educate and enlighten them resonates with the agendas of contemporary museums, and that these ideologies are not a new phenomenon. Bennett, 'The Political Rationality of the Museum', in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, pp. 89-105.

⁷⁶⁸ Morris, 'Taxidermy Today', in *A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste*, pp. 374-378.

⁷⁶⁹ Dickinson, 'View from the Chair', 1.

⁷⁷⁰ For more information on the credit system and the different levels of accreditation see: Guild of Taxidermists, 'Credit System Explained', *Taxidermist: The Journal of the Guild of Taxidermists*, 35 (2012) p. 12.

4.1 Access, Inclusion and Interactivity

While a growing demand for heritage experiences informed the development of social history museums in the 1970s and 1980s, the accessibility and relevance of extant museum displays interpreting natural science collections through predominantly scientific narratives in the 1990s was increasingly called into question. The focus on the relevance of museums to the public, and a greater demand for accessible and, increasingly, interactive displays, challenged traditional scientifically orientated and didactic approaches to interpreting taxidermy in museums.⁷⁷¹ In 1998 Andrew Barry commented that '[t]he contemporary concern with interactivity emerges at a moment when there is a perceived to be a crisis in the relations between science and the public'.⁷⁷² Indeed, in the following year, Maurice Davies warned biology curators of the possible ramifications of retreating 'into the more comfortable world of science' and justifying taxidermy collections 'in terms of their scientific value rather than their educational and display potential [...] at the expense of more accessible themes'.⁷⁷³ At the Hancock Museum, which remained first and foremost a museum dedicated to natural science, the call for increased accessibility and relevance was partly appeased through the opening of 'The Living Planet' gallery in 1996. As we have seen, unlike the single subject 'The Magic of Birds' gallery, 'The Living Planet' gallery was thematic and interdisciplinary, and featured a variety of different interpretative techniques (fig. 31). The NHSN reported that:

Museum staff have been at pains to combine the new technology with a wide range of natural history specimens, and this approach has been greatly appreciated by visitors.⁷⁷⁴

The interdisciplinary approach used in 'The Living Planet' could be viewed as a precursor to the approaches used in the galleries of the redeveloped museums today in that while its displays continued to interpret scientific themes, they did so in ways which attempted to relate them to spheres of human experience in order to demonstrate their significance to people's everyday lives. The graveyard display, for example, addressed a scientific concept

⁷⁷¹ Davies, 'Save our Stuffed Animals', 22.

⁷⁷² Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98- 117 (p. 98).

⁷⁷³ Davies, 'Save our Stuffed Animals', 22.

⁷⁷⁴ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1996*, 57:2, p. 69.

(species extinction), but by using the analogy of graves and gravestones, presented the concept in a way that was humancentric and more widely accessible (fig. 64).

Since the onset of this study, redevelopments of natural history galleries in other UK museums have evidenced a shift away from interpreting taxidermy using didactic, mostly one dimensional scientific narratives, to seeking to create displays which are interdisciplinary, and promote more interactive visitor engagements with objects. This is reflective of a broader shift in museum interpretation which has increasingly questioned the primacy of the single narrative in the interpretation of objects and the authority afforded to vision as the primary means of communicating in museums.⁷⁷⁵ For example, following the redevelopment of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, which reopened in 2006, the Museum's galleries now sport interdisciplinary displays incorporating taxidermy which are devoid of traditional taxonomic groupings.⁷⁷⁶ In addition, part of Kelvingrove's current philosophy is to reduce the 'physical and intellectual barriers' between visitors and the Museum's collections.⁷⁷⁷ This is characterised by a significant amount of Kelvingrove's taxidermy being presented on open display with a view to increase physical and spatial accessibility for audiences enabling them to experience the objects at close range.⁷⁷⁸ This approach has also been adopted by national institutions such as National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, which opened in 2011 following redevelopment, where taxidermy specimens are displayed openly without the use of glass casing. In the redeveloped Manchester Museum, taxidermy is used to communicate ideas about the different relationships between people and animals in the Museum's 'Living Worlds' gallery.⁷⁷⁹ Similar to Kelvingrove Museum, The Manchester Museum's 'Living Worlds' gallery also reveals a more interdisciplinary approach to the interpretation of ideas about nature and the natural world by moving away from the traditional disciplinary constraints associated with the interpretation of science and natural history. These shifts in the display and interpretation of museum taxidermy indicate a heightened focus on the creation of displays which approach the interpretation of natural science collections through themes

⁷⁷⁵ Classen, 'Introduction', in *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender, and the Aesthetic Imagination*, pp. 1-10, (p. 1).

⁷⁷⁶ Richard Sutcliffe, Mike Rutherford and Jeanne Robinson, 'No Glass! Natural History Specimens on Open Display at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow', *The University of Manchester: School of Arts, Histories and Cultures* (2007), <<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/museology/assets/thefile,131699,en.pdf>> [accessed 24 July 2012].

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁹ Uni Life: The University of Manchester, 'Hundreds Flock to Gallery Opening', 3.

which are centred upon, or reflective of, human experiences and relationships. In using these approaches, museums are increasingly interpreting concepts which concern nature and the natural world in ways which key in to different modes of engagement deemed more socially inclusive and accessible to the public.⁷⁸⁰

There are some displays in the redeveloped museums today where taxidermy mounts are interpreted using a layered interpretation, therefore affording the objects multiple meanings, and widening their potential relevance to different audiences. The variety of interpretative narratives and display mediums used in the three case study museums means that visitors have more choice over how they access and engage with the taxidermied material on display. In some instances, such as the following interpretive label accompanying a display of various natural science specimens at LCM, the interpretation is phrased in such a way that it frames ideas relating to nature and the natural environment through their significance and relevance to people:

Using Nature

We use the variety of life on Earth for all sorts of things. Nearly everything you eat, and most of what you wear, was once alive. We use nature for entertainment, fuel, medicine, building, transport, clothing, materials... have a look around you.⁷⁸¹

While explicit reference is made to humans using nature to meet their own needs, the approach adopted by the interpretation also encourages audiences to develop the ideas presented beyond the material provided in the museum gallery. This is reflective of the contemporary museum's focus on individualism, and the museum seeking to enable visitors to shape their own learning experiences by affording them greater agency in the construction of object meanings (2.3, p. 120). While the themes used to interpret taxidermy collections remain largely scientific, there are distinct ways in which they have been orientated to reflect human experiences and therefore appear relevant to a wider audience. The use of biodiversity as an overarching interpretative theme in all three of the case study museums is particularly significant in this respect.

⁷⁸⁰ Gail Anderson, 'Introduction: Reinventing the Museum', in *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. by Gail Anderson (Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira, 2004), pp. 1-7.

⁷⁸¹ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Life on Earth', LCM.

Biodiversity

Following their most recent redevelopments, all three of the case study museums use taxidermy specimens to interpret various scientific ideas and concepts under the broader theme of biodiversity. Biodiversity is the contraction of biological diversity, and is commonly used to refer to all forms of life on Earth and encompasses everything that constitutes the global ecosystem.⁷⁸² The unifying and collective associations of biodiversity as a concept are particularly useful for contemporary museums as they provide a route through which museums can elide their interpretative approaches with liberal notions of multiculturalism and inclusivity. (Also see: 3.3, p. 188). The concept underpinning biodiversity, that all elements, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, are of value and importance within the wider network of relations within which they are situated, can easily be mapped against the liberal notion that the values, beliefs and voices of individuals from all cultures and communities should be considered of equal importance. Therefore, while the dominance of the biodiversity narrative in the redeveloped galleries of the three case study museums is reflective of shifting trends in science, it is also reflective of shifting social and ethical positions. As observed by Andrew Isenberg in *The Moral Ecology of Wildlife* (2002), '[o]ur representations of wildlife are inescapably expressions of human values. Those values are historically contingent and inextricably entangled in a changing culture'.⁷⁸³ As a concept, biodiversity underpins the moral and political rhetoric of the contemporary museum by championing inclusivity and diversity and demonstrates how current scientific concerns can key in to contemporary social policy.

The culturally constructed dichotomy of local and foreign, familiar and unfamiliar, 'us' and 'the Other', dominated how taxidermy was organised, displayed and interpreted in late nineteenth and early twentieth century inceptions of the three case study museums. (See: 2.2, p. 88). From around the 1950s onwards however, and particularly from the late 1970s and early 1980s, the museums adopted a multiplicity of classificatory and interpretative strategies in recognition of the multiplicity of identities that make up museum audiences, and the increasingly globalised and multicultural climate of contemporary society. While modernist, linear conceptions of progress previously resulted

⁷⁸² Peter Davis has suggested that the term 'biodiversity' gained usage and acceptance in the late 1980s and has increasingly gained relevance since that time. Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 128.

⁷⁸³ Andrew C. Isenberg, 'The Moral Ecology of Wildlife', in *Representing Animals* ed. by Rothfels, pp. 48-60 (p. 60).

in nature being framed through one dominant narrative, where, as argued by Gordon Fyfe, difference was ‘submerged [...] in the bounded selves of universal citizenship’, today museums are increasingly ‘called to recognize the plurality and flux of identities’.⁷⁸⁴ As Peter Davis has suggested,

in the twentieth century, and particularly from the 1960s onwards, our view of the world has moved away from the simplistic vertical model, shifting towards a paradigm of horizontal, global interdependence.⁷⁸⁵

The theme of biodiversity has been adopted by a number of large and influential museums since the late 1990s as a primary discursive framework through which ideas about nature and the environment can be interpreted. For example, today biodiversity is used as the dominant narrative in interpreting taxidermy in the ‘Nature Theatre’ in Naturalis, Leiden, and the ‘Hall of Biodiversity’ in the American Museum of Natural History, both of which opened in 1998, suggesting that these examples may represent a wider trend in the conception and interpretation of natural science collections.⁷⁸⁶ Although many of the displays in the redeveloped case study museums are quite different from one another, by uniting them under the wider theme of biodiversity, they appear to be inter-related in ways which may render visitors’ perceptions of the displays more holistic. For instance, displays concerning climate change, the conservation of species and their habitats, how humans use nature, and the impact of humans upon the natural environment, can all be interpreted within the discursive framework of biodiversity. Indeed, this is the case at LCM, where Clare Brown devised the new gallery by dividing its content into three strands relating to biodiversity: explaining biodiversity, why biodiversity is in decline, and what humans rely on biodiversity for.⁷⁸⁷ In LCM’s ‘Life on Earth’ gallery these sections have been further subdivided into topics which provide the themes for discrete displays such as evolution, climate change and extinction.

The very names of the redeveloped galleries: ‘Life on Earth’ (LCM), ‘Living Planet’ (GNM:H) and ‘What on Earth!’ (MS:WP), reveal a more universalising approach to

⁷⁸⁴ Gordon Fyfe, ‘Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 33-49 (p. 39).

⁷⁸⁵ Davis, *Museums and the Natural Environment: The Role of Natural History Museums in Biological Conservation*, p. 59.

⁷⁸⁶ For more information and images of these displays see: Paddon, ‘An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums’, pp. 28-32.

⁷⁸⁷ Clare Stringer, ‘Leeds Natural Science Gallery Draft Brief 2: Themes, Story Lines and the Objects that go with them’, (2004-2008).

interpreting collections conventionally categorised under the discipline of natural history by transgressing traditional classificatory boundaries. In addition, the removal of titles such as 'natural history', 'natural science', 'zoology', and discrete animal groups like 'birds' and 'mammals' from all of the gallery names suggests an increasing fluidity between museological disciplines, which owing to their specificity, define but can also restrict the terms on which audiences engage with objects. Moreover, the gallery titles 'What on Earth!', 'Living Planet' and 'Life on Earth', unite different geographies and their associated flora and fauna under the broad umbrella terms of 'Planet', 'World' and 'Earth'. In contrast, however, the locally focussed or regionally specific galleries of 'Natural Northumbria' and 'Arctic World' are individualising, marking out the spatial parameters of their contents through their names. Furthermore, at LCM and MS:WP, taxidermied examples of foreign species, much like the new gallery titles, are interpreted using broad universalising themes such as 'power' (MS:WP), and 'colour' (LCM) which are geographically non-specific.

In the recently redeveloped museums the contemporary moral and ethical position of the museum as being inclusive and promoting diversity is reflected through the apparent celebration of difference in displays such as LCM's 'Colour Wall', the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', and MS:WP's 'Weird and Wonderful'. The title of 'Weird and Wonderful' itself suggests the marking out of difference while simultaneously celebrating it. Although the ways in which visitor identities are constituted through the display and interpretation of taxidermy in the twenty-first century may be shifting away from notions of nationhood to other shared interests and cultures, what persists, however, is the condition that individual and/or collective identity is formed through its relationship to 'the Other'.⁷⁸⁸ As suggested by Stuart Hall, defining oneself in the world is equally about what one is, as it is what one is not: 'the "unities" which identities proclaim are [...] constructed within the play of power and exclusion'.⁷⁸⁹ To mark out notions of identity, therefore, it remains necessary for contemporary museums to draw attention to difference, while at the same time, limiting the extent to which they do so in order to avoid excluding, and perhaps even offending certain visitor groups. This tension presents a unique problem for contemporary museums which has resulted in universalising themes being adopted in parallel with individualising ones. For example, while local and foreign taxidermy is differentiated in different ways in the three case study museums, what is similar across all three museums is how the

⁷⁸⁸ Stuart Hall, 'Who needs 'Identity'?', in *Identity: A Reader*, ed. by Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 15-30 (p. 17).

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

representation of local wildlife (or in the case of LCM's backyard display, local environments) is highly specific, often using real locations as examples. The representation of the global as a category, however, has become increasingly nebulous and lacking in definition. In effect, by interpreting taxidermied specimens in displays such as the 'Bio-Wall' at the GNM:H according to habitat and climate rather than the culturally constructed borders drawn between nations, the case study museums are able to avoid outmoded, characteristically Modern and imperial representations of Otherness which in the past carved up the Earth and the life it supports according to notions of ownership, property and trade.⁷⁹⁰

Displays which promote or celebrate diversity, difference and equality can be problematised when we consider the fundamental role the museum to represent, an act in which the display of knowledge and ownership, and therefore authority and power, is inextricably implicated.⁷⁹¹ A counter-argument to the continued hegemony of the museum, however, is that by interpreting the contemporary theme of biodiversity through taxidermied objects in their galleries, LCM, the GNM:H and MS:WP are not attempting to represent nature in its entirety. Indeed, considering the sheer range of what may constitute nature's biodiversity, attempts to represent it, much like the encyclopaedic displays of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, are unachievable in practical terms.⁷⁹² Rather, in displays such as the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', the representation of biodiversity as a concept is always partial and suggestive of a much greater theoretical reality. Missing species or 'gaps' in displays representing biodiversity, therefore, could be considered to underscore the case in point, that the natural world is vast, complex, and in many ways unexplored and unknown. From this point of view, it is perhaps in their incompleteness that displays representing biodiversity are most effective. If contemporary biodiversity displays can be interpreted as representations of the failed endeavour of the nineteenth century encyclopaedic project, and of the limitations of human knowledge, then the authority of the museums which present them can be put into question. It is at this juncture where a new space opens up; where reflexive dialogue becomes possible. Sharon Macdonald has

⁷⁹⁰ For an example of such a display see the 'Game Animals of the Empire Exhibition' developed at the BM(NH) in 1932, pictured in: Snell and Parry, *Museum Through a Lens: Photographs from the Natural History Museum 1880 to 1950*, pp. 80-82.

⁷⁹¹ Pieterse, 'Multiculturalism and Museums', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 163-183 (p. 167).

⁷⁹² For example, the climate, geological formations, plants, soil, bacteria, marine invertebrates and fungi along with many, many other elements impact upon and shape the biodiversity of the planet yet they are very rarely represented to the same extent as animals (and particularly vertebrates) in displays which interpret biodiversity.

described reflexive approaches to interpretation as affording 'greater attention to the processes by which knowledge is produced and disseminated, and to the partial (in both senses of the word) and positioned nature of knowledge itself'.⁷⁹³ Reflexive approaches influence how taxidermy is interpreted for contemporary museum audiences by focusing on the power of representation itself to realign its meanings and values.⁷⁹⁴ The development and professionalisation of museology has resulted in museums increasingly being staffed by individuals who have studied or have a background in museum studies. As a result, many of these individuals have sought to utilise and apply poststructuralist methodologies to negotiate some of the challenges arising from the display and interpretation of material culture. In some ways, reflexive approaches can be characterised as a product of Postmodernity in that, as suggested by Fredric Jameson, the 'pastiche' practices characteristic of postmodern art led to the subject of postmodern art being 'art itself'.⁷⁹⁵ Similarly, Nicholas Mirzoeff has argued that '[t]he dominant postmodern style is ironic: a knowing pastiche that finds comment and critique to be the only means of innovation'.⁷⁹⁶ While this could also be the case regarding contemporary reflexive approaches to museum display, more recent observations made by Beth Lord serve to challenge this view by suggesting that the ability of museums to critique themselves is not due to the cultural consciousness or contingency of any particular historical moment. Rather, it is because of the museum's Enlightenment origins as 'a space of representation', that it can 'perform a critique of its own historical foundations'.⁷⁹⁷ For Lord, the function of the museum to represent is not reflective of a particular period in history, but of a particular episteme concerned with making meaning through the space of representation.

Attitudes and Approaches

During the recent redevelopment of LCM, Clare Brown drew attention to the perceived importance of ensuring that visitors can leave the 'Life on Earth' gallery feeling like they can contribute to the conservation of the natural world rather than feeling down-spirited,

⁷⁹³ Macdonald, 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

⁷⁹⁴ Pieterse, 'Multiculturalism and Museums', in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Corsane, pp. 163-183 (p. 176).

⁷⁹⁵ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 1-20 (p. 7).

⁷⁹⁶ Mirzoeff, 'What is Visual Culture?', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Mirzoeff, pp. 3-13 (p. 4).

⁷⁹⁷ Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', 1-14 (p. 7). Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

impotent, and therefore unlikely to return.⁷⁹⁸ The curator stated that because taxidermy 'lends itself to discussion on adaptive features', exploring these factors could provide a way to address topics like evolution and extinction without having to focus on 'the "horror" of extinction' itself'.⁷⁹⁹ Recently a similar view was expressed by the Head of Collections and Curator of Zoology at The Manchester Museum, Henry McGhie: 'We are trying to get people beyond thinking of the environment as an "issue", but to connect their lives with nature for their health and well-being, as much as for the good of the environment'.⁸⁰⁰ This approach is reflective of an emerging trend in museums which privileges museums not only as sites of edification and entertainment, but also as agents of social change over their more traditional function of acting as storehouses of information. In a culture where the internet has made information more freely available than ever before, the more traditional and didactic model of the museum has increasingly been challenged in relation to the evolving needs of museum audiences and the museum's role in the social, cultural and moral edification of the public. This more campaigning approach, which has been increasingly adopted by museums following the imposition of social inclusion policies, has led museums to increasingly assume leading roles as agents for social change by encouraging individuals to connect and become more actively engaged with their surroundings and communities.⁸⁰¹ At The Manchester Museum, McGhie suggested that the new natural science gallery 'represents a radical shift in the role the Museum plays in relation to its audience by taking a bold step away from traditional academic collecting towards a more experiential and campaigning approach'.⁸⁰² In addition, however, while the move to make audiences feel more independently empowered by the knowledge gained from their museum visit is reflective of a culture which privileges individualism, it can also be framed as a response to the shifting agenda of museums in relation to their funding. In particular, since visitor numbers are now regarded as an indicator of museum performance, they play an important role in informing decisions about funding the continued maintenance of museums and determining their eligibility for future funding grants.⁸⁰³ Therefore, while museums may assume the role of informing the public about pressing

⁷⁹⁸ Clare Stringer, 'Leeds Natural Science Gallery Draft Brief 2: Themes, Story Lines and the Objects that go with them', (2004-2008) (2004), p. 10.

⁷⁹⁹ Untitled, unpaginated preliminary notes [2004(?)], in Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁸⁰⁰ Uni Life: The University of Manchester, 'Hundreds Flock to Gallery Opening', 3.

⁸⁰¹ Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, p. 49.

⁸⁰² Uni Life: The University of Manchester, 'Hundreds Flock to Gallery Opening', *Uni Life*, 3.

⁸⁰³ Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, p. 15.

environmental issues, it is also important that they do not dissuade visitors from making repeat visits by presenting an overly negative museum message.

There are some ways in which the interpretive approaches adopted through the current taxidermy displays at the three case study museums contrast considerably with those featured in earlier inception of the three museums. In other ways, however, there are also approaches which remain quite similar. For example, displays such as the Hancock Museum's graveyard of extinct animals, which presented a rather bleak interpretation of the relationship between people and animals, afforded a sombre and sobering tone to the ideas being communicated through the display. By way of comparison, the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', along with LCM's 'Colour Wall' and MS:WP's 'Weird and Wonderful', seem much more orientated towards celebrating extant biodiversity and championing its preservation than lamenting its proposed decline. While these displays still carry strong conservation messages, more positive motivational language and imagery is used. At LCM, a display which interprets recycling, saving energy and how to be 'green', also reflects a perceptively more positive attitude which is epitomised by the display's title, 'How to Save the World'.⁸⁰⁴ There are, however, other areas in the museums where this more campaigning, motivational approach is less evident. In a different area of 'Life on Earth' at LCM, a panel entitled 'The chemical age' near a display of taxidermied threatened and endangered species portrays a perceptively less positive view for audiences:

We are polluting the Earth. The seas are becoming acidic and, in places, land is becoming barren.

From landfill to radioactive waste to chemicals to litter – we know how to wreck a place. The wonders of technology can bring death and disease with them.⁸⁰⁵

In addition, some of the imagery used to interpret the endangered display at LCM could be considered provocative in that it has the potential to incite strong emotions in visitors. For example, an enlarged photograph of a flaming pyre of seized elephant ivory may be particularly striking for some individuals (fig. 79). At LCM, this more confrontational position may be reflective of the style and delivery of the interpretation planned for the 2003 conception of LCM's 'This Fragile Earth', in which Clare Brown's predecessors, Adrian Norris and Jim Nunney, had conceptualised gallery themes which would be, in their view,

⁸⁰⁴ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Life on Earth', LCM.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

'hard hitting and controversial', covering 'important ecological stories from all parts of the world'.⁸⁰⁶ In the early planning stages, the approach of 'This Fragile Earth' was described in the following way:

This Fragile Earth tackles the destruction of natural environments, pollution, the extinction of plants and animals, man's exploitation of the planet's natural wealth and the development and adaptation of life on the planet.⁸⁰⁷

The content planned for 'This Fragile Earth', as the title of the gallery suggests, was heavily influenced by some of the concerns, attitudes and agendas expressed amongst the natural science community in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. (Also see: 3.1, p. 142). The hard-hitting interpretative approach of 'This Fragile Earth' was, therefore, reflective of the agendas of more senior members of museum staff, who's museological and scientific careers had been traditionally academic, and for whom more didactic models of communication had been commonplace. In the early stages of the most recent redevelopment Brown adapted and developed the content for 'Life on Earth' from the content plans drawn up for 'This Fragile Earth'.⁸⁰⁸ While in the curator's rough preliminary notes Brown questioned her predecessors' proposition that the planet is 'fragile', in some areas of the 'Life on Earth' gallery the approach adopted is evocative of the attitudes expressed in the earlier 'This Fragile Earth' plans, although the displays themselves have been heavily reconfigured.⁸⁰⁹

To an extent, a similar divide in approaches is evident in the redeveloped galleries of the GNM:H where the interpretative content of 'Natural Northumbria' seems more focussed on the presentation of primarily didactic and scientific textual interpretation in comparison to 'Living Planet'. In 'Natural Northumbria', although taxidermied animals are grouped and interpreted thematically according to their associated habitats as they are in 'Living Planet', many are also framed by, and interpreted through, the conservation status of the species they represent in much more detail than they are in 'Living Planet'. For instance, in 'Natural Northumbria', a label interpreting a display of taxidermied small mammals reads:

⁸⁰⁶ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds City Museum: Concept Design Brief (2003), fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁸⁰⁷ 'This Fragile Earth', in Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds City Museum: Concept Design Brief (2003), fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008), p. 7.

⁸⁰⁸ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds City Museum: Concept Design Brief (2003), fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

Many of the North East's small mammals, such as water voles, are threatened by American mink. At Gosforth Park, this threat is managed through conservation projects such as encouraging otters to the reserve. Mink numbers are now decreasing as the otter out-competes them for territory.⁸¹⁰

As demonstrated by the label, some of the textual interpretation offered within the gallery also promotes public engagement with the Society as links are drawn between the specimens on display and Gosforth Nature Reserve where much of the Society's research is undertaken. The approach adopted in the textual interpretation in 'Living Planet', however, focuses less on the conservation status of species represented, and more on the ecological contexts in which discrete species live, and how species have adapted to them through themes such as protection, competition and food and water.⁸¹¹ By way of comparison, in 'Living Planet', a label interpreting some of the taxidermied animals presented in the polar section of the 'Bio-Wall' reads:

Food and Water

Resources are scarce in the polar regions for much of the year, but there are short periods of abundance in the summer months. Many animals, like sanderlings and reindeer migrate south as winter returns. In winter, animals need to be able to find food in an extremely harsh environment. Wolves hunt in packs and may travel long distances looking for prey.⁸¹²

While this approach may be considered to be equally as didactic as that demonstrated in 'Natural Northumbria', through the layering of interpretation, other approaches are also evident in 'Living Planet' which are distinctly less academic. For instance, some of the digitised information available in 'Living Planet' interprets the taxidermy specimens on display through 'fascinating facts', which in a number of cases are framed as jokes:

Fascinating fact

What's the difference between a wolf and a flea? One howls on the prairie, the other prowls on the hairy!⁸¹³

⁸¹⁰ Excerpt from a text panel in 'Natural Northumbria', GNM:H.

⁸¹¹ Although there are exceptions, for example the interpretation accompanying the live exhibits informs visitors of the conservation status of the species represented.

⁸¹² Excerpt from a text panel in 'Living Planet', GNM:H.

⁸¹³ Excerpt from a digital display (interpreting a grey wolf) in 'Living Planet', GNM:H.

The contrast in style of the interpretation provided in the two galleries demonstrates a divide in approaches in the GNM:H. In some cases this has resulted in a combination of both characteristically modern and postmodern approaches to communication overlapping and intersecting with one another in different ways in the redeveloped Museum's galleries. Furthermore, while some displays relay an upbeat, motivational, and at times, campaigning approach, others are more sobering, hard-hitting and poignant. In addition to the layering of interpretation, by demonstrating a diverse range of approaches and attitudes towards the themes adopted in their displays, the three case study museums have optimised the accessibility of their displays by providing for a wider range of audiences with different interests, opinions and agendas.

Technology and Design

The use of multiple communicative and interpretative mediums in museums today is reflective of shifting ideas in museology regarding how visitors use museums, what they expect from them, and how they learn and experience the world within them. Entwined with these new approaches to interpretation have been shifting trends in design, along with the technologies which facilitate them. While changes in layout and display in the 1960s may have helped improve the appearance of galleries and the quality of museum provision, by the 1970s the role assumed by museums to inform the public was being increasingly challenged by the proliferation of new and alternative forms of visual and communicative media.⁸¹⁴ Museum professionals were beginning to recognise how the increased availability of information resulting from technological developments was impacting upon the pedagogic role of the museum in new ways. In 1975 a report by the Museums Association concerning interpretative techniques stated that: 'Museums must appreciate [...] that a substantial part of their traditional role has been taken over by the mass media, in particular colour television'.⁸¹⁵ As television and film began to play a larger role in the dissemination of information to the public, it became increasingly apparent that in order for museums not to be supplanted by advances in technology and visual culture, they needed to more clearly distinguish themselves, and the services they offer society, from the role of the mass media. Simultaneously, however, as technology and visual culture

⁸¹⁴ Quinn, *Windows on Nature: The Great Habitat Dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History*, p. 21.

⁸¹⁵ Museums Association, 'Museums and Interpretative Techniques: An Interim Report', *Museums Journal*, 75: 2 (September 1975), 71-74 (p. 72).

increasingly shaped tastes and trends, museums were also increasingly under pressure to borrow and integrate some of the communicative tools and approaches of the popular media and commercial sphere in their public galleries. In 1977, the museologist Kenneth Hudson highlighted how technological developments and the dominance of visual culture were setting new precedents for the communication of information when he posed the following question:

Are people who have become accustomed to the impressionistic methods of television and the cinema willing to accept the established learning tradition of moving in an orderly and logical sequence from one piece of information to the next?⁸¹⁶

In the widely cited essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin stated how when viewing art, concentration involves the viewer being 'absorbed' by the work art, while distraction, involves the viewer 'absorbing' the work of art.⁸¹⁷ For Benjamin, in the first instance audiences could be understood to be actively engaged with, or in, an object they are viewing, while in the second, audiences passively receive information transmitted from the object through its visual consumption.⁸¹⁸ While poststructuralist theory contends that individuals bring their own thoughts and experiences to the viewing process and therefore that the act of viewing is always active on some level, approaches to the design of some museum displays in the late twentieth century were suggestive of museums responding to the shifting position of the visitor as a spectator and consumer of visual culture.⁸¹⁹ For instance, the opening of the 'The Magic of Birds' at the Hancock Museum in the late 1970s marked the arrival of various audio technologies into the Museum including a coin-operated display featuring a sound recording of 'Sparkie' 'talking', as well as a small auditorium.⁸²⁰ The auditorium presented 'programmes on birds of five different habitats [...] using colour slides of some typical species to the accompaniment of recordings of their calls and songs'.⁸²¹ The use of film and sound to help interpret the taxidermied birds on display at the Hancock Museum enabled audiences to interact with the Museum's collections in novel ways, affording some of the objects and

⁸¹⁶ Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends*, p. 9.

⁸¹⁷ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin*, ed. by Arendt, pp. 211-244 (p. 232).

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994) (first publ. in Debord, Guy, *La Société du Spectacle* (France: Buchet-Chastel, 1967)).

⁸²⁰ Stansfield, 'The Bird Room at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne', 199-201 (p. 201).

⁸²¹ Ibid.

displays new and additional meanings. In other instances, museums internalised some of the aesthetic and spectacular qualities of television and film by replicating or transposing them into the design of their public galleries. For example, when WPM opened its 'Wildlife' gallery in 1986, part of the redesigned museum space resembled a cinema auditorium (fig. 23). Unlike the more open layout of the Museum's previous gallery, the compartmentalisation of the display cases containing taxidermy framed each section in a way that was evocative of viewing screens. Moreover, the darkened space was dramatically lit using high-contrast lighting effects in order to draw visitors' attentions to the contents of the displays. The appearance and approach of the new displays presenting taxidermy in 'Wildlife', therefore, were reflective of the increasing dominance of television, film, and other forms of visual culture in the late twentieth century. By positioning the visitor as a spectator, these new display approaches provided for an audience increasingly conditioned by spectacle as a means of display and communication.⁸²² In 2006 Nick Prior described the spectacle as,

a realm of fantastical contrivance, a kind of democratization of the image in the age of consumerism, the power of which continues to reside in the devotion accorded to the visual as a world of pleasure.⁸²³

Indeed, the development of these kinds of displays at this juncture in the history of the Hancock Museum and WPM coincided with the transformation of perception in the postmodern turn. The increasing reproductability and speed by which visual culture was experienced, had led to a culture of distinction being superseded by a culture of distraction.⁸²⁴ In addition, the 'blurring' of the 'boundaries between education and popular culture', a phenomenon which gave rise to the term 'edutainment' in museology in the late twentieth century, was increasingly reshaping the perceived role of the museum.⁸²⁵

The significant involvement of commercial designers in museum redevelopments added an additional layer of influence and authorship to the appearance of museum taxidermy displays. Some museums added designers to their core staff, but it was also

⁸²² Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*.

⁸²³ Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 514).

⁸²⁴ Nick Prior, 'A Question of Perception: Bourdieu, Art and the Postmodern', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56: 1 (2005) 123-13 (p. 133). Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984).

⁸²⁵ Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98- 117 (p. 106).

common, particularly for smaller museums, to commission designers from the commercial museum design industry to afford museum exhibitions a more professional edge.⁸²⁶ In the early 1980s the curators at WPM stated that '[s]omewhat unfashionably for a large provincial museum, Sheffield has not yet added design staff to its establishment, although consultant designers have been used on major gallery schemes'.⁸²⁷ For example, during the production of the 'Wildlife' gallery in the mid-1980s, WPM commissioned an independent designer, Roger Simpson from Tideswell, Derbyshire, to redesign the gallery space.⁸²⁸ Increased professionalisation and specialisation in the natural sciences, along with the professionalisation of museum design in the late 1970s and throughout 1980s, contributed to the decline in what could be described as the 'polymathic' curator. In previous years, particularly in smaller museums, it had been relatively common for museum curators to take on various creative roles including those of taxidermists, technicians, designers or artists to create parts of or sometimes entire museum displays. In the late 1960s, for instance, John Armitage helped create scenery and habitat surrounds for cases displaying taxidermy at LCM (fig. 80).⁸²⁹ The difference between having in-house design staff, or curators who undertook design work themselves, and commissioning commercial designers is that, as argued by Kenneth Hudson, 'designers design for other designers and architects for other architects', meaning that that designers' interests are divided between the requirements of their clients, and the marketability of their work.⁸³⁰ The impact of commercial design companies and the prevalence of visual culture on approaches to museum display were clearly manifest in the Hancock Museum's 'The Living Planet' gallery installed in 1996. The gallery featured spot lights, high resolution digital prints, panels and backdrops (enabled through the development of computer aided design) to make the gallery space appear contemporary, streamlined and visually engaging. The contrast in appearance between 'The Living Planet' and older displays created in-house is particularly noticeable when comparing the more traditional geology displays (which continued to be

⁸²⁶ Museums Association, 'Museums and Interpretative Techniques: An Interim Report', 71-74 (p. 71). Michael Brawne, *The Museum Interior: Temporary and Permanent Display Techniques* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

⁸²⁷ Riley, Garland and Whitely, 'Sheffield City Museums: Natural Sciences Section', 71-107 (p. 79).

⁸²⁸ Information derived from design plans, see: Fig. 57.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

Museum staff with both artistic and scientific skills like Armitage were not uncommon in earlier inceptions of the three case study museums. Another example was Alfred Walker, who undertook various in-house display work at WPM between c.1910 and c.1952, his skills being described as, 'in the realm of the applied arts, in restoration and in modelling'. City of Sheffield, *The City Museum Annual Report 1952-1953*, p. 9.

⁸³⁰ Hudson, *Museums for the 1980s: A Survey of World Trends*, p. 81.

displayed on the Hancock Museum's first floor gallery) with the professionally designed new gallery (fig. 31).⁸³¹

The continued success of museums in the late twentieth century was dependant on a degree of redefinition in regard to their public role. Museums were required to provide services which were distinct in purpose to the mass media, while also embracing visual culture in order to develop new and alternative means of communicating with the public. As it became more common for professional design companies to work on natural science gallery redevelopments, the tastes and trends of the commercial design industry had a greater impact upon the content and appearance of museum galleries.

4.2 The Commodified Museum

The most recent redevelopment of the museums at Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield in the first decade of the twenty-first century was part of a broader shift in the social, cultural, economic and political role that culture has come to play in UK cities in recent years.⁸³² When the UK experienced a dramatic expansion in the heritage industry in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of museums in the regional and national economy began to shift.⁸³³ The decline of the major industries was met with an increased focus on culturally led urban regeneration. In the absence of industries that previously positioned Northern cities as leaders in the world market, the heightened focus on culture was reflective of the contemporary economic climate where tourism and the leisure industry now play a dominant role in the local, regional and global economy.⁸³⁴ The development of commoditised cultural experiences, particularly in the form of social history sites and museums demonstrated the shifting value of museums to a burgeoning tourist and leisure industry.⁸³⁵ In addition, in order to reduce their reliance on state funding, museums were being pushed to adopt a more autonomous, businesslike strategy to their management and

⁸³¹ 'The Living Planet' was designed by Redman Design. In correspondence with the NHSN (2011).

⁸³² Bruno S. Frey and Stephen Meier, 'Cultural Economics', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 398-414 (p. 398).

⁸³³ Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*.

⁸³⁴ Vall, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000', in *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*, ed. by Colls and Lancaster, pp. 47-70 (p. 68-70). Chris Wharton, 'The Newcastle Look: Culture as Spectacle', in *Made in Newcastle: Visual Culture*, ed. by Hilary Fawcett (Newcastle: Northumbria University Press, 2007), pp. 153-169.

⁸³⁵ Kennedy, 'The Spectator as Tourist', in *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*, pp. 94-114 (p. 99).

activities, to become more financially self sufficient.⁸³⁶ To compound the problems facing museums in the 1980s and 1990s, the expanding leisure and heritage industry continued to raise audiences' expectations of customer care and quality of service. While new cultural services were being developed, extant museums were becoming increasingly outmoded, struggling to outperform one another while more up to date and better equipped leisure facilities became increasingly available to the general public elsewhere.⁸³⁷ As Northern cities were gradually reconfigured into places of consumption over places of production, cultural services, including museums, became increasingly commodified.⁸³⁸

Saloni Mathur has suggested that global competition, corporate sponsorship and museums taking a more commercial approach to their activities has led to the 'blurring [of] the boundaries between the world of museums, the world of Hollywood, the world of fashion design, while also creating a convergence of interests between these powerful economic sectors'.⁸³⁹ The commissioning of Villa Eugénie, a high-profile Belgian events company, to undertake the design of the recently redeveloped natural science gallery of The Manchester Museum could be considered one example of this 'convergence'. The company's other clients include Chanel, Dior, Jean Paul Gaultier and Miu Miu, amongst many other high end fashion brands (fig. 81).⁸⁴⁰ Another example is that of 'Polly Morgan – Live and Stuffing', an event during which the contemporary artist Polly Morgan mounted up a small bird in front of a live audience as part of Museums at Night 2012 at the University of Liverpool's Victoria Gallery and Museum.⁸⁴¹ Situated within the sphere of contemporary fine art and famous for making surreal and subversive sculptural works which frequently incorporate taxidermy, Morgan's celebrity status and the recent rise in the popularity of taxidermy in fine art practice made the event extremely popular.⁸⁴² Commodity culture and

⁸³⁶ Sandell, 'Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 562-574 (p. 563).

⁸³⁷ For instance, in the late 1990s the Hancock Museum found itself increasingly in competition with a new city centre attraction, 'Centre for Life' which opened on Fourth Banks in 1996, in addition to other museums in the neighbouring regions. Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 2001*, 62:1, p. 10.

⁸³⁸ Miles, *Spaces for Consumption: Pleasure and Placelessness in the Post-Industrial City*, pp. 6-7. Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 512).

⁸³⁹ Mathur, 'Museums and Globalization', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 510-516 (p. 511).

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid. Villa Eugénie, <<http://www.villaeugenie.com/>> [accessed 24 May 2013].

⁸⁴¹ University of Liverpool, 'Polly Morgan – Live and Stuffing at VGM', *University of Liverpool, University News* (May 2 2012), <<https://news.liv.ac.uk/2012/05/02/polly-morgan-live-stuffing-at-vgm/>> [accessed 20 May 2013].

⁸⁴² Nick Stockman, 'Museums at Night 2012: Polly Morgan's Taxidermy Delivers Knock Out Blow in Liverpool', *Culture 24 / Museums at Night* (19 May 2012)

corporate involvement in funding cultural services has also increasingly led the museum sector to adopt the vocabulary of the popular media industries.⁸⁴³ Museums strive to attain so-called 'superstar' status, through the exhibition of 'celebrity' objects. For example, in the late 1990s the Hancock Museum increasingly relied on 'blockbuster' shows to draw in audiences.⁸⁴⁴ Shows such as 'Star Trek: The Exhibition' were largely unrelated to the NHSN's focus on natural history, however, the Society rationalised that the hosting of such exhibitions was 'driven by the need to attract more visitors', and because the Society felt that the Museum was 'immediately placed in a very competitive commercial leisure market – like it or not'.⁸⁴⁵ As Andreas Huyssen argued in 2003, under capitalism '[t]here is no pure space outside of commodity culture, however much we may desire such a space', and this principle now extends to museums.⁸⁴⁶ As distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture have become less dichotomised in the postmodern period, this shift has also impacted upon the retail sector where there is now a heightened focus on transforming the act of shopping into a cultural experience.⁸⁴⁷ Enhanced forms of visual display, along with an increased tendency to narrativize consumer goods has enabled retail outlets to transform consumption activities and transactions into 'experiences'.⁸⁴⁸ Charles Saumarez Smith has suggested that this approach has rendered the act of shopping 'more creative, more historical, and more aesthetically suggestive' in the twenty-first century, therefore replicating some of the characteristics of the museum.⁸⁴⁹

While more aggressive forms of commercialisation are perhaps characteristic of larger, multiple site institutions such as the Tate or Guggenheim, particularity since there is pressure on national and international museums to be bigger and better than their counterparts, the extent to which regional museums and their collections have also been affected by shifts in the social, political and economic significance of commodity culture

<<http://www.culture24.org.uk/places%20to%20go/museums%20at%20night/art386216>> [accessed 20 May 2013].

⁸⁴³ Mathur, 'Museums and Globalization', in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Carbonell, pp. 510-516 (p. 511).

⁸⁴⁴ Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 514). Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1998*, 59:1, p. 9.

⁸⁴⁵ Natural History Society of Northumbria, *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria: Annual Report 1998*, 59:1, p. 8.

⁸⁴⁶ Huyssen, 'Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia', in *Past Presents: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, pp. 11-29 (p. 19).

⁸⁴⁷ Charles Saumarez Smith, 'The Future of the Museum', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 543-554 (p. 545).

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁹ *ibid.*

should not be underestimated. The role of municipal and regional museums has become more complex in recent years. As regionally located, and largely local authority funded organisations, smaller museums are under continued obligation to provide for local audiences and encourage their engagement with museum collections. Simultaneously, however, they are also implicated in a much broader political and economic strategy, in which culture is being used to achieve nationally, and increasingly internationally, oriented goals. As the roles of the three case study museums have shifted, so too have the perceived purposes of their collections. This has reconfigured how the three case study museums use their taxidermy collections today in a number of different ways.

The Museum Experience

Since the late twentieth century, alongside education and entertainment, museum audiences have also increasingly come to expect museums to provide influential and memorable experiences, and this expectation has influenced how taxidermy collections are being displayed and interpreted in contemporary museums.⁸⁵⁰ The focus on visitor experiences is, in part, a reflection of shifts in the understanding of how different audiences learn in different ways.⁸⁵¹ Equally, the definition of learning has expanded in recent decades to encompass all forms of cognitive, physical, emotional, and sensory experience which enable visitors to obtain knowledge, or use and build upon pre-existing knowledges, by 'doing' as well as observing in museums.⁸⁵² This has given rise to an increase in more interactive forms of interpretation in museums more broadly. Although contemporary museum experiences are difficult to define, Dennis Kennedy has suggested that they can be characterised as encounters of 'sensation or renewal, inspiration or diversion'.⁸⁵³ When one considers the overall appearance and content of many of the displays featuring taxidermy in the three case study museums, it appears that a significant part of the contemporary visitor's experience of taxidermy is constituted by a combination of information and spectacle communicated primarily through visual technologies. Displays such as LCM's 'Colour Wall', the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall', and MS:WP's 'Weird and Wonderful', have been

⁸⁵⁰ Saumarez Smith, 'The Future of the Museum', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 543-554.

⁸⁵¹ Hooper-Greenhill, 'Conceptualising Learning in Cultural Institutions', in *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance*, pp. 31-44 (p. 34-38).

⁸⁵² Ibid. Barry, 'On Interactivity: Consumers, Citizens and Culture', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 98-117 (p. 105).

⁸⁵³ Kennedy, 'The Spectator as Tourist', in *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*, pp. 94-114 (p. 95).

engineered to provoke emotional and aesthetic responses from museum visitors. At MS:WP, the focus on visitor experience, in this instance to provoke notions of awe and wonder in visitors, was written into the Museum's interpretation strategy:

The Natural World

The aim is to startle and fascinate the visitor with the wonders of the natural world and to provide opportunities for the visitor to investigate natural history themselves in the gallery. The range of specimens for display is extremely wide and includes for example butterflies and insects, minerals and rocks, animals and plants [*emphasis in original*].⁸⁵⁴

Although the displays featured in the three case study museums have all been designed to provoke particular reactions and emotions in audiences by using varied techniques and technologies, they do so in different ways. At LCM, the 'Colour Wall' uses expansive panes of colour within which natural science specimens are displayed alongside semi-abstract images and digital moving footage of animals and other nature scenes (fig. 82). When standing before the 'Colour Wall', the colours across the panels saturate the visitor's field of vision, each colour sets a different mood and atmosphere provoking different emotional responses from viewers and changing the feel of the space. In MS:WP, the space containing 'Weird and Wonderful' is small and intimate and has been designed to have an almost cavern-like feel and appearance. Inside, the taxidermied animals are presented in a dark and dramatically lit space in ways which simultaneously accentuate the diversity of the objects on display and the aesthetic qualities of the objects themselves (fig. 45). Upon entering 'Weird and Wonderful', the design of the space is such that it engenders a level of reverence in visitors while implying that the objects on display are exclusive, treasured and of great significance. Dennis Kennedy has proposed that:

Any space we occupy deeply affects how we perceive events inside of it. We are bodies which occupy space and metaphorically are occupied by it. Especially when we are present in a space marked off from the mundane, like a sacred temple or a chamber for the exercise of power, we are likely to alter not only our behaviour but our frame of mental reference.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵⁴ Sheffield, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust /Weston Park Museum, MS Interpretation Strategy City Museum & Mappin Art Gallery Project (2001), p. 8.

⁸⁵⁵ Kennedy, 'The Body of the Spectator', in *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*, pp. 133-150 (p. 133). Also see: Duncan and Wallach, 'The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis', 28-51.

Similarly, the design of the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall' also employs the manipulation of scale and space in order to shape visitor experiences of the display by encouraging particular behavioural and emotional responses. Specifically, the size and scale of the 'Bio-Wall' is used to create an impact and elicit notions of awe and wonder. The 'Bio-Wall' display is a floor to ceiling panoramic vista designed to have, as Steve McLean the Project Manager of the Hancock Museum's redevelopment claimed, the "wow factor".⁸⁵⁶ The impact of the 'Bio-Wall' is further enhanced by the fact that it is the only display in the 'Living Planet' gallery, and the surrounding walls have been painted a neutral colour to ensure that visitors' attentions are not distracted from the display to other objects in the gallery space (fig. 83). While diverse in design and layout, all of these techniques point towards the case study museums using design and interpretation techniques which create more experiential encounters with the taxidermy on display.

The focus on visitors' experiences is also manifest in the use of technologies to construct a particular kind of atmosphere and to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the displays creating an 'ambiance' of 'wrap-around drama'.⁸⁵⁷ These include theatrical devices such as changeable lights which dramatically cast gallery spaces into different colours, and audio recordings played on a loop which simulate the soundscapes of rainforests, jungles, or other environments inside the museums. These light and sound effects are used in a number of different displays in the case study museums including in LCM's Amazon rainforest display, in the GNM:H 'Bio-Wall', and in MS:WP's 'Arctic World' gallery amongst others. The use of these technologies contributes to visitors' experiences of the taxidermy on display by creating an immersive context which audiences can inhabit. Although the aim of immersive displays may be to portray a convincing verisimilitude of a particular environment through the provision of atmospheric and sensory interpretation, they are not intended to recreate real life experiences of the environments they emulate. Rather, immersive displays provide audiences with unique encounters with objects which are particular to museums and museum visiting. Immersive displays provide audiences with alternative realities, heterotopias, where the natural world is experienced in simultaneously similar, yet different or novel ways.⁸⁵⁸ In some respects, immersive museum experiences of nature could be considered improvements on experiences with living nature, in that the

⁸⁵⁶ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums', p. 249.

⁸⁵⁷ Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 517). Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*.

⁸⁵⁸ Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias', 46-49.

animals are easier to spot and study, and they can be viewed for as long as visitors choose to do so. In *Representing Animals* (2002), Nigel Rothfels attributes similar benefits to viewing living animals in captivity:

Compressed into small spaces, the better nature of the zoo makes real nature seem dull by comparison. The nature of the zoo suggests that there should be an animal-or better yet many animals-in every scene, and that one should only have to look hard enough to find them.⁸⁵⁹

This is the case with LCM's Amazon rainforest display, a simulated rainforest scene containing a wide variety of specimens in a compact display space (fig. 84). As well as being immersive, visitors are encouraged to interact with the display by spotting the different animals it contains.

The action-reward approach to interpreting objects in museums, (often simply referred to as 'interactives') whereby visitors are required to do something to or with a display to produce an outcome, is now prevalent in the galleries of all three museums. Some examples of how this action-reward system can map on to museum natural science displays are offered in WPM's *Interactives Strategy* developed in 2001:

On the simplest level, this may be to stroke the fur of a fox to determine what it feels like, or to push a button to hear a sound. On a more complex level, it may be using computer software to generate a specific learning outcome or watching some types of audio-visual equipment to produce an emotional response.⁸⁶⁰

Although the availability of interactives to museums, particularly high-tech ones, is largely determined by pragmatic factors such as cost and durability, there is evidence to suggest that there is a growing culture of increasingly judicious use of interactive forms of interpretation owing to a renewed sense of precedence in the primacy of museum objects.⁸⁶¹ For instance, during the recent redevelopment of WPM, the following was considered one of the 'Golden Rules' of interactive exhibits:

⁸⁵⁹ Rothfels, 'Immersed with Animals,' in Rothfels, Nigel, ed., *Representing Animals*, pp. 199-222 (p. 218).

⁸⁶⁰ Sheffield, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust /Weston Park Museum, *MS Interactives Strategy* (2001), p. 3.

⁸⁶¹ Sandra H. Dudley, ed. *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Interactives should always be associated with another exhibit. They should be used to emphasise or enhance a subject already covered in the gallery, rather than tackle a new subject on its own. Interactives are part of a display; they are not a display in themselves. A visitor must be able to completely ignore all the interactives on the site and still learn something from the experience. Don't rely on interactives too much.⁸⁶²

Equally, during the development of LCM, Clare Brown noted that:

The Museums [*sic*] collections are its unique selling point and the audience's [*sic*] interaction with the real thing is an essential part of the visitor experience. Any new displays while employing the most relevant and modern interpretative techniques will always start from the object.⁸⁶³

These comments suggest that while different interpretative technologies were planned into the museum redevelopments, interactions with actual objects continued to be privileged, and therefore, were a dominant factor shaping the content of the displays in the redeveloped museums (see: 1.1, p. 32 and 3.2, p. 163).

Implicated in the renewed sense of the primacy of museum objects has been the reduction of textual interpretation in museum galleries in comparison to those of the past, if not in amount, then in its visibility, particularly since a significant proportion of interpretation is now presented through digital formats which enable the viewing of only one screen of text at a time. This shift can also be attributed, in part, to the development and enforcement of new guidelines concerning the use of text in museum galleries in response to developments in learning theory and the access and inclusion agenda.⁸⁶⁴ For example, in WPM's *Museum Project Text Strategy* (2001) it was stated that:

Whatever the subject, text must be designed so visitors can read it easily and comfortably. If we plan carefully what we say and how we say it, our text can be accessible and inclusive.⁸⁶⁵

The privileging of objects (images) over text can also be characterised as product of the postmodern condition, where, in a society increasingly conditioned by spectacle, visual

⁸⁶² Sheffield, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust / Weston Park Museum, MS Interactives Strategy (2001), p. 7.

⁸⁶³ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Museum Interactive Guidelines, fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master (2004-2008).

⁸⁶⁴ Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement*, p. 124.

⁸⁶⁵ Sheffield, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust / Weston Park Museum, MS Weston Park Museum Project Text Strategy (2001), p. 3.

culture constitutes the primary way in which we now experience the world.⁸⁶⁶ For instance, Nicholas Mirzoeff has suggested that:

Western philosophy and science now use a pictorial, rather than textual, model of the world, marking a significant challenge to the notion of the world as a written text that dominated so much intellectual discussion in the wake of such linguistics-based movements as structuralism and poststructuralism.⁸⁶⁷

This may suggest that the intention of the displays to provide visually provocative and aesthetic experiences, has, in some display areas, been privileged over fulfilling the more traditional, pedagogic and characteristically modernist function of the museum through the use of conventional textual interpretation. For example, in numerous displays throughout the natural science galleries of all three of the case study museums interpretative labels are not presented alongside the specimens on display. Rather, visitors have to do one or more of the following to access textual information about the individual taxidermied objects on display: move to a different area within the gallery, navigate a digital display, access a supplementary 'Find out More' card, or interpret a numerical key. Textual interpretation, therefore, is not imposed upon visitors in a way that suggests it is essential to engaging with the material on display (as at times it was in the past, for example see: 2.3, p. 115-119). Rather, in the redeveloped museums, the intrinsic meanings and values of the taxidermy mounts themselves are acknowledged enabling the objects to function as examples of embodied knowledge. For example, at LCM, a red fronted macaw has been posed in a way that suggests the bird is preening itself, in the GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall' two red deer stags prepare to rut, while in MS:WP's 'Arctic World', Canada geese stretch their wings as if flying in formation overhead (fig. 14). Rather than being augmented by labels which describe animal characteristics and behaviours, contemporary scientific knowledges concerning the species that the taxidermied animals are both made out of, and serve to represent, have been inscribed into their materiality by the taxidermists who prepared them. Although shifting trends in display and advances in technology, particularly the internet, have opened up new avenues for representing the natural world in recent decades, the amount of taxidermy on display in the galleries of the three case study museums is suggestive of the continued attribution of authority to remnant models over other means of representing the natural world.

⁸⁶⁶ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*.

⁸⁶⁷ Mirzoeff, 'What is Visual Culture?', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. by Mirzoeff pp. 3-13 (p. 5).

In addition to a reduction in how much textual interpretation is visible in the galleries of the three case study museums today, in some cases the overall visual effect of the displays appears to have been prioritised over the extent to which visitors can engage with taxidermy objects at close range. This is significant since one of the frequently cited benefits of taxidermy by museum curators is that it allows viewers to get close to animals to study them. As suggested by Geoffrey Stansfield, 'a well mounted-specimen of a bird or mammal provides the opportunity for close examination in a way that is seldom possible in the wild'.⁸⁶⁸ The GNM:H's 'Bio-Wall' provides an example of this approach, as a result of the nature of its construction, taxidermy specimens arranged around the midsection of the display cannot be closely examined by visitors.⁸⁶⁹ Hannah Paddon has suggested that these specimens occupy a "sacrificial layer", which demonstrates how in some areas of the redeveloped GNM:H, the 'design won out over the specimens'.⁸⁷⁰ Rather than the design of the 'Bio-Wall' being privileged over audiences being able to get in close proximity to the taxidermy on display, the presentation of taxidermy using this mode of display could also be seen as enabling audiences to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the animals on display in a different way.⁸⁷¹ Since, in other areas of all three of the case study museums taxidermy can be viewed up close, for instance at MS:WP taxidermied examples of a European badger and a pangolin have been put on open display specifically for visitors to closely examine (fig. 85). Through the creation of multiple display contexts, therefore, the contemporary museums have sought to provide multiple routes through which their visitors can experience museum taxidermy in different ways.

Museum 'Brands'

The process of globalisation, whereby developments in travel and communication technologies have increased the speed, frequency, and concentration by which goods, ideas, and people now circulate around the world, has led to cities competing for exposure and prestige on the global stage. For example, the enthusiasm with which cities pursue

⁸⁶⁸ Stansfield, 'Education and Interpretation in Natural History Museums', in Stansfield, Mathias and Reid, eds., *Manual of Natural History Curatorship*, pp. 232-242 (p. 235).

⁸⁶⁹ Although in some instances the objects can be viewed from above and/or both by looking through the glass compartments, in the main, the positioning of specimens in the midsection of the 'Bio-Wall' limits how close visitors can get to them.

⁸⁷⁰ Paddon, 'An Investigation of the Key Factors and Processes that Underlie the Contemporary Display of Biological Collections in British Museums', p. 252.

⁸⁷¹ Dudley, 'Introduction' in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. by Dudley, p. 10.

titles such as the 'European Capital of Culture', an accolade which generates considerable cultural and economic activity in the city awarded the title, is demonstrative of how culture has become increasingly bound up with the signification of economic prosperity.⁸⁷² In an era where identity is heavily dependent on image, world renowned architects, artists and designers have increasingly been commissioned for culturally led redevelopment schemes so that cities may take on the cultural cachet associated with famous names and brands.⁸⁷³ To use Baudrillard, they attempt to 'personalize', communicating particular ideological values through an economy of signification.⁸⁷⁴ Competition between cities, compounded by a perceived slippage of identity, has increased the need for cities and their respective museums to assert their individuality through distinctive cultural developments.⁸⁷⁵ This response, however, has led to scores of cities attempting to do the same thing, paradoxically undertaking similar developments and commissioning from a relatively small and increasingly homogenised pool of famous names in order to mark out their individualism.⁸⁷⁶

As culture has become increasingly bound up with the imaging of the economically prosperous city, commercial and cultural sectors have increasingly emulated one another on a number of different levels. In particular, the public image or 'brand' of contemporary museums has become increasingly important in recent years. This phenomenon has led to taxidermied objects being put to a variety of new uses in the redeveloped case study museums. One of these uses is the commodification of the images of discrete taxidermied objects to represent and/or promote museum services. For example, LCM today uses the image of the 'Leeds Tiger' throughout its promotional material and as the 'face' of the Museum service (fig. 86). Similarly, MS:WP uses the image of 'Snowy' in some of its advertising, as well as on leaflets, Museum trails, and on merchandise sold in the Museum's

⁸⁷² Miles, *Spaces for Consumption: Pleasure and Placelessness in the Post-Industrial City*, p. 2.

Previous winners of the 'European Capital of Culture' include Glasgow (1990) and Liverpool (2008), both of which were heavily industrialised cities in the past.

⁸⁷³ Prior, 'Postmodern Restructurings', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Macdonald, pp. 509-524 (p. 512).

⁸⁷⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *La Systemé des objets*, trans. by Jaques Murrain (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 255-83 (repr. in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), pp. 10-28.

⁸⁷⁵ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. Harvey, 'The Condition of Postmodernity', in *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Appleby and others, pp. 494-507 (p. 494).

⁸⁷⁶ Harvey, 'The Condition of Postmodernity', in *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Appleby and others, pp. 494-507 (p. 501).

shop (fig. 87).⁸⁷⁷ In borrowing the visual vocabulary of branding prevalent in the commercial sector, the museums consolidate their aims, values and identities into one image or sign, rendering them ‘emblematic’ of an ‘entire institution’.⁸⁷⁸ This branding effect is an extension of the perceived need for museums to identify themselves through one powerful form of signification in an increasingly competitive leisure market saturated by signs.⁸⁷⁹ This system is effective because increasingly, other museums are using the same system of signification, albeit through the commodified images of different objects (signs).⁸⁸⁰ As John Berger has suggested, ‘[p]ublicity is not merely an assembly of competing messages: it is a language in itself which is always being used to make the same general proposal’.⁸⁸¹ Within this language of commodified images which represent the identities of discrete museums, different museums are defined by both their similarity and their difference to other signs in circulation (eg. 3.3, p. 182).⁸⁸²

There are other examples where the images and culturally constructed associations of particular species have helped determine the use of taxidermy in the redeveloped museums. For instance, the selection of specimens used in LCM’s endangered case to interpret potentially upsetting narratives was carefully selected. When deciding on which mounts would feature in the display, and in cases where a number of different specimens could have been used to interpret the same narrative, aesthetic factors along with the perceived popularity of certain species informed which taxidermy mounts were chosen.⁸⁸³ In developing the content for the new gallery Clare Brown stated: When it comes to choosing objects, larger “stars” will be chosen over less exciting animals’.⁸⁸⁴ As a result, charismatic and popular species such as a polar bear feature in the endangered display at LCM, as does an example of a giant panda, the commodified image of which is widely

⁸⁷⁷ At the GNM:H, the image of a replica *Tyrannosaurus rex* (*T. rex*) skeleton, cast from a fossilised skeleton, is used in a similar way. In addition, the *T. rex* featured heavily in the promotional work leading up to the Museum’s reopening including in information leaflets and flyers, and also in a televised advertising campaign. The *T. rex* is currently displayed in the ‘Fossil Stories’ (Geology) gallery at the GNM:H.

⁸⁷⁸ Alberti, ‘The Bengal Tiger in Context’, 13-15 (p. 15).

⁸⁷⁹ Baudrillard, *La Systemé des objets*, repr. in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. by Poster, pp. 10-28.

⁸⁸⁰ For other examples see: Paddon, ‘Biological Objects and “Mascotism”: The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla’, in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 134-150 (p. 141).

⁸⁸¹ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972), p. 131.

⁸⁸² Baudrillard, *La Systemé des objets*, (repr. in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster, pp. 10-28.

⁸⁸³ Leeds, Leeds City Museum Archive (Discovery Centre) MS Leeds Natural Science Gallery Draft Brief: ‘Storylines’, fol. Natural Science Gallery, Master, (2004-2008), p. 1.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

known due to its use as an emblem by the WWF.⁸⁸⁵ The specimens presented in the display were selected not only because the conservation status of the species they represent is allied with the theme of the display, but also for their visual appeal and elevated status in popular culture and the public imagination. In an era where promotional images compete with one another for attention, the unique histories and identities of museum mascots, their anthropomorphised ‘personalities’, tap into the cult of celebrity and the ‘celebrity brand’ which now dominates many twenty-first century consumption activities.⁸⁸⁶ The commodification of the images of the ‘Leeds Tiger’ and ‘Snowy’ to promote and represent LCM and MS:WP respectively, could be viewed as an elevation of the perceived importance and status of the objects. While elevated in visual culture, however, the commodification of taxidermied animals in this manner could also be considered another way in which humans marginalise animals to meet their own agendas. Animals have been commodified in a multitude of ways throughout history, and their aesthetic qualities in particular have been commodified in a vast array of forms, from wildlife documentaries and animated films, to Christmas cards and online viral advertisements.⁸⁸⁷ Steve Baker has argued that the act of making animals visual through their ‘disnification’, marginalises them by rendering their meanings so arbitrary that they are of little, if any importance beyond the image of the animal itself.⁸⁸⁸ Baker’s critique is not directed at Disney productions in their specificity, but rather ‘the connotations of trivialization and belittlement which are a central and intentional part of the everyday adjectival use of terms like “Disney” and “Mickey Mouse”, and perhaps, the act of naming a taxidermied polar bear, ‘Snowy’.⁸⁸⁹ For Baker, the meaning of the animal is diminished by being limited to the visual realm, ‘the basic procedure of disnification is to render it [the animal] stupid by rendering it visual’.⁸⁹⁰ In the case of taxidermy, however, this notion is complicated by the fact that taxidermy is already a visual representation, and (re)presentation, of the animal. As the commodified images of animal representations, museum ‘brands’ like the ‘Leeds Tiger’ could, therefore, be

⁸⁸⁵ Baker, ‘Escaping the Ratking: Strategic Images for Animal Rights’, in *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*, pp. 187-231. It has been suggested that the image of one particular giant panda, ‘Chi-Chi’, previously a captive of London Zoo, but now taxidermied and on display in the Natural History Museum, may have been used in the development of the WWF logo, see: Nicholls, ‘The Afterlife of Chi-Chi’, in *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*, ed. by Alberti, pp. 169-185 (p. 183).

⁸⁸⁶ David P. Marshall, ed. ‘Introduction’, in *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 6.

⁸⁸⁷ Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-186.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

considered doubly reductive of the meanings of animals. Despite their hollowness as symbols of animals, however, perhaps it is the emptiness of commodified mascot images which enables them to become effective surrogates for such a wide range of unique human-centric meanings and values.

It is significant that out of the considerable number of objects under the custodianship of LCM and MS:WP, the images which have been appropriated to signify the respective museums are of taxidermied animals. The selection of these objects over others suggests that they have been afforded a particular status by their respective custodians and invested with heightened significance. As objects of unique social, cultural, political and economic importance, the 'Leeds Tiger' and 'Snowy' act as signifiers for a specific set of meanings and values which are simultaneously particular to each museum, the audiences they provide for, and the regions they serve to represent.

As spaces of representation, the three case study museums have used a multitude of different approaches to displaying and interpreting taxidermy to their publics. While developments in technology, and taxidermy practice have shaped the contents and appearance of their galleries in different ways, the impact of globalisation and commodity culture have also reconfigured audiences' expectations of contemporary museums. Despite these shifts, however, as a medium of representation, taxidermy has remained integral to the communication of ideas about the natural world and our relationship to it throughout the histories of all three of the case study museums.

Conclusion

By framing taxidermied animals as products of the material culture of science, this thesis has investigated the social, cultural, political and economic contexts of their museological presentation and display. In tracing shifts in the way that taxidermied objects have been interpreted for museum audiences, this study has demonstrated how the construction and content of natural science displays are as reflective of human interactions and relationships as objects from disciplines such as social history, which are more readily understood as being cultural in nature.⁸⁹¹ This thesis, therefore, has built upon and extended the growing body of research in museum studies, cultural studies and animal studies, which now recognises museum taxidermy collections as being constitutive of material traces of human interactions and relationships. By investigating the interpretation of taxidermy within the museum, this project has demonstrated how changes to museum displays can evidence paradigmatic shifts in the ideological function of the public museum in relation to wider cultural shifts, such as those in politics, ethics, education and science. In doing so, it has highlighted how at different points in history, discrete knowledge formations have been used to frame taxidermy in a variety of different contexts and invest it with meanings contingent to its production.⁸⁹² Throughout the respective histories of Leeds City Museum (LCM), the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H) and Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (MS:WP), this process has enabled the three case study museums to attribute particular meanings and values to taxidermied objects while simultaneously silencing others.

This investigation proposed to challenge the idea that the unpopularity of museum taxidermy displays at different points in history, but particularly in the last decades of the twentieth century, could be attributed exclusively to the controversial components of their construction. It also aimed to investigate the idea that the themes taxidermy objects have been used to interpret may have also have played a significant role in shaping negative public perceptions of museum taxidermy. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has observed that museums 'have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surround them'.⁸⁹³ Perhaps this was most clearly demonstrated in the series of events that this study took as its starting point, where taxidermy specimens that barely survived the

⁸⁹¹ Macdonald, 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibition: An Introduction to the Politics of Display', in *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, pp. 1-24 (p. 1).

⁸⁹² Aim 1. (p. 25).

⁸⁹³ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, p. 1.

mass removal of natural history displays in the late twentieth century, were reinstated into renovated museum galleries in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In other instances, some taxidermy mounts, particularly mascot specimens, have benefitted from a more elevated status in redeveloped museums. While, Imperial collections, such as Abel Chapman's game heads, have been reinterpreted or reconfigured to align with contemporary sensibilities. These shifts in the use and interpretation of taxidermy suggest that a significant part of the perceived problem with museum taxidermy was related to its mode of presentation, and while taxidermy does remain problematic for some owing to the material components of its construction, this has not resulted in a decline or cessation in the display of taxidermy in contemporary museums.⁸⁹⁴ In 1984 Tony Tynan of the Hancock Museum acknowledged that '[t]he old fashioned bird watcher used a shot gun, not binoculars, and museums up and down the land can prove it'.⁸⁹⁵ As social values have shifted however, so have cultures of collecting, displaying and interpreting taxidermy in the public museum. Most significantly, shifts in sensibilities and ethical positions in relation to the conservation of the environment and the treatment of animals over the last century have tempered our understanding of museum taxidermy, even though the materiality of taxidermy remains largely fixed:

As socially and culturally salient entities, objects change in defiance of their material stability. The category to which a thing belongs, the emotion and judgement it prompts, and the narrative it recalls, are all historically reconfigured.⁸⁹⁶

As a significant component of the discourse on nature, the manner in which taxidermy is displayed and interpreted at any given time, and the fact that those systems are subject to change over time, has considerable bearing upon what constitutes nature; what nature 'is' in any given period. By investigating shifts in the interpretation and display of taxidermy, therefore, this study has also explored some of the ways in which the category 'animal' has been subject to revision over approximately the last century.⁸⁹⁷

While, as Michelle Henning has argued, it is increasingly recognised that there is 'a modern sensibility which views taxidermy as gruesome', this study has demonstrated how attitudes towards animals, living or taxidermied, have been, and continue to be,

⁸⁹⁴ Aim 2, 3 (p. 26).

⁸⁹⁵ Tynan, *Guide to the Hancock Museum*, p. 18.

⁸⁹⁶ Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*, p. 125.

⁸⁹⁷ Objective 1.3 (p. 25)

inconsistent and at times contradictory.⁸⁹⁸ Indeed, visitor reactions to encounters with taxidermy in contemporary museums often suggest that museum audiences continue to both like and dislike taxidermy.⁸⁹⁹ The argument that damaged taxidermy mounts are redolent of death and decay and are therefore offensive to the public, as suggested by Wheatcroft in 1987, however, can be challenged in light of the case of 'Joey' the taxidermied lion at WPM.⁹⁰⁰ Specifically, when the redeveloped WPM opened to the public there were no physical barriers between 'Joey' and the Museum's visitors and the lion developed a number of bald patches from being repeatedly petted by the public (fig. 88).⁹⁰¹ The mount also sustained damage through children sitting on its back, and this resulted in 'Joey's' legs giving way under the pressure.⁹⁰² Although it was intended for 'Joey' to remain on public display following the recent redevelopment, the object was removed c.2007 for conservation purposes after its collapse.⁹⁰³ Through physical demonstrations of affection, the Sheffield public had shown their appreciation of 'Joey' the lion a little too ardently. Despite the lion's balding and less than naturalistic appearance, 'Joey's' removal from the gallery was met with public protest.⁹⁰⁴ While attitudes have shifted since the late 1980s when Wheatcroft levelled her critique at damaged taxidermy, the scenario that played out at WPM over the presentation and subsequent removal of 'Joey' from public display demonstrates how the significance of the taxidermy mount was, for some, dependant on much more than it representing the lion species, or simply providing audiences with something interesting or attractive to look at. Indeed, as this study has illustrated, some taxidermy objects and collections have come to occupy a privileged position in the collective cultural consciousness of the communities which frequent the three case study museums.⁹⁰⁵ In particular, the commodification of the images of certain taxidermied animals as museum 'brands' is reflective of their heightened significance, to the museums themselves, and the various individuals and communities they provide for.⁹⁰⁶

This study has argued that on different levels, taxidermied objects can play an important role in the construction and reflection of both public and institutional identities.

⁸⁹⁸ Michelle Henning, 'Skins of the Real: Taxidermy and Photography' in *Nanoq: Flatout and Bluesome: A Cultural Life of Polar Bears*, ed. by Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson, pp. 136-147 (p. 144).

⁸⁹⁹ Leeds, Leeds City Museum, MS Leeds City Museum Completed Questionnaires (undated [2009]).

⁹⁰⁰ Wheatcroft, 'Merely Rubbish: Disposal of Natural History Collections', 133-134 (p. 133).

⁹⁰¹ Although the featured image of 'Joey' was taken in 2001, even at that time balding patches were clearly developing on the specimen.

⁹⁰² In correspondence with Alistair McLean (2013).

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁵ Objective 3.2 (p. 27).

⁹⁰⁶ Objective 3.3 (p. 27).

The different ways in which taxidermy is classified, presented and interpreted reflect varying notions of local and global identity, and contribute to how individuals gain a sense of belonging in the world in both spatial and temporal terms. Stephen Asma has suggested that '[n]ature does not reveal some rational design or order; we ourselves impose order where none exists'.⁹⁰⁷ What kinds of classificatory schemes are used, therefore, depend on which orders are most useful to society at the time of their conception. Although museums remember for audiences, the ways in which identities are preserved and materialised through museum taxidermy displays today differ significantly to those of the past. Singular, exclusive and Imperial narratives have increasingly given way to more individualised, pluralistic and people-centred histories which align with contemporary sensibilities and more effectively meet the demands being made of museums in an increasingly globalised world.⁹⁰⁸ Hans Belting has suggested that, '[o]n the one hand, museums need to attract global tourism, which means claiming their share in a new geography of world cultures. [while] On the other hand, they need acceptance and support by a local audience'.⁹⁰⁹ This study has investigated how the three redeveloped case study museums have reconfigured and redefined their taxidermy displays in different ways in order to attempt to achieve these at times complimentary, but at others conflicting goals.⁹¹⁰

In tracing shifts in the interpretation of taxidermy this study has charted changing ideas and developments in biological science, particularly since the 1950s, and in doing so, has emphasised how scientific theories can be subject to change, development and erasure in light of new discoveries.⁹¹¹ While epistemic shifts in science remain embedded in museum displays, the relationship between taxidermied animals and their significance to science continues to be reconfigured. In particular, contemporary ideological positions concerning inclusivity and diversity can be mapped against the current scientific agenda to preserve nature's biodiversity.⁹¹² However, while recognising that 'museum nature is the product of a particular configuration of modernity', as observed by Sam Alberti, this is not to suggest that these current philosophical responses to the interpretation of taxidermy in

⁹⁰⁷ Asma, *Stuffed Animals & Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums*, p. 124.

⁹⁰⁸ Objective 1.1 (p. 25), Outcome 1 (p. 27). Hans Belting, 'Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age', in *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective*, ed. by Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007), pp. 16-38.

⁹⁰⁹ Belting, 'Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age', in *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective*, ed. by Weibel and Buddensieg, pp. 16-38 (p. 36).

⁹¹⁰ Objective 2.2 (p. 26).

⁹¹¹ Objectives 2.1, 2.2 (p. 26), Outcome 1 (p. 27).

⁹¹² Objective 1.1 (p. 25).

museums are any more or less enlightened than those of previous generations.⁹¹³ Rather, it reflects how ideologies and philosophies contingent to the present historical moment are being adopted and embedded in contemporary museum displays.

By evidencing some of the ways in which the meaning of taxidermy has been tempered at different points in history by shifts in its presentation and display, this study has highlighted how the contemporary museum remains an enlightenment institution. Its primary concerns are rooted in the problem of representation; 'the museum is a space for the visitor to reflect upon the order of things and the problem of the adequacy of representation' and these concerns remain characteristic of an enlightenment ideology which strives to represent the world through 'conceptual systems of reason'.⁹¹⁴ In comparison to the late nineteenth century, the agency or 'voice' of the curator has become increasingly diluted in order to be more relevant and representative of the thoughts and opinions of museums' multiple stakeholders. Nevertheless, museum displays do continue to privilege particular subject positions and value structures over others.⁹¹⁵ Rachel Poliquin has argued that 'nature is a chaos of forms and colors and shapes and forces, and the various ways in which that chaos has been untangled and made legible should never be taken as nature's truth but rather as nature's possibility within a human imaginary'.⁹¹⁶ To use Foucault, the supposed 'truth' or meaning of contemporary taxidermy displays, and indeed the displays of the past, 'is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it'.⁹¹⁷

In the public galleries of LCM, the GNM:H and MS:WP today, natural history objects are used to represent and interpret ideas which key into different modes of engagement in order to be more accessible to the public. Over approximately the last two decades, the focus on human value structures centred on experiences and relationships has seen natural history displays which embody and give shape to explicitly scientific themes, such as those characteristic of the first decades of the twentieth century, increasingly fall out of favour with museums and their audiences.⁹¹⁸ Displays which are socially and culturally inclusive, promote interdisciplinarity, and make available interactive learning and experiential engagements for audiences, however, have risen in popularity to become primary modes of

⁹¹³ Alberti, 'Constructing Nature Behind Glass', *Museum & Society*, (p. 84).

⁹¹⁴ Lord, 'Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy', 1-14, p. 6. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

⁹¹⁵ Objective 1.1 (p. 25).

⁹¹⁶ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing*, p. 9.

⁹¹⁷ Foucault, *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, ed. by Rabinow, p. 74.

⁹¹⁸ Outcome 1 (p. 27).

communication in contemporary museums.⁹¹⁹ The influence of the civil rights movement, the rise of cultural studies, and the subsequent increasing sensitivity to the pluralistic nature of society has played a significant role in this shift. In addition, the development of museology, and the increasing preference for museum staff to have undertaken studies in the field of museum studies has led to a heightened awareness of the need to integrate reflexive and dialogic approaches into museum practices.⁹²⁰ As a result, the politics of representation itself are increasingly being problematised through contemporary taxidermy displays. Although in many instances taxidermy mounts are still presented by the three case study museums as objective species representatives, in a variety of ways, some implicit, some explicit, the museums have also increasingly acknowledged the legitimacy and value of adopting alternative and additional ways to interpret their taxidermy collections. Furthermore, in displays where a layering approach to interpretation has been adopted, audiences are provided with alternative narratives which more expressly reveal the polysemy and material hybridity of taxidermy.⁹²¹

The continued use of taxidermy in the three case study museums today suggests that, despite dramatic advances in digital technologies and to a lesser degree techniques in three-dimensional modelling, taxidermy remains a popular tool for communicating ideas about wildlife to the public. This suggests that taxidermy continues to be valued, both by museums and their audiences, for qualities that differ from other mediums of representation despite developments in technology and design culture, and more broadly, the shifting role of tangible objects in a society where perception is heavily mediated by spectacles of display and visual culture.⁹²² This study has also attempted to chart how the professionalisation of museums, including the rise of the commercial museum design industry, has heavily informed trends in the interpretation of taxidermy. In addition, much like the commissioning of museum designers and consultants, museums have increasingly outsourced taxidermy, limiting the perceived need for in-house taxidermists and their workshops or studios. This investigation is timely in light of these changes, as in-house museum taxidermists have themselves become an endangered species in recent years, and the histories of museum taxidermists and their practices are fading from the collective consciousness of the museum sector. Therefore, while this study has argued that taxidermy

⁹¹⁹ Objective 2.2 (p. 26). Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement* and Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2012), Dudley, ed. *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*.

⁹²⁰ Objective 3.1 (p. 26).

⁹²¹ Objective 2.2 (p. 26).

⁹²² Objective 3.3 (p. 27).

continues to feature in a significant proportion of contemporary museum displays in the North of England, it has also traced shifts in the culture and industry of museum taxidermy production more broadly.⁹²³

Through this investigation into factors which have influenced the construction of new taxidermy displays in a select group of redeveloped Northern museums, I hope to have contributed to the field of museum studies by drawing attention to previously under researched shifts in contemporary museological interpretative and display practices.⁹²⁴ By comparing and contrasting a unique group of non-national museums in the North of England, all of which have different personalities and agendas but are connected through a shared historical and cultural episteme, this study has served to counterbalance the academic attention afforded to other, more eminent museums elsewhere in the UK. Overall this study has served to underscore how the museum remains a contested site for the production and consumption of knowledge, and how the attribution of different meanings and values to museum taxidermy collections at different times, can evidence shifts in human value structures.

Areas for further study

Following the findings of this thesis, an area now ripe for further investigation would be a consideration of how the recently redeveloped taxidermy displays in the three case study museums are being received, interpreted and understood by their audiences. While the museums discussed throughout this project have expressed a commitment to recording visitor statistics and responding to visitor feedback, the relative infancy of the museums means that a substantial body of information concerning visitor responses is only now coming to fruition. Research concerning audiences' responses to the taxidermy on display would provide a useful counterpoint to the present study by investigating if and how the various aims and objectives of the new displays have been understood by the public. In addition, a particularly useful area of more extended research would be to examine shifts in visitors' attitudes and responses to the displays discussed in this study as they too gradually become outdated and eventually in need of renewal (alongside audience opinions and the reasons for this). Such a study would trace changing patterns of reception over time, and

⁹²³ Outcomes 1, 2 (p. 27).

⁹²⁴ Outcome 1 (p. 27).

could be mapped against the present study to provide an insight into the effectiveness of early twenty-first century museological interpretative practices.

This study has investigated and critically analysed different taxidermy displays presented by three museums at different times throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Since the potential scope of the study was wide, it was necessary to draw parameters around which displays could be included. Ultimately, these parameters were limited to displays contained within central 'city' museum buildings. One finding from the initial research underpinning this project, however, was that both today, and at different points over roughly the last century, the museum services under discussion have also presented their taxidermy collections to the public through a variety of temporary and semi-permanent offshoot sites. For example, in 1901, in High Hazels Park, Darnall, a multidisciplinary museum was developed by Sheffield City Council where taxidermy was put on display, although after being used by the Home Guard during the Second World War, the Museum was closed.⁹²⁵ Similarly, in Northumberland, the Border Forest Park Museum was opened in 1965 being jointly managed by the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne.⁹²⁶ Taxidermied animals were also displayed at this site. Leeds City Museum has also displayed its collections in a number of alternative venues, some of which have been less conventional than those established at Sheffield and Leeds. For instance, in the 1940s, displays featuring taxidermy were set up in Leeds local cinemas to tie in with the themes of the feature presentations. Mounted leopards were displayed at a showing of *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945), while a taxidermied polar bear was presented for the screening of *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948).⁹²⁷ Although these three examples of museum 'offshoots' vary dramatically in purpose and character, a factor that they all share is that they presented and interpreted museum taxidermy collections in spaces which complimented or were alternative to the central museums. While a study mapping the extent of offshoot museum venues would in and of itself provide an interesting insight into developments in twentieth and twenty-first century museology, an investigation into how the display of museum taxidermy collections in such varied spaces mediated the meaning of the objects on display and impacted upon their

⁹²⁵ For more on High Hazels Park and Museum See: Friends of High Hazels Park, *High Hazels Park: A Short History*, Friends of High Hazels Park, (2006) <<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/out--about/parks-woodlands--countryside/parks/city-district-local-parks/high-hazels-park.html>> [accessed 12th September 2013].

⁹²⁶ [Tynan (?)], *What's New*, (1965).

⁹²⁷ Brears, *Of Curiosities & Rare Things: The story of Leeds City Museums*, p. 25.

public reception would be fruitful in extending the present study and framing it in a wider cultural context.

As demonstrated in recently redeveloped museums such as The Manchester Museum, taxidermy is increasingly being used to interpret themes other than, or in addition to, those relating to the natural sciences. Equally, in gallery spaces which interpret social history narratives in the three case study museums there are instances where taxidermy is being used in non-scientific contexts. For instance, in the 'Mouse House', a child orientated space in the redeveloped GNM:H, and in the 'Ancient Worlds' gallery in the redeveloped LCM, where taxidermy is used to interpret the social significance of certain species to past civilisations. A more recent example of taxidermy being used to interpret social history narratives is in Wakefield One, a new civic building containing a museum which opened in October 2012.⁹²⁸ In Wakefield One, naturalistic, anthropomorphic and cryptozoological taxidermy specimens prepared by Charles Waterton are used to interpret narratives which enliven the biography of the nineteenth century naturalist and frame him as a historically significant local figure. In these displays, taxidermy is being used to represent and interpret ideas which explore some of the socio-historical narratives attached to collections traditionally categorised under the umbrella of natural science. The increased prevalence of museums interpreting taxidermy in this way suggests that an investigation into the effects of the dissolution of traditional disciplinary boundaries in museums in relation to the display of the natural sciences is overdue. Furthermore, the impact of contemporary social history displays which present taxidermy to the public is yet to be thoroughly examined. In the present climate, where disciplinary boundaries in many contemporary museums are becoming more fluid, and audience consultation and feedback is increasingly driving the direction of museum exhibitions, it is likely that research analysing these kinds of approaches will become an increasingly pressing concern for museum studies and cultural studies researchers in the near future.

⁹²⁸ Wakefield One is a new civic building in which the previously segregated services provided by Wakefield County Council such as the City Museum, City Library and Information Centre have been amalgamated.

Figures



Fig. 1. A selection of materials which may be used in the preparation of a taxidermy mount (2012). © Author's image.



Fig. 2. Taxidermy animals awaiting disposal at Salford Museum of Natural History, Buile Hill (c.1982). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 3. (In descending order) Leeds City Museum (2008), Great North Museum: Hancock (2010) and Museums Sheffield:Weston Park (detail) (2010). © Author's image.



Fig. 4. Eric Morton in the Taxidermy studio, Hancock Museum (2004). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 5. Doris Downend, Weston Park Museum (1939). © Museums Sheffield.

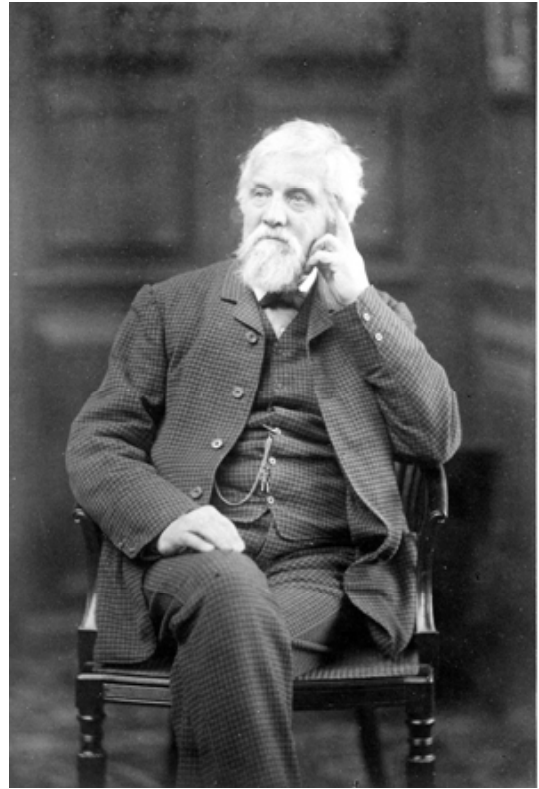


Fig. 6. John Hancock at Cragside (1882) photographed by J. Worsnop. © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 7. The 'Leeds Tiger', 'Zoology Room', Leeds Philosophical Hall (c.1900). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

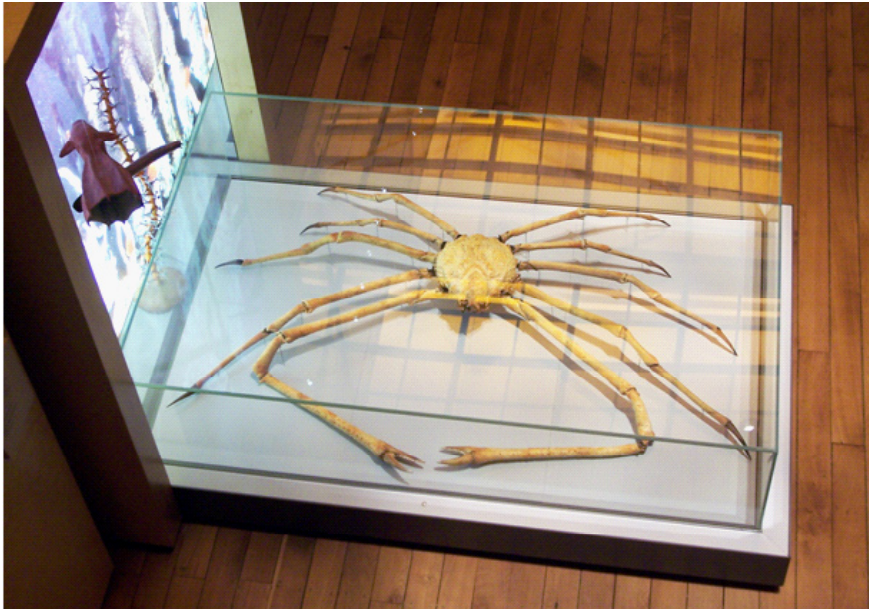


Fig. 8. Japanese spider crab, 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 9. Abel Chapman (left), 'Zebra on Stony Athi' from Chapman, Abel, *On Safari: Big-Game Hunting in British East Africa with Studies in Bird-Life* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), plate preceding p. 233.



Fig. 10. Taxidermied bird donated to Weston Park Museum by Henry Seebohm c.1875 (2010). © Museums Sheffield.

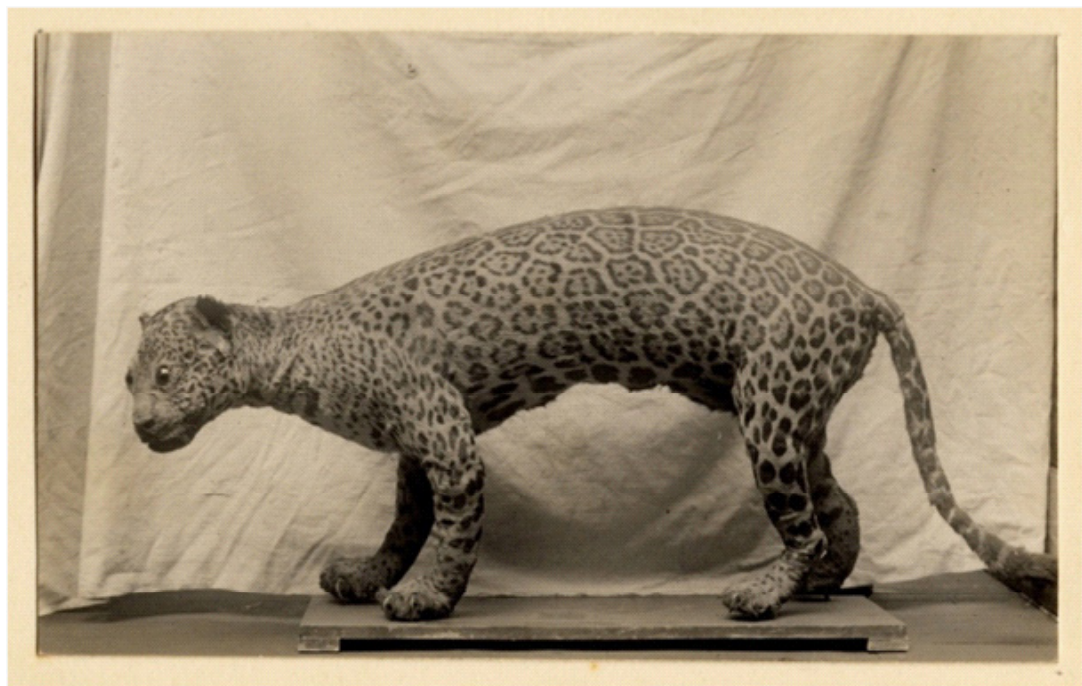


Fig. 11. Taxidermied jaguar before remounting, Leeds City Museum (c.1932). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

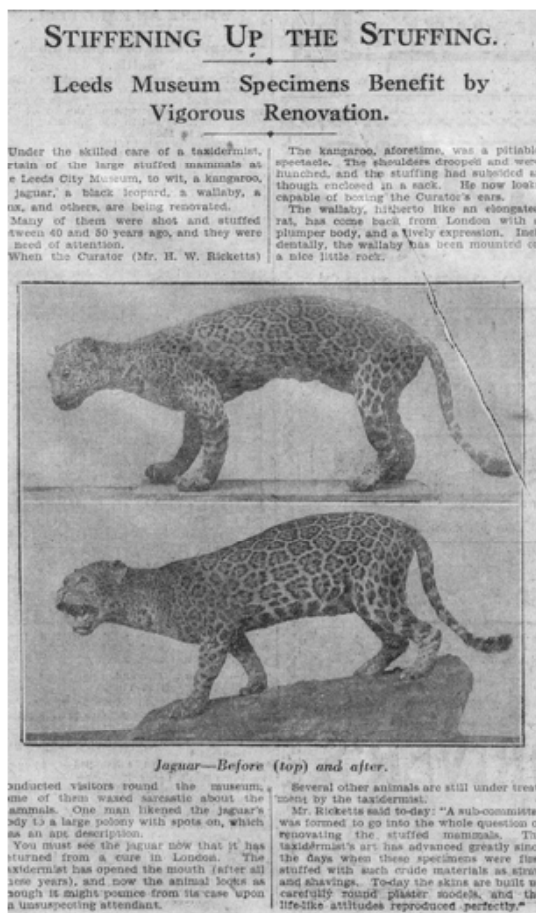


Fig. 12. Taxidermied jaguar before and after remounting, Leeds City Museum, from 'Stiffening Up The Stuffing: Leeds Museum Specimens Benefit by Vigorous Renovation', [Yorkshire Evening Post(?)], [1933(?)]. (c.1933). © Leeds Museums and Galleries and Yorkshire Evening Post.



Fig. 13. 'Sparkie' display, Hancock Museum (2004). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 14. Taxidermied Canada geese posed in flight, 'Arctic World', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 15. The 'Small Zoological Room' / 'Bird Room', Philosophical Hall, Leeds, (c. 1900).
© Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 16. The 'Bird Room', Hancock Museum, in E. Leonard Gill, *The Hancock Museum and its History*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, 1908), plate between p. xxvi and p. xxvii.



Fig. 17. 'The Natural History Gallery', Weston Park Museum (c.1888). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 18. 'Bills of Birds' display, 'Small Zoological Room' / 'Bird Room', Philosophical Hall, Leeds (c.1900) © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 19. 'Large Zoological Room',
Philosophical Hall, Leeds (c.1900) ©
Leeds Museum and Galleries.

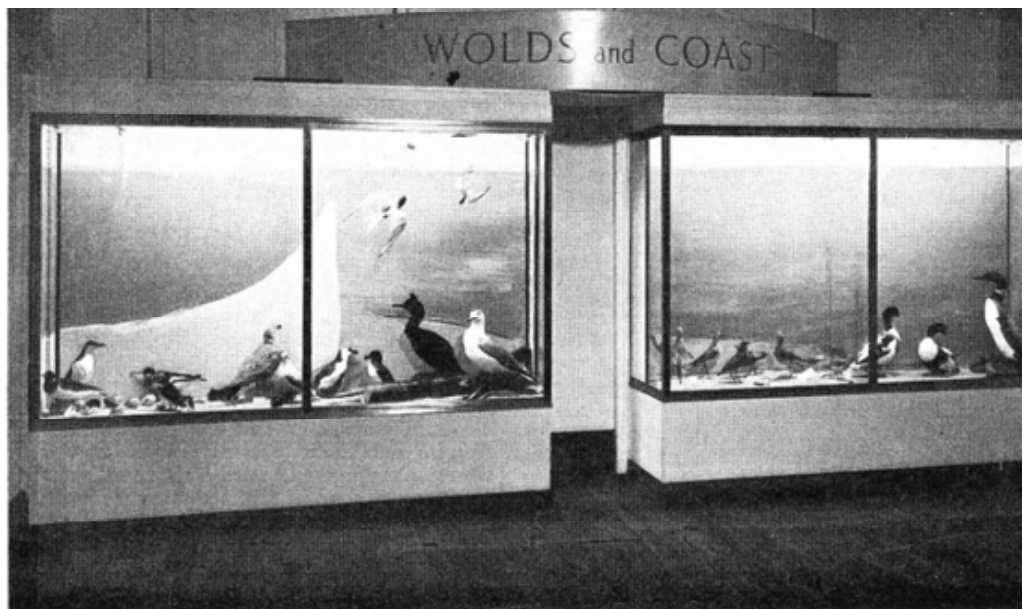


Fig. 20. 'Wolds and Coast' display, Leeds City Museum, from Leeds City Museums,
Leeds City Museums Guide Book to the Collections and Displays (Leeds:
Jowett & Sowry, 1953), p. 10. (c.1953). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 21. 'Leeds Tiger', orangutan and gorilla, and giant panda display cases (produced as post cards) Leeds City Museum (c.1970). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 22. Text-book style displays, Weston Park Museum (c.1975). © Sheffield Museums.



Fig. 23. 'Wildlife' gallery, Weston Park Museum (c.1986). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 24. 'Wildlife' gallery (display detail), Weston Park Museum (2002). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 25. 'Snowy' display, 'Wildlife', Weston Park Museum (c.2002). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 26. 'British Mammals' display, 'Zoology Room', Hancock Museum (1975). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 27. 'The Magic of Birds' (view from the gallery), Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 28. Bird anatomy display (detail), 'The Magic of Birds', Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria

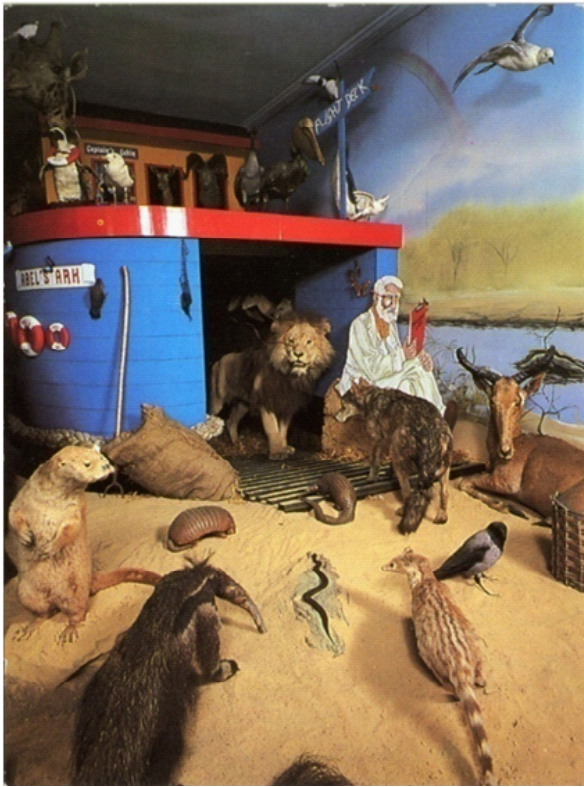


Fig. 29. 'Abel's Ark' showing the figure of Abel Chapman (centre right), Hancock Museum (c.2004). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 30. Panels interpreting the history of the Natural History Society of Northumbria and the Hancock Museum, Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 31. 'The Living Planet' (ground floor) and old geology displays (upper balcony), Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 32. 'Bio-Wall', 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.

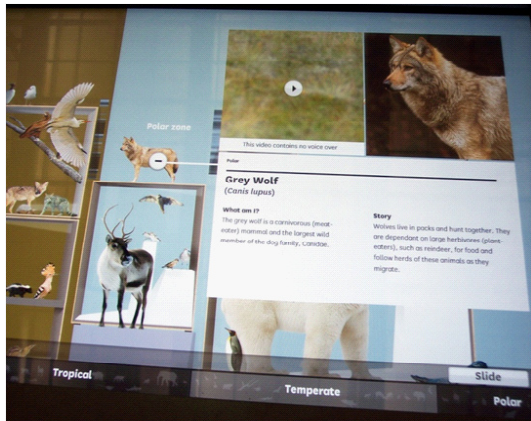


Fig. 33. Interactive digital display (above) and screen shot detail (below), 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2010). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 34. 'Sparkie' (bottom centre), 'Bio-Wall' display, 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2011). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 35. 'Natural Northumbria' (display detail), Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 36. Regional map in 'Natural Northumbria' (display detail), Great North Museum: Hancock (2011). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 37. Exterior display case of 'Explore!', Great North Museum: Hancock (2010). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 38. 'Bills of Birds' display (detail), 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 39. Endangered display, 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2013). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 40. 'Colour Wall' display, 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 41. Scarlet ibis (left) and red squirrel (right), 'Colour Wall' (detail), 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2013). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

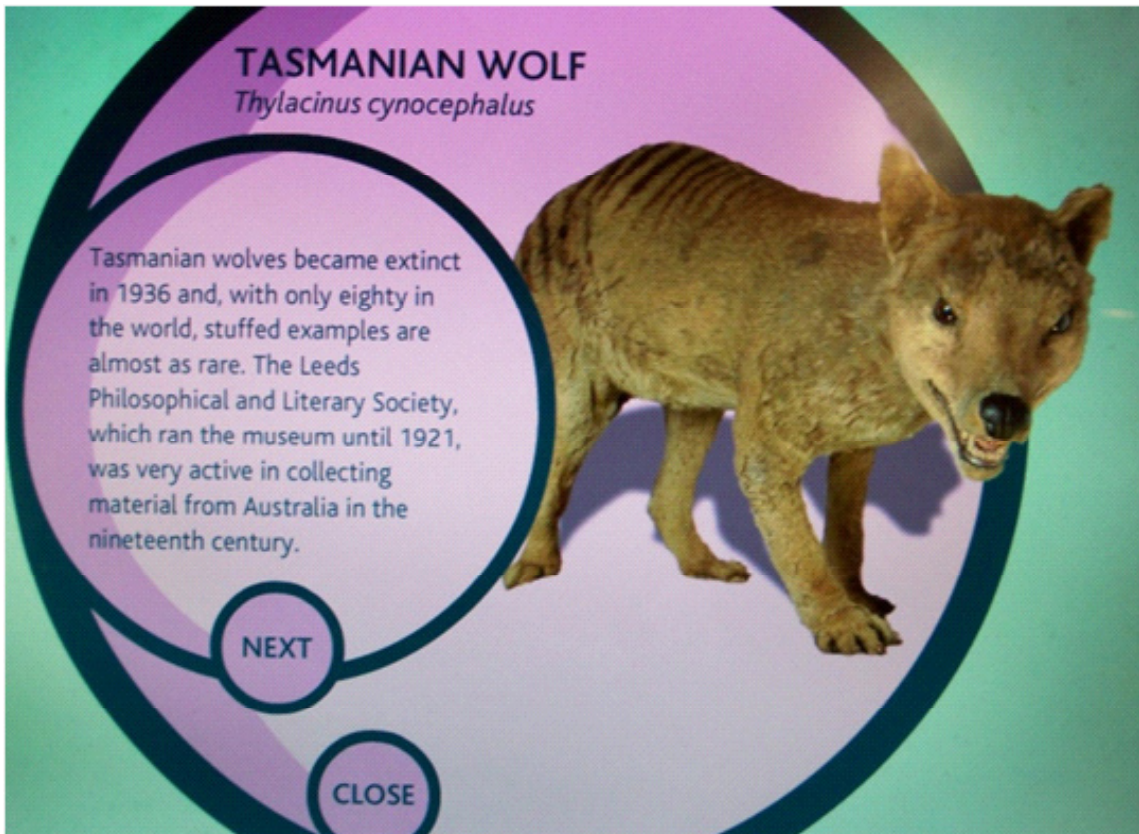


Fig. 42. Interactive digital display (screen shot detail), 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 43. 'Leeds Tiger', 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2008). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 44. 'Broad-leaved woodlands' Chatsworth tree (display detail), 'What on Earth!', Weston Park Museum (c.2006). © Museums: Sheffield.



Fig. 45. 'Weird and Wonderful' (detail), 'What on Earth!', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 46. Wall mounted specimens (top left), 'What on Earth!', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park Museum (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 47. 'Curiosity Cabinet', 'What on Earth!', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 48. 'Arctic World', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 49. 'Snowy', 'Arctic World', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 50. 'Bio-Wall', 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 51. An 'escapee' taxidermied grey wolf on the fringe of 'Living Planet' (2010). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 52. Taxidermy organised taxonomically at Leeds Museums and Galleries Discovery Centre (2009). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

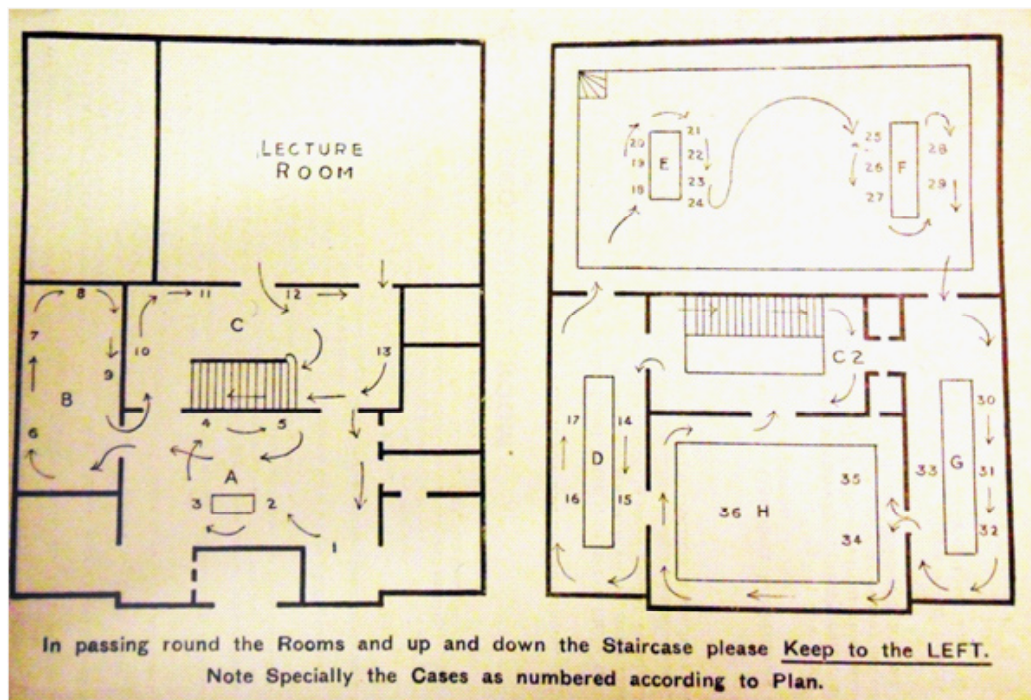


Fig. 53. Map of the Philosophical Hall illustrating advised visitor flow patterns, from The City of Leeds Education Committee and The Leeds and District Teachers' Association, Scheme for Scholars Visiting the Museum: Third Session, 1903-4 (Leeds: [n.pub], 1903(?)). © The City of Leeds Education Committee and The Leeds and District Teachers' Association.



Fig. 54. School groups studying the 'Museum within a Museum', Philosophical Hall, Leeds (c.1900). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

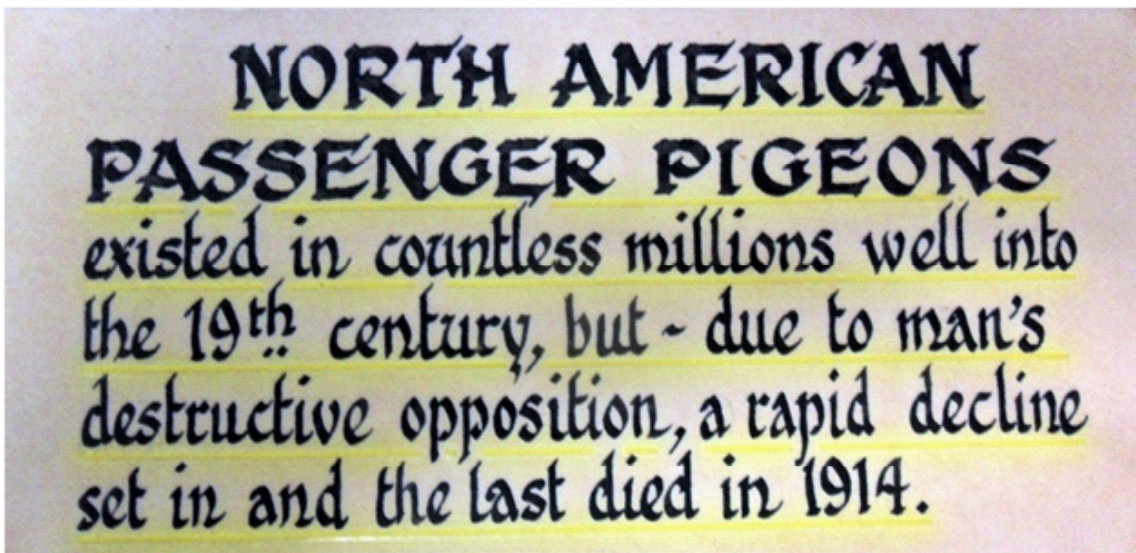


Fig. 55. Handwritten specimen label from Leeds City Museum (c.1930). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

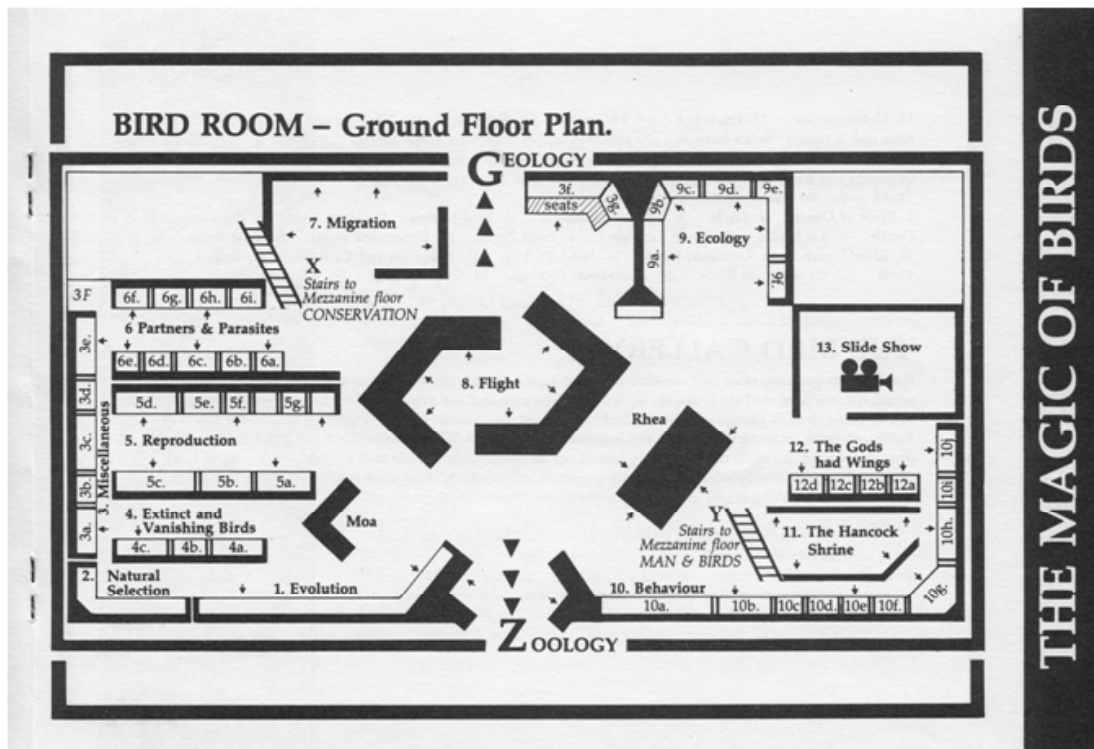


Fig. 56. Floor plan of 'The Magic of Birds' at the Hancock Museum from Anthony M. Tynan and Peter Davis, *The Hancock Museum: A Teacher's Guide* (Newcastle: [n.pub], [1991(?)]). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.

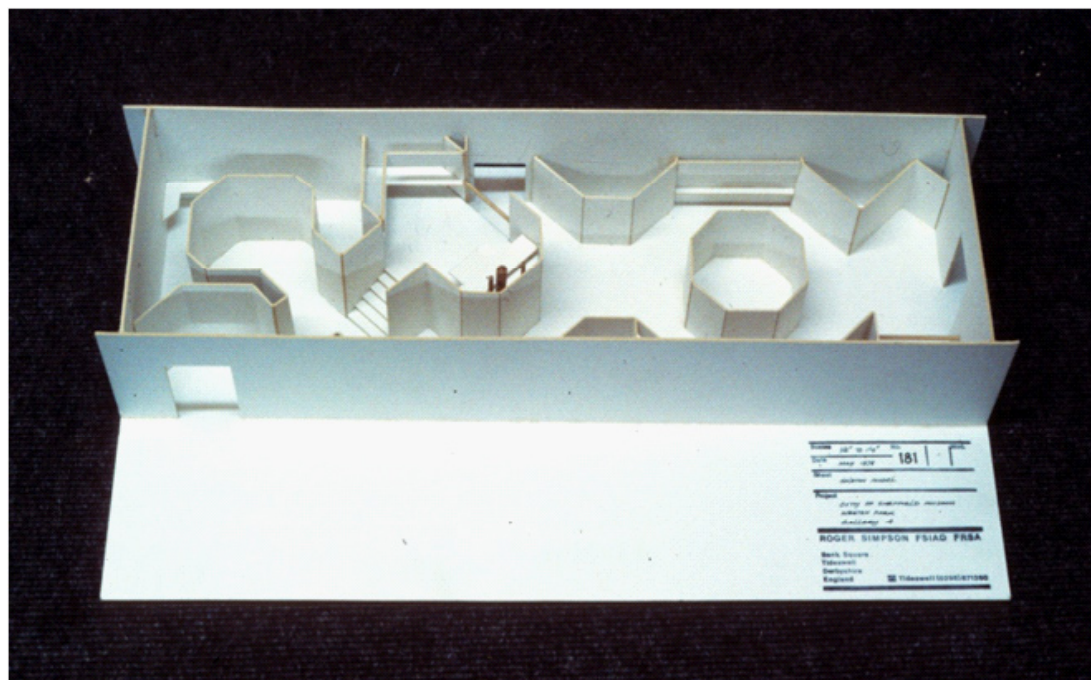


Fig. 57. Scale model of the layout of 'Wildlife', Weston Park Museum (1985). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 58. 'Bio-Wall' (detail of transparent casing), 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 59. Primate display, 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2013). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

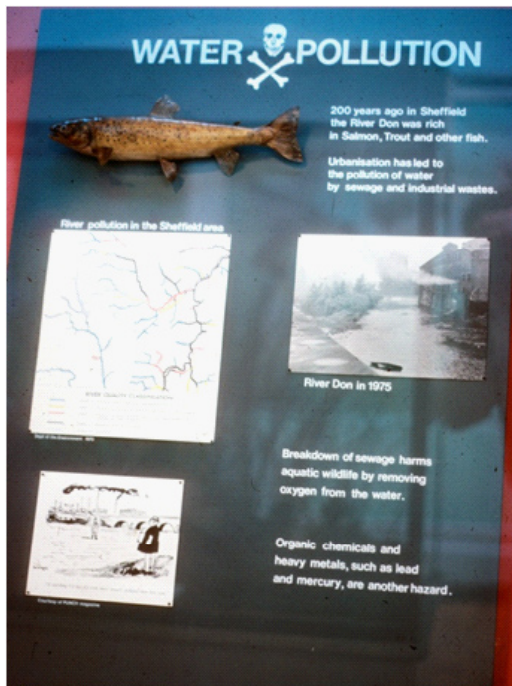


Fig. 60. 'Water Pollution' display (detail), Weston Park Museum (1975). © Sheffield Museums.



Fig. 61. 'Man and Birds' display (detail), 'The Magic of Birds', Hancock Museum (2004). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 62. 'The Plume Trade' display (detail), 'Wildlife', Weston Park Museum (2002). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 63. 'Urban Areas' habitat display (detail), 'Wildlife', Weston Park Museum (2002). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 64. Graveyard display, 'The Living Planet', Hancock Museum (2006).
 Image by newcastlephotos.blogspot.com. © Natural History Society
 of Northumbria and newcastlephotos.blogspot.com.



Fig. 65. Trophy heads including Abel Chapman's collection, Hancock Museum
 (c.1980). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 66. 'Abel's Ark', Hancock Museum (c.2004). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 67. Faded specimens at the Natural History Museum (2011). © Natural History Museum.



Fig. 68. Taxidermy studio at the Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 69. Image of taxidermists at work, interpretative panel (detail) in 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 70. 'Find out More' card, 'What is Taxidermy', 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 71. 'Find out More' folders, 'What on Earth!', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2011). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 72. Taxidermied wombat, 'Explore!', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 73. Model polar bear cubs, 'Arctic World', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2011). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 74. Various models of marine species, 'Bio-Wall', 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2009). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.

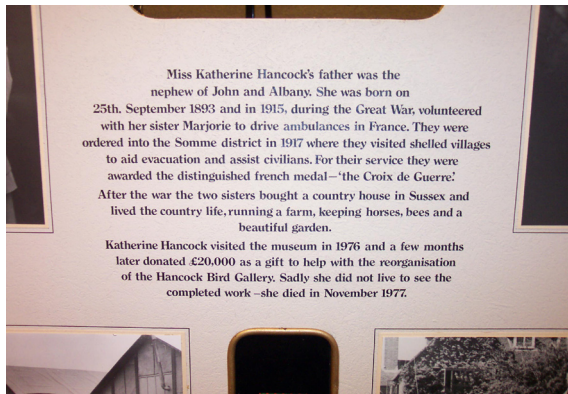


Fig. 75. Text panel (detail) from the Hancock 'shrine' display, 'The Magic of Birds', Hancock Museum (c.2006). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.

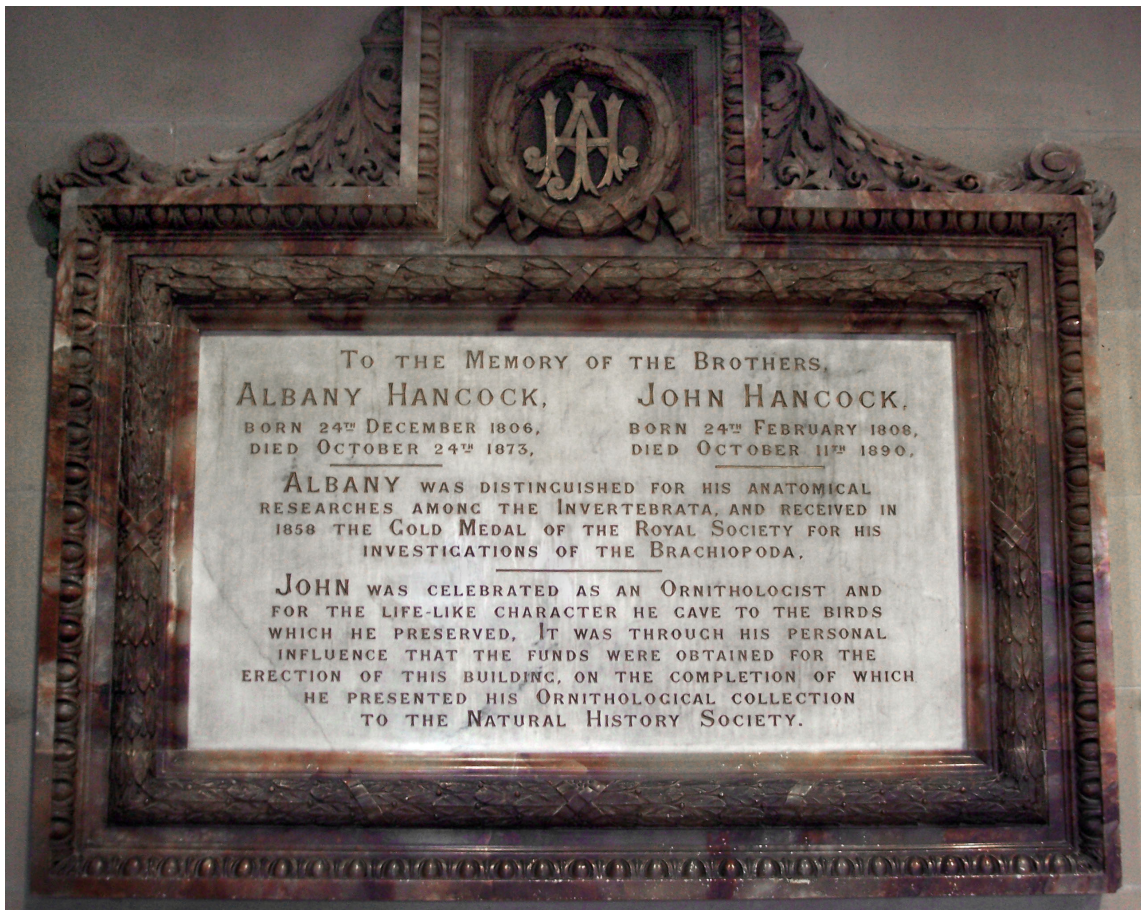


Fig. 76. Commemorative plaque in the vestibule of the Great North Museum: Hancock (2010). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 77. Exterior of the Great North Museum: Hancock (detail) (2011). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 78. Specimen labels inserted into the 'Colour Wall' (detail), 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 79. Text panel interpreting the trade in elephant ivory, 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2013). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 80. John Armitage undertaking scenery painting at Leeds City Museum. (c.1969). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 81. Exterior publicity for 'Living Worlds', The Manchester Museum (2011). © Author's image.



Fig. 82. Video footage and colour panels in the 'Colour Wall', 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 83. Empty wall space adjacent to the 'Bio-Wall' in 'Living Planet', Great North Museum: Hancock (2011). © Natural History Society of Northumbria.



Fig. 84. Amazon rainforest habitat display (detail), 'Life on Earth', Leeds City Museum (2013). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.



Fig. 85. Taxidermied badger on open display, 'What on Earth!', Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.

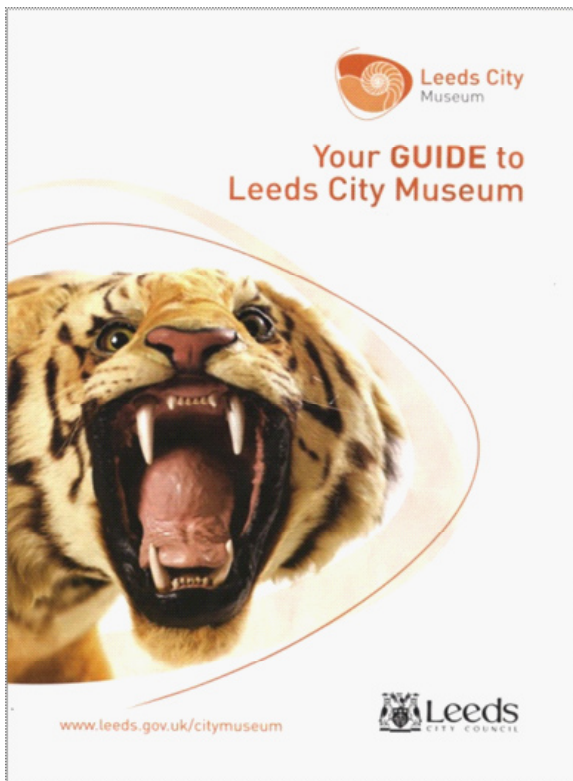


Fig. 86. Guide to Leeds City Museum featuring the 'Leeds Tiger' (2011). © Leeds Museums and Galleries.

**Congratulations!
You have found all of Snowy's friends.**



Fig. 87. 'Snowy' featured on a gallery trail activity sheet available in Museums Sheffield: Weston Park (2010). © Museums Sheffield.



Fig. 88. 'Joey' the lion, Weston Park Museum (2001). © Museums Sheffield.

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