

Museums and the Embodiment of Human Rights

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Abstract

The representation of human rights in museums is not simply another new phase of museum practice or policy. This article considers how the space of the museum is, and has always been, an important territory for the exercise of rights, and analyses the museum visit as a journey through which rights are offered to visitors and invested in them. Presenting two cases, Le Mémorial de Caen, Normandy, and the National Maritime Museum, London, it pays close attention to how human rights are articulated by museum architecture, gallery installation, collection arrangement and displayed text. Human rights as universal values are being increasingly disseminated across a global museum sector but the understanding of these rights, how they are acquired and who is permitted to exercise them is shaped within each specific museum space.

Key Words: human rights, museums, embodiment

Embodying Human Rights in Museums

On 7 December 2008, to mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, artist Monica Ross recited its lengthy Preamble and all its 30 Articles from memory. Her performance took place in the British Library as part of its exhibition *Taking Liberties: the Struggle for Britain's Freedoms and Rights*.¹ Ross developed the work, entitled *Acts of Memory*, in response to the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes in Stockwell tube station in 2005. Following *Taking Liberties*, she has undertaken the recitation many times in a number of public spaces, including museums, galleries, universities and libraries. For each performance she memorises the entire Universal Declaration of Human Rights by writing it out over and over, repeating it over and over, ensuring that its words can be enacted by her and its ideas audible through her. This process is one of embodiment (Butler 1990; Graves-Brown 2000). As well as solo recitations, Ross works with groups to create collective performances in multiple languages wherein participants are encouraged to remember rather than read the articles that may be meaningful to them and thereby to embody the Declaration's principles.²

Acts of Memory is a return to the original entreaty of the General Assembly of the United Nations to its member countries on 10 December 1948 to 'cause' the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions'.³ Each recitation is an answer to this call. But I would like suggest that *Acts of Memory*, premised upon a process of embodiment, goes beyond dissemination of the Declaration. Recitation locates human rights in human bodies. The performance of the 30 Articles gives abstract ideas, such as the rights to freedom, equality, dignity and personhood, a physical presence. Moreover, such rights emanate from physical bodies. Uttering, say, Article 9, 'No-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile' without the prompt of the written words testifies that the ideas of security of life and freedom of movement are held within the body of the person speaking. The body of artist, Monica Ross, is the still centre of the performance, both solo and collective. Dressed in plain, modest and dignified black clothing, effacing her own identity to appear statuesque, she gathers up the powers traditionally ascribed to the body in art as the representation of the people, to insist that rights embodied in her body belong to all (Figure 1).



Figure 1 'Anniversary – an Act of Memory, Monica Ross and Co-Reciters 2008-2010', <http://www.actsofmemory.net/>. Photos: Bernard G Mills, Joel Chester Fildes, Alex Delfanne, Georges Torode. Reproduced with thanks.

The places in which *Acts of Memory* has been performed fall into the UN General Assembly's category of 'educational institutions' and many also house paper archives or collections of objects. Some are museums and others have museum-like functions of collection and display. However, *Acts of Memory* is addressed to the limitations of the Declaration of Human Rights as carefully kept document; it is a demonstration of how rights inhere in the body of the person and an appeal for enacting rather than holding onto rights as articles to be read or viewed. *Acts of Memory* thus raises questions, which I hope to address in this article. Are museums spaces in which human rights can be expressed or exercised? What kinds of strategies of display, or types of curatorship, might enable rights to be enacted or embodied?

Displaying Human Rights in Museums

In a 2001 article in *Museum International*, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) publication, Terence Duffy reviewed numerous museums of 'human suffering.' His list included many examples of Holocaust museums (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, to give two examples), museums that record other genocides of the twentieth century (such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Phnom Penh, or Ntarama Genocide Memorial Site, Rwanda), museums of slavery (of which Gorée Museum of Slavery, Senegal, is perhaps the most well known) and prison museums (Robben Island, South Africa, is certainly the most famous). Museums devoted to human rights rather than human suffering featured in the list (with Liberty Osaka, Osaka, Japan, one example of four). Terrence Duffy concluded:

The museums discussed in this article envisage a genuine human rights culture and the extension of its protection for everyone. The museums exhibit historical and contemporary situations involving gross violations of these rights. It is encouraging that there is an emerging group of museums of human rights that might be custodians of what one could call a 'human rights culture'. UNESCO's programmes have made an enormous contribution to education for human rights and to their dissemination and protection. It is hoped that human rights museums might also contribute to this process. It is certainly the privilege of these museums of 'human suffering' to show the worst moments in the experiences of peoples in the hope that such portrayals will contribute to the advancement of human rights worldwide (Duffy 2001: 16).

I would like to distinguish the various functions Duffy attributes to these museums. He notes they 'envisage' and are the 'custodians' of a human rights culture; he hopes they could contribute to the 'education', 'dissemination' and 'protection' of human rights. Certainly, the

documentation of the abuse of human rights within museums has meant that it is they, rather than other public institutions that also hold historical records, such as libraries or archives, that have been appointed the guardians of past atrocities. Institutions once devoted to the history of human civilisation for the purposes of public enlightenment are keepers of a history of human oppression in order to do the same thing. The museum's content may have changed but its mission to hold collections for the benefit of the public remains firmly in place, thus involving them in the process of extending knowledge of war crimes, genocide, forced migrations, political imprisonment and torture. Here, it is the claim that such displays of the abuse of human rights can in fact provide for the 'protection' of rights that I would like to question a little further.

There is an assumption that the protection of human rights is achieved by the documentation of their abuse. Terence Duffy is not alone, of course, in making this claim: the importance of witnessing and reporting human rights abuse is the function of human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. But, there is a disjunction between showing the suffering that occurs and upholding rights that are supposed to prevent its occurrence. Indeed, one of the most important and long running debates about the recording of suffering, catastrophe, war and atrocity is that viewing such images encourages inaction: helplessness, apathy and even boredom (Sontag 2003). Furthermore, when a particular case of human rights abuse is viewed sometime after that abuse has ended, which is inevitably the scenario in museums of human suffering erected to remember the atrocities of the past, the museum visitor is looking at a time when it is too late to take any action for the case on display. Such representations of human suffering do provide the setting for educational programmes about human rights although attempts to activate museum spaces may well be considered necessary because viewing alone is not enough.⁴ The failure to prevent violations of human rights, despite the Universal Declaration and the international conventions or national legislation that instate its principles, is a problem that cannot, of course, not be resolved only by museums, but is, nevertheless, a matter that needs to be addressed if they really are to contribute to Duffy's 'human rights culture.'

Acts and Methods

Monica Ross' *Acts of Memory*, I suggest, offers a way of thinking about the disjunction between the documentation of rights and their enactment. In preparation for each of the recitations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Ross and the members of groups with whom she works move from quietly reading the Declaration, to reading an article aloud, speaking it without reading, checking the spoken word against the written text until all is memorised correctly. Then, it is performed in public. Thus rights are remembered, internalised, embodied. Might such a practice of embodiment occur within a museum? Could museums constitute rights rather than simply show how they have been disregarded? In order to answer these questions, and in doing so perhaps inform future museum developments, it would be useful to know a little more about how human rights may be already articulated in particular types of museum. This is the intention of this article. In it, I pay close attention to what actually happens inside a museum to a museum visitor and ask: how do museum visitors receive the idea of human rights or, indeed, receive those rights themselves, or recognise them in others?

Two case studies are offered for consideration here: *Le Mémorial de Caen*, Caen, Normandy, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. Both museums contain histories of conflict mounted from such dissimilar perspectives that any shared subject matter is barely recognizable. They are dissimilar in other respects. *Le Mémorial de Caen* is a relatively new national museum, established through a municipal initiative in 1988, dedicated to twentieth-century victims of war, and encourages group participation and guided tours as much as individual visits.⁵ The National Maritime Museum has been open for three quarters of a century and is not only nominally a national museum, it celebrates a national culture of discovery within which war features as a scientific adventure.⁶ It is located in what is now a highly developed metropolitan tourist centre. Put simply, a visit to the National Maritime Museum is a day out that fulfils the standard tourist expectation of amusement mixed with

education, and thus represents a case study of a more conventional museum experience than that of *Le Mémorial de Caen*. Although memorial museums are increasingly integrated into tourist itineraries, particularly those that claim to be either alternative or authentic, their dedication to the dead still sets them apart. Often founded to redress acts of violence, they are fairly obvious places in which to look for expressions of human rights. The case of the National Maritime Museum, however, permits some consideration of how human rights are manifested within the mainstream museum sector.

On the one hand, any museum might seem an unlikely venue for the presentation of matters of such contemporary and widespread relevance as human rights. Museums have been likened to cemeteries and mausoleums (Crimp 1993); they have been found to be elitist (Bourdieu and Darbel 1990). Attempts by museum professionals to overcome criticism which casts their institutions as deathly, forgotten and unpopular and to genuinely address the absence of sociability where it did exist has encouraged another spate of criticism: museums are too showy and commercial; they commodified the artefacts they were established to preserve and spectacularised their history (Bennett 1995: 59-88)

On the other hand, museums appear to have become highly sought after as places where the principles of human rights are legitimised. The part that museums could or should play in a 'human rights culture' (Duffy 2001: 16) may not be as frequently debated as their role in 'combating social inequality' (Sandell 2003: 3) nor is the inclusion of peoples and cultures in the museum as different and equal normally framed as question of human rights; however, I would like to suggest, perhaps not entirely controversially, that the exhibitions of equality undertaken in museums of all types over recent years can be interpreted as a social formulation of discourse of human rights which has re-opened up museum as space of political representation in which such rights can be exercised.

The museum's work of political representation, often understood as fairly new, is, in fact, grounded in their historical function as institutions of official, dominant or state culture. Early eighteenth century European museums were not only manifestations of the philosophical project of the Enlightenment to accumulate knowledge of the world but of its political vision. They were expressions of the republicanism of Enlightenment, which mobilised images of good government from past classical civilisations of Greece and Rome: the state was imagined as a body of knowledgeable citizens conducting its affairs in public. Museums gave physical form to this public space of the state.

The historical relationship between museums and the state has been described by Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach in their oft quoted 1980 *Art History* article, 'The Universal Survey Museum.' To simplify for the sake of brevity a piece of writing that patiently accumulates material details to reveal broad historical processes, there are two parts to its argument. Firstly, the architectural form of the museum is an articulation of the state. Duncan and Wallach write: 'In common with ancient ceremonial monuments, museums embody and make visible the idea of the state' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 449). And, secondly, the arrangement of the museum's collection within this architectural frame is the script of a ritual of incorporation into the state. '[T]he visitor', they observe, 'moves through a programmed experience that casts him in the role of an ideal citizen – a member of an idealized public and heir to an ideal, civilized past' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 452). The architecture of wide steps ascending to tall columns and high atriums that open into rooms with walls covered with images in gilded frames embodies, to repeat Duncan and Wallach's use of the word, the state in its benevolent form as the guardian of society's most highly valued possessions: wealth, culture and knowledge. The person who climbs the steps, walks under the columns, enters the atriums, moves through the rooms, then begins to embody the ideas embodied in the museum architecture.⁷ It provides a platform on which that person performs as a willing participant in the state, behaves as a member of an orderly and educated public. Thus, Duncan and Wallach argue that museums constitute a citizenry; those that pass through the museum assume the identity of a person endowed with rights.

From their very inception museums were used to express rights and it should be no surprise that they continue to be used to define them. The imperative of those that belong to Terence Duffy's 'human rights culture' (Holocaust museums, museums of slavery, prison museums, peace museums) is to offer some redress to peoples whose rights were not

recognised at some point in the past, through representations of the consequences of such a denial of humanity. Such symbolic reparations are in some cases, such as the museum exhibitions opened for the bicentennial of the Abolition Act of 1807, marking the two hundred years since the parliamentary prohibition of the British trade in slaves, an outcome of on-going re-evaluation of the unequal relationships between peoples and nations that have been perpetuated by museums. An attempt to understand and undo the forms of colonial authority exercised by museums has dominated academic museological debate and curatorial considerations about gallery development (Karp and Lavine 1991) for at least twenty years. Although the interest in human rights is very recent, it seems a logical continuation of the desire to create inclusive museum spaces where cultural differences are equally valued. The representation of human rights is an act of inclusion. It may even appear to complete the museum's Enlightenment project: finally, all people are citizens. What were once the rights of a few individuals, European men of property, now belong to the rest of the world. An exploration of the historical relationship between citizenship, the form of individual sovereignty characteristic of the western nation state, and humanity, an idealised body of equals whose rights transcend national boundaries, is beyond the scope of this article. I would only want to point out that the former identity is not simply supplanted by the latter in a museum. Ideas embodied in physical structures, the manifestation of the state as the national keeper of culture is not easily erased. The national (and colonial) legacy of the museum not only resides in its collections of other cultures but also in its architecture of citizenship. The act of inclusion intended by the representation of human rights may be little more than one of incorporation into a western institution. My initial questions bear repetition with some refinements in order that they can address the historical limitation of museums as well as their present possibilities. Are museums spaces in which human rather than individual rights can be expressed or exercised? How might existing strategies of display, or types of curatorship, need to depart from traditional museum fare to enable human rights to be enacted or embodied? I would now add another question. Is it possible to re-occupy the space that has cultivated narrow definitions of equality and remake the rights of citizens as those of humans?

I have sought to explore these questions by examining what Duncan and Wallach have called the 'architectural script' of the museum and the 'ritual of walking' through it (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 450-451). I wish to apply and extend their analysis of the classical architecture and rooms of oil paintings that comprise the metropolitan art museum to museums of a different type: one promotes international peace and another celebrates a national past. The varying content of the script of *Le Mémorial de Caen* or the National Maritime Museum may evoke a political identity other than a citizenry, such as that of humanity, but this will be seen by examining, as Duncan and Wallach do, the structures that shape the path of the visitor, that is, 'the museum itself' and its composition in 'the installations, the layout of rooms, the sequence of collections' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 450-451).

The study of *Le Mémorial de Caen* analyses the initial spaces that visitors encounter and which shape their visit, focusing upon two Second World War galleries entitled *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace and *La France des Années Noires* /France in the Dark Years. That of the National Maritime Museum centres upon the Atlantic Worlds gallery and the spaces that surround it. *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace and *La France des Années Noires* /France in the Dark Years date from the establishment of *Le Mémorial de Caen* in 1988 while the Atlantic Worlds gallery opened in 2007 as part of the bicentennial commemorations of the British parliamentary prohibition of the slave trade. It is possible, therefore, to read these two case studies as indicative of the formation of human rights in different types of museums as well as over time.

Le Mémorial de Caen

Le Mémorial de Caen, founded by the Mayor of Caen, Jean Marie Girault, is an early example of the recent memorial museum phenomenon (Williams 2007). Classified according to its collection and its strategies of exhibition, it is a social history museum. *Le Mémorial de Caen* displays historic artefacts not for their aesthetic but evidential value and adapts familiar

documentary forms to the scale of the museum. Panels of text and large photographic pictures line the museum's walls, applying the word and image juxtapositions of news reporting to the historical subject matter of *Le Mémorial de Caen*: the war ridden twentieth century. *Le Mémorial* is a civic initiative with an international mission. Its initial focus is local: it opens with an explanation of the occupation of France during the Second World War and a description of resistance in Normandy. The legacy of occupation, resistance and liberation is the impetus for the museum and its attempt to understand international conflict and its effects.

Twentieth-century war, and especially the Second World War in Europe, must be the most widely known history of all. It is a staple subject of the film industry; it is a fixture of school curriculums; it is always a focus of academic enquiry and popular writing. The visitor to *Le Mémorial de Caen* could have read about the Nazi occupation in countless books or viewed numerous films without leaving the comfort of his or her home. Visiting this museum (or, indeed, any other) is not a simple quest for information. It demands greater physical effort than either reading or watching; it involves the whole body in motion. Visiting a museum is a journey. In the case of *Le Mémorial de Caen*, close to the Normandy beaches, the journey could be considered a type of pilgrimage to a sacred landscape, which is completed inside the museum. Thus, the history exhibited within its walls, whether or not its outline or its details are already known, is assimilated into the journey of the visitor, absorbed into a day of their life to become part of their own experience: it is embodied.



Figure 2 *Le Mémorial de Caen*. Designed by Jacques Millet. Author's photograph.

Approached on foot or in a vehicle, *Le Mémorial de Caen* rises up from the ground as a war memorial: a huge expanse of stone, abstract and monumental (Figure 2). The museum lies within this structure, its entrance through a chasm in the memorial, a fissure in the stone, which has been rendered to appear cracked. The fractured stone is a broken body, a symbol of a physical and political body, the people and the nation. Across the façade of the museum are the words of the poet Paul Dorey:

LA DOULEUR M'A BRISÉ, LA FRATERNITÉ M'A RELEVÉ,
DE MA BLESSURE A JAILLI UN FLEUVE DE LIBERTÉ

'GRIEF HAS BROUGHT ME DOWN, SOLIDARITY HAS RAISED ME,
FROM MY WOUNDS HAS SPRUNG A RIVER OF LIBERTY'

Healing the broken body, or to put it in a less visceral or literary way, overcoming disunity that is both a cause and effect of war, is a fundamental principle of the museum. *The Guide to Le Mémorial* describes its 'running theme' as 'universal reconciliation' (*Le Mémorial de Caen* 2008: 4). This can be seen in its educational activities but also, importantly, it is embedded in the 'museum itself'. The transformation from the disruption of war into an ideal of unity structures the narrative of the museum and the journey of the visitor through it; it is 'written into the architectural script' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 450-451).



Figure 3 Entrance to Le Mémorial de Caen. Designed by Jacques Millet. Author's photograph.

As visitors enter the museum through the jagged cut in the stone, they walk straight into the wounded body between the words that declare that life and freedom has been delivered through physical suffering (Figure 3). A Christian mythology is unmistakable. Indeed, Caen is described *Le Mémorial's Guide* as 'a martyr city of the Liberation' (*Le Mémorial de Caen* 2008, 4). Such an invocation of sacrifice may seem out of place in nationally recognized municipal museum, a secular institution founded by a civic authority, which also in its first gallery '*La Faillite de la Paix/The Failure of Peace*', I would like to note, provides a Marxist analysis of the rise of fascism. However, museums typically, according to Duncan and Wallach, appropriated religious forms to provide the framework for secular rituals: 'deliberately recalled past ceremonial architecture' (Duncan and Wallach 1980, 449). War museums also

elicit the solemn attitude associated with honouring war dead at funerals and public commemorations: a slowed walking pace that keeps the bustle of life at bay and a hushed, dutiful silence which permits some recognition of absence.



Figure 4 Inside Le Mémorial de Caen.
Gallery designer: Yves Devraine. Author's photograph.

Thus, to enter *Le Mémorial de Caen* is nothing less than an acknowledgment of the suffering of human sacrifice. The process of actually purchasing a ticket for the museum at a desk in its atrium seems a rather redundant commercial transaction in comparison and a meaningless diversion from which museum visitors are called back to their path by the next instalment of the museum script: 'On the 6th June 1944, on the beaches of Normandy, over 10,000 soldiers paid for our freedom'. These words printed above the blue sky of a large photographic reproduction of a deserted Normandy shoreline sweep around a curved wall and draw visitors into the first gallery (Figure 4). '[O]ur freedom' is made evident to the visitors just by their being in the museum: we are here while the dead soldiers are not; we have our lives because they do not. Freedoms are also realised by us, the museum visitors, as we walk: we can go as we please, taking in the sights as it suits us; we can stop to look, read or study the objects, images and texts as we encounter them. Any museum visit exemplifies freedom of movement and freedom of expression, two of the most basic human rights, but within *Le Mémorial de Caen*, it is made quite explicit that these rights are inherited. Visiting a museum, especially one located in a site of history, such as a battlefield, revives a connection between past and present, upholds a relation across time. To visit *Le Mémorial* is to accept an inheritance, a type of gift. Gifts create obligations (Komter 1996; Mauss 2002). Thus, the museum visitor carries a debt to the past. Rights exist in the body of the visitor, in his or her presence in the museum and ability to move through it. But, rights do not inhere in visitors simply because they exist, following the liberal notion of origin of individual rights; here in the museum, rights are given and received; they are shared between people. The subjects of the museum and the museum visitors are thus constituted as a community.

Fragmentation into chaos: walking into hell

Between 2009 and 2010, *Le Mémorial de Caen* opened five new galleries. Existing spaces have been redeveloped and an additional one, devoted to the Battle of Normandy, created. The new galleries combine contemporary museum curatorship concerned with the engagement in historical debate, with *Le Mémorial's* original intention: to recognize the effect of war upon the city of Caen and to extend an understanding of experience of the Second World War to all international conflicts. The two galleries considered here, *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace and *La France des Années Noires* /France in the Dark Years are numbered 1 and 2 in *Le Mémorial's* maps and guides; they are founding galleries, not new ones, but as the first spaces through which visitors move they shape the experience of the rooms that make up the rest of the museum, those that follow later in the museum's walk and later in its development (Figure 5).



Figure 5 'Floor Plan' Le Mémorial de Caen (2010). Reproduced with thanks.

The sign to the first gallery, *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace, which also serves as an historical proclamation, is engraved on a shiny floor plaque. Stepping on or over the words reminds the visitor to *Le Mémorial* that he or she is undertaking a physical journey. Attention is also drawn to the motion of their body as the path they take slopes downwards. *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace is a spiral from the destruction of the First World War to the outbreak of the Second. This is a descent into hell, a path from fragmentation into chaos, separation into disunity. The journey is accompanied by sound, indistinct rumblings that become louder as the visitor reaches the spiral's end, and is punctuated by panels of text and photographic prints along a right hand wall. The first panel, entitled, 'The Imprint of the Great War' reads:

Its unprecedented violence made the First World War a human disaster without parallel in history, a horror that was to set the course of events for the rest of the 20th century. With 10 million dead and 21 million wounded – mostly among

those in uniform – the conflict was a blood bath that left Europe deeply traumatized. A whole generation of young men disappeared in the trenches, leaving millions of widows and orphans to fend for themselves. The weight of the dead crushed the life of those left behind. Mass mourning, physical injury and emotional damage shattered the values of a ruined Europe that no longer dominated the world stage. Victor and vanquished alike were left broken by their trial by fire.

Physical disorientation, lack of clear direction and fear of impending doom evoked by the text is felt in varying degrees by the visitors as they descend through the gallery whether or not they have read all or, indeed, any of the words. The 'Imprint of the Great War' text, and those that follow, provide an historical justification, should a visitor seek one, for the disruption to the normally smooth passage through a museum: the trauma of war compounded by interwar economic crisis created the conditions for totalitarianism and war once more. An analysis of the causes of war can be seen in the sequencing, the selected depiction of events, including the Great Depression, which explain the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, while an interpretation of its effects can be gleaned from almost every sentence, if read in whole or just part as visitors move down into the dark and towards the noise. Snatched phrases are sufficiently meaningful: 'blood bath ... young men disappeared ... millions of widows and orphans ... weight of the dead crushed the life... physical injury and emotional damage ...left broken.' Thus the architecture, lighting, sound and text of the *La Faillite de la Paix/The Failure of Peace* gallery coalesce around the victim of war: the human body.

The words of the panel of text entitled 'Imprint of the Great War' make no specific appeal to declarations or conventions of human rights but its condemnation of war is based on the unwritten and underlying principle of the value of human life. The destruction of life overturns the social order: physical wounds form political divisions. In the radical prose of the writing along the wall of the *Le Mémorial's* walk into hell is an argument for the unifying principle of human rights: protecting life, safeguarding the integrity of the human body, secures the political cohesion of society.

Subsequent panels of text in *La Faillite de la Paix/The Failure of Peace* sequence begin to identify specific abuses of human rights. A list of rights, often identified at the moment they are taken away, is compiled over the course of the gallery. For example, the panel of text entitled, 'Nazi Germany', contains references to the end of freedom of expression, to arbitrary arrest, imprisonment without judicial process and the instigation of discriminatory laws:

Coming legally to power as Chancellor of the Reich in 1933, Adolf Hitler transformed a Germany ravaged by unrelenting crisis into a totalitarian State. The first concentration camps were opened in the same year, to imprison and suppress those who opposed the new regime...As part of official ideology, racism and anti-semitism were enforced by a range of laws and measures excluding Jews from public life and the national community.

This text is part of a wider and well-rehearsed argument about fascism and its 'final solution': the Holocaust was made possible by the dismantling of a series of seemingly less significant freedoms than that to life. Listing human rights in order to prevent unfettered use of state violence is, of course, the purpose the Universal Declaration. The actions of Nazi Germany, from eliminating political dissent to stripping Jewish people of political identity, detailed in *La Faillite de la Paix /The Failure of Peace* gallery corresponds to a set of rights now codified in the Declaration that should have been recognized at the time. In this sense, the gallery is fairly straightforward expression of a discourse of human rights.

La Faillite de la Paix /The Failure of Peace gallery ends as the spiral flattens out into a narrow bridge (Figure 6). The noise is now louder and clearer, discernible as the sounds of a Nazi rally, and its source is visible: there is a door opening on the other side. Visitors to museums often falter at each change or choice of direction. As they halt at the end of the spiral, they appear to be standing on the edge of a precipice. The bridge announces a break in history and then enables visitors to continue their journey into a different time and place. When they walk across it, they step on or over another shiny floor plaque: *La France des Années Noires/ France in the Dark Years*. The gallery is a level, low ceiling basement comprised of small

rooms without natural light. *Le Mémorial's Guide* describes it as a 'deliberating oppressing, confined space' (*Le Mémorial de Caen* 2008: 13). Historical interpretation is again manifested in the museum's architecture, which in turn provides the coordinates for the visitor's experience through four chronological sections: the Phoney War, Defeat and the Armistice, Occupation and Collaboration, Resistance and Repression. A chronological order and sense of direction is lost in the last section as visitors are left to select exhibits for closer inspection. Some are accounts of collaboration, others of resistance. Hesitancy within museum spaces is a common experience. Unsure that they have understood what there is to see, visitors may ask themselves or each other: what shall we do now? The uncertainty of visitors in the final stages of *La France des Années Noires*/France in the Dark Years is an echo, albeit without urgency of a call to action, of the dilemma of the French people under occupation. Historical problems are felt, translated into the uneasy movements of the body of the visitor in the museum.



Figure 6 Bridge to La France des Années Noires/France in the Dark Years. Gallery designer: Yves Devraive. Author's photograph.

Techniques of embodiment are accompanied, as they were in the previous *La Faillite de la Paix* /The Failure of Peace space, by a series of text panels that continue the discourse of human rights: abuses are listed and used as a measure to evaluate the legitimacy of the political regime. The closing panel of text, 'Collaboration', claims:

The new, unashamedly authoritarian national order lost no time in espousing the values of existing European fascist regimes, turning France into a repressive militia-run police state in which persecution, arrests, round-ups and finally, open and unabashed collaboration with the occupying Nazi power were the order of the day. Jacques Doriot, Pierre Laval and Admiral Darlan, all loyal followers of Marshall Pétain's, rapidly became leading players in the anti-semitic, xenophobic and collaborationist policies that officially came into force at Montoire on 24 October 1940.

Arbitrary arrest, detention, discriminatory legislation and complicity with the already established abuses of the fascist state pile up as evidence against the Vichy regime and those named as the engineers of collaboration. At this closing stage of the gallery, museum visitors are addressed as history's jury; they are invited to adjudicate upon the wrongs of the past from their position in a better present. Retrospective views suppose some degree of separation. There is a difference in time between the moment when events recorded in the museum took place and that when its visitors have come to re-examine them. Visitors finally inhabit their more customary role within the museum: they become observers. They have felt the effects of past and are now enabled to judge the actions of historical figures. They have a dual relationship to the past or, rather, two different relationships to the people of the past: a close, physical connection to the victims of war and a dispassionate one to its perpetrators.



Figure 7 Prison de Caen 6 Juin 1944. Author's photograph.

It is the relationship between visitor and victim that dominates inside *Le Mémorial* and determines the pace of movement through it. Visitors slow up when faced with historical accounts appearing important, mattering most to them, and speed through those they find possible to ignore. Quite literally, this is a process of identification: picking out one subject as opposed to another upon which identification as projection (I would feel like this if that happened to me) is premised. *Le Mémorial's Guide* selects only a few exhibits for special mention, one of which is 'an engraved stone' from Caen Prison. The stone is displayed under a slab. Text is printed in relief at the head of the heavy, transparent block with the stone and its markings visible below. The exhibit is shaped like a tombstone; visitors read the circumstances of peoples' death as if over a grave (Figure 7). Under the large letters PRISON DE CAEN 6 JUIN 1944, is the following:

Within the precincts of the Caen prison, the Nazis executed without trial some 80 Resistance fighters in the morning of the June 6 1944, as the Allies were landing on the beaches nearby.

Since it was too late to transfer them to camps in Germany, the German authorities ordered they be eliminated. The prisoners, who had been detained for several weeks, belonged to several Calvados Resistance organizations. They faced a firing squad. In order to remove every trace of their crime, the occupying forces took the bodies away.

They have never been found.



Figure 8 *Les Villes Détruites/ Bombed out Cities. Author's photograph.*

A substitute for the proper burial denied to members of the Calvados Resistance, the exhibit is one of many in *Le Mémorial de Caen* that mark the loss of life. For example, in the gallery entitled *Les Villes Détruites/D'une Guerre à l'Autre/Bombed out Cities/From One War to the Next*, which connects the pre '45 and post '45 sections of the museum, includes a series of small photographs of ruined buildings and piles of rubble that demonstrate 'the scale of destruction of towns and human lives across Europe and Asia' (*Le Mémorial de Caen* 2008: 20). The photographs hang over a pale pink plasterwork, the size of large abstract painting, in which impressions of everyday clothing have been made, including the dress of a small child (Figure 8). These are imprints of the absent bodies of innocent people; their clothes are the sign of unarmed civilians struck down in the midst of their daily routine. The whole display, a composite of museum information panel, artwork and memorial, evokes lives that should have been lived; it is a reminder of the right to life and of how that right resides in the form of the human body. It is another assertion of a physical connection between the museum's subject and its visitors and an appeal for recognition of a shared humanity. Humanity is the community to which *Le Mémorial's* visitors are invited to belong. They stop to peer at the small photographs, looking at the details of devastation, but the visual clarity of the display as a whole is such that its meaning can be gathered at a glance as the museum visitor passes by to

continue their journey into the *Guerre Froide/Cold War* spaces or make their way out of the museum into *Le Parc et Les Jardins du Souvenir/The Park and Gardens of Remembrance*.

Le Mémorial is surrounded by landscaped green spaces, including an increasing number dedicated to the different nations who took part in the Normandy landings, and punctuated by war memorials and symbols of peace, of which the most well-known sculpture is the 'Knotted Gun' by C.F. Reuterswärd rarely called by its official name, *Non-violence*. The Resistance Memorial, opposite the British Gardens, at the side of path leading to the front entrance of the *Le Mémorial* on the route to and from the car park, is as significant, perhaps more so. It is comprised of a concave arrangement of stones, unfinished and worn in appearance and predates the recent re-development of both museum interior and expansion of the landscape around it. It was erected a year after the opening of the museum with this engraved tribute:

AUX RESISTANTS ABATTUS DE LA PRISON DE CAEN
A TOUS LES MARTYRS DU NAZISME DANS LE CALVADOS
L'HOMMAGE DE LA VILLE DE CAEN
LA VILLE DE CAEN A REALISE LE MONUMENT EN HOMMAGE A LES
PREMIERES VICTIMES TOMBEES LE 6 JUIN 1944 POUR LA
LIBERATION DE LA FRANCE ET DE L'EUROPE

LE 6 JUIN 1989

THE CITY OF CAEN PAYS TRIBUTE
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RESISTANCE SHOT IN CAEN PRISON
TO ALL THE MARTYRS OF NAZISM IN CALVADOS
THE CITY OF CAEN ERECTED THIS MONUMENT IN TRIBUTE TO THE
FIRST VICTIMS TO FALL ON 6 JUNE IN 1944 IN THE LIBERATION OF
FRANCE AND EUROPE

6 JUNE 1989

Caen prison is both an exhibit in the museum and a memorial in its landscape. The account of the deaths of the eighty Resistance fighters and the acknowledgment of their loss of life is central to the foundation of *Le Mémorial*, lies at its heart so to speak. The Resistance Memorial is an act of reparation that can explain the purpose of *Le Mémorial* as a whole. To look at the shape and form of the stones, to read the tribute, to think about the eighty members of the Calvados Resistance, to imagine their hopes for liberation, to try, and in all likelihood fail, to imagine what it might feel like to face execution as the war you had fought was about to be won, gives them an existence for that moment in time standing before the memorial. Some part of the debt the visitor carried though the museum is repaid in the small offering of time from living to the dead.⁸

Le Mémorial de Caen provides spaces in which lost lives are given a presence.

The National Maritime Museum, London

The National Maritime Museum is a quite different museum journey. With the Royal Observatory and the Queen's House, it is one of the three public buildings that comprise 'Maritime Greenwich', a World Heritage Site, a visitor attraction within a tourist destination. Visiting the National Maritime Museum would be combined with activities that make up a day out, such as bus rides, boat trips, shopping, eating in cafes or restaurants, to become another thing to see and do, an item on an itinerary. Such listings are, of course, vitally important for they prescribe the activities and define institutions through which a tourist could acquire knowledge of a place and its history.

The National Maritime Museum was established in 1934 from collections of naval art and history that had been on public display in Greenwich since the eighteenth century (Littlewood and Butler 1998: 10). Its collections encompass the major taxonomic split in the museum world; the National Maritime Museum includes both art and science. The latter,

however, dominates its main spaces. The halls initially encountered by visitors contain large-scale, interactive, technological exhibits and uses the language of discovery associated with science museums: visitors are encouraged to discover the extraordinary world that has been discovered by inventors or explorers. Not all the spaces within the National Maritime Museum are the same. In many if not almost all museums, galleries undergo re-development and re-display at different times according to political and financial priorities to produce a rather inconsistent overall effect. Each museum space, shaped by the curatorial principles current when it was created, differs in form and content. For example, the Ships of War gallery in the



Figure 9 'Gallery Guide' Atlantic Worlds The National Maritime Museum.

National Maritime Museum presents progress in the technology of combat as an achievement in itself without any historical implications, whereas the Atlantic Worlds, the gallery examined here, considers the human consequences of crossing the seas for exploration and trade. Opened to coincide with the bicentennial commemorations of the Abolition Act of 1807, Atlantic Worlds deploys two strategies of current critical curatorship. Firstly, different kinds of museum objects are juxtaposed: usually discrete collections are combined and traditional museum typologies disregarded to demonstrate the relationship between the accumulation of wealth and acts of oppression. Secondly, the linear narrative common to national museums, wherein history unfolds before of the eyes of the museum visitor as the equivalent of national progress, is replaced in Atlantic Worlds by a curving, circular space (Figure 9). Museum exhibitions of the history of the slave trade are the subject of much recent debate generated by the 2007 commemorations of Abolition (Cubitt 2009; Rice 2009; Webster 2009) but rather than repeating this discussion here, important though it is, I wish to focus attention upon how Atlantic Worlds forms part of the 'programmed experience' of the National Maritime Museum which 'casts' the visitor in a particular 'role' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 452). As in the previous case study of Le Mémorial de Caen, what follows is an account of a museum journey. Taking up again Duncan and Wallach's interpretation of the 'ritual of walking' in museums as a

process of enactment of the museum's 'script' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 450-451), it uses their analysis of the making of citizens in the art museum as a formula for understanding how another type of museum might constitute another political identity: the human subject protected by human rights.



Figure 10 Entrance to the National Maritime Museum. Author's photograph.

From the broad gravel path that leads from Romney Road to its arched entrance, the National Maritime Museum appears as temple (Figure 10). Art museums evoke temples as do state offices. The National Maritime Museum could be mistaken for an art museum. Its neo-classical façade, a 'Greco-Roman temple front', is one of the architectural forms through which public buildings, argue Duncan and Wallach, claim descent from imperial Rome: 'those who pass through its doors enact a ritual that equate state authority with the idea of civilization' (Duncan and Wallach 1980: 450). With a shop to the right and the busy movement of people around large showy exhibits, the architectural script is interrupted as soon as the visitor enters but, importantly, reinserted into the museum experience on the first floor. A large, central, open space can be reached by two staircases. It resembles a town square: bordered by the symmetrical windows of eighteenth century houses, statues of male dignitaries positioned at the corners, benches for sitting and waiting, tables and chairs belonging to a café just spilling out over its edge. It is, unmistakably, a civic space within the museum structure, constructed by inserting a mezzanine above a courtyard and under a glass roof (Figure 11). Although entitled the Upper Deck Collection, it is not dominated by exhibits; traditional museum objects, selected 'treasures' from the National Maritime Museum collection, are placed in conventional cabinets that run along the parapets of the square, leaving the floor empty (Figure 12). Visitors move at a gentle pace around the floor and adopt a contemplative disposition; they halt to look at the objects, read the labels; they stop to think. They often simply look around, gain a sense of the place, decide where to go next. The sign



Figure 11 Civic space within the National Maritime Museum. Author's photograph.



Figure 12 Upper Deck collection. Author's photograph.



Figure 13 Entrance to Atlantic Worlds from the Upper Deck. Author's photograph.

for the Atlantic Worlds gallery is prominently displayed (Figure 13), visible from both staircases and the café; however, visitors are not hurried through the entrance but encouraged to delay their journey, if only for short while. The town square called the Upper Deck functions as a kind of antechamber within which visitors prepare themselves for the experience of looking at the collections of the National Maritime Museum. Indeed, a series of four text panels explain the purpose of museums. Under the title, 'Collective Memory', the panel closest to the Atlantic Worlds reads:

Museums mirror the cultures that create and support them, both in the long term and in more temporary ways. They convey and illustrate a mass of information, varied meanings and collective memory about the objects they preserve, and to an ever-widening range of people.

Museums are the product of scientific civilization – societies that have developed a rational, observational approach in attempting to understand all aspects of existence, past and present. They show us material ranging from a pre-human past to aspects of our own time. The objects they hold help us retrieve the actions and thoughts – good or bad – from previous generations.

Museums can be tools of propaganda and social control, but in free societies they present information in a balanced manner, without political interference. Even so, museums should challenge comfortable ideas and may provoke passionate responses. It is their role to interpret and question as well as display and celebrate.

This is a complicated piece of writing that raises, but does not resolve, the contradictions of museums in the twenty-first century; they are of the past but in the present. The 'Collective Memory' text panel suggests that museums reflect society and adapt to their visitors but, as creations of 'scientific civilization' (surely a reference to the Enlightenment), it argues that knowledge of a changing society is gathered in a way that has not changed: we look then learn, or put less simply, we examine 'all aspects of existence' to gather 'understanding' of them, we try to see the reasons for their existence. There is not space here to discuss the text panel in full, but I would note that the tension between museum collections, which represent a moment in time, and museums, which change with time, is its central problematic. Museums, or at least the National Maritime Museum, claim to provide only information, the past as it happened, just history, but also to offer it up for judgment. Visitors can distinguish through the museum objects the 'actions and thoughts – good or bad – from previous generations.' They occupy the space between the past and the present of the museum and are invited to judge the former from the position of the latter: they are the contemporary witnesses of history and then its jurors. Visitors in *Le Mémorial de Caen*, at the close of *La France des Années Noires*/France in the Dark Years, were addressed as members of a jury. To take up this position, I suggested, was to accept their customary role in museums: to be observers, to look upon the past rather than feel its effects too keenly.

The National Maritime Museum visitors are addressed as part of 'free societies'; their membership of which, importantly, is based upon their capacity to examine the world, to see it for themselves and arrive at their own understanding. Visitors are readily recognized by museum professionals, by museum sector funding bodies and through museum outreach programmes as holders of the right to education (Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). However, the rights the 'Collective Memory' text endows upon visitors are more basic than that of access to schooling; they are rights to freedom of opinion and expression, specified in Article 19 as rights 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'. Thus the museum is defined as an institution of human rights. As the provider of information 'in a balanced manner, without political interference', it is a means through which rights are exercised. Furthermore, the National Maritime Museum charges itself with a questioning role in the presentation of its history. The 'Collective Memory' text panel reads as both a welcome and warning: you have the freedom of the museum, but you may not like everything that you see.

The architectural script of the National Maritime Museum, its doorway through the arch and the columns, its ascent into a civic space, invites museum visitors to consider themselves as citizens; its written script encourages them to act as freethinking jurors. Citizen and juror are not disparate identities, of course, the latter is an extension of the former: a member of nation-state, a reasoning and reasonable individual prepared and willing to examine the past. Museum visitors are empowered to make their own decisions, offered autonomy and isolation. The actual entrance to the Atlantic Worlds gallery is inauspicious, rather business-like but suitable for the official endeavour about to be undertaken. Visitors must pull a heavy office door towards them and as they do so become certain that the frivolity of interactive museum is not to be found within.

Compared to the hubbub of children around the large scientific displays, the Atlantic Worlds gallery is a quiet, somber space; it is dimly lit with noise soaked up by a carpeted floor. Its collection initially appears to be of decorative arts: oil paintings and eighteenth and nineteenth century prints, silverware, ceramics. Among these objects of beauty are artefacts of violence. There is weaponry: guns whose age and craftsmanship enable them to be read as antiques that are entirely of piece with the oil paintings and conform to the standard visual fare in an English country house. But this scene of domestic plenty is interrupted by instruments of punishment and forced restraint: whips and shackles are on display in the glass cabinets of the Atlantic Worlds gallery. These are simply presented as part of the National Maritime Museum's collection, labeled in the same way as the silver spoons.

The history of slavery is uncovered in the Atlantic Worlds gallery as visitors find disturbing objects in familiar surroundings. The very fine things held in the National Maritime Museum, the gilded portraits or the shining tableware, are readily interpreted by all those visitors who have once made their way through an art museum as the wealth of the nation

that has become, through its collection and display, their cultural inheritance. Just including a few of the objects used to hold slaves may seem a small curatorial gesture but it indicates the source of national wealth and the culpability of those who claim it as inheritance. In other words, it raises the question: to whom do the whips and shackles belong? Since they are held by the museum are they not also part of the museum visitor's inheritance? An opening panel entitled 'The Collection' admits ownership of almost everything in the gallery and in so doing acknowledges a material connection between the slave trade and the museum. Its visitors stand to be implicated in the history of slavery. However, they are also reminded of the difference between the museum's collections and the museum itself:

The objects in the collection come, almost exclusively, from the collections of the National Maritime Museum. Like all collections, they only tell part of the story of an historical period or geographical area. They reflect the ideas and preoccupations of the people who collected them and the times in which they were collected.

All text displayed in museums is intended to guide the visitor on their journey through its collections. This opening text on 'The Collection' and those that follow in the bays of the curving gallery space provide historical information concerning the two overlapping histories presented in Atlantic Worlds, transatlantic slavery and the colonisation of the Americas. The information assumes a readership, indeed, gallery writers pay very close attention to existing and potential visitor demographics. But regardless of differences of age, ethnicity, gender or class, the text is always written for visitors in their own moment in time and thus confirms that they observe the past from the present; they are at some distance from the events being described. To take an example, 'Visions of the Caribbean', relays information about plantation slavery:

The Africans were defined in law as 'chattels' – the personal property of their 'owners'- denied the right to live and move as they chose. Their forced labour produced commodities like tobacco, cotton and sugar, for which there was a huge European demand. It also made plantations owners very rich, and notorious in Britain for their decadent lifestyles.

Nearly two-thirds of all enslaved people cut cane on sugar plantations. These were not the tropical paradises of contemporary European depictions, but places of hard labour and cruel treatment. The combinations of unceasing toil, disease and inadequate food led to very high mortality rates. Despite this, African music, dance and religious ceremonies flourished, evolving into new hybrid cultures and traditions. Individual acts of resistance and large violent rebellions left slaveholders throughout British America in a state of perpetual unease.

The dissembling of plantation slavery, as if it is an institution unknown in its basic forms by visitors until they begin to read the text in the museum, releases them from any prior relationship that they may feel they have to the past. The flattened tone of uncontroversial fact also allows museum visitors to make their own judgment. Rights to free expression and opinion are guaranteed in the National Maritime Museum by techniques of reporting that equate the absence of involvement with accuracy. Perhaps nothing could be further from the hold of the past over the present in *Le Mémorial de Caen*. But both museums do share one strategy: the identification of actions that can be retrospectively recognized as abuses of human rights. It is used, for example, in the text panel devoted to 'The Middle Passage'. The representation of the horrors of the middle passage won the debate for the abolition of the slave trade in parliament yet the Atlantic Worlds panel remains consistent with the moderate prose of the rest of the gallery:

Conditions on board the ships were appalling: huge numbers of people were crammed into very small spaces, with little room to move or air to breathe. Men, women and children were separated, families being torn apart. Men were usually kept in pairs, handcuffed by their wrists and shackled with iron leg-rings.

Most ships carried between 200 and 400 people. Overcrowding, poor diet, dehydration and disease led to high death rates. Of the 3.4 million Africans transported in British ships about 1 in 7 – or 450,000 people – died on the Atlantic crossing. Their bodies were unceremoniously thrown overboard, without burial rites. Those who resisted by refusing food and water were beaten and force fed. Those who attempted more violent organized rebellion were even more savagely punished. Rape was common.

The specific abuses detailed in the 'Middle Passage' can be quickly recognized as absolutely wrong; they are a subversion of rights that should be, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, upheld everywhere and at all times. The separation of families is a refusal of the right to family life; transportation in cramped ship is a denial of freedom of movement at every level; cuffing, shackling, force-feeding, beating, raping are forms of 'torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment' to which 'no one shall be subject'; the principle that 'everyone has the right to life, liberty or security of the person' has been disregarded as the number of deaths demonstrate; the disposal of bodies confirms that Africans were not treated as 'equal in dignity and rights.' Slavery and the slave trade are prohibited in Article 4 but the Universal Declaration as a whole provides a moral standard through which a series of historical wrongs can be authoritatively identified. This is a retrospective application of human rights to slaves and as such is to re-value people who were treated as less than that. The dispassionate words of Atlantic Worlds gallery are, nevertheless, an act of reparation.

Conclusion

The two cases studies of *Le Mémorial de Caen* and the National Maritime Museum indicate differences in how human rights are articulated in museums. It is tempting to present these differences as embodiment and disembodiment: the physical experiences of *Le Mémorial de Caen* and the intellectual practice of examining history in the National Maritime Museum have been set against each other in this article. The fragile human body, whose integrity guarantees a peaceful society and whose disintegration is the effect of war, is the focus of *Le Mémorial de Caen*, manifest in its script and through the physical sensations of its first two galleries. Embodiment is keenly felt. However, walking through the gates and within the walls of any museum can be understood as a process of embodiment, but is often a less sensational process, indeed, one in which a body is controlled in order that the visitor can conform to the requirements of the museum. There is a moment, usually early on in the museum visit, when visitors feel they have become accustomed to the space; they have adopted an appropriate form of behaviour, found out how to perform themselves and settled into a suitable body: citizen or human, witness and juror. I do not simply want to argue vaguely that various forms of embodiment occur in various museums creating as many types of identity as they are museums but rather that human rights are enacted differently because they are inflected through and exercised within specific museum structures: exterior and interior architectural forms, gallery spaces, juxtapositions of objects and written text. While it is all too common to suggest in conclusion that that further study is needed, this is certainly the case here. This article has begun to identify specific practices of human rights in museums but the extent to which these may be found again or found to be general across the museum sector would require other museums to be subject to a similar analysis to that offered here.

Specificities should not be underestimated in any search for generalities. For example, human rights within *Le Mémorial de Caen* and the National Maritime Museum are rights of different origin. In the former, they are constituted through relationships between people, by the living remembering the dead. In the latter, they are an extension of the autonomy of citizenship. The invocation of human rights in museums as dissimilar as *Le Mémorial de Caen* and the National Maritime Museum is an indication of the extent to which their principles have become a measure through which the past is interpreted; the deployment of a discourse of human rights to indict the past is a shared strategy that has assigned to museums a role in historical reparations. Thus these two case studies do raise an important general question. Can museums really give back rights that were once taken away?

Notes

- 1 British Library, 'Taking Liberties: the Struggle for Britain's Freedoms and Rights', <http://www.bl.uk/takingliberties> accessed 25.6.10.
- 2 Monica Ross and Co-Reciters, 'Anniversary – Acts of Memory: Solo, Collective and Multi-lingual Recitations from Memory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights', <http://www.actsofmemory.net/> accessed 25.6.10.
- 3 United Nations, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights', <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> accessed 25.6.10.
- 4 See, for example, the work of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience: <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>.
- 5 Caen-Normandie Mémorial: Cité de L'Histoire Pour La Paix <http://www.memorial-caen.fr/portailgb/> accessed 29.7.10.
- 6 National Maritime Museum, <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/nav.2837> accessed 8.9.10.
- 7 My notion of embodiment derives from Judith Butler's work (1990) and is indebted to Paul Graves-Brown's reflections upon the materiality of embodiment (2000). My reading of Duncan and Wallach's analysis of the 'ritual of walking' (1980: 450-451), which is, in fact, a re-reading of a text I have read many times, has driven it, I hope with some sensitivity, through this notion; although the text, of course, predates the current preoccupation with embodiment. The sources of Duncan and Wallach's analysis of the museum ritual are stated in their footnote 11 (1980: 467): V. Turner (1977a) 'Frame, flow and reflection: ritual drama in public liminality' in M. Benamou and C. Carmello (eds) *Performance in Postmodern Culture*, Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; V. Turner (1977b), *The Ritual Process*, Ithaca: Cornell Paperbacks; A. van Gennep (1960), *The Rites of Passage*, Chicago: University of Chicago.
- 8 I am very grateful to the anonymous reader of this article who alerted me to the importance of Roger I. Simon's work, in particular his essay 'The terrible gift: museums and the possibility of hope without consolation' (2006) and that written with Jennifer Bonnell, "'Difficult" exhibitions and intimate encounters' (2007), *museums and society* 5 (2). I hope my consideration of the expression of human rights in museums may contribute to a general understanding of what Simon describes as 'practices of inheritance initiated by public history' (2006: 189) as well as, more specifically, to an analysis of museum visitors as the recipients of a gift, which I consider here to be, in part at least, reciprocated with an offering of time (Bourdieu, 1990: 98-111).

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