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**HISTORY WRITING IN A MUSEUM:
PRACTICE, ARCHIVES, ART**

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**Covering Document (together with publications annexed)
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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Works submitted (in the order that they are discussed in the covering essay)

1. 'The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961', in *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*, ed. by David Cesarani (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 146-156 (first published in *Journal of Israeli History*, 23.1 (2004), 146-156).
2. 'The Material Culture of Persecution: Collecting for the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum', in *Extreme Collecting: Challenging Practices for 21st Century Museums*, ed. by Graeme Were and J.C.H. King (New York, Oxford: Bergahn, 2012), pp.19-36.
3. 'Remembering Srebrenica', *History Today*, 57.11 (2007), 52-53.
4. 'What Wireless Listeners Learned: Some Lesser-known BBC Broadcasts about Belsen', in *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. by David Cesarani and Suzanne Bardgett (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 123-152. Adapted version published in *History Today*, 56.8 (2006), 30-37.
5. 'A Child Survives in Drohobycz', in *Survivors of Nazi Persecution in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle*, Volume 2, ed. by David Cesarani, Jessica Reinisch, Suzanne Bardgett and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), pp. 281-302.
6. 'The Imperial War Museum's Collections and Multi-cultural Britain: Uses, Challenges, Possibilities', in *Identité et Diversité: Créations, Discours, Représentations*, ed. by Anne-Marie Motard (Montpellier: Presse Universitaire de la Méditerranée, 2013), pp. 193-210.
7. 'A Mutual Fascination: Indians in Brighton during the First World War', *History Today*, 65.3 (2015), 41-47 (footnoted version also included in submission as footnotes are not required by *History Today*).
8. *Wartime London in Paintings* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2020).

1 Introduction

The publications I have submitted were published between 2004 and 2020. They reflect the trajectory of my career during that period, when I was initially a specialist in the Holocaust and genocide, and their representation, before moving on to lead the Imperial War Museum (IWM)'s research initiative, and later to write a book about an aspect of its officially commissioned art collection.¹

My published work can be said to illuminate the kind of writing that emerges from the intersection of academic history and public history. The project-focussed nature of museum work means that the range of topics covered in my submission is varied and reflects the exigencies of working in a very public-facing national museum. As the person who led the creation of two exhibitions designed to provide a wider public understanding of the Holocaust and genocide, and consultant on a third related project, I was on a number of occasions asked to explain the issues and challenges of these initiatives, usually to conference audiences made up of other museum practitioners, as well as academics, and these interactions were a distinctive element in my work from 2000 to 2007. Opportunities for more focussed writing on historical topics arose in other settings, when, for example, the museum was a partner in a funded project or conference. These articles and chapters drew on close readings of items in the museum's collections and often deployed either narrative or micro-historical approaches to put under scrutiny how a particular work of art or set of correspondence illuminated a historical

¹ It should be noted that the IWM's first Holocaust Exhibition is due to be replaced by a new set of Holocaust Galleries, led by my colleague James Bulgin and scheduled to open in autumn 2021. These will be in a new location within the IWM London building, draw on additional collections acquired and present a fresh historical interpretation, taking account of developments in Holocaust historiography since the first exhibition opened in 2000.

episode.² Narrative and micro-history is therefore the kind of history I tend to practise and is a particularly apt approach within museums, where the telling of stories is central, as can be the arrival of a newly acquired artefact or an encounter with an individual who entrusts their past story to the museum. In the words of Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman, writing in the context of Holocaust research, micro-history 'grants renewed importance to individual practices and experiences' – a phenomenon familiar to history museum curators whose daily work is concerned with human experience.³ For Zalc and Bruttman, 'smaller spaces can better elucidate the complexities of decision-making...and ultimately provide more compelling insights into the events that contemporaries faced in their day-to-day lives'.⁴ The editing work undertaken for the 'Beyond Camps and Forced Labour' conference series also has micro-history at its core, diverse academics from across Europe producing chapters which illuminate recovered voices and experiences of those under threat from Nazi persecution.

The subtitle of this essay, 'practice, archives and art', highlights three interrelated themes that have shaped my work. Museum practice has developed and changed a great deal in the last twenty five years, notably in embracing 'difficult' and 'challenging' history, in which I have been closely involved. This work closely relates to that being undertaken in archives, where there is an increasing sensitivity among curators and archivists to the intrinsic power dynamics, inequalities and fragilities within the archive – a phenomenon expertly described by Stoler, whose work has informed my own. The art store - replete with raw and traumatic

² In doing this I am following in the footsteps of many IWM colleagues, past and present, who wrote and continue to write about our collections. See <https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-reports> and IWM's annual journal the *Imperial War Museum Review* (1986-1997).

³ 'Personal stories' are a pervasive element in the displays at the IWM, bringing together combinations of artefacts, documents and testimony, so that the visitor gains a multi-sensory understanding of the predicaments faced by individuals caught up in conflict.

⁴ *Microhistories of the Holocaust*, ed. by Claire Zalc and Tal Bruttman (New York: Berghahn, 2016), pp. 2-3.

responses on canvas to the human experience of war – has added a third, though less prominent, dimension to my work.

To further elaborate on the subtitle of this essay, I use the term ‘practice’ to denote the fact that I am first and foremost a museum practitioner, and to underline the multi-dimensional, very practical nature of the work undertaken by a historian working in a museum. My work from 1996 to 2002 on two ground-breaking Heritage Lottery Fund-supported exhibitions involved a range of activities including public and community relations, overseeing a major collecting initiative within the UK’s Holocaust survivor community, liaising with potential funders as well as managing curatorial teams and overseeing the exhibitions’ constituent story-telling elements. I wrote about these processes for a number of publications, but for the purposes of this PhD have submitted an example that used the IWM’s own institutional archive to place the IWM’s first Holocaust Exhibition in a longer historical context.

The IWM’s decision to mount two major exhibitions – one on the Holocaust and the other on genocide - was a radical departure when both were first suggested in the mid-1990s. The first of the essays uses my first-hand knowledge of the cultural milieu of the time to show some of the tensions that emerged and were eventually resolved during this period of rapid change, and the second how the major collecting challenge for the Holocaust Exhibition was met. For both essays I was able to bring knowledge of both the institutional and cultural politics of the time and the very dynamic collecting process undertaken by the curatorial team. Providing museum expertise in a recent conflict zone - Bosnia and Hercegovina - was a subsequent overseas consultancy task where memory politics were much more painfully evident. In this instance it was instructive to read how academics have since critiqued the interventions made by the IWM, which was working in collaboration with historians from Kings College London, on behalf of the Srebrenica Potočari Memorial Foundation, in turn supported

by the international peace-stabilising apparatus in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Finally, for a conference in France looking at diversity, I addressed the potential of the IWM's collections to illuminate the colonial experience of the two world wars, helping to shed light on the museum's potential for fresh thinking. In this instance I suggested some of the opportunities that might arise with a wider, more critical, consideration of the notion of 'Empire' in our public offer – blending my knowledge of IWM's record in this area with an appreciation of trends then emerging in the wider UK cultural scene.

These examples show the kind of work I undertook between 1996 and 2007 as a practitioner of representing 'difficult history' in the museum space, where historical skills needed to be complemented by diplomacy and an understanding of the intricacies of memory politics. Richard Sandell has remarked that 'the attributes – veracity, authenticity, credibility – with which audiences endow museums, secure them a relatively privileged, authoritative and potentially influential position in the media hierarchy', a reminder that the IWM's status as a national museum gave us credibility during that period of rapid innovation.⁵

There were concerns when the two genocide exhibitions were proposed that the extreme nature of the subject would be too upsetting for our visitors. There was however a strong moral imperative to create these displays. Julia Rose has written of the responsibility that museums take on when presenting distressing history to their publics, warning that to avoid those histories 'means missing learning opportunities that are otherwise ethically responsible, inclusive and enlightening'.⁶ It was rewarding, after the two exhibitions had opened, to become one of a small number of other museum practitioners charged with creating similar displays in

⁵ Richard Sandell, 'Reframing Conversations', in *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, ed. by Richard Sandell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 174.

⁶ Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 7.

several countries who shared best practice on the creation and management of places containing notably demanding subject matter.⁷ The curators of such places tend to have similar concerns: Silke Arnold de Simine in her insightful critique observes that the histories of persecution ‘tend to be object poor, because the people whose plight is exhibited were dispossessed’, requiring other presentational techniques to ‘draw visitors into an imaginative encounter with the past’.⁸ Positioning is another key concern whenever a historical event is given a self-contained exhibition with government funding – sending a powerful message to the outside world that the events described deserve to be consciously remembered. The contexts will vary, and the politics are sometimes complex, but in an increasingly inter-connected world the scope for transnational memory has come to the fore. At sites and museums with commemorative purposes ‘controversy reveals that what is at stake matters’ and their audiences can ‘contribute to the expansion to the boundaries of our moral imaginations’.⁹

The curatorial teams who worked on the Holocaust Exhibition in the 1990s were working in advance of a shifting climate which in the following decade would see ‘difficult history’ come to the fore in the museum world and greater responsibility vested in curators to make sometimes politically sensitive or delicate choices. Museums became markedly more ready to engage with public criticism, losing their earlier image as ‘stuffy repositories of arcane information’.¹⁰ As a consequence curators and archivists have changed ‘from keepers of the past to presenters and communicators of multiple pasts’ and there is today a steadily growing

⁷ Examples are listed in my Curriculum Vitae below.

⁸ Silke Arnold de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 10.

⁹ Edward Linenthal, ‘Commentary Epilogue’ in *Transnational American Memories*, ed. by Udo J. Hebel (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 448-449.

¹⁰ Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 973.

literature on presenting challenging history in the museum space.¹¹ A participatory historical culture is moreover giving new possibilities in the fields of exhibition-making, digital engagement and family history.¹²

Crucially, museums have a key role to play in the pressing debates relating to the legacy of empire, including the ownership of collections, the biographies of objects and the interpretation of historic sites and events. My own engagement with this came midway through the progress of a discourse which has deepened and become more urgent. Comparing two books we can see how far the debate has progressed. *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (1998) was based on an art history conference held at the V&A in 1995 and contained a number of case studies by curators clearly sensitive to the issues arising from collections, their ownership and display. Nima Poovaya-Smith considered Bradford Museums and Art Galleries – ahead of many museums with its commitment to collecting and displaying South Asian Art from the mid-1980s – and called for a ‘fundamental reassessment of the role of imperial institutions in the post-colonial period’.¹³ Twenty-two years later Dan Hicks’s *The Brutish Museums: the Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (2020) arrived at a pivotal cultural moment and was much more forthright, calling for a full return of artefacts taken during the colonial era. In Hicks’s words: ‘Nothing can stop the tide of history as it is being made and remade around our institutions at this global juncture for the

¹¹ Faye Sayer, *Public History: a Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 70.

¹² Hilda Kean, Preface to paperback edition, *Public History and Heritage Today: People and their Pasts*, ed. by Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. xvi-xvii (hardback edition first publ. in 2009).

¹³ Nima Poovaya-Smith, ‘Keys to the Magic Kingdom: the New Transcultural Collections of Bradford Art Galleries and Museums’, in *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum*, ed. by Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p.111

colonial past'.¹⁴ In the period I work in, 'Empire' issues revolve around the wartime exploitation of the people of former colonies - from forcible conscription in Africa and India during the First World War to double standards and racism in the services in the Second. If museums are today's 'safe places' to explore the momentous injustices of the past, there are many opportunities here for the IWM.

Moving on to 'archives' and 'art', the IWM's collections include a vast range of officially commissioned film, photographs and works of art, generated by wartime governments to manipulate public opinion. A close reading of the circumstances in which these collections were created, sometimes supplemented by oral history recordings with the men and women who created them, has provided rich material for successive IWM curators and many external historians. Two of my essays and my book *Wartime London in Paintings* belong to this tradition, and deploy insights gained from studying both the relevant archives and sources on propaganda, politics and wartime mentalities. Faced with constraints from above, officials, reporters, writers and artists fought, acquiesced or steered a wary path between the two.

The work I have done specifically on the colonial experience of war invites the question 'how far have I been able to look *beyond* those repositories which are 'the monuments to particular configurations of power'?'¹⁵ Key to this work is an understanding of the importance of the 'willingness to engage' and an embracing of the notion of working towards a 'reflexive and inclusive understanding of the signs, cultures and social and material circumstances' associated with colonialism's products.¹⁶ I encountered the challenges presented by colonial texts at a

¹⁴ Dan Hicks, *The British Museums: the Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2020), p. 231.

¹⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science* 2 (2002), p. 96.

¹⁶ Ricardo Roque and Kim A. Wagner, eds, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 4.

granular level when working on the British Library's collection of censored letters written by Indian soldiers during the First World War. The collection derives very obviously from 'colonial statecraft', and I needed to read 'against the grain'. A minute examination of the letters, and the discovery of incidental observations in local newspapers of the day, enabled me to 'locate human agency in small features of refusal and silence among the colonized', including expressions of resentment by the Indians of the authorities' highhandedness.¹⁷ Through a close reading it was possible to construct a picture of the feelings of the Indians – bemused by the warmth of their reception but soon made cynical by the constant fussing while at the same time being locked up. By marshalling a wide range of sources to consider what happened in just three months, I deployed a subaltern studies approach to address the nature of colonial authority as imposed in a British seaside town.¹⁸ Such methodologies can be applied to other spheres of history, not just those relating to Empire, wherever the 'hegemonic discourse of authorities' threatens to obscure histories that are relegated to the margins.¹⁹

I have also drawn on other sorts of archives. Visits to Holocaust survivors' homes frequently reveal 'personal archives' built over decades to document past trauma – something Atina Grossman has eloquently described.²⁰ Papers, photographs, scrapbooks and photocopied documentation relating to the history of a former home town or city make up these highly-

¹⁷ Stoler, 'Colonial Archives', p. 99.

¹⁸ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 479. Chakrabarty provides an explanation of this intellectual movement, and highlights Ranajit Guha's encouragement to historians to develop 'a conscious strategy for "reading" the archives, not simply for the biases of the elite, but for the textual properties of these documents in order to get at the various ways in which elite modes of thought represented the refractory figure of the subaltern and their practices'.

¹⁹ Roque and Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge*, p. 15.

²⁰ Atina Grossman, 'Versions of Home: German Refugee Papers Out of the Closet and into the Archives', *New German Critique*, 90 (2003), 95–122. Also Atina Grossman, 'Family Files: Emotions and Stories of (Non-) Restitution', *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 34.1 (May 2012), 59-78.

charged accumulations of mementoes of a family life destroyed. Investigating the story behind the artist Alicia Melamed Adams brought me into contact with this very different kind of archive.

It was two art-focussed archives – that of the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC) and its chairman Sir Kenneth Clark’s correspondence in the Tate Archive – that furnished me with much of the material for my book about the paintings made of London under the official war art scheme. Some scholars have asked why the WAAC’s work overall, as distinct from the outputs of individual artists, has had so little attention. Brian Foss, in his book *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain*, identifies some of the difficulties, including the marginalisation of the work of lesser known artists (overshadowed by eminent figures such as Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore); the complexity of analysing multiple forms artistic expression; and the challenges of weaving in the broader story of the propaganda war.²¹ Rebecca Searle has similarly queried the lack of attention to the WAAC’s links to the wider propaganda effort and has sought to remedy this in her work on paintings relating to the air war, placing these works in the broader context of their wartime consumption.²² For my book about the forty artists who recorded activities in wartime London, I was concerned with similar issues, and it was illuminating to probe the tensions between a Committee wanting to commission an artistic record of the war and a parent body – the Ministry of Information – that had other agendas.

Taking into account the above, I am best described as a historian at the intersection of public history and academia, who takes a social history approach to her subject matter, and who

²¹ Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 3-4.

²² Rebecca Searle, *Art Propaganda and Aerial Warfare in Britain during the Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), p. 1.

had the responsibility of driving forward – in the late 1990s/ early 2000s – projects which shifted the ground for the IWM and altered its public image.

2 Essays on the curating of exhibitions on genocide

During and after the creation of the Holocaust Exhibition I wrote a number of articles describing that process – focussing on the challenges the curatorial team had faced. In **‘The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961’** I situated the exhibition within the museum’s wider history.²³ The notion of the IWM hosting a Holocaust Exhibition was novel at the time it was first put forward in 1993, and reactions to the idea were broad.²⁴ Our plan was to devise a multi-media narrative exhibition which would educate visitors about this momentous event, using original artefacts and documents, archive film and photographs, testimony, narrative texts and captions. With the Heritage Lottery Funding and the promise that this would be a ‘national contribution’ to understanding, expectations were high. There was scepticism in some quarters over whether the museum would be able to deliver on its mission, while in others there was gratitude that a national museum was willing to take it on.²⁵ In the mid-1990s, when the IWM’s plans got under way, the subject of the Holocaust was not as prominent in UK cultural life as it is today. The late 1990s saw a growth in interest as a number of legacy issues started to be aired prominently in the press (the restitution of stolen works of art, compensation for slave labourers, the role of the Swiss banks and others). The writing of **‘The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961’** – undertaken shortly after the Holocaust Exhibition had opened in June 2000 – involved looking back at how the IWM

²³ ‘The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961’, in *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*, ed. by David Cesarani (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2004), pp. 146-156.

²⁴ See David Cesarani, ‘Why Should Britain have a National Holocaust Museum?’, *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 7.3 (1998), 17-27, and in the same issue Suzanne Bardgett, ‘The Genesis and Development of the Imperial War Museum’s Holocaust Exhibition Project’, 28-37.

²⁵ See Imperial War Museum Archive, HGH/ A/ 01/007/001, ‘Letters Against the Idea of the Holocaust Exhibition’ and HGH/ A/01/007 002 ‘Letters in Support of the Holocaust Exhibition’.

had viewed and interpreted the phenomenon of the Nazi state and its crimes from the 1960s to 2000.

My essay was a crucial first step in historicising how the Holocaust had been represented and approached at the IWM. There now exists a fairly substantial literature on the rapid increase in the remembrance and representation of the Holocaust in the UK, with the IWM's Holocaust Exhibition, Holocaust Memorial Day and, more recently, the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial in Tower Gardens, at the centre of these discussions.²⁶ My essay pre-dates much of this work; in the UK scholarship on the commemoration of the Holocaust was relatively limited until the early 2000s.²⁷ It added to this body of work at an early stage, showing how, from the 1970s to the 1990s, the Holocaust as a subject was only very gradually accepted as

²⁶ See the articles cited in notes 27, 28, 31 and 34 below and Part V 'Public History and Holocaust Commemoration' in *The Jews, The Holocaust and the Public: The Legacies of David Cesarani*, ed. by Larissa Allwork and Rachel Pistol (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 267-342. For discussions of the proposed memorial in Tower Gardens see Andy Pearce, 'Marginalisation Through Commemoration: Trends and Practices in Holocaust Education in the United Kingdom', *War & Society*, 39.3 (2020), 215-220 and David Tollerton, 'Visions of Permanence, Realities of Instability: the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission and the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, ed. by Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 449-465.

²⁷ The form, content and reception of the IWM's first Holocaust Exhibition were the subject of a wide range of scholarly writing. See for example Tony Kushner, 'The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain: a Study of Ethnography', in *Representing the Holocaust: Essays in Honour of Bryan Burns*, ed. by Sue Vice, (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), pp. 13-40, (first publ. in *Immigrants and Minorities*, 21, 1-2 (2002)); Andrew Hoskins 'Signs of the Holocaust: Exhibiting Memory in a Mediated Age', *Media, Culture and Society*, 25. 1 (2003), 7-22; Tom Lawson, 'Ideology in a Museum of Memory: a Review of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 4.2 (2003), 173-183; Tim Cole, 'Nativization and Nationalization: a Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK', *Journal of Israeli History*, 23.1 (2004), 130-145; Hannah Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Rebecca Jinks, 'Holocaust Memory and Contemporary Atrocities: the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition and Crimes against Humanity Exhibition', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, ed. by Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 142-159; Tony Kushner, 'The Holocaust in the British Imagination: the Official Mind and Beyond, 1945 to the Present', *Holocaust Studies*, 23.3 (2017), 364-384; Steffi de Jong, *The Witness As Object: Video Testimony in Memorial Museums* (Oxford, New York: Bergahn, 2018); Chad McDonald, 'Negotiating Memory and Agency: David Cesarani and the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition (2000)', in Pearce and Lawson, *Palgrave Handbook*, pp. 405-425, and in the same volume Hannah Holtschneider, 'Holocaust Representation in the Imperial War Museum 2000-2020', pp. 389-404.

truly belonging to the IWM's remit.²⁸ In the early 1990s the IWM was still a museum which tended to celebrate – and even look back nostalgically at – the British role in the Second World War. In writing this piece, therefore, I contributed to the scholarship that explores how national museums develop and change, a process which can be slow and sometimes painful. By investigating how Nazi persecution had been addressed (or neglected) in the IWM's exhibitions and educational initiatives from 1960 to 2000, I was able to show how the museum gradually asserted its interest in the topic. Much of the impetus for this came 'from below' – from individual members of staff who could see the subject's relevance and potential for the IWM. Once the IWM's exhibition *had* opened there was a great deal of interest in its origins and creation – especially from mainland Europe, Canada and South Africa – where several new museums relating to the Nazi era were being developed – and from the Higher Education sector.²⁹

My article was read and cited by a number of historians curious to understand how the subject of the Holocaust came into prominence in the public domain in the early 2000s in a way unforeseen in earlier decades. Some commented on what they perceive to be a very sudden embracing of the subject by the IWM. Tony Kushner for example acutely noted that the

²⁸ Of most relevance to this essay with its focus on the timing of the arrival of the Holocaust Exhibition on the UK cultural scene are: Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance Between the National and the Transnational: the Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 155-161, and Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, pp. 108-132. Alys Cundy in her doctoral thesis undertaken as part of the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme devoted a chapter to the genesis of the Holocaust Exhibition: "A Black Hole in the Museum": The Holocaust Exhibition, 2000'. (Alys Cundy, 'A century of Reinvention: Display Policy and Practice at the Imperial War Museum, 1917-2017' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bristol, 2015), pp. 155–171.) See also Judith Petersen, 'How British Television Inserted the Holocaust into Britain's War Memory in 1995', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 21.3 (2001), 255-272.

²⁹ Several doctoral students - Jaime Ashworth (Southampton), Angelika Schoder (Bayreuth), Larissa Allwork (Royal Holloway University of London), Andy Pearce (Royal Holloway University of London), Emily Stiles (Winchester) and Chad McDonald (Bristol) - focussed on the Holocaust Exhibition or an aspect of it for their theses, and in the early 2000s I gave interviews also to a large number of MA students – mainly studying Cultural Studies – who were looking at aspects of the creation of the exhibition for their dissertations.

Holocaust Exhibition – when it was eventually built – was unexpectedly large, given that the museum had been ‘long averse to incorporating the subject’.³⁰ Andy Pearce referred to my article in his study *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*, discussing the antecedents and origins of the Holocaust Exhibition project at some length.³¹

The fact is that the encompassing of the Holocaust as a prominent element in the IWM’s public gallery was an unexpected development, drawing scepticism from a number of quarters, and as a result giving the IWM Holocaust project team some testing times. Writing of the trend towards museums ‘embracing a kind of emotional literacy, an ability to work sensitively and astutely with the thoughts and feelings of others’, Gaynor Kavanagh observed that this shift had been ‘pragmatic and little prepared for’.³² The IWM’s exhibition did not emerge from this new thinking, which came later – in the 2010s. Rather personal commitment by the Holocaust Exhibition project team to making a first-class exhibition on this momentous subject, together with factors such as regular contact with Holocaust survivors, meant that these curators took a deeply empathetic approach to the subject matter on their own initiative. The result was an IWM exhibition very different in tone from anything that had gone before.

³⁰ Tony Kushner, ‘The Holocaust in the British Imagination: the Official Mind and Beyond, 1945 to the Present’, *Holocaust Studies*, 23.3 (2017), p. 377. See also Tony Kushner, ‘The Murder of Stephen Lawrence: Racism, the Post-colonial and the Holocaust in Britain’, in *Holocaust Memory in a Globalizing World*, ed. by Jacob S. Eder, Phili Gassert and Alan E. Steinweiss (Göttingen: Wallstein Verla, 2017), pp. 77-94. The IWM had mounted an exhibition on the relief of Belsen in 1991, a small temporary exhibition on the Warsaw Ghetto in 1993 and an externally curated display on *Schindler’s List* in 1995, so the subject had started to be addressed in the public galleries, but Kushner was correct to note that the announcement to mount a major exhibition on the Holocaust was unexpected. At 1200 square metres the exhibition was then the largest the museum had ever mounted.

³¹ See ‘The Imperial War Museum’s Holocaust Exhibition’ in Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, pp.108-132.

³² Gaynor Kavanagh, ‘Remembering Ourselves in the Work of Museums: Trauma and the Place of the Personal in the Public’, in *Museums, Society, Inequality*, ed. by Richard Sandell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), pp. 130-142. See also Cundy, ‘A Century of Reinvention’, p. 165. Cundy observes that ‘a rhetoric of social responsibility provides an important framing for the IWM Holocaust Exhibition’, deriving in part from the New Labour government’s inclusion agenda, and quotes Paul Williams’s assertion that ‘a global, cosmopolitan culture sympathetic to loss’ prompted the creation and acceptance of narratives of atrocity in public spaces.

A study of another national museum grappling with similar issues emerged in 2018 in the form of an article about the efforts by the Canadian War Museum (CWM) in Ottawa to establish a Holocaust display.³³ Mark Celinscak looked back at the heated debate which followed the CWM's 1997 announcement of plans for a major \$12m Holocaust gallery, which in the event was cancelled. Celinscak analysed the proceedings of the Canadian Senate Sub-Committee of Veterans' Affairs to consider why the plans had been dropped. The lack of a relationship between Canada and the Holocaust was cited, as was the planned size of the gallery (35% of a proposed expansion) particularly when set against certain military topics that Canadian veterans would have liked to see better explored; the view that the Holocaust had no place in a Canadian national museum; and a concern that the story would simply overpower the rest of the museum. In short Celinscak showed how vested interests inhibited the insertion into the CWM of the Holocaust's perhaps too dominant subject matter. Celinscak revealed that Michael Marrus, the Canadian Holocaust historian, had expressed doubts as to whether the CWM had the expertise to deliver the exhibition. There are parallels here with how some academics in the UK viewed the IWM's plans, wondering how the Holocaust would be dealt with when we did not (at that time) have a track record in presenting the history of genocide, nor a demonstrably deep understanding of Jewish history and culture. In the event the IWM's exhibition arrived on the UK cultural scene at a moment when public interest had matured and concerns about IWM's ability to deliver or that 'visitors would not come' turned out to be misplaced.³⁴

³³ Mark Celinscak, 'The Holocaust and the Canadian War Museum Controversy', *Canadian Jewish Studies / Études Juives Canadiennes*, 26 (2018), 11-30.

³⁴ Other citations of 'The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961' not mentioned earlier include: Bailey McGuire Ball, "'Never Again': The Impulse to Commemorate the Holocaust at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the British Imperial War Museum' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2011), fn. 60; Sarah K. Cardaun, 'Between Universalism and Particularism: Government and Civil Society Responses to Contemporary Antisemitism in Britain' (unpublished doctoral thesis, King's College London, 2014), fn.60; Antoine Capet, 'Holocaust Art at the Imperial War

As late as the 1990s, both the IWM and the CWM still had auras of sacrosanct national institutions with unassailable identities. My article, in reviewing the period from the 1960s to 2000, helped situate the Holocaust Exhibition's arrival in the longer continuum of the IWM's history. Insights into the conservative milieu in which the exhibition was conceived provide useful context for understanding the constraints faced by the curatorial team – who were breaking new ground, and conscious of this throughout the exhibition's creation.³⁵

'The Material Culture of Persecution: Collecting for the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum' is the opening chapter in a book of essays addressing collecting 'on the margins'. The anthropologist Graeme Were led a series of AHRC-supported workshops on this subject at the British Museum in 2007 and 2008. The chapter, given initially as a paper at one of

Museum, 1945-2009' in Sharples and Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*, p. 147, fn.2; Flaminia Bartolini, 'L'esposizione dell'Olocausto all'Imperial War Museum: un'analisi comparativa per un'ipotesi di museo sulla storia del fascismo', *E-Review 6, Rivista degli Istituti Storici dell'Emilia-Romagna in Rete* (2018); Chad McDonald, "'We Became British Aliens": Kindertransport Refugees Narrating the Discovery of their Parents' Fates', *Holocaust Studies*, 24.4 (2018), fn.22; Thomas Thiemeyer, 'Multi-Voiced and Personal: Second World War Remembrance in German Museums' in *Views of Violence: Representing the Second World War in German and European Museums and Memorials*, ed. by Jorg Echternkamp and Stephan Jaeger (New York: Bergahn, 2019), fn. 60; Amy Williams, 'Memory of the Kindertransport in National and Transnational Perspective' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2020); and Stefan Jaeger, *The Second World War in the Twenty-first Century Museum: From Narrative, Memory, and Experience to Experientiality* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), p. 354. For an account published by the IWM of the impact of the Holocaust Exhibition during its first decade, see Suzanne Bardgett, *The Holocaust Exhibition Ten Years On* (London: IWM, 2010).

³⁵ See Suzanne Bardgett, 'David Cesarani and the Making of the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition', in Allwork and Pistol, *The Jews, the Holocaust and the Public*, pp. 297-305. There is a very large literature on 'the new museology' and a growing literature on the interpretation of difficult history (see for example Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016)), but relatively little on national museums which have embraced new subject matter which hitherto appeared to be outside their territory. Edward Linenthal's *Preserving Memory: the Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995) has chapters on the background to the establishment of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, but the circumstances were different in that the USHMM was a new entity, and there were competing groups wanting control of its narrative. *National Museums: New Studies From Around the World*, ed. by Simon Knell, Peter Aronsson and Arne Bugge Amundsen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) surveys museums around the world which have embraced new challenges.

these workshops, focused on the Holocaust Exhibition team's then-recent experience of collecting artefacts.³⁶

Writing of the example of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, opened in 1993, Tim Cole described the 'obvious concern on the part of the exhibition designers with authenticity.....Thus the material artefacts on display in the museum are more than simply things to look at, they are self-consciously also building blocks of evidence.'³⁷ The IWM team was familiar with the very ambitious collecting strategy deployed by the USHMM and aimed to do as well by the subject as it had done. The chapter in *Extreme Collecting* explained how the curators drew up a 'wants list' and combed museums in Europe for potential loans, at the same time hoping that our appeals to the Jewish community in the UK might yield personal possessions kept by survivors. In the event it was indeed such items – wooden clogs, a bowl used in a concentration camp, letters, cloth Yellow Stars, concentration camp badges – which furnished the exhibition with this much-needed humanising element.

Starting with a then-recent example of an acquisition of some religious objects abandoned by their owner, Michael Maynard, in a north London house in the early 1950s, I explained the background to this aspect of the exhibition's creation, and how the supportive strand of artefacts in showcases helped convey a number of important historical concepts – such as the Nazis' race theories, their propaganda efforts and their own brand of antisemitism. I thus gave insights into a collecting process that was unprecedented in a UK national museum and which succeeded in its ambitions. The chapter thus contributes principally to the field of

³⁶ Suzanne Bardgett, 'The Material Culture of Persecution: Collecting for the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum', in *Extreme Collecting: Challenging Practices for 21st Century Museums*, ed. by Graeme Were and J.C.H. King (New York, Oxford: Bergahn, 2012), pp. 1-36. A shorter account of the same collecting effort appeared as 'Object Lessons' in *Museums Journal*, June 2010, 22-27.

³⁷ Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), p. 160. For a full account of the USHMM's collecting effort see Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, pp. 147-166.

museum studies and cultural studies, but will be of interest also to historians of twentieth century history interested in the delivering of challenging history in the museum setting.³⁸

The museological processes adopted for the Holocaust Exhibition informed the thinking that went into a subsequent genocide-related project in Bosnia and Hercegovina.³⁹

'Remembering Srebrenica', an account of the creation of the Srebrenica Memorial Room published in *History Today* in November 2007, a few weeks after the opening, was in essence a description of the background to the establishment of the memorial room, how its design had been commissioned and its two narrative elements curated. As consultant on this politically delicate project, my role as author of the article was to do just that, on behalf of the Srebrenica Memorial Foundation and the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Hercegovina, which had instigated the project. In the article I described the two elements: a 30-minute film jointly produced by British tv documentary maker Leslie Woodhead and Muhamed Mujkic of the Sarajevo-based Federal Commissions for Missing Persons, who had filmed the excavation of mass burial sites, and the series of personal stories, which, following the pattern used in the Holocaust Exhibition, involved the researching and writing of texts about twenty different artefacts exhumed from mass graves, a task undertaken by survivor Emir Suljagic.⁴⁰

³⁸ The chapter has been cited by Emily-Jayne Stiles who, in Chapter 3 of 'Narrative, Object, Witness: The Story of the Holocaust as Told by the Imperial War Museum, London' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Winchester, 2016), pp. 91-120, questioned the IWM team's approach and asked why objects were subsumed to the needs of a narrative. Chloe Paver also cited the article in her study of Holocaust artefacts, analysing the meanings and after-lives of such objects in contemporary museums in Germany and Austria. See Chloe Paver, *Exhibiting the Nazi Past: Museum Objects Between the Material and the Immaterial* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 191.

³⁹ 'Remembering Srebrenica', *History Today*, 57.11 (2007), 52-53. Some background may be useful: shortly after the exhibition *Crimes against Humanity* had opened Lord Ashdown, then High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, wrote to the IWM to say that he had seen the IWM's two genocide exhibitions and wanted help in establishing something similar in Bosnia. The IWM was subsequently contracted to provide consultancy advice on the Srebrenica Memorial Room which was jointly funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Dutch Foreign Ministry. Professor James Gow and Dr Jan Willem Honig at Kings College London provided much valued historical advice to the project.

There is now a well-developed literature about such memorial spaces. Paul D. Williams's *Memorial Museums: the Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (2007) provided a timely critique of the 'memorial museum' as a phenomenon of the early 2000s, satisfying the public desire for history lessons at the very site of terrible events and providing an impetus to post-conflict healing.⁴¹ Williams also highlighted the risks of building such museums in haste, and without due consideration of unresolved conflict. The political scientist Lara Nettelfield described the wider efforts to memorialise Srebrenica in *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide*. Nettelfield explained the origins of the cemetery at Potočari and the mass burials that happen there each year on the anniversary of the massacre (11 July 1995). As well as the landscaping and tree planting, she mentioned the emblematic presence of the Bosnian national flag (rare in Republika Srpska, whose own flag is more commonly seen) 'signalling the interventionist aim of the memorial center'. Nettelfield also wrote about the three-day memorial marches that see families retrace the route taken by the men and boys who in July 1995 escaped through the hills to the safety of Tuzla, and their visits to known execution sites. The memorial room in the adjacent Battery Factory was described and Nettelfield highlighted the crucial role played by Emir Suljagic.⁴²

A thoughtful response to such international interventions has come from anthropologist Ger Duijzings, who advised on the memorial room, and who notes how:

⁴⁰ The article is cited in *Remembering Genocide*, ed. by Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 11 and p. 14.

⁴¹ Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: the Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007). See also *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'*, ed. by William Logan and Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-13.

⁴² Lara J. Nettelfield and Sarah E. Wagner, *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 45-47.

the Srebrenica commemorations have not only grown into demonstrations of Muslim survival and unity, symbolically and ceremonially dominated by the Islamic Community; they have also evolved into a platform for the ritual declarations of guilt and responsibility by members of the international community, who use it to express their regret at having allowed the massacre to happen.⁴³

Others have argued, more forcefully, that ‘there can be too much memory’, and that silence is the best response, because the process of healing from conflict takes time.⁴⁴ This notion, briefly elucidated by Fergal Keane and Alison Des Forges in the IWM’s 2002 *Crimes Against Humanity* exhibition, has been the focus of writings by, among others, the historian Tony Judt and Harvard law professor Martha Minow.⁴⁵ It posits that some measure of forgetting may be a necessary condition for moving on and rebuilding a society fractured by conflict, and is particularly apposite in the instance of the Srebrenica Memorial Room. The cemetery and memorial are both sited within Republika Srpska, whose 2002 report on the genocide sought to minimise the numbers killed. Tensions remain high in the area, particularly during the annual commemoration at the Potočari memorial which continues to be very heavily policed.

Academics working in the field of transitional justice will be particularly sensitive to the

⁴³ Ger Duijzings, ‘Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia’, in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. by Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 141-166.

⁴⁴ Marita Eastmond and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, ‘Silence as Possibility in Postwar Everyday Life’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 6.3 (2012), 502-524. See also Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, ‘Perpetrators and Victims: Local Responses to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia’, *Focaal (Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology)*, Special Issue 57: *Beyond Reconciliation: Social Reconstruction after the Bosnian War* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 50-61, and in the same special issue Anders H. Stefansson, ‘Coffee After Cleansing? Co-existence, Co-operation, and Communication in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina’, 62-76.

⁴⁵ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (Heinemann, 2005), pp. 826-831, and Martha Minow, ed., *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 14-19.

challenges of peace-building in a recent conflict zone – an approach which goes to the crux of whether and when it is wise to speak out about the truth. The cemetery and memorial at Potočari were both established under the special powers of the High Representative in Bosnia and as such represent a conviction from that entity that for Bosnia and Hercegovina to move on, truth-telling was necessary.⁴⁶

Arguments for collective silence highlight the fact that the memorial room – deeply unpopular with local Bosnian Serbs – can be considered provocative in this polarised setting. No matter how contentious such memory spaces may be, however, they are a necessary part of the process of coming to terms with loss. Those involved in memorial initiatives in post-conflict zones should find this a useful case study, as will museum studies scholars concerned with the ethics and practicalities of lending skills and advice to museums overseas.

⁴⁶ Sarah Wagner, 'Tabulating Loss, Entombing Memory: the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Centre', in *Memory, Mourning, Landscape*, ed. by Elizabeth Anderson, Avril Maddrell, Kate McLoughlin and Alana M. Vincent (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2010), pp. 61-78.

3 Historical chapters contributed to books on aspects of the Holocaust

Under discussion in this section are two contributions to scholarly publications I wrote which deal with cultural representations of the Holocaust in the post-war world. *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives* brought together the papers given at the 2005 conference to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, which I organised with David Cesarani. My contribution – ‘**What Wireless Listeners Learned: Some Lesser-known BBC Broadcasts about Belsen**’ – considered two previously unexplored facets of the BBC’s coverage of Belsen: firstly the broadcasts made shortly after the discovery of the camp by Patrick Gordon-Walker, the BBC’s German specialist, who conducted some of the first interviews with camp survivors; secondly, a radio play by Leonard Cottrell, broadcast a year after the liberation had taken place, about a small group of inmates’ experiences in the days before the British arrived.⁴⁷

The wartime BBC was reticent in what it broadcast about the Nazi persecution of the Jews. There were constraints from the Ministry of Information, which feared stoking already prevalent antisemitism.⁴⁸ Stephanie Seul considered this in her article about the BBC’s avoidance of the subject on the Home Service.⁴⁹ The reticence was buttressed by a belief that the British public did not want too much ‘gloomy’ news. Sian Nicholas’s *Echo of War* showed how the BBC took careful note of audience reactions to horrific material on Nazi Germany. A 1944 weekly drama series, *The Silent Battle*, which had focussed on German atrocities and

⁴⁷ ‘What Wireless Listeners Learned: Some Lesser-known BBC broadcasts about Belsen’, in *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. by David Cesarani and Suzanne Bardgett (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 123-152. The article also appeared as ‘Belsen and the BBC: What Wireless Listeners Learned’ in *History Today*, 56.8 (2006), 30-37.

⁴⁸ For an account of this see Michael Fleming, ‘Geographies of Obligation and the Dissemination of News of the Holocaust’, *Holocaust Studies*, 23:1-2 (2017), 59-75.

⁴⁹ Stephanie Seul, ‘Any Reference to Jews on the Wireless Might Prove a Double-edged Weapon’, in *Jewish Images in the Media*, ed. by Martin Liepach, Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2007), p. 204.

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resistance, had been shown to be unpopular, BBC Listeners Reports suggesting that ‘while factual accounts of German atrocities are necessary to keep people informed, their dramatization, as it cannot be followed up by action, tends to blunt feelings beside pandering to cheap sensationalism’.⁵⁰

The programmes made by Patrick Gordon Walker were ‘Belsen: Facts and Thoughts’, broadcast in the evening of Sunday 27 May 1945, and a spin-off programme made for *Children’s Hour* of children in the camp singing. Gordon Walker’s role at Belsen had been highlighted by Ben Shephard in his book *After Daybreak*, but the focus there had been on Gordon Walker’s published diary and what he wrote down about the relief of the camp – he met with senior medical personnel who confided to him that delays had been caused by a lack of authority within the military.⁵¹ Nicholas also mentioned Gordon Walker’s programme ‘Belsen: Facts and Thoughts’ in her book, noting that the talk ‘attracted a remarkable 28.9 per cent audience recorded in a BBC Listener Research Department Report – and contrary to BBC fears, prompted virtually no protests’.⁵²

‘What Wireless Listeners Learned..’ added to this work by finding the actual radio broadcasts, which I listened to – almost certainly for the first time since they were broadcast – in a booth at the British Library. The recordings include the voices of survivors who described the brutalised nature of camp life and spoke of a place called ‘Auschwitz’. They are thus one of the earliest efforts to document survivors’ experiences – while the war was still being fought -

⁵⁰ Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 153, 158-159 and 163. See also Jeremy D. Harris, ‘Broadcasting the Massacres: an Analysis of the BBC’s Contemporary Coverage of the Holocaust’, in *Holocaust: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, ed. by David Cesarani (New York, Abingdon: Routledge, 2004) pp. 298-323, (first publ. in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 25 (1996)), pp. 65-98 .

⁵¹ Ben Shephard, *After Daybreak: the Liberation of Belsen, 1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), pp. 61-2, 65 and 70.

⁵² Nicholas, *Echo of War*, p. 163.

and as such are of interest to those researching the early historiography of the Holocaust.⁵³ It was rewarding to later hear the recordings played as part of Edgware Synagogue's Yom Hashoah service and to see them featured on the BBC website, a good example of research enriching the possibilities for public engagement.⁵⁴

The chapter also contextualised Gordon Walker's presence at Belsen – explaining his role within the Psychological Warfare Division under SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) whose brief it was to use the powerful Radio Luxembourg transmitter to broadcast into Germany. Gordon Walker took time out from this effort to gather material for his book *The Lid Lifts*, a first-hand account of Germany in the immediate aftermath of the end of the war. As the writer of numerous Workers Programmes for Germany put out by the BBC's European Service, he had a deep knowledge of the country and this informed his approach now that he finally got to see it on the ground.

The chapter considered how far Gordon Walker's recordings made it into the final programmes, and how far cuts were made so that they chimed with the British propaganda needs of the time. Gordon Walker attended the first Sabbath service in the camp conducted by Rabbi Leslie Hardman, and in *The Lid Lifts* described a private conversation with Hardman, who broke down and sobbed out loud. Gordon Walker was aware of the fact that the survivors were predominantly Jewish, but in what he broadcast his acknowledgement of this was limited.⁵⁵

⁵³ For a discussion of David P. Boder's more systematic efforts to record survivors in 1946 see Rachel Deblinger, 'Holocaust Memory in Displaced Persons Camps', in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. by David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 115-126.

⁵⁴ Hetty Werkendam, who as a child had been interviewed by Gordon Walker in 1945, was re-interviewed by the BBC in 2018 about her memories of that time. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/stories-43812173> [accessed 2 March 2021] The extract from Gordon-Walker's interview begins at 2.52.

⁵⁵ For an analysis of Richard Dimbleby's broadcast see Judith Petersen, 'Belsen and a British Broadcasting Icon', *Holocaust Studies*, 13:1 (2007), 19-43.

Gordon Walker was unable to publish his greatest scoop – the fact that the leadership of the relief effort had been woefully inadequate. I showed how he confided to a private portion of his report – ‘the following not for publication’ – the fact that ‘there was no person *in the camp* who was of high enough authority to take decisions and to put in his requests to the proper authorities.’ That lives were lost through delays is now well understood, but Gordon Walker withheld the information from his broadcast account – highlighting the dilemma of the war reporter under official command. In short, the chapter drew attention to this senior BBC radio specialist who knew the power of his medium, and got close to the truth of what had happened both at Belsen, and in other camps, but was constrained in what he could say.

The second half of the chapter deals with Leonard Cottrell’s 1946 radio play *The Man from Belsen*. This was an hour-long dramatic reconstruction of the days shortly before the camp was liberated, with background narration from a rare British survivor of Belsen, Jerseyman Harold Le Druillenec. It focused on a small group of inmates, as they struggled to survive the starvation and disease that had spread through the camp in the spring of 1945. It was broadcast on the Home Service on 12 April 1946 – three days before the first anniversary of the arrival in Belsen of British troops. Files at the BBC Written Archives enabled me to describe the exact circumstances of the live recording in Studio 8 at Bush House, and how the production team secured some of the best talents of the day – including the distinguished composer William Alwyn to write the background music and the actor Valentine Dyall as a member of the cast.

Radio drama during the ‘golden age of wireless’ has largely tended to be the province of literary and media historians. Hugh Chignell’s *British Radio Drama 1945-1963* deals with the period after the Second World War, while John Drakakis’s *British Radio Drama* considers the output of playwrights from Louis MacNeice in the 1940s through to the 1970s from a mainly

literary perspective.⁵⁶ Chignell usefully outlines the challenges of researching the medium: recordings are rare and difficult to find and even significant works by major writers were not always retained. At the same time, newly-digitised material emerging from the BBC archives means that there is increasing scope to investigate this area.⁵⁷

The Man from Belsen was produced from within the BBC's Drama Department, presided over by Val Gielgud, under whose direction, as Drakakis has shown, 'during the period 1931-1941 (the) production of radio plays increased some seven-fold'.⁵⁸ Alex Goody's 2018 article, 'BBC features, radio voices and the propaganda of war, 1939-1941', explored this phenomenon but also the limitations of war-related programmes, with an analysis of the series *The Shadow of the Swastika* and the feature *Narvik*. While the former gave British listeners a solid introduction to the Nazi regime and its history, and was considered a success, *Narvik* ran into difficulties when the wife of one of the naval captains featured complained that it was 'unpardonable' to impersonate 'the living and the dead'. Her protest caused the BBC to follow a more cautious line with its dramatisations.⁵⁹ More recently James Jordan has drawn attention to *I am a Jew* (1940) and *No Luggage, No Return* (1943) – glimpses into the BBC's attempts to address the

⁵⁶ John V. Pavlik, *Masterful Stories: Lessons from Golden Age Radio* (New York: Routledge, 2017) and *British Radio Drama*, ed. by John Drakakis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁵⁷ For an account of the challenges of the five-year project, *Connected Histories of the BBC*, see John Mullen and David Hendy, 'Interview with David Hendy: Writing an Official History of the BBC in 2020', in *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* (online), XXVI-1 (2020). <https://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/7628> [accessed 2 March 2021]

⁵⁸ Drakakis, *British Radio Drama*, p.7.

⁵⁹ Alex Goody, 'BBC Features, Radio Voices and the Propaganda of War, 1939-1941', *Media History*, 24.2 (2018), 194-211. See also Alex Goody, 'Radio at Home : BBC Drama and the Domestic Listener, 1935-1942', *Modernist Cultures*, 10.1 (2015), 62-82.

persecution of the Jews in dramatized form. As Jordan shows, such efforts, though rare, could be chillingly well-informed.⁶⁰

In examining the origins and production of *The Man from Belsen*, I added to the understanding of the power of war-themed radio drama and showed how, at a very early point in the piecing together of the story of Nazi persecution, the BBC's drama team was able to bring one survivor's account of his time in three concentration camps into the homes of BBC listeners. There has been much analysis of how the story of the opening-up and relief of Belsen was packaged for British consumption, and of the misconceptions that have been perpetuated by this early effort.⁶¹ Several scholars have looked at the screening of newsreels in cinemas and how they conveyed Belsen to the British public: footage of the emaciated camp inmates remained indelibly lodged in viewers' minds and the power of this visual record has been the subject of a number of academic studies. Little though has appeared on the radio aspects of the reporting of the uncovering of Nazi concentration camps and in this respect my essay broke new ground.

The two-part 'What Wireless Listeners Learned' thus usefully brought to light two reflective, analytical but hitherto unexamined broadcast items, adding to historians' understanding of how the British public consumed the Belsen story. My contribution to scholarship was to show how – despite being the product of a BBC that was heavily controlled by the Ministry of Information, and constrained by wider official expectations – the creators of

⁶⁰ James Jordan, 'Beyond the Cesspit Beneath: The BBC and the Holocaust', in Lawson and Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*, pp. 243-260.

⁶¹ See 'Approaching Belsen: an Introduction', in *Belsen in History and Memory*, ed. by Joanne Reilly, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner and Colin Richmond (London: Frank Cass, 1997). For the filming of the camp, see Toby Haggith, 'The Filming of the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen and its Impact on the Understanding of the Holocaust', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 12:1-2 (2006), 89-122.

both productions did what they could, within the constraints of the time, to provide informed comment on the phenomenon of the Nazi concentration camp.⁶²

In 2009 I wrote an essay, '**A Child Survives in Drohobycz**', about the Holocaust survivor Alicia Melamed Adams, from whom the museum had acquired two paintings for its collection.⁶³ As a teenager Melamed Adams had lived through the Soviet and then Nazi occupations of Drohobycz, a town in Galicia, and was the only one of her family to survive. Through interviews and written sources, I was able to provide context to her paintings, write her memories into the wider story of post-war survival and examine the role that creativity can play in survivors' lives.

The extreme nature of the Nazi crimes in Galicia was brought to prominence in 2018 in Omer Bartov's *Anatomy of a Genocide: the Life and Death of a Town called Buczacz* (the home town of his mother). Drohobycz, where Melamed Adams's family lived, is nearly 200 km south west of Buczacz, but the experience of the two towns was similar.⁶⁴ Where I was using the testimony of just one survivor, Bartov, over a three-decade research project, found several dozen living witnesses to the town's wartime history, and was able to dissect how Ukrainians, Poles and Jews reacted to each occupation and the recriminatory activity that was unleashed as

⁶² In 2018 Dan Stone, Royal Holloway University of London, instigated and provided the commentary to a reading by actors of Alan Burgess's 1950 BBC radio play, *The Greatest Detective Story in History*, about the work of the International Tracing Service (ITS) – an insight into how radio plays can be revived and find new audiences. In focussing on BBC history I entered an area which I would later pursue with an AHRC Network to open up understanding of the archive of transcripts of the BBC Monitoring Service. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/listening-to-the-world-bbc-monitoring-collection-ahrc-research-network>

⁶³ 'A Child Survives in Drohobycz', in *Survivors of Nazi Persecution in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle*, Volume 2, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett, David Cesarani, Jessica Reinisch, and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), pp. 281-302.

⁶⁴ Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: the Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018). Other studies of the region include Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44* (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's, 2000) and *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, ed. by Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008). For the specifics of Jewish women in hiding in Galicia see Natalia Aleksion, 'Gender and the Daily lives of Jews in Hiding in Eastern Galicia', *Nashim: a Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, 27 (2014), 38-61.

a result. His account gives a full, intimate story of the nature of the occupations of Galicia, and how the casual murder of Jews there became routine to the point that summary executions on the streets were a regular occurrence.

My article shed light on one individual's experience in a town in the same region whose story is little known, as so few Jewish people from there survived. I made several visits to Melamed-Adams's studio in Muswell Hill, and, with the aid of existing testimony, photograph albums and books, and further interviews, pieced together her story. Her collection of personal memorabilia is fascinating (there are 1960s photographs of her with fellow artists including the sculptor Henry Moore) but also horrific (books and articles that have been written about the fate of the Jewish population of Galicia). Press cuttings gave insights into the cultural scene of St Martin's School of Art in the 1960s, and how Melamed Adams's own artworks, expressing the loss of her family, were received at that time. A running theme is the isolation she experienced, both while under threat of being hunted down and killed in Drohobycz and later, at St Martin's, where she felt an outsider, unable to communicate what she had been through.

Melamed Adams survived because the son of a Jewish tailor, whose work for the Nazis protected his family, fell for her. Her mother literally pushed the fifteen-year-old Alicia into his care at a critical moment – shortly before she and her husband were taken away and shot. Their daughter's life was saved, but there was a heavy price to pay. 'I wanted my mother. I didn't want a lover', Melamed Adams recalled. Bartov in his study of Bucacz wrote of the phenomenon of parents saving their young daughters in the way Alicia's did, despite knowing the likely consequences.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, p. 246. See also Zoe Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 76-78.

There is a well-developed literature relating to Jewish artists who portrayed the Holocaust, Charlotte Salomon, Samuel Bak and Felix Nussbaum being the most notable, but there are well-documented collections by many more artists in Yad Vashem, Jerusalem and the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw.⁶⁶ There has been little effort however to research and write up the histories of the small number of survivors who made their homes in the UK after the war and who became artists, and in this respect my chapter fills a gap.⁶⁷ It contributes to scholarship through investigating the life and post-war difficulties encountered by a young woman who survived – greatly against the odds – in a region notorious for the ferocity of the Nazi occupation, and who found a way to express her trauma through her art. At the same time I was able to show something of the wider picture for survivors who made their homes in London, where the fact that there had been no occupation made their experience particularly difficult for others to grasp.

⁶⁶ See for example <https://www.yadvashem.org/museum/museum-complex/art/articles/virtues-of-memory.html> and <https://www.yadvashem.org/museum/museum-complex/art/articles.html> [accessed 2 March 2021]

⁶⁷ For refugee artists in the UK see *Insiders/Outsiders: Refugees from Nazi Europe and their Contribution to British Visual Culture*, ed. by Monica Bohm-Duchen (London: Lund Humphries, 2019) although Melamed Adams is not included in this. There is mention of her however in the catalogue to the exhibition *Unspeakable: the Artist as Witness to the Holocaust* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2009). Melamed-Adams's paintings achieved wider dissemination once two examples were owned by the IWM and discoverable online by picture researchers, resulting in 'Two Frightened Children' and 'The Parting' appearing on book covers, including Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and two volumes of the 'Beyond Camps and Forced Labour' conference series.

4 Addressing the history of empire

In the summer of 2020 the Black Lives Matter movement brought to the fore the sense of cultural alienation felt by people of colour in the UK, and the notion of ‘decolonising our museums’ has gained considerable traction since that time. My 2011 paper ‘The Imperial War Museum’s collections and multi-cultural Britain: use, challenges, possibilities’ was written nearly a decade before and needs to be placed in the year it was written.⁶⁸ At that point, depicting the story of empire from the perspective of those colonised had started, but still had – and still has – a long way to go.

Neil MacGregor’s 2010 BBC Radio Four series *A History of the World in 100 Objects* was one of the first major broadcast outputs to address collections with contested meanings and to include stories of the misunderstandings that can take place ‘when different worlds collide’. MacGregor’s series showed how objects in museums, discussed and interpreted, can ignite our interest and move us towards a more informed understanding of Britain’s colonial past. More recently, in 2019, Richard Sandell observed how ‘museums designed to present an aura of the glory of our imperialist past are, at last, commissioning artists as activists inside their buildings to respond to their collections’.⁶⁹ In October 2020 Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, called for museums to ‘provide a civic space, in which all can feel ownership’ and involving as many voices

⁶⁸ ‘The Imperial War Museum’s Collections and Multi-Cultural Britain: Uses, Challenges, Possibilities’ in *Identité et Diversité: Créations, Discours, Représentations*, ed. by Anne-Marie Motard (Montpellier: Presse Universitaire de la Méditerranée, 2013), pp. 193-210.

⁶⁹ Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell, *Museum Activism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 105. There is now a fast-developing literature calling for a more inclusive approach to curating history within the museum space. See for example John Giblin, Imma Ramos and Nikki Grout, ‘Dismantling the Master’s House: Thoughts on Representing Empire and Decolonising Museums and Public Spaces in Practice: an Introduction’, *Third Text* (2019), 33:4-5, 471-486; and Sara Wajid and Rachael Minott, ‘Detoxing and Decolonising Museums’, in *Museum Activism*, ed. by Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp. 25–35. Wajid founded Museum Detox - see <https://www.museumdetox.org/>

as possible in discussion of contested pasts.⁷⁰ Museums and archives are today establishing partnerships with theatre companies and other creative practitioners to give voice to the under-researched stories within their collections.⁷¹

My paper thus appeared at the start of a decade which would see a transformation of attitudes within museums and archives, an acknowledgement of the fact that museums are not neutral in how they present the past, and a fuller acceptance of the dynamic role they can play in making the remembrance and study of Britain's past more inclusive. I gave an embryonic version of the paper at a conference in Montpellier in November 2010, which brought French and British academics together to look at how both countries were engaging with their colonial pasts. I gave an overview of how the UK museum sector had addressed 'the legacy of Empire' up to that year, highlighting the V&A's ground-breaking 2010 conference 'From the Margins to the Core', and reviewing the IWM's steps towards properly representing this history and what the future might hold. At the IWM a notable contribution had been the co-curated anniversary exhibition *From War to Windrush* (2008). I also highlighted the IWM's 1986 art exhibition *The Call of Empire: Portrayals of African, Asian and Arab peoples in the Second World War*. These two examples had been important steps forward. It was clear though that the entrenched habit at the IWM of viewing history from the British perspective had tended to suppress the telling of the story as experienced in the former colonies, and I considered what a more balanced approach might involve. Listening to Martin Plaut's BBC World Service 2009 documentary 'Africa's Forgotten Soldiers' prompted me to look at examples of activism which were clamped down on by the colonial authorities – an example being Wallace Johnson, the Sierra Leonean

⁷⁰ Tristram Hunt, 'How Museums Can Help End the Culture Wars', *Prospect*, November 2020. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/how-museums-can-help-end-the-culture-wars> [accessed 2 March 2021]

⁷¹ See for example <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/loyalty-and-dissent-script-collection.pdf> [accessed 2 March 2021]

activist imprisoned by the British on the outbreak of the Second World War, though many more could have been given.

The fact that the essay was published in a French academic work meant that it reached a Francophone audience rather than a British one.⁷² The essay fed into activity within the IWM however when, in 2012, I led an AHRC-funded project *Whose Remembrance?* which looked at the role of colonial troops in the two world wars and how far the descendants of those people were familiar with this story.⁷³ This brought the museum into useful dialogue with academics who had worked on issues of cultural identity and appropriation – an important step in the museum’s progression towards understanding the need for a more inclusive approach.⁷⁴ A film about the project – which highlighted the richness of the IWM’s collections in this area, and the societal benefits of a better understanding of this subject – was widely disseminated through UK public libraries, and also used by the Heritage Lottery Fund to train their staff about the opportunities during the First World War Centenary for BAME communities to seek funding for exhibition and similar projects.

⁷² <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/12193> ‘Suzanne Bardgett, responsable de la recherche à l’*Impérial War Museum* de Londres, se pose la question de l’apport possible des musées historiques à la diversité culturelle en Grande-Bretagne en prenant l’exemple des troupes coloniales de l’Empire britannique. Elle salue les efforts récents qui ont contribué à recouvrir la mémoire de ces troupes, mais déplore le peu d’informations existantes sur l’impact identitaire de la guerre et du déracinement.’ [accessed 2 March 2021].

⁷³ See <https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/whose-remembrance> [accessed 2 March 2021]. Three experts from different ethnic backgrounds were embedded in the IWM archive, looking critically at how easy the catalogues were to interrogate and how they and other contextualising information might be improved. Screenings of an AHRC-supported film about the *Whose Remembrance?* project in public libraries around London and at IWM North in Manchester resulted in dialogue between the project team and members of the public interested to understand their own family stories, and how these histories can – with effort – be excavated. The *Whose Remembrance?* film can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsJbiQ5R5tI> [accessed 2 March 2021]

⁷⁴ This process continues, the most recent and ongoing project being an AHRC Towards a National Collection project for which IWM is working with Tate. See <https://www.nationalcollection.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/Provisional%20Semantics.pdf> [accessed 2 March 2021]

In 2014 I wrote ‘**A Mutual Fascination**’ – an article published in *History Today* about the Indian troops’ relations with civilians in Brighton during the First World War. The article originated as an academic paper (‘Why Were the Indian Wounded locked up? Race, Fear and Officialdom in Sussex, 1915’) given at an international conference at the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, in October 2014, marking the centenary of the arrival of Indian troops in France and Belgium.⁷⁵ The Royal Pavilion in Brighton had in 1914 been converted into a hospital for Indian soldiers wounded on the Western Front, and there was much press attention on the presence of the Indian troops in this well-known, ‘exotic’ venue. My paper looked at how the people of Brighton reacted to the arrival of 12,000 Indian soldiers in their town in December 1914 and how the warm rapport which developed between the Indians and the women in the town irritated the authorities, who effectively locked the Indians up the following February. No-one had looked at the gender aspect in detail and a variety of sources shed new light on how the situation had soured. There had clearly been a class issue and reading both contemporary accounts of what Brighton would have symbolised to elite military minds at that time and also about past sexual scandals within India, the reasons for the military’s nervousness became clear.

Throughout the writing of the piece I was aware of the contributions of scholars who had looked closely at interracial encounters during the First World War, notably Alison Fell’s chapter on the representation of colonial troops in nursing memoirs and Radhika Singha’s studies of the Indian Labour Corps.⁷⁶ Their focus on the intimate detail of encounters between

⁷⁵ Santanu Das, who had participated in the *Whose Remembrance?* project, led the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) project *Cultural Change in the Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War* from 2013-2016. This brought together academics in four countries – Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and the UK to investigate the encounters that took place during the First World War between people of different nationalities and ethnicities in prisoner of war camps, hospitals, training camps and contact zones. For an overview of this HERA project see <http://sourcebook.cegcproject.eu/introduction/> [accessed 2 March 2021].

⁷⁶ Alison Fell, ‘Nursing the Other: the Representation of Colonial Troops in French and British First World War Nursing Memoirs’, in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. by Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge

colonial troops and nurses or recruiting officers was inspiring, showing as it did how the minute examination of correspondence can illuminate the nature of human interactions, both those which were unequal and exploitative and those which caught moments of deep connection.

By consulting newspaper accounts and histories of both Brighton and of earlier sexual scandals – I was able to probe a number of reasons for the curtailment of the Indians’ freedom – in particular the military elite’s snobbish disdain for a town they associated with ‘day-trippers’ and the acute nervousness at the thought of repeating in Brighton the liaisons with French women that had developed when the Indians had been in Marseilles. I was able to piece together why the military had reacted so punitively, adding to our understanding of why this particular cultural encounter – begun with such enthusiasm – foundered amid misunderstanding and suspicion.⁷⁷ The British authorities had been eager to use the Indian presence for their own ends, but only if the story that emerged enhanced the imperial project. I thus used a micro-historical approach to show how the unexpected ‘mutual fascination’ threatened to undermine the long-presumed racial supremacy of the British over the Indians, and how the military back-tracked on a propaganda initiative which had taken an unwanted turn.

University Press, 2011), pp. 158-175; and in the same volume Radhika Singha, ‘The Recruiter’s Eye on the Primitive: to France in the Indian Labour Corps and back 1917-1918’, pp. 199-221.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of the Indians’ experiences in Brighton see Santanu Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 157-164 and Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 65-98.

5 War artists and the city

Wartime London in Paintings tells the story of how works of art commissioned or purchased by the War Artists Advisory Committee produced their own distinctive record of London during the Second World War. It brought a number of paintings to light that had not previously been published, adding to the visual history of London at that time. It is useful to consider how earlier books about the cultural history of London during the Second World War examined the work acquired by the WAAC. Robert Hewison's *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945* (1977) has a chapter on art, but he is rather disparaging about the WAAC's output, feeling that the fact that this was 'official art somehow crept into the pictures themselves' and that they consequently had, in his view, a 'static quality'.⁷⁸ Andrew Sinclair's *War Like a Wasp: The Lost Decade of the Forties* (1989) is concerned mainly to capture the intensity of life in Fitzrovia and Soho. *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War* by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams (1994) has a chapter on how Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland were shaped by the war, but the focus is limited to these three.⁷⁹

Wartime London in Paintings followed a different path in highlighting the works of forty-two artists who painted scenes of London, many of whose names are scarcely known today. These painters were not the cultural elite of the time, nor did they congregate in the pubs of Fitzrovia, but rather got on with life under the duress of wartime conditions. Nearly all had had art-school training, and some were working as book illustrators, mural painters or stage-set designers. Some, like Leonard Rosoman, were determined to become artists, but finding the

⁷⁸ Robert Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 142-3.

⁷⁹ Andrew Sinclair, *War Like a Wasp: the Lost Decade of the Forties* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) and Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War* (London: Constable, 1994). For detailed accounts of the work of the War Artists Advisory Committee see Susan and Meirion Harries, *The War Artists* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983) and Foss, *War Paint* (2007).

path hard. Several had positions in London art schools – a profession which became precarious when, on the outbreak of war, many of these schools moved out of the capital.

Seven of the artists in the book are women – reflecting the higher proportion of female artists given official opportunities than during the First World War.⁸⁰ I included four paintings by Frances Macdonald – today virtually unknown but in her twenties given several commissions, including one to record the construction in the London docks of the top secret Mulberry Harbours. Several reviews of the book mentioned that it highlights the work of a number of women artists.⁸¹

For the captions, the richest source was the WAAC correspondence held by the IWM, which documents how each painting was acquired, together with a number of private papers held by the Tate archive, and nearly 150 books on a whole variety of topics. I wove into the book several quotes from William Sansom's *Westminster in War* (1947), which has detailed observations on how London was physically changed by the many air raid precautions and the bombing. Sansom had early access to Westminster's archives and knew some of the artists. I was able to track down the two grandsons of E.M.O'R. Dickey, the Secretary of the WAAC, who had had such a lasting impact on the IWM's art collection and I corresponded with the daughter of one of Bernard Hailstone's sitters, Christian Vlasto, one of the all-female canal boat crews so essential to the wartime economy. Vlasto had married the Pakistani writer Ghulam Abbas and gone to live in his country after the war, and, by contacting her daughter, Mariam Shera, in Karachi, I was able to read Vlasto's unpublished account of her life, including how she

⁸⁰ See Kathleen Palmer, *Women War Artists* (London: Imperial War Museums, 2011).

⁸¹ Elizabeth Fullerton, 'Blitz Spirit Brought to Life', *Art Quarterly* (Summer 2020), 55; 'The War of Art', *History Today*, 70:7 (2020), 103; and Marina Vaizey, 'Wartime London Explored in Paintings', *Artlyst*, July 2020 <https://www.artlyst.com/reviews/wartime-london-explored-paintings-marina-vaizey/> [accessed 2 March 2021].

negotiated the route into London ‘down dark watery lanes’.⁸² The research brought me into close contact with the fabric of the city. I took riverboats up the Thames to see the undersides of bridges painted by Edgar Platt, and walked around the dense area of streets around St Paul’s where several of the painters found rich material.

I addressed how the WAAC negotiated the delicate territory of truth-telling about the scale of suffering by the civilian population of London. I showed how Dickey, who was answerable to the Ministry of Information, wanted by instinct to give the artists a free hand in how they depicted the war, but that pressures came from above. A letter he wrote to Kenneth Clark, reproduced in the book, illustrates this: Edward Ardizzone’s rendition of Londoners in shelters had evidently annoyed the Minister of Health who had wanted scenes of ‘junketing’. Dickey’s acerbic words show that he and Clark understood that, with civilian morale a constant concern, there was a delicate path to be trodden. Dickey warned his friend Ethel Gabain not to make her picture ‘a gloomy one’ and asked John Piper not to use the word ‘Devastation’ – the title of one of Graham Sutherland’s works – in a British Council publication Piper was writing. In short the WAAC correspondence reveals the circumspect approach of the Committee – in theory given a free rein to commission as they liked, but acutely aware of the need not to annoy their government superiors.⁸³ I was not the first researcher to examine this aspect, but I was the first to look in detail at its ramifications specifically within the capital, where the relentless bombing was a daily challenge to Londoners’ morale.

My book also highlighted a missing Carel Weight painting – destroyed in the Blitz.

Weight described the work in a letter to Dickey:

⁸² A copy of Christian Vlasto’s memoir is now held by the IWM: IWM Documents, SUP 126.

⁸³ IWM WAAC correspondence, GP/55/46, E.M.O’R. Dickey to Ethel Gabain, 20 September 1940.

The subject of my picture is a shelter in the Lewisham district. I came upon it one warm moonlight, late summer evening. The women were sitting outside on chairs, peacefully knitting and gossiping with the men. Here were people who had suffered much finding relaxation under war conditions. In contrast were the strident cries of the children not yet put to bed and the ever restless swinging of searchlights in the sky.⁸⁴

The loss of the painting in 1941 was a critical one, both as a record and in the light of Weight's later reputation.

These artists given access to secret enterprises, control rooms and factories were flattered to be assigned such work, and, by bringing their works to light, I showed the degree of trust placed in them – in return for providing an 'acceptable' record, one that celebrated the ingenuity deployed by the government and military planners. The tone of the works is a largely empathetic one, very noticeably in those paintings depicting Londoners who had nowhere but the tube stations to shelter or who had to resort to Rest Centres if bombed out. The depiction of canteens and concerts in shelters underlines the authorities' wish to celebrate their progressive approach to Londoners' welfare.

In short my contribution was to investigate – from a historical, rather than art critical perspective – how a group of artists responded to their brief to depict scenes of war-torn London. The paintings, taken as a whole, reveal to us a new visual history of London at a critical time in its history, something which Iain Sinclair, on reading the book, described as a 'portal into a visionary and vanishing past'.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ IWM WAAC correspondence, GP/55/156 Caryl Weight to E.M.O'R. Dickey, 2 November 1941.

⁸⁵ Suzanne Bardgett, *Wartime London in Paintings* (London: IWM, 2020), p.189.

6 Concluding thoughts

The discipline of history has provided a crucial underpinning in all my work. Museums take on a lot of responsibility when they package and interpret the past, and historical skills are vital for such work – from collecting artefacts to constructing narratives. Pressures to simplify can come from colleagues whose role it is to advocate for accessibility – all national museums and indeed the cultural sector more widely have moved in this direction in the last quarter century. It is the historians who have the knowledge to push back and assert the need for a watertight approach, be that through extra text to achieve balance or a more considered choice of photograph or artefact. The mantra ‘do-not-let-design-considerations-compromise-the-narrative’ was frequently cited during the Holocaust Exhibition’s making and the exhibition was the better for it. Tensions can also arise with distressing subject matter, particularly when new or difficult territory is being negotiated. The first essay illuminates how the Holocaust Exhibition challenged the IWM’s earlier identity and contributed to its modernisation – a development which prompted a number of academics to ask questions about the IWM’s often vexed ‘politics of progress’.

War and genocide and how they have been documented or portrayed is a highly charged field and I have been inspired by the exceptional sense of purpose of academics and museum practitioners working in these fields and have looked to them, as well as to my own IWM colleagues, since I first began working in this area in the mid-1990s, for discussion and support.⁸⁶ Working on how officially commissioned artists depicted wartime London marked a return to the British home front after a long immersion in the locations and events of twentieth-century genocide. The people depicted in *Wartime London in Paintings* were facing a conflict in

⁸⁶ My colleagues at the IWM, the staff of the Wiener Holocaust Library, Royal Holloway University of London and the academics involved in the ‘Beyond Camps and Forced Labour’ conference are prominent in this list, as are the historians and educators at the Srebrenica Memorial Room in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

which entire families might be obliterated on one night, but they were not trapped in totalitarian states bent on genocidal destruction, and in this respect the work feels very different.

My writing can be said to be reflective of the intersection of memory politics and museum practice, while at the same time investigative of the micro-histories which increasingly over the past twenty years have enriched our understanding of the broader sweep of history. I have been closely involved in ground-breaking efforts by the IWM to modernise and adapt its identity to meet the expectations of new audiences and have taken the opportunity where possible to publish about these activities, as well as to research related historical episodes. A whole variety of experiences – the practical work of creating exhibitions, being involved in debates that arise from this process, getting to know survivors of wars and genocides, talking to curator colleagues, devising PhD studentships and organising seminars and conferences – all these activities have enriched my development as a historian.

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Appendix

Full bibliography of all works published by the candidate and curriculum vitae

1 Books and edited journals

Imperial War Museum Review, Volumes 1-8, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett and Peter Simkins (London: Imperial War Museum, 1986-1994)

Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives, ed. by David Cesarani and Suzanne Bardgett (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006)

Survivors of Nazi Persecution in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle, Vol 1, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett, David Cesarani, Jessica Reinisch, and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010)

Justice, Politics and Memory in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle, Vol 2, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett, David Cesarani, Jessica Reinisch, and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011)

Wartime London in Paintings (London: IWM, 2020)

Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Proceedings of the Sixth Beyond Camps and Forced Labour Conference, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett, Christine Schmidt and Dan Stone (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

2 Chapters, articles, papers and reviews

'Henry Lamb and the First World War', in *Imperial War Museum Review*, 5, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett and Peter Simkins (1990), 42-57. Abridged version published in *The Independent Magazine* (May 1990), pp. 44-47

"'No Braver Companion...No Finer Reporter": the Writings of A.B.Austin, *Daily Herald* War Correspondent, 1940-1943', in *Imperial War Museum Review*, 6, ed. by Suzanne Bardgett and Peter Simkins, (1991), 16-30

'Dieppe: a Disaster Beyond Words', *Financial Times's FT Weekend* (August 1992), pp. i and vi

'A Housing Estate on the Way to Auschwitz', *The Independent* (January 1995), p. 13

'The Genesis and Development of the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition Project', *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 7.3 (Winter 1998), 28-37

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'The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961', in *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust*, ed. by David Cesarani (Routledge: Abingdon, 2005), pp. 146-156

Review of *Auschwitz: the Nazis and the Final Solution* (BBC six-part documentary series), *Journal of Oral History*, 33.2 (Autumn 2005)

'Film and the Making of the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition', in *The Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representation in Film and Television since 1933*, ed. by Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), pp. 19-25

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'Tradition and Change at the Imperial War Museum', in *National Memory and European Identity* (proceedings of 'European national monuments in the 21st century' academic colloquy) (Leipzig: Museum of City History Leipzig, 2005)

'What Wireless Listeners Learned: Some Lesser-known BBC Broadcasts about Belsen', in *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. by David Cesarani and Suzanne Bardgett (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 123-136

'Belsen and the BBC: What Wireless Listeners Learned', adapted version of above, *History Today*, 56.8 (2006), 30-37

'Remembering Srebrenica', *History Today*, 57.11 (2007), 52-53

'Der Verwendung von historischen Film-und Fotoaufnahmen in der Holocaust-Ausstellung des Imperial War Museum London' [The use of historical film and photography in the Holocaust Exhibition of the Imperial War Museum London], in Rainer Schulze und Wilfried Wiedemann, eds, *In AugenZeugen: Fotos, Filme und Zeitzeugenberichte in der neuen Dauerausstellung der Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen* (Eye-Witnessing: Photos, Films and Contemporary Testimony in the New Permanent Exhibition of the Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen), Celle: Stiftung Niedersächsische Gedenkstätten (2007)

'Bergen Belsen's Information Centre', *History Today*, 58.1 (2008), 4-5

Review of Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Bloomsbury, 2007), *Journal of Oral History*, 36.2 (Autumn 2008)

'Object Lessons', *Museums Journal*, June 2010, 22-27

The Holocaust Exhibition: Ten Years On, Imperial War Museum, 2010

'A Child Survives in Drohobycz' in *Survivors of Nazi Persecution in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle*, Vol 2, ed. by David Cesarani, Suzanne Bardgett, Jessica Reinisch and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (Edgware: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), pp. 281-302

'The Material Culture of Persecution: Collecting for the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum', in *Extreme Collecting: Challenging Practices for 21st Century Museums*, ed. by Graeme Were and J.C.H. King (London: Bergahn, 2012), pp. 19-36

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'Coaling, 1917 by James McBey', *The Art Newspaper*, 258 (June 2014), 7

'A Mutual Fascination', *History Today*, 65.3 (2015), 41-47

'David Cesarani and the Holocaust Exhibition at Imperial War Museum London', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 21.4 (2015), 207-214

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With Friedericke Kind-Kovacs and Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, 'The Act of Listening: Radio Monitoring 1930-1990', in Special Issue 'Transnational Radio Monitoring', *Media History*, 25.4 (2019), 391-399

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'A Passage to India: India's First World War Experience as Seen Through Personal Archives', review of Santanu Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), *History Today*, 69.4 (2019), 103

2019 to present: Series Editor with Ben Barkow of 'The Holocaust and its Contexts', Palgrave Macmillan: book series which aims to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Holocaust and related issues in contemporary society, politics and culture

'The Invisible', review of Radhika Singha, *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914-1921*, (London: Hurst, 2020), *History Today*, 71.4 (2021), 101

3 Obituaries and forewords

Obituary of Italian partisan and founder of Brescia-based Second World War archive, Luigi Micheletti, *The Independent*, January 1995

Obituary of Cyril McCann, former prisoner of war and IWM model maker, *Daily Telegraph*, 26 December 2011

Obituary of Premysl Dobias, political opponent of Nazi regime and survivor of Mauthausen, *Daily Telegraph*, May 2012

Foreword to Felix Weinberg, *Boy 30529: A Memoir* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. ix-xii

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Foreword to Kate Ottevanger, *Life and Love in Nazi Prague: Letters From an Occupied City* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. ix-x

4 Blog posts and edited AHRC-funded research project websites

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<https://www.iwm.org.uk/blog/research/2015/08/dissecting-warsaws-new-museum-of-polish-jewish-history> [accessed 1 March 2021]

'The Study of History and the Higher Education Sector at the Imperial War Museum', in *The Royal Historical Society Newsletter* (October 2015)

'C.H.H. Burleigh, Interior of the Pavilion, Brighton: Indian Army Wounded', short article about an oil painting in the IWM for the sourcebook produced by the HERA project 'Cultural Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict: Colonials, Neutrals and Belligerents during the First World War' (September 2016). <http://sourcebook.cegcproject.eu/items/show/213?query=brighton> [accessed 1 March 2021]

Whose Remembrance?, ed. for webpages of AHRC-funded Connected Communities project looking at the state of awareness of the role of colonial troops and labourers in the two world wars for which SB was Principal Investigator, 2012-2013:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/whose-remembrance> [accessed 1 March 2021]

Listening to the World, ed. for webpages of AHRC-funded International Network on the BBC Monitoring Service's collection for which SB was Principal Investigator, 2015-2016:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/listening-to-the-world-bbc-monitoring-collection-ahrc-research-network> [accessed 1 March 2021]

Curriculum vitae

Present and past appointments

- 2010-present Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, Imperial War Museums
- Leading an initiative for the long-term invigoration of the IWM through engaging strategically with the Higher Education sector, contributing to the work of the IWM Institute for the Public Understanding of Conflict and overseeing measures which support IWM staff's academic development.
- Principal Investigator for three successive Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships from AHRC, giving IWM three PhD studentships each year from 2016 – 2022. <https://ahrc.ukri.org/skills/phdstudents/collaborative-doctoral-partnerships-scheme/>
- Under that scheme has co-supervised four AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) Collaborative Doctoral Award PhD studentships. Co-supervising fifth collaborative PhD (on encounters between British soldiers and Italian civilians 1943 to 1946).
- Co-Investigator on AHRC-funded Network (international) *UNTV in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (2019-2021) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/filming-for-peace>
- Principal Investigator on AHRC-funded Network (international) *Listening to the World: the BBC Monitoring Collection* (2015-16) <http://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/listening-to-the-world-bbc-monitoring-collection-ahrc-research-network>
- IWM lead as Associate Partner in HERA project led by King's College London *Colonial Exchange in a Time of Global Conflict* (2014-2016)
- Principal Investigator for AHRC-funded Connected Communities project *Whose Remembrance?* (2012) and producer of AHRC-supported film of same name (2013). <http://www.iwm.org.uk/research/research-projects/whose-remembrance>
- Led Imperial War Museums' application for Independent Research Organisation status (awarded 2011)
- 2004-07 Consultant Project Director for Srebrenica Memorial Room, Potočari, Bosnia Hercegovina (p/t secondment). Facilitated creation by mainly Bosnian team of a museum-style memorial space funded by Foreign & Commonwealth Office, and Dutch Foreign Ministry.
- 1995-2010 Project Director for *The Holocaust Exhibition* (2000) and *Crimes against Humanity: an Exploration of Genocide and Ethnic Violence* (2002). Head of Department of Holocaust and Genocide History from 2008-2010, representing the interests of both exhibitions and continuing the Holocaust Exhibition's acquisitions drive.

- 1983-1995 Special Assistant Directing Staff, IWM: undertook a variety of tasks in support of IWM's Directorate, including being member of IWM's then Redevelopment Working Group.
- 1986-95 While in the above post, established and co-edited the *Imperial War Museum Review*, annual journal of collections-focussed articles by IWM staff.
- 1976-1983 Research Assistant, Department of Education and Publications, IWM.

Academic and advisory positions (since 2003)

Trustee, Freud Museum, 2018-present

Co-Chair of Independent Research Organisations Consortium, 2015-2020

One of four vice-presidents of the Royal Historical Society (2015-2017). Chair of the RHS's Research Support Committee (2015). One of three judges on the panel for the 2016 Gladstone Prize – awarded to a first book on a non-British subject. Co-Chair from autumn 2016 to the publication of its Report in October 2018 of the RHS's Race and Ethnicity Equality Working Group. <https://royalhistsoc.org/racereport/>

Member of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Peer Review College (2016-2020)

External panellist for annual Collaborative Doctoral Partnership award panel for British Library, (2015-2019)

Expert reviewer for one of the European Research Council's Horizon 2020 panels (2017)

Member of Review Panel for Kent University's History Department Research Excellence Framework submission (2016)

Member of Tate's Research Board (2014-2018)

Member of Strategic Advisory Group of the AHRC/ ESRC Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Cybersecurity (2015 to 2018)

Member of Advisory Board of Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Durham (2013-2017)

Between 2003 and 2011, member of international advisory groups and panels for several museums seeking to modernise or to create new Holocaust-related displays including the Jewish Museum Vilnius, Lithuania; the Jasenovac Memorial Museum, Croatia; and the Kazerne Dossin Holocaust Museum, Mechelen, Belgium

Founder member of organising committee of triennial international conference, 'Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: International Research into Survivors of Nazi Persecution' (2003-ongoing).

Awards

Honorary Doctorate awarded by University of Wolverhampton in recognition of contribution to research on survivors of Nazi persecution (2011)

