Jaime Ashworth
@missinghist #missinghistories
framingthequestion.wordpress.com

Twitter: @missinghist

Where's my coffee (from)?

It all begins with a coffee at Starbucks. As I waited for my latte, I noticed a map on the wall: a map of coffee history, from the discovery of coffee berries (c. 800 CE) to the establishment of Starbucks in 1971. The lines tracing Atlantic voyages caught my eye, taking me back to an early lesson in my PGCE placement last year looking at how the demand for tea, coffee and sugar in the eighteenth century had stimulated the British economy. Tea, coffee and sugar grown on plantations in the Caribbean, South America and the southern United States (as they had recently become): plantations where the work was done by slaves. Of this trade, which carried millions over a period of **315 years**, not a trace remained.

Figure 1: Starbucks map of coffee, July 2015. Photo: Jaime Ashworth.

I didn't have to teach the following session on the Middle Passage, but the accounts of those voyages between Africa and the slave markets have remained with me. As Olaudah Equiano describes in his 'Interesting Narrative', first published in 1789:

> *At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. ... The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome.... The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died -- thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. (Equiano, 2003:58)*

It is a measure of the awfulness that one of the most famous images of the abolition campaign, the *Brookes* illustration, shows conditions on board after legislation in 1788 to regulate the numbers ships were allowed to carry. The *Port Cities: Bristol* website explains that while the illustration shows 295 slaves packed into the vessel (with barely room to move), a previous voyage had transported 609. Borrowing a term from Terrence des Pres's *The Survivor* on the degradation in the camps of the Third Reich, this was an 'excremental assault'. Conditions reduced the slaves' estimation of their own worth as 'defilement was a constant threat, a condition of life from day to day, and at any moment it was liable to take abruptly vicious and sometimes fatal forms' (des Pres, 1978: 57). As Equiano narrates: 'with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together. I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, Death, to relieve me' (Equiano, 2003: 56).

As in the Nazi camps, the assault kept others at bay. Other ships could smell the slavers for miles and avoided them and the miasma they carried: literally distancing themselves from the terrible reality, 'stifling in common loathing the impulse toward solidarity' (des Pres, 1978: 61).

The legislation of 1788 was introduced partly in response to the case of the *Zong*: a ship which left Africa in August 1781 with 442 slaves aboard. After 62 slave deaths from malnutrition and disease, the captain ordered that a further 78 be thrown overboard: the terms of the ship's insurance were such that 'natural' deaths would not be compensated (to the slaver) but slaves jettisoned to save the rest of the (human) cargo could be. The conditions had done their work; 'murder [was] less terrible to the murderers, because the victims appeared less than human' (des Pres, 1978: 61) and 'death could be administered with the conviction that so much rotten tissue had been removed from life's body' (Ibid.: 62).

Furthermore, although the *Zong* featured in abolitionist literature just as in contemporary curricula as a milestone on the road to abolition, the facts are less reassuring.

The case was brought by the insurers out of a sense of financial rather than moral outrage and never properly resolved.

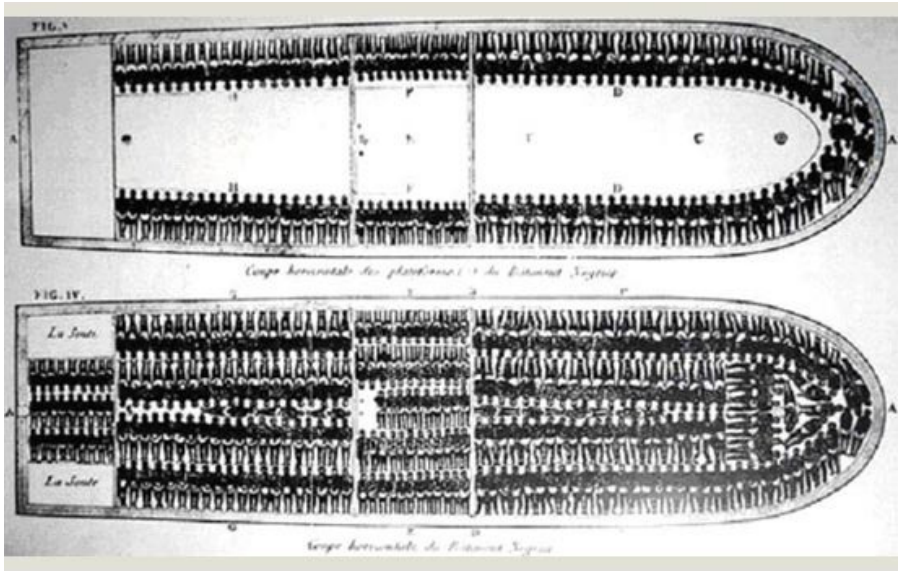

Figure 2: The *Brookes*. From www.history.ac.uk.

The connections between slavery and British wealth are well documented, not least in the **National Maritime Museum's** superb galleries on the Atlantic and the East India Company, the Liverpool **International Slavery Museum** and the **Legacies of British Slave-ownership** project at UCL. But the gap in everyday discourse represented by the single reference in Starbucks to the Caribbean was striking.

> *While on leave in Paris, a naval officer took a sprout and transported it back to Martinique. Once returned to the Caribbean [it?] thrived and is believed to be father of many Coffea arabica trees alive today in Central and Latin America.*

The web of imperial and colonial power that took the plant from Africa to Paris and thence from Paris to Martinique is obscured by the statement itself. It is an example of what Barthes termed the privation of history, in which historical language 'is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from' (Barthes, 2000: 178-179).

It is not coincidental that this project begins with a link between the past and addictive consumption: even imperial defender Niall Fergusson notes the importance of the new stimulants in British imperial expansion: the Empire, he writes 'was built on a huge sugar, caffeine and nicotine rush' both commercial and physical (Fergusson, 2003: 15). Christopher Keep and Don Randall have read the 'relationship between the imperial imaginary and the psychic economy of addiction' (Keep and Randall, 1999: 208) into the Sherlock Holmes story *The Sign of Four* as one of the 'stories which the Empire told to itself' (Ibid.: 207) in order to 'authorise, legitimise and mythologise its campaigns of material and economic exploitation' (Ibid.: 219). The *Ibis* trilogy by Amitav Ghosh depicts this process

from the perspective of the colonised, drawn into a global web of trade, power and exploitation.

Figure 3: Wedgewood anti-slavery medallion copied from the seal of the Anti-Slavery Society.

History consists of both voices and silences, and the latter are hard to address. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously and despairingly noted, 'the subaltern cannot speak' (Spivak, 1988: 308). Hugh Thomas, in his magisterial history of the slave trade, comments: 'The slave himself is a silent participant in the account […] an unknown warrior, invoked by moralists on both sides of the Atlantic, recalled now in museums in one-time slave ports from Liverpool to Elmina, but all the same unspeaking, and therefore remote and elusive' (Thomas, 1997 : 799).

The gendered language as Thomas comments on the gaps in the record is ironic testimony to the problem he identifies, his formulation eliding the possibility of an alternative which recovers the voices and histories of women and children. The question posed by the abolitionists – *Am I not a Man and a Brother?* – is once more problematised: certainly a man (not a woman or a child) but still not a brother, or at least only a younger, subservient one to be pitied. The figurehead carved for the *Royal George* yacht in 1817 stands in the National Maritime Museum. The information notes that its figures (copied from the Wedgewood medallion) 'indicate[s] how much anti-slavery imagery and language had pervaded British society by the early 19th century' but I can't help seeing in it the persistence of a hierarchy: grateful supplicants to royal mercy.

Figure 4: detail of the Royal George figurehead, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Photo: Jaime Ashworth, 2015.

The silences of the Starbucks map set me thinking about the need for educational resources to fill these silences. As a history teacher, I am very aware that as Alison Kitson and Chris Husbands put it, 'the selection of what we teach, as well as how we teach it, directly confronts our assumptions about 'usable' or 'significant' knowledge' (2011: 133). If we see the construction of curricula as 'a selection and organization from the available knowledge at a particular time' (Young, 1971: 24), justified by assumptions about culture and 'fields of knowledge' (Stenhouse, 1975: 19) and who can be seen as a 'legitimate author' (Apple, 2000: xxviii) we can also see 'disciplines' and 'subjects' as social constructs which serve to replicate power relations. One does not have to be a Foucauldian to partner 'discipline' with 'punish' or to see the linkage between the elision of historical slavery and the obscuring of the nature of the supply chain to the modern consumer: I can't answer the question that acts as a heading to this section.

These elisions are what Heidi Safia Mirza terms 'embodied intersectionality': the physical manifestation of 'patterns of power and ideology that reproduce inequalities based on race and gender differences' (Mirza, 2009: 2). Silences of the type embodied in the Starbucks map are perhaps the most insidious practices which go toward creating 'gendered, raced, classed, colonised, sexualised 'others'' (Mirza, 2009: 3) since it is difficult to become aware of them, much less confront or challenge them. #missinghistories is

intended to be a way for different voices to express themselves. The conundrum of whether a white middle-class heterosexual male can even raise this without being patronising is probably irresolvable: the reader will have to trust my goodwill.

Practically, an INSET training by Mirza helped me articulate the power of educational resources in addressing these patterns by exploring and exploiting the gaps created in the language of history itself. I had already designed a session intended to problematise the use of the word 'mulatto' in a historical analysis in response to comments by students of Afro-Caribbean descent at earlier material, and continued to draw attention to the language *in which* (in the Barthesian formulation) the past was spoken. Looking at Indian participation in WW1 from the perspective of work by David Olusoga (2014) and Santanu Das (2014) both challenged the dominant narrative that reduces it to a 'tragic but monochrome European feud' (Olusoga, 2014: 424) and allowed students to make links between historical writing and empire.

Samples of all these resources (suitable for AS History) are available to **download**, along with a longer **elaboration** of the project's concrete outcomes.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh has written that "the only people for whom we can even begin to imagine properly human, individual existences are the literate and the consequential . . . the people who had the power to inscribe themselves physically upon time". In his novels, he inverts this significance by making the coloniser speak in a historical patois that is hard to comprehend while his 'colonised' characters are narrated in lucid and limpid prose. Supplying #missinghistories helps us to perform a similar inversion where 'alternative' sites of memory (Nora, 1989) can become part of the narrative of the city and so change it. In the recent documentary *Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners*, projections of the registers of those who claimed for compensation were superimposed on contemporary London: #missinghistories allows us to do this over time and for many other stories. A tweet from my placement colleague John Siblon is a model of how Twitter might be used to do this: why was the East India Company formed? How did the growth of the port affect the coffee shop? What was the role of the Bank of England? We can ask these questions on the move.

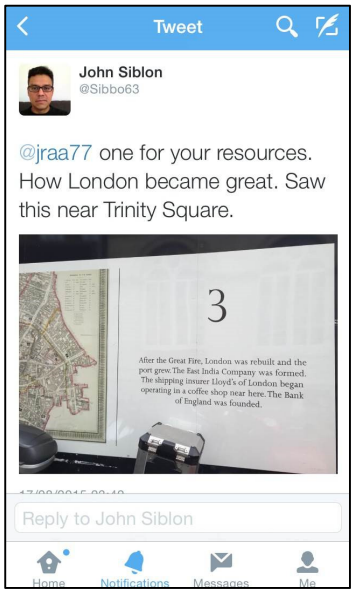

Figure 5: Tweet of a #missinghistory.

More broadly, therefore, these rewritings of the problematic representation or non-representation of the past change the city in which they are found. Michel de Certeau described the city as composed of 'unrecognised poems' (de Certeau, 1988: 93) of meaning in relation to space and time. The voices of Londoners could rewrite this poem, creating new 'trajectories and alterations of spaces' (Ibid.) that send thoughts and everyday habits along new figurative as well as literal avenues. If you attended the **London Open Garden Squares** event earlier this year, you will know the way your eyes are opened in new ways by finding somewhere you've never been before. If you went to the **Clay Cargo** event at King's Cross, you've seen the power and beauty of Londoners literally remoulding the fabric of the city in their own image. By filling in #missinghistories we are actually creating a new history which in turn opens up a new future. Hopefully, by rewriting and remapping the city in which we live, we can change the lives that are lived within it.

Figure 6: stills from 'Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners'. Copyright of originator.

What we want and what will be done with it.

From the public: **photos of representations or non-representations of the past that fascinate, infuriate or just simply amuse.**

From educators: **teaching resources designed for use in addressing representations or non-representations of the past, or linking local points of interest to the formal curriculum.**

From institutions: **links to the resources designed already for use with exhibitions and sites, with as much detail about the exhibition or site as possible.**

These phases are intended to run together, though the first may outstrip the second. Members of the public can post things that interest them and then teachers can use the information to create resources. Teachers, however, can post resources from the beginning and other institutions and organisations can link to the project as appropriate. Posts will be expected to uphold the democratic and egalitarian values that inspire the project. The basic principle will be to accept what is posted but there will be some monitoring and a panel to adjudicate disputes.

What next and why? Aims and objectives

Phase 1: Remapping and reconfiguring the local

What: a website with an interactive map of London collating examples of the problematic representation or non-representation of the past as posted by the public.

Why?

What has this got to do with us? Most teachers have, at some point, heard this question and all understand the importance of establishing early on why a topic is important and interesting. Linking the study of the past to the lived experience of students in the present is an important tool in this. Site and museum visits which allow students to make cognitive and emotional links with and concerning the past *experientially* are also a popular means of doing so. The map would offer a way to see that 'it happened there' (Webber, 2000) that links the two. By using images and words from users it would make clear that participation in remembering and discussing the past should be democratic and membership of the community something that should simply be assumed.

Phase 2: Resources for sharing

What: a bank of resources aimed at Further Education teachers and their students, based on the remapping created by users and linking wherever possible to other existing sources of information and lesson support.

Why?

History teachers are required (like all teachers) to be 'dual professionals'. This means that we have to combine expertise in what we teach *and* how we teach it, 'committed to maintaining and developing their expertise in both parts of their role to ensure the best outcomes for their learners' (ETF, 2014: 8). For all teachers, this requires continuing professional development (CPD), defined by Goodall *et al.* (2005: 6, quoting Day, 1999) as 'all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which constitute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom.'

For the history teacher, even small adjustments in the curriculum (let alone the wholesale changes coming this autumn) can mean huge increases in workload as they are required to take on period and area studies they are unfamiliar with. This is made worse by the way in which history graduates are educated: no historical education above KS3 really even claims to offer a longitudinal or canonical understanding of the past, focusing instead on specialised units which although they may be spread over a long duration as a whole do not have to offer a coherent narrative or analysis. As a retired history teacher told me rather grumpily before my PGCE: 'The problem is, no one studies history. You have to look at part of it.' And looking at one part entails ignoring others. I have a doctorate in Holocaust Studies but this did not help when required to teach eighteenth-century British and Caribbean history: my pride in rising to meet this challenge is mixed with regret at the avenues I had to leave unexplored.

Furthermore, in a climate which demands teachers be 'calculable rather than memorable' (Ball, 2008: 56) while simultaneously 'teeter[ing] on the edge of moral regulation' (Ibid. : 54) many highly professional and motivated teachers do not have the time to explore the complexities of the past in terms that go beyond the (demanding) curriculum. At the INSET training mentioned above we were asked for examples of practice where teachers had explored the assumptions of their subject in relation to race, gender and sexuality. As I shared the work I had done with colleagues, I was conscious of a silence. 'It's sad and predictable that it takes a trainee to produce that kind of good work' was the verdict of my head of department. I think he was being unfair in his assessment of the importance of the reasoned and critical approach to curriculum design and supportive collegiate atmosphere that he promotes in the department and wider college (as my 'host teacher' for the slavery discussion he encouraged me to run the session looking at language). But he also has a point: Janet Broad notes the increasing 'structural' pressure on teachers in FE. If (following Edward et al., 2007) teachers face 'endless change coming at them from all directions and struggling to balance the needs of their learners with the demands of their managers, inspectors and funding sources' (Broad, 2015: 19) then we should not be surprised if spending valuable teaching time on what are (it might be argued

in a purely instrumental sense) side-issues seems difficult to justify, however much the individual teacher feels they are important.

From the 'demand side', the introduction of a market model in FE (and more and more at secondary and primary levels) means that students have to be canny consumers: conducting admissions interviews at my placement college I was struck by the high level of precision with which many students had mapped out their college careers before getting their GCSEs. FE is seen as a transitional stage of education in a way which has no real parallel: it follows the grounding of secondary education and leads to the end result of Higher Education or employment.

This is, I suspect, a huge part of the strategic problem for the sector: it is an intersectional institution, neither base camp nor summit but a staging post between the two. This lack of clear identity, combined with per capita funding and a continuing perception in government that it is for 'other people's children' (Hodgson, Bailey and Lucas, 2015: 1) has led to the sector responding with progressively sharper commercial attitudes. The warning in the Kennedy Report that colleges were having 'not just to be businesslike but to perform as if they were businesses' (Kennedy, 1997:3) has translated into measurable problems in what Baryana (2013) terms 'unethical recruitment' as some colleges recruit students who are unable to perform at the appropriate level (to keep the lights on) while others refuse entry to those who may not make the grades (to manipulate pass rates).

The broader problems endemic in British education are not fixable without changes in government policy and a reorienting of society's attitudes to education. A collection of resources will not address these. They will, however, save the teacher time: #missinghistories will constitute a 'shared drive' allowing teachers to access free high-quality material that addresses their curriculum in a way that is tailored to their locality and reflecting adjustments made in the classroom. The idea is to make it just a little easier for the interested teacher to deliver a lesson that takes a broader view of the curriculum and its content.

Moreover, while as a history teacher I am most aware of the needs of my subject, there is obvious scope for other teachers to join and create resources that link the problematic representation or non-representation of the past to contemporary issues. Teachers of Psychology and Sociology might find the location of the Imperial War Museum on the site of the **Royal Bethlem Hospital** an interesting way to talk about mental illness and its stigma and link from that to the **Time to Change** project run as a partnership by Rethink and Mind. The *Kindertransport* memorial at Liverpool Street Station could link to the work of the **Refugee Council** or **Refugee Support Network** just as surely as to the **Wiener Library**, **Holocaust Memorial Day Trust** or **Holocaust Educational Trust**. Returning to my cup of coffee, the story of slavery should be linked to the work of **Stop the Traffik** and **Antislavery International** to end modern slavery and people trafficking: the Mediterranean migrants

that have been in the news this summer are the latest response to the political and ideological structures that took the slave ships across the Atlantic. The only limit is your creativity guided by your values.

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Weblinks

Miscellaneous

http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/18805.html (National Maritime Museum: object listing for the Royal George figurehead)

http://discoveringbristol.org.uk/slavery/routes/from-africa-to-america/atlantic-crossing/middle-passage/ (Port Cities: Bristol)

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html (Slate.com video showing slaver voyages)

http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/ (International Slavery Museum)

http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/brookes.html (Brookes diagram history)

Institutions and Organisations

Antislavery International: http://www.antislavery.org/english/

Clayground Collective: http://www.claygroundcollective.org/

Holocaust Educational Trust: https://www.het.org.uk/

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: http://hmd.org.uk/

Legacies of British Slave-ownership (UCL): https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/

London Open Garden Squares: http://www.opensquares.org/preview/index.html

National Maritime Museum Atlantic Worlds: http://www.rmg.co.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/atlantic-worlds

Refugee Action: http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/

Refugee Council: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Refugee Support Network: http://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/

Royal Bethlem Hospital: http://museumofthemind.org.uk/about

Stop the Traffik: http://www.stopthetraffik.org/library

Time to Change: http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/

Wiener Library: http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/