

**The Consumption of Heritage Centres in Ireland, with Particular  
Reference to Wicklow's Historic Gaol.**

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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# **The Consumption of Heritage Centres in Ireland with Particular Reference to Wicklow's Historic Gaol**

**T.M. Breathnach**

## **Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with the consumption of heritage centres in Ireland, and asks why and how visitors engage with the past there. To do this, it develops one heritage attraction, Wicklow's Historic Gaol, as a case study. It questions critiques of heritage visiting that see it as a retreatist, nostalgic and inauthentic way of experiencing of the past, and presents an alternative conceptualisation that acknowledges the complexity of this activity. It discusses the role that various forms of identity may play in engaging with the past and re-considers the very concept of authenticity that is at stake in such experiences. Following Selwyn (1996) and Wang (1999, 2000) this thesis suggests that visitors may use heritage attractions as a vehicle to experience an 'authenticity of self'.

In adopting Hall's (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding' model of communication, the development of the case study includes the analysis of Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a 'text', its production, consumption and the contexts which impact on both. Primary data was generated by conducting interviews with both exhibition organisers and visitors, by conducting a questionnaire survey of visitors, and by developing 'behavioural maps' of visitors' movements.

This thesis finds that preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings of the text emerge amongst visitor responses. These occur in relation to both class and cultural identities. This thesis also argues that aspects of these responses indicate that visitors seek to establish an authenticity of self both by engaging with the exhibitionary authenticities employed at the gaol, and by locating themselves in the past as it is represented there.

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## Introduction

There is no doubt that both history and heritage are important components of contemporary Irish life. These terms generate both symbolic and economic meanings. On one hand, the generation of tourism has provided the principal impetus for the emergence of a network of heritage sites and centres that interpret our history. On the other hand, differing interpretations of the past continue to be a divisive force between cultural groups here. Several visitor studies conducted in Ireland have established who visits these attractions, when they visit and how much they spend. Few, however, have considered the deeper meanings that are given to narratives encountered at heritage attractions and indeed, the act of visiting itself. This thesis aims to consider how and why visitors engage with heritage centres in Ireland. It will investigate the meanings given by visitors themselves to the act of visiting, the subjects represented and the strategies of representation that are used. It will do this by analysing the empirical data that has emerged through the study of visitors to Wicklow's Historic Gaol, a heritage attraction on Ireland's East Coast. This historic building was opened as a heritage attraction in 1998, following its transformation from a near derelict site during the course of the previous decade.

The interpretation of the past by such entities has received a significant level of academic and popular interest. The rapid development of a heritage industry in Britain during the 1980s prompted vehement criticism. The most well known of these texts, which was written by Robert Hewison (1987) and coined the very term 'heritage industry', attacked the increasingly profit-oriented agenda of those entities entrusted with the representation of the past. However, this and other similar texts that followed were simply described as 'heritage baiting' in Raphael Samuel's wide-ranging and inspirational counter argument, Theatres of Memory (1994). This argues for a deeper understanding of the contemporary fascination with the past, set in broader chronological and historiographical contexts. This thesis aims for this type of approach in understanding the particular contours of heritage visiting in an Irish context.

The same rapid increase in the number of heritage attractions to open in Ireland throughout the 1990s gave rise to considerable comment in several fields. This is to be expected given that heritage centres, and indeed the subject of heritage itself, are inter-discursive. Amongst other areas of enquiry, the growth of critical interest in tourism here also saw a focus on heritage. O'Connor and Cronin's Tourism in Ireland - A Critical Perspective (1993), Kockel's Culture, Tourism and Development: The Case of Ireland (1994) as well as his related work Landscape, Heritage and Identity: Case Studies in Irish Ethnography (1995), all included essays on heritage and heritage attractions. In a broader sociological context, essays in Peillon and Slater's Encounters in Modern Ireland (1998) and Memories of the Present (2000) also dealt with this aspect of Irish life. However, perhaps the most comprehensive critical work on heritage in

Ireland to date has been David Brett's The Construction of Heritage (1996). Despite these valuable contributions, there has been little in-depth work done on heritage visiting in Ireland – that is, work that seeks to establish the actual patterns of the consumption of heritage attractions amongst visitors in specific contexts. Although several visitor studies have been conducted here, these have mainly been connected to the tourism industry. These have been large-scale survey type studies that have aimed to generate data useful in the creation of a viable 'heritage product' within the over-all development of Ireland as a destination of cultural, and particularly heritage, tourism. Indeed, one might describe the area of critical visitor studies in Ireland as a fallow field. Therefore, this study looked to empirical works on heritage visitors in other contexts for models that would help to set the parameters within which this contribution could be set. Clearly, there is a deep contrast between the level of work being conducted in this area of research in Ireland and elsewhere, despite the significance of heritage and heritage attractions in Irish culture. This imbalance needs to be addressed if we are to understand the full import of the current emphasis on heritage here. This thesis seeks to make a contribution both to the development of a field of visitor studies in Ireland and to an existing body of research on museum visitors and tourists, but in a new context.

Something also needs to be said here about the particular difficulties encountered in producing this body of research. As indicated above, the absence of detailed, context-specific visitor studies conducted in Ireland meant that there was a consequent lack of pre-determined models in which to situate this study. Secondly, the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject of heritage and heritage visiting, meant that the questions at the heart of this research project shifted and changed as my own path of discovery through unfamiliar disciplines developed. However, these problems also made this project challenging, exciting and worthwhile.

The question at the heart of this study asks why and how we consume heritage centres in Ireland. This also involves asking:

- What is the nature of the object of consumption? That is, how should we define the concepts of 'heritage' and 'heritage centres'?
- Because heritage is related to concepts of the past, why and how is the past consumed?
- If heritage centres are largely concerned with representation, what is the nature of their representation and how does this impact on their consumption?
- What is the relationship between the production and consumption of such representations?
- What are the implications of this for our relationship with the past?

This section will now describe the structure adopted in the writing of this thesis. A brief description of the aim and content of each chapter will be given here, while a more detailed

introduction is included at the beginning of each section. Several tasks were undertaken to facilitate the development of a clear understanding of the factors described above. The thesis is structured accordingly. The first section will conduct a review of the literature that this thesis considers to be most useful in understanding heritage visiting in relation to the questions posed above. Although this thesis is principally concerned with the generation and analysis of empirical data, this process is entirely necessary in order to achieve a proper understanding of these issues. Within this section, chapter 1 will attempt to define the object of study. It will consider the meanings of the terms 'heritage' and 'heritage centre', discussing the place of the latter in the discourse of exhibitionary representation. This will establish some of the issues that impact on both their production and consumption. The themes of authenticity and identity will be found to be particularly important, and so the following two chapters are structured according to the meanings these themes have for our understanding of heritage visitors. Chapter 2 will identify two broad approaches to understanding the heritage visitor within the theme of authenticity. The first part of this chapter will consider those critiques that designate the past that is produced in heritage centres to be inauthentic. The following section seeks to provide an alternative consideration of heritage visitors that will acknowledge the possible complexity of such an experience. This involves a reconsideration of the relationship between visitors and the exhibitionary authenticities involved in heritage attractions. Our fundamental conception of the authenticity involved in such experiences is also questioned here, in line with the turn towards the concept of an 'authenticity of self' that has emerged within the critical study of tourism. This thesis also considers the theme of identity to be important in understanding how meaning is generated in the consumption of the past at heritage centres. Chapter 3 considers how concepts of class and cultural identities are useful in developing an understanding of heritage visits. Finally, these discussions of identity will be related to the previous discussions of the authenticities associated with heritage centres and their visitors. These chapters will turn to the discussions involved in "the heritage debate"; museum or media representations and audiences; tourist experiences and individual and collective memory to create two possible frameworks in which the empirical data at the centre of this thesis can be understood.

Section 2, the "Methodology", will be concerned with asking both what data is required in a study such as this, and how it should be gathered. This methodology is divided in two parts. Chapter 4 will identify a suitable methodological model for use in this study by identifying the types of visitor studies that are carried out, their purpose and the nature of the data they produce. It will focus in particular on work that has been influenced by the study of mass-media audiences, which offers the most fruitful approach to answering the questions at the centre of this thesis. Of particular relevance will be Stuart Hall's (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding' model of communication. Chapter 5 will describe how this approach has been applied in gathering data for this study. It will discuss

the choice of Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a case study. In line with the Encoding/Decoding model, it will describe the methods used to gather data pertaining to both the production (encoding) and consumption (decoding) of the gaol.

Section 3, "The Encoding and Decoding of Wicklow's Historic Gaol", is concerned with the development of the gaol as a case study of the consumption of heritage centres in Ireland. This section is structured according to the concern with the meanings attached to both the processes of encoding and decoding, and the impact of the contexts surrounding them. Chapter 6 will examine the discourses involved in production and consumption of heritage centres in Ireland. Firstly, the relationship between heritage and the tourism industry will be addressed. Secondly the place of heritage in the representation of Irish identity and the construction of collective memories will be discussed. The following chapter will consider the encoding of the gaol as a 'text', discussing the intentions of producers and the relationship between these and the issues raised in the previous chapter. It will go on to demonstrate the 'preferred' reading of the text and how this is communicated to visitors – that is, it will describe the experience that visitors are intended to have. Some of the alternative readings that may arise here will also be addressed. Finally, Chapter 8 will describe and analyse visitor responses to the gaol and the relationships between these, the preferred reading of the text and the discourses pertinent to both, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

The complexity of interpreting the past at heritage sites in Ireland is alluded to by Michael Hartnett in his poem A Visit to Castletown House. In the final stanza he writes:

I went into the calmer, gentler hall  
In the wineglassed chattering interval:  
There was a smell of rose and woodsmoke there.  
I stepped into the gentler evening air  
And saw black figures dancing on the lawn,  
*Eviction, Droit de Seigneur, Broken Bones,*  
And heard the crack of ligaments being torn  
And smelled the clinging blood on the stones<sup>1</sup>.

I hope this study can begin to shed some light on the complexity of the meanings attached to such pasts by heritage visitors themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> From, Hartnett, Michael, Selected and New Poems. Gallery Books, Oldcastle, 1994.



## **SECTION 1      REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

## **SECTION 1     REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Chapter 1     Defining Heritage**

#### **1.1     Introduction**

The principal concern of this thesis is with the consumption of heritage centres. As outlined in the introduction, the questions that inform it relate to both the motivations that underpin the act of visiting heritage centres and the meanings that arise out of the experiences and narratives that visitors encounter there. This section as a whole seeks to provide a review of the literature that surrounds these issues with a view to creating a framework in which the empirical data at the heart of this study can be understood.

The subject of heritage is relevant to several academic discourses. This is not surprising, given the ways in which it is itself inter-discursive, being rooted in economic, cultural and symbolic functions. Since the emergence of the 'heritage industry', there has been a significant critical response from those fields concerned with the subject of consumption generally and with the generation of meaning in relation to the past, places and identity. Many of these bodies of literature have offered analyses pertinent to the core interest of this thesis. These have included the arguments that surround "the heritage debate" itself; discussions that are concerned with museum or media representations and audiences; individual and collective memory and tourist experiences. Various themes have emerged in the course of analysing these sets of discourses. The strongest of these are concerned with the inter-relationships between their object of study and:

- modernity or post-modernity;
- globalisation;
- economic or cultural forces;
- a shift in understanding how meaning is made through the exchange between producer and consumer;
- The authenticities and identities associated with it.

It is the inter-relationships between heritage and these themes that will underpin the following discussion. It is useful here to re-state the questions outlined in the introduction to this thesis in relation to its aims and objectives, given that they must also guide the theoretical discussion that follows. The principal question with which this literature review is concerned is: Why and how are heritage centres consumed? In turn, this requires us to ask:

- What is the nature of the object of consumption? How should we define the concepts of 'heritage' and 'heritage centres'?
- Because heritage is related to concepts of the past, why and how is the past consumed?
- If heritage centres are largely concerned with representation, what is the nature of their representation and how does this impact on their consumption?
- What are the implications of this for our relationship with the past?

This chapter will consider the first of these questions. It asks what is heritage, what are heritage centres - that is, what meanings do these terms hold for us, as distinct for example from the related terms 'history' and 'museum'<sup>1</sup>. In order to answer this question, this section will consider what defines heritage centres as a specific cultural form in relation to the nature of their representations and how they differ from other ways of engaging with the past in an exhibitionary context. This will place them within some of the discourses that may inform both their production and consumption. Furthermore, many of the issues raised here will be pertinent to subsequent sections.

## 1.2 Defining Heritage

Heritage has become an increasingly significant and familiar term in official, academic and popular discourse. In Ireland, it is enshrined in legislation (the Heritage Act 1995), as well as having been used in the naming of Government departments at various points in the last decade (the Department of Arts, Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) and state bodies (The Heritage Council, Dúchas: The Heritage Service). The subject itself has become a component of academic courses of study (University College Dublin, University College Cork, Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology, and the related Buttimer et al, 2000) and a continuing strand of academic discussions both in Ireland (see, for example Foster, 2001; MacBride, 2001; Graham, 2001; Brett, 1996; O'Connor and Cronin, 1993) and elsewhere (Dicks, 2000; Faulkner et al, 2000; Boswell and Evans, 1999; Herbert, 1995). During the height of a public controversy over the state's siting of interpretive centres, heritage and interpretation became emotive words at both local and national levels (see O'Toole, 1992). But what exactly do we mean by it? At its most elementary, the term heritage can be simply defined as that which is inherited. This basic definition implies that in using the word heritage we are concerned with the relationship between the past and the present - in order for something to be inherited, it must have existed in a past

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter speaks of heritage attractions and museums in polaric terms because of a desire to create clarity in the discussion and also because this reflects the perception of these institutions in theoretical literature. The complexity that occurs in reality is, however, readily acknowledged, and indeed explored in relation to the specific case study that forms the primary data of this study.

context, but also in the present. It is also clear that its use and meaning has been extended by contemporary society. From its initial usage as a term to describe personal inheritances – family names or property, for example – it is now used to describe a collective inheritance (Lowenthal, 1985: 54). Therefore, we speak in terms of our collective ownership of a local, regional or national heritage. In this sense, it often refers to tangible or physical legacies – the natural or man-made heritage – but also to the intangible elements embedded in particular cultures or ways of life. These include working or leisure activities, music, song, dance and literature, or other customs. Clearly, these aspects are also represented in the material culture of a people.

In this way, the term heritage has become deeply intertwined with the articulation of group identities. The term is often used in relation to dominant collectivities, like that of the nation, but also in relation to distinct cultural or more localised groups within these. Because of this, heritage can become both a unifying and a divisive force. This has been demonstrated, for example, in relation to the conflict that surrounds the marching season in Northern Ireland. The discussion of the act of marching, the routes taken and the material culture associated with them are articulated in relation to their value as the heritage and tradition of a people. If this heritage were to be negated, then so too would the identities associated with it. Heritage is therefore involved with the construction of identity myths, an element in the imaginary identification between members of the same group (Andersen, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Middleton and Edwards, 1990). The term heritage has been related to a popular, mythic sense of the past whose concerns are in contrast to those of official historiography (Samuel, 1994; Brett, 1996).

The relationship between heritage and national identity can also be formed in relation to the tourism industry. It has been a major component in the development of places as tourist destinations. This is in response to globalisation in particular, where different destinations have sought to specialise in different sectors of the holiday market (Urry, 1990). In Ireland this has been particularly so in the last two decades as the country emerged from the doldrums of the recession of the 1980s into the boom-time of the 1990s. One of the key cards in the development of the country's tourism industry during this period was the marketing of its heritage as an identifying feature of its national character.<sup>2</sup> It was a 'heritage' rather than a 'sun' destination. This was also true in the case of the "enterprise culture" of late twentieth century Britain (Corner and Harvey, 1991). Clearly, heritage is a loaded word in contemporary life, a word with significant symbolic, cultural and economic currency. Furthermore, these meanings are inter-linked rather than separate (Dicks, 2000; Boyce, 2001). Corner and Harvey (1991) argue that globalisation, as well as producing an economic necessity for the enforcement of the

identities of tourist destinations, also results in an intensified interest in the heritage of places as a response to its weakening of local or national identities. Related to this is their assertion that a rise of interest in heritage must be linked to a sense of discontinuity with the past or with places, because it is only under these conditions that the action of retrieving that past becomes necessary.

### **1.3 Heritage Centres as Systems of Representation**

The focus of this thesis is more particular than this. Here, it is the term 'heritage centre' that is under discussion. Clearly, heritage centres participate in the generation of the meanings outlined above, but they also carry other sets of meanings. In this context, the word heritage is also associated with the representation of the past, or places, through exhibition. As an exhibitionary form akin to museums, heritage centres can be regarded as systems of representation and are therefore defined in relation to particular discursive formations (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Lidchi, 1997). The antecedents of heritage centres have been identified in the panorama and the international exhibitions of the nineteenth century (Brett, 1996), in the displays of folk-life museums in Scandinavia (Bennett, 1995) and at Colonial Williamsburg in the USA, established in the early twentieth century (Woodham, 1997). However, it is possible to identify a particular rise in a 'heritage style' of display in the late twentieth century. There has been a considerable increase in the number of such cultural forms since the 1970s, a trend that reached its height during the 1980s and 90s. This situation was not unique to Ireland, but was similar to the situation in Britain, the USA and other industrialised countries during the same broad time-span (Urry, 1990; Lowenthal, 1985). As indicated above, such entities have become a part of the service industry, and have often been associated with the development of both local or national economies and private commercial interests (Corner and Harvey, 1991). However, it is not this alone that marks them out from other forms of exhibition. Rather it is the focus of their narratives and their representational strategies that define heritage centres most visibly.

So how exactly do heritage centres represent the past? Although displays can include artefacts, they are not the central means of communication, as they are in museums. Rather, a whole series of methods of communication are used. These include photography, film, sound, simulation and reconstruction, and they can place an increased emphasis on new technology. Indeed, alongside new forms of display in older forms of museum, they have been associated with the rise of a tele-visual culture (MacDonald and Silverstone, 1990; Silverstone, 1989). Any objects used can therefore become part of the telling of the story rather than the story itself. Also, its narratives are frequently focused on a particular locality or significant event, activity or period within that locality. The stories told often focus on ordinary aspects of traditional or past

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<sup>2</sup> This is dealt with in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

lifestyles, rather than on national histories, for example. This description is a straightforward one. However, following the development of semiotic and discursive approaches to the discussion of cultural forms (see Hall, 1997 for an overview of this), we are also aware that the concept of heritage centres carries a connotative meaning. By this, I mean a secondary, associational meaning. This connotative meaning is based on the change in the strategies of representation used in heritage centres and associated entities as compared with traditional museums, as described above. How can this connotative meaning be defined further?

How heritage centres are themselves represented may give an indication of the connotative meanings we give them. A trawl through the brochures in any tourist information office will make one aware of a plethora of heritage attractions available to us. We are invited to 'step back in time' and sample a past that is 'brought alive'. The images used in promotional material assure us that the experience that awaits us is exciting and that we will indeed be enveloped in another world - we see reconstructed street scenes, live actors in costume or lifelike mannequins in convincing poses (see figs 1.1 and 1.2). Visitors are also pictured while they interact with exhibits (see fig 1.3) or participate in various activities (see fig 1.4). These images give us a sense of the nature of the representation of the past at heritage centres, and more particularly, the way in which heritage centres wish to appeal to their visitors. Drawing on the concept of binary opposition in visual imagery (Hall, 1997) - that is, the definition of one entity through an association with its opposite - we can say that the heritage centres shown here are not just defined by their own characteristics, but in relation to a binary opposite. It is not only their own representational strategies that help to define heritage centres, but those of diverse exhibitionary forms. The issue of access is a fundamental aspect of this. The heritage industry itself can be critical of museums that "have always accepted customers driven by scholarly or educational needs" and instead promote the concept of "heritage for all" (McNulty, 1993: 52). So, the use of the term heritage centre conjures up the image of an entity that differs considerably to the traditional museum. This difference has also been the basis for much criticism of the heritage industry, discussed below. What exactly is at the basis of this differentiation? To answer this question effectively, this discussion briefly focuses on those museums that are most polaric to heritage attractions in the approach taken to representing the past. Large, public regional or national museums have often been organised according to academic or connoisseurial concerns. Exhibits are really an end product, a result of the scholarly expertise of their organisers. As such, they display wonderful objects that have earned a place in the hallowed halls of the museum because of their rarity, their quality or their associations with important individuals. They are accepted into the museum because of their uniqueness. The authenticity of the object is the criteria by which it is accepted by the museum and put on display.

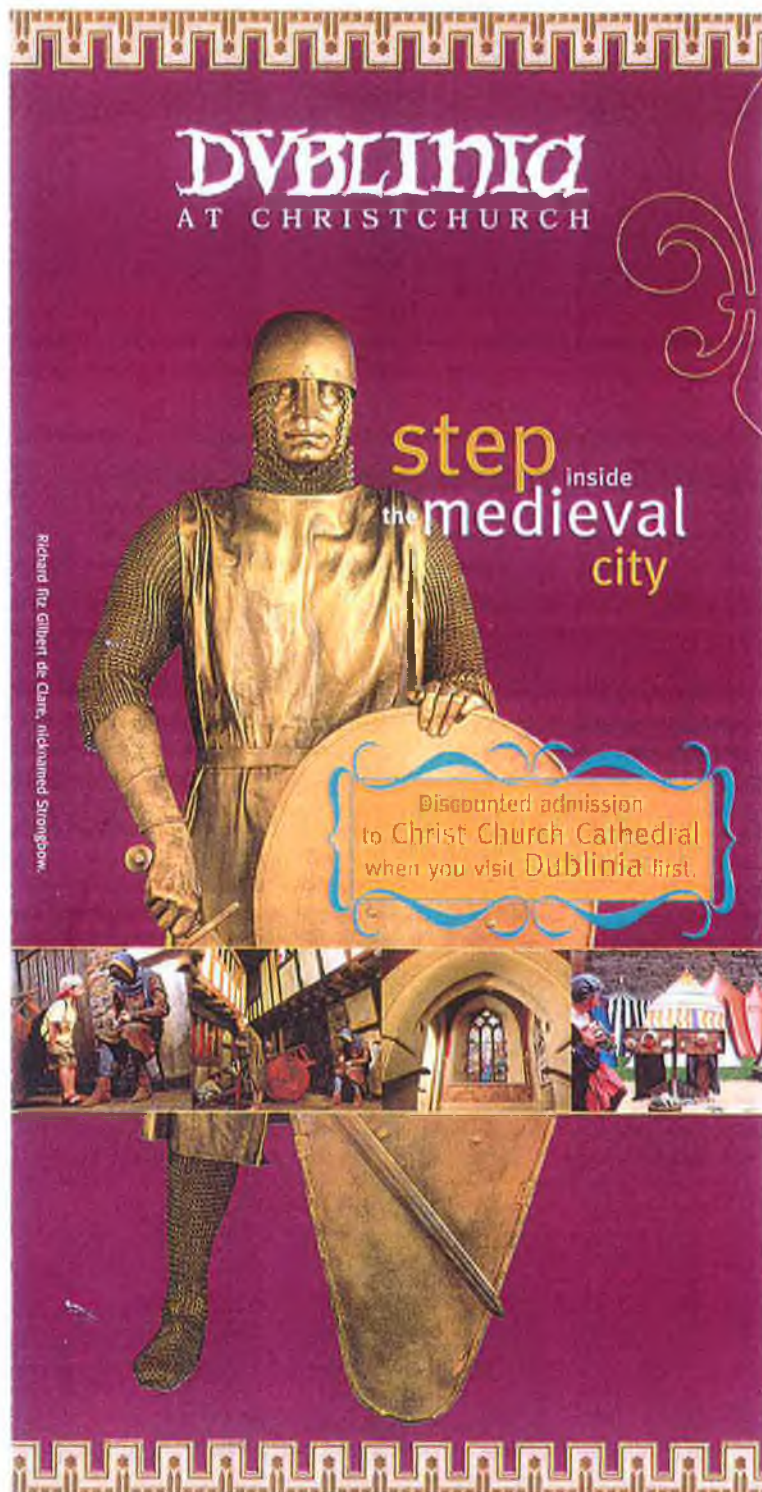


Fig. 1.1 Dublinia at Christchurch, Dublin, Brochure, 2002.





Fig. 1.2

Palace Stables Heritage Centre, Armagh, Brochure, 2002.



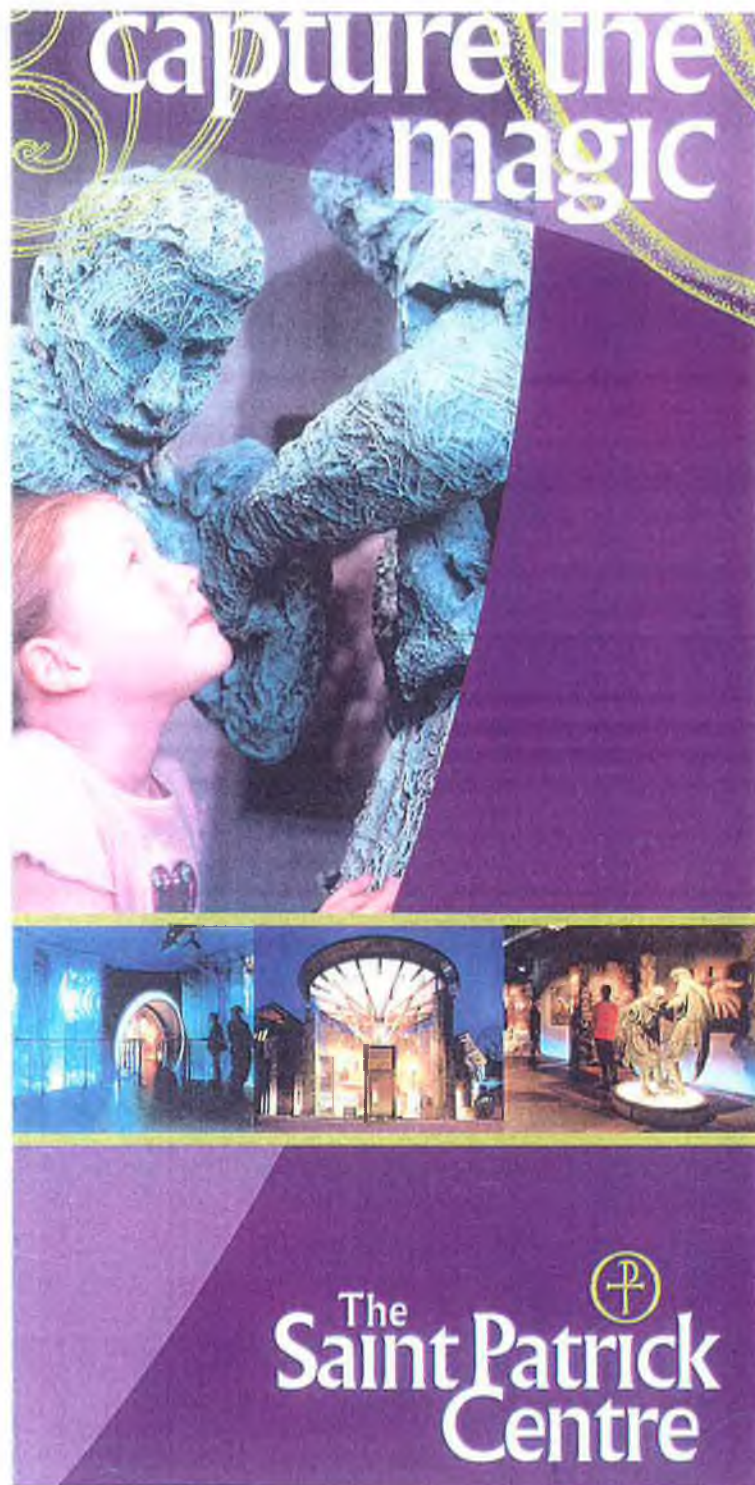


Fig. 1.3

The Saint Patrick Centre. Downpatrick, Brochure, 2002.



Fig. 1.4

Palace Stable Heritage Centre, Armagh, Brochure, 2002.

The 'aura' of authenticity is therefore an important aspect of the visitor's experience at this type of museum. The systems of representation used in such museums also grow out of academic concerns with classifying objects. Displays therefore show objects grouped together in taxonomic order, according to type, place of origin, historical period or material for example (see fig 1.5). This type of display, then, focuses on the relationship between objects rather than on their relationship to the lives that surrounded them. These exhibitions are understood to serve an educational function as part of the remit of the public museum. In contrast, as indicated above, one considers heritage attractions as places where we can experience narratives about the past that are communicated using a range of mediational devices. Indeed, although they may be housed in old buildings or use objects in their displays, their prime interest is in the telling of stories rather than in the collection, documentation and conservation of artefacts. Furthermore, the narratives told at heritage attractions frequently relate to the lives of ordinary people or even ordinary aspects of the lives of extraordinary people. Their principal objective is to make a profit, and they see themselves as offering entertaining experiences for the visitor in order to do so. In this sense, heritage centres can be aligned with theme parks, like Disneyland. However, heritage attractions are also often anxious to promote educational objectives alongside those of entertainment. One can argue that this focus on learning about the past seeks to align heritage centres with museums so that the heritage centre will inherit some aspects of the meanings we give to museums. This therefore leads to an identification between the heritage centre and the museum, and a differentiation between the heritage centre and the theme park. So, in relation to the images described above, the term 'heritage centre' both connotes a departure from a widespread image of museums as dusty halls with scholarly objectives and a serious educational experience diverse to that of the funfair-like theme park. We can say that heritage centres exist within an exhibitionary axis that places public museums with auratic, taxonomic principles of display at one end, and theme parks with anti-auratic, dramatic spectacles at the other. Furthermore in its focus on a primarily narrative form in the representation of the past, heritage centres might also be associated with other narrative forms like the historical novel, cinema or television documentaries – indeed, the association between heritage centres and televisual culture has already been flagged in this discussion. In this way, the association between heritage exhibitions and other forms of exhibition might also be extended to other ways of representing the past. The degree of value awarded to these entities surrounds their authenticity, a major theme in relation to the consumption of heritage centres that will be developed in the following section.



Fig. 1.5 Furniture Gallery, The National Museum at Collins' Barracks, Dublin, 1997.

#### **1.4 Summary**

This discussion has provided initial definitions of the terms heritage and heritage centre in a contemporary context. In doing so, it has touched on the symbolic, cultural and economic meanings associated with them. In particular, this section has defined the terms heritage and heritage centre in relation to the inter-relationship between them and:

- civic and commercial programmes of development;
- an intensification of interest in the past;
- a popular sense of the past rather than the academic pursuit of history;
- a new form of representation of the past through exhibition;
- the expression of collective identities;
- their interconnection with diverse exhibiting practices and other forms of popular engagement with the past;
- The relative authenticity of these forms in their representation of the past.

This section began by stating that the sum of its discussion would form the basis for a review of the literature surrounding the consumption of heritage. The following two chapters seek to explore the factors outlined above in relation to this field. In considering why and how we consume heritage centres this review will ask:

- As heritage is related to the past and to place, why and how are pasts and places consumed?
- What are the identities associated with the consumption of heritage centres as exhibitionary forms, and as representations of the past and of place?
- What is the relationship between this and modernity, post-modernity and globalisation?
- If heritage centres are largely concerned with the representation, what is the nature of their representation and how does this impact on their consumption?
- What are the concepts of authenticity associated with exhibitionary forms, the past, places and identities?
- How do these concepts of authenticity affect our understanding of the consumption of heritage centres?

Two of these factors, identity and authenticity, are so important in the analysis of heritage consumption that they form the underlying structure for this review. The following chapters examine these questions in the context of the themes of authenticity (Chapter 2) and identity (Chapter 3).



## **SECTION 1     REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Chapter 2     Authenticity and the Consumption of Heritage**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter defined the term heritage centre in relation to a number of factors. We now turn to the consideration of these factors specifically in relation to the principal concern of this thesis, the consumption of heritage centres. The following two chapters seek to consider how we might reflect on the motivations and experiences of heritage visitors theoretically, with a view to creating a conceptual framework in which to understand the consumption of Wicklow's Historic Gaol. This chapter focuses on the theme of authenticity in considering these issues, while the following chapter will examine the significance of identity. Briefly, this chapter will consider the relationship between concepts of authenticity and the consumption of heritage by asking:

- As heritage is related to the past and to places, why and how are pasts and places consumed? What role do concepts of authenticity play in this?
- What is the relationship between this and modernity, post-modernity and globalisation?
- What are the concepts of authenticity associated with exhibitionary forms?
- How do these concepts of authenticity affect our understanding of the consumption of heritage centres?

The themes of identity and authenticity in heritage consumption are not necessarily distinct and the relationship between them will be drawn out in Chapter 3. Included in both chapters are discussions of heritage and museum visitors, tourists and the modern or post-modern subject. This is because heritage visitors can be aligned with:

- museums visitors, as a result of the relationship between heritage centres and museums as exhibitionary forms;
- tourists, as a result of both the material and metaphorical connections between these groups;
- modern or post-modern subjects, as clearly, heritage visitors exist as such.

This chapter therefore draws on literature from a variety of sources. While some of the critical responses used here are direct responses to the offerings of the heritage industry, others are concerned with our engagement with the past, tourism, place and identity more generally. These include discussions pertaining to the development of the heritage industry specifically (Hewison, 1987, 1989, 1991; Wright 1982, 1999; Walsh 1992), our relationship with the past (Lowenthal, 1985; Samuel, 1994; Urry, 1996), the meaning of nostalgia (Tannock, 1995; Graburn, 1995;

Robertson, 1990) those that are concerned with tourism (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990; Urry and Rojek, 1997; Selwyn, 1996; Wang, 1999, 2000) and with the nature of post-modern, or late modern, subjects (Giddens, 1991). Also referred to here is the knowledge created by a growing number of empirical studies in the field of heritage and museum visiting (Silverstone and MacDonald, 1990; Bagnall, 1996, 1997; Dicks, 1997, 2000; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Cooke and McLean, 2002). The relative authenticity or inauthenticity of such experiences has been a significant theme in these discussions. This chapter will identify two broad approaches to understanding the heritage visitor within this theme. The first part of this chapter will consider those critiques that designate the past that is produced in heritage centres to be inauthentic – that is, a false narrative constructed to appeal to the desires of the present rather than a true record of historical events or conditions. I will argue that this implies that the experiences of heritage visitors are equally inauthentic. In contrast, the following section seeks to provide an alternative consideration of the heritage visitor that will acknowledge the shift in our understanding of the nature of consumption. I will argue that recent changes in conceptualising the very nature of the authenticity at stake in considering tourist experiences can be used to understand the experiences of heritage visitors more fully. While the former viewpoint is concerned with an authenticity that is judged according to an objective reality, the latter focuses on a use of the term centring on the concept of an authenticity of self – being true to oneself. One is concerned with an externalised sense of authenticity, the other with an internalised one. The third part of this chapter will explore authenticity in the context of exhibitionary forms – that is, the strategies of interpretation and mechanisms of display used in heritage centres. More specifically, it will ask how both an authenticity based on the aura of the original object and a sensory authenticity created through the use of media simulations and dramatic performance are consumed. In particular, this section aims to consider what the differences or relationships are in the consumption of these forms of exhibitionary authenticities. I will also consider how these concepts relate to the critical constructions of heritage visitors outlined in the previous sections.

## **2.2 The Inauthenticity of Heritage Centres.**

So how is the heritage visitor understood in critical discussions? The first viewpoint to be discussed here emerged in response to the increasingly commercialised representation of the past in a newly developed form of museum or theme park during the 1980s. This set of discussions is often referred to as the 'heritage debate' (Lumley, 1988). In order to create a sense of clarity, this analysis distils the principal points that set these discussions apart from others in their understanding of heritage visitors. However, it must be stated that some of the critics dealt with here have also acknowledged or promoted alternative viewpoints (see Urry, 1994, 1995 and Urry and Rojek, 1997 for example). These are included in the following section of this chapter. The arguments presented here are also sometimes divided between initial

reactions to the development of a heritage industry and arguments that form a part of the critique of post-modernism, particularly in relation to the concept of simulation. In the context of this study, however, it was felt that it is more useful to combine these discussions because they share the fundamental view that heritage centres are inauthentic in their representation of the past and that, therefore, visitors' experiences of them are also inauthentic. Inauthenticity then, is the binding theme of this section in its discussion of the motivations and representations associated with heritage centres<sup>3</sup>.

Wright (1982, 1999) and Hewison (1987) assert that the starting point for the most recent enthusiasm for heritage was in the 1970s when campaigns to save large country houses from decay were widespread in Britain. Hewison links this increased interest in conserving the past to the sense that established ways of life were in decline. In particular, he argues that the decline of traditional manufacturing industries caused a deep sense of loss and a lack of confidence in both the present and the future. This triggered a desire to retreat into the safety of a nostalgic vision of the past. The rise of heritage is also associated with a particular view of the post-modern subject as being a seeker of ironic, playful experiences. This has been articulated usefully in terms of this study in relation to the concept of the 'post-tourist' (Feifer, 1985). Urry (1990: 11) asserts that post-tourists "find pleasure in the multiplicity of tourist games. They know that there is no authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played". They delight in the inauthentic. Moreover, there are an endless variety of different objects of this 'tourist gaze' around which these games can be played. Urry sees heritage attractions as being perfectly placed to cater for this desire. The motivation being spoken about here differs from that put forward by Hewison in the sense that one suggests a sense of loss as being at the root of visitor motivation while the other concerns itself with a search for an ever-greater range of fantasy situations. However, because of the focus on nostalgia as a way of meeting this sense of loss in the first view and the desire for fantasy in the second, both viewpoints converge in the idea that visitors both seek and are offered depthless and ultimately inauthentic experiences.

Both the demand for nostalgic representations that fulfil the sense of loss referred to above, or the plethora of images supplied in post-modernity have contributed to recent patterns of development in the service industries, and in particular the tourism industry. This has led to unprecedented growth in the number of attractions, such as heritage centres, to be established.

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<sup>3</sup> I have included aspects of John Urry's work here because of his assertion that tourists seek inauthentic experiences and because of his assessment of the heritage style of representation as being about the creation of a spectacle rather than understanding. However, I do not mean to suggest that Urry shares the absolute critique of heritage made by Hewison, Wright and Walsh. To the contrary, he has advanced the view that the division they make between heritage and history on the grounds of inauthenticity is a false one.



In keeping with his assessment of the post-tourist, Urry asserts that this results from "the fact that contemporary tourists are collectors of gazes" and furthermore, that "the initial gaze is what counts and people appear to have less and less interest in repeat visits." This supports Corner and Harvey's (1991) observation that there is a connection between commercial enterprise and a re-configuration of museums in late twentieth century Britain, a factor that was already discussed in the previous chapter. Hewison, one of the principal critics of these re-configured museums, was the first to coin the term the 'heritage industry' (after Adorno and Horkheimer's The Culture Industry, 1972), to describe this situation. He argues that publicly funded museums were in decline due to decreased funding while financially independent museums and related entities had seen tremendous growth (Hewison, 1989, 164). Hewison's critique of the heritage industry relates both to the escapist, nostalgic impulse that it feeds and the mis-use of the past as a way of making a financial profit, when those museums established in the public interest were being abandoned. These concerns form the basis of many of the criticisms of heritage attractions, and the experiences of visitors there.

The shift from public to private concerns affects the interpretation of historical themes and their representation at heritage attractions. The heritage attraction is market driven, and therefore needs to cater for the desire of the consumer for pleasing leisure experiences. In keeping with this idea, Urry outlines two important factors active in forming objects of the tourist gaze. These are that a place must offer elements that distinguish it from the day to day life of the tourist, and that the experiences encountered there must be pleasurable in some way. Important in any discussion of the gaze, therefore, is the concept of difference or departure. When we travel, we have an expectation that our destination and the experiences we encounter there will be distinct from those that constitute our everyday lives. Place, activity or interaction with others, and indeed the representation of these things, signify an experience that contrasts with the mundane or the banal. For societies for whom tourism is an important economic activity then, it is necessary to construct experiences for the tourist that are pleasurable, which are clearly part of the liminal realm of leisure rather than its antithesis.

So a clear differentiation is made between an objective, scholarly history and a commercially led, constructed heritage. Hewison sets up an axis on which ideas about history as a product (heritage) are completely opposed to ideas about history as a process (Hewison, 1989: 166). Similarly, Walsh argues that the interpretation of the past at heritage attractions is always as something distant and complete which "removes the process of any past actions from the present" (Walsh, 1992: 57). Drawing on semiotic theory, Urry describes tourism as the "collection of signs" and the gaze as being "constructed through signs". These signs are connotative, or of second order signification. For example, the image of an English village is not

read as an image of a particular place, but as a set of traditional or lost cultural values of a non-specific 'past'. The defining element of such narratives is nostalgia, understood to be a "socially organised construction" rather than a "total recall" (Urry, 1990: 109). Because the root cause of nostalgia is understood to be distaste for the present and a consequent desire to escape to the past, nostalgic narratives are selective rather than complete in their interpretation of the past. Ultimately, the creation of this type of narrative results in the development of an "a-history...the mediation of the past into myth" (Walsh, 1992: 57). Furthermore, by drawing on post-modernist critiques, Hewison suggests that the development of the heritage industry has seen the "restructuring and commodification of private memory itself" in favour of "a collectively reconstructed image of a period or way of life" (Hewison, 1989: 20). Brett also understands heritage to be a type of popular history that acts as a means of asserting group memory. This has already been discussed in the previous chapter, where it was argued that what is meant by the term heritage is now closely aligned with collective rather than individual inheritances. However, for Hewison and Brett this sense of group memory is based in "imagined" figures and "(unlike history) it never quite escapes this primitive character" (Brett, 1996: 4). The past as presented at heritage attractions is nostalgic, commodified and mythic in character, creating depthless narratives defined by the whims of the present. Heritage centres are therefore purveyors of an inauthentic sense of the past.

The divisions made between process and product, public concern and private enterprise are further articulated in relation to the difference between entertainment and education. The perceived abandonment of education as a prime purpose in accessing the past is viewed with horror. Hewison perceives this freedom from educational motivations to be one of the principal defining boundaries between bodies dealing with history and those that deal with heritage. The development of heritage attractions and the decline of museums is interpreted as the ousting of education in favour of consumption and production. The belief in the use of the past as an educative resource, and therefore as a factor in effecting social change, is of great importance to this viewpoint. As such, institutions that represent the past should stimulate critical thought amongst as wide a group of people as possible. Instead, they have to justify their existence in terms of visitor numbers to compete with other less worthy, more entertaining leisure attractions. This shift from public to private agendas and the consequent change in the objectives for representing the past has caused concern amongst those working in the museum profession. Again, fears are expressed that serious attempts to communicate ideas about the past would not "compete with pressure for a comfortable romantic image full of St. Patrick and Cuchulainn on the one hand and swashbuckling men on the other" (Meek, 1991:18). Indeed some see the implication of promoting heritage for economic rather than "community or social" reasons as a bid to "reduce our history, the story of our origins, to nothing more than a recreational activity...a

historical zoo" (Walsh, 1993: 42). While heritage attractions provide entertainment, museums should "continue to assert their educational role while increasing their leisure value" (Walsh, 1993: 45). So for these critics, the heritage industry is a force that removes the use of the past from a serious interest in the public good to an interest in crass commercialism and the mindless pleasures of popular culture.

The focus on the visual and the methods used by the heritage industry to represent their narratives are also included in this school of thought. Urry describes how "In such centres there is a curious mixing of the museum and the theatre. Everything is meant to be authentic, even down to the smells, but nothing actually is authentic" (Urry, 1990: 132). The term authenticity here is used to describe the way in which heritage displays are managed to produce the sensation of being a part of the real thing, hence the promise by many heritage attractions to 'bring the past alive'. The previous chapter showed how the heritage industry presents such attractions as being more accessible than museums because of their use of more sophisticated, familiar and entertaining media. Their critics argue against this, seeing the mechanisms of display in heritage attractions to be equally as controlling as the traditional museums they seek to differentiate themselves from. The use of simulation in heritage attractions is heavily criticised in relation to this. Such techniques of representation focus on the production of a "synchronous spectacle", thereby removing any sense of change over time. Representing the past as a spectacle is to represent it as an isolated event, rather than a link in an ongoing chain of history (Walsh, 1992: 137). Through the convincing creation of a world that never existed, heritage centres create an alternative to the present. In doing so, heritage "treats the past as our own age" (Lowenthal, 1985: 139). The use of simulation then, simply compounds the treatment of the past as a closed book; an effect of the nostalgic recall referred to earlier. As well as creating a spectacle of the past, simulation is also understood to further reduce the critical capacity of visitors by creating an auratic experience akin to that created in the traditional museum. Walsh asserts that museums contribute to an "institutionalised rationalisation of the past" by creating highly mediated experiences. The use of the term mediation here, I assume, refers to the aestheticisation of artefacts through their removal from everyday contexts and their display in relation to other objects according to specialist concerns. As argued previously, visitor experience in this setting is based on the special aura of the object marked out by the institution. Rather than understanding contemporary heritage representations as a complete departure from this vision of the museum, Walsh sees their reliance on "the aura of the hyperreal simulacrum" (Walsh, 1992: 176) to be similar to the aestheticised, auratic displays of traditional museums. This comparison seems to lie in the emphasis on the visual, which gives rise to sensual experiences. This does little, critics assert, to encourage visitors to be critical or reflective. Indeed, both Urry (1990) and Jordonova (1989) argue that such an emphasis impedes rather

than aids understandings of the past.<sup>4</sup> For them, important social experiences such as death, war and hunger are trivialised through their representation in this way. Furthermore, the promise of pleasure is offered by non-touristic practices – the media, for example, which pre-figure or construct the terms through which the holiday – or heritage - experience is ‘read’. In this regard, there is a greater sense of the visual which “enables the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured” (Urry, 1990). These responses draw on some of the ideas contained within the literature on post-modernity (Jameson, 1984), which argue that a defining characteristic of post-modernity is its emphasis on pastiche, simulation and depthless experiences. To simulate the past is to collapse a sense of real time and real events with real consequences. Rather than enhancing our understanding of these events, the representational strategies associated with heritage centres diminish their importance by making them safely viewable.

The responses to the advent of the heritage industry outlined in this section discuss the motivations of both producers and consumers, the effect of these on the narratives that heritage centres create and the ways in which these narratives are represented. The principal arguments raised here in relation to these issues can be summarised as follows. These critiques comment on:

- The rise in heritage as a response to a sense of decline in post-industrial society, the demands of the profit oriented agenda of an enterprise culture and the desires of the post-modern consumer;
- The singularity, selectivity and nostalgic undertones of its narratives;
- The way in which these narratives are defined by the present day concerns rather than an objective historiographical stance;
- The production of a spectacle of the past that closes off the possibility of understanding history as an ongoing process therefore creating an incomplete, inauthentic representation;
- The possibility of some class interests being represented better than others in contrast to the promise of the heritage industry to make the representation of the past more accessible;
- The shift in emphasis from public to private interests in the museum sector and therefore the shift from educational concerns towards those of entertainment.

Each of these relate to the factors that define heritage centres that were discussed in Chapter 1 and outlined again at the beginning of this chapter. Briefly, these involved the relationship between heritage and: public and private concerns; a rise of interest in the past; collective identities; popular engagement with the past; particular representational strategies and other exhibitionary and representational forms. This viewpoint engages with these issues from a particular position, however. This thesis argues that the interpretation of each of these points within this school of thought surrounds the inauthenticity of heritage centres as a form of

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<sup>4</sup> Urry (1996) has also written of the potential for the active performances stimulated by such artefactual histories.

representing the past. But how exactly is the heritage visitor conceptualised within this viewpoint? The way in which heritage centres are discussed within this group of critiques implies that heritage visitors:

- Share the same motivation for visiting or engaging with heritage;
- Share the same 'reading position' as each other and as the producers of heritage attractions;
- Accept the narratives put forward by the heritage industry unproblematically;
- Do not, or cannot, engage in critical thought while being entertained or indeed that reflection and learning do occur during the course of particular forms of entertainment.

Some of these arguments are very convincing and are clearly motivated by a deep concern for any lessening of the importance of the past and the knowledge it provides as a resource open to all in the forging of the present and future. However, the assessments made within these discussions are largely based on broad assumptions about the nature heritage visiting and visitors, rather than on data generated in the study of actual visitors. It has been argued that a similar set of assumptions have been made by traditional museums with a public, educational remit (see, for example, Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Casting either heritage or museum visitors in this way seems to me to offer limited scope for understanding the full complexity of meanings that may be generated through both the production and consumption of heritage as a form of representing the past. It is out of sync with the findings of a growing body of empirical studies of both museum and heritage visitors (Cooke and McLean, 2002; Dicks, 1997, 2000; Prentice and McIntosh, 1999; Prentice and Light, 1994; Bagnall, 1996, 1997; Merriman, 1991; Silverstone and MacDonald, 1990 and for an overview of this field see Bicknell and Farmelo, 1993); the findings of specific case studies of museums or heritage attractions (MacDonald, 1997; Dicks, 1997, 2000); and with the deepening understanding of how other representational media are consumed (for an overview of this field see Moores, 1990 and Gunter, 2000). The theoretical basis of these developments will be outlined fully in the Methodology section of this thesis (see Section 2), but broadly, they all point towards the active creativity involved in the consumption of representations. More particularly they indicate the differences that can occur within readings of the same representations and the variety of factors that impact on both the consumption and production of representations in specific contexts. This is paralleled by the deepening understanding of consumption more generally, now more widely understood to be both constrained and creative, and formed by the complex inter-weaving of production and consumption in relation to economic, cultural and individual patterns. In fact, elements of the conceptualisation of the heritage visitor manifested in the critiques discussed above have far more in common with the earlier understanding of the consumers of mass media put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), on which Hewison's (1987) early text is clearly based.

Secondly, this view of heritage visitors is bound up in a particular conception of the post-modern subject. This involves the idea that post-modern subjects are seekers of surface experiences amidst multiple simulations. This includes the spectacular simulation of nostalgic visions of pasts or places provided by the heritage industry. This is associated with a taste for a past that is offered by commercial entities, and which changes according to the demands of fashion. However, this is disputed by alternative interpretations of the post-modern subject, particularly in relation to the concept of reflexivity (Giddens 1991). But how can we take account of these developments in examining the consumption of heritage centres and the consumption of the past more generally? Are there other interpretations of heritage visiting and how do these relate to the concepts of authenticity/inauthenticity that are core to this chapter? These issues are dealt with in the following two sections of this chapter.

### **2.3 Questioning the Inauthenticity of Heritage Visiting**

One approach to understanding the consumption of heritage has been outlined above. This approach provides interesting analyses of some of the meanings that may be attached to heritage visiting, and the implications this has for the use of the past as a panacea for the ills of the present. However, I have also argued that this set of arguments are not fully adequate in furthering our understanding of the 'why' and 'how' of heritage consumption. This section seeks to outline an alternative understanding of the experience of visiting heritage. I have suggested that many of the criticisms of heritage outlined above revolve around the theme of inauthenticity – a sense of the inauthenticity of contemporary culture, the inauthenticity of modes of representation and simulation, the inauthenticity of the narratives presented there and the consequent inauthenticity of visitor experiences. This section argues that considering the themes of authenticity/inauthenticity further provides us with a way to deepen our understanding of the motivations and experiences of heritage visitors. The literature used here is drawn from several corners. Corner and Harvey's (1991) and Samuel's (1994) discussions cite heritage as one of many popular forms of accessing the past, Giddens (1991) considers the emergence of the reflexive subject in relation to the late-modern re-organisation of the concepts of time and space, Urry and Lash (1994) apply these ideas to the generation of meaning in relation to the material pasts of particular places, while Tannock (1995) re-considers nostalgia for more generalised pasts as a critique of our experience of modernity. MacCannell (1976), Selwyn (1996) and Wang (1999, 2000) all argue that accessing toured objects is a bid to counteract a sense of the inauthenticity of our lives in modernity. Clearly, although most of these have emerged as distinct ideas, they are formulated in relation to a unifying concept – that of post or late modernity.

Heritage centres are inter-textual (Corner and Harvey 1991). That is, they share a platform with other forms through which a popular engagement with the past occurs. In examining the motivations of heritage visitors in particular, this requires us to ask much broader and more fundamental questions - why do we look to the past, what do we seek there? Samuel (1994) casts a wider net than Hewison in locating the rise of heritage as a way of accessing the past. He discusses the current emergence of an interest in the past at a popular level in relation to a variety of "resurrectionary movements" which have occurred since the 1950s (Samuel, 1994: xi). These encompassed the preservation of railways, the growth in interest in styles of dress and objects from previous historical periods and a surge in interest in numismatics, industrial archaeology, new wave social history and genealogy. He insists that "Quite where and when and how and why heritage acquired its currently inflated status is, or ought to be, an open question" (Samuel, 1994: 227). Samuel's placement of the rise of heritage from the 1950s onwards indicates that its emergence coincides with the latest phase of modernity. This locates the interest in heritage as a way of accessing the past beyond the period of industrial decline of which Hewison speaks, and within a broader time frame. Although, as indicated in Chapter 1, its roots can be traced back to representational practices current in the nineteenth century, heritage can clearly be interpreted as being a peculiarly late modern or post-modern form of engagement with the past. I am suggesting that it is this connection between the appeal of the past through heritage and the experience of this period that should form the basis of a re-consideration of its consumption. If we focus on Hewison's idea of a sense of loss - rather than a desire for nostalgia or a post-modern desire for the inauthentic - as a basis for the growth of interest in the past we may be able to deepen our understanding of this appeal. In order to further this idea, we must seek to understand late or post-modernity and the effects this has had on the late or post-modern subject in a different way to that referred to in section 2.2. In doing this, we turn to the concept of reflexivity.

Giddens (1991) argues that post-modernity, rather than representing an entirely new era, is a period in which the effects of modernity have become more widespread or extreme than ever before. Modernity is understood to be the result of processes through which the traditional structures that framed human experience are swept away, and where a new form of global, rather than local, relations emerge. As a result of this, the pace and scope of change is intensified. In particular, the dynamic at work within modernity has resulted in the separation and re-combination of time and space and the consequent dis-embedding of social systems and the re-configuration of social relations in a more reflexive way (Giddens, 1991: 19). Here, Giddens is referring to the impact that the development of new technologies (e.g. television, the internet) has had on our perception of time and space. For example, in contrast to pre-modern periods, time and space are no longer necessarily interlinked - a 'when' is not always located in a

specific 'where'. It is this that contributes to the removal, or 'dis-embedding', of social practices or relations from specific local contexts. This results in a sense of "existential doubt" or "puzzlement" - a loss of "ontological security" or a secure sense of self. However, these processes are combined with increased reflexivity, where decisions are made according to the appropriation of new knowledge rather than solely in relation to tradition. So the experiences of being dislocated from traditional ways of life and social relations can produce both a sense of loss and reflexivity within post-modern subjects. This is a crucial point for this study. This moves away from the rather more negative views outlined above, because while the sense of loss is acknowledged here, it is understood to occur in tandem with a growth in reflexivity. This means that we are not just acted upon by external systems, but that we also act upon our own situations using these systems. What does this mean for our understanding of the relationship between late modern subjects and the past?

Important elements of Urry and Lash's (1994) analysis of the desire to conserve the material past are valuable here because of the relationship he creates between the reflexive subject and the meanings given to material objects associated with the past. This appears to depart from the stance Urry has taken in relation to post-tourists and their search for inauthenticity. They discuss the concept of a reflexive response both to a tension that exists between modernity and tradition, the local and the global, and to two notions of time. Firstly, Urry and Lash see the drive towards conservation of the historical built and natural environments as a response to a sense of loss of past ways of life. They assert that old buildings carry a number of general associations. These can include those of solidity, continuity, authority and craftsmanship. Buildings associated more directly with modernity have a very different range of associations – mechanised production rather than craft, anonymity and perfection rather than individuality, coldness rather than warmth and so on. The favouring of old buildings, then, can also be understood as a desire to counteract the experience of the idea of modernity in a material form. Old buildings can both signify these values generally and in relation to specific places. Therefore, if "the object were to be demolished or substantially changed than that would signify a threat to the place itself" (Urry, 1995: 154-157). One can argue that what is being expressed in these instances is the desire to assert a sense of the local within an experience of the homogenising forces of globalisation (as considered by Robins, 1991 and Hall, 1992). Secondly, Urry and Lash also make an analysis of the preservation of aspects of the material history of localities in terms of the relationship between our experience of two senses of time in the modern world. The desire to engage with the past in this way can be understood more fundamentally as "attempts to assert a glacial conception of time, to challenge the profoundly disruptive effects of instantaneous time by reflexive subjects" (Urry and Lash, 1994: 250). They define instantaneous time as "a time so brief, so instantaneous that it cannot be experienced or observed" and contrasts it with an



"immensely long, imperceptibly changing evolutionary or glacial time" (Urry and Lash, 1994: 242). The use of glacial time to counteract the effects of instantaneous time is a feature of our experience of post-modernity and crucial, they argue, for our understanding of the reflexive subject. That is, reflexive subjects deal with their experience of life in modernity by asserting a relationship with the past in material form. This thesis argues that the same concept can be applied to the relationship between heritage centres and their visitors. In this instance, the visitors' performance of heritage at heritage attractions can be understood as a reflexive activity because it may also allow us to fulfil our need for a glacial conception of time, using the representational media at our disposal.

Furthermore, the arguments Urry and Lash use to explain our engagement with the material past is mirrored in Tannock's (1995) analysis of nostalgic recall. This analysis can also be linked to the concept of reflexivity. Once defined in terms of the pain associated with homesickness, nostalgia can also be understood as the "anguish occasioned by temporal displacement" (Graburn, 1995: 164), or more specifically, a feeling that invokes a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world (Tannock, 1995: 454). Nostalgia then may be crucial to dealing with our experience of modernity. As we have seen in the first half of this chapter the criticisms levelled at nostalgia, however, are both hostile and dismissive, giving no credence to the possibilities that it may present. As we have discussed, it is associated with loss, decline, fantasy and fiction, a sort of false or superficial memory. While acknowledging that some aspects of the critique of nostalgia may apply in some situations, Tannock argues that nostalgia, if properly approached can also lead to "effective historical interpretation and action" (Tannock, 1995: 456). Rather than being described as a way of deadening the effects of modernity - an opiate for the masses - nostalgia could be understood as a way of empowering oneself by establishing a sense of continuity amidst discontinuity. This means that the pursuit of nostalgia is not just recognition of discontinuity but a critique of the modernity in which it occurs and a bid to resist some of its effects. Interpreted in this way, the pursuit of nostalgia may well be considered to be a reflexive act. By extension, engaging with the nostalgic narratives of heritage centres may serve a purpose in the exercising of reflexive capabilities.

What I am arguing here is that reflexive subjects counteract their experiences of modern life by asserting a sense of glacial time in their interaction with their material surroundings, a taste for nostalgia and the representational media at their disposal. In summary, this study moves away from the critique of heritage visiting laid out in 2.2, based on the concept of inauthenticity by focusing on an alternative conception of late modern subjects. In summary, the views put forward here emphasise:

- Locating the current fascination with the past through heritage in a broader context than that of post-modern critiques;
- The understanding of late modern subjects as experiencing both a sense of loss as a result of the processes of modernity and a growth in reflexivity using the channels provided by the conditions of modernity;
- Our engagement with the past as a reflexive act which both resists and critiques our negative experiences of the present. These experiences pertain to a sense of loss of traditional structures and relationships that framed human experience, a consequent sense of fragmentation and alienation, the re-configuration of the local in relation to the global, and of our concepts of time;
- How we exercise our reflexivity in this regard by actively pursuing nostalgia and by asserting a sense of glacial time in an effort to counteract our experience of instantaneous time. The latter is achieved by engaging with the past as represented by material objects. It was argued here that although Urry and Lash's analysis of glacial time pertains to the drive to conserve historical environments and Tannock's discussion of nostalgia is a generalised one, I have suggested that these can also be used to explain the drive to engage with the past through visiting such objects and through representational media like heritage centres.

These represent an interesting departure from the views outlined in the last section. But can this set of concepts be linked theoretically to the theme of authenticity/inauthenticity in heritage visiting? To establish this, the discussion now turns towards theoretical approaches to understanding the motivations of tourists in terms of a search for authenticity. The reasons for linking the analysis of tourist experiences with those of heritage visitors have already been laid out at the beginning of this review of literature as a whole and Urry's (1990) work in relation to the post-tourist, toured objects and inauthenticity has already been discussed in section 2.2 of this chapter. The views set out below are intended to act as the basis of an alternative conceptualisation of the experiences of heritage visitors to the analyses of Urry and others which focus on inauthenticity in this context. The relationship between the concept of reflexivity in late modernity, the consumption of the past and the following theories of authenticity in tourism will be addressed later. So how has the relationship between tourists, toured objects and authenticity been addressed theoretically, and how can this be used to understand the parallel relationship between visitors, heritage centres and authenticity?

## **2.4 Tourism and the 'Authenticity of Self'**

Since the publication of Dean MacCannell's work in the early 1970s, the relationship between authenticity and tourist experiences has received steady attention (Fawcett and Cormack, 2001; Halewood and Hannon, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Waitt, 2000; Wang, 2000, 1999; Moscardo, 2000,

1986; Waller and Lea, 1999; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Crang, 1996; Selwyn, 1996; Payne-Daniel, 1996; Hughes, 1995; Cohen, 1988). Urry (1990), as stated previously, asserts that the principal goal of the tourist in post-modernity, or post-tourist, is to look for signs of tourism itself – that is, for inauthentic, staged experiences. He argues that tourists actually delight in the inauthentic, knowing that there is no one authentic experience. In his analysis, heritage centres become a part of this search for the novel, the search for new games to be played. In contrast, other analyses have placed a significant emphasis on the search for authenticity, rather than inauthenticity, as being crucial to the formulation of a theoretical basis for understanding how toured objects are experienced in late modernity. This thesis now considers these contributions. It will be argued that the discussion of authenticity in relation to tourism provides an umbrella concept in which our engagement with the past can be placed. This is hinted at in Urry and Lash's (1994) use of the concept of reflexivity in relation to glacial time and Tannock's (1995) designation of nostalgia as a strategy of resistance. This will provide us with an alternative set of concepts in which to place heritage visiting.

Dean MacCannell's analysis (1976) of tourism has been seminal. He has argued that because processes of modernity have resulted in increased fragmentation and a sense of dislocation, we experience a deep sense of loss of authenticity, or wholeness, in everyday life. Therefore, the tourist seeks authentic experiences elsewhere, during leisure time. 'Others', whether they are located in the past or in foreign cultures, are the object of this search. By drawing on Goffman's work, MacCannell defines tourist experience in terms of 'front' and 'back' stages. Front stage experiences are those organised to appeal to the tourist directly, while back stage experiences are perceived by the tourist to be more natural or more real. MacCannell constructs six experiences based on this analysis. The first is Goffman's front stage, the second and third stages are front regions that have been constructed to appear as back regions, stage four are acceptable parts of a back region open to outsiders, stage five is an altered back region to permit tourists to enter it and stage six is Goffman's back region. In response to an authenticity perceived to be lacking in their everyday lives, MacCannell's tourists seek back stage experiences elsewhere. He describes how host cultures provide front stage experiences that are designed to look like back stage experiences to satisfy this. The tourist then never achieves the authenticity s/he seeks because what s/he experiences is a staged authenticity. So, while Urry understands the post-tourist to actually seek out such staged, inauthentic experiences, MacCannell sees this as a frustration to the tourist's search for real authenticity. MacCannell shares Hewison's central focus on a sense of loss as a motivating factor in heritage visiting but his views are opposite to both Hewison's and Urry's arguments in relation to tourist responses to staged authenticity. MacCannell's visitor is frustrated by inauthenticity, Urry's is satisfied by it and Hewison's doesn't realise that what they are experiencing is inauthentic in the first place.

However, they all envisage authenticity as something that can be measured in an objective way. By this, I mean that the real is judged to be authentic but the copy or whatever lies between is unreal and is experienced as such. The very fact that something is staged for the heritage visitor/tourist makes their experience inauthentic, and either frustrating or satisfying. However, both Selwyn (1996) and Wang (1999, 2000) develop aspects of MacCannell's thesis of the search for authenticity as a basis for touristic experience, as opposed to their frustration with staged experience. In doing this, our understanding of the very nature of authenticity at stake in the relationship between tourists, toured objects and the search for authenticity changes. A movement in this direction also provides an alternative way to consider authenticity in relation to heritage experiences. Furthermore, Selwyn's and Wang's discussions may provide a way of bridging the gap between the theoretical stances outlined above.

Looking to MacCannell, Both Selwyn and Wang build on the idea that tourism entails a search for authenticity or a sense of wholeness, prompted by the experience of loss of traditional social structures in modernity. The toured object becomes a location for this authenticity. However, both move away from MacCannell's claims of there being a frustration with the staged authenticity that tourists are offered. While identifying problems with the particular conception of authenticity in MacCannell's work, Wang has looked to extend the concept of authenticity in this context (Wang, 1999: 350). He initially identifies two different understandings of authenticity, broadly identified as 'objective' and 'constructive' or 'symbolic'. The first is partially represented in the work of MacCannell, for example where the tourist seeks authenticity in a particular way of life or aspect of a culture that is judged to be free from artificiality. Constructive or symbolic authenticity, outlined in the work of Cohen (1988) or Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), is not located in any objective element – that is in the host culture – but rather in the belief systems of the tourist's own culture. These beliefs are projected onto an element of the culture of the host. It is the tourist's own conception of what is, or is not, authentic in relation to their own culture that is of importance here. Through this mechanism, authenticity becomes "a label attached to the visited cultures in terms of stereo-typed images and expectations held by members of the tourist sending society" (Wang, 1999: 5). It involves a distinction between those 'marked' as authentic and those that are not, despite their existence in the host culture. Some beliefs and expectations become embedded in the host culture's own sense of authenticity on a symbolic level. However, Wang argues that neither of these conceptions of authenticity explains the full gamut of tourist experiences sufficiently well.

How should the idea of authenticity be explored in this context? For Selwyn (1996), authenticity in tourism can be conceptualised as being either 'hot' or 'cool'. Hot authenticity refers to feeling, while cool authenticity refers to knowledge. He further defines these by saying that the tourist

looks for both "authentic social relations and sociability (hot)...aswell as some sort of knowledge about the nature and society of the chosen destination (cool)" (Selwyn, 1996: 8). Within these concepts is a tension between a quest for an 'authentic other' and a quest for an 'authentic self'. The 'other' in this instance is something that is perceived to be authentically social. This means that, like Wang's description of symbolic authenticity, the tourist views the toured object as being symbolic of an authenticity lost in their own culture. Selwyn argues that "the character of this other derives from belonging to an imagined world which is variously pre-modern, pre-commoditised or part of a benign whole re-captured in the mind of the tourist" (Selwyn, 1996: 21). Experienced as being more real socially than one's everyday life, toured places and peoples provide the tourist with a hot, or a felt, authenticity. The experience of hot authenticity is described by Selwyn to involve locating an authenticity of self as a way of counteracting alienation experienced in modernity. It is the focus on the authentic self, rather than on the authentic 'other' that provides the basis for a re-consideration of the concept of authenticity in how toured objects are experienced.

Wang explores this in his development of the concept of existential authenticity in relation to tourism in late modernity. He defines the term 'existential' as a special state of being where one desires to be true to oneself, in order to counteract a perceived loss of this state of being in public life. Referring to Heidegger (1962) and Selwyn (1996) he moves away from objective and constructive or symbolic authenticities. Rather, he argues, tourists are pre-occupied with finding an existential state of Being. This sense of authenticity can be found in "creative and cathartic acts of participation in and interaction with elements of host culture..." (Wang, 1999: 350). Tourists are not concerned with "the authenticity of toured objects at all. Rather, they are in search of their authentic selves with the aid of activities or toured objects" (Wang, 1999: 356). He argues that, the sense of loss of the true self occurs when the balance between rational and non-rational factors in society breaks down. This is because "a sense of the authentic self involves a balance between two parts of one's being: reason and emotion; self-constraint and spontaneity; Logos and Eros" (Wang, 1999: 352). This motivates subjects to search, through tourism and in other areas outside of everyday existence, for places or activities which involve a sense of freedom, spontaneity and naturalness – a liminal zone. The true self can only be achieved there. Although the seeking out of liminal experiences can be regarded, perhaps, as a critique of one's own society or everyday life, it is not a negation of it, however, as the liminal experience requires both a departure from and a return to ordinary life. Nevertheless, within this schema, it may be possible to assert that the search for an authenticity of self becomes an act of resistance to "dominant rational orders of the mainstream institutions of modernity" (Wang, 1999: 356).

The experience of hot authenticity is understood by Selwyn to be the location of two strands of a sense of the authenticity of self. One such authenticity is "driven by desire and the urgent need for immediate gratification, is apparently free in the sense of being able to eschew any group identification as well as the social and moral constraints which that would entail" (Selwyn, 1996: 24). What is sought here is an authenticity of self through "the experience of play. Performances, spectacles, masks and make-believe are all vehicles for authentic good times" (Selwyn, 1996: 24). Although not expressed in relation to post-modern playfulness, the emphasis on creative and participatory experiences is also an aspect of Wang's definition of existential authenticity, particularly in relation to his discussion of the body in tourist experiences. Wang's existential authenticity is divided into 'intra' and 'inter' personal authenticities. He speaks about these in relation to bodily feelings and self-identity (intra personal) and the confirmation of family ties and a sense of "touristic *communitas*" through social interaction (inter-personal). The imposition of "constraining and monotonous routine" in everyday life and the consequent failure of subjects to achieve "self-realisation" invokes the desire for such authenticities. He conceives of this in terms of intra-personal authenticity in relation to adventure tourism and the desire to challenge oneself physically and mentally in a way that does not happen in everyday life. By removing themselves from the securities of everyday life in this way, tourists achieve a sense of wholeness. This aspect of existential authenticity involves bodily feelings in two ways. The first is symbolic and the second sensual. The former concerns how the body is associated with identity, the latter as the site of innermost feelings and pleasures. In this conception of authenticity, bodily feelings become associated with an expression of the true self in a bid to counteract the self-control required in everyday life. Like Selwyn, Wang describes tourist experiences in this sense in terms of "diversion, entertainment, spontaneity, playfulness" (Wang, 2000: 66). The search for inter-personal authenticity is perceived as a response to the loss of the social inter-action understood to have been a part of traditional communities. Tourists may be searching for this inter personal authenticity, not just with host cultures but with each other. Wang asserts that "The toured objects or tourism can be just a means or medium by which tourists are called together". These experiences can occur with family members, for example, or with other tourists (Wang, 1999: 358). Wang draws on Turner (1975) in framing tourism as a contemporary form of pilgrimage and describes how, when pilgrims reach their destination they are "endowed with most sacred values and charged with high emotions" and enter *communitas*. Reaching *communitas* is described as reaching a kind of liminal zone. Removed from ordinary life, this liminality is caused by the falling apart of "structures and differences arising out of institutionalised socio-economic and socio-political positions, roles and status", and results in the experience of "unmediated, pure, inter-personal" relationships based on "common humanity" (Wang 1999: 360). Creativity, interaction, participation and resistance all seem to be entailed in these descriptions of the tourist's search for an authenticity of self.

Neither Selwyn nor Wang adopt conceptions of the tourist as a seeker of authenticity of self to be achieved solely through the experience of authentic objects (MacCannell, 1976), or as a player of games with the in-authentic (Urry, 1990), outlined above. Instead, they describe tourists who satisfy the search for an authenticity of self by using toured objects, whether they are considered to be objectively authentic or not. Wang uses the post-modernist deconstruction of authenticity as a springboard to re-examine the concept of authenticity at stake in how toured objects are experienced, and in doing so shares aspects of Urry's conception of the post-tourists desire to depart from the everyday and to enter a liminal zone. Selwyn attempts to bridge the gap between the polaric approaches discussed here. In his analysis, toured objects might be locations for both a search for a missing authenticity of the self and the playful desires of a post-modern subject. Selwyn addresses this by suggesting that there is "a possibility that within the same individual tourist may beat a heart which is equally pilgrim-like and child-like...a seemingly fundamental ambivalence...which...may well be the principal characteristic of tourism in the post-modern world" (Selwyn, 1996: 9). The over-riding principal at work in both analyses is that authenticity remains a key concept in this context, albeit in an altered form. The focus is on an authenticity of self.

The concepts addressed here can be summarised as follows:

- The over-rationalisation, routinisation and disintegration of traditional structures associated with modernity are understood to create an imbalance in our lives. This imbalance is experienced in terms of a lack of authenticity;
- Tourism is understood as a desire to counteract these negative experiences. It is an act of resistance to imbalance in everyday life and a search for experiences that will restore the tourist's sense of authenticity;
- The concept of authenticity at stake in discussions of tourism is reformulated. It moves away from understanding authenticity in relation to the judgement of the authenticity of toured objects (objective authenticity), or in relation to the construction of host cultures as being authentic in relation to the needs of the tourist's home culture (constructive authenticity). Rather, the concept of authenticity under discussion here is subjective or inter-subjective. Described as being a 'hot' or 'existential' authenticity, it pertains to the experience of an inner authenticity of self.
- Such an authenticity can be experienced in the context of toured objects that are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic.

- The character of this authenticity is experienced through toured objects that involve the tourist's own emotional, physical and mental participation. This engagement with toured objects can be characterised by creativity, spontaneity, sensuality, social-interaction, risk and adventure.

How can this concept of an authenticity of self be understood in relation to the consumption of the past generally and to heritage visiting more particularly? Clearly heritage centres other exhibitionary forms and aspects of the actual collective heritage of tourist destinations become toured objects. Therefore they are a suitable focus for examining the concept of achieving an authenticity of self through toured objects. To do this in sufficient depth, however, this theory needs to be unpacked in relation to the specific issues that surround the consumption of the past through heritage and heritage centres. An alternative strand of discussions concerning the consumption of the past than those addressed in 2.2 has already been put forward. It was argued that it was possible to place the desire to engage in nostalgia and with the material past in relation to a reflexive response to late modernity. It was argued that this analysis could be applied to heritage centres as representational systems that are concerned with the past of places, and heritage objects that constitute the material evidence of that past. I am suggesting here that in combining this set of ideas with those that concern a search for an authenticity of self in tourism, a suitable theoretical framework begins to emerge for a study of the consumption of heritage centres. The concepts that are shared by theories of the authenticity of self and the reflexive subject can be outlined as follows. Particular conditions of modernity result in individuals experiencing a sense of loss or imbalance (inauthenticity). Engaging with alternative scenarios located outside of mainstream experiences counteracts this sense of inauthenticity. This has been conceptualised as both a search for an authenticity of self (Wang, 1999, 2000; Selwyn, 1996) and as a reflexive act (Urry and Lash, 1994). I am putting forward the idea that the fulfilment of the self (the achievement of hot or existential authenticity) can also be described as a reflexive act in that it seeks to counteract or resist the negative implications of modernity for the construction of the self. When combined in relation to the consumption of heritage, these theories can be summarised as follows:

- The current fascination with the past through heritage should be located in the context of late modernity, rather than in relation to a critique of post-modernity;
- The over-rationalisation, routinisation and disintegration of traditional structures associated with modernity are understood to create an imbalance in our lives. This imbalance is experienced in terms of a lack of authenticity of the self;



- Late modern subjects experience both a sense of loss as a result of the processes of modernity and a growth in reflexivity using the channels provided by the conditions of modernity. Activities that take place outside of everyday routines, like tourism and heritage visiting or engaging with the past or other cultures through a range of mediated experiences, can be thought of in this way;
- Such experiences are reflexive in that they both recognise imbalance in everyday life and attempt to resist or counteract this by searching for experiences that will restore the subject's sense of balance or authenticity;
- Such an authenticity can be experienced in the context of toured objects or activities that are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic.
- The character of this authenticity is experienced through objects that involve the subject's own emotional, physical and mental participation. This engagement can be characterised by creativity, spontaneity, sensuality, social-interaction, risk and adventure.

This section has begun to construct an alternative understanding of the concept of authenticity/inauthenticity in heritage visiting. It has done so by drawing on theoretical discussions of reflexivity in late modernity and also the move away from objective and constructive authenticities in the discussion of tourism towards the authenticity of self. However, this analysis remains incomplete. Two factors in particular need to be addressed. It might be suggested that the focus on the authenticity of self is overly individualised (Meethan, 2001), and that the importance of collective identity, established as a key theme in discussions of heritage in Chapter 1, is not fully acknowledged. Actually, another aspect of Selwyn's concept of hot authenticity refers directly to both a process of identification between the tourist and the toured and to the furtherance of this in the use of particular mechanisms of representation at 'warm' heritage sites (Selwyn, 1996). This will be discussed in the following chapter in relation to cultural identity and collective memory.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, we need to develop a fuller understanding of the actual processes at work in the consumption of toured objects, and in particular heritage centres. This requires us to return to the concept of objective authenticity or inauthenticity as these underlie the exhibitionary forms associated with heritage. This chapter now turns to the discussion of how objective authenticity or inauthenticity are experienced by visitors in the

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<sup>5</sup> Giddens (1991) has also focused on the link between reflexivity and an existential sense of the self in relation to the construction of self identity by constructing auto-biographies or narratives. This idea will be addressed in the following chapter in the context of collective identity and memory.

context of heritage exhibitions. In doing so, it seeks to consider how the authenticity of self discussed so far might be felt in this context.

In Chapter 1 I argued that heritage centres are defined in relation to their approach to providing the visitor with authentic experiences. This focuses on the creation of life-like simulations that feel real. This can be aligned with other popular forms of engaging with the past like television and contrasts with the authenticity offered to visitors in traditional museums (Silverstone, 1989). The latter is built on the concept of the auratic qualities of unique objects. These have already been referred to in the critique of heritage presented in section 2.2 of this chapter. These concepts of authenticity will be referred to collectively in this thesis as 'exhibitionary authenticities'. The differences between them are defined in relation to their objective authenticity or inauthenticity. For the purposes of clarity in the context of this study, the authenticity favoured by heritage centres will be titled 'simulated' authenticity while that associated with unique objects will be titled 'auratic' authenticity. The view of heritage visiting put forward in 2.2 stressed the inauthenticity of representations in heritage centres, although the actual processes involved in the visitor's consumption of either form of authenticity were not addressed in sufficient depth. Equally, as mentioned above, the discussion of how an authenticity of self is actually experienced in the context of heritage centres has not yet been discussed in this study. The following discussion will partially address this with a view to furthering our understanding of authenticity in the context of heritage visiting. This will be done so that these concepts can be figured into the theoretical framework formulated to date. This involves asking whether there is any relationship between the different types of authenticity that pertain to the consumption of heritage centres as toured objects. That is, how does the concept of an authenticity of self relate to the ideas of simulated and auratic authenticity? It is important to consider this because these are the concepts of authenticity usually associated with exhibitionary representations of the past or of other cultures and therefore central to the consumption of heritage centres.

## **2.5 Visitor Experiences of Exhibitionary Authenticity**

Brett understands that the reception of the visual, the simulated and the written word is experienced differently. In his analysis "the same event, described through the spoken word, the written word, the drawing, the photograph, the panorama, the tableau, the theatrical performance and the film, is delivered, experienced and understood through different senses and capacities, and according to different conventions" (Brett, 1996: 62). In defining heritage and heritage centres, I have already discussed how these different forms of representation produce different types of authenticity. This aspect of the discussion is concerned with this theme. It will focus on the mechanisms through which visitors experience the past in heritage

centres and the nature of the authenticity produced and experienced as a result. These mechanisms include media of communication and historical objects. As stated above, the different authenticities produced by these mechanisms are at the basis of many distinctions made between museums 'proper' and heritage centres. These two authenticities can be discussed in relation to the real 'thing' - an auratic experience of artefacts — and — the real 'feeling' - simulation using other media. As will be discussed here, the latter also focuses on a sense of the 'real' story. While the auratic authenticity associated with objects is understood to relate primarily to connoisseurial museums, the popular engagement with the past promised by heritage centres could also involve such objects. This is pertinent in the light of the particular case study at the centre of this body of research. In order to consider these concepts further, it is necessary to broaden the scope of literature with which we have been concerned. Specifically, the sources referred to here include the discussions of Benjamin (1973), Samuel (1994), Lowenthal (1995) Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Stewart (1999) and Kwint (1999).

### **Simulated Authenticity**

The concept of simulated authenticity refers here to the creation of an environment that makes us feel as though we were experiencing a particular event or situation, often using a wide variety of media to immerse us in a simulation of it, hence the promise by many heritage attractions to "bring the past alive". The same tendency could be noted in other media representations of the past, and particularly those that place subjects in a simulated past – the 1900 House (2000) or the Edwardian Country House (2002), for example. It is this promise of authenticity through the use of simulated authenticity that forms the basis of some of the criticisms of the heritage industry put forward in 2.2. Those who make this criticism (Hewison, 1987,1989; Walsh,1992) argue that rather than delivering the authenticity that is promised this sense of immediacy in fact contributes to making the visitor's experience inauthentic. The visitor is blinded by the appearance of reality and is unable to experience the representation critically. As argued previously, this may not necessarily be true. How might we consider the consumption of a past through this particular form of representation in an alternative way to that offered in 2.2? What exactly is the character of visitor experience within this concept of authenticity? An alternative examination of simulated authenticity in relation to visitor experience will now follow. This will be discussed in relation to the concepts of immediacy and informality produced through social, physical, sensory and cognitive interaction.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett differentiates between two modes of representing the past using simulated authenticity. These are the panoptic and the panoramic way of presenting historical narratives. The panoramic representation of history adheres to an evolutionary scheme or scenic effect that places the visitor outside of the representation offering him/her "a supreme

vantage point". The panoptic approach "offers the chance to be seen without being seen, to penetrate interior recesses, to violate intimacy" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 55). More often than not, it is the latter that dominates our experience of heritage centres. We find ourselves physically placed within the narrative. This leads to a sense of an immediate or direct communication between the past and the present. Samuel suggests that "if there is a unifying thread to these exercises in historical reconstruction it is the quest for immediacy, the search for a past which is palpably and visibly present" (Samuel, 1994: 175). For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the forfeiting of "third person omniscience for the partiality of the first person seems a small price to pay, for what is lost in historical comprehensiveness is gained in immediacy and detail, in the completeness and penetrability of a small virtual world" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 194). For Edwards (1996) "there remains a sustaining equation in the popular imagination between intimacy and truth" (Edwards, 1996: 211), suggesting that is not just in its immediacy but also in its intimacy that simulation seems so authentic. Drawing on Lowenthal (1985), Edwards argues that our experience of the past has become increasingly visual since the eighteenth century, and that the power of the visual experience lies in its immediacy, in its suggestion of a direct experience rather than a description of one. Furthermore, she stresses that the way in which the intimate is represented visually accentuates this, describing how "it is given a snapshot quality with its wider contextual framing stressing encounter, immediacy and realism, rather than aestheticised visions..." (Edwards, 1996: 212). This is not to say that images of 'the everyday' are not aestheticised, but rather, that their aesthetic is one of realism, or as Samuel (1994) has referred to it, of apparent informality. An image which appears to be natural because of its subject, but which is of course constructed, may be doubly powerful in its effect. Live displays too, can "create the illusion that the activities you watch are being done rather than represented, a practice that creates the effect of authenticity, or realness" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 55). This also lays emphasis on the perceived authenticity of narratives, which appear to come unmediated 'from the horses mouth'. This should not be regarded automatically as being a negative or a positive thing in itself with regard to the quality of our relationship with the past. Rather, it may deliver both possibilities. This immediacy is delivered both in relation to the content of narratives and their communication using a variety of media.

The criticism that simulated authenticity simply offers visitors a seamless, simultaneous alternative to the present has already been described in relation to the construction of visitor experiences in heritage centres as being inauthentic. Samuel (1994) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) disagree with this, particularly in relation to the interaction that can occur between visitors and live performers. Social interaction is important when "living history displays take the form of a tableaux vivants and are offered as a form of shared experience" (Samuel, 1994: 177). In this sense, Samuel places reconstruction in the context of "ancient forms of play" particularly in

relation to historical re-enactment in civic ceremonies. In her discussion of the heritage site that surrounds the Plymouth Rock in the USA, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes this interactivity in terms of visitors' active engagement in the site and those in it. While marketing initiatives describe a 'time-travelling experience' part of the power of the interaction between visitors and actors at the site is dependent on the rupture between past and present. While she acknowledges that "there may be times when the time-machine – the museological interface – recedes from awareness and visitors lose themselves in a pilgrim world...", she also describes how "visitors try to tempt the historical re-enactors to break frame..." watching to see if "...Pilgrims will tear the fabric of time and emerge as 1998 persons if only for a flash" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 199). The deliberate engineering of the representation of the past through living history is a source of pleasure for visitors in itself. Furthermore, in discussing the concept of social interaction and play, Samuel and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett are describing behaviour which can be characteristic of the holiday or leisure experiences, described by Urry (1990), Selwyn (1996) and Wang (1999, 2000).

This re-framing of narratives shifts the focus from the grand narrative to ordinary experience. To what extent the desire to experience this underbelly of the grand narrative in history is part of a voyeuristic wish to experience emotional drama or a sense of intimacy without feeling the pain, or a need to recover a sense of the humanity of history is open to debate. In fact, it could be thought of in relation to several issues. These include the breakdown of distinctions between high and low culture in post, or late, modernity, a contemporary compulsion to experience alternative lives voyeuristically through media simulations, the shift towards 'lived experience' from the 1960s onwards as a basis for both accessing and recording history or to alternative ways of managing learning environments. Certainly, as Samuel argues, the focus on the everyday can descend into morbidity. This is expressed in an interest in the intimate details of less pleasant or acceptable aspects of life. This might include ordinary bodily functions, like going to the toilet, extraordinary events like murder or war, or aspects of life sometimes hidden from view, like madness or criminality. This interest in a history that is hidden from view is not only found in heritage centres or the 'new' museum, but also on television and in associated books. Therefore, the current vogue for larger-than-life historical documentaries or historical fiction might also influence the visitor's experience of history as represented in heritage centres or museums<sup>6</sup>, and may feed a voyeuristic quality in contemporary life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A range of material of this type has been available in recent years. For example, a documentary screened during the period in which this research took place portrayed a series of events in Britain during the seventeenth century. The series, called *A Century of Troubles: England 1600-1700* (2000) focused on particular themes – one explored the advent of the bubonic plague, for example – using a combination of dramatisation and narration. An advertisement for a book club called The History Guild (*The Independent*, 13/04/02) shows a book of the series. The copyline beside it reads "Terror, Intrigue, Ambition and Death..." and, commenting on the emphasis on the seamier sides of

There are, however, alternative possibilities in thinking about this, as indicated above. Samuel refers to the emphasis placed by historians from the 1960s onwards on the 'ordinary' experiences of those who had 'lived' history. In this way, 'living history, emphasises empathetic responses. Personal observation and local knowledge is important in "eschewing the epic or grand narrative of history" (Samuel, 1994: 195). Visually, the use of old photographs in relation to research and their reproduction in terms of display during the 1960s supported this shift, and "helped to give history a human face" (Samuel, 1994: 190). Aurally, the portable tape-recorder participated in this widening of the ways we both recorded and experienced history, becoming a wider part of the move towards placing history on a human footing. Museological responses to the same shift also follow this broad interpretation. In this context, the re-framing of historical narratives and use of sensory experiences to communicate them are related to the formulation of an alternative way of learning history. Changing attitudes to education informed the development of living history approaches to exploring the past. The concept of learning by doing and through imaginative activity began in Britain in the 1920s but gained a wider currency much later on (Samuel, 1994). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett goes as far as to term the increased use of simulated authenticity in the heritage or museum setting as "a performance epistemology...and a performance pedagogy more akin to the nascent medium of virtual reality than to older models of learning" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 194). As indicated above, this concept is illustrated in more depth in museological literature that describes the shift away from academic systems of knowledge to broader based themes which stress the points of commonality between peoples, past and present, as a basis for creating understanding. An examination of the emphasis placed on connoisseurship has resulted in a move towards "cultural relativism" (Pearce, 1993: 25-27) where all subject matter is seen to be equal in value in relation to past human activity rather than to each other on an isolated plane. This has, for example, changed attitudes towards the relationship between mass-produced (inferior) and individually created (superior) objects, or the deeds of great individuals (superior) and the mass of the people (inferior), seeing both as being equally valuable sources of interest. It has also contributed to the re-framing of historical narratives often an aspect of the simulated authenticity on offer in heritage centres, or newer forms of museum. Such a re-framing of narratives concentrates on "people, their history, their lives, their relationships" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 10) and recognises the experiences of

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history, one critic referred to it as "the itchy and scratchy history show". The other books included here also bear testimony to a boom in 'popular history', both on television and in book form. Other titles include Simon Schama's A History of Britain and Tim Taylor's Digging up the Dirt with the Time Team – both companions to television programmes. More recently, Channel Four screened a documentary on prehistoric sex (2002).

<sup>7</sup> The development of concepts surrounding 'dark tourism' or 'fatal attractions', discussed by both Lennon (2000) and Rojek (1993) also relates to such a re-framing of historical narratives.

ordinary people as being relevant in the representation of the past. The stimulation of visitors' own way of relating to history implies communication through dialogue rather than a more limited academic monologue. This representation of the past becomes relevant to the present experiences of a broader section of society. This move away from intellectualism as the sole basis for communication shifts the emphasis from didacticism to what is seen to be the more effective goal of education in a broader sense of the word. This has been identified as the activity of drawing out the individuals "intellectual, creative, social and spiritual potential" as opposed to merely dispensing fact through instruction. Drawing on the writings of the broader base of educational philosophy, Maton-Howarth labels such opposing approaches to representation in exhibitionary contexts as behavioural and experiential. She describes behaviourist approaches to display as being similar to the type of education provided in the formal school system where pre-ordained memorised notes take precedence over the "development of first hand knowledge so that potentially exciting learning material loses its quality and becomes simply more facts to take in" (Maton-Howarth, 1989: 177). Experiential learning, in contrast, concentrates on the development of the aforementioned first hand knowledge through the facilitation of interaction between the individual and his or her environment. It is based on the belief that a system of learning which facilitates a "layering of experience, seen and interpreted in the light of previous experiences...allows learning to take place in context and facilitate meaning which is not only cumulative but transferable" (Maton-Howarth, 1989: 177). This can be understood to result from a simulational mode of authenticity, where visitors experience a 'hands on' approach to the telling of a narrative and a focus on ordinary experiences as a basis for the narrative itself. This involves the use of inter-active devices, role-playing, immersive approaches to representation and a concentration on interpretive themes that are rooted in common human experiences. Essentially, while behaviourist approaches to learning promote complete control of the 'teacher' (exhibition organiser) and attempt to instruct the 'student' (visitor) by dispensing fact, experiential learning remains in the control of the student by drawing on their previous life experiences in order to facilitate further understanding of themselves as well as others. In fact living history, Samuel asserts, "seeks to reconstruct grand narrative...through the medium of the self" (Samuel, 1994: 197). What Samuel suggests is that the broadness of narrative involved helps to place 'the self' in history, and therefore gain an understanding of self through others in historical and contemporary circumstances. Hannabus has referred to the role of simulated authenticity in this process as enabling "visitors to project themselves temporarily into 'themselves-as-if-long-ago'" (Hannabus, 2000: 354). This shift in the way that we experience the past and therefore in our perception of authenticity has perhaps undermined the status of archaeologists or other museum professionals, for example, who see their role as "the pursuit of the truth about the past using

empirical, scientific means" (Cooke, 1991: 25). It is not the practice of reconstruction that is criticised, but the extent to which this departs from scientific evidence in the attempt to create more powerful experiences for the visitor. However, the concern here is with the information supplied rather on the value of the communication that takes place. A suitable analogy might be found in the writing of museum labels, where the concern with naming the artefact correctly in archaeological terms so that it is meaningful to archaeologists obliterates any meaning the function of the piece might have for those outside of this group – for example to label a tool placed in isolation in a glass case as "axehead, 2000BC", tells us nothing of its meaning in the society in which it was produced nor of its meaning in our own society.

The senses are clearly central to the ways that we experience living history environments or simulated authenticity. Samuel describes a situation where "instead of a solemn hush, the visitor is assailed by a cacophony of sounds" (Samuel, 1994: 177). In its emphasis on sensory experience, this kind of authenticity is understood as a new form of knowledge in itself, as well as a new way of accessing the past. The generation of this knowledge involves a combination of social-interaction and other mental, emotional and physical experiences. The apparent immersion of the visitor in "an experiential situation" means that s/he "uses all her senses to plot her own path, at her own pace, through an imagined world" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 194). Furthermore, the nature of simulated authenticity does not reduce or compartmentalise our experiences, as traditional museum displays do, where "all distractions must be eliminated – no talking, rustling of paper, eating, flashing of cameras" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 57). Rather, simulated authenticity, in its combining of these points of engagement, amplifies our experience. Also, the use of media or activities associated with entertainment does not necessarily mean that our experience is not educational. Mental, emotional and physical engagements are experienced simultaneously and indeed may facilitate one another. As stated, the traditional approach to the organisation of exhibits draws on the ethos of many formal educational systems. This means that there is always the possibility "of developing in the minds of the public the same aversion for museums that many have felt for the classroom" (Maton Howarth, 1989: 187). If this is the case, then simulated authenticity works against our experiences of traditional museum displays and formal learning environments. If traditional modes of display signify authority, impenetrable expertise or negative educational experiences in the mind of the visitor, then simulated authenticity represents open exploration, access and alternative learning environments. This must surely contribute to the ways in which meanings are made in heritage centres.

A differentiation between exhibitionary authenticities has already been made. This section of the discussion has considered simulated authenticity. In summary, simulated authenticity is



produced using multi-sensory media and an interpretive focus on common experience. It is associated with a sense of immediacy, informality and intimacy. It moves away from what is conceived as the compartmentalisation of sensory experience in traditional museum environments, immersing the visitor completely in the 'representation'. This involves visual, tactile, vocal and aural interaction. Social interaction, where visitors may feel free to 'play' with other visitors or re-enactors, as well as the exhibits is also a feature of simulated authenticity. Emotional, cognitive and physical experiences are understood to be bound together. As part of this, new kinds of knowledge are stimulated. These factors set it apart from other ways of generating knowledge in more formalised environments like educational institutions and traditional museums. It is auratic, rather than simulated, authenticity that is associated with such museums. However, again we need to examine this in more depth. What is the nature of auratic authenticity, how is it produced and consumed and how is the visitor's experience of it different or similar to that of simulated authenticity?

### **Auratic Authenticity**

"The presence of the original is the pre-requisite to the concept of authenticity" (Benjamin, in Durham and Kellner, 2001: 50). Here, the concept of authenticity is rooted in the unique object – the real thing. This authenticity is experienced through the aura associated with the original object. How is this aura produced? It has been argued that an object's aura is conferred on it by authoritative, connoisseurial systems – for example, by being accepted into the museum, the object is awarded special significance. MacCannell sees the object's aura to be produced when it is given such a "socially constructed importance" (MacCannell, 1999: 47). When something is marked out as being special, authentic, it is given an aura. In relation to art objects, it is clear that to be told of an object's significance, that it is a work of genius for example, is an important factor in how we perceive it. It has an auratic quality because it has been marked out as an authentic work of genius. This can also be the case with historical objects that are rooted in everyday life – social historical objects. In this case, we regard them as having special qualities because they are representations of lives and lifestyles that no longer exist but that have become the focus of expert attention. In contrast to MacCannell, Benjamin defines aura as "a unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be" (Benjamin in Durham and Kellner, 2001: 65). He describes the object as having a distanced quality that makes it unapproachable, which he sees as being rooted in the original usage of art as part of social ritual. For Benjamin, the art object carries this ritualistic aura with it. However, it could be argued that objects that are not part of a 'special' environment like those in a junk shop or in an elderly relative's attic can still carry an auratic quality. These are not marked out as being special in any way, in the sense of MacCannell's socially constructed aura, nor do they carry Benjamin's ritualistic presence. However, following part of Benjamin's analysis, it can be argued that at least part of this type of

auratic quality is produced in the mind of the consumer through an awareness of the gap between its tangible and intangible qualities. This involves "the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (Benjamin, in Durham and Kellner, 2001: 50). This might be interpreted as a description of the object's closeness – its tangibility – and its distance – the intangible essence of the events it has witnessed. For its consumer, the power of the 'authentic' object perhaps lies in the tension between these two. We can see it, and perhaps even touch it, and in this sense we can 'know' it, but we are also aware of the intangibility of what it has known, its past. For Benjamin, the changes in the physical appearance of the object which occur over time testify to its "substantive duration", its age, while a record of changes in ownership testifies to its provenance.<sup>8</sup> They attest to the objects authenticity, and therefore the validity of its historical testimony. A reproduction of the object does not command the same authority – it loses the auratic qualities associated with the original object. If this is the case, both the physical nature of the object – the patina of age – and the imagination of the consumer would clearly be important parts of this process. By touching the object, the consumer imagines that they experience some of the intangible qualities that it represents. Like simulated authenticity, the past appears to be more immediately accessible in this way.

This approach leads us to consider that the power of objects does not lie entirely in our knowledge of the objective measurement of their authenticity, nor in a ritualistic association. The aura of authenticity might also be 'in the eye of the beholder' as they experience the tension between the tangible and intangible in the form of the object. It might be worth pursuing this understanding of authenticity a little further. As with simulated authenticity, emotional, mental and physical engagement is involved here. Again this occurs in relation to the immediacy of our sensory experience of objects and the narratives they represent. Objects once rooted in everyday life, at once both familiar and unfamiliar, seem less distant than the narratives of written history. Lowenthal asserts that "In resurrecting the way of life of the millions who have left no archival trace, artefacts partly redress the bias of written sources, and hence make historical knowledge more populist, pluralist and public" (Lowenthal, 1985: 244). This increased accessibility is related to the idea that a narrative history is mediated in a distanced way, whereas objects provide an apparent immediacy of experience directly accessible through our senses. "The shiver of contact with ancient sites brings to life their lingering barbarity or sanctity, and merely touching original documents vivifies the thoughts and events they describe" (Lowenthal, 1985: 246). The principal point being made here is similar to those made in relation to simulated authenticity. Specifically, it is being suggested here that auratic authenticity brings

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<sup>8</sup> This is also a part of the interpretation of auratic authenticity as being socially constructed because both patina and provenance are important in relation to connoisseurship, the system through which such authenticity is marked out.

the humanity of historical events closer to us. As argued above, simulated authenticity may give us a similar sort of access to the past. As discussed above, this is particularly so in its re-framing of historical narratives in favour of themes that focus on everyday life and ordinary people, and in its use of multi-sensory experiences.

Experiencing the past, or more specifically, memory, through objects has become a focus for discussion in the field of material culture. Kwint (1999) outlines three ways in which objects and memory interact. Firstly, he states that "objects are instrumental to the formation of consciousness enabling the self to prise its sense of separation from the world", and that as such, they facilitate recollection through becoming part of our mental maps of our own past life. That is, our memories of a person might be bound up with mental images of a piece of jewellery or the fabric of their clothing. Secondly, existing objects stimulate recollection through our encounters with them. When we come across an object, it might trigger a series of associations – memories – in our own minds. Thirdly, objects become documents, "storing information beyond individual experience." Furthermore, he sees our encounters with objects, particularly in the second and third sense, as emphasising evocation. Evocation is an unpredictable process and for Kwint it "implies an open dialogue between the object, the maker and the consumer in constructing meaning" (Kwint, 1999: 2-3). So how is this dialogue stimulated in relation to the consumer? How precisely is the aura of authenticity felt? Is it possible to further define the role of the materiality of the object and the interaction between it and the person experiencing it?

Lowenthal (1985) discusses how we may experience 'relics', or historical objects in more detail. Decay for example plays a part in our experience of them. Romanticist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries placed particular importance on the experience of the patina of the ruin. The aesthetic pleasure derived from ruins – that is the 'look of age' – was meaningful in relation to a consciousness of one's own mortality. Lowenthal states that, for example, "In portending the inevitable end, the ageing of artefacts reconciled the observer to his own impending fate" (Lowenthal, 1985: 179). Stewart addresses this issue in a contemporary context when she describes objects to be "totems of the dead, totems by which we carry forward a memory of the dead..." (Stewart, 1999: 28). If we accept this, the apparent transience of material things, communicated through their decay, can heighten the sense of our own transience. The reverse of this – an awareness of immortality in relation to them or their users – is also true. Through their very existence, objects indicate both a sense of distance from, and a continuance of, the past. The look of age then, implies an "accretion of experience". Furthermore, the tangible evidence of this experience acts as a form of continuation of the experience, linking "past and present, reassuring us that life goes on even if death is around the corner" (Lowenthal, 1985: 179). The co-existence of historical objects and their modern contexts

is underlined. Where written history demarcates past and present very clearly, we imagine artefacts to straddle both simultaneously. This 'presentness' of past has already been raised as a defining factor of heritage as an inheritance in Chapter 1.

Stewart (1999) discusses this in relation to our sensory experience of art objects, and particularly in relation to touch. As mentioned earlier, in encountering a historical object, we imagine that we know its life, that is, the lives of those that surrounded it, that left their mark on it. The marks of its usage play a special role perhaps, in allowing us to feel we are accessing its memory. In this sense, the experiences we imagine that the object stores for us are released through touch. In touching the object, it touches us. It is in touching the object that the tension between the tangible and the intangible – the aura- is felt. Touch makes the object more real to us perhaps in that it doesn't just represent or symbolise a set of experiences in the way an image does – although this too is an important part of our experience – it makes us feel that we have a part in those experiences. Touching an object has "the capacity to cross the threshold between the inanimate and the animate, the tomb and the flesh, the dead and the living" (Stewart, 1999: 35). This is particularly relevant to a discussion of the experience of historical objects outside of traditional museums in more informal or immersive settings. As discussed above touch might be more acceptable amidst simulated authenticity, or in architectural settings, where we are enveloped by the building, and where touch is inevitable. Indeed, museums are described as an "elaborately ritualised practice of refraining from touch" (Stewart, 1999: 28). So our experience of authentic objects must be particularly auratic when we feel we are touching something we aren't normally allowed to touch. As articulated in Chapter 1 and as discussed above in relation to simulated authenticity, heritage centres signify the opposite of traditional museums and are therefore partially defined by them. This means that our experience of touching objects in some contexts is heightened by our knowledge of not touching authentic objects in other contexts. However, synaesthesia – the experience of one sense through another – also plays a role here. Stewart describes the way in which, for example, "the cold, dead, silent, smooth or variegated surface of sculpture or porcelain evokes sensations of touch, warmth, smell, taste and hearing; the inanimate musical box pours forth its mechanical notes at our touch as if responding to a living thing" (Stewart, 1999: 24). Whether part of the process of synaesthesia, or a wider set of processes the interaction between people and objects is evocative. In museums, when we turn from the object to the explanation beside it we are pursuing our desire to touch the object. The visual is paramount in our experience of many historical objects. Although we are frustrated, by looking at an object we must also be able to anticipate touching it. In Stewart's analysis, "visual perception becomes a mode of touching when comparisons are made and the eye is placed upon...relations between phenomena" (Stewart, 1999: 24), that is, rough and smooth, cold and hot.

Divisions are also sometimes made between discussions of sensory experiences and thought processes. By contrast, Stewart attempts to "find a way of approaching these questions that is more engaged with the dynamic between sense experience and thought than with their division" (Stewart, 1999: 18). Kavanagh (2000) also argues that the sensual experience of museums or other forums for auratic authenticity is not separate from other ways of experiencing them. Although she places the senses in a central position, she also argues that "...the brain allows the senses in particular to engage in such delights as a means of lifting the capacity for instruction and cognitive adaptation..." (Kavanagh, 2000: 174). She goes on to say that objects "bring an instinctive understanding of what it is to be human and with that comes the potential for empathy and the capacity to learn about others" (Kavanagh, 2000: 148). It may be then that the physical experience of authentic objects in relation to both their materiality and the aura they carry involves processes of evocation, empathy and imagination which, rather than being separate to, are bound up with cognitive understanding. I have already suggested that this is equally the case with simulated authenticity. Lastly, although our sensory experiences are divided (we hear with our ears, we see with our eyes, etc.) they become part of a more general experience of the way our body interacts with the world around us. Because our consciousness operates as a way of regulating these experiences, "the modulation of the senses takes part in a dynamic that is the core of subjectivity itself" (Stewart, 1999: 19). The senses, Stewart argues, are a boundary or threshold between our internal selves and our external environment. Similarly, Kavanagh has defined the museum as a 'dream-space' "where our inner experiences find a mesh with the outer experiences which museums provide" (Kavanagh, 2000: 175). The physical experience of our world in this context is nothing less than the construction of selfhood.

Two approaches to authenticity in the context of visitor consumption of the past in heritage centres have been outlined. Although we have discussed them separately, visitor experience of auratic and simulated authenticities share common features. In both instances the particular authenticity concerned is experienced through participating in sensory, emotional, imaginative, physical and cognitive interaction. These are not separate in their effect but are bound together in the production of meaning. In relation to simulated authenticity, social interaction may also be included here. This is also produced by the focus on the ordinary and the familiar in the way that narratives are framed. Physically and conceptually, the visitor is knitted into the narrative. The effect of this is to produce a sense of informality and immediacy in accessing the past. In focusing on this, visitors may experience both auratic and simulated authenticity as being oppositional to their experiences in more formal environments like those of the traditional museum, and formal educational systems.

This section began by asking whether there was any relationship between the different types of authenticity that pertain to the consumption of heritage centres. Also, having discussed the possibility that consumers of toured objects, like heritage centres, might be experiencing an authenticity of self, this section set out to consider how that concept relates to the ideas of simulated and auratic authenticity. It is important to do this because these are the concepts of authenticity usually associated with exhibitionary representations of the past or of other cultures and are therefore central to the consumption of heritage centres. This thesis argues that in experiencing both simulated and auratic authenticities, visitors may also experience an authenticity of self. If creativity and participation are entailed in descriptions of the tourist's search for an authenticity of self, they have also emerged as being aspects of the consumption of both auratic and simulated authenticities, particularly in the context of social, mental, emotional and physical interaction. It was also argued that engaging with toured objects in this way is a form of resistance to the constraints of modernity felt in everyday life. Equally, it is also possible to argue that to seek out the historical narratives presented in heritage centres may also be read as a bid to resist both the meta-narratives of official history and the methods used to communicate them. This may be particularly the case in formal educational environments and traditional museums. Experiencing authenticity in the context of exhibitionary forms may contribute to this. I am making two principal connections here between exhibitionary authenticity and the authenticity of self. These pertain to the ways in which we experience ourselves through the opportunities for creativity and participation available within exhibitionary authenticities; and through acts of resistance to the distanced meta-narratives of history by focusing on alternative histories, and on immediacy and informality in their representation.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter has outlined concepts surrounding the experiences of tourists and heritage visitors in relation to themes of authenticity and in-authenticity. In response to the issues raised in Chapter 1, it set out to consider the following questions:

- As heritage is related to the past and to places, why and how are pasts and places consumed? What role do concepts of authenticity play in this?
- What is the relationship between this and modernity, post-modernity and globalisation?
- What are the concepts of authenticity associated with exhibitionary forms?
- How do these concepts of authenticity affect our understanding of the consumption of heritage centres?

The first section of this discussion focused on those critiques that see the construction and therefore the consumption of the past at heritage centres to be inauthentic. This inauthenticity is caused by:

- The rise in heritage as a response to a sense of decline in post-industrial society, the demands of the profit oriented agenda of an enterprise culture and the desires of the post-modern consumer;
- The singularity, selectivity and nostalgic undertones of its narratives;
- The way in which these narratives are defined by present day concerns rather than an objective historiographical stance;
- The production of a spectacle of the past that closes off the possibility of understanding history as an ongoing process therefore creating an incomplete, inauthentic representation;
- The possibility of some class interests being represented better than others in contrast to the promise of the heritage industry to make the representation of the past more accessible;
- The shift in emphasis from public to private interests in the museum sector and therefore the shift from educational concerns towards those of entertainment.

The way in which heritage centres are discussed within this group of critiques implies that heritage visitors:

- Share the same motivation for visiting or engaging with heritage;
- Share the same 'reading position' as each other and as the producers of heritage attractions;
- Accept the narratives put forward by the heritage industry unproblematically;
- Do not, or cannot, engage in critical thought while being entertained or indeed that reflection and learning do occur during the course of particular forms of entertainment.

I have proposed that more recent discussions of consumers of representational systems offers a richer set of explanations than this earlier rather mechanical and uni-linear model of communication. This approach demands that we take account of the complex nature of meaning creation in the context of heritage centres, and the potentially active role of the visitor in this process. This theme will be drawn out further in relation to the particular approach adopted in the empirical aspect of this thesis and will be discussed in detail in Section 2, the Methodology.

Ultimately, this part of Chapter 2 suggested that the view-point put forward here has much to offer in making us aware of the potential effects of representing the past solely for the purpose of generating economic profit and without concern for the wider importance and purpose of historical exploration. However, it does little to extend our understanding of the actual processes at work in the consumption of heritage centres. The remainder of the chapter aimed to address

this issue by focusing on an alternative conception of such processes. It began by returning to the concept of reflexivity, and went on to link it to a recasting of the concepts of authenticity that may be at work in the context of heritage centres. This pertained in particular to the relationship between the underlying motivations of visitors and their interaction with both historical objects and representational strategies there. This issue of motivation will be addressed again in relation to the connections between self-identity and individual and collective memory in Chapter 3.

It had already been argued in the first section of this chapter that subjects act reflexively in their use of representational media to negotiate their experiences of late-modernity. This part of the chapter suggested that heritage visitors may well be using heritage centres, or other representations of the past or of particular places, in this way. Although the loss of these things is an implicit aspect of our experiences of modernity, we are also able to act reflexively in dealing with our circumstances using the channels that they provide us with. Part of this action is in the re-building of aspects of the self which are left unsatisfied by our daily experiences. This analysis was understood to parallel one approach to the construction of tourist experiences, built on the concept of existential authenticity. It was argued that the authenticity that has been at the heart of discussions of tourist experiences either pertains to an objective authenticity or a symbolic authenticity. This thesis favours the analysis of tourist experiences in terms of the search for, and satisfaction of, an existential or hot authenticity denied in everyday life. This occurs as a result of the influence of modern institutions, abstract systems, which introduce a sense of inner imbalance. This search focuses on the experience of toured objects that satisfy this need, whether they are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic. This re-orientates our understanding of tourist experiences away from the idea that tourists seek either an objective authenticity in things, people, places or events; or playful, ironic and essentially inauthentic experiences. Indeed, it was shown how toured objects, as the focus of a search for an existential authenticity, can be either authentic or inauthentic. This is because the authenticity that is achieved or sought after is within the self. It was suggested that the theory of existential authenticity in tourist experiences can be linked to the theory of the reflexive subject. This is because both are rooted in the idea that modernity affects the experience of self and that we, as reflexive subjects, seek ways to counteract this. This chapter finished by stating that this theoretical stance offers greater possibilities for a richer understanding of heritage visiting than that described initially. The third part of this chapter explored the concepts of exhibitionary authenticities in relation to both heritage centres and museums; that is, the strategies of interpretation and mechanisms of display used in these contexts. These were described as an auratic authenticity, based on the historical object and simulated authenticity, based on the use of a range of interactive or immersive media. It found that aspects of both types of authenticity,



although frequently constructed as being polaric, may be experienced similarly. This includes their provision of a more immediate, informal and direct access to the past through imaginative, physical, sensory, social and cognitive interaction. These activities were interpreted as being both participative and creative. Furthermore, the experience of the past in this way may be read by visitors as being oppositional to the learning environments they experience in traditional museums or formalised educational systems. Experiencing such exhibitionary authenticities counteracts their experiences of mainstream education.

I will refer to this set of ideas as the 'authenticity of self' thesis, which can be summarised as follows:

- The current fascination with the past through heritage should be located in the context of late modernity, rather than in relation to a critique of post-modernity;
- The over-rationalisation, routinisation and disintegration of traditional structures associated with modernity are understood to create an imbalance in our lives. This imbalance is experienced in terms of a lack of authenticity of the self;
- The understanding of late modern subjects as experiencing both a sense of loss as a result of the processes of modernity and a growth in reflexivity using the channels provided by the conditions of modernity. Activities that take place outside of everyday routines, like tourism and heritage visiting or engaging with the past or other cultures through a range of mediated experiences, can be thought of in this way;
- Such experiences are reflexive in that they both recognise imbalance in everyday life and attempt to resist or counteract this by searching for experiences that will restore the subject's sense of balance or authenticity;
- Such an authenticity can be experienced in the context of experiences that are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic;
- The character of this authenticity is experienced through objects that involve the subject's own emotional, physical and mental participation. This engagement can be characterised by creativity, spontaneity, sensuality, social-interaction, risk and adventure;
- The exhibitionary authenticities associated with heritage centres also focus on these types of interaction. Therefore they may provide the visitor with an opportunity to experience an authenticity of self.

It was stated in Chapter 1 that, alongside authenticity, identity is a major theme in discussing heritage and heritage visiting. This thesis now turns to the concept of collective identity, with a view to understanding how it can also contribute to our understanding of the consumption of heritage centres.

## **SECTION 1    REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Chapter 3    Identity and the Consumption of Heritage**

#### **3.1    Introduction**

I have already stated that the purpose of this review of literature is to consider how we might reflect on the motivations and experiences of heritage visitors theoretically. Although focusing primarily on the theme of authenticity, the previous chapter raised the issue of identity as a component of the authenticity experienced in the consumption of toured objects. However, as stated, the concept of identity involved here is essentially individual. This is at odds with the vast bulk of discussions of heritage where collective identity is highlighted as a principal theme in both its construction and consumption. The following discussion focuses on the theme of collective identity in considering why visitors seek out experiences in heritage centres, how visitors experience the representations they encounter there and the factors that contribute to the formation of these meanings.

Several problems were raised in relation to the critique of heritage outlined in section 2.2 in the previous chapter. One of the most important of these is the way in which the implied heritage visitors in these discussions are constructed as being homogenous in their consumption of heritage. This non-differentiation of visitors pertains to both their motivations for visiting and their experiences once there, and reflects the influence of earlier models of communication for both museums and other media (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 1995). This model understands visitors to be at the end of a uni-linear process in which they receive messages sent by exhibition organisers or media producers in a straightforward way. However, as raised earlier, work emerging from several inter-related fields in the last twenty years (Hall, 1980, 1997; Lidchi, 1997; Silverstone, 1989; Silverstone and MacDonald, 1990; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 1995) has understood visitor/audience experiences in more complex terms. Rather than understanding visitors/audience members as passive receivers, newer approaches recognise that they bring their own experiences to bear on their readings of exhibitions or media presentations. This may produce meanings other or in addition to those intended by the text. Therefore the polyvocal, rather than monovocal, quality of communication in museums and heritage attractions is recognised (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 1995). The various strands of this polyvocality are formed by sets of variables within the experiences of visitors. Amongst the most significant of these is identity. This section sets out to consider what collective identities are involved in the consumption of heritage, and how this relates to individual identity. As raised in the previous chapters, the consumption of heritage centres can and should be considered in relation to the consumption of other exhibitionary media, like museums, and a wider range of representational

media concerned with the past. In order to understand the consumption of heritage centres fully, this section then must also ask what role identity plays in the consumption of these related fields.

As stated previously, the central question that informs this thesis is why and how do we consume heritage centres? If identity is to be considered as a major factor in answering this, this discussion must be informed by the following questions:

- What are the collective identities associated with the consumption of heritage centres as exhibitionary forms, and as representations of the past and place?
- What is the relationship between the consumption of the past and places, collective identities and concepts of modernity, post-modernity and globalisation?
- What is the relationship between collective identity and the authenticities discussed in the previous chapter?

The theoretical discussions on which this chapter is based can be divided in two. One group considers the tastes associated with different class-identities to be one set of variables that influence our choices in where and how we engage with the past. The other focuses on heritage as a tool in the expression of belonging to imagined communities, particularly that of the nation. Having discussed these strands of thought, this chapter will go on to consider the possible relationships between them and the concepts of authenticity understood to be central to our experience of heritage and heritage centres, established in the previous chapter.

### **3.2 Class Identity and the Consumption of Heritage**

The idea that there is a relationship between socio-economic identity, the act of museum and heritage visiting (Prentice and Light, 1994; Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Merriman, 1991; Heinich, 1988; Hood, 1983) and ways of engaging with the past of places (Urry, 1990) has emerged as an important one in latter years. This idea is part of a wider body of thought that understands class identity to be a particularly powerful variable within consumption practices (Bourdieu, 1984) and has been described as "the socially structured ways in which goods are used to demarcate social relationships" (Featherstone, 1990: 8). It follows then that this discussion will consider how heritage and museum visiting are used to demarcate such relationships. Therefore, this section will discuss how patterns of consumption suggest a link between establishing or maintaining socio-economic identities and heritage and museum visiting. It will do so by asking:

- Who visits museums and heritage attractions?
- What motivates these groups to do so?
- What experiences do they favour there and why?
- How does this relate to the ways in which these and other groups engage with the past in wider contexts?

Exactly who visits heritage attractions and museums? Several surveys conducted in Ireland (TDI, 1994, 1996) and studies conducted further afield (Prentice and Light, 1994; Merriman, 1991; Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Hood, 1983) have established that visitors tend to come from groups of higher social status with a higher degree of education. For example, Merriman (1991) found that the average visitor in Britain was from the ABC1 social groups and had been educated beyond minimum age. Prentice and Light (1994) also identified higher social status groups as being in the majority amongst visitors to Welsh heritage attractions. Indeed, professional and managerial workers were over-represented by three and four times when matched to statistics regarding the general population, while all other groups were markedly under-represented (Prentice and Light, 1994: 91-2). This situation is mirrored in the number of participants who were found to have continued in formal education after the age of 18. Again, this group were over-represented by three times their representation in the general population (Prentice and Light, 1994: 94).<sup>9</sup> So museum visiting is primarily an activity associated with higher social status groups and those who stay in education for longer periods. Furthermore, this remains the case despite both the huge increase in and the change in nature of heritage sites that represent the past. Socio-economic identity is clearly an important factor in understanding why some sections of society choose to visit museums and heritage attractions and some do not. Why is this?

Some studies have analysed the impact of class identity on consumption practices generally (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas and Isherwood, 1980), in relation to heritage and museum visiting (Heinich, 1989; Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991, Merriman, 1991) and in relation to the consumption of place (Urry, 1990, 1995; Urry and Rojek, 1997). These put forward the idea that the choice of particular goods or activities demonstrates one's fluency in particular sets of knowledge or tastes. This indicates the degree of cultural, rather than economic, capital that one possesses. The demonstration of such competencies is used to draw distinctions between one class group and another. So, the particular goods or activities chosen by the consumer operate as communicators or signs of these distinctions. According to Bourdieu (1984), the system that enables us to make the correct choices within our groups in terms of taste is learned in childhood and is referred to as 'habitus'. Habitus might be described as a mechanism through which taste, cultural appropriation, is formed. Similarly, but drawing on psychologically rather than sociologically based work, Prentice and Light assert that the practice of heritage visiting must be understood in relation to achieving a sense of "competence and enhancement of self-esteem" based on past experiences. These past experiences are understood to be formed by the way in which "an individual has been socialised", a process in which "the family is the key agent". There is also a subsequent need to "maintain a self image which is acceptable to peer groups" (Prentice and Light, 1994: 98). This explanation relates closely to the concept of habitus above. Although it is more concerned with individual units rather than broader social formations, it does refer to the relationship between the individual and the group. It is in this interaction that some aspects of identity are formed. For Bourdieu (1984, 1991), Merriman (1991) and Urry (1990) exercising taste, although enacted on an individual basis, will always be a variant of group practice. They argue that consumption is therefore a social, rather than an a-social experience.

Bourdieu describes the social system as having two principal orders – the dominant and the dominated. However, within the former exist two factions – a primary, dominant group concerned with material reproduction, the sphere of production and economic wealth, and a secondary, group concerned with the legitimisation of material reproduction through the exercise of symbolic power. The second group is engaged in a constant struggle with the first over the legitimacy of cultural rather than economic activity. In Bourdieu's analysis, the second of these groups include sub-groups such as the *petit bourgeoisie*, the *new bourgeoisie* and the *intellectuals*. The service class, as discussed by Urry (1990), and in particular a group of 'cultural intermediaries' who possess particularly high levels of cultural capital can also be included. Furthermore, Bourdieu argues, the cultural field is one in which class relations become

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<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of visitors to Irish museums and heritage attractions are documented in Appendix 3.

particularly reinforced. This is because cultural practice largely involves objects or activities which hold minimum use value, and more often than not require specific competencies, knowledge or learned behaviour on behalf of the participant if they wish to 'play the game'. This is expressed very clearly in the creation and consumption of art, for example (see Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991). The availability and control over time is also of importance here. That is, when one decides to invest one's time in a particular range of cultural practices low in use value, one is distinguishing oneself from those who are, or can only be, concerned with the investment of their time in goods or activities with a high use-value. John Urry's (1990) work on the tourist gaze focuses on the relationship between socio-economic identity and the consumption of places through tourism. This is pertinent to this study because he argues that museum or heritage visiting and a sense of the past of a place in a more general context, can be important elements in the touristic consumption patterns of some socio-economic groups. As discussed previously, the development of Urry's thesis is based on a belief that much of the literature about consumption wrongly presumes an a-social individual, and therefore, a-social patterns of consumption. Following Bourdieu's theory of habitus, Urry recognises that the consumption of tourist services is social because it always involves a particular social grouping and that different holiday experiences are constructed specifically for these groupings (Urry, 1990: 25). Most simply, this might be described as the ways in which particular groups look upon aspects of the landscapes or townscapes they visit. That is, to be a tourist is to experience our surroundings in a particular way, "it speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so". Places therefore become objects of the "tourist gaze" of particular social groups (Urry, 1990:1).

So, while some studies have acknowledged the importance of pragmatic barriers to museum visiting – distance, ownership of a car, availability of money and leisure time and so on (Prentice and Light, 1994; Merriman, 1991) – an emphasis is placed on the socio-cultural factors that may inform one's choice of leisure activity. This is because it has been widely established that a defining characteristic of museum and heritage visitors is that they belong to higher social status groups. It is argued that higher social status groups are predominant amongst those who visit heritage institutions because engaging in this activity demonstrates a particular set of competencies that are important within this group's culture (Bourdieu, 1984, Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Merriman, 1991). Merriman signals this when he asserts that "...society can be divided into those who see museum visiting as part of their culture, and those who reject it" (Merriman, 1991: 5). How then has the audience for museums and heritage attractions grown, as evidenced by the number of new museums or other attractions that have opened over the last two decades (Hewison, 1987; Urry, 1990; Merriman, 1991; Samuel, 1994)? Rather than understanding this increase as any real broadening of the social groups who access museums, Merriman understands it to be a result of increased access to education for longer periods, more

affluence and the gradual erosion of working class culture by more middle-class concerns (Merriman, 1991: 92). That is, there has been a growth in the middle-classes generally, and in specific middle-class sub-groups (Urry, 1990). Merriman states that as improved social status occurs, the "connotations of museum visiting make it an appropriate leisure activity with which to signal a change in status" (Merriman, 1991: 5). Why is this? What motivates groups of higher social status to visit heritage attractions and museums in particular? Why is museum or heritage visiting not part of the culture of other socio-economic groups? In other words, what are the sets of tastes that distinguish one class culture from another, and how is this expressed in relation to heritage and museum visiting?

Prentice and Light advance their analysis by examining possible motivations in relation to education and a prior interest in the past amongst visitors. Drawing on studies conducted previously (Hood, 1983), they assert that higher status groups consider learning and the constructive use of leisure time to be important in choosing leisure activities. Visitors to museums in particular, they contend, value "having an opportunity to learn, the challenge of a new experience, and worthwhile use of leisure time. They suggest that "professional and managerial workers were far more likely to visit monuments to be informed, whereas manual workers were more likely to visit for relaxation and entertainment".<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, social groups not represented amongst museum visitors regard "museums as being educational rather than entertaining, suggesting that such people did not regard education as a legitimate use of their leisure time" (Prentice and Light, 1994: 98). Similarly, this study also discovered that managerial and professional workers indicated a specific interest in history while manual workers favoured a general interest or sightseeing motive. In their analysis, the researchers suggest that therefore "middle-class visitors tend to display more specific and purposeful behaviour..." (Prentice and Light, 1994: 108). According to this body of research, choosing to visit museums or heritage attractions may express a taste for what are perceived to be more serious, more worthwhile pursuits and therefore a desire for self-advancement, or perhaps, the advancement of one's children. In this way, one distinguishes oneself from other groups whose leisure practices express an alternative set of desires – the preference for immediate pleasure rather than investing in cultural advancement, the desire for entertaining, socially interactive experiences rather than activities regarded as being more constructive or worthwhile, and so on.

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<sup>10</sup> There is a division to be made between tourists and locals, as well as between class cultures, in terms of motivations for visiting. Tourists are understood to be more 'purposeful', while local residents tend to give more general recreational reasons for their visit (Prentice and Light, 1994, 109). Other factors like age are also understood to be important (Prentice and Light 1994; Merriman 1991).



Merriman also describes two distinct approaches to experiencing the past in a wider context than simply in heritage attractions and museums. The first is through personal sense of memory and attachment to people, places and things, and the second to a more distanced, impersonal sense of the past. Merriman describes the first as being heavily reliant on "memory, imagination and conversation in which history is passed on verbally" and the second as something which has "no direct connection with one's personal past, being expressed in terms of the history of other people, of the region, the nation, or the world" (Merriman, 1991: 5). Furthermore, Merriman argues that this distinction is expressive of differences in class cultures, the former approach being preferred by groups of lower social status, and the latter by groups of higher social status. The non-museum visitor, Merriman suggests, "prefers to experience the past at home, and the most important sense of the past for them is personal and local" (Merriman, 1991: 5). In contrast those who visit museums on a regular basis tended to be those most involved in other formalised ways of engaging with the past. This included genealogical research, for example. Merriman explains that this may be because of its relative formality, and the possibility of "needing to be at home in an academic culture" (Merriman, 1991: 122), like that of libraries or other genealogical research facilities. This study found a similar division in how material culture is used to access the past. Those from groups with a high degree of cultural capital are more likely to engage in formalised collecting activities, and are also more likely to own an object over fifty years old. The most frequently cited reason for valuing this object was that it was beautiful, as opposed to reasons related to family links or monetary value, for example. For Merriman this "suggests that it is the aesthetic disposition which characterises their responses to objects both in museums and in their own possession...another badge of distinction, a demonstration of mastery of the correct codes, and of distance from necessity" (Merriman, 1991: 126). In contrast, non-museum going participants indicated that the object's connection with family provided the main point of interest again "demonstrating the close personal way in which they gain access to the past" (Merriman, 1991: 126). The use of objects in this way differs to the approach to family history that favours research into the family tree in a formalised way. In fact, in Merriman's view, the informality of "thinking about the family" in contrast to a defined activity like genealogy suggests that "what perhaps characterises the approach of the dispossessed to the past is...a sense of the past which may be difficult to articulate and provide few manifestations other than family heirlooms and souvenirs" (Merriman, 1991: 127).

The degree of contextualisation available at heritage attractions is also an issue in considering the heritage visitor in terms of socio-economic identity. Although a majority of museum-going participants in Merriman's study agreed that "castles and historic houses bring the past to life better than museums", by and large they tended to place more emphasis on interpreting the past without 'help' – that is, without a guide or an emphasis on contextual information. Those who do

not visit museums or historical sites tend to prefer to experience the past through television, where there is a great deal more contextualisation of the narrative – indeed it might be suggested that there has to be a strong narrative framework to begin with. When attitudes towards the further development or increased interpretation of the sites concerned were examined empirically by Prentice and Light they found that there was a high level of satisfaction amongst visitors with the sites as they were. For the researchers this suggests that visitors were “conservative, ...purist in their views” and favoured “presenting them as largely underdeveloped ruins...the aesthetic presentation of historic relics” (Prentice and Light, 1994: 111). An interesting parallel can be drawn here between Merriman’s (1991) assertion that higher status groups – that is those groups with a high degree of cultural capital – appropriate the past in a more distanced, rational and aesthetic way than other groups. This approach is perhaps best represented in traditional museum displays or heritage sites with a low degree of contextual input. Interesting data also suggests some reasons why non-visitors do not visit museums and heritage attractions- that is, why they are not considered to be a part of their culture. In Merriman’s study, for example, differences between attitudes to a descriptive statement about castles and historic houses were established. A majority of museum-going participants disagreed with the statement “They only show the life of the rich”. However, a much higher number of participants who do not visit museums agreed with the statement indicating that “an image of exclusiveness is a strong deterrent factor for those who tend not to visit them” (Merriman, 1991: 70). This sense of exclusion relates to attitudes about the perceived content of the stories these attractions tell. Apparently, non-visitors may not identify with the histories displayed at such heritage attractions.

Bearing Merriman’s description of the diverse ways in which visitors and non-visitors experience the past at heritage attractions, as well as in other contexts, it can be suggested that there is a perceived difficulty amongst non-visitors in experiencing the past in a more personal way in museums. This would mean that there is no sense of the self in museums for non-visitors in terms of the interpretive focus or the way in which this is presented. It is in this way perhaps that museums have come to be regarded as institutions that favour one particular set of values over another. Thought of in polaric terms, we might understand this as a distinction made between raucous / refined, social / solitary, loud / quiet, sensual / cerebral, emotional / rational, or as Merriman describes it, “the sacred versus the profane” (Merriman, 1991: 88). For Bourdieu, this distinction operates between “the elite of the dominant and the mass of the dominated” through the avoidance by the ‘elite’ of “all forms of levelling, trivialisation and massification” (Bourdieu, 1984: 468). Furthermore, Prentice and Light put forward the idea that the profile of producers of heritage experiences matches that of middle-class visitors. Therefore, “the production or supply of heritage is similarly, and traditionally, in the hands of the middle-

classes: middle-class producers define, present and interpret heritage for middle-class consumers" (Prentice and Light, 1994: 93)<sup>11</sup>, Considering the results of Merriman's and Prentice and Light's studies, this implies that interpretation and display at museums or heritage sites would favour a concentration on objects rather than on the cultural processes at work in both their original production and consumption. If this were the case, one might expect audiences for the past as presented at museums or heritage attractions to have widened given the emphasis now placed on contextualisation and the concept of 'edutainment'.<sup>12</sup> But this is not the case. So why do museums and heritage attractions continue to be the focus of higher social status groups, despite the change in approach taken to interpretation and display?

To begin to answer this, it may be useful to place these findings within the broader historical context of museum development and visiting (Bailey, 1978; Merriman, 1991; Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Prior, 2002). The origins of the public museum in the nineteenth century lie in both a philanthropic desire to increase access to knowledge, and also as part of the social apparatus used to ensure the dominance of middle-class values. In relation to leisure activity, this was expressed in a desire to encourage more rational, educationally based entertainment and to discourage more raucous, unrefined and perhaps 'dangerous' activities based on the more physical, socially interactive excesses of traditional fairs and the gin-palace. The dangers feared here were in the perception that large, uncontrolled gatherings of the lesser classes could provide the opportunity for revolt against the system that had provided the middle-classes with an opportunity to prosper. It might be suggested that the idea of leisure activity as a way of distinguishing between oneself and others then has been an essential component in the discourse of the museum, and that the historical longevity of this idea in itself has contributed to its deep-seated nature (Merriman, 1991: 88). It might be argued here then that the perception that visiting museums, and indeed accessing the past, is a general 'good thing' to do in one's leisure time draws on a discourse rooted in social distinction. As a further argument in favour of this idea, Merriman suggests that "museums, as part of the dominant culture, tend to be recognised as legitimate even by large numbers of those who do not participate in them" (Merriman, 1991: 65). However, Merriman also considers that both the physical environment of museums or historic properties and the strength of associations they have with the early objectives of public museums might be intimidating to non-visitors (Merriman, 1991: 71). This

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<sup>11</sup> This idea has also formed the basis of much of the criticisms levelled at the traditional museum, particularly those that call for the museum to become more accessible to a wider audience (see Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Pearce 1991, Kavanagh 1991).

<sup>12</sup> This change has occurred as a result of several factors. These include the changing perception of the nature of the educational role of the museum, the pressures exerted on traditional museums by the need to exist in a commercial culture and audience expectations created by the heritage industry or other more contextualised ways of experiencing the past, like television.

may also be true of other heritage attractions, despite the change in approach to the presentation of material there, given that they may partially exist within the discourse of the museum, as argued in Chapter 1. Rather than understanding heritage attractions as a departure from the concerns of the traditional museum, non-visitors may simply regard them as an extension of it.

But what of the other aspects of the trajectory of the heritage attraction – that is the media-based contextualisation of the narratives they tell which some argue are rooted in the appeal of ‘three-minute’, anti auratic post-modern culture (Walsh 1992)? For some, an alternative explanation lies in understanding the social and cultural changes that have effected the tastes of class groups, in particular those of the new middle-classes (Bourdieu, 1984; Urry, 1990). Urry (1990), for example, has suggested that particular places appeal to the tastes associated with two forms of tourist gaze. He asks if the touristic consumption of place is about “the ability to gaze at a particular object if necessary in the company of others? Or is it to be able to gaze without others being present?” (Urry, 1990: 30). That is, the consumption of place can be ‘collective’ or ‘romantic’ in inclination. The former refers to the collective gaze, which requires the presence of large numbers of other people – for example, the seaside resort. The romantic gaze, however, places emphasis on the solitary, semi-spiritual relationship between the tourist and the object of their gaze. Urry describes how interest has moved away from the seaside resort or holiday camp experience, where interaction with a group is paramount, towards objects of the romantic gaze, which revolve around more individualised or solitary experiences. Urry understands this to coincide with a post-modern desire to be treated in a more differentiated way, rather than as a part of an undifferentiated mass. This he describes as the emergence of the post-tourist (Feifer, 1985). So the nature of the tourist gaze has changed over time from a collective to a romantic one. For whom is the object of this romantic gaze especially meaningful and how do their tastes impact on their leisure or holiday experiences?

Although Urry clearly recognises that these gazes become meaningful in different ways within different temporal and cultural contexts, he understands that the service class are currently particularly involved with the romantic form of the gaze (Urry, 1990: 98). The service class are broadly defined as being a part of the middle-classes made up of professional, managerial, white-collar and clerical workers (these are also referred to as the ABC1 groups)<sup>13</sup>. They are

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<sup>13</sup> More specifically, they:

- Do not own land or capital to any significant degree;
- Are located within a set of interlocking social institutions that service capital;
- Are particularly predominant in the cultural sector, or in those professions involved with representation or presentation;

high in cultural but low in economic capital. Therefore, their tastes are related to those of Bourdieu's 'intellectuals', new bourgeoisie' and 'new petit bourgeoisie' and contrast deeply with the tastes of bourgeois and working-class cultures. Furthermore, both Bourdieu and Urry link the service class with some tendencies of postmodernism and to the concept of the post-tourist. The tastes of these new middle-classes that may pertain to the consumption of heritage attractions, museums and the past as it may be associated with tourist destinations include a preference for:

- Leisure practices that are considered most culturally legitimate and least expensive (e.g. museum visiting);
- Natural environments that appear to be in a 'wild' state rather than those that have been overtly cultivated;
- 'Real' holiday experiences that involve individualised 'travel' rather than mass tourism and the need to be educated about one's destination;
- Minimalist, more ascetic aesthetic styles rather than sumptuous, traditionally luxurious interiors and architecture inspired by vernacular styles, such as those which predominate in newly-developed heritage or cultural quarters;
- The organic, the home-grown, the natural, alternative medicine.

In addition, an important point to be made here concerns the low level of a sense of grid and group amongst these new forms of the middle-class. This results in a sense of guilt in relation to their 'middle-classness', and a desire to be free of the expectations established by previous generations of their group (Bourdieu, 1984; Urry, 1990). That is, they wish to be free of the usual collective identity associated with their socio-cultural group. For Urry, "holidays have become less to do with the reinforcing of collective memories and experiences and more to do with immediate pleasure" (Urry, 1990: 102). This results in a preference for:

- Rapidly changing fashion rather than ideas of respectability or tradition;
- Pleasurable rather than dutiful activity. Pleasure can often be concerned with bodily or self-expression and interaction with others. However, this tendency differs to these types of experiences within the collective gaze because members of this group are self-conscious in the way they experience them.

What can this tell us about the continued relevance of heritage and museum visiting for the middle-classes, despite the changes in representational practices and the choice of interpretive

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- Are employed in superior work situations that result from the existence of well-defined career patterns in which educational credentials are an important regulatory factor (Urry, 1990, 89).

foci? Clearly, some elements of the taste preferences of these new middle-class groups, as outlined above, suggest that some of the divisions that have been made between the cultures of museum and heritage attraction visitors and non-visitors may be more complex. For example, the desire to experience pleasure in terms of bodily expression and interaction with others, and an affinity with three-minute anti-auratic culture may make the newer form of heritage attraction or museum<sup>14</sup> appeal to the leisure tastes of such groups. This does not necessarily replace the importance of the solitary, de-contextualised experience within the culture of the museum-going public. Rather, it suggests that different sorts of experiences may appeal to different elements of middle-classes. Furthermore, both types of experience correspond with the auratic and simulated modes of exhibitionary authenticities discussed in the previous chapter. There it was suggested that aspects of both auratic and simulated authenticities might be experienced in similar ways. In this context, however, it may be the auratic authenticity that depends on the authority of the museum, communicated by its approach to exhibition display that appeals to some aspects of the middle-classes. Significantly, however, the concept of education may remain a primary motivational force for all middle-class groups. Firstly, this suggests that some kind of critical appropriation of the past is sought after by these groups, as opposed to the idea of the consumption of heritage as a panacea to dull the pain of the present. Secondly, this tendency may not be exclusive of the desire to be entertained, or to experience pleasure through various forms of self-expression and interaction with others. Indeed, some of this desire for pleasure may reside in the act of learning itself. Furthermore, Prentice and Light's (1994) assertion that the presentation of the past is both produced and consumed by the same social-groups may still hold in this context, in the sense that members of the service class are often employed in positions pertaining to cultural representation.

Some criticisms of this set of ideas point towards difficulties between Urry's analysis of the contemporary gaze as a romantic one, and its connection to the habitus of the new service class in their attraction to anti-auratic, three-minute culture (Mellor, 1990: 426). One can perhaps think about this in terms of the use of a romantic visual idiom – the image of an impressive valley is not important because it is a particular or unique valley, but because it has certain associations for particular social groupings. Given that simulacra and representations have become so important in the post-modern world, and constitute so much of our consumption experiences, it seems reasonable for Urry to argue that the 'new' romantic gaze is also consumed through mediations and indeed that the way in which we 'read' a place itself is constructed in and through the media. This argument is also important to our understanding of the consumption of heritage centres because of the increased use of representation and

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<sup>14</sup> These have been described in chapter 1 as being reliant on contextualising media rather than the auratic status of older museums.

simulacra rather than the 'real thing'. Mellor also asserts that Urry may have "attached post-modernism to the wrong gaze", in that the sites of consumption of which he speaks, like heritage centres, "constitute a continuation of the collective gaze: they are precisely the Golden Miles and Central Piers of our time" (Mellor, 1990: 426).

Attitudes towards the past as a general concept have also been interpreted in terms of socio-economic position. Merriman found that a majority of the participants in his study placed importance on the role of the past in their lives generally and that the images of the past they had formed were adverse rather than nostalgic. This is important because it runs counter to the theoretical criticism of the heritage industry's portrayal of the past, for example, which is described as pandering to and perpetuating a backward looking nostalgia motivated by a sense of loss or decline in the present. Merriman's findings in this respect also suggest that our consumption of the past is more complex than this, allowing for both positive and negative perceptions to be expressed. Within this, however, it was found that social position in the present might affect whether our images of the past are positive or negative. Interestingly, this study suggested that those less well-off in the present tended to regard the past in a more positive light, that is, as being better than now, while those who were more fortunately positioned in contemporary society tended to regard the past less favourably. Prentice and Light (1994) arrived at a similar conclusion. Therefore, if those that visit museums tend to come from higher social status groups and tend to be more affluent, then "museum visiting is not undertaken just in order to escape from the present; it might also be undertaken to affirm that one is better off in the present. (Merriman, 1991: 61). Prentice and Light also suggest some visitors see the past in more "romanticist and escapist terms" (Prentice and Light, 1994: 109). Merriman also suggests that those who responded more positively to activities unsanctioned by formal institutions like museums (e.g. treasure-hunting) express "enjoyment of the romantic elements of the past and its discovery, and in some cases, their disillusionment with the present" (Merriman, 1991: 5).<sup>15</sup> This romantic inclination may not be the parallel to Hewison's ultimately damaging escape from a declining present, however. Neither is it controlled by the commercial concerns of the heritage industry. Rather, "images of the past...are an important personal way in which individuals come to terms with themselves and their circumstances, and they can also be seen as an unspoken discourse on the present" (Merriman, 1991: 4). Merriman does not present those who expressed more positive images of the past as passive recipients of a dominant ideology, but rather that their nostalgia may be a feeling that foregrounds an active criticism of the present. The idea that the consumption of the past should be understood as an active bid to counteract the effects of

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<sup>15</sup> This aspect of Merriman's finding also suggests that those who engage in both unsanctioned and sanctioned activities share demographic characteristics with museum-goers. Taken in conjunction with the findings of Prentice

one's circumstances in the present mirrors the central shared idea put forward in relation to the authenticity of self and late modern reflexivity theses advanced in the previous chapter. Specifically, it corresponds with the idea that engaging with toured objects, the material past and nostalgia are criticisms of and reflexive acts to counteract, our current circumstances.

In their focus on the impact of socio-cultural identity, the analyses outlined above ultimately reject the 'dominant ideology' thesis in relation to the heritage industry, outlined in the previous section, and offer a fuller understanding of the consumption practices that surround it. Indeed Merriman (1991) describes the former viewpoint in this context as one which sees "the public as unthinking dupes" who "all have the same reason for visiting museums" and who "all receive and similarly assimilate the messages contained in its presentations". However, the idea that museums or heritage attractions should be considered as "ideological institutions" is accepted. Rather than understanding the heritage attraction as a tool in the domination of society generally through the pacification of visitors, Merriman suggests that "the dominant ideology is restricted to the dominant and that museums, or heritage attractions, act as a mechanism which might "bind members of the dominant stratum together" (Merriman, 1991: 18). The power relationship highlighted here is not between producers (and the elite who benefit from the preservation of their property etc.) and consumers, as is expressed in the section 2.2, but rather between producers/visitors and non-visitors. Similarly, Urry moves away from the positioning of heritage in relation to an elite (Hewison, 1987, 1989; Wright, 1982, 1999), although he is still concerned with the relationship between the promotion of a place's heritage and a dominant class interest.

The analyses of heritage and museum visitors referred to in this chapter are compelling and clearly offer a grounded and fuller sense of their motivations and experiences than those that simply focus on a homogenous audience duped by the inauthenticity of the heritage industry. It has been argued that socio-economic identity is central to our understanding of consumption practices generally, in relation to leisure practices and the consumption of place (Urry 1990) and in relation to heritage institutions (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Merriman, 1991; Prentice and Light, 1994). Work of this kind has not yet been carried out in an Irish context, although several important studies have established that the middle classes are predominant amongst both museum and heritage visitors here.<sup>16</sup> Therefore the consideration of visitors' experiences of heritage attractions according to this form of identity will form a part of the analytical work of this thesis. However, some further questions must be raised about the impact of habitus on heritage

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and Light, this would suggest that a romantic inclination towards the past is a part of the class cultures of those who visit museums as well as those who do not.

<sup>16</sup> These will be discussed in relation to the case-study specific to this thesis.



visiting here. Indeed, the empirical visitor studies discussed in this chapter have themselves raised some of these issues. These can be outlined as follows:

- The same criticisms might be made of the concentration on social status as a factor in how people access the past and consume heritage as are levelled at Bourdieu's concepts of the role of habitus and the acquisition of cultural capital in marking out social distinction through consumption practices. Therefore, it might be said that other variables –gender, nationality, age/lifecycle stage or forms of cultural identity that relate to other aspects of one's life experiences and so on – should be considered. As the research outlined above itself suggests, these are important factors in our consumption of the past and need to be investigated more fully and perhaps in less class-bound ways. However, while Bourdieu acknowledges that other elements encountered throughout life will also influence taste, he asserts that these also will be appropriated according to one's existing habitus;
- the influence of parents or grand-parents whose formative experiences are based on the habitus of groups other than the one to which one belongs in the present should be explored. This relates to the previous point in that one's identity may be split between different class identities and therefore between different habitus;
- the idea that identity has become increasingly less class bound and more concerned with the fluidity of lifestyles in the post-modern world;
- the assumption that because one visits a museum or heritage attraction, that one experiences the past there in aesthetic, intellectual or more rational ways, in keeping with the idea that these experiences appeal to higher social groups. This suggests that these groups do not experience other responses. The assertion that one is more romantic and less rational in one's engagement with the past in more contextualised, less formal settings is also problematic. It is unclear exactly how the division between 'rational' and 'romantic' responses is arrived at, particularly in terms of the mixed nature of the heritage attraction as a cultural form, as argued in the last chapter. It might be suggested that both sets of responses may occur in tandem, or may even be dependent on one another. Indeed, data emerging from one of the studies discussed above raised questions about the class bound nature of these assumptions because members of higher social groups who expressed a preference for non-academic forms of heritage activity were also understood to favour a romantic way of perceiving the past. This would suggest that class is not the sole factor in defining such responses.

Finally what relationship, if any, is there between the authenticities discussed in Chapter 2 and the expression of class identity in heritage and museum visiting, and the consumption of the past in other ways? Firstly, this group of discussions can also be understood to oppose aspects of the 'inauthenticity' thesis, as the 'authenticity of self' thesis does. However, in doing so, it follows an alternative route. It is parallel, rather than related, to the 'authenticity of self' thesis as I have presented it in attempting to understand the motivations of heritage visitors. However, despite the fact that one looks to individual identity and the other to collective identity and that they are therefore difficult to reconcile in theoretical terms, these analyses may not be mutually exclusive in real life situations. That is, both motivations may be present in how visitors actually give heritage-visiting meaning. More direct theoretical connections can be made between the concept of exhibitionary authenticity and class identity. Specifically, it was suggested here that class identity may define one's preference for simulated (contextualised) or auratic (de-contextualised) authenticity. I would argue that this is dependent on the way in which a sense of auratic authenticity is produced because, as claimed in the previous chapter, aspects of auratic authenticity can be experienced in similar ways to a more contextualised simulated authenticity. This suggests that the consumption of exhibitionary authenticity may not be defined solely by class identity.

Two concepts of collective identity were mentioned at the outset of this discussion. These were class-identity and national identity. Having discussed the implications of class identity for our understanding of heritage consumption, this discussion will now concern itself with the relationship between other forms of collective identity and heritage.

### **3.3 Imagined Communities and The Consumption of Heritage**

This section aims to consider the roles that cultural and particularly national identities play in the construction and consumption of heritage centres. As with aspects of the discussion in section 2.2 of the previous chapter, the changes wrought by late modernity, or post-modernity, and globalisation are important factors here. As indicated above, the subject of identity has become a significant element of several academic discourses, particularly those that focus on consumption (see Du Gay et al, 1997). This increase in significance is understood to respond to a contemporary 'crisis of identity' in the face of social, economic and political changes occurring in late-modernity (Woodward, 1997). Reflecting this turn, national and other cultural identities have been central to the analysis of both the production and the consumption of the past. This has been the case in discussions of museums, particularly the representation of national identity and 'otherness' (Lidchi, 1997; Gruffudd, 1995; Kaplan, 1994; Karp and Lavine, 1991;) in national or ethnographic museums in both historical and contemporary contexts. This is also evident in

discussions of more recent forms of historical representation, like heritage sites, centres and theme-parks (Corcoran, 2002, 1993; Pitchford, 1995; Lowenthal, 1993; Wright, 1982, 1999). Equally, heritage, memory and the past have been important to discussions whose primary focus is on the subject of cultural identity itself (Gellner, 1983; Andersen, 1983; Hall, 1992, 1996, 1997). Interestingly for this study, there has also been a growing body of studies that highlight the articulation of cultural identity as a factor in the consumption of the past in museums or heritage sites (Cooke and McLean, 2002; Dicks, 1997, 2000; Prentice and McIntosh, 1999). It is this body of literature that will inform the following discussion. This section seeks to consider two broad aspects of cultural identity. The first is the construction of cultural identity at a collective level; the other is the relationship between this and the identities of individual subjects. The ways in which both collective and individual memories are important to these projects will clearly be a principal focus of this discussion, given their relevance in the context of the consumption of heritage. It is because of the focus on consumption in this thesis that the relationship between individual and collective memories and identities is important. To understand this relationship properly, this section needs to discuss the following questions:

- What are cultural identities?
- How are they constructed or expressed?
- What do they mean to us in the contemporary world?

As stated above, the concept of identity generally has become an important one for academic discussions. But what do we mean by the term cultural identity? Hall has defined the term to mean "those aspects of our identities which arise from our belonging to distinctive ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and above all national cultures" (Hall, 1992: 274). This discussion focuses on national identities because of their importance in the field of heritage studies, but the content of much of the discussion is applicable to other forms of cultural identity. The nation, and by association the concept of national identity, is most frequently understood to have emerged as a component of modernity (Smith, 1999; Gellner, 1983; Hall, 1992) in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Whilst during the pre-modern period, identity was rooted in a relationship with region, locality or tribe, as modernity gained momentum such identifications were transferred to the nation (Hall, 1992). Therefore a characteristic feature of this period was that the particularities of local and regional identities were subsumed by the singularity of national identity. An understanding of national identity must be constructed in relation to the concept of the nation itself. The nation can be understood to be either an objective or a subjective entity, or a combination of the two. Objectively, the nation can be defined as a political state or definable territory while subjectively its definition looks to the common bonds, the cultural or ethnic ties between a people. Both definitions are valid, and indeed some would suggest that this

ambivalence is central to the concept of the nation (Bhabha, 1990: 1). The latter, however, is most pertinent to this discussion of cultural identity in the context of heritage.

The academic discussion of national or other cultural identities now largely revolves around a non-essentialist perspective of what is involved in the expression of such ethnic or cultural ties (Woodward, 1997, Hall, 1992). This means that rather than considering identity as being rooted in a given set of characteristics shared naturally by members of a nation, it is understood to be formed through an identification with a constructed idea of the nation. In this way, the nation becomes symbolic of ties between a people, it is an "imagined community" (Andersen, 1983). As Hall states, "People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation" (Hall, 1992: 292). But how is an imagined community like this articulated? Three points can be made in relation to this. Firstly, we can say that the set of characteristics associated with the imagined community occurs through the discourse of the nation. In this context, the use of the term discourse refers to the "group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment..." (Hall, 1992: 291). This group of statements, or representations, when spread across several sites are referred to as a discursive formation. We can say then that the meanings entailed in national identities are produced through their representation within the discourses or discursive formations associated with them. Because of their ability to reproduce such discourse, media forms are understood to have been central to the emergence of the idea of the nation as an imagined community (Andersen, 1983). Although Foucault (1977) originally focused on the way in which the meanings produced by discourse are historically specific, more recent advocates of the importance of discourse to our understanding of identity have questioned this. Hall (1996) has looked at how "repertoires of representation" can be accumulated over time so that they become more sedimentary. This is to say that fragments of a specific discourse in one context may become a part of that of other periods.

The second point to be made about the articulation of the imagined community focuses on the concept of difference. The function of discourse is not simply to bind members of a group together, but to do so by marking them out from others. That is, the process of identification involves a process of differentiation, of marking out the 'self' from the 'other' (Woodward, 1997, Hall, 1996). In systems of representation, this process can be conceptualised in terms of the construction of binary oppositions. In linguistic theory, the term 'binary opposition' refers to the way in which one concept is defined in relation to its opposite – wet is wet because it is not dry (see Hall, 1997 for an explanation of this and other pertinent concepts). Although the differentiation entailed in the concept of binary opposition refers to extreme or polar opposites, it is context dependent. This can be interpreted as meaning that the opposite, or 'other', of a

binary opposition may be less polar but equally effective in the process of differentiation – wet is wet because it not damp. This is because it is the recognition of difference itself that produces meaning, that marks one thing out from another. In relation to cultural identity therefore, a national culture is defined in relation to its 'other' in any given context. Identification and differentiation are therefore two sides of the same coin.

Thirdly, the discourse of the nation is composed using a number of mechanisms that create a particular biography for that nation. Hall (1992) understands the community of the nation to be bonded through a focus on:

- Histories and cultural production;
- The establishment of a sense of origin;
- A sense of continuity and timelessness through the invention of traditions or symbolic practices;
- Foundational myths;
- The idea of a pure original folk.

In practice, these factors may be either distinct or inter-related. The establishment of a sense of origin, for example, may involve the combination of a foundational myth and a national history communicated through invented traditions or the trope of a pure original folk. Building a sense of the nation therefore involves looking back to the past. Just as historical conditions are important factors in shaping the establishment of the nation, the communication of historical narratives and associated material heritage are central to the projection of national identity. Collective memory and its expression are key to understanding this process. As Middleton and Edwards assert "collective remembering is essential to the identity and integrity of a community" (Middleton and Edwards, 1990: 3). How is such a discourse is circulated? The involvement of print media in the creation of imagined communities has already been mentioned. Commentators argue that the narratives associated with collective memory are expressed through the interpretation of symbolic historical sites and the wider field of media representations. Both act as "sites of the creation of social memory...a body of available materials" (Middleton and Edwards, 1990: 5). Such sites act as "instrumental vehicles for collective memory...symbolic places or culturally expressive sites...that anchor shared emotional attachment" (Corcoran, 2002: 6). Referring to Nora's (1996) discussions on the fragmented nature of national memory in France, Corcoran (2002) utilises the concept of first and second-degree sites of memory in his discussion of collective memory. The latter, in their reliance on more distant forms of storing memories seem to relate most closely to the concept of heritage centres. Such second-degree sites engage in the production of 'prosthetic memory', or the stimulation of memory using 'props'.

Although the narratives of collective memory make it seem as though it is the past that gives definition to the present, it is really the reverse of this that occurs. That is, it is the requirements of the present, particularly in relation to the articulation of particular identities, which dictate the narratives we construct about the past. This is because the narratives that underpin memory must be of a "past that members of the community presume constitutes their heritage" (Corcoran, 1993: 8). The past that is resurrected must satisfy the needs of the group in the present. Therefore, "you know how the group understands its position in society in the present if you know the way it generates and understands its memories" (Corcoran, 1993: 4). So collective recall, and indeed forgetting (Andersen, 1983), is used to create a discourse of the nation in particular historical circumstances. As addressed above, however, this discourse may carry the residue of previous interpretations of the past. Leerson suggests that the strength of such myths stems from their imaginative character rather than any objectivity – it is a sense of the past that is formed rather than a series of facts being recorded. He also refers to the importance of repetition in the continued survival of collective memory. To continue to be meaningful it must be performed again and again but rather than being re-written and altered, it "codifies into a canon which maintains an indefinite shelf life" (Leerson, 2001: 219). Also, in the same way that we have said that collective identity and memory are constructed rather than reflective, the meanings associated with material heritage are now understood to be produced through their interpretation. Objects are endowed with meaning by becoming a part of the discourse of the nation. Graham argues that "heritage is seen as an essential component of the foundational myth of the nation state, a 'dreamland', part and parcel of the need to give people a dramatised sense that they belong to the state" (Graham, 1994: 135). In the same way as the narratives associated with important historical events in the biography of the nation are value laden and perhaps residual, so to is the interpretation of the material heritage associated with them.

Some parallels between the view of heritage discussed in Chapter 2.2 and collective memory are immediately obvious. This assertion that the past is defined by present day needs has also been made in relation to the concept of heritage, in opposition to objective historical inquiry, as discussed in the previous chapter. For Corcoran, the implications of relying on such constructed or prosthetic memory, particularly when used by political systems, are two-fold. Such an approach legitimates past actions and replaces a more natural collective memory based on tradition. As also argued by the proponents of the 'inauthenticity of heritage' or 'retreatist' (Dicks, 1997, 2000) viewpoint described in Chapter 2, the identities articulated in this way can often draw on dominant ideology. National museums may well operate in this way, particularly prior to the deconstruction of grand narratives that has occurred latterly. The result of an over-reliance of prosthetic memory is the production of "unnatural memory, that is, private memories supported by particular social symbolic systems" (Corcoran, 2002). The extent to which dominant collective

memories, and therefore identities, are supported and maintained by second-degree memory sites, and particularly heritage centres, is being questioned however. As argued in the previous chapter, heritage can be understood as part of movement towards history from below (Samuel, 1994). Although initially concerned with the commemoration of ruling elites, heritage representations of the past are increasingly understood to encompass a far broader array of 'hidden histories', and in this way have become more relevant to different groups of visitors (Urry, 1990, 1996; Urry and Rojek, 1997). This can be important for some cultures where historical narratives and cultural symbols have a particular resonance in relation to a more dominant culture. In Scotland, for example, "the key is to offer strategies of resistance and to emphasise traces of non-dominant cultures which fit awkwardly with nationally dominant cultures" (Urry, 1996: 61). This may also be true in Ireland, where historical narratives can reverberate around the processes of colonisation and de-colonisation. This will be discussed in relation to the case study at the centre of this thesis. Furthermore, it is conceivable that the airing of one such non-dominant identity may hold appeal for other non-dominant cultures than those being specifically represented. In other words, a set of memories at the core of one collective identity may be used by members of other groups to enact or stimulate their own memories. In this instance, the identification occurs in relation to the concept of being non-dominant or sub-altern. I have drawn attention to two issues here that problematise the simple construction and consumption of a singular group memory or identity. The first refers to the relationship between private, or individual, memory and group memory. This is problematic because we are not clear about exactly how the two interact. Urry and Rojek point out that there is "a lack of research on exactly how history and heritage are in fact remembered by people...how people's popular memories...are initially stimulated, enthused and then organised into a potential documentation of remembrance" (Urry and Rojek, 1997: 13). Indeed, although Corcoran himself acknowledges the importance of theoretical discussion which sees individual memory to be embedded in group memory, he also cautions against over-emphasising this so that individual memory is only understood as "a product of a unique intersection of various discourses rooted in group memories" (Corcoran, 1993: 2). This opens the possibility of diverse individual experiences questioning as well as accepting particular group memories, and therefore the possibility of oppositional or negotiated memories and identities being formed. The second point relates to this, as it may also be true in the case of conflict between diverse group memories. As Urry and Rojek state "even the most apparently unambiguous of museums or heritage centres will be read in different and paradoxical ways by different groups of visitors" (Urry and Rojek, 1997: 14). Such conflict is typical of identity formation in the contemporary world as a result of the breakdown of both individual and singular group identities. This has drawn significant attention in academic literature, particularly in the context of late-modernity and globalisation.

How have identities been affected in late modernity? The idea of conflict between or within identities and the possible hybridity of identities are important issues for those concerned with late modernity, and in particular, globalisation. In discussing the effects of globalisation on local identities, Hall argues that local identity is not eroded by the homogenising system of globalisation. Indeed, the formation of the imagined community of the nation was in itself a homogenising force in its emphasis on a singular identity. Rather, Hall argues, there is a constant tension between the global and the local. He refers to this as the global/local nexus. He describes the interaction of universalistic (global) and particularistic (local) identities rather than the eclipse of one by the other. Globalisation has presented "new ways of articulating the particularistic and the universalistic aspects of identity, or new ways of negotiating between the two" (Hall, 1992: 304). In this way the formation of identity in a singular way is contested by globalisation, particularly in relation to national cultures. This idea is seen to be particularly relevant to diasporic identities that become hybridised in this process. Diaspora identify with more than one national, ethnic or racial group. In this view, the process of globalisation motivates us to re-assert localised identities in the face of homogenisation. It has also led to the breakdown, rather than the shoring up, of singular identities. This is not a straightforward process that replaces one thing with another, but a process that creates hybridity, conflict and fluidity. As Corcoran has intimated, we might understand memories in these instances to be "dynamic, fluid, plural, composite, open to new configurations and sometimes subject to intense struggle and disagreement" (Corcoran, 2002: 7).

So what do our cultural identities actually mean to us, particularly in this context? 'Finding yourself' seems to be the subject of a whole field of popular literature, from self help books to magazine articles. But why has identity become such a 'hot' topic for the individual, and how does the focus on self-identity correspond with the concurrent rise in heritage, if at all? Identities provided by the external world were at one point stable and fixed in accord with the needs of the culture as a whole (Hall, 1992: 276-277). However, as discussed in relation to collective identity, the inter-linking processes of globalisation and modernity, fragment this stability. These processes disintegrate "the frameworks which give individuals stable anchorage in the social world" (Hall, 1992: 274). In late, or post, modernity, identities are understood to have become more unresolved and open-ended (Thompson, 1992). This loss of stability motivates individuals to construct a narrative of the self, "a meaningful story with a past, present and future" (Moore, 1997: 240) to counteract the sense of having been cut adrift. In this instance, identity becomes a component of the ontological project of the self (Abrams et al, 1997; Giddens, 1991).



As stated above, what must concern us here is how individual and collective identities relate to one another. To discuss this might seem to fly in the face of the concept of collective identity itself, because the singularity of that vision implies that they are one and the same thing. Hall draws attention to this when he states that "the shift towards a constructionist conception of language and representation did a great deal to displace the subject from a privileged position in relation to knowledge and meaning..." (Hall, 1997: 55). As described above, this would mean that individual experience can only exist within the confines of the discourse. In order to participate, subjects must adopt the "subject positions provided by the discourse itself, otherwise the discourse would make no sense to the subject (Hall, 1997: 56). But why or how do individuals identify with some subject positions and not others (Hall, 1996: 10)? Hall argues that subjects are both hailed by and invest in subject positions. This implies that identity is an ongoing activity for individuals (Bauman, 1996), and can only occur through a two-sided process, an articulation of subject and subject positions within the discourse (Hall, 1996: 6). Individual points of identification occur in the intersection of the discourse and individual subjectivity. "Identities", Hall states, "are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall, 1996: 5). Therefore we project ourselves into the identities (subject positions) offered to us by the external world, aligning our "subjective feelings with the objective places we occupy in the social and cultural world" (Hall, 1992: 276-277). Identities are therefore neither wholly collective nor individual, but are formed in the interaction between the individual and the subject positions available to them through discourse. Moores describes this activity in relation to media audiences as the selective and reflexive appropriation of discourses by viewers and listeners (Moores, 1997: 240).

At first glance it seems difficult to reconcile the discursive position on identity with the self-identity discussed within the concept of an authenticity of self, and particularly Wang's concept of an existential authenticity discussed in the previous chapter. In considering self-identity, Wang confines his discussion to an identity arising from the imposition of constraints like routinisation and monotony in late-modernity on our ability to achieve a sense of self-realisation (Wang, 2000: 67). As described above, this is the driving force behind touristic desire for risk and adventure. However, it is important here to address other aspects of self-identity that we have already described as being affected by the processes of modernisation and globalisation. Selwyn describes another aspect of self-identity involved in the concept of hot authenticity that is especially relevant to a discussion in the context of heritage. The 'self' that arises in this case is described by Selwyn as resulting from a process of identification between the tourist and the "groups or categories forming the focus of their visit" (Selwyn, 1996: 24). In particular, this aspect of hot authenticity is felt in relation to 'warm' tourist sites that commemorate historical events that include themes of "exile, dispersion, defeat and death". These provide visitors with

"the emotional coherence and potency to transform symbols of national weakness and vulnerability into symbols of national renewal" (Selwyn, 1996: 23). Hot authenticity here then refers to an authenticity of self sought and found in the experience of emotional or cultural ties with place or people through the experience of toured objects – the other. We are not just concerned here with what is remembered and who remembers it, but what we remember with, and perhaps, what the appeal of those particular mechanisms, or technologies, are. This process of identification is not necessarily separate from the spectacles, masks and make-believes that Selwyn mentions in relation to a child-like post-modern tourist because sometimes, as he argues, it is physically manipulated in staged settings so that the tourist seems to become one of those being represented. It can be argued in the context of this study that forms of interpretation, mediation and display associated with the heritage industry or the new museum facilitates this. In this framework, the tourist is knitted into the narrative, the 'text', both emotionally and physically. If heritage centres as second degree sites of memory are involved in the discursive formations that form cultural identity, then their narratives also provide the subject positions with which individuals identify.

A further point can be made here about the interaction between collective and individual memories. Christopher Lasch (1979) comments on the loss of historical continuity that has been felt to be increasingly apparent since the 1960s. By this, he is referring to the loss of "a sense of belonging to a succession of generations originating in the past and stretching into the future" (Lasch, 1979: 5). Lasch interprets the concern with identity in this context to be a narcissistic retreat from political action, part of the "therapeutic sensibility" of late-modern society (Lasch, 1979: 7). If Lasch's comments are taken in conjunction with one another, they can be partially aligned with the views of "heritage baiting" (Samuel, 1994: 259). These were already described in Chapter 2 as being an incomplete understanding of what actually occurs between visitors and the heritage 'text' they are consuming. However, if we ignore Lasch's focus on narcissism and the therapeutic sensibility, his analysis of the loss of a generational sense of oneself in late-modernity becomes more promising in the context of understanding heritage visiting. It seems to me that there are useful connections to be made here between Urry and Lash's (1994) concept of a glacial sense of time, discussed in the previous chapter, and what I will call Lasch's concept of a generational sense of time. Urry and Lash focus on the way that contemporary subjects construct a glacial sense of time in opposition to the disruptive effects of instantaneous time. They do this by forming attachments to place through being active in the conservation of the material past of that place. I have argued that this may also be true of other forms of engagement with the past such as historical buildings in other places. However, Urry and Lash do not specifically address how this drive may relate to attachments to people, particularly one's own people, as well as to place. I would argue that we do not just root ourselves in relation to the

past of the places we occupy, but also in terms of a particularised generational sense of ourselves. Of course, this may also be related to or stimulated by particular places. It is this generational sense of the past that can be entailed in the use of the Irish term 'dúchas' (heritage), or the combination of attachment to people and place in the term 'ait dhúchasach' (place of my people), rather than in the use of the more distanced, less emotionally rooted, 'oidhreacht' (heritage). It still remains for us to consider how a particularised generational sense of the self is expressed. I am suggesting that the processes of change involved in modernity have meant that each generation's experiences may be radically different to their predecessors, a process that occurred unselfconsciously in pre-modern periods or societies. This is also true in the case of diasporic cultures, because of the rupture that occurs when the journey from 'home place' to 'new place' is undertaken. If private, familial memories are lost, incomplete, unexpressed in everyday life or remain inevitably distant because of one's difference of experience from one's forbears, then it is conceivable that mediated, collective narratives provide the material out of which we imagine our generational past. In the context of heritage centres with their focus on a broader array of histories, we can explain this process as an articulation between the self-knowledge of visitors and the narratives represented by the heritage centres. I believe that this analysis falls within Hall's assertion that identity is formed in the inter-play between the individual subject and the discourse of identity concerned. In both an emotional and a physical process of identification "the authenticity of the visitors' selves is confirmed in relation to the social life depicted by the museum" (Selwyn, 1996: 24).<sup>17</sup>

One further point needs to be made here. As discussed in Chapter 2, Giddens (1991) describes the reflexivity associated with the late-modern subject as having resulted from "increasing self-questioning together with proliferating sources of information" (Giddens in Hall, 1992: 344). That is, the media used by cultural systems provide the subject with the material to counteract their own self-questioning. Therefore, we can say that the formation of identity utilising the representations produced by cultural systems is a reflexive act – we use these images to construct a narrative of the self. In this context, we can suggest that heritage centres are one of the tools the reflexive self uses to construct its identity in a self-conscious and semi-empowering way. Drawing on the discussion of a generational sense of the past, I am asserting that heritage visitors may be using the collective memories that underlie the narratives of heritage centres to position themselves in relation to the past. In doing so they counteract the sense of being cut adrift by the processes of modernity and globalisation. There is a sense of resistance to modernity within this that corresponds with my discussion of nostalgia, glacial time and authenticity of the self in the last chapter.

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<sup>17</sup> See also Uzell (1989) for an exploration of the value of 'warm' sites in counteracting the bland nostalgia often associated with the heritage industry.

### 3.4 Summary

The central subject that concerns this thesis is why and how we consume heritage centres. This chapter has focussed on the theme of identity in considering this. In doing so, it sought to discuss the following questions:

- What are the collective identities associated with the consumption of heritage centres as exhibitionary forms, and as representations of the past and place?
- What is the relationship between the consumption of the past and places, collective identities and concepts of modernity, post-modernity and globalisation?
- What is the relationship between collective identity and the concepts of authenticity and reflexivity discussed in the previous chapter?

The chapter was divided in two, according to the diverse bodies of literature associated with the theme of identity in the context of museums and heritage centres and in relation to concepts of the past more generally. The first section asked:

- Who visits museums and heritage attractions?
- What motivates these groups to do so?
- What experiences do they favour there and why?
- How does this relate to the ways in which these and other groups engage with the past in wider contexts?

It was primarily concerned with the tastes associated with different class-identities as one set of variables that influence our choices in where and how we engage with the past. I will refer to this as the 'habitus' thesis. The findings of this aspect of the discussion can be summarised as follows:

#### Heritage Visiting and Habitus

- Higher socio-economic groups, and those that stay in formal educational systems for longer periods, are predominant amongst visitors. These may be understood to include those newly emergent groups like the service class, the intellectuals and the new petit bourgeoisie. Therefore, the choice to visit or not to visit museums or heritage sites during leisure time may be related to class identity.
- The concepts of habitus and cultural capital are important concepts in understanding these motivations. Higher socio-economic groups may be expressing the tastes associated with their class identity, formed through their habitus, by visiting museums or heritage attractions.

Therefore, visiting museums and heritage attractions, and displaying a taste for what might be termed as 'heritage style' may be understood in terms of the concept of social distinction.

- The preference for museum and heritage visiting amongst higher status groups may relate to a desire to engage in the 'constructive' use of leisure time, which involves the pursuit of education and subject matter understood by these groups to have a serious purpose. The long established image of museums as public educators and the class concerns underlying their construction as such might play a role in the perception that heritage visiting is a more legitimate leisure activity for higher social groups. This differs to the idea that pleasure, rather than a sense of duty in the 'constructive' use of one's leisure time, is important to some newer elements of the middle-classes like the service class. It is the heavily contextualised styles of representation of the newer museums and heritage attractions that may appeal to this desire for pleasure, because they offer the opportunity for increased physical and social interaction on behalf of visitors. This does not imply that educational motivations or the constructive use of leisure time are unimportant to this group – rather, it is the concept of dutiful activity that may be at stake.
- These factors are significant in relation to the consideration of motivation amongst heritage visitors, given that the heritage centre as a cultural form may answer both the need to engage in 'dutiful' and 'pleasurable' activity. Rather than considering the heritage visitor to have either one or the other of these motivations, they may have both or different sub-sections of the middle-classes may place more importance on one than the other, or indeed they may not differentiate between them so clearly. If we position the heritage centre at the intersection of two discourses – the discourse of the museum which emphasises education and that of the visitor attraction which emphasises entertainment – then we may also position the motivations of visitors here also.
- Separate ways of engaging with the past related to one's habitus are also understood to exist. These have been outlined as including a less personal, more rational, intellectual and aesthetic approach that favours less contextualisation, favoured by higher status groups and an approach that seeks more contextualised, less formal or more personal verbal histories, favoured by lower status groups. These approaches are also understood to be at the basis of the personal possession of 'old' objects. Class identity may define one's preference for simulated (contextualised) or auratic (de-contextualised) authenticity. This may be dependent on the way in which a sense of auratic authenticity is produced though, because as argued in Chapter 2, aspects of auratic authenticity can be experienced in similar ways to a more contextualised, simulated authenticity

- An interest in the past more generally was found to exist amongst all social groups. Positive or negative impressions of the past however can be related to particular social groups. Positive images of the past were more predominant amongst lower social groups, while higher social groups displayed a preference for the present. It was suggested that these attitudes reflect the satisfaction of these groups with the present. Where positive attitudes towards the past were recorded, it was suggested that they can be considered either as an indication of a more romantic, escapist appropriation of history or as an active criticism of one's situation in the present.
- This viewpoint rejects the construction of heritage visitors as an undifferentiated mass. However, museums and heritage centres are understood to act as a mechanism through which dominant social groups identify with one another. Heritage centres, and indeed a more generalised heritagisation of space, demonstrate social imbalance because they represent the tastes of dominant classes.

However, some problematic issues were identified. These pertained to the impact of other variables, the fluidity of identity in the late or post modern world, and an absolute division between rational, emotional and physical responses to representations of the past.

The second section of the chapter focused on heritage as a tool in the expression of belonging to the imagined community of the nation, the relationship between such a collective sense of identity and individual identities and the impact of the forces of modernity and globalisation on them. The term 'cultural identities' refers to those identities formed by belonging to ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and national cultures. This section has focused on national identities, although much of what has been said applies to other forms of cultural identity. It asked:

- What are cultural identities?
- How are they constructed or expressed?
- What do they mean to us in the contemporary world?

It was established that:

- Such collective identities are formed through discourses, or discursive formations. They are artificially constructed rather than naturally formed.
- Such discourses may be specific to particular historical periods, but can incorporate residual aspects of the discourses of previous periods.

- One aspect of this is in the construction of a set of collective memories, which involves looking back to the past to consolidate present day identities. Heritage sites can be involved in this, as can the narratives communicated in heritage centres.
- This involves the use of representational media that employ strategies of differentiation as well as identification.
- These processes result in the creation of imagined communities.
- The relationship between individual and collective identity was also discussed. In fact, identity is formed in the articulation between the individual subject and the discourse of collective identity.
- The processes of modernity and globalisation have fragmented the singularity associated with national identities on both collective and individual levels.
- Although homogeneity is associated with both modernity and globalisation, a reaction to these processes also involves the assertion of localised identities. The placement of one culture in the midst of another – as in the case of Diaspora – also leads to the breakdown of monolithic identities and produces hybridised identities. The interaction between individual and collective identities is also involved in this.
- Also as a result of these processes, individuals are cut adrift from the stable identities that were once experienced. In counteracting the negative experiences associated with this, they seek to construct narratives of the self using the media at their disposal.
- An element of this sense of loss is the lack of a generational sense of time. This is supplied by the interaction of individual and collective memories using the various media involved in representing the historical narratives necessary to the construction of collective memory. As with the assertion of a glacial sense of time in response to the effects of instantaneous time, the assertion of a generational sense of the self can be considered to be a reflexive act.
- Heritage centres and heritage sites are clearly well placed to cater for this set of needs.

Connections were also made between exhibitionary authenticity, the authenticity of self and cultural identity. It was argued that, although the focus on the individual within the 'authenticity of self' thesis and the focus on collective identity in the discussion of cultural identities seem to be opposite, that it is in fact possible to reconcile them. It was suggested that because identity is understood to be formed in the articulation of the individual and the group; and because part of what has been lost in modernity has been a generational sense of the self, that this is sought out in the consumption of collective identity and memory. Therefore, the search for this aspect of self-identity can be aligned with the search for an authenticity of self found in an engagement with toured objects. Simulational environments aid this process of identification in heritage centres. Furthermore, the action of rooting oneself, using the systems open to us, in response to the negative impact of contemporary life, is a reflexive one. This discussion has therefore

extended the 'authenticity of self' thesis as it was outlined in the previous chapter. This can be summarised as follows:

### **Heritage Visiting and the Authenticity of Self**

- The current fascination with the past through heritage should be located in the context of late modernity, rather than in relation to a critique of post-modernity;
- The over-rationalisation, routinisation and disintegration of traditional structures associated with modernity are understood to create an imbalance in our lives. This includes the ways in which individuals are cut adrift from the stable identities that were once experienced. An element of this sense of loss is the lack of a generational sense of time. This imbalance or loss is experienced in terms of a lack of authenticity of the self;
- Late modern subjects experience both a sense of loss as a result of the processes of modernity and a growth in reflexivity using the channels provided by the conditions of modernity. In counteracting a sense of loss of identity or imbalance, they seek to construct narratives of the self or to address inner imbalance using the media at their disposal. Activities that take place outside of everyday routines, like tourism and heritage visiting or engaging with the past or other cultures through a range of mediated experiences, can be thought of in this way;
- Such experiences are reflexive in that they both recognise imbalance in everyday life and attempt to resist or counteract this by searching for experiences that will restore the subject's sense of balance or authenticity;
- A generational sense of self is supplied by the interaction of individual and collective memories using the various media involved in representing historical narratives. This is clearly related to the assertion of a glacial sense of time.
- Such an authenticity can be experienced through toured objects that are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic.
- The character of this authenticity is experienced through objects that involve the subject's own emotional, physical and mental participation. This engagement can be characterised by creativity, spontaneity, sensuality, social-interaction, risk and adventure.



- The exhibitionary authenticities associated with heritage centres also focus on these types of interaction. Therefore they may provide the visitor with an opportunity to experience an authenticity of self, and to counteract negative experiences of mainstream education.

This section set out to review the bodies of literature concerned with heritage visiting. This was attempted so that the research central to this study could be framed theoretically. It was argued that, although there is unequivocal merit in the critical responses to the heritage industry and the place of the visitor within it, they were limited in their understanding of actually how and why visitors engage with heritage centres. The frameworks described above were offered as alternative explanations of these experiences. At this point in the thesis, these frameworks remain at the level of generalised sets of concepts. Urry and Rojek argue that, if we are to really grasp how heritage is used in this context, that we must ask "what are the conditions of existence of particular discourses and practices of heritage?" (Urry and Rojek, 1997: 13). This thesis argues that it is in the accumulation of knowledge about heritage production and consumption in specific contexts that will enable us to develop a full understanding of the consumption of heritage centres. The following section documents the methodology used in this study and why it was chosen.

## **SECTION 2      METHODOLOGY**

## SECTION 2 METHODOLOGY

### Chapter 4 Methodological Model

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous section considered what questions were pertinent to a study of heritage visitors and how these have been approached theoretically.<sup>1</sup> This section is concerned with how they can be addressed empirically in the context of this study. Both the epistemological stance and the questions particular to this study will inform the methods chosen to carry out this research.

This methodology is divided in two parts. This chapter aims to identify a suitable methodological model for use in this study, while the following chapter will describe how this has been applied in the gathering of data in a more specific way here. This chapter will identify the types of visitor studies that are carried out and the level of data they produce. This will be done with a view to identifying a specific model of communication that is suitable for this thesis. Because the analysis of heritage is interdisciplinary, a survey of all studies related to its consumption would prove to be cumbersome. This section will focus in particular on the field of exhibition visitor studies itself. Initially it will explore what visitor studies have been carried out in Ireland, their purpose and the nature of data they produce. In the absence of a variety of types of study conducted in Ireland, it will consider those conducted most frequently in a more generalised context and more particularly, the emergence of an approach to visitor studies that is influenced primarily by the study of mass-media audiences. The latter are ethnographic in their approach to the gathering of data and, it will be suggested, offer the most suitable way to address the questions in which this thesis is interested. Of particular relevance, it will be argued, is Stuart Hall's (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding' model of communication.

#### 4.2 Methodological Model

The study of heritage and museum visitors as a specialist subject has received increasing attention over the last four decades (Shettel, 1989; Hooper-Greenhill, 1995). The purpose of this section is to identify a methodological model within this field that is suitable in the context of this study. This will be achieved by surveying the types of empirical visitor studies that are carried out and the nature of the data they offer. A specific model of communication will be adopted that is suitable to the research questions at the basis of this thesis. The following chapter will describe how this has been applied in the gathering of data for this study.

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<sup>1</sup> That is with the exception of those views outlined in chapter 3.1, which are rooted in empirical work.

Although there has been a growth in concentration on interpretation in Ireland, and therefore in the emphasis on the visitor, the number and range of visitor studies has been less impressive. They have largely been in the form of large-scale surveys, undertaken as part of the marketing strategies adopted by individual institutions or by development organisations. This echoes the involvement of such organisations in the promotion of interpretation and display at heritage sites as a means to encourage the growth of the tourism industry<sup>2</sup>. There has been a marked absence of studies undertaken by other agencies involved in the promotion of heritage attractions, such as The Heritage Council and until recently, Dúchas - The Heritage Service, whose work has concentrated on other issues. The general studies that have come to the attention of this author include: Visitor Statistics 1969-1998 (Dúchas -The Heritage Service); Visitor Attractions Survey (Tourism Development International, 1994, 1996); Perspectives on Irish Tourism: Visits to Tourist Attractions 1989 – 1996 (Bord Fáilte); and a series of studies conducted by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the most specific of which were undertaken during the 1980s and include for example their Survey of Visitors to Ulster American Folk Park (1985). The studies undertaken by Tourism Development International in the Republic of Ireland are based on data gathered at specific institutions, as was a study carried out at the National Museum of Ireland by the marketing research company 'Attitudes and Behaviours' (1986). These types of surveys have been described by Kenneth Hudson in the following terms: "There is no essential difference in aim between a marketing survey carried out for a museum and one for a manufacturer of meat pies. The primary purpose in both cases is to increase the number of customers" (Hudson, 1993: 36). This emphasis on improving the 'product' is clearly evident here. In 1997, Bord Fáilte published Perspectives on Irish Tourism, a series of analyses on tourism and tourists in Ireland. In their analysis of cultural and historical attractions they focus on visitor profiles and statistics to build a picture of heritage as part of a product which attracts tourists. The research was undertaken in relation to overseas travellers only and although the purpose of the survey was not made entirely explicit it would at least partially seem to be to "identify gaps in the heritage experience" in order to fill them with "appropriate interpretation" (Bord Fáilte, 1997: 131). However, while it is important to acknowledge the framework in which these studies are conceived, the information gathered by them can also be useful in terms of answering some of the broader questions which might interest us about visitors, as well as highlighting the questions that have yet to be asked. An examination of these survey type studies can provide us with valuable information about visitors to a variety of Irish heritage attractions both within the context of the development of the tourism industry and in studies with an alternative focus. However, the data is, by nature or necessity, generalised and highly controlled. It is geared towards eliciting evaluative judgements on the visitors' behalf using highly

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<sup>2</sup> This will be discussed in the following section.

controlled methods. Both the large numbers of visitors surveyed and the way in which material is analysed and presented indicate that these studies tend towards quantitative rather than qualitative data. They do not seek to understand the possible diversity of visitor experiences, such as how individual visitors, or particular groups, respond to specific situations, nor do they ask why this may be so.

Except for a small number of exceptions (see Johnson, 1999 for example) there appears to be a dearth of other types of studies carried out in Ireland, despite the growing importance of museums and heritage attractions here and the level of both academic and popular comment about them. In order to develop an alternative approach, this study has had to adopt a broader perspective in the search for suitable methodological models. The vast bulk of studies of heritage and museum visitors in Britain and America focus on the educational purpose of exhibitions, and sometimes measure the extent of visitors' learning. Uzzell divides this approach in three, labelling each strand as behaviourist, cognitive and socio-cognitive (Uzzell, 1995: 125). The first measures short-term learning, and understands the exhibition as the active variable – visitors are asked a series of questions about the subject of the exhibition before and after their visit and their 'scores' are compared. The second 'cognitive' approach seeks to measure changes in visitors more general structures of understanding of the subject area (e.g. farming, nineteenth century society). The third of these approaches measures the difference between cognitive learning in exhibitions as an individual and in group (social) formations. The objective of all three of these lies in measuring the effectiveness of exhibitions as educational tools. The results of these types of study can influence the future design of exhibits and can therefore be considered to be evaluative in nature (Falk, 1993). However, many studies of this type assume that a particular message (the subject of the exhibition) is sent from the sender (exhibition organiser) via a medium (the exhibition) to the receiver (visitor). As indicated in the previous section, this also appears to be the conceptualisation of visitor experiences implicit in the critique of the heritage industry and traditional museums. This simplistic model of communication, sometimes referred to as the "hypodermic needle" or "magic bullet" concept (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994: 3) was questioned as early as the 1960s in relation to museum communication (Cameron, 1968) when the addition of a feedback loop was first mooted. However, the underlying structure of this dominant model has undergone little change in the context of visitor studies. Indeed it may be the sheer dominance of studies rooted in this approach that has spawned the emergence of different approaches to museum and heritage visitors within alternative frameworks (MacDonald and Silverstone, 1991; Merriman, 1991; Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000; Clare, 1998; Cooke and McLean, 2002). They stress the social and

cultural significance of museum visiting, the importance of understanding variations in the ways visitors 'read' exhibition content and the factors that impact on these differences.<sup>3</sup>

As Silverstone has asserted, the methodology adopted in any study must relate to the theoretical and epistemological stance of the research. He states, "Any discussion of research methodology...cannot begin without reference to theory, to the ways in which the object of investigation is to be conceptualised or framed. Research is not simply a matter of observation, measurement and report. It requires prior commitment and prior questions..." (Silverstone, 1989: 139). What then is the stance of this study? The questions that drive this research project are neither concerned with the educational effectiveness of exhibitions in heritage centres nor their performance as commercial visitor attractions. This not to say that these objectives are not valid, commendable or interesting. However, this study is interested in a deeper and wider set of issues. As set out in the previous chapter, it seeks to understand both the meanings that surround the practice of heritage visiting and the narratives and modes of display encountered in heritage centres. It asks why and how visitors consume heritage centres. This involves understanding the wider circumstances that may inform their responses. The previous section established that these may include the meanings we invest in leisure practices generally and also in the past. This was discussed particularly in the context of identity formation and authenticity in late modernity. Therefore, whilst the types of studies described above may be understood to inhabit a positivist stance, this study can be described as being interpretive in its approach<sup>4</sup>. The methodological model adopted for this study must be one that is capable of producing rich but elusive data of this sort. What models of communication match the approach to studying visitors suggested by the previous section, and how can this be used to construct a particular methodology that will elicit the required data?

As indicated in Chapter 2, there is a growing awareness of the complexity of visitor experiences in museums and heritage centres, and of their nature as objects of study. An interesting approach to the study of heritage visitors emerges from those disciplines concerned with the production and consumption of the mass media. Those who examine the production and consumption of exhibitions from this perspective (Silverstone, 1989; MacDonald and Silverstone,

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<sup>3</sup> A body of visitor studies concerned with the relationship between class identity, heritage visiting and the consumption of the past was dealt with in the previous section in 3.1, where it was felt it would be more useful.

<sup>4</sup> Gunter 2000 and Neuman 2000 give clear descriptions of these epistemological approaches. An interpretive approach is one that aims to gain an insight into how people construct meanings in ordinary contexts (Gunter 2000). It has also been described as "the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds" (Neuman, 2000, 71).

1991; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 1995; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000) adopt a rather different stance than those outlined above.

In his article Heritage as Media: Some Implications for Research (1989), Silverstone turns his attention to the heritage industry, which he understands to be increasingly intertwined with mass media and its audiences. He is interested in the implications this has for understanding the museum and its visitors. Silverstone asserts that "if museums, exhibitions and heritage displays are, as indeed they are increasingly becoming, exercises in mass communication, then an understanding of the way they work, of their effects and effectiveness ought to be informed by the procedures adopted in the study of mass communication and contemporary culture" (Silverstone, 1989: 139). Furthermore "there has been no tradition of studying exhibitions... as the site of complex strategies of symbolic power..." or from the point of view of the theory of reception" (Zavala, 1993: 82). Museums are widely understood to construct coherent, accessible narratives in order to inform, educate or entertain, attempting to mediate between the present and the past, the unfamiliar and the familiar, between now and then, between there and here. In doing so, they align themselves with other mediations such as television (Silverstone, 1989: 140). The structures used in the telling of stories draw on signs and symbols normally used in everyday life. In constructing these mediations, they rely on means of communication which include objects, audio, visual and textual representations. Silverstone suggests that in competing for the same audiences as other forms of mass media, the museum engages in the "fragmentation of displays, the drawing on mass culture's own metaphors in gallery design, the premium being placed on interactivity, the peopling of restored sites by actors in accents and costumes" all testifying to "the increasing dominance of televisual and arcade culture" (Silverstone, 1989: 141)<sup>5</sup>. It should also be noted here that an exhibition differs from other forms of media because it is a more physical, spatial entity and that the use of objects as well as visualisations means that it is "more semantically unruly" (Macdonald, 1993: 24). Nevertheless, once this has been considered, it may well be possible to understand the construction of heritage in terms of mass-media based theoretical frame works in that both attempt to act as systems of representation by constructing texts for consumption.

The usefulness of the ethnographic and anthropological frameworks in the study of museum visitors within this approach has also been raised. This approach has been understood to emerge from the cultural studies tradition, in which Silverstone's work, for example, is placed

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<sup>5</sup> Some of these elements perhaps deserve further consideration. The idea of fragmentation, the use of interactive media and live actors for example, could all be influenced by concerns outside of the mass media, such as perceptions of education, the disintegration of clear academic boundaries and indeed the change in emphasis within academic research.

(Lawrence, 1993). In describing the nature of such studies Macdonald draws attention to the importance of studying visitors in this way, of "decoding the riddles that they set us. These are riddles of which, paradoxically, we may sometimes not even be aware, so used have we become to making certain cultural assumptions" (Macdonald, 1993: 77). MacDonald looks to cultural anthropology for suitable methods. One of the principal tasks of the anthropologist is to establish patterns, and to understand their expression within a given culture. Central to this is the practice of "looking at particular cultural patterns and asking how they might be otherwise" (Macdonald, 1993: 77). This concept is understood to be useful in terms of studying museum visitors in order to establish the variance in the meanings that people give to the activity of visiting museums. It is the visitor's own reading of text, context and the relationship between them that is of interest here.

A discussion of the roots of this approach in the context of the mass media will be useful in investigating a methodological model suitable to this study. During the 1970s, Stuart Hall developed a theory that expounded ideas about the encoding and decoding of texts. This differed significantly from traditional concepts that saw communication as a linear arrangement of Sender/Message/Receiver, as referred to above, rather than a more complex structure, a continuous circuit. Hall adopted a semiotic framework in his attempt to understand both the production and consumption of television. Essentially, this theory understands "symbolic work", or meaning to be made, both during production (encoding) and consumption (decoding). Furthermore, the codes used in both instances may not correspond to one another. Hall refers to the work of Roland Barthes in this instance who says that signs possess a certain degree of fluidity which means they can both be articulated and read in a number of different ways, although in a limited sense because "encoding will have the effect of constructing some of the limits and parameters within which they will operate" (Hall, 1980: 135). In other words, meanings are constructed "through the operation of codes within...a chain of discourse" (Hall, 1980: 62). The product circulates within this discursive formation. In highlighting the connotative rather than denotative meaning of signs, Hall argued that it is in the particular contexts of their positioning that "coded signs intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional more active ideological dimensions" (Hall, 1980: 69). New events must intersect with pre-established discursive formations if the audience is to make sense of them. Furthermore, readings are not entirely individual but occur as "significant clusterings". He outlines three possible subject positions in relation to texts. These are the dominant/hegemonic reading, the negotiated reading and the oppositional reading. The first sees the subject, the viewer, decoding the message using the same framework or reference code as the one within which it was produced. The negotiated code both acknowledges the dominant code and makes adjustments to it within its own particular position. The oppositional code understands the



message as having been communicated and understood, but from an entirely different referential framework. Furthermore David Morley (1980) asserts that previous theories had failed to distinguish between the reader and the text and the reader of the text, or as Moores has described them, "the actual social subjects who interpret or de-code texts" (Moores, 1990:14). These readers were understood to be active in their consumption of texts, becoming producers of meaning through consumption by drawing on their own cultural knowledge, which they use to interpret the text. Theoretical analysis of film, and particularly the method practised by those publishing in Screen, for example, was understood to promote an abstract understanding of the text/subject relationship. It ignored the "constant intervention of other texts and discourses" outside of the text under analysis. Morley however, argued that these other discourses were an active element in the positioning of the subject in relation to the text setting "some of the terms by which any particular text is engaged and evaluated" (Morley, 1980: 162) This understanding of the inter-relationship between different discourses suggested the existence of a 'discursive subject'. The concept of "interdiscourse" suggests that discursive formations provide a multiplicity of pre-established subject positions from which the text can be read. This "transforms the relation of one text/one subject to that of a multiplicity of texts/subject relations in which encounters can be understood not in isolation but only in moments of their combination" (Morley, 1980: 166). Morley acknowledges the concept of dominant or preferred readings describing how "such texts privilege or prefer a certain reading in part by inscribing certain preferred discursive positions from which its discourse appears natural, transparently aligned to the real and the credible". However he also suggests that even the positions of subjects constructed by the text "may be inhabited differently by subjects... It does not follow that because the reader has taken the position most fully inscribed in the text...he/she will, for that reason alone, subscribe to the ideological problematic of the text" (Morley, 1980: 169). This means, for example, that subject positions taken in relation to some texts might be contradictory to that taken in relation to others. So, the discursive subject constructs meanings by using particular sets of discourses "knowledges, prejudices, resistances" that are dependent on "the repertoire of discourses at the disposal of different audiences." This repertoire, Morley argues, is defined by one's social experiences. This might include class, culture, gender, age and so on.

Drawing on the work of Roger Silverstone and David Morley, Moores suggests that "the time has come to consolidate our theoretical and methodological advances by refusing to see texts, readers and contexts as separable elements and by bringing together ethnographic studies and textual analyses" (Moores, 1990: 24). Adopting this approach to heritage visitors would see the analysis of the text and its producers to be essential in understanding the consumer of that text, the "inter-relationship between, for example, the intention of the creators and the responses of the visitors" (Silverstone, 1989: 142). Macdonald and Silverstone address the question of

conducting research which focuses on this: "Evaluation research can discover, once an exhibition is open, who comes to it and what they say about it. Formative research can test the effectiveness of individual exhibits. But such research rarely goes very deeply into the socially defined nature of the relationship between the visitor and the objects, exhibits and texts of an exhibition, and it is this relationship which is the crucial one" (Macdonald and Silverstone, 1991: 186). It is worth stating here that Hooper-Greenhill (1994) has developed a theoretical model of communication in exhibitionary contexts that describes this interaction "where messages are formulated, exchanged and interpreted in a continuous process" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 9). This is akin to Hall's (1980) 'Encoding-Decoding' model in which a linear process of communication is abandoned in favour of one that shows meanings to be made through the interaction of a "team of communicators" and "active meaning makers" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994: 25). However, I think that this model does not account as fully for the ways in which meanings are made as the 'Encoding/Decoding' model, described above. As discussed, Hall and Morley place emphasis on text, context and discourse in describing the actual process of meaning-making that takes place, while Hooper-Greenhill seems to be describing an ideal of communication for museums in their educational function. In her description, a direct communication appears to take place between exhibition organisers (team of communicators) and visitors (active meaning makers) to create an agreed set of meanings.<sup>6</sup> Because of the emphasis placed on contexts and discourse, as described in the previous section, and the interpretive nature of this study, it is Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' model that is adopted in this thesis.<sup>7</sup>

So how has the concern with the relationship between readers, texts and contexts been explored in relation to museums or heritage institutions? It will be useful here to discuss briefly both the nature of the data that has emerged in visitor studies that have followed this route and the problems that have been encountered in producing it.

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<sup>6</sup> Hooper-Greenhill does acknowledge that because each visitor brings a different set of experiences to their interpretation, that this is difficult to achieve.

<sup>7</sup> While fully acknowledging the value of using Hall's original model, Dicks (1997) suggests that in understanding particular sites of communication, aspects of the model can be extended. She presents a version of this model that divides 'relations of production' into conditions – the economic, social and cultural context in which the site develops – and process – "the particular relations that characterise that development". The inter-relationship between the cultural and the economic is stressed here. She makes a further alteration to the model which sees 'frameworks of knowledge' "distinguishing between popular cultural signs and discourses and professional technical knowledge". The latter might include, for example, technologies of interpretation in exhibitions. These "circuits of cultural mythology and intertextuality" can include both general images or myths and ones that have more localised, specific meanings. This is a valuable contribution, but is conceived in the context of a specific heritage site with particular patterns of development. I continue to use Hall's original model of communication here to allow the most scope for the patterns of development peculiar to the case study at the centre of this thesis to emerge.

Macdonald (1995) and Dicks (1997, 1999, 2000) have both approached visitor studies in this way. Although not specifically concerned with the 'Encoding/Decoding' model, MacDonald (1995) did view museums and related entities as an appropriate focus for approaches adopted in the study of the mass-media (see also MacDonald and Silverstone, 1991) and was interested in the relationships between the exhibition (text) wider contexts (science) and readers (visitors). MacDonald examined visitor responses to the exhibition Food for Thought at the Museum of Science in London. She was interested in investigating visitors' thoughts about both their experiences of the exhibition and science as a more general concept. This built on an earlier analysis of the production of the exhibition (MacDonald and Silverstone, 1991). More recently, Bella Dicks (1997, 1999, 2000) has applied the encoding /decoding model to her study of visitors to heritage attractions specifically, as opposed to museums more generally. She has addressed the ways in which the concept of community has been encoded and decoded at the Rhondda Heritage Park in Wales, and more broadly how heritage can be considered as a social practice.

The data that emerged from these studies was of course context specific and complex. However, it is possible to distil some types of data common to both studies. In particular, researchers were able to gain an insight into patterns of development of the exhibitions, visitor motivation, patterns of visitor response and the relationship between production and consumption of the text. All of these also involved the contexts in which the exhibitions and subject matter were being produced and consumed. The findings of these studies indicate that:

- As indicated by Hall, visitor responses occur in 'significant clusterings'. Responses give useful data that relate to motivation for the visit, particular readings of exhibition narratives and attitudes in relation to museums and both specific and broader subject matters (MacDonald, 1995; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000).
- Visitors may conceive of their visit in educational terms, but other factors may also be at the basis of their visit. These include life cycle or family events, the relationship between museum or heritage visiting and visiting new places or other experiences that are outside of ordinary activities (MacDonald, 1995).
- Visitors may use museum or heritage representations as objects of personal reminiscence – this has been expressed in relation to finding a sense of self-recognition and identity (MacDonald, 1995; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000).

- Visitors may construct narratives other than those envisaged by producers. Visitors may also construct narratives based on linking particular types of display rather than content (MacDonald, 1995).
- Visitors may draw on a broader group of texts or discursive formations in their decoding of heritage and museum narratives and representations. Therefore, although active, visitor readings occur within pre-defined parameters (MacDonald, 1995; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000). Although variations occur in readings, visitors do not necessarily question the authority or intent of producers (MacDonald, 1995).
- Conceptions of the past in relation to the present vary amongst visitors. These may include both a more distanced and closed view of the past or one that is more critical and which stimulates thought about related, present day concerns (Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000).
- Particular forms of identity may contribute to the particular view of the past visitors express – diasporic identity, it has been suggested, may partially seek a more uni-vocal and closed sense of the past. This draws on pre-existing knowledge of collective identity and memory rather than on more personal or individual memory (Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000).

It is also useful to outline here some of the suggested methods used to elucidate this type of information. These studies were clearly qualitative rather than quantitative. Participant observation plays an important role in this research. Visitor movements, conversations and so on are recorded and analysed with a view to establishing particular patterns. Interviewing techniques are also used. The kinds of questions posed by this approach are best answered through the use of open-ended techniques. The phrasing of questions becomes particularly important, given that visitors' answers can be abbreviated and that "it seems comparatively rare for visitors to be critical of exhibitions" (Macdonald, 1993: 78). Open questions that ask the visitor to describe their visit, rather than assess it, may be more rewarding. This might include asking where they went, what they saw, what they felt and why. The interviews are informal in character, and are conducted either on an individual basis or in groups. Other techniques might include the use of maps or photographs as aids in sparking conversation. In Macdonald's view, this approach allows "visitors to set the agenda" (Macdonald, 1993: 79). Similarly, Zavala describes it as the "narrative reconstruction of visitors' experiences from visitors' own perspectives, considering these experiences as 'readings' of exhibitions with individual 'identity themes' that give the readings meaning specific to individual visitors" (Zavala, 1993: 83).

### 4.3 Summary

The first part of this chapter aimed to identify a suitable methodological model for use in this study. In doing so, it looked particularly to the field of exhibition visitor studies itself. It considered what visitor studies have been carried out in Ireland, their purpose and the nature of data they produce. It went on to identify the types studies that are conducted most frequently further afield. Given that neither of these approaches were deemed suitable to answer the questions at the heart of this study, a third approach was described. This was a largely ethnographic approach to visitor studies that is particularly influenced by the study of mass-media audiences. In particular, it was found that:

- The field of visitor studies is an under-developed one in Ireland, in marked contrast to the level of interest in heritage attractions in popular, economic and academic discourse. The focus of studies conducted here reflects the economic importance of heritage to the country more generally. These studies are interested in heritage attractions as 'products', and their visitors as 'customers'. The questions at the basis of this study are interpretive in nature, and therefore require models of communication and methods that depart from the positivist stance of these studies, and of the bulk of studies conducted in the field of museum and heritage visiting elsewhere.
- Studies that are closer in their interests to this study look to models used in the field of mass-media audience research, and the usefulness of anthropological and ethnographic methods within this. Underlying this approach is an understanding of communication (whether in the context of museums and heritage attractions or other media) that moves away from the linear sender/message/receiver model. Rather, a model that demonstrates the complexity of such communication is required. Therefore, Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' model was adopted here.
- The 'Encoding/Decoding' model takes account of the importance of understanding how the text (exhibition), reader (visitor) and context (discourses) interact to produce meaning. The study of visitors within this approach demands that we gather data pertaining to all points on this circuit of communication. It is in the inter-relationship between these factors in specific situations that consumption can be most fully investigated.

The under-lying conception of visitors, the nature of the questions that underpin such studies and the type of data they produce all suggest that this approach to studying visitors can be aligned with the core interests of this thesis. The model of communication and the methods used in gathering empirical data within this approach are therefore adopted by this study. These

methods are given more detailed consideration in the following chapter, which documents their use in the context of this thesis.

## **SECTION 2 METHODOLOGY**

### **Chapter 5 Methodology: Wicklow's Historic Gaol**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was concerned with locating this study within the various approaches found currently in the field of visitor studies. As stated previously, this study is interpretive in its outlook departing from the concerns of the bulk of visitor studies to be conducted in Ireland and further afield. It is qualitative rather than quantitative. The use of qualitative methods has increased since the 1980s, particularly in the fields of media/communication studies, cultural studies and sociology. This has in turn impacted on their use in the study of museum and heritage visitors (see Bicknell and Farmelo, 1993 for an overview of the field; MacDonald, 1995; Dicks, 1997, 1999, 2000). The purpose of this chapter is to document the use of such methods in gathering data for this study, and the issues encountered in doing so. Academic works on the use of qualitative methods used in compiling this chapter are by Gilbert (1993), Gunter (2000), Alasuutari(1995) and Neuman (2000). Other sources useful in the design of this methodology, particularly with regard to the case study method, were Yin (1994) and Roche (1997).

#### **5.2 Methodology**

##### **Case Studies**

The 'Encoding/Decoding' model suggests that meaning is made in the interaction between the text, the reader and the contexts that impact on both. This implies that it is in understanding the particularities of specific situations that the meanings produced in the course of heritage consumption can be best understood. I felt that a case study model provided the optimum methodological structure relevant to the exploration of these concerns. Yin suggests that case study research is an empirical inquiry of a particular phenomenon "within its real life context" (Yin, 1994: 13). In contrast with quantitative methods case studies seek out rather than ignore "the particularities and complexities of real life circumstance" (Roche, 1997: 99). Perhaps most important is the use of multiple sources of evidence in the construction of case studies, allowing us to consider several processes at work in both the production and consumption of the particular heritage exhibition in hand. In the context of this study, the adoption of this method allowed for the development of rich primary data, and for cross-checking of ideas presented by one set of data against those suggested by others. Not only was this important in terms of the validity of the study, but also in the exploration of one of the key ideas presented in theoretical literature – the exploration of the relationship between producer, text, context and consumer.

Both practical and theoretical concerns impacted on the choice of case study. Initially it was envisaged that a comparative study of visitor responses to three 'types' of institution, each providing diverse visitor experiences would be conducted, but it was felt that the quality of data and analysis would be higher if this study concentrated on one institution, given the practical constraints involved. Also, in reality, many 'heritage attractions' fall between two, or even all three, of these ideal types. The chosen case study needed to be accessible on a practical level and yet have the potential to produce a rich set of data. Issues included whether the possible case studies were accessible in terms of travel, whether they were open at the particular times of year in which the data gathering would occur, whether the displays and organisers were accessible to me, and whether there was documentary material available to me. It was desirable to choose a case study which had not been exhausted in critical literature, but where useful data may have been available – for example, survey type studies of visitors to the institution or the area in question. A number of possibilities were considered, but Wicklow's Historic Gaol was chosen because of its suitability both conceptually and practically.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol was opened as a visitor attraction in 1998, following its restoration and interpretive development since the late 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Funded in part by the European Structural Fund, administered by Bord Fáilte, and owned and developed by Wicklow County Council, it seemed to function on both public and private commercial levels. After an initial period it became a profit making enterprise in its own right. It can therefore be considered then as part of both public and commercial representation of the past in Ireland, influenced by the development of the heritage and tourism industries. Indeed, the gaol is the most recent, major, addition to the visitor attractions of the county and as such, forms an important part of the history of the county as a tourist destination since the eighteenth century. As a part of the tourism industry, it was also included in a wider survey of visitors to the area shortly after it opened. The interpretive narrative focuses on its original function as the county gaol, telling its history in relation to those major events in national and county histories that impacted on the gaol itself. It uses representational strategies associated with the heritage industry, and yet this occurs in the context of the original artefact of the building itself. Wicklow's Historic Gaol was therefore interesting on a conceptual level because it was part of the inter-connecting discourses of Irish historiography, commercial and civic concerns and the representation of the past through exhibition. There was therefore the potential to explore the concepts of authenticity and identity, outlined in the previous section, that underpin the production and consumption of the past at heritage attractions.

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<sup>8</sup> This is documented fully in Section 3 of this thesis.



Adhering to the 'Encoding/Decoding' model, this thesis divided the development of the case study in three. The central concern was the study of visitors to Wicklow's Historic Gaol. However, this also required the gathering of information about the text, the context and the producer because of the possible relationship or non-relationship between preferred, ancillary or alternative readings of exhibition narratives, as discussed in the previous chapter. Various sources were utilised in the gathering of data pertaining to the case study. These were comprised of:

- archival documentation;
- secondary literature;
- semi-structured one to one interviews with those active in the production of the experience;
- primary observation of the interpretation and display;
- focus group interviews with visitors;
- a survey questionnaire completed by visitors;
- the development of behavioural maps.

These are documented in more detail below. Context is dealt with first, as this is relevant to both encoding (production) and decoding (consumption) processes.

### **Context**

Researching the contexts that contribute to both the production and consumption of Wicklow's Historic Gaol involved gathering primary data in the form of promotional material for the gaol and for the county, or touristic region, more generally. This included both contemporary and historical sources, so that a sense of the development of the relevant discourses over time could be explored. Secondary material involved critical and factual responses to heritage, history and tourism in the region and to the gaol in particular.

### **Production**

Data pertaining to the development of the gaol as a visitor attraction was gathered through direct observation of the gaol and the interpretive narrative that surrounds it, one to one interviewing of relevant people and the use of secondary and primary documentary sources. This meant that the data gathered from different sources could be verified against one another. The use of multiple sources allowed for the production of data rich enough for a rounded analysis of the text and its development in relation to historical, touristic, historiographical and museological contexts.

### **Interview Process**

Those interviewed were the manager, David Bowe, Tom Broderick, the County Development Officer and the principal person involved in the gaol's development as a visitor attraction and the designer, Dennis Brennan. It was felt that this would give a well-rounded picture of the development of the exhibition and the way in which it functions as a visitor attraction in its own right and in the wider development of the county as a tourist attraction. Again these were semi-structured interviews which were conducted on a one to one basis. They were conducted in a conversational style in order to maximise the data produced. The basic schedule used in each interview is reproduced in Appendix A.

### **Observation, Primary and Secondary Documentation**

Research was conducted in relation to the development of the text itself using first-hand observation and primary and secondary documentary material. Primary documentary sources included a series of briefing documents, interpretive plans and correspondence relating to the development of the gaol as a visitor attraction between 1993 and 1998. The use of secondary sources was useful in understanding the history of the gaol and both local and national histories. These were both descriptive and critical. This was important in understanding the issues surrounding the interpretation of the gaol, particularly with regard to the historiographical stance that it adopts. Both primary and secondary sources are listed in the bibliography. The guiding schedule used in the first-hand observation of the exhibition or 'text' of Wicklow's Historic Gaol is reproduced in Appendix A.

### **Consumption**

A primary element in the development of the case study was the gathering of data pertaining to the visitors themselves. The methods used here adhere to the qualitative nature of the study and to the schema described by Fielding as "interviews (usually more a conversation than a standardised interview often involving key informants), the analysis of documents, direct observation of events, and some effort to think oneself into the perspective of the members, the introspective, empathetic process Weber called *Verstehen*" (Fielding, 1993: 20.). The particular methods chosen here were unobtrusive observation and semi-structured interviews using focus groups and a small-scale questionnaire survey.

### **Survey**

A decision was made to use a small-scale survey. This was not intended nor should it be considered as a valid survey in relation to quantitative methodologies. Rather, it was envisaged as a way of defining some of the topics for use in focus group interviews, and to give some sense of the possible difference in responses according to a basic set of variables. These were

socio-economic group, nationality, gender, age and type of group in which the visit took place. 157 survey questionnaires were distributed and 154 of these were returned. Visitors were invited to participate in the exercise by the researcher following the completion of the first part of the tour, and completed questionnaires were returned voluntarily following the completion of the entire visit. Two pilot surveys had been conducted prior to this that had used different styles of questionnaire. These were assessed in relation to their usefulness in the context of this study and elements of both were combined in the production of the final questionnaire. Where possible, answers were controlled to enable the efficient collation of data in a codified form. In these cases visitors were asked to choose their answer from a limited set of choices – for example, 7 age-groups were listed and visitors were asked to circle the appropriate age group for them.

The individual questionnaires were collated on computer using a spreadsheet facility. This enabled me to isolate groups of responses according to the categories included in the questionnaire. It was also possible to isolate sub-groups within these and cross-reference their answers. This process enabled me to establish whether particular patterns had emerged in relation to visitor responses. This method was particularly useful in establishing whether a pattern existed in terms of visitor responses to those questionnaire categories that were less controlled. This included the questions asked in respect of motivation, likes and dislikes and special interests.

A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A. The results of the survey are discussed in Section 3.

### **Focus Group Interviews**

Initially utilised in commercial and military studies, focus groups have been used in academic audience research following the emergence of new theoretical interests in media/communication studies (Gunter, 2000) although they are still under-utilised in the field of sociological research as a whole (Gibbs, 1997). The use of focus groups is described as “A research strategy which involves intensive discussion and interviewing of small groups of people on a given focus or issue...” (Marshall, 1998: 233). Their use is a clear alternative to the quantitative, structured questionnaire survey often employed in the study of museum visitors, and is an established method in relation to media audiences, museum or heritage centre visitors (Dicks, 1997, 2000; MacDonald, 1995).

The value of this method lies in the nature of group interaction which enables the researcher to “draw upon respondents’ attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions” which are “more

likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails" (Gibbs, 1997: 2). The adoption of a group rather than an individual interviewing strategy encourages the gathering of material that pertains to "the terms, concepts, perceptions and structures of argumentation within which the group operates and thinks as a cultural group" (Alasuutari, 1995: 17)

Issues to be considered when adopting this strategy included: the ability of the facilitator, the group dynamic (e.g. the participation of dominant/non dominant group members), group influence on individual opinion, non-comparative groups/contexts/topics, the generation of context specific rather than generalised data, the pre-determining of answers, the pragmatic difficulties in organising a session and in the recording and transcription of free-flowing conversations. Also considered were whether there would be distinctions between the results obtained from a natural group and from a selected group, and which of these was it best to use. Methods of sampling are also less clearly defined within the focus group methodology. Arber (1993) describes two methods of sampling for use in qualitative research. These are theoretical and snowball sampling. Theoretical sampling involves the choice of participants who will "maximise theoretical development" (Arber, 1993: 74) and this was the method adopted here. This study opted to use natural groups, that is groups who were already visiting the gaol together. Related to this was the decision not to invite visitors to participate in the study prior to their visit, but only to invite participation following their visit.<sup>9</sup> This was because it was important that visitor responses were as natural as possible. It would therefore have been counter-productive to alert visitors prior to their visit, because this may have partly formed their response. This was meant that natural groups were chosen over pre-selected groups. It was important to try to ensure a balance of type of visitors in choosing groups to interview. This involved making choices in relation to age balance, gender balance, nature of the group (e.g. adult, family with children, couples,), and when possible, nationality. It was not always possible to assess nationality prior to interview. Although this aspect of the method primarily focused on groups, a decision was made to include single visitors where possible, as this would give a fuller sense of the range of responses that might occur. Maximum use had to be made of the visitors that attended on any one day and during the research period as a whole, and ultimately this is reflected in the nature of the participants of this study.

The term 'unstructured' interview can be somewhat misleading. Although the nature of the interview session is less formal and the questions asked are open ended and more

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<sup>9</sup> For example Dicks (1997, 2000) gathered information prior to the visit and following it. This established whether visitor attitudes changed during the course of their visit. This was not central to my study, and so this aspect of methodology was not relevant here.

conversational in tone than quantitative questionnaire surveys, a clear schedule of topics must be developed for use by the researcher in eliciting data. This schedule relates directly to the questions that frame the study as a whole but allows respondents extreme latitude in the way they frame their responses (Fielding, 1993: 138). Fielding goes on to outline the principles that should inform these interviews. These are:

- Questions should be as open-ended as possible so that responses are spontaneous rather than rehearsed;
- Questioning techniques should aim to elicit under-lying attitudes, beliefs or values.

Of the five possible techniques advanced by Fielding (1993), two were used in questioning during focus-group interviews in this study. These were:

- indirect questioning – e.g. “how do you think other visitors feel when...”
- picture techniques – images as conversation prompts.

Pilot interviews were conducted in June 2001 with a view to establishing if there was particular problems with the interview schedule, the location in which the interviews would take place, the method for recording responses and so on. This allowed for the fine-tuning of the final research schedule used during the course of this aspect of the research. The basic interview schedule is reproduced in Appendix A.

Interviews took place on site, either in a cell at the end of the exhibition route or in the cafeteria following the completion of their visit. It was felt that visitors would be comfortable and as relaxed as possible in these settings, rather than in a more formal, more contrived context. This aspect of research took place in four separate sessions during the month of August 2001. A total of 22 groups were interviewed, containing between 1 and 5 people. 5 of these were family groups visiting with children, 7 were visiting as a couple, 4 as groups of adult friends or family and 6 were single visitors. In total, 43 adults and 9 children were interviewed. 22 of the adult participants were men and 21 were women. 21 participants were aged between 45 and 54, 7 were between 55 and 64, 6 were between 35 and 44, 5 were between 25 and 34, 4 were aged over 65 and two were aged between 15 and 18. 5 of the groups were resident in Ireland and four of these were on day-trips. 11 groups were from the UK, two of whom had members born in Ireland. 3 groups were resident in Northern Ireland, 1 was from Germany, 1 from America and 1 from Australia. 13 of the 22 groups can be classed as being in managerial or professional positions (ABC1), 7 were divided between lower status white-collar workers, and skilled or unskilled workers (C2DE). The occupations of two groups went unrecorded. Thirteen out of 22 groups had been to second level education, 4 had a third level or professional qualification and a

further 3 groups had a mixture of both levels of education. 1 group had left the formal system after a primary level of education. It was also decided to use some earlier pilot interviews in the final analysis because of the richness of data contained within them. However, the details of the backgrounds of these visitors were not recorded. It is important again to state here that maximum use had to be made of the visitors that attended on any one day and during the research period as a whole, and that this is reflected in the sample of participants in this study. Particular problems were encountered that were completely outside of the control of the researcher. During the period in which this research took place, the foot and mouth disease crisis led to the closure of many of the country's heritage sites and several of the county's principal attractions. This meant that the number of visitors to the gaol was lower than usual. The manager of the gaol also felt that this had effected the number of visitors coming from outside of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK. This was because visitors from other European countries and other continents, particularly America and Australia, tend to visit as part of organised coach tours visiting the larger heritage sites in the county. Wicklow Gaol functions as an additional rather than a principal stop on such tours, and therefore suffered significantly from the closure of these sites.

Following a pre-amble to introduce the project, visitors were asked questions listed in the interview schedule. However, because of group dynamics and the open-ended nature of the questions being asked, this did not occur in any strict order, nor sometimes in the form cited in the schedule. For example, on several occasions visitors began to discuss the subject matter of the exhibition or a related topic more freely, giving the data required without being asked a specific question. Also, the same question was sometimes asked in different forms if the data required was not being addressed by participants in their answers. Another issue that arose in the course of some interviews concerned the flow of information that was not required. However, by using the schedule the interviews were re-focused. This occurred largely because a conversational style was adopted, which also enabled a broader range of issues, that visitors themselves felt were relevant, to emerge.

### **Unobtrusive Observation**

The value of observational methods of data collection lies in their ability to elicit information about specific patterns of behaviour as enacted by participants. Gunter refers to this when he says, "While focus groups and surveys are useful for obtaining data on people's opinions about different things, they are less accurate indicators of how individuals actually behave in specific situations." (Gunter 2000: 7.) This data was gathered with a view to establishing whether or not there were particular patterns of consumption in evidence – that is, whether visitor behaviour could be grouped into 'significant clusterings' (see MacDonald, 1995). Originally, it was intended

that visitors' conversations with one another would be monitored, but a pilot study revealed some difficulties with this at this specific site. For example, the smallness of the individual spaces that make up the entire experience and the number of different spaces spread out over a large area made it impossible to gather this kind of information unobtrusively. Furthermore, the level of sound of the exhibits themselves within particular spaces made it difficult to hear visitor conversations, which were often conducted in hushed tones. Therefore, behavioural maps were used in the gathering of the following data:

- What route do visitors take through the exhibition, if it isn't pre-determined?
- What elements do visitors engage with most? How long do they stop there?
- Do they stop at other key points? For how long?

The maps were in the form of plans for each floor, as well as for the reconstructed transportation ship. Cells were numbered and labelled according to their content and the media used there. Visitors were tracked through the gaol following the completion of the structured part of the tour. They were timed in the cells, in the ship or at other elements with which they engaged, and notes were made in relation to other factors. These included, for example, whether or not actors were present at particular points, behavioural characteristics that seemed prevalent and whether they used a guide or not. Also of importance was the recording of gender and estimations of age groups and group formations. In order for the data gathered using this method to be meaningful, an assumption was made that the length of time a visitor engages with a particular object indicates greater or lesser interest. It was envisaged that this would be useful in establishing whether particular patterns existed in relation to visitor response to particular types of display or aspects of the story line. Clearly, this may not be the case – visitors may have delayed in a particular cell to take a quiet moment away from family or friends, to daydream, to have a row with a partner or to tie shoelaces. Again the nature of the space involved meant that this could not be clarified further without making visitors aware that they were being observed. However, the data that resulted from recording such information for the entire visit meant that an overall pattern of behaviour would emerge. For example, if a visitor was stopping longer in every cell that contained an aural account, or dealt with the 1798 rebellion, than it is unlikely that they were delayed because of ancillary reasons each time. The other key information to emerge here was the route that visitors took through the gaol. This aspect of the behavioural mapping process produced interesting and useful results. The results of this process were again collated on computer using a spreadsheet system and data had to be codified to make this an efficient method.

A copy of the basic behavioural map used in the compilation of this data is reproduced in Appendix A. The results of this aspect of my research are discussed in Section 3.

### **5.3 Summary**

While the previous chapter was concerned with finding a methodological model, this chapter described how this was applied in the gathering of data in this study in a more specific way. This chapter described the adoption of a case-study methodology in researching this thesis. This was understood to match the issues of importance to the 'Encoding/Decoding' model of communication. The choice of Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a case study was discussed as were the methods used to investigate both its production and consumption, again in accordance with the concerns of the 'Encoding/Decoding' model. The specific issues encountered in the course of this aspect of researching this thesis were also outlined. More specifically, this chapter described how:

- In attempting to reach this level of understanding, this thesis adopted a case-study method. The particular case study chosen for development was Wicklow's Historic Gaol. The data required for the development of the case study was divided in three, according to the emphasis within the 'Encoding/Decoding' model. Data was therefore gathered in terms of the exhibition (text), the discourses involved in its production and consumption (contexts) and visitor responses to it (readers).
- A variety of methods were used in each case to ensure validity. All involved the use of both primary and secondary material. Secondary material included both descriptive and critical material in relation to tourism, history and visitors in Ireland and more particularly in Wicklow. Primary data included the use of promotional material for the gaol and the county more generally, documentation pertaining to the development of the gaol as a heritage attraction, interviews with both key participants in its development and visitors and the data generated by behavioural maps of visitors movements and questionnaire surveys completed by visitors.

The first section of this thesis discussed the diverse ways in which heritage visiting has been understood, particularly in relation to the themes of identity and authenticity. This section has described models of communication pertinent to the study of museum and heritage visitors, the methods associated with them and the types of data they produce. It has also documented the particular model of communication and methods used in the generation of empirical data within this study. This thesis now turns to a consideration of the production and consumption of Wicklow's Historic Gaol, the central focus of this body of research.



**SECTION 3      ENCODING AND DECODING WICKLOW'S  
HISTORIC GAOL**

## **SECTION 3     ENCODING AND DECODING WHG**

### **Chapter 6     Heritage, Tourism and Identity in Ireland**

#### **6.1     Introduction**

The previous section set out the model of communication seen to be most appropriate to this study of heritage visitors. It also described the particular methods that were employed to gather the empirical data on which this case study of Wicklow's Historic Gaol is based. The purpose of this section is perhaps the most straight-forward of all. It aims to describe the findings of this study, and to present an analysis of this data in relation to the ideas put forward in Section 1 and Section 2.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol stands on Kilmantin Hill in Wicklow town (see fig. 3.1). It is first recorded as a functioning gaol in 1702, and became increasingly important throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is attested to by the amount of architectural additions made to the building throughout this period. It was in use as a gaol until 1924 and after this was used periodically as a storage space for the county council. Having fallen into disrepair, a significant portion of the building was demolished in the 1950s. Interest was revived in the building in the 1980s, when the local authority planned to demolish it entirely with a view to using the land for housing and car-parking. This caused dissatisfaction locally, and an alternative future for the gaol as a heritage attraction was conceived. It is the consumption of the gaol as a heritage attraction that is the core interest of this thesis. I will refer to Wicklow's Historic Gaol as WHG from now on.

Following on from the discussion of Hall's (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding' model in the previous section, an analysis of the consumption of WHG as a text must also involve examining its production and the contexts in which both occur. This section as a whole is structured according to these fields of enquiry. This chapter will examine the contexts that impinge on the production and consumption of the gaol, the following chapter considers the gaol as a text and the processes involved in its production and the final chapter considers the meanings that visitors themselves produce during the course of their visit. This chapter will describe the principal discourses underlying the production and consumption of heritage centres in Ireland. It will firstly consider the place of heritage in the development of Ireland's niche market as a tourist destination and the consequent increased emphasis on its interpretation and display at official levels. It will go on to consider the place of heritage in constructing Irish identity in the representation of Wicklow as a tourist destination, and the particular forces that have shaped those images. This will involve a discussion of identity, tourism, historiography and collective memory in Ireland.



Fig. 3.1 Wicklow's Historic Gaol. Co. Wicklow. 2001.

## 6.2 Heritage and the Tourism Industry

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the increased profile of heritage in contemporary Irish society is indicated by several factors. There was a considerable rise of state interest in heritage. As already indicated, this was marked in the 1990s by the establishment of a government department with specific responsibility for it and other aspects of Irish culture; the implementation of new legislation; the establishment of the Heritage Council; and the re-organisation and re-naming of Dúchas – The Heritage Service, the agency most closely associated with its protection and use.

There have been distinct phases in the official focus on heritage in the last 150 years. Broadly, we might understand the first of these as showing an initial concern with the preservation, conservation and public ownership of material heritage through a concentration on legislative measures. More recently, this has changed to a concern with public access to history and heritage sites, their development as visitor attractions and a focus for leisure pursuits (see Appendix B). A concern with the public ownership of material heritage can be traced, in legislative terms at least, to the nineteenth century when issues of protection or preservation were first raised. While it would seem that these are still perceived to be one of the principal concerns of state agencies, there has been a great deal of involvement on behalf of these agencies in the interpretation and display of heritage on their own terms or in conjunction with the tourist industry. Within this thesis particular importance must be attached to the amount of funding that has been channelled into bodies engaged in the preservation and presentation of the past<sup>1</sup> in recent years and the consequent rise in the number of heritage attractions in the country. While in 1988 only 116 heritage attractions were found, by 1993, this had risen to 219 (Prentice and Andersen, 2000: 498). A figure of 342 fee-paying attractions was listed in the 1997 Visitor Attractions Survey (Tourism Development International, 1998). With regard to both fee-paying and non fee-paying attractions, a preliminary survey would suggest that there are approximately 400 heritage attractions in the Republic of Ireland at present. 330 of these might be described loosely as heritage or interpretive centres, museums or historic properties (Deevey, 1999), but only nine of them are county museums, two are regional museums and four are civic or other public museums. 71% of the museums surveyed in The Heritage Council's Report on a Survey of Museums and their Collections (1998) had been established in the last ten years, while only 17% were established in the previous twenty five years, 8% in the last fifty

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<sup>1</sup> By 1992, the Operational Programme for Tourism had awarded 40 per cent of European Regional Development Funding to this area (Brown, 1992); £94 million was contributed by the ERDF to projects whose aim was to improve tourist access to heritage and culture – this represented just over 3/4 of the total budget awarded to natural or cultural tourism under the Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-1999.

years and 4% in the period before this<sup>2</sup>. There has clearly been a massive increase in the number of institutions engaged in the mediation of history or culture. This chapter will now consider the contours of this development in more depth.

### **Interpretation, Heritage and Tourism**

So, what is the perceived purpose of interpretation and display in Ireland, and what has informed its development? The last decade has seen considerable interest being expressed in relation to interpretation. State bodies have been very active in asserting its importance. *Dúchas* – The Heritage Service, as well as protecting, maintaining, conserving and managing the national built and natural heritage, also presents it to the public. The development of an interface between the public and their heritage was emphasised in the creation of a specific section of this organisation, Education and Visitor Services. The specific objective of this division is to promote the conservation work undertaken by the other sections and to “deepen appreciation of Irish heritage among the public in general and young people in particular”. To this end they have been heavily, and often controversially, involved in the development of various interpretive projects. Their interest in interpretation is very specific, and has been understood as a bid to promote the conservation of heritage sites, as articulated by Freeman Tilden: “Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection” (Tilden in Mullane, 1994: 80). At the core of the Heritage Council’s activities are three key themes. These are the collection of data, the proposing of policy and the promotion of pride in Ireland’s heritage. The Heritage Council is therefore charged with duties that relate both to the conservation of the national heritage and its use for recreational and educative purposes. Most pertinent to this discussion, is their aim to “facilitate and build on the increased understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and conservation of the national heritage” (Verling, 1998: 21). This perhaps bears a close relationship to the philosophy adopted by *Dúchas*, which sees the relationship between conservation, appreciation and interpretation to be a close one. Furthermore, the educational role of these bodies, and therefore associated museums or interpretive centres, is implicit in this approach to interpretation. The Heritage Council has also undertaken to achieve heritage objectives in a way that enables community participation. This is informed by Agenda 21, an international initiative committed to social, economic and environmental sustainability that emerged in the wake of the Rio de Janeiro summit in 1992. The development of partnerships between local communities, state agencies, local authorities,

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<sup>2</sup> This report provides a valuable insight into the current situation in which museums find themselves in Ireland. Although the report focuses on just three counties, it was felt that they were representative of the wider situation (Canavan, 1998, 3). The institutions which participated in the survey included two museums and two heritage centres in Longford, four museums and three heritage centres in Mayo and seven museums and six heritage centres in Tipperary South Riding.

the private sector and educational institutions is central to this concept. Furthermore, it has undertaken to contribute to sustainable tourism and the task of ensuring that the national heritage has a place in local and community development. The emphasis awarded to conservation or protection of the national heritage, even in its interpretation, is overwhelming. Nevertheless, other issues surrounding interpretation of, and public access to, aspects of our heritage have also been highlighted, generating increased interest both critically and otherwise in the last twenty years. The remainder of this section aims to explore what may be described as a very prominent factor in this activity, the relationship between tourism, interpretation and heritage. The principle of partnership referred to above can be seen to be in operation in the management of heritage interpretation in Ireland as described below.

The significant development, which has taken place in the Irish tourism industry since the 1980s, has been encouraged by both national and world-wide trends. These include broadly defined issues such as the shift away from holidays in the sun towards activity or discovery tourism characteristic of the post-modern period (Urry, 1990), to more specific concerns centred on the reductions in costs and increase in services of air travel, the decline in inflation rates on a local level, and, particularly in the 1980s, the visits home made by emigrants (Gillmore, 1994: 4). Also during this period, when economic recession had reached a height, new measures for the creation of jobs to combat unemployment were sought. Tourism was identified as one of the key industries that could contribute to economic well being as a whole and in which job creation could take place. In keeping with global trends, the emphasis on service industries represented a move away from traditional manufacturing or agriculturally based industries (Gillmore, 1994: 3).

Bord Fáilte, the semi-state body responsible for the tourism industry, produced a series of reports outlining its envisaged development. The first of these was produced for the period between 1970 and 1980, although similar reports were produced on a more regular basis after the introduction of the White Paper on Tourism in 1985, reflecting perhaps the growing importance of the industry in the economy generally. The Operational Programme for Tourism (1989), The Fáilte Business: Tourism's Role in Economic Growth and Developing Sustainable Tourism: Tourism Development Plan (1993-97, 1994-99) are amongst those more recent reports of most interest to this study. This type of planning had not existed on a national level prior to this phase in the history of the tourism industry in Ireland, except in a non-specific way as a part of more general economic strategies. Of central importance in any of these plans were the use of EC funding and the concentration on the idea of a 'sustainable' industry. The concept of sustainability is reiterated throughout these reports, particularly in terms of a "quality environment...developing profitable enterprises...(and) enduring job creation" (Bord Fáilte, 1994:

1). Furthermore, in order to be successful, the country should develop an "image" based on those characteristics outlined above, which would be protected and "ideally enhanced, as a resource for future enjoyment" (Bord Fáilte, 1994: 3). The plan aimed to present a co-ordinated approach to the proposed development, focusing specifically on four elements. These were the designation of tourism centres, tourism areas, touring areas and special interest centres. It was recognised that if these were to be successful, a number of components had to be addressed. With this in mind, strategic plans were implemented in relation to the environment, accommodation, special interest activities, infrastructure/services and attractions. The latter was seen to be "firmly based on the heritage of the country...all those facets of the natural, human-made and cultural heritage which give us a unique identity...reflecting character, authenticity and sense of place...a distinctively Irish image" (Bord Fáilte, 1994: 5). Heritage had become a distinctive element in the product being sold to tourists, and tourism was therefore to become one of the most important defining factors in the promotion of heritage. One of the most influential programmes to be implemented with respect to the growth in heritage centres specifically was the Heritage Towns initiative. Visitor centres in each of the appointed towns would "explain its heritage features and help visitors to explore them with the help of guides, literature, and distinctive signposting". Included were Cobh, Westport, Kinsale, Cashel, Wexford, Kilkenny and Youghal, all of which were perceived to have both historic and architectural potential and communities committed to the promotion of high environmental standards. Other variations of this theme such as the Traditional Village initiative might draw on "outstanding performers in the Tidy Towns Competition" (Bord Fáilte, 1994: 49). Each town or village would organise their interpretive activities around the "dominant historic theme of the town" (Browne, 1992: 1.5). The development of specific areas as tourist attractions was to be highly controlled according to centralised plans concerned with the development of tourism.<sup>3</sup>

This programme of development was applied to County Wicklow, the focus of this thesis. Tourism has been an important component in the county's economy since the nineteenth century at least, if not prior to this, although the status of the tourism industry is perhaps less than that of some other counties, particularly those in the South-West. Traditionally, Wicklow has

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<sup>3</sup> The regional patterns associated with tourism may also be of particular significance to an exploration of the relationship between tourism and heritage. A number of reports suggest that there is a definite pattern associated with the spatial distribution of tourism in contemporary Ireland. Dublin and the Southwest represent those regions which gain most revenue associated with tourism, while coastal areas generally attract a higher proportion of holiday makers, the south-west and north-west coasts being particularly important. The appeal of the west of Ireland for both domestic and foreign tourists is long established and is associated with "a long attractive coastline and extensive upland scenery, together with the character of its human landscape, people and traditional culture" (Gillmore, 1994, 26). The reliance on tourism as a source of employment creation follows similar patterns, as does the development of heritage attractions – for example, there are approximately 28 attractions in Galway, while there are only 6 or 7 in Cavan or Carlow.

attracted visitors with its picturesque scenery and seaside resorts but the recent trend towards heritage tourism described above can be discerned in its more recent pattern of development. Although existing heritage sites have long been a feature of its promotion, an emphasis has been placed more recently on the enhancement of existing attractions and the development of new ones through the funding policy associated with tourism development. So the latest phase in the development of Wicklow's tourism industry broadly mirrors that of the rest of the country. Wicklow, alongside Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly East and Westmeath, is a part of the touristic region of Midlands-East. £80 million was invested in the development of the tourism industry in the region as a whole between 1989 and 1993 – this is on a par with the Western region for example which invested £90 million during the same period but seems very removed from the £175 million invested in the Cork-Kerry region. This simply reflects the degree of economic dependency on tourism in the latter. The difference in the amount of Structural Funding in each area is less marked however ranging from £30 million in Cork-Kerry, £25 million in the Western region and £27 million in the Midlands-East region. At this point, a further £125 million was estimated to be required to further develop the region according to the proposals made in Bord Fáilte's Tourism Development Plan (Bord Fáilte, 1994). It was envisaged that development would be encouraged in four distinct 'product' areas and also in marketing this product. One of these areas was in the development of attractions. Specific development opportunities were noted in county Wicklow, one of them being the development of a visitor centre and tourist office at Wicklow Gaol. (Bord Fáilte, 1994: 99). Of the 342 fee paying attractions documented in 1997, 74 of them were found to be in the Midlands-East region as a whole, the highest number of attractions in any one region. This compares with 64 in Shannon, 35 in the North West and 34 in Dublin. (Tourism Development International, 1997) The principal attractions in the region as a whole at this point included the Powerscourt Estate and Glendalough, both based in Co. Wicklow. Both of these have been consistently identified as being amongst the top twenty fee-paying attractions (measured in visitor numbers and therefore profits) in all regions. They are also, perhaps, two of the longest established. Other aspects of the county's history that have been a part of more longstanding provision for tourists have been various sites that commemorate the 1798 rebellion and its aftermath – the Dwyer McAllister Cottage and the Military Road can be included here. More recently, different aspects of the lives of the 'mass' of the people in Wicklow have been established– these might include the Coolakay House, Bray Heritage Centre, Greenan Farm Museum and Maze (see fig. 3.2) and WHG.

But what of the focus on interpretation advocated within this programme? By the 1990s, to "mould our heritage in its broadest sense and promote and present it to visitors so that the result is a transformation in the quality of the entire holiday experience" (Bord Fáilte, 1994: 45) became the aim of the tourism, and the heritage, industries. Because of the concern with sustainability, it



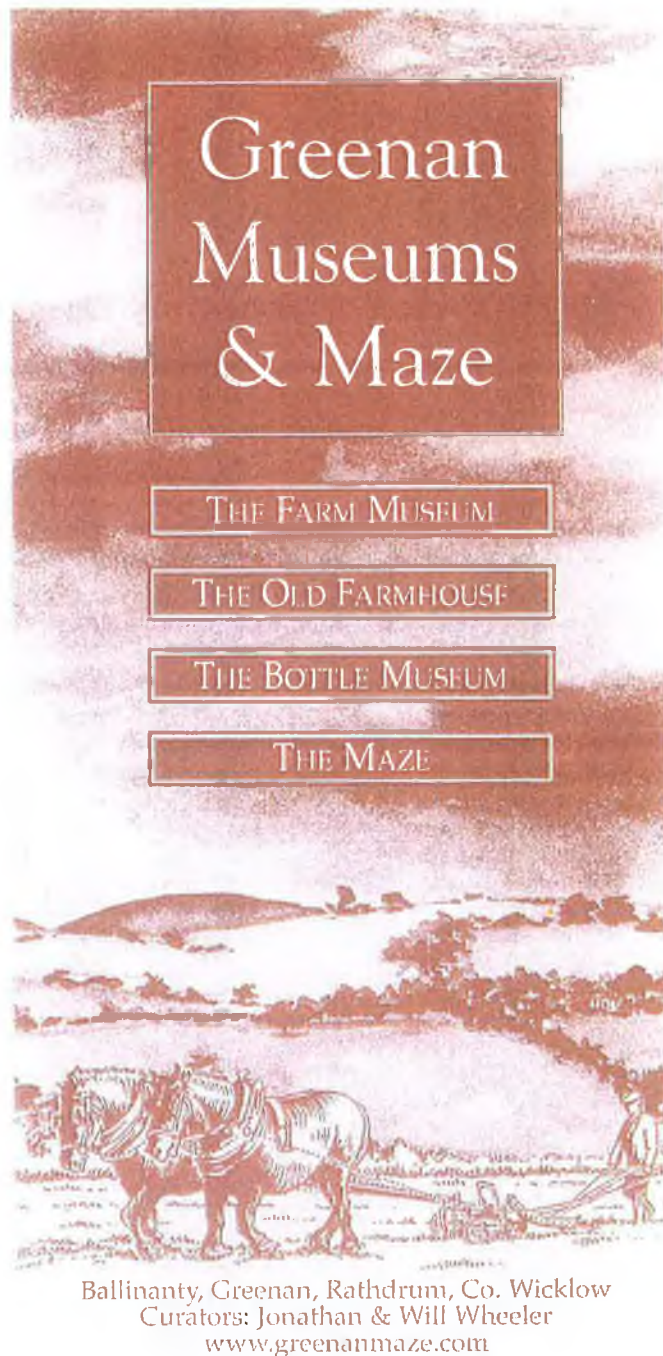


Fig. 3.2

Greenan Farm Museum and Maze, Co. Wicklow. Brochure, 2003.

was recommended that authenticity, relevance to the local community, hitherto neglected aspects of the heritage and focused interpretation should become defining factors in the development of existing or new attractions. Interpretation, an activity that emphasises the visitor and has become increasingly important in the last thirty years in institutions that represent the past, became a primary concern of the tourism industry. The emphasis on heritage as part of the tourism product saw the organisation of two conferences on the development of heritage attractions in Ireland during 1990 and 1992. These were organised by Bord Fáilte but with speakers based in the Office of Public Works (later to become Dúchas – The Heritage Service), Tourism Development International, Shannon Heritage Ltd, commercial developers, Department of Tourism, Transport and Communication, University College Cork, University College Dublin, Irish Heritage Properties, An Taisce, and the National Museum of Ireland. The development and regions manager of Bord Fáilte presented a strategy to interpret Ireland's history and culture for tourists at the second conference. This was based on the work of a committee that had been established following the first conference. This committee consisted of representatives from Bord Fáilte, Office of Public Works, Shannon Development and local authorities, demonstrating the partnership approach referred to above. It was recognised by these bodies that the complexity of Irish history was not easily understood by visitors, particularly foreign visitors who "arrive with a limited awareness of a few elements of this heritage" and with limited time to explore them further. This committee saw the purpose of increased interpretation as being to "heighten visitor experience, increase satisfaction levels and help in awareness and appreciation of individual sites" which would ultimately create repeat business and a "strong brand image of Ireland as a quality heritage destination" (Browne, 1992: 1.2). The centrality of the visitor, the "primary interest group", in the development of heritage attractions was stressed repeatedly (Stevens, 1992: 1.18). This has continued to be an important factor in competing with other non-sun destinations such as Britain, France and Scandinavia (Bord Fáilte, 2000).

The duplication of themes in various museums and heritage attractions was partly attributed to the use of traditional chronological interpretive frameworks and an alternative framework was introduced to counteract this. The new framework identified themes that would be familiar to most visitors, focusing on landscape, economy, science and technology, religion, social and political action, culture and leisure. These were grouped around five principal thematic concerns including Live Landscapes, Making a Living, Saints and Religion, Building a Nation and The Spirit of Ireland. Each of these were further subdivided into separate narratives so that the visitor's understanding of particular themes could develop through visits to a number of attractions. This approach was intended provide "a discipline, but not a strait-jacket" (Browne, 1992: 1.3). For example, The Skellig Experience in Kerry might adopt the theme of Early Christianity, while Kilmacduagh Monastery in Galway may focus on a particular storyline

associated with that theme. Smaller attractions at a local level might not be subject to the same duplication difficulties experienced by larger attractions, given that their interpretive content would have a strong local, and therefore individual, emphasis. The choice of a particular storyline or theme would not discourage attractions from dealing with more than one concept, but would encourage them to remain focused in terms of the narrative being told. It is important to place this framework within the context of the shift in emphasis in the activity of interpretation in museums more generally. The idea of a focused narrative is one that was mooted early in the consideration of visitor experience in museums (Hein, 1998) and remains a widespread concern in institutions, or individual exhibitions, that represent the past. This framework bypasses the traditional academic or collection based approaches associated with museums with a view perhaps to creating a more dynamic and accessible representation (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). This document is perhaps more formalised, however, and is concerned with the management of interpretation on a national, rather than a localised or institutional, scale with a view to creating a comprehensive 'heritage product.' So, the most recent and perhaps most powerful phase in the interpretation of Ireland's heritage is inextricably linked to the highly organised development of the country's tourism industry. This views the country and its culture as a product to be marketed abroad to increase sales. The development of Ireland's image as being uncrowded relaxed, scenic and friendly with a distinctive culture and heritage and an unspoilt environment have become the central focus of this programme. Therefore, heritage and other 'visitor attractions' are emphasised, are funded by the European Regional Development Fund and are therefore subject to the funding criteria in operation. A national interpretive strategy was implemented with a view to improving the overall quality of the heritage 'product' by assisting individual projects in availing of funding and meeting visitor expectations. Part of this strategy was to increase opportunities for access by overseas visitors and to avoid duplication in terms of the stories being told at individual sites. The implications of these guidelines for the interpretation of WHG will be discussed in the next chapter.

These developments caused considerable debate in several spheres. One body of critical literature perceives this in terms of the creation of Ireland as "a pleasure periphery designed to retail and retell historical narratives to an ever increasing volume of travellers visiting the island" (Johnson, 1999: 191). Fintan O'Toole used the analogy of Jorge Luis Borges' emperor who becomes more and more obsessed with having a detailed map of his territory. Eventually the map covers the entire country itself. O'Toole asserted "To this story, we in Ireland have one refinement to offer. When the map is finally spread out over the landscape, we will build a few interpretative centres on it, so that visitors may be taught its meaning" (O'Toole, 1992). This was in response to a controversy over the siting of interpretative centres by the OPW that raged during the early 1990s. It was a battle fought at both local and national levels, over the

airwaves, in magazines and newspapers, in court and in the popular arena. For O'Toole and others, the argument over the siting of interpretative centres became an argument about the activity of interpretation itself. His article was re-published in the Interpretation Journal and stimulated response from those engaged in interpretative activity both within and outside of the Irish context. This backlash against the activity of interpretation itself occurred in the face of the rapid, state supported development in the heritage industry, and the consequent focus on the development of exhibitions. While a considerable portion of European Regional Development funding was channelled into the general area of exhibition development, the focus on heritage centres rather than museums was also lamented in some quarters. One museum curator asked why "museums in this country have been chronically under-funded, neglected or even ignored for years?" (Holland, 1994: 43). It is perhaps easy to understand how the perception of museums as "small, poorly presented, dull, academic and unfriendly heritage centres" could arise in this context (Donaldson, 1992: 75). While some felt that a new style interpretive or heritage centre was simply "the new name for a museum if you wanted to get a grant for it", (McNulty, 1993: 51) for others, the distinction is far greater. Aidan Walsh claims "The role and function of the museum is far wider than that of heritage centres and similar tourist oriented attractions. These are largely display centres with high quality, frequently well researched, static displays. Museums collect, preserve, research, communicate, document, conserve and display cultural artefacts...most important of all, they possess the communicative power of the real thing" (Walsh, 1993: 45).

So to summarise, in tracing the growth in emphasis on heritage in Ireland, a pattern has emerged where the protection of the national heritage became increasingly under public rather than private control between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. In the last decade, the establishment of a new government department as well as the re-organisation of existing bodies has placed increased emphasis on state involvement in the protection and promotion of aspects of the national heritage. These public bodies have emphasised the interpretation of the country's natural and built heritage as an educational activity. There has been a considerable growth in the number of new museums or heritage centres established in recent years. This can be attributed in part to the injection of EC funding made available for projects such as this. Heritage has become important in terms of the economic well being of the country, particularly in terms of the tourism industry, and this relationship has been a central factor in increased development of the visitor experience through interpretation. Furthermore, the strategies adopted by public and private agencies in the promotion of tourism have been a central defining influence on the type of interpretation offered at heritage centres. The themes chosen in this centralised strategy may be understood as a shift away from traditional narratives associated with academic or curatorial concerns, and is therefore broadly in line with more recent approaches to interpretation in the museological world

these representations, not because of their own importance necessarily, but because they become a part of an over-all image of the country as being rooted in the past, a lost world. Are these concepts of Irishness made manifest in the promotion of county Wicklow, or the touristic region of the Midlands East, where WHG is situated, and how does this occur?

The cover of a promotional brochure for the Midlands East region as a whole shows two scenic images of county Wicklow. The principal image, to the right, depicts two walkers in the foreground, the only figures in the image, striding into a scene of sublime beauty (see fig. 3.3). They are apparently able to walk in peace on a modern, tarmacadamed road. In a separate image to the left, the round tower at Glendalough stands in the midst of a scattering of higgeldy piggeldy gravestones surrounded by trees in full leaf. The only figures in the image stand near to the tower and are almost indiscernible. The region as a whole is described as "a land of Celtic myth and mystery, majestic rivers, lakes, mountains and sea, with a warm and friendly people" and later, emphasised by the use of capital letters, the promise of "a place apart where dreams come true". Initially the brochure deals with the attractions of the region thematically, clearly setting out what are seen to be the principal selling points. "Pride and Opulence" (see fig. 3.4) features images of the exteriors of large houses such as Russborough, Avondale and Castletown, and an unidentified interior showing a room redolent with a sense of oldness and comfortable wealth in its magnificent fireplace, aged leather furniture and walls lined with solid bookcases filled with finely-bound books and portraits. Following this "The Saints and the Scholars" promises that "The Golden Age of Early Christian Ireland...is still to be found in the solitude..." of Glendalough" (see fig. 3.5). "The Wild Wonderful Spirit of Adventure" is to be found in the mountains. The image of a lone walker picking his way across a river using stepping stones is superimposed on an image of a winding track through the Slieve Blooms, this time there is a single car parked in the middle distance (see fig. 3.6). This attention to the accessibility of the region, despite its wildness, seems to be repeated on the following page, whose copyline reads "So Much Awaits Your Pleasure". Here the first image "touring in the Wicklow mountains" shows a lone car making its way along a well surfaced, mountain road – superimposed in the foreground is a signpost showing directions to various sites or scenic spots (see fig. 3.7). Later, an image of Fitzgerald's Pub in Avoca (Ballykissangel) is shown with groups of drinkers basking in the sunshine in front of it (see fig. 3.8). The brochure then deals with individual counties within the region. Wicklow appears on the penultimate page with the sub-title "the garden of Ireland". Read in conjunction with the next page the text reads "County Wicklow / The Garden of Ireland / Dreams Do Come True" (see fig. 3.9). A group of composite images forms the visual component here. These are dominated by a panoramic view of Lough Tay, a view of Powerscourt House from its gardens, Wicklow Bay and golfers on Wicklow Head. Text runs down the left-hand side of the page, superimposed on a faded image of the waterfall at Powerscourt.

generally. This is representative of the increased emphasis on the visitor rather than the curator or collection. There is also a perception, however, that this latest phase in the representation of the past is simply a commodification of Irish culture and history that ignores any complexity. In this context, a clear division is often made between education and entertainment. This division is sometimes transferred to arguments about the validity of 'the real thing', associated with museums, over representative images or simulation, associated with heritage centres.

This discussion has described the nature of the emphasis on heritage and heritage centres in Ireland in the last decade or so, and the impact of plans for economic development on their interpretive activities. In doing so, it touched on the importance of heritage in the branding of Ireland as a tourist destination. The following discussion considers the relationship between heritage, national identity and the shaping of tourist texts in more depth.

### **6.3 Heritage and Identity Construction in Ireland**

Identities are constructed through interaction with others, on individual, cultural or national levels. In Ireland, our interaction with others, initially in terms of colonisation and later in terms of tourism have been particularly important forces in the construction of self-images. In terms of tourism, this relates both to the country's long history of tourist imagery and the high level of contact between tourists and locals, in contrast to the mass tourist resorts of other European nations (O'Connor, 1993: 68). We have established that heritage tourism has been an important focus of the tourism industry here, but what part does this play in the image of Irishness that has been constructed for tourists? O'Connor (1993) identifies four principal elements in the construction of contemporary Irish identity in a touristic context. These are images of "picturesque scenery and unspoilt beauty" (O'Connor, 1993: 70), "simple people who live their lives in traditional ways far from the hurly burly of the city" (O'Connor, 1993: 72), "past glories and achievements" (O'Connor, 1993: 76) and the notion of timelessness (O'Connor, 1993: 75). The use of these elements may also be seen to have responded to one of the most important aspects of tourism in Ireland, the search for ancestry (O'Connor, 1993: 73). More recently, Dublin has been awarded an image of its own that focuses on the city as a site of modern pursuits - cultural activities, shopping and so on. It is possible to suggest, however, that this identity still draws on the sociable, easy-going qualities that have been traditionally associated with the Irish character. So, the Irish identity constructed by the tourism industry is largely rooted in an image of Ireland as a rural, community-based pre-modern nation, distanced from the fast-paced, urbanised and isolated environments and lifestyles of post-modern existence. In addition to this, Irish people are perceived to be approachable, idiosyncratic and open to social contact. In this way, they are also differentiated from other cultures where the isolation of individuals is understood to be a part of modern life. Heritage sites feature within





Fig. 3.3 Cover, The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True, Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.

## The Pride and the Opulence



resort, in Clonsilla, was built by William Petty, 1st Duke of Sligo, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, in 1722. It is regarded as the finest house in the north. The long gallery is decorated in the Irish style, and there is a charming garden. Equally magnificent is Rathfriland, near Mullingar, the magnificent palace built by the Earl of Sligo, in 1741. Ballyvaughan, near Mullingar, an exquisite villa of about 1740, with its view overlooking Lough Ennell. Not too far off is the great Gothic Revival castle of Malahide, home of the Longford family. Malahide Manor, near Longford, is an imposing Gothic mansion with fine reception rooms, magnificent stables designed by Cannon in the decade of the 18th century.

County Louth is the monumental Emo Court, designed by Cannon for the Earl of Droghda in 1790. Powerscourt in County Wick, set in classical gardens with a deer park and waterfalls, is a wonderful day's outing. Not far off is Killybegs, seat of the Earls of Meath, where the gardens may be visited. Around the town of Charles Stewart Parnell, surrounded by wild woodlands and lakes, has an exhibition called 'Ireland's Uncrowned King'.



Fig. 3.4

The Pride and the Opulence. The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True. Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.



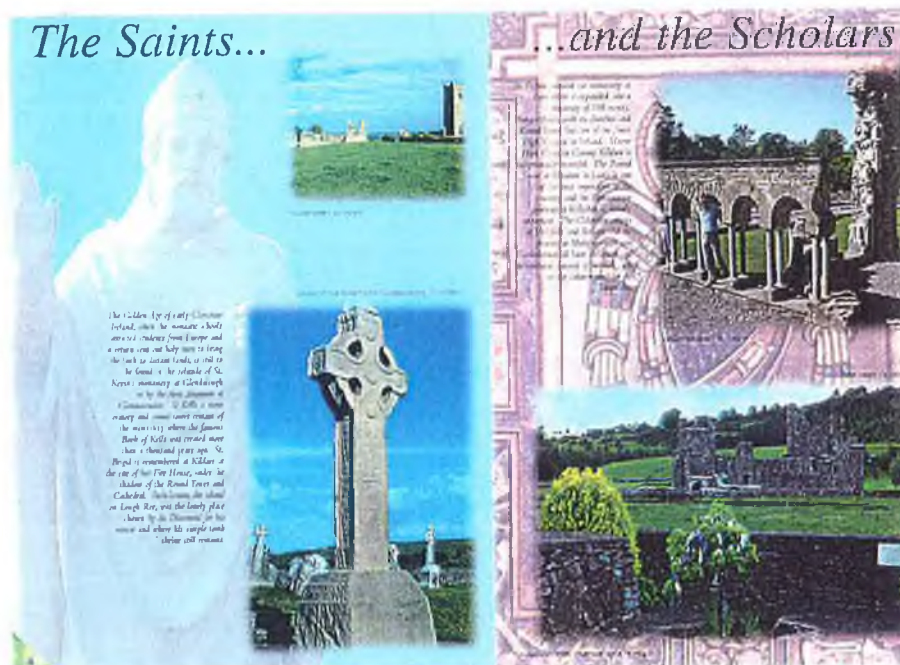


Fig. 3.5 The Saints and the Scholars. The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True. Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.



Fig. 3.6 The Wild Wonderful Spirit of Adventure. The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True. Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.



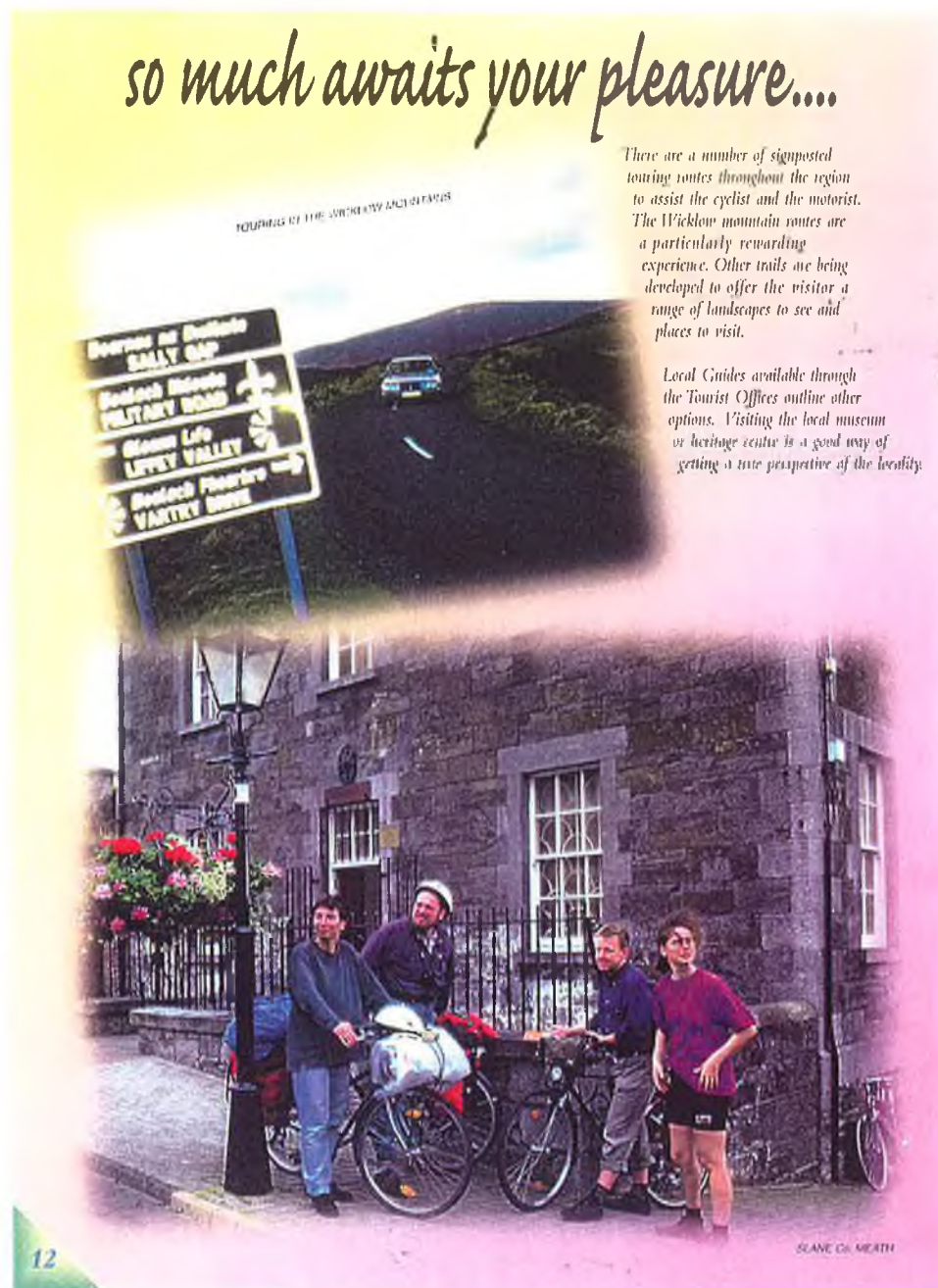


Fig. 3.7 So Much Awaits Your Pleasure, The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True, Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.



Fig. 3.8 Pamper Yourself. The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland: Where Dreams Come True, Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.





Fig. 3.9 County Wicklow: Dreams Do Come True, The East Coast and Midlands of Ireland:  
Where Dreams Come True, Midlands East Tourism, Mullingar, c.2001.

The text reiterates the copyline "a place apart", and goes on to describe both scenery and other attractions using adjectives like "golden", "rolling", "cascading", "rich", "magnificent" and "picturesque".<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the principal postcard images of the county, available in the county and in Dublin city centre, show Powerscourt House and Gardens (fig. 3.10), Glendalough itself (fig. 3.11), The Upper Lake there (fig. 3.12) and other 'beauty spots', as well as picturesque shots of specific towns like Bray and Wicklow (fig. 3.13). However, alongside these are many more unidentified scenes of thatched cottages (fig. 3.14), deserted cottages (see fig. 3.15), picturesque elements of farmhouses or other buildings – for example a painted window against a whitewashed wall with potted plants (fig. 3.16) - elderly men in conversation or on carts or (fig. 3.17)<sup>5</sup> and so on. There is also fluidity between these groups. One postcard, showing an unidentified image of Glendalough nestling in the surrounding scenery is in fact titled "Ireland", and so the principal attraction in county Wicklow becomes a flagship image of the idea of Ireland as a whole (fig. 3.18). When the images specific to county Wicklow or the Midlands East region are compared with more generalised images of Ireland, a tentative conclusion can be drawn regarding the predominance of images of Powerscourt, Glendalough and scenery in county Wicklow and the absence of images ostensibly depicting 'vernacular' culture there. Indeed one might say that there is an overwhelming emphasis on the grandeur of the estates of the landed gentry. Although this is a very valid point to make, there must also be a great deal of fluidity between these two groups of images, particularly for visitors coming from outside of Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, an account of those images that might contribute to the construction of an identity for Ireland in a broader context is also necessary here. This is particularly the case in relation to television programmes that are set in Ireland, but accessible to viewers elsewhere. These include the television series' *Ballykissangel*, a popular television series made by British makers for British television and televised as far afield as Australia, and *Glenroe*, a popular Irish-made soap opera also shown on British television. Although these are pertinent to discussions of the representation of Ireland more generally, they may carry a particular significance for producers and consumers of tourism in Wicklow, where they are filmed. Indeed part of the tourist 'product' of Wicklow is a tour that visits the setting for *Ballykissangel*. The brochure for this tour announces, in large type, that one can visit "Ballykissangel" and, in smaller type, "the Garden of Ireland" (fig. 3.19). *Ballykissangel* is a fictional town, and the tour is actually to Avoca, the village where it is filmed. The imagery associated with this programme in particular is again based on natural scenery, but also presents a sense of a place out of time, where locally formed

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<sup>4</sup> The attraction of filmmakers to county Wicklow is highlighted, referring to production like *Excalibur*, *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart*, as well as the television series' *Ballykissangel* (Avoca) and serial, *Glenroe* (Kilcoole).

<sup>5</sup> This image now also appears with the title 'Express Delivery in Ireland'.

<sup>6</sup> Also, underlying economic decisions must be at the base of producing so many generic images, which can be distributed more widely than images specific to a particular county.



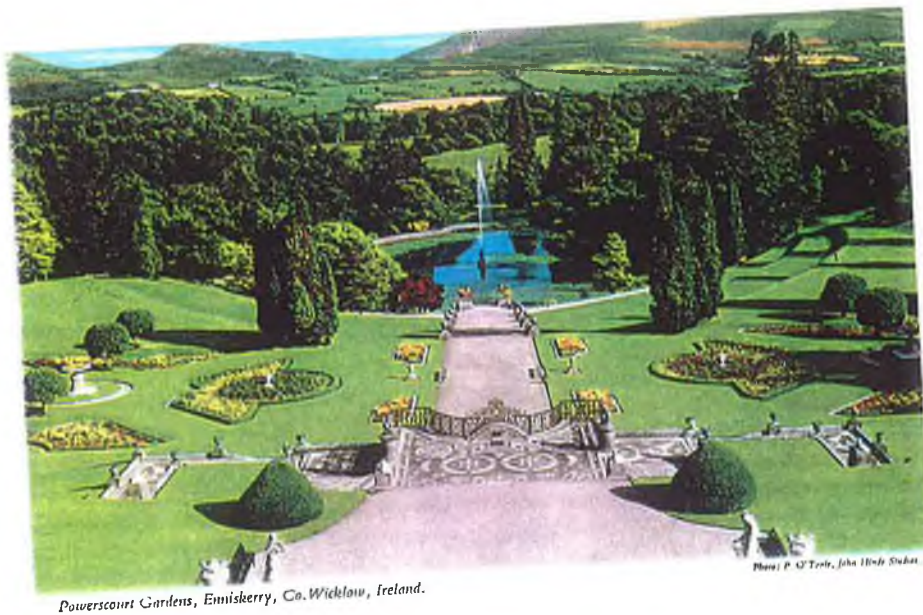


Fig. 3.10 Powerscourt Gardens, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.

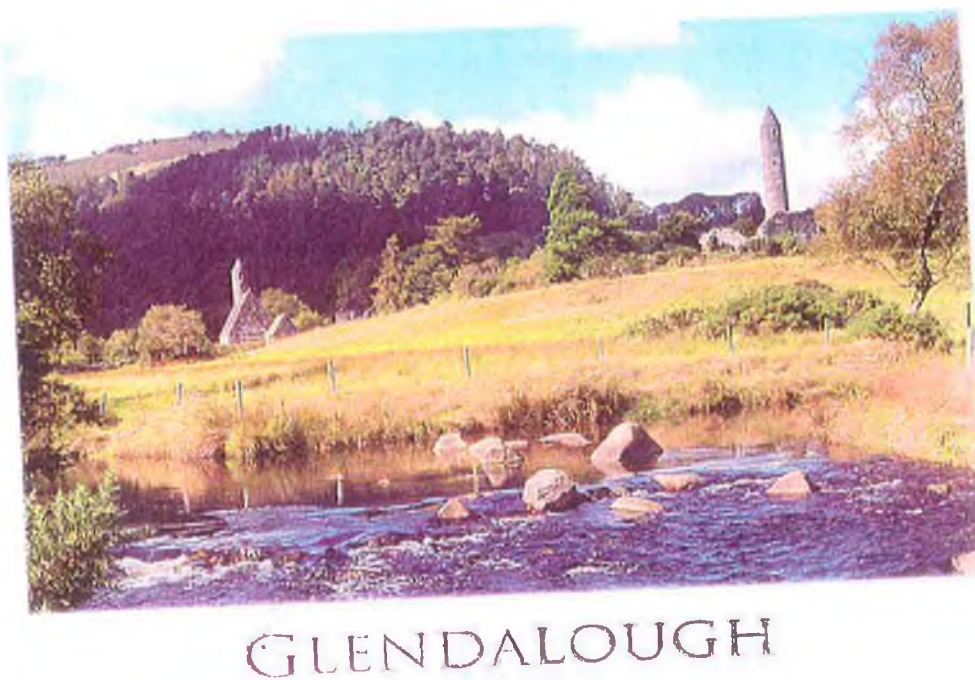


Fig. 3.11 Glendalough, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.



*Evening view of Upper Lake, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, Ireland*

John Hinde Ltd.

Fig. 3.12 Upper Lake, Glendalough, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.



## WICKLOW TOWN

Fig. 3.13 Wicklow Town, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.



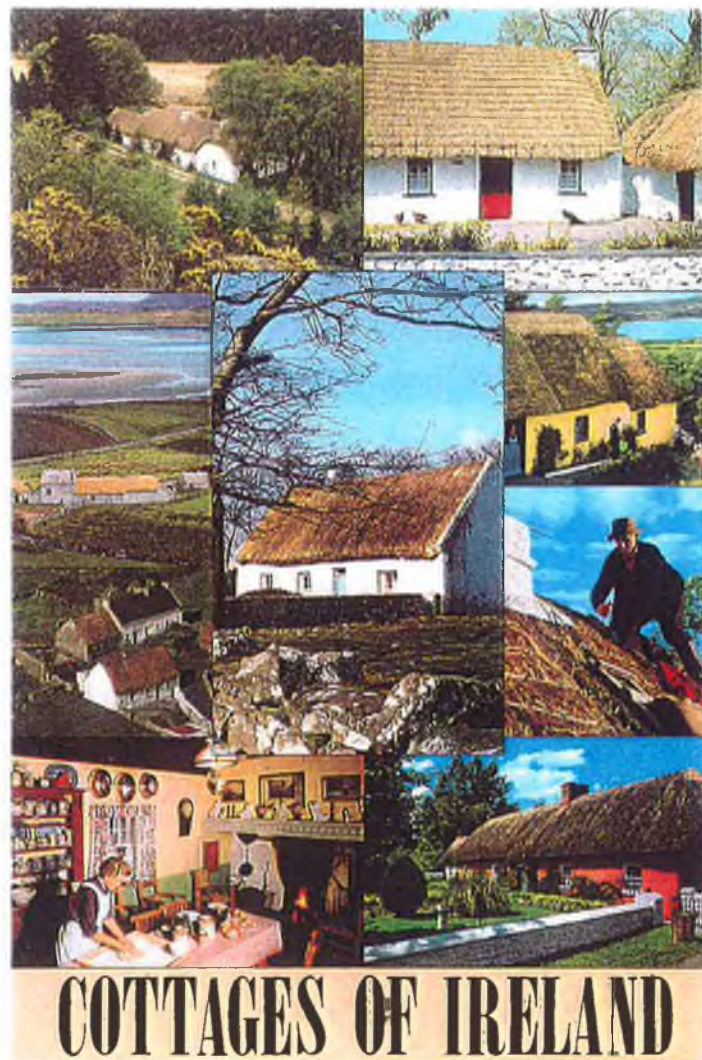


Fig. 3.14

Cottages of Ireland, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.



Fig. 3.15 Deserted Cottage, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001.



Fig. 3.16 An Teach Beag, John Hinde Ltd., c.2003.





Fig. 3.17      Man on Cart, John Hinde Ltd., c.2003

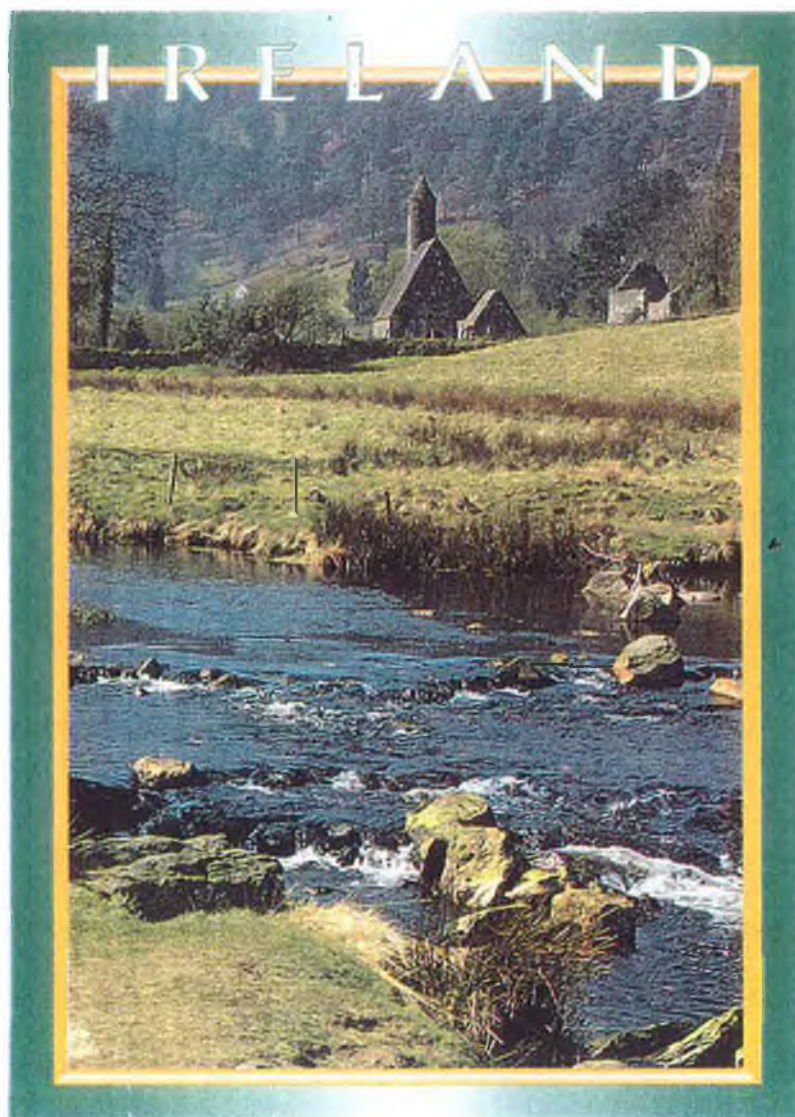


Fig. 3.18 Ireland, Postcard, John Hinde Ltd., c.2001

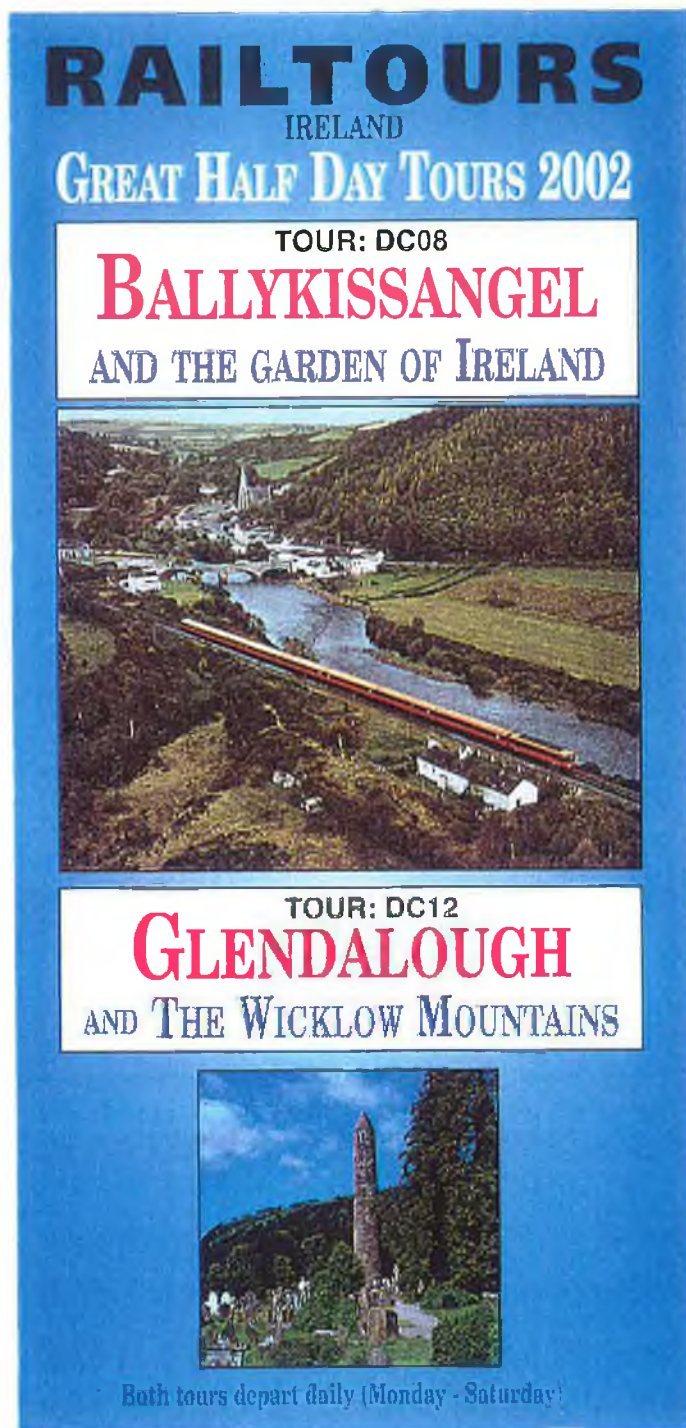


Fig. 3.19

Ballykissangel and the Garden of Ireland, Railtours Brochure, 2002.



relationships dominate story-lines and where tradition and change can be in conflict.<sup>7</sup> So, touristic imagery of the region in question here seems to show a predominance in the depiction of the ancient ruins of Glendalough, the "magnificence" of Powerscourt House and gardens and images of the county's natural scenery. Indeed, the concepts of the sublime and the picturesque, rooted in the depiction of landscapes, have a constant presence in the representation of all three. Although the vernacular – that is in the sense of a focus on the culture of the mass of the people – is not a particular feature of specifically touristic imagery, this becomes a part of the circulation of images about the region through its depiction in television programmes. Therefore, when all of these images are combined, the image of county Wicklow, or the Midlands East region as a whole, is very closely aligned with that of Ireland more generally. Furthermore, one can say that the focus of the tourism industry on promoting the country as a 'heritage' destination is clearly marked out in the images of this region. In a broader context, this also plays on a post-fordist drive in the contemporary tourist industry towards the individualised and the romantic, rather than the collective, as discussed previously (Urry 1990).

Ireland and Irishness in touristic discourse are constructed according to the desires of its 'guests' and demonstrate the relationship between the centre and its periphery, between one identity and its 'Other'. The promise of contact with the past is very much part of this image – indeed the discourse of Ireland's identity in this context revolves around its construction as a place that is 'out of time', an 'Other' to modernity. The region's, and Ireland's, status as 'Other' in touristic discourse mirrors MacCannell's assessment of tourism as a search for authenticity lost in modernity, and the consequent promotion of destinations as the anti-thesis of modern life. In Gibbons' view, these familiar images are part of a nostalgic reaction to modernity, which embodies "a particular view of social change which embalms rather than actively re-negotiates the past" (Gibbons, 1996: 43). This perception echoes some of the criticisms of the heritage industry dealt with in section 1, particularly those of Hewison (1987, 1989) and Walsh (1992) which argue that the commercial focus of the heritage industry ensures a representation of past and place as a pleasurable alternative to present day ills, as discussed in Chapter 2. Because of the focus on the traditional, the rural, or indeed the lost grandeur of other days, the representation of Ireland and the Midlands East region appeals to this nostalgic impulse, this search for authenticity.

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<sup>7</sup> It must also be noted here that promotional images are specifically part of the construction of the county as a tourist destination and that therefore these and postcards are specifically involved in the circulation of images of the county in a touristic context. In contrast, filmic representations are likely to have been consumed in a more general way. Despite this, film locations have been an aspect of the promotion of the county since the 1950s, and this has increased with the filming of large-scale feature films there (*Braveheart*) and the popular television series' discussed here.

One can say that the representation of the region, and the place of heritage sites within this, is subject to the contemporary concerns of the tourism industry and tourists themselves. However, it is also possible to suggest that the images described here are also part of the powerful legacy of the historical relationship between Ireland and its 'Others', and particularly Britain. Inevitably, these have revolved around the relationship between coloniser and colonised. The effects of these assertions of identity are clearly visible in the representation of tourist sights in the region as a whole over time. This is visible in both the emphasis that particular places receive, and the ways in which these accounts are structured. A brief discussion of these factors now follows. It is important to include this here because, clearly, the production and consumption of WHG is located within this discursive formation. This will enable a richer discussion of the impact of these discourses on the production and consumption of the gaol in the ensuing chapters.

The image that has emerged in the above discussion has been developed visually and verbally in travellers' accounts of the country since at least the eighteenth century. P.J. Duffy describes nineteenth century Romanticism as a pivotal factor in defining Irish identity. He describes English perceptions in particular as being "based on purely Romantic constructions of otherness" and that this 'otherness' was "reflected in the wildness and strangeness of an exotic, imaginative race, inhabiting untamed landscapes of horrible beauty..." (Duffy, 1997: 67). Visually, emphasis was on sublime and picturesque scenes and the depiction of large country houses, the seats of landowners. In Wicklow, the pattern of land ownership within the county meant that the tours undertaken there were in fact of a series of landed estates. These estates had themselves been physically constructed according to the conventions of the picturesque to be consumed (Slater 1993). This exerted a control over both the natural landscape and those who lived in it. Like an early 'house portrait' of Powerscourt (see fig. 3.20), this was an attempt to "naturalise the signs of...authority" of the land-owning class (Hutchinson, 1990: 94). Similarly, the man-made heritage of the region was situated within a more general appreciation of the landscape so that it simply became an extension of the natural. By representing heritage sites in this way, the specific conditions under which they evolved were erased. In ignoring the human, and indeed local, significance of these sites they became 'de-peopled', and therefore available for 'ownership' by the tourist. Indeed, any infringement on the tourist's solitary enjoyment of the scene was regarded with great annoyance. The processes of colonisation and the relationship of power between coloniser and colonised are clearly implicated here. Within this framework, Ireland was represented as a primitive 'other', an image commonly held by many colonised nations and essential to the justification of the distribution of power between the periphery and the centre. At worst the image that was projected was of a savage and backward race, at best it was quaint and out-of-time. 'Ireland' was a place outside of mainstream progress that either served to



Fig. 3.20 Powerscourt Waterfall, George Barret, from Hutchinson, J., "Intrusions and Representations: The Landscape of Wicklow", Irish Arts Review, Vol. 6, 1990.



bolster colonial superiority, or to provide access to those structures felt to have been lost because of such progress. This pattern reflects the concerns of those for whom the image was constructed, particularly in relation to the formation of their own identity as subjects of a great empire and a modernised nation. The meanings ascribed to the natural and manmade sights on Wicklow's tourist route and the structure of the description differ according to the identity of the person giving the description. The characteristics Slater (1993) associates with the accounts of the romantic tourist are that they are:

- Dominated by the visual – furthermore, the act of viewing is an individual rather than a collective activity;
- Based on pre-formed perceptions of place – the visitor brings both a knowledge of how to view and also pre-conceived images from other outsider accounts;
- Selectively constructed and consumed – both the choice of sights to view and the constructions of those sights themselves was rooted in a romantic 'gaze';
- Anxious to deny a sense of history in their constructions of the insider, the 'other' of the native peasantry – this occurs by removing them from the romantic view (or re-configuring them in a way that does not interfere with the romantic experience).<sup>8</sup>

This is clearly apparent in visual representations that accompanied the verbal descriptions in which Slater is interested. In Hall's Tour of Ireland (1853) an image of Glendalough is used as a frontispiece. Clearly, this site was seen to encompass the most important qualities to be expressed about Ireland and was perhaps a flagship image as much then as it is now. The image shows a scene centred on the archaeological remains themselves, but amidst the 'sublime' scenery in vogue visually at the time, and peopled by a small, indistinct figure and some picturesque cattle in the foreground. This is not unusual in the scheme of this book, or of other accounts produced at the same time. For example, of the 26 images reproduced in this instance, 15 are dominated by scenery, while 9 show ruins and just two show 'portraits' of the peasantry. If this is compared with the images of Glendalough and other scenes used in the promotion of the county currently, discussed above, we can see the same essential concern with

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<sup>8</sup> Slater also describes an 'insider' viewpoint, based on the accounts of guides' narratives given by the Halls. These operate within an entirely different set of parameters. The principal ones are:

- The cultural connection rather than the picturesque view in accounts of places – this involves the use of narratives which focus on human involvement with sites;
- A collective rather than an individualised activity – the guide engages in storytelling to a group to construct accounts;
- Involve an internal structuring of chronological time – the relationship between aspects of stories creates a sense of time and that this constructs a historical rather than an ahistorical account of place.
- The particularity rather than a universality of place – this occurs through attempts to make sense of objects and places in relation to events rather than making sense by naming or describing them.

de-populated scenery and picturesque ruins. This is in a place that is accessible to, but clearly apart from, the modern world. Some of the current images of the region, described above, are clearly rooted in this earlier series of representations.

A reversal of this process occurs in later representations of the county. The interpretation of historical sights, and indeed the landscape, and the structuring of the narratives that surround them begin to differ during the period when the focus was on the process of de-colonisation and the establishment of Ireland as a nation state in its own right. During the process of de-colonisation, a concern with the verbal and visual description of Ireland became part of the construction of an independent national identity, which also focused on cultural difference to define itself. Reversing the image portrayed of Ireland as a colonial acquisition, those striving for independence from Britain sought to construct an identity that centred on Ireland as the location of an authenticity, or purity, lost to Britain as an industrialised nation. The west of Ireland, for example, was an important element of this identity, and emphasised the survival of indigenous language, folklore, antiquities and ways of life. If this was the image of 'true' Ireland, then parts of the country which did not accord with it, and certainly Britain, were therefore 'inauthentic'. (Nash, 1993, 87). While the images promoted during periods of colonisation and de-colonisation share certain characteristics, they clearly have different sets of meanings attached to them. Although both are anti-modern, it might be argued that colonial images represent Ireland – and the past – as an 'other' to the present, while de-colonising images see a return to the traditional as an alternative future. Both sets of images required the establishment of an 'other' in order to be meaningful. Furthermore, it was the peasantry rather than aristocratic or middle-classes who was seen to represent all that was noble and pure about Ireland in the discourse of decolonisation, and who held the true 'memory' of 'real' Irish culture<sup>9</sup>. I have already discussed the importance of rooting the imagined community of nations in the idea of a pure and resilient folk in Chapter 3, and it is clear that such a device was also a part of the construction of national

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<sup>9</sup> Changes also occurred over time in colonialist depictions of the peasantry in Ireland. Harrington (1991) suggests that the stereotypes of the Irish in such accounts were initially based on the idea that the situation of the poor would be alleviated by being a part of a progressive Britain but changed to ones based on the idea that the Irish were victims of disaster following the famine. The images of the Irish in travel writing at this time were also part of a much broader circulation of images of Irishness. Cullen (1997) includes the popular paintings of the Irish peasantry produced by David Wilkie in the 1830s and '40s; a general vogue for the representation of catholic nations in painting which focused on a romanticised bandit peasant figure and the publication of popular novels set in Ireland. Cullen also suggests that the representation of Ireland through a focus on the peasantry was complex and intertextual. Peasants were heroicised through the depiction of the theme of 'honest industry' and the family, particularly in relation to scenes of emigration and immigration. Cullen states that "the family is the dominant trope, and the mother and child the most visible pull on our emotions" and that this is rooted in a wider concern with the representation of misery, "an age-old iconographical formula for the representation of Paupertas" (Cullen, 1997: 114).

identity during this period. The need to project an image based on mythic narratives that focus on the past of such a community was also shown to be of importance. The development of nationalist historiography in Ireland during this period is clearly implicated in the process of creating its imagined community, and can in turn be seen to have contributed to the representation of heritage in tourist texts that pertain to Co. Wicklow. Before considering the expression of this in specific contexts, it is necessary to examine how such a history was constructed.

Leerson has identified two forms of collective memory in Ireland. One of these, 'community remembrancing,' is "sub-elite and demotic, carried by largely local or small scale communities...perpetuated by oral or folkloristic face to face means rather than mediated in print or monuments". Community remembrancing is, Leerson argues, "history from the point of view of the losers...the traumatic paradigm" (Leerson, 2001: 215). It might be argued that such a sub-altern and traumatic community remembrancing became official 'society remembrancing' in the shift from colonial to post-colonial status in Ireland. Prior to decolonisation, Irish historiography had focused on the benefits of the Union for Ireland. In contrast, nationalist interpretations of Irish history had sought to separate the histories of Britain and Ireland by creating "a self-enclosed liberation narrative" (Foster, 2001: 25). McBride describes the core of such historiography as being the relationship between "two antagonistic Irelands – the world of the Gaelic underclass, the cottiers cabin and the hedge-school abruptly juxtaposed against that of the Big House" (McBride, 2001: 28). <sup>10</sup> Graham sets out other characteristics of Irish nationalism that he understands to have effected the interpretation of heritage sites. He emphasises its:

- Conservatism and insularity;
- The longevity of its origin myth which involved a fore-shortening of time or a 'time collapse',<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Both Ryan (1993) and Brett (1996), for example, comment on the use of a national identity based in a mythical notion, spawned during the nineteenth century, of a single celtic people with special characteristics. While the use of celticity as a basis for an image of the 'true' Irish was used during the Celtic revival in cultural circles because it presented a vision of a non-sectarian Irishness (Kearney, 1997, 113), it was also combined with an image of a noble, lawful, wise and learned race who absorbed Christianity seamlessly to create "the Island of Saints and Scholars" (Ryan, 1995, 32). It is interesting to consider that the phrase 'the island of saints and scholars', has become a 'sign' of Irishness itself. Therefore, it appears frequently in tourist literature, like the promotional brochure for the Midlands East region discussed previously, and became one of the themes laid out in the interpretive framework for the development of the country's heritage as part of the tourist industry in 1992, discussed the first part of this chapter..

<sup>11</sup> A parallel can be drawn between this and Slater's description of the collapse of linear time in native guide descriptions of heritage sites.

- Extreme Anglo-phobic basis particularly with regard to the Anglo-Irish landed class;
- Use of the Catholic church in the absence of another suitable historical entity;

The material heritage used in the construction of an origin myth would therefore have to fit in with these aspects of the nationalist ideology (Graham, 1994: 138). Those sites that were identified as being particularly suitable, for example, included sites with Christian connections like, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow but excluded references to "alien" innovations like towns or, presumably, in relation to later periods, the fine houses, mansions or administrative buildings associated with the landed class.<sup>12</sup>

The introduction of such an interpretive framework for heritage sites is discernible in travel writing of the period. Thompson presents the characteristic approach of such a nationalism in travel writing as – "Reading the landscape as a history of dislocation rather than viewing it as innocently picturesque....this nationalist practice presents a powerful alternative to the colonialist narratives that occlude the oppressions of Irish history under the clouds of the picturesque and the marketing of the collectable, exotic primitive." (Thompson, 1999: 128).<sup>13</sup> Because of Wicklow's location close to the urban, 'inauthentic' centres of both Ireland and Britain, in conjunction with a longstanding image of the county as one that had been heavily anglicised, one might expect the construction of an anti-colonial image of Ireland to be less evident in touristic representations there. But this is not so. By the mid twentieth century<sup>14</sup>, Glendalough is described in the Official Guidebook to Counties Wicklow and Wexford, published by Fogra Failte, the tourist promotion authority of the time. Here, the emphasis is apparently on the role of Glendalough as the representation of Ireland's Golden Age in the Celtic period and as a stalwart defence against the raids of invaders rather than on the ruin as an organic and picturesque part of the landscape. It is described as follows:

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<sup>12</sup> A similar shift can also be discerned in relation to the change in title and curatorial interest of the National Museum of Ireland during this period.

<sup>13</sup> It should also be argued that both nationalist and colonialist travel images and writing are constructed principally through a process of 'othering', and that both are equally selective in their construction. However, Thompson provides an analysis of what he understands to be a nationalist tradition in photographic representation during the early twentieth century. William Bulfin's *Rambles in Eirinn* (1907) deliberately avoids the well-travelled route normally associated with tourism in Ireland and goes into the less well-travelled mid-lands. One photograph shows a farmers house and tilled field, not in the picturesque tradition but, as Thompson suggests, "taken from the soil". Another shows a deserted landscape and is titled after a poem by Oliver Goldsmith about mass eviction. Thompson comments on a process of reversal of the picturesque within these images and the written descriptions that accompany them. Bulfin "de-aestheticises the landscape by reading its history". For example he writes "Like many another quiet corner of the Irish mid-lands, where thriving hamlets once nestled in happy comfort amidst the teeming fields, no evidence remains to show the extent of landlord devastation"... (Bulfin in Thompson, 1999: 128)

<sup>14</sup> This also occurs earlier in the visual and verbal record of Synge's travels in Wicklow. His book, *In Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara* (1911) a heroic description of the peasant is offered. The opening chapter, "The Vagrants of Wicklow" describes tramps as a healthy sign of a community's vitality. The nobility, toughness and bravery of this class are contrasted with the meanness of a colonial police force in Synge's text (Thompson, 1999).

"In the ruins...the history of the glen can be traced from its settlement by St. Kevin through the Golden Age of its European renown to the plundering raids of the Danes and others and its later vicissitudes in the strife between Wicklow Chiefs and Anglo-Norman invaders."

(Anon, 1953: 71)

This theme is later continued in the description of Glenmalur as the "heart of the resistance to the *English invader*". It goes on then to create an historical account of the area by selecting particular events: "In the sixteenth century the glen was the headquarters of Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne, the great Wicklow chief who in 1580 inflicted a crushing defeat here on the army of Lord Deputy Grey...here, the young Red Hugh O'Donnell recuperated from the effects of exposure after his escape from Dublin castle at Christmas 1592...Glenmalur was also for a time the headquarters of Michael Dwyer, the Wicklow leader of the 1798 insurrection..." (Fogra Failte, 1953: 44). This is reinforced in the use of language in connection with other sites: "...extensive buildings...originally one of a series of barracks erected by the British government along the Military Road after 1798, to keep the inhabitants of Co. Wicklow *in subjection*" (Fogra Failte, 1953: 11) and regarding the Billy Byrne's monument in Wicklow town which has "...an inscription commemorating the Wicklow men who participated in the rising (1798) and in *later struggles for freedom*" " (Fogra Failte, 1953: 19). Here, it might be suggested, the Wicklow landscape becomes both representative of the cleverness of the Irish in seeing off the outsider and a refuge against them— a semi-protective force in contrast to the landscaped 'gardens' of the 'invader'. The accounts given at this point seem to reinforce a sense of difference between insider and outsider, the native people and the coloniser by focusing on the cultural, rather than aesthetic, associations with place. Such accounts emphasise the cultural rather than the picturesque and are based on an internal structuring of chronological time through the selective emphasis between one aspect of a story and another. Therefore, these accounts can be seen to support both Graham's and Slater's arguments in relation to the interpretation of heritage sites within 'nationalist' or 'insider' narratives respectively.<sup>15</sup>

I have demonstrated how the romantic gaze of a colonialist pattern of representation has been inherited in the contemporary projection of images of Wicklow and the touristic region of which it is a part. But what of the myths underpinning the drive towards decolonisation? The necessity of repetition of such mythic narratives to the survival of collective memory was discussed in

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<sup>15</sup> The role that contextual elements played in the consumption of historical, or other, sites must also have been tremendously important in this framing of them, when one considers the plethora of images conjured up by popular ballads, stories, poems and songs learned in school as well as popular novels, films and illustrations that might fit into such a nationalist ideology.

Chapter 3. It is to this that Leerson is referring when he suggests that nationalist historiography is at its most traumatic when "the sense of hurt and wounding recurs". He relates the need to re-experience this to the lack of acknowledgement of trauma through "proper official recognition and catharsis" (Leerson, 2001: 220), and argues that this may underpin the drive to commemorate catastrophic events here in the late twentieth century. This is key to our understanding of the current focus of historical narratives in Ireland, including those represented at heritage sites and centres. The interpretation of Irish history and its physical evidence, and the relationship of this to identity continue to be a 'live' issue in Ireland. As one commentator has put it "when it comes to myth, the past is never past" (Kearney, 1997: 108). If nationalist historiography is understood to be mythic in its character, the new historical turn that emerged in the 1930s in reaction to it sought to engage in the "demythologising of the past" (McBride, 2001: 38). The merits of a move away from nationalist towards such revisionist interpretations of Irish history, or beyond, continue to be debated. Some argue that nationalist historiography is "a potent factor in the endless conflict of the north" and that this necessitates its abandonment (Graham, 1994: 146). Foster sees a "sneaking nostalgia for the verities of the old victim culture" (Foster, 2001: xv) in any continuation of nationalist historiography, and Kearney argues that such narratives continue to place great emphasis on "a tribal voice of martyrdom" where "defeat is victory, failure is triumph, past is present" (Kearney, 1997:110). ). Others, such as Ciaran Brady, have claimed that "under the pretence of objectivity" revisionist historians had "distorted or buried the heritage which the community had received from the past". Brady, for example, has described the 'new' history as one which simply "served to de-sensitise modern historical writing to the sufferings and injustices" of that past (Brady, 1994: 10). It might be possible to argue that revisionist and post-nationalist tendencies in historiography are a part of a wider re-consideration of identity and memory. The desire to be more broadly inclusive of alternative Irish identities than those at the heart of a conservative nationalism might find a parallel in the post-modern broadening out of those aspects of history considered to be worth representing. However, while in Britain, for example, this has meant that the history of the 'ordinary' has been elevated, it can be suggested that in Ireland, this pluralism has seen an increased interest in those aspects of heritage excluded by the origin myth of an emergent nation state. These include the grand edifices of Georgian squares or the grand 'piles' at the centre of country estates, for example.

Differences in thought emerge when the commemoration of the centenary and bi-centenary of the 1798 rebellion are compared. This is particularly pertinent to any discussion of heritage and historical representation in Wicklow, given the importance of this event in the history of the area. Its relevance to a discussion of WHG will be drawn out in the following chapter. Foster examines these two commemorations. By the nineteenth century, both unionist and nationalist traditions

had “put the events of 1798 firmly into a continuum of linked struggles for freedom” (Foster, 2001: 217) playing down the original ideals of the United Irishman and the influence of the republican ideals of the French and American revolutions. McBride asserts that it was Fr. Patrick Kavanagh’s The Wexford Rebellion which established the “popular image of 1798 as a patriotic rising of priesthood and people” (McBride, 2001: 32). This is clearly a manifestation of Graham’s analysis of nationalist ideology at work in the construction of historical narratives, as has been demonstrated above in the context of touristic representation of Wicklow. The oppression of Protestants or Catholics at the hands of their ‘Other’ were central to the myths of both communities and suited contemporary political needs. The centenary commemorations in 1898 did more to express these needs than any objective vision of historical events, and by 1916, a narrative structure was adopted where earlier rebellions were ordered into “a cumulative sequence of inspirational defeats” which, echoing Kearney above, became “a sacrificial martyrdom for future generations” (McBride, 2001: 35).

Boyle connects the continued appeal of these themes to the expression of young, male identity in particular, and therefore we can see the re-production of collective memories formed in particular historical contexts being meaningful not just to the members of the Irish diaspora, but intersecting with a collective memory that appeals to a particular age group and gender.<sup>16</sup> However, it has been argued that a re-assessment of this type of narrative can be felt in the late twentieth century, although it is equally no less free from contemporary concerns. Graham has suggested that the ‘grand narrative’ of a nationalist state has been diluted by both ideological and other more pragmatic factors. The need for financial aid from Europe, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, sees a “parallel need to ‘place’ Ireland in a European context. This involves identifying components in its heritage which stress European linkages and a national self-image which no longer can seek its inspiration in negativity and insularity” (Graham, 1994: 147). The development of ‘heritage’ as part of the tourist industry, discussed previously, is a clear example of this. Socio-political agendas also contribute to the re-

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<sup>16</sup> Boyle’s (2002) investigation of the use of song amongst Scotland’s Irish Diaspora in a contemporary context as a way of expressing memory and identity is also interesting here. Those most often sung are rebel songs that communicate the role of “hero/martyr” characters and bloody or violent events rather than those that describe more pacifist resistance. The themes of most importance are understood to be:

- Endurance, where “victory will come to those who suffer the most”;
- Daring, where we see “the courage and bravery of resistance fighters who take on challenges in the face of overwhelming odds;
- Intellectual, artistic and moral qualities, where heroes have “more than simply physical courage”;
- Loyalty to the cause where martyrs are “honest and straight”; and
- Sacrifice, where we see “volunteers preparedness to die for the cause” and to part with those nearest and dearest to them.

assessment of historical interpretation – a fraught peace process, for instance, has provided an incentive to see the conflict-laden history of Ireland within contexts other than those of an insular nationalism. Graham describes the contemporary re-interpretation of monastic sites as “political capitals and centres of economic exchange and production...in a largely secular world”, rather than their interpretation as symbols of a “pre-invasion ‘golden age in which Ireland was the ‘isle of saints’” (Graham, 1994: 148) within a nationalist historical narrative. An equally significant shift may also be discernible in the commemoration of 1798 and the Great Famine in the 1990s.

Carroll identifies a combination of three memory types in the commemoration of 1798 in 1998. The first of these, folk memory is one in which “the physical fabric of the local community, every named field, battle site and hero’s birthplace, are monuments to the past”. These ‘monuments’ are a part of everyday life, stimulate a sense of having blood ties with those at the centre of historical events so that a local community might feel that they are “almost their contemporary embodiment”. The second form of memory, state memory, seeks to “foster an identity more in tune with the economic and political developments of the time”, and the third has been shaped by both forces of democratisation and commercialisation. This is demonstrated by the greater involvement of those outside of officialdom and the heritage, tourist and merchandising industries in the latest round of commemorative acts (Carroll, 2000: 20-21). These memory types can be identified in: the centralised and highly organised nature of state involvement, which saw the establishment of a Commemoration Committee and the issuing of a set of guidelines to be followed in the organisation of events; in the array of commemorations that were rooted in a localised sense of place and past; and in the inclusion of 1798 in various heritage centres, or the inclusion of sites on various tourist trails and the claims that such commemorations were good for business. The guidelines issued by Comoradh ’98, the Commemoration Committee, under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach stated that events should:

- Commemorate the ideals of the United Irishmen;
- Recognise the rebellion as a “forward looking, popular movement aspiring to unity”;
- Emphasise democratic and pluralist principles over military elements;
- Focus on the relationships with Australia, France and America;
- Recognise the importance of the Presbyterian and Ulster involvement..

(Foster, 2000: 225).

It can be argued that these guidelines demonstrate a move away from the ideology at the centre of both the commemorations of 1898 and 1948, which had been conceived within a nationalist, catholic framework. They demonstrate a desire to be less insular and more inclusive of a



broader range of identities through their focus on the concept of unity within republicanism rather than sectarianism and military conflict.

Carroll has identified ways in which the "hegemonic discourse" of state involvement was disrupted by various groups in the meanings they gave to their own commemorations which, he argues, produced oppositional, or at least negotiated, interpretations of the same historical event. In discussing this, he examines the commemorations at local level in Co. Wexford where, because of their possession of a "living memory, an unbroken folk tradition" – or, perhaps, Corcoran's (2002) 'natural' memory – there was "least need of official commemoration" (Carroll, 2000: 19). Official celebrations, it was felt, ignored the sense of an unbroken relationship with those involved in the rebellion locally. They glossed over sectarianism in the desire to focus on the theme "Christian unity", with a view to furthering the peace process, and I assume, to be seen to move away from the prior state use of a nationalist historiography. The 'new' history of the nation, as it were, was seen to ignore local 'knowledge' of, or belief in, historical events. The second example of alternative readings that Carroll gives is in the involvement of Sinn Féin in commemorations in the same locality. Although some of its rhetoric represented party involvement in the peace process and constitutional politics, other aspects seemed closer to older, nationalist, forms of commemoration. A poster for a local event, for example, juxtaposed images of a local IRA man who had been recently shot whilst on 'active service' in London, and WolfeTone. This may be interpreted as both an example of the collapse of linear time and the theme of sacrificial martyrdom at the heart of nationalist historical narratives. For Carroll, the production of such negotiated and oppositional readings of official narratives display evidence that there can be no "catachism of memory" (Carroll, 2000: 22). This supports the views discussed in Chapter 3 that see collective identity and memory to be full of conflict and always negotiated. It might also be true of individual readings of historical narratives, given that individual identity, and memory, may be a unique thing formed partially by the intersection of a whole range of potentially conflicting collective identities and memories.

#### **6.4 Summary**

This chapter has looked at the relationship between heritage, identity and tourism in Ireland, focusing particularly on county Wicklow and the touristic region of the Midlands East in which it is situated. It found that:

- Heritage has been a major component in the development of the country's tourism industry. There was a significant increase in heritage attractions throughout the 1990s. This also saw an increased interest in the 'visitor experience' at heritage sites and a consequent focus on interpretation as well as conservation. This involved thinking about the historical narratives

told at such sites on a national rather than local basis, which would ensure the proper development of the countrywide 'heritage' product;

- Irish identity as promoted by the tourism industry has emphasised an anti-modern image of the country. This has emphasised in particular our natural and man-made heritage, as well as the idea of the rural, traditional ways of life, and the friendly, inviting nature of Irish people. All constructs Ireland as the 'Other' to modernity, a focus of the search for lost authenticity, for objects of the romantic gaze. The representation of Wicklow feeds this image, but also has a particular emphasis on grand houses, landed estates and sublime scenery;
- These representations are clearly constructed according to current needs. However, this chapter has also found that such images bear the imprint of earlier discursive formations associated with Irish identity. I have suggested that a dual set of discourses were involved in the representation of the county in tourist texts which have been subject to the needs and identities of the contexts in which they were produced and consumed. The images described above are rooted in a process of colonisation. An alternative set of texts surrounding heritage sites in the county are involved in a reversal of this in the context of a process of de-colonisation. It was shown how during the latter process, the structure of accounts of heritage sites changed so that they became emblematic of a nationalist collective memory. More recently, the official accounts of historical events important to the region have changed focus again. This time, a less insular vision has concentrated on the connections between Europe and Ireland, mirroring the increased importance of Europe in the economic life of the country, not least in relation to the funding of heritage attractions and other developments pertinent to the tourism industry;

But to what degree have these factors impinged on the text of WHG itself? The following chapter investigates this in terms of the focus of the interpretation of the gaol, the particular methods used to communicate it and the underlying processes involved in their production.

## **SECTION 3     ENCODING AND DECODING WICKLOW'S HISTORIC GAOL**

### **Chapter 7     Encoding Wicklow's Historic Gaol**

#### **7.1     Introduction**

This chapter aims to consider the processes at work in the organisation of the gaol as a heritage attraction, and the impact of these on the experience now offered to visitors. This will involve documenting the particular conditions under which the gaol as an architectural artefact was transformed into a heritage attraction. Important here are the intentions of those involved in the project, particularly in how they relate to the issues raised in Chapter 6. The chapter will then go on to give an analysis of the text, showing how these are incorporated in the text of the gaol. Several factors are pertinent to this discussion, as indicated in the previous chapter. These include: the desire to assert a glacial conception of time locally; the relationship between Irish historiography, collective memory and the tropes involved in this discourse; the concerns of the tourism industry; and finally, concepts of exhibitionary authenticity.

#### **7.2     Production of the Gaol as a Heritage Attraction**

This section of the discussion is largely concerned with the development of the gaol as a heritage attraction between c. 1983, when the idea of its preservation was first mooted and 1998, when it opened as a heritage attraction. The current development of the gaol occurred in three phases, outlined separately below.

##### **Phase 1**

The first phase of development begins in the early to mid eighties when a local voluntary group consisting of local authority officials, local historians and other interested parties was formed. Their objective was to consider alternative options for the gaol than the plans within the local authority to demolish it in order to extend the town's parking facilities and to provide housing for the elderly. Tom Broderick, an official with Wicklow County Council, was particularly instrumental in the formation of this group and has continued to be a driving force in the development of the gaol since then. The principal recommendation that was made by this group was that the gaol would not be demolished, and that an alternative use of the building would be devised.

From the outset any alternative use of the building would pertain to its historical importance. Initially this was conceived in terms of a 'museum', with other functions being attached to that – for example, the yard would house craft units. The museum would be traditional in its approach, and would perhaps serve as a county museum, non-existent prior to this in Wicklow. It would

house artefacts pertaining to the history of the county generally, as well as those related specifically to the history of the gaol itself. It seems that these plans were relatively vague, and it is unclear whether the full realities of running an artefact-based museum had been explored. For example, the expense of treating the building in terms of conservation standards for artefacts, or security considerations, or indeed the provision of storage facilities should the 'museum' continue to actively collect material and so on do not appear to have been discussed. Rather, the decision to preserve the building seems to have been part of a wider movement towards the preservation of buildings in Ireland, and a museum seemed to be a sensitive use of it. For example, Broderick has referred to it as "a time when Ireland was waking up to the fact that there were various properties around the country, local communities and local authorities were saying "gosh, we should preserve these"..." (Broderick, 2001). This rise in interest in conservation and preservation has been linked elsewhere to a growing nostalgia for those buildings associated with lost ways of life or the social patterns associated with them (see Urry, 1990; Samuel, 1994). David Bowe, the current manager of the gaol, describes his understanding of the initial desire to halt the demolition of the gaol in terms of a popular movement to preserve local memory "I think a lot of the older people in the town, and the people that had relatives that were housed here in one capacity or another, particularly through 1798 for example, and people felt a bond to the gaol because there was no other historical site like it in the town. So I think on a community level – Billy Byrne was housed here... - people felt this is a part of the town's history that we can't let go..." (Bowe, 2001).

Interestingly, it was also at a time when both public and private bodies were particularly active in the development of a more sustainable tourism industry in Ireland, to counteract economic recession and widescale unemployment. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, it was at this point that the concept of 'heritage attractions', as distinct from other conceptions of the use of historic properties and museums, was to become central to these wider aims, and in turn to influence the further development of the gaol. While seeking funding for the development of the gaol as an historic property, Broderick attended the conference organised by Bord Fáilte on the development of heritage attractions in Ireland, discussed in Chapter 6.2. Many of those making presentations were from Britain where the heritage industry was better developed. As discussed previously, the aim of this conference was to ensure a well-managed development of the country's heritage, which would maximise its use as an element in the Irish tourism product, but in a way that was informed by the principles of sustainable development. This was to change the concept of having a county museum housed in the gaol. Impressed by the presentations about heritage attractions made at the conference, the organisers were to opt instead for a less traditional, more contemporary approach, in line with the ideas promoted there.

Broderick had already been involved in the production of a report on the development of the tourism industry in Wicklow (Broderick, 2001). It established that in comparison to major tourist centres like counties Kerry, Cork and Galway, county Wicklow operated as a destination for independent day-trippers from Dublin. Also, well-established attractions like Glendalough, Powerscourt and Avoca Handweavers acted as stopping off points for coach tours en route to other destinations or organised day trips, while the rest of the county would remain largely unexplored. Alongside these, the principal attraction for day-trippers to Co. Wicklow was its natural scenery, its coastline and associated outdoor activities. One of the obstacles that was perceived to impede its development as a tourist destination was the lack of indoor facilities and a range of marketing initiatives – for example, Broderick refers to the benefits of commercial entities in marketing tourist destinations when he says “If you take Killarney, just that one town, it has hotels and the leading hotels in Ireland are in Killarney and they’re all advertising themselves, and if they are advertising themselves, they are advertising Killarney” (Broderick, 2000). The marketing of a major new heritage attraction was perceived to have benefits for the entire county. The development of a heritage attraction at Wicklow Gaol, although originally a part of a general drive towards conservation of place became a way of boosting the county’s tourism industry this way.

One of the commercial heritage development consultancies that made a presentation at the Bord Fáilte conference in 1992 was Touchstone Ltd. Following the change of direction in the development of the gaol, Broderick invited them to submit a proposal for the project and the next phase of development began.

## **Phase 2**

The European Structural Fund, administered for this type of project by Bord Fáilte, provided the capital investment to begin the project. This aspect of funding was limited to the restoration of the physical structure of the building. This second phase began in 1992 and was completed in 1994. The first task was in the re-roofing of the pavilion style cellblock and the demolition of some of the existing façade. The façade of the original building was entirely re-constructed and placed at the front of the building that had been left following the extensive demolition of the 1950s. The façade is therefore now fronting the furthest side of the quadrangular block that had originally housed the store and cook rooms. The high curved walls were therefore brought further away from the road than had originally been the case. Wicklow County Council conducted all of this work using their own workforce rather than contractors and therefore contributed to the resourcing of the project in this way.

It was this 'shell' that was to house the heritage centre, the third phase in the modern life of the gaol. Brennan and Whalley Ltd., a London based firm, installed the current display, between September 1997 and April 1998, although the process of planning it had begun as early as 1993, as soon as funding became available for this aspect of the project.

### **Phase 3**

Between twelve and fifteen design firms submitted proposals for the development of the gaol as an attraction in May 1993 and four were short-listed to make presentations of their initial proposals the following July. Brennan and Whalley were successful in winning the competition and work began on the full interpretive development of the gaol.

Those principally involved in the project were Dennis Brennan and his associates Touchstone, the two researchers Joan Kavanagh and Ruan O'Donnell, and Tom Broderick, the County Enterprise Development Officer. An initial brief was drafted by Tom Broderick, but the process from there on was relatively informal – Broderick describes how “flesh would have put on the bones, sitting around tables drinking coffee until the small hours.” Broderick however, while acknowledging the contribution of others to the translation of the interpretation into a physical form, clearly had a sense of ownership of the project - “So it was my project, I project managed it from start to finish. All of the ideas that are in it, I suppose ninety percent of them are my own ideas. The script is my script” (Broderick, 2001). It would seem that both this sense of ownership and the informal processes of development that were adopted made the project something that went beyond the ordinary work of those involved, particularly for the principal motivational force, Tom Broderick. The interpretative and display treatments of the gaol developed over a long period of time, and can be traced using the interim plans presented at intervals as progress reports to the client, Wicklow County Council and as applications for funding to Bord Fáilte. The first full interpretive plan was produced in October 1993, following the final selection of designers for the project. (Brennan and Whalley Ltd., 1993). This was re-worked and further developed between 1993 and 1997. In 1998, the gaol opened to the public as a heritage attraction.

A document which seems to have been part of the brief given to designers prior to the initial submissions in May 1993 lays out objectives in the interpretation of the gaol and an outline of the particular content of the interpretation and the physical areas which were available to use (Wicklow County Council, 1996). A second unidentified document was also found in the course of research that refers to other issues of importance in a briefing process. Here an assessment of the potential market for a visitor attraction at the gaol was made as well as suggestions for a

marketing strategy (Wicklow County Council, 1996). Combined, these may provide us with a sense of the brief given to designers at the outset.

So, what was the envisaged market for the gaol? The prime audience for Wicklow Gaol was identified as coming from the ABC1 socio-economic groups and from age groups over 45 years old. Local residents were identified because of geographic convenience, while overseas visitors, particularly returning emigrants, were noted because of high motivational factors. The initial identification of ABC1 and older age groupings was influenced by research conducted in Britain, but the pre-disposition within those groupings for visiting heritage sites had also been identified in Ireland (see Appendix C). These pre-dispositions included that ABC1 groupings were more likely to show an interest in "heritage/learning", while those over 45 were more likely to show an interest in "heritage/nostalgia" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 3). It should be noted that the identification of these groups was in the context of investigating the viability of the market for such an attraction, and so was conceived in terms of tapping into existing markets, rather than in identifying new audiences for such a venture – that is, in the context of community or audience development projects, for example.

Markets were also considered in terms of their geographical situation, based on figures estimated by Bord Fáilte (1989) and the Wicklow Tourism Monitor (1989). The propensity of the local population of Co. Wicklow to visit the heritage attraction was considered, as was the Dublin market, particularly in terms of socio-economic groupings. In considering potential over-seas visitors, it was pointed out that almost half of all visitors in that grouping gave the reason for their visit as visiting friends and relations. Those coming from Australia and the USA were seen to be an important market segment because "these visitors have a high propensity to visit attractions, particularly attractions related to the family tree, and they also act as motivators for residents" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 6). Later the report anticipates that "30,000 would visit Wicklow Gaol possibly coupled with a visit to the Wicklow Genealogy Centre" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 9). Furthermore, in relation to the coach tour market, "the product for this market would be strengthened considerably by the creation of thematic itineraries". Of particular interest in this discussion would be an "heritage and ancestral trail linking such places as Kilmainham, Glendalough, Avondale, Wicklow Gaol, Wexford Heritage Park" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 9). The educational market was also considered. It was proposed that the consideration of primary, post-primary and adult groups would result in a product that would achieve "the balance between fun and learning" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 9). There was a clear desire then to align the project with both the perceived educational and wider leisure aims of the audience.

So the ABC1 social groups, older age-groups, educational groups, day-trippers, local residents and the Irish diaspora were all identified as important market segments and, one assumes, the development of the project would need to reflect their interests. These interests were understood to relate to family connections with places and events, the desire to learn, to be entertained and to indulge a nostalgic impulse.

At an early stage in development, six areas had been designated for interpretation – the former dayrooms, the chapel, three levels of the cellblock and the central ground floor area there, the basement area and the exercise yards. Of these, two were not suitable for complete development at that point – dampness prevented the basement area containing original bathing facilities being used, and the exercise yards were restored but did not contain any significant interpretive elements. These were to undergo development over time, the current manager taking an approach which supports making a profit and “re-investing that money back...” (Bowe, 2001) into the ‘product’. In the year following the completion of the empirical work of this study, for example, a life-size model of a treadwheel with figures was installed in the yard, a smaller model of it was installed in a cell on the third floor and a new actor was employed to play the part of prison-matron. The creation of an attraction that is largely self-sufficient continues to be important, and the ‘product’ is developed with that in mind. For example, the current manager focuses on encouraging return visits by adding new aspects to the storyline or “to keep changing, otherwise it becomes stagnant...you have to put something new into your product every three years...you have to launch again, people know you’re there and that’s fine. Now you have to say we’re here and we’ve something new. You find the sites that weren’t actually able to do that – remember Celtworld?” (Bowe, 2001). The reference to Celtworld here refers to the closure of a high budget themed site in Tramore, Co. Waterford due to low visitor numbers after its first year of business. This is understood to have related to an unchanging audio-visual display and the subsequent failure to attract repeat business (Bowe, 2001).

For producers, the need to make a financial profit is not completely isolated from concerns associated with the management of heritage in a public arena. Bowe states that “I think education, for a site like Wicklow Gaol is very important. There are other things - entertainment is important... people are on holidays, they should get an informative tour and an enjoyable tour. They should get a good mixture of both...there is no point, when a person walks through the door, of bombarding them with historical facts....The actors make it as informative and as fun as possible. People take more in and they tend to listen more. So I think the focus now is on entertainment and education.” (Bowe, 2001) However, it is now important for producers to consider the need to attract an audience whose principal aim is concerned with leisure: “Advertising used to be very much the “crime-cruelty-exile-misery” where now its kind of,



"experience the passion of 1798". Not so many negative words...people can come in and enjoy it as well". Later Bowe asserts "The word "history"...people don't go for that...they think "HISTORICAL – GAOL" there's two words I don't want to hear on my week off. Whereas, you bring words like "PASSION" in, with the 1798, and also words like "TRANSPORTATION", people set their minds to it then... 'history' isn't a word that sells, 'historical' isn't a word that sells, 'heritage' isn't a word that sells – it certainly isn't a word that sells" (Bowe, 2001). So the management of the gaol understands the principal motivating forces behind the project to have changed, or been added to, over time. The concern with the conservation of local memory was paramount initially, but both educational and commercial concerns followed - "and what would have stemmed after that would have been educational...and I think the last thing that came into it was actually looking at it as a viable visitor attraction" (Bowe, 2001).

We can understand the desire to preserve the gaol, to develop its historical meaning in the form of a heritage attraction and the particular ways in which this was done to oscillate between a number of factors. These include:

- the increased need of localities to counteract the threat to place represented by the demolition of material heritage and to assert a glacial conception of time;
- the desire to promote an awareness of, and pride in, local history;
- the relatively informal relationship between those involved in the research, interpretation and display processes;
- The increased combination of commercial and other concerns in the management of heritage in Ireland. This is demonstrated in the identification of a market; considering the commercial viability of projects and their role in the creation of a quality tourism 'product'; the promotion economic regeneration; focusing on both the entertainment and educational potential of the site. The latter related both to the beliefs of the organisers and the needs of the identified market segment.

### **7.3 Interpretive Themes: Constructing the History of the Gaol**

By the 1980s, when the gaol was threatened with demolition, the building was largely comprised of the pavilion block, built in the 1840s. The building was far smaller than it had been when functioning as a gaol, and much of the accommodation outside of cells had been destroyed. The 'raw material' for any redevelopment was therefore in the form of a large ground floor space, a large number of self-contained small cells spread over three floors, a double-height room that had housed the chapel and some of the remaining ancillary accommodation. These spaces were connected by narrow stone stairways.

What other factors were to influence the interpretation of the gaol as an historical attraction? We have already discussed the shift in the particular focus that the gaol as a heritage attraction should take which moved away from ideas about a traditional museum towards a more contemporary treatment. Broderick has since described the original idea as "ridiculous" because "museums are too static, you know, they're lifeless... people nowadays expect when they go into places like that, they expect something akin to a television programme..." (Broderick, 2001). Broderick's comments demonstrate two points in relation to the particular character of the gaols' development as a heritage attraction. The perceived expectations of the market were already a factor – if it was to be successful in drawing adequate numbers of visitors it would have to compete with other attractions aimed at a similar market. Given the economic climate, it was also important for public bodies to be seen to be effective in their use of funds and so projects in their remit would have to demonstrate their economic viability. Furthermore, the more general shift in the ways in which historical narratives were represented in museums and other institutions, discussed in Chapter 2, can also be detected here. This is demonstrated in the way that concepts of authenticity influencing the narrative to be told were clearly not centred on the auratic qualities of objects in a connoisseurial sense or on academic systems of classification but on experiencing the past in a more direct, less distanced way. This would effect the general interpretive focus, specific points of emphasis within particular aspects of the narrative and the methods used to communicate the narrative.

Once the decision to move away from a more generalised historical museum towards a more specific interpretation of the history of the gaol was made, there was a relatively clear concept surrounding the direction that such a focus should take in the minds of the organisers. This is indicated by the reports and interpretive plans produced during the development process. For example, one document indicates that the interpretation should see the history of the gaol as a microcosm of a national history, a people's story that would help to give visitors, and particularly visitors drawn from the Irish diaspora, a sense of identity:

"Wicklow Gaol draws on the history, heritage and human stories of the region...it will add to the awareness of national heritage amongst the indigenous population, add substance and detail to the sense of origins amongst descendants of Irish emigrants from all over the world, and will encapsulate important elements of the growth of a nation for visitors with little or no prior knowledge of the turbulent history of Ireland"

(Wicklow County Council, 1996: 17).

Furthermore, an initial brief outlined clear guiding objectives in relation to the development of a storyline for the gaol. These were that the story would convey that "Imprisonment takes away

basic human needs such as warmth, space, conversation and love and affects the physical and mental condition of prisoners" and that "The majority of people imprisoned in Wicklow Gaol had committed crimes out of desperation often as a result of social and political situations." The ideas that "very ordinary people were imprisoned in Wicklow Gaol and that they came from a variety of backgrounds" and that "prisoners were individuals" were also important points in the briefing process (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 1). These themes are transferable, in that they could apply to other geographical and chronological situations, and would therefore appear to create links between past and present. The explicit choice of such transferable underlying themes in the interpretive focus at WHG aligns it with the approach to interpretation in the 'new' museum, outlined previously. This interpretive focus would be explored through specific elements of the gaol's history, which included: the prison regime before and after penal reform; individualised stories of particular prisoners during their time in gaol, before gaol and for some, their life following imprisonment; and "key historical events in Ireland with an emphasis on their County Wicklow context – the 1798 rising, the great famine and transportation" (Wicklow County Council, 1996: 1).

Herein seems to lie the principal underlying approach to interpreting the gaol – the interpretation would not focus on historical figures nor on its architectural history, for example, but would intertwine major events in the history of the county and country with prison life. Historiographically, these themes coincide – for example, the number of prisoners swelled dramatically during both the 1798 rebellion and the Great Famine. The principal guiding theme, however, focuses on the 'ordinariness' of prisoners, and the injustices perpetrated on them by legal and prison systems during the periods concerned. A number of factors may have influenced this approach, both in terms of general movements within the interpretation of heritage, documented in Chapter 1 of this thesis, and in terms of more specific elements. In relation to the latter, for example, Broderick differentiates the gaol from others by saying "Wicklow Gaol never housed anybody of, you know, importance...so that if you restored the place as a gaol...it wouldn't hold peoples' attention. Kilmainham is so different, you know, it had very famous people, people associated with 1916 and so on, that's why it's a national shrine". He compares Wicklow Gaol to Cork Gaol by saying "Again I think we have an advantage at Wicklow because I think we are telling a lot of stories about a lot of ordinary people. We're depicting different eras, different things that happened in the story of Wicklow and the story of Ireland. And we're not focusing on individual people, so as in Cork for instance, where they're focusing on a number of famous inmates" (Broderick, 2001).

In a set of informal notes used during one of the presentations, the theme of the quotidian and its descent into morbidity, as outlined in relation to the concepts of 'dark tourism', 'fatal

attractions' and 'history from below' in Chapter 2, appears to be a factor. The notes comment on "peoples fascination with misfortunes", that "the prison is very much like a horror movie" and that "good news does not sell newspapers". The focus here might be described as containing a voyeuristic element, or at least an awareness of its attractions for visitors. However, Brennan had already declined further involvement with the London Dungeon (fig. 3.21), a true 'horror movie' of visitor attractions, after providing the initial ideas because of its strong focus on such elements. This perhaps demonstrates a distaste for an over-emphasis on the more morbid or gory aspects of history, or at least for their over sensationalisation. A diagram in the same set of notes also shows the early approach to the interpretive focus of the gaol (fig. 3.22). In the centre of the diagram a stick figure representing a prisoner is surrounded by bullet points which read "social scene, his crime, family, the system: why separation, the sentence, transportation: what happened to them, prison life: women, children, conditions, food, work..." and so on (Brennan and Whalley Ltd., 1993). This diagram may be a response to the description of prisoners in the briefing document as the "principal medium" through which the story would be told (Wicklow County Council, 1996). This diagram gives a strong sense of the approach of organisers which focuses on the humanity of prisoners and their plight within unjust social and penal systems. It can be argued that this broad approach to interpretation laid the groundwork for encouraging a process of identification between the visitor and the subject of the story.

In response to a question that differentiated between the story of 'ordinary' people told at WHG and those perhaps illustrated at other major attractions in the region like Russborough and Powerscourt Houses and Glendalough. Broderick emphasises the importance of telling those stories "...it was very important, I'm glad you made that point. It does deal with ordinary people because it was ordinary people that were incarcerated in Wicklow Gaol" (Broderick, 2001). For the organisers, clear differentiations were made between the lives of the people incarcerated in the gaol and other aspects of society- "...but then gaols and conditions in Ireland during the period we're portraying weren't pretty, for the ordinary people, they weren't. For others, for the gentry and the like, the landed classes, the wealthy – a totally different society altogether". In portraying the lives of prisoners during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the organisers sought to demonstrate the clear distinction between two aspects of society in Wicklow, 'the ordinary people' – the prisoners – and 'the wealthy' – their captors. This was partially as a result of the desire to tell a 'hidden' sub-altern history, not fully represented at other major heritage sites in the region. The promotion of the gaol illustrates this. An image of it is included in the promotional brochure described previously (fig. 3.9) which shows costumed actors engaged in the re-enactment of a historic event in front of WHG on its opening in 1998. This is one of the only images that departs from the representation of the region as a location of scenic beauty, leisured activity and grand houses and gardens. A more specific promotional image of the gaol



Fig. 3.21 The London Dungeon, Brochure, c.2001

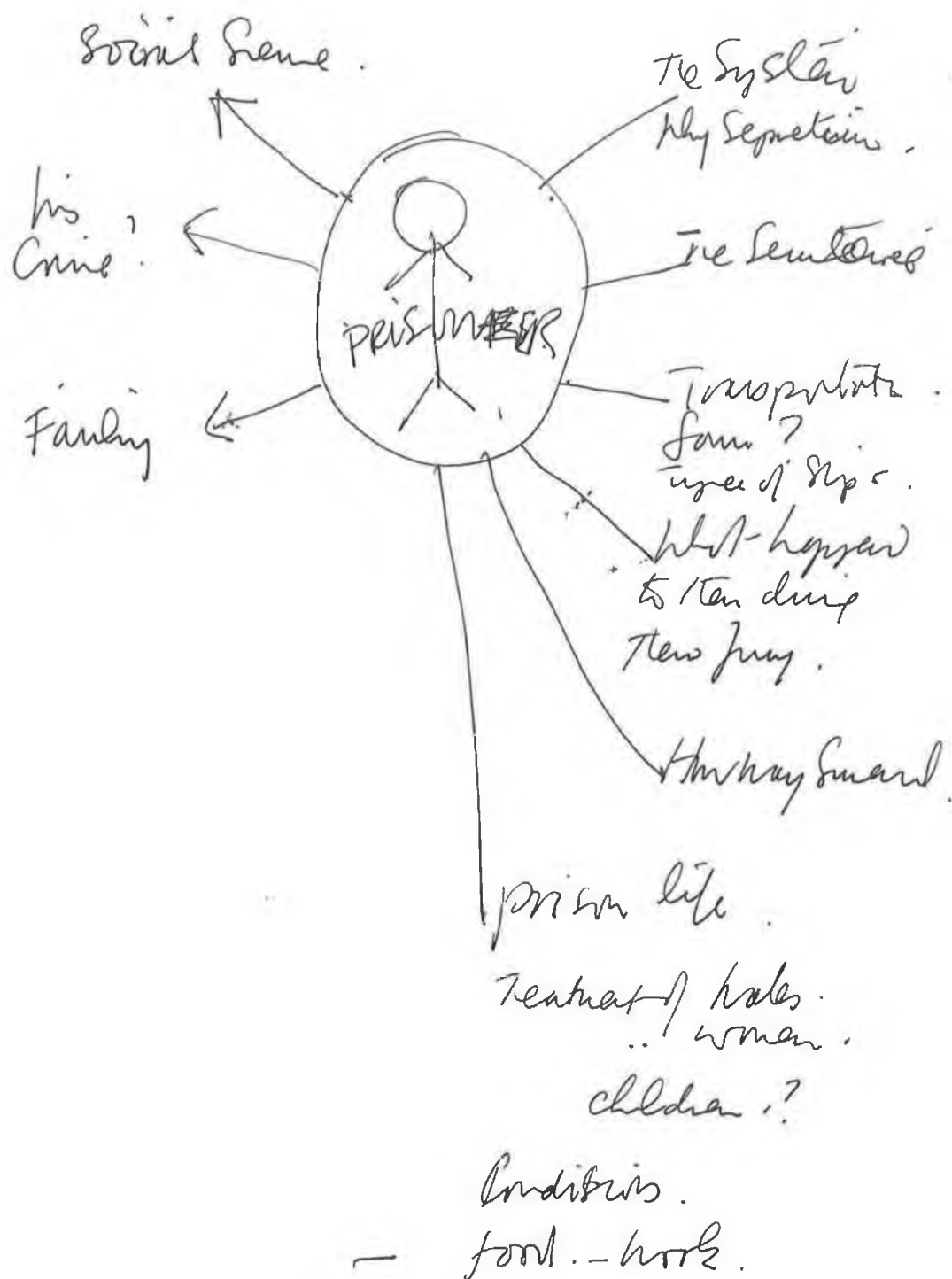


Fig. 3.22

Diagram, Brennan and Whalley, Presentation Notes, 1993.

can be seen in fig 3.23. The promotional strategy used is almost the complete antithesis of the idea of the picturesque or the sublime so frequently associated with the area whether in relation to natural or man-made heritage, focusing instead on the darkness of the history that the gaol represents – that is, “a story of crime, cruelty, exile and misery”. The image of starved figures in tattered and torn clothing stands in stark contrast to both the opulence of other heritage sites like Powerscourt or Russborough, and the construction of Glendalough as a picturesque ruin. Indeed the way in which the gaol is promoted emphasises how the representation of history at this site ruptures the more common depiction of the county’s heritage sites in tourist texts<sup>17</sup>. Although this aspect of the gaol’s interpretation reacted against the discourse of Wicklow as a tourist destination, it can also be seen to be a part of that in operation during the period of decolonisation. As described in Chapter 6.3, such a sub-altern history became a part of touristic descriptions of heritage sites like Glendalough and Glenmalur, and in relation to collective memory co-exists with newer forms of remembering. There is a sense here of the creation of a binary opposition with the ‘haves’ on one side and the ‘have-nots’ on the other. Differentiations were also to be made between prisoners, and particularly in the lot of prisoners in the pre-reform era, the post-reform era and prisoners now. Broderick refers to this by saying “At least in modern day gaols, while you’re deprived of your liberty certainly, you’re not deprived of very much else” (Broderick, 2001). A clear distinction is made here between past and present, despite the transferable character of the objectives at the heart of the interpretive plan.

It is also important to consider the factors that influenced the emphasis on particular themes within this broad interpretive framework. The inclusion of the 1798 connection certainly related to the specific history of the gaol and to its importance in the history of both Wicklow and its neighbouring county, Wexford, but was given an increased emphasis over time. This was because of the coincidence of the opening of the gaol with the bicentenary of the rebellion itself. In the earliest interpretive plan, for example, the 1798 theme was to be treated as part of a pre-visit interpretation area, alongside a description of gaol conditions in the eighteenth century (Brennan and Whalley, 1993: 20). An interpretive plan produced in 1996 saw the 1798 theme receiving additional emphasis, placing it in the first floor of the cell block, its present situation, and outlining the stories that might be told about particular prisoners during that period. This included Billy Byrne, a local 1798 hero. At this point, the 1798 theme was still a sub-theme to the story of the gaol in the eighteenth century. By 1997, the final exhibition script describes how in 1998 “the story of the United Irishmen will take pride of place, and the entire ground floor was devoted to it.” Broderick goes as far as to state “...the fact that we were going to open in 1998,

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<sup>17</sup> The first mention of the gaol in tourist guides is in 1970 where it is referred to as being “now disused; stands on Kilmartin Hill. Billy Byrne of Ballymanus, a leader of the 1798 rising was amongst those imprisoned here... (Bord Fáilte Éireann, 1970).



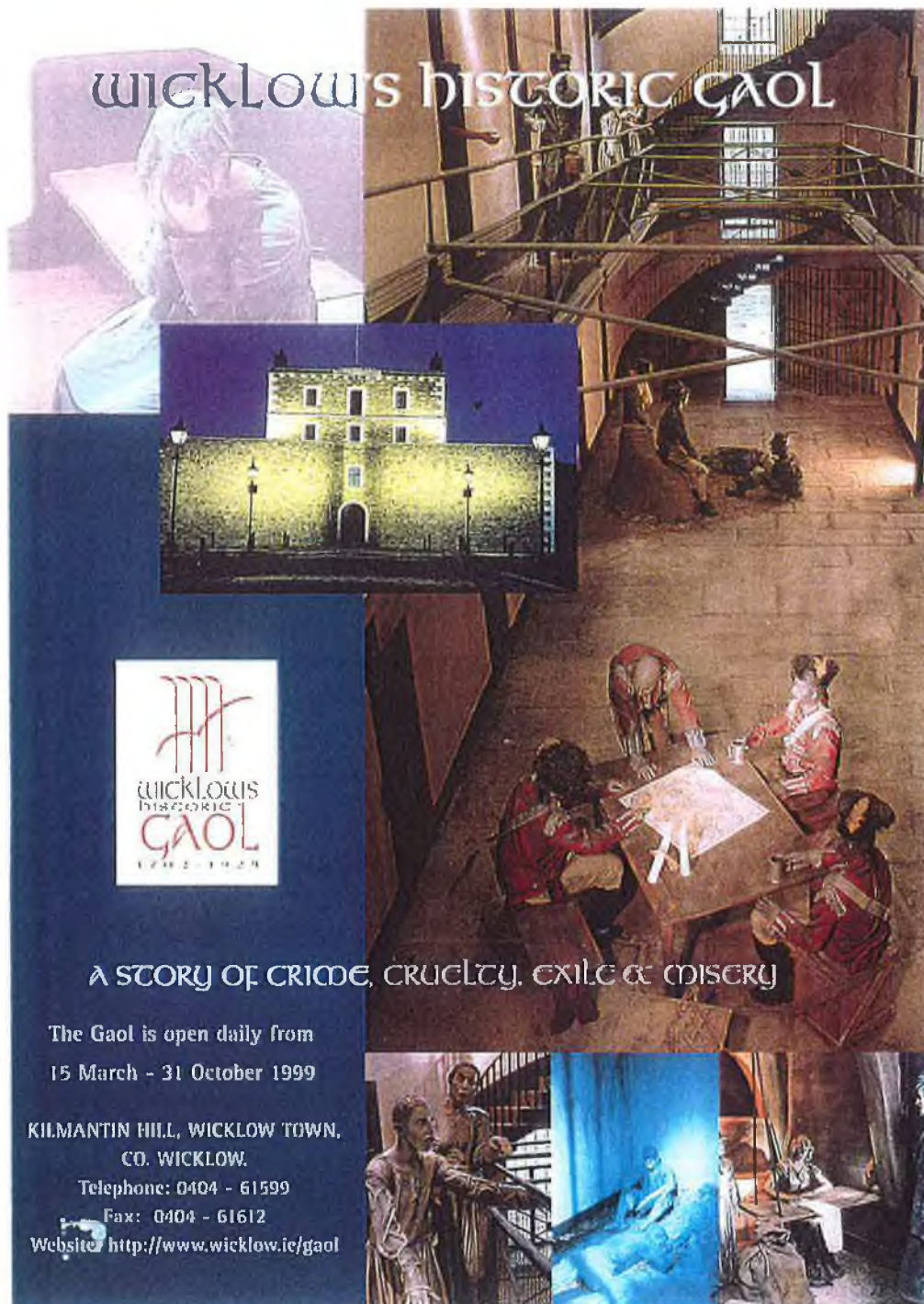


Fig. 3.23 Wicklow's Historic Gaol, Advertisement, East Coast and Midlands of Ireland, Top Visitor Attractions, Mullingar, 2001.



two hundred years later...focused us into devoting the entire ground floor to that 1798 exhibition..."(Broderick 2001). Furthermore, the initial inclusion of themes of both 1798 and transportation, as well as being part of the history of the gaol, were also influenced by the particular expertise of researchers. Ruan O'Donnell, for example, had completed research on transportation from Ireland to Australia, and published work about the 1798 rebellion and its aftermath in Wicklow. Important to consider here are perceptions of the historiographical stance of researchers. O'Donnell, for example alongside other "commemorationist historians", has been charged with a selective re-telling of history. Foster, a revisionist, criticises him for using language that appears to divide loyalists from the "general citizenry" of County Wicklow, describing it as "ominous" and aligning it with Whelan's (1996) description of himself as a 'croppy'. For Foster this is "a feel-good identification" which "suggests a certain limitation of approach" (Foster, 2001: 232). The development of this aspect of the narrative must, therefore, be placed within contemporary socio-political and historiographical frameworks. This will be drawn out in the analysis of the text presented later in this chapter.

The further development of the theme of transportation into a major aspect of the storyline was motivated by the agenda of Bord Fáilte in administering funding. During the course of the producers applying for grant aid from the European Regional Development Fund, Bord Fáilte raised the issue of the uniqueness of the story line. Broderick recalls how "they said to us...this is very similar to Cork Gaol and you've Kilmainham up the road so we think you should emphasise ...the transportation element...so that Wicklow Gaol could be associated with...the National Centre for Transportation to Australia" (Broderick, 2001). This became a condition of funding for the project as indicated in correspondence from Bord Fáilte to the project organisers. This states "It is not possible to grant full approval for this project until the following is in place: redevelopment of interpretive plan to focus on deportation and links with Australia" (Sherwood, 1996 b). It was proposed that the plans to reconstruct the chapel be dropped, and an emphasis on transportation be accommodated by designing a reconstruction of a transportation ship in the same space. This was, perhaps, one of the most controversial spaces in the development of the project as a whole. Previous to this, there had been a change in focus from a reconstructed courtroom scene surrounding the trial of Billy Byrne to a chapel scene. This had been prompted by Brennan's interest in creating a sense of the authenticity of the stories told at the gaol and the integrity of the building as a historical artefact. The reconstructed chapel was to emphasise the regime of silence and separation in operation at the prison during the nineteenth century, and its effect on prisoners as dehumanised units in a "mechanistic routine" (Brennan and Whalley, 1993). The emphasis on the humanity of prisoners, however, did not change when the idea of the chapel was ousted in favour of the transportation ship. The interpretation of the ship would also emphasise the feelings and thoughts of prisoners in the course of enduring dreadful

conditions on board and a strange new environment afterwards (Brennan and Whalley, 1997). Broderick, in criticising an initial treatment of the script for the cells just prior to the ship scene, says "The horrors of transportation...the pathos, the tragedy of transportation must be brought out before visitors experience the voyage" (Broderick, 1997d). We can identify this with the thrust of the interpretative treatment of the gaol spoken about previously, where the emphasis in particular themes would encourage the identification of the visitor with the prisoners, the subject of the narrative. For Broderick, the focus on transportation was also a chance to create links between past and present. The Epilogue, a section of the exhibition housed in the room just before the exit into the shop, was intended to "develop a link, a present day link with Australia" (Broderick, 2001). It is unclear whether this was motivated by a desire to appeal to a diasporic audience in a commercial sense or a desire to articulate the relevance of history in a contemporary context. Either way, it served to emphasise the importance of visitor identification with the interpretive focus of the story line. The increased emphasis on the transportation theme also changed the over-all interpretive plan, because it prompted organisers to include a whole floor devoted to life in Australia following transportation.

The perspective of producers in relation to the broad interpretive approach to be adopted can be summarised as containing the following elements:

- A mixture of commercial and other concerns – education and awareness/entertainment, local memory and centralised development strategies for industry, a concern with both historical integrity and the viability of a 'market product', both a fascination with the gruesome in relation to its selling power and a respect for the sensitivity of the subject matter. Of particular importance was the adoption of the transportation theme both as a result of the expertise of researchers and the concerns of the funding body.
  
- An awareness of the role of the gaol in the commemoration of the 1798 rebellion and other events. This further requires the analysis of the historical interpretation at WHG to be placed within the discussions surrounding 'commemorative culture' in Ireland in the mid to late 1990s and the discussion surrounding the construction and purpose of historical narratives in Ireland, as suggested in Chapter 6;
  
- A concern with the telling of a collective history but through individualised stories in a specific context. The interpretive approach deals with both specific, individual and authentic stories, and displays a concern with portraying society in relation to broad divisions between groups - rich and poor, good and evil, oppressors and oppressed.

- An empathetic basis for the principle objectives of the interpretation in their emphasis on human emotion, suffering and experience. The particular slant of the interpretive themes is transferable in nature and displays a strong desire to promote the identification of the visitor with the subject. This can be understood to be an extension of the discourses surrounding interpretation in the 'new museum' and the focus on the ordinary in the practice of history from below at heritage attractions, particularly the 'warm' sites spoken about by Selwyn (1996).

So how were these broad objectives carried out at WHG? In particular, what narrative is told, how is it told and what impacts on its telling? In other words, how has this story been encoded? Rather than discussing each element of the experience in detail, the next section seeks to identify the principal underlying thrust of the approaches taken to both interpretation and display of the history of Wicklow Gaol.

### **7.3 Textual Analysis**

The core visitor experience occurs over five key interpretive areas. These can be considered in terms of three key themes: prison life under pre and post prison reform regimes; the 1798 rebellion in Wicklow and the role of the gaol within that and finally, transportation to, and convict life in, Australia.

The exhibition is laid out over three floors and is semi-structured— that is, the visitor is guided by an actor playing a specific character in the history of the gaol through some sections, and follows an organised but flexible route independently in others. Initially, the visitor is guided by an actor through the pre-reform space and partially directed through the 1798 area. They then follow a route through numbered cells in both the 1798 and the post-reform areas before going on to be met by a guide on entering the quayside and ship's deck. The visitor then follows a series of audio-visual tableaux through the ship's hold and route through numbered cells in the area looking at life following transportation to Australia. The visit concludes in an area called the Epilogue, which outlines some achievements and mentions specific descendants of those who had emigrated or were transported to Australia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The visitor then exits the exhibition area through the shop, where they had first bought their tickets.

The principal means of communication used at the gaol are in the form of audio-visual technology, more traditional static texts and images, models and figures, and live performances. The static texts and images used are either copies of original prints or documents, or are

produced using a 'period style', and are frequently applied directly to walls, in imitation of notices that might have been pasted there originally. Although restored, the gaol has not been given the appearance of a finely finished or crafted building internally, but has been treated to appear aged and decaying. This is seen, for example, in the use of a wash on newly painted walls which makes them seem dirty or damp. Visitors may touch original features like doors, beds and graffiti, as well as newer exhibits like models and figures, and several cells contain interactive displays like touchy-feely boxes or quiz boards. Sound is an important feature of the visitor experience, and recordings of screams, shouts, crying, footsteps, doors closing and keys turning are audible in all areas, even in those areas outside of the central exhibition space. This is augmented by live performances.

Although pre-determined and organised, the experience that is produced for the visitor can vary widely. For example, during the period in which primary research was conducted for this study, a team of four actors shared the various roles when acting as guides. All had different styles of delivering the script, and even concentrated on particular elements of the script rather than others. Depending on the timing of shifts, no actors may have been available to cover particular aspects of the interpretation. The nature of the delivery or the information given might be altered according to the numbers of visitors in any one group, their ages, background or other factors. Banter can occur between the actor and individual or groups of visitors, and in this sense elements of the performances can be improvised. Visitors do not always use the written guide given to them at the ticket desk, and are free to spend as long as they wish in all areas, except the pre-reform room at the beginning of the tour. They are also free to return to any area, other than the pre-reform room, unless they have exited the exhibition area all together.

The previous section demonstrated how organisers sought to create an experience that was strongly empathetic and that would encourage a process of identification between the visitor and the object of their gaze. The approach to display is understood to support this by focusing on creating the sense of a direct experience of the past, an simulated authenticity rather than the type of auratic authenticity created in the connoisseurial museum. Within this, it was important to the organisers to stimulate visitors' imaginations with a view to creating a better understanding of the narrative in tandem with creating a pleasurable experience. How is this made manifest in the exhibition as the visitor now experiences it?

### **Pre-Reform Regime**

Following the purchase of tickets, the visitor is equipped with a small guide detailing the contents of interpretive areas (fig. 3.24). Although this brochure does not advise visitors to follow any particular route directly, this is almost assumed in the way in which information is arranged on



# WICKLOW'S HISTORIC GAOL

*A story of crime, cruelty, exile and misery*



## A CELL BY CELL GUIDE

Kilmantin Hill, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow  
Telephone: 0404-61599  
Fax: 0404-61612  
Email: [wccgaol@eircom.net](mailto:wccgaol@eircom.net)  
Website: [www.wicklow.ie/gaol](http://www.wicklow.ie/gaol)

Fig. 3.24

Cell Guide, Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

the page. This in turn reflects the layout of the gaol itself. A numbering system is in operation in relation to cells, which also suggests that a particular route is recommended.

Following receipt of the brochure, the visitor meets the 'gaoler' in the ticket/gift shop or in a waiting/education room. The gaoler is always in character, regardless of the actor playing the role, and banter often takes place between gaoler and visitor before the tour proper begins. The gaoler is based on a man called Richard Hoey, a gaoler who worked here during the pre-reform period.

After the initial point of contact, the gaoler brings the visitor through the gaol gate (fig. 3.25), either bringing them directly into the pre-reform 'prison' to the right (former dayrooms, fig. 3.26) or alternatively lines them up at the wall opposite prior to entering it. The gaoler often makes a point of clanging the gate closed behind the group and locks it noisily. Visitors are also aware of pre-recorded sound effects – the screams and groans of prisoners, the sound of heavy footsteps and the sound of doors or gates closing, for example.

The emphasis here is on the injustices done to prisoners in the pre-reform gaol, and this is communicated by the gaoler's performance, the use of groups of ghostly grey figures to which specific audio narration are connected and more general atmospheric conditions using audio-visual techniques.

Both the written script and performances that depart from this attempt to draw visitors into the specific conditions of the period, and indeed the performance itself by using particular devices within the delivery. For example, the visitors are immediately asked a question, rather than presented with a statement: "You look like honest folks, so I don't suppose you'll know much about gaols, will you?" (Brennan and Whalley 1997 c: 9). Or, as in cases observed by this researcher, the gaoler will often first ask for visitors' names and where they have come from, and sometimes uses this information to draw particular visitors into the performance.

Visitors enter the 'pre-reform' gaol room, where lights are low and figures seem to emerge from the shadows as visitors' eyes get used to dim light. A series of moans, groans and other sounds "characteristic of an unreformed gaol room" (Brennan and Whalley 1997 c: 10) are played. This audio-tape also includes brief extracts of conversation/thought that relate to the groups of grey figures dressed situated at points around the room – "... (scream) a rats just bitten my leg!"; "the straw is soaked through, how can I sleep on it?"; "this place stinks of death" and so on. Sounds also include the cry of a baby and the frantic pleas of its mother. Figures include those of a young boy, a well-dressed man and emaciated men and women dressed in rags. Sometimes,



Fig. 3.25 Gaol Gate, Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

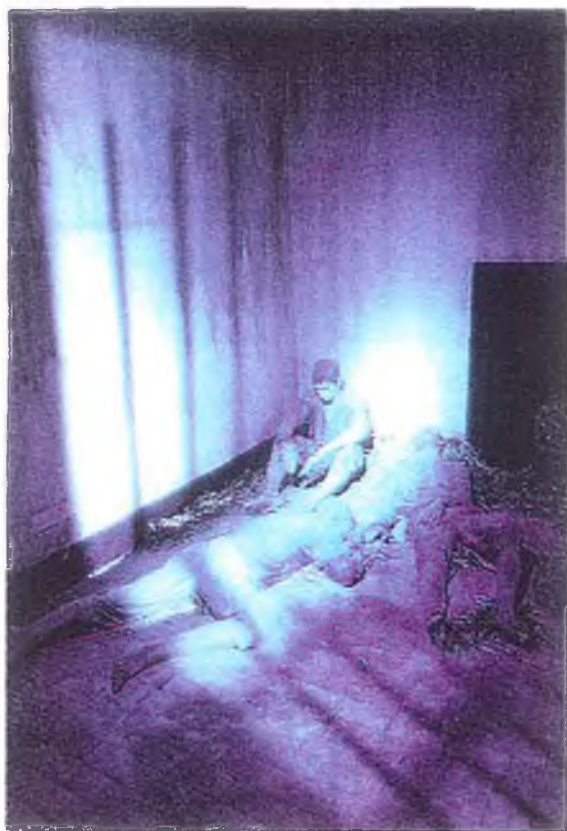


Fig. 3.26

Convicts, Pre-Reform Room,

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.



these figures are used by actors to refer to the keeping of prisoners of all degrees within the one 'cell' – for example, the well-dressed man becomes a 'distressed' gentleman, the young boy becomes a lunatic, the woman becomes a drunkard or prostitute and another male figure becomes a rapist or murderer.

He refers to the conditions of gaol life when he says, "All the prisoners are kept in this one room. That's right – men, women and children together" and again the visitor is placed within the narrative when, following this he states "...and if you're one of the gentlefolk in a bit of debt don't think you'll fare better because I've only got this one room" (Brennan and Whalley 1997c: 10). As the experience progresses, the gaoler himself makes visitors aware of the maltreatment of prisoners, his own corrupt practices, and the attempts of prison reformers to bring an end to both. In relation to the reform of the system, visitors are asked a set of rhetorical questions: "Who cares if this rooms damp and not whitewashed? He said it was unsanitary and told me I should separate men from women. Where would I put them? Why should I trouble myself anyway?" In relation to his own use of the system, he states "Sure the wages are low but there's a fair living to be made in other ways, if you get my meaning" and later "This reformer had wise words about penny-pot and garnish too...but we're only looking out for ourselves, same as any man."

The visitor is shown through an internal gate that, the gaoler explains, was called 'the gates of hell' because prisoners were unlikely to emerge alive. They are led down a narrow flight of stone steps (fig. 3.27) and brought into the ground floor area of the cellblock (fig 3.28). The narrowness of the steps seems confined and cramped compared to the brightness of the cell block, and perhaps compounds the sense of moving from (dark, narrow, damp) pre-reform to (cleaner, brighter) post-reform areas of the gaol.

Many of the characteristics of the visitor experience at WHG are firmly established at this point.. Given that the room used as the pre-reform area was in fact a post-reform addition to the building, and indeed that the whole front portion of the post-reform, nineteenth century prison had been demolished some years ago, it seems fair to say that the emphasis here is on the experiential quality of the experience rather than on its artefactual authenticity. Visitors have already been drawn into the performance by the actor, and removed from the securities of twenty-first century life. The use of lighting and sound, and the actor's performance serve to immerse the visitor in an alternative realm, in another time and set of experiences. The visitor is already made aware of the variety of crimes or indeed 'non'crimes committed by prisoners, and the variety of backgrounds from which prisoners might have come. The emphasis is on the failure of an unjust, inhuman, penal system in operation prior to what might be described as the



Fig. 3.27

Stairs from 'Pre-Reform' to '1798 Rebellion'.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001

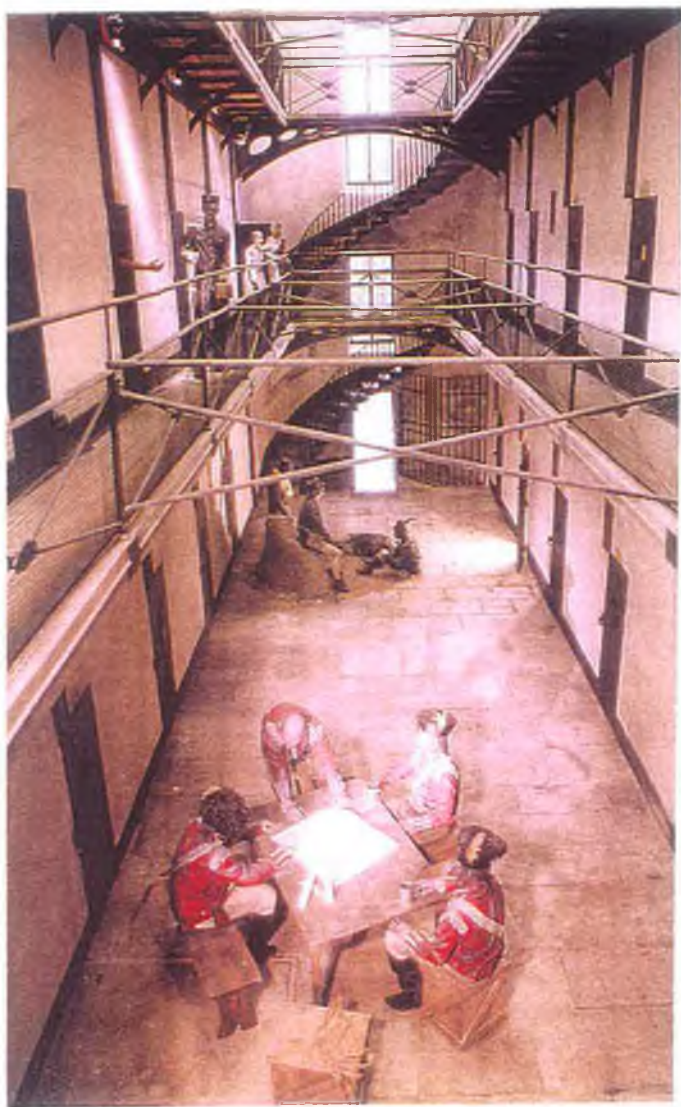


Fig. 3.28      Cell Block, Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

emergence of an 'enlightened' approach. Both an emotional and physical involvement in the experience is already demanded from the visitor.

A sense of the history of the prison as a reflection of wider social injustices of the period is already established. This is compounded by both particular and more general 'stories' told there - one of the first prisoners held in the gaol, for example, was Fr. Owen McFee, a priest outlawed during Penal times, and the presence of women, children, the ill, the poor and the disabled is emphasised. The gaoler's corruption is also a point of emphasis. However, although his character is unpleasant, he is portrayed as being weak and greedy rather than having any real power socially. He is seen as someone who uses the system to his advantage rather than someone who creates the system.

Originally, this pre-reform element of the experience was to be chronologically located in the year 1798 – however some actors now tend to locate the scene earlier, prior to the 1798 rebellion, and the division of time between the varying interpretive sections is not always made clear. As the gaoler brings visitors from the pre-reform gaol down a narrow staircase to the ground floor of the cell block they can sometimes be, in interpretive terms, travelling from the early/mid eighteenth century to the late eighteenth century, and from a time of peace to a time of war.

### **The 1798 Rebellion**

Visitors are introduced to an actor playing the part of Billy Byrne, 1798 rebel, having reached the ground floor of the cellblock. The drawing in of the visitor into the narrative continues, Billy Byrne asking "So, you're like me, you've got a free run of this place too. Did you pay him well to enjoy the visit?" (Brennan and Whalley, 1997: 12). After this, the emphasis of the narrative changes from prison conditions to the 1798 rebellion, with Byrne weaving his own story into that of the rebellion generally. The story is told using the actor's performance, audio narration and graphics on the central area of the cellblock and in the cells which surround it. Physically, the visitor experiences the story line within the individual spaces of cells, different aspects of the story being indicated on the cell guide given to visitors previously. Therefore, cell 8 is marked as 'time-line', and describes the events leading up to the 1798, while in cell 12, the involvement of informants is told through the character of 'Croppy Biddy'.

Billy Byrne's script sets the tone for the treatment of the rebellion historiographically. At the beginning of the performance he states "Would you believe Catholics like myself, Protestant men and Presbyterians are all fighting for the same cause? They want independence from Britain and equality for everyone on this island" (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c: 12).. Later he

focuses on the influence that the American and French revolutions had on those involved, stating “their ideals of liberty and equality inspired many of us, Catholics and Protestants alike, to start thinking.” (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c: 13). The same concepts are re-iterated on graphics in period style painted directly onto the walls of the first cell, which act as a timeline, and in the audio treatment of the ideals of the United Irishmen, delivered by a figure of Wolfe-Tone.

The narrative of the rebellion told at WHG can be broadly aligned with that supported by Comoradh '98, outlined previously, as a post-nationalist, rather than a nationalist, construction of historical events. This was understood to have grown out of the debate between historians with differing perspectives and the view that, in particular, it was important for commemorative events to be sensitive to both continued conflict and the peace process in the north of Ireland. Comoradh '98 supported a non-sectarian perspective that focused on the involvement of Catholics, Protestants and Presbyterians in a movement against injustice and in a promotion of republican ideals, influenced by other revolutions. The emphasis in WHG on the non-sectarian, non-insular interpretation, and the focus on the involvement of influential figures like the protestant 'General' Joseph Holt, rather than Fr. John Murphy of Boolavogue, can be understood as being part of a re-assessment of previous accounts of the rebellion and its leadership in what has been described as a “faith and fatherland” version of events (Foster, 2001: 228). This perspective is counter to the narratives constructed around the rebellion during the process of de-colonisation, for example, when it was important to establish a ‘myth of origin’ which would appeal to the sensitivities current at that time. As discussed previously, the ‘faith and fatherland’ narrative re-constructed the rebellion as one of a series of key defining moments in the establishment of Ireland as an independent nation, and was designed to encourage a sense of identification with the ‘imagined community’ of Irishness of which Catholicism and being ‘of the people’ were components.

While the principal thrust of the narrative at the gaol is clear, it might be suggested that in its representation, there are traces of a narrative similar in part to older, more insular nationalist readings of the rebellion also at work. The series of representations of torture methods of the yeomanry shown in cell 11, is drawn from a post-rebellion account understood now to have been written from a nationalist perspective. While the torture methods are clearly barbaric and worth representing as part of the over-all story, the atrocities committed by rebel forces are not underscored graphically in this way. Because of their initial purpose, the stylistic idiom used within them is intended to convey the monstrosity of one group and the victimhood of another – the images call on us to be sympathetic to one group and not to the other. The juxtaposition of tableaux of rebels and military forces in the central ground floor area are also

interesting in this respect. These figures represent the unequal nature of the conflict by showing a clear contrast between the guns and indoor setting of the military forces and the pikes and outdoor setting of rebel forces. It is, however, in the tone of the audio-treatments of these tableaux that older, more mythic, constructions of a history might be found. Here, the government forces describe the attempts to capture the United Irishmen, and in particular Joseph Holt and Michael Dwyer, saying, "...they'll give in when the winter comes. Sure if they don't, we'll build a road to get them..."(Brennan and Whalley, 1997c). This is followed by laughter, and probably intends again to communicate the unequal distribution of power and to foreground a later section which deals with the building of the Military Road in Wicklow. However, when coupled with the audio presenting the rebel perspective which states "...they killed our wounded where they lay, not one received the rites or got a decent burial...many of us have died in a month of fighting for freedom...but I say we should never give up..." (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c), one gets the sense that through its dramatisation, the narrative and representational convention of creating characters with whom we identify or not is established. This, I would argue, relates to points made above about both the desire to tell a hidden history 'like it is' without demeaning it by ignoring those aspects which are unpleasant or which clearly represent inequality, and the desire to create a strong, appealing narrative. I am not suggesting therefore that the narrative of the rebellion is what we might call nationalist in its orientation, but rather that a post-nationalist narrative can draw on older 'discursive formations' in its representation, particularly when it is important to engage the visitor by telling a 'good story'. Specifically, this is seen in the use of representational or narrative conventions in the exhibition which call on visitors to identify with one group – the hero/victim rebels, the 'Self' –and distance themselves from another, or more correctly, the 'Other'. This post-nationalist narrative therefore may share some representational or narrative conventions with the historical narratives produced during the construction of a myth of origin in the service of an emergent national identity.

This sense of identification with the subject of the narrative which, I am suggesting, is written into the text in the section interpreting the 1798 rebellion builds on the response demanded from visitors in the pre-reform section. This occurs both through being involved in role-play as prisoners and in the way in which characters are constructed to appeal to our sense of injustice, or unequal power relations and the drive to place ourselves in relation to them.

### **Life in the Gaol: The Post-Reform System**

When the visitor moves on from the ground floor, s/he moves up to the next floor where the gaol is interpreted in relation to conditions after the reform of the penal system (fig. 3.29). They are therefore travelling from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, from the period between

1798 and 1803 to the period after 1843, when the cellblock had been built. Because of the physical structure here, all interpretation is situated in cells, except for the use of the gallery on the right hand side of the block as a space where some figures are situated. These represent a 'lunatic' and the female prisoner minding her, the gaoler or 'turnkey' and a prisoner's arm reaching out from a window of a cell door (fig. 3.30). The visitor begins here by entering cell 15, where they are immediately made aware of the difference between pre-and post reform gaols both through the tone of the representation and the information communicated. On entering the cell, visitors are met by the sight of a figure behind a door marked WC and the associated audio presentation that begins in a jovial way by stating "Begob, you've caught me at an awkward time, if you get my meaning. I'll have to shout." (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c). The figure goes on to introduce himself as William Quinn, first turnkey. Difference is marked between pre and post-reform gaols by telling us how each prisoner has a cell of their own and that they are taught skills and trades.

We are, however, made aware of the hardship which prisoners had to endure almost immediately in the following cell where we hear an audio presentation of the rules and punishments in operation under this system. We are told how punishments as small as blowing one's nose in an "improper place" received a punishment of two days on bread and water, while other more demanding punishments were meted out for more serious breaches of the rules. These are represented by replicas of a shot drill and a cat'o'nine tails and a visual representation in period style of a treadwheel. The emphasis here is on the pointlessness of punishments as well as on their harshness – the prisoners exertion on the treadwheel was not to drive machinery and therefore have some sense of productivity attached to it, but simply to engage in fruitless, mindless labour. Severe whippings were meted out for crimes like those of Thomas Pitt, a small child convicted of theft.

The philosophy of the new system is further explored in relation to the chapel, a model of which is housed on this floor. Here the point is made that prisoners were denied the right to any social interaction through the explanation and illustration of the design of the chapel. The use of the chapel seems particularly poignant given the denial there of what we would now see as a basic human right, a fundamental belief for many religions. An audio presentation of a preacher's sermon describes how prisoners were regarded as sinners with "wicked tongues", part of a "contagion of wickedness" and idleness.

The experiences of particular groups, like women and children, are given emphasis by allocating separate spaces for the telling of their stories. We are made aware of some of the special circumstances pertaining to the imprisonment of such groups, whose stories are told primarily



Fig. 3.29

Stairs from '1798 Rebellion' to 'Life in Gaol'.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.





Fig. 3.30      Turnkey, 'Life in Gaol', Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

through the description of the experiences of particular individuals who had been incarcerated in Wicklow Gaol. The story that receives most emphasis is that of Eliza Davis (fig. 3.31), sentenced to death for the murder of her baby son at the age of 22, but transported for life following an appeal. Johana Kelshaw, who was detained for a month for prostitution, represents the reason why many women found themselves in the gaol. The following cell describes how there was a rise in the number of children in particular incarcerated in the gaol during the famine – we are told by an audio presentation that “So many... have had to steal to feed their families” and that “some are stealing just to be fed here”. A dramatisation of the experiences of children Mary Anne and Margaret Spenser is presented on audiotape – both their fear and the reason for being imprisoned is described. One voice states “I wish we’d never taken branches from those trees. All we wanted was a little timber for our fire and for selling to buy food.” The focus in relation to women and children is on the probable necessity of their crimes as a means of survival in the face of catastrophe or social deprivation, and on the emotions they experience. This emphasis on the emotional experiences of prisoners is continued in a section that acts as an introduction to the subject of transportation and the life of convicts once they had reached their destination. In cell 22, an audio presentation describes the thoughts of Esther Reed and Patrick Smith, who await transportation: Esther Reed states in anguished tones “my children, who will look after my two children, I’m the only parent they have...”, while Patrick Smith describes how “I can see my wife crying and waving on the docks.” (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c: 62). This audio is played in a cell which has original graffiti on the bed showing the outline of a hand and images of sailing boats similar to those on which such prisoners would have sailed. The effect is staggeringly poignant and creates the sensation of an immediate contact between past and present. This, I would suggest, builds on the use of emotions as a way of encouraging the identification of visitors with those represented in the gaol.

A sense of hope and possibility is also entailed in the way that the introduction of aspects of criminal reform, rather than punishment, are dealt with. We are made aware, for example, that some prisoners were able to create a better life for themselves following their release from prison. It might be suggested that this positive strand of the interpretive treatment is one that we become increasingly aware of throughout the whole experience. We have already made a journey across time from dark spaces to lighter ones, and on the second floor, as we ascend the physical space while at the same time being made aware of the progress made in the treatment of prisoners.

Visitors are again encouraged to practice role-play throughout this section. The first cell, for example, displays life-size cut-out figures and corresponding details of the physical appearances, crimes and sentences of historically authentic prisoners incarcerated in Wicklow

Gaol. They are encouraged to interact with weighing and measuring apparatus or the shot drill, tools and materials used by prisoners, and to use other interactive elements like 'feely-boxes'. The treatment of the building itself also aids the impression of a hands-on environment. In the original restoration, walls were finished roughly, and this was further enhanced by the use of washes and other dressing effects to give the impression of a damp, dirty and aged surface. Many original features are left unprotected, like beds, bells and some graffiti, for example and visitors are free to touch them. Descriptions of gaol life by real prisoners of the gaol, those gaoled elsewhere and fictional quotes, are used and create a sense of a more immediate encounter with history, directly 'from the horses mouth', as it were. This is compounded by the way in which such descriptions are presented – the use of dramatised audio presentations give the sense that we are eavesdropping on something that is happening in a past that is parallel to our own time and are conversational in character. Graphics are produced in a period style and pasted or written directly onto walls, building on the concept of some of the original features of the building, particularly graffiti exacted by prisoners themselves. This style of presenting text is in fact described as graffiti in the final script (Brennan and Whalley, 1997: 54), suggesting that this was the intent of producers.

### **Transportation and Life in Australia**

Visitors enter mezzanine floor between the third and fourth floors of the main cell block via a narrow stone staircase. Originally this housed the prison chapel, but is now the location of a reconstructed transportation ship, the *Hercules*, which sailed to New South Wales in November 1801. Visitors have therefore moved back in time again. The inclusion of this whole section was as a result of funding issues encountered in the development of the gaol, as discussed earlier. So, on reaching the top of the stairs, visitors find themselves on the deck of a ship rather than in a gaol environment. The sounds of seagulls and goods and prisoners being loaded onto the ship are heard when ascending the stairs. Nevertheless, the arrival onto the ship comes as a surprise. A double sense of departure from the familiar therefore occurs in the course of a visit – once as visitors meet the gaoler and embark on the first stage of the experience and again here. A costumed performer playing the part of the ship's captain, Luckyn Betts, meets them here (fig. 3.32). Visitors are either treated this time as paying passengers rather than convicts, and are introduced to the experience of the voyage as such. Betts describes his "consignment" of "thieves, murderers and wicked people aswell as the present company, my paying passengers" and assures them of safe passage. They can read here of the length of the journey, the routes followed, the contents of captains' and surgeons' journals and the numbers of convicts on board (140 men, 25 women). They are led down a second stairway, this time within the reconstructed ship, to the hold (fig. 3.33). On their entry, a series of 6 tableaux are activated. These describe both imagined individual experiences or emotions and recorded historical events. As each



Fig. 3.31

Eliza Davis, 'Life in Gaol', Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001



Fig. 3.32

Captain Luckyn Betts. 'Transportation',

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.



Fig. 3.33

Stairs from Deck to Ship's Hold, 'Transportation'.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

tableau is lit, figures seem to appear out of nowhere (figs. 3.34 and 3.35)<sup>18</sup>. As the scenes appear, they are accompanied by 'sound-bursts' of conversations or of 'silent' thoughts. These emphasise the harshness of conditions, fears of not surviving the voyage or the life that lay ahead, ways of ensuring survival on board, the planning of mutiny and the treatment of those who participated after it had been quelled. There is a great deal of emphasis here again on the humanity of prisoners and the cruelty of this system of punishment. The first scene is of two figures, one saying "the man I am chained to has died. I shall not tell, then perhaps I may eat his allowance of food..." Following on from the cells in which the plight of women and children was emphasised, a woman's voice is heard appealing for water for her child. In a second scene a woman is heard to say "So I shall be your companion for this voyage...and I shall be fed better than others?" (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c) (fig. 3.36). This clearly alludes to the way in which sailors on board ship bought sexual services with the promise of better treatment and the hope of survival. Later, another scene alludes to a pregnancy, presumably as a result of such an arrangement. The accents used here again become a part of establishing a binary opposition. While a figure of a guard comments in an English, almost cockney accent "I do not trust those Irish bastards..." (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c), the following scene uses a local, rural accent to describe a mutiny is embarked upon in response to the harsh treatment on board. A convict shouts "We will make the bold Luckyn Betts sorry that they ever treated us like animals" (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c). This recalls the contrasting experiences of visitors as 'paying passengers' earlier in the alluded to by the actor on deck. Memory of place is itself alluded to in the penultimate scene, where a chained convict says "Sometimes I think I see the green hills of Wicklow again and feel the rain on my skin, but it is simply a fantasy..." However, there is almost an air of excitement as convicts describe what can be seen as the ship nears port – one prisoner comments "Look, look, there's land at last" while another muses "I am nervous about going ashore, yet want so much to leave this vessel" (Brennan and Whalley, 1997c). This is matched by a 'tropical' scene being lit to one side of the ship, indicating the exit to the third floor and the final part of the experience (fig. 3.37). This is accompanied by sound-bursts of tropical birds, the sound of sea lapping and so on, and it is only on closer inspection of the painted scene through which one is passing that one sees the images of prisoners hanging from gallows, or chained to another as they work. At this point then visitors embark on another 'departure', this time from the ship to the new colony of Australia, and from the darkness of the ship to the brightness of land. There is sense of both fear and possibility communicated here.

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<sup>18</sup> This is a technique called 'Grey's Ghost' where figures are hidden behind painted gauze and are then back-lit to make the 'appear'.





Fig. 3.34      Tableaux. Ship's Hold, 'Transportation'.  
Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.





Fig. 3.35 Tableaux. Ship's Hold, 'Transportation'.

Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.



Fig. 3.36      Female Convict, Ship's Hold, 'Transportation'.  
Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.



Fig. 3.37      'Life in Australia', Wicklow's Historic Gaol, 2001.

The following cells deal with the conditions of life in the colonies for convicts, the hardships endured but also the possibility of achieving success, and even mythic status. The visitor is constantly drawn into the story through both methods of display and the other devices used in its telling. For example, the stories or 'voices' of individual prisoners continue to be used – one section of the display shows prisoner accounts of their experiences in the form of fake letters home or diary entries. A display of food rations for convicts for one week is compared to an estimation of contemporary consumption of food for one day. Clearly, this is meant to be a direct communication to the visitor, ultimately affirming his or her own experiences. It makes no mention of contemporary imbalance in relation to food, and the contrast is only applied to then and now, past and present.

Alongside this is a strand of the narrative that emphasises a sense of pride or patriotism, alluding to the achievements of transportees. One cell presents a series of stories of individuals who went on to establish themselves as valued citizens in Australia. Those chosen were all members of the United Irishmen and transported for their involvement in the 1798 rebellion rather than for any more 'ordinary' crime. Another cell deals with those whose lives continued to revolve around crime. Wanted posters and text in the form of fake news cuttings tells the stories of Jack Donoghue - The Wild Colonial Boy, Martin Cash and Lawrence Kavanagh and Ned Kelly. All of these achieved mythic status, and figures like the Wild Colonial Boy and Ned Kelly remain popular heroes because of their resistance to authority. This is compounded by the playing of the ballad *The Wild Colonial Boy* in this cell. This ballad continues to be popular in Ireland and amongst the Irish diaspora abroad – indeed, although not necessarily nationalist in content it echoes many of the themes referred to by Boyle (see Chapter 6) as being essential to the appeal of such songs. This is particularly so in its focus on resistance, bravery and tragic death.

Resistance is in fact a very strong theme on this floor, and the 1798 rebellion continues to feature in the story line. As mentioned above, many of the 'success stories' were based on the lives of former United Irishmen. An audio-visual presentation of General Joseph Holt, who had been transported for his involvement in the rebellion, describes conditions for convicts there, and the story of the Eureka Stockade makes mention of Vinegar Hill, one of the battles of 1798. At the end of the visitor's experience of this floor, one cell deals with the subject of The Young Irelanders, a movement that grew out of Daniel O'Connell's campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union that followed the 1798 rebellion. Indeed the Young Irelanders, and one of their leaders, William Smith O'Brien, were held responsible for a failed uprising in 1848, and O'Brien was transported. He was given a free pardon in 1856, when the text informs us, "he returned to Ireland and continued to fight against colonisation and for patriotic rights". The connections

between this and Fenian activity are also emphasised, particularly the rising of 1867 and their strong base in America, rooted in the Irish American diaspora. The text here describes the "strong resentment of British policies" and the memory of the famine as making this group eager to join the Fenians. Original graffiti here dates from the civil war of the early twentieth century, just prior to the closure of the gaol. Visitors exit the floor and return to the shop through the 'Epilogue', where large cut-out figures represent the descendants of those who emigrated or were transported to Australia. This is linked to the genealogical centre located elsewhere in the gaol.

It seems to me that the intended, if implicit, message of this text is that the Irish population contributed to the making of Australia. This is intended to appeal to one of the principal audiences that were envisaged for the gaol as a heritage attraction. In particular, it is organised to appeal to the Irish Australian diaspora, and after this to the more general diasporic community. Particularly as visitors near the end of their experience, there is an increased emphasis on the resilience of emigrants and transportees, and on the connections, through descendants and a shared collective memory, between past and present. This is built on the designation of the gaol's uniqueness as a heritage attraction as its connection to transportation and emigration, as discussed in the last chapter. I think a second message is offered by the text, which although perhaps unintended, is a clear possibility. Here we see in operation a similar effect as the narrative structures adopted in nationalist accounts of the heritage sites of the county in the mid-twentieth century. As discussed in Chapter 6, these accounts create links between events of importance in the construction of collective memory and the adoption of particular tropes like that of 'the people' and the martyr. The producers of the gaol did not necessarily set out to do this – the text certainly makes no mention of the 1916 rising for example, which often forms the main focus of such a narrative thread in nationalist historiographies. However, it can be suggested that the focus on popular heroes and tales of resistance, followed by the interpretation of the impact of fenianism alongside displays of original graffiti dating from the period of the civil war creates a loose structure that is akin to those of nationalist historiographies

## **7.5 Summary**

Interpretive themes focus on the experiences of 'ordinary' people, rather than an elite. Clear distinctions are made between groups on either side of a binary opposition of rich and poor, the powerful and powerless, the coloniser and the colonised and so on. While the section on the 1798 rebellion seeks to move outside of such broad divisions by emphasising, for example, the non-sectarian basis of its organisation and its republican ideals in the broadest sense of the word, the desire to create an engaging story necessitates the casting of heroes and villains. This

is not to suggest that the narrative at WHG is a deliberate extension of a nationalist historiography. Rather, I would suggest, that the sub-altern focus of this post-colonial narrative intersects with the focus on the quotidian in a post-modern reading of 'history from below', as mentioned by MacCannell (1976), Urry (1990), Samuel (1994) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998). Furthermore, the narrative conventions of telling a story which cannot but pull on one's emotions may be similar to those used in older versions of the discursive formation of Irish historiography, as discussed by Carroll (2000), Leerson (2001) and in a wider context, Hall (1992). There may be, however, a desire to appeal to the collective memory associated with Ireland, and in particular with the Irish Diaspora. It can be suggested that this is evident in parts of the narrative at WHG which focus on the deeds of popular heroes, and the partial collapse of a linear structure when several elements of the display are combined. This builds on the use of the ideas of the 'ordinary people', the oppressed and bravery through resistance that have long been an established part of the national imagination.

This approach coincides with that of the experience more generally, where the objective is to create a strong empathetic response within the visitor. This sees the incorporation of interpretive and communicative devices that encourage the visitor to identify with the principal focus of the narrative, the prisoners. The intention of involving the visitor at an emotional level in the story of Wicklow Gaol's prisoners is clear from the very beginning of the experience. This is achieved by appealing to particular 'universal' ideas about human experiences like childhood, birth, death, tragedy, anxiety, and helplessness and so on in the emphasis within interpretive themes. This is communicated in a physical way through the creation of an all encompassing environment or atmosphere using both visual and aural devices, and particularly in the interaction between actor and visitor.

The use of lighting and the technique of grey figures combine to give a sense of ghostly apparitions – this is heightened by the use of 'greys ghost' techniques in the ships hold and the sudden movement or appearance of live actors. Sound, particularly audio-presentations of the experience of prisoners, also contributes to the sense of experiencing something that is ever present, rather than past. The environment is not pristine – although the building was fully restored, aged elements have been left intact and restored elements have been aged – benches/beds have remained in their original condition, for example, while re-plastered walls have been 'dirtied' and scuffed. This is not just a visual effect but encourages the sense of a 'hands on' environment, where the visitor is not distanced from the object they are exploring. All of these are instrumental in creating an 'immersive' environment for the visitor, and both the nature and treatment of the original artefact and the use of a variety of media and live performances seems to enhance the experiential quality of the authenticity in operation at the

gaol. This builds on the emphasis placed on common human experience in interpretive themes. In these ways, the visitor is written into the text of WHG. This corresponds with some of the ideas discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In particular, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1998) discussion of simulated or simulated authenticity, Stewart's (1999) discussion of the interaction between human subjects and material artefacts and Selwyn's (1996) description of a process of identification between visitors and those represented at 'warm' heritage sites through the modes of display used there.

It would appear that the discourses of authenticity and identity become enmeshed in the encoding of WHG. But how do visitors actually respond to such a narrative? Do the intentions of producers match the experience of visitors? Do they draw from the same well of representational and narrative devices? Are stories read in the same ways in which they were conceived? What do visitors bring with them and how does this impact on their experiences? Do the themes of identity and authenticity discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and evident in the above account of the production of this text, resonate in its consumption? The following section will consider why visitors engage with the past at this heritage centre, and how they do so, or in other words, how visitors decode WHG.

### **SECTION 3     ENCODING AND DECODING WICKLOW'S HISTORIC GAOL**

#### **Chapter 8     Decoding Wicklow's Historic Gaol**

##### **8.1     Introduction**

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the text that accounted for the preferred readings intended by producers and also some possible alternative messages that could be inferred from it. This was done in relation to the contexts of development discussed in Chapter 6, and the particular processes that occurred in the text's production. This chapter will now return to the central interests of this thesis, the consumption of WHG. This chapter will begin by describing the data produced in the course of investigating the consumption of the gaol, and the relationships between this, the text as it is produced and the discourses pertinent to both. The results of behavioural maps, questionnaire surveys and the interviewing process are all pertinent here. However, the latter will form the principal analytical focus of this chapter, while the former two will be used in a validity capacity. This chapter is largely structured according to the significant clusters that emerged as visitor responses were analysed.

The profile of the group of visitors at the heart of this research project broadly matches that of other visitor groups in Ireland and the UK (Tourism Development International, 1996, Merriman, 1991). This ratio shows a particular predominance of higher status groups amongst visitors with just less than a third being identified as belonging to other groups. Also evident is the predominance of those groups within the middle-stage of the life cycle. About a third of all visitors had come with children. Although adult groups visiting as couples or with friends and family are clearly significant, this researcher found it difficult to gain access to groups with children, although they were in significant numbers. This was because of the difficulties of parents in being able to devote the time to participating in the study. There was also a predominance of tourists over local visitors. In fact, there is a particularly high level of tourists amongst participants, and indeed, a particularly marked absence of local residents, as opposed to day-trippers. Again, the researcher found it difficult to gain access to those groups who were reluctant to participate in the study. It is also interesting to note that almost a quarter of visitors from outside of Ireland described themselves as either being born here, or as having a family connection here. As indicated in Chapter 5, there was a high proportion of British holidaymakers amongst participants – this is clearly reflected in the nature of some of the responses described below, particularly within responses that focus on cultural identity.

##### **8.2 Visitor Responses : Description and Analysis**

As described above, several strands of response emerged in the analysis of this data. This is not to say that these responses are entirely separate – in reality, both similar and conflicting



responses to the gaol were often inter-twined. However, these have been separated into four sections to facilitate some clarity of discussion. This aspect of the discussion begins by describing responses that seemed to suggest very specific motivational patterns amongst visitors. I then go on to discuss responses to the exhibitionary authenticities in operation at the gaol, the identification with 'imaginary communities' through the text, and the finally the relationships that visitors create between past and present.

### **Education, Leisure and Holiday-making**

Some visitors describe their motivations and the benefits they perceive to occur in visiting attractions in very clear terms. The value of a visit as an educational experience was highly regarded amongst many participants. Barbara (int. 13) describes how "...well, we went to university...and then you always feel you need to accomplish a little more at general education..." She also expresses a sense of duty, almost, with regard to her visit to the gaol – "...we wanted to go down to the beach, and then we thought maybe we should do the gaol first...you do a little education and then you do other things you like..." Some responses might demonstrate the cross-over between life-cycle, heritage visiting and education. Mary (int. 11) says "we've also been to Carnarvon Castle where the Prince of Wales was – had his investiture, and the children enjoyed that. We try to take them places where they can relate to things that have gone on in history." For Jenny (int. 12) also, gaining knowledge (understanding) of another culture through heritage visiting is beneficial to life at home – "...we come from Birmingham...there is a big Irish population...so it gives us a better understanding of their culture in a different sort of way..." and later, in relation to travel, "its getting to grips with it at grassroots, if you like". A pattern emerged in relation to the idea of 'doing things properly' to gain full educational benefit from the experience. This came to the fore particularly in the way some visitors described the decisions they took with regard to routes through the physical / narrative space of the gaol. Bill (int. 3) describes his reason for following the guide in relation to cell order – "We're not going to sketch through it, we're going to spend quite a while there and do it properly..." and later, "...we had a good look around all the rooms so that we could get a balanced view of what was going on...we went around each one in strict rotation from one to the next, until we'd done the whole lot, so we kind of built up a picture...(J)...because if you're messing about from side to side you get confused and the story doesn't gel, does it?" This response could be interpreted as a visitor belief that, firstly, there is a 'correct' order, and secondly, that if followed properly, it will benefit you most educationally. The implication of this may be that the authority of the 'museum' in presenting a balanced narrative is unquestioned here, as well as that this is the point of being there in the first place in benefiting from their knowledge. Patrick (int. 8) also expresses a similar acceptance – "I followed the guide, I went into each cell...they all followed in the right order, and I just followed from one to the other..."

Julie (int. 7) also describes this tendency – “yes, the teacher in me again! I’ve just stuck to this (the guide)...because it tells you what’s in them, rather than you just going in and catching half-way into something...I think you need some sort of guidance rather than just going in and out of different things.” Very few of the visitors who were observed in the behavioural mapping process were seen to be actually engaging with the guide (see Appendix A). Although no responses were outrightly negative in relation to mediation at WHG, some visitors focused on more traditional techniques of mediation, like written text. Patrick (int. 8) comments that “I don’t like to see too much of the electronic stuff, you want it explained as best you can...” Following this, he makes a comment in relation to guided tours: “...it’s all explained to you anyway, through the intercom and all that and what’s written on the wall. So you can browse, take in a lot. Whereas, if you’re listening to somebody and you’re there with another crowd of people, you miss quite a lot.” Trevor (int. 2) stated that “I love looking at the diary entries that are written on the wall...I love looking at the historical tracts of what’s gone on and who’s been here and the history of the building itself...What I didn’t listen to that much was the commentary that came in terms of the garbled noises that was meant to depict people...the atmospherics...” One must be careful in relation isolating one aspect like text from the over-all experience, and particularly at WHG where text does not always appear in panel format but rather is written directly onto cell walls like graffiti. But there is perhaps a sense here that both social interaction and ‘interactive’ forms of mediation interfere with the real ‘work’ of museum visitors. By this I mean the assimilation of knowledge through reading, akin to experiences in traditional museums and formal educational environments. It must be said that this stands in direct contrast to the majority of responses in the questionnaire survey, regardless of socio-economic group, who favoured live performances or other interactive or immersive elements like the ship. Equally, there was an overwhelming level of comment on the simulated authenticity of the display within focus group interviews, and a significant interest amongst visitors observed in the mapping process in the ship also. These will be discussed later. The constructive use of leisure time through a concern with the educational benefits of visiting the gaol is clearly a strong motivational factor here. Responses concerned with displaying a knowledge of the codes of behaviour associated with heritage visiting are included here, as are responses that indicate a preference for a less contextualised, more formal representational strategy than that used at the gaol. All of these factors were associated with the habitus thesis put forward in the relation to heritage and museum visiting by Merriman (1991) and Bourdieu and Darbel (1991), and with the interpretation of visiting patterns by Prentice and Light (1994), discussed in Chapter 3. The patterns of response recorded at WHG correspond with those of visitors from higher socio-economic groups as established in these other studies. As indicated above, these findings are validated by the broad socio-economic profile of participants in this study, in the survey and in the surveys of visitors to heritage attractions in Ireland more generally, as these groups are in significant numbers.

Therefore, visitors to WHG may be engaging in the acquisition of cultural capital and the display of their habitus'. While these responses are clearly important, they are coupled with a whole range of less duty bound, more pleasurable responses, as will be discussed below. As discussed by Urry (1990), these may indicate the tastes associated with the new service classes for the interactive, playful experiences offered by the use of simulated authenticity in the gaol. However, as will be demonstrated later on in this discussion, these are frequently associated with less playful motivations or perceived benefits which comment on the emotional pull of the story and which demonstrate a reflective response to it. This suggests that Urry's assessment may not be adequate in the context of the gaol. This may be because of the nature of the gaol's history and it's status as a 'warm' heritage site, as described by Selwyn (1996). This may also indicate that factors outside of class identity are important to our understanding of how and why visitors engage with the past at this heritage attraction.

A second element to be discussed here is the role of holiday experiences in the particular contexts in which heritage visits take place. Edel (int. 2), a retired violinist, when questioned whether she visited attractions at home as well as on holidays, states "Without a doubt...the National Trust, we're members." For some, the activity of heritage visiting seems to be a completely accepted, unquestioned norm in their wider leisure choices, lending it an importance outside of holiday experiences akin to the responses described above. However, the bulk of visitors who responded to the survey questionnaire were motivated to attend WHG through being on holiday or on a day out, and this, it has been suggested, might also correspond to the high degree of visitors who visit museums annually, rather than monthly (see Appendix A). Similar patterns emerge in interview responses. Michael's (int. 5) response is perhaps what one would expect in relation to holiday itineraries – "...we had planned to, it was on our books, like. We thought it would be a fine day and we were looking for something to do on a wet day." This type of response is confirmed by responses that indicate the ways in which visitors become aware of WHG as a place to visit. Francis and Anne (int. 24), for example, were provided with an itinerary from which they could choose by the campsite at which they were staying – "The guy at Redcross. They give you the map and tell you all the different things, and this was really a must." This is clearly a standardised procedure, as many responses from those staying at the same campsite offer similar information, as do responses which indicate finding out about WHG from B and B's or other attractions like Glenroe Open Farm. This type of independent promotion of one facet of the industry by another is an important aspect of creating holiday itineraries, and is recognised by the management at the gaol. The inclusion of WHG in the itineraries of organised coach tours is also important. This was highlighted during the year in which this research was conducted, as described in Chapter 7. Others place the idea of visiting attractions as something one does on holidays specifically, rather than in other leisure frameworks. Debbie

(int. 7) responds to a question regarding heritage visiting more generally when she says – “If its on our way to somewhere... I haven't been to one in London for about five years, I think... I think that's why you're at a place, to see it... and you've got a limited amount of time and you want to make the most of it....when you're at home you think I can go any time, but you never do.” Prentice and Light (1994) have indicated the importance of heritage visiting within a holiday experience, and this would certainly seem to relate to the findings of this study. The responses of Brendan, John, Kate and Imelda (int. 6) give some an insight into the visiting patterns of more local visitors. Kate says, “Brendan actually worked up here on the restoration project, mostly the outside...so he kind of said to me last year that everyday it was open and to come up some day”. Although from a neighbouring county and on a 'day out', and in this sense 'tourists', this group are also 'local'. As one member worked in the production of the site, there may be a sense of ownership or personalisation, or perhaps insider knowledge of the gaol and its production as a heritage attraction. Taken in conjunction with the interest of another member of the group in local history (John), particularly in those aspects which connect strongly with the narrative surrounding the 1798 rebellion and the famine at the gaol, this was one of the only responses in this study that indicated the role of heritage attractions in the contexts of the local consumer. Of course, this cannot be understood as a negation of the importance of heritage sites and their associated history in a local context. At a most basic level, it simply reflects the number of local visitors to be interviewed within this study, and perhaps more importantly, the relatively low numbers of local visitors to heritage attractions recorded more generally. This group were also special in that they had a particular knowledge of the gaol. There was reluctance on behalf of some local visitors to participate in this study, interestingly, because they were local and they felt that they would not be of interest, although other factors must also have been at the root of their unwillingness to participate. While it cannot be suggested that this is in any way representative, or perhaps even telling, responses like this, coupled with the relatively low level of visitors generally, might suggest that a sense of ownership of the site by local people, or those non-museum visiting social groups, is not expressed through the practice of heritage visiting. This might relate to Hooper-Greenhill's suggestion that useful studies might be conducted of those who do not visit museums as well as those who do – although it might be necessary to broaden the scope of such a study to consider other experiences of the past. Although not within the scope of this study, the ways in which a site is experienced outside of the confines of 'the visit' as such, or indeed how or why local history/heritage is engaged with more generally would provide an interesting basis from which to explore heritage in the context of local memory.

The importance of the life cycle, and in particular those stages concerned with children and the family or time as a couple, has been indicated by other studies (Prentice and Light 1994,

Macdonald and Silverstone, 1990). The combination of life cycle and leisure/holiday activity choices is also important in this study. For Karen and Robert (int. 22), visiting heritage attractions is "...what we would do on holidays. That would be our main thing. Because the kids need constant entertainment. We've done Glenroe, we've done here, and we're going to do the Powerscourt Waterfall...". John (int. 4) also places visiting attractions as something suitable for all the family to do - "...well, we were interested and, well, with family tickets it's a cheap day out...its actually a cheap and interesting day out." Margery (int. 9) also describes its suitability as a family outing with small children –"We tend to look for things that have adult and children's interest, a family sort of thing." For Donal (int. 15), these issues are also important - "It was just word of mouth really. It looked like an interesting place to visit. We like a bit of history and that. It was a good day out without overspending..." and later "Just to learn more about our history...a lot of stuff you covered in school...and its nice to bring the boys along, and they get quite interested in it." Other points in the lifecycle, or alternative lifestyles than those discussed above, also emerge as part of motivational factors. Philip (int. 18) says "...we've started to visit – our kids have started to grow up..."

### **Exhibitionary Authenticity**

Different conceptions of authenticity have emerged during the course of the analysis of visitor responses. These might be described as focusing on the 'real thing, the 'real feeling' and the 'real story'. These mirror theoretical discussions of the ways in which these authenticities are experienced, discussed in Chapter 2, which were described as auratic and simulated authenticities. Responses which illuminate the significance of 'the real thing' are those that speak about the building and associated features as auratic artefacts, conduits between past and present and markers of the authenticity of stories told there. Responses that speak of the 'real feeling' are concerned with the reconstruction of an authentic experience using a range of media to produce realistic effects. Ideas about the realness of the story also emerged. This was in relation to the portrayal of the ordinary as the telling of the 'whole' story – these will be discussed in the context of simulated authenticity, as in Chapter 2, although they are clearly dealing with the focus of the narrative rather than the choice of display techniques. Although these are isolated out for the purpose of discussion, these responses are often expressed in tandem with one another.

#### **The Real Thing: Auratic Authenticity**

So how did visitors respond to the building, the artefact itself, and how did this experience operate in making meaning? Responses that suggest that auratic experience is active in the creation of meaning can be framed by concepts surrounding the relationship between aura and sensory, imaginative, empathetic and cognitive activity. To some degree, the strength of this

strand of responses is dependent of the place of exhibitionary authenticity in the encoding of the gaol. Some of the issues raised in the two previous chapters related to the use of the gaol as an artefact and the techniques of display used there. The gaol was restored, but was treated so that it wouldn't appear to be pristine – walls were dirtied artificially for example. Furthermore, there was no attempt made to cordon off original features like beds or bells, and there was no limit put on visitors' interaction with these elements, as there is in more formal environments. While the delicate graffiti on walls is covered by Perspex, the graffiti that is carved into beds is not, and there is no deterrent in place to stop visitors touching it. Because of this, and because as a building, this authentic artefact is all enveloping, there is a clear difference between this heritage attraction and other more traditional and more formal museums or historic properties.

An indication of the importance of the artefact in creating a sense of experiencing the past in what is perceived as a more direct way is offered by the responses of Jenny and Mike (int. 12). Here, when asked whether they would have enjoyed the experience had it been in a new building, they say "(both) No, no, no, no...(J) It's the whole period feel of it...I think you remember more if you go into the actual environment...its more personal, isn't it? (M) ...when you become involved because you are actually physically in it and then the video and audio things that are there increase that. So, you are actually surrounded by it, you're really in it. (J) I think the way that its presented makes you a part of it. Highlighting the bits of graffiti...so you think then this is real, gosh, real people were here. (M) Somebody actually did that." Karen and Robert (int. 22) state that "t...there's something about it having been the real thing and having been operational at the time, you know, you can sort of get a feeling of the pain that must have been caused." Maggie and Derek (int. 21) respond in a similar way when asked the same question – "No, you don't get the atmosphere (in a new building)...You can actually imagine what...like seeing something like that graffiti in 1805, I think it was, you can actually feel someone doing that." The imagination emerges as a valuable tool in experiencing the gaol as an authentic artefact. Edel (int. 2) comments "...if you come into a place like this, children use their imaginations and its like when you go and sit in a place like The George at Stanford, and you can imagine the Knights Templar walking through the bar, and children get all their imaginations going and they can understand what this was." Mary (int. 11) says of the use of the building itself rather than a purpose built centre: "Yes, its got to be authentic – I said that to Gemma when she sat down on the bed "do you realise that somebody has sat on that bed or slept on that bed in the 1800s?", and she got up, you know (gesture and laughter)...Its all trying to imagine, isn't it?" Imaginative and sensory experiences are combined for Julie (int. 3), who describes her response as follows "I mean, these were real people and this was their life and it all happened to those people and you imagine yourself trying to lift up things like that (shot drill) and its terrible,,,". Margery (int. 9) also gives a clear insight into this aspect of visitor responses

when she says "The graffiti aswell we were interested in...it really brings it to life, somebody real". This was true for Gary also (p.int. 4), who, speaking about a prompter image of graffiti carved into a prison bed used in the course of the interview, states "I remember that, I liked reading that...I was able to touch it and to run my hand over it, and think "how hard..."

The idea of decay, perhaps in relation to the mark of age as a sign of authenticity or else as an aspect of a more generalised sense of pastness, or indeed both of these, may also be an important factor in the auratic experience of this artefact. Barbara (int. 13) comments "well, everything is kind of less – well, this environment looks quite natural, things are not re-done." At WHG, things were in fact considerably 're-done'. However, the maintenance of original features or the use of sympathetic materials during the restoration of the building was important. Both the enhancement of the sense of authenticity of the original artefact by not interfering significantly with some elements and the creation of a sense of a still functioning prison were also important for exhibition organisers in the development of the 'text'. This is visible, for example in the use of paint effects on the walls to suggest dirt or dampness or in the 'period' treatment of signage. One group seem to use the physical experience of the gaol as a basis for both cognitive and empathetic understandings of prisoner experiences. Jim (int. 11) asserts "...you could never explain, you've got to get the feeling of the size of the doors, the size of the bed, you know, to visualise what went on." Similarly, other responses appear to demonstrate a link between the visitor's own physical experience in the building and their thoughts in relation to the experience of prisoners in the past. Marie (int. 1) comments "He counted us and there was about twenty of us in the room, so multiply that by six and fit us all into that one room." A similar exchange occurs between Richard and Marie (int. 1): "(M) We were just wondering whether these (the beds) were the originals...you just sort of think, if they could speak, it's true, you know, if the walls could speak...® And this glass wouldn't have been there, would it? It would have been just bars, so it wouldn't have been very warm, would it? No heating...(M) Well, if you had enough people in here, it would have been warmer wouldn't it? Although if they were all cold..." Here direct physical experiences of the artefact stimulate the visitor to think about the life that went on within it. Clearly, imagining human experience in the past is made 'real' for visitors through their placement within the artefact itself.

The artefact is a significant factor in visitor experience in a number of ways. It seems to operate as a conduit for a sense of experiencing the past in a more direct way. This is spoken about in relation to the linking of physical and imaginative experiences and, I would argue, to the experience of the gaol auratically. By interacting with the gaol in an immediate way through touch – and perhaps the other senses – and by combining this with imaginative and cognitive activity, visitors use their sense of both the aura and the physicality of the original object to

experience the history of the gaol's inmates. There isn't a sense that the artefact is revered for its own sake here, which can appear to be the case in connoisseurial museums for example, but that its uniqueness and its aura are read as expressions of the lives that surrounded it. This experience is perceived to be more direct or less mediated than other experiences and in this sense is perceived to be more authentic by visitors. It seems possible to suggest that the gaol's aura is created, or at least enhanced, by visitors sensing the tangible and imagining the intangible essence of the artefact. As discussed in Chapter 2, this could be described in terms of the closeness of its physicality and the distance of the lives and events that have impacted on it or in relation to the tension between the transience of human life but the achievement of immortality through material things. Of particular importance here is Lowenthal's (1985) analysis of the relic as a more direct way of experiencing the past, its power as an historical 'document' that links rather than divides past and present, as well as his discussion of the perception of patina and decay as markers of authenticity. Benjamin's (1973) concept of the auratic experience of art works and Stewart's (1999) discussion of touch in experiencing a sense of the life that has surrounded objects are also significant. This is clearly experienced by visitors to the gaol. Touch is an important, although not the only, factor in releasing this auratic experience. Here this is bound up with the patina of the building and its original features. A perception that the artefact shows the proof of its historicity through the patina of age, so important in the assessment of authenticity within the world of the connoisseur is also a factor in visitor experience here. It must be understood that it is the perceived as well as the actual authenticity of the gaol that heightens visitor experience. The graffiti left by inmates is a particularly powerful element in these experiences. This power might well reside in the idea that it takes on the mantle of a message left by inmates to be read by those that came after them, and is a particularly personal form of what Lowenthal refers to as 'the mark of age', as discussed in Chapter 2. This is not just a random or accidental mark left by the wear and tear experienced by objects through interaction with humans, but a deliberate communication by specific individuals. It is easy to understand how these expressions of identity, boredom, frustration or anger seem to have been left there for us to find – direct communications between those on either side of the divide between past and present. Furthermore, the graffiti seems to exist despite the restrictions and hardship experienced by inmates in the context of a penal institution and certainly emphasised within the text, which seems to give these 'marks of age' particular poignancy.

#### The Real Feeling: Simulated Authenticity

While a sense of the authenticity of the building is important in the above responses, the significance of other factors, like the use of media, in creating the feeling of 'the real' is also highlighted by visitors. The reliance on simulated authenticity was a significant factor in the encoding of the gaol, particularly in terms of the use of sound and costumed actors. These



elements, particularly sound, were an important part of the initial submission made by Brennan and Whalley and as discussed in Chapter 7, made a significant impression on the producers of the gaol. They were perceived to be important in stimulating visitors to imagine the gaol as it functioned, rather than as a 'dead' artefact. This became a central component of the final 'text', as did the live performances. Although it was envisaged that the actors would serve several functions, like monitoring visitor behaviour and so on, their chief function was in drawing visitors into the 'story' being told. These and other factors that surrounded the use of simulated authenticity in the gaol were also a feature of visitor responses. Although some visitors experience the gaol principally through the artefact or the mediated experience, others do not distinguish one response from the other quite so clearly. For example, Caroline and Deborah (int. 7) express differing responses to the 'lack' of mediation in some cells. Deborah states that: "I think, there's some cells here, and if you walk into everyone, that's a waste of time, I would have preferred it to have been sealed off...if you walk into everyone and there's nothing there, you're looking for something." In response, Caroline says: "...I think some of the empty cells have got graffiti on the wall, the original graffiti", perhaps indicating the significance of the artefact in her experience, in contrast to Deborah's focus on other aspects. Like Deborah, Philip (int. 18) describes how he saw "... a blank sort of cell and I wouldn't go in because they all look much the same." Similarly, Karl (int. 14) states "we tended to sort of see if something was there to be seen and if there wasn't we kept going." The key element in experiences like this is the involvement with or experience of either the information being presented or perhaps the mode of presentation in itself. In Mike's response (int. 12), the convergence between the artefact and other media is very strong however, and the distinction between the objectively measurable authenticity of the artefact and the sense of authentic feelings provided by the use of media in conjunction with it appears to collapse almost entirely – "Yes – it's the time passage. You are actually going into the time and seeing it at first hand – rather than being told about it or reading about it you are actually being part of it". Similarly, some visitors made clear distinctions between their experiences in WHG and those in formal educational contexts, which might be more concerned with written history. Marie (int. 1) explains her lack of interest in Irish history generally: "I suppose I just got a sickener in school...you know, you just had to sit there and think Oliver Cromwell, whatever the date and the battles were. You never really had a vision of what it was like..."

This sense of authenticity of experience – that you can actually experience the sensations of another time and culture – is a particularly strong feature of many responses. The highlighting of the ship by visitors as a central element in their experience indicates this in itself, as do their descriptions of it. John (int. 6) felt that "...it was very real, like, I thought the way they had the parts for it, it was very real the way they had it arranged and all..." Patrick (int. 8) responds "I

think that was excellent, the way they done the ship. I didn't think it would be so authentic. Alex (p.int. 4) is more specific in his description "because you feel the decks you are walking on, the ground you are walking on, even the light changing, is really moving, shaking as if one would be on a ship." Karen (int. 22) extends this in describing physical sensations caused by the immersion in the ship's environment - "You can envision the real thing more. I looked around at one point and he was swaying. I don't know if he was swaying himself or if he was swaying in his head!" The immersion of visitors in the ship-like environment also stimulates cognitive thought, and in this sense there is a strong link between artefactual and experiential authenticities. This is emphasised, possibly, because of the scale of the original artefact in this instance – as an architectural artefact, we are necessarily immersed in it as we are with the reconstructed environment of the ship. Michelle and Gary (p.int. 4), following their description of the ship, go on to exchange thoughts about the conditions for prisoners on board ship: "(M) You can't imagine how so many people were crammed into such a small space...(G) A hundred and sixty eight I think it was...(M) A hundred and sixty eight depending on what ship it was and what time of year. I mean, how would you cope?" Maggie (int. 21) emphasises imaginative activity as important, particularly in relation to the stimulation of one sense "The audio was very good...I suppose you can use your imagination of what it would look like...yeah you have to imagine what five people in a cell would be like and the insanitary conditions." These responses are similar to those in the previous section, which highlight the imaginative and cognitive aspects of experience in relation to the physical environment of the cells.

Live performances are also important. Alex (p.int. 1) describes "very good story telling – he made it very real". Some visitors place emphasis on the 'playfulness' of encounters, and in particular the interaction between themselves, or other visitors, and the actors. Julie and Bill (int. 3) comment

" (J) Yeah, we met the gaoler, we did. He threatened the children, threatened the public. You know – any misbehaviour and we'll be in the cells! (laughter) A nice introduction, weren't it? (B) It was a nice touch, you know, for the visiting public...kind of gets you into the atmosphere". Karl (int. 14) who, in response to a question regarding his enjoyment of the actors, says comments the interaction between visitor and actor on, "Probably because I got a little bit of personal attention." Similarly, Imelda and Kate comment " (I) He (the gaoler) was good...(K) He called me, what was it? (I) Croppy Biddy! (laughter)". Meant as a semi-criticism, Marie's (int. 1) response also provides some evidence of this: "I thought he (the sea-captain) might have been a bit more chatty – he was chatty but only because we put our heads in and asked a question. Like, the fella downstairs was very good, we sort of bantered with him a bit..." Visitors become a part of the performance. There is a sense of playfulness here, a sense of participating in a game. Stephen (int. 23) would have liked this to have been more developed, describing his

interaction with actors at other sites – “...I’ve been to the plantation in America...and they live the part and that does make it more interesting because you cannot trip them up, no matter what you say they don’t...if its not in that era...” There is a clear indication here that although immersion is an important element of the experience – losing touch with the ‘real world’, as it were – the desire to be a participant in a game in which one’s role is to create a rupture in the seamlessness of ‘time travel’, suggested by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), is also evident. The emphasis on interaction is also evident in relation to other aspects of the experience. For Marie (int. 1) “the little questionnaire things, that was quite good, because you go in and you read all this and when you see it there...it sticks in your mind more...” Jane (int. 4) likes to “do a bit of both because the tour gives you more information but having different aspects like lifting up boxes that you can read yourself – you’re more likely to do it.” Very active forms of participation, which involve play and the testing of one’s knowledge, are given high priority by some visitors in recalling their experiences.

Some visitors link or differentiate their experience at WHG to those at other sites, particularly in terms of the style of the mediation in operation. Jenny (int. 12) describes a visit to Worcester: “...the Command Room...around the civil war and that’s very much the same – hands on, touchy-feely sorts of things. Its less formal.” Philip (int. 18) response is similar when he says “...its not a don’t touch thing, which I think is very effective...everything’s touchable, you know?” Jenny (int. 12) hoped that her experience would not be to “wander around a castle type thing with lots of things in cases, the archetypal thing...” She also felt that “It was a very hands on kind of museum...you can touch all...” Abbey (int. 14) responds similarly “Its different – its, like, museums, very dry, walk around reading stuff.” Responses about the idea of self-directed routes might also be included here. Again Philip (int. 18) says “Like I’ve gone to somewhere where you’ve had somebody going around with you all the time, and it doesn’t give you the freedom to explore yourself.” Barbara (int. 13) comments that “In Germany, usually, you have this museum guide who’s always behind you...so I like that you were always on your own up there – no one was “don’t do this...” Freedom to discover, to see and hear...” Patrick (int. 8) felt that “It’s nice to go around in your own time rather than being taken around by people.” Here, the informality and the self-direction of the experience are emphasised. The multi-sensory nature of the visit is described in relation to the gaol as a learning environment. Michelle (p.int. 4) describes her visit as follows: “Everything’s in different formats here, there’s some in tapes, there’s some in pictures and some things to read and, like, you’ve got the doors to open and that...you didn’t have to keep reading all these things...getting information in different ways.” Mary (int. 11) notes that “(M) well, that’s the difference – you don’t go in and read lots of stuff, you get...information that you tie together...(K) It’s more interesting then just going to the museum...(M) ...and its more entertaining isn’t it. You learn more through entertainment then through the study”. Mick (int. 12)

relates these ideas to concepts of education or learning: " You've had experience rather than instruction". The sense of the gaol as a start, or a part of, a wider desire to learn is may also be evident. Julie (int. 3) states "Its informative isn't it?...when you come and see it gives you a new picture. It opens your eyes..." and later, "...I didn't have an interest in what had gone before, but now I do because...it starts it off, doesn't it?" The cross-referencing of the gaol with other heritage sites also gives a sense of 'learning' as a central component in visitor motivation / benefit. Jenny (int. 12) describes her delight at making a connection with the interpretation of transportation to Australia at WHG and another 'hands on' experience at a mining heritage site in Ballarat. These experiences are stored by the visitor and re-emerge when stimulated by other visits or activities.

Some responses suggest that it is not only the way in which this story is mediated that is important in relation to a sense of authenticity of experience but that there is a significance in the broad focus of the interpretation on the 'ordinary' or back-stage of history. It is sometimes difficult to separate out the two, as indicated by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998). Jenny's (int. 12) experience, for example, centred on the idea of "real people talking...you can relate to it better...it's not just history as a pile of facts". This is again emphasised when she responds "it's nice that they could pick out individuals and follow their life through. It's the personal bits, because it's real." Here, it is both the general focus on the experiences of 'ordinary' people that is important, and the focus on the stories of 'real' individuals. Barbara (int. 13) articulates this also: "...you have separate stories to make it more personal, to have something to relate to...there's not a great distance, you get personal.... I take this particular person and then I know the life and somehow imagine what it was like..." Margery (int. 9) also gives a clear insight into this aspect of visitor responses: "And the voices, different voices, the personal experiences that were given...that brought it to life" and again "I suppose you feel like it's just ordinary people like you experiencing it, it felt really real, it really had happened". What is being referred to here be the use of audio and graphic means to communicate original accounts and dramatised or fictional performances pertaining to prisoners' lives. Again visitors feel the immediacy of this approach as though it were a more direct contact with the past, and in this way a more authentic one. Michelle (p.int. 4) discusses the focus of history at school compared to the stories told at WHG: "We did all Normans and whatever, it was so far away whereas this is more recent history, it's really interesting...". The implication here is that the focus of the narrative – the interpretation - itself is of importance. Marie perceives her experience at school to have been centred on history as a series of distanced facts to be memorised, rather than seeing what it was 'really like'. Michelle sees history taught at school as something located in a remote past, distant from her own life, and therefore less relevant to her. A sense of the pursuit of alternative histories than those perceived to be offered at an official level emerges. John (p.int. 3)

emphasises a gap in history learned in formal educational environments, a gap he perceives to have been filled through his experience at WHG: "...I'd say 95% of the English, not the British, are ignorant...the English haven't got a clue about it...we didn't learn Irish history at school, you learned about the British government beating the hell out of the Indians or something like that – doing this and then giving it back years later and everyone dying for nothing". Derek (int. 21) also describes his experience in this way "...Things we don't normally hear of. Things that you read in the paper, it only skims the surface, until you actually talk to someone whose been there...you actually find out how it was put together, and all that. So when you come to a place like this you actually get the full story. Whereas you read a book and it just tells you what they want you to know." Later, he expresses this again when he says "You learn nothing at school...They only want to tell you what they want to tell you...whereas if you actually go and see history, it then steps into your mind". Francis (int. 24) comments that "There are different sorts of history, you know. There's the history that you're taught at school...what the establishment wanted me to know. And then there's the history that I learned afterwards, like coming here and seeing places like this..." Perhaps this interest in the 'ordinary, or in 'hidden histories', as discussed by Samuel (1994) and Urry (1996) in relation to history is the desire to see the 'back-stage' of life more generally in destination cultures, as discussed by MacCannell (1976). During the course of her description of her response to WHG, Cathy revealed her feeling that the organised tourist trail in Hong Kong was a sham which hid the 'truth' about that culture. In her response to a question that asked about this in the context of the narrative at WHG, she says "Everyone's done something wrong. All they was doing was fighting for the land, or teaching, or the priests or whatever. At that time, its not wrong. All over they're all fighting for land – they're all fighting for land or religion wherever you go. You can't hide it." There is evidence here that perhaps echoes both MacCannell's (1976) analysis of the frustrated search of the tourist for authenticity and Urry's emphasis on departure (1990). It could be construed that this tourist at least is looking for an authenticity that has been imagined prior to their visit. They are perhaps looking for the 'sign' of the culture that they are visiting, and for some, an element of this pre-conceived image is that of a pre-modern culture, with an emphasis on apparent poverty or frugality. The essential element here is that the experience of destination cultures should be different to their own experiences in everyday life. When met by a front-stage, which resembles their own modernity, they are frustrated by it. Although obviously understood and enjoyed as a staged authenticity, the narrative at WHG is perceived partially as a back-stage experience – an honest glimpse of the true / full history of Ireland. In this sense, in seeking out the backstage of others lives, visitors perceive themselves to be gaining knowledge denied to them in other contexts.

For Ruth (int. 4), a teenager, it relates to an interest in the "gruesome bits...Because when my first history teacher – she showed us a concentration camp video – she said "I shouldn't really tell you this but I'm going to tell you anyway", and she told us all the blood and gore and we loved it." A similar interest is hinted at by Joyce (p.int. 3), a pensioner: "I'd like to have seen more of the – I know it sounds terrible, but – torture things more on display, they had a few but...I'd like to have seen more that went on, the way they were treated..." Julie (int. 4) likened her experience in part in a positive way to another attraction in London, the London Dungeon, which might be regarded as an extreme response to 'darker' histories. Barbara (int. 13) thought the promotional material for the gaol promised a similar type of experience but gave something better, more restrained – "...at first, I was a little – it says the story of exile and...I think it sounds a little, you know, American, its so blown up...like a theatre, something more like a horror trip." This is clearly related to Samuel's (1994) discussion of the contemporary interest in the darker, morbid side of history-from-below, as discussed in Chapter 2. An oppositional reading to this is demonstrated by the responses of Phil (int. 5). She describes her experiences at WHG and other sites that she feels are similar to it as "eerie...I just go to one or two and I don't like them, don't like the atmosphere at all". She later describes an experience in a local workhouse in similar terms, joking that "I think I must have been here before, and I was locked up in a cell!" She describes how, for her, "...it's too real, the poverty and all that" and later "some of the scenes are very real...I don't like any of the places, I've been to Cork Gaol, and I felt the same thing about them." In essence she feels that "it's too far removed from today's world". She contrasts her experience at WHG with one that she had that morning at Greenan Museums and Maze saying "...there's a farm and kind of an old place...the farmhouse museum, and a household compartment...it was all the old things people used to use, and like some of them you would remember from your grandfather, dressers and things like that. That's far enough to go back for me!" What does response articulate? They could be interpreted in relation to concepts of simulated and artefactual authenticities – both the story and the 'scenes' are too real (simulated authenticity), while the predominantly artefact based display at the farmhouse museum throws up pleasant memories. For Phil, the objects in the farmhouse museum do not 'speak' of hard labour, but of happier days, whereas the gaol only offers stories of human suffering and hardship. However, the experience of the principal artefacts at WHG, Cork Gaol and Dunamase Workhouse – the buildings themselves – must also be of great importance, given that the level of interpretive media used at Cork and Dunamase is far less than at WHG. Here, the interaction between the imagination, one's physical experience of the building and images and ideas collected from other sources in the mind of the visitor must be important. Another factor in this response is in the difference between a recent past that is within her memory, and one that is more distant. Although distance is referred to as time, it could also be

considered here, perhaps, in relation to life experiences. The experience at the farmhouse museum is not just pleasant but is more meaningful in terms of the visitor's own life.

So visitors to the gaol assessed their experiences of exhibitionary authenticities in relation to an increased level of imaginative, cognitive, emotional, physical and social interaction. This was because of their immersion in both the auratic authenticity of the building and the simulated authenticity of the display. This is compounded by the focus on lived experience. This focus on the humanity or 'ordinariness' of prisoners will be discussed again later in relation to a process of identification that occurs between visitors and those being represented at the gaol. In the context of this aspect of the discussion, these exhibitionary authenticities are partially conceived by visitors to be fulfilling in educational terms. This is frequently spoken about in contrast to their experiences in more formal environments like traditional museums and educational systems. This is rather a different sort of educational worth than that discussed in relation to the expression of middle-class habitus. Visitors also cross-referenced their experiences at the gaol with other similar types of displays, indicating that this is not a unique response to WHG. Rather, this is related to the heavily contextualised representational strategies of heritage attractions and the new breed of museums as well as the focus of their interpretations of 'history-from-below' (Samuel, 1994). What we are seeing in operation here is the appeal of the 'experiential' form of display (Maton-Howarth, 1989), as discussed in Chapter 2. These responses do not seem to me to be built on the concept of heritage visiting as a constructive use of leisure time, but rather on the wider value and indeed pleasure of learning. This seems to give a meaning to learning in this context as an oppositional form of education than that received through other educational experiences.

It is also possible to suggest a second strand of interpretation here with regard to the meanings invested by visitors in the exhibitionary authenticities of WHG. As described above, the focus on social and physical interaction was a feature of these responses. This interaction occurred between visitors themselves, between visitors and actors and between visitors and the building. This is also attested to by some of the behaviours observed as behavioural maps as they were being produced. For example, this included playing at locking fellow visitors into cells and so on. This was in addition to the importance given to interactive features of the display in the questionnaire survey. As discussed in Chapter 2, this focus on creative, playful and participative acts is a feature of the concept of the authenticity of self formulated by Wang (1999, 2000) in relation to existential authenticity and Selwyn (1996) in relation to 'hot' authenticity. If we accept Wang's assertion that such acts are a bid to counteract experiences in the mainstream of people's lives in late modernity, then both educational and other experiences of exhibitionary authenticity at WHG may be fulfilling visitors search for authenticity, rather than frustrating it

(MacCannell 1976). This refers to Wang's concept that tourists can experience an authenticity of self through toured objects whether they are judged to be objectively authentic or not.

### **Past and Present**

An important element to consider in relation to visitor responses is the possible ways in which the relationships between past and present are conceived. Clearly, the relationship between past and present was an issue in the encoding of the gaol. This was in terms of the historiographical shift from nationalist visions of the past to accommodate contemporary concerns regarding concepts of Irishness. This was in evidence in the organisation of the 1798 display, as discussed above. Relationships between past and present were also referred to this strand of responses. Michael (int 5) draws parallels between conflicts in the past and in the present "The harshness and the cruelty of the system, what people done to other people. It's still going on there in Yugoslavia..." Bill (int 3) extends this to other historical situations "I found out about this potato famine...this is the reason I think the Irish are quite aggrieved about it, at the time the potato crops failed they were shifting things like grain to England...and I think about the second world war and I think about why people did things at the time..." Conversations about their experiences at WHG clearly stimulate visitors to think about the idea of conflict in both historical and contemporary circumstances. Perhaps because of the predominance of Northern Irish and English visitors interviewed, or because interviews took place between July and August during a year when there were particular difficulties associated with the marching season, the current situation in Northern Ireland is spoken about frequently. Some responses indicate that the section of the narrative that deals with the 1798 rebellion acts as an important reference point in visitor engagement with issues in Northern Ireland, and in particular it seems to be regarded as a challenge to pre-conceived ideas about them. John (2) (int. 4) says "I didn't know anything about the 1798 rebellion. That was quite fascinating, and also the fact that it wasn't religious at that time, whereas now we just get Catholic and Protestant, I thought that was quite impressive." Similarly, John (1) and Joyce (p.int. 3) respond "(Joh) I think the most important thing I found is that the English, they didn't know, the average Englishmen didn't know that the Irish had such a history, and now, getting into politics, this politics that's going on at the moment, you know, with Orangemen and the southern Irish – Sinn Fein or whatever they call themselves – existed years ago, you know, it's going back so many years, it literally is, you know. I don't think we realise that, in England we see this as a...(Joy)...a modern thing...(Joh)...a modern religious thing, you know – the Catholics and the Protestants, they don't like each other, something like that..." (John/Joyce, p.int. 3) Jack (p.int. 2), from Northern Ireland, is also interested in how understanding events in the past might impact on his experience of the present. He wonders whether "...what they were doing was possibly right, you know? I think with foresight...possibly if they'd have known what was going to happen they would have



planned it differently and I think things could have turned out a lot better, you know? I think that I didn't like that after that event...well, Presbyterians and Catholics agreed to have a common cause at that time, and then after that it seemed to fragment with the result that the two sections ...the time was right... things should have moved and it could have turned out better..." Perhaps it is the understanding, or review, of conflicts represented at WHG, or the idea of history more generally that stimulates John (1) (p.int. 3) to reminisce "...but I think people our age – I went through the war and if you knew what happened there after we...I mean I'm not swinging a lamp but we struggled through the swamps and everything, I caught malaria and that...I was with the Gurkas...but it made it all *not* worthwhile then. Do you understand what I'm saying? We did all that and there were people in the Japanese prisoner of war camps...and people died, thousands died and now everybody's shaking hands with everybody else, we buy Japanese televisions and that – It doesn't make it worthwhile in the end, war." Having related the idea of examining conflict historically to his own experience of historical events he continues his train of thought by returning to the narrative at WHG and marrying it with ideas about the current situation in Northern Ireland. "So everything you see in this gaol, 1798 rebels and that, it doesn't really matter, all this politics and government, it doesn't matter...Like Tony Blair...Sinn Féin...David Trimble...when you consider so many people die and they could be kissing each other later." The clear relationships drawn between historical and contemporary events by these visitors may suggest that for them, the past is something that is ever present, and never really closed. Through its exploration, opportunities are established for both personal reminiscence, an affirmation of one's own historical experience, and reflection on both broad and specific factors – in this instance, the consideration of the concept of war, and the causes for the development of conflict in Northern Ireland.

Julie (int. 3) says "...I'm not so keen on history...it's more people that I'm interested in...I'm all for now really...don't drag nasty things back up...hold it in your mind but don't hold any grudges about these things and build." For this visitor, history can be a dangerous thing – a wound that can be re-opened and if allowed to fester will be destructive rather than constructive. For some visitors, looking to the past seems to act as an affirmation of the present. A number of responses state this baldly, as a direct reaction to the focus on deprivation, poverty, hunger and harshness of treatment in the narrative. Patrick (int. 8) simply states "I would not have liked to live in those days, I like reading about it, but I would not have liked to live in those days." Jack (p.int. 2) also frames his response in this way "If people could see what their lives were before...I certainly would not have liked to live then, no way, no way..." Clearly, there is very little room in these kinds of responses for the simplistic nostalgic impulse spoken about in critiques of the heritage industry's representation of the past. However, Patrick's response here co-exists with his strong cultural ties to Ireland, and the role that history plays in his sense of belonging to its

imaginative community as will be discussed below. The co-existence of impulses at the base of both nostalgic and other responses to the past must compound the complexity of visitor readings of WHG.

These responses to the gaol indicate that the past is not seen to be a separate, complete entity as suggested by the critiques of heritage visiting discussed in Chapter 2. Rather, they indicate the strong connections that visitors make between historical and present day events. Some of these responses can be interpreted in a similar way to the interest in the educational potential of the visit, discussed previously in relation to the use of simulated authenticity. This time, this potential is indicated by the reflection that occurs during the course of the visit. This corresponds with Maton-Howarth's (1989) concept of transferable knowledge, discussed in Chapter 2. This is where the presentation of historical or other knowledge enables visitors to apply similar concepts to their experiences and situations. I am suggesting that the focus on conflict in 1798 here results in visitors contemplating the wider significance of conflict in other historical, personal and contemporary situations.

### **Cultural Identities**

One could continue to explore responses that elucidate the various meanings produced by visitors to the gaol in a number of ways. A strand of meaning that has emerged in the discussion so far might be understood to relate to a process of identification and its obverse, a process of differentiation, between visitors and the object of their gaze. For the purposes of this discussion, varying strands of this process of identification will be separated out. However, lines of demarcation are fluid here and all may well be evident in a single response. It is also possible to suggest that various strands are so intermingled that they are dependent on one another.

The first strand of visitor response in terms of identifying processes might be based on a kind of universal perception of humanity. By this, I mean that visitors identify with elements of the text that promote a common vision of human existence. This perhaps draws on an emotional identification, particularly with those groups seen to be more vulnerable than others. These might include children, the sick, the elderly, the poor and so on. Furthermore, this might be understood to be an explicit element of the approach taken to the organisation of the 'text' of WHG, as described in Chapter 7, where there was a clear desire to relate to visitors in a way that would emphasise the humanity of prisoners. This was an aspect of the encoding of the gaol from the earliest point in this process when its producers laid down the key to interpretive focus. This influenced both the elements of the narrative that received particular emphasis and the ways in which they were communicated, as indicated above.

Julie and Bill (int. 3) discuss the plight of children in what they perceive to be an unjust system: "(B) We both commented on the harshness of the punishment for stealing gooseberries or...(J) Yeah, specially with the children. There was one or two young children who were...extremely young for, you know, small trivial things. I mean, what? Abusing timber or something." For Jack and Maura (p.int. 2) this process is particularly clear, in that they draw in their own child, Connell, into their response: "(M) I would think...the way children were put in the gaol, and adults and stuff like that, for nothing...(J) I mean children were put in gaol from 7 or 8 upwards, when you look at your own family..." The concepts of crime and punishment are also read in relation to socio-economic conditions. In a continuation of the above response, Julie (int. 3) states "Taking branches off trees, you know, because of the poverty and they'd got nothing to burn so they'd just taken the branches off. Tiny trivial things yet such harsh treatment." Margery (int. 9) also seems to draw on a similar identification: "...I suppose just to say how awful it was, how people were brought in for very small crimes, because of the desperate situation they were in...People were very harshly treated for very minor offences. Because of the situation they were in, children as well...also sent to the colonies as well for very small crimes. The harshness of it." Again Julie's response (int. 3) may provide us with another aspect of this strand: "To me the transportation to these places, you know and nobody knew what they were going to, it was all strange and they were leaving behind everything they knew...and they're all getting taken away...and some were faring a lot better than others..." Jack (p.int. 2) also explores this: "I found it very hard to understand how people could be locked up in a place like this for so long. It was so wrong. I would say their mind must have gone after a while in a lot of cases. At least with some of them with transportation, at the end of that journey there was a bit of life...so that would definitely terrify me, being locked up in a cell like that..." Interestingly, both of these responses clearly focus on finding positive outcomes – 'happy endings' – as well as critiquing perceived social injustices. We might suggest that in these readings punishment is read as an unjust treatment of an innocent people suffering social and economic deprivation, the unjust infliction of suffering, criminal or not. In relation to punishment in the form of transportation, a concurrent reading looks for some redemption within that framework – the ending of one life but the beginning of another. These responses are clearly producing the preferred reading of the gaol, as outlined in Chapter 7. This occurs specifically in terms of the focus on the humanity of prisoners, by emphasising common human experiences, relationships and emotions. Also an intentional aspect of the 'encoding' of the gaol was the change in focus from negative to positive as the visitor moves through the narrative, and the replication of a sense of change, success or freedom through the management of lighting and sound. As discussed previously, this occurs in the transition from the ship to the third floor and again in the later aspects of the narrative where the successes of some transportees are addressed.

A second strand in this possible process of identification emerges when we consider responses that focus on the inmates of the gaol, or those transported to Australia, as 'ordinary people'. Clearly, the history of building as a gaol necessitates a focus on non-elite groups. However, it is particular concentration within the text on prisoners' involvement with crime as a result of socio-economic circumstance and on the individualisation of prisoners by focusing on specific life-stories that produces this group of readings. This relates closely to the focus on the humanity of prisoners identified above. As established in Chapter 7, organisers sought to focus on this element of the county's history, because of they perceived it to be absent in other heritage attractions which focused on the history of elite groups. This had both an economic and historiographical meaning for them. Some visitors referred to this reading in relation to the contrasting of their experience at WHG with experiences elsewhere. Michelle and Gary (p.int. 4) speak of "(M)...a lot of heritage sites and things where it's about how people actually lived. Country houses and things I don't really like but heritage centres tend to give a better picture about what it was like...(G) ...I suppose its about how we would have been living and we can compare our lives to theirs". Bill (int. 3) responds "As I got older, I'm more and more angry at injustices. I'm what you might call an anti-royalist...a lot of injustices have been done and a lot of wars have been fought, they've been of no benefit to what you might call the common person, the cannon fodder. I don't like going around stately homes, because I think about the poor girl who had to get up at three o'clock in the morning to make sure everything was OK for some rich guy and that's what they are about." Bill (int. 3) goes on to further articulate this when he says "I mean, we're from an area in England where we were just as – well, maybe not to the same extent - oppressed, but its an area that was ruled by the government and we were poor people, our ancestors were poor, so we wouldn't have been treated that much better than the people in this gaol. So there's a common bond there..." The bond spoken about by Bill here is one of a perception of having had the experience of being an oppressed people. The implication here, it would seem, is that there is a clear identification, at least historically speaking, with one half of a 'binary opposition' – rich/poor, ordinary/special, workers/employers, governed/governors, us/them, our history/their history. As discussed in Chapter 7, this is an important facet of the representational strategies used at the gaol, which I have suggested is intended to serve the function of dramatising the narrative sufficiently to create a strong impression of the visitor. This will be discussed again later.

Perhaps one of the strongest expressions of this sense of rooting oneself in a cultural group, although this time in relation to a specific locality, is through Bill's later reference to a prized personal possession: "(B)...I've got a piece of history on my wall at home, which says that in seventeen thirty five, I think it is, that an ancestor called William Hold (?) which is my name, and

he was a carpenter...And it's all written with the seals and everything...(B) I don't know if its worth anything of value in monetary terms, but it's of great value to me. Specially with it being the same name aswell.... you know where you are and where you've come from." Here, the expression of a sense of belonging is almost as tangible as the material form with which it is associated. Cathy (int. 17) relates the experience at WHG to her experience of the past through television "Yeah, even if you watch a film on television, and its about prostitutes in old London and everything. Its – I wonder did my family come from the prostitutes side or did they land or did they...and that's what's in the back of your mind..." Later she continues by saying "Its just family isn't it? Just wanting to know...I think that's how you get when you get older. You come with a school outing or things like that, but I don't think it doesn't sink in as much until older family passes away and then all that goes. And you've only got a certain chance really to find out about yourself." Here, locating herself in an imaginative way in historical narratives pertaining to the ordinary, Cathy is seeking ways of performing her identity. Trevor's (int. 2) response may indicate an element that underlies many responses within this strand of visitor readings. He says, "Its what's constituted our history isn't it? It's things you know have been there for hundreds of years and that there were people there just like you – the only difference was they were dressed in different clothes and they have different things to experience, but they were people like us and all that makes you what you are today". Trevor's description perhaps collapses any real distinction between past and present through an identification with the 'the people'. Taking these responses as a group. It might be possible to suggest that what is being articulated is the locating of a sense of continuity and an authenticity of self in the identification with a construct of 'the people', but also that their story is the 'real' story – that there is an authenticity to be found in the underbelly of official history. This will be addressed in more depth later in the discussion.

Another strand of these processes of identification might also be in evidence amongst visitor responses, one that pertains to an imagined community of the nation. Here, as with the previous strand, it may be possible to detect the rooting of a collective identity in terms of another set of 'binary oppositions'. These are based on the division between oppressor / oppressed, coloniser / colonised, and most particularly English / Irish. This was also discussed in relation to the encoding of the gaol itself in Chapter 7 and the discourses that were understood to surround Irish identity, heritage and tourism in Chapter 6. It was suggested that dual meanings were involved in the 'encoding' of the gaol. One sought to move away from a nationalist interpretation of the 1798 rebellion, which saw it as one of several highpoints in the de-colonisation of Ireland, towards a less insular and more European interpretation of its importance. It was argued in Chapter 6 that this was a part of the re-interpretation of 1798 within the organisation of the commemoration that was more conducive to encouraging the success of the peace process in

Northern Ireland and as a result of the use of European funding. A second aspect of the 'encoding' process that relates to the discourse of cultural identity was the way in which the text seeks to create links between the diasporic imagination and the interpretation of the 'Transportation' theme. As mentioned above, aspects of this focus on the endurance of those transported, their successes and bravery and popular figures. This was clearly as a result of the desire to appeal to this segment of the market, as discussed in Chapter 7. As suggested in the last chapter, when these aspects of the story intersect with the use of tropes associated with the older discourses of Irish identity, particularly those associated with the binary opposition of England/Ireland and coloniser/colonised, a reading could be made that incorporates these into the preferred narrative. It must also be stated here that this set of visitor responses is clearly related to the specific profile of participants, particularly those visitors that were British or of Irish descent living in Britain. Patrick (int. 8) born in Ireland but living in England since late childhood, answers a number of questions in a way that suggests the existence of this type of reading. "Well, just from the history side of it...My parents, especially my father, spoke a lot about the Black and Tans, and about...the 1916 rising. So I've always been very interested in Irish history." Again, the gaol does not seek to interpret these elements of Irish history, but as suggested in the preceding chapter, the mention of the gaol's final use during the civil war and the existence of graffiti from this period become inadvertently connected to those aspects of the gaol's narrative that are dealt with in detail. It seems clear that this is the reading being made by this visitor. And in relation to prior knowledge, and perhaps expectation: "But I knew roughly what happened about people being sent to Van Daemon's Land, doing very little wrong. You know, that's the way it was in those days." This might suggest that the visitor's reading of the text here is facilitated by pre-formed expectations, formed by one's cultural ties, amongst other factors. Patrick illustrates his reading of the criminality of all convicts at in relation to his own cultural orientation: "It's the history side of it that grabs me. You can feel then what they went through, fighting for Ireland...although some of them did commit murder, in their eyes they thought they were doing the right thing, fighting for their country", and in relation to other heritage sites: "It's like going to the prisons in America, their way is completely different. OK, a prison is still a prison, wherever you go, but I suppose here, it's more the political side of it, over there its more... murderer or rob banks or whatever". For Patrick, the crimes committed by heroes striving for Irish independence were more just, and more special, than those committed in other locations for other reasons. For this visitor, is a commemoration of ordinary people made special, and a commemoration of his own place in history. Jim (int. 11), an elderly emigrant, and his Welsh born daughter Mary, also give us some sense of the importance of these kind of cultural ties: "(J) It would have been a lot of value to...people who didn't understand the history of Ireland. Excellent – people would never understand that coming from other countries...for stealing a few potatoes...(M) Yeah, seven years – and it was the English that inflicted these

things, wasn't it...the history of Ireland, the persecution of the people." For Frank (int. 16) from Belfast, the past is a palpable part of the present. On being asked why a visit to the gaol might appeal to him, he replies "Well it's probably because of where we're from. For us, it's the history of Ireland, and for us, we're still living the history of Ireland in the North. We remember the hunger strike, (muffled), and the amount of people that suffered in here, its a little way of....It re-enforced what we've read and what we've been taught and ...what we know". It is easy to see here how the processes of reproduction central to the maintenance of collective memory, dealt with in Chapter 3 and 6, occur in practice. Because of the complexity of the preferred reading of the text itself, it is difficult to interpret these patterns of response as being preferred or oppositional. For this reason, they will be referred to as negotiated readings which occur as a result of visitors' cultural identities and their knowledge of the discourses that surround them. Another point must be made in relation to them however. For Patrick, as with Bill, his reading may relate to a search for a sense of origin, of belonging. In relation to his interest in history generally, Patrick says, "Well I suppose it started with my father. I wanted to know what kind of country he went through. I mean when you see what its like now, and what it must have been like for them..." Like Bill's description of a personal possession, Patrick draws on memories of his father as a basis for his interest in a particular set of histories. It might be suggested that through processes of identification, shot through with personalisation of various kinds, readings that both draw on and reinforce collective identities are produced.

Also apparent is a second set of negotiated readings this time built on the tensions between different strands of cultural identity in which visitors position themselves. These occur when the preferred and negotiated readings documented come into conflict. Margaret (int. 4) may be articulating this when she says, "I thought it was very well done. I feel quite embarrassed to be English...we don't get taught Irish history in schools, so most of us have got no idea at all...I find that quite hard to deal with..." This might also partly tally with our previous discussion of John's response regarding his formal educational experiences. Francis (int. 24) also comments on this when he says, "I didn't know much about the history of Ireland. And then the troubles as they call them. And it was quite enlightening, a little bit ashamed really about what went on in English hands..." Gary (p.int. 2) was "stunned" saying, "I didn't know we'd been do vicious. It was horrible..." and later "I'm amazed. I can see why some people hate us. It's understandable when you see this." This response runs parallel with his identification with 'the people', as discussed earlier, and also with his partner Michelle's lack of interest in visiting country houses, a heritage she sees to be distant from her own, documented above.

One interview in particular suggests that an alternative set of readings to those that seem to identify with the subject may also exist. Because these run contrary to both the preferred and

the negotiated readings as described above, these will be referred to as oppositional to the text as it is encoded. In contrast to many of the responses that reel in horror at the conditions for convicts on board transportation ships, Roger and Trevor (int. 2) assert "(R) But you would have got fatalities on all those anyway, didn't you? I mean...the ship that had a mutiny on...had all those deaths on his ship, which wasn't a gaol ship or anything like that...so it was endemic wasn't it? (T) Well, I was surprised at how few people died, even the convicts, at how few people died relatively...that wasn't a lot when you consider...the English navy, you got more fatalities on board fighting ships through scurvy, then you did on those convict ships which are supposed to be a hardship..." In terms of the harshness of punishments, Trevor (int. 2) related a conversation he had with the actor performing the part of the gaoler "And I said to the gaoler when I was coming out, "You know those harsh punishments that were inflicted...But the do-gooders came in and said you can't have a hundred and twenty people in a room, you've got to give them individual cells and all the rest of it. We've got the same do-gooders today who don't recognise that harsh punishment is the only deterrent to criminal activity." Roger later adds "'But nevertheless, we mustn't get led to the fact that they were all only stealing a loaf of bread in order to feed their family. Often they were. But I often think, as with the east-enders, where we know there was a criminal content, and that probably comes endemic right back from Dickens' day when we read about child gangs stealing silk handkerchiefs and what have you to survive, and it becomes a way of life...It's OK once you're not thieving off your own...But you can get this going through generations in areas." It may be possible to suggest that in these responses there is a marked distancing from the text, which expresses itself through comments on criminality and punishment in both past and present situations. Trevor draws parallels between gaol reform in the nineteenth century and conditions for prisoners currently, while Roger draws a distinction between crime as survival ('good' crime)— as expressed in the text of - and crime as a way of life ('bad' crime) about which we must not be duped. Furthermore, this latter form of criminality can be an inherited trait, almost a racial characteristic. Here we might interpret this as an objectification, an othering, of a contemporary criminal class.

This group also responds strongly to the othering of Englishness, a part of an unintended binary opposition in the text. I have asserted that this is in part adopted by the text as a narrative device essential to its dramatic content. The experience at stimulates both Trevor and Roger to be sensitive to criticisms of the former British Empire. In response to the interviewer's question about the balance of the narrative, Trevor (int. 2) says "'But we have the unfortunate experience...that when we go to most areas in the world the English...have been there and we're always the villains of the piece, we're never the good guys...I would also say in defence that there were also merits in the fact that generally speaking, the English language...the modern parliament was...the basis of law...many fantastic and modern inventions were given to



the world..." In other words, Trevor defends the rationalising, progressive influence of the British Empire on her dominions. Trevor goes on to place these ideas in the hands of post-colonial nations, saying "I've seen quotations from speakers of Parliament...that since the British left we have gone down hill".... in exchange for, if you like, what some would consider rough justice, we have given a lot to the world aswell." It seems reasonable to suggest that, at the very least, the text of stimulates pre-existing discourses surrounding the relationships between coloniser and colonised. These are activated and brought to bear on the text of WHG by the visitor according to their own cultural identities. These discourses also seem to be at the base of connections made between the text of WHG and the present conflict in Northern Ireland. Trevor, again in an indirect response to an interview question about balance in the narrative, says "But I'm also proud to be British, although I say English because of the reaction I'm feeling to these people...who are saying effectively, "we are not strong or united enough as the kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, we've all got to be called our own nationality". I don't happen to agree with that, but if the Scots, Irish or Welsh want to do that, I'm happy to go along with it...we've got our greatest strength and power, long before we became the United Kingdom...I have no wish to see England retain Northern Ireland only in so far as if one million two thousand people in Northern Ireland say we want to stay British...it was the same with the Falklands." The 'empire' is not at fault in any conflict – rather they are the peacemakers. Although an indirect response, Trevor here seems to be marrying pre-formed ideas about nationhood and current conflicts, and the narrative he has experienced at WHG, to create a reading that confirms his own identity as being 'other' to those within the text at WHG.

Additional data regarding contexts of understanding was also produced during the course of interviews. These responses commented on the construction of Irish identity predominant in tourist texts, as documented in Chapter 6, to which visitors refer. This runs alongside the varying responses to WHG that have already been documented above. What is seen here is the opposite type of response to the concept of Irishness with which I have been concerned so far. Rather than seeing this as an active process of emotional identification or differentiation, this strand of response is closer to Urry's concept of a more distanced romantic gaze. John and Joyce (p.int. 3) state how "(Joy) We find the Irish very laid back and everyone's got time for you. (J) You don't get that in London... people have time for you...and they're full of knowledge..." These qualities are also described ascribed to Ireland and Irish people by Barbara (int. 13), particularly in relation to a previous visit – "...it was somewhat more easygoing then to go to Great Britain. I don't know, I like the Irish, its not as hurried..." She goes on to say however that "it has become very modern, I don't know. At the beginning I felt it was very relaxed...I'm not saying rural, but you know, a different kind of gathering. But now it really has changed". The impact of different sources of 'knowledge' regarding Ireland, or the Wicklow specifically, are also

used by visitors in describing their experiences. Karl and Abbey (int. 14) cite two sources of their pre-formed expectations. "(K) My expectations of the people were and still are that the Irish are very friendly on the whole and that the Irish like to enjoy themselves... we've got the occasional Irish pub in Sydney as well, not the same, but I think the atmosphere is not too dissimilar." They also mention the television programme discussed in Chapter 6, *Ballykissangel* - "(K) The only thing I would have said I had a feel for was some of the TV programmes... when we were on our way driving here, we were saying that the roads - well, we find them quite narrow then what we're used to, but we'd expect that from programmes like *Ballykissangel*." This source of ideas about Ireland is also mentioned in Jenny and Mick's (int. 12) response, this time in relation to the motivation to come to Ireland - "(J) Rebecca, last week, said why don't we go to Ireland and see where they film *Ballykissangel*... (M) ...last night was the cream on the top, because we went to Fitzgerald's Bar and we all sampled the Guinness! (J) It sounds a bit naff but you know..." An insight can also be gained here in the way in which these sources of knowledge are consumed - "(M)...on the television you only see what they want you to see....we recognised the shops, the different parts of the programme. And we enjoyed the fact that we saw that, that's another hands-on personal experience". There may be evidence here of the simulation becoming more real than the real - Jenny and Mick do not visit Avoca, the village where this TV programme is filmed, they visit *THE Ballykissangel* itself - the 'real thing' as the set of the programme. At the same time, they do this with the full knowledge that what they are looking at on television and visiting on holidays is a constructed entity. They are willing to engage in the game but are anxious to let the researcher know that this might be "naff" and that they know this is not the 'real Ireland'. So what we see here, alongside of the responses described above, is an image of Ireland as an 'other' to modernity of guest cultures, as discussed in Chapter 6, but also one which some visitors understand to be inauthentic or staged.

In summary then, the discourses of national identity, particularly those implicated in representing the relationship between England and Ireland, are clearly evident in both the encoding and decoding processes at the gaol. The readings discussed in this strand have been based on a process of identification or differentiation that occurs between visitors and those represented by the text; and on the tourist gaze as it occurs in Ireland. As discussed in Chapter 2, it would seem that Urry's (1990) concept of the 'tourist gaze' and his reference to the desires of the post-tourist applies here. The tourist gaze is characterised by a distanced engagement with toured cultures. This was also discussed in relation to Slater's (1993) analysis of 'outsider' accounts of the county in the last century, as described in Chapter 6. Furthermore, it can be suggested that the images involved in the touristic promotion of Ireland is constructed according to a symbolic authenticity - that is, one which constructs Ireland as an authentic 'other' to the modernised home cultures of tourists. This authenticity, as discussed in Chapter 2, involves the projection of

needs, produced in tourists' home cultures, onto the toured object (see Wang 1999, 2000). These images have been constructed over a long period of time. It has also been suggested that this construction can be related to the impact that the processes of modernity had on the representation of Ireland in England as early as the nineteenth century, as referred to in Chapter 6. Furthermore, Urry's discussion of the post-tourist's knowledge of the inauthenticity of such images is also in evidence in visitor responses to the wider area in which the gaol is situated, as indicated above in relation to Ballykissangel. However, this does not explain the emotional identification, or differentiation, that occurs in other groups of responses to have been discussed here. These responses do not have the distanced quality associated with the tourist gaze. I have already commented on how these responses demonstrate the impact of the discourses of cultural identity on both the encoding and decoding of WHG. This gives a clear picture of the way in which such discourses are reproduced, as well as an indication of the part such texts can play in questioning dominant discourses. But these responses express a deeper set of needs underlying the engagement with the past at heritage sites like WHG. These responses, particularly those that identify with the constructs of the imagined communities of the common people and the Irish nation, relate to the history represented at the gaol as sets of collective memories. This corresponds with some of the ideas that I have included in the 'authenticity of self' thesis as laid out in Chapter 3. I argued that late modern subjects experience both a sense of loss in modernity and greater reflexivity to deal with this loss (Giddens, 1991, Hall, 1992). The dissolution of traditional structures results in a sense of loss in subjects, particularly in relation to identity. As Giddens, Hall and Moores have noted, these subjects therefore need to construct narratives of the self. Individual subjects choose subject positions within discourses of identity, and are therefore rooting themselves by identifying with particular cultural groups. As discussed previously, I have suggested that late modern subjects also experience a loss of a generational connection (Lasch, 1979), or as Urry and Lash (1994) have suggested, a glacial sense of time. I have suggested that in positioning themselves in relation to particular imagined communities and their collective memories, late modern subjects are counteracting this sense of imbalance in a reflexive way. Heritage centres, as representations of such collective memories, may be used in this way. This corresponds with Wang's (1999, 2000) and Selwyn's (1996) assertion that visitors experience an authenticity of self – an existential or hot authenticity – through toured objects. Furthermore, Selwyn has argued that 'warm' sites, like the gaol, are particularly associated with processes of identification between visitors and others. I am arguing here that visitors to WHG are engaged in these processes. This both replaces and is combined with personal knowledge to enable the visitor to imagine his or her own generational biographies. Visitors to WHG are rooting themselves in the present by locating a vision of themselves in the past.

### 8.3 Summary

This chapter analysed the data produced in investigating the consumption of the gaol. The relationships between the text as it is produced and consumed and the impact of the discourses pertinent to both were revealed, as were the connections between the theoretical concepts dealt with in section 1 and the context specific data produced at WHG. This discussion demonstrated how visitor responses showed a concern with the class and tourism based issues surrounding the visit, the exhibitionary authenticities encountered there, the relationship between past and present and a process of identification or differentiation between visitors and those being represented. I have asserted that visitors make preferred negotiated and oppositional readings of the text. These occur within the parameters of the text and the discourses of cultural identity that are at the base of both encoding and decoding processes. Finally, these responses can be located within the theoretical frameworks discussed in section 1. The importance of heritage visits within tourism rather than local contexts were considered. This, it was suggested, results both from the very visible presence of the tourism industry in the development of heritage attractions and the possibility that local people engage with their heritage in other ways. Elements of the 'Habitus' thesis are clearly apparent here where visitors, largely drawn from higher socio-economic backgrounds, conceive of their visit as a constructive use of leisure time, display their knowledge of the codes of heritage visiting and sometimes express a preference for more distanced forms of representation. However, greater emphasis was placed on the heavily contextualised displays of the gaol by most participants. This was discussed in relation to concepts of auratic and simulated authenticity.

These authenticities were experienced in relation to an increased level of imaginative, cognitive, emotional, physical and social interaction. The focus on lived experience was also of importance here. These were all conceived by visitors to be fulfilling in educational terms, in contrast to their experiences in traditional museums and educational systems. This seems to give a meaning to learning in this context as an oppositional form of education than that received through other educational experiences. This departs from the placement of the educational worth of the visit in terms of middle-class habitus, and should not be seen as a unique response to WHG but also as a response to other entities where these representational strategies are used. In this sense, we are seeing a discourse of how the past is experienced in operation here. This cannot be limited to museal or exhibitionary experiences, but can be extended to the mechanisms through which the past is experienced in other contexts. Visitors to the gaol did not see the past as a separate, complete entity as suggested by the critiques of heritage. In contrast, they indicated the strong connections that visitors make between the present and the past in relation to particular themes or events. For example, the sections of the display that dealt with conflict stimulated responses concerning the wider significance of conflict in other historical, personal and contemporary

situations. The concept of transferable knowledge, where the presentation of historical or other knowledge enables visitors to apply similar concepts to their experiences and situations, is in evidence here.

Some responses demonstrated the relevance of the tourist gaze thesis. It can be suggested that the images involved in the touristic promotion of Ireland are constructed according to the idea of symbolic authenticity – that is, one that constructs Ireland as an authentic 'other' to the modern home cultures of tourists. These images have been constructed over a long period of time, displaying a distanced form of the gaze that has been pertinent in the relationship between tourists and Ireland as a tourist destination. As suggested in Chapter 6, these images continue to dominate touristic promotion. Tourists' knowledge of the inauthenticity of such images is also in evidence in relation to Ballykissangel, suggesting the relevance of Urry's reference to the post-tourist. The readings based on the identification or differentiation that occurs between visitors and those represented in the text were also discussed in relation to the discourses of Irish identity, and the relationship between this and English identity. I have argued that this suggests the relevance of other ways of thinking about the consumption of toured objects, like WHG. These responses did not have the distanced quality associated with the tourist gaze but point towards a different dynamic between heritage visitors and the object of their gaze. The responses that identified with the imagined communities encountered within the text relate to this history as sets of collective memories. I believe that this supports my assertion that late modern subjects, in experiencing a sense of loss of a generational consciousness of the self, construct narratives of the self by identifying with the collective memories represented in the media. Heritage centres, as representations of such collective memories, may be used in this way. Visitors to WHG create a generational autobiography by locating themselves in history. In this way, visitors experience an authenticity of self through engaging with the past. The findings of this study can therefore be linked to concepts regarding Wang's (1999, 2000) 'existential' and Selwyn's (1996) 'hot' authenticity. A further link was made with Selwyn's idea that the immersive displays associated with heritage attractions like this facilitate such a process of identification. It would appear that this is clearly the case at WHG. A related interpretation of the exhibitionary authenticities experienced by visitors at WHG was also made. This focused on social and physical interaction which occurred between visitors, actors, the display and the building. Creative, playful and participative acts were also a feature of the concept of the authenticity of self formulated by Wang and Selwyn. If such acts are a bid to counteract negative experiences in late modernity, then the experience of exhibitionary authenticity at WHG may also be fulfilling visitors concern with achieving such a sense of authenticity. Once again, the themes of identity and authenticity are intermingled in the decoding of the gaol.

## CONCLUSION

## Conclusion

This thesis has discussed the consumption of heritage centres in Ireland, focusing on Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a case study. It set out to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of the object of consumption? That is, how should we define the concepts of 'heritage' and 'heritage centres'?
- Because heritage is related to concepts of the past, why and how is the past consumed?
- If heritage centres are largely concerned with representation, what is the nature of their representation and how does this impact on their consumption?
- What is the relationship between the production and consumption of such representations?
- What are the implications of this for our relationship with the past?

Section 1 sought to provide a review of the literature that surrounds the issues pertinent to the core interest of this thesis. This review began by defining heritage centres as an object of study. It then moved on to discussing diverse approaches to understanding their consumption. The study of heritage is multi-disciplinary, a reflection of the hybrid status of heritage centres themselves. They are, as it was suggested, an inter-discursive form associated with economic, cultural and symbolic functions. Several fields of enquiry were useful in constructing the arguments I have made here. These have included the arguments of 'the heritage debate' itself, discussions concerned with heritage centres, museums and media representations and their audiences, the relationship between identity and individual and collective memory and between identity, modernity, globalisation and tourist experiences.

Chapter 1 argued that heritage centres could be defined in relation to the links between them and:

- an intensification of interest in the past;
- collective identities;
- concepts of the past;
- both national and global cultures;
- both civic and commercial programmes of development;
- the rise of a new way of representing the past through exhibition;
- other exhibitionary forms, or forms of popular engagement with the past outside of those associated with exhibitions;
- the authenticities associated with the above.

The themes of identity and authenticity formed the underlying structure for the rest of the discussion. Chapter 2 focused on the analysis of heritage consumption according to the theme

of authenticity or inauthenticity. The first part of this chapter addressed a particular view of heritage visiting which understands visitor experiences to be false, or inauthentic. The principal features of this viewpoint can be summarised as follows:

- The rise in heritage as a response to a sense of decline in post-industrial society and the demands of the profit oriented agenda of an enterprise culture;
- The singularity, selectivity and nostalgic undertones of its narratives;
- The way in which these narratives are defined by present day concerns rather than an objective historiographical stance;
- The production of a spectacle of the past that closes off the possibility of understanding history as an ongoing process. This creates an incomplete, inauthentic representation;
- The possibility that the 'status quo' of some class interests is represented better than others. This contrasts with the promise of the heritage industry to make the representation of the past more accessible to a wider group of people;
- The shift in emphasis from public to private interests in the museum sector and therefore the shift from educational concerns towards those of entertainment. Again this relates to the idea that heritage narratives offer an interpretation of the past as a closed book rather than as something that is linked to the present, offering both an understanding and a critique of our own age.

The view-point put forward here is valuable in alerting us to the potential effects of representing the past in a narrow, profit-making context, without concern for the wider importance and purpose of historical exploration. However, it was found to be problematic on the grounds that it is bound up with a particular view of the post-modern subject that stresses their attachment to playful, surface experiences. It was also suggested that this view is at odds with the contemporary understanding of both museum visitors and media audiences as active makers of meaning. It was argued that it does little to extend our understanding of the actual processes at work in the consumption of heritage centres. In response, this thesis looked to an interpretation of late-modern subjects that sees them as experiencing the loss of the certainties provided by traditional societies, but also the opportunity for greater reflexivity. An element of this reflexivity may be witnessed in attempts to re-build aspects of the self which are left unsatisfied by our daily experiences. This analysis was understood to parallel one approach to the construction of tourist experiences, built on the concept of an authenticity of self. Rather than adhering to the idea that authenticity in visitor experiences is only either objective or symbolic, this thesis looks to the analysis of tourist experiences in terms of a search for an 'existential' (Wang 1999, 2000) or 'hot' (Selwyn 1996) authenticity of self through a variety of objectively authentic or inauthentic toured objects. I believe that this theoretical stance offers greater possibilities for a richer



understanding of heritage visiting than is more frequently postulated. It was argued that exhibitionary authenticities may offer the visitor scope for the types of experiences they seek. This discussion revolved around auratic authenticity, based on the historical object, and simulated authenticity, based on the use of a range of interactive or immersive media. It found that aspects of both types of authenticity may in fact be experienced in similar ways, as providing more immediate, informal and direct access to the past through imaginative, physical, sensory, social and cognitive interaction. These activities were interpreted as being both participative and creative, and as such akin to some of the experiences described by both Selwyn and Wang. Furthermore, such experiences offer an alternative learning environment then that embraced in more formal museums or educational systems. Chapter 3 looked to the theme of identity to explain the consumption of heritage centres. The first section considered the way in which socio-economic identity impacts on patterns of heritage visiting, attitudes towards the past and modes of engaging with the past. Although this section of the chapter drew on the work of several authors, most were concerned with Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of taste and distinction. Broadly it was shown that heritage visiting is a part of a system of distinction, as are one's preferred mode of accessing the past there and in other contexts – that is, one's preferences in relation to exhibitionary authenticity for either contextualised or distanced representations. The second aspect of this discussion of identity was that of cultural, and particularly national, identity. Such an identity is created through discourse. The discourse of nationhood looks to root present-day identity in the past. The nation's heritage, 'national' histories and representational media are all involved in this process which results in the creation of an 'imagined community'. Late modernity, and globalisation in particular, are understood to have broken down such identities, causing them to become less monolithic and more hybrid. Rather than experiencing a stable and fixed sense of identity, individuals become less fixed, less rooted. This drives them to construct a narrative of the self. If Hall's argument that identity is formed in the articulation of the discourse and the individual, then the subject positions offered by discourses provide the individual with a way of anchoring themselves in a reflexive way. Using Lasch's (1979) concept of the loss of generational consciousness in late modernity, this chapter went on to argue that the subject positions offered by the discourses of cultural identities may allow the individual subject to re-assert a generational sense of the self. That is, the collective narrative of the discourse is used to fill the gaps in individual narratives of the self. Individual memories are supplemented by collective memories. Links were made between this and the ideas that pursuing nostalgia (Tannock 1995) and re-asserting a glacial sense of time through involvement with the conservation of the material environment (Urry 1995) are reflexive responses to a sense of loss that underpins modern experience. Most importantly for this thesis, links were created between this concept of collective memories or identities being used by individual subjects to re-assert a generational sense of the self and the concept of an

authenticity of self experienced through toured objects. Because of their status as toured objects and their involvement with the representation of past and place, heritage centres and sites are ideally placed to cater for this need. Although Wang's concept of existential authenticity focuses on individual self-identity, Selwyn looks to a process of identification between the tourist and the toured object, between the visitor and the heritage site or centre. This chapter interpreted this process in terms of cultural identity, the relationship between the individual and cultural groups.

The themes of identity and authenticity are clearly inter-twined, This thesis has suggested that two principal theoretical frameworks can be used to analyse the consumption of heritage. Rather than being seen to be oppositional, these may well exist in tandem in the same visitors. These can be summarised as follows:

#### **Heritage Visiting and the Authenticity of Self**

- The current fascination with the past through heritage should be located in the context of late modernity, rather than in relation to a critique of post-modernity;
- The over-rationalisation, routinisation and disintegration of traditional structures associated with modernity are understood to create an imbalance in our lives. This includes the ways in which individuals are cut adrift from the stable identities that were once experienced. An element of this sense of loss is the lack of a generational sense of time. This imbalance or loss is experienced in terms of a lack of authenticity of the self;
- Late modern subjects experience both a sense of loss as a result of the processes of modernity and a growth in reflexivity using the channels provided by the conditions of modernity. In counteracting a sense of loss of identity or imbalance, they seek to construct narratives of the self or to address inner imbalance using the media at their disposal. Activities that take place outside of everyday routines, like tourism and heritage visiting or engaging with the past or other cultures through a range of mediated experiences, can be thought of in this way;
- Such experiences are reflexive in that they both recognise imbalance in everyday life and attempt to resist or counteract this by searching for experiences that will restore the subject's sense of balance or authenticity;

- A generational sense of self is supplied by the interaction of individual and collective memories using the various media involved in representing historical narratives. This is clearly related to the assertion of a glacial sense of time.
- Such an authenticity can be experienced through toured objects that are judged to be objectively authentic or inauthentic.
- The character of this authenticity is experienced through objects that involve the subject's own emotional, physical and mental participation. This engagement can be characterised by creativity, spontaneity, sensuality, social-interaction, risk and adventure.
- The exhibitionary authenticities associated with heritage centres also focus on these types of interaction. Therefore they may provide the visitor with an opportunity to experience an authenticity of self, and to counteract negative experiences of mainstream education.

#### **Heritage Visiting and Habitus**

- Higher socio-economic groups, and those that stay in formal educational systems for longer periods, are predominant amongst visitors. These may be understood to include those newly emergent groups like the service class, the intellectuals and the new petit bourgeoisie. Therefore, the choice to visit or not to visit museums or heritage sites during leisure time may be related to class identity.
- The concepts of habitus and cultural capital are important concepts in understanding these motivations. Higher socio-economic groups may be expressing the tastes associated with their class identity, formed through their habitus, by visiting museums or heritage attractions. Therefore, visiting museums and heritage attractions, and displaying a taste for what might be termed as 'heritage style' may be understood in terms of the concept of social distinction.
- The preference for museum and heritage visiting amongst higher status groups may relate to a desire to engage in the 'constructive' use of leisure time, which involves the pursuit of education and subject matter understood by these groups to have a serious purpose. The long established image of museums as public educators and the class concerns underlying their construction as such might play a role in the perception that heritage visiting is a more legitimate leisure activity for higher social groups. This differs to the idea that pleasure, rather than a sense of duty in the 'constructive' use of one's leisure time, is important to some newer elements of the middle-classes like the service class. It is the heavily contextualised styles of representation of the newer museums and heritage attractions that

may appeal to this desire for pleasure, because they offer the opportunity for increased physical and social interaction on behalf of visitors. This does not imply that educational motivations or the constructive use of leisure time are unimportant to this group – rather, it is the concept of dutiful activity that may be at stake.

- These factors are significant in relation to the consideration of motivation amongst heritage visitors, given that the heritage centre as a cultural form may answer both the need to engage in 'dutiful' and 'pleasurable' activity. Rather than considering the heritage visitor to have either one or the other of these motivations, they may have both or different sub-sections of the middle-classes may place more importance on one than the other, or indeed they may not differentiate between them so clearly. If we position the heritage centre at the intersection of two discourses – the discourse of the museum which emphasises education and that of the visitor attraction which emphasises entertainment – then we may also position the motivations of visitors here also.
- Separate ways of engaging with the past related to one's habitus are also understood to exist. These have been outlined as including a less personal, more rational, intellectual and aesthetic approach that favours less contextualisation, favoured by higher status groups and an approach that seeks more contextualised, less formal or more personal verbal histories, favoured by lower status groups. These approaches are also understood to be at the basis of the personal possession of 'old' objects.
- An interest in the past more generally was found to exist amongst all social groups. Positive or negative impressions of the past however can be related to particular social groups. Positive images of the past were more predominant amongst lower social groups, while higher social groups displayed a preference for the present. It was suggested that these attitudes reflect the satisfaction of these groups with the present. Where positive attitudes towards the past were recorded, it was suggested that they can be considered either as an indication of a more romantic, escapist appropriation of history or as an active criticism of one's situation in the present.

The second section of this thesis, the Methodology, was concerned with identifying a suitable method for conducting empirical research into the issues addressed in the review of literature. The epistemological stance and the questions particular to this study were clearly important in identifying the methods chosen to carry out this research. The first part of this section aimed to identify a suitable methodological model for use in this study. An approach to visitor studies that is particularly influenced by the study of mass-media audiences was adopted. This draws on

Stuart Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding model which sees both the processes of encoding (production) and decoding (consumption), and the discourses pertinent to both, to be important in understanding the meanings that are made from media texts. The following chapter described how this was applied in the gathering of data in this study in a more specific way. This chapter described the adoption of a case-study methodology in researching this thesis. This was understood to match the issues of importance to the 'Encoding/Decoding model of communication. The choice of Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a case study was discussed as were the methods used to investigate both its production and consumption, again in accordance with the concerns of the 'Encoding/Decoding' model. The specific issues encountered in the course of researching this thesis were also outlined. A variety of methods were used. All involved the use of both primary and secondary material. Secondary material included both descriptive and critical material in relation to tourism, history and visitors in Ireland and more particularly in Wicklow. Primary data included the use of promotional material for the gaol and the county more generally. This involved examining documentation pertaining to the development of the gaol as a heritage attraction, as well as conducting interviews with key participants in its development. The consumption of the gaol was investigated by conducting in-depth interviews with visitors, the generation of behavioural maps of visitors' movements and the distribution of questionnaire surveys for completion by visitors.

The purpose of Section 3 was to develop Wicklow's Historic Gaol as a case study. Chapter 6 examined the discourses that surround the production and consumption of heritage centres in Ireland. This considered the relationship between heritage and the tourism industry, and the place of the past in the representation of Irish identity in tourist texts. Chapter 7 considered the encoding of the gaol. It described the conditions under which the gaol as an artefact was transformed into a heritage attraction, the intentions of producers and the ways in which these are located in relation to the issues raised in relation to the discourses spoken about previously. Chapter 8 analysed the data produced in investigating the consumption of the gaol. It revealed the relationships between the text as it is produced and consumed, the impact of the discourses pertinent to both and the connections between the theoretical concepts dealt with in section 1 and the data produced in this study of Wicklow's Historic Gaol.

This thesis re-iterated the idea that the natural and man-made heritage, as well as the idea of the rural, traditional ways of life, and the friendly, inviting nature of Irish people have been significant components in touristic images of the Ireland. This contributes to the promotion of Ireland as an anti-modern destination. Therefore, Ireland can be perceived as a focus of the search for lost authenticity, and for objects of the romantic gaze. The representation of Wicklow within this places a particular emphasis on grand houses, landed estates and sublime scenery. This

chapter also found that such images bear the imprint of earlier discursive formations associated with Irish identity. I have suggested that a dual set of discourses were involved in the representation of the county. These were involved in both the processes of colonisation and de-colonisation. The structure and focus of accounts of heritage sites in Wicklow changed over time to accommodate contemporary concerns. Inevitably, this continues to occur. This can be seen in the commemoration of the 1798 rebellion in 1998 when its interpretation concentrated on the connections between Europe and Ireland. This mirrors the increased importance of Europe in the economic life of the country, not least in relation to the funding of heritage attractions in the development of the tourism industry.

An analysis of the text demonstrated how these, amongst other concerns, were made manifest in the interpretation of history at Wicklow's Historic Gaol. While some aspects of the text seem to set out to appeal to the collective memories of Ireland's imagined community, and in particular with the Irish Diaspora, others actively seek to distance themselves from older discursive patterns. The move away from such older patterns can be seen in the section on the 1798 rebellion, while the upper level of the gaol that focuses on life in Australia re-establishes these connections. There is both an intended and accidental use of the tropes associated with the national imagination. These emphasise the deeds of popular heroes, the 'ordinary people' as the oppressed, and bravery through resistance. Distinctions are made between groups on either side of a binary opposition of rich and poor, the powerful and powerless, the coloniser and the colonised. Furthermore a partial collapse of a linear time occurs when several elements of the display are combined. The narrative devices used here are a result of the desire to create an engaging story that necessitates the casting of heroes and villains, the history of the gaol itself, and the desire of producers to present an alternative set of histories than those at other heritage sites in the county, and the echo of older discursive formations of Irish historiography. I have also suggested that the sub-altern focus of this post-colonial narrative intersects with the contemporary appeal of 'history from below' (Samuel 1994). The involvement of the tourism industry in relation to funding also shaped an important aspect of the interpretive scheme used at the gaol. This involved the significant emphasis placed on the transportation theme, which was to ensure that this attraction would stand out in the market generally and appeal to an important aspect of that market – the Irish Diaspora. This approach taken to interpretation at the gaol is matched by the approach to display. The objective here is to also encourage the visitor to identify with the principal focus of the narrative, the inmates of the gaol. 'Universal' ideas about human experiences and the creation of an all encompassing environment or atmosphere contribute to this. Neither is the visitor intentionally distanced from the gaol as an artefact as in other 'museums'. Clearly, the themes of identity and authenticity were significant in the encoding of Wicklow's Historic Gaol.

The discussion of visitor responses demonstrated a concern with the class and tourism based issues surrounding the visit, the exhibitionary authenticities encountered there, the relationship between past and present and a process of identification or differentiation between visitors and those being represented. It was found that visitors make preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings of the text. Furthermore, these occur within the parameters of the text and the discourses of cultural identity that at the base of both encoding and decoding processes.

The importance of heritage visits within tourism rather than local contexts were considered. This, it was suggested, results both from the very visible presence of the tourism industry in the development of heritage attractions and the possibility that local people engage with their heritage in other ways. Elements of the 'Habitus' thesis are clearly apparent here where visitors, largely drawn from higher socio-economic backgrounds, conceive of their visit as a constructive use of leisure time, display their knowledge of the codes of heritage visiting and sometimes express a preference for more distanced forms of representation.

Great emphasis was placed on the concepts of auratic and simulated authenticity in the context of visitors' ideas about the educational worth of the visit. These authenticities were experienced in relation to an increased level of imaginative, cognitive, emotional, physical and social interaction. The focus on lived experience was also of importance here. These were all conceived by visitors to be fulfilling in educational terms, in contrast to their experiences in traditional museums and educational systems. This seems to give a meaning to learning in this context as an oppositional form of education to that of other such experiences. This departs from the placement of the educational worth of the visit in terms of middle-class habitus, and should not be seen as a unique response to Wicklow's Historic Gaol but also as a response to other entities where these representational strategies are used. In this sense, we are seeing a discourse of how the past is experienced in operation here. This cannot be limited to museal or exhibitionary experiences, but can be extended to the mechanisms through which the past is experienced in other contexts. Visitors to the gaol did not see the past as a separate, complete entity as suggested by the critiques of heritage. In contrast, they indicated the strong connections that visitors make between the present and the past in relation to particular themes or events. For example, the sections of the display that dealt with conflict stimulated responses concerning the wider significance of conflict in other historical, personal and contemporary situations. The concept of transferable knowledge, where the presentation of historical or other knowledge enables visitors to apply similar concepts to their experiences and situations, is in evidence here.

Some responses demonstrated the relevance of the tourist gaze thesis. It can be suggested that the images involved in the touristic promotion of Ireland are constructed according to the idea of symbolic authenticity – that is, one that constructs Ireland as an authentic 'other' to the modern home cultures of tourists. These images have been constructed over a long period of time, displaying a distanced form of the gaze that has been pertinent in the relationship between tourists and Ireland as a tourist destination. As suggested in Chapter 6, these images continue to dominate in touristic promotion. Tourists' knowledge of the inauthenticity of such images is also in evidence in relation to aspects of Wicklow's tourist sights, pointing towards the relevance of Urry's reference to the post-tourist. The readings based on the identification or differentiation that occurs between visitors and those represented in the text were also discussed in relation to the discourses of Irish identity, and the relationship between this and English identity. I have argued that this suggests the relevance of other ways of thinking about the consumption of toured objects, like Wicklow's Historic Gaol. These responses did not have the distanced quality associated with the tourist gaze but point towards a different dynamic between heritage visitors and the object of their gaze. The responses that identified with the imagined communities encountered within the text relate to this history as sets of collective memories. I believe that this supports my assertion that late modern subjects, in experiencing a sense of loss of a generational consciousness of the self, construct narratives of the self by identifying with the collective memories represented in the media. Heritage centres, as representations of such collective memories, may be used in this way. Visitors to Wicklow's Historic Gaol create a generational autobiography by locating themselves in history. In this way, visitors experience an authenticity of self through engaging with the past in this way. The findings of this study can therefore be linked to concepts regarding Wang's (1999, 2000) existential and Selwyn's (1996) hot authenticity. A further link was made with Selwyn's idea that the immersive displays associated with heritage attractions like this facilitate such a process of identification. It would appear that this is clearly the case at Wicklow's Historic Gaol. A related interpretation of the exhibitionary authenticities experienced by visitors at Wicklow's Historic Gaol was also made. Because of the focus on social and physical interaction which occurred between visitors, actors, the display and the building. Creative, playful and participative acts were also a feature of the concept of the authenticity of self-formulated by Wang and Selwyn. If such acts are a bid to counteract negative experiences in late modernity, then the experience of exhibitionary authenticity at Wicklow's Historic Gaol may also be fulfilling visitors concern with achieving such a sense of authenticity.

The themes of identity and authenticity are intermingled in both the encoding and the decoding of the gaol. Aspects of these responses relate to several of the concepts discussed in previous chapters. Those of most interest here were the 'Habitus' and 'Authenticity of Self' theses, and



the concept of preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings within the 'Encoding/Decoding' model. Whilst these frameworks were all pertinent, the 'Authenticity of Self' thesis seems to be particularly suitable in the explanation of the responses explored here. As suggested previously, this may well be because of the nature of the interpretive focus - the narrative - and the strategies of representation used at Wicklow's Historic Gaol. It is only through the documentation of diverse contexts of heritage consumption that a fuller picture can be developed.

Indeed, perhaps one of the most startling realisations of this thesis is the difficulty of documenting local participation in heritage visiting, and the need for work to be done on discovering how this group engages with its heritage, particularly in relation to the built environment. This is also true in a class context, where higher social status groups continue to dominate the use of heritage attractions here. It is imperative that we attempt to understand ways of engaging with the past outside of heritage visiting, when the generation of economic wealth is already in danger of supplanting other important aspects of our lives as Ireland undergoes another period of social change. Those responsible for planning decisions have the power to erase landmarks of local memory as our economic successes emphasise the importance of developing road networks and housing solutions to meet demand. Unless we understand the significance of such landmarks fully, we will not understand the effects of their erasure on local consciousness.

This study suggests that the meanings attached to the past in the context of heritage visiting, and the act of visiting itself, are far more complex than the analyses of the 'heritage debate' initially suggested. Visitors are certainly able to engage with both the "rose and woodsmoke" and the "clinging blood upon the stones" of Hartnett's poem mentioned at the beginning of this thesis. It only remains for other researchers to extend or, indeed, challenge the contribution this study makes to our understandings of the meanings we give to the past in the context of heritage visiting.

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### **Unpublished Works**

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## **Appendix A Research Schedules**

### **Consumption**

#### **1.1 Visitor Interview Schedule**

- Why did you choose to visit today?
  - Who did you come with?
  - Did you come to see/do anything in particular?
  - Had you been before? Why did you come again?
  - What other things would you be doing if you weren't visiting here?
  - Do you go to exhibitions frequently?
  - Do any other exhibitions stand out in your mind? Why?
  - Are you interested in ...? Do you do other things related to ....? (eg. history, art history, local history, music etc.)
  - Did you know about this subject before? How?
- 
- Tell me where you went and what you saw? (If you were describing your visit to a friend what would you say?)
  - What do you think the exhibition was about?
  - What elements stand out in your mind? Why?
  - What elements did you like/dislike most? Why?
  - What did you think of .....? Why?

## 1.1 Behavioural Maps

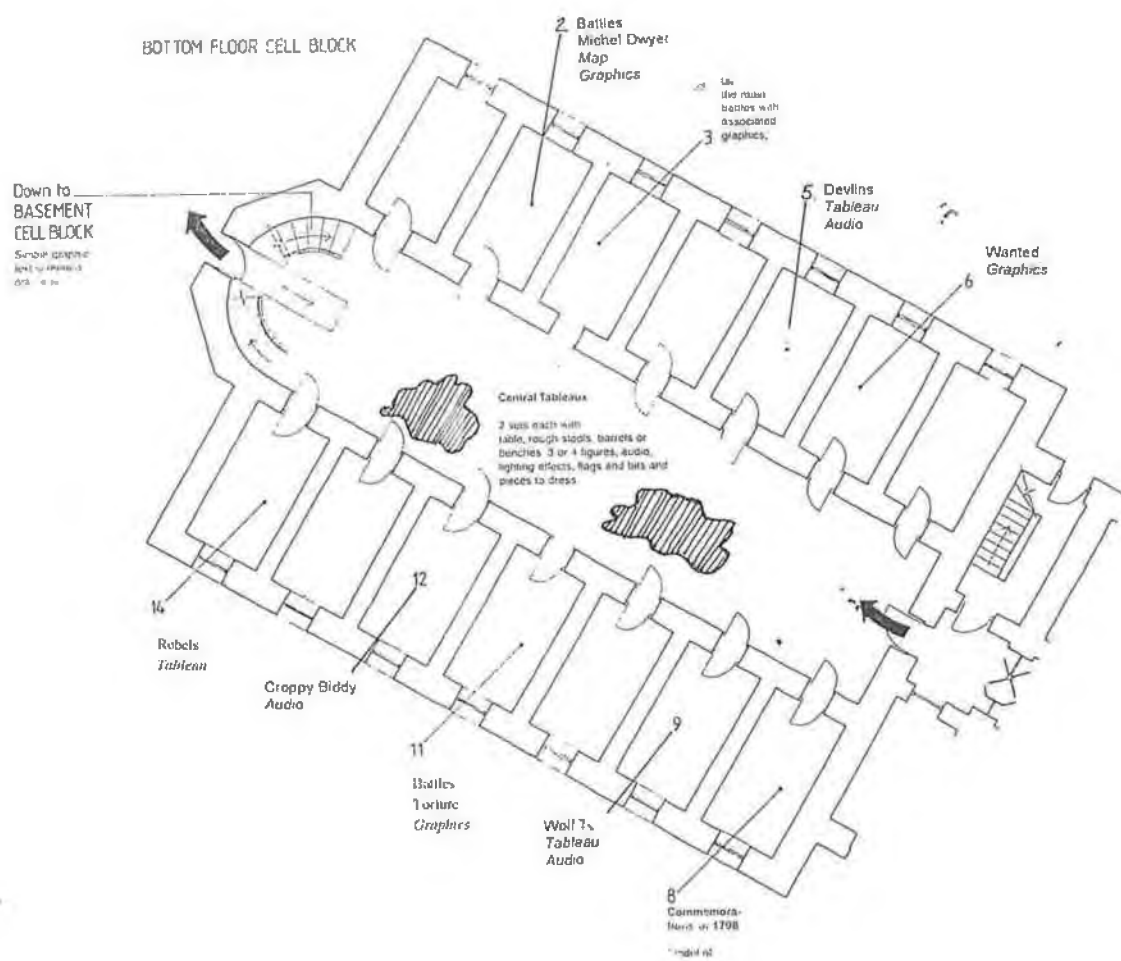


Fig. 1.1 (a) Behavioural Map : Ground Floor.

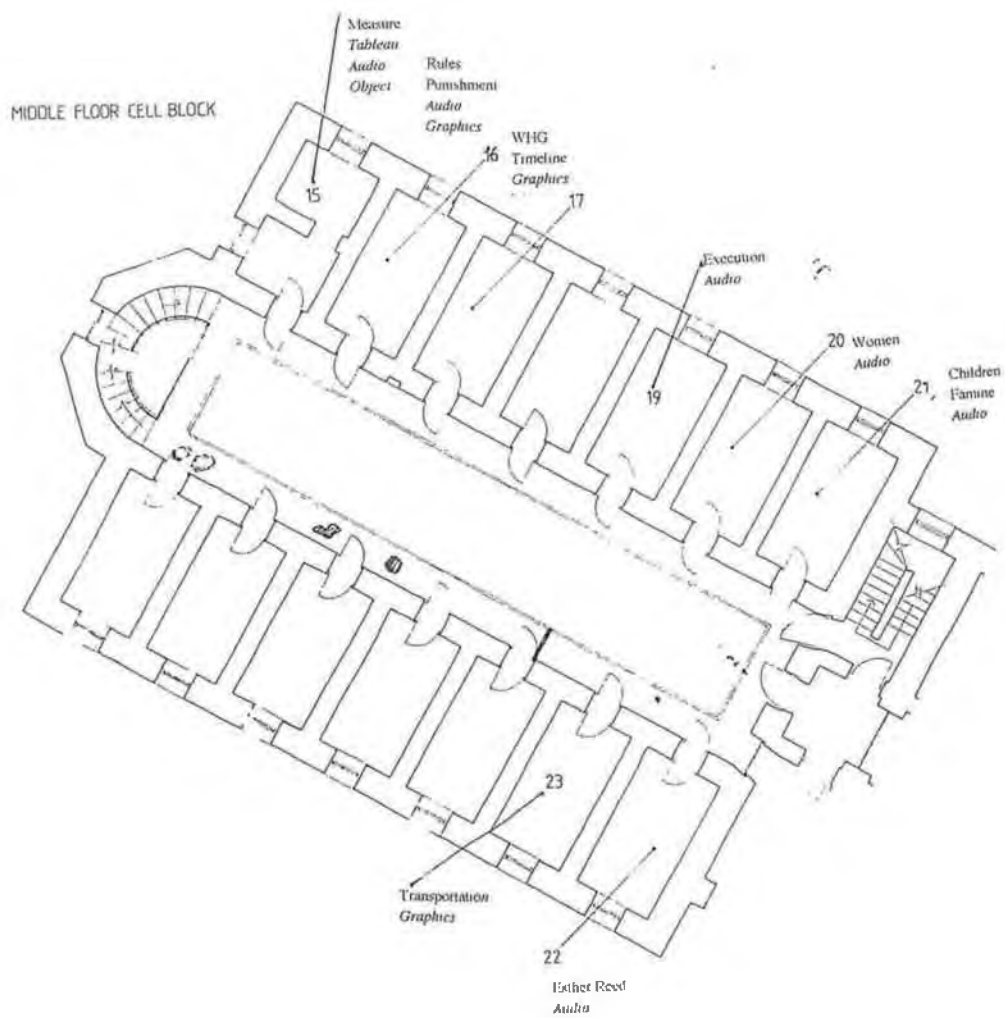


Fig. 1.1 (b) Behavioural Map : 1<sup>st</sup> Floor.

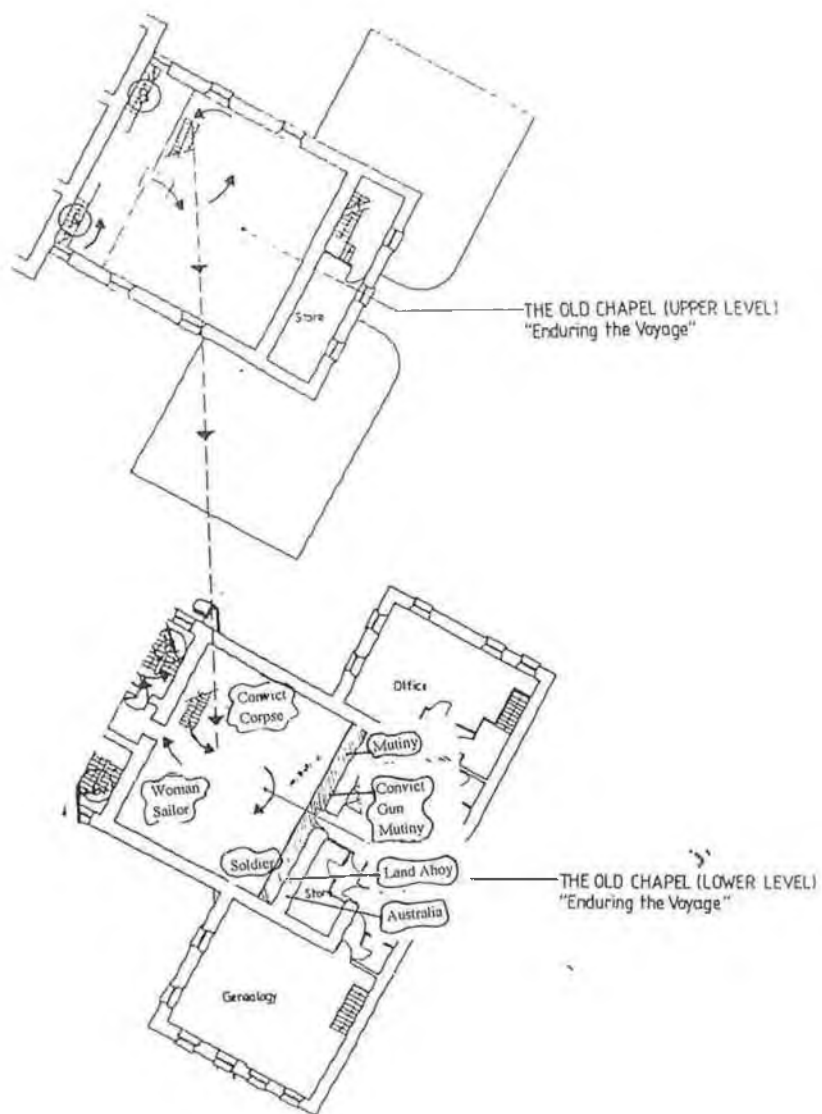


Fig. 1.1 (c) Behavioural Map : Ship.



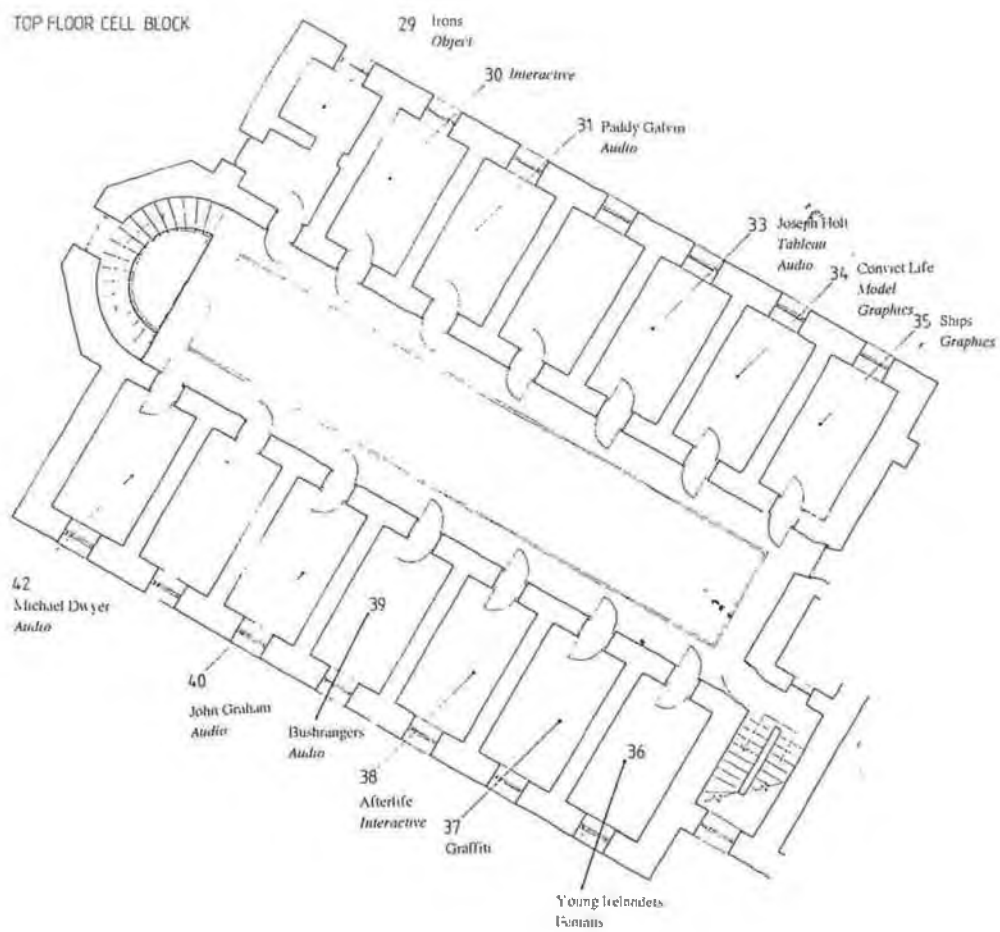


Fig. 1.1 (d) Behavioural Map : 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.

## Survey Questionnaire

### VISITOR SURVEY *Wicklow's Historic Gaol*

I am conducting a visitor survey at Wicklow's Historic Gaol as part of a research project with Dublin City University. You can help me by completing the following questionnaire and returning it to me when you are finished. Your participation is much appreciated!

Please circle the appropriate category:

Sex                      Male                      Female

Age                      15-18                      19-24                      25-34  
                                 35-44                      45-54                      55-64                      65+

Education              Primary    Secondary  
                                 ThirdLevel (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

(if retired, please state occupation before retirement)

Place of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Did you visit...?    Alone                      As a Couple                      Friends/Family                      Family/Children  
                                 OrganisedGroup (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you visit heritage sites...?(eg. centres, castles, museums, houses, galleries etc.)

Once a week                      Once a month                      Once a year

What are your special interests?(eg. science, sport, politics etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you visit Wicklow's Historic Gaol? \_\_\_\_\_

What                      did                      you                      enjoy  
most? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you enjoy

least? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **1.4 Analysis of Questionnaire Survey and Behavioural Maps**

Women made up the majority of those who completed the questionnaire at 53.5%, although only slightly, with men at 46.5%. The largest of the age groups represented were between 45 and 54 years old (27%) followed by those aged between 35 and 44 years old (22%). Those aged between 55 and 64 years old, those over the age of 65 and those aged between 25 and 34 years old were in a mid-band at 16%, 13.5% and 13% respectively. Those respondents aged between 15 and 24 years old numbered just 9% of the total. By far the largest group of visitors to be represented were those who had completed second level education (47%), but a significant number of visitors had completed their education after attending third level institutions (31%). 14% of visitors stated that they had attained other qualifications (eg.nursing, mechanic), while only 2% had not engaged in formal education after primary school level. Two thirds of these were over 65 years old.

Only 2.5% of visitors were living in Australia, compared with 10% from America and Canada, while only 8.5% were from countries in Europe outside of Britain and Ireland. A large number of visitors were from Britain (35%), Republic of Ireland (24%) and Northern Ireland (18%).

European visitors are under-represented here compared with surveys of the county generally – this may be explained by language barriers both in terms of the completion of the survey questionnaire itself and the lack of facilities for languages other than English in the gaol. The latter was commented on by a number of European respondents during the gathering of data. A second factor here is the popularity of Co. Wicklow with those on caravanning holidays, who may well be more likely to come from Britain or Ireland because of the transport involved. A third factor of importance here was the effects of the foot and mouth crisis on tourism and particularly on long haul visitors.

The largest type of group represented amongst those interviewed were visiting as informal groups (53.5%). 30% of these were in groups of friends and family, while 23.5% specified that they were visiting with children. The second largest group to be represented were visiting as

couples (42%) while the smallest groups to be represented were those visiting alone (2%) and those in organised groups (2.5%). The latter is not generally true at the gaol, where organised groups form a relatively important market niche, but it may well reflect the cancellation of group bookings both because of the foot and mouth crisis directly, and because of the closure of Glendalough which tends to be the principal items on group itineraries. These figures differ to surveys of tourists in the county generally, which found that the largest group type to be represented were those visiting alone, although, like at Wicklow gaol, couples form an important element of the market in Wicklow county generally. The predominance of groups amongst visitors to the gaol is also the inverse of visitor profiles to attractions in the country generally. A majority of respondents indicated that they visit heritage sites approximately once a year (63%), compared with those who visit once a month (19.5%) and once a week (3%).

Over-all then, visitors to Wicklow's Historic Gaol were almost equally likely to be male or female, and over 45 years of age. They were moderately to highly educated from Britain, Ireland or Northern Ireland were visiting in informal groups of friends, family or children. A majority of these will visit heritage only once during the year.

The other fields on the questionnaire referred to motivation for the visit, and elements to which visitors responded particularly positively or negatively. This is the type of information that can also be compared with the results of the behavioural maps. The broadness of visitor responses here and the lack of clarity surrounding particular responses make analysis more difficult, but it may be possible to establish some broad patterns of response. The responses to the question "Why did you decide to visit Wicklow Gaol?" were broad-ranging, but included those that were "passing", on "holiday" or a "day trip", "touring", at a loose end on a "wet day" or for whom it was recommended or who saw adverts, signs and brochures. Other responses included "general interest", "historical interest" and "irish interest". The use of the terms education and entertainment were few and far between. Although few in number, responses that indicated a personal connection with those in the 1798 rebellion or transported stood out as did those who

wished to compare the gaol at Wicklow with others already visited in Australia or elsewhere. The codification of this data proved precarious, but the analysis of these results may suggest some principal motivations. Only 2% of those interviewed used terms directly related to "education". For example, one visitor stated her motivation as being "to learn local history" while another indicated that one of her motivation was that the gaol was "educational for children". However, 15.5% indicated a "general interest" as being at the basis of their motivation, while 29% stated a specific "historical interest" as same. If these groups can be combined, they make up 46.5% of the total number of visitors interviewed. A large group of visitors used terms which indicated that their visit was forming a part of a holiday or leisure time itinerary. Approximately one quarter of visitors (25.5%) stated that they visited because they were on holiday, and a further 9% were on a day trip. 11% of respondents simply stated that the gaol had been recommended to them, but on further analysis approximately 8% of these were resident outside of Ireland. This suggests that these respondents perhaps form a sub-group within the "holiday" grouping. If combined, these groups make up 45.5% of the total number interviewed. If we consider this alongside the figures for those respondents who visit just once a year (63%) it might be possible to suggest that the visiting of heritage sites is something that is associated very particularly with holidays and with the visiting of another place as opposed, perhaps, to the broader notion of leisure time. Motivations then, seem to divide, if only broadly and tentatively, in two. However, this perhaps can only be understood as a division in the visitors description of their motivation and an indication of the way that people think about heritage sites. For example, there is no reason to think that visitors who state that being on holiday is their motivation are not also motivated by historical, or other, interests. Similarly, visitors who state a historical interest as motivation may well simply assume an understanding that heritage visiting is something one does when on holiday. It is interesting to note that only 18% of respondents stated that history was a particular interest of theirs. Just under half of these stated that their historical interests were at the basis of their motivation for visiting. The other half were made up of those whose motivation related to a general interest, being on holiday, recommendations or educational goals.

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Responses to the question "What did you enjoy most" were equally difficult to interpret, but certainly gave a clear insight into broad patterns of response. A majority of visitors (40%) stated that live presentations (eg. the actors, the guided tour, the tour guides) provided most enjoyment for them. 17% of respondents indicated their enjoyment of some element of the story line (1798, transportation, prisoners stories). 6.5% referred to the nature of the media used or the character of their visit (eg. representation, interactive exhibit, unstructured route, freedom etc.) while 4% mentioned audio-visual elements and 10% mentioned the ship. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a description of the story-line and the particular mechanisms used to communicate it, but in this analysis it might be suggested that, a total of 60.5% of respondents cited a means of communication, the ways in which a story is told, as being of importance to them. 6% of visitors surveyed simply cited the "cells", a difficult response to categorise, as standing out from other aspects of their experience while just 2.5% mentioned original features (eg graffiti, the building). The remainder of respondents either did not respond to the question at all, or responded very broadly (eg., all, everything, most). It would appear that visitor responses break down into at least three broad areas – the story-line, the way in which it is conveyed and original features. The second of these categories can be sub-divided according to visitors particular responses such as the use of actors, audio or visual devices and reconstruction.. As mentioned previously, it is difficult to know where to place one visitor response – the cells – because it is unclear what visitors mean specifically here, and so they have remained intact as a group in themselves. The results of behavioural mapping also point to the ship being an important point of engagement for visitors, although one must remember that its size would also have impacted on the amount of time visitors spent there. The results pertaining to the cells were less clear. Out of 17 tracking studies, cells 16, 17, 30 and 34 were most popular. They use a variety of media and deal with different subject matter. Of these, cell 30 was most frequently visited for longer periods – this houses the interactive quiz boards. Of the other cells, there may be a connection between cells 34 and 16, as both deal with some aspect of the lived experiences of prisoners. These cells received almost equal interest from both men and women, except for cell 34, which attracted marginally higher interest from women.

Cell 20, which deals with the plight of women prisoners particularly, did not receive particularly high interest from either group. Generally, the shortest times spent in cells was on the first floor – the displays dealing with the 1798 rebellion. The cells that received least interest here were cells 1, 4, 6 and 7, while the highest levels of interest here were in cells 5, 12, 11, 9 and 8. Cells 1, 4 and 7 were all empty – that is, containing no mediated elements. Cell 6 contains graphics in the form of maps, but comes at the end of the intended route on this floor. Cells 5, 12 and 9 all contain installations that include props, a display figure or an audio presentation. Interest in cell 12 was high, but a majority of visitors only stayed for less than a minute. Only 4 of the 17 visitors studied appeared to consult the cell guide regularly (see fig), and only 1 of these appeared to engage with each listed cell – however, the periods of engagement with each cell only lasted between 1 and 2 minutes.

Some visitors made extended statements either in conversation with the researcher or in the margins of the questionnaire, or in response to questions about motivation, or positive and negative reactions. It might be useful to consider these comments in more detail. One grouping commented on the modes used in the presentation of the story. One visitor commented, for example, that “there was no one to ask questions, too much reading, more active learning” and another that “there was too much reading, not able to ask questions”. A similar, but perhaps more enigmatic, response was that there was “no guide in the lower cell to clarify and share stories”. There seems to be an emphasis here on the idea of being interactive expressed perhaps in the choice of language used in responses, for example “ask”, “clarify” and “share”. Another type of comment here differentiated between modes of presentation, with visitors favouring one over the other, such as the comment “audio difficult to follow at times, visual easier to take in”. Another group of visitors linked their visits to Wicklow’s Historic Gaol to other experiences. For example, some commented on other attractions, and particularly those in Australia like Port Arthur and Melbourne Gaol, while others made links with personal experiences ranging from holidays “having visited NSW / Queensland recently (it was ) interesting to see the origins of the population”, to emigration “lived in Australia for three years”.

Specific readings of the stories told here also emerged. These ranged from those that related to visitors own experiences and attitudes about life in Ireland "being from the North of Ireland and under British Rule, you can only but feel sorry for the people who were prisoners here", to other historical events "reading that one there (panel re. British, Australian and Irish fighting in WW1) makes you realise how silly it all was" and to personal connections to historical events "my mother was imprisoned in Kilkenny Gaol during the War of Independence". Other comments that pertained to the reading of the story were also in evidence, for example the visitor who wrote that they enjoyed the telling of stories about "some thieves who stole food to eat (and) were transported to a better life."

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## **Production**

### **1.5 Interview Schedule (Organisers)**

- What is the ethos of the institution? What does it see as its principal purpose and where does the organisation of exhibitions fit in terms of this (eg. entertainment / education / profit/ community development / preservation / research)?
- What type of institution is it? How many people are employed and what is the structure of the organisation? How is it funded?
- How did it come to be developed?
  
- Why was this exhibition organised? What is its purpose?
- What staff / external parties were involved in the organisation of the exhibition?
- What was/is your role in its development?
- What was the decision making process? How did the exhibition evolve?
- How were designers briefed?
- Who was the intended audience? Is it aimed at once off visitors or return visitors?
- Was it expensive to produce?
  
- What approach was taken to choosing the interpretive narrative and why?
- What approach was taken to display and why?
- What is the intended route through the exhibition?
- How were objects/other elements chosen and why?
- What are the key elements in the narrative, display and object choice and why?
- How did/do you envisage visitors participating in the experience?
- How do you see it in relation to other attractions?
  
- In what ways is the exhibition used (eg. tour groups, educational workshops etc.) and how did this impact on the use of the space/design of the display?
- What are/were the key aspects in the development /running of the gaol from your perspective?

## **1.6 Exhibition Observation**

- What is the exhibition about?
- Where is the exhibition?
- Are there other exhibitions/elements nearby? If so, how does it relate to them?
- Is it permanent or temporary?
- What scale is it?
  
- What are the principal themes of interpretation? What elements of the story does the interpretation emphasise?
- How is the narrative divided or structured?
  
- What is the nature of the exhibition space? Does it form part of a sequence of spaces, is it on open access or entirely enclosed?
- How is the narrative divided spatially?
- Does it contain objects? If so, how many and what are they?
- What methods of display/communication are used (eg. text panels, visuals, audio visuals, models, reconstructions, interactive media, other interactive methods)?
- What style is used in their design and in the overall space?
- Are there prominent points in the narrative/display/object choice and what are they?
- How do they relate to other elements in the exhibition?
  
- How does it relate to other attractions in the area or in a wider context?
- What part does it play in the use of heritage sites for touristic consumption in the wider area?

## **Appendix B Heritage Policies in Ireland**

### **Organisations and Legislation**

Prior to 1922 and the establishment of the Free State, a body of legislation already existed which related to the protection of both archaeological and architectural monuments. Much of this legislation was related to that in Britain, although some applies to Ireland only. The first act to deal with the protection of monuments was the **Irish Church Act (1869)**, which made provision for the protection of ruined ecclesiastical structures of architectural or other merit following the dis-establishment of the Church of Ireland. The body responsible for their preservation was the Commissioners of Public Works. The second measure of consequence was the **Ancient Monuments Protection Act (1882)** which was aimed specifically at the protection of monuments of archaeological importance and the area immediately surrounding them. A similar act, the **Ancient Monuments Protection Act (Ireland, 1892)**, relating specifically to Ireland was introduced ten years later. This widened the scope of the act and enabled the inclusion of further monuments. The guardianship of such monuments was also at issue. The **Local Government Act (Ireland, 1898)** enabled county councils to become the guardians of ancient monuments in their region, at the request of the owner of the monument. **The Irish Land Act (1903)** extended the powers of public guardianship of monuments by allowing the Land Commission to award the Commissioners of Public Works and county councils the protection of ancient monuments that were "a matter of public interest by reason of the historic, traditional or artistic interest". In 1923 this was extended to include any monument of archaeological interest.

The **National Monuments Act (1930)** repealed the previous acts and extended the scope of legislation by introducing the use of preservation orders and by allowing for the general control of all archaeological objects and excavations. Later amendments to this act (**1954, 1987, 1994**) included items dealing with new issues relating to underwater archaeology and the use of detection devices.

The **Ministers and Secretaries Act (1924)** saw the establishment of government departments responsible to the new state. Under this act, the Commissioners of Public Works came under the remit of the Minister of Finance, while the National Museum came within the remit of the Department of Education. Overall responsibility for the National Museum was not transferred from the Department of Education to the Taoiseach until 1982, and from there to the Minister for the Arts, Culture and Gaeltacht in 1993, following the establishment of that department. The National Monuments and Historic Properties Service, which had been part of the Office of Public Works, was also transferred to this department in 1996 and now forms part of Dúchas – The Heritage Service. The department was renamed in 1997 and is now called the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

A National Heritage Bill reached a second stage reading in the Seanad in 1982 but had yielded to the appointment of a Heritage Council instead in 1988. Perhaps one of the most important developments in relation to state involvement in heritage was the introduction of the **Heritage Act (1995)**, which placed an increased emphasis on the Heritage Council as a statutory body. The Heritage Council is an independent body with specific duties in relation to the "identification, protection, preservation and enhancement" of the national heritage. The council staff includes eight officers with responsibility for architecture, wildlife, museums, archaeology, planning, education and communication, inland waterways, and finance and who liaise directly with the specialist committees designated with the responsibility for those areas. Their responsibility seems to relate principally to the tangible elements of heritage (e.g. monuments, objects, architecture, flora, fauna, habitats, landscape etc), rather than intangible elements (e.g. music, literature, language).

Another state department of relevance to a study of heritage in Ireland is the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Of particular interest here is the funding of regional, civic or county museums by local authorities and specific schemes in relation to urban and village renewal. The Local Urban and Rural Development Operational Programme (1994-99), offers financial aid to projects which aim to "rejuvenate the social and economic life of towns and villages, rehabilitate the built environment and restore and conserve important elements of Irish architecture and heritage." This funding can be awarded to local authorities, civic trusts or other local development organisations. An additional £5 million in annual funding was provided in January 1999 to support the implementation of conservation initiatives.

## **Appendix C Visitor Studies in Ireland**

Several visitor studies have been carried out in Ireland. The majority of these were produced for the tourism industry. This section gives an interpretation of the results of these studies.

Tourism Development International, an Irish based company concerned with consultancy and market research for the tourism and leisure industries, have undertaken three studies of visitors to attractions between 1991 and 1995. These studies can perhaps be described as the most comprehensive of their type here in Ireland, and they often underpin related publications produced by other organisations such as Bord Fáilte. This section will examine the most recent of these, the 1995 Visitor Attractions Survey (Republic of Ireland).

It seems particularly important to consider both the purpose and the parameters of this body of research if we are to understand it fully. Similarly to the Bord Fáilte studies, the principal objective was "to provide a comprehensive industry overview on the attitudes, behaviour, characteristics and motivations of visitors to tourist attractions in Ireland" (TDI, 1996, 1). This was done with a view to providing individual attractions with market research information, to estimate the number of visits to visitor attractions and the total amount of expenditure by visitors there in order to contribute to the creation of an overview of the main developments in this sector during the period in question. It is reasonable to suggest then that the purpose of the research was to gather information which might be useful in the further development of heritage as part of the tourism 'product'. The impetus for the earliest study followed a conference called Developing Tourist Attractions, organised by Bord Fáilte during 1990 at which "many of the guest speakers emphasised the vital importance of market research in successful tourist product development" (Macnulty, 1992, 2.1). This occurred within the wider context of the increased emphasis on the tourism industry as an important element in the economic well-being of the country.

The research was conducted in relation to fee-paying attractions only in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The sample of visitors was drawn from overseas and domestic markets, and included visitors both on holidays and on daytrips. This contrasts with some of the work done by Bord Fáilte, which looked at both fee-paying and non fee-paying attractions and which questioned overseas visitors holidaying in the Republic of Ireland only (Bord Fáilte, 1996, ?). The research was conducted between July and September 1995, the peak season, at attractions which were categorised as historic houses and castles, historic monuments, interpretive centres/museums, parks and heritage gardens.

The methodology employed by the study was three-fold, and largely repeated the approaches taken previously in 1991 and 1993 in order to facilitate comparison and trace development, or the lack thereof, within the industry. The methods adopted included an attitudinal survey of visitors to a total of 37 attractions, a weekly diary recording information regarding the total number of visits by day of the week and by market profile (eg., country of residence) at 19 attractions and an end of season telephone survey with 232 site managers to establish total visitor numbers at each site.

The attitudinal survey consisted of "personal in-depth interviews" with a total of 150 visitors at 13 attractions, and a further 706 interviews at 24 other attractions. It was felt that this approach would ensure "adequate survey coverage in terms of region, size and type of attraction" (TDI, 1996, 6). The total number of interviews conducted was 2, 656.

These interviews were conducted on site, at point of exit, using an extensive questionnaire. This questionnaire was concerned with the gathering of specific data, according to the purpose of the survey. The questions were carefully framed, often providing a choice of specific responses in answering them. For example, one question asks "Did you have a clear understanding of the main theme (story) behind this particular exhibition/attraction?" to which interviewees could answer "Yes, had a clear understanding", or "No, did not have a clear understanding" in relation to both themselves and their children (TDI, 1996, Appendix A). Other questions related to visitor satisfaction with the visit. For example, one question asks "Now, thinking of your arrival at (name of site) earlier today. How would you rate the following aspects of the sites infrastructure?" The visitor could then choose to rate signposting, access, parking facilities and impact on the environment by considering them to be very good, good, fair, poor and so on. The less specific descriptions available to the interviewee were "don't know" or "no reply".

Data was collected regarding marketing, infrastructure, interpretive material and tour guides, visitor patterns and experience, facilities, expenditure, value for money, other attractions visited and accommodation.

The survey accords particular importance to the 'visitor experience'. Having documented and analysed the visitor reaction to physical infrastructure and facilities at attractions, the survey states that "in terms of the visitor experience it is the thematic approach adopted by attractions, and the way in which these themes are presented to the customer that can have even greater impact" (TDI, 1996, 46). The survey then goes on to provide data with regard to visitor opinion of and reaction to the methods of interpretation used and their understanding of the chosen interpretive theme.

The methods of communication which came under consideration were tour guiding, literature, exhibitions and the use of audio visual media. Visitors were asked whether they would have preferred to view the site with or without a guide and how they would rate the guide had they availed of the service. The survey found that equal proportions of visitors preferred to experience the site with or without a guide, although the percentage of people who would prefer to be guided through interpretive centres or museums was slightly higher than those who would not. However, only 23% in total and 17% in relation to interpretive centres or museums actually availed of a guided tour when presented with the option. This may reflect the extent to which guides were actually available at given times, or that visitors respond in one way when questioned and in another when presented with the choice in an independent situation.

When asked to describe other methods of interpretation according to a specific set of terms, 31% found exhibitions to be entertaining, while 57% found them to be educational. This ratio did not differ significantly when visitors were asked to respond to a specific medium, the audio-visual presentation, when 34% found it to be entertaining while 54% found it to be educational. In contrast, while 54% found literature at the site to be educational, only 16% found it to be entertaining (TDI, 1996, 48). In the 1991 survey, visitors were presented with terms which included 'informative' and 'interesting', as well as 'educational' and 'entertaining'. Only 28% of visitors in 1991 found exhibitions to be educational and 17% found them to be entertaining while 32% found them to be informative and 50% found them to be interesting (McNulty, 1992, 2.7). It is difficult to see how visitors in responding to this question either link particular descriptions together or separate them,

These responses, while adequate in terms of the objectives of this study, raise questions in a broader arena. It may be possible to suggest here that, in the visitors mind or within the parameters of the questions asked, that both exhibitions and audio-visual presentations are equated with their perception of what it means to be entertained, while the same information presented in a written form tends to be equated with their ideas about learning. It could also suggest that the separation of the terms education and entertainment in relation to exhibitions for example, may not occur so definitively in the visitors mind, or that their expectation of sites which focus on historical significance are that they have an educational purpose. Visitor responses to both the terms used by the interviewer and the methods chosen to communicate interpretive themes may well be influenced by other forms of entertainment or education experienced by them.

The summary of statistical information can be highly suggestive here. In relation to the above, for example, the summary emphasises that audio-visual aids "are considered to be more educational and well-presented than entertaining or comprehensive". Exhibitions are compared with literature and are "regarded as having a higher educational value and a better standard of presentation than literature. They are also considered to have a higher entertainment value than literature" (TDI, 1996, 49). In fact this seems to be true of both exhibitions and audio-visual aids, which are considered to be almost equally entertaining, educational and well-presented as exhibitions.

The survey also questioned visitors with regard to their understanding of the theme, or the story being told. A very high percentage of visitors (81%) felt that they came away with a very clear understanding, obviously interpreted by the surveys as a positive acclamation of both the content and presentation of the site. A very clearly defined question of this sort does not seek to tell us what that understanding was and whether it matched the expectations of those telling the story or whether it reinforces particular ideas held by the visitor themselves, becoming part of an alternative reading of that story rather than a simple transference of a message from a sender (the curator) to a receiver (the visitor).

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board also engaged in the study of visitors to attractions within the context of the development of the tourism industry there. Following the publication of a report which assessed the state of the tourism industry at that time a series of studies were undertaken at specific attractions. These were conducted between 1982 and 1985 at Strangford Lough and its amenities, the Giants Causeway and the Ulster American Folk Park. The survey at Strangford Lough included both natural and historical amenities as well as a visitor centre. The Giants Causeway deals only with the visitor experience of the landscape itself given that the visitor centre had not been built at that point. The third survey conducted at the Ulster American Folk Park is perhaps most interesting in terms of this study. An annual survey of visitor attractions at a wide range of sites has been undertaken since 1993, similar to those undertaken by Bord Fáilte.

The specific objectives of the study were to establish the characteristics of both day and holiday visitors to the site and in a more detailed way to "examine the extent to which visitors explored the folk park, their reasons for visiting the park and to investigate the demand for improvements" (NITB, 1985). The visitors were interviewed on leaving the park according to a detailed questionnaire, similar in style to those discussed above.



In contrast to other similar studies, the majority of visitors to the park were residents of Northern Ireland - indeed while 73% conformed to this profile, only 10% were from the Republic of Ireland and 9% were from Great Britain. Similarly high percentages travelled in family groups, were making their first visit and were from ABC1 social groupings. The section which dealt with 'reason for visit' asked for responses to specific motivational categories which included knowledge or information, enjoyment, curiosity, education for children and entertaining friends. All visitors placed a premium on enjoyment. However, breaking down the responses according to social grouping, the survey found that knowledge, information and enjoyment were rated almost equally by the AB group, while DE groups were less interested in information and knowledge but more interested in education for children than AB groups (NITB, 1985, 10). Almost all visitors to the park saw all or most of the exhibits with relatively few limiting their visit to a specific aspect of the park. 10% of those who visited the park regularly however came specifically to see the latest display at the exhibition gallery (NITB, 1985, 13).

The Behaviour and Attitudes study carried out at the National Museum and the Natural History Museum in Dublin may provide a valuable insight into visitor experience in a more confined space. This study was undertaken during August and October of 1986, prior to the National Museum's more recent move to Collins' Barracks. Prepared for the Department of the Taoiseach, the survey was undertaken in two parts. These were a Barometer Study and a Survey of Museum Visitors at both museums. The first aimed to establish museum visiting patterns amongst 1200 adults at sixty geographically and demographically diverse sampling locations. The interviews were conducted at the homes of participants and were based on a specific questionnaire which asked questions relating to the frequency of visiting museums, the recency of visits, the profiles of those visiting and the institutions they were most likely to visit. The second part of the study took place in the institutions concerned where a total of 500 visitors were questioned using a similar type of questionnaire. This explored a range of issues which included reasons for visiting, the amount of time spent there, particular likes and dislikes within the museum, improvements desired, ratings of facilities and interest in specific sections or exhibits. The questions were asked in a number of ways – response to the rating of facilities and the preference for exhibits, for example, was according to a pre-set, specific choice of answers, similar to that used in the studies discussed above, while the visitor seems to have had more freedom in reporting their own likes and dislikes. The results were sometimes divided according to place of residence and gender.

The general findings of the study suggested that visitors to both institutions tended to be from ABC1/2 social backgrounds and resident in Dublin. The principal reasons for visiting the National Museum were to bring children or other family members, to see specific exhibits and because of

particular interests in historical data. There is a significant difference in terms of the first motivation between men and women – women were more than twice as likely to visit for this reason than men. Interestingly, very few visitors considered education as part of their reason for visiting, in contrast to some of the other studies discussed above, although again visitor differentiation between descriptive terms is unclear.

General display standards were rated very highly at both the Natural History Museum and the National Museum with more than 80% of visitors considering them to be 'very good'. A majority of visitors rated both the clarity and amount of information contained in labels quite highly, although more information was required by a significant number of visitors. These responses are perhaps interesting given that these institutions were both heavily reliant on traditional layouts and display systems at this time, and in relation to the Natural History Museum, had not reorganised their displays significantly since their establishment in the nineteenth century. Visitor experience of different types of displays in different contexts might provide interesting material for further discussion, given that surveys of this type cannot shed light on the complexities or subtleties which may underpin visitor responses.

At the National Museum, visitors found the archaeological finds and historical material to be most interesting, followed by musical instruments and silver. Presented with a list of the museum's 'figurehead' objects, visitors indicated that most had seen the Derrynaflan Paten, St Patrick's Bell and Shrine and the Tricolour, while least had seen the Fonthill Vase and the Dotaku Bell. However, this data is not accompanied by maps showing the positioning of exhibitions or exhibits in terms of the museum as a whole, or the nature of their display in groups or singularly and so it isn't possible to establish how or why visitors responded in this way. For example, if the Derrynaflan Paten had been displayed singularly in the first room that visitors entered, their memory of it may have been stronger than that of the Dotaku Bell had it been displayed as one of ten other bells in a case positioned under the stairs or in a corner of a first floor gallery. Similarly, it isn't made clear whether or not visitors were aware of the exhibit before they came – would visitors relate differently to objects seen in advertising campaigns than those encountered for the first time, for example? This and other questions simply cannot be answered by studies of this type.

An examination of these survey type studies can provide us with valuable information about visitors to a variety of Irish heritage attractions both within the context of the development of the tourism industry and in studies with an alternative focus. However, the data is by nature or necessity generalised and highly controlled. It is geared towards eliciting evaluative judgements on the visitors' behalf using highly controlled methods. Both the large numbers of visitors

surveyed and the way in which material is analysed and presented indicate that these studies tend towards quantitative rather than qualitative data. They do not seek to understand the possible diversity of visitor experiences, such as how individual visitors respond to specific situations, nor does it ask why this may be so.

It would appear that there is a conspicuous lack of other types of visitor studies in the Irish context. One such analysis which does consider visitor response more directly, and which takes an alternative approach to the studies discussed above, was conducted as part of research by Nuala Johnson during the early 1990s. Johnson's study focused on the interpretation of Strokestown House in Co. Roscommon and the National Heritage Park in Co. Wexford, considering them in terms of the relationship between time and space in the development of heritage attractions. In discussing these issues, Johnson is concerned with how the past is mediated and with its consumption, highlighting the importance of understanding "the manner in which the spaces of heritage translate complex cultural, political and symbolic processes to popular audiences" and the ways in which the "meanings of the past are mediated by the interplay of object, narrative and audience" (Johnson, 1999, 204). To this end, a series of interviews were conducted with visitors to Strokestown House following a guided tour. The interviews were conducted on site with a random selection of visitors using open-ended questions to allow the participant as much flexibility as possible in their response. The visitors interviewed by Johnson seem to have been very conscious of the difference between their experience at Strokestown and elsewhere, supporting Johnson's and others textual analyses. They emphasised an idea of the interpretation being more realistic or rounded than the "more glossy magazine version of the past" presented at other properties - indeed one visitor commented that the interpretation they were given was far closer to "what life was really like in such a house". The explicit nature of the interpretive strategy also prompted more negative reactions which stressed a sense of injustice on behalf of the family who had lived there, whose behaviour, they felt, had been decontextualised from the general behaviour of aristocrats during that period (Johnson, 1999, 203/4). Given the aims outlined above, the methods used in gathering the data and the nature of the information which is made available through their usage, it would seem that Johnson's study can be broadly aligned with those conducted by Silverstone, Macdonald and others elsewhere.

## **Appendix D A Brief History of Wicklow's Historic Gaol**

There are a number of stages in the early 'life' of the gaol. In 1786, Co. Wicklow gentry were petitioned for their subscriptions towards the erection of a new gaol in the town of Wicklow and by 1815 it is described as being 'modern' in the Travellers New Guide (Ref). By 1822 its capacity was doubled by adding a further 20 cells and an infirmary, and it is this stage with which the acclaimed architect, William Vitruvius Morrison is accredited. A further 46 cells were added between 1842 and 1843, and a series of workrooms were also built. It is this last stage of alterations that survive, at least partially.

The gaol is mentioned in a number of reports that pertain to the organisation of gaols and prisons in Ireland. It is mentioned as early as 1823 in the 4<sup>th</sup> Report for the Association of Improvement of Prisons, presumably because of the alterations that were made in 1822. Thereafter it appears in the Report of the Inspectors General of Prisons in Ireland for 1839, 1840, 1843 and 1863.

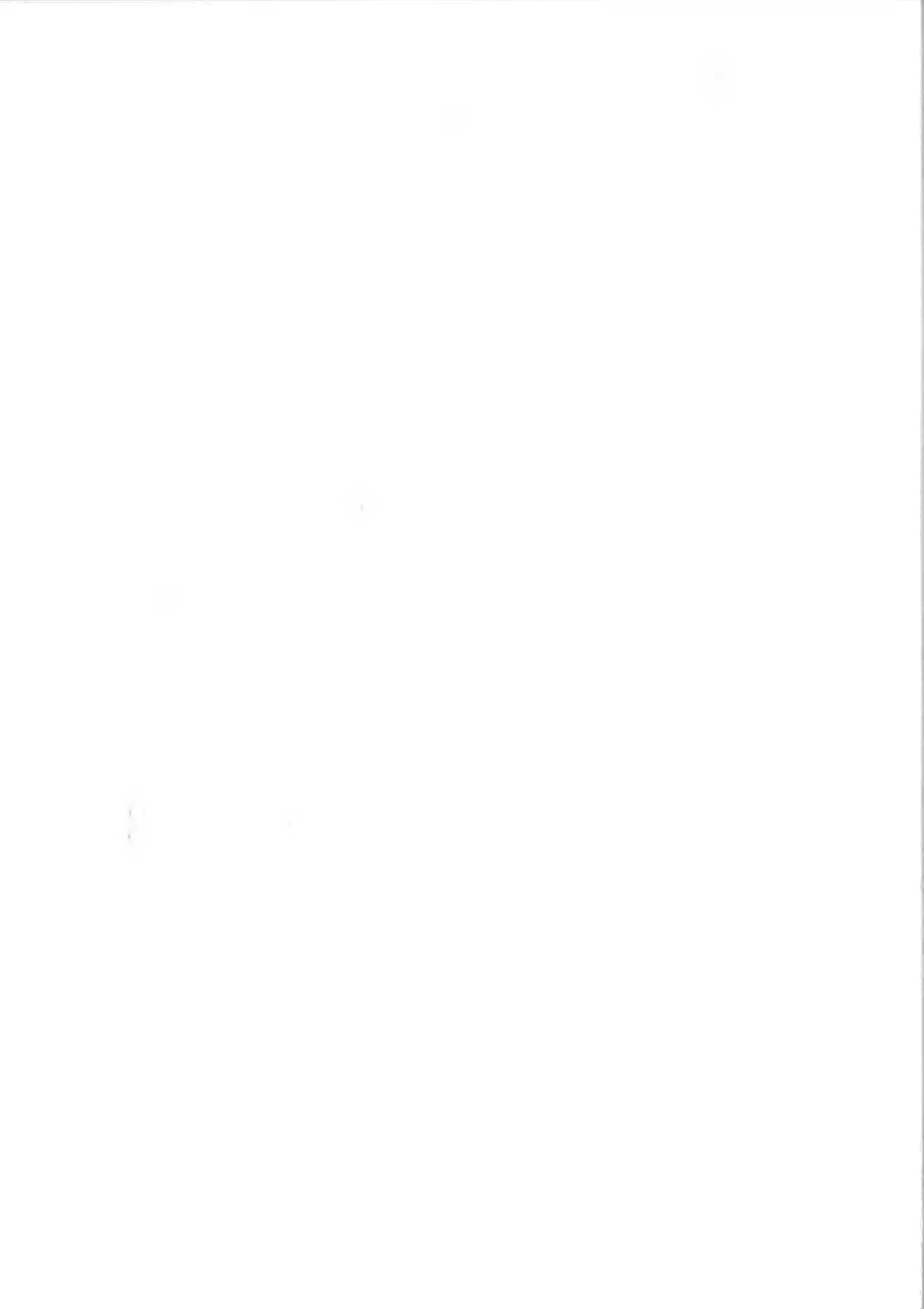
The history of the punishment and rehabilitation of criminals is an interesting one and is often reflected in the design of the buildings themselves. Dixon and Muthesius (1978) state that the most important considerations in the design of a prison are security, supervision and considerations with regard to the mental and moral health of the inmates. Prior to the eighteenth century the emphasis here was on punishment, while after this it focused on the duality of punishment and correction. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a move away from the idea of execution as an effective form of punishment. Instead, it was regarded as a wasteful exercise, functioning mainly as a way of emphasising the sovereign's power rather than reforming the individual so that he or she could serve in the creation of a better society. Rather, the prison would "be "a more efficient exercise of power; more efficient because it was calculated to transform the conduct of inmates through the studied manipulation of their behaviour in an environment built specifically for that purpose" (Bennett, 1995, 23). The criminal, once reformed, would continue to curb their own criminal tendency through self-monitoring. Some architectural layouts were perhaps intended to facilitate this more than others.

There seems to have been four basic plans for prison buildings, although there are many variations on them. The first is the radial where individual blocks radiate out from a central point. The second is the panopticon, where blocks follow the line of a semi-circle. The third is one where individual blocks jut out at right angles from a central spine and the fourth where galleries lined with cells surround a central hall or yard. This layout is sometimes referred to as the pavilion layout, and is also associated with the design of hospitals and asylums. The last phase

of alterations at Wicklow Gaol (1842-3) follow this pattern. In America, this layout can be seen in Auburn, New York (1816) and Sing Sing, New York State (1826). Here, cells were small as prisoners were only confined here during the night whereas they were put to work in large communal areas during the day. Charles Dickens admired this system on his visit in 1842 comparing it to the alternative system in use in the Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia where inmates were confined to their cells night and day, and where the layout as a whole was in a radial form (Pevsner, 1976, p.168). The arrangement of buildings in these ways perhaps represents the two philosophical approaches to the detention of the criminal, the former embracing the emphasis on punishment and correction, the latter adhering to the more stringent solitary punishment model.

As described above, the main section of Wicklow gaol is in the pavilion form. The top lit hall has a stone staircase situated in an apse at one end, while three tiers of cells are reached by cast-iron and timber galleries. The sections of the gaol that were demolished contained 'dayrooms' and a workshop, as well as laundry and drying facilities, kitchen and so on, where prisoners might spend their daytime hours, before returning to their cells at night. This perhaps indicates that as a penal institution, Wicklow Gaol favoured the punishment as correction model. This is also reflected in the Inspector General's comments that imprisonment should give "every prisoner a day of industry and a night of solitude and reflection". Although the structure of the building as a whole might suggest a punishment and reform model, the literature on the gaol asserts that the system utilised in Wicklow was one of silence and separation. The building of new cells was meant to alleviate overcrowding, thereby enabling the confinement of prisoners to one cell each. A further support of this argument is in the existence of a chapel built on the silence and separation model at Wicklow, where prisoners sat in individual stalls, so that any social interaction would be impossible.

Only part of the original building survives and this dates from the 1840s, when the last phase of alterations was added. A substantial section of this was demolished in the 1950s which included two yards at the front contained behind high, curved walls. One of these contained the treadmill house. Behind these was situated a quadrangular block of cells surrounding two further yards. Also accommodated here were two day rooms, a workshop, laundry and drying rooms. To one side of this block were the hospital and garden. The side of the quadrangle furthest away from the original entrance still survives and originally housed a clothing store and store room to one side and a cook room on the other. Beyond this was a central corridor flanked on either side by relatively large rooms, only one of which is identified and this is as a surgery. Beyond this again lies the section of the gaol built in the 'pavilion' style with its three tiers of cell lined galleries (44<sup>th</sup> Report of the Inspectors General on the General State of the Prisons of





Ireland. Vol 34, 1866). A photograph of the gaol in the 1940s shows a small open area in front contained behind railings, and behind this a central arched gateway flanked on either side by high, curved walls. Beyond this again is a four-floor façade with barred windows in each floor. The central 'window' on the fourth floor was in fact where prisoners were executed by hanging.