Cover sheet (‘An article’, 7963 words excluding biographies, abstract and references)

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Abstract

‘Such endings that are not over’: The slave trade, social dreaming and affect in a museum

The paper explores Social Dreaming (SD) as a method for understanding the affective responses to one of the exhibitions that marked the bicentenary of the 1807 Act that abolished the British slave trade: *Breaking the Chains: The Fight to End Slavery* at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM) in Bristol. It asks whether SD can serve the evolving purposes and mission of museums and their role in society. The theory and practice of SD is described and findings are interpreted from a psychosocial and Deleuzian perspective. Finally the value and potential of SD is discussed as a process for attending to audience reactions to disturbing exhibitions.

Key words: museum, social dreaming, affect, slavery, psychosocial

‘Such endings that are not over’: The slave trade, social dreaming and affect in a museum

Introduction

Avery Gordon’s phrase ‘such endings that are not over’ refers to the apparent ending of racial slavery in the USA (2008, p. 139). But can one ever draw the curtain on the horrors of historical slavery and would one ever want to? If we apply such questions to history that has been selected for museum displays, we question a common method of interpreting history. This essay examines how facts about the slave trade were displayed in the exhibition *Breaking the Chains: The Fight to End Slavery* at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM) in Bristol and how it is sometimes only with difficulty that the museum visitor can access a factual world through the vulnerable non-factual self. We examine the use of Social Dreaming (SD) (Lawrence, 2005; Manley, 2014) as a way to access the subjectivities of the self in this museum context, and investigate its use in museums.

Breaking the Chains: The Fight to End Slavery

In 2007 hundreds of museums prepared exhibitions to mark the bicentenary of the 1807 Act that abolished the British slave *trade.* Slaves were emancipated through a further act in 1833, Even then a system of apprenticeship kept the freed slaves tied into unpaid labour for fixed terms. In 1838 this too was abolished. This distinction between the slave trade and slavery is easily elided in loose talk about slavery being abolished in 1807. We argue that one of the darknesses of slavery is that historical narrative is not necessarily a safe haven for an examination of such a tumultuous theme. Furthermore, in their efforts to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade, the museums were also trying to manage competing demands ‘fraught with sensitivities and

tensions' (Smith, 2010b, p.24) which may have been beyond the remit of historical narratives: on the one hand they were celebrating abolition and on the other embracing the experiences of African and African-Caribbean communities within wider narratives of 'Britishness'.

Bristol was one of the main British ports involved in the trading of slaves from West Africa to the British Caribbean during the 17th and 18th centuries. The *Breaking the Chains* exhibition was one of the more substantial exhibitions of the bicentenary commemorations (Dresser, 2009, p.235; Prior 2007). Visitors were initially confronted with an image of slaves confined in the hold of a ship (Figure 2) and then proceeded through sections covering West Africa; trading with Europe; the capture and enslavement of people; and a celebration of the resistance to slavery in the British Caribbean. Inevitably strong reactions and emotions were evoked. Prior, a historical consultant to the BECM comments that 'transatlantic slavery and African-Caribbean history in general are not yet considered a normal or ordinary part of a British museum's brief. The perceived difficulties of mounting exhibitions or planning ancillary events on these topics lead to a "curating by committee" approach which undermines bold and imaginative treatments and waters down direct language' (Prior, 2007, p.200). Despite this, Dresser suggests that, 'the museum's public consultation process and its incorporation of exhibitions of local black artists had been ground breaking in its inclusivity' (2009, p.235).

Dresser also comments that the programme was both engaging and contested (2009, p.231): there was 'deep suspicion expressed in some quarters that the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade would be misrepresented by official bodies and made into a Eurocentric vehicle of self-congratulation' (Dresser, 2009, p.231). The museums engaged in the 2007 commemorations

were implicated in national cultural policy that struggled with the difficulties of the issues. In their analysis of Tate Britain's programme for 2007, Dewdney et al argue that it 'inflected the same narrative of victimhood on a contemporary diverse population simply on the basis of racial difference, exacerbated by the targeting of BME audiences' (2013, p.67).

Many museums today adopt a wider remit than that of collecting, conserving and displaying artefacts and specimens (Bennett, 1995; Message, 2006). Of particular relevance is the shift that Arnold-de Simine identifies from 'history museum' to 'memory museum' (2012, p.15; Arnold-de Simine, 2013). This marks a shift away from the museum as the authoritative narrator of a progressive national narrative to one that invites affective responses. Such a shift is particularly relevant in the case of the abolition exhibitions. However, Wilson argues that the exhibitions deferred 'a confrontation with a traumatic past' and in fact repressed it (Wilson, 2010, p.176). According to Fouseki, some of the consulted community groups 'often experienced frustration, anger, and disappointment during and after the development of the 1807 exhibitions' (Fouseki, 2010, p.180; see also Cubitt, p.2010; Waterton, 2010). These commentaries are echoed in some of the entries to the Visitors' Book from the *Breaking the Chains* exhibition:

> As an African American female, I am overwhelmed with a number of disheartening emotions. I move from sadness to anger in a swift movement of the eye. Are you celebrating African culture or are you subtly defending the institutions of slavery because of its profitable advantage? I'm extremely confused by the intentions and the purpose of this museum… (*Breaking the Chains*, Visitors' Book)

For this visitor, the exhibition's narrative failed to express the reality of the trauma behind the story, to such an extent that the writer thinks the exhibition might even be condoning slavery. Such alienation can arise when visitors find nothing to suggest the exhibition makers have any sense of what their experience might be. She is left alone with her experience. Below, we discuss how SD may contribute to generating a shared affective space for visitors to a potentially traumatic museum experience.

Much museological analysis focuses on art museums and what they do with and to art (Hetherington, 2006; Preziosi and Farago, 2004). Critique of the representation of *history* in museums often takes place within a theoretical framework of memory, emotion and identity (Arnold-de Simine, 2012). This interest in emotion has arisen alongside a museological and practice-based interest in 'difficult heritage' or 'dark history' (Macdonald, 2009; Witcomb, 2013), dealing with subjects like war and genocide. Some such museums express a particular sensitivity to the subjective experience of people caught up in the history and that of the visitors (Smith and Campbell, 2015; Pivnick and Hennes, 2014).

In her analysis of the commemorative exhibitions Smith concludes that the powerful emotions that accompanied the exhibitions

> should not have been ignored by curatorial staff. Rather it is important to recognise that such emotional issues exist and to develop the tools or opportunities within an exhibition to help visitors constructively mediate them. (Smith 2010b, pp. 209 -10)

Although we agree that emotional issues may not have been addressed, we believe that rather than deliberately ignoring such issues, most of the museums were engaged in common museum practice whereby collections are used to present a history derived from a written narrative. In this context, the collections are used to *illustrate* and the evocative powers (Bollas, 2009) of the objects themselves are not overtly addressed.

The growing critical literature about museums as places of emotion and affect (Smith and Campbell, 2015; Witcomb, 2013) arises from this need, which we address from a psychoanalytic perspective, an unusual stance for museum or heritage studies. In taking such an approach we are not surprised by the complexity of emotions that the exhibitions evoked. We suggest that psychoanalytic theory brings an understanding of the psychic and cultural origins of contradictory emotions, that makes it particularly apt for dealing with the subject of enslavement. Our focus then is on psychosocial theory and the interpretation of the contributions to the SD workshops at the BECM, rather than an exhaustive analysis of other kinds of data that has already been used in extensive research into the 2007 commemorations (for example see Smith et al, 2011). Also relevant but beyond the scope of this essay is the literature on museums as sites of memory and indeed the 'new museology' which discusses, amongst other things, the concept of the memory museum (eg Macdonald 2013; Andermann and Arnold-de Simine 2012; Araujo, 2012). It may be further speculated that the aspect of 'memory' that might be relevant to a psychosocial study of a museum dealing with the traumatic subject of enslavement, is precisely the Freudian understanding that to remember what has been forgotten is concurrent with psychoanalytical practice: that is to say the releasing of repression so that what is 'forgotten' may be expressed, including even those aspects of memory that are not memory at all because

the past experience was not sufficiently perceived in the past to have been 'forgotten' in the first place. It is precisely the latter 'memories' that Freud identified as being discovered through dreams (Freud, 1950 [1914]).

We see SD, therefore, as a way of introducing an affective perspective on what a museum might offer. Our hypothesis is that the use of SD enhanced the expression and understanding of the hidden emotional communications that were implicit in the narrative of the exhibition.

Social Dreaming: Visualising Emotions in the Museum

The SD workshops, therefore, questioned the thesis of the 1807 commemorations that it was time to 'move on' (Waterton, 2010), which at the time of writing is still the UK Prime Minister's official response (Andrews, 2015). To borrow from Arnold-de Simine, the workshops encouraged 'an imaginary engagement with the past as an intractable "other" that cannot be brought to a closure' (2012, p.30). They were a subtle intervention but one that brought a significant additional dimension to the workshop participants' experience of the exhibition. They were both an actual and a symbolic intervention (Brown, 2004, p.247) into a contested area using dreams and visual material that acknowledged the profound impact of a traumatic history. It made the museum, albeit for a short time, a place where complex emotions were expressed, and unconscious responses were understood to be influential in determining visitors' experiences.

SD is a way of sharing and processing complex emotions, especially where this is difficult to express because the subject matter is traumatic or disturbing. Typically, participants gather in a room and share dreams and associations for 60-75 minutes, and then follow this up with a discussion for 30-45 minutes. The emphasis on the sharing of emotions comes through the dream images and associations because dreams 'insist with greater energy upon their right to be included among our real mental experiences in respect to their affective [sic] than in respect to their ideational content' (Freud, 1991, p. 595). Since the mid-1980s SD has been used as a means of discovering hidden or unspoken thoughts, the 'unthought known' (Bollas, 1987) in participatory settings. During the dream-sharing event, called a 'matrix', dreams are not initially interpreted by the facilitators or researchers. Instead, the dream images and associations are allowed to gradually accumulate. The sensation is of complex emotions emerging in such a way that participants often feel they are perceiving new thoughts and meanings. This process is immediately followed by a dialogue and reflection on the images and the emotions so that participants can make sense of the SD work.

The extensive literature that documents the use of SD has highlighted the method's potential for engaging with complexity through people's dreams and a shared 'associative unconscious' (Long, 2013). The idea of the 'associative unconscious' draws from Freud's (1900) use of free association with his patients. In SD, however, the free association occurs in a shared and non-therapeutic setting. In the matrix the associations of feelings and ideas are understood as being common to the social world of the participants. The matrices work to simultaneously encourage sharing and a certain de-personalising of the themes, images and emotions that emerge. That is to

say, in the course of the matrix, we are interested in 'the dream and not the dreamer' (Lawrence 2005, p. ix). This is why the seating is arranged in a 'snowflake' pattern, as illustrated below.

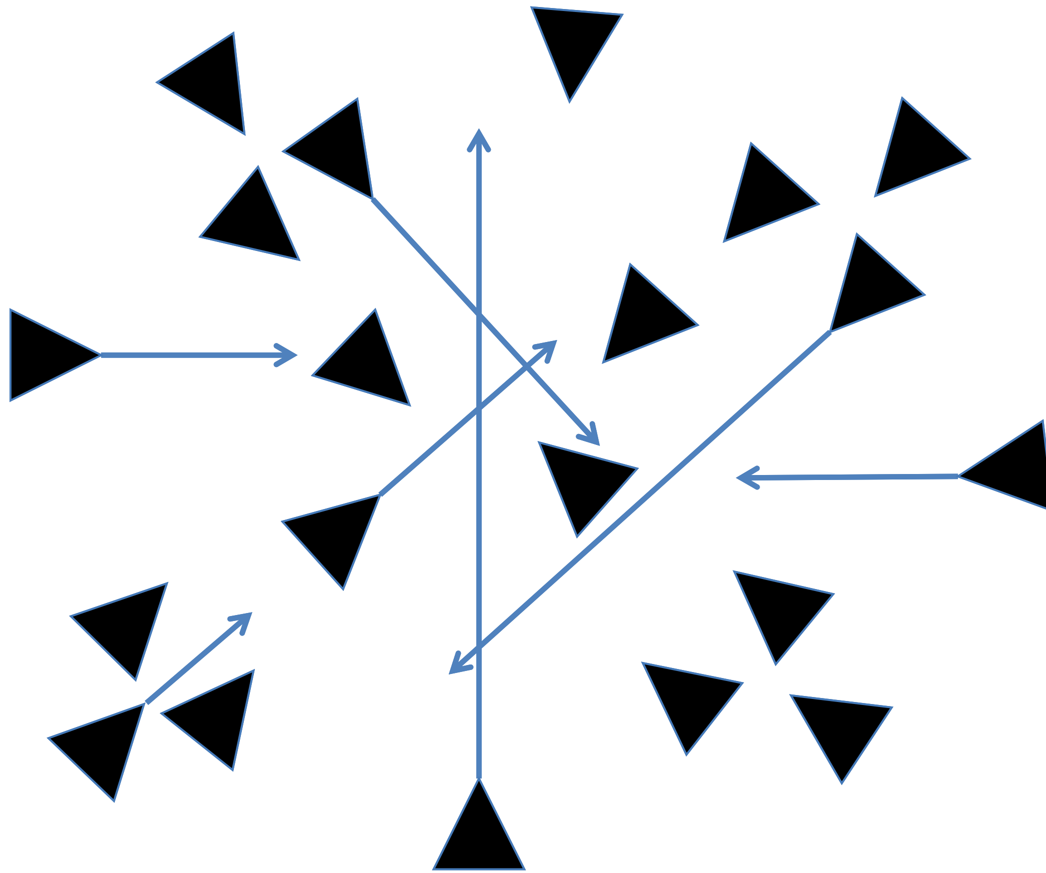

Figure 1. Snowflake pattern

This configuration makes it impossible for a participant to directly face others and allows her to speak 'to the matrix' rather than to any person in particular. This is important in engendering a non-judgmental, non-interpretive atmosphere. It stimulates the creation of a new, shared space that resonates with the concepts of potential space and transitional phenomenon developed by Winnicott (Winnicott, 1991 [1971]; Kuhn, 2013). As Kuhn says,

> '... in potential space an individual can engage with the (external) inherited tradition whilst bringing something of their own inner world to it, both drawing upon and feeding into a personal style or idiom' (2013, p.5)

The purpose of the dialogue that follows the matrix is to give meaning to the work. Notes are taken both of the matrix and the discussion that ensues. The researcher applies the idea of 'working hypotheses' throughout the process, so as not to foreclose interpretation during the process itself. By 'working hypothesis' we understand an acceptance of 'approximate reality' (Manley, 2014, p. 336). The concept is discussed at length by Long (2014). The movement from hypothesis to interpretation depends on making connections between the dream images and associations, which may be seen to exist either within a single matrix or, as in the case of the present case study, from matrix to matrix.

The validity of this process as applied to the *Breaking the Chains* exhibition has already been generally discussed by one of the authors (Manley, 2010). In that study, some important images and themes from the matrices were applied to the exhibition in the BECM. Our current study takes a single detailed example of the development of a dream image – that of the boats and ships - during the course of the four matrices and demonstrates how interpretation of meaning can emerge by making connections between the images that emerged and re-emerged from matrix to matrix.

There was a lengthy negotiating process with the museum's outreach staff about the nature of the workshops and a certain initial reluctance to give permission for an event that might give the museum a bad press. But as a result of the museum's desire to collaborate with local communities it was agreed to hold four workshops. Participants were recruited from the museum's mailing lists, personal contacts and on an ad hoc basis as visitors arrived in the museum. They were asked to visit the exhibition at least once before attending the sessions. The workshops took place during the normal museum opening times and lasted about two hours. Between 15 and 25 people took part in each session. The matrix was transcribed and distributed to participants soon after the event. This provided both a record and data for later analysis. It also gave the participants a further opportunity to reflect upon their experiences.

The recurring image of a boat or ship freely emerged from a combination of the exhibition experience and the SD sessions. The emergence of this image resonates with John Beech's assertion that 'slavery (really the slave trade) is often defined and interpreted as a "maritime activity"; that is, as a subset of transport history or the expansion of British trade' (quoted in Oldfield, 2007, p.135); in other words, almost as a way to avoid confronting the essence of slavery itself: the black Africans inside the ships. The choice of this image by participants in the workshops maybe suggests a similar avoidance of British responsibility for slavery in an exhibition housed in the *British* Empire and Commonwealth Museum, that was indeed being defined in terms of British colonial trade and its ships, where 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves'. The confusion of the abolition of the slave trade with the abolition of slavery may constitute a national avoidance of responsibility that is still being debated today, even in the face of evidence of the widely shared participation of large numbers of white British ancestors in the

slave trade and their acceptance of financial compensation for ‘loss of property’ when the slave trade was eventually abolished, while the enslaved themselves received nothing (Hall et al, 2014).

Our reflection on the development of this image in the minds of the visitors to the exhibition begins with the Visitor’s Book which was placed at the exit of the exhibition, a transitional point, the exit being also the threshold from the exhibition to the SD session.

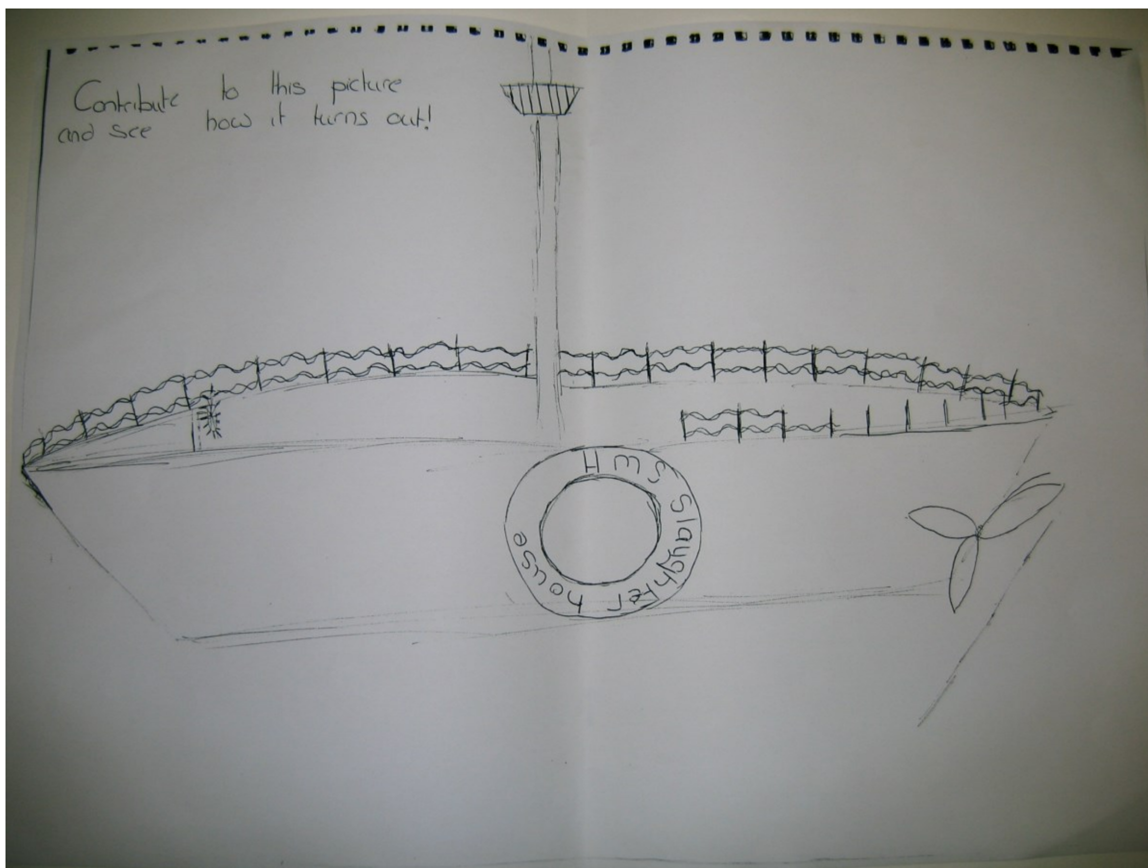

Figure 2. Visitor’s Book: Slave ship

In contrast to the written entry quoted above, (page xx), this contribution is sparing with words. The name on the boat’s life buoy is ‘HMS Slaughter house’ and we are asked to ‘Contribute to

this picture and see how it turns out!' These words are carefully chosen to emphasise the truth behind the 'maritime façade' by naming the ship as 'His Majesty's Ship'. At the same time 'Slaughter house' written in two words with the effect of highlighting 'house' reminds us both of what is 'housed' in the hold of the ship and of the British 'houses' back 'home' that contributed to enslavement. The word 'slaughter' conjures up the inhuman treatment of slaves. These words are part of the image, ensconced within the life buoy. The invitation to 'contribute' to the image, deliberately directs us to 'think visually' and draw. Even without adding to the drawing, anyone who comes across the image can complete it in her mind's eye. In asking ourselves why this contribution should be drawn rather than written, we suggest that maybe the drawer is using the image to digest the traumatic experience of the exhibition and that this contrasts to the previous entry from the Visitors' Book quoted above. The power of the drawing of a ship in the same Visitors' Book arises partly from the lack of historical narrative, the very narrative that was so frustrating to the writer of the previous entry. The drawing is both representative of the images in the exhibition and the emotion within the image itself. It encapsulates a multi-layered emotional struggle with the meanings of the exhibition, where the outside of the slave ship and its association to maritime glory and imperial power hides a 'dirty secret' inside, with the consequent feeling of repressed guilt and the potential for reparation The drawing thus provides clues as to why the image of the boat or ship was echoed repeatedly in the SD workshops.

The picture of the ship's hold (Figure 3) in the exhibition was an image that caught the attention of participants in the workshops.

Figure 3. Slaves stacked up in the ship's hold (*Sheol* by Rod Brown)

The image was powerfully displayed at the beginning of the exhibition as a life-sized panel. In this way, the visitor was invited into the exhibition by going inside the slave ship. Although the initial shock of such an image may well diminish as the visitor moves away, it continued to resonate with the participants in the 'inside/outside' fashion described here:

> The sounds outside give me the feeling of being condensed into a small space, reminds me of the pictures of slaves stacked up. You can see the soles of their feet. You can hear the sound of the ship's engines in the exhibition, like the sounds from outside…

The participant evokes claustrophobia, almost an empathy with the actual sensations of the enslaved, expressed through a powerfully conjured imagination that is sensually constructed to include sight and sound. The participant is able to move from cognitively registering the archival record of 'pictures of slaves' to a sense of personally and emotionally 'seeing' the 'soles of their feet' and 'hearing' the sounds of the ship's engines. It is almost as if the inside of the slave ship - presented to the visitor as a life size introduction to the exhibition - has provoked an 'inside' reaction, the inner emotional response of the visitor, and it is this 'inside' that is expressed through the forum of SD.

Within the matrices this sense of claustrophobia developed into an exploration of fear. The unreality of the unknown space of the ship's hold was compared to a 'scary dream' whilst the fear was summed up in an image of the Titanic and associations of tragic doom. In the first SD matrix, the relevance of this expression of affect was emphasised through a comparison with the news reports of modern day boat journeys of immigrants from Africa:

> Reminds me of a newspaper headline in Spain concerning the black Africans who try to cram into tiny boats and make a trip to Spain, the Canary Islands to find freedom… Wonder what the difference is between the slaves 200 years ago and those people today…

This example demonstrates the movement in SD from the suggestion of the dream image to the association of the present day crisis, and how sharing a dream image is able to induce affective understandings that are relevant to the participants in the matrix even if the historical event in the

recounted dream, for example the sinking of the Titanic, is located in the past and in some virtual reality in the imagination of an individual dreamer. In this way, the dream becomes relevant to all the participants in the matrix and contributes to a shared understanding of the affective realities of the exhibition buried within the exhibition narrative.

These guiding associations to the dreams and the images in the exhibition can also be stimulated by cultural references. In the following example from the second session, the cruelty of humanity is evinced in a reference to *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1995 [1902]):

> When I came here I picked up a book in the shop, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*…and reminded of the dark corridor, the stacks of slaves, like a dream scene, the image stayed with me. Where is the darkness? Who are the slaves? Who is responsible?

The participants who have read the novel will to some degree 'relive' the sensations of the book and understand how those sensations are also evoked by the fate of the slaves. Even if a participant has not read *Heart of Darkness*, there are plenty of clues in the association of the book to the exhibition that guide each participant to an open confrontation with affect and the question 'where is the darkness?' These 'clues' can be felt by each participant through associations to darkness, heart-felt emotions and links to the image of the slaves in the hold of the ship from the exhibition.

Another feature of SD is how a throwaway comment or cliché, becomes significant as a result of the accumulating collages of images in the matrix. In the third session, for example, we are told 'We're all in the same boat'. In the context of the dream images and associations to boats and slave ships, this becomes a way of identifying with the slaves and of breaking down the barriers between them and their masters and also with the participants in the matrix. In the third session, this suggestion leads to a complex contemplation of the possible meanings behind the directions adopted in a rowing boat:

> Actually, the right way to row a boat is facing backwards. Still, it's necessary to have someone there who knows the direction, not just staring in the right direction.

This reflection evokes the paradoxical feeling of turning your back to your destination in order to row a boat. This sense - of not knowing where you are going and yet the necessity of this ignorance to make 'progress' to a destination, the hell of enslavement – is expressed using a form of what Freud called 'condensation': the ability of an image, especially a dream image, to condense multiple meanings within one image (Freud 1991, pp. 383-414). As a result of this condensation within the matrix the emotional content is made more complex and turned into an affective rather than simply emotional experience.

Social Dreaming and affect

The distinction between an 'emotion' and 'affect' is an important one. We use the word 'affect' rather than 'emotion' when discussing shared emotional complexity because the dreams and images encourage a sense of knowledge through complex embodied feeling. Unlike emotion – which for our purposes we can define as recognisable, finite and nameable feelings such as

‘sadness’ and ‘happiness’ – affect is difficult to define. Indeed, within this difficulty we already have a clue to the connection between affect and the dream image.

The SD matrix expresses emotions, reflections and the affect contained within dreams. Many of the emotions, as defined above, and the subsequent reflective thoughts in the matrices arise from the ill-defined images of dreams and associations where affect resides. For example, a thinking reflection from a participant such as ‘everybody needs to co-operate’ emerges from the affective sensation of being chained down in a ship’s hold, ‘not being able to determine direction’ and having ‘to always lie on your back with no space to turn around’. These images both embody and trigger affective sensations that in themselves cannot succinctly be described as an emotion. But it is this immersion in the original affect of the images that encourages the subsequent reflective and emotional expressions. Although such expressions arise from the original affect that forms part of the images, the original raw affective state of these images must remain if the authenticity of our understanding of an enslaved existence is to endure. The direct expression of emotions and reflections in the SD matrix is indissolubly linked to the more complex affect of the images. The expression of an emotion such as being ‘moved’ – ‘I found that image very moving’ – would be painfully inadequate if it had not been preceded by the affect embodied in ‘being trapped in a ship, away from the known world, like a scary dream, not being able to see out, like the Titanic’. In this extract, apart from the instant recognition of affect that we have upon imagining a ‘scary dream’, we are presented with the image of the Titanic and all the sensations that go with it: hopelessness, helplessness, terrifying fear, a closing in of death by drowning, human hopes and desires crushed; cruel twist of destiny and fate, a journey curtailed, and so forth. All of this together is complex affect encapsulated in the single image of the Titanic.

‘Affect’ has been used in different ways, but our use of the term is Deleuzian, (see Thrift, 2008 for a discussion of the various uses of the term ‘affect’). For Deleuze, affect – adopted from Spinoza’s *affectus* (Deleuze, 1978; Spinoza, [1677] 1992) – is a holistic, embodied form of complex emotional responses occurring in tandem with another or others, animate or inanimate, that are in a process of constant motion or stirring – ‘becomings’ - with each other. The key to how and why this occurred in the SD sessions lies in comprehending the development of affect within a web of inter-relations between the participants and also between each of them and the exhibition. Through or behind the historical narrative of *Breaking the Chains*, the visitors experienced layers of disturbing emotions that were not acknowledged. The SD sessions provided a contained, space for exploring the complexity of this affect.

Precisely because affect is difficult to define, it may be better expressed through images. These take many forms, some being closer to an acknowledged reality than others, such as the real images in an exhibition. These are more than representations located in the time-bound historical narrative of the museum and presented to the audience as such. Even as past objects they are witnessed in the present and may also be connected to some distant or close memory. For example, the ‘past’ image of the slaves in the hold of the slave ship became the ‘present’ image and affect of the participants in the SD ‘locked’ inside a ‘wooden’ room:

> I was struck about coming through the door here and the door being locked behind us, a sense of claustrophobia…like in the ships, being left here but in this case we’re in a gracious Jacobean room.

For Henri Bergson, who was an important influence on Deleuze, images are never 'pure perception' but 'memory images', where the present is always inextricably combined with some form of recollection (Bergson, 2002, pp. 124-135). Similarly, dream images are memories that become present through the sharing in the here-and-now of the SD matrix. In this sharing there is also a sharing of the affect held within those images. As these images and affects accumulate in the course of the matrix, the affect becomes increasingly complex. For example, feelings of guilt and shame were brought out by the various transformations made available through the images that were associated to wood. These included the wooden hull of the ship made of logs; the logs tossed into the sea to measure the distance from freedom to enslavement, (a reference to measuring a ship's speed by throwing a log tied to a knotted rope into the sea, the knots being counted as they passed through sailors' hands to calculate the speed of the ship); the ship's log (though not wooden) recording the slaves' journey and made present through association with email; and finally the possibility of death, people as floating logs, and the cynical thought of recycling the 'dead' logs into fuel, and with this image, the dehumanising of the enslaved.

These complex multiple affects are connected to and by the dream images. In this way, the images - and therefore the affects - are processed in the real-time of the matrix in an active relationship between all that is perceived and the perceiver, and vice versa. Although to some extent this is true of all perception – an object in an exhibition cannot really be perceived out of its context – a conventional exhibition will often use an object as illustrative of a fact. In other words it is removed from its context and isolated within the condition of the exhibition. Through SD, however, the images become intimately bound to the complex emotional realities that join

the perceiver and the perceived and the containing environment of that process. In this way, the SD process creates images that are affects: the ‘image-affect’ (Manley, 2009, pp. 84-85).

These image-affects sometimes work in isolation, like symbols that represent phantasies and unthought knowns, (Bollas, 1987), such as the example of the Titanic above, but very often they express complexity through a combination of the image-affects in relation to others. This leads to a ‘collage’ of image-affects that create potential meaning(s). The greater the collage the less stable the specificity of meaning and the richer the combined affective potential. This is because the various meanings of the collage may change and shift according to which combination(s) of image-affects one can perceive in any particular moment. This may also be different from one person to the next, so that different participants in the SD matrix might understand different meanings from the collage but still be in agreement that these multiple meanings create a ‘sum that is greater than the parts’, to use a well worn, but still relevant, phrase from systems thinking. For example there was an image of Jonah being trapped in a whale which connected with that of the Titanic:

> Being trapped in something, like a ship or a crocodile reminds me of Jonah being trapped in the whale…

In this way, the Titanic becomes more than a single expression of affects in isolation from other images, even though in this image alone these are already rich and multiple. By merging the whale and Titanic images, the sense of doomed fate of the Titanic and of being drowned within its hull connects to the idea of divine punishment within the belly of the whale leading to a

complex sensation of affect whereby the combined fates of the Titanic and the whale seem indescribably unfair and at the same time tinged with a faint hope of divine redemption, so faint it is both desired and cruel, while the idea of being swallowed by a whale continues to be monstrous.

Becoming, the depressive position and reparation

The understanding generated through affect emerges through the experiential process of 'becoming'. Participants in the SD matrix express affect in images that they can sometimes embody and 'become'. By comparing the 'becoming' in the SD sessions, with Deleuzian (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) accounts of 'becoming' – this term being inseparable from a Deleuzian understanding of affect – one becomes aware of the participants' image-affects. For example, in trying to imagine what it must have been like to be trapped in a slave ship, the participants gave a sense of what, following Deleuze, we might call 'becoming crocodile' and then 'becoming Jonah in the whale'. The image of the crocodile initially emerged from a dream of a child being eaten by a crocodile – 'There was a little girl by the water and suddenly the crocodile took her. You could hear her screaming in the belly of the crocodile'. The memory of this image resonates in the subsequent image of being swallowed by the whale. Deleuze and Guattari use similar 'becomings-animal' – the becoming whale and crocodile – in order to illustrate the philosophical concept of 'becoming' (1988, pp. 243-248). The fact that these same animals were used by Deleuze and Guattari as examples may indicate a particular archetypal power carried by such creatures which, independently of Deleuze and Guattari, emerged in the SD. Deleuze and Guattari continue their line of thought by saying that these becomings occur on the fringes of experience where the 'sorcerer' rules (Deleuze and Guattari 1988. p. 246). What

they mean by this is that through the embodied imagination (the place of the 'sorcerer'), where 'the anomalous is the borderline' (1988, p. 245), apparently disparate entities can join and interconnect. In our example, the fear that we associate with the image of being eaten by the crocodile is combined with the sorrow and repentance of Jonah inside the whale and the fate of the enslaved people inside the 'belly' of the slave ship. The affect is the combination of this fear, sorrow and repentance expressed in the images. In the SD sessions the participant is 'becoming-animal' as a means of expressing affect, imaginatively eaten by the crocodile and swallowed by the whale. Through imagination and felt affective experience, the participant can come closer to understanding being trapped inside the hold of the slave ship, which might otherwise be difficult to conceptualise. This sense of 'becoming' is what enables the disparate combinations or image-affects to be experienced by each participant in SD.

The state of mind required of the participants in order to embody affect through this process of becoming needs to be expansive and able to receive and synthesise multiple potentially contradictory ideas. This state of mind is akin to the Kleinian depressive position. To suggest that we consider Deleuze and Klein as mutually connected might at first appear to be unusual, but Deleuze was influenced by Klein (Widder, 2008). According to Widder, the 'twist' that Deleuze brings to Klein involves 're-reading her story of pre-Oedipal and Oedipal development by placing the infant in a world of simulacra rather than one of substantial objects with stable boundaries. The world of simulacra is no longer a temporary one that the infant outgrows, as it was for Klein, who saw the infant synthesizing part-objects into whole and complete objects as its ego developed.' (2008, p.2) While we may question the idea that Klein's 'boundaries' were 'stable', since Klein was concerned as much with the precisely unbounded nature of the psychic

life of adults where the depressive position is never permanently achieved but rather is constantly prone to slipping back into anxiety and vice versa, it is with this reading of Deleuze in mind that we see the affective response of the SD as being situated in the process of the matrix, that is to say in the simulacra of the shared dream worlds of the participants.

We have already discussed how the exhibition tended to provoke confusion about the meaning and purpose of *Breaking the Chains*. The SD created an affective space for the transformation of intellectual opposites into an emotional unity. Such a view of the workshops suggests that the acceptance by the participants of the negative emotional realities of the slave trade, the ‘depressive position’, leads to a potential for reparation. In the case of the slave trade and Bristol, this could have been the reparative value of an apology for the city’s participation in the slave trade, as was being debated in the city at the time of the exhibition. We suggest that participation in the SD made apology more relevant and reparation more possible through each person’s personal experience of affect.

The debate within Bristol about an apology was part of the wider reparations discourse taking place at the time, and still today (Beckles, 2013; Coates, 2014). The museum hosted the local apology debate in May 2006, which was chaired by the anti-apology philosopher A.C. Grayling. The apology debate is in part about whether a symbolic gesture is sufficient. Kaufman argues that ‘critics who simply equate the slavery reparations campaign with a perverse wallowing in victimhood demonstrate a profound disregard for the symbolic need for both the making and the accepting of reparative initiatives’ (2007, p.275). Financial reparations, as promoted for instance by the Caribbean Reparations Movement (Rojas, 2014) are seen to be more genuine since they

would require considerable outlay from former slaving nations. The publicity given to the Legacies of British Slave Ownership project at UCL has fuelled the reparations movement (Best, 2013; Hall et al., 2014; Legacies, 2015)

Kaufman (2007) has discussed the psychology of Kleinian reparation as an essential aspect of slavery studies and reminds us that for Klein reparation was a creative act: 'Klein herself argues that all creative work springs from mourning, and that all creative work is by definition an act of reparation.' (p. 278). This is relevant to our study of the use of SD to process the horror of the trans-Atlantic slave trade since creativity has previously been identified as a feature of the SD experience (Lawrence 2010). Kaufman goes on to warn against 'mock reparation', as in American civic memorials where 'mourning is denied and historical guilt is turned into historical triumph' (2007, p. 279). That is to say, the 'bad' aspects of slavery are denied in favour of the 'good' that came out if it, and feelings are split into dualities. Similarly, the *Breaking the Chains* exhibition may have been focused on the 'mock reparation' of the triumph of the Caribbean slave revolts that appear to be placed at the end of the exhibition to somehow compensate for the failures of humanity elsewhere in the exhibition.

Museums can be psychoanalytically conceptualised as places of reparation, as a nation's source of redemption from the destruction carried out through war and neglect (Trustram, 2013, p.198). If trauma creates knowledge (Alford, 2014) then museums have the opportunity to create the circumstances for such knowledge to be accessible (Hetherington, 2006, p.598). The 2007 exhibitions went some way towards this. The SD workshops began to explore the ways in which such knowledge might not be available even to the knower. In this 'unknown' way, the

historical and factual approach to the exhibition could be interpreted as a curator's defence against the painful emotions that the exhibition was bound to stimulate. Bristol is a city whose wealth was partly built on slavery and so it is not unreasonable to suppose that this defence resonated with many of the visitors. This was also a reflection of the need for a wider societal defence against the shame of the slave trade, hence the emphasis on abolition. The subject of the slave trade itself invites divisions: black and white, good and bad, master and slave, then and now, them and us, and so on. In the example of the Visitors' Book entry by the 'African American female', this tendency to division and splitting was acutely felt as a sensation of being 'overwhelmed with a number of disheartening emotions', where the writer moves 'from sadness to anger'.

Some visitors to the exhibition encountered their own overwhelming responses to the account of slavery they were told, an account tempered by curatorial attempts to convey elements of positive humanitarian concern within that story. They thus were asked to encompass extremes of positive and negative. Furthermore, the *mood* of the exhibition was studiously historical which made it difficult to feel an empathic emotion that might have otherwise been achieved through the stories of rebellion. We suggest that the relationality of the SD workshops and the ensuing dream space simulacra provided a potential space for the generation of affect leading to a Kleinian depressive position formulated together with others. This enabled the split of emotions generated by the exhibition – as the individual visitor confronted the material on his or her own – to give way to reflection upon these emotions and their relevance to their contemporary lives

Conclusion

We have shown that affective imagination can be stimulated by SD and that this opened up avenues towards an expression of emotions that were stymied by the exhibition itself. The fact that this path towards affect is neither smooth nor without traps should not deter us from using SD, or related methods, in our attempts to understand the panorama of human experience that includes all our senses, as well as our endeavours to make intellectual meaning out of traumatic histories.

Brown comments that 'history shaped by traumatic violence becomes not a history that is recorded, explained, and resolved for all time but a history that is essentially not over' (2004, p.258). Whilst the 1807 Act did, in a sense, end the British slave trade, the SD workshops demonstrate that its ending in another sense is indeed 'not over': the slave trade and its aftermath haunts the affective imagination. Gordon says that the ghost of something like slavery 'cannot be simply tracked back to an individual loss or trauma' (2008, p.183). This is what SD makes evident: the public nature of an apparently privately experienced phenomenon.

Cvetkovich comments that 'the history of slavery presents the challenge of a missing archive, not only because of the generational distance but also because even in its time it was inadequately documented ...' (2003, p.38). We would suggest that the data from the SD workshops can be conceived of as coming from a 'missing archive', an archive of the imagination. She goes on to say that traumatic histories like slavery demand 'unusual strategies of representation' (2003, p.38). We believe that SD might be considered one of those 'unusual strategies'.

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