

Repurposing
Museum Interpretation
in
American Historic House Museums

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Abstract

To investigate whether the American historic house museum sector preserves evidence of past inter-cultural encounters that could increase its relevance to today's scholars and audiences, I charged a seven-member team made up of members from different ethnic, socio-economic, educational and generational backgrounds to visit and produce photographs at three historic house museums in St. Louis, Missouri. The photo-voice data was created, gathered, and submitted by the participant team members at the height of the social unrest triggered by Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement. It argues for the relevance and sustainability of the historic house museum sector as a venue for the development of new approaches to understanding past inter-cultural encounters and, in fact, to suggest redesigning the way museum interpretation is practiced. The visual data provided by the participant team for this dissertation demonstrates how people bring their own perspectives to respond to, critique, question and embrace what the museum asserts and displays about past inter-cultural encounters. The research suggests that the museum has the potential to shift its interpretive role and practice from knowledge broker and expert to become an interpretive space where new hermeneutics-informed understanding in the tradition of Gadamer continually emerges iteratively through the interaction invited between the museum, its content, and the various members of its audiences. It argues that, if the museum is to remain relevant, especially in particularly difficult moments, it has to provide a space to honor and respectfully both solicit and receive the voices, understandings, and even the pain experienced by each member of the affected community.

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Soli Deo Gloria.

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Introduction

This exploration of the interpretation of diversity at the American historic house museum had its beginning in my professional role as the executive director at the Bolduc House Museum in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, from 2009 through early 2016. As will be made clear in the prequel, I was responsible to reinvent the interpretation at that eighteenth-century French colonial historic site so that it, with honor, incorporated the stories, not only of the French Americans who founded the town, but of the Native Americans and African Americans, both enslaved and free, who made up the town's earliest community of cultures. With the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, each cultural group became increasingly invisible, marginalized out of their own story as the victor's narrative, American pioneers following the American Dream and Manifest Destiny west, began to dominate the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans across much of North America.

I was also very aware that many people, starting, perhaps with Richard Moe, the retired director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, now question the viability of the American house museum sector. He asked, "*Are there too many house museums?*" (Moe 2002). I wondered if there might be a path forward towards increasing the relevancy of this sector through a different approach to the interpretation of diversity. Debra Reid raised a similar possibility with regard to the sector's under-imagined potential to inform the study of social history by probing what these historic house museums could offer, through their artifacts and documents, about the domestic lives of past men, women and children (Reid 2002). Assuming that the interpretation of diversity is a means by which the sector can gain increased relevancy for current audiences, which are, themselves, increasingly diverse, I wanted to learn how to both probe and honorably do the interpretation of diversity at these museums.

This meant that I needed to gain some insight into how diverse visitors view and respond to what is already being interpreted at these sites. I realized, as I explain in the prequel, that I am limited and, sometimes even blinded, by my own perspectives, heritage and experience. Thus, I am unlikely to recognize what people from other heritages, experiences, and who hold other perspectives, might identify as pertinent to their own history. Because of the predominant lack of diversity on the boards and staffs of these museums, I surmised that the interpretation presented by their interpretive staff might be limited in similar ways. This is complicated by the fact that museum interpretation, as a practice, assumes the museum to be the authority, even when it invites the participation of cultural representatives whose contributions are recruited to bring inclusion and diversity. I was interested to see whether visitors whose heritages are different (i.e., other than those of the museum's owners, operators and interpretive staff) would accept the authority of the museum.

The Black Lives Matter Movement, started by the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, added a significant, although unplanned component to this project. Ferguson is a municipality of St. Louis that is located just a few miles from each of the museums featured in this research. Museums in St. Louis debated their curatorial and programmatic responsibilities after this incident, while museums elsewhere in the United States used the emergent issue to pose more philosophical questions about inclusion and the interpretation of diversity in the museum. This issue touched every part of the project and is discussed throughout the dissertation.

I, initially, had two main challenges to solve in designing this project. First, I needed to find a way to gain observations from multiple perspectives. Second, I needed to find a lens through which the current interpretation of diversity at these museums could be explored.

To accomplish the first challenge, I decided to involve a very small group of participants to visit three historic house museums: the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven, the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum

and the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site. Each museum is located in St. Louis, Missouri. Each promotes itself as prioritizing and privileging the interpretation of diversity. One is owned and operated by the National Park Service. One is owned and operated by the State of Missouri, and the third is owned and operated by a private, non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Chapter one is a discussion of the American historic house museum sector, how it tends to approach interpretation and diversity, and what is being tried in order to improve the sector's appeal and relevancy, in general. Chapter four profiles the three sites featured in this research.

I recruited seven adult participants. They were volunteers who asked to be included after learning of the project either from a Facebook post or from a friend. They all either lived in, or worked in, Missouri in 2015. None of the participants is a museum professional. They ranged in age from their early twenties to their seventies. There were three men and four women. Two are white. One is African American. Two are recent immigrants: one from Kenya and one from Liberia. Two are mixed-race: each of them has a white mother and an African American father. The diversity in the group provided the probability that there existed, within the team, an array of perspectives and experiences that I hoped would result in the kinds of observations that I needed in order to understand whether and how the interpretation of diversity was currently being done at these three house museums. I introduce each participant in chapter five prior to presenting the data they each produced and submitted.

To address the second design challenge, I decided to create a prompt that would require each participant to search the house museums for evidence, preserved and/or interpreted, of past inter-cultural encounters. I also decided to make the investigation rely on visual ways of knowing by asking the participants to submit original photographs, taken on their smart phones, of any such preserved and/or interpreted evidence. This methodology, considered more fully in chapter three, is known as photo-voice. The participants' photographs, accompanied by their original titles and brief explanations of why they took the pictures, serve as the data for this study, which is presented in chapter five. It is augmented by the results of my documentary analysis of

published works, both in print and online, by, or about, the three museums. I also took photographs on the day we visited the sites. My photographs, along with the document analysis and my field notes, presented in chapter four, serve as the frame for the participant photo-voice submissions.

Originally, I intended for the exploration of inter-cultural artifacts and interpretation, often hereafter referred to as “inter,” to be the observational lens through which the participants would identify, gather and create the data. I also, however, needed a theoretical approach to understanding culture by which to think about diversity. However, as I show in chapter two, the various cultural approaches I considered did not fit with the kinds of questions I was asking, nor did they align well with the responses that the participants were returning. In the end, I discovered that “inter,” as described by Edward Said, Eduardo Glissant, Homi K. Bhabha and James Clifford, in addition to serving as the project’s observational lens, also worked very well as an analytic, theoretical tool. This is expounded on in chapters two and three. In addition, the theoretical criteria of inter, as identified in chapter two, are specifically associated with each participant submission in chapter five.

As I analyzed the participant images and, their original, accompanying text and titles, I was able to identify a series of recurring essential and incidental themes (McInnes 2013 p.7). When considered alongside the ideas of inter in chapter six, these themes do suggest that the American historic house museum does have the potential to tell history in a more inclusive, balanced way that does not reinforce, but, instead, interrupts and disrupts more traditional and biased stereotypes. They also demonstrate that, according to the members of the participant team, the sector’s current approach to the interpretation of diversity, while more visible, in their opinion, than ten or fifteen years ago, tends to reinforce the old stereotypes. The participants used their photo-voice submissions to critique the museum’s interpretive text panels (in particular), as well as to ask questions, to juxtapose items and ideas, and to make recommendations about things like truth, inclusion and balance.

In conclusion, as I show in chapter seven, I believe that this project demonstrates that the American historic house museum can become more

intentionally inclusive in its interpretation of diversity, in a way that brings honor to each individual, family and culture whose story intersected during a site's significant period and community. This led me back to the problem of how such sites could re-purpose their approach to interpretation, in general, and to the interpretation of diversity, in particular, so that honor and balance characterize what is presented by and at the museum, and so that lost stories can be recovered and the wounds which remain from injustices perpetrated in the past can be addressed, lanced, and perhaps, healed.

My suggestion for how this can perhaps happen starts with a critique of the way interpretation is viewed by the museum. The museum has tended to view interpretation as an educational activity where it sets a lesson plan and educational goals for the visitor. The visitor, once exposed to the museum, is typically expected to go away having learned specific things. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill writes: "*Interpretation is very loosely defined in the museum context*" (Hooper-Greenhill 2000 p.172). The most referenced pioneer in the field of the interpretation of American historic sites owned and operated by the National Park Service, Freeman Tilden, taught that, within the museum, interpretation refers to a mediated visitor experience that relies on "*original objects*," "*firsthand information*," and/or "*illustrative material*" (Tilden 2008) augmented by "*demonstration*," "*participation*" and "*animation*" (Ibid.). This locates the museum's understanding of interpretation as an educational activity designed to "*construct and communicate meaning*" (Hooper-Greenhill 2000 p.14).

At its etymological root, interpretation is the action of standing between two parties in order to assist both to arrive at a new mutually understood meaning. This definition poetically illustrates the place of the museum's professional interpretive practice in the theoretical space that I have named *inter*. The question to be answered here for the museum is, in my opinion, how to best occupy that in-between space between two or more parties that, insofar as being fellow human beings, are due equal respect.

My recommendation and conclusion, as promoted in chapter seven, is for the museum to relinquish its identity and role as the visitor's educator, authority and knowledge broker. Instead, I suggest that by adopting a theoretical foundation for museum interpretation guided by Gadamerian hermeneutics, the visitor could be assisted, through the museum's exhibits and other interpretive activities, to do the interpretation and to derive meaning for themselves. This approach relies on this distinction, drawn by Hooper-Greenhill, between museum interpretation and interpretation as understood by hermeneutics:

In the museum, interpretation is done for you or to you. In hermeneutics, however, you are the interpreter for yourself (Ibid 2000 p.172).

Not only might this adjustment provide the museum with a theoretical basis, hermeneutics, that has interpretation, meaning and understanding as its subjects, if adopted, it also might allow a shift in the posture of the museum *vis-a-vis* the visitor so that humility and honor characterize the invitation, in general. In order to suggest and clarify this idea, I have threaded ideas from the field of hermeneutics as influenced, mostly, by Gadamer, throughout this dissertation.

Hermeneutics is the arena in which philosophy has been theorizing how we derive meaning and understanding from what we know or are becoming aware of. It first occupied itself with theology and jurisprudence before becoming more generally applied as a component of phenomenology. In this dissertation, when I refer to hermeneutics I am usually concerned with the space between a person's prior knowledge and the articulation of some revised or expanded understanding. Hermeneutics calls the space interpretation. I conceive it to be the place of the "aha" moment. It is a blurry place where internal, private, meta-cognitive work happens and, after I identified, in chapter two, that there are six theoretical conditions inherent in the space of inter, I serendipitously now believe that the hermeneutic space where interpretation happens is one kind of inter space. I conclude by calling the museum to shift towards inhabiting and providing hospitality within that inter space for its visitors, and itself.

In short, my thesis is that the American historic house museum sector has the potential to shift its identity from that of knowledge broker, expert and teacher to become a space and catalyst for the formation of new, transformational understanding by adopting a theoretical foundation for museum interpretation informed by hermeneutics. This is particularly important if we want to be relevant in the light of urgent situations and particularly difficult historical and political moments—such as what has come to be called “Ferguson” and the Black Lives Matter Movement in the United States—when museums could provide the space, invitation and opportunity to honor, receive and truthfully articulate the perspectives of each stakeholder.

Prequel

My Professional Experience and Inspiration for This Project: “How will YOU tell OUR story?”

Introducing the Bolduc House Museum

From 2009 until early 2016 I served fulltime as the executive director of the Bolduc House Museum in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. Before that time, from 2006 through 2009, I contracted with the museum as a strategic planning consultant and grant writer. By the end of my tenure, the museum, which is owned and operated (until November 2016) by The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Missouri, was transitioned from its original role as a historic house museum to a re-branded, enlarged campus with an extended, under-told, under-explored story called New France - the OTHER Colonial America. With the acquisition of two additional eighteenth-century vertical log French colonial houses and a former bank building slated to become an interpretive and educational center about French colonial America, and with enough money raised and in-hand to renovate that building, at the time I resigned as director, the site was positioned and on a trajectory to become a significant historic site in the first town of Missouri. In large part, this is due to my strategic decision to incorporate and privilege in the museum interpretation information and stories about the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-faith French colonial community juxtaposed against the more familiar and “traditional east-west presentation of U.S. history” (Gitlin 2010).

How my decisions about interpreting 18th-century diversity led to this project

This prequel will profile the Bolduc House Museum of 2009 as it compares and contrasts to the 2016 campus of New France. To understand some of the

factors that influence the discussion of the three house museums considered in this project, the prequel will describe some of the mindsets that controlled the interpretation of the museum in a way that privileged the British American colonial story over those of the French, Native Americans and Africans who lived in Ste. Genevieve during the period being interpreted. The way the museum was chosen as the venue for an exhibit about the Shawnee and Delaware Tribes' experience in eastern Missouri, and how that exhibit was designed, are important for appreciating what was happening in my personal and professional understanding. It also showed me how shifting the interpretive focus would produce challenges for the community, the staff and the board of directors. It leads directly to the demands that the participant team articulated about balance and truth in the interpretation of diversity at the historic house museum. A trip I made to the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma's lands and tribal museum, as well as a subsequent hearing for the humanities, adjusted what I understood even after the exhibit opened.

Similar, but different enough to be discussed, is how we came to design and install an exhibit about the African experience in colonial Ste. Genevieve. The limitations of the town's racial history, demographics and stereotypes factored in the experiences that combined to influence the creation, as well as the reception, of the exhibit. Especially interesting are the reactions of Joe McGill with the Slave Dwelling Project (The Slave Dwelling Project 2017). The most profound disruption of my understanding that caused the epiphany that inspired this project happened when an African American visitor came and provided her perspective and interpretation of a neighboring eighteenth-century vertical log building. The prequel ends with the conclusions that resulted in a commitment to make interpretive decisions for the museum based on a commitment to honor and humility, as well as interpretive strategies and priorities, and how these experiences drove this project and dissertation.

The Bolduc House Museum’s history, governance, mission, community and audiences

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Missouri (NSCDA for the National Society and NSCDA/MO for the Missouri Society) purchased the Louis Bolduc House in May 1949 from Zoe Bolduc. The French-style, vertical log, post-on-sill house had been home to members of the Bolduc family since 1792, when the community of Sainte Genevieve relocated itself after the Mississippi River flooded and destroyed the Old Town. It was a French, Catholic community, opposed to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, loyal to the Bourbon kings and, even though it was governed by Spain from 1763 to 1800, it was thoroughly French in character, language and traditions. Sainte Genevieve was also home to members of at least five Native American tribes, and as much as forty percent of the community was made up of enslaved and free Africans during the period interpreted by the museum.

A presentation to the NSCDA/MO by Charles Van Ravenswaay, then president of the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis, and an activist lobbying the Missouri State Legislature to enact legislation regarding historic preservation, persuaded this organization to purchase the house to save from demolition what he considered to be the “oldest house in Missouri” (Van Ravenswaay 1947). After a ten-year process of stabilization, preservation, restoration and furnishing with French colonial American artifacts and furniture collected or purchased by Charles Van Ravenswaay and his colleague Charles Nagle, then director of the St. Louis Art Museum, the house was opened as a historic house museum to much acclaim on May 7, 1958 (Orthwein 1958). In 1960, the donation of another vertical log, post-on-sill house directly across the street from the Louis Bolduc House, was made to the NSCDA/MO. This house, the Beauvais-Linden House, was given to the Society in perpetuity to be its state headquarters. In 1970, a third house, originally built and lived in by Louis Bolduc’s grand-daughter Agatha Bolduc LeMeilleur, was restored and donated to the Society as a second “tour home.”

The decision of the NSCDA/MO to preserve and interpret historic houses was consistent with the priority that the NSCDA has always placed on the historic preservation of places that are deemed significant to the nation's history and development. Today this organization is comprised of 44 autonomous, affiliated state societies and, together, they own and operate 40 historic sites and/or help to facilitate another 50 sites or collections (National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 2017). It is an all- female organization whose membership is by invitation only to those women who can trace their ancestry to a man who was a military or political official in one of the thirteen British American colonies prior to the Revolutionary War. So, the NSCDA qualifies as what Patricia West, speaking of the first American historic house museum, Mount Vernon, identifies as "Founding Mothers" (West, 1999) of the Bolduc House Museum and of their other historic house museums across the United States.

Until the Society organized a new, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization to manage the site in November 2016, the NSCDA/MO governed the Bolduc House Museum by a dedicated Bolduc Historic Properties Committee (whose members all resided 70 miles away in St. Louis) without any official collaboration or participation from individuals not members of the NSCDA/MO. A director from the local community who did not have a museum or other professional background was hired in 1962. She was succeeded by her daughter—a retired French teacher from the local high school in 1987. I succeeded her in 2009. Local high school girls and some retired women were hired beginning in the early 1960s to be the museum interpreters, with two boys hired after 2006, and, under my watch, there was an incremental shift to an all-adult, paid staff with some teens among the volunteer corps.

The NSCDA/MO adopted a mission statement that included historic preservation, education and the preservation of documents and items that advance public awareness of the story of the Louis Bolduc family, in particular, and of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, in general. The mission statement was adjusted since 2009 to reflect the re-branded focus on colonial French America. In 1987, because of the educational mission of the site, the NSCDA/MO became designated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a tax-exempt

501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It had been allocated tax-exempt, non-profit status with the State of Missouri since 1996, and as a “benevolent corporation” since 1896 (Missouri Secretary of State 2017). Non-profit status for a museum is important in the United States for four reasons: 1) only these organizations qualify to receive grants from philanthropic charitable organizations; 2) only gifts to these organizations provide tax exemptions to the donors; 3) museum shops belonging to these organizations are exempt from collecting and paying sales tax on items they sell; and 4) these organizations are exempt from paying sales tax on purchases made related to their operations. The Louis Bolduc House became designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1970 (National Parks Service 2017), ten years after a National Historic Landmark District was designated in the historic downtown area and to which the Louis Bolduc House, the Bolduc-LeMeilleur House and the Beauvais Linden House all “contribute significance” (National Park Service 2012). NHL designation provides both protection and limitations on what can be done to the exterior of the building. Each of the three house museums visited in this study are tax-exempt, non-profit organizations with NHL designations as well.

The City of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, is 70 miles south of St. Louis. It is the county seat of one of the state’s first five counties, Ste. Genevieve County. The population of the City hovers just under 5,000 (City-Data.com, Sainte Genevieve City 2017). Its population at the time of the Louisiana Purchase was 1300, of which one-third were enslaved African Americans (Switzler 1888). While members of several Native American tribes were living in villages located within the region of Sainte Genevieve, they were not represented in the censuses. The county, with an area of 502 square miles (City-Data.com, Sainte Genevieve County, 2017), has a population of 17,914 as of 2014(Ibid.). While around 30 percent of the colonial Ste. Genevieve community was of African origin or descent (Switzler 1888), fewer than 2 percent of the residents of Ste. Genevieve county are non-white today (City-Data.com, Sainte Genevieve City, 2017). A major shift in the racial makeup of the community happened as a result of some riots in 1930 (Loewen 2005). Despite a Spanish land grant in the

region of Cape Girardeau, south of Ste. Genevieve, to the Shawnee Tribe in 1793 (Warren 2008), the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (National Archives 2017) excluded Native Americans from living in the State of Missouri.

These historical and demographic factors are predictive of the size and makeup of the visitors and audience for the Bolduc House Museum. From May 1958 through January 1960, according to the internal records of the NSCDA/MO, 8,515 people had visited the new museum. In 2015, we counted just over 7,000 unique visitors to the museum, the overwhelming majority of which were white.

Interpretation as I inherited it at the Bolduc House Museum as of 2009

When I became the executive director, I inherited an interpretive staff mainly comprised of high school students who had not yet studied either U.S. History or World History in high school. Two retired adult women were also employed as seasonal interpreters. The visitors were guided through the Louis Bolduc House, where they could peer over some stanchions into the various rooms and where they were given an object-driven, architecture-heavy speech. After viewing an eighteenth-century French kitchen garden, the visitors were led through an aisle in the center of a period room in the Bolduc-LeMeilleur House. This house epitomized the early American period between the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and Missouri statehood in 1821, when it had briefly been the home of Louis Bolduc's grand-daughter and her husband. The period room led to the museum shop.

When asked questions such as, "Did Louis Bolduc have any slaves?", the interpretive staff had been instructed to say, "Yes, he had slaves," and then to change the subject. Native Americans were not mentioned.

There was little documented provenance for the items in the collection other than that they had been selected by qualified experts in 1957 to match an inventory of the Bolduc estate after the death of Agatha Govereau Bolduc in 1774 in a different house in the Old Town site. Items had been added since, like a Japanese nutcracker from the twentieth century that was asserted to be

from the eighteenth. What I came to call “wanna-be” history prevailed over research-based assertions in many respects.

Return visitors who brought guests to see the museum were apt to elect not to go on the tour but to wait for their friends on a bench, saying that they had already been here—even as long as ten years ago. Fourth graders make up a significant visitor demographic. A photograph of the Louis Bolduc House is in the most popular Missouri History textbook (McCandless and Foley 2001 p.70), and its caption was the lone information presented about the French, who were the dominant colonial Americans living in Missouri from 1720 to 1804. There was no compelling story and nothing to touch, taste or smell, except in the garden, when these nine and ten-year-old children visited.

My leadership regarding interpretation and the visitor experience beginning in 2010

I immediately began to change the way a visitor experienced the Bolduc House Museum towards a more story-driven, participatory interpretation with a goal to shift to the interpretive strategy known as “Living History.” In Living History, visitors encounter authentically clad people from the period being interpreted who are engaged in activities that would have been part of that era’s daily life. To do Living History well requires a huge learning curve, so we began phasing into it by, first, adding a functional Quebec-style bread oven to the costumes and by scheduling regular appearances by *fusil*-toting members of the *Milice de Ste. Genevieve*, for example. I required that we be able to document whatever we asserted. This caused some resistance because some of the community’s oral history conflicts with documentary evidence. We incorporated role playing activities, games, proverbs and other hands-on educational and historically inspired activities. We intentionally talked about the enslaved Africans and their contributions. We emphasized the unique differences between French and British colonial America through discussing the role of women in the community, the policies that determined how the colonists related to the American Indians, as well as the impact of this community’s organization

around the French Catholic ecclesiastical calendar and conventions, in contrast to the American Protestant work ethic, for example.

A lesson in humility and the privilege of working with three Native American Tribes

The second thing that pushed me towards what would become this dissertation was a call from the director of the Missouri Humanities Council to ask whether we would be interested in being the permanent venue for an exhibit. The Council had committed to fund and create an exhibit for each Native American Tribe that had ever lived in what is now the State of Missouri. An exhibit about the period from 1787 to 1830, when the Shawnee and Delaware Tribes lived in pan-tribal villages in Southeastern Missouri, had been in the planning stages for several years. A venue had been selected but that museum did not respect the tribes' requirements to limit their collaboration with other Indians only to those who belonged to federally recognized tribes. Because the Bolduc House Museum is located within the region where these tribes moved, upon the invitation of the Spanish government to assist in defending the Mississippi River from the British and Americans and the western frontier from the Osage Indian Tribe, we were asked whether we would like to be considered to host the exhibit. We did, and so a visit from a delegation of tribal members from three Shawnee and two Delaware Tribes was arranged. Another house museum in Ste. Genevieve was also being considered so the delegation would visit both venues on the same day.

The head of the delegation was Chief Glenna Wallace of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. She had previously consulted with Williamsburg on their development of a new interpretive strategy to incorporate Native American culture and history. She served on President Obama's Council for Native American Affairs. I had met her at a museum conference where she gave a workshop.

The area I could provide for this exhibit was not optimal. It was an unheated, 14-foot square stone cottage (Fig. v.1). I could also allocate a larger outdoor

space in which we could create programming around Woodland Indian life-ways using Living History interpretive strategies.

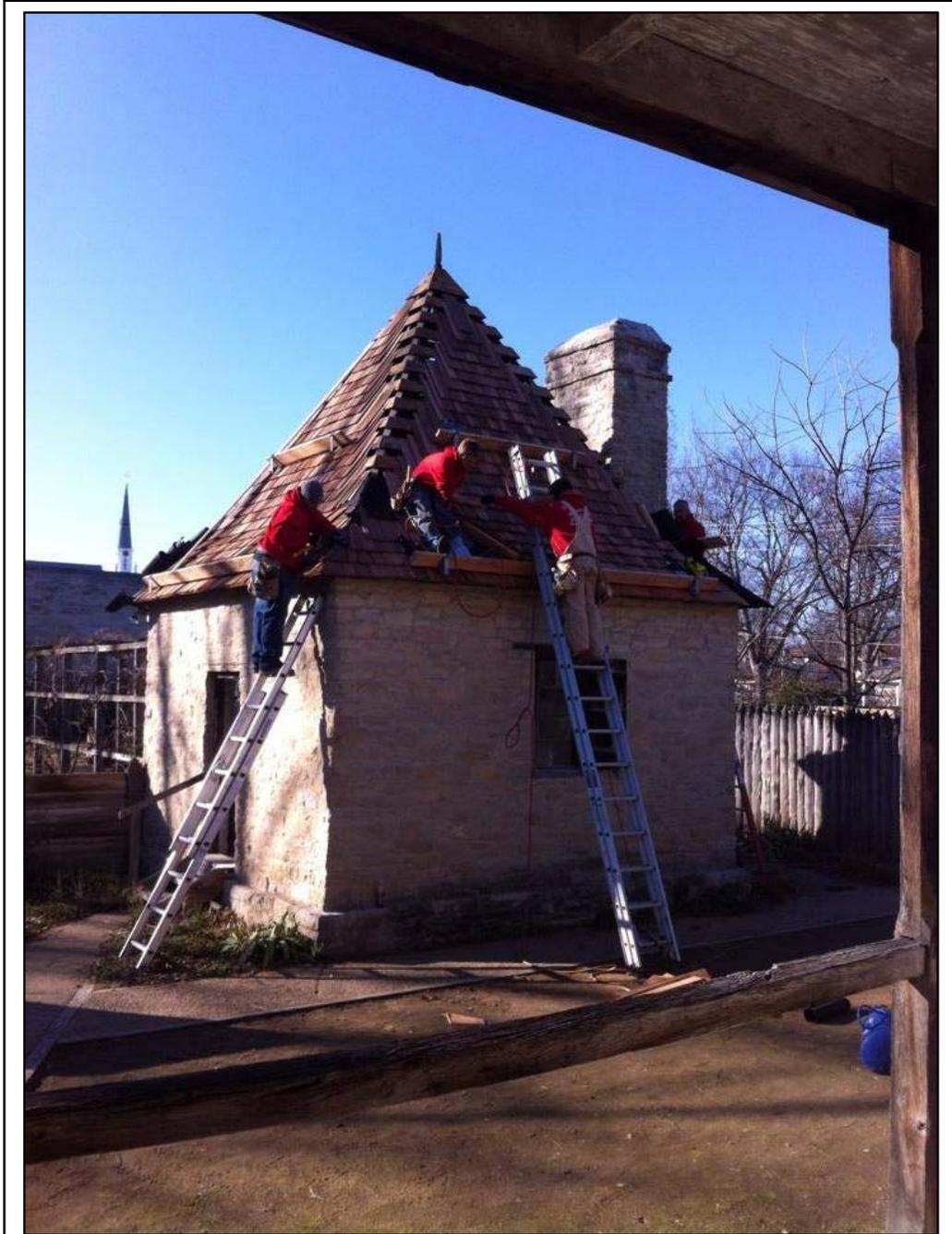


Figure v-1. Stone Cottage Exterior. Photo by Lesley Barker

Our site received the first visit. In the afternoon, the delegation returned to discuss the proposal in greater detail. It seemed that they were leaning towards

choosing us. Chief Wallace looked directly into my eyes and asked me, “So, Lesley, how will YOU tell OUR story?” I realized that my answer would determine if we would be selected for the exhibit, so I took a deep breath before answering. “Well, Chief Glenna,” I replied, “I cannot tell your story because I do not know it. You will have to tell me how you want your story to be told.” She quickly replied, “You can have the exhibit.” Then she described that she wanted the exhibit not only to convey the tribes’ history in this region but also to portray the tribes as alive today, living within their own culture and political context as sovereign nations in the United States. One of the benefits that she hoped might come as a result of the exhibit was that the tribes would have an opportunity to learn more of their own history. Because the experience in this part of Missouri was difficult and, by 1830, because of President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act, the tribes were pushed out, in spite of possessing a Spanish land grant of 25 square miles in this region, this part of their history was not included in the oral canon that had been passed down. I agreed to share any research I might amass to help the tribes recover their lost stories.

I worked closely with a consultant from the Missouri Humanities Council to develop the exhibit so that it meshed with and enhanced the narrative we were beginning to tell. A very important interpretive panel was devoted to the Doctrine of Discovery, a series of papal bulls beginning with the Papal Bull Dum Diversas of 1452, by which non-European lands and peoples were “discovered” and subjected to Catholic and then Christian European monarchs (Doctrine of Discovery Study Group 2017). This doctrine remains in force in international law today, was used as late as 1974 against Native people in the United States, and the rituals of “discovery” were enacted when NASA’s (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s) astronauts landed on the moon in 1969 (Miller 2008). Another panel, that the tribes were insistent about, described gender roles that the U.S. and the British had attempted to dismantle, along with artifacts pertaining to those roles. One artifact in this part of the exhibit is a drum that only men can touch and with which they dance when it is filled with water. By making public these ways that Europeans and

Americans had specifically wounded these tribes, the exhibit could function to bring not just public awareness to them, but they could also bring understanding that might dispel some prejudices. We named the exhibit, “This Community of Cultures - the Shawnee and Delaware Indian Experience in Eastern Missouri.” Before it opened to the public, Chief Wallace and her tribal preservation officer, Robin Duschene, visited to critique it. During the entire time that the exhibit was under development, the consultant submitted each new idea to the tribal members, privileging how they wanted their story told.

Establishing four commitments to follow in the interpretation of diversity

Naming the Shawnee and Delaware exhibit “This Community of Cultures” was a promise that other exhibits related to the other cultures that were members of the French colonial community would follow. The African exhibit would be next and it would be more difficult, mostly because wounds are still open from when the African American community fled after a murder and some riots in the 1930s (Loewen 2005). Incredibly, from a population of more than 30 percent of the colonial town, people of African descent now comprise just under 2 percent of the population of Ste. Genevieve County (City-Data.com, Sainte Genevieve City 2017). This means that there was virtually no local African American community available to include in the design and critique of such an exhibit. However, in order to interpret the truth about this French colonial community, I felt that it was imperative to include each culture that made up its fabric. As with the Shawnee and Delaware exhibit, there was very little documentation, other than records for the purchase and emancipation of enslaved Africans, to inform the museum’s interpretation. So, a commitment to develop an exhibit had various inherent challenges, not to mention a non-existent budget.

I spent around three years exploring the Ste. Genevieve Archives for information about Africans within the colonial community, and I augmented this information with a few books such as Gwendolyn Hall’s *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (Hall 1992) and Robert Harm’s *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (Harm 2003). I was determined that the African

Experience in the Colonial Ste. Genevieve exhibit should reflect the four commitments that I articulated as priorities for the museum: honor, redemption and restoration, transformation and wisdom. The exhibit should honor the contributions of the African people who lived and worked in Ste. Genevieve prior to the Louisiana Purchase in two ways: by naming the individuals, and by a commitment to particularize everything I asserted. The exhibit should redeem and restore the lost stories of the people in the community. It should be transformative and it should communicate wisdom. The exhibit had to put facts on the wall and not pretend to draw or insist on any conclusions. That the exhibit succeeded in these objectives was proven when Joe McGill of the Slave Dwelling Project (McGill 2017) visited. He was especially grateful for all of the names that I included.

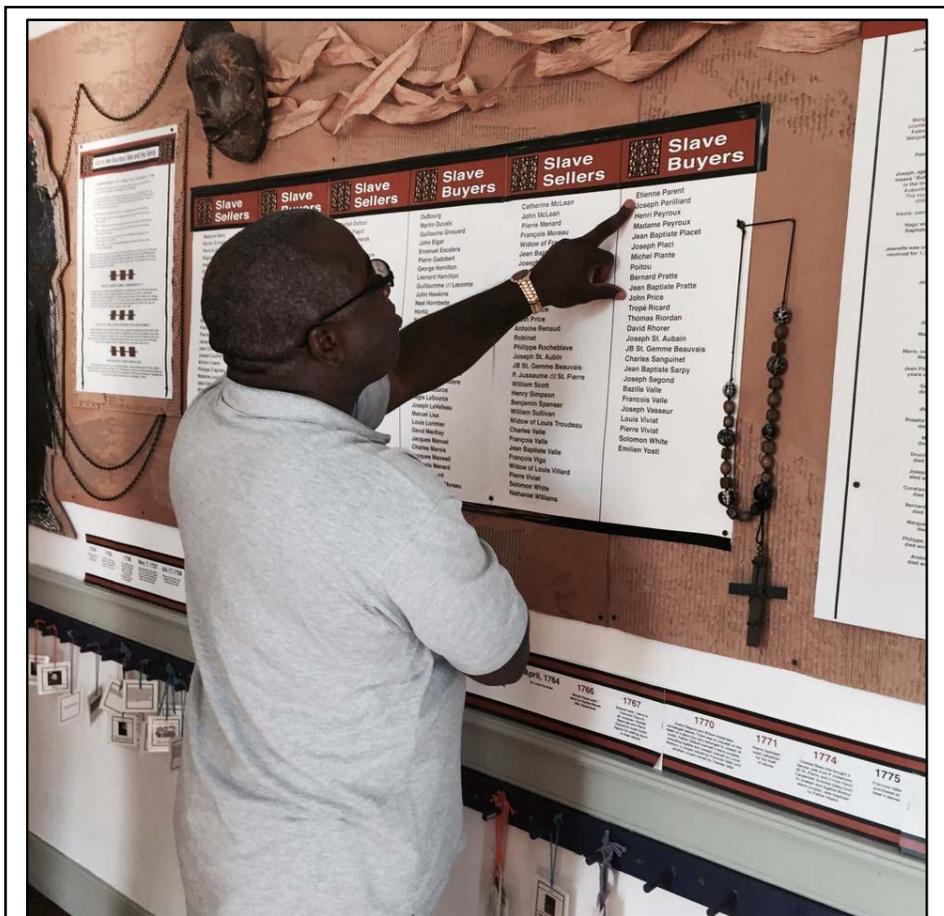


Figure v-2. Joe McGill of the Slave Dwelling Project. Photo by Lesley Barker

In many regards this exhibit was a confrontation to the current community, a declaration that we will expose and discuss the sugar-coated “the French were much more benevolent to their slaves than the British” local claim with facts. The French enslaved four times as many Africans as did the British and Americans combined over the course of the slave trade (Harm 2003).

“Founding Mothers,” old stereotypes and the problem of the “power of the purse”

Because the Bolduc House Museum has always been owned and operated by The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Missouri, they tend to operate as the “founding mothers” described by Debra Reid this way :

The Founding Mothers practiced consensus history exaggerating the power of the domestic sphere to ensure civic virtue and de-emphasizing divisive issues such as slavery, suffrage, and segregation. (Reid 2002).

There seems to be an aspect of *noblesse oblige* at work in which the visitors are thought of as people who need the benefit of the “education” the museum offers. These women descend from the victors in the American story, the writers of the history books so, even though they own and operate a historic site that tells a counterpoint history to that of their ancestors, they tend to persist, in my opinion, in attempting to press the French colonial multi-ethnic, multi-cultural stories through the sieve of the “self-made man,” pioneer trekking westward along the path of Manifest Destiny. They still use predominantly African American domestic “help” in their homes and to staff their social events. When, for instance, we were negotiating an exhibit agreement with the Missouri Humanities Council and the three Shawnee and two Delaware Tribes for This Community of Cultures, I had to navigate a hugely prejudicial old stereotype about Indians. The Board balked at the idea that we should award “First Family” status to the members of the tribes so that they would receive free admission to the museum. As the museum’s transition to an expanded

campus develops, there is a risk that the Board will prioritize downplaying this French, African, Native American and Catholic colonial story of the bread-basket for the French Americas in favor of an exaggerated and invented tale of entrepreneurship and the American Dream and that, due to the “power of the purse,” this contrived interpretive narrative may prevail.

How I discovered that my “expert” perspective has significant gaps and “blind spots”

My understanding that we needed to incorporate the stories about the French, Africans and Native Americans, as well as the women who all tended to be dropped from the typical story of American hegemony moving westward—first in the context of the Doctrine of Discovery and, next, following the American Dream and Manifest Destiny, always privileging the “self-made man”—gave way to decisions that radically changed how the museum approached interpretation under my leadership. It was Chief Glenna’s question, “*How will YOU tell OUR story?*” that produced a mental gasp between what I understood about telling another’s story and how, when, or even whether, I could design an honest exhibit. After both the Shawnee and Delaware exhibit and the African Experience in Colonial Ste. Genevieve exhibit had been on display for more than a year each, another visitor’s inquiry produced and reinforced this gasp. Lisa is an African American educator, performing artist and journalist. She asked me where the African American history of the colonial community was available to visit. I took her through my site, showing her the contributions made by Africans. Next, we walked about one-half mile south to see two vertical log homes that had belonged to freed African families. Before we got there, we passed the Janis House, known today as the Greentree Tavern, built in 1792 (Fig. v.3). Lisa stopped, stared, and asked “*Was this a slave market?*” She explained that the way the stairs went up on one side of the square porch extension and down on the opposite side was the way slave market blocks were built.



Figure v-3. Greentree Tavern Front Porch,

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Photograph_of_the_Greentree_Tavern_in_Ste_Genevieve_MO.jpg

I did not know whether enslaved individuals had ever been sold there, but promised to try to find out. I realized that daily for years I had been passing that building without ever making that connection. I understood that whether or not Lisa's conjecture is true, whether or not enslaved individuals had been sold from that porch, for African Americans who had researched their history well, their first reaction may very well match hers. The thing that humbled and startled me was that I had not once even considered the possibility.

How these experiences inspired this research and dissertation

This is the professional context with which I was immersed when I developed the design for this project. My experiences with Lisa and Chief Wallace made me shed any pride I had as the museum director charged with representing their stories. All the documentary research in the world would not have made me recognize the possibility that enslaved individuals had ever been sold from the porch of the Greentree Tavern. While I could narrate a timeline for the experiences of the Shawnee Tribe in Southeast Missouri, I could not tell their story with empathy or from a place of intimate understanding. But I remained convinced that there must be a way to create authentic interpretations of the "other" in a historic house museum. If Lisa's recognition is justified, then these museum spaces preserve evidence of past intercultural encounters that are lost

because they do not resonate with the “other” that looks white like me and is typically in charge of telling the story. There must be a way to expose to the historic house museum people who look and see from other perspectives in space and time in order to notice and bring attention to other such “porches.” I imagined an American historic house museum that would be able to simultaneously present historical periods and events from multiple perspectives, but that invited the visitor to incrementally become cognizant and empathetic to the mindsets that determined each culturally-based decision and action. I purposed to incorporate the way trust is extended from person to person—a little at a time until one is found to be trustworthy, as indicated from the invitation to move from a doorstep to the hallway, to the living room, the kitchen and then to the more private spaces of relationship. The more I wrestled with how best to interpret the eighteenth-century Shawnee and African experiences to twenty-first century museum visitors, the more I became concerned about whether what I was adding to what I understood, but had yet to express, would satisfy both what I could envision within that space and also resonate as true to each visitor. This caused me to be humbled and to begin to understand that only out of a certain humility that displays honor, without trespassing beyond the current invitation, could this even start to occur. It caused me to discover a way to involve people whose heritage informed them with other perspectives and understandings than mine in the exploration of what could only be called a hunch that the American historic house museum preserves and may interpret evidence of past intercultural encounters that, when investigated with this in mind, may point to a way that this museum sector can continue to contribute value for new knowledge about how the past could be interpreted to bring honor, redemption and restoration of lost stories, transformation and wisdom.

Preface

Personal Positionings: Terms, Definitions and Current Events

As must be apparent from the prequel, my approach to this project and my motivations for conducting this research flow directly from my professional experience as the executive director of the Bolduc House Museum. There, my responsibility and challenge was to upgrade a significant historic site to what could be described as research-based best practices, a term I was familiar with from my years as an elementary school teacher. My work touched each area of museum practice: administration, development, marketing and social media, archival, curatorial, historic preservation, personnel, educational, interpretation, board relations, community relations, exhibit design and program development. It became apparent to me that a key to making that museum succeed, its unique selling advantage, to borrow a term from business, would be to center its operations on the interpretation of the town's colonial community of cultures, its diversity: French, African and Native American. This is what distinguishes it from a site like Colonial Williamsburg, for example. These unique characteristics can best be summed up, in my opinion, with the word, diversity. The Bolduc House Museum and Colonial Williamsburg interpret the same period of significance: eighteenth and early nineteenth century colonial America. They contrast, are diverse from each other, however, in terms of the culture of the colonial power: Bolduc (and Ste. Genevieve) represents and interprets the French, and was governed alternatively by France and Spain prior to becoming part of the early United States; Bolduc represents and interprets a majority Catholic society; Bolduc represents and interprets an ultra-conservative political position that was pro-monarchy in a time of revolutions and enlightenment. This French Catholic colonial context makes the role of women, laws and practices regarding slavery, strategies and relationships with Native American neighboring tribes, taboos related to cross-cultural and inter-racial marriages, aesthetics related to dress, food-ways, material culture and architecture different and diverse from what can be represented and

interpreted at a British colonial historic site or museum such as Colonial Williamsburg. I made the interpretation of these distinctive characteristics and practices the core from which I based and referenced every other executive decision that I made, and advocated for from the board, related to running the museum. I am convinced that pushing more research, experimentation and innovation into the arena of interpretation is vital. In my opinion, thinking about and involving the views and expertise of people who bring divergent, often dissenting ideas to the museum and its boardroom about how our history should be presented may increase the role and value that the historic house museum, in particular, might offer to a modern world. So, when I speak of diversity throughout this dissertation, I am assigning to it a very broad spectrum that can encompass culture, ethnicity, race, gender, faith, aesthetics, politics and more.

Once I determined that I would base the transformation and core message of the Bolduc House Museum on the interpretation of diversity, I realized that a few attitudinal commitments had to be identified so that we would be best able to reach across modern cultural fissures, also often related to diversity, but rooted in wounded past encounters, abuses and oppressive laws and practices. I expressed these commitments by the words: humility, honor and justice. They, too, are how I handled what I inherited in the climate of the museum's work environment and in the fact that the modern town's community did not, for the most part, reflect, know about, understand or celebrate its historic diversity. By choosing to make the interpretation of the community's past diversity central to the work and message of the museum, I directly confronted the status quo that had obtained in the community since the 1930's when the town expelled its African American families following a series of altercations.

When I use these words in this dissertation: humility, honor and justice, I am reaching outside of any theoretical framework to values that have grounded my personal life-long spiritual and relational goals. Let me define here what I mean by them as they apply to interpretation in a historic house

museum. By humility, I understand my own opinions, positions, perspectives and positions to be just one set amid multiple equally valid opinions, positions, perspectives and positions. I understand that I can always only know part of any whole matter. Humility, understood this way, keeps openings available for, and values dissent. A commitment to this kind of humility sets an expectation that we will be continually adjusting what we each know and think we understand by refusing to be entrenched in any fixed mind-set. I learned to apply humility to the museum's interpretation by giving room for visitors, staff and board members, to provide alternate explanations for what we asserted and by inviting and encouraging the collection of oral history and family memories as clues to the interpretation of a more complete picture of the past. By honor, I mean ascribing value to each other's personal or cultural beliefs, memories and contributions. I learned to apply honor in the museum's interpretation by naming past individuals and by celebrating what their presence and participation in the community achieved. In addition, I made it a practice of honor in the interpretation of the various communities of culture at the Bolduc House Museum to use direct quotations from representatives of each cultural participant of past events and encounters and to communicate objective facts without using language that was either judgmental or conclusive. Honor and humility, in my opinion, do not work without a co-commitment to justice. So, when I speak of justice in this dissertation, I imply a commitment to expose and discuss events, mind-sets, abuses and strategies that have systematically served to keep marginalized individuals and cultures in the shadows. Justice, as this kind of activist value or commitment, provides the potential, in my opinion to do what Joe McGill of the Slave Dwelling Project advocates: "*change the narrative*". He proudly promotes an alternative telling of history on the tee-shirts he markets on Facebook that portray a cup of coffee and read: "*I like my history black-ck – no sugar*" (McGill 2017). I learned to apply this kind of justice to the museum's interpretation by, for example, listing the names of the slave buyers and the slave sellers in the exhibit I created about slavery in Ste. Genevieve prior to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. I also listed the names of

as many enslaved individuals I could find in the town's archives alongside what was known about their personal lives and work. In this context, justice shines light in places and cultural conversations that have been traditionally ignored, seemingly forgotten because they are un or under-told. When juxtaposed with commitments to apply humility and honor to how a museum does interpretation, this sense of justice becomes the objective of conversations that I have experienced and chosen to lead.

Interpretation, as a practice in my opinion, connects to the idea of advancing humility, honor and justice at the museum because it relies, in its definition, on what must be done in order to achieve mutual understanding, whether this happens through translation, paraphrase or performance. When a museum's interpretation draws and insists that its conclusions about what is being preserved and/or displayed through text panels, artifacts, images, re-enactments, performances or the statements of the guides are right, I have seen it stop visitors from asking different, often difficult questions or from allowing their own pre-established opinions, positions or perspectives to be adjusted. Humility makes the museum expect to have its positions challenged and changed. Honor makes the museum value and search out alternate perspectives and renditions of the past. Justice makes the museum acknowledge, investigate and incorporate these new viewpoints and positions into its interpretation.

These commitments, and my experiences insisting that the Bolduc House Museum reflect them as I prioritized interpretation as the adopted pivot point for transitioning itself for future growth and significance, are what, once I was introduced to the philosophical tenets and theories of hermeneutics, attracted me to harness it as a way to re-approach, from a its vantage points, and to propose, through this dissertation, that the historic house museum can perhaps become a setting where the approach to interpretation as a museum practice can be repurposed. Hermeneutics, as I explain more fully in chapter three, takes takes as its subject the phenomena of understanding, interpretation and meaning. In its development, beginning

in theology and moving through jurisprudence and comparative literature, hermeneutics has remained largely absent from and mostly unexplored by the museum as it thinks about interpretation. The museum, seeing itself as a purveyor of knowledge, and an expert, has typically located its interpretive practice in the theoretical underpinnings of education. Hermeneutics has set itself to describe the process by which a person's perspectives and positions can become questioned and disrupted when they encounter an alternative position or perspective. This kind of disruption produces a hermeneutic pause in which new information becomes internally set in juxtaposition to the original understanding or knowledge and, after some unseen meta-cognitive reflection, a new understanding or meaning can find expression. So, after having collected the data that serves as the research for this dissertation, once I discovered hermeneutics, I found that it resonated with the core commitments I, as a museum professional, had already placed at the center of my interpretive museum practice. Hermeneutics is iterative and expects changes in understanding to occur in ways that echo my insistence that the museum apply humility as a core commitment. Hermeneutics does not subscribe to how meaning is derived in such a way as to require a hierarchical relationship, as does education, between an expert teacher and a learner who is expected to benefit from the knowledge held and taught by the teacher. In this way, hermeneutics offers a habitat of honor for each person who is encountered by a museum's exhibit, performance, display or claim by insisting that they derive their own meaning from what has confronted them at the museum. Finally, because hermeneutics opened such a space of reflection and iteration for me as I applied the photo-voice data that my participant team submitted once they had arrived at the hermeneutic understanding that each photograph documented what they recognized to be evidence that the museum preserves and/or interprets some past intercultural encounter, I can present, in this dissertation, a collection of images that can be used to begin to evaluate how a spectrum of participant-identified diversity is interpreted at three historic house museums in St. Louis.

This brings me to the current events, now known as “Ferguson” that were unfolding in St. Louis between the time this project was designed and when the research took place. Had Michael Brown not been killed on August 9, 2014, I think that this project might have produced different results. St. Louis, which is where Ferguson is located, as I detail later in this dissertation, was my home for most of my adult life since 1973. Already divided along racial lines, St. Louis erupted thanks to the events that followed the death of this African American teenager. Traffic was disrupted. A state of emergency was proclaimed by then Governor Nixon. My nephew’s new wife, a St. Louis County police officer, was called home from her honeymoon to serve, behind transparent military shields, on the front line, armed, against the protestors. My darker-skinned Ugandan and Indian sons-in-laws brought very different and difficult personal experiences of police encounters to the family dining room table. I had taught, for several years, in the St. Louis Public Schools, a district that predominantly serves the inner-city’s African-American and newly arrived refugee neighborhoods. I found myself grieved and personally unable to locate myself, in the under-nuanced and increasingly volatile, polarized conversation, in a firm position. I became increasingly aware that this single event had catapulted the nation into a different, new conversation about the memory of slavery and the significance of race, and that museums in St. Louis were involved, or not, in that conversation. Ferguson and the ensuing Black Lives Matter Movement dominated news and social media throughout the time this project was underway. I monitored the way museums responded to it, contrasting museums in St. Louis with other American museums. Aware that the three house museums profiled in this dissertation each prided themselves on their interpretation of the history of race in the United States, I paid attention to their posts on social media and to how they adjusted their programming and exhibitions to cover the way the conversation was changing. Once my participant team members had been identified, I checked their Facebook posts from August 9, 2014 and November 2014, when the decision about whether or not to indict the police officer who shot Brown was due, to understand how each of them voiced any personal impact provoked by these events. It is my opinion that

Ferguson, although addressed in this dissertation primarily anecdotally using mainstream journalism and social media as the main documentation, is essential to its integrity. The three house museums, the seven participant team members and I all belong to the greater St. Louis region and community which had been thoroughly destabilized, and continues at the writing of this revision to the submitted dissertation, in December 2017, to suffer frequent incidents of inter-racial violence, often with the police as one party to the violence.

I, personally believe that an open wound is always better and more likely to heal than a hidden, festering infection. My participant team members visited the three museums just one month prior to the first anniversary of Michael Brown's death. I believe that, because it was a freshly open, still bleeding community wound that Ferguson pushed each of us to bring our openly vulnerable selves to be encountered and addressed by what the museums did or did not do regarding the unrest. It also set a socio-political emotional climate in which the team was asked to address, in turn, the things that the museum did preserve and/or interpret about intercultural past encounters. Because the St. Louis community, at large, was and remains actively disturbed and in search of a way through to a new, more sensitive inter-cultural and inter-personal exchange, I believe that Ferguson has to be included here for its layered, unresolved peep-hole into what remains to be narrated and interpreted far into the future. Ferguson made this research uncomfortable but vital. Ferguson is exactly that kind of inter-cultural event that has yet to be curated or interpreted but that has the potential to prove whether museums choose to apply the kind of humility, honor, justice that I have become persuaded are the hallmarks of an interpretive practice, informed by hermeneutics, that refuses to manipulate its claims about history, especially when it deals with culture and race, to the advantage or disadvantage of any of its participants. Thus, the current events and the impact of Ferguson is threaded throughout this dissertation.

Additional note: When the source of a citation is a Kindle edition, Harvard Referencing Style advises not to include page or location numbers because each reader is able to customize the size and font, which makes location variable (Robert Gordon University 2017).

Section One

A Survey of Academic Literature
Leading to Inter

The American Historic House Museum

“Mollusk’s motto: ‘One must live to build one’s house, not build one’s house to live in.’”

(Bachelard 1958 p.106)

The American historic house museum is the museum sector with which I am most familiar. This project flowed from my professional role as the executive director of a historic house museum in transition. My conviction grew, during my tenure as director there, that interpretation is a primary driver for the operations, collections management, visitor services, interpretive educational programming and development at a house museum. This museum sector is undergoing a significant struggle for viability, relevance and sustainability. One reason for this struggle is that the sector is frequently accused of promoting a historical narrative driven by the hegemonic victor who is often portrayed as a hero and the site’s eponymous past resident. In other words, the interpretation at these museums tends to ignore the members of other cultures, as well as women and children, or else to promote old, and often racist, stereotypes when said people are mentioned. Even before I concluded that both the museum and its visitors would be better served by adopting a hermeneutics-informed interpretive strategy driven by a commitment to honor all the participants significant to the period being interpreted at a site, I wanted to explore whether the American historic house museum sector, in particular—should it be found to preserve and/or interpret evidence of past inter-cultural interactions—has the potential to contribute new knowledge to the academy and to visitors alike. Therefore, I decided to focus this project around the interpretation of diversity at three historic house museums in St. Louis, Missouri, which each promotes itself as prioritizing the interpretation of diversity. Between the design for the

project and the implementation of the field work, Michael Brown was killed by Darren Wilson in Ferguson, a municipality in St. Louis County. This tragedy triggered what has come to be known as Ferguson and the emergent Black Lives Matter Movement in the United States and defines the socio-political and emotional atmosphere in which the project was carried out. This chapter introduces the house museum sector in the United States through the literature. It also connects the characteristics profiled in the literature, when applicable, with the project sites. Not only does it describe the sector; it focuses on why the sector is at risk, as well as what various house museums are doing to address the risk. Finally, this section considers the literature about interpretation at house museums, and especially about the interpretation of diversity at the American historic house museum.

What is an American Historic House Museum?

Susan Orr gives a simple definition of the historic house museum in the United States this way: *“It is a house that is turned into a museum, with or without original furnishings, interpreted to the public.”* (Orr 2011). A historic house museum is a house built in the past and preserved because it was associated with a historic figure or event, or because it typifies a social, cultural or aesthetic era or value. The house has been opened as a *“public display [of] private history”* (Carnegie 2006) and is operated as a non-profit institution by a board of directors or by a government entity. Perhaps more than any other museum sector, the historic house museum epitomizes the museum paradigm that organizes itself around *“the joining of objects and inquiry in architectural and textual spaces.”* (Apt 2010).

Linda Young introduced a classification system developed by Charlotte Smith (Young 2002) that classified historic house museums into five broad categories:

1. The *“Great Man Shrine”* is a house dedicated to a hero or heroine. In the United States, Mount Vernon and Monticello belong in this category. Mount Vernon was the home of George Washington. Monticello was the home of Thomas Jefferson. The project site,

the U.S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven, was the home of President and Civil War General Ulysses S. Grant. Even lesser heroes have been idolized and enshrined in their house museums, such as the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis, Missouri, dedicated to the life of ragtime pianist Scott Joplin, for example, another one of the project research sites.

2. Smith's second historic house museum category is the "*collector's house*," such as the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum in St. Louis, Missouri, another of the project sites. This house is filled with toys, including those collected by and for the children's poet Eugene Field.
3. Smith's third house museum category is "*the aesthetic house*." By this she means that the house is preserved because it is "*an exemplary specimen of style or design*." The Frank Lloyd Wright House & Studio in Oak Park, Illinois, fits into this classification.
4. The fourth type of historic house museum is, according to Smith, a "*social history house... representing the lives of ordinary and sometimes anonymous people*." The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City belongs in this category, as does, from another vantage point, the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site, named in the first category as well.
5. Smith's last classification is reserved for the "*stately home/pioneer folk cottage*," a house preserved and furnished as a period piece using typical items. According to Young, this type of historic house museum "*tends to be amorphous in focus, which enables visitors (and staff) to use them for their own fantasy expectations of a golden past, whether elegant or homely*." Some of the homes preserved as part of Colonial Williamsburg fit this definition, as does the collection of log cabins at the Saxon Lutheran Memorial in Frohna, Missouri. (Ibid.).

Proliferation and range of American house museums

As of 2013, the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation estimated that there are 13,000 historic house museums in the United States (Burns 2015) amounting to 48 percent of all the museums in the nation. The Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS) estimates the number of historic house museums in the United States to be higher. It counts 16,880 historical societies, historic preservation and historic houses and sites. (IMLS 2014)

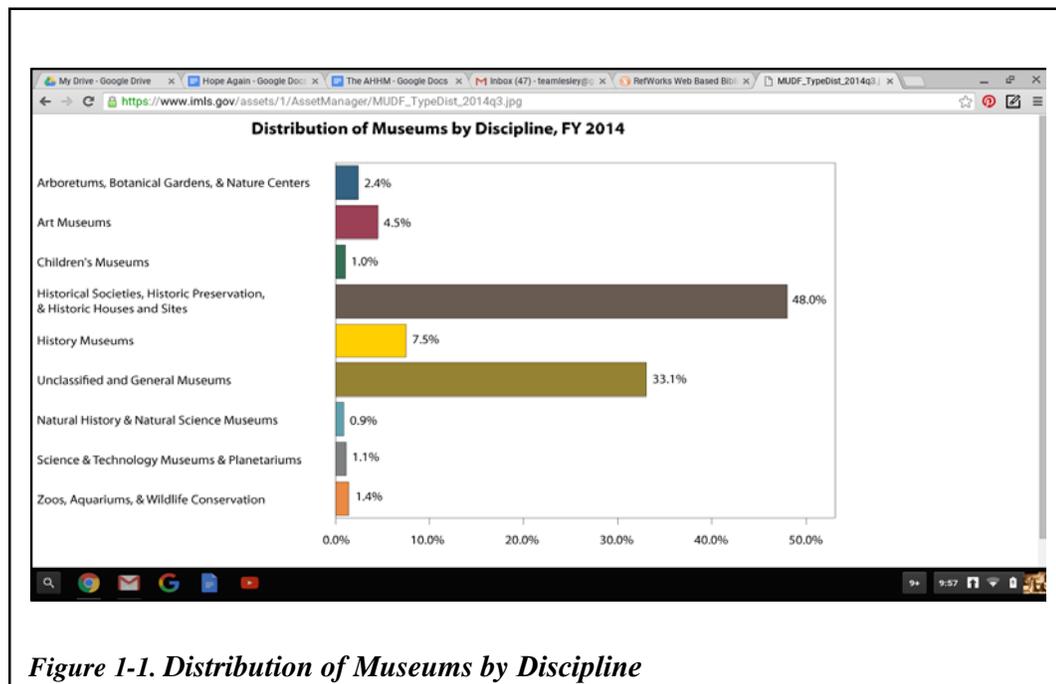


Figure 1-1. Distribution of Museums by Discipline

Most American historic house museums are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This listing is given to qualified nominated buildings that are more than 50 years old and that may contribute significance in their own right, or for the community within which they are located. Fewer, but each of the sites visited during this project, as well as the Bolduc House Museum, have been designated National Historic Landmarks (NHL). These buildings have been awarded special protection under the umbrella of the National Park Service because they epitomize unique architectural features, or they are associated with specific individuals important to the nation's history or to its cultural, musical or artistic heritage. The Bolduc House Museum received both its NHL

status and its listing on the National Register of Historic Places because of its French colonial vertical log *poteaux-sur-sols* (post-on-sill) architecture, for example (Lissandrello 1974). There are more than 80,000 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places but only 2,430 National Historic Landmark buildings.

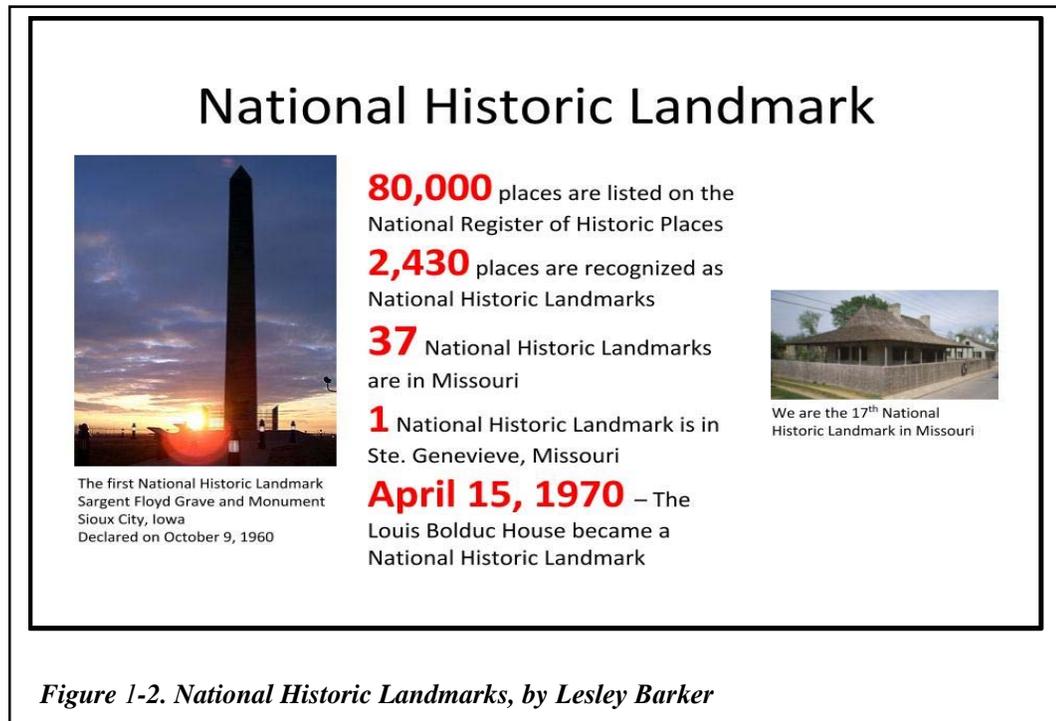


Figure 1-2. National Historic Landmarks, by Lesley Barker

How this museum sector is distinct from other museums

The most obvious distinctive of a historic house museum is that, according to George McDaniel, referenced in Jessica Donnelly, “*the settings for the artifacts are real.*” (Donnelly 2002). The house, itself, according to Debra Reid, is the “*museum’s largest artifact.*” (Reid, 2002). The house and its furnishings, together, combine to reconstruct a past into which a visitor is immersed. While some areas of the house museum may contain interpretive panels and artifacts in display cases, most house museums rely on period rooms and tour guides to interpret them during a guided visitor experience. Most artifacts are not accompanied by any labels or provenance at a house museum. Sarah Staniforth remarks that:

... unlike museums, collections in historic houses are on 'open' display...the objects cannot be considered on their own, but must be treated as part of a much larger, and more significant whole. Such awareness of context derives from the essential distinction between museums and historic houses, which is that collections include not only historic objects but also the whole interior in which objects are displayed. (Staniforth 2006).

Because historic house museums typically remain *in sitio* on their original build sites, they both embody and can catalyze the promotion of public history within a community. Gadamer's statement about the hermeneutic impact on people's understanding of the past, occasioned by "*great works of architecture*" (Gadamer 2013) is insightful. He writes:

[They] continue to exist in the life of the present as living witnesses of the past; and all preservation of inherited manners and behavior, images and decoration, does the same thing, for it too mediates an older way of life to that of the present. (Ibid.).

Some in the United States, like Andrew Hurley, criticize historic preservation legislation at all levels: state, local and federal, alleging it to be a hidden strategy for the re-gentrification of neighborhoods that have cycled out of their initial affluence to become poorer and minority-dominated today. (Hurley 2010). However, an historic house has likely always been at some level a source of pride for the surrounding community, as Janiskee claims, "*Historic houses are regarded as community assets.*" (Janiskee 1996). The Scott Joplin House State Historic Site, named a NHL in 1976, for example, was:

widely recognized as one of the neighborhood's few cultural assets, it was nonetheless weakly integrated into the life of the surrounding community (Hurley 2010)

until after it became a house museum, when plans to re-invigorate a blighted neighborhood used the museum as a point of orientation for:

neighborhood identity and a redevelopment agenda around the area's rich tradition of entertainment (Ibid.).

This kind of initiative and community impact can happen with other types of museum, but they tend to be dislocated by their institutional presence and size from their local neighborhoods.

Founding motivations and the consequences of those motivations on the sector's future

Another distinctive of an American historic house museum is that there is likely to be a pre-determined social or political message inherent in the goals of its founders that guides its collection and interpretation. Patricia West details how the first historic house museum in the United States, George Washington's Mount Vernon, was designed to organize and involve affluent women from all around the country in the promotion of that shared hero's legacy in order to stimulate a common American patriotism intended to prevent the onset of the Civil War. (West 1999). The imposition of such an agenda on the educational mission of a house museum persists especially in those museums owned and operated by women's legacy organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution or The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, which owns and operates the Bolduc House Museum, for example. Even with house museums that are government-owned and operated, a funding group with an agenda can assert peculiar emphases and priorities that may be more myth than history. In these cases, the influence comes through a "Friends Organization" that may guide program through what they decide to fund. Donating is an elite power tool that "*profoundly affects*" physical resources, according to Harold Lasswell, "*by the purposes, assumptions and identities of those who plan or change them.*" (Lasswell 1978 p. ix). Lasswell's comments disclose the strategy implemented by these founders as an elitist:

strategy of admiration... to attract by putting on a show... [to take] advantage of social tensions to seize power and [sponsor] spectacular projects to divert attention from the illegitimacy of

their power ... in the hope of obtaining heroic and histrionic effects... the creation of suitable settings for pageants, exhibitions, and other grand occasions (Ibid., p. 17).

Patricia West (West 1999) alleges that American historic house museums were originally established by what Debra Reid terms “*founding mothers*” (Reid 2002) to display a power that “*resists historical criticism*” (Gadamer 2013) which, according to Gadamer, has its roots in what is considered to be:

classical... because its historical dominion, the binding power of the validity that is preserved and handed down, precedes all historical reflection and continues in it (Ibid).

Elite owners and operators of these historic house museums act out of their own hermeneutic prejudices¹; appealing to the:

familiarity - the potential presence, as it were - of what the monument [i.e., house museum] memorializes is always assumed” [as true] (Ibid).

Reid accuses these founders of:

practicing consensus history exaggerating the power of the domestic sphere to ensure civic virtue and de-emphasizing divisive issues such as slavery, suffrage, and segregation.” (Reid 2002).

Lasswell provides a parallel between a house museum and a university by arguing that:

because of their close association with authority universities have usually been expected to justify the dominant myth of the ruling elite and to train specialists whose tasks are to inculcate,

¹ In hermeneutics, prejudice is a term that refers to prior understanding or prior knowledge.

celebrate and apply its philosophical and legal components
(Lasswell 1978 p. 28).

Perhaps for these reasons, the American “grand narrative” has largely and until recently, prevailed in the public imagination. This emphasis tends to mitigate against a polyvocal interpretation at a house museum that includes and juxtaposes alternative understandings of the same events and situations.

Reid claims that social historians “*hint that the domestic sphere was a myth,*” (Ibid.) but that the house museum’s house itself “*contains the material culture to further our understanding of gender.*” (Ibid.) However, she considers that the ongoing “*influence of founders with contrary ideas about women’s, men’s and children’s roles and responsibilities*” may impede the interpretation of gender in these museums (Ibid). Reid’s discussion about the potential value of this museum sector to provide new knowledge about men’s and women’s domestic roles and relationships provided a significant inspiration in the design of this project around the interrogation of the preservation and interpretation of “inter”-cultural encounters in the past. But, her concern, strengthened by Lasswell’s research about elite power expressed in architecture, raises a new question. Does the fact that the American historic house museum sector was established by elites weigh against its sustainability as a form, if power shifts away from the “founding mothers” at the center? Lasswell wonders whether a “*principal political effect of the architecture of opulence*” (which I argue is embodied in the historic house museum):

is to contribute to long-run political destabilization by nourishing among the elite classes a self-image that contains an illusory conception of the potency of the system and of the self... and, in effect... the physical environment conveys yesterday’s message.
(Lasswell 1978 p. 57, 59).

Gadamer's statement about a society's "*ruling taste*" applies as well:

What is considered valid in a society, its ruling taste, receives its stamp from the commonalities of social life. Such a society chooses and knows what belongs to it and what does not
(Gadamer 2013).

For the historic house museum sector to become open to a more inclusive interpretation of diversity, characterized by mutual honor, will require a humility and an openness to change that actually mitigates against the traditional, classical, if you will, *mentalité* that has been at the root the sector's traditional self-identity.

American historic house museum governance and operations

There are three main governance structures used by American historic house museums: 1) to be owned and operated by the federal government through the National Park Service; 2) to be owned and operated by a state or local government; and, 3) to be privately owned and operated as a tax-exempt, non-profit [usually 501(c)(3)²] organization. Each of the house museums visited by the participant team to collect the data for this project represents a different one of these governance structures.

The Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven (White Haven) is owned and operated by the National Park Service. A highly trained professional museum staff is involved in the operations and interpretation of this site. They are paid good wages with benefits and regular raises. Architect and landscape historians advise on maintenance. Any renovations at the site are informed by both archaeologists and environmental specialists. In addition to admissions

² 501(c)(3) is a designation from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) awarded to applicant organizations whose mission and purpose is proven to serve the public with education, health care, religious services, and charity. Donors to these organizations are allowed to deduct the value of their donations from their gross taxable income. These organizations are also exempt from paying most taxes. These organizations are also prequalified recipients for government and philanthropic grants. 501(c)(3) organizations are analogous, in other areas of the world, to NGOs.

and sales, it, like every federally owned and operated house museum, is funded out of the federal budget allocated to the Department of the Interior. In addition, because it is in the National Park system, White Haven receives a large visitation from across the world. Besides its staff, there is a “Friends” organization that funds special programs at the site.

The Scott Joplin House State Historic Site is owned and operated by the State of Missouri’s Department of Natural Resources. In addition to admissions and sales, it is funded through a percentage of the state’s sales tax revenue. Like the National Park Service sites owned by the federal government, the Missouri state historic sites utilize a highly trained professional staff earning competitive wages that are incentivized over time with raises, educational training opportunities and benefits. Missouri also funds a program of paid summer internships for youth to work at state historic sites and parks. The youth gain an introduction to cultural heritage tourism and to historic preservation while also accruing time in the state employment system. A “Friends” organization also exists to fund special projects and programs.

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum is a privately owned and operated non-profit 501(c)(3) organization run by a board of directors which is responsible for its governance and fiscal well-being. The museum’s revenue is a combination of admissions, sales, individual donations and grants from philanthropic and corporate giving foundations. This museum relies heavily on college interns for its interpretive staff. Volunteers also provide many services often expected from paid museum staff.

Questions about the viability and ongoing sustainability of this sector

The American house museum sector is in decline. In comments made to the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), Gary N. Smith, president of Dallas Heritage Village, said:

House museums are an important segment of the museum field, but they are increasingly in danger of being marginalized. Many

are deteriorating physically, declining financially, and fading in importance to their communities. Increasingly the energy of the museum field has shifted to more dynamic science and natural history museums, and house museums appear out of step with trends of visitor interest. One of the major factors in this situation is the declining role of government funding, rendering many house museums as unsustainable as presently operated (Smith, G. 2011).

Smith's comments echo a question framed by the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, now retired, Richard Moe. In 2002, he asked: "*Are there too many house museums?*" (Moe 2002). According to the current president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Stephanie Meeks, the problematic issues relate to the proliferation of this museum sector, the lack of funding, an "*antiquated*" reliance on period rooms for interpretation, and a lack of professional staff (Burns 2015). Marian Godfrey and Barbara Silberman join this opinion, stating for the Pew Charitable Trust that there are "*a troubling surplus of sites that are underused and hopelessly disconnected from their communities...these monuments need to be 'repurposed' to be revitalized.*" (Godfrey & Silberman 2008).

Frank Vagnone and Deborah Ryan itemize five "*critiques*" that contribute to the decline of the house museum:

1. Historic House Museums reflect political and social propaganda
2. Historic House Museums have nothing relevant to contribute to conversations
3. Historic House Museums are boring
4. Historic House Museums have been narrowly curated and do not reflect real life use
5. Historic House Museums are too expensive to preserve and they engage in deceptive conservation practices (Vagnone & Ryan 2016 p. 40-41).

Their book addresses the need for, and some strategies to promote engagement with new audiences as a way to combat some of these problems.

Jay D. Vogt summed up the conclusions of the Kykuit II Summit on the sustainability of historic sites by saying:

The historic site community must reaffirm the importance of these places for our nation's future and redefine their mission in terms of that future rather than the past.” (Vogt 2007 p. 21).

This imperative echoes Lasswell's question:

Will messages of yesterday continue to dominate man's experience of tomorrow and perpetuate parochial identities, demands and expectations into the future? (Lasswell 1978 p. 60),

which I apply to this discussion of the historic house museum sector's uncertain sustainability. If Debra Reid is correct that the founding premise of at least the privately owned and operated historic house museum, “*the power of the domestic sphere to ensure civic virtue*” (Reid 2002), is a myth that continues to be perpetuated in the boardroom, it is unclear whether this segment of the sector can sustain the current shaking.

Various approaches to the sector's sustainability and viability

The government-owned and operated historic house museums are, for the most part, fiscally protected from the issues of viability and sustainability that are facing the privately-owned house museums. Rising costs, dwindling visitation, and low interest rates that dis-incentivize philanthropic giving have all combined with, and complicated, the other, more systemic problem of an archaic and uninspiring interpretative strategy and message to challenge the sector's future.

According to a 2000 study by the Pew Charitable Trust, the most recent year available, only 10% of the house museums studied

have an endowment large enough to cover operating costs, 80% have more than \$1 million in preservation needs and the average operating budget is \$100,000 or less (Hellman 2016).

Various house museums have experimented with different responses to these challenges. Donna Harris lists eight *“new solutions for house museums”* when the board of directors has determined that to continue to own and operate a museum is no longer viable. Her solutions mainly address the financial challenges that these museums face, such as:

1. Transition from a house museum open to the public to a *“study house with limited visitation”*
2. Keep the mission but do not use the site as a museum; instead turn it into a *“library, guest house, museum shop, organizational offices, educational setting, artifact or other storage”*
3. *“Enter into a formal co-stewardship, cooperative relationship, or lease with another house museum organization to manage the property as a house museum”*
4. Merge with another similar organization
5. Lease the house museum to a *“for-profit entity for an adaptive use”*
6. *“Sale to a private owner with easements”* whereby the easements actually restrict the modifications that the new owner could make for historic preservation and conservation purposes
7. *“Sale to a nonprofit organization with easements”*
8. *“Donation of the property to a governmental or other nonprofit entity”* (Harris 2007 p.83-99).

Each of the solutions proposed by Harris requires board consensus and may have ethical challenges due to binding gift agreements and legal restrictions consistent with the tax-exempt, non-profit status or other restrictions stated in the bylaws.

Another very common revenue-producing strategy is to market the house museum as an event venue. This can be expressed in two very different approaches: by events that have a missional connection, and by events that are purely revenue producers, such as weddings and receptions. Events with a missional connection include community festivals, special programs, focused tours and living history events. These events are often repeated annually and are advertised locally in museum publications and online. For nonprofit historic house museums in the United States, because rental events like weddings and small receptions do not conform with their Internal Revenue Service-designated educational purpose and mission, Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT) must be collected. This can become a very lucrative source of revenue, even though it injects new accounting and staff responsibilities for the museum to oversee.

Interpretation at the American Historic House Museum: goals, strategies, and a critique

Commonly utilized interpretive strategies at house museums

It is my conviction that the most sustainable strategic approach to revitalizing the house museum sector is in the area of interpretation so that the museum, its collections and the stories of the people who lived and worked in or visited the house, are mined for their potential to contribute new knowledge and information that will assist the visitors to navigate a new and truer interpretation of their own past. Before considering new interpretive strategies for the house museum, it is necessary to describe the typical interpretative strategies implemented in the sector, as well as to explore why it tends to be frozen in the “*We’ve always done it that way*” mentality.

Period Rooms

A period room is like a room in a life-sized doll house. In most house museums, an attempt to replicate or utilize period fabrics, wall coverings and floor coverings is a high priority, with much funding spent on researching and then acquiring such things. The furniture and other artifacts are often original to the house or to the family whose history the house is presenting. A curator or other

subject-matter expert on the period, culture and material culture being presented consults on the placement of the furniture, and thus it remains for decades enshrined and regaled as a true rendition of what would have been once upon a time. Of course, as Handler and Gable remind us in their book on Williamsburg, the reminder is incomplete and missing the ambiance provided by streets without sewers and windows without screens admitting the malaria-bearing mosquitoes of a former time. (Handler & Gable 1997). Frequently, the visitor is restrained from fully entering and experiencing the items in the period room by stanchions and velvet ropes, as if she or he is unworthy to enter a holy place.

Each of the house museums that the participant team visited for this project relied heavily on period rooms. White Haven was very sparsely furnished because the original furnishings, when in storage during Grant's lifetime, were destroyed by a fire. This site also contained a more traditional museum display area in a reconstructed barn. More traditional museum exhibits are located in a large entry hall which also contains a museum shop and theater. The Scott Joplin House has a fully furnished set of period rooms upstairs. Downstairs, there is a small space for viewing an orientation video, and another small space in which visitors gather to hear Joplin's ragtime compositions on a player piano at the very end of the guided tour. Also located downstairs is a small shop and a traditional museum exhibit area devoted to ephemera such as sheet music and copies of contemporary newspaper articles about the artist and his performances. The Eugene Field House also relies on a series of period rooms on the first and second floors. The third floor incorporated more interpretive signage in one room. A second room serves as the museum shop. This house museum uses a bannister with interpretive signage to section off the period room recreating Roswell Field's law office. This provides information about the landmark Dred Scott law case for which he, Eugene Field's father, was the defense attorney. Period rooms are the norm in the American historic house museum. They tend not to be rearranged. New stories or displays are rarely added. This may be a reason that many visitors do not tend to return to

the house museum except to bring out-of-town guests or the next generation of their children or grandchildren.

Young explains that this interpretive method works because:

The period room or period house contains integrity because visitors believe they are in the presence of great objects, relics and artwork (Young, L. 2002).

Not only does this “static frozen-moment nature of period rooms” (Ibid.) “set up a passive expectation” (Ibid.) in the visitor, Young considers it a:

reduction of house museum interpretation to a conventional assemblage of the ‘warm parlor of the past’ [which] merely reinforces stereotypes (Ibid.).

Whether and how a house museum’s interpretation either disrupts or reinforces stereotypes about culture, race and gender is an important concern raised by the participant team and will be discussed in later sections of this dissertation. Period rooms, however, tend to be unchanged over decades, except for when an occasion like Christmas envelopes the ordinary arrangement of the furniture and ephemera of the space with garish or tasteful period decorations. Hence they appear to assert authority, resist criticism, and endorse a status quo. They set the visitor up as the receiver both of information and its interpretation, as Hooper-Greenhill notes is done for or to the visitor. (Hooper-Greenhill 2000).

Object-driven

Frequently, the interpretation at a house museum is organized around objects. The reliance on artifacts, instead of the human strengths, *faux pas*, contentions and foibles that may have happened inside the historic house itself, may make the authority of the presented information less vulnerable to critique. One can assert and demonstrate by visual and/or documentary proof that a certain chair or a particular costume was used/worn when so and so (our American hero) did such and so. This is important, and easier, if the goal is to present a historical narrative that purports to be complete and authoritative.

On the other hand, objects carry value for the hermeneutic goal of understanding the past. According to Gadamer, a:

memento... is precious in itself since, as a bit of the past that has not disappeared, it keeps the past present for us...Mementos lose their value when the past of which they remind one no longer has any meaning (Gadamer 2013),

so, in repurposing interpretation at the historic house museum, the way the objects are presented is going to be important.

The three house museums under consideration in this project rely on objects to move the guided tour along. The ranger pointed to an unpainted door to introduce slavery at White Haven and to a collection of seashells to discuss the women in the home. The Scott Joplin House tour used an icebox to discuss city life and technology, and a set of men's grooming tools arranged on a dresser to discuss African folk tradition related to hair. At the Eugene Field House, because we did not have a docent to guide us throughout the rooms, the objects jumbled together without much of a unifying thread, other than for the toys, which were scattered in cabinets, on tables and even in the office chair of the law office. Object-based interpretation, however, was clearly the strategy, with toys being the most emphasized objects.

To rely on objects that never get moved from their staged places in period rooms to tell the story of a historic house treats the house itself as fossilized. This fossil, hopefully, is like what was envisioned and romanticized by Gaston Bachelard. He wrote that:

every form retains life, and a fossil is not merely a being that once lived, but one that is still alive, asleep in its form (Bachelard 1958 p. 113).

This project is an attempt to wake up the true sleeping fossil of the historic house museum. Surely, when it stirs and stretches, a lot of the furniture will be tossed out of place and some surprisingly different explanations may be

required in order for the visitor to make sense out of the released cacophony of voices including the family members, slaves, servants, neighbors and enemies competing to be heard before the story ends.

Guided Tours

Guided tours are the standard approach to providing information and interpretation at historic house museums. Tours tend to start at set times during the day. They are semi-scripted, often with room for the guide to customize the information presented to the visitors in the group. However, visitors do not usually have access to the artifacts except from a distance. Provenance, or other labeling, is usually absent. Because there is another tour scheduled to follow, probably led by the same guide who will need a drink, or a short break, between groups, the tour is a way to manage both the route and the time that a visitor is present. In many historic house museums, the tour guide, or docent, wears a period costume designed to enhance the visitor's experience of stepping back in time or perhaps to a certain "once upon a time" construction of the past according to the founders' and donors' prescriptions.

Guided tours are the norm at the three house museums considered for this project. The tour guide at White Haven wears a National Park Service ranger's uniform, complete with a Smokey The Bear hat and badge. Visitors to this site are free to explore the grounds and the museum-like display in the barn and main gate building. However, to be given entry to the house itself, the ranger supervises a tour. He provides the information about the Grant family and about the romance between the pro-Confederate Colonial Dent's daughter Julia and the Union general soon to become president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant. He predicts what the visitors would and would not see inside the house. Then he allows the group to explore inside the house while he remains available there for questions. The tour guide at the Scott Joplin House, on the day we visited, led a more traditional tour, herding us and the other visitors from room to room, pointing out the objects that fit her script. There was a university intern hosting the visitors to the Eugene Field House the day we went. She asked if we wanted her to guide us through the house or if we just wanted to look around on our own and ask her any questions we had. We were

given such a choice, perhaps because the intern recognized me as having led her class through the Bolduc House Museum during a historic preservation field school summer class the year before and because there were no other visitors on site when we visited.

New interpretive strategies that aim to produce new knowledge and information

As is evident from Patricia West's research on the founding of four major American historic house museums, their interpreted "heritage" has been scripted by elites for other Americans who "need" reminding, or educating, about the tenets of patriotism, as well as for those who "need help" embracing the ideas and aesthetics that predispose the fulfillment of the American Dream. (West 1999). The purpose of heritage as it has been expressed in many privately owned and operated historic house museums and in celebrations like the 1904 World's Fair at St. Louis, for example, has been to solidify the white male hero version of U.S. history in an effort to manage a political or social message that maintains an elitist status quo or hegemony. The problem with this status quo is that it leaves many of the characters, themes and actions out of the story. These former homes of the first families of (the authorized version of) American history tend to be as much about replicating the original interiors and landscape designs as they are about elevating the famous Americans.

The Tenement Museum in Manhattan is a historic house museum with a founding mission that challenges the house museum norm in its interpretive goals and strategies. According to Charles Hardy:

By crossing the boundaries of ethnicity and class, public and private, past and present, [the Tenement Museum] has the potential to be part of a watershed moment in the history of museums. (Hardy 1997 p.1013).

Indeed, by implementing a radically different interpretive strategy that replaces the period room approach with narratives informed by social history, a transformation of the American historic house museum sector "from shrines to

sites of social relevance” (Pustz 2010 p.33) may be possible. Other innovative approaches to new interpretive strategies being implemented at historic house museums include Anarchy, Living History, and Museum Hack. None of these approaches, however, shift the interpretive imperatives away from the idea that the museum is the interpretive authority and that they are providing the interpretation to and for the visitor.

Anarchy

The Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums (Anarchy) is a LinkedIn group with 1406 members as of April 20, 2016 which is led by Franklin D. Vagnone. (Vagnone 2016). It is a forum that questions the viability of the house museum using cynicism and an exchange of both information and opinions. It is also the title of a book by Vagnone and Ryan (Vagnone & Ryan 2016) that provides a series of well-researched, documented critiques of the house museum sector alongside innovative suggestions for engaging new audiences and especially the local community in which a historic house museum is located. The book:

calls for the holistic de-construction of the HHM (historic house museum) and the re-establishment of a paradigm from the perspective of human habitation (Vagnone & Ryan 2016 p. 41).

They discuss such things as elevating *“emotive experience to a standing equal with historical exactitude”* and *“promoting poetic preservation.”* (Ibid., p. 37). Their book provides a do-it-yourself evaluative tool for historic house museums along five standards: community engagement and participation, communication, visitor experience, collections and environment, and “shelter” and preservation (Ibid.). In spite of its innovative ideas, Anarchy still operates within the paradigm that interpretation is something done to or for the visitor, although it makes some space for the visitor to *“leave a mark”* on the museum by *“fingerprinting.”* (Ibid., p. 146-149).

Museum Hack

Museum Hack also concentrates its efforts on engaging new audiences with the museum. However, where Anarchy seeks to transform the museum from

the inside out, Hack is an outside vendor of highly priced, specialized visitor experiences that aim to bring into the museum people who might otherwise not choose to go. Museum Hack bills itself as a “*highly interactive, subversive, fun, non-traditional museum tour*” (Museum Hack 2017). It markets itself as the answer to any museum’s declining visitor statistics. It blames this decline on an out-of-touch approach to interpretation that does not appear relevant to millennials. Their website explains:

Museum Hack is known for our Renegade Museum Tours, which include sassy stories, juicy gossip, activities in the galleries and fun photos with the art. We’ve attracted thousands of millennials and other groups to the museums we operate at by speaking their language and engaging on the channels that work for them (Museum Hack 2016).

The company creates games, dances, creative challenges and scavenger hunts that rely on group activities and proceeds from a non-museum, non-art history background. They explain:

We came into museums with fresh eyes, and never stopped asking the question, ‘how do we make this more interesting?’ We’ve taken elements from all over, including theatre, tech startups, and leading edge business practices to develop a new approach to museum tours (Ibid.).

This model does not promote the museum as the authority. Instead, Museum Hack tours are contracted from the museum and led by non-museum guides.

The digital “wing” of the Museum of American Art, Reynolda House, contracted with Museum Hack to “*curate an online gallery.*” Referring to Museum Hack’s approach as “*visitor-curated*”, the museum reflected that:

Our experience with Museum Hack demanded that Reynolda House be a cross-collaborative institution that blurs the lines between museum disciplines. (Oxford 2014).

This approach to interpretation leaves some space for a more iterative kind of interpretation, such as hermeneutics would understand interpretation, because it prompts the visitors to come up with collaborative, but independent-of-the-museum's statements, songs or actions in response to artifacts or other information. For museums that consider themselves to be “shrines” in memory of heroic historic figures, this approach may be perceived as too irreverent and flippant. In fact, Nick Sacco criticized Museum Hack's program at the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area for:

the heavy emphasis on 'fun' [that] ran the risk of trivializing the meaning of a war with great significance to American history (Sacco 2015).

He feels that:

considerations of tone, environment, place and context should be taken into account when designing a program at such a charged place [and that he] was not the only one who questioned the appropriateness of turning Civil War weapons into instruments for fighting zombies or wondered where discussions of politics, slavery or causes of the Civil War fit into the program (Ibid.)

Living History

Colonial Williamsburg, Plymouth and Connor Prairie Pioneer Settlement are three examples of historic sites that include collections of historic houses and utilize the interpretive strategy known as Living History. Living History involves the use of costumed interpreters who adopt and portray a character who would have been at the site during the period that is being presented. Each of the sites, referenced above, utilize a first-person approach in which the interpreters act as if they are an incarnation of the historic, real person they are portraying. These interpreters have a thorough knowledge of both the period, in general, and of the specifics related to the character they portray. They use reproduction tools and artifacts to do the “care and feeding” of their site as part of the interpretation—baking pies or making gunpowder, for example, in front of, and

sometimes assisted by, visitors. At Williamsburg, an interpreter's pay is based on their expertise. Craftsmen are hired in as apprentices who advance through the guild ranks of journeyman and master. Other Living History sites use a third-person approach in which an interpreter does not embody the character of a person from the past but, instead, is dressed and involved in period-appropriate activities. Third-person Living History interpreters speak from a modern perspective about what they are doing, how and why, whereas first-person interpreters do not break character. They do, however, keep their conversations rooted in the past (ALHFAM 2017).

According to Bryk:

The house infused with character and activity moves the historic house from a memorial to one in which the characters or their household may seem more complex, believable, and even likeable (Bryk 2002).

Living History shifts the house museum away from an object-driven guided tour to a:

moment-in-time installation, where characters and their activities take center stage, [and] household goods serve as a backdrop (Ibid.)

It also:

requires the curator to possess a disciplined imagination and an intuition about the characters whose lives are being interpreted (Ibid.).

Lloyd suggests that the first-person approach is:

challenging, but when done well, it encourages visitors to interact with the interpreters because it carries the potential of making history personal. (Lloyd 2002).

Vagnone and Ryan counter that:

While history lovers may enjoy the make believe [of costumed interpreters], less seasoned visitors may find the pretend to be off-putting because it places them in the role of an other, confused and unwelcome (Vagnone & Ryan 2016 p. 85).

Under my leadership, the Bolduc House Museum began to move towards a Living History style of interpretation by gradually incorporating elements consistent with the 18th-century French village we represented. One of the most interesting observations we made as we added activities— such as militia re-enactors challenging each other to throw a tomahawk at a wooden target, baking bread in a Quebec style clay oven that we built, and washing wool to spin and weave—was that the visitors were more attracted to the activity than to the period. They asked questions like “*Is that a real fire?*” and “*Did that come from a real sheep?*” The interpreters needed to be experts at what they were doing, but the conversation rarely moved to any discussion of historical or cultural issues. However, visitors went home having tasted a piece of bread, thrown a tomahawk, spun a length of wool or cooperated with other visitors to twist a rope. They were more likely to linger at the site longer to interact with the Living History activity and to participate actively in the experience than when the interpretation was limited to a standard guided tour. It is the learning curve for the museum, along with the difficulty of locating, or producing, period-appropriate tools, materials and methods that makes Living History a challenge, in my opinion.

Interpretation of diversity at the American historic house museum: strategies, criticisms, Slave Dwelling Project

The traditional approach to interpretation at a historic house museum depends on a perhaps naive assessment that a home is a safe, nurturing place that brings happy memories. As Donnelly wrote:

A historic dwelling provides a compact and holistic environment for offering lessons in history. No matter what its age, size, or

style, or what life inside and outside was like, a residence is a universally understood place (Donnelly, 2002).

This “*no place like home*” attitude can be a sham that covers over any unsavory “family business,” domestic violence, abusive treatment of slaves and servants, and more, as was noted in the discussions of the participant team after visiting the three project sites. Vagnone and Ryan quote a series of tweets in their book, one of which may make this clear:

See, the primary problem with slavery is not that your house might be bad. It is that you are a slave (Vagnone & Ryan 2016 p.71).

By purposefully including, at the historic house museum, the interpretation of these other voices, and, perhaps, a more balanced set of messages, a shift may occur that may ring truer to a more diverse segment of visitors that may be attracted, as a result. Some house museums have already begun to incorporate an interpretation of diversity, even though, as will be seen, most of this interpretation continues to be done to and for the visitor. It often also continues to assert the primary authority of the museum’s exhibit.

Donna Ann Harris laments that most historic house museums “*romanticize and honor local forefathers.*” Most of whom, she quotes Richard Moe, are “*dead rich white guys.*” (Harris 2007). Such was certainly the vision of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s. Even now, with a well-funded commitment to incorporate a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural cast of Native Americans and Africans, Williamsburg, according to the findings of Handler and Gable, has only partially succeeded. Indeed, their observations describe the interpretation of African Americans through the lens of their enslaved positions *vis a vis* their white masters and mistresses. They elaborate as follows:

As we see it, new characters and topics have become vehicles for an uncritical retelling of some old American myths (Handler, R. and Gable, E. 1997).

However, Levinson reports that according to Lonnie Bunch, the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, “*exploring issues of race is essential to [the visitor’s] understanding of American culture.*” (Levinson 2014 p. 48-49). Exploring issues of race, ethnicity and gender are essential, but, as this project will demonstrate, mere inclusion is not enough. It is not **just** enough, which is why I am insisting on a different approach to interpretation that does disrupt, interrupt and confront old stereotypes while honoring the contributions of all of the participants.

Interpreting diversity well and consistently is a relatively recent priority for the museum in general and for the American house museum sector in particular. Yet unanswered is a question that Levinson reports was asked by Saidya Hartman:

How does one revisit the scene of subjugations without replicating the grammar of violence? (Ibid.).

Scott asks the same question this way:

How do sites... go beyond celebratory shrines or exquisite archaeological specimens to foreground social issues like racial conflict, slavery and segregation without sacrificing positive visitor experience and family fun or without ghetto-izing these subjects into ‘segregated knowledge’ by confining them to special programs and tours? (Magellsen 2011).

This challenge is made even more complicated, according to Stephen Hanna, by the fact that:

our national memory as well as the collective memories and landscapes of cities, towns and rural areas are constructed of white-centric narratives containing an often hidden Africanist presence (Hanna 2008).

Hanna continues his critique of southern American museums and memorials in a post-Civil Rights society for not:

constituting a direct challenge to the dominant narratives...and to question or disrupt the histories performed within plantation museums and on Civil War battlefields...challenges to the white-washed memories (Ibid.).

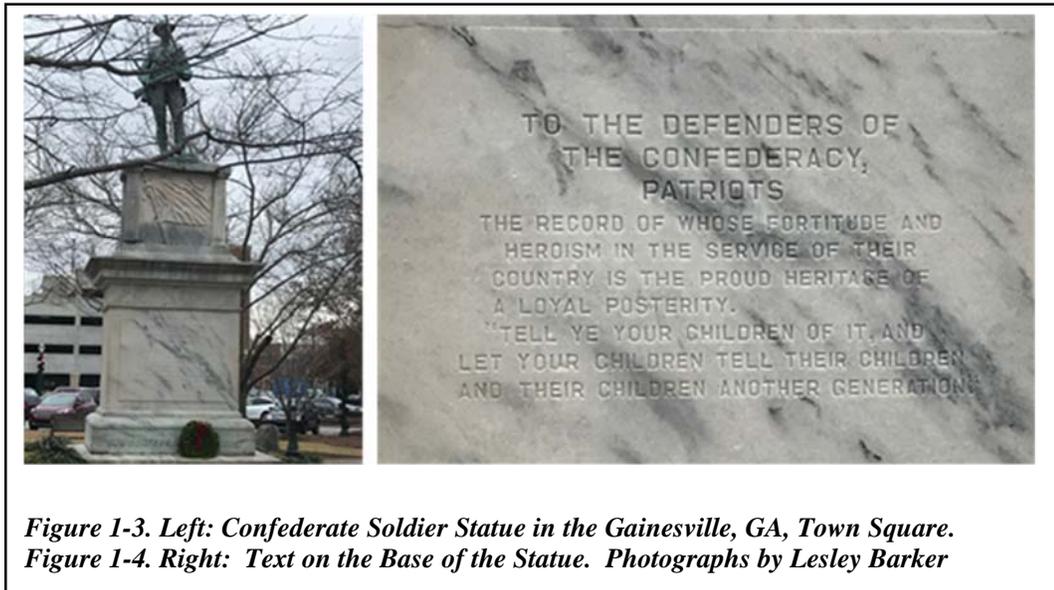


Figure 1-3. Left: Confederate Soldier Statue in the Gainesville, GA, Town Square. Figure 1-4. Right: Text on the Base of the Statue. Photographs by Lesley Barker

The place of honor given to a statue of a Confederate soldier in the Gainesville, Georgia, town square, as of December 2016, illustrates this problematic practice (Figures 1-3, 1-4 above). The statue faces north to imply that the Civil War threat, which must be prevented, comes from that direction where the Union is. Many white Georgia natives of Gainesville remain proud of this legacy and, as the text on the pedestal of the statue declares, ending with a quote from Joel 1:3 in the King James Version of the Bible:

To the Defenders of the Confederacy, Patriots. The record of whose fortitude and heroism in the service of their country is the proud heritage of a loyal posterity. 'Tell ye your children of it and let your children tell their children and their children another generation',

they consider it something to pass down for posterity among their generations. Many African American Georgians and other newly arrived residents of Georgia, like my white nephew, Nate Early, who grew up in Chicago, find this monument offensive and, even, threatening, given that the Confederacy lost the Civil War in 1865. It is, as Gadamer writes, something that:

has been sanctioned by tradition and custom [and so it] has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact that the authority of what has been handed down to us and not just what is clearly grounded - always has power over our attitudes and behaviors” (Gadamer 2013).

A different approach to the interpretation of this, and other related issues of difficult heritage, such as the interpretation of slavery at plantation museums, insists on disturbing, or disrupting what is thought to be known and understood. It is similar to what the hermeneuticist, Gadamer, explains as an “*experience of negation*” where we recognize that “*something is not what we supposed it to be*” (Gadamer 2013). The idea of using museum interpretation to “*disrupt*” old stereotypes was voiced by members of the project participant team in its discussion of how the three sites treated the interpretation of diversity. Hermeneutics claims that such disruptions prepare cognitive paths forward to “*establish agreement where there was none or where it had been disturbed in some way*” (Ibid).

In the context of examining 18th-century portraits of enslaved individuals, Cyra Levinson suggests four possible disruptive strategies for “*opening space for the underserved subjects in our pictures and the underserved questions of our audience*” (Levinson 2014). I believe that these strategies can apply to assist the historic house museum in retooling the interpretation of diversity.

They are:

1. Unfreezing the past
2. Recognizing scenes of subjection
3. Converting absence to presence

4. Seeing the flexible history of objects (Ibid.)

In the American historic house museum, the past is frozen when nothing changes, for decades, about how the narrative is presented. Where the house itself, during its period of significance, was a place where enslaved and indentured individuals lived or worked, it needs to be open about the fact that it was, at least then, a “*scene of subjection*.” Not to acknowledge this dishonors, repels and rejects visitors whose ancestors were the ones who were subjugated. This is the first step towards bringing attention to these members of the historic household and community who have been, in the traditional museum narrative, so marginalized out of the story that they have been absent. Naming them and telling their stories are next steps towards making them present. The possibility that the front porch of Ste. Genevieve’s Green Tree Tavern may have been a slave market is an example of “*seeing the flexible history of objects*” (Ibid) in a way that accomplishes Levinson’s previous three goals.

Eichstedt and Small developed a:
typology of four representational/discursive strategies used by plantation museums to interpret slavery and African Americans
(Eichstedt and Small 2002),

in which they describe how plantation museums (plantations are large southern farms that depended on enslaved labor until the Civil War that ended in 1865) typically have interpreted slavery in a way that prevents embracing Levinson’s strategies:

1. By the use of the passive voice, neutral pronouns and relative invisibility and absence, the interpretation conveys “*symbolic annihilation and erasure*”? (Ibid).

This allows the “*absence*” that Levinson insists should be converted in a more inclusive interpretive strategy to “*presence*.” As will be demonstrated in chapters four and five, the use of pronouns rather than names, and the phrase

“the slaves” in contrast to the named members of the white slave-owner family, is incorporated into the interpretation at White Haven, one of the project sites. Conversely, the participants critiqued the way that the interpretation at the Scott Joplin House made it seem as though whites were absent from the entertainer’s life.

2. By the use of humor, and claims that it was *“not all bad”* or that the enslaved individuals were happy, grateful, and appreciative of the master, the interpretation *“trivializes”* the conditions of slavery (Ibid).

This seemingly flippant claim that the enslaved African Americans were content with their lives at White Haven was also noticed and incorporated into the data that the participant team returned.

3. By locating discussions about slavery and African Americans in a separate area from where the main interpretation happens, the interpretation reinforces patterns of *“segregation and marginalization”* (Ibid).

All three of the project museums located the interpretation of the other (i.e., slavery and African Americans at White Haven and the Eugene Field House, and whites at the Scott Joplin House) in separate areas. At White Haven, this happens in the outdoor kitchen and laundry room. At the Eugene Field House, it happens on the third floor and in the law office. At the Scott Joplin House, whites are only mentioned in the exhibit area filled with ephemera about Joplin’s musical career.

4. By locating information about slavery and African Americans throughout the tour that is not degrading and that uses the names of the enslaved persons, the interpretation demonstrates a *“relative incorporation”* of the themes (Ibid).

This discursive strategy, when used at a plantation museum or a historic site, begins to bring honor, presence and, in effect, may serve to unfreeze the past (Levinson 2014).

In an article for the Journal of Interpretation Research, Carol Clark noted that:

Research that evaluates methodologies for interpreting slavery is also limited...research often addresses how sites treat slavery as a topic and are accounts of the process of creating new exhibits that include slavery as a theme or interpreting the archaeology of slavery (Clark 2011).

This project adds to research that explores how the interpretation of slavery, as well as of both cultural and gender diversity, is being done at three historic house museums in St. Louis. My hope is to discover whether and how this interpretation can become more inclusive, bringing appropriate honor and representation to all the people who once touched the site's story, and should be told about.

The Slave Dwelling Project, headed by Joe McGill of South Carolina, is making an impact for the preservation of slave dwellings, previously thought to be mere outbuildings, among the historic preservation community. He has been generous to consult with historic house museums such as Traveler's Rest, in Tennessee, for example, on how to begin the conversation about slavery at a museum, especially at one that does not have much access to or participation from a local community of color. (McGill 2015). This organization is making a difference because its priority is to bring attention and preservation to buildings that retain the evidence of the nation's past subjugation of African Americans through slavery.

Nick Sacco blogged that according to Kristen L. Gallas, who led a webinar for the AASLH, a strategy of "*affective equality*" should be a goal in the interpretation of slavery. He wrote:

Affective inequality occurs when historic sites develop 'emotionally evocative accounts' of the planter-class family while referring to the enslaved experiences in factual, quantitative terms, such as mentioning that X number of slaves worked at a given site without further elaboration or emotional connection. (Sacco 2016).

This resonates with me after having created and watched, since 2013, visitors from all cultures interact with the exhibit: *The African Experience in Colonial Ste. Genevieve*. However, for sites that heretofore have not included information about any but the lead family—to enumerate, name, and bring attention to the enslaved, indentured, and employed members of the household—is a vital first step, in my opinion.

The interpretation of diversity at a historic house museum is not just limited to domestic help, enslaved or freed. It also must include information about the women and girls who lived in the house and the neighboring members of other cultures and faiths. Debra Reid envisions the house museum sector as key to new material about gender to inform social history going forward, for example.

The home, the space in which males and females regardless of age communicated intimately, provides a place to start the study [of 'how gender acculturation affected daily interaction, life choices, and perceptions of the world']. House museums can further our understanding of the significance of the [inter-gender] exchange ...Historic houses, a museum's largest artifact, contain the material culture to further our understanding of gender (Reid 2002).

It is into this arena of the interpretation of diversity at the American historic house museum that I place my research. My goal is not to come up with a new set of interpretive objectives based on educational best practices, however. It is, rather, to argue that the house museum—because it retains the context in which slavery, domestic servitude, and the domestic relationships between

men, women and children, whether related in a family or encountering each other on the porch as members of or strangers visiting a community—does preserve evidence of these past encounters that are, as yet, unexplored for what they might reveal to our understanding of history. Indeed, to quote Gaston Bachelard:

The old house...is a sort of geometry of echoes. The voices of the past do not sound the same in the big room as in the little bed chamber, and calls on the stairs have yet another sound
(Bachelard 1958 p. 60).

If this project can capture even a few of these “echoes” at a high enough resolution to make meaning from them, it will be significant, in my opinion. Perhaps this project can begin to rectify a “*disappointment in the path the past has taken*” (Davis, Liu and Huang 2010) for some whose ancestral legacies have been marginalized and ignored at these museums. My goal, as a result of this research, is also to call for the museum to exhibit a new humility that does not presume to have educational authority in the interpretation of diversity but that, instead, is committed to honor, redemption and restoration, wisdom, and transformation through itself being transformed into a space where a hermeneutics-informed interpretation happens and causes, always and again, new transformations of how we each understand our mutual and individual pasts.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics grapples with how our understanding of the past is necessary if we are to navigate, with understanding, in the present. He writes that “*only the part of the past that is not past offers the possibility of historical knowledge*” (Gadamer 2013) and that “*the horizon to the present cannot be formed without the past*” (Ibid). By using the fragments of the past that remain accessible at historic house museums, and by inviting an iterative, hermeneutic approach that embraces the disruption of presumptions and prejudices and, also, welcomes individuals who bring different presumptions and prejudices to address, critique and question what we think we know and understand, it may be possible to express fuller, more layered and more inclusive interpretations of

our mutual pasts and presents. As Gadamer writes, we may be able to gain “*new experiences of history*”. He states:

Our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard...we have, as it were, a new experience of history whenever the past resonates in a new voice” (Ibid).

This project recruited a small gathering of new voices at three house museums. My hope is for the echoes to resonate, not just sounding new opinions and understandings, but articulating clues to arrive at a new way to do interpretation at the museum.

Donna Harris (Harris 2007), Frank Vagnone and Deborah Ryan (Vagnone & Ryan 2016), and Museum Hack (Museum Hack 2016) provide different strategic and tactical approaches to address and remediate the decline of the house museum sector. Harris’ suggestions predominantly address the fiscal problems of the sector, while Vagnone and Ryan and Museum Hack concentrate their efforts on how to engage new audiences. These are both important issues that must improve if the sector is to thrive. My project, taking a clue from Debra Reid, investigates the potential of a third claim to a future purpose for these museums as the preservers of material to inform social and cultural history that is heretofore untapped. It also is an attempt to move away from the “educational” interpretive strategies that have characterized museum interpretation, in general, and to advocate for the creation of a space in which there can be a hermeneutical experience where the stakeholders take information from a museum, allow it to ruminate among other prior knowledge until a new understanding is produced within each participant, including the museum, its staff, volunteers, board members, visitors and online audiences.

Applying Bachelard’s words to the area of the interpretation of diversity at the house museum: “*We have here a controversy over values that often deforms the facts on both sides*” (Bachelard 1958 p. 92). If my project is successful, it should point a pathway that can hopefully be seen as “*a fresh opportunity to do*

away with misunderstandings" (Ibid p. 93) about the past in America that has been left unresolved between cultures, genders, and ethnicities because of an elitist affinity for a standard narrative of American history of the white man hero moving west following a path of Manifest Destiny, no matter who else may have been rightfully occupying the land before he arrived. This is the narrative that has dominated the interpretation at the house museum to date, but it is my view that it has masked but not erased valuable information to amend it to a more inclusive and just set of ideas. There should be space at these museums, in my opinion, for the hermeneutical pause prior to the "Aha" moment that might bring more balance and truth to adjust how we think of ourselves and of our national history.

Chapter 2

Cultural Theories and Liminal Spaces Between Cultures

"I was told this, and I have not forgotten it. It happened in a past before I was born. My oldest memories, therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more. This then, is my ancestral forest. And all the rest is fiction."

(Bachelard 1958 p.188)

The first step in this project was to set its context: the American historic house museum, and to discuss how it does, and also may, contain the potential to interpret culture, in general, and diversity, in particular, in a way that disrupts old stereotypes and silences. The next challenge was to find a theoretical lens through which to view culture and diversity. A search for a theory of culture was important to determine how to frame an exploration of whether the house museum sector could have an intrinsic value to contribute to social history *vis a vis* race, ethnicity, faith and gender relations in the past. This chapter chronicles my consideration of literature relating to culture, inter-cultural relations, and the ways the museum has both viewed and interpreted it. It documents the frustration I experienced in this search for a useful theoretical framework from academia with its us/them dialectic and its toggling of post-colonialism from either a Marxist or a Freudian foundation. It shows how I found a theoretical vehicle for this work by combining theoretical ideas of boundaries and liminal spaces between cultures as articulated by Edward Said, Edouard Glissant, Homi K. Bhabha and James Clifford. Using their work, I identify, here, six criteria that are found to be inherent in what I call inter spaces, or the space of inter. The chapter also describes the business literature that has developed around inter-cultural relations in order to train and

develop the practical skills of inter-cultural sensitivity, intelligence and competence essential to winning negotiations. It notes that these issues are not very apparent at the museum in its discussions about culture and diversity. It also foreshadows how the literature treats some of the inter-cultural themes that will be seen to emerge from the data created and stated by members of the participant team. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter Movement in the United States as a compelling, current socio-cultural-political example of inter at work.

Six criteria for an interrogative lens or theory of culture

In order to be useful to a discussion about the interpretation of diversity at the museum, in my opinion, an interrogative lens or theory of culture has to meet the following six criteria.

1. It cannot dismiss the elitist narrative as irrelevant or untrue in every regard because the elites still own, govern—and are the primary funders of—the majority of these house museums, and the standard victor's narrative is, often, their family story of what actually happened in the past.
2. It has to be usable throughout the cultural/chronological/geographical range represented by these museums.
3. It has to resonate as a valid tool for inquiry with the broadest possible spectrum of audience sectors, including academics, school children and house museum *aficionados*, as well as those who might never before have visited such a museum.
4. It has to produce results that have otherwise not been considered and that foster new questions and perspectives with the potential to challenge persistent stereotypes.

5. It has to make possible the formation of a hermeneutic space for a process that develops inter-cultural understanding.
6. It has to serve as a practical (applied) understanding for the project and its participants, as well as for the museum to monitor the processes and ethics as new ideas and strategies emerge.

Theoretical approaches to understanding culture and cultural differences

There are two main academic theoretical approaches from anthropology used to understand culture: one, that it is a static system and two, that it is a dynamic process (Herdin 2012). A third, more pragmatic applied comparative approach comes from business studies. This approach plots any single culture on a spectrum of attributes, values and behaviors. None of these approaches meets all the criteria listed above, but each approach illuminates and factors into the project, either by being an approach utilized (knowingly or not) by the members of the participant team, or by explaining something about how the historic house museum currently handles the interpretation of culture. A fourth approach that became helpful comes from business psychology. It explores how inter-cultural sensitivity and inter-cultural competency develop. These four approaches combine to enable the project's core design around the exploration of inter.

A first approach: essentialism

Essentialism asserts that culture is a system that does not change. Its premise is that cultures can be defined, described and compared. It *"takes the stability of culture for granted"*. (Breninger and Kaltenbacher 2012). This approach implies that culture is geographically stable and *"belongs"* to a group, that the members of a cultural group have a shared worldview that informs commonly understood meanings, and that traditions are *"uniform over time."* (Ibid., p.161).

According to Laurajane Smith, writing on heritage,

Indigenous culture has itself been essentialized, through not only colonial processes, but more recently through such things as the processes of cultural tourism and cultural heritage management,

and is often defined as something essentially 'traditional' and thus 'unchanging'. (Smith, L 2006 p.294).

Edward Said's explanation of the history and academic field of Orientalism relies on this approach, as does the connected theory of Colonialism. In Colonialism, the colonizing culture dominates, and thus objectifies, the colonized culture. According to Robert Young,

Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the people of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves...and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests (today they are deemed to require development). (Young 2003).

Gadamer explains that this happens, from a hermeneutic perspective, when someone claims "to understand the other person in advance" (Gadamer 2013), saying that this:

functions to keep the other person's claim at a distance. We are familiar with this from the teacher-pupil relationship... (Ibid.).

Orientalism emphasizes that the essentialization of another culture happens when the more powerful, external "we" develops a body of knowledge that objectifies, predicts and stereotypes "them." (Said 1978). This "them" is referred to, in cultural theories, as the concept of the "Other," or alterity. Basically, alterity allows a colonizer or, in the absence of a colonial relationship, a more powerful member of one culture to distance himself from members of an indigenous culture or, again in the absence of a colonial relationship, from a less powerful member of another culture. According to Homi Bhabha:

The 'Other' must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity -cultural or psychic- that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the cultural to be signified in a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality.... [that depends on the]

concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construct of otherness.
(Bhabha 1994).

Bhabha finds that the “*space of the Other is always occupied by an idée fixe: despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, violence.*” (Ibid.).

Glissant probes the value that the concept of alterity provides to the more powerful, hegemonic culture by attaching it to how the culture assigning alterity to another understands the identity of the members of the “other” culture as “*a consciousness of a lineage inscribed in a territory.*” (Glissant 2010 p.13). He goes on to predict that:

Either the Other is assimilated, or else it is annihilated. That is the whole principle of generalization and its entire process. (Ibid., p.49).

The value of this, according to Glissant, is that it permits the stronger to:

conceive of the opacity of the other for me, without reproach for my opacity for him. (Ibid., p.193).

Gadamer's hermeneutic answer to this essentialist default to alterity may be epitomized by this question:

How can we possibly understand anything written in a foreign language if we are thus imprisoned in our own? (Gadamer 2013).

Whiteness studies

Robin DiAngelo connects the lack of understanding that white Americans have, about how, and even that, race has formed their identity, to the operation of power and alterity. She quotes Sherene Razack:

writing about whiteness and the pattern of studying those who are seen as 'different,' [who] states that, 'The cultural differences approach reinforces an important...cornerstone of imperialism: the

colonized possess a series of knowable characteristics that can be studied, known, and managed accordingly by the colonizers whose own complicity remains masked.' (DiAngelo 2012 pp.219-220).

This disparity between how American people of color and white Americans view their racial identity showed up in the data produced, and in the comments made, by the members of the project participant team. It also factors into the socio-cultural conditions caused by the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, a suburb of St. Louis, located just a few miles from each of the three museums visited and observed by the team.

Mirroring/Othering

Littler and Naido echo Stuart Hall's idea that in order for a person to feel that he or she belongs to a national culture, they need to "*see themselves reflected in the mirror*" (Littler & Naido 2005) of the "*nation's collective memory*." (S.I. Martin 2005). Glissant calls it a "*mirror in which Western humanity reflected the world in its own image*." (Glissant 2010 p.111). Bhabha speaks more generally about "*the mirror of (human) nature*" [in which] "*the philosophical tradition of identity*" [is the result of] "*self-reflection*." (Bhabha 1994).

Some of the visual data produced by the participant team can be organized based on whether the image is about something that is from the member's culture, i.e. "mirroring," or if it is about something from an "other" culture. Whether an essentialist approach to understanding culture can ever be valid, it is an approach that some of the participants seemed to use and may perhaps be consistent with Gadamer's statement that "*Plato considers all knowledge of essence to be recognition*" (Gadamer 2013), such as how a person can recognize herself in a mirror. Gadamer invokes this mirroring idea to argue that:

In fact, history does not belong to us. We belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family,

society and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorted mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being” (Gadamer 2013).

So, no matter whether one embraces an essentializing view of culture, aspects of this theoretical perspective are still potentially, and if so, likely invisibly, at work within our own understanding of culture. This is a major reason that I found it important to involve a participant team to investigate, identify, gather and submit data for this project.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are based in an essentialist approach to culture. Bhabha calls the stereotype:

a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated. (Bhabha 1994).

In fact, stereotypes become formed, according to a “*xenophobic model*” developed by Schrangl and Zumbach, whereby long-term stereotypical mindsets strengthen as short-term experiences are repeated (Zumbach, Schrangl, Mortensen, and Moser 2016).

The participant team was concerned that the interpretation of diversity at the sites we visited was guilty of reinforcing past stereotypes about race and culture. Richard Sandell noticed this trend in his ERIC Arts Survey report:

By keeping ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ cultures and communities apart - and by generally treating the latter as ‘unified, traditional, unchanging and thereby exotic’ they sometimes operate to reinforce rather than to challenge stereotypes. (Sandell and Nightingale 2012).

Indeed, Naidoo asks:

Are certain ongoing oppressive ideologies about 'race' and nation being repackaged and sold in new, more enlightened clothes?
(Naidoo 2005).

It is part of the challenge that comes from the fact that the elite power brokers of American culture tend to own and operate or, at the very least, provide the major funding to the historic house museum sector. So, like DiAngelo's dilemma as a white educator teaching white Americans about racism,

This is one of the major challenges I face as a white person writing about race. While my goal is to interrupt the invisibility and denial of white racism, I am simultaneously reinforcing it by centering my voice as a white person focusing on white people. Although some people of color appreciate it, others see it as self-promoting and narcissistic (DiAngelo 2012 p.xvii).

There is a potential disconnect between the objective of dismantling the reliance on stereotypes within the historic house museum because the ones who are the most prone to default to them are in the driver's seat on many boards of directors. DiAngelo quotes Audre Lourde in a way that sheds light on the problem for this museum sector:

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house
(DiAngelo 2012 p.xvi).

Applications to the museum

It could be said that the elite owners and operators of many American historic house museums fit Glissant's description of:

windbags [elites who] are anxiously intent on confining themselves to the false transparency of a world they used to run
(Glissant 2010 p.114),

and that the house museum, itself, may provide the space and invitation to continue to proclaim their view of history along with their dismissal of “revisionist” history as flawed from the start.

Michael Ames calls museums “*cannibalistic in appropriating other peoples’ material for their own study and interpretation*” (Ames 1992 p.3). He advises that there are:

two extremes...to be avoided: the imperialist assumption that the scholar, curator, or museum has a natural or automatic right to intrude upon the histories and cultures of others in the ‘interests of science and knowledge’; and the nihilistic, postmodernist claim that all knowledge is relative, all voices are equal, therefore we can only ‘invent’, rather than more or less accurately come to know, the ‘Other’, and only ‘They’ can speak knowingly about themselves. (Ibid., p.14).

Speaking of the influence of the paleontologist, Henry Osburn, on the American Museum of Natural History, where he was an innovative nineteenth-century curator, Tony Bennett explains Osburn’s:

conception of the museum as a distinctive kind of memory machine, promoting an unconscious mnemonics through which the race plasm of white Americans was to be renewed and invigorated (Bennett 2013).

Bennett explains that, starting from the late nineteenth century, the anthropological museum, structured pedagogically to present social Darwinism, arranged exhibits about cultures according to their presumed level of development. This was a strategy to reinforce the claim that the West, who were the colonizers, was at a higher evolutionary status than its colonial subjects, the “Others.” The interpretive premise of these museums was rooted in an essentialist, static view of culture as a predictable, fixed system. Bennett

argues that this premise should be replaced with a redefinition of the museum as:

a space that is simultaneously epistemological and civic for it is this that enables...the museum space to constitute an apparatus of intervention in the social (Ibid.).

Robert Janes sums up this interpretive problem this way:

The presentation of diversity and the nurturing of reflection are unrealized opportunities for most museums. (Janes 2009).

He, further, charges that:

There are simply too many museums submerged in a miasma of sacred cows, unquestioned assumptions, groupthink and habitual behaviors (Ibid.).

This is undoubtedly often true about the house museum genre. It is one of the reasons that I designed this project to use a novel methodology to investigate whether there is, perhaps, a new way of viewing and probing what the historic house museum has to contribute as an “epistemological” and “civic” hermeneutic space. The elite owners and operators of these museums, whose view of history and whose family stories ascribe to and count their ancestors to be the heroic victors, sometimes are seen to maintain an essentialist approach to understanding culture, or, as Viv Golding writes, they exhibit a:

stubborn endurance of binary patterns of thought ...the museum as patriarchal space with its resulting tensions (Golding 2013).

It is unlikely that the sector can survive without these participants. However, the participant team members, none of whom would self-identify as one of these wealthy elites, also were seen to utilize an essentialist approach to culture when they encountered an unfamiliar expression of alterity. It is an approach that the museum may tend to reinforce partially, and simply, because of its

typical lack of diversity on the professional staff and board of directors. All the same, it is an approach that can and should be exposed and intentionally identified and challenged.

Hermeneutic implications

Said's identification of Orientalism as a political strategy, which Napoleon first employed in his campaign to conquer Egypt, demonstrates that it was the secular replacement for the papal bull and *requimiento* of the Doctrine of Discovery. Both strategies rationalized and provided a moral authority for Europe's land-grabbing, people-dominating, colonial prerogative. The Doctrine of Discovery asserted a misguided Christian claim that the pope and the king had a divine right to govern non-Catholic and then, after the Reformation, non-Christian, lands and people (Doctrine of Discovery Study Group 2017). Orientalism posited that by gathering and exploiting what can be "known" about a people and its culture, they could be dominated and ruled efficiently as the needy beneficiaries of a more advanced society and nation. This understanding has significant hermeneutical implications for the museum's interpretation of diversity. If it is based on the kind of essentializing, knowledge-reducing approach to culture as Said judges Orientalism to be, then its display and the lessons to be "learned" from such a display, are themselves political acts that neither disrupt nor challenge stereotypes and past prejudices. In his opinion:

The Orientalist is required to present the Orient by a series of representative fragments, fragments republished, explicated, annotated, and surrounded with still more fragments. (Said 1978).

If the museum insists that its interpretive role is didactic, Said is even more explicit in his allegation that this involves a political claim of dominance against the taught-about culture and its members:

The didactic speaker [about the Orient], therefore, displays his material to the disciples, whose role it is to receive what is given to them in the form of carefully selected and arranged topics
(Ibid.).

This perhaps answers some of the museum's complaints that indigenous cultures resist exposing hidden aspects of their identity and traditions to museum curators and interpreters. For example, Kelsey Wrightson, writing about the 1988 Spirit Sings boycott by the Lubicon Cree First Nation of the Canadian Anthropological Society's exhibit of indigenous artifacts collected from museums around the world, said:

To predicate inter-cultural respect on access to knowledge that necessitates that everything be accessible to a settler audience creates Western epistemological privilege over cultural incommensurability (Wrightson 2016).

Gadamer's hermeneutics would indict the museum for continually:

seeing things in a certain way while at the same time knowing that doing so is absurd in the world of understanding (Gadamer 2013).

My call, articulated more fully in chapter seven, is for the museum to rethink its approach to interpretation as a pedagogic function. It is to reconstruct it to achieve a less directed, hermeneutics-informed interpretation, thus constituting a kind of counter-colonial, counter-imperialistic manifesto.

According to Gadamer:

The interpreter... is always guided in his understanding of the past by his own particular set of prejudices... Prejudice is a necessary condition of all historical and other understanding (Mueller-Vollmer 2006 p.38).

Obviously, in this statement, Gadamer is not assigning the typical negative sense to the word prejudice. Understanding, as meant by hermeneutics, is a person's *a priori* knowledge. This word, then, becomes a synonym for prejudice. It is a position grounded in cognition and experience. Interpretation also has a particular hermeneutic definition as a cognitive space that can open

up in a person when a previously held position, prejudice, is either shaken and displaced or reinforced and re-stated in a new utterance. Utterance is another hermeneutic term that means what is stated, written and displayed to explicate the new understanding with its adjusted prejudices.

This project had to navigate through several sets of prejudices. What each historic house museum studied understands, and thus interprets, is one set of prejudices. What each participant team member initially understood and how the project impacted them, as well as what I initially understood and how the project impacted me, are other sets of prejudices. The project demonstrated that everyone involved holds some prejudices. If the project is ultimately to succeed, it will produce such a challenge to any essentialist prejudices that they will become vulnerable to be uprooted. For this to actually happen, it will require a reformed interpretation on the part of visitors, participants and museums that will impact how and what a museum chooses to present.

A second approach—culture is in process

The second theoretical approach to understanding culture is that it is “a *‘process of meaning making’... in which culture is constantly produced and reproduced*” (Breninger and Kaltenbacher 2012). The premise of this approach is that culture is a “*dynamic, an ever-changing matrix, short-term*” (ibid., p.161) process that determines values, behavior, beliefs, taboos, aesthetics and the criteria for a person’s inclusion and exclusion in the culture. James Clifford is a cultural theorist in this camp. He calls the “*decentering of the West*” [the] *big event of the late 20th century.*” (Clifford and Mickiewicz 2012) He links this to three “*distinct historical energies*”: “*decolonialization, globalization, and indigenous becoming*” against which cultural change happens. He says:

The three histories construct, reinforce and trouble each other... [and that] culture is articulated, performed and translated, with varying degrees of power in specific relational situations (Clifford 2013).

Bhabha advocates a transition **from** a more essentialist view of culture as:

an epistemological object to [viewing] culture as an enactive, enunciatory site [that] opens up possibilities for other 'times' of cultural meaning making (retroactive; prefigurative) and other narrative spaces (fantasmic, metaphysical) (Bhabha 1994).

Social justice view of culture, post-colonialism and institutional racism

Fanon's activist writing epitomizes the post-colonial commitment that inspired Bhabha to say that:

the black man refuses to occupy the past of which the white man is the future (Ibid.).

Post-colonialism, in Bhabha's opinion, asks:

How does one encounter the past as an anteriority that continually introduces an otherness or alterity in the present? (Ibid.).

Colonialism is blamed for the institutionalized racism that continues to be experienced in the United States, such as was expressed, for example, in the protests and national conversations about race that followed the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014. For example, DiAngelo writes:

Slavery in African countries was not based on concepts of inherent superiority and inferiority, a notion developed as justification for the enslavement of blacks in America... In America, a slave's caste status was inherited, generation-to-generation, for hundreds of years (DiAngelo 2012 p.225).

In many regards, post-colonialism is a theoretical activism that permits and calls forth those "Others" who were essentialized out of having voices by the colonial powers that oppressed them. Bhabha identifies:

transmutations and translations of indigenous traditions in their opposition to colonial authority (Bhabha 1994).

If traditions can be observed mutating and translating, they are not fixed. Instead, they are changing, in process, developing into some new iteration of old wisdom, truth and Gadamer-defined prejudices. Littler and Naidoo doom those:

who colonized the past whose versions of history matter [by saying that] it only takes the passage of time, the shift of circumstances, or the reversals of history to reveal those assumptions as time-and-context bound, historically specific, and thus open to contestation, re-negotiation, and revision... (Littler and Naidoo 2005).

This post-colonial prediction assumes that culture is not fixed, but rather that it adapts and changes as circumstances warrant.

Critique

For the sake of this project, neither of these theoretical approaches towards understanding culture is useful, in my opinion. Essentialism objectifies and predestines the “correct” responses of members of any cultural group. It requires a binary us/them, insider/outsider, emic/etic alterity based on the inequities produced by, in the colonial context, for example, political hegemony. For museum interpretation to flow out of a view that culture is unchanging prejudices the message towards the biases of the museum’s experts. It is not true to the history of any culture that has bumped up against any other culture through trade, conflict, immigration, enslavement, religious proselytization or intermarriage. For example, the Shawnee tribes split in the late 1800s according to three cultural paradigms. One faction, led by Tecumseh, attempted to return to a pre-[European]-contact culture and lifestyle. A second group capitulated to the cultural demands of the Protestant American settlers in the Northwest Territories (today’s Ohio and Indiana) to change their gender

norms so that men left the hunter role to become farmers in exchange for the soon-to-be-renege promise that they could retain their lands. A third group emigrated to the Spanish-governed French west side of the Mississippi River where a *laissez-faire* mentality prevailed—one could attach a vertical log shed to a traditional wigwam, for example. (Warren 2008). The theoretical approach that culture is a dynamic process is more helpful, in my opinion, for this project, than is essentialism, in that it opens space for variations of cultural expression. However, in my opinion, this open space remains an inadequate place for the ship of this project to drop an anchor.

Balance, truth, the museum and another hermeneutic foray (... All Cretans are liars...)

As will be seen later in this dissertation, the participant team struggled to find both balance and truth represented in the presentation and interpretation of diversity at the three sites we visited. Clifford was also concerned about balance. He put it this way:

We search for a realism that can engage a paradoxical world of simultaneous connection and divergence (Clifford 2013).

When either balance or truth are not visible, freedom for transparency in how something is stated, or displayed, is also missing. This transparency is a different, vulnerable, trust-risking posture than that which is demanded, coerced, to be analyzed and distilled as power to be used by a more powerful entity against a discloser. It is the kind of transparency to which Glissant refers when he writes:

Western understanding...requires transparency... [but then he goes on to show value for its withholding:] ...Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics... (Glissant 2010 p.190).

Breninger adds to how we can think about truth and tradition by calling for a:

deconstruction of an exclusive relation between truth and tradition. Truth of the tradition and truth in the tradition are two different things and must not be confused with each other (Breninger and Kaltenbacher 2012).

Glissant's poetics speak of a truth and wisdom that the museum would do well to embrace, in my opinion:

Only by understanding that it is impossible to reduce anyone, no matter who, to a truth he would not have generated on his own... (Glissant 2010 p.194),

only then, can we find the way forward to a hermeneutic pause between understanding and utterance that allows truth to simmer until it is distilled enough to discuss. When the approach to culture assumes that it is in process and that there will be shifts and variations in the "correct" cultural actions and assumptions, the risk is to concretize today's response and to embark on another xenophobic cycle (Zumbach, Schrangl, Mortensen and Moser 2016 p.191). Freedom to disclose, not to disclose, to lie or to give a partial response and to change today what may have been disclosed yesterday—combined with, and met by, a proven commitment to accept what is offered and revealed, with grace—should be a goal of museum interpretation so that it brings honor to each cultural participant and perspective. This offers the visitors an intellectual freedom that does not pair well with a lesson plan that has been constructed with a set of correct, learned facts as its objective, in my opinion.

A third approach

The sociologist in me demands to understand culture as comprised of layers of patterns such as the ones that businesses, which operate across cultural boundaries, have identified and articulated. From such pragmatic observations, businesses developed applied approaches to understand and navigate cultures. These approaches have become expressed in several theoretical descriptive frameworks. They compare and contrast individual cultures through

a spectrum of cultural values, behaviors and attributes. For example, Brooks Peterson has developed a “*Cultural Style Framework*” in which opposite cultural styles are set as poles: equality versus hierarchy; direct [communication style] versus indirect; individual versus group; task [oriented] versus relationship; and risk versus caution (Peterson 2004). Shalom Schwartz itemized “*multiple [cultural] values*” organized around 10 “*value types*”: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition and security (Breninger and Kaltenbacher 2012). More recently, he has expanded these to nineteen “*motivationally distinct values*” that are “*transituational*” and found in multiple cultures (Schwartz et al 2016 p.3). Schwartz also identified cultural attitudinal attributes about life: self-enhancement i.e. ambition; openness to change; self-transcendence; and conservatism. (Ibid., p.54). Geert Hofstede takes a similar approach by isolating four “*cultural dimensions*”: power/distance; masculinity; avoidance/tolerance of uncertainty; and short/long term oriented (Elsens, Pollet and Delvelde 2007 p.77). Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampton-Turner describe differences between cultures by how the people within a culture solve problems across a range of values, each of which can be displayed on a spectrum. For instance, they discuss how some cultures apply rules indiscriminately, while other cultures do not. Some cultures are more oriented to benefit the group, while others prioritize the good of the individual. Some display their feelings openly, while others mask them. Some cultures assign status based on criteria other than achievement. Others base status and advancement more consistently on achievement. They also explain how cultures differ in their orientation to time, as well as to whether people believe that they are controlled by nature. All of these, according to Trompenaars and Turner, describe an array of values through which decisions and solutions to problems are viewed within any culture (Trompenaars and Turner 1998).

Difference and dissonance

Difference and dissonance are theoretical ideas that emerged from the participant-generated images that fit well with this approach to understanding culture. S. Jones notes that:

There is a tendency to simply celebrate cultural difference rather than risk disrupting mainstream national narratives through the introduction of subject matter which demands recognition of relationships of power (Jones, S. 2005).

Robert Young claims that:

Hanging on to cultural differences masks over the cracks and successfully neutralizes the fact that some groups are rich and other groups are poor (Young 2003).

His post-colonial theory advocates for:

a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledges, as well as needs, developed outside the west (Ibid.).

Juxtapositions and hermeneutics again

The participant team's original photographs frequently produced, as will be seen later in this dissertation, juxtapositions within and between images. Clifford identified juxtapositions as a way to critically think more fairly, perhaps, about culture:

We thus rely on a process of juxtapositions and mediation.... We work with irreconcilable antinomies entering the paradoxes and tensions of our historical moment with agendas that are positioned and relational, pushing against, while drawing on, partial perspectives. The result is a more realistic, because multi-scaled, dialogical and unfinished, understanding of the contemporary socio-cultural worlds (Clifford 2013).

Breninger connects the idea of juxtapositions to a hermeneutics that she calls:

analogous... meaning that where there is an inaccessibility of the other as regards contents, all that we can rely on are the

analogous structural patterns which make understanding possible beyond all centrism (Breninger and Kaltenbacher 2012).

Gadamer values juxtapositions as a hermeneutic way to gain knowledge when he writes:

Knowledge always means, precisely, considering opposites [and that] It is possible to demonstrate something by means of contrast - e.g., - by placing two pictures alongside each other... so that one is interpreted by the other (Gadamer 2013).

Critique

Even though this descriptive, but flexible, way to view culture through its attributes makes more sense to me than either to essentialize it or to conceive of it as an ever-evolving amoebic process, I again find that it is insufficient to serve the purposes of this project. None of these approaches to understanding culture allows for the prospect of developing a mutual, reciprocal, gradually increasing-in-trust relationship between members of different cultures. None of them elicits the expertise of those mixed-race, mixed-faith, mixed-ethnic individuals who have the birthright to legitimately belong to, participate in, and truly articulate truth from both perspectives. For this it will be necessary to think about how and where transactions between members of different cultures happen and to recruit the assistance of the ones whose ancestors first met in the spaces where the two cultures came together. Bhabha locates these inter-cultural encounters in the “*borderlines*.” He writes:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present (Bhabha 1994).

Towards a Theory of Inter

It is towards these in-between spaces of inter-cultural contact, the borderlines, that this project turns for its theoretical view of culture. I find it helpful to juxtapose the words and work of four cultural theorists:

Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Edoardo Glissant, and James Clifford; to inform which theoretical aspects of inter, preserved and/or interpreted by the museums and as recognized and explored by the participant team data, I will be analyzing.

Said's seminal book, *Orientalism*, published in 1978, opened the conversation by narrating the history of orientalism as a strategy to benefit the West by essentializing and *exoticizing* the East. Said, himself, was in search of a *beginning* (Said 1978) point for discussing these ideas: "*Beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them*" (Ibid.). He advocated that, instead of focusing on the "*clash of civilizations*", we focus on, or perhaps begin by investigating:

the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic code of understanding can allow (Ibid.)..)

So, for this project's location in cultural theory, I began, thanks to Said, by charging the participant team to examine each house museum for what it preserves and interprets about overlaps, borrowings, and co-existences between cultures. I refer to this point of origin and departure throughout this dissertation as inter. These features: overlaps, borrowings and co-existences between cultures are the first things I will be looking for in the analysis of the participant data.

The next theoretical contribution to this project's exploration of inter was Edoardo Glissant who, in his book, *Relations*, published in 1990, explored the place where cultures overlap using poetics. His work added vocabulary to help us envision in which spaces cultural *relations* take place and, also, what we might be able to predict about how they happen. For example, Glissant

described the Caribbean metaphorically as "a *place off encounter*", "a *connivance*" and "a *passageway*" (Glissant 1990 p.33). This allowed him to apply the word and theory of creolization as a place or space characterized by "mutual mutations generated by the interplay of relations" (Ibid., p.89).

Other experts expanded on Glissant's usage of the Caribbean colonial experience and the phenomenon of creolization as a metaphor for what happens when two cultures encounter each other. Liz Constable, for example, described creolization as a process of:

the mediation of social phenomena through local, vernacular viewpoints and vernacular modes of representation which are themselves the results of encounters (Constable 2011).2011).

In her article in the 2013 edition of *Feminist Review*, Anim-Addo and Scafe describe how spaces become "creolized". Speaking of the "space of rape", Addo claims that it is creolized by being inscribed "within [the victim's] affects" and explains that this act of creolization is:

the source of a counter-politics, a counter--imagining, a counter-metaphysics, not originating from the master (and his world) but from the outside space she possesses as "the other" (Amin-Addo and Scafe). 2013).

She continues by saying that a:

key to understanding the creolising of affect is... when she breaks silence on her deathbed, she charges her daughter to never forget and to bear witness (Ibid.).).

Achebe said, about the past experience of enslavement:

Even now they have not found the voice with which to tell of their suffering (Achebe 2010). 2011).

So, in the analysis of the participant data, I will be looking, thanks to Glissant's and others' work, for creolization as expressed by the articulation of local, vernacular viewpoints and representations, counter-imaginings as well as by the giving voice (a mouth) to past trauma.

The third characteristic of inter, as theorized in Glissant's poetics, that I will look for in the analysis of the participant data is blurred boundaries. I will locate them in uncertainty, ambiguity, questioning and in attempts to define or redefine a person's place in a culture or community.

Four years after Glissant's book was published, Homi K. Bhabha's work and book about "*The Location of Culture*" became available (Bhabha 1994). He pushed even farther in the realms he calls "*borderlines*", "*margins*", "*boundaries*", "*interstices*" and "*in-between*" places, preferring the term "*hybrid*" and "*hybridity*" to creole or creolization. He, like I, calls the space:

'inter'- the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture (Ibid.).

It is in these liminal places of "*cultural interaction*" that, according to Bhabha, a "*problem... emerges*":

...only at the signifying boundaries of cultures, where meanings and values are (mis)read or signs are (mis)appropriated. Culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life, between classes, genders, races, nations (Bhabha 1994).

Like Glissant, Bhabha insists on an ambiguity that he describes as the "*vanishing point of two familiar traditions*" and as "*the place of the 'meanwhile' while asking 'where do you draw the line between... cultures? ... between peoples?'*" (Ibid.). It deepens the problem of culture for him. He continues to ask a question that must be grappled with by every history museum and historic site that has any relationship to diversity of any kind by writing:

How do we historicize the event of the dehistoricized? If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, then what does it mean to encounter a past that is your own country reterritorialized, even terrorized by another? (Ibid.).

Bhabha's solution to the problems of culture is to push "the paradoxes of modernity to its limits, reveal the margins of the West..." and to "split open those 'welds' of modernity" (Ibid.). Like the disruption of Glissant's questioning process, Bhabha's rupture of these "welds" in his words, allows:

... a postcolonial contra-modernity [to] become visible ... a form of cultural re-inscription that moves back to the future, a 'projective' past, a form of the future anterior (Ibid.).

Once the welds that held colonial boundaries in place are split open, Bhabha proposes that the new space that must be occupied is one of:

... the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that are [where] the intersubjective and collective experiences of nation-ness, community, interest or cultural value are negotiated (Ibid.).

Bhabha's interstices, or very small gaps or cracks between two things, can thus open between such arenas as "private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social" (Ibid.). He insists that these interstices must reflect "intimacy" in order to question:

... binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially imposed (Ibid.).

Bhabha predicts that this kind of interstitial intimacy, these small glimmers of light in the cracks between past essentialized cultures, may produce:

A form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges between the claims of the past and the needs of the future (Ibid.).

Like Glissant's messy uncertainty, Bhabha's "*borderline work of culture*":... *does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent in-between space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present* (Ibid.),

but it is a kind of intimate "displacement" in which:

... the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting (Ibid.).

Bhabha's ideas also inform, through the theory of inter, how I will analyze the data submitted by the participant team members. Thanks to his work, I will look for problems in terms of mis-read and mis-appropriated meanings and values or in terms of a loss of meaning. I will also look for interstitial intimacy by paying attention to things that are so innovative that they interrupt what is happening now. I will also search for evidence of interstitial intimacy where private and public seem to fuse into one undefinable new kind of inter-action.

James Clifford, in his most recent 2013 book, *Returns*, identifies some practical but paradoxical challenges to how we can continue to wrestle with these questions of inter and cultural. He is in search of a:

... realism that can engage a paradoxical world of simultaneous connection and divergence (Clifford 2013).

He defines the:

... challenge...to recognize over-lapping but discrepant histories that struggle for room to maneuver in a paradoxically systematic and chaotic contemporary world (Ibid.).

Clifford values the “*deep histories, grounded in place and kinship*” and, like Bhabha looks for innovation as these: “*take new forms in ... the creative ‘second lives’ of heritage*” (Ibid.). From this point of origin, Clifford sets a goal to: engage “with multiplicity and contradiction, inhabiting paradox” (Ibid.), so that we:

...not only create a historical archive, but also transmit communal wisdom in new ways... (Ibid.).

by evaluating:

how indigenous knowledge is disseminated through translation and interpretation across times, places, generations and cultures [asking], What falls away and what is added in the process

(Ibid.)
By “looking both ways” at the “*overlays, loops, and intersecting temporal paths*” of history (Ibid.), Clifford suggests we can observe the evidence of cultural transformation and change. So, thanks to his ideas and questions, I will be looking for paradoxes, multiple meanings, contradictions and discrepancies in the circulation of “*objects, people, foods [and] symbols*” across “*times, places, generations and cultures*” (Ibid.).

To summarize the work of these four thinkers work about the spaces between cultures, which I simplify to embrace the array - border, boundary, hybrid, creole, liminal spaces, interstices - with the word inter, the following are six themes that they have identified happens or characterizes the theoretical space of inter. Their existence or absence in the data submitted by participant team members will feature in my analysis of that data:

1. **Overlaps**, borrowings and co-existences between cultures
2. **Creolization**: in the expression of local, vernacular viewpoints and modes of representation (Constable 2011); the expression of counter-politics, counter-imaginings and counter-metaphysics; breaking silence, bearing witness, remembering and giving voice to the experience of past trauma or suffering

3. **Blurred boundaries** as shown by uncertainty, ambiguity, questioning or attempting to define a place either in culture or community
4. **Problems** in the derivation of meaning as shown by misread or misappropriated meanings or values or as a loss of meaning
5. **Interstitial intimacy** as shown by innovations and interruptions in the performance of the present
6. **Paradox**

These theoretical glimpses of what happens in the space of inter should prove to be helpful when evaluating whether a historic site or museum is being successful at what Bhabha calls the:

borderline work of culture renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present (Bhabha 1994).

They should assist in observing whether what Sandell diagnoses as a "pressing need" for the museum:

There is a pressing need for strategies and programs aimed at creating 'third spaces'; where individuals are permitted to cross the boundaries of belonging and are offered genuine opportunities for self-representation (Sandell and Nightingale 2012).

My project is not in search of creolized or hybridized cultural artifacts *per se*. Rather, it is to investigate how and whether the American historic house museum preserves and interprets evidence of past inter-cultural encounters. While this can include creolized or hybridized items of material culture, it has a broader scope such as the note below (Fig. 2.1) found at the Bolduc House Museum. It was pressed in a mid-nineteenth-century French prayer book from a man to a woman, requesting that she bring him a bit of brandy since he still was not feeling well.

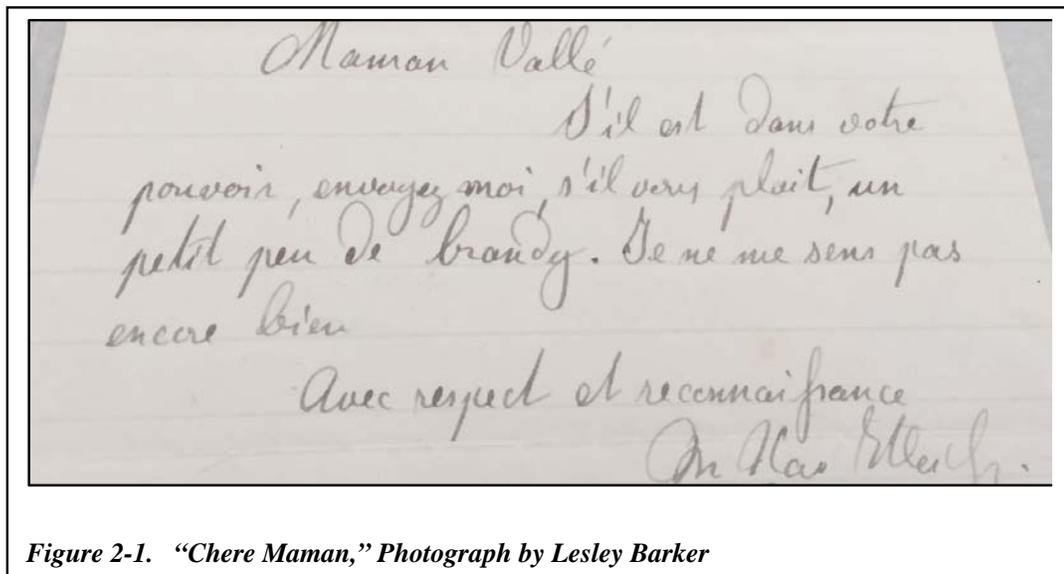


Figure 2-1. "Chere Maman," Photograph by Lesley Barker

For this reason, for this project, I have chosen to use the word and idea of inter as both an observation tool and as an analytical device. Emmanuel Levinas, Elsen, Pollet and Develtere invoke the term inter-cultural in a way that resonates with my thinking when they write:

An intercultural relationship can....be defined as an asymmetrical relationship. The other imposes him/herself on me; the issue at stake is not so much the culture but the encounter itself (Elsen, Pollet, and Develtere 2007 p.69).

Making this project theoretically reliant on inter also satisfies the six criteria listed at the beginning of this chapter.

1. “Inter”-culturality does not dismiss or dismantle the narrative of the American hero/victor/self-made man. This represents the opinions and goals of one potential participant in any single inter-cultural experience that may be represented at a historic house museum.
2. Inter is a usable tool throughout the cultural/chronological/geographical range of this museum genre. It is not limited to any cultural, historical or geographical context but, rather, seeks the results of encounters between cultures and genders.
3. Inter can be used as a tool for inquiry by people of any age and educational level.
4. Inter has the potential to challenge persistent stereotypes while fostering new questions and perspectives at the museum.
5. Inter-cultural dialog has the potential to open a hermeneutical space to the development of inter-cultural understanding.
6. Inter, thus, serves as a practical tool and theoretical frame for this project.

Inter as a conceptual frame

Defining inter

Thus idea of inter is key to the whole project. Inter is a prepositional prefix that comes from the Latin word “between.” Inter-cultural, then, means “between cultures”. This is in contrast to multicultural, and to cross cultural where “multi” means many and “cross” means to “exchange” or “switch.” Inter can be thought of as both relational and positional, and in this project, it carries both aspects. Inter also, poetically, is included in the word, “interpretation”, the museum practice in which I situate the research, a word that is understood to be that function of translation to make mutual meaning accessible, whether we rely on a hermeneutic or common sense of the word, itself.

A conceptual frame

Frames have important functions. Frames undergird and support walls, doors, windows, buildings and vehicles. Even though these structural frames are built first, they often are covered up and hidden by what they support. For 2-30

this project, inter is such a structural frame. It undergirds each aspect of the project: from the selection of the participant team members; to the assumptions about cultures—that they are as fluid as they are fixed, both aspects may be operating within the same mindset, like anatomy contrasted to physiology; to the conversations between the members about the project; and to the artifacts and text panels that are portrayed in the photographs that the participants submitted as data to be analyzed. Inter also underlies the local, national and museum conversations around the issue of Ferguson and its outgrowth in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Another sense of the word “frame” means to create a visual device, a border/boundary, that brings attention to an aspect of an image. Photo editing software, for example, allows one to delineate and then crop pictures in order to frame a desired focal point. Picture frames do similar things for works of art, and the frame, itself, can resonate with the internal image, making a certain color in the image seem to “pop,” for instance, and, hence, intensify the viewer’s experience. I invited the participants to take as many photographs as they liked to satisfy the question: What evidence of past inter-cultural (which I extended to include encounters between men and women) is preserved and/or interpreted at each museum? However, by limiting the number of photographs they could choose to submit to a maximum of five per house museum, the selection process became a kind of framing exercise in which the message was “inter”.

The participant team’s diversity

The participant team was made up of seven adults who all lived and/or worked in eastern Missouri in 2015. They volunteered to participate in the project, signed consent forms, and gave a full day to visit the sites together as a group, with me taking field notes and photographs of them at work. However, in spite of the group’s small size, the dialog between the team members required INTER-relationship. The team was made up of people of different ages, cultures, races, ethnicities and genders, as will be seen more clearly in chapter four.

Positionally, the interstices between cultures, those liminal boundaries that exist on a map as a line, can be conceived as expandable as though that line were a rubber band, to inscribe a meeting place (stretched but located fully between the two areas on the map that the rubber band divides) where the inter-relational dialog can happen (See Figure 2-2 below).

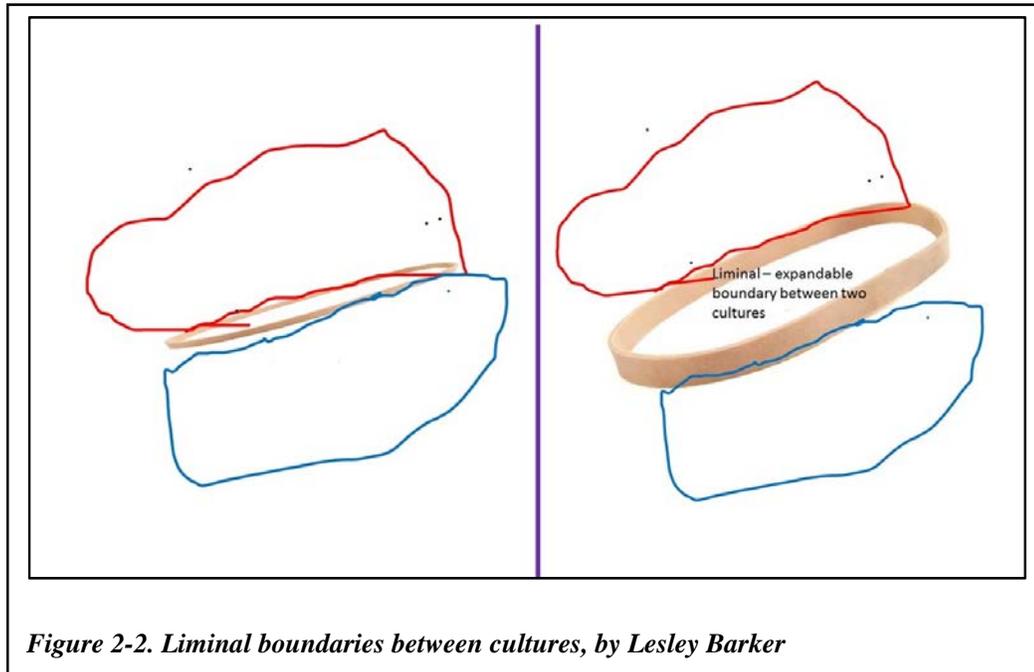


Figure 2-2. Liminal boundaries between cultures, by Lesley Barker

This inter space, in this project, became uniquely available to allow each participant to be in the same place simultaneously while retaining individual differences, perspectives and opinions. From a hermeneutical perspective, Heidegger would people this borderland region defined by the stretching rubber band as a place where each person's "*subjective response*" to their "*ontological condition*" was considered equally relevant and valid (Davey 1999 p.5).

I felt it necessary to involve a diverse team of participants because of my experiences with the Shawnee chief and with the African American educator, which made me realize that my own heritage predisposes me to recognize certain cultural markers, as well as to fail to notice others. In order to explore the question of whether a museum preserves and interprets evidence of past inter-cultural encounters, then, I could not rely either on my own observations or on those of the curatorial staff. The participant team

included four women and three men. One woman was in her 70s, one in her 60s, one in her 40s and one in her 20s. The men were all in their 20s. Two members were white; two members disclosed that they had white mothers and black fathers; one was African American; and one was from Kenya and one was from Liberia. Five members were born and raised in the American mid-West; two were newly arrived immigrants. Two members had master's degrees, one was in graduate school, two members had high school diplomas, and two members were attending community college to earn associate's degrees. I accompanied the team, recording and photographing them at work.

The conversation that the team had with me at the end of the day, after visiting each of the sites, was fascinating. Everyone was hot and thirsty, and we guzzled water while we waited for our food at a neighborhood Greek pub. Once we all cooled off, we began to talk. Our conversation, which will be described in the next section, explored inter from both the day's mutual experiences, and mediated through each participant's past. The conversation illustrated some of the "*contradictory strain*" that Bhabha associates with: *learning to work with ... languages* [substitute the word, culture, for languages] *lived and languages learned* [and that] *has the potential for a remarkable critical and creative impulse* (Bhabha 1994).

The conversation also touched on what Bhabha labels:

Anxiety [that] *links us to the memory of the past while we struggle to choose a path through the ambiguous history of the present*
(Ibid.).

The conversation also included a sense of the "*uncertainty*" that Glissant says is inferred by:

contact among cultures (Glissant 2010 p.161) [and the] *relation* [that is] *more like a force than an element that functions both internally in culture and externally between cultures* (Ibid., p.171).

Ferguson as a compelling, current socio-cultural-political example of Inter

Where Ferguson is in relation to St. Louis and locating the three American Historic House Museum sites in relationship to Ferguson

Ferguson is IN St. Louis, not NEAR St. Louis. This is the local socio-political context for the community, its museums and the individual members on the participant team for this project. Without understanding how impacted the St. Louis community has been from the nationally proliferating events triggered by the unfortunate killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown on August 9, 2014, the context for this investigation will be missed.

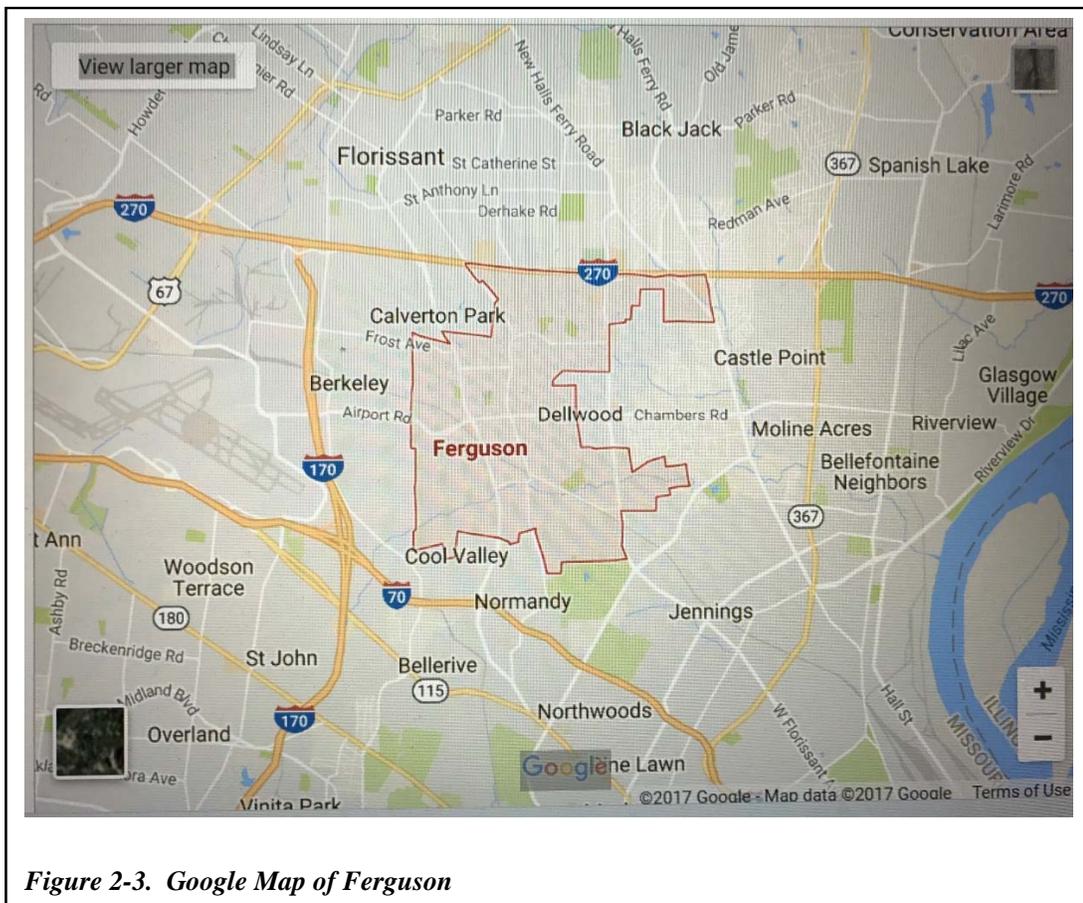


Figure 2-3. Google Map of Ferguson

The pink area on the map in Figure 2-3 is the municipality of Ferguson (Google 2017). It is located in St. Louis County. St. Louisans think of themselves either

as living in St. Louis City, which is its own county, or in St. Louis County. There are thirty-two municipalities like Ferguson in St. Louis County, most with their own school district, police force and fire department. Functionally, though, people in St. Louis think of these municipalities more as neighborhoods. One does not write “Ferguson” on the envelope to mail to a resident of Ferguson; one writes “St. Louis.” So, although the media labels Ferguson as somewhere near St. Louis, people in St. Louis know that Ferguson is in their town. St. Louis City and St. Louis County are located west of the Mississippi River, south and east of the Missouri River, and north of the Meramec River. Highway 270 makes a loop around the area, although the suburb of Chesterfield, in West St. Louis County, extends somewhat outside of the Highway 270 loop. Interstate 70 goes east to west on the north side of the area, and Interstate 55 follows the Mississippi River to the south, while Highway 44 goes east and west on the south side of the area. Highway 40, which is the local name for Interstate 64, splits the area into north and south. Historically and to a large extent still today, the neighborhoods and municipalities to the north of Highway 40 have predominantly African-American residents, while the neighborhoods and municipalities to the south of Highway 40 have predominantly white residents. Ferguson is within the boundary of the Highway 270 loop and north of Highway 40.



In Figure 2-3 above, Ferguson is shown outlined in pink on the map in the northeastern portion of St. Louis County (Google 2017). In Figure 2-4 above, the orange star is at the approximate location of the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven. The green star is at the approximate location of the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum, and the blue star is at the approximate location of the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site.

Figure 2-5 below (St. Louis Downtown Airport.com 2017) shows the St. Louis Arch from the St. Louis International Airport, which is just next to Ferguson. This image illustrates that the events which have come to be known as Ferguson are intrinsic and localized to St. Louis, where all of the project sites are located.



Figure 2-5. The Arch from the St. Louis International Airport, which is Located at Ferguson

St. Louis demographics compared to Ferguson demographics

The City of St. Louis had a 2010 population of 319,365 of which 49.2 percent self-identified on the census as Black or African American, while 43.9 percent self-identified on the census as White. In the City of St. Louis, 27 percent of the residents live at or below the federal poverty level in an area comprised of 61.91 square miles, with 5,157.5 people per square mile (Census Viewer St. Louis 2012).

Ferguson had a 2010 population of 21,203 of which 29.3 percent self-identified on the census as White, and 67.4 percent as Black or African American. In Ferguson, 24.9 percent of the residents live at or below the federal poverty level in an area comprised of 6.19 square miles, with 3,423.2 people per square mile (Census Viewer Ferguson 2012).

Brief history of Ferguson

Ferguson was incorporated as a city in 1894 after having met the population threshold of 1,000 residents required before an area could legally be designated a city. Around forty years earlier, William Ferguson sold a section of his farm to the North Missouri Railroad. A stipulation in the sale was that a train depot must be built on the land. This became Ferguson Station. The community built itself up around the depot (City of Ferguson 2015). The town was predominantly white until after 1980, when the neighboring African American town of Kinloch was disrupted by an expansion of Lambert International Airport. This coincided with a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that banned the use of “restrictive covenants,” which had traditionally served to keep neighborhoods and municipalities in St. Louis County segregated. Many displaced African American residents of Kinloch relocated to Ferguson, clustering in low-income housing such as the Canfield Green Apartment Complex. This introduced an income disparity connected to race in Ferguson that was exacerbated when Bellerive Country Club abandoned the area but a white elite and very affluent neighborhood, Bellerive, remained. (Smith, J. 2014).

Who was Michael Brown, Jr. and what happened to him?

Born in 1996, Michael Brown, Jr. graduated from Normandy High School in 2014. He planned to attend a vocational college to study heating and cooling technology beginning in August 2014. His interests included rap music. On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown, Jr. died after having been shot by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. Brown’s body lay exposed in the street for four hours after he died. Michael Brown’s funeral took place at the Friendly Temple Missionary Baptist Church on August 25, 2014 (Neuman 2014).

What ensued from his death in Ferguson and elsewhere?

As when any death happens in a public place, people started bringing items to leave at the scene, creating a makeshift memorial beginning on August 10. That night, demonstrators arrived, as did members of the police force—

wearing riot gear, carrying shields, and equipped with tear gas—from Ferguson, as well as from neighboring police departments from other municipalities in St. Louis County.



Figure 2-6. *Black & Blue* Poster (Missouri History Museum 2015)

The police fired tear gas at the demonstrators, and rioting started with fires set, shop windows broken, and looting. This happened nightly until August 13. President Obama addressed the nation about Ferguson on August 14. Missouri Governor Nixon assigned Ron Johnson, a captain in the Missouri State Highway Patrol, to *“take over security in Ferguson.”* On August 15, the officer whose bullet killed Michael Brown, Darren Wilson, was named. The same day a video alleging to show Michael Brown robbing a convenience store was released to the public. These actions triggered more demonstrations, along with violence and armed responses from the police. More rioting occurred and there were about 200 arrests that night. On August 16, a State of Emergency was declared by the governor. This triggered the mobilization of the Missouri National Guard, which was deployed on August 18. Demonstrations in sympathy with the citizen protests in Ferguson happened nightly across the United States (Neuman 2014).

The Reverend Al Sharpton, a well-known civil rights activist from New York City, preached the eulogy at Michael Brown’s funeral on August 25. More demonstrations happened during the two days after the funeral. Fresh demonstrations happened on October 14 in advance of the Special Prosecutor’s Grand Jury report on whether to indict the police officer. The autopsy report, which conflicted with eye witness accounts of the incident, was leaked to the media on October 22. A second State of Emergency was declared, reactivating the Missouri National Guard on November 17. On November 24, Robert McCulloch, the prosecuting attorney for St. Louis County, made public the decision of the Grand Jury not to indict Darren Wilson (Ibid.). Following this announcement, demonstrations were held in New York City, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Boston, Atlanta, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Nashville, Denver, and San Francisco, and *“an estimated 130 protests were planned in more than 30 states according to an assessment made by CNN”* in addition to the ones that took place in Ferguson. (Hart 2014). The Rev. Al Sharpton returned to Friendly Temple Missionary Baptist Church on November 30; in his sermon, he promised that *“Justice will come to Ferguson”* after rhetorically addressing the prosecuting attorney: *“You won the first round, Mr.*

Prosecutor, but don't cut your gloves off, because the fight is not over."
(Montgomery 2014).

How have the opinions and reactions to Ferguson been framed, advanced, and justified?

The opinions and reactions to Ferguson have been framed through the national media and stratify along racial and political lines, with more politically conservative Americans aligning on the side of the police, and with more politically liberal Americans tending to align on the side of the protestors. Many of the demonstrations were based on the frustration that Officer Wilson would not be held accountable for the death of Michael Brown and on a belief that, because Brown was African American and a teenaged man who had a supposed history of petty crime, his death would be just one more statistic. Two chants: *"No justice! No peace!"* and *"Black lives matter"* became rallying cries for the demonstrations in Ferguson and across the country.

Rev. Sharpton's sermon epitomized the opinions of one side. He went on to say:

God is going to use Michael to lead this nation to deal with police accountability... Michael, they are going to know your name because you're going to change the music of how policing is done in this country... Ferguson is to this battle... what Selma was to the voting battle (Ibid.).

Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City and 2008 Republican candidate for president of the United States, voiced the other side in an interview with Adam B. Lerner of Politico:

A man committed a robbery, attempted to assault a police officer, and the police officer, to save his life, shot him.... The police officer did his duty. The police officer did what he did. He did exactly what you should do (Lerner 2015).

Race remains very much on everyone's minds in St. Louis because of the inequities among schools in districts that serve predominantly white or African American populations, as well as because of the way African Americans are disproportionately likely to be stopped for routine traffic checks. They are also more likely to be fined, arrested and killed during police encounters. This is measured by a disparity index which is:

the proportion of stops divided by the proportion of population for a given race... An index of one means there is no disparity for a particular race. The index for blacks in Ferguson is 1.37. Statewide the disparity index for blacks - 1.59- is higher... On the other hand, the disparity index for whites [in Ferguson] at 0.38, is one of the lowest in the state. The statewide index is 0.96 (Moskop 2014).

How American museums, in general, have responded to Ferguson

Outside of St. Louis, American museums seem to be using the momentum of Ferguson to pose philosophical questions about the role of museums in general. Lonnie Bunch, the director of the Smithsonian's African American History Museum, wrote that:

Ferguson, Cleveland, Staten Island, North Charleston, and now Baltimore have been seared into our consciousness... there have been key moments in our past when events, when tragedies, when injustice has galvanized the nation and the pain has led to profound change. This may be such a moment of possibility; a moment of change. [He continues to question how museums can function] at the center of their community (Bunch 2015).

Bunch links this to a critique of museums for their lack of diversity as:

something that everybody talks about, that everybody claims, but nobody owns (Ibid.).

Adrienne Russell published a “Joint Statement From Museum Bloggers and Colleagues on Ferguson and Related Events” on December 11, 2014. She writes:

There is hardly a community in the US that is untouched by the reverberations emanating from Ferguson and its aftermath. Therefore, we believe that museums everywhere should get involved (Russell 2014).

Like Bunch, Russell goes on to pose a question about what should be the appropriate role for museums to take in response to Ferguson. She suggests a philosophical approach:

Museums may want to use this moment not only to ‘respond’ but also to ‘invest’ in conversations and partnerships that call out inequity and racism and commit to positive change (Ibid.)

Like Bunch, Russell also articulates a strong critique against museum organizations for their silence, writing that only the Association of African American Museums had, to that point, taken a position about the events in Ferguson.

We believe that the silence of other museum organizations sends a message that these issues are a concern only of African Americans and African American Museums (Ibid.)

She concludes with the optimistic statement: “We know that this is not the case.” (Ibid.).

Dan Yaeger, the president of the board of directors of the New England Museum Association, expressed a philosophical call for museums to respond to Ferguson after he considered the controversy this way:

As we continue to absorb the news about protests against police brutality and racial injustice, museum professionals face

potentially difficult decisions. While many of our personal consciences may prompt us to speak out, we find that our museums may be reluctant to enter the fray of public discourse on such volatile issues (Yaeger, 2014).

His conclusion is that:

As key pillars of their communities, museums play an important role in helping make sense of life's challenges, contextualizing the news, and improving the circumstances of the people they serve (Ibid.).

Indeed, Yaeger makes a sweeping statement about the social justice role that museums should assume. Their response to Ferguson should, in his opinion, conform to that role:

The great power, and fundamental duty is to act as agents of transformation to society as a whole (Ibid.).

In general, it appears as though American museums are leveraging the tensions triggered nationally by Michael Brown's death to advance a philosophical conversation about the social justice role of museums in their communities. In addition, Samuel Black, the head of the Association of African American Museums, took advantage of the unrest in Ferguson to discuss racially based inequities in museum funding on a post about the St. Louis Griot Museum on the St. Louis Public Radio website, saying,

It's typical around the country for mainstream institutions to get the big money. 'Race plays a major part in it...and it's not only a financial situation, it's also a social one. It is the way that America sees black culture and black history.' Black added that there's a trust factor when it comes to predominantly white-run museums telling African-American stories (Fowler 2015).

How museums in St. Louis have responded to Ferguson

Museums in St. Louis City and County, however, have had a more immediate curatorial, along with a unique programmatic, role in the wake of the unrest in Ferguson. This effort has been led by the Missouri History Museum. On January 21, 2015, the Missouri History Museum's director of library and collections, Chris Gordon, issued a public appeal for people to provide the museum with artifacts about the unrest in Ferguson in an article in *The Riverfront Times* written by Lindsay Toler. Gordon is quoted in the article, *Missouri History Museum Collects Ferguson Protest Artifacts, Wants Your Donations*, as saying:

We really felt like we needed to be in a position to collect this as it's emerging so we can give future generations the clearest picture we can of what is happening right now (Toler 2015).

Gwen Moore, a curator at the same museum was quoted by Mitch Smith in an article, *Historians Sift the Ruins for Ferguson's Legacy*, saying: "This is a tragedy, but it's still part of the narrative" (Smith, M. 2015). Smith's article mentions that Washington University in St. Louis was also involved in collecting "digital artifacts of the protests, including photographs, video and audio" (Ibid.). The article also discusses the collection effort being made by Ruth Brown, a volunteer archivist at the Ferguson Historical Society. Smith compares this collection and curatorial effort to what the Louisiana State Museum did after Hurricane Katrina catastrophically damaged New Orleans. Toler notes that:

the task of preserving today's history is a big change from the museum's typical routine. People usually come to the museum to research artifacts from decades or centuries - not hours or days - ago (Toler 2015).

Curating the arts inspired by the Ferguson unrest was the project of the Alliance of Black Art Galleries, which created the *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Artists Respond to Ferguson* exhibit by March 2015, just seven months after Michael Brown died. Over 100 artists displayed work at 14 different venues, in

St. Louis City and County, with Ferguson, including the St. Louis University Museum of Art (Missouri History Museum 2015). Some of the art has a dual status, both artifactual and artistic. After the shop windows were broken during the looting and rioting, wooden panels were installed to protect the buildings from further damage and from the weather. Many of these boards were subsequently painted by a varied assortment of people including graffiti artists, children, members of the community and professional artists. Some of these boards were collected as part of the effort to preserve this moment in history. A local author, Carol Swartout Klein created an illustrated children's book, *Painting For Peace in Ferguson* (Klein 2015), using the wooden window boards as the illustrations. A website also preserves images connected to the making and preserving of these boards: www.paintingforpeace.com.

In addition to its curatorial role, the Missouri History Museum has provided several free programs focusing around the issues raised by the unrest in Ferguson starting just one month after Michael Brown's death. The following are a few of the events hosted by the Museum as they were promoted in posters and flyers:

- September 17, 2014: "From Brown to Ferguson - the Unfinished Business of Civil Rights"

FROM BROWN TO FERGUSON
THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Wednesday **SEPTEMBER 17**
7pm to 9pm
Lee Auditorium

FREE

William Frantz Elementary School, New Orleans, 1960. After a Federal court ordered the desegregation of schools in the South, U.S. Marshals escorted a young African American girl, Ruby Bridges, to school. wikimedia.org

Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division escort African American students to Central High School in Little Rock in Sept. 1957, after the governor of Arkansas tried to enforce segregation. Photo courtesy National Archives. wikimedia.org

Presented in conjunction with Washington University Washington University in St. Louis

From Brown to Ferguson The Unfinished Business of Civil Rights

Sherrilyn Ifill (pictured at right), president and director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., talks about the legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education* on the 60th anniversary of this watershed court case striking down school segregation.

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM
Lindell & DeBaliviere in Forest Park
314.746.4599 mohistory.org

Missouri History Museum

2014 PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Figure 2-7. "From Brown to Ferguson Poster." (Missouri History Museum 2014)

- September 24, 2014: "A Photographer's View of the Ferguson Protests" that included works by Robert Cohen and J.B. Forbes, both staff photographers from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Lawrence Bryant, of the St. Louis American, the African-American

newspaper in St. Louis, and Whitney Curtis from the New York Times.

- March 8, 2015: “Documenting History - Artists Respond to Ferguson”

DOCUMENTING HISTORY
ARTISTS RESPOND TO FERGUSON PANEL DISCUSSION

Sunday **MARCH 8**
2pm
AT&T Foundation Multipurpose Room

FREE

ALLIANCE OF BLACK ART GALLERIES

DOCUMENTING HISTORY
Artists Respond to Ferguson

MODERATOR: **Freida L. Wheaton**, Curator, *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Artists Respond*

WELCOME: **Dr. Frances Levine**, President, Missouri Historical Society

PRESENTERS:
Pat Smith Thurman, Founding Member, Alliance of Black Art Galleries; *Hands Up* Exhibition Media; Exhibition Venue and Artist
Annetta Vickers-Bentil, Founding Member, Alliance of Black Art Galleries; Videographer, *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Artists Respond* Exhibition
Daniel Jefferson, *Hands Up* Exhibition Artist; graffiti mural artist
Christopher Gordon, Library and Collections Director, Missouri History Museum
Petruta Lipan, Director, Saint Louis University Museum of Art, *Hands Up* Exhibition Venue
Ruth Brown, Historian for Ferguson Historical Society
Meredith Evans, Associate University Librarian, Washington University in St. Louis
Buzz Spector, Professor of Art, Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Art, Washington University in St. Louis

Robert Ketchens—“Whitewash, Sun Down Town”

Solomon Thurman—“Artist and Officer”

Exhibiting Artists from *Hands Up, Don't Shoot*: Najjar Abdul-Musawwir, Howard Barry, Sami Bentil, William Burton Jr., Ken Calvert, Lenard Hinds, Daniel Jefferson, Alan Johnson, Robert A. Ketchens, Kuumba, P31, Marilyn L. Robinson, Pat Smith Thurman, Solomon Thurman, Annetta Vickers-Bentil, and Freida L. Wheaton

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM
Lindell & DeBaliviere in Forest Park
314.746.4599 mohistory.org

Missouri History Museum

2015 PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Figure 2-8. “Documenting History – Artists Respond to Ferguson” (Missouri History Museum 2015)

- April 6, 2015: “Before Michael - Brutality and the Policing of Black America,” a lecture by Jelani Cobbs
- May 22 and 23, 2015: “Black and Blue” (See Figure 2-6), a performance by Lee Patton Chiles that “includes professional actors and Ferguson, Missouri, residents (Missouri History Museum 2015).
- October 4, 11, 18, 25, November 1, 8, 2014 “# Next Hashtag”, a performance: written by Teens Make History Players in response to recent events in Ferguson, Missouri. It is about things they wish people understood and about their hopes for the future (Missouri History Museum)

#NEXTHASHTAG
TEENS MAKE HISTORY

Saturdays OCTOBER 4–NOVEMBER 8
11:30am
Reflections Gallery

FREE



Supported by the William R. Orthwein, Jr. and Laura Rand Orthwein Foundations; The Dana Brown Charitable Trust; The Tria Foundations of St. Louis, Missouri; Wildo Furgu Advisors; The Crawford Taylor Foundation; and Energizer

#NextHashtag

Saturday, OCTOBER 4, 11, 18, 25, and NOVEMBER 1, 8
11:30am

#NextHashtag was written by our Teens Make History Players, in response to recent events in Ferguson, Missouri. It is about the things they wish people understood and about their hopes for the future.

MISSOURI HISTORY MUSEUM
Lindell & DeBaliviere in Forest Park
314.746.4599 mohistory.org

Missouri History Museum

2014 PROGRAMS/EVENTS

Figure 2-9. “# Next Hashtag” (Missouri History Museum 2014)

These programs, and the images used to promote them, are the Missouri History Museum's attempt to push the metropolitan community to dialogue around the issues raised by Ferguson. They appear to be mostly framed around two objectives: linking Ferguson to historic and ongoing racial inequities in the region, and creating a space for the African American voice as articulated through the arts and performing arts.

Ferguson matters

Ferguson matters locally and nationally, as well as to this research project. The events associated with the death of Michael Brown are shifting the status quo for the community and for the way museums engage with it. The evidence is still emerging. There is, as yet, no body of peer reviewed academic literature to critique. However, I believe that it is fair to suggest that the data generated about how the three St. Louis-based historic house museums selected for this project preserve and interpret evidence of past inter-cultural encounters, and the dialogue that proceeded from the images collected by the participant team members, would have been different had the research been done prior to these events because Ferguson brought the issues of diversity, and their interpretation, into the spotlight. A white man killed a black man. This triggered a discussion of the historic inequities of race relations in the United States at America's dinner tables. The museums, under consideration for this project, by virtue of their location and public commitments to interpret the history of race relations in St. Louis, had to make decisions about whether, and how, to include, in their interpretation, references to the unrest, and to the on-going unsettled racial divisions within St. Louis. The participant team brought an array of opinions and emotions about Ferguson with them when they gathered to investigate whether these sites preserve and/or interpret evidence of past inter-cultural encounters. These opinions had been expressed in public posts on social media during the year between the death of Michael Brown and the day we met as a group. By having chosen to investigate inter in this racially polarized socio-cultural-political context, I believe I serendipitously positioned each of us behind its lens. I also believe that the charge to look for inter allowed each participant to step slightly outside of their

normal vantage point and to, thus, become addressed by the concerns of the project in ways that prevented them from defaulting to some set stereotypical and predictable assumptions. Without this new hermeneutic horizon, or vantage point, we all might have been unable to understand the importance of this historic moment because, as Gadamer writes:

It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition (Gadamer 2013).

Ferguson appears to be disclosing hidden prejudices, especially when the lens is inter. It permits new decisions to be made as:

actions are performed in freedom, but that this decision really decides something, i.e., that a decision makes history and through its effect reveals its full and lasting significance is the mark of truly historic moments (Ibid.).

The use of inter as a conceptual frame for this project, as will be seen, leads to a conclusion and suggestion that the museum has the potential to shift away from its identity, and role, as the expert educator and communicator about history and culture. It has the potential to become a place where a hermeneutics-inspired interpretation, that extends honor (or value) to each cultural participant, happens within itself, its visitors, and to influence the larger community. Inter will be shown as a key to prioritizing a humility from which safety and trust can promote a conducive environment for difficult conversations and confrontations over past conflicts, both psychological and political. Inter is a hermeneutic idea, as Gadamer explains when he writes:

Hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness; ... between being a historically intended, distanced object and belonging to a tradition. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between (Ibid.).

Inter inter-connects all of these concepts and thus became the theoretical frame for the investigation of the interpretation of diversity at these three historic house museums within an interrupted and disturbed socio-political climate having been hermeneutically addressed by Ferguson.

Chapter 3

Interlinking Methodologies— Participatory Visual Photo-voice, Document Analysis, Inter and Hermeneutics

“The two genealogies are interested, entangled, and unfinished.”

(Clifford 2013)

Having shared my professional experiences at the root of, and the inspiration for, the project in the prequel and preface; the context of the American historic house museum and the socio-cultural-political context of Ferguson in the first two chapters; and various theoretical approaches to culture as a perspective in the second chapter; my next challenge was to determine a methodology best suited to investigate any evidence displayed and/or interpreted at the historic house museum of past inter-cultural encounters. I was interested in finding a way to both capture and consider any such evidence that might bypass and neutralize the museum’s claims and conclusions. I actually employed four interlinking methodologies, which are the subjects of this chapter. The primary methodology is visual photo-voice. This is supplemented by a document analysis. During the course of the project I came to realize that inter, as a concept and as a perspective, was becoming both a methodological approach, a kind of investigative lens, and an analytic tool. Hermeneutics was the final methodological tool that I applied. Like inter, hermeneutics serves the project as an iterative methodology. It also became an organizational, thematic device, like a thread on which I could string all the seemingly disparate beads of a necklace to bring forth both cohesion and meaning. Hermeneutics is also, as will become evident in the conclusion, the theoretical point to which I

suggest the museum should turn in order to rethink and re-purpose the interpretation of diversity in order to arrive at a more humble, more inclusive hermeneutics-informed strategic approach.

Participatory visual photo-voice as the primary methodology

If my experiences with the Shawnee Chief and the African American educator indicated anything that can be generalized, the evidence I was looking to discover would not be obvious, except to members of the culture to which it originally pertained, even though their understanding of that evidence might be minimal, indicated only by a sense of familiarity or wonder. This is why I felt it necessary to involve a participant team. I knew that I was likely not to recognize artifacts, and that I might miss even linguistic references made in language that contained culturally coded, hidden or double meanings. I specifically recruited a diverse team of participants. The team was comprised of seven members—three men, four women, two married members, two recent immigrants, one African American, two mixed-race individuals and two whites. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to the late 70s. The educational level of the participants included high school graduates, as well as members with multiple graduate degrees.

Because I was looking for artifactual evidence, and because that will always consist of some materiality, I decided that to use the visual as a primary methodology for this project would be the most helpful. This section investigates how visual cognition and understanding works, which scholars and academic fields use visual methodologies, and how their work pointed to a methodology for this project. A significant portion of this chapter was first published in “On Visual Research,” an editorial that I wrote and that was originally published in the 2015 Volume 19 edition of *Museological Review* (Barker 2015). In this section, I also discuss how I was assisted to think about the visual aspects of this project through the online social media platform, Pinterest.

The visual is a way of knowing

The academy and, indeed, most people, process what they know and understand through words and logic. Some individuals, including people on the Autism Spectrum, process what they know and understand through pictures. Information can also be disseminated through words as well as by pictures. Meta-cognitive research differentiates between the visual and the verbal by claiming that verbal intelligence is incrementally arrived at, while visual intelligence happens all at once (Marion and Crowder 2013). In order to see why I decided to privilege the visual as the methodology for this project, it is useful to describe how it works as a way of knowing.

Howard Gardner innovated an educational theory of multiple intelligences that changed the way classroom teachers deliver instruction so that students, whose primary “*intelligence*” or neutrally-based “*computational capacity*” (Gardner 2006 p.7) is not language, can be more successful learners. One of Gardner’s several specific intelligences is spatial or visual intelligence. As with each intelligence he profiles, visual intelligence has three distinct aspects: a bio-physiological component, a sociological component and an individual stylistic component. The first, and what he insists is a bio-physiological component of each different kind of intelligence, is “*a computational capacity*” (Ibid., p.6, 31) that depends on neural pathways and on the part of the brain that is most frequently utilized for thinking and problem solving. The sociological component of an intelligence, according to Gardner, applies to crafts, disciplines, and fields or to:

any kind of organized activity within a society in which one can readily array individuals in terms of experience (Ibid., p.31).

The third way that Gardner defines intelligence is “*the manner in which a task is executed.*” (Ibid. p.33). Gardner’s work suggests that the different intelligences each hold different specific keys to new knowledge. Visual research should produce new knowledge because of the way it computes and presents both its questions and its conclusions.

A solution to a problem can be constructed before it is articulated. In fact, the solution process may be totally invisible, even to the problem solver (Ibid., p.12),

when a nonverbal intelligence is involved, according to Gardner.

Temple Grandin has been able to make her non-verbal solution process visible. She is an animal psychologist who has designed equipment for handling livestock to make tasks like slaughtering and veterinary care more compassionate and efficient.

I think in pictures. Words are a second language to me...every design problem I've ever solved started with my ability to visualize and see the world in pictures (Grandin 2008 pp.1, 4).

A high-functioning person with autism, Grandin, a PhD, understands her metacognitive processes well enough to describe them as:

thinking in pictures and making associations...without language...by associating sensory based memories such as smells, sounds, visual images into categories... [and] ... putting details together to form concepts (Ibid., p.200-201).

"My experience as a visual thinker with Autism makes it clear to me that thought does not have to be verbal or sequential (Ibid., p.194).

Grandin's anecdotal descriptions support what other scholars who work with visual information also understand. In their book, *Visual Research: A Concise Introduction to Thinking Visually*, Marion and Crowder contrast visual and narrative approaches to information this way:

Unlike narratives, which unfold progressively, images can present everything at once (Marion and Crowder 2013).

This idea is further explored using both drawings and words by Nick Sousanis, whose doctoral dissertation took the form of a comic book that has recently been published by Harvard University Press. He privileges the visual over language saying,

While image IS, text is always ABOUT (Sousanis 2015 p.58).

He posits that there are:

two distinct kinds of awareness: the sequential and the simultaneous (Ibid., p.63).

He understands “*sequential*” awareness to be linked to verbal cognition and “*simultaneous*” awareness to be linked to visual cognition. So, by asking the participant team members to photograph what they assessed to be evidence of inter-cultural past encounters at the house museums we visited, I hoped to benefit from this kind of simultaneous, more instinctive awareness and sensory information that did not need to be explained or bolstered by words.

These ideas have significant consequences for research in terms of what is possible. But, because visual communication has existed since cave paintings and petroglyphs for millennia, I wonder what has prevented the visual from being used within the academy for both inquiry and the dissemination of new knowledge until very recently if the visual is a means through which:

new knowledge and critiques may be created (Pink 2013 p.24).

Sousanis blames Plato’s distrust of perceptual distortion, illustrated by the fact that a pencil seems to bend when it is inserted into a glass of water. He further indicts Descartes’ fear that:

all he perceived might be the deception of a supremely powerful evil spirit (Sousanis p.54)

as a reason that the academy has privileged a reliance on logic, not sensory information.

Work in developmental optometry, in the brain science of human perception, and in the phenomenology of perception, such as that contributed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty 2013), combine to push us and, perhaps the academy, past these archaic opinions. By discussing, via images, the role of images as conveyors of new knowledge in a comic book format, Sousanis disrupts:

the status quo [by] using multiple vantage points to create new ways of thinking (Mulhere 2015).

His work is a powerful demonstration of the potential for visual research to be used, as Claudia Mitchell explains,

as modes of inquiry, modes of representation, and modes of dissemination (Mitchell 2012).

By risking to think and do research using visual methodologies, we stand at a “*threshold*” (Sousanis 2015 p.94) for new explorations of thought and inquiry because,

thinking in a new medium means seeing the world beyond the confines of a singular direction... [where], “as Sousanis says... ‘Nothing changed except the point of view-- which changed everything.’ (Mulhere 2015).

I want to position this project at such a “*threshold*” that shifts the perspective about the past that, so far, has been confined at many American historic house museums by the narrative limited, for the most part, to the traditional victor’s perspective. Using the visual, according to Mitchell, Mulhere, and Sousanis, may, in my opinion, produce the potential to break through these confines.

The participant team was instructed to use the visual as a “*mode of inquiry*.” It was charged to create original photographs to “*represent*” what they assessed to be evidence of a past inter-cultural encounter, and then to share (“*disseminate*”) those photographs for me to use to investigate the questions at hand.

What visual research is being used to explore and investigate

Visual research has been used since the 1970s in anthropology, sociology, medicine, education and applied business, primarily as a means of data collection. This is especially true with a participatory action research methodology known as photo-voice that was developed by Caroline C. Wang of the University of Michigan. Claudia Mitchell of McGill University adopted this methodology to explore, for example, conditions that youth with HIV/AIDS face in rural South Africa, as well as many other social research projects that she has conducted, using the visual as both a participatory method for data collection and to present conclusions. Aimee and Hunleth have utilized this methodology to explore community attitudes in St. Louis about colorectal screening for the Siteman Cancer Institute at Washington University. (Aimee and Hunleth 2011). Like Mitchell, they use the visual primarily as a method for participatory data collection.

Visual methods have become widely used in education for the delivery of instruction by means of graphic organizers like Venn Diagrams, KWL charts, and “mind-maps,” which have replaced traditional, linear, logic-driven outlines for teaching the writing planning process, for example. Visual methods are also widely used in business for strategic planning and for task management protocols. This, as in the use of the visual in the classroom, is an application that has been shown to increase the learning or strategic outcomes and that could also be collected and analyzed in a research setting.

Studies using visual ethnographic methods have also been widely used in the field of Human Computer Interaction and in related computer science areas as new methodologies for visual research. (McNely 2013). McNely, at the

University of Kentucky, has issued a call for the development of specific research standards for visual research methods in the field of communication design research after his own work demonstrated that:

Visual methods are more than merely illustrative; they may lead, rather, to wider frames of analysis, improved understandings of processes and change, and qualitatively different forms of thick descriptions (than field notes alone) ... [as well as offering] communication design researchers an alternative feedback instrument, where participants are able to reflect upon their own practices and environments by seeing them in a different way (McNely 2013).

My decision was to employ a participant team to produce and collect visual data for this project using photo-voice-inspired methods such as those innovated by Wang and Mitchell.

How has the academy received, criticized and evaluated visual research?

Claudia Mitchell addresses each aspect of the research process: inquiry, representation, and dissemination in her book, which uses case studies from her sociological research into girls' health and safety in rural South Africa. Her process uses photo-voice methods to explore how the visual works as a research tool. She writes that:

the emergence of visual and arts-based research as a viable approach is putting pressure on the traditional structures and expectations of the academy (Mitchell 2012).

The academy has embraced ethno-visual methods of data collection within the social sciences, as illustrated in the preceding examples. However, there remain issues of analysis, validity, and ethics. In addition, the traditions of the academy when it comes to the presentation of research—in a PhD dissertation, for instance—may serve as a barrier to experimentation with the visual as a

means of disseminating knowledge. This has been recently challenged by the comic book dissertation by Nick Sousanis (Mulhere 2015).

Gillian Rose calls working with, and analyzing, visual data:

a complex process... [that, for example,] draws attention to at least three modalities related to photographs: the technological, the compositional, and the social (Mitchell 2012).

Katie MacEntee identifies and applies a set of four criteria to the analysis of photo collages. She evaluates their “*persuasiveness*,” “*evocativity*,” “*action orientedness*” and “*reflexivity*” (Ibid.). Mitchell cautions that we must be prepared both for the “*iterative*” (Ibid.) and “*reflexive*” (Ibid.) nature of doing visual research. Sarah Pink advises that:

a reflexive approach to analysis should concentrate on how the content of visual images is the result of the specific context of their production and in the diversity of ways that photographs are interpreted (Pink 2013 p.160).

This connects to her understanding that an image includes layers of meaning that make it able to demonstrate that “*sets of diverse worldviews exist simultaneously*” and that the meaning of an image may, actually, change over time (Ibid., p.166). Machin and Mayes insist that the visual is a form of discourse that must be subjected to a Critical Discourse Analysis to identify how meaning has been constructed by:

the kinds of ideas, absences and taken-for-granted assumptions in the images as well as the texts which will also serve the kinds of power interests buried in them (Machin and Mayes 2012 p.9).

They evaluate the “*truth claims*” of an image using devices such as foregrounding, style, lighting, context and framing to test its validity. Their concerns should inform any peer review process of visual research within the academy, in my opinion. The photographs produced for this project are in no

way to be considered art. The photographers are not professionals, they did not construct their pictures based on the arrangement of the elements portrayed, nor did they utilize any technology such as lighting, special lenses, filters or advanced editing software to manipulate the images.

Not the least significant of the concerns levied by the academy about visual research is its ethical implications. Mitchell's work with at-risk and teen populations in third-world cultures makes her very aware of ethical concerns such as accessibility, ownership and the potential for harm to come to the people portrayed. She asks:

How can we ensure that research with marginalized populations does not further marginalize them (Mitchell 2012)?

She notes that ethics boards subject visual research projects to a:

more rigorous scrutiny ... than most other data because it is so accessible (Ibid.).

My project, because its focus and the subject of the photos generated by the participants is artifacts, not people, raises fewer ethical concerns. I did charge the participants not to submit photographs including people. The photographs I took, on the other hand, some of which are in this document, do include images of members of the participant team, each of whom gave written permission for such photographs to be shared without their names being used. There was also the potential that the racial, ethnic and religious themes of this investigation might prove difficult to some members of the participant team. Permission to withdraw from the project was available, without any judgment or condemnation, and, should a member have shown any signs of psychological distress as a result of the project, I committed in advance to assist in seeking appropriate help. No such problems arose, thankfully. It is clear to me that the new affordability and widespread availability of digital audio and visual recording devices, coupled with the potential of visual research methodologies to unlock new understandings and engage different participants, make visual

research projects likely to become more popular within the academy going forward.

McNely provided a call for the academic field of communication design research to draw on visual anthropology and visual ethnography methods and standards to produce protocols for visual research for his field.

There is an opportunity, however, for more researchers to build robust and theoretically informed incorporations of visual methods into studies of communication design. In particular, visual methods can be more meaningfully deployed throughout communication design research processes, so that photography and videography become more than merely illustrative (McNely 2013).

In general, I think that McNely has discovered, in the lack of standard, accepted protocols, a primary hurdle to the adoption of visual research methodologies across the academy at large.

What can visual research contribute to the field of museology and what can museology contribute to the academy in the area of visual research?

The Museum is a sensory arena where visitors interact by moving through exhibits which always include the visual. Museological research is concerned with how people learn as they move through and linger in physical spaces enriched by sensory information that often requests some kind of response.

Where Claudia Mitchell talks in a subjunctive mood about an:

emerging scholarship of display.... As inquiry, bringing together, as it inevitably would, technical issues and participatory processed and policy dialogue (Mitchell 2012),

the field of museology can provide a research-basis for such a “*scholarship of display*” that is nuanced and informed by layers of research done over decades

across museums worldwide. The field of museology is, in my opinion, uniquely situated to take a leading role for the academy in developing broad standards and informed, research-based practices in visual research methodologies and methods. Advances in visual research, in turn, will provide the field of museology with the twofold gains noted by McNely for his own field:

a means for better documenting, analyzing, and understanding participant experience, and working with others to produce or discuss visual representations in a participatory way (McNely 2013).

My project is predicated on this potential.

Why employing a visual methodology suits this project

According to David MacDougal, visual methodology is exactly what the project requires because:

The visual allows us to construct knowledge not by 'description'...but by a form of acquaintance (MacDougal 2006 p.330).

The photographs produced by the participant team members serve a delightful paradox. They are intrinsically objective documentations of artifacts currently on display at a historic house museum and, simultaneously, subjective, personal assessments of something perceived to have transpired in the past. By involving participants from different cultural, ethnic, racial, faith, age and socio-economic backgrounds, and by giving an open-ended invitation for them to produce and submit images that they feel provide evidence of past inter-cultural encounters, the use of a visual methodology permits this “*construction of knowledge by a form of acquaintance.*” It allows a plural perspective and multiple “voices” to scrutinize and critique the museum’s interpretation of diversity without a direct confrontation or protest. The photographs, augmented by the associated titles and captions, written by the participant photographers, produce a visual statement that should issue a

challenge to the house museum sector. This challenge is not a call to overturn the sector, but to widen its reach by celebrating what it has to offer to advance what we all can know about how inter-cultural encounters happened in the past. In addition, this challenge may, indeed, provide context for what is happening between diverse cultures in this present day.

How Pinterest served the visual aspects of this project

Pinterest (Pinterest 2016) is a social media platform. A Google Search of “Pinterest” on December 26, 2016, resulted in the official site listed in the top position. According to the short description for that listing, Pinterest is “*The world’s catalog of ideas*” (Ibid.). The subordinate description for the listing reads:

A content sharing service that allows members to ‘pin’ images, videos and other objects to their pinboard. Also includes standard social networking features ... (Ibid.).

My Pinterest account, for example, is visible under the User Name, “Lesley Aileen.” Pinterest allows a person to save a photograph from anywhere on the internet, and to upload original photographs, to a “board” that the account owner can control. The original source for each image is imbedded in the photograph on Pinterest so that its citation always accompanies the image. A user can create as many boards as she wants, giving them titles and brief explanations of what they are about. Each board provides a thumbnail display of all images it contains. Permissions for each board are set by the user, who controls it as either public or secret. Public boards are searchable and visible to any other Pinterest user, while secret boards are neither searchable nor visible.

I used Pinterest during both the design phase of this dissertation and the analysis phase. In order to assist the design of this project, I searched the internet and pinned photographs I found of each of the historic house museums we would visit to an individual board that I named with the name of each site. I also gathered images about past events related to African Americans,

Native Americans and White Americans, as well as images that indicated a past inter-cultural encounter. I labeled these boards by the relevant cultural or ethnic group and made them public. These boards informed how I prepared the participant team to collect and generate their photo-voice data. Once the participants submitted their data and, preliminary to the analysis phase of this project, I uploaded the images generated by each participant to individual secret boards. I included any title and caption provided by the participant to accompany the image on these boards in the descriptions of each image.

Pinterest was more valuable to me during the analysis phase of this project because I could copy images from the secret boards containing the submitted images of the individual participants to new secret and thematically organized boards. For example, I created a secret board for each house museum to which I copied the images submitted by each participant from that site. It allowed me to consider and sort, and repeatedly re-sort using different criteria, the images digitally on the computer. I ended up with a set of secret boards for participant images according to the following themes: "Named Individuals", "Whites or European", "The Slaves", "Native Americans", "Hero", "Pictures taken by more than one participant", "Participant pictures of text panels", and "Juxtapositions". I also created a secret board for my original photographs of the team members at the sites, which I named "Field Notes July 11, 2015."

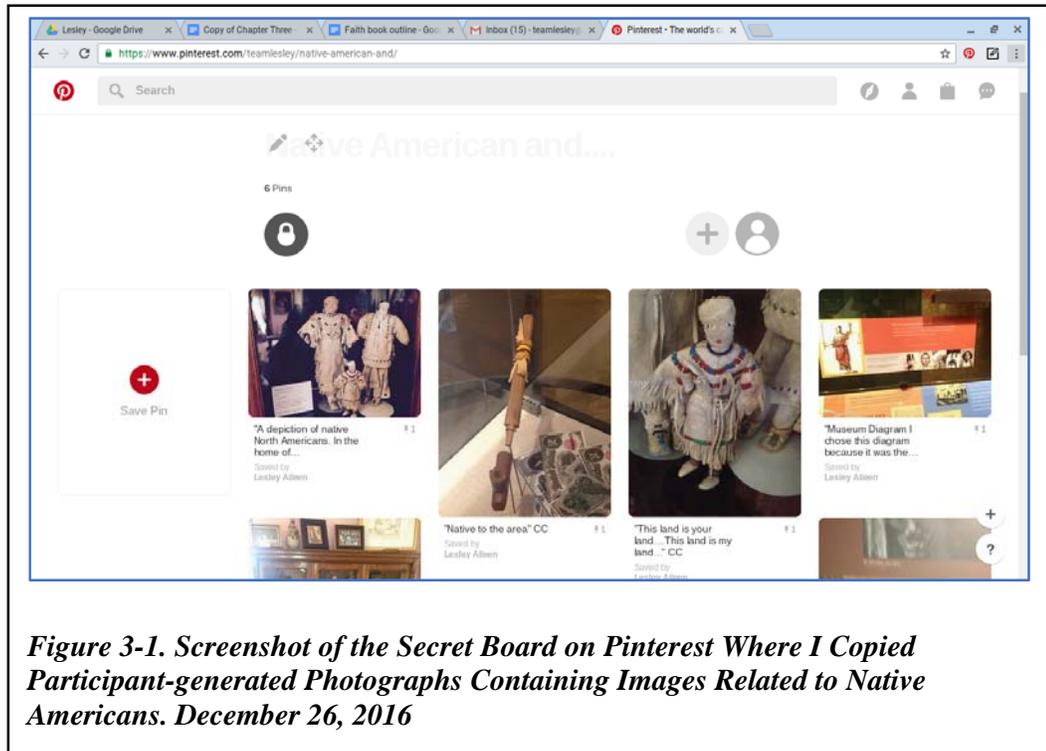


Figure 3-1. Screenshot of the Secret Board on Pinterest Where I Copied Participant-generated Photographs Containing Images Related to Native Americans. December 26, 2016

I also used my own photographs as field notes for this project. These, along with the results of the document analysis, will be seen, in the next chapter, to comprise my “frame” for the snapshots supplied by the participant photo-voice data.

Document analysis — as a secondary methodology

Part of the problem inherent in the tendency for the American historic house museum’s concern to promote an interpretive, historic narrative based on the traditional victor’s perspective is that other perspectives, while in evidence, may be articulated in ways that allow old stereotypes to persist (Handler and Gable 1997). Because it is extremely rare for these museums to be owned, operated and staffed by non-white individuals, the inclusion of “other” voices may not be *just* enough. In addition, this oversight may not be internally considered by the interpretive staff or reflected in the museum’s interpretive strategic plan. Instead, the museums may mask and gloss over prejudices, or naively ignore and unconsciously keep absences from being

noticed. By analyzing documents about their own interpretation of diversity, generated by and about the sites to which I would take the photo-voice participant team, I expected to be able to articulate each site's own priorities, as well as perhaps to observe inconsistencies.

To that end, I performed a document analysis of the published materials generated by each house museum. The documents included brochures, promotional material, social media posts and web-content. In addition, I analyzed documents written and published about the sites by others. These documents included such things as National Historic Landmark nominations, tax forms that are searchable to the public, and articles about the sites by academics, cultural heritage and museum professionals, and journalists. The results of my document analysis, when juxtaposed with the ideas provided in the analysis of the photo-voice data with its associated titles and captions, along with my field notes, allowed me to draw conclusions about how successful each museum's interpretation of diversity was at the time of the investigation when evaluated through a hermeneutics-informed lens and through the opinions of the participant team members.

Inter as the observational tool

In addition to inter functioning as a conceptual frame for this project, as discussed in chapter two, inter also served as a key part of the methodology. Inter became a primary observational tool that the participant team members used to satisfy the prompt to photograph, using their smart phone, anything they assessed to be evidence of a past inter-cultural encounter at each of the three house museums visited. By not asking the team to search for evidence of any specific cultural past presence, I believe I lessened the likelihood that individual prejudices and grievances based in personal or family experience would become the focus. Indeed, as will become evident in the analysis of the photo-voice data, my request to look for and then document inter seems to have functioned as a new lens that brought forward unexpected ideas and information. None of the participants had difficulty discussing inter, even though several voiced strong opinions in reference to

their personal experiences of prejudice. All of the participants agreed that truth and balance are vitally important and that they were not necessarily on display when inter-cultural themes were being interpreted at the museums. Instead, the team was able to discern what J. Rutherford describes as “*the traces of a multitude of pasts and histories [that] lay scattered everywhere*” (Rutherford 2005).

I believe that using inter as an observational tool served a strategic function to relieve the participants of any potential latent intimidation that could have been caused by their own personal experiences. It also may have helped them expand away from any other entrenched prejudices, whether or not the individuals were aware that such prejudices may exist. Because of the fractious and volatile climate in St. Louis at the time the site visits happened, thanks to the impending first anniversary of the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, this device, inter, perhaps allowed the project to happen without triggering any significant emotional distress in the participants. I also believe that using inter as an observational tool allowed the participants to embark on what Gadamer calls a hermeneutic “*adventure*” which:

interrupts the customary course of events, but is positively and significantly related to the context which it interrupts. Thus, an adventure lets life be felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength. Here lies the fascination of an adventure. It removes the conditions and obligations of everyday life. It ventures out into the uncertain (Gadamer 2013).

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a division of philosophy that seeks to probe interpretation, understanding, knowledge and meaning. Originally it was a discipline of theology, and then it was embraced by jurisprudence before being applied more widely since the mid eighteenth century, beginning with the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher. During the twentieth century, hermeneutics became connected to phenomenology. For the purposes of this project, I am relying

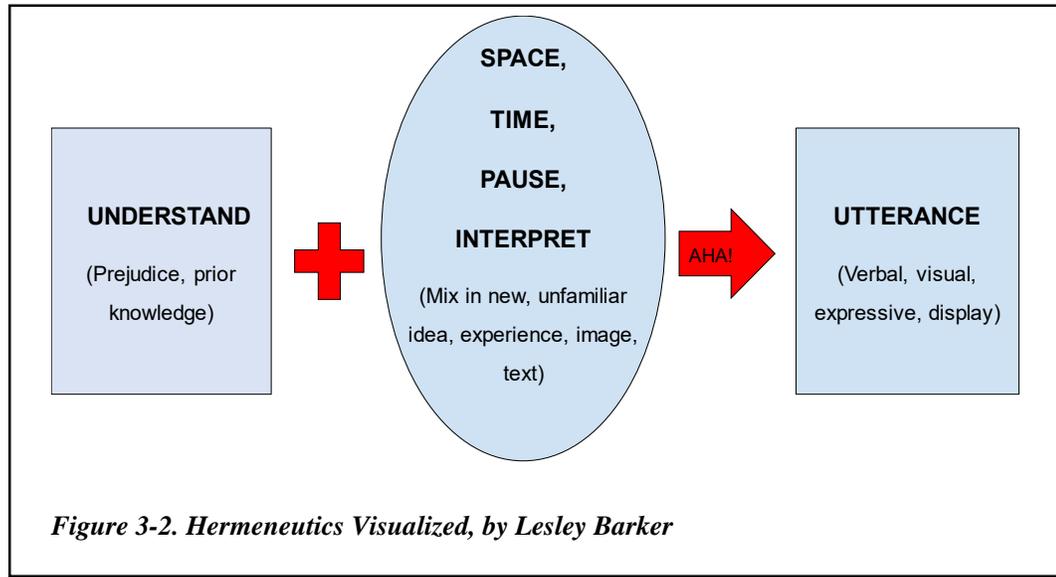
heavily on the work of the German hermeneuticist Hans-Georg Gadamer. Not only does his major work, *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 2013), chronicle the way hermeneutics has evolved as a way of thinking and as a method of investigation for the humanities; it also assists to ground the methodology, analysis and conclusions of this project.

Gadamer's influences on this project

Gadamer places hermeneutic understanding within the context of a conversation. He assumes that meaning is layered, subjectively understood and rooted in prejudice, which he takes to mean prior knowledge. He believes that prejudice can be identified and probed through conversation and that, according to Davey, *"no meaning can ever be complete."* (Davey 1999 p.22). For the sake of this project, the members of the participant team entered into a visual conversation with the museum, and with me, to disclose their own prior understanding, prejudices—triggered, addressed and confronted by the museum's display. This, in turn, served as a catalyst for a series of interpretive pauses that did, and may continue to, produce shifts in understanding within each person and institutional party to the conversation to result in the articulation of different utterances. Indeed, Davey claims, for Gadamer:

*what is revealed...what the alethetic powers of conversation...
discloses to us...occasion events which, contrary to one's
willing and doing disrupt one's self-possession and equilibrium*
(Davey 1999 p.9).

Figure 3-2 below is a graphic representation of how I understand this disruptive hermeneutics to operate such that the oval, symbolizing hermeneutic interpretation, is the place, space, or interval where both the disruption of a status quo or prejudice and the ensuing meta-cognitive transformation happens in a person, and potentially, in my opinion, in the museum itself.



Gadamer values art's:

ability to disclose an understanding of both ourselves and of our being in the world in an immediate, unique and revelatory manner altogether distinct from, but as defensible as, propositional knowledge (Davey 1999 p.5).

Gadamer calls an image:

a manifestation of what it represents - even if it brings it to appearance through its autonomous expressive power (Gadamer 2013).

This ability for an image to disclose new understandings or new manifestations is inherent in the project's design and in its primary visual methodology, photo-voice Gadamer poses a paradoxical approach to understanding something that is seen which is dependent not only on what is perceivable but also on what is absent. He writes:

All understanding as is an articulation of what is there, in that it looks-away-from, looks-at, sees-together-as (Ibid.).

The participants each saw some of what each museum put on display **as** their own “*truth claims*” (Ibid.) for the interpretation of diversity. Determining what was absent from the displays became an important part of the analysis phase of this project. According to Gadamer,

Interpretation...does not refer to the sense intended (by the display or truth claim, for example), but to the sense that is hidden and has to be disclosed (Ibid.).

Gadamer influences the way I understand the call I am issuing, through this project, for a hermeneutics-informed, innovative approach to museum interpretation that privileges the inclusion of each cultural participant in any past encounter. For example, Gadamer distinguished between “*truth*” and “*truth claims*” this way:

To every claim there is a counter claim. This is why it is possible for each of the partners in the relationship reflectively to outdo the other. One claims to know the other's claim from his point of view and even to understand the other better than the other understands himself (Ibid.).

Writing about “*hermeneutic aesthetics*,” Davey explains:

A major leitmotif of hermeneutic fact is that certain truths can only be experienced subjectively but that fact does not render them subjective (Davey 1999 p.3).

Gadamer writes about our experience of a work of art, saying that:

what invites our attention is how true it is - i.e., to what extent one knows and recognizes something and oneself (Gadamer 2013).

This is a core assumption on which the project is centered. In my opinion, our individual heritage and history uniquely position us to experience truth subjectively in the same way that the African American educator experienced

her first sight of the porch of the Greentree Tavern in Ste. Genevieve as having been a slave market. However, this subjective understanding has to be juxtaposed with other kinds of evidence before her truth claim can be promoted as objective truth. The participant team members were very concerned with whether the interpretation of diversity at the house museums we visited was balanced, because, as they collectively concluded, otherwise it would not be “true.” The assessment of truth enabled by the participant photo-voice images during the analysis phase of this project was assisted by Gadamer’s work. He wrote:

What is to be understood is, in fact, not a thought considered as a part of another’s life, but as a truth (Ibid.).

Gadamer considers the past and history to be important factors that govern interpretation, understanding and meaning. He is interested in:

the spiritual creations of the past, art and history [and says that they] no longer belong self-evidently to the present; rather they are given up to research, they are data or givens from which a past can be made present (Ibid.).

By situating understanding within history, Gadamer’s hermeneutics endorses the assumptions and methodological approaches of this project. He connects the person seeking understanding with the object about which said understanding is sought. Mueller-Vollmer calls these “two horizons,” one subjective and the other objective, and explains that Gadamer fuses both together because they “share a common effective historical coherence” (Mueller-Vollmer 2006 p.17). The participant team member who visits a historic house museum in search of evidence of some past inter-cultural encounter illustrates such a coherence. It was intensified and, perhaps, made even more central to this project by the events of Ferguson. As Mueller-Vollmer continues to explain, Gadamer understood that:

...It is the past within the present which makes us ask historical questions... We must interpret remnants of the past... in order to gain an understanding of what they reveal about the past (Ibid., p.18).

He goes on to say that, according to Gadamer,

Any interpretations of the past...are as much a creature of the interpreter's own time and place as the phenomenon under investigation was of its own period of history (Ibid., p.38).

The socio-cultural-political events of Ferguson and the emergent Black Lives Matter Movement across the United States are examples of the participant team's and the museums' "*own time and place under investigation*" alongside the artifacts within the house museums. The value of Gadamer's hermeneutics to this project is strengthened by this comment by Jeff Malpas in his biographical article about Gadamer:

All interpretation, even of the past...is always oriented to present concerns and interests, and it is those present concerns and interests that allow us to enter into the dialogue with the matter at issue (Malpas 2016).

Two key present concerns and issues for this project are Ferguson and the subjective perspectives brought by each member of the participant team. The essential question and "*matter at issue*" under investigation in this project is how the three American historic house museums under consideration interpret diversity.

Interpretation, according to hermeneutics, is iterative. It is this iterative nature of hermeneutic understanding that gives way to adjusted and new interpretation and utterances that can be conceived of as the "*hermeneutic circle of understanding*," a concept that Viv Golding recommends should inform programming at the modern museum (Golding 2009). Gadamer explains that:

Fundamentally, understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts and vice versa, is essential. Moreover, this circle is constantly expanding since the concept of the whole is relative, and being integrated in ever larger contexts always affects the understanding of the individual part (Gadamer 2013).

That there is no end to the potential for reflection to produce a transformation to any person's and, in my opinion, to any museum's understanding about any particular idea, artifact, event, or behavior, is why I think hermeneutics is so important to this project. As a result of this research, as will be clear in the conclusion, I envision a museum whose identity shifts away from knowledge expert and educator. It shifts to become an inter space where visitors, staff and board members each expect to undergo ever-expanding new understanding, thanks to a hermeneutics-informed interpretation, whenever they engage in a dialogue or conversation with the museum by visiting it in person or online. This museum will embrace an interpretive strategy that invites and honors everyone's prejudices (i.e., prior knowledge). In my opinion, this museum will be positioned to find new popularity, relevance and respect.

Finally, Gadamer's hermeneutics helps this project by addressing the us/them, emic/etic, problem of the "other" in comparison to translating from one language to another. Gadamer compares translation and interpretation this way, "*Translation, like all interpretation, is a highlighting*" (Gadamer 2013), which is what each member of the participant team did through their remarks, captions and submitted images that mirrored their own heritage. In other words, each person engaged with and highlighted the "familiar." Each person also made remarks, wrote captions or submitted images that "othered" their heritage, thereby engaging as an "other" or "alien." In particular, the mixed-race participants were able to simultaneously engage with and highlight artifacts as both a "familiar" and an "alien," which made their identification of, for example, European as "an other" uniquely visible to me. As Gadamer explains,

The interpretation as a whole is made up of a thousand little decisions which all claim to be correct (Ibid.).

If the museum shifts towards a hermeneutics-informed interpretative strategy, as I will propose in the conclusion, Gadamer predicts that “*Understanding [will] occur in interpreting*” (Ibid.), as multiple bilateral conversations ensue “*between the interpreter and the other, and ...between the interpreter and oneself*” (Ibid.). As Malpas explains, for Gadamer, understanding is:

The formation of a new context of meaning that enables integration of what is otherwise unfamiliar, strange or anomalous... [and]...involves a process of mediation and dialogue between what is familiar and what is alien in which neither remains unaffected (Malpas 2016).

A problem with relying on Gadamer-inspired hermeneutics for this project

My reliance on hermeneutics and on Gadamer, himself, may be problematic, however. There have been post-colonial critics of Gadamer, such as Teresa Orozco (Orozco 2004), who associate his work with elitism and Nazism. In fact, Dieter Misgeld claims that:

he has underestimated the place of power or coercion in social life and therefore has failed to address the phenomenon of domination as a social problem in modern societies (Misgeld 1990 p.171).

A more troubling possible problem may lie in Gadamer’s own personal prejudice. For example, he wrote the following statement in *Truth and Method*:

The fact is that we see sensory particulars in relation to something universal. For example, we recognize a white phenomenon as a man (Gadamer 2013).

Because this project is rooted in a commitment to honor understandings and truth claims that have often been marginalized and sometimes purposefully, sometimes innocently, left out of the narrative or promulgated as truth, it might be a fatal flaw to endorse Gadamer's perspectives. His assumptions, derived from Plato and Aristotle, and thus Western in their logic and wisdom, might create difficult conditions for individuals whose prior knowledge, understanding and prejudice were formed by a different, non-western, oral rather than literate cultural set of premises.

This concern may, in fact, mitigate against the use of hermeneutics at all. However, for the purposes of this project, hermeneutics, as articulated by Gadamer, is useful, in my opinion, as a methodological tool and theoretical orientation because it opens a inner and inter space where meaning is not fixed and where a reflexive, iterative, dialogical, emergent definition of truth is assumed. Thus, there is an implied universal requirement for what I call humility that, when applied to museum interpretation, re-configures everything. So, until the time that non-western philosophical understandings of meaning, understanding and interpretation can be collected and compared to the museum in a similar way to how this project uses hermeneutics, my reliance on Gadamer-informed hermeneutics may be viewed as a step in the right direction to shift the interpretation of diversity at the museum towards a more balanced, true involvement of each community of cultures.

Section Two

Gathering, Producing and
Presenting the Data

Chapter 4

Three St. Louis Historic House Museums

I selected three historic house museums in St. Louis as the sites for this participatory photo-voice project. The museums each claim to interpret diversity as part of their mission. Each site was the home of a man who influenced race relations in the United States. The sites were built and inhabited at different times spanning the history of St. Louis from when it was a French colonial enclave in the eighteenth century until the first decade of the twentieth century. Each site is owned and operated by a different kind of entity. The Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven is owned and operated by the National Park Service. The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum is owned and operated by a private non-profit organization. The Scott Joplin House State Historic Site is owned and operated by the State of Missouri's Department of Natural Resources. This chapter will introduce each site through information about its governance and location, as well as about what its interpretive goals and strategies are. The information presented derives from a document analysis of each site's social media sites, website, published brochures and newsletters, as well as articles, tax returns, National Historic Registry and National Historic Landmark nominations, and books written about the sites. In addition, the author's photographs of the site will be shared here in order to provide a contextual frame for the visual and textual data collected and submitted by the members of the participant team and presented in chapter five. Finally, based on what each site publishes about itself and on what other literature indicates, I will note my initial predictions about what the participants might notice and photograph. In addition, because the shooting death of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014, set the socio-political and social justice tone of the community in which each site is located, this chapter will include information about what has become known as "Ferguson" as it relates to the sites. The next chapter will include information about how Ferguson was understood and how it impacted each of the participant team members.

White Haven (the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site)

Governance, location, description, history, funding and visitor statistics

The Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site, commonly referred to as White Haven, is located in St. Louis County at 7400 Grant Road, Grantwood Village, Missouri. This area is predominantly white (94.4 per cent according to the 2010 U.S. Census) and increasingly Bosnian. It is in St. Louis County in the City of Affton. In the City of Affton, 7.8 percent of the 20,203 residents live at or below the federal poverty level. Affton has an area of 4.61 square miles with 4,409.8 people per square mile (Census Viewer 2012).

White Haven, along with each of the other sites under consideration here, is a National Historic Landmark, a designation made when the Department of the Interior and its subsidiary, the National Park Service, deems a site to be of national significance. The designation was given to White Haven on June 23, 1986, for its *“long and close association with U. S. Grant”* (Hamilton 1985 p.3), who was the general-in-chief of the Union armies during the Civil War and who, later, became the eighteenth president of the United States. White Haven was the plantation where Grant’s wife, Julia Dent, grew up. Today the site is owned and operated by the National Park Service (NPS). The site comprises 9.85 acres and includes five buildings: the main house, the former slave quarters, a shed, smokehouse and a barn. According to the National Registry Nomination Form (Ibid.), the house is where Grant proposed to Julia Dent.

According to Al O’Bright, the architect historian who wrote the site’s historic structures report, Julia Dent’s father named his plantation after an older one owned in Maryland by his family and where he lived until 1802 (O’Bright 1999 p.2.55). By 1830 the Dents owned eighteen enslaved individuals, and by 1850 they owned thirty (Ibid. p. 2.57). Mrs. John C. Dent, a descendant, writing in 1916, stated that the family owned ninety enslaved people (Ibid. p.3.20). While there is significant documentary history about as many as eighteen slave cabins that were standing in the early 20th century, no one knows their exact location today. (Ibid. p.1). The plantation, by virtue of the labor of its enslaved

workforce, produced “*molasses, tobacco, whisky... vegetables, bacon, beef and poultry*” (Ibid. p.5.11).

The house was first built as a log house, with French-style vertical logs in the west wing (Ibid. p.2.122), between 1796 and 1800, when the first Americans were moving into this area on the Spanish west side of the Mississippi River. As in the history of the Bolduc House Museum nearly 75 miles to the south, the region was then under Spanish colonial rule even though its colonial settlers were predominantly French. Prior to the Civil War, White Haven was a plantation that relied on slave labor with between 400 and 1,000 acres on what started as a Spanish Land Grant to Hugh Graham.

During the time that the Grants owned White Haven, three trees, a ginko and two lindens, acquired on a round-the-world tour from 1877-1878, were planted on the property (Ibid.). In addition, a barn was built in the 1870s to serve as a stable for Grant’s thoroughbred horses (Ibid.). In 1884, the railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, acquired the property. He sold it to Luther H. Con in 1888 (Ibid. p.2.66).

Today there is a modern parking lot with an entry to a modern visitor center with a theater, reception area and a small souvenir shop. This building communicates by glass doors with the barn. The barn is divided into two sections by floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors. One section includes the stables and original, horse-drawn vehicles along with some nineteenth-century farm equipment. The other section is devoted to information about Grant’s life and presidency which is organized in display cabinets and on text panels in an arrangement more like a traditional museum than a house museum. Outdoors there is a hiking trail that leads to the house, stone kitchen and garden.

Visitors are greeted at a large reception desk by uniformed NPS rangers. Admission is free. Visitors have self-guided access to the entire site, with the exception of the house. In order to enter the house, visitors must be guided by a ranger, who provides an orientation with information about how Grant courted Julia Dent and, eventually, ended up proposing to her there. The ranger explains that the house is mostly unfurnished due to a fire at a warehouse

where Grant's furniture had been stored, and then destroyed, during his lifetime. After the orientation, which is conducted outside, across the fence from the house, the ranger accompanies the visitors to the house and remains there available to answer questions.

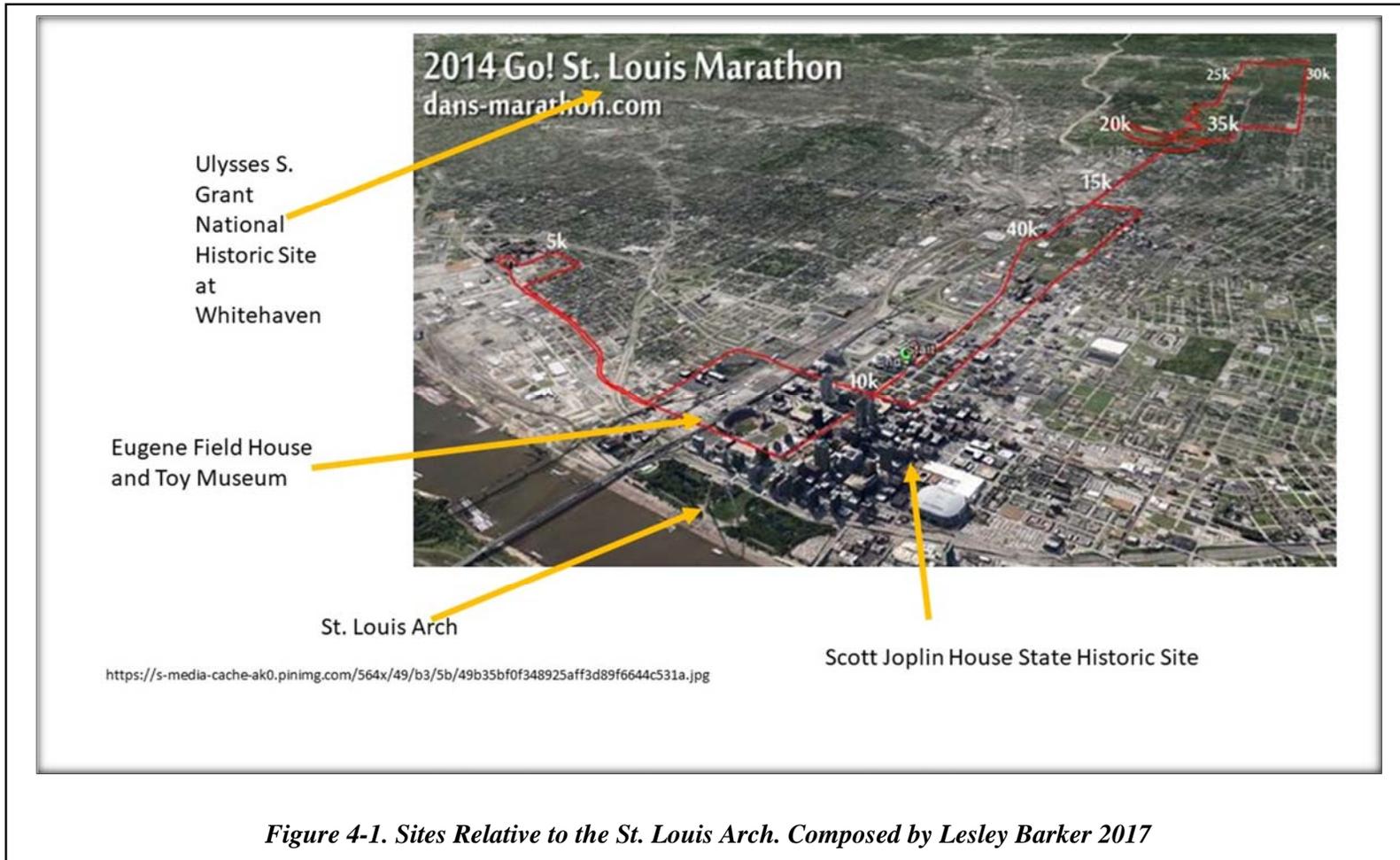
Funding

NPS sites are funded by direct government spending apportioned to the Department of the Interior according to the national budget approved by Congress. In addition to this, NPS sites receive earned income through admissions (although White Haven is free) and sales. Finally, donations and philanthropic grants also provide revenue for these sites.

Visitation

The site received 3,403 visits in September 2014. The Year-To-Date visitor count for 2014, with the September statistics included, was 34,019. This was down 14.52 per cent compared to September 2013, when there were 3,981 visitors (IRMA 2014). The site is open year-round daily from 9 AM until 4 PM with tours every half hour.

White Haven in the Context of Ferguson



The NPS staff from White Haven collaborated with colleagues from the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial at the St. Louis Arch, the National Alliance of Faith and Justice and the Ferguson-Florissant School District to develop programming for the district's 600 eighth grade students, who average age 14. The goal was to:

develop a program that would help students understand that the events in their community were the result of many actions, some dating to the Civil War... The programs focused on the role of African Americans, before, during, and after the Civil War. The emphasis was on individuals taking action; Grant's civil rights policies, African Americans fleeing slavery, joining the army, taking a stand, obtaining an education and voting (Pollock 2015).

The students visited the site during May, and the site planned to repeat the program in 2016 with a potential to make it an annual event.

What White Haven interprets by which interpretive strategies

This site fits Charlotte Smith's "Great Man Shrine" (Young 2002) category for historic house interpretation. In addition to using traditional museum interpretive signage throughout the site, with exhibit cases in the barn and in the stone kitchen, an orientation film, and a scripted talk by one of the rangers to introduce the house, the museum's website lists the following "stories" interpreted at White Haven:

- April 6, 2015: "Before Michael - Brutality and the Policing of Black America," a lecture by Jelani Cobbs
- Grant and White Haven
- White Haven's Wildlife
- Grant and the 15th Amendment
- A Valuable Lesson Learned in 1861
- Preface to His Memoirs
- Proposal & Marriage

- The Visits of Ulysses and Julia to St. Louis
- The Causes of the Civil War
- The Determination of Grant at Shiloh (National Park Service 2014)

A new interpretive film about the 1859 emancipation of William Jones, who was the only enslaved person that Grant is known to have owned, was previewed by Superintendent Tim Good at the March 2015 Midwest Regional Conference of the Association of Living History, Farms, and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) held in Collinsville, Illinois.

At the U. S. Grant Site, Ranger Nick Sacco, blogging for the Association of State and Local History (AASLH) after attending a webinar by Kristen L. Gallas, calls for a shift in the goal of the interpretation of diversity to “*affective equality*.” He says:

Affective inequality occurs when historic sites develop ‘emotionally evocative accounts’ of the planter-class family while referring to enslaved experiences in factual, quantitative terms, such as mentioning the X number of slaves that worked at a given site without further elaboration or emotional connection (Sacco 2016).

As will be seen later, the participant team was divided about whether the interpretation of slavery at this site achieved such a goal.

The interpretation of slavery at White Haven incorporates archaeological artifacts unearthed in excavations that were made prior to the construction of a visitor parking area and during access road construction. Archaeologists were also consulted about how best to interpret these artifacts. In 1991 and 1992, archaeologist Virgil Noble estimated the construction date of one of the buildings at White Haven in order to ascertain whether two grassy areas could be turned into visitor parking lots without putting any archaeological evidence at risk. They discovered a few small items matching other finds elsewhere in the region known to be identified with enslaved Africans. In 1995, Jim Price, an

archaeologist from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Mark Lynott, an archaeologist with the National Park Service, consulted with the site about how to provide accurate interpretation of the finds. (St. Louis Community College 2014A). In 1997, St. Louis Community College professor Gladys-Marie Fry wrote an article for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch about what the earlier archaeologists, including Mark Leone, unearthed. Their opinion and images about what was found are described on a Community College web page and suggest that the artifacts were evidence of:

a ritualistic breakage of vessels to keep the spirit of someone who died from coming back, [a slave's] dinner bundle [or] conjurer's cache, [and] coral beads of a variety often associated with enslaved African communities found in the process of access road construction at White Haven. (Fuller 2014).

What the site says and visually portrays about itself

On the website

The official website (NPS 2014) shares its template and organizational structure with the other NPS sites. The homepage gives a brief introduction to Grant and to his wife's family before indicating the timeframe that it interprets today:

From 1854 to 1859 the Dents, Grants and an enslaved African-American workforce lived on the property (Ibid.).

Two video clips are embedded on the homepage. One, "*Sunlight and Shadows: Slavery at Ulysses S. Grant's White Haven,*" is accompanied by the statement:

My hope is that [visitors] can see themselves in the story (Ibid.).

The other video is "*A Thousand Kisses: The Love Story of Pres. Ulysses S. Grant and Julia Dent Grant.*" (Ibid.)

The “History and Culture” page continues to market the interpretation of slavery at this site, saying that Grant’s:

experience working alongside the White Haven slaves may have influenced him in his later role as the Union general who won the war which abolished ‘that particular institution’; and as President of the United States. The interpretation of slavery at White Haven is therefore an important part of the mission of the historic site (Ibid.).

The webpage names the enslaved man, Dan, “*with whom Grant worked at the plantation.*” This part of the website also gives statistics of slavery in St. Louis at two percent of the population in 1860, which was “*down from 25% in 1830*” (Ibid.). It names five enslaved Africans owned by William Lindsay Long in 1818, who owned the property before Dent. Their names were Wallace, Andrew, Lydia, Loutette and Adie. It discloses that half of the enslaved individuals who lived on the property in the 1830s were under the age of ten, and it names four more individuals: Henrietta, Sue, Ann and Jeff. Another enslaved man, “Old Bob,” lived at the plantation in 1816.

The website also includes program options for teachers to use in planning field trips to the site, a section archiving news items and PDF versions of the park’s newsletters, a section about the management of the park including “*Laws, Policies and Sustainability,*” and options for visitors to donate and volunteer. Finally, it includes information about the Jefferson National Parks Association (JNPA), which is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to “*support educational activities at this and other parks*” (Ibid.).

On social media

The Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site at White Haven is active on Facebook, Yelp and Foursquare. The “About” section of the site’s Facebook page repeats most of the introductory material on the website.

The NPS preserves and interprets White Haven and tells the story of Ulysses and Julia Grant, the events surrounding the Civil War and Reconstruction and all the people - free and enslaved - who called White Haven home (USNPS-Facebook 2014).

The Face Book page uses the “Events” feature and, on the day I accessed the page for this research, it listed only past events, including several events that explored past inter-cultural encounters:

- *“September 7 - Kathryn Harris as Harriet Tubman*
- *June 2 - American Jews and the Civil War*
- *March 16 - Dr. Wilma King: African American Women and Children in the Civil War Era West of the Mississippi River*
- *January 12 - A Discussion with Scott Berg: 38 Nooses - Lincoln, Little Crow and the Beginning of the Frontier’s End”. (Ibid.).*

The site posts items to its “Timeline” that relate mostly to what Grant was doing on the same calendar day as the posting, along with pictures. The Facebook page had 1,900 total likes as of October 20, 2014, and on that day, fifty-one individuals were *“talking about it.”* The most engaged demographic on that Facebook page, according to its “insights,” are 45- to 54-year-olds from St. Louis. There were seventy-eight reviews by followers of the page. By making the assumption that the icon next to the reviewer’s name, unless it was a picture of an animal or of some inanimate item, indicates their gender and ethnicity, only four reviews were submitted by people who are not white, thirty-eight reviews were submitted by men and thirty-six were submitted by women.

The information about the site on Foursquare as of October 20, 2014, included a map, links to the website and some older comments, the most recent of which was dated August 10, 2013 (USNPS-Foursquare 2014).

Yelp, accessed the same day, had a total of eleven reviews. They had been made at very sporadic intervals, and the most recent review had been posted

on August 10, 2014. A negative review had been posted on June 3, 2012, by Jessica F., an African American woman from Manhattan, New York. She wrote:

At 4:10PM my friend and I decided to go to Grant's original home. We got there 20 minutes before closing and got a Cliff Note's tour 101. We didn't have time to do the museum in the barn and were totally bummed by that (USNPS-Yelp 2014).

In its newsletters and brochures

White Haven publishes quarterly newsletters that are archived in PDF format on the website. There is an average of five articles in each issue. Because this project is focused on the interpretation of diversity, I scanned each issue from Spring 2007 through Summer 2014, paying attention to articles and events related to that theme. I also surveyed the images in the newsletters for visual evidence of diversity. Several issues included information about exhibits and programs touching the themes related to diversity. In all, out of twenty-nine issues surveyed, with an average of five articles per issue or a total of 145 articles, there were only twelve articles that concerned Native American, African American and Jewish people, policies and events (NPS 2014).

The newsletters occasionally include pictures of the staff and volunteers. The people portrayed in these issues indicate that the site is run by a team that is mostly white and male. A total of forty-nine staff members and volunteers were pictured in the newsletters from Spring 2007 through Summer 2014. Of these, twenty-six are men and thirty-six are white (Ibid.).

Author's photographs of White Haven

I took the following photographs on July 11, 2015, to document the participant team's work at each site. There are pictures of the team at work, as well as of artifacts and text panels that I recognized as answering the prompt to photograph anything that appears to be evidence of a past inter-cultural encounters.

Figure 4-2. White Haven's Visitor Center. This photograph is looking through the main hallway in the new visitor center at White Haven. The woman taking a picture in the center is one of the team members. The information counter is to the left. The stairs to the right lead to a movie theater. The glass doors in the background lead to the historic house and the grounds.



Figure 4-2. White Haven's Visitor Center

Figure 4-3. The Green House is White Haven. The green house with the double porch in the background is White Haven. Pictured at the stone bench in front of the reading rail are the participant team members. The ranger in the background is sharing the story of Julia Dent's romance with Ulysses S. Grant. This is part of a ten-minute introduction that precedes a visitor's entry into the house itself.



Figure 4-3. The Green House is White Haven

Figure 4-4. Interpreting Slavery. A lot of the text panels at White Haven provide information about slavery. Indeed, a lot of attention was given to the pre-Civil War national debate about slavery because the Dents were pro-slavery members of the Confederacy, while Grant was anti-slavery and a Union general.

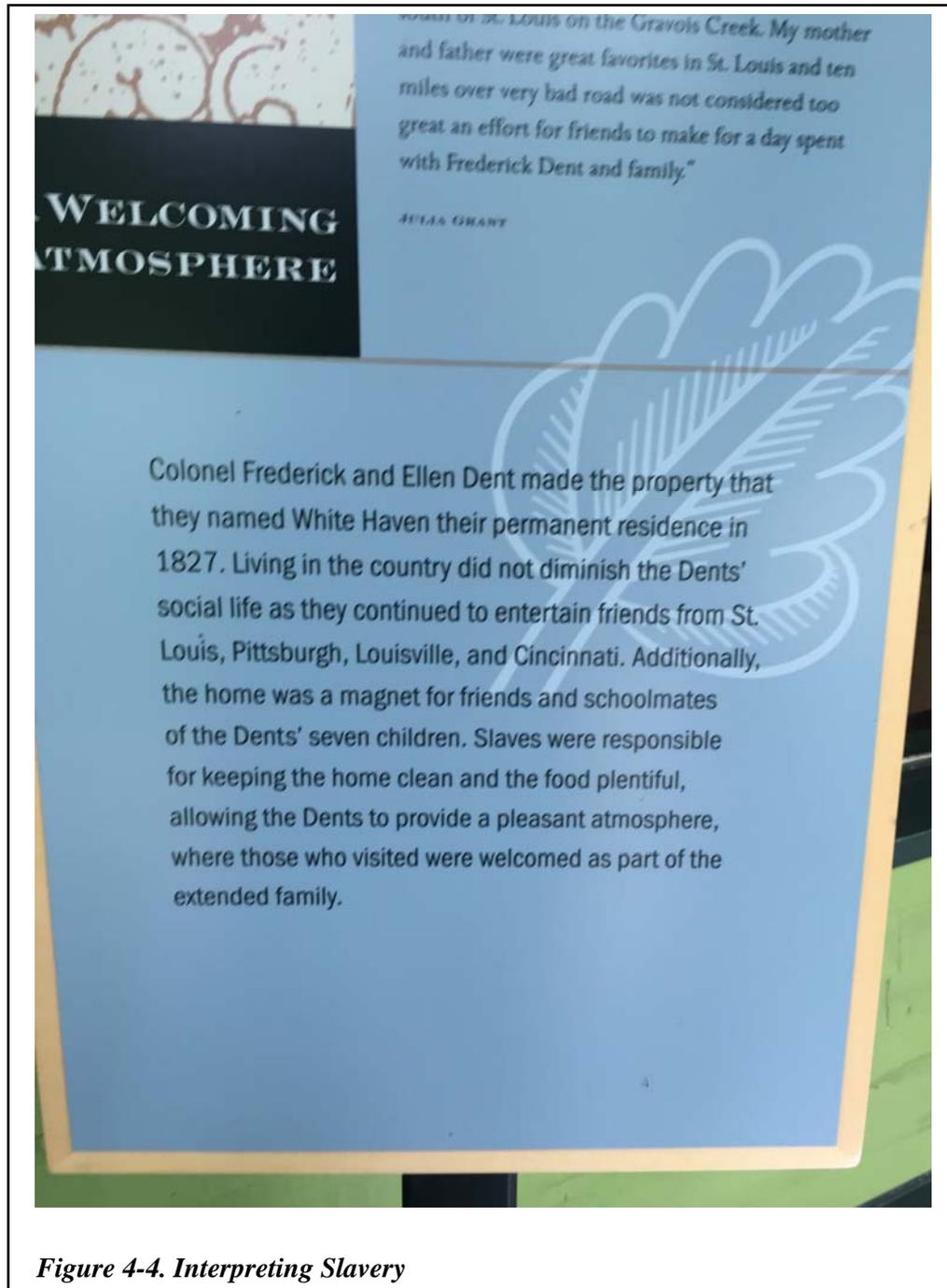


Figure 4-4. Interpreting Slavery

Figure 4-5. Drama. Very little furniture is at White Haven because the original furnishings were destroyed when a fire broke out at the place they were being stored during Grant's life, according to the ranger. This mirror above the mantle in the front room of the house disguises a digital frame. When the switch is on, a video plays a dramatized dinner table conversation about the institution of slavery between the men, Grant on the left and Col. Dent on the right. Julia Dent sits, demure and silent, with her back towards the viewer. Standing, also silent and without any facial expressions to give her feelings and opinions away, is an enslaved female domestic servant, serving the meal. In my opinion, this is a high-tech *"uncritical retelling of some old American myths"* (Handler and Gable 1997) that, as will be seen later, offended and enraged one of the team members so much that he had to leave the room.



Figure 4-5. Drama

Figure 4-6. “Our People.” This text panel quotes Julia Dent writing that “*our people*,” which is code for slaves, “*were very happy*.” It goes on to infer that Julia’s marriage to Grant would have caused her to rethink her opinions about slavery in general.

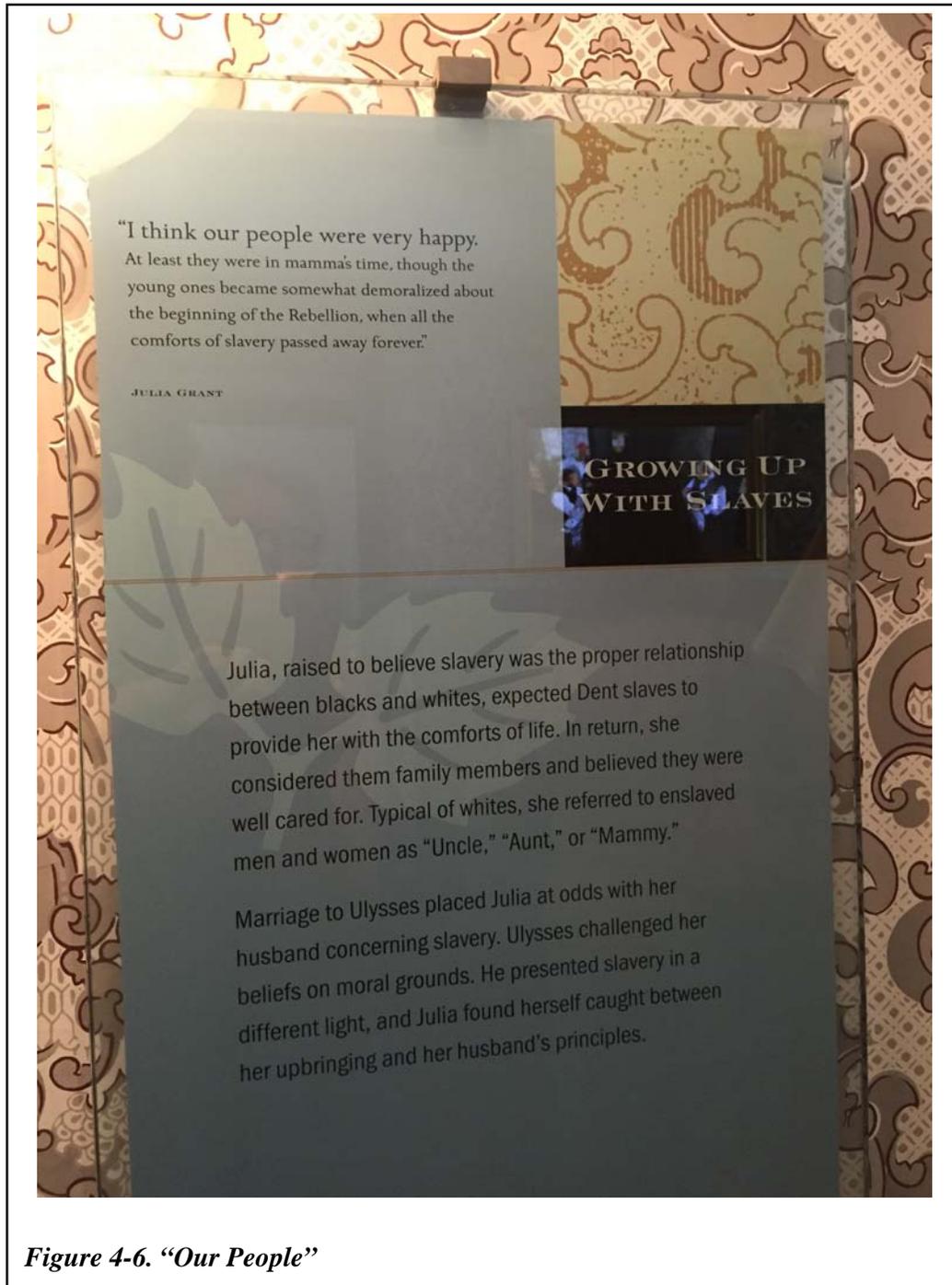


Figure 4-6. “Our People”

Figure 4-7. Exposed Vertical Log

Wall. This exposed section of an original exterior wall shows vertical log, post-on-a-sill, construction typical of French colonial architecture such as was used at the Louis Bolduc House in Ste. Genevieve. It is quite likely, in my opinion, that this indicates that African or Native American individuals enslaved by French colonial Americans built the original section of the house. No mention of who labored to build the walls is made or suggested in the official interpretation.



Figure 4-7. Exposed Vertical Log Wall



Figure 4-8. Seashells in St. Louis

Figure 4-8. Seashells in St. Louis.

Because this collection of sea shells seemed out of place, I asked the ranger about them. He told me that they were Julia's mother's mementoes of a visit to the ocean and that, as a child, Julia was forbidden to touch them. However, he continued, one of the slaves, a little girl, played with them and, to save her from being punished, Julia took the blame.

Figure 4-9. Herring Generosity. The next text panel is one of several in the outdoor stone kitchen, where found artifacts excavated on site, such as the child’s marbles, are on display. Again, the text panels quote Julia asserting that the slaves were “*happy with their life*” at White Haven and that her father was “*generous*” to them, such as when he bought barrels of herring for them to eat.

Opposite Realities of Slavery

“Most of our old colored people were from Virginia and Maryland, and papa used to buy for them great barrels of fish—herring from that part of the country. Molasses, tobacco, and some whiskey (on cold, raw days) were issued regularly to them from the storehouse, and then they had everything the farm produced, such as all vegetables, bacon, beef, and, of course, poultry.”

JULIA SWANN

Preserving Identity and Community

Despite the fact that slaves had little control over their lives, they found ways to maintain some level of independence. Julia thought Bob careless when he let the fires burn out and had “to walk a mile to some neighbors and bring home a brand of fire.” More likely Bob intentionally let them burn out to escape his owner’s watchful eye, even if only for a few hours.

Slaves grasped opportunities for building community by embracing required work with socializing. Corn shucking provided an occasion for slaves to gather from many plantations, making the work easier by sharing food, talk, and song.

The Invisible Hand of Slavery

From Julia’s perspective her father’s generosity to the slaves at White Haven left them happy with their lot. She stated that they “had everything that the farm produced,” ignoring the fact that the farm’s wealth of goods resulted solely from Charles, Wilks, William, and Jim’s labors in the fields and endless women’s work in the kitchen garden. Likewise, she grew up thinking that the “house kept itself” rather than Kitty, Rose, and Mary, who worked tirelessly to keep things in order. Julia did not grasp the irony that as slaves these men and women could not benefit from their own labors.

FROM SWANN
The 1850 agricultural return for White Haven indicates the goods produced by the enslaved men and women.
Original location.

Name of Slave, Name of Owner of the Farm	1850												Total	
	W	B	A	S	T	C	O	P	H	L	I	S		
1														
2														
3														
4														
5														
6														
7														
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FROM SWANN
Slaves exhibited white-shedding corn.
See illustration below.

NOTES
Bones and shell artifacts indicate slave diet and pork supplemented by wild game, birds, and fish.

NOTES
Slaves were required to carry a gun whenever they left their master's property.
Foot of Iron (Illustration below).

NOTES
“Working” by Jean-Pierre Belin, 1970 (left).

Figure 4-9. Herring Generosity

Figure 4-10. Wash Day. A section of one of the text panels in the kitchen is devoted to “Wash Day.” It explains how hand-washing was done, but again, essentializes “*the slaves*” and “*the laundress*” without naming them.

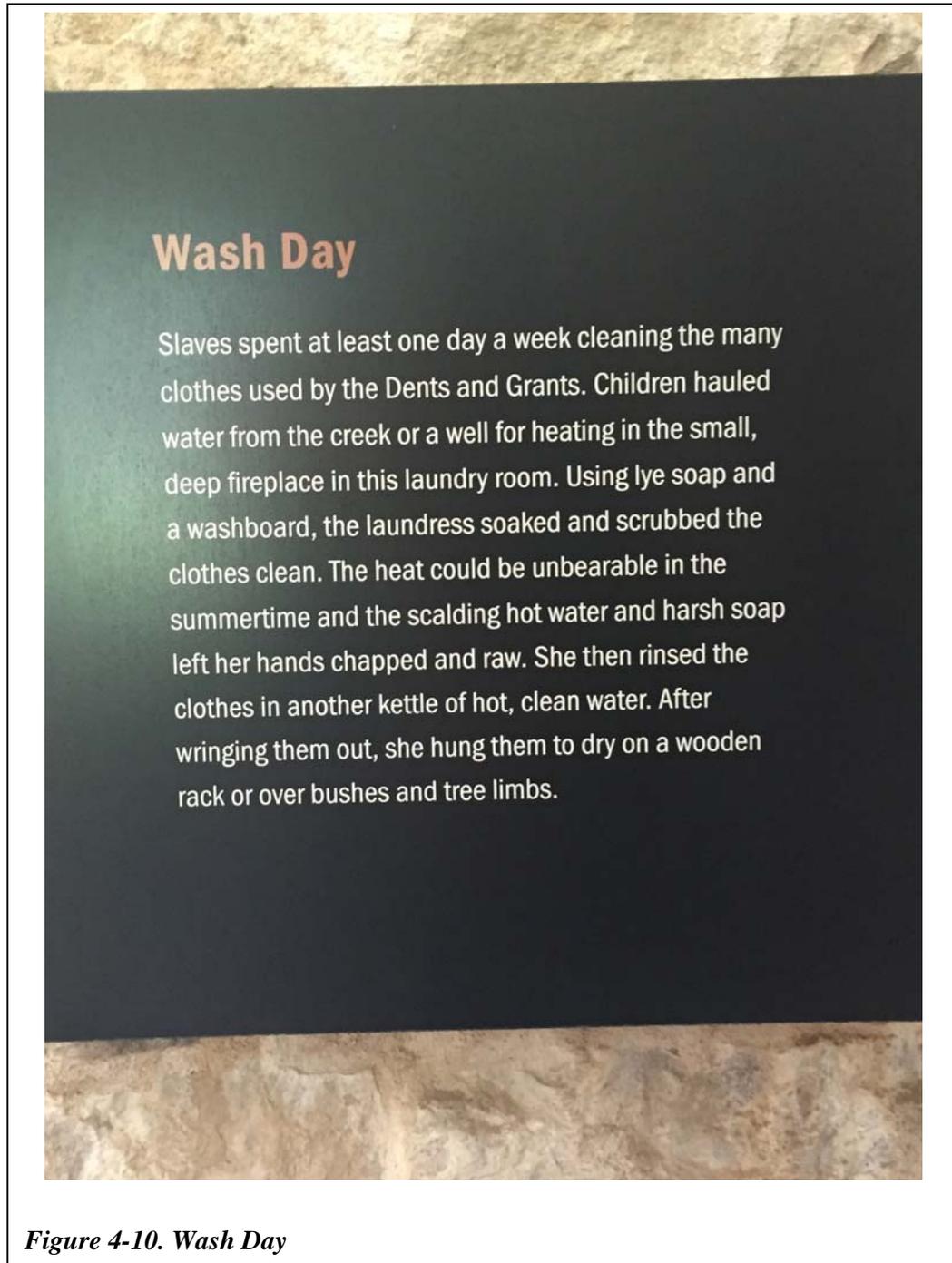


Figure 4-10. Wash Day

Figure 4-11. Context for Wash Day.

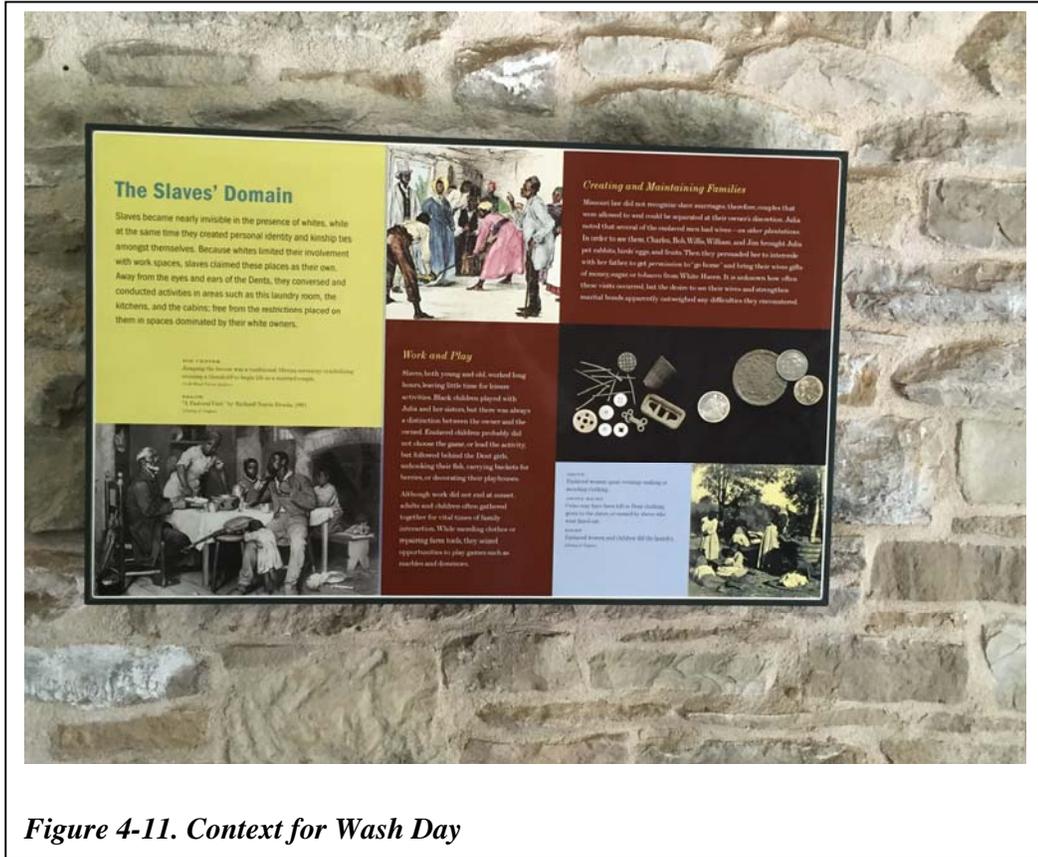


Figure 4-11. Context for Wash Day

Figure 4-12. Pottery Fragments. These pottery fragments continue the trend. Notice the interpretive signage: *“Like the utilitarian redware bowl fragment, it represents work done by slaves in the daily routine of serving the master.”* Once again, the “slaves” are impersonal, a nameless category. These artifacts, like the remaining four photographs in this section, are located in the museum side of the barn which, according to the ranger, was built for Grant’s thoroughbred horses. Half of the barn is used to house horse-drawn vehicles and farm implements. The other half is filled with displays more typical of standard museums.



Figure 4-12. Pottery Fragments

Figure 4-13. Prejudiced? Grant's life included inter-cultural encounters other than those he had with enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals. The text panel "Prejudiced?" informs the visitors that Grant expelled Jewish members of the military from serving on December 17, 1862, and then rescinded the order on January 6, 1863.

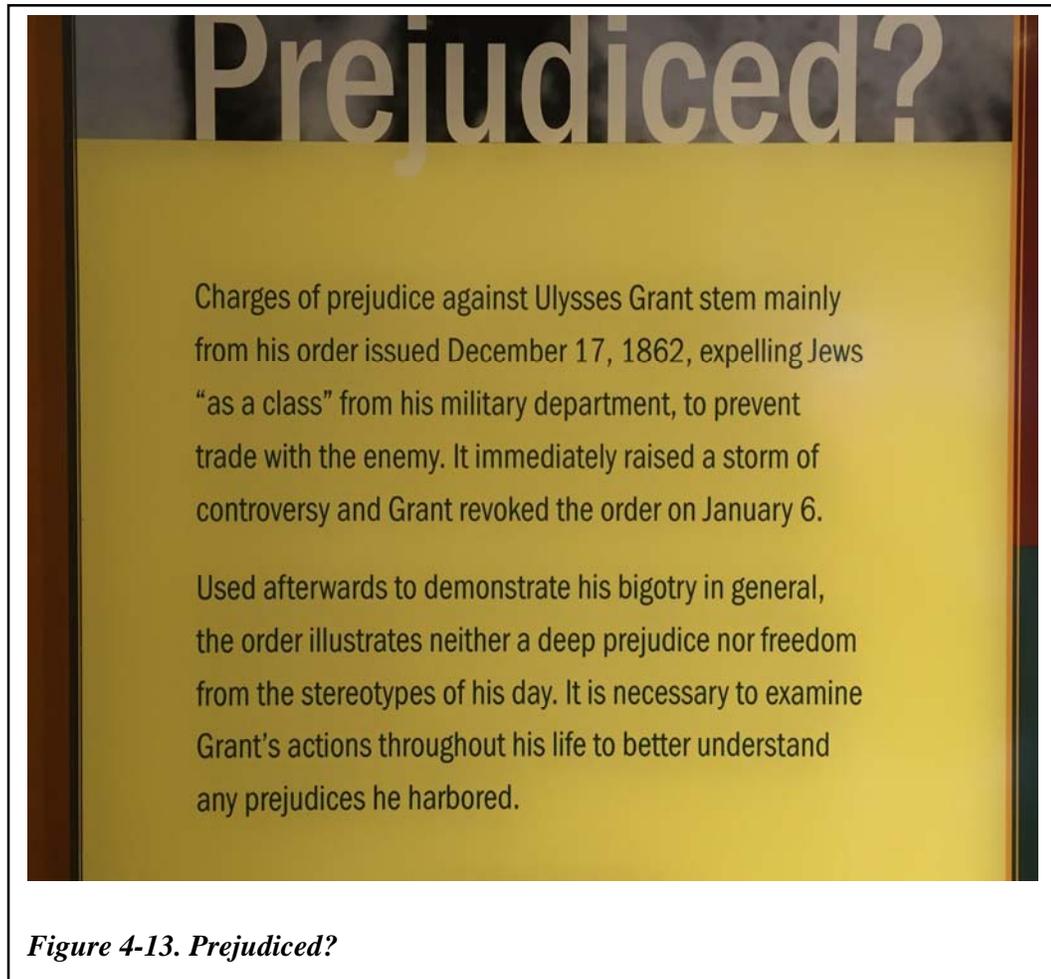


Figure 4-13. Prejudiced?

Figure 4-14. Follow the Money. The following text panel gives a financial reason for why Grant may have acted in this anti-Semitic manner. His father was involved with a Jewish firm in the cotton trade.

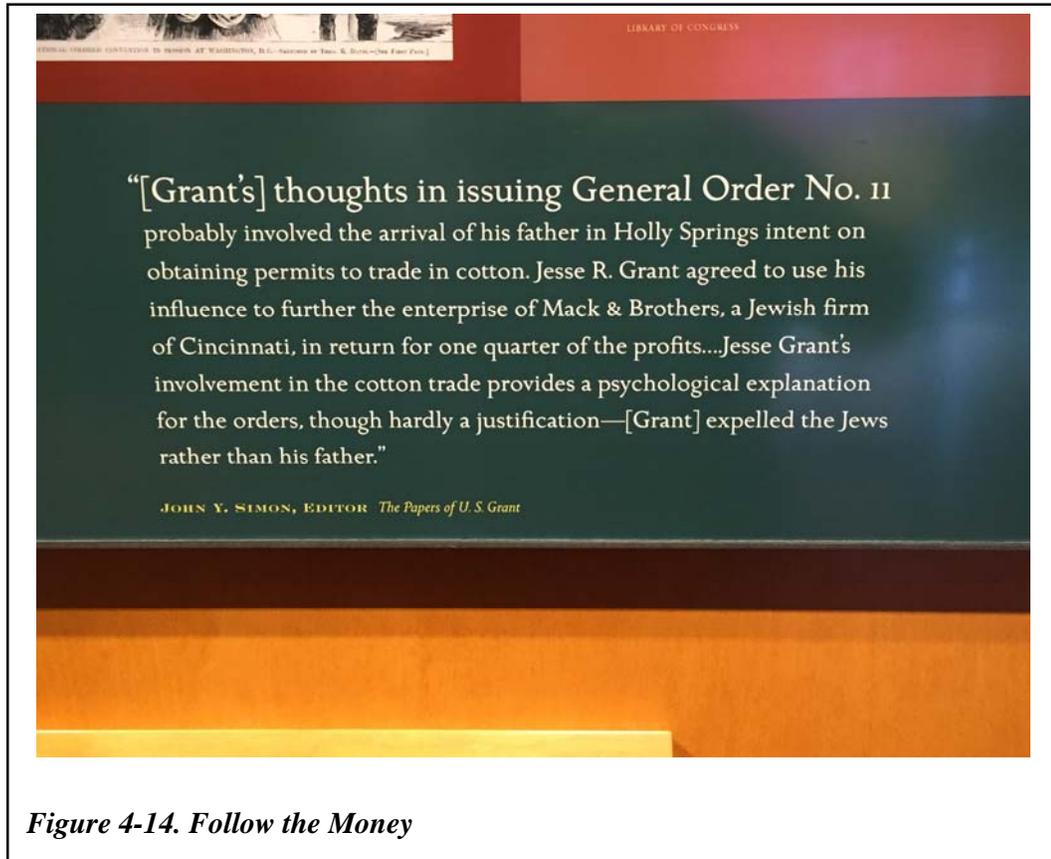


Figure 4-14. Follow the Money

Figure 4-15. "Oft Expressed Desire." This text panel seems to contradict the basis for the prejudicial actions described in the two that precede it, because it quotes Grant as publicly stating that:

My oft expressed desire is that all citizens, white or black, native or foreign born, may be left free, in all parts of our common country, to vote, speak and act in obedience to law, without intimidation or ostracism on account of his views, color or nativity.

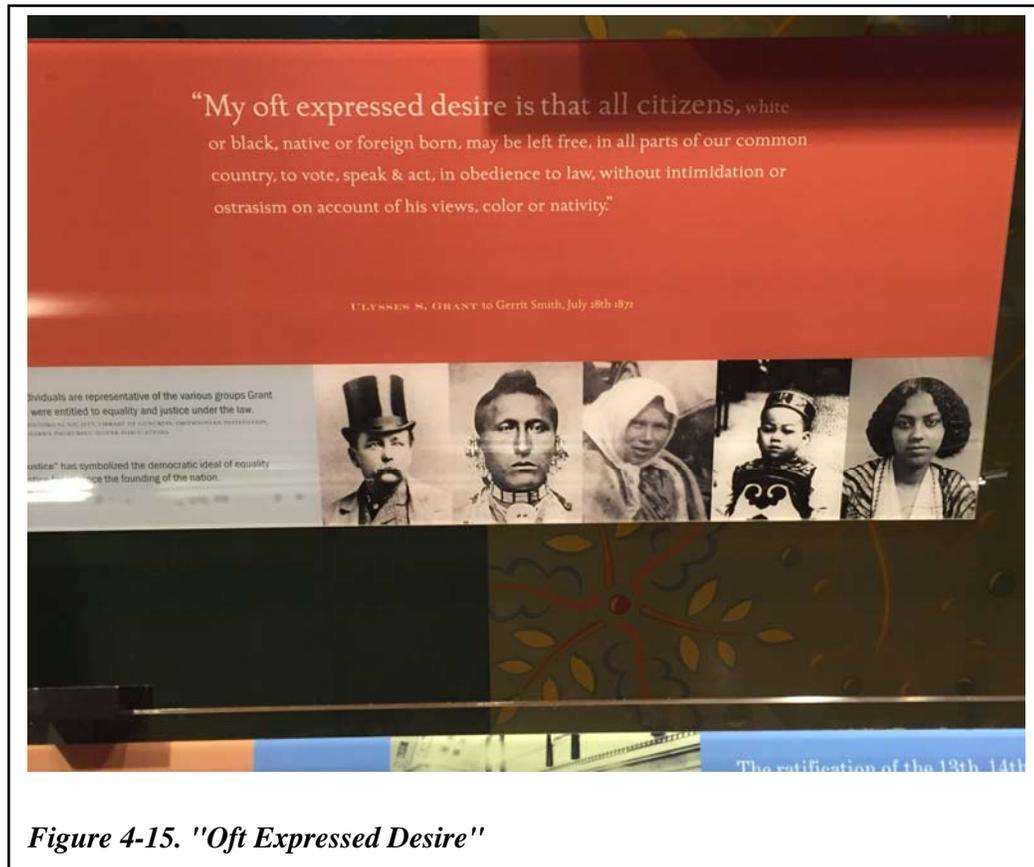


Figure 4-15. "Oft Expressed Desire"

It is one of the few exhibits that portrays people from several different cultural and ethnic heritages.

Figure 4-16. Know Nothing. This text panel informs us that Grant also had issues with Catholics and, for a time, joined the “Know Nothing,” anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant political party.

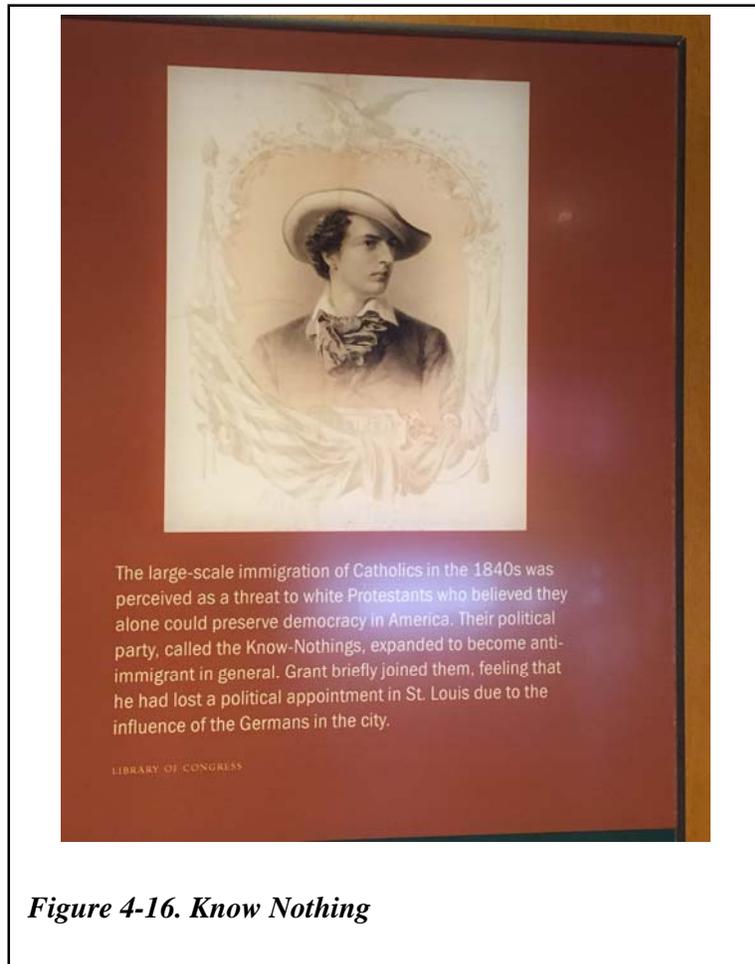


Figure 4-16. Know Nothing

Figure 4-17. Climbing the Ladder. This image with the ladder is a political cartoon about women’s rights and independence. It is in a display case along with a Ku Klux Klan mask, a Native American peace pipe and some money.



Figure 4-15. Climbing the Ladder



Figure 4-18. Juxtaposition

Figure 4-18. Juxtaposition. This exhibit does not provide any interpretive text, but it does juxtapose visual evidence of intercultural encounters in the United States during the time that Grant lived.

Figure 4-19. Soldiers. This item is a framed poster for sale in the museum's shop. It shows various Civil War military uniforms from both the Union and Confederate armies, along with both President Abraham Lincoln of the United States and President Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States of America. I find it notable that this museum, which has a stated priority to interpret diversity, would market an item like this one, which neglects to portray any non-white soldiers, even though there were black soldiers in both of the armies.



Figure 4-19. Soldiers

Predicting what the participants may observe and photograph at White Haven

The photographs I took, displayed above, indicate what I expected some of the participant team members to notice, photograph and submit as data. Because the site emphasizes the story of Julia Dent, I expected the participants to submit images that dealt with encounters between men and women. I also expected the participants to notice and submit images that included or discussed Native Americans. In addition, I thought the participants would notice and include images related to inter-faith encounters.

Eugene Field House & Toy Museum

Governance, location, description, history, funding and visitor statistics

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum is located at 634 South Broadway in the City of St. Louis.

Figure 4-20. Across Broadway.

This photograph was taken from the third-floor window of the museum. The sign on the lamp post celebrates the museum. The brick building across Broadway Avenue is Busch Stadium, where a major league baseball team, the St. Louis Cardinals, plays.

It is in an area known as South City near the Soulard Neighborhood. This area, which used to be predominantly white, is now mostly African American. It is far inside the I- 270 loop and about a mile south of Highway 40. Like White Haven, the Eugene Field House

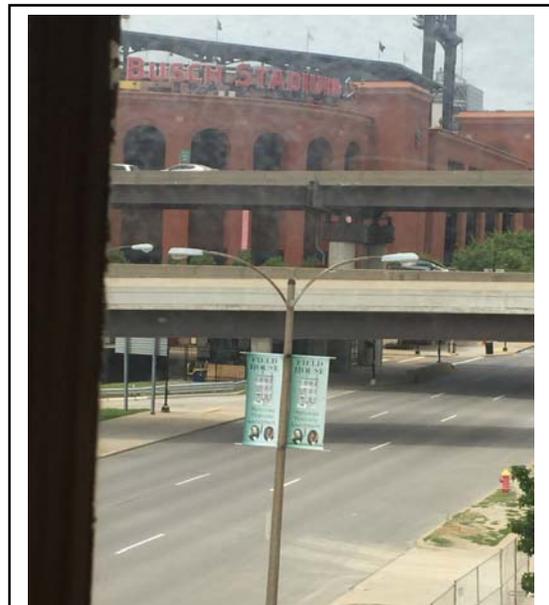


Figure 4-20. Across Broadway

& Toy Museum is a National Historic Landmark. Unlike White Haven, it is owned and operated by The Eugene Field House Foundation which is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt, non-profit organization.

The house is a freestanding, three-story Greek Revival brick building just blocks from the Mississippi River, the St. Louis Arch and the Old Courthouse. In 1765, the land was owned by one of the presumed founders of St. Louis, Pierre Laclede. He willed it to his mistress's son, Auguste Chouteau. Chouteau died in 1820. The house was built circa 1845 as one of a series of rental units known as Walsh's Row. In 1935, the house was slated for demolition. Because it served as the "early boyhood home of Eugene Field, the 'Children's Poet' and Roswell Field's son" (Finkelman and Dyer 2006), it was preserved intact.

Eugene Field wrote the classic children's poems, "*Winken, Blinken and Nod*" and the "*Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat*", along with many other well-known poems. Mark Twain, the iconic American author of the books *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, unveiled a plaque on the exterior of the Field House in 1902. It reads "*Here was born the poet, Eugene Field, 1850-1895.*"

The more important significance stated in the National Historic Landmark nomination form is:

The Field House is significant as the home of Roswell Field, attorney for the slave Dred Scott, whose case, Scott v. Sanford (1857) was the most controversial Supreme Court case of the nineteenth century, and remains one of the most significant cases in the history of the United States Supreme Court (Ibid. p.4).

Scott, An African American man who, along with his wife, Harriet, appealed to the Supreme Court after his owner, Mrs. Irene Emerson (née Sanford) transferred the human "property" to her brother, John F. A. Sanford. Because Dred and Harriet Scott had lived in Illinois, where slavery was illegal and thus he had been considered "free," upon being relocated to Missouri he was restored to an enslaved condition. Scott's statement to the Supreme Court is quoted in the National Historic Landmark nomination form:

I thought it hard that white men should draw a line of their own on the face of the earth, on one side of which a black man was to become no man at all, and never say a word to the black man about it until they had got him on that side of the line. So I appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States (Ibid. p. 18).

Scott's suit was denied on the basis that nobody with "African ancestry" was eligible for citizenship, and thus he had no right to appeal to the Supreme Court. Roswell Field represented the Scotts in their appeal to the Supreme Court, and his law office, at the time of this case, was on the second floor of the Eugene Field House. The association of this house with the Dred Scott Case qualified the building for its National Historic Landmark designation under the category: "IV. Shaping the Political Landscape; 4. Political ideas, cultures and theories". (Ibid p.9).

After the house escaped the 1935 threat of demolition, it was opened as a museum, the Eugene Field House. This was owned and operated from 1936 until 1968 by the St. Louis Board of Education. The Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. took over the maintenance of the house in 1968. In 1981, the house was turned over to the Eugene Field House Foundation. After making a strategic decision to include the interpretation of Roswell Field and the Dred Scott Case, the Foundation acquired more land and made plans for renovations to facilitate the new interpretive priorities. National Historic Landmark designation was applied for on September 5, 2006, and awarded on March 29, 2007. The new exhibit space opened to the public in 2016 but was not considered in this project. I only note here that it had been planned and that a capital fundraising campaign was underway in July 2015, when the participant team visited.

The Eugene Field House Foundation adopted the following mission statement:

The Eugene Field House Foundation preserves and maintains the oldest private residential historic house and property in downtown St. Louis (Guidestar 2014).

It is a 501(c)3 non-profit, tax-exempt organization, EIN #43-1229351, so it is eligible to receive philanthropic grants. It depends on a combination of revenue streams including grants, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, admissions and sales. The State of Missouri supports museums by not charging state sales tax on items in their shops that can be directly related to their missions and exhibits.

For Fiscal Year 2013, the Foundation reported gross revenues of \$347,450.00 on its IRS 990 tax report. After adjusting for expenses, the total revenue for 2013 was \$232,141. This was an increase of 60 per cent over the total adjusted revenue reported for 2012 (or \$141,590). The Foundation reported total assets worth \$1,492,747 for Fiscal Year 2013 (Ibid.).

Figure 4-21. Table: Eugene Field House Foundation Revenues 2012 and 2013.

	2012	2013
Grants and Contributions	\$58,483	\$171,297
Program Revenue	\$7,876	\$5,360
Investment Income	\$11,447	\$12,314

Source: www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2014/431/229/2014-431229351-0ac37bb7-9.pdf

While contributions and grants were significantly higher in 2013 over 2012, the program revenue fell during the same period by 32 per cent. At the current admission rate of \$5/adult, the program revenue indicates that 1,575 visitors paid admission in 2012, and 1,072 visitors paid admission in 2013. Of course, this does not include children and may not be a direct correlation. No public document includes visitor statistics for the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum.

How the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum responded to Ferguson

Figure 4-22. Arch from the Eugene Field House.

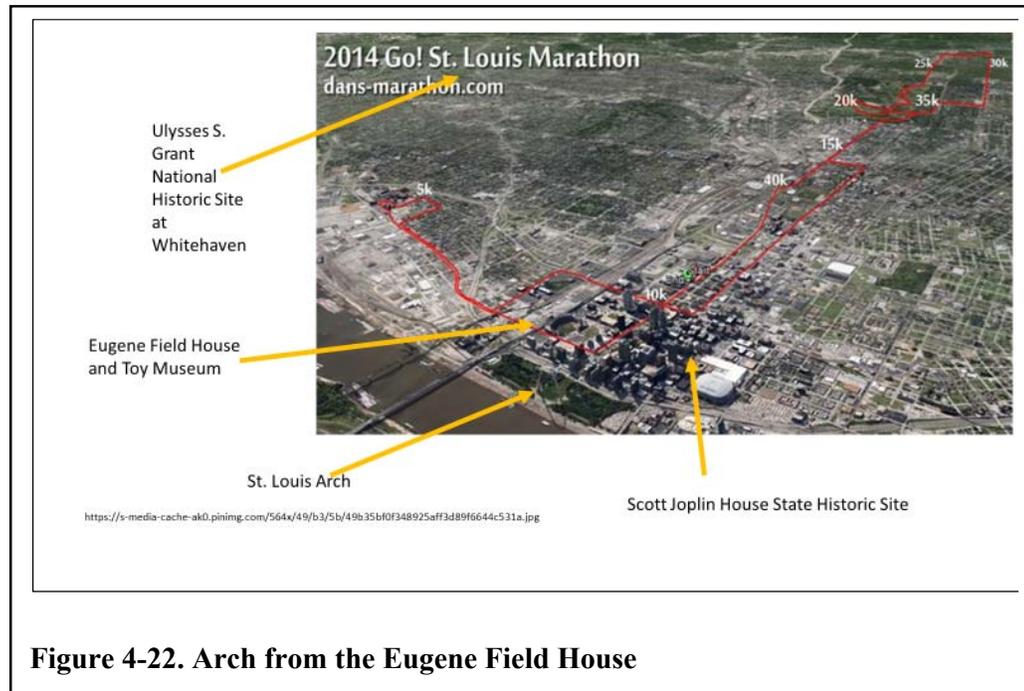


Figure 4-22. Arch from the Eugene Field House

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum boasts of its connection to the history of racial relations in St. Louis through the work of attorney Roswell Field as the lawyer in Dred and Harriet Scott's unsuccessful suit for freedom. On November 1, 2014, this house museum was the first of some forty stops on the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation's 5th Annual Dred Scott Footprints Tour. (Eugene Field House 2014). However, there is no mention of any curatorial, collections effort, exhibition, program or other response from this museum to the events in Ferguson. Instead, its fall edition of *Field Notes* promoted its Christmas events, an exhibit of Liberty of London Dolls, the receipt of a restoration grant and new items for sale in its gift shop, in addition to the news about the Dred Scott Footprints Tour.

What it interprets by what interpretive strategy

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum fits the second of Charlotte Smith's house museum category, "*the collector's house*" (Young 2002). Toys lay

scattered around every room. Visitors ring the doorbell and a volunteer, intern or board member allows them inside. No guided tour happens. Instead, the docent shadows visitors to answer any of their questions about the site. There are no stanchions or text panels, except in Roswell Field's law office, where a wooden banister serves to support a series of text panels about the Dred Scott case. The museum shop is on the third floor next to a space that is organized less like a room in a home and more like a typical museum exhibit.

What the site says and visually portrays about itself

The Website

On the homepage of the website (Eugene Field House 2015), there is an image—a collage that contains books; toys; photographs of Dred Scott, his wife, Harriet, and Eugene Field; as well as a picture of the house. The museum hours are announced to be Wednesday through Saturday 10-4 and Sunday noon to four o'clock. The page informs that the museum is open February through December and that adult admission costs \$5. The homepage has a section devoted to "upcoming events," and, when accessed on May 25, 2015, this section announced a future event that had occurred on April 11. The homepage also gives a brief history of the museum, as well as a hyperlink to the capital campaign information

A tab takes the online visitor to "Historical Information." This paragraph about the Scotts is here:

In 1853 Roswell served as the attorney of the slaves Dred and Harriet Scott and their daughters, Eliza and Lizzy, when they brought action in federal court for their freedom. The Scott's were denied freedom on the grounds that African-Americans were not citizens and therefore could not sue in federal court. The refusal of the US Supreme Court to treat Dred and Harriet as citizens is believed by many to be a factor that precipitated the Civil War (Ibid.).

Another tab, "The Dred Scott Case." leads to a page with photographs of Dred and Harriet Scott and to this statement:

...In Scott v. Stanford, one of the most controversial cases of the nineteenth century, Supreme Court Justice Roger B. Taney declared that no slave could be a US citizen and that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (that abolished slavery in most territories) was unconstitutional... (Ibid.).

The "Exhibits" tab leads to a page with two sections: past exhibits and museum collections. The past exhibits included three toy exhibits, and the collections are listed as the following:

- The Field Collection
- The Historic House Collection
- The Toy Collection
- The Book Collection (Ibid.)

An Events tab listed past events, as well as an invitation to attend a performance where Hal Holbrook would impersonate Mark Twain scheduled for May 25, 2015, the day I accessed the website.

The Volunteers tab led to a recruiting page for docents and interns. It had five pictures:

1. The profile of a young white woman next to the museum's sign
2. A young white woman "face-painting" on a white boy's hand
3. A young white man with a cheerleader's pompom in his raised right hand
4. A white middle-aged man in a tuxedo
5. A young white woman talking to a four- or five-year-old white girl along with another white woman who could be the child's mother

The Museum Gift Shop tab leads to an assortment of toys, books, sculpture and jewelry. The Contact tab has directions to the museum and a Google map among other standard pieces of information.

The Campaign Brochure

A capital campaign is underway with a campaign brochure also available online on the site's website at www.eugenefieldhouse.org/resources/Page-Artwork/Campaign-Brochure.pdf. The campaign is called "*The Campaign for the Roswell and Eugene Field House Museum: Where Inspiration Has a Home.*" Note that the brochure adds Roswell Field's name to the name of the museum. The brochure has his photograph with the caption, "*The pivotal attorney who brought into federal court the freedom suit of Dred and Harriet Scott*" (Eugene Field House Campaign Brochure). A map of the immediate downtown area cross-promotes the St. Louis Gateway Arch, the Old Courthouse, and Busch Stadium. The map has this caption: "*Located within a prime position within the historic triangle*" (Ibid.). Another photograph is of Eugene Field with his books, and there are three photographs of the house itself—one from the early 1900s, one from the 1940s and one from 2014.

The brochure includes a quote from Stephanie Meeks: "*Reinventing House Museums for the 21st Century*" (Ibid.). As one would expect, the brochure includes a case for improvements, highlights for the expansion, and a commitment to the continuity of the architecture in the new construction planned. The brochure promises that:

The Field House Museum will convert a sleepy house museum into a destination that will complement and enrich the downtown St. Louis experience (Ibid.).

Planned improvements include more exhibition space, a hands-on component, the addition of interpretive exhibits about Black history and Civil Rights, space for traveling exhibits, and conference rooms.

Predicted changes to the museum's interpretive strategy include making connections between period items and the exhibits, rotating the toy and arts exhibits, including exhibits about the history and technology of toys, and the addition of apps. In addition, the campaign brochure describes an expanded "A Room Divided" exhibit this way:

The exhibit compares and contrasts the life of free and enslaved people in a dramatic example that gives a glimpse into the past differences in daily lives of nineteenth century children, while providing hints into today's continued human rights struggle and inequities at a child's level (Ibid.).

Facebook Page

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum page on Facebook uses the same cover photo collage that is on the homepage of the museum's website. A total of twenty-four pictures that portray a total of sixty-two individuals had been posted by the museum to its Facebook Page as of May 25, 2015. Of these, thirty show white women, two show black women, seven show white children, twenty-one show white men, and two show black men. The page had two comments. On March 29, 2015, Stephanie Pericich gave the museum a five-star rating and stated: "*Finally got around to visiting this house and museum and it is a gem*" (Eugene Field House-Facebook 2015). On February 18, 2015, Laura Yount gave the museum only one star, stating:

Freezing cold inside. Minimal things to see. Tour guide was nice but not very professional. Plus no restroom for paying guests (Ibid.).

Online Newsletters

The museum posted the Fall 2014, Volume 20, No. 3, edition of *Field Notes* which I accessed on November 8, 2015. This newsletter is comprised of ten items.

1. "The St. Louis Holiday Historic House Tour" - an invitation and announcement that the museum would be one of the stops on the house tour.
2. "The Eugene Field House Annual Members Party" - an invitation and announcement
3. An announcement that the Liberty of London dolls are back
4. Marketing information for St. Louis Skyline cards
5. Information about the way the house would be decorated for the holidays
6. An announcement that one of the 250 large painted birthday cakes to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the City of St. Louis would be installed outside the museum
7. An announcement that the museum had received a Restoration Grant to *"restore an original Eugene Field painting"*
8. *"Forsyth Poetry"* written by third-graders
9. An announcement that the museum: *"has once again partnered with the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation for its fifth annual Dred Scott Footprints Tour. The tour, which took place on Sunday, November 1, 2014, visited almost forty locations and memorials connected to Dred Scott and his case for freedom. See www.thedredscottfoundation.org."*
10. An announcement that the St. Louis Preservation Board had approved the addition to the Eugene Field House. (Eugene Field House 2014).

Author's photographs at Eugene Field House & Toy Museum

Figure 4-23. Welcome Center.

Members of the participant team linger in the front hall, where admission is paid. There is a doll house on top of a piece of furniture near the foot of the stairs, and the front door is in the background.



Figure 4-23. Welcome Center

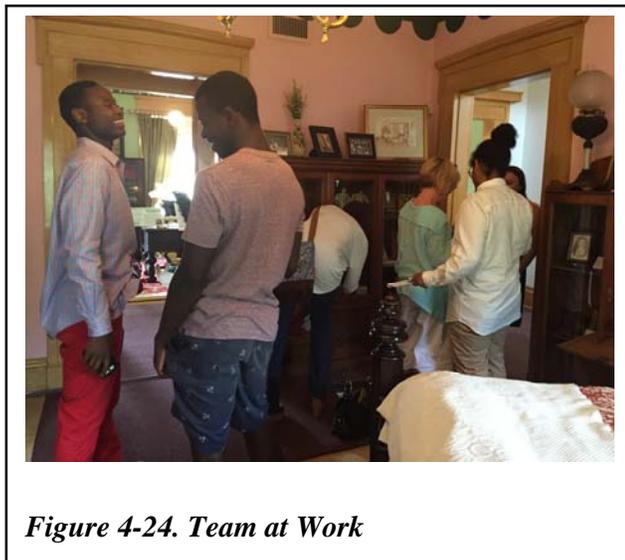


Figure 4-24. Team at Work

Figure 4-24. Team at Work.

Across the hall, on the first floor, are two adjoining rooms filled with period furniture and many toys. The participant team spread out to find pictures that would satisfy the prompt to photograph anything understood to be evidence of a past inter-cultural encounter.

Figure 4-25. Dutch Marquetry Cabinet. One of the participants was interested in considering items of European origin to be an example of inter-culturality, naming this Dutch marquetry cabinet in the front room as evidence of an inter-cultural encounter. It contains small toys, including the oldest toy in the collection—a snake in a box that has metal fangs that would cut a person’s finger if it happened to be in the way.



Figure 4-25. Dutch Marquetry Cabinet

Figure 4-26. Snake

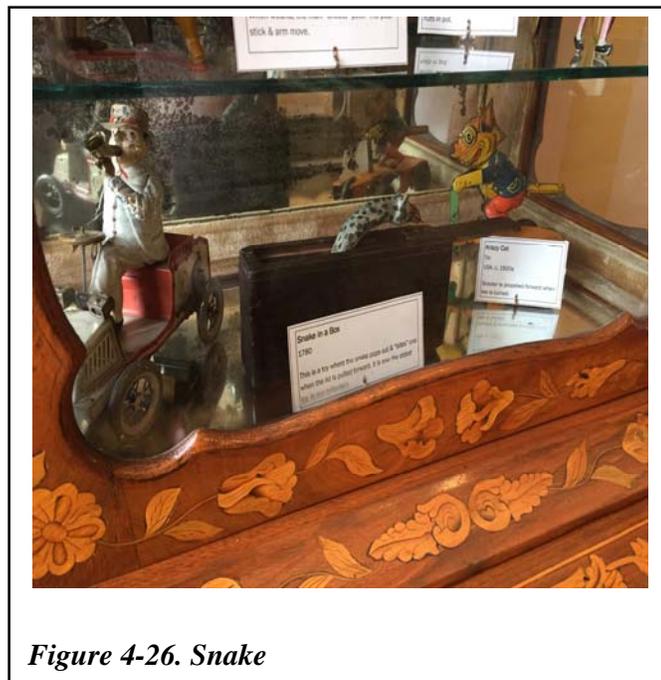


Figure 4-26. Snake

Figure 4-27. Toys, Toys and More Toys.

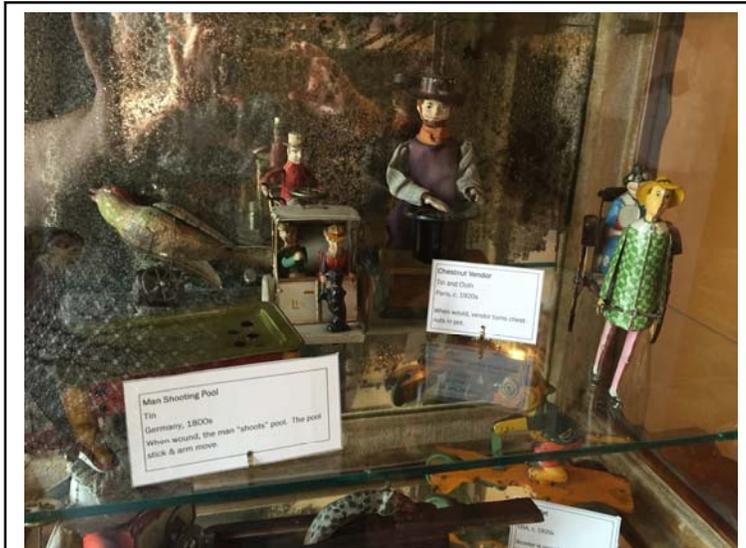


Figure 4-27. Toys, Toys and More Toys

Figure 4-28. Wooden Puppet. In the back room are the dolls. The carved wooden puppet shown here is an oversized caricature of an African American child, such as a ventriloquist would use. Like the Native American dolls on the shelf above it (Figure 4-29), this doll was owned by Eugene Fields.

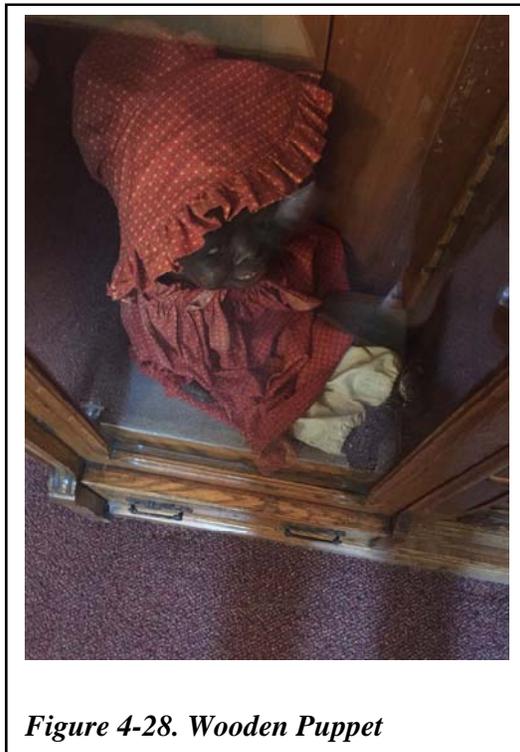


Figure 4-28. Wooden Puppet

Figure 4-29 - Native American Doll Family.



Figure 4-29. Native American Doll Family

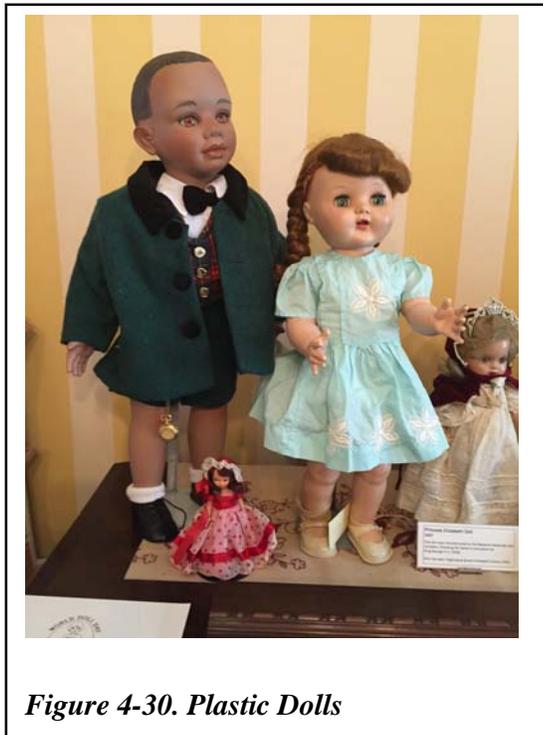


Figure 4-30. Plastic Dolls

Figure 4-30. Plastic Dolls. The pair of plastic dolls—an African American boy and white girl—are obviously more modern and, according to the intern who served as our guide, were part of a traveling exhibit that was technically over but still on exhibit.

Figure 4-31. Hers (below left). Figure 4-32. His (below right). There are two rooms on the second floor, with a hall on the north side. One room juxtaposes two dressers—one with women’s grooming supplies and tools, and the other with men’s.

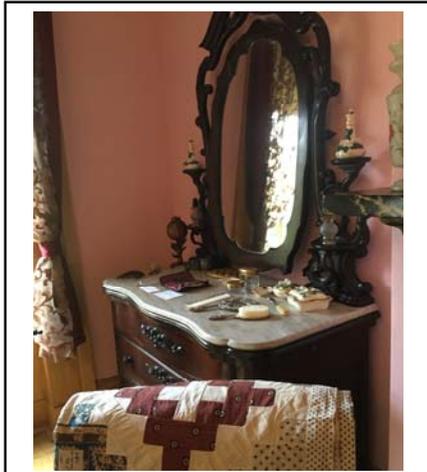


Figure 4-31. Hers



Figure 4-32. His

The other room on the second floor is Roswell Field’s law office. This and one of the rooms on the third floor are devoted to the interpretation of racial issues and diversity.

Figure 4-33. Interference? As you can see, this room is the only room in the house that has any kind of barrier to keep a visitor from fully exploring the artifacts. The banister serves as a mount for the signage that tells the history of the Dred and Harriet Scott suit for freedom and Roswell Field’s role in it. Behind the banister is the lawyer’s desk. Toys are on display throughout the room, interfering, in my opinion with the serious theme discussed in the series of text panels.



Figure 4-33. Interference?

Figure 4-34. Upstairs-Downstairs. This two room upstairs-downstairs doll house is located outside the banister to the right of the lawyer's desk.



Figure 4-34. Upstairs-Downstairs

Figure 4-35. Upstairs. Upstairs, the white doll sits in a lovely parlor.



Figure 4-35. Upstairs

Figure 4-36. Downstairs.

Downstairs, the black doll takes a break in the kitchen and laundry area.

This doll house became a metaphor for the participant team to discuss the interpretation of diversity at each of the museums, as will become clear later.



Figure 4-37. What's This! This picture shows two members of the participant team. They were drawn to the doll house and spent quite a few minutes looking at and photographing it.

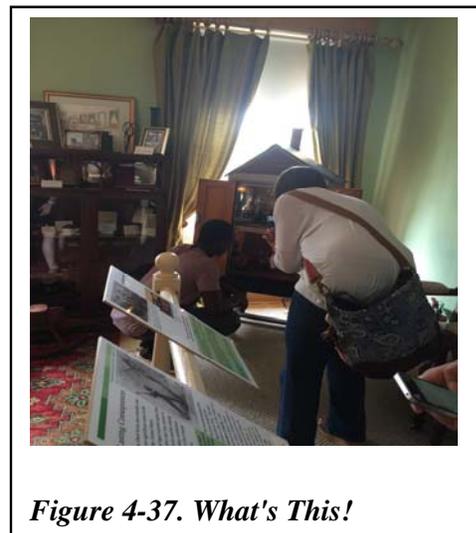


Figure 4-38. Museum Shopping. The third floor also has two rooms, with a long hall on the north side of the building. One room serves as the museum gift shop. A third room is a continuation of the shop where various lotions were for sale on the day we visited.



Figure 4-38. Museum Shopping



Figure 4-39. Room Divided

Figure 4-39. Room Divided. The "Room Divided" juxtaposes information about, and artifacts depicting, the black experience contrasted with the white experience in St. Louis in the mid-nineteenth century. This exhibit is planned to be expanded, according to the capital campaign brochure. The artifacts and text panels are in an eclectic arrangement.

Figure 4-40. Photo-voice at Work. This picture shows one of the team members photographing a text panel.

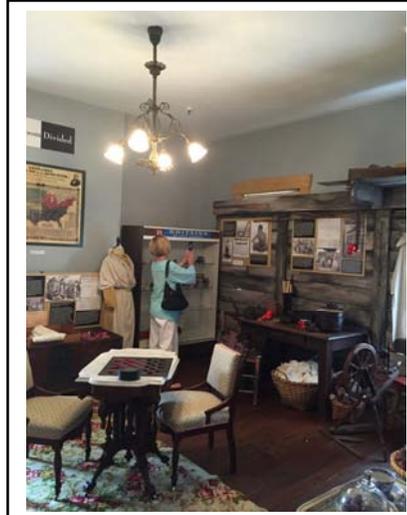


Figure 4-40. Photo-voice at Work



Figure 4-41. Nest for a Doll Baby

Figure 4-41. Nest for a Doll Baby. A small basket with a black doll is under a table almost totally hidden from view.

Summary

The Eugene Field House & Toy Museum is a combination of a “*great man’s shrine*” and a “*collector’s house*” (Young 2002). The interpretation is being shifted towards a focus on Roswell Field and his role in the Dred Scott case, but the main message of the house continues to be toys. The house is mainly set up as a period room, but it includes two rooms that are more thematic and narrated via interpretive signage. There does not seem to be a logic to the display and, without a guide (the intern hung around in case we had any questions), it is very interesting to see what the participants chose to submit about this museum.

Scott Joplin House State Historic Site

Governance, location, description, history, funding and visitor statistics

The Scott Joplin House State Historic House is located in the City of St. Louis at 2658 Delmar Blvd., St. Louis MO 63103. This is about two miles north and a few blocks west of the Eugene Field House. It is also far inside the I-270 loop and about a mile north of Highway 40, in what has always been a predominantly African American area of the City of St. Louis. It is owned and operated as a historic house museum by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Like the other two sites under consideration for this project, the Scott Joplin House has been designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark, not because of its fairly generic Italianate brick architecture but because of its association from 1900 to 1903 as the home of the African American ragtime musician Scott Joplin. The designation was made on December 8, 1976, with this statement of significance:

From 1900 to 1903, this was the residence of Scott Joplin. (1868-1917), one of America’s significant composers. His work with the musical genre later known as Ragtime provided important

foundations for modern American music, combining elements of Midwestern folk and Afro-American melodic rhythmic traditions within the structural contexts of Western European musical forms (NPS 1976).

Since 1970, in order for a building to pursue the NHL designation it must first be listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. That nomination for this site was prepared June 30, 1976, by Lynne Gomez-Graves. She described the building as:

a masonry load-bearing structure situated on a lot approximately 100' x 120', constructed shortly after the Civil War (1865-1870), appearing in Compton and Dry's Pictorial St. Louis (1874) (Gomez-Graves 1976).

The building was originally a four-family flat with a basement. Each apartment had three rooms. In the 1890s, a two-story addition was built on the west side of the building (Ibid.).

Scott Joplin was born on November 24, 1868, in Texarkana, Texas. His father, Giles Joplin, was formerly enslaved. He was from North Carolina and his mother, Florence Givens Joplin was a freewoman of color from Kentucky. According to the National Registry Nomination, Scott:

Joplin worked basically in brothels, saloons, bawdy-houses and the red-light districts of most cities and towns (Ibid.),

including St. Louis, Hannibal, Columbia, Jefferson City and Sedalia in Missouri; East St. Louis and Springfield in Illinois; Cincinnati in Ohio; and Louisville, Kentucky (Ibid.). Joplin performed and received significant attention at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. He married Belle Hayden in 1899. Their infant daughter died in 1900 after the couple moved to St. Louis, where they divorced by 1904. That is when Joplin married Freddie Alexander, who died the same year on September 10. In 1907 Joplin moved to New York City, where he died of syphilis in 1916, according to the information provided by the docent when the

participant team members visited the site. The petition for the house to be listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, as well as to receive NHL designation, was for recognition of its significance for both music and African American history (Ibid.).

The State of Missouri acquired the 3.9-acre property in 1983 when it became the “*first state historic site in Missouri dedicated to the African American heritage*” (Wikipedia 2016).

Funding

The DNR funds its parks and historic sites through a percentage of the Missouri State sales tax. Many of the sites also involve an outside Friends organization, such as the Friends of Scott Joplin. This is an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. It has probably been assigned “private foundation” status, which means that its fund-raising strategies cannot typically include grants and that its mission limits its giving to this site only. Such Friends organizations often wield significant “power of the purse” to influence the events and museum activities and acquisitions that it funds.

How the Scott Joplin House responded to Ferguson

The Scott Joplin House State Historic Site was one of the 14 venues that hosted the *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Artists Respond* exhibit (Wheaton 2014). Local artist Howard Barry had a total of nineteen Ferguson-related pieces of art in that exhibit, including a poster titled “*Policing the Community - Ferguson Artist Response.*”

Figure 4-44. The Arch from Scott Joplin House.

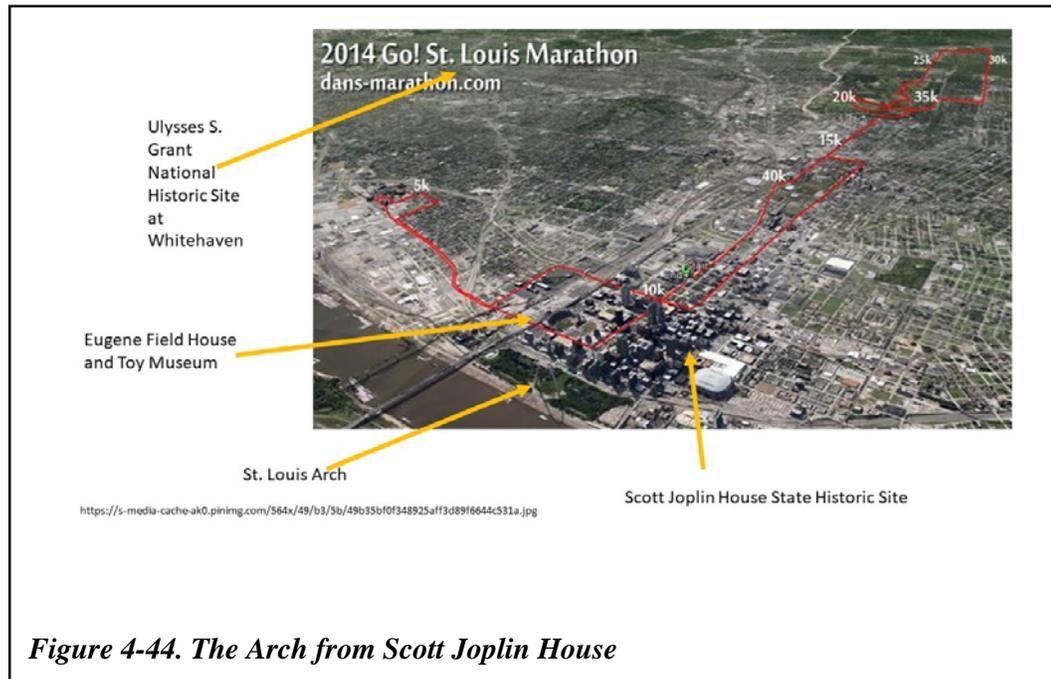


Figure 4-44. The Arch from Scott Joplin House

What it interprets by what interpretive strategy

Even though the Scott Joplin House is dedicated to the role that Scott Joplin played in the musical history of the United States, the inventor of ragtime music lived an ordinary life for an entertainer. The house does not pretend to be a shrine to a great man. Charlotte Smith would likely consider this site to be a “social history house...representing the lives of ordinary and sometimes anonymous people” (Young 2002). It is unique in that it is a site that interprets the African American experience of a prominent entertainer who was bound by the Jim Crow laws enforcing racial segregation in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.

After its acquisition by the DNR, a steering committee of residents from the neighborhood worked to help develop the site’s interpretive goals and strategies. According to Andrew Hurley, University of Missouri-St. Louis professor of urban planning, this partnership was expected to use the site itself as a tool for community revitalization and rehabilitation. The Scott Joplin House:

seemed an unlikely catalyst for urban revitalization... Widely recognized as one of the neighborhood's few cultural assets, it was nonetheless only weakly integrated into the life of the surrounding community (Hurley 2010).

The steering committee suggested that the DNR reserve:

the attic for an exhibit on local black artists and performers [and transform] the entire block into an 'inner city cultural center' (Ibid.),

but these ideas were not adopted. Instead, the interpretive focus became the musical heritage of ragtime, and Joplin's role as its most famous composer. This focus, according to Hurley,

fostered a clientele that was predominantly white and suburban. Few of the African American residents who lived and worked on the surrounding streets visited the museum or attended its music festival (Ibid.).

It was not until the DNR created a replica of the Rosebud Cafe and utilized it as a rental venue that the local community became involved with the museum.

About 90% of Rosebud's business came from African Americans who lived nearby (Ibid.).

The original cafe was located on Market Street and was owned by Tom Turpin, who was the first African American artist to publish a piece of ragtime music. (Missouri State Parks 2014).

Community involvement in the site was continued when some urban archaeology was done there in order to:

narrate the evolution of an African American neighborhood and tell a story that featured the area's current inhabitants along with their predecessors (Hurley 2010).

The group wanted to use the museum as a point of orientation for the neighborhood and to create:

a redevelopment agenda around the area's rich tradition of entertainment [that began] during the period after Joplin's residence [when it] emerged as a ...premier African American entertainment district, and, by extension, a crucible of political activism (Ibid.).

As a result of this goal, the site became the “*de facto headquarters*” for the Black Artist's Guild (Ibid.). This pointed the way towards achieving the results the original steering committee had anticipated. It also prepositioned the site to be significant in the wake of Ferguson. Hurley claims that:

By integrating its interpretive mission with the needs of its immediate neighbors, the Scott Joplin House offered a new paradigm for cultural heritage sites in urban America (Ibid.).

Indeed, this paradigm has been touted by Frank Vagnone as an innovative strategy for Museum Anarchy (Vagnone & Ryan 2016 p.41).

The site's interpretive strategies are mixed. Visitors enter and leave the site through a small room that includes items for sale and promotional literature about the African American community in St. Louis' resources and events. There is an orientation movie to begin the visitor's experience, followed by a guided tour of the house that does not include interpretive signage, except in a more traditional museum space where an exhibit of ragtime and Scott Joplin's musical ephemera is on display. At the end of the tour, visitors sit to hear original player piano rolls of music performed by Scott Joplin via a player piano.

What the site says and visually portrays about itself

The site-published information includes a DNR-sponsored website, a website for the Friends of Scott Joplin organization and a Facebook Page.

The Official DNR Website:

Each of the DNR parks and historic sites has a dedicated web-page that follows the same template. The main page for the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site issues a musical welcome from a player piano. Images show the gas lights and furnishings dating from 1902. It introduces:

The Rosebud Cafe... A reconstructed structure that recreates a turn-of-the-century bar and gaming club [that] is available for rent [and it offers a] tour of the home of the King of Ragtime (Missouri State Parks 2014).

An “Activities” tab explains that adults are charged \$6 to tour the site and that reservations one week in advance are required for visits by groups of fifteen or more people.

The “General Information” tab includes a photograph of the “King of Ragtime,” along with a bio and information about Joplin’s music. There is a photograph of a white woman seated beneath Joplin’s portrait. The following statement is on this page:

In 1976, Joplin’s St. Louis home was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places, and in 1984, the owner, Jeff-Vander-Lou Inc., donated the property to the Department of Natural Resource’s Division of State Parks. The house is wholly dedicated to the preservation of African American contributions to Missouri’s cultural history (Ibid.).

Images on the page included pictures of St. Louis and the immediate neighborhood around the house, the player piano, gaslights and some “second-hand furnishings” (Ibid.). The page gave recognition to the “*T. Bahnsen Piano*

Man Co., with thanks to Prof. Bill Edwards and Dr. Dave Majchrzak" (Ibid.) and included a link to the Friends of Scott Joplin. A photo gallery link connects to Flickr. There is information about the Rosebud café, along with rental information and pricing for its use.

Finally, there is a link to YouTube via the "Historic Site Video" tab. The video, "Patrons of the Museum Get to Play the Player Piano," is 1.11 minutes long and is narrated by an African American woman (Ibid.).

The Friends of Scott Joplin Website

The link to the Friends of Scott Joplin Website leads to a basic website for the private organization (Friends of Scott Joplin 2014). The home page identifies the mission as being "*dedicated to the preservation of ragtime in St. Louis*" by hosting concerts as well as a monthly "*Ragtime Rendevous*" at 2 P.M. on the first Sunday of the month. The home page also includes a mailing address. A link opens to reveal the name of the four officers and the "*At Large Board Members*." An Audio-Visual section leads to photographs of social events sponsored by the Friends. In all, these photographs portray a total of sixty-four individuals. Sixty of them are white. The one African American man portrayed appeared in three of the photographs, and one African American woman appeared in one photograph. In addition, a link connects to the Friends' Facebook page. When I accessed it on October 24, 2014, this page had a total of thirteen Likes, and the latest post had been made on March 10, 2009 (Ibid.).

The Facebook Page

This museum's Facebook page appears to be the most dynamic and human of the online material published by the museum's owners or its Friends organization (Facebook 2014). According to the About section, the site joined Facebook on July 25, 2011. As of October 24, 2014, the page had received 415 Likes, and it stated that a total of 692 had "*been here*." The page's activity included photographs of visitors, staff members and volunteers, many of whom are African American. As of July 22, 2016, the last post to the site's Facebook page had been made February 5, 2015. It included thirty photographs, most of

which showed the site decorated for Christmas. It is notable, however, that a few of these photographs show an African American woman interacting with a group of visitors that include people from different ages and races.

Author's (with two exceptions) photographs at the Scott Joplin House

Figure 4-45. Scott Joplin House.



Figure 4-45. Scott Joplin House. Photograph by Member E

Figure 4-46. Orientation. Note that there are not as many of my photographs from this site because one of the team members used my smart phone here after her battery ran out. After paying for admission, our team was invited to join a couple who were watching the end of the orientation video. We were told that we could watch it from the beginning at the end of our tour, which we elected not to do.

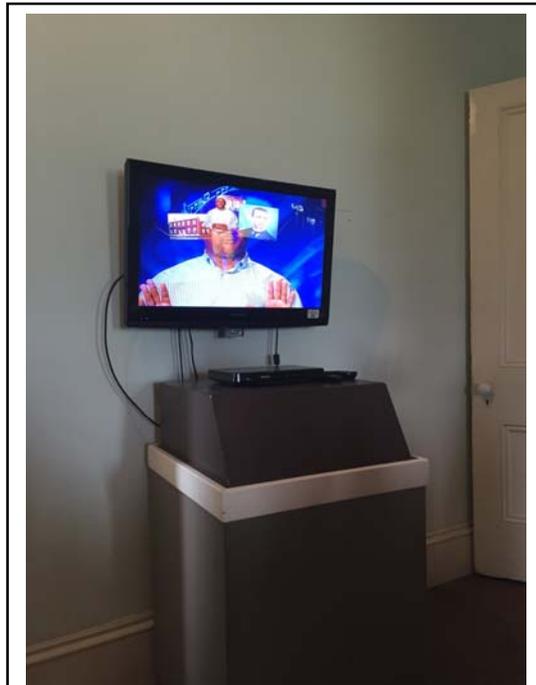


Figure 4-46. Orientation



Figure 4-47. Back to History

Figure 4-47. Back to History. Behind the seated team members is a room devoted to the history of Ragtime and the collected ephemera of Scott Joplin's musical career, such as sheet music and ticket stubs. Overall, as you will see from the photographs, this site is not well lit.

Figure 4-48. Claustrophobic Hallway. After waiting for the guide in a claustrophobic hallway, we were instructed to go up a very narrow, dark set of stairs to get to the living quarters.

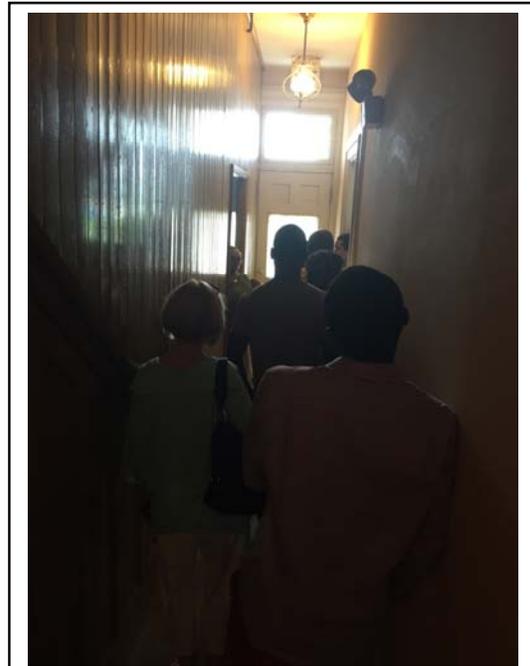


Figure 4-48. Claustrophobic Hallway



Figure 4-49. Narrow, Dark Stairs

Figure 4-49. Narrow, Dark Stairs

Figure 4-50. Composer's Desk. At the top of the stairs a small office space contains this desk, which the guide explained was used by Joplin to compose his "rags." She pointed out that the view of Delmar Avenue, Figure 4-51, would have been filled with a cacophony of street sounds that may have inspired the artist.

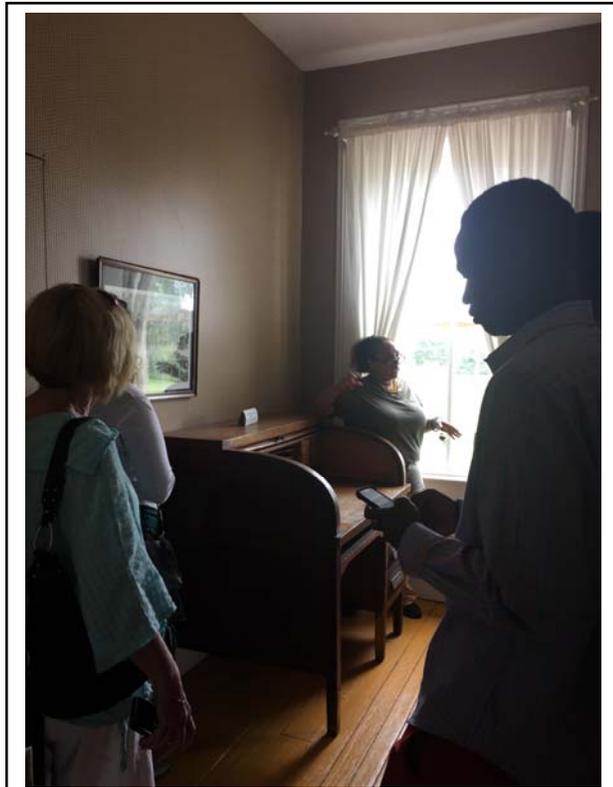


Figure 4-50. Composer's Desk

Figure 4-51. South Side. The hallway is on the south side of the house, with doors opening into each of the three upstairs rooms. First, we walked through a living room from which I have no photographs. One item I noticed in that room was a prayer written in German. A simple clock stood on the wooden mantle, and comfortable but well used furniture was arranged to make a sitting room.



Figure 4-51. South Side



Figure 4-52. "Crazy Quilt"

Figure 4-52. "Crazy Quilt"¹. This room connects to a bedroom with a simple, brass single bed covered with a "crazy quilt," which is a style of quilting that combines irregular patches of fabric and ornate embroidery over the seams.

¹ A Crazy Quilt is a term used for non-geometric American quilts made with mixed fabrics and ornamental embroidery on top of the seams between patches

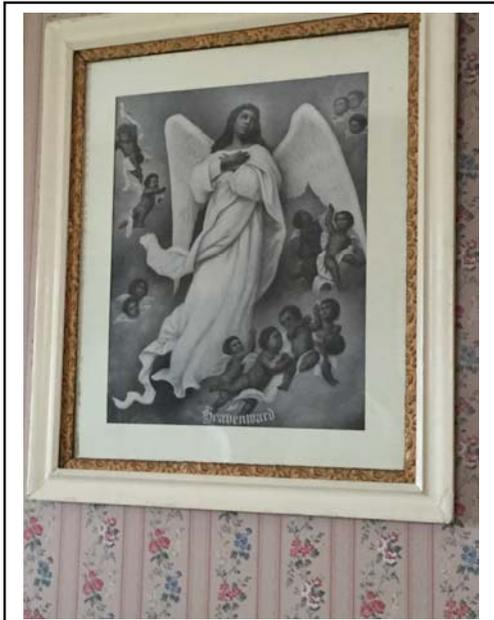


Figure 4-53. Black Jesus

Figure 4-53. Black Jesus. Above the bed hung this picture of a Black Jesus with wings surrounded by Black cherubs.



Figure 4-54. In the Bedroom

Figure 4-54. In the Bedroom. The team spent more time in the bedroom than in any of the other rooms in the house, perhaps because it has more floor space, so it was comfortable for the whole group to be there.

Figure 4-55. His Dresser. The dresser top contained the items used in men's grooming, including supplies for shaving, a container for clipped hair, and a white collar.



Figure 4-55. His Dresser

Figure 4-56. In Africa. The guide shared that in Africa people save the hair that leaves their body.



Figure 4-56. In Africa

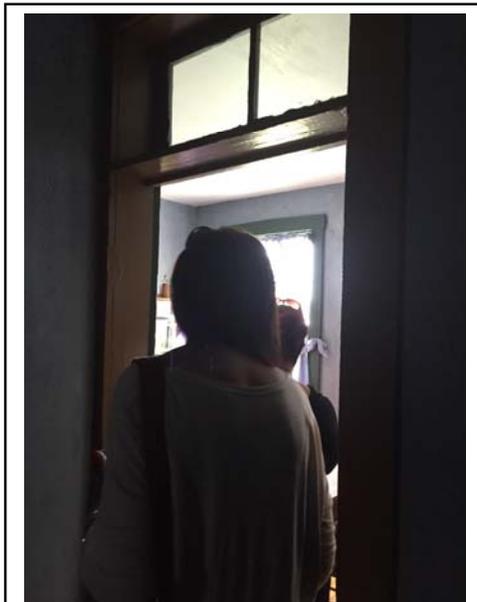


Figure 4-57. Another Dark Hall

Figure 4-57. Another Dark Hall.

After another wait in another dark hall —this one adorned with a gas lamp— the guide led us to the upstairs kitchen.



Figure 4-58. Icebox

Figure 4-58. Icebox. Here she emphasized the technology of the day, especially the ice box, and explained how the iceman came with his blocks of ice packed in straw, and that he would have had to lug that ice up the stairs to this room prior to electric refrigerators. **This photograph was taken by Member F.**

Figure 4-59. In the Kitchen.



Figure 4-59. In the Kitchen

Downstairs again, we were invited to explore the collection of musical ephemera, which included a text panel describing the plot of Joplin's opera, *Tremonisha*.

Figure 4-60. Tremonisha. Other items on display included sheet music, explanations of some of the business dealings in which Joplin had been poorly represented by white agents who arranged the contracts to their very significant monetary advantage.

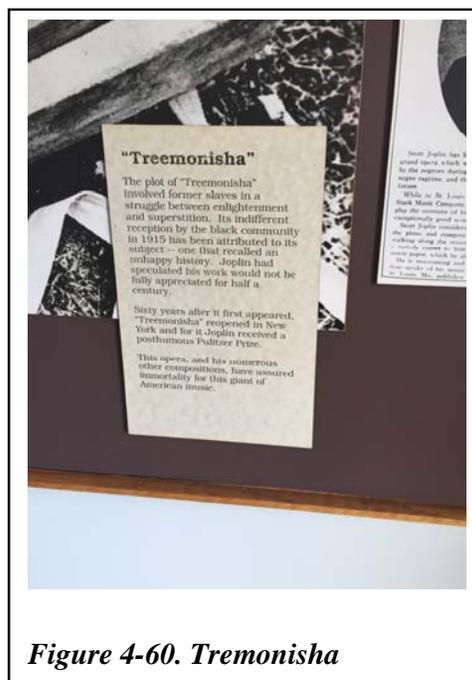


Figure 4-60. Tremonisha

Figure 4-61. Ephemera. The collection also included this ticket to the Tyrolean Alps exhibit at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Joplin performed at the fair while he lived at this house located within walking distance to it. The exposure he received at the fair promoted both the new musical genre and the composer going forward.

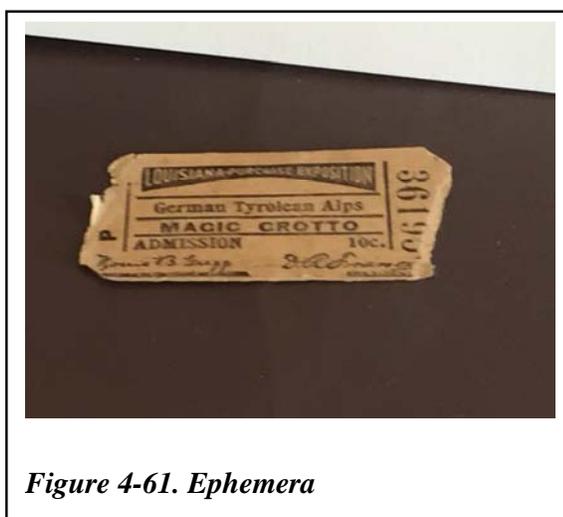


Figure 4-61. Ephemera

Figure 4-62. Final Stop. The final stop was this room with a player piano.

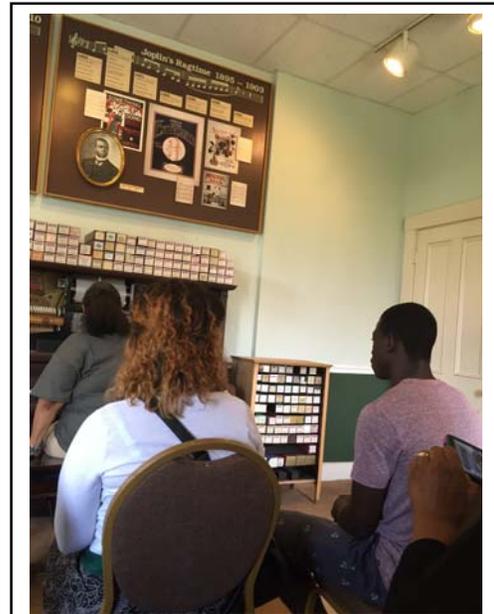


Figure 4-62. Final Stop



Figure 4-63. Players

Figure 4-63. Players. The guide inserted one of the rolls punched with holes to program the piano to play what was encoded while she operated the foot pedals to power the performance. The team members were visibly and fully engaged during this part of the tour. Above the piano and to the left on the wall is a hodge-podge display of images from the site. The

rack to the right of the piano contains rolls of Joplin's piano rags.

Summary

The information gleaned from the documentary analysis of these three house museums serves as the context for the investigation performed by and with the participant team. Their photographs and any accompanying text are presented in the next chapter and should be viewed as if framed by the information and images in this one.

Chapter 5

Sets of Subjective Visual Snapshots Created by the Members of the Participant Team

“The most important thing in all life is the big picture, but all we have are snapshots...tiny snapshots that provide only a narrow and very misleading impression of the whole.” (Munroe 2006 p.59)

- Myles Munroe

Recruiting the participants

My goal was to recruit a very diverse participant team where each member fulfilled the following criteria. Each person lived and/or worked in Missouri, was available, had a smartphone and was at least 18 years old, thus legally considered an adult. In addition, each person self-affiliated as representative of one or more of the social, ethnic, racial or faith groups that make up the St. Louis community. Initially I hoped to recruit six participants: three men and three women; two African-Americans; two white Americans; and two mixed-race individuals. I also hoped that the team would include a range of ages, as well as members with different careers and educational backgrounds. Finally, I felt that it was important for the participants not to be museum professionals.

On May 25, 2014, I posted the following on my Facebook timeline:

Looking for something to do this summer? As part of my doctoral research I need to involve a group of up to 15 adults who live or work in Missouri and who are not museum professionals. Over the course of this summer we will be visiting 3 historic house museums in St. Louis. Each person will be tasked with taking photographs on their smartphone in

response to a prompt and then we will meet to talk about the photos. The optimal team will have equal representation from African American, White, and mixed ethnicities, a mix of ages, and both men and women. If you are interested and/or know someone who might be interested in participating, please private message or email me for a formal invitation and more information (Barker Face Book 2015).

Seven people replied that they wanted to participate. Of these, three were unable to for scheduling reasons. The four who became team members—Member A, Member B, Member C and Member E—each committed to recruit others to participate as well. Ultimately, Member B recruited Members F and G, while Member E recruited Member D.

The agreements

Each participant signed a consent form that indicated they understood the information I provided about the study and that they could withdraw from the study at any time prior to the completion, submission and/or any subsequent publication of the research. They also agreed that photographs of themselves could be used but would not be used in conjunction with their name.

Furthermore, they agreed that their words also could be used but not in conjunction with their names. They agreed that their words could be identified as spoken, or written, by a person of their racial, ethnic or religious background. Finally, they gave permission for their original photographed images, along with titles and captions, to be used, published in print and on the World Wide Web (Internet) without their name being attached but with identifying information about their racial, ethnic and/or religious background.

Saturday, July 11, 2015

**Figure 5-1.
Participant Team
at White Haven.**



Figure 5-1. Participant Team at White Haven



Figure 5-2. Participant Team at Olympia Bar & Grill

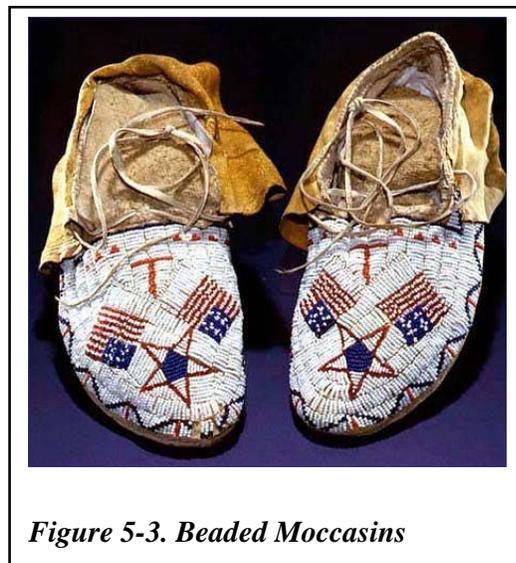
**Figure 5-2.
Participant Team
at Olympia Bar &
Grill.**

The consensus of the recruited team members was to devote a full day on which we would visit all three sites. Member A was only able to join us for the orientation meeting at 9 AM at a Panera's Restaurant in South St. Louis County and for the visit to White Haven. At the orientation meeting I explained that each person would be looking for evidence of past inter-cultural encounters at the three sites. Photography is permitted at each site, so the members would be free to take as many pictures as they liked, with the understanding that they would select and submit to me just five images from each site for inclusion in this study.

I presented two sample photographs that I found on Pinterest as examples. These images (Pinterest 2014) indicated what the team members might be looking for.

Figure 5-3. Beaded Moccasins. (Pinterest 2014).

The moccasins are traditional Native American footwear, but these are beaded with symbols of the United States. So, because of the coexistence between two cultures shown in the artifact, they represent inter and serve to model an inter-cultural past encounter between the indigenous people and U. S. citizens.



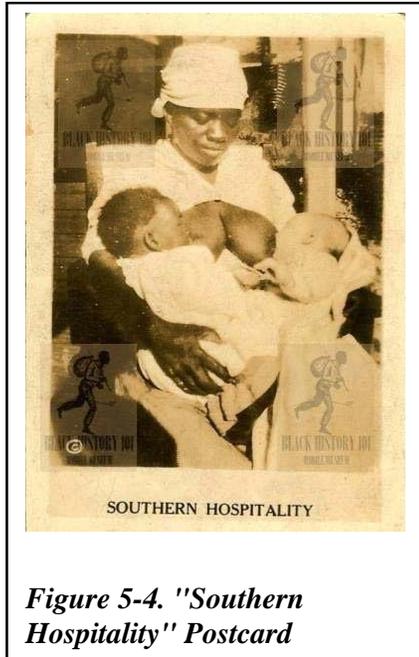


Figure 5-4. "Southern Hospitality" Postcard

Figure 5-4. "Southern Hospitality" Postcard. (Pinterest 2014).

The "Southern Hospitality" postcard shows an African American woman with, presumably, her own black baby nursing on the right breast and a white baby nursing on the left breast. Not only does this image portray inter's coexistence between two cultures, it also makes public a private moment, another theoretical characteristic of inter.

I located both images on Pinterest and presented them to the team as visual examples of inter-cultural encounters that happened in the past (Pinterest 2014). The team picture (Figure 5-1, above) was taken outside the visitor center at White Haven, with the house itself hidden behind the trees in the background, past the white fence. Instead of stopping for lunch, since everyone was still full from the breakfast we had eaten at the orientation meeting, the team decided to continue the site visits. The second site we visited was the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site, after which we went to the Eugene Field House & Toy Museum. Finally, we drove to the Olympia Bar and Grill (pictured above, Figure 5-2), where we debriefed. I took notes at each site, as well as at the Olympia, where I also made an audio recording of part of the conversation. The team members were asked to select five photographs from each site and to text them to me along with a title and a brief two or three sentence explanation of why they took each picture. I posted the pictures to secret boards on Pinterest, to which I gave the team members access.

Introducing and profiling the participants with their images and accompanying texts

What follows is basic information about each team member: their age, race, gender, faith (if it was disclosed), as well as information about their educational and career background. This establishes their socio-cultural affiliation and

indicates something of their likely “prejudices” in the hermeneutical sense of that word. According to noted hermeneuticists like Schleiermacher, Droysen and Boeckh, understanding is a:

*means of overcoming the historical [or temporal]
distance between the interpreter and the historic
phenomenon”*

(Mueller-Volmer 2006 p.38)

So, the effort required to grapple with the distance each member had to overcome varied for each person and was, to some extent determined by their personal demographics. Gadamer calls temporal distance a filtering process that:

*is not fixed but is itself undergoing constant movement and
extension, [as both] new sources of error [and] new sources of
understanding (Gadamer 2013),*

are stitched into a person’s fore-knowledge. As will be seen, for this project, hermeneutical “*historical distance*” is just one component of the gap I perceive between the museum’s content and the experiential “*understanding*” of each “*interpreter*” team member. Not only is there “*historical distance*” to “*overcome*,” there is also cultural distance, racial distance, and generational distance between the various team members, as well as between each team member and the historic phenomenon that the site projects. The same distances factor into each team member’s ideas and opinions about Ferguson. The participant team members live and work in St. Louis, Missouri. There are two exceptions: a young married woman from Southeast Missouri, who lives about 100 miles south of Ferguson, and a retired, married woman who lives in Illinois and works in the City of St. Louis. Four team members made posts on Facebook in the days immediately before and after the Special Prosecutor’s report on whether Officer Darren Wilson should be indicted in the shooting death of Michael Brown, which was made public on

November 24, 2014. These public posts illustrate the range of opinions within the team, in my opinion¹.

In addition, for each participant-generated and submitted image, along with any original title or text, I associate the applicable criteria of inter as I identified them in chapter two. As you will remember, there are six main criteria or characteristics that are present in the space of inter that I derived from the research of Edward Said, Edouard Glissant, Homi K. Bhabha and James Clifford. They are:

1. Overlaps, borrowing and co-existences between cultures
2. Creolization as shown by the use of local, vernacular viewpoints and modes of representation; offering a counter-politics, imagining or metaphysics; breaking silence, remembering, or giving voice to a past trauma or suffering
3. Blurred boundaries as shown by uncertainty, ambiguity, questioning and attempting to define a place
4. Interstitial intimacy as shown by innovation or an interruption of the present and by the merger of private and public.
5. Problems in the derivation of mutual meaning as shown by misread, misappropriated or loss of meaning
6. Paradox.

¹ References to the team members' Face Book Pages are disguised so that, instead of their actual names being included in the citations and URL address, they are replaced with Member A, Member B...etc.

Member A - Retired secretary

Member A is a single woman in her late sixties or early seventies. She is a retired secretary with a high school education who has always lived and worked in St. Louis. She affiliates as an Evangelical Christian. She was very excited about participating in the project after seeing the Facebook recruiting prompt. However, she could only join us for the first site visit, White Haven, so all of her photographs and comments are from that site. She was also not able to join us for the debriefing meeting at the restaurant. The images and captions in this section are the original creations of Member A. The titles of the images, however, were added by me, drawing from words included in Member A's caption.

On November 24, 2014, the day that St. Louis County Police Officer Darren Wilson was not indicted in the August 9 shooting death of Michael Brown, Member A shared the following on her Facebook timeline (Member A 2014). Her caption provides her attempt at introducing a counter-politics to what she ascribes to the mainstream media's bias. It is an expression of the creolization that happens in the space of inter.

Figure 5-5. "R.I.P." Jordan-Davies Photos.

"R.I.P. Jordan-Davies Photos" with the caption: *"What the media isn't showing you - young men cleaning up after the #Ferguson protests"* (R.I.P. Jordan-Davies 2014).



Figure 5-5. "R.I.P. Jordan-Davies Photos"

Note that this chapter presents photographs taken, selected and submitted by each participant. The titles are located in the frame, beneath the image. Most of the members also wrote a caption, by which I mean a brief paragraph to explain why they took and submitted the image. To assist the reader to recognize that a participant team member wrote the caption or paragraph, a different font is used for the text they generated.

Member A's photos of White Haven

Figure 5-6. Untitled.

"Hey Lesley,
attached is the
first picture I
took, which
fascinated me
due to its
personal nature.
It's a bit of a
letter written
to Julia from
Grant.

Evidently, she
was expecting
one of their

children and he was off being a hero...what was of great interest to me was that the letter was from her to him expressing his concern that he couldn't be there. I found this in the gift shop...Very personal bit of history in a very public spot. Pretty positive that wouldn't have been his intent."

This image shows that Member A found this private correspondence inappropriately on display in a public space. Thus it meets inter's criterion of interstitial intimacy.



Figure 5-6. Untitled. Photograph by Member A

The next image indicates Member A's historical bias towards the issue of slavery. She is pro-Union and against slavery. Thus, she can vilify Col. Dent for his pro-slavery stance.

Figure 5-7. Untitled.

"I rest my case about Col. Dent! Hope you can read this...but, in essence, he would rather stay away and hermitize himself than get on board with the inevitable change that was to come." Member A's text supplies a creolizing counter-imaging between herself and Col. Dent. The image also documents one instance where the museum calls attention to the coexistence of two cultures: master's and slave's. **Figure 5-8. Untitled.**

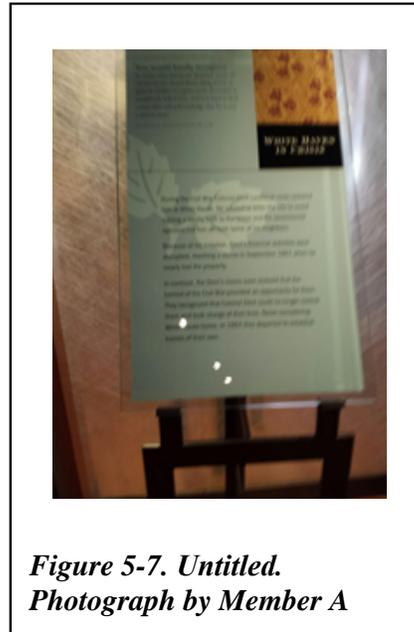


Figure 5-7. Untitled.
Photograph by Member A

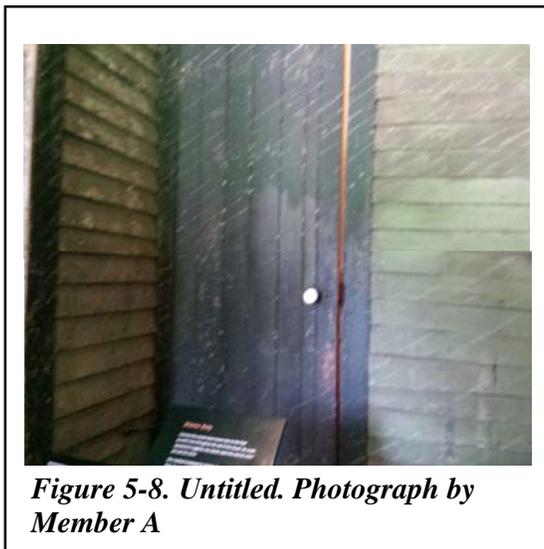


Figure 5-8. Untitled. Photograph by Member A

"This green door/
possible slave entry/exit
made me sad. But also
the summer kitchen gave me
an awareness of not only
the incredible ignorance
of humanity as God viewed
it, but also the battle
Grant must have dealt with
internally and in reality.
He had a Constitution to
uphold (15th amendment
that he passed...this was

in the movie that I stayed to watch!) ... but I cannot believe there couldn't have been incredible conflict with his very own family!"

Member A here articulates the blurred boundaries of an intercultural encounter by noting the conflicts and questions she imagines were in play as she, in her own imagination of this past contest, attempted to locate a new place.

Member A's reaction was emotional, "sad" as if she was coming to grips with the personal nature of the public conflict that escalated into the American Civil War. This idea continued in the text panel she photographed (Figure 5-9) about the ways the family exerted "control" over their slaves.

Figure 5-9. Untitled.

"Sorry for the huge white light on this...Couldn't get a different angle on it. I believe the white-out word could be 'Apparently'."

In spite of the emotional connection that Member A is making, her photographs

about slavery at White Haven constitute othering, in which her understanding is expressed as contrasting with her personal experience. The images also exhibit stereotypes. Her written comments persist in generalizing "the slaves... they". It is likely that many historians would challenge her belief that there was no advocate for the African American cause at the time. Her perspective appears to be that the first hero for African American social justice was the mid twentieth-century Civil Rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By these devices, Member A epitomizes the problems of the derivation of mutual meaning that happen in the space of inter.

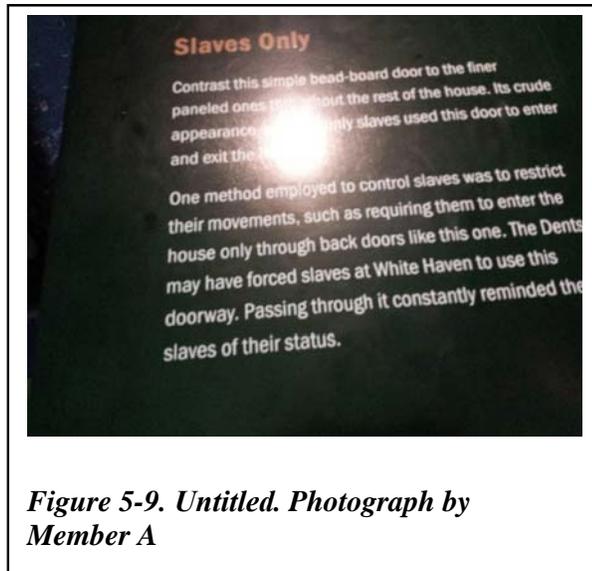
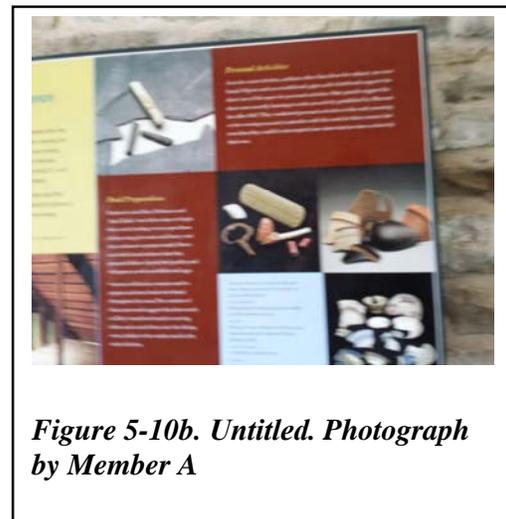
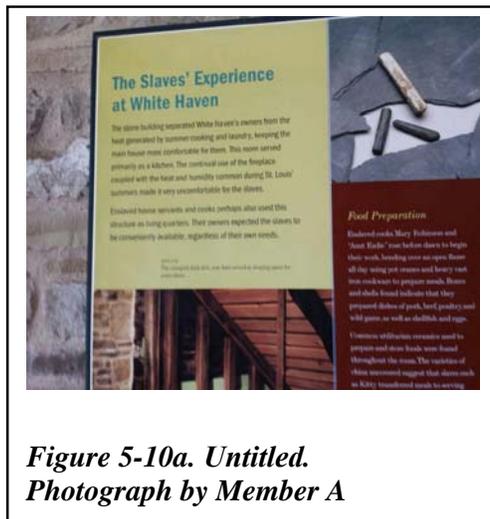


Figure 5-10 a and b. Untitled.



"If you can't stand the heat.... What choice did they have? Summer kitchen at White Haven. What they must have endured...heat, humidity, critters, but what choice did they have? Did they understand their future as slaves? Could they have even thought in terms of future freedom? Nobody like Dr. ML King at that moment in time...They would have had an advocate in Pres. Grant. Would they be proud of how far their hope would be taking them?"

Here, Member A provides a list of questions, another activity that happens in the blurred boundaries of inter.

The final submission from Member A (Figure 5-11, below) is an example of mirroring, in which her understanding is expressed in terms of, or as a reflection of, her personal experience. She relates, as a woman, to the handwriting. She makes an assumption based on the absence of "scratch throughs" and to the supposed effort that went into making the arrangements.

Figure 5-11. Untitled.

"Invitation to dinner...At the White House. This was fascinating to me to view Julia's hand-written notes for this state dinner's seating arrangements. I would presume this wasn't her first dinner

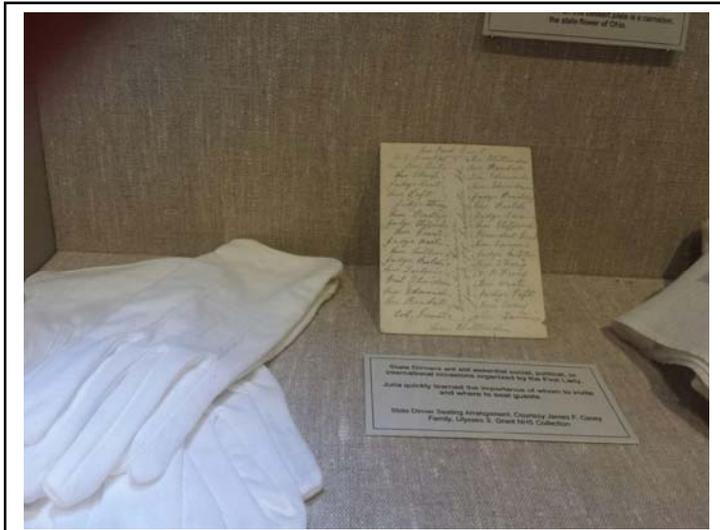


Figure 5-11. Untitled. by Member A

since nothing had been scratched through. But that's unknown because no year actually is readable on the sheet. Just the date of January 9th. "

Once again, in this caption, Member A expresses inter through her uncertainty which is consistent with the blurred boundaries in the space of inter.

During the tour of White Haven, Member A asked the guide, "Are any of the floors original? And, that door was for slaves? So that would have been made by slaves?" The ranger answered, "Well, we don't know about that."

While the other team members were walking around outside of the house, Member A confided to me how very much she was enjoying the day. She said she was sad that very few actual artifacts from the Grants are inside White Haven due to a massive fire that destroyed most of the furniture while it was in storage. "I could look at a rock and get history from it.", she said.

Member B - Retired educator and school psychologist

Member B is a married woman in her late sixties. She is a retired educator and school psychologist with two master's degrees. She lives on a

small farm just east of St. Louis in Illinois and worked in the inner city public schools of St. Louis for more than forty years. This is a majority African-American school district with a growing immigrant enrollment. She and I worked together for several years in this school district and became good friends, a relationship sustained now mostly via Facebook. She responded immediately to the Facebook recruiting prompt, asking to participate. She also recruited Member F and Member G to participate in the project. The images and captions are the original creations of Member B.

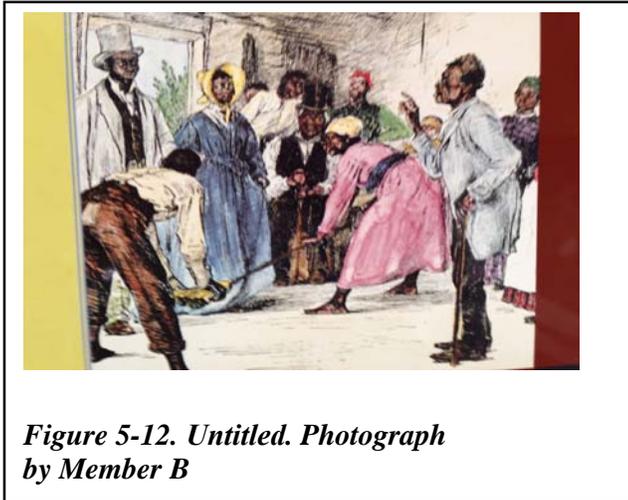
Member B posted the following about the Michael Brown case on Facebook on November 19, 2014. Like Member A, Member B used her Facebook Timeline as a platform to present a counter-imagining that positions her within the space of inter. She promotes prayer as a counter-imagined response to blame and judgment:

Instead of casting blame and judgment on our national leaders, our local leaders, the protesters, the police, Michael Brown, each other, how about we pray for healing for our community, our nation, our families, our relationships. Prayer is much more effective than mongering hate and fear and locking and loading! Isn't that what brought us to this point and haven't we had enough? If what we're doing isn't working, we must try something different. Prayer, love and understanding DO work!
(Member B 2014).

Member B's photos of White Haven

Member B's first picture is a photograph of a portion of a text panel that is, itself, a juxtaposition of wedding traditions of the enslaved African people at White Haven with those of the whites. She employs the habit that both DiAngelo (DiAngelo 2012) and Nick Sacco (Sacco 2016) flag as a strategy of colonialism and as a way to continue the us-them stereotypes by naming the whites but essentializing and anonymizing "the slaves". Her caption defines the coexistence of two cultures, thereby situating the submission in inter.

Figure 5-12. Untitled.



"Public, formal, written notice of marriage between Julia Dent and Ulysses S. Grant. A depiction of 'jumping the broom' which was marriage between slaves. The contrast is slaves' were not recognized or respected, and

certainly not honored by slaveholders."

Figure 5-13. Untitled.

Again, in this photograph of the vegetable cart and in the photo of the plow (Figure 5-14, below), Member B's "assumption" essentializes and anonymizes "slaves". The adjective, "primitive", may indicate an inherently negative prejudice. In my opinion, both are consistent with how meaning can be misread, misappropriated or lost in the context of inter.

"A primitive cart used to haul vegetables to the City of St. Louis for profit for the Grant family. It is my assumption that the cart was constructed by slaves."

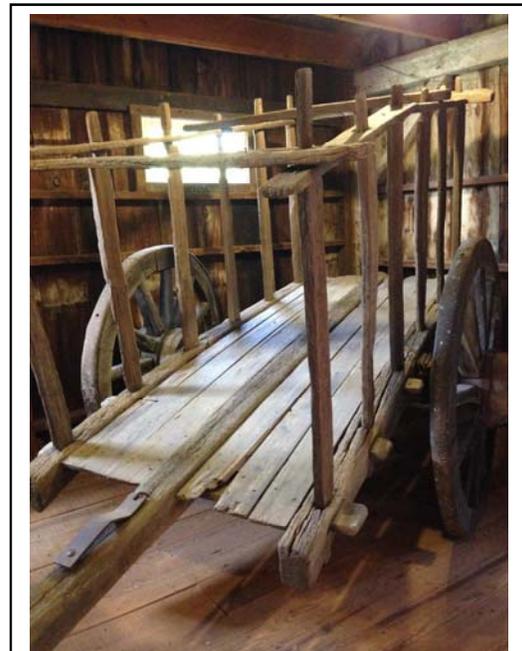


Figure 5-113. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Figure 5-14. Untitled.

"A primitive hand-held plow used by the slaves and, again, my assumption, constructed by slaves to till the soil to produce crops for maintaining White Haven's existence and profit."



Figure 5-14. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Figure 5-15. Untitled. This

photograph contains a visual juxtaposition which is reiterated in the text. It is another example of inter by showing coexistences between cultures.

"An example of eating utensils used by slaves and slave owners. The slave owners had fine china and the slaves had pottery made from clay."



Figure 5-15. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Member B's photographs of the Scott Joplin House

Figure 5-16. Untitled.



Figure 5-16. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Member B captured this image of a prayer in German framed in the living room of the Scott Joplin House. The guide did explain that the picture had been a gift to Joplin. However, the arrangement of the artifacts in the house is due to the interpretive assumptions of the museum curators, so we do not know if it had the "place of honor" that Member B declared.

"A German prayer in Scott Joplin's home.

An example of intercultural influence, a framed German prayer in a place of honor on the sitting room wall of the Ragtime King??"

The double question mark that Member B placed at the end of this caption is, in my opinion, indicative of inter's blurred boundaries as expressed through uncertainty and questioning.

Figure 5-17. Untitled.

Member B narrates this photograph of a Black Jesus surrounded by Black cherubs with exclamation points to indicate her critique of Christianity as a cause for the African slave trade. She juxtaposes enslavement, which disturbs her, with the huge respect she has for Scott Joplin the "King of Ragtime." This is the second time she included that phrase in a caption. I find it interesting that she did not comment on the ethnicity of Jesus represented in the print as her claim for the photograph to document evidence of an inter-cultural exchange.

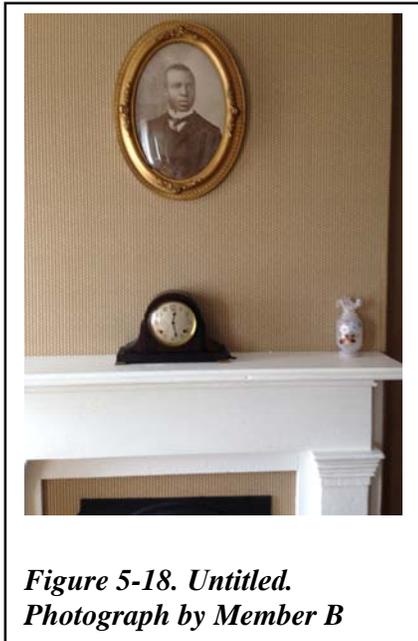


Figure 5-17. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

"A depiction of Christianity. Framed on the wall over Scott Joplin's bed. Scott Joplin, the son of the father who was a former slave, and whose mother was a free woman...his people were enslaved in the name of Christianity... And Scott Joplin was the King of Ragtime! A musical genius!"

In my opinion, Member B's statement that Joplin's "*people were enslaved in the name of Christianity*" is an overstatement consistent with the problems of misread or lost meanings that happen in the space of inter.

Figure 5-18. Untitled.



*Figure 5-18. Untitled.
Photograph by Member B*

The caption for this photograph echoes the use of the word "primitive" in the photographs that this member took at White Haven. It is another example of the problems that happen in the space of inter related to a loss of meaning.

"The concept of counting and keeping track of time with the depiction of Scott Joplin, the son of the former slave. Africans had no background experience with timekeeping."

Figure 5-19. Untitled.



Figure 5-19. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

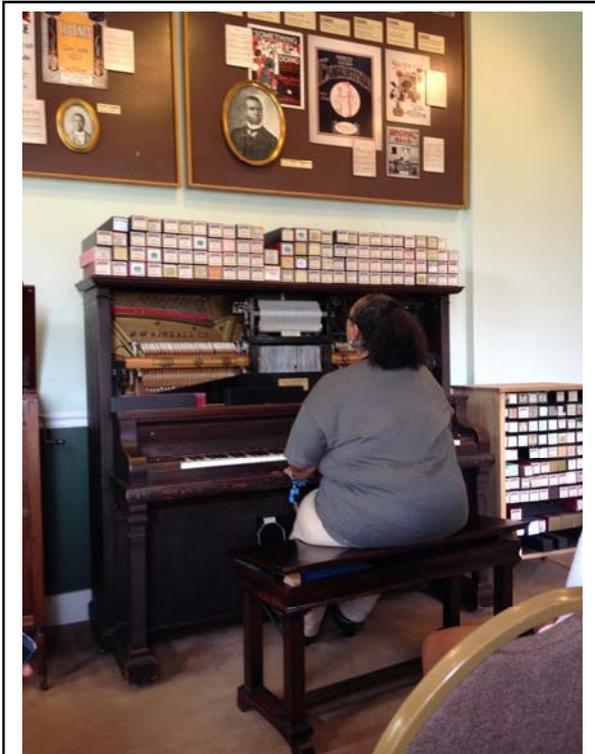
In her next caption, Member B expresses inter in another problematic assumption by connecting the image of a paper collar on the dresser to a metal collar that she says enslaved Africans would all have worn around their

"The fashion and hygiene trends of the day. Stiff paper covered with cotton worn tightly around the neck for the collar to what his parents would have worn as a slave and a laborer."

Sets of Subjective Visual Snapshots Created by the Members of the Participant

Team Member B was very impressed with the performance on the player piano Scott Joplin's rags. In fact, this submission may signal that she had experienced a moment of interstitial intimacy as the performance of the past interrupted her experience of the present.

Figure 5-20. Untitled.



"Syncopation... a variety of unexpected rhythms which gives the music (and the listener) a new surprise. This was played on a player piano, a pneumatic device, which thrust the hammer toward the keys and played the music of Scott Joplin to our ears 100 years later while sitting in his row house!"

Figure 5-20. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Member B's photographs of the Eugene Field House

Figure 5-21. Untitled

"A hip bath in the Eugene Field home. Once a month, whether needed or not, one tub of water. First the father, then the mother, then the children in birth order."

Member B is making yet another assumption, that the Field family washed just once a month and that they did not change the water between bathers. Yet, the Field family was wealthy enough to own and house domestic

enslaved Africans.

This submission may be another example of inter at work through the problem of meaning making. Here, perhaps there is a misreading of the artifact.

Figure 5-22. Untitled.

In the caption that accompanies this photograph of three Native American dolls, Member B expresses the personal emotions of a "heavy heart" and "shame," without an explanation of what provoked those emotions other than the idea of American Indians depicted as dolls.

"A depiction of native North Americans. In the home of Eugene Field. Now toys, but a depiction of the original Americans, independent, strong,

indigenous. My heart is heavy and I feel ashamed."



Figure 5-21. Untitled. Photograph by Member B



Figure 5-22. Untitled. Photograph by Member B

Sets of Subjective Visual Snapshots Created by the Members of the Participant Team

Member B's caption acknowledges the coexistence of inter by stating that these Native American dolls were in Eugene Field's home. The last two images that Member B submitted from the Eugene Field House are in direct, intentional juxtaposition, as are the are in direct, intentional juxtaposition, as are the captions. Once again, less respectful language is used when talking about the enslaved African, "*a female slave,*" compared to when talking about the white woman, "*a Caucasian woman.*" Taken together, the two images again reflect inter's coexistence of two

Figure 5-23. Untitled.

"A female slave's dress in Eugene Field's home. Notice the coarseness, the style and the fit"



Figure 5-23. Untitled.
Photograph by Member B

Figure 5-24. Untitled.

"A Caucasian woman's dress in the same era. Notice the fashion, the quality, and the fit."

At the Eugene Field House, the guide told the group that the kitchen, dining and domestic quarters were upstairs on the third floor. Hearing this, Member B asked, "*domestic quarters, meaning?*" The guide replied, "*meaning servants.*"

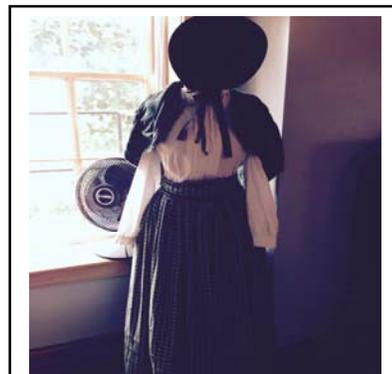


Figure 5-24. Untitled.
Photograph by Member B

At the restaurant

Member B was quiet for most of the conversation at the restaurant following the three site visits. Her one comment was in regard to the lack of connection made between the Old Courthouse, where the Dred Scott case was tried, and the Eugene Field House, where the defense lawyer lived and had his office. The two buildings, both historic site museums are about three blocks from each other.

Member C - Young mother

Member C is a married woman in her early twenties with two preschool age children. She lives in southeast Missouri about one hundred miles south of St. Louis and has a high school education. She approached me about participating on this project through her mother, because she loves history and museums. She works as a marketer for a home health care agency.

On November 24, 2014, the day that St. Louis County Police Officer Darren Wilson was not indicted in the August 9 shooting death of Michael Brown, Member C shared the following overstatement on her Facebook timeline:

Ferguson is basically burning to the ground right now. Just so you know. The place is currently in flames... (Member C 2014)

On December 10, 2014, Member C posted this about a tire store in Jackson, Missouri, a predominantly white community in Southeast Missouri:

Jackson Tire is trying to capitalize on what's going on in Ferguson. Talking about the protesters being ridiculous for burning down their own community and so he says the only thing burning down is prices....LOL WUT? (Member C 2014)

In both of these Facebook Posts, Member C, like Member A and B, expresses inter through creolization. In her case, Member C bears witness to a trauma she feels is not being noticed or properly understood in southeast Missouri. She also identifies Jackson Tire's misappropriation of the meaning of Ferguson, another expression - the problem of meaning-making that happens in the space of inter.

Member C's photographs of White Haven

Figure 5-25. The grass is Always Greener.

Member C made pithy statements as titles to accompany each photograph she submitted for the project, but she did not provide any captions for them. Her first picture was of this unpainted door, which the guide told us was intentionally left unpainted to be a constant reminder to the enslaved workforce of their lower status compared to the owner and his family. One could understand this submission to be a creolizing example of inter by appealing to a vernacular proverb in the title.



Figure 5-25. The Grass is Always Greener. Photograph by Member C

Member C's next photograph (Figure 5-26) is a visual juxtaposition of two wings of the house. The main house where the family lived is in the background of the image with wooden clapboard siding, painted green, while the summer kitchen where the enslaved African women worked is made of stone. Her comment indicates that she intentionally juxtaposed these two areas of the home.



Figure 5-26. The True Great Divide. Photograph by Member C

Figure 5-26. The True Great Divide.

This image demonstrates inter's overlapping coexistence of two cultures in the same space.

Figure 5-27. European Heritage.



*Figure 5-27. European Heritage.
Photograph by Member C*

Member C took this image, as was explained during the conversation at the restaurant, because her white grandmother gave her a curtain rod with a pine cone finial. It illustrates two theoretical aspects of inter: borrowing between cultures; and an example of how, for this participant, public and private merged in the space of inter.

Figure 5-28. Watchful Eyes.

The reason and the inter-cultural connection Member C used for this submission and caption are obscure to me. But, both the problematic loss of meaning such as I experience



Figure 5-28. Watchful Eyes. Photograph by Member C

trying to analyze this submission and the blurred boundary of uncertainty are typical of inter.

Figure 5-29. Marriage Equality.



*Figure 5-29. Marriage Equality.
Photograph by Member C*

The broom is a typical reproduction that can be seen at any 18th- or early 19th-century American historic site.

Enslaved Africans couples were known to “jump over the broom” to signify their marriage. Member C may be utilizing creolization to give voice to the historic past suffering of inequality between marital rights of members of different races in the United States.

Figure 5-30. Native to the Area.

Member C also included a photograph of this image of a Native American peace pipe that is displayed in the barn/museum at White Haven, along with some early U.S. currency. The case also contains the head covering and mask for a Klu Klux Klan robe, which she did not include in the way she framed the picture she submitted. This is perhaps an expression of inter's blurred boundaries by attempting to question and define a people's place or legitimacy within a region.



*Figure 5-30. Native to the Area.
Photograph by Member C*

Member C's photographs of the Scott Joplin House

Figure 5-31. Greek Influence.

Member C's picture of an etched glass lampshade alongside the comment, "Greek influence," demonstrates that she considers this an example of an inter-cultural encounter or exchange, a coexistence and borrowing between cultures.

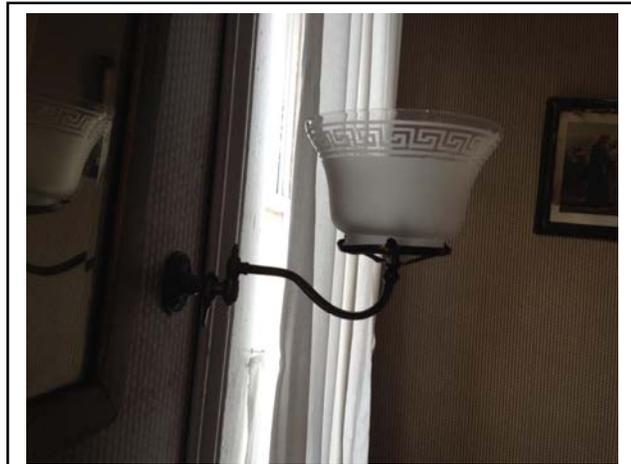


Figure 5-31. Greek Influence. Photograph by Member C

Figure 5-32. Walk a Mile in the White Man's Shoe.



Figure 5-32. Walk a Mile in the White Man's Shoe. Photograph by Member C

The second image from the Scott Joplin House is of spats from the dresser in the bedroom. The juxtaposition of this image and its title produces a creolizing counter-imaging, in my opinion.

Figure 5-33. Music Brings the World Together.



Figure 5-33. Music Brings the World Together. Photograph by Member C

This photograph of a wooden inlaid radio cabinet shows the overlapping of inter when combined with the caption. Scott Joplin's music appealed across the cultures and ethnic boundaries in his day in spite of the overt segregation that would have been his lot in early twentieth-century St. Louis.

Member C's Photographs of the Eugene Field House



Figure 5-34. Shared Goods.

Figure 5-34. Shared Goods.

This is a photograph of a toothbrush on a dresser. Does the caption indicate that both men and women, as well as both the enslaved domestic servants and their masters, used them?

It does evoke the problem of lost meaning and shows an ambiguity, both of which happen in the space of inter, in my opinion.

Figure 5-35. It's the Dress Code.

This image is of a “servant’s” dress from the third floor of the Eugene Field House. The tone that I sense from the title may be an expression of inter as creolization by giving voice to a past suffering.



*Figure 5-35. It's the Dress Code.
Photograph by Member C*



Figure 5-36. Family Tree. Photograph by Member C

Figure 5-36. Family Tree.

The image of the Field family’s European coat of arms is another example, along with the lampshade in the Eugene Field House and the curtain rod in White Haven, of how Member C distinguishes Europe as another culture, something only Member E does as well. It illustrates the presence of inter's coexistence between cultures.

Figure 5-37. This Land is Your Land... This Land is My Land...



Figure 5-37. This Land is Your Land... This Land is My Land.

By means of her title for this photo, Member C sets the Native American doll in contrast to the lyrics from a popular American patriotic song by Woody Guthrie: *This land is your land, this land is my land, from California to the New York Island, from the redwood forests to the gulf stream waters. This land was made for you and me* (Guthrie 2016).

It satisfies the idea of inter through creolization as expressed by a counter-imagining. The juxtaposition of image and title highlights the historic injustices promulgated by the United States against its indigenous peoples.

Figure 5-38. Greek Affluence.



Figure 5-38. Greek Affluence. Photograph by Member C

Member C's final photograph is of the top room in the doll house in Roswell Field's law office, the white family's room. The wallpaper has the same Greek-inspired motif that is etched in the lamp at the Scott Joplin House. By using the adjective, Greek, Member C draws

a European cultural motif was borrowed to make a piece of American folk art. Borrowing between cultures is an expression of inter.

Member D - Former journalist now non-profit executive

Member D is a single African American woman in her forties. She lives in St. Louis County and works as a non-profit executive. She has a background and a master's degree in journalism. She was recruited to participate in this project by Member E. She does not use Facebook so I cannot quote what she may have felt or stated as the events of Ferguson unfolded.

Member D's Photographs of White Haven

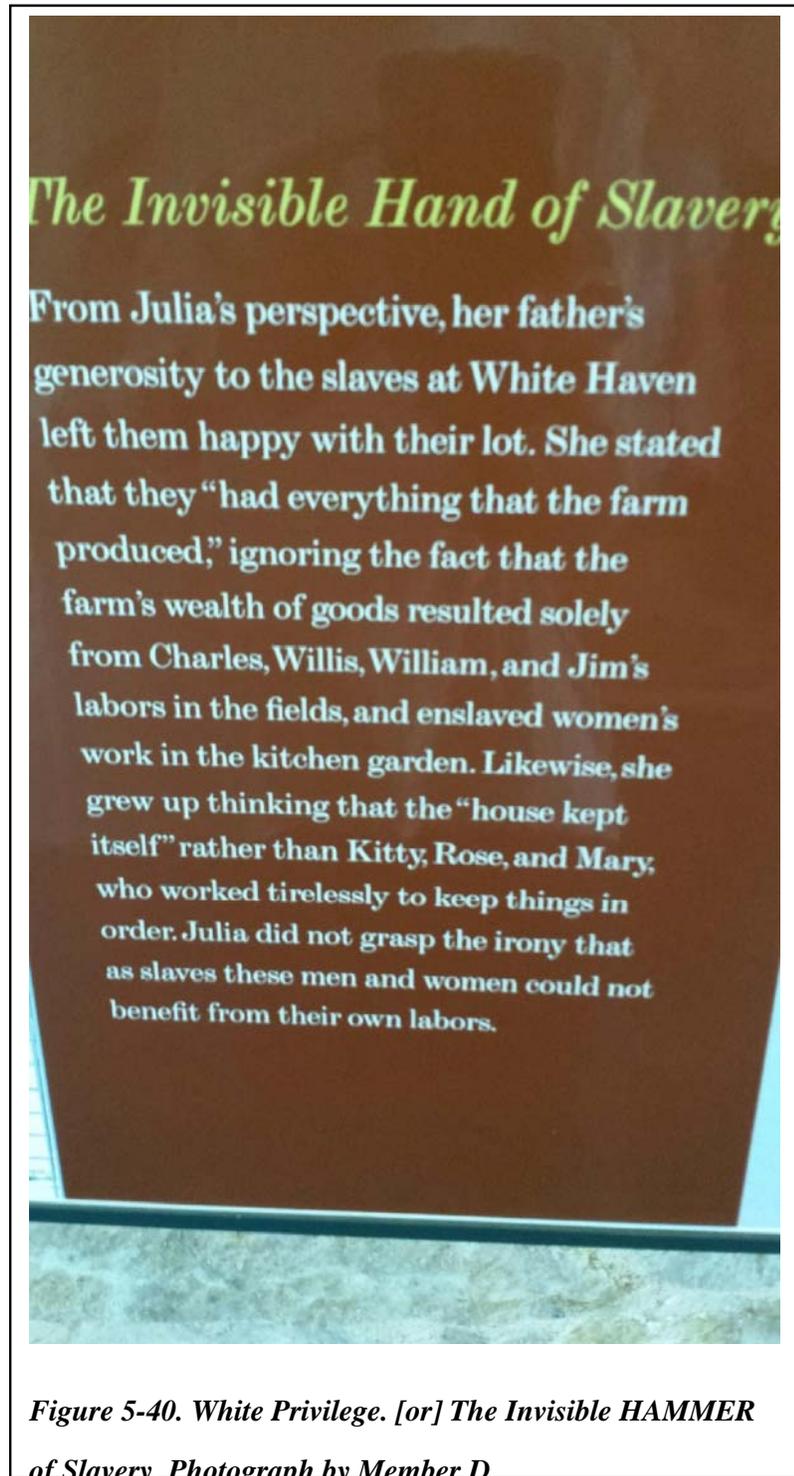
Figure 5-39. Mind Control.



Like Member C, Member D submitted photographs and simple titles but did not include explanations of why she took the pictures or of why she provided the titles she did. The first image from White Haven is this unpainted door, with the site's explanation that it was left unpainted as a reminder to "the slaves" of their lower position relative to the white family. This and, indeed, many of Member D's submissions demonstrate inter's creolization by offering a counter-imagining to the way the museum stated its interpretation.

Figure 5-40.
White Privilege.
[or] The
Invisible
HAMMER of
Slavery.

Member D submitted this photograph of the text panel entitled “*The Invisible Hand of Slavery*” twice. The first time she connected it with the phrase “*White Privilege*.” The second time she connected it with the phrase “*The Invisible HAMMER of Slavery*.” Both versions critique the museum by offering counter-imaginings, creolizing the space of inter



and, perhaps, breaking a silence about past traumas that the museum's interpretation does not interrupt.

Figure 5-41. ...And an Ocean Away from Their Stolen Home.

This photograph of another text panel becomes juxtaposed with the caption

Member D wrote.

The text panel contains a quotation replete with romantic hyperbole about the rural beauty of White Haven. It is *“prettier than its name.”* This is another critique of the museum via an expression of inter, a creolizing, counter-imagining that bears witness to a past trauma.

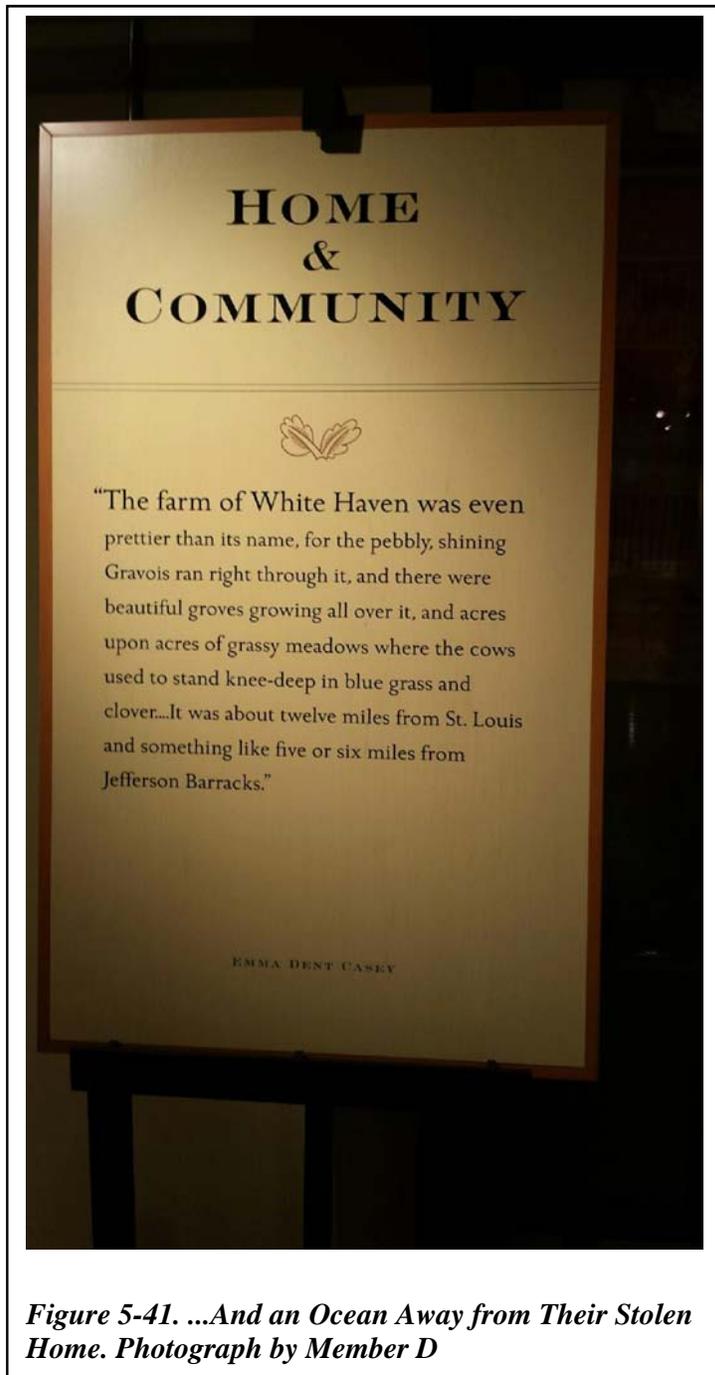


Figure 5-41. ...And an Ocean Away from Their Stolen Home. Photograph by Member D

Member D's Photographs of the Scott Joplin House

Figure 5-42. Oh Ragtime Be Not Worthy of Such Genius?!

Member D submitted two photographs taken at the Scott Joplin House. The first is this image of a text panel about Sedalia, which is a town about halfway between St. Louis, on the east edge of Missouri at the intersection of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, and Kansas City, on the west edge of Missouri where the Missouri River turns to go north. This submission provides an example of inter's blurred boundaries: it questions and attempts to find a place for Ragtime music within music's supposedly more respected genres.

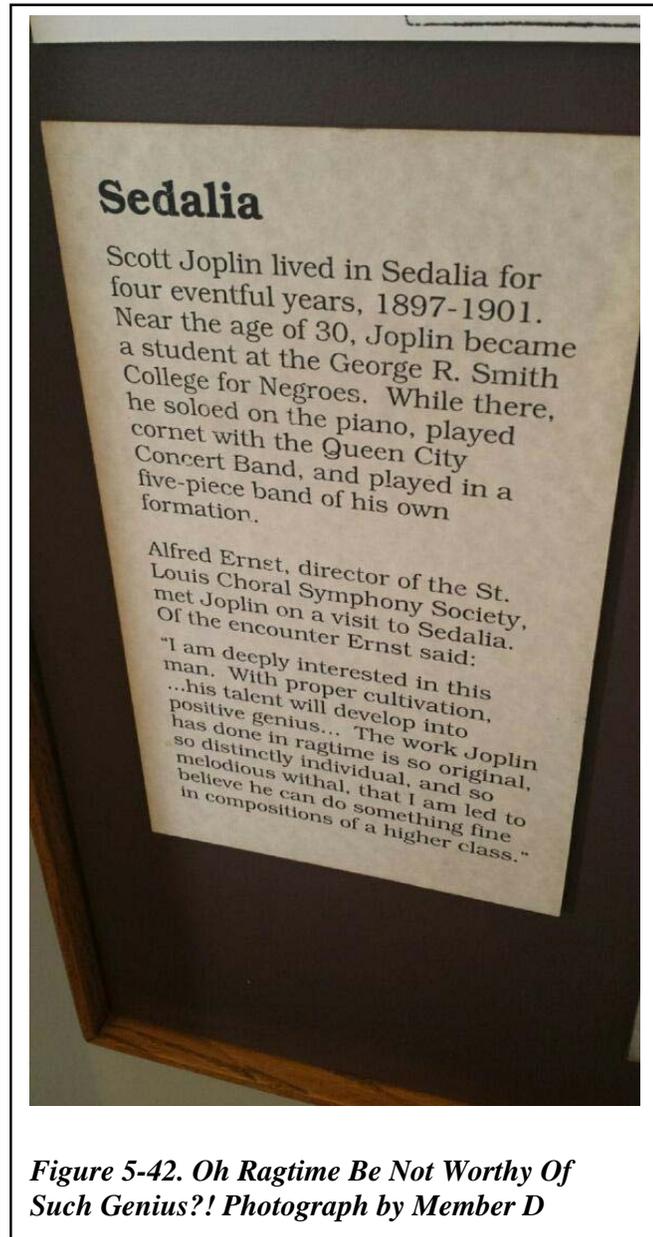


Figure 5-42. Oh Ragtime Be Not Worthy Of Such Genius?! Photograph by Member D

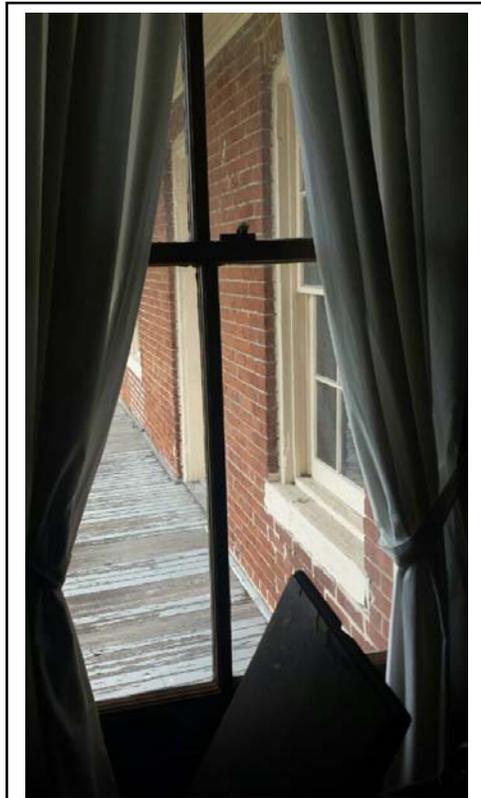


Figure 5-43. The Tax Man Cometh. Photograph by Member D

Figure 5-43. The Taxman Cometh.

This photograph is looking out the floor-to-ceiling window from the Scott Joplin House that is large enough to be a door and communicates with the porch. The guide explained that people used to be taxed for the number of doors they had, leaving us to infer that this window may have been used as a door.

In a similar way to Member C's invocation of a vernacular proverb, Member D creolizes the space of inter through the idiomatic, vernacular reference to the "*tax man*".

1860, when the Civil War became inevitable. Dred Scott is pictured in the center right of this image under the year 1857. In my opinion, this submission employs inter through creolization using a vernacular phrase, "*Front Line*", to, once again, draw attention to past suffering - this time in the American struggle for civil rights for people of African descent who had formerly been enslaved.

Member E - Ceramicist

Member E is a single mixed-race (African American and white) man in his early twenties. He lives in St. Louis County, grew up in St. Louis City, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine arts from an art institute in Kansas City about two months before our site visits. He was poised to begin a master's program in ceramics at a prestigious university in St. Louis a few weeks after we met to visit the sites. I first met him at a conference about African American Missouri history about a year earlier, and our relationship continued via Facebook. He responded enthusiastically to the Facebook recruiting prompt and also engaged Member D in the project.

On November 22, 2014, two days before the verdict about whether St. Louis County Police Officer Darren Wilson would be indicted in the shooting death of Michael Brown, Member E posted this to Facebook:

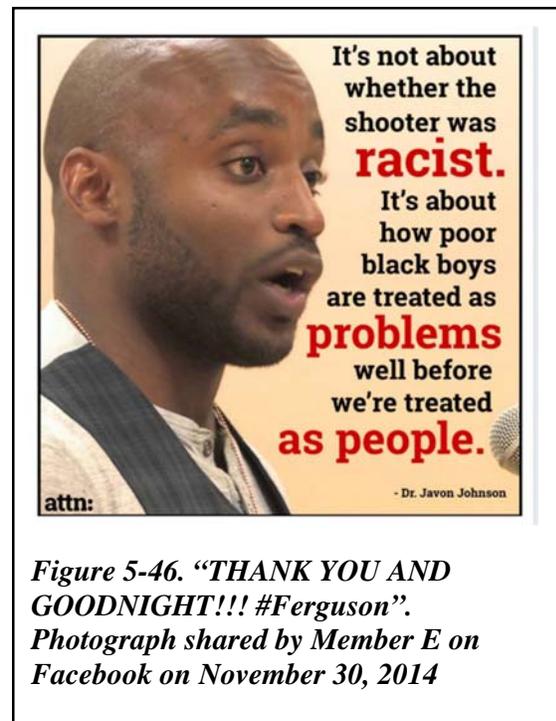
I'm tired. I am stressed. It is not easy. I may not be Mike Brown but at any moment that could be me. I was working in the studio [in Kansas City] and made a comment. The response I got was derogatory and racist. The comment put that person above me and because it was odd to him that I enjoyed a certain music and that didn't fit the stereotype I was supposed to be in according to his mind. The person who said it did not even understand what they were saying. But their sheer ignorance is what perpetuates racism and unrest. This is putting some people at a position of advantage. They have the money, the cars, the family, the houses, the wealthy parents and grandparents. I am rich in love and all my friends and family that care so much for me. When I'm dealing with racism and ignorance at school, what is going to save me? I'm scared...wore out... and to deal with racist people in my life

hurts me even more. I may not be getting shot but the prejudice might as well be torturing me (Member E 2014).

This post reflects the problem that misreading meaning produces in the space of inter and demonstrates its potential emotional impact. It also, in my opinion, gives a voice to the suffering of racism, past and present. This kind of statement is a component of how the space of inter is creolized.

Figure 5-46. “THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT!!! #Ferguson”.

On November 30, 2014, Member E shared this photograph on Facebook with this comment: “*THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT!!! #Ferguson*” (Ibid.).



Member E's photographs of White

Haven **Figure 5-47. Untitled.**



***Figure 5-47. Untitled. Photograph
by Member E***

Member E's first image here is of the house at White Haven. The image and Member E's caption illustrate inter by calling attention to borrowing between European and American cultures.

"I believe that there are intercultural interactions. The Museum site prepares and keeps the building's original Paris green color. It is a home in the United States but

the color is named after a European city. It is complicated because many people inhabited this land. The guide did share that enslaved people worked this land."

Figure 5-48. Untitled

The next image shows a detail of the wall's construction in the original wing of the house. Lath boards are nailed over hand-hewn vertical logs. In between the vertical logs would have been a mixture of mud, straw and animal hair, *bousilliage*. Plaster would have been applied over the lath before the wall would have been painted.

"This is an image of the interior of the home. It shows the inner structure of the home's construction. This is a place where the museum

could share pertinent information to who actually constructed the home. The guide shared information about who worked the land, but this is the next step. I feel that it can be a more inclusive representation of the depth of history."

In this caption, Member E creolizes the space of inter by offering a counter-imagining that would also break a silence in the museum's interpretation of who may have built the wall.



***Figure 5-48. Untitled.
Photograph by Member E***

Figure 5-49. Untitled.



Figure 5-49. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

The caption for this photograph of the stone fireplace in the basement contains strong personal emotional information. In my opinion, Member E's personal disclosure about "people who looked like me", is the gift of an interstitial intimacy in that it interrupts the museum's clinical interpretation, a possibility that happens in the space of inter.

"This is a stone constructed fireplace. It is on the lower level of the home. This is where enslaved people cooked in the winter. It was shared

that this is a site of specific interaction within the home. I was intrigued by this space because it was really dark and was where people who looked like me were forced to work.

Figure 5-50. Untitled.

Member E's caption for his photograph of blue transfer ware repeats his concern for who made the items on display.

"These wares were produced multiples at a time. The blue was transferred and the pigments made the imagery. Was this European dishware? Where was it made? Possibly?"

It indicates the blurred boundaries of inter by questioning and uncertainty.



Figure 5-50. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

Figure 5-51. Untitled.



Figure 5-51. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

"I chose this diagram because it was the only Diagram in the place that showed more than one nationality together on one card.

The photo of this text panel was submitted because it was unique in Member E's experience at White Haven, in his opinion, because it displayed more than one culture on a single panel. It fits the theoretical criteria for inter by showing coexistences between cultures.

Member E asked the ranger where the slave quarters were. He was told that they used to be a quarter mile away from the house but that Grant, himself, tore them down.

Member E's photographs of the Scott Joplin House

Figure 5-52. Untitled.

Once again, in his caption for the photograph of the Scott Joplin House, Member E identifies European as a culture that is distinct from American, another example of inter as borrowing between cultures.

"Half of this building was Scott Joplin's home for a short time in his life. It is a European style two story apartment building. This was an interesting site because it was a temporary residence."



Figure 5-52. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

Figure 5-53. Portrait of Scott Joplin Housed in a European Frame.

It is a "European frame" that "houses" Scott Joplin. The member's title could serve as a metaphor for this entire study. It is also another example of inter shown as borrowing between cultures.



Figure 5-53. Portrait of Scott Joplin Housed in a European Frame. Photograph by Member E

Figure 5-54. Untitled.

This photograph of the wallpaper, followed by one of a white porcelain sculpture of a bowl with fruit, are also connected with Member E's opinion that European influence predominates over any other cultural legacy in the United States. It again show inter as Americans borrowing from Europe.

"The pottery, wallpaper, the frames that house the photographs of Scott Joplin himself. The wallpaper, the frames, and the porcelain in the home are another

connection between the euro dominant culture that prevails in the United States. It is really interesting that the museums do not comment on the significance of these specific cultural markers that perpetuate the standard."



Figure 5-54. Untitled.

Figure 5-55. Untitled.

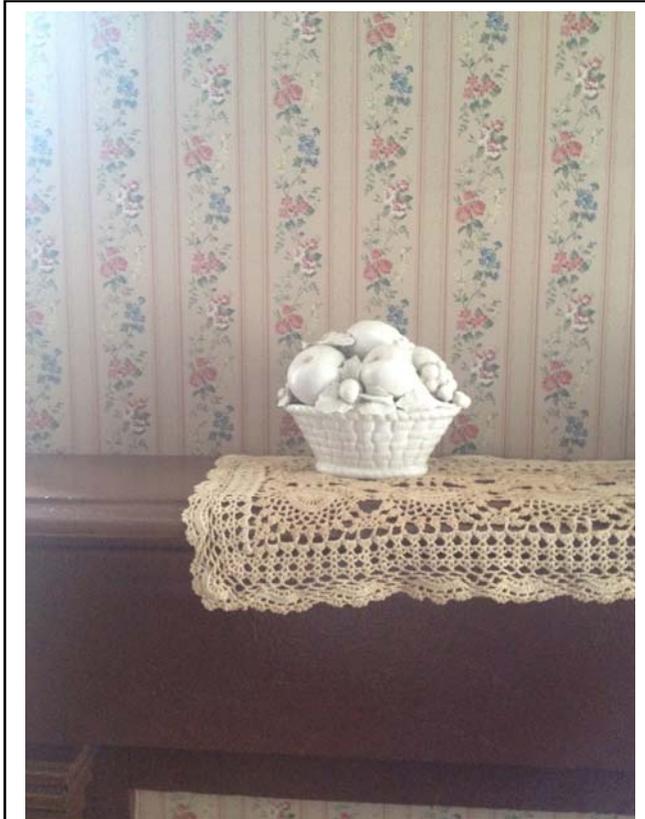


Figure 5-55. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

In addition, this photo and caption repeat Member E's concern with who made the actual items that are being used to tell the museum's story.

"This is a site of intercultural interactions with the stylized wallpaper mass produced, porcelain objects on top of lace. Who made the lace, who produced the porcelain objects, who benefited from the sale of the wallpaper?"

The fact that Member E questions the museum, insisting that it acknowledge the role, or place, of the culture responsible for the production of the displayed artifacts is an example of the blurred boundaries of inter.

Figure 5-56. Untitled.

This image of a text panel and timeline of Scott Joplin's life is critiqued in the caption. His comment contains a question in search of more information that could, perhaps un-blur a boundary from the space of inter. "These diagrams seem to highlight limited information about Scott and his lifetime. It would be interesting to see these posters contextualized within the scope of his life time and the rest of contemporary history at that time."

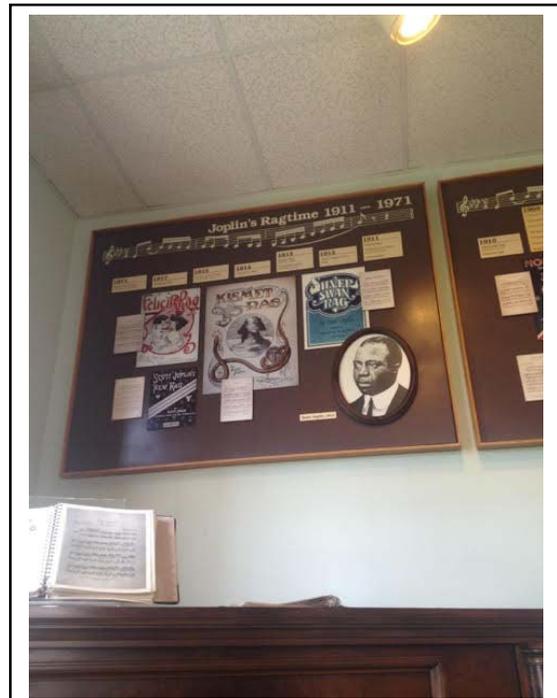


Figure 5-56. Untitled.
Photograph by Member E



Figure 5-57. Untitled.
Photograph by Member E

Figure 5-57. Untitled.

Member E explained that he grew up with a similar "crazy quilt."

"This blanket is important because it was stitched together and resembles many historical quilts but also one that I grew up with."

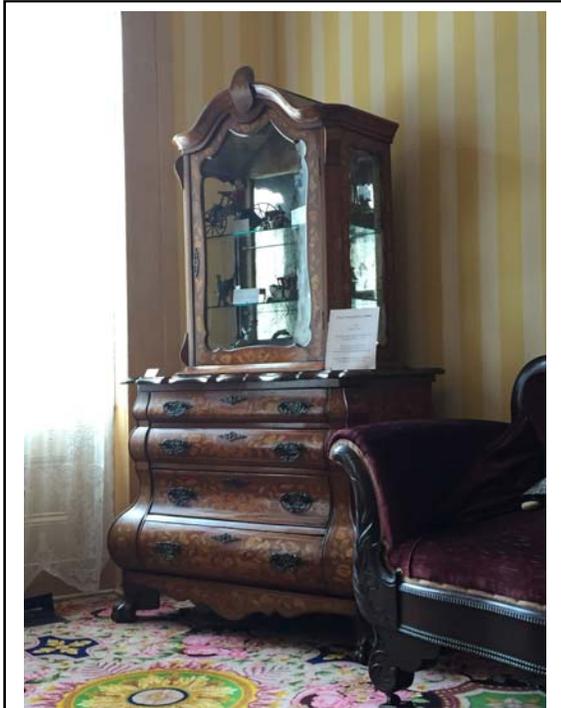
This is the second time that Member E relates personal information triggered by an item on public display. It is an example of inter's interstitial intimacy at work in which the public and private are allowed to merge.

Member E's photographs of the Eugene Field

House Figure 5-58. Untitled.

Member E drew an inter-cultural conclusion across both time and space with the submission of the caption for this chest filled with toys and made in Europe, again drawing attention to inter through an example of borrowing.

"This is a chest from the 19th century. Made in England. It is filled with different toys. The fact that we were in the museum and viewing this piece is an account of intercultural relations within the house museum."



***Figure 5-58. Untitled.
Photograph by Member E***

The following submission returns to the idea of European influence on American life. Member E essentializes Europeans, assigning them a motive to "get away from" Europe without leaving their lifestyles to assimilate to a new culture. It also shows borrowing between cultures, a criterion of inter. This could also be an indirect juxtaposition and judgment of the requirement for African Americans who did not want to get away from their homeland and who were prevented from continuing their traditions here. He also critiques the museum for not drawing out the inter-cultural connections in the exhibits.

Figure 5-59. Untitled.



Figure 5-59. Untitled. Photograph by Member E

"I took this picture because of the mix and matched furniture, the carpet, the window symmetry and the long mirror. All of these aspects show the European influence and copying in the construction of this building. This was in the 18th and 19th centuries that these homes were built. For it to be still

standing is a great reminder of how far the Europeans wanted to get away from Europe but still stayed close to all the traditions they knew. Within this house there was a lot of content. I feel that the intercultural connections are implied and [not] automatically understood. If connections were made and are intertwined in the museum much of the information can be easily understood. This is the mirror in the back of an almost 2 hundred years old house."

Figure 5-60. Untitled.

The two final photographs submitted by Member E are connected. The dolls in this cabinet include Native American dolls and a large puppet Black doll such as a ventriloquist would have used. Member E also submitted a photograph of the puppet alone.

"Lastly this is like a cabinet of curiosities. This glass cabinet is in a bedroom and has a diverse array of items within it. 18th century native American dolls, an early brown skinned blaxploitation doll, and other toys that had been collected. To think someone slept in a home with all these items is quite interesting."

Member E employs the creolization of inter by the use of the vernacular word, "blaxploitation" to describe the doll in his caption.



*Figure 5-60. Untitled.
Photograph by Member E*

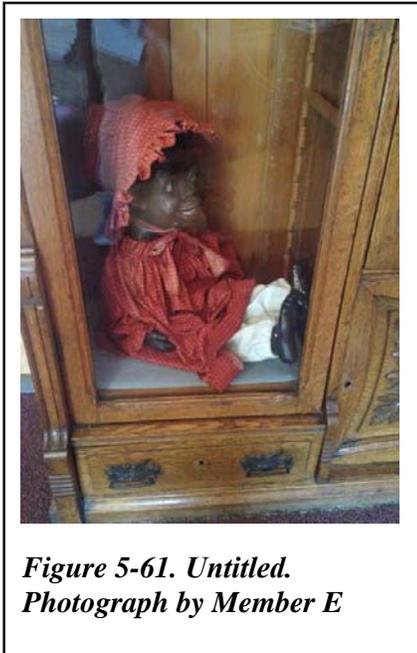


Figure 5-61. Untitled.

Member E included a close-up photograph of this doll as well.

"This is a close up of the specific doll I mentioned... Enslavement, institutional indentured servitude and poverty reeked through the American population in the US and this is an example of that history present in this house museum"

Here, Member E continues to creolize the space of inter at the museum by giving voice to past trauma and suffering that he associates with the production of this caricature doll.

Member F- Immigrant college student and soccer player

Member F is a single immigrant man from Liberia in his early twenties who lives in student housing at a small community college in Jefferson County, Missouri, where he plays on the school soccer team. His family immigrated to St. Louis, where he attended and graduated from high school. Member F was recruited to the project by Member B through her son, a soccer coach at the St. Louis high school that Member F attended. Member F submitted three photographs taken at White Haven and two taken at the Scott Joplin House; however, he included no comments or titles, so the images alone are what we have, from him, to think about. Member F is not active on Facebook so I have no posts from him about the events of Ferguson.

Member F's photographs of White Haven

Figure 5-62. Untitled.

Member F's photographs of White Haven are all images on text panels. The first shows men laying rock along what would become a railroad. The whites, with jackets and top hats, are in the foreground, sitting and talking. The African Americans are with the animals in the background smoothing out the rocks. This image shows inter by portraying coexisting cultures.

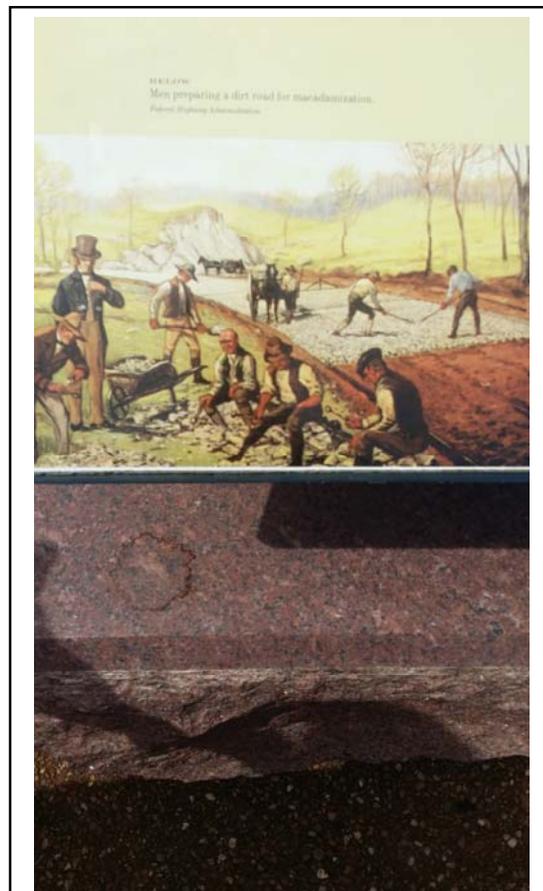
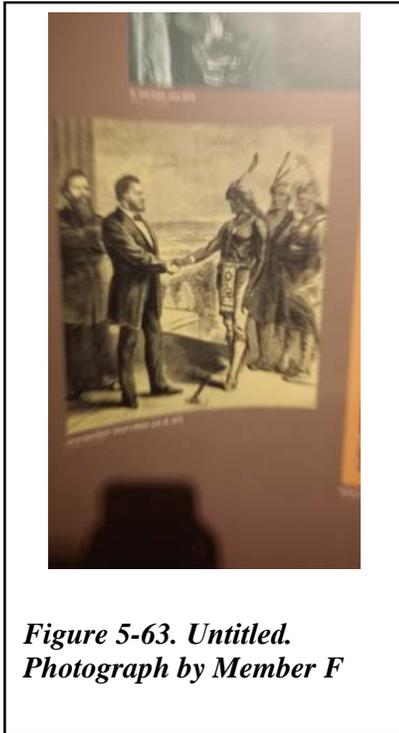


Figure 5-62. Untitled. Photograph by Member F

Figure 5-63. Untitled.



Member F's second image from White Haven shows President Grant shaking hands with Native American chiefs in full regalia. Once again, this image satisfies inter's criterion of portraying two co-existing cultures.

Figure 5-64. Untitled.

Member F's third image from White Haven shows a political cartoon in which an African American child is being beaten in front of a soldier guarding the U.S. Marshall's office. In the background, whites carrying signs for the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) are massing. The title of the cartoon asks the question: "*Shall we call home our troops.*" The subtitle for the cartoon reads: "*We intend to beat the Negro in the battle of life and defeat means one thing - EXTERMINATION!*"

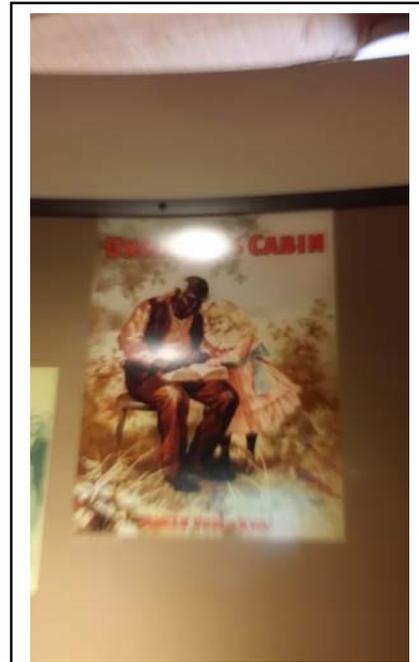
The cartoon was originally published in the Birmingham, Alabama, News. Not only does the image continue to depict the coexistence of cultures, it also may serve the creolization of the space of inter to insist that this trauma never be forgotten.



Member F's photographs of the Scott Joplin

House Figure 5-65. Untitled.

Member F's first photograph from the Scott Joplin House is of the cover for a magazine. An African American adult man is seated outdoors on a bench with a book in his lap. A white girl child is standing at his side, pointing at words in the book. The image is entitled "Uncle Tom's Cabin," an allusion to the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe that brought popular attention to the abolitionist cause prior to the Civil War, when it was illegal for enslaved Africans to be taught or to learn how to read. It also shows inter in the depiction of two co-existing cultures.



***Figure 5-65. Untitled.
Photograph by Member F***



***Figure 5-66. Untitled.
Photograph by Member F***

Figure 5-66. Untitled.

Member F's final submission is of the early twentieth-century icebox in the kitchen of the Scott Joplin House that he talked about at the restaurant. As he explained there, this image constituted a representation of inter by virtue of its contrast with today's smart, computerized refrigerators. This image does qualify as a depiction of inter, from my perspective, because it raises uncertainty in me, a quality of inter's blurred boundaries and it makes me think that I may be missing Member F's intended meaning, another thing that happens in the space of inter.

Member G - Immigrant college student and soccer player

Member G is a single immigrant from Kenya in his early twenties who lives in student housing at a small community college in Jefferson County, Missouri, where he, along with Member F, plays on the school soccer team. His family immigrated to St. Louis, where he attended and graduated from high school. Member G was recruited to the project by Member B through her son, a soccer coach at the St. Louis high school that Member G attended. Member G is Muslim and, because the day we did the site visits was during the month of Ramadan, where Muslims fast during the daylight hours, Member G limited himself to water at both the orientation meeting and the debriefing meeting and took the food “to go” to eat after dark. Member G did not return any photographs, despite being asked several times by both Member B and myself. However, Member G provided valuable comments during the day, and his participation enhanced the experience for all of us there, as was evidenced by Member B’s comments about the diversity of the team and in St. Louis in contrast to her hometown of Jackson, Missouri, 120 miles south of St. Louis. Member G does not use Facebook, so there are no quotes from him about Ferguson available on that social media platform.

Conclusion to this chapter

The members each understood the project, prompt and assignment differently. They did not have the list of the criteria I have, in chapter two, theorized as pertaining to and defining the space of inter. The team members were given an open-ended prompt. However, each of their submissions fits easily and naturally into one of the theoretical criteria for inter. To sum up the participant submissions as they depict or describe one of more of the qualifications of inter, I present this chart, noting here, that none of the images fit into the criterion of paradox.

Sets of Subjective Visual Snapshots Created by the Members of the Participant Team

Criterion of Inter	Images Fitting that Criterion
Overlaps, borrowings, and coexistences between cultures	5-3, 5-7, 5-12, 5-15, 5-22, 5-23/24, 5-26, 5-27, 5-31, 5-33, 5-36, 5-38, 5-44, 5-47, 5-51, 5-52, 5-53, 5-54, 5-58, 5-59, 5-62, 5-63, 5-64, 5-65
Creolization by:	
<i>Local, vernacular viewpoints and modes of representation</i>	5-25, 5-43, 5-45, 5-60
<i>Counter-politics, counter imaginings, counter-metaphysics</i>	5-7, 5-32, 5-37, 5-40, 5-39, 5-41, 5-48
<i>Break silence, remember, bear witness, give voice to past trauma or suffering</i>	5-29, 5-35, 5-40, 5-41, 5-45, 5-48, 5-61, 5-64
Blurred boundaries by:	
<i>Uncertainty or ambiguity</i>	5-11, 5-16, 5-28, 5-34, 5-66
<i>Questioning or attempting to define a place</i>	5-8, 5-10, 5-30, 5-42, 5-50, 5-55, 5-56
Interstitial intimacy by:	
<i>Innovation or interrupting the performance of the present</i>	5-20, 5-49
<i>Public becomes merged with private</i>	5-6, 5-27, 5-57
Problems of misread, misappropriated or loss of meaning	5-9, 5-13, 5-14, 5-17, 5-18, 5-19, 5-21, 5-28, 5-34, 5-66
Paradox	

Figure 5-67. Chart of Images Associated with Criteria for Inter

Taken together, these responses and images provide a kind of crazy quilt through which to think about how to rethink and re-purpose how the museum, and particularly the American house museum, interprets diversity. The goal of the next two chapters is to assemble the crazy quilt.

Section Three

Themes, Analyses, Conclusions

Chapter 6

Themes Emerging From the Data

On July 11, 2015, the participant team and I met in St. Louis for an orientation meeting followed, the same day, by three site visits and ending with a debriefing conversation. Each participant was charged with the task of photographing anything they assessed to be evidence of a past inter-cultural encounter at each site. Inter-cultural was broadened to encompass culture, race, ethnicity, gender and faith. The participants agreed to submit five photographs per site, accompanied by a title and a caption explaining why they took each picture. There was a range of compliance with these requests, but, in all, the sixty-one images, along with forty captions and thirty titles I presented in chapter five, were submitted by a total of seven participant members. In addition to associating each submission to a theoretical criterion of inter, as I did in the last chapter, this chapter funnels the data through five main topics: 1) the interpretation of diversity at these three house museums; 2) the museum as knowledge broker or hermeneutic provocateur; 3) the value of the visual methodology; 4) the priority of honor in the interpretation of diversity; and 5) the correlation between my predictions (along with the backdrop of “Ferguson”) and the data returned. In summary, the goal for this chapter is to analyze how well the data serves these core concepts surrounding museum interpretation at these three house museums in order to draw some preliminary conclusions that should lead to more and larger-in-scope research.

The interpretation of diversity at these three house museums

The first question to be addressed in this chapter is whether the data demonstrates that these three house museums preserve and/or interpret evidence of past inter-cultural encounters that might be valuable to the development of new knowledge about history, and social history, in particular. A corollary to this question is whether the participants

brought any critique of how the museums handled this evidence that proceeded from the request for them to view the sites through the lens of inter-cultural encounters. This will be partially addressed through an evaluation of the surprising submission of seventeen photographs of museum-generated text panels and the associated participant-generated titles and captions. Gaps in what the museum presents, according to members of the participant team and their submissions, will also assist in reflecting on this question.

The first inkling I had that the participant team would return data that suggests that these museums do, in fact, preserve and interpret evidence of past inter-cultural encounters—and that they also would severely critique what the interpretation asserts—happened at the debriefing session at the restaurant. I posed the question:

So, what happened today from your point of view? (Barker 2015).

In reply, Member C, invoking inter's criterion of interstitial intimacy by risking a private opinion in this public forum, said,

We're a little afraid of our slave history so we don't acknowledge it and try to cover it up (Ibid).

I asked whether the team felt that the sites do a good job interpreting “*our slave history*.” Member D used her answer to issue a call for balance and truth. It creolized the space of inter because she offered a counter-imagining to the museum's interpretation. She said,

It goes back to the value we place on different aspects of our history. Look at the Scott Joplin House... That did not seem to be a fair portrayal of his life. There was no intentional balance. No other cultures. All the whites he would have dealt with.... At the Scott Joplin House if you were an alien dropped off in that space you would have thought whites were not part of his life. No one questioned that. There needs to be a true representation. You don't have to overdo it. You just have to speak the truth (Ibid).

Speaking of the U.S. Grant White Haven site, she continued,

I remember going on the U.S. Grant tour years ago. Years ago, the guide was scripted. Today the guide has been given permission to talk about what used to be taboo. Even in some descriptions of slave conditions. New content is there that has been updated to reflect the changing of our times. Not so much the Eugene Field House (Ibid).

I asked about the mirror in the U.S. Grant White Haven parlor that doubles as a digital frame to play a dramatized dinner conversation between Colonel Dent and U. S. Grant while Julia Grant sits demurely with her back to the audience. At the same time, the enslaved African woman domestic servant faces the audience but makes no sign that she hears, understands or has any opinion about the conversation or about the issue of slavery. Member E, again offered an expression of inter's potential for interstitial intimacy by interrupting, trusting us with his private pain, when he exclaimed,

I hated it! I had to walk away! (Ibid).

This led to a more extensive discussion among the participants about whether the current and modern technology-driven interpretation of diversity at these three house museums interrupts, disrupts, confronts or reinforces old stereotypes. Member E continued, creolizing, as happens in the space of inter, by giving voice to past suffering. He said:

Justify. Technology - is it reinforcing the untruth? Are the new tools being used to reinforce the old stereotype? The representation of Julia. Would she have been talking? (Ibid).

I interposed, "It's her home," to which Member E, returning to the creolizing behavior of remembering and allowing another interstitial intimacy of what may be the public expression of some past private pain, said, "You get beat at home." (Ibid).

Inter-cultural

Each submission was made after a time of reflection. Member A and Member C texted their submissions the evening of the day we did the site visits. The other members responded within two weeks of the visits. Member G did not return any submissions after repeated requests. Each photograph was intended to fulfil the prompt to capture evidence of past inter-cultural encounters that are

being preserved and/or interpreted at each museum. The data returned answers to the prompt in some interesting ways. Some photographs clearly show artifacts that indicate that such inter-cultural encounters happened. Other photographs support a member-generated caption or title which conveys the opinion or explanation for how the photograph satisfies the prompt. Still other photographs rely on and depict what was identified as inter-cultural by the museum's interpretation. All of the submissions, as I showed in chapter five, fit one or more of the criteria to describe what happens in the space of inter that I established in chapter two.

The inter-cultural message is conveyed by the image

The participant photographs taken at White Haven that clearly portray evidence of an inter-cultural encounter by portraying overlapping, borrowing or co-existences between cultures are the following. Member C submitted a photograph (Figure 5-26) that captures both the stone kitchen, where the enslaved domestic servants worked, and the main house. She also submitted a photograph (Figure 5-30) of a Native American peace pipe that had been given to President Grant. Two photographs submitted by Member F are enlarged facsimiles of period ephemera that portray inter-cultural encounters. Figure 5-63 shows President Grant shaking the hand of a Native American chief in full tribal regalia. Figure 5-64 portrays a political cartoon that shows a white man beating an African child in front of the U.S. Marshall's office, with members of the Ku Klux Klan robed and standing in the background.

Participant photographs taken at the Scott Joplin House that clearly portray evidence of an inter-cultural encounter, again by showing overlaps, borrowings or co-existences between cultures, are these. Member B's photograph (Figure 5-16) of a printed prayer in German that is hanging in the living room is one. The photograph (Figure 5-17) of the black Jesus is another. This becomes inter-cultural only when one considers that most depictions of Jesus, and of cherubs, portray them as white. Member F submitted a photograph (Figure 5-57) of a magazine cover about the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* illustrated with a painting of a black man being read to by a little white girl.

The participant photographs taken at the Eugene Field House that clearly portray preserved evidence of past inter-cultural encounters by depicting overlapping, borrowing or co-existences between cultures are the following. Three Native American dolls that belonged to Eugene Field are the subject of Figure 5-22 by Member B. The dolls are also the subjects of Figure 5-37 submitted by Member C. They are also included in the photograph (Figure 5-60) by Member E. Member D's photograph (Figure 5-44) of the two-room doll house with the white family's parlor on top and the kitchen and laundry area, where the enslaved African woman works, on the bottom, was also portrayed in Member C's Figure 5-38. Member E submitted two photographs (Figure 5-60 and Figure 5-61) of the carved puppet that is a mocking caricature of an African American. Another photograph (Figure 5-36) submitted by Member C is of the Field family's European coat of arms. She and Member E are the people who consistently recognized and identified European as another culture.

The inter-cultural message is conveyed by the image in conjunction with the title or caption

The pictures that depict evidence of inter-cultural encounters preserved at White Haven, but which rely on the member's creolizing, counter-imagined (from the museum's interpretation) caption to explain the existence of such evidence, are the following. Member E submitted photographs of a section of vertical log architecture (Figure 5-48), the stone fireplace in the outdoor kitchen (Figure 5-29) and a piece of blue transfer ware (Figure 5-50). Each of these pictures depends on the caption to explain why he thought these represented inter-cultural encounters. In the same way, Member B used captions to link the idea of inter-cultural to photographs (Figure 5-13 and Figure 5-14) that, in themselves, do not, without reliance on her text, convey this message. Member C's picture of a curtain rod (Figure 5-27) becomes evidence, in her opinion, of an inter-cultural encounter by means of the title, "*European Heritage.*"

Pictures from the Scott Joplin House that depend on the member's creolizing, counter-imagined (from the museum's interpretation) caption or title for the inter-cultural message to be conveyed are the following. Member C submitted a picture (Figure 5-31) of a lampshade etched with a Grecian-inspired border that she titled "*Greek influence.*" She also photographed a pair

of spats (Figure 5-32) that, in themselves, do not obtain to any race until they are paired with the title she gave: *“Walk a Mile in the White Man’s Shoe.”* This is the same strategy she employed with the photograph (Figure 5-33) of a stereo cabinet entitled *“Music Brings the World Together.”* Member E’s photograph of the exterior of the brick house (Figure 5-52) shows a typical St. Louis building, but his title *“European Style Building”* demonstrates that he considers the architecture to be evidence of inter-cultural influence. The presumed inter-cultural aspect of his photograph (Figure 5-53) of a framed portrait of Scott Joplin also depends on the caption *“housed in a European frame.”* In the captions for two other photographs from this site (Figure 5-54 and Figure 5-55), Member E continues to argue that artifacts on display, that are of European origin or influence, are evidence of past inter-cultural encounters.

I list Member C’s photograph (Figure 5-38) of the upper room of the doll house at the Eugene Field House as an example of an image that she feels is indicative of a preserved inter-cultural encounter. However, to understand that she is talking about European as the other culture that bumped into an American culture, we have to rely on her creolizing title, *“European Affluence.”* Other photographs from the Eugene Field House whose inter-cultural messages are incomplete without the creolizing, counter-imagined (to the museum’s interpretation) caption or title include the following. Member E submitted two images (Figure 5-58 and Figure 5-59) portraying furniture that he wrote was made in Europe. Without the inclusion of the creolizing caption, the furniture does not, in itself, communicate an inter-cultural message, in my opinion.

The inter-cultural message reflects the museum’s interpretation

Other submissions from White Haven depend on the interpretation supplied by the ranger to identify the inter-cultural context. Member A submitted a photograph (Figure 5-8) of the green door which the ranger explained had been left unpainted. He said that this door was the one used by the enslaved members of the household. It was unpainted, he explained, to remind the enslaved members of the households that they held a lower status than the white family. Member C also submitted a picture of this door (Figure 5-25), as

did Member D (Figure 5-39). Without the information supplied by the ranger, and also written on the museum's text panel next to it, this door would not, in itself, clearly depict evidence of an inter-cultural encounter, so it actually serves as evidence that this museum interprets diversity, here, by replicating a traditional practice. Member B submitted a photograph (Figure 5-15) of the display of dishes where porcelain plate fragments are set next to crude earthenware. The interpretive label provides the information that the more expensive china was for the use of the white family. The museum's interpretation in both cases called attention to the co-existence between the cultures: master's and enslaved's on the plantation.

The participants did not submit any pictures from the Scott Joplin House that relied on the information provided by the guide or on any interpretive signage. The only written interpretive material at the Eugene Field House is in Roswell Field's law office and on the third floor in the more traditional museum exhibit, "*A Room Divided*." The reading rails in the law office narrate the details of the Dred and Harriet Scott court cases that were defended by Field. The docent provided us with no interpretation about the site, in general, and the participants asked her for very little specific input.

The participant-generated photographs and their captions and titles do indicate that White Haven clearly preserves and interprets evidence of past inter-cultural encounters between enslaved and free persons, between Native Americans and U.S. citizens, between people of African descent and whites, and between Europeans and Americans. The participants found this evidence in various artifacts, in aspects of the architecture, and in documents on display. The participant submissions also indicate that the Scott Joplin House preserves and interprets evidence of past inter-cultural encounters between Europeans and African Americans and between white Americans and African Americans. Again, the participants photographed and made reference to architecture, artifacts and ephemera to support their opinions. The Eugene Field House also was found by the participants to include preserved, but not interpreted, evidence of past inter-cultural encounters through artifacts including pieces of furniture and toys on display. It is interesting to note that the participants did not submit any images or statements about the interpretive

panels in Roswell Field's law office that describe and narrate the Dred and Harriet Scott Supreme Court suit for freedom.

Inter-cultural broadened to consider past encounters between men and women

By extending the idea of inter-cultural to include past encounters between men and women, the participants were invited to probe whether Debra Reid's claim that the house museum has value as a resource for social historians who are looking to understand more about the domestic life of men, women and children in the past (Reid 2002). The participants did submit some images that clearly relate to such past encounters. Member A's photograph (Figure 5-6) of an enlarged facsimile of a letter written from Ulysses Grant to his wife is one example that shows a dispute between them. Her submission (Figure 5-11), along with the caption and title explaining how amazing she found the guest list to a state dinner without any corrections to be, "*Nothing Scratched Through,*" is also an example of this encounter between men and women where the First Lady invites both men and women to dine at the White House. Member B's photograph (Figure 5-12) of an illustration of the wedding tradition of "jumping the broom" at a wedding between enslaved individuals taken at White Haven is alluded to, perhaps, by Member C's photograph (Figure 5-29) of a reproduction broom to which she provided the title "*Marriage Equality.*" Member B submitted two photographs (Figure 5-23 and Figure 5-24) that she juxtaposed, as did the Eugene Field House, as an example of inter-cultural encounters. They also fit in this arena because they are both of mannequins wearing pieces of women's clothing. Member C (Figure 5-35) also included one of these dresses and the title "*It's the Dress Code.*" It is interesting that no analogous male garments were on display. Member C included a photograph (Figure 5-34) of a toothbrush and labeled it "*Shared Goods,*" a reference, perhaps, to the fact that it is a tool used by men, and women, as well as by both white and people of African descent.

Of the three sites, only White Haven intentionally set out to interpret a woman's perspective. One of its key stories is the courtship between Grant and Julia Dent. So, it is that site which included more artifacts and stories about women.

Even though Scott Joplin had been recently divorced and remarried, and his wife Belle Hayden would have lived in the house with him, there was, unless one relegates the kitchen to be a woman's domain, no hint that any woman had been there. The Eugene Field House contains various dolls, including both girl and boy dolls. It includes Harriet Scott in its interpretation of the Dred Scott Case. A section of "*The Room Divided*" exhibit is devoted to the role of Catholic nuns in nineteenth-century St. Louis. The site includes a woman's dresser in contrast and parallel to a man's dresser. However, these were not portrayed or discussed in the material submitted by the participants, except for the dresses. Reid's insistence (Ibid) that house museum collections should be mined for what they contribute to our knowledge about the domestic lives of men, women and children seems to be borne out by what is preserved but not interpreted at these sites.

The museum as knowledge broker or hermeneutic provocateur

The second question that this chapter considers is whether the data contributes any insight in favor, or in dispute, of the role of the museum, as shown by its interpretation, as a knowledge broker or expert. This will be addressed by probing six themes that appear to be emerging from the data: 1) images of text panels as a critique and reply to the museum; 2) juxtapositions; 3) the "other," "self," stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions; 4) cultural and historical distance; 5) the identification of European as an "other"; and 6) perceived gaps in the museum's interpretation. How the themes proceed from the data will be discussed, as well as what the themes suggest about current interpretive practices at these sites. In addition, this section will consider what these themes illustrate about how the submissions themselves represent that a hermeneutical circle of understanding was at work in the participants.

Images of text panels as critiques and replies to the museum

I was surprised that seventeen of the sixty-one images submitted are of museum-produced interpretive text panels instead of objects. The captions and

titles submitted alongside these images suggest that the participants were utilizing the panels as ways to intentionally confront, critique, query or reply to the museum's interpretation of an aspect of inter-cultural encounters and/or diversity. Each of these submissions also demonstrates that, for the duration of the project, the museum functioned as a space of inter that permitted creolizing expressions of local vernacular viewpoints and representations, counter-politics and imaginings, and the breaking of silence, remembering and giving voice to past suffering. Some of these submissions also testify to the museum's function as a space of inter because they indicate blurred boundaries and the problems of misread, misappropriated or loss of meaning.

Member A found the *"pretty personal bit of history in a very public spot"* something she was *"pretty positive that wouldn't have been his intent."* She was speaking of a letter (Figure 5-6) from Grant to his wife. However, her sensibility about what should be respected as private between husband and wife functions as a judgment against the museum's decision to display the letter near the gift shop. Her submission of a text panel with biographical details about Col. Dent is accompanied by *"I rest my case about Col. Dent"* because she judges that he was against the tide of history with his pro-slavery positions. In this case, she is replying to and agreeing with the bias of the museum. She submitted a photograph (Figure 5-9) of the interpretive panel that discusses the unpainted door as a way to *"control"* the *"slaves"* at White Haven. In her caption about the photograph of the door itself (Figure 5-8), she discloses a judgment of the *"incredible ignorance of humanity as God sees it"* that was, in her opinion, prevalent in a slaveholding culture. Figure 5-9, with its apology for the *"huge white light on this"* could be an unintentional but apt visual metaphor for this entire project. Her photographs (Figures 5-10 a and b) of the interpretive panels in the stone kitchen that talk about the *"Slaves' Experience at White Haven"* are accompanied by a series of questions that are posed as if challenging the museum:

What choice did they have? Did they understand their future as slaves? Could they even have thought in terms of future freedom?

These questions were based in her erroneous statement (when you consider the African abolitionists like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Prince Hall and others) that there was no one like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. around to advocate for freedom. The site could have provided answers for these questions in an African voice that might have challenged her uninformed, good-hearted but stereotypical opinions and that could have opened a space for a new interpretation to have formed within her.

Member D submitted the same photograph of the museum interpretive panel entitled “The Invisible Hand of Slavery,” (Figure 5-40 and 5-41) twice with two different titles. The panel communicates the irony that Julia thought that the enslaved, named individuals who worked the plantation “were happy with their lot” but that, in fact, they could not “benefit from their own labors.” While the museum’s interpretation is critical of this condition, its title is not as strong as either of the titles used for the photograph by Member D. The first, “White Privilege,” is an indictment or an accusation. The second, “The Invisible Hammer of Slavery,” conveys a much more sinister message than that implied by the museum. The next text panel photographed and submitted by Member D also critiques the romantic message of the museum. The museum’s title is “Home and Community” and includes a quotation from a book about White Haven. This panel does not mention either the white owner and his family or the enslaved African laborers. However, Member D uses the submission to contrast the pleasure that the white family might derive from their beautiful home with the fact that, as she names her submission, for the enslaved Africans who lived at White Haven, it is “....an ocean away from their stolen home,” which would not have been and should not now be forgotten. Member D also submitted Figure 5-42, a photograph of the Scott Joplin House interpretive panel called “Sedalia.” The museum’s message is that Joplin was “discovered” by the director of the St. Louis Choral Symphony Society, Alfred Ernst, while a piano student at the George R. Smith College for Negroes in Sedalia, Missouri. Ernst recognized his talent as “unique,” “melodious,” deserving of “proper cultivation” in order for it to “develop [into] positive genius,” but that it should be directed into “compositions of a higher class.”

Member D also submitted a photograph of the “*Time Line*” from the Eugene Field House. She framed the photograph so that the time line starts with the 1820 Missouri Compromise and ends with the cession of South Carolina from the United States in 1860. The interpretive panel links various historical events that led up to the American Civil War. Once again, Member D used the invitation to change the title to “Front Line,” another stronger statement than the museum’s. Member D submitted just two photographs that do not have interpretive panels as subjects. She directly responded to the museum by shifting their weaker, biased-towards-the-white perspective, written interpretation to stronger, more critical, and often cynical statements. Member E submitted one photographed interpretive panel from White Haven (Figure 5-51), giving the reason for the choice in his caption: “It was the only diagram in the place that showed more than one nationality on a card.” Indeed, the submissions by Member F demonstrate that Member E missed a few “cards,” but the criticism that the museum’s visual interpretation could benefit from more representations of non-white individuals who would have encountered each other during Grant’s life and presidency stands as another example of how the participants used images of museum interpretive panels to critique its educational messages. Member E returned to this theme in his submission of a time line on display above the player piano at the Scott Joplin House. Here his caption is a request for more and better contextualized interpretation:

These diagrams seem to highlight limited information about Scott and his life time. It would be interesting to see these posters contextualized within the scope of his life time and the rest of contemporary history at that time.

Member F submitted three photographs of interpretive panels from White Haven (Figure 5-62, Figure 5-63 and Figure 5-64). Each panel displays images of inter-cultural encounters but, because he did not include any narrative with his submissions, it is impossible to know whether they are intended to convey any other message or meaning (an example of inter’s blurred boundaries or of a loss of meaning), than a literal compliance with the prompt.

The majority of these submitted photographs of the museums' interpretive panels do include words that communicate the participant's reply, or else question, provide a contrasting opinion, or critique the museum's message. In other words, they produce a creolizing counter-imagining or other message that indicates that inter is in play. This suggests to me that if the museums were to invite visitors to engage with them to provide dissenting information, opinions and emotional reactions, a much richer, stronger, and perhaps even more accurate conversation might ensue. That the participants risked taking and voicing positions critical of the written text panels provided by the museums is notable and courageous in light of the power that Gadamer assigns to written material. He writes:

The sheer fact that something is written down gives it special authority. It is not altogether easy to realize that what is written down can be untrue. The written word has a tangible quality of something that can be demonstrated and is like a proof. It requires a special critical effort to free oneself from the prejudice in favor of what is written down and to distinguish here also, no less than in the case of oral assertions, between opinion and truth
(Gadamer 2013).

As long as the museum retains in its position as expert, teacher, and controller of information and knowledge, in my opinion, such an invitation for the audiences to engage with the interpretation in an open, raw, dissenting or critical manner will likely be hindered.

Juxtapositions

According to Stuart Kaplan, a juxtaposition is a type of visual metaphor that sets two things in linguistic, pragmatic or hermeneutic tension (Kaplan 1992). So, when the participant team used any form of juxtaposition in their submissions, they were intentionally creating a comparison. Some of the submissions included visual juxtapositions within a single image, such as the photograph (Figure 5-15) by Member B of a display at White Haven of earthenware next to porcelain. This image reiterates the museum's interpretive decision to juxtapose the dishes, so it satisfies the prompt by showing two coexisting cultures in the space of inter. Member C's photograph (Figure 5-25), taken looking at the corner made by the connection of the stone kitchen to the wall of the main house at White Haven, was an intentional juxtaposition on the part of the participant, as evidenced by her title, "*The True Great Divide*." Here the visual juxtaposition of a joint between two sections of a building jars against her choice of the counter-imaging, creolizing giving voice to past suffering by the word "divide." Member D's photograph (Figure 5-44 of the doll house at the Eugene Field House is another example of a visual juxtaposition within a single image. Actually, the artifact itself provides the juxtaposition. Her comments at the debriefing session at the restaurant show how powerful she felt this juxtaposition to be. She said,

The doll house with white lifestyle on top and blacks on the bottom. They are in one house but the relationship is not clear. It is almost as if they are trying to reinforce the separation, not talk about the integration. Not trying to make an attempt to show an integration between the cultures. Forced. Law. Mandate. Part of their religion that we are not the same (Barker 2015).

Some participants included two images that, when taken together, create a visual juxtaposition when enlightened by the title or caption. For example, Member B submitted a pair of images (Figure 5-23 and Figure 5-24) of the dresses on display at the Eugene Field House. She strengthened the counter-imagined creolizing force of the juxtaposition by using parallel titles. The dress said to be consistent with what an enslaved African woman wore is described as “*Coarseness, Style and Fit*,” while the dress said to be what a white woman wore in the same period is described as “*Fashion, Quality and Fit*”.

Member B submitted another pair of photographs from White Haven where her caption indicates that, in her opinion, they are to be considered together, juxtaposed. Figure 5-13 is a photograph of a cart and Figure 5-14 is a photograph of a plow. In both captions, Member B uses the adjective “*primitive*” in conjunction with her stated assumption that the item was made “*by slaves*” and also used by them to produce a profit for the white family.

Member C intentionally juxtaposed a photograph of a Grecian motif etched on a lampshade on display at the Scott Joplin House with the same motif on the wallpaper in the white family’s room in the doll house at the Eugene Field House. Not only is the motif used decoratively in each artifact, her titles, similar to Member B’s strategy with the dresses, force us to consider the two images in tandem. The lampshade (Figure 5-31) is called “*Greek Influence*” while the doll house (Figure 5-38) is called “*Greek Affluence*.”

Member B juxtaposed a photograph (Figure 5-19) of the paper collar on the dresser in Scott Joplin’s bedroom with the expression of a verbal stereotype in the caption. She wrote,

Stiff paper covered with cotton worn tightly around the neck for the collar to what his parents would have worn as a slave and a laborer.

Scott Joplin's father had been enslaved, but whether, in the 1850's, he would have worn neck shackles is not known, so the juxtaposition she made may indicate what she assumes and feels (i.e., her pre-existing, hermeneutic "prejudice"). These assumptions are also consistent with what happens in the space of inter where meaning can be misread or misappropriated and lost.

Kaplan's identification of a juxtaposition as a metaphor (Kaplan 1992) is useful to our conversation when added to the connection Snodgrass and Coyne make about metaphors as the "*transference of one concept to another*" (Snodgrass and Coyne 1992 p.56) and that metaphors "*convey their meaning by way of hermeneutical understanding*" (Ibid p.62). Not only do the juxtapositions submitted by the participants repeat the museum's interpretation, they also expose the participant's understandings, biases and erroneous beliefs. There may be tremendous potential for increased engagement through a shrewd, intentional employment of juxtaposition by the museum that could result in hermeneutics-informed new interpretations.

Research based on exploring this idea is indicated, in my opinion. Its results could be especially useful in shifting the museum towards a humbler interpretive position that prioritizes giving honor, value and respect to each "other" who participated in the encounters on display. The research should explore what would happen if a museum were to specifically invite its visitors to produce visual and verbal juxtapositions in response to what the museum has on exhibit.

The "other", "self", stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions

How the "other," the "self" and stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions were represented in the submissions indicates the hermeneutic prejudices or prior knowledge with which the participants arrived at the museums, in my

opinion.

The data also adds depth to the hermeneutic ideas of prejudice and prior knowledge, the hermeneutic circle of understanding (Golding 2013), and to the idea that interpretation is both a subjective and socially informed activity (Davey 1999 p.3). According to Risser, “each [topic] requires *“the voice of the other”*” (Risser 1997).

When the participant submission reflected their own gender, heritage, race or ethnicity, I started calling the phenomenon “mirroring.” When, however, the submission did not reflect anything about the gender, heritage, race or ethnicity of the participant, I started calling the phenomenon “othering.” When the submission involves mirroring, the participant is likely to be offering the museum a creolizing critique or reply. When it involves othering, however, the participant is likely to be expressing an assumption rooted in a stereotype that inhabits inter as a loss, misreading or misappropriation of meaning.

For example, Member A, a woman, mirroring Julia Grant, critiques White Haven for its placement of the intimate letter from Grant to his wife (Figure 5-6) because of its content that she claims should be, and it is understood that she expects that Julia Grant would have, kept private. Later, Member A provides an example of othering towards Col. Dent. Not only is he a man, he is pro-slavery, a position she abhors and, with this submission, her caption repeats a stereotype. Her caption for Figure 5-7 documents, judges and dishonors a person whose values contrast with her own. Member A persists in essentializing and generalizing “*the slaves... they*” in her comments.

Member B only used othering in her submissions. She sounds similar to Member A in her caption for “*Contrasting Weddings*” (Figure 5-12) by naming the whites but essentializing and anonymizing “*the slaves.*” She continues to display othering and to use pejorative language in her captions for Figures 5-12 and 5-13, in which she calls the cart and plow, both at White Haven,

“primitive.”

At the Scott Joplin House, othering continues to be accompanied by generalization in her submissions. The caption she wrote for Figure 5-18, a photograph of a clock, states that Africans had *“no background experience with timekeeping.”* This is a stereotype that essentializes and diminishes the African other and, actually, contains an inaccurate assertion. Her use of othering continues to expose her reliance on stereotypes. In her caption for Figure 5-19, the picture of the paper collar on Scott Joplin’s dresser, as noted above, she assumes that all slaves, throughout the whole time of slavery in America, wore neck shackles. When discussing the photograph of Native American dolls on display at the Eugene Field House, Member B’s use of othering exposes a stereotype that idolizes the members of this culture. They are *“independent, strong, original and indigenous”* in contrast to the words she used about enslaved Africans: *“enslaved”, “collared”,* and *“primitive”* with *“no experience.”*

Member C disclosed that she has a white mother and a black father, so she mirrors both white culture and black culture, but she others men and Native Americans. She mirrors her white heritage in Figure 5-27, a photograph of a curtain rod embellished with a pine cone. The explanation, which is also an example of an interstitial intimacy merging private and public, was given to me as a comment at the Eugene Field House,

I find it interesting that this house and the first house [White Haven] and my grandma’s house all have the same pinecone treatment on the windows.

At the restaurant during the debriefing conversation, Member C reflected, mirroring her experience as an African American mother with very young children with another interstitial intimacy between public and private. She said,

At the Eugene Field House, there was a newspaper cutting from October 1, 1847 about five negro slaves and their descriptions (Barker 2015).

I asked if they had run away from their owners. Member C replied,

I don't know how you would have escaped! Some of the slave children were the same age as my children. Thinking about trying to get my kids to cooperate and then trying to get to freedom with them... (Ibid).

Member C did not default to a stereotype when her submission was othering the picture of the Native American peace pipe and the currency at White Haven. Her title *"Native to the Area*, is perhaps a bit cynical, offering a possible creolizing counter-politics. It is interesting to notice that her photograph did not include the Ku Klux Klan mask that was on display in the same case.

Member D submitted just two images that were not photographs of museum-generated interpretive panels: Figure 5-43, of the window of the Scott Joplin House that would have been taxed at a higher amount had that window been a door, and the photograph (Figure 5-44) of the doll house at the Eugene Field House. She neither overtly mirrors nor others in her photographs. However, the titles she assigned the photographs all issue critiques of the museums for being under-balanced in their interpretation of the African American experience and history. So, perhaps her background as a journalist veils her bias, but it still emerges as a mirroring voice of critique by means of creolizing counter-imaginings and remembering of past suffering much of the time.

Member E disclosed that he has a black father and a white mother. In his caption for the photograph (Figure 5-57) of the crazy quilt at the Scott Joplin House, Member E uses mirroring to explain that he grew up with a similar quilt on his bed at home. He also mirrored what the docent at the Scott Joplin House explained about how African men shaved and saved the shaved hair to make ornaments. *"I save my shaved hair,"* said Member E. Both are examples of the interstitial intimacy of inter by merging public and private information. He takes an othering position in the caption of his photograph of the interior of one of the downstairs rooms at the Eugene Field House. In his caption, he essentializes and critiques Europeans who were early settlers in America for wanting to *"get away from Europe but still stay close to all the traditions they knew."* He mirrors the black doll on display at the Eugene Field House (Figures 5-60 and 5-61), critiquing it as an objectified stereotype, and renaming it a *"Blaxploitation Doll."*

Member F, an immigrant from Liberia, displayed mirroring in the images he submitted from White Haven (Figure 5-62 and Figure 5-64) and the Scott Joplin House (Figure 5-65), where black men or boys were portrayed. His submission with President Grant shaking hands with the Native American chief is an example of othering. Because Member F did not submit any titles or captions, there is no way to probe deeper into what he was trying to communicate through the images. Member G, an immigrant from Kenya, did not contribute the promised submissions, so we cannot include him in this part of the discussion.

In the images and associated text submitted by the participant team members for this project, othering tends to essentialize, marginalize and stereotype. Mirroring tends to try to explain or critique, prove or disprove. This suggests that there is a likelihood of over-statements, misstatements, and under-representation by the museum of what the other (to the museum) knows and understands. In my opinion, this potential for imbalance or inaccuracy increases when the museum views interpretation as an educational activity without disclosing the hermeneutical prejudices of its interpretive staff, because it is likely that some mirroring and othering is inherent in the museum interpretation due to the mirroring or othering influences of the interpretive staff. Member E wrote about this in his comment for Figure 5-58,

the fact that we were in the museum and viewing this piece is an account of inter-cultural relations within the house museum.

Othering tends to rehearse stereotypes. According to Bjartveit and Panayotidis,

the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story (Bjartveit and Panayotidis 2014 p.8).

If, instead, the museum framed its interpretive responsibility as that of hermeneutic provocateur, it might become the venue and trigger for Gadamer's

goal for truth to emerge through understanding the other, which he refers to here as “*the Thou*”:

What is so understood is not the Thou but the truth of what the Thou says to us. I mean specifically the truth that becomes visible to me only through the Thou, and only by letting myself be told something by it (Gadamer 2013).

Cultural and historical distance

Another hermeneutically significant theme emerging from the photo-voice data and its accompanying titles and captions is the depiction and description of cultural and historical, or temporal, distance or of Gadamer’s work on the “*historical nature of understanding itself.*” (Mueller-Vollner 2006 p.28).

According to Mueller-Vollner, Gadamer maintained that

Any interpretations of the past... are as much a creature of the interpreter’s own time and place as the phenomenon under investigation was of its own period of history (Ibid).

Another hermeneuticist put it this way:

Interpretation is an interaction between a historically produced text and a historically produced reader (Moules et al 2011 p.21).

Of course, our context requires us to treat “text” as museum artifact, and “reader” as one of the participant team members. Not only did the team members have to navigate the historical distance between themselves and each site, they also had to cope with cultural distance as well. This was illustrated by Member E in the caption he wrote to accompany his photograph (Figure 5-58) of a piece of furniture at the Eugene Field House when he characterized their visit as an inter-cultural experience even though the museum is within three miles of where he went to high school. He wrote:

The fact that we were in the museum and viewing this piece is an account of inter-cultural relations within the house museum.

Member C demonstrated an awareness that participating on the team allowed her to navigate new cultural distances. At the restaurant team meeting at the end of the site visits, she commented that St. Louis is so much more diverse than where she lives in Southern Missouri. She mentioned that not only did she meet Member F, who is from Liberia, and Member G, who is from Kenya, but, during the course of the day, she learned that they have friends here in St. Louis from Nepal—a fact that amazed her. The conversation shifted to a discussion about whether slang or Ebonics is a legitimate form of English communication. This revealed even more about how cultural distance impacts how we draw inferences and make judgments about each other. It is indicative of the problem of deriving mutual meaning that the space of inter contains. The idiom in question was used by Member C, *“Where you at?”* The two Africans were adamant that this is an illegitimate use of the English language. Other members commented as well. Member E said, *“We can change the language. I’m interested in progression, not stagnation.”* Member D bantered back, *“You are not interested in rules.”* Member C said, *“I think there is something refreshing about rules.”* Member E answered, *“I just give a little more freedom.”* The discussion moved to regional idioms. Member C suggested the word, *“schmarmy,”* which most of the rest of us did not recognize. *“It is used to describe something or someone kind of like a used car salesman,”* she explained. Member D asked Member F, *“Speaking of cultures: would it not be considered disrespectful to use your native language incorrectly?”* He answered, *“Yes, so, in America, we absolutely will not disrespect your language because I don’t disrespect mine”* (Barker 2015).

Two submissions portray historical distance: a photograph (Figure 5-21) of a bathtub from the Eugene Field House taken by Member B and a photograph (Figure 5-66) of the ice box in the Scott Joplin House taken by Member F. Member B’s caption makes some assumptions about the hygiene habits of the family based on what is traditionally thought to have been the norm for pioneer families in the 19th century. She wrote:

A hip bath in the Eugene Fields home. Once a month, whether needed or not, one tub of water. First the father, then the mother, then the children in birth order.

The museum did not have any interpretive signage to indicate that this would have been either the way, or the frequency, that the Field family bathed. There was no docent-led tour, either. So, Member B's assumption about the bath habits of the family derived from an imagined sense of history. Member F's photograph, *Icebox*, (Figure 5-66) is another example of historical Member F did not supply a caption with the image he submitted, but he did talk about this icebox at the restaurant. He contrasted the icebox, which has no electricity and, in essence, is a picnic cooler disguised as a piece of furniture for which large blocks of ice were regularly delivered, with a modern computerized refrigerator that "talks to you." "I was looking at how far we have come," he continued (Barker 2015).

Each museum constructed the historical and cultural atmosphere by arranging the houses so that the visitors could experience what home looked and felt like to these featured families. This curatorial role is largely guesswork assisted by any extant drawings, photographs or written descriptions of the homes. Archaeology and research by architect historians derive what they can of the remnants that still linger in the ground, and throughout the buildings, but the fact remains that this curation is a hermeneutic task, not the laying out of known, indisputable facts. The museum navigates cultural and historical distance and then invites the visitor to accept their rendition of the past. So, for the museum to view itself as the knowledge expert discounts the potential for a visitor:

making sense of particulars, putting them in context, assigning relevance and meaning and acting on the implications of that meaning ...that occurs in a shifting in-between, in the middle of relationships, contexts and particulars... (Moules et al 2011 p.2).

However, the museum, by offering what indisputable facts are available, mitigates the visitor's potential to misinterpret what is being presented. In my opinion, the museum should display facts without dictating a single conclusion that relies on its making inferences from those facts. The museum can, also, in my opinion, present an array of interpretative conclusions to demonstrate balance, inclusion and honor for each known possible iteration while offering

the visitors an invitation to suggest other ways of understanding the same array of facts from their own particular perspectives and prejudices.

Identification of European as an “other”

The identification of European as a distinct and “other” culture is another important theme to analyze. When considered next to Nick Sacco’s call for museums to practice “*affective equality*” (Sacco 2016) in the interpretation of diversity, the participant-generated and entitled “*Portrait of [the black man] Scott Joplin in a European Frame*” (Figure 5-53) seems essential and not incidental to this research (McInnes 2013 p.2). The lack of attention paid by these house museums to European legacies in the American experience and in the development of American material culture can be examined through the work done by Robin DiAngelo (DiAngelo 2012) and others, who are exploring whiteness studies as a way to confront the disparities left behind by colonialism in the way the races perceive themselves and each other, especially in the United States.

The discernment of European as an “other” culture is a theme that was only articulated by Member C and Member E, the two mixed-race participants, who noticed and highlighted it. Member C submitted four images that she intentionally connected to Europe. She gave the title “*European Heritage*” to the photograph (Figure 5-27) of the curtain rod embellished with a pine cone at White Haven and told me that her white grandmother gave her a similar curtain rod. She also submitted a photograph (Figure 5-31) from the Scott Joplin House of a lampshade etched with a Greek motif that she called “*European Influence*.” She submitted two European-themed photographs taken at the Eugene Field House: “*Family Tree*,” (Figure 5-36) and “*Greek Affluence*,” (Figure 5-38). At the debriefing conversation at the restaurant, Member C said,

It was interesting to see how many things in these houses were from European cultures and that are in our homes too. Like the blue china. That is what we use at Christmas every year. That

curtain rod with the pine cone ends...I know my grandma gave me one in the same style.” (Barker 2015).

Member E submitted six images that he intentionally connected to Europe. In his caption for the photograph of the house, White Haven (Figure 5-47), he wrote:

The Museum site prepares and keeps the buildings original Paris green color. It is a home in the United States but the color is named after a European city.

As a master’s student in ceramics, Member E was drawn to ceramic artifacts. The caption for his photograph (Figure 5-40) of blue transferware china queries the dishes, “*Was this European dishware? Where was it made? Possibly?*”. He calls the Scott Joplin House a “*European Style Building*” (Figure 5-52), and his photograph (Figure 5-54) of the wallpaper and a ceramic bowl in that house is called “*Euro Dominant*.” The caption for this photograph expresses his critique of the museum’s lack of attention to the European legacy that so prevails in this country’s material culture and history. It also epitomizes the blurred boundaries found in the space of inter. He wrote:

The wallpaper, the frames, and the porcelain in the home are another connection between the euro dominant culture that prevails in the United States. It is really interesting that the museums do not comment on the significance of these specific cultural markers that perpetuate the standard.

The photograph he submitted (Figure 5-59) of a chest “*Made in England*” is another insistence for us to pay attention to Europe as an other. The caption for Member E’s photograph (Figure 5-59) of the interior of one of the downstairs rooms at the Eugene Field House sums up his opinion about the importance of making the American legacy from Europe explicit. It also reveals his bias against what he thinks was a refusal of the European settlers in America to relinquish their European-ness on arriving in a new land. He wrote,

I took this picture because of the mix and matched furniture, the carpet, the window symmetry and the long mirror. All of these aspects show the European influence and copying in the construction of this building. This was in the 18th and 19th centuries that these homes were built. For it to be still standing is a great reminder of how far the Europeans wanted to get away from Europe but still stayed close to all the traditions they knew. Within this house there was a lot of content. I feel that the inter-cultural connections are implied and [not] automatically understood. If connections were made and are intertwined in the museum much of the information can be easily understood.

I was initially surprised that I had not ever thought about European culture as distinct from my own. On reflection, I think that this is perhaps because of mirroring, for how familiar these European things are to me, so familiar that they disappear from my radar. After all, even though my heritage is British, French and Spanish, albeit all dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I have never thought of myself as anything but an American, a descendant, even, from two prototypical American individuals who arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts, on the Mayflower in 1621. It is interesting that only the mixed-race participant team members noticed and identified European as a separate-from-American culture, and it is compelling that they each chose to call attention to it as preserved, but not interpreted, evidence of past inter-cultural encounters at all three sites, and that nearly one third of their submissions dealt with this theme. For each museum to neglect this theme, perhaps, may be a reflection of their systemic lack of diversity, another indictment against their expertise as a knowledge broker, and a pointer to direct a new role for the museum *vis-a-vis* interpretation as a hermeneutic practice that *“involves our sense of identity through differentiation”* (Kearney 2011 p.6).

Gaps

The last theme that I plan to interrogate via the participant-generated data related to the museum as knowledge broker or hermeneutic provocateur is

gaps in the interpretation or in the participants' observations of what the sites interpret. According to McInnes,

Hermeneutics suggests the assumptions, perspectives and biases of the researcher are not only embedded in the study... but are essential to the interpretive process (McInnes 2013 p.5).

As Merleau-Ponty argues,

meanings are never given as isolated terms or objects but always as parts of a mobile interaction of signs involving intervals, absences, folds and gaps (écarts) (Kearney 2011 p.6).

What the data suggests should assist museums in their decisions about which information to include to assist a hermeneutic approach to meaning-making within the space of inter, in my opinion. What the museum presents could serve as touch-points for the visitor to encounter and then admix to their initial knowledge and prejudices in order to make the internal wheel of the hermeneutic circle of understanding turn (Golding 2013).

The participant team members noticed a lack of balance in the interpretation, calling attention, in our debriefing conversation, to the lack of information about white people who would have been in relationship with Scott Joplin, for example. Calling attention to such missing content, in fact, is a creolizing behavior that happens in the space of inter by breaking silences and giving voice to past sufferings. Member D stated,

It goes back to the value we place on different aspects of our history...Look at the Scott Joplin House...That did not seem to be a fair portrayal of his life. There was no intentional balance. No other cultures. All the whites he would have dealt with.... At the Scott Joplin House if you were an alien dropped off in that space you would have thought whites were not part of his life. No one questioned that.

The same lack of balance applies to the interpretation of women at that site and to the interpretation of both men and women at the Eugene Field House.

Joplin lived in that house from 1900 through 1903. For that entire time, he was married to Belle Haydon. Their infant daughter died in St. Louis in 1900, the first year they lived in that house. They got divorced in 1904. Yet nothing to indicate a woman's presence in the home exists. At the Eugene Field House's *A Room Divided* exhibit, the juxtaposition of the dress worn by an enslaved African woman and that worn by a free white woman is interesting. However, no men's garments are on display. The Eugene Field House interprets just the stories of the poet, Eugene, and of his father, Roswell. In fact, the only woman named in the interpretation of that site is Harriet Scott, wife and co-defendant in the Dred Scott court case.

A lack of connectivity between historic places within walking distance that still stand in St. Louis was noted by several participants in the debriefing conversation at the restaurant. *"There should be a connection,"* said Member D, such as a painted dotted line on the sidewalks between the Old Courthouse where the Dred Scott case was tried and the Eugene Field House where the lawyer for the Scott's lived and worked. *"You're absolutely right,"* Member B responded. *"I was at the courthouse two weeks ago and not one mention of the Eugene Field House was made."* (Barker 2015).

Ceramicist Member E repeated his professional concern to know who made the artifacts and built the buildings in several of his captions, but in a comment at the restaurant, about whether the vertical log section of White Haven (Figure 5-48) had been built by enslaved Africans, he challenged the museum by offering a creolizing counter-imagining suggestion for its interpretation. *"The work isn't done. Talk about contributions from all of the cultures. That truth is missing. Not acknowledging anyone cheats everyone."* (Ibid). Later, when he submitted that image, he continued to assert this in the caption:

This is an image of the interior of the home. It shows the inner structure of the home's construction. This is a place where the museum could share pertinent information to who actually constructed the home. The guide shared information about who worked the land but this is the next step. I feel that it can be a more inclusive representation of the depth of history.

To be fair, when he asked the ranger about this, the ranger answered that it is not known who actually did the work of building the house.

As long as the museum perceives itself, and is also perceived by others, as the knowledge expert, these kinds of gaps will persist, in my opinion. However, to take a hermeneutic role allows the emergence of what Merleau-Ponty suggests, that:

each perception of the world constructs itself on the basis of our emerging part which solicits our co-creation of the world (Kearney 2011 p.7).

Gadamer's statement about the "*movement of understanding*" is also relevant in that it insists that until all the "*parts*" harmonize to form the "*whole*," what we understand and, thus, know, is incomplete and incorrect. In other words, meaning may be missing, as happens in the space of inter. Gadamer wrote:

The movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. The harmony of all details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding failed (Gadamer 2013).

The value of the visual (methodology)

How the use of a visual, photo-voice methodology as a way of knowing and communicating worked in this project is a third question to be analyzed in this chapter. This will probe whether the visual was essential to the project. It will also identify when the visual could stand alone as a statement, and when the addition of words strengthened, clarified or carried the message. Of particular interest in thinking about this topic are the participant submissions of six objects that were each photographed by more than one participant.

The unpainted door at White Haven, which the museum interprets as the white family's means to continually reinforce that the enslaved Africans were of a

lower station, was the subject of three images submitted by the team members. Member A submitted the door in (Figure 5-8) which "*made me sad*", an example of othering that aroused a negative emotion. Member C submitted the door as "*The Grass is Always Greener*" (Figure 5-25), an allusion to the proverb, "*The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.*" Member D submitted the door as "*Mind Control*" (Figure 5-39), a strong, mirroring reaction to it. Sadness, irony and cynicism are three different verbal responses to the same preserved artifact.

Member B submitted nearly the same image (Figure 5-18) of the portrait of Scott Joplin hanging above the mantel clock as Member E (Figure 5-53). Member B's caption incorrectly asserts that Africans had no traditional experience with timekeeping. This was likely meant to acknowledge the cultural gains made by African Americans since slavery until the early twentieth century. Member E used his caption to comment on the European frame that "housed" the portrait of Scott Joplin, which, as I mentioned earlier, could serve as a metaphor for the inter-cultural theme of this project.

Member B and Member C both submitted photographs of the top of the dresser in Scott Joplin's bedroom. Member B (Figure 5-19) focused her lens and her caption on the paper collar but connected it to a contrasting, imagined metal neck iron that she assumed might have been imposed on Joplin's enslaved father. Member C (Figure 5-32) used another allusion tinged with cynicism for her title, "*Walk a Mile in a White Man's Shoe*", and focused on the spats.

Member B and Member C both also submitted a photograph of the Native American dolls at the Eugene Field House. Member B (Figure 5-22) used her image, "*Now Toys*," to express shame and guilt. Member C (Figure 5-37) made an allusion to Woodie Guthrie's song, by entitling the photograph, "*This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land*," which creates a compelling, but jarring, juxtaposition of the claims of the indigenous peoples with those of the colonizing Americans.

Member B and Member C also both submitted a photograph of the dress on display at the Eugene Field House that the museum claimed epitomizes what

an enslaved African woman in the mid-nineteenth century might have worn. Member B (Figure 5-23) uses the image and its title to compare and contrast the dress supposedly worn by a white woman of the same era. Member C (Figure 5-35) uses the image to communicate a message that, to me, feels full of hopelessness with the title, *“It’s the Dress Code.”*

Member C and Member D both submitted a photograph of the doll house at the Eugene Field House. Member C (Figure 5-38) used the photograph to identify a European motif preserved in the wallpaper via her title, *“European Affluence,”* while Member D (Figure 5-44) used her title, *“A House Divided,”* to issue a call for balance and truth about how the races really interfaced while living and working in the same house.

The fact that more than one team member chose to submit photographs of the same artifact but used the opportunity to communicate very different meanings and messages is fascinating and only apparent when we consider both the visual and the verbal aspects of the submissions. The same phenomenon may have occurred had the project asked the participants to use written or spoken language, but no images, to respond to the same prompt. However, by requesting the project to be image-driven and language-supported, the participants were challenged to search, identify, frame and select images prior to the composition of any text. This forced the formation of an iterative space, a hermeneutic pause for interpretation to emerge, that flowed into the “utterance” of the submission. It allowed for uninterrupted subjective evaluation, identification and understanding to be done before any social, spoken or written communication. Even the submissions, while made available through the secret boards on Pinterest, are personal disclosures from their creators and stand as unique statements to satisfy the prompt, because, apart from incidental conversations between team members during the day we visited each site, the final debriefing conversation at the restaurant is the only time that they shared their experiences with each other verbally.

The fact that Member G only submitted images, without supporting titles or captions, adds to this part of the analysis. Member G was faithful to photograph

and submit images portraying obvious inter-cultural encounters. Each of his images were of enlarged versions of ephemera. His submissions taken at White Haven (Figure 5-62, Figure 5-63, and Figure 5-64) respectively portray the disparity of roles for whites versus others in the construction of the railroad, a Native American chief shaking President Grant's hand, and a political cartoon in which an African boy is being whipped in front of a group of Ku Klux Klan men. His photograph (Figure 5-65) of the magazine cover at the Scott Joplin House, which shows an illustration for the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, also clearly depicts an African American man being read to by a young white girl child. Knowledge of the prompt makes the photographs powerful without any additional text. His photograph (Figure 5-66) of an icebox at the Scott Joplin House does not intrinsically reflect the prompt, so, without the information Member E provided at the restaurant about the advancements in refrigerator technology since 1903, the image does not make sense and would be helped by the support of a title and caption.

The priority of honor in the interpretation of diversity

Each of the participants agreed that the three sites we visited do interpret diversity. However, they also critiqued that interpretation for its lack of balance and truth. As I have said, inclusion is not *just* enough. In my opinion, there must be honor, as in respect and value given, in the inclusion, as well as humility, in both the display and in any conclusions produced and disseminated by the museum. My call to root a Godamer-inspired hermeneutic approach to museum interpretation in terms of balance, honor and wisdom is supported by these participant-generated images and texts. The first part of this section involves disclosures of emotional content, surprise, disgust and shame. While a purveyor of knowledge may be able to set up a lesson plan that does not elicit emotions, hermeneutics relies on the disruption and discomfort that emotions, when addressed, produce. The second part of this section includes the participants' demands for truth, or balance, in what the museum interprets.

Disclosures of emotional content, surprise, disgust and shame

The inclusion and disclosure of emotional content, surprise and disgust or shame in the photo-voice data and text expose both prejudices and inaccuracies, as well as deep wounds. They also show that the project opened a creolizing space for the expression of past suffering and for the disclosure of interstitial intimacy. Whether these indicate only the specific circumstances of the participant who expressed the emotion cannot be probed within the confines of this project. However, they do provide insight for the museum about the power of its interpretation to wound and to heal. For example, in response to my question about a digital frame disguised as a mirror on display at the U.S. Grant National Historic Site, a mixed-race participant, Member E, made an explosive emotional comment: *“I hated it! I had to walk away”* (Barker 2015). This led to a more extensive discussion among the participants about whether the current and modern technology-driven interpretation of diversity at these three house museums interrupt, disrupt, confront or reinforce old stereotypes.

The unpainted door used, according to the interpretation at White Haven, by the enslaved workforce, *“made me sad,”* wrote Member A in her caption for Figure 5-8. It was as if she was coming to grips with the personal nature of the public conflict that escalated into the American Civil War. Member B expressed a *“heavy heart”* and *“shame”* at the sight of the three Native American dolls owned by and on display at the Eugene Field House. She wrote this caption to accompany her photograph (Figure 5-22),

Now toys, but a depiction of the original Americans, independent, strong, indigenous. My heart is heavy and I feel ashamed.

She does not elaborate about why the sight of three antique Native American dolls caused this feeling, other than that they are *“now toys.”* Member E also expressed a very strong, accusatory emotional reaction by naming the photograph (Figure 5-60) of the black puppet at the Eugene Field House, *“Blaxploitation.”* In his caption for the close-up photograph (Figure 5-61) of the same doll, he continued to use emotional language, saying that:

Enslavement, institutional indentured servitude and poverty reeked through the African American population in the US and this is an example of that history present in this house museum.

The other members conveyed emotions less directly by using cynicism, as in the titles Member C and Member D gave their photographs. For example, the title for the photograph (Figure 5-25) in which Member C juxtaposed the summer kitchen with the main house at White Haven is “*The Grass is Always Greener.*” This contains both feelings of resignation and dissatisfaction. The title for Member D’s photograph (Figure 5-39) of the unpainted door at White Haven, “*Mind Control,*” is a judgment tinged, perhaps, with anger.

The prospective emotional consequences of seeing an artifact or of reading an interpretive panel are important for the museum to consider as a social justice and ethical responsibility. The emotions expressed by these participants were unsolicited, but stated. The feelings were intrinsically strong enough to be articulated in what was selected to be submitted—just five images and captions from each site—when many more than five photographs were taken. The museum, as a knowledge broker with a lesson plan to deliver, can dismiss emotional reactions as irrelevant. However, if the museum shifts its interpretive goals and strategies to a hermeneutic priority to be “*brokers of understanding*” (Moules et al 2011 p.2), the emotional component is a helpful disruption, inter’s interstitial intimate interruption of the present or the hermeneutic signal that we have been “*addressed by*” a topic (Moules et al 2014 p.3) because:

it troubles something and problematizes it. When this happens the work becomes about...taking what is assumed and unquestioned and looking at it as something new and exotic (Ibid).

Issues of, and calls for, balance and truth

Issues of, and calls for, balance and truth (Ibid p.5) to be present came through the participant-generated data in various ways, including the use of sarcasm and irony in the texts accompanying the photos; in specific comments

referencing an imbalance or an exploitation; and in the conversation following the site visits. This theme manifested in the creolizing counter-imagings of the space of inter without being prompted, such as when an African-American participant commented that,

At the Scott Joplin House if you were an alien dropped off in that space you would have thought whites were not part of his life. No one questioned that. There needs to be a true representation. You don't have to overdo it. You just have to speak the truth (Barker 2015).

But, Moules et al describe truth as being:

tricky in hermeneutic work because it disappears as it appears... truth is both revealed to us and concealed from us at once (Moules et al 2014 p.3).

This truth-work is prevented by a pedagogical truth-claim, according to Gadamer, who writes:

In understanding we are drawn into an event of truth and arrive, as it were, too late, if we want to know what we are supposed to believe (Gadamer 2013).

Instead, Gadamer suggests that:

the world of the senses is not mere nothingness and darkness but the outflowing and reflection of truth (Ibid),

which, he says, the:

hermeneutic consciousness seeks to confront...with something of the truth of remembrance: with what is still and ever again real (Ibid).

At the restaurant, Member D spoke about the unpainted door at White Haven in response to comments by Member C. She said,

Are you criticizing the museum or are you looking at the disparity between family types? On purpose, part of the mental abuse was to remind slaves that they did not matter... The door was interesting. I don't remember it from 15 years ago. (Barker 2015)

Member E answered, "The slave quarters were torn down and there's no plantation left" (Ibid).

I inserted,

The vertical logs were hand-hewn by someone. That's a French colonial building style and the French enslaved predominantly people from the Bambara Tribe known to be expert carpenters. Is that a missed opportunity? (Ibid).

Member D replied,

The work isn't done. Talk about contributions from all the cultures. That truth is missing. Not acknowledging anyone cheats everyone (Ibid).

Member D's statement that "*truth is missing*" is a call for the hermeneutic work of *aletheia*, the Greek word for "truth". Moules et al write that "*we stay true to the work of aletheia in unconcealing topics in all their messiness and richness*" (Moules et al 2014 p.5). Only if the museum opens a inter space between cultures can this layered truth become visible and previously lost meanings, silenced voices and memories of past suffering be given their rightful place, in my opinion. Moules et al assert that:

It is the mark of the relevance of effective hermeneutic work when a topic is seen to live in worlds of shared cultures (Ibid p.10).

Member D echoes Moules et al in his comment. He calls for "*dis- and uncovery, as well as a call to recovery of what was forgotten.*" As long as the museum retains its identity as knowledge broker and expert, even if it makes invitations for "others" to contribute perspective to a topic, the "guests" may still be "others," of a lower status, whose contributions may be filtered through the

status quo. The “*hermeneutic task*,” according to Moules et al, quoting Kearney, is:

how to take the wealth of the world’s knowledge in all of its often contradictory complexity and not betray it with the simplicities of the old, tired, industrial model of education (Moules et al 2011 p.2),

With the humility to involve people who remember and can do the creolizing uncovering of what may have been “forgotten,” the museum can become a venue for “*a fusion of horizons*” (Moules et al 2014 p.10) that invites all the perspectives to the conversation, activating the circle of hermeneutic understanding so that an emerging and reemerging interpretation occurs prior to articulating an exhibit. Otherwise, to quote Gadamer, the museum may be guilty of providing “*truth...manipulated in [a] mirror...*” (Gadamer 2013).

The correlation of my predictions (including Ferguson) and the data returned

The fourth and final section of this chapter will be devoted to how accurately I predicted what the participants would notice and submit at each site. In addition, I will try to connect the socio-political and inter context of Ferguson to what was submitted.

The Interpretation of diversity at each site

White Haven

In spite of White Haven's stated priority and its National Park Service mandate to interpret a multi-cultural story, the site is dedicated to the memory of what Richard Moe called a “*dead rich white guy*” (Harris 2007). Given that the interpretation of the site is handled by a mostly white and predominantly male rangers and volunteers, I wondered whether the participants would feel that White Haven's interpretation is a “*vehicle for an uncritical retelling of some old American myths.*” (Handler and Gable 1997) or whether it has achieved a greater degree of truth and balance than Handler and Gable found at

Colonial Williamsburg. The participants submitted data that was highly critical of the way White Haven interpreted the story of the enslaved African workforce as reinforcing the old stereotypes while they also expressed appreciation that their story was being told at all.

Scott Joplin House State Historic Site

The area I predicted that the participant team would concentrate on at this site was the exhibit about Joplin's music because it contained more overt evidence of inter-cultural/racial encounters than any other place in the house museum. However, with the exception of Member G's (Figure 5-65) photograph of the magazine cover, and Member E's (Figure 5-42) photograph of the interpretive panel about Sedalia, none of the participants submitted photographs from that part of the museum. I also expected that the images would include the German prayer and the picture of the black Jesus. Member B submitted both of these photographs but used them to voice opinions that do not emphasize the inter-culturality latent in both artifacts. The time Joplin lived in this building spanned both of his marriages, yet there is no trace of a woman in the home. I wondered if the lack of feminine belongings would be noticed and whether the participants would find a way to indicate visually the absence of female artifacts, especially since the guide told the story of the failed first marriage, followed by the very brief, tragic second marriage. She waited until we were listening to the player piano to mention that Joplin died of syphilis. None of the participants noticed the lack of evidence that a woman lived in the home, although one noticed the lack of evidence that whites were a part of his life. I also wondered whether the team would find and return any particular information deriving from the identity of the site as African-American and, if so, how that would compare and contrast with the information from the other two sites. This did not come up in any of the submissions. Finally, I expected that the composer's role at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair would be of interest and that team members would return images related to it. The team ignored the World's Fair, which actually provided the platform for Joplin's music to gain an international intercultural audience.

Eugene Field House & Toy Museum

I expected that there would be pictures of the non-white dolls and that the juxtaposed man's and woman's dressers would inspire some pictures dealing with male and female roles. The Native American dolls were noticed and images of them submitted by several participants, and the "Black Doll" was submitted twice by the same participant. No one returned any images of the man's and woman's dressers, however. I wondered how the clutter of toys in the law office would color the comments made by the participants and what they would say about the two-story doll house with the white quarters on top. No one commented about the toys in the law office, except for the doll house, which became one of the metaphors for this project, but not because of its location in the museum. The *Room Divided* exhibit was the most obvious place, in my opinion, for the participants to take pictures that reflected the prompt, and so I wondered whether there would be comments about why the exhibit making a contrast between a white woman's dress and a black woman's dress did not also include men's clothing. In other words, I wondered whether the participants would poke holes in the way that room is designed for gaps in the information presented. They did not.

Can Ferguson be interrogated using the themes emerging from the data from this project: inter, mirroring, othering, juxtapositions and truth?

The Ferguson controversy revolves around these themes starting with inter's coexistence of two cultures. Michael Brown was an African American teenager who was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, a white police officer. The way that the debate has been framed follows the themes of both mirroring and othering. "*I may not be Mike Brown but at any moment that could be me*" (Member E 2014), written by Member E, a mixed-race man in his twenties, is an example of mirroring Michael Brown. The comment by former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani: "*The officer did his duty*" (Lerner 2015), is an example of mirroring Darren Wilson. Othering is present too: when the message is meant to be positive, such as when the white participant team Member A shared the image of the young African American men helping to clean up Ferguson after the protests (Figure 5.5). Othering is also present in a more negative message,

such as when Adrienne Russell criticizes non-African American museums for their silence in the wake of Ferguson (Russell 2014) and when Samuel Blackuses the issue to discuss race-based funding disparities for museums in America (Fowler 2015).

Juxtapositions are present as well. Ferguson is juxtaposed with the civil rights movement as having similarly significant implications for race relations in the United States. The museum's responses to Ferguson are juxtaposed with the responses of a Louisiana museum to Hurricane Katrina.

Truth is still what is in dispute. The perennial question—“*What is truth?*”—can, and should perhaps, be cynically extended to investigate whether the various museum's responses to Ferguson are more rooted in the opportunity provided to ride the coattails of a huge media frenzy in an attempt to gain visitors and funding, or whether they proceed out of a more authentic concern to respond appropriately to issues that have shaken a community and a nation.

In my opinion, Ferguson forcefully illustrates the space of inter in a way that the museum can benefit from observing. The clashes between people who are perceived of as belonging to different races and cultures but who are neighbors, classmates and colleagues show inter's overlapping cultural coexistences within today's St. Louis community. Ferguson has served to open a creolizing space of inter, in the greater St. Louis community, in which counter-politics and counter-imaginings are being suggested and where a national conversation that is breaking generations of silences about past suffering and trauma has begun. Many participants to these conversations are risking and expressing an interstitial intimacy that interrupts the way the same conversations may have developed prior to Ferguson by bringing private experiences and information into the public arena. New expressions of uncertainty, questions related to revising our mutual places in the community along with many problems of misread, misappropriated and losses of meaning abound. These all show the blurred boundaries and problems of arriving a shared meaning that are inherent to the space of inter. The museum as a public institution has a compelling responsibility

to observe, understand, interrogate and respond to and, within the messy space of inter, perhaps open its interpretation up to become re-purposed as a new hermeneutic, emerging creolized interpretative space that can promote a new interstitial intimacy among the members of the community. The museum in such a diverse and contested community space must find a way to widen the space of inter, wedging the tiniest interstitial openings farther open if it is to be regarded as offering a significant resource for arriving at new, meaningful ways to understand and stand by each other for each member of the community. In my opinion, for the future relevance of the historic house museum as a respected vehicle for members of the St. Louis community to celebrate their historic and current places in and contributions to that community, the test will be how they navigate the aftermath of Ferguson.

Chapter 7

Conclusions Related to Interpretive Strategies at the American House Museum

Obviously, the conclusions of such a small-scope project can only be considered as clues or pointers for more in-depth investigation and analysis. However, there is merit, in my opinion, in collecting what can be gleaned from this project and in posing several interesting questions, both in general terms and in particular for each of the sites we visited. What does the project suggest about the museum's present interpretation and preservation of any evidence of past inter-cultural encounters? How does the project constitute a critique of the museum's approach to the interpretation of diversity? How do the submissions that contain critiques of the museum show a willingness to engage with the museum? Was the use of a visual methodology necessary and/or helpful? How was the employment of inter valuable as an observational tool? How was the identification of theoretical criteria of inter space useful and as an analytical, theoretical lens? What about Ferguson matters and why? How do the submissions reflect a hermeneutic process of understanding, interpretation and expression at work within the participants? What does this project indicate for a re-thinking and re-purposing of museum interpretation under a theoretical umbrella, informed by hermeneutics and inter, that prioritizes honor for all the possible voices? Is this kind of transformation likely to be practical, given the long-standing interpretive practices at house museums, in particular?

What does the project suggest about the museum's present interpretation and preservation of any evidence of past inter-cultural encounters?

The project brought an innovative attention to the interpretation of past inter-cultural encounters at three St. Louis house museums.

White Haven does interpret the romance between Grant and Julia Dent because the plantation was her childhood home and the place where much of the couple's courtship happened. It was also a place they inherited and lived in later. The interpretation of this relationship as it progressed over time is rooted in the story's curious connection with the denouement of slavery in the United States. The Dent family wealth depended on slavery. Grant was the victorious general of the Union Army that crushed slavery and initiated wholesale emancipation to the enslaved African workforce. So, the romance had to navigate the public debate in a very private arena. It is a setting and set of characters that work narratively to reimagine the debates and the emotional and relational costs of maintaining a conviction on either side of the issue. However, how the museum chooses to utilize documents and artifacts to tell this story was flagged by Member A as inappropriate because the museum put what was intended by the correspondents to be intimate into a very open public area. This entitlement on the part of the museum—as owner, preserver and proprietor of the artifact, in this case a letter—reminds me of the critiques leveraged against museums for the public display of sacred artifacts taken from, and meant to explain, formerly colonized indigenous people. White Haven does not pay much attention to portray the lives of women, at this time in our history, other than to quote Julia's writings and to explain that the laundry and cooking were done in the stone kitchen by enslaved African women. Julia's role as First Lady of the United States was not emphasized, nor was the role of contemporary, politically active and aspirational women shown, other than in the text panel displaying the rungs on the ladder to "*the top*," which none of the participants used in a submitted photograph or comment. (See Figure 5-18.

While White Haven does include evidence of inter-cultural encounters between enslaved, and formerly enslaved, African-Americans and whites; between Native Americans and immigrants, as well as colonizing Americans; between Catholics and Protestants and between Jews and Protestants; it does not seem to take advantage of the material they have on display or of the potential for conversations about how these encounters were shaped by the biases, beliefs, assumptions and convictions of each. While mentioned, such as that

President Grant appointed the first African-American ambassador, these encounters do not celebrate shattering glass ceilings, nor do they provide context for understanding any social injustices done. To place a Ku Klux Klan mask in the same exhibit case as a Native American peace pipe and some U.S. currency, without providing any explanation for the juxtaposition (Figure 5-19), for example, makes it easy to miss the whole exhibit. Only Member C submitted a photograph (Figure 5-30) of that display case, but she cropped the photograph so it left out the Ku Klux Klan mask. The other participants ignored, or did not notice or recognize, the mixed message of the display.

The Scott Joplin House neglects to interpret and does not seem to preserve evidence of encounters between men and women, even between Joplin and Belle Haydon, his wife at the time he lived there. The participant team felt that it also neglected to mention that any whites were involved in his life. However, there was considerable preserved and interpreted evidence of the role of whites in the promotion and distribution of his music in the room set aside to display ephemera from his musical career. The docent pointed to the space, but did not allocate much of her attention to it, nor did she allow us much time to investigate it. So, the way the visitor experience is choreographed is the likely reason that the participants arrived at their conclusion that the site ignores whites. The potential for the site to expose how segregation and Jim Crow laws in St. Louis functioned to restrict and determine how Joplin and other black performers lived and worked has not been adequately tapped as an interpretive theme by the museum, in my opinion. One powerful context that they already have artifacts to support, and on which they could base such a narrative, is the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, where Joplin performed and gained much international attention.

The Eugene Field House is intentional about comparing and contrasting the black experience with the white experience in antebellum St. Louis in their *A Room Divided* exhibit. They also possess considerable preserved evidence of past inter-cultural encounters through the toys and dolls that they have randomly displayed throughout the house. The organization was in the midst of a capital fundraising campaign to expand their site so that they

will be able to articulate the history of civil rights in St. Louis in a way that is accessible for a child. (The new space and exhibits opened in fall 2016 but are not featured in this dissertation). At the time of our site visit, however, the site did not demonstrate much sensitivity in the way they currently approached the history of race and civil rights in St. Louis, in my opinion. For example, the jumble of toys in Roswell Field's office, which is the location of the interpretation of the Dred and Harriet Scott trial, which determined that people with African heritage have no rights as citizens of the United States, seems to trivialize the message that is commonly assessed to be one of the root causes of the Civil War, according to many historians. That the trial was heard just blocks north of the museum, and that the Old Courthouse re-enacts the trial for fourth graders each year, are not mentioned either, so a valuable opportunity for a cross-pollination between historic sites within walking distance is missed. This site does mention the role of Catholic nuns in the early development of race relations in St. Louis but in such a scant way, on one interpretive panel, that it leaves a visitor, again in my opinion, who takes the time to read that panel only wanting someone to tell more.

This project does endorse the potential for the American house museum to contribute to the study of past inter-cultural encounters through the material culture and documents that they preserve. However, the emphasis on telling the biographical narrative of a male hero, which each of the museums prioritizes, seems to hide these lesser-known, but more widely applicable and relevant, themes. By taking the prompt and the invitation to probe each house museum for evidence of past inter-cultural encounters seriously, the team members hunted, identified, responded to and submitted nuanced visual and verbal material that points to the potential for these museums to engage with more and diverse audiences around the familiar ideas and items. This could, in fact, validate Debra Reid's opinion that

the house museum is a repository for material to inform new knowledge about social history and the domestic lives of men, women and children (Reid 2002).

How does the project constitute a critique of the museum's approach to the interpretation of diversity?

The team members took their task seriously and, over the course of the day, became willing to share their personal experiences and opinions with members that they met just that morning. They disclosed emotional pain, such as when Member E *"had to walk away"* from the digital frame at White Haven because he *"hated"* the way the dinner table interaction was portrayed. They made personal connections, such as when Member C talked about the blue china her family uses at Christmas, the pine cone curtain rod that was similar to one her grandmother gave her, and when she reflected on how difficult it would have been to make a run for freedom as a young mother with very young children. They made comments about a lack of balance and truth, such as when Member D critiqued the Scott Joplin House for a lack of information about *"all the whites"* who were in Joplin's life. They identified a gap in the interpretation of European as an other culture that influenced the development of American material culture and biases. They exposed stereotypes and inaccuracies lingering in their own understanding, such as when Member A claimed that there was no nineteenth-century black advocate against slavery analogous to Martin Luther King Jr.'s role in the mid-twentieth century Civil Rights Movement, and when Member B used words like *"primitive"* to describe things associated with African Americans, and when she claimed that, as Africans, *"they"* had no experience with *"timekeeping"* but lauded the Native Americans as *"independent, strong, original and indigenous."* The photographs submitted by the team members do constitute a series of images that identify that, and how, the museums currently interpret diversity, and the captions and titles tend to provide accolades, assumptions or cynicisms to augment and tailor the message the members wanted to convey.

The photographs that the members submitted, and then renamed or reacted against, of museum-generated interpretive text panels is another way that the

project constitutes a critique of the museum's interpretation of diversity. That nearly one third of the submitted images were of text panels, not artifacts, appears, in my opinion, to be a serious critique of the museum's bias and perspective. If the museum were to juxtapose information, quotations and opinions from experts from as many cultural, ethnic and other specific perspectives as exist for a topic or event, this project may have returned very different data.

As Member D commented, all the sites do interpret diversity but, in her opinion, they lack *"balance"* and *"truth."* When asked whether the way the museums handled that interpretation disrupted, interrupted, justified or reinforced past stereotypes, they seemed agreed, similar to the findings of Handler and Gable (Handler and Gable 1997) about Williamsburg, that the current interpretation reinforces past stereotypes. This could be construed as a wake-up call for the house museum sector if they truly want to attract, and actually make historical contexts and content available to, a diverse visiting public.

An interesting other finding comes from observing the behavior of the team members at the sites. The members were willing to ask questions of the guide at all three sites and, at the Scott Joplin House, Member D volunteered personal information to the guide. They did not want to stay to view the beginning of the orientation film at the Scott Joplin House when the tour was done, nor did they choose, except for Member A, to view the orientation video at White Haven. These behaviors might have been caused by the fact that our purpose for each visit was to search the collections for a specific kind of material that the sites did not necessarily, in spite of their promise to interpret diversity, include in the material spoken about on the tour or in a video. Not to be interested in watching orientation films may also have been due to the fact that we were cramming three site visits into one day.

How do the submissions that contain critiques of the museum show a willingness to engage with the museum?

The submissions that contain critiques of the museum show a willingness to engage with the museum, because they include suggestions, questions and

the alteration of words and phrases that illustrate powerfully how the museum could create a wider impact through its interpretation of diversity. The captions submitted along with the participant photographs often contain suggestions, such as Member A's "*pretty positive*" opinion that the letter in her image should be displayed in a less public place. Member E made comments about how the museum "*should*" include information about who made the items, such as the hand-hewn vertical logs at White Haven and the ceramics at the Scott Joplin House. Member D engaged with the museum in her renamed images of text panels by demonstrating how a single phrase can change both the meaning and the emotional impact of a message, such as when she changed "*The Invisible Hand of Slavery*" to "*The Invisible Hammer of Slavery*" and when she changed "*Time Line*" to "*Front Line*."

Was the use of a visual methodology necessary and/or helpful?

The use of a visual methodology made the project about recognizing and identifying material and constructed representational evidence and interpretation of diversity at these museums. It was not dependent on anyone's prior knowledge or ability to read and understand, or even hear and comprehend, a narrative articulated in English. The instruction to find, photograph, name and explain whatever they personally assessed to be evidence, preserved and/or interpreted, of a past inter-cultural encounter became independent of the museum's current interpretation, including any statements made by museum staff or volunteers. To limit each participant's submissions to five photographs from each site also required the participants to engage in a reflective, post-visit interaction with the museum's collection, which would not have been available without the use of the photo-voice methodology. So, the visual became, first, a means of gathering information. Next it served as documentation for the site visits. This documentation, consisting of more than five photographs per site, was then available for the participants to reflect on until just five photographs (or fewer) were chosen to be submitted. Only after the visual processing had been through these phases did the team members add language in the form of titles

and captions. So, the visual methodology became key to the participants' experience of gathering, explaining and submitting the data for the project.

Once I received the data, I was assisted by the visual in the derivation of the essential themes that became the basis for my analysis. That more than one member submitted photographs of the same item, but described and explained their submission from very different points of view, helped me to understand that the diversity of the team was vital to the project, as I had suspected. That close to a third of the images submitted were of museum-generated text panels surprised me, and I have come to understand that these submissions are intended to prove the museum's bias towards interpreting eponymous master at both White Haven and the Eugene Field House. The only text panel photographed and submitted from the Scott Joplin House described the director of the St. Louis Choral Society's opinion of the composer's early music. The visual portrayal of these panels, combined with the verbal name changes or challenging commentary made by the team members in their titles and captions, shows that the team disputes the museum's expertise in how they are interpreting the items on display. In this way, the visual methodology supports my opinion that the museum should relinquish its role as knowledge broker and expert, and reposition itself as a hermeneutical provocateur.

Visual juxtapositions strengthened the project by highlighting the connections the participants made between items on display and their own prejudices and understanding. When Member C submitted two images of a Greek geometric motif, one from the Scott Joplin House (Figure 5-31) and one from the Eugene Field House (Figure 5-38), a visual juxtaposition was strengthened by the verbal echo in the titles she assigned, "*European Influence*" and "*Greek Affluence*," respectively. Juxtapositions within the same image, such as the two-story doll house at the Eugene Field House and the single image that includes the outdoor kitchen and the main house at White Haven, are effective visual demonstrations of inter-cultural encounters that would have been less accessible without the use of the visual, in my opinion. Four of the five images submitted by Member G are of period illustrations portraying inter-cultural

encounters. Each of these photographs conveys and satisfies the prompt for the project in visual terms alone, without the addition of either titles or captions.

Two of the images are strong enough, with the addition of the team member's words to serve as visual metaphors for the work of the project as a whole. The first of these is Member A's picture (Figure 5-9) of the text panel next to the unpainted door at White Haven. The image becomes a powerful visual statement when the first phrase from her caption is considered: "*Sorry for the huge white light on this.*"

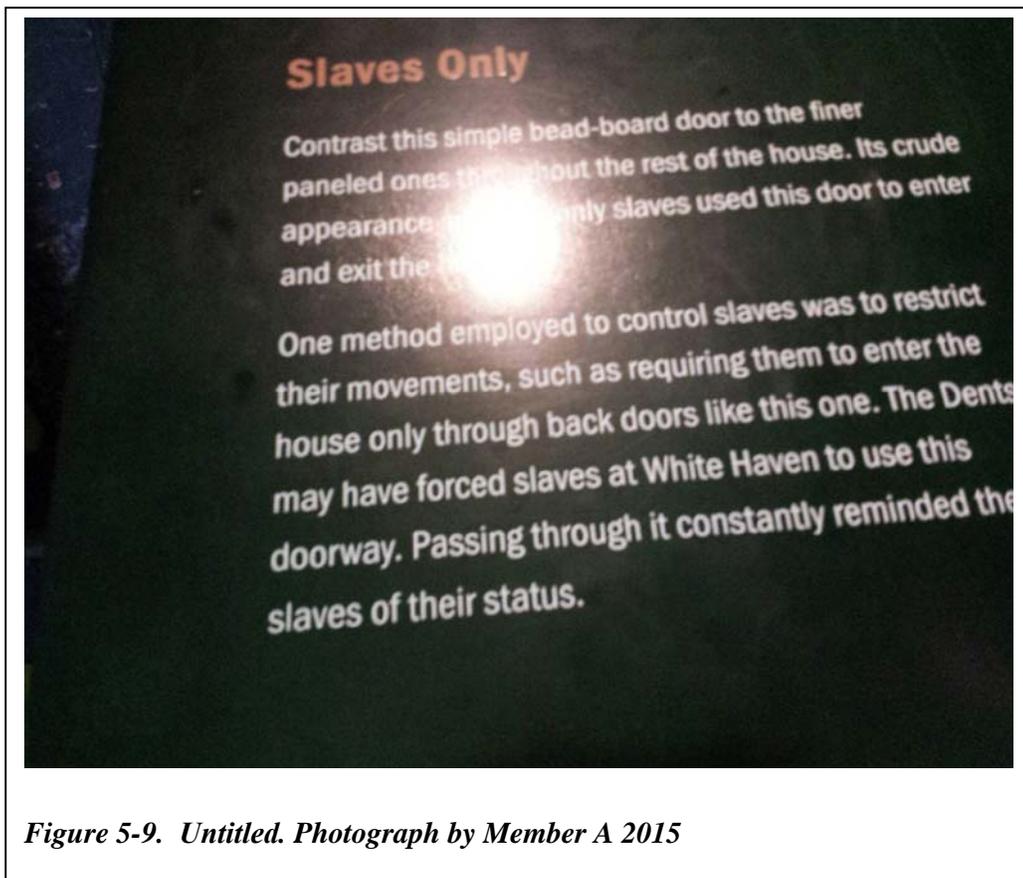


Figure 5-9. Untitled. Photograph by Member A 2015

The second very strong visual metaphor (Figure 5-53) was submitted by Member E. His title for the photograph is *“Portrait of Scott Joplin Housed in a European Frame.”*

While Member A’s apology for the white light is probably a literal apology for the quality of the photograph, the image and the statement together epitomize the interpretive problem that this project set out to probe. With the museum staff and board members being overwhelmingly white, and immersed in the traditional



Figure 5-53. Portrait of Scott Joplin Housed in a European Frame. Photograph by Member E 2015

narrative in which the history of the United States is told through the victor’s point of view, this statement should be what the museum admits going forward. The museum should apologize for the huge white light that blocks a more nuanced interpretation of the same events and artifacts from multiple, also true, perspectives which the museum must then invite and incorporate.

Member E’s title is not accidental. It is meant to draw attention to the European influence in the material culture that fills the musician’s home. His use of the words “housed” and “frame” likely speaks to the restrictions and injustices that black men, even world-renown musicians, faced in St. Louis during the early twentieth century. I think that this title is meant to shock and to force a confrontation with a stereotypical mindset that still obtains for many but that we hardly ever face, or even see, in ourselves.

The visual interests me because it can communicate many layers simultaneously, and these two pictures illustrate that. Each visual submission constitutes a hermeneutic “utterance” made intentionally after the photograph captured a new experience and after the interpretive pause allowed the formulation of a new “aha.” Each also preserves and provides evidence of the new emerging inter-cultural, inter-temporal encounter between the member and the artifact they photographed. I believe that the use of a visual methodology was key to the success of this project. I think that the field of museum studies, in particular, should intentionally pursue how the visual works as a way to preserve and communicate knowledge. I believe that the use of the visual in this very small-scope investigation points the way for us— museologists, whose specialty is exhibition and display—to communicate information, ideas and the various tellings and retellings of our diverse pasts in this present context. I contend that we need to embrace the visual as a methodology, explore its potential, and intentionally become more expert in understanding and wielding its power.

How was the employment of inter valuable as an observational tool?

Tasked to look for evidence of inter, the participant team members were challenged to apply a different set of criteria than if they had been asked to look at how the museum preserves and interprets the black experience, the white experience, the Jewish or Protestant or Catholic or Native American experience. Instead, they had to locate items through which transactions between different cultures, faiths and genders happened. With this criterion as the core question, the participants could not merely rely on what was familiar to them through mirroring, or on what was known and/or assumed about another through othering. They actually had to employ both mirroring, if one of the parties involved in the transaction, in fact, did share their heritage, and othering, if they did not. The participants did engage in both mirroring and othering. Sometimes they were able to incorporate an awareness of this in their submission, such as Member C’s comments about the blue china and her submission of the photograph of the pine cone curtain rod at White Haven

because it resembles a curtain rod given to her by her white grandmother. Using it as an example of how European influence demonstrates an inter-cultural transaction, this mixed-race participant was able to both mirror and other black and white cultural artifacts simultaneously.

Member G was very disciplined about his submissions. At White Haven he found and photographed three examples of inter-cultural interactions: a period illustration that shows a disparity between the dress, position and activity of whites and non-whites engaged in work on the railroad; a political cartoon in which a white man is shown beating a black boy in front of other whites, some robed in the racist garb of the Ku Klux Klan; and, a print showing President Grant shaking hands with a Native American chief. At the Scott Joplin House, he found and photographed a magazine cover showing Uncle Tom, the enslaved black character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, being read to by a little white girl. Each of these submissions took the challenge to find preserved evidence of inter literally, and Member G succeeded in the challenge without the addition of any titles or captions. One could take any one of Member G's images and build an interpretive strategy for the site from it.

I do not think the idea of Europe as a different-from-America culture would have surfaced without the invitation to use inter as the lens for the project. The doll house at the Eugene Field House might have been photographed if the prompt had been to find and submit evidence of the black experience or of a domestic slave's experience. However, thanks to the emphasis on inter, the take-away comment by Member D at the restaurant is:

We're in denial. Almost in secrecy. That blacks and whites influenced each other. The distinction of that coexistence is not revealed. The doll house with white lifestyle on top and blacks on the bottom. They are in one house but the relationship is not clear. It is almost as if they are trying to reinforce the separation, not talk about the integration. Not trying to make an attempt to show the integration between cultures (Barker 2015).

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I believe that the use of inter allowed everyone to stretch past what is their typical default opinion and prejudice. I also believe that inter is a non-threatening vehicle that the museum could employ to design a polyvocal interpretative strategy.

A series of these “doll houses” that juxtapose contemporary scenarios, but separated by cultural norms, laws, and taboos, could be developed by the museum to display, interrogate and offer competing explanations for the conditions experienced by each “story.” Inter is an observational tool that makes everyone more comfortable by not pointing directly, by means of the text panels, at one of their grandparents. Inter is also a tool to motivate conversations about the antecedents for today’s racial tensions and attitudes because it doesn’t isolate or marginalize one culture while elevating another. By seeking out inter-cultural encounters, both cultures are honored for their participation, and any injustices perpetrated from one to another can be evaluated from a place of objectivity. This would be different if just one of the cultures were privileged, as, for example, White Haven does in its text panel (Figure 5-41) that romanticizes “*Home and Community*” from the perspective of the whites while ignoring what Member D called to mind in the renamed title for the panel, “*And an Ocean Away from Their Stolen Home...*” Seeking inter also allowed us to notice its absence at the Scott Joplin House, where the role of whites and women is mostly ignored in favor of the biography of the musician in isolation from the people he lived and worked with. Inter became a device to probe culture in a way that produced different combinations of ideas, critiques and opinions, as well as exposed gaps and absences in the interpretation of the same.

How was the identification of theoretical criteria of inter space useful as an analytic lens??

Inter space, or the space of inter, was found to contain six characteristics or criteria thanks to combining the theoretical work of Edward Said, Edouard Glissant, Homi K. Bhabha and James Clifford. The most basic criterion, the

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existence of overlaps, borrowings and coexistences between cultures, is the easiest to observe and most of the images submitted by the participant team overtly portrayed this characteristic. If the image was insufficient to show it, the member typically used the title or caption to explain, as in Member D's Figure 5-53, "*Portrait of Scott Joplin Housed in a European Frame*". This criterion could be applied to any museum collection to readily determine to what extent it preserves and interprets artifacts that pertain to past inter-cultural encounters.

Member C's appeal to a familiar proverb in her title for Figure 5-25, "*The Grass is always Greener*" and Member E's title for Figure 5-60, "*Blaxploitation Doll*" both creolize the space of inter through a vernacular expression. Providing new titles for museum text panels was how Member D creolized the inter space of the museum through proposing a counter-imagining, counter-politics and counter-metaphysics. Her title for Figure 5-39, "*Mind Control*" is an example of how giving a voice to past suffering, breaking silence, bearing witness and causing people to remember creolize the inter space of the museum.

These creolizing strategies, if presented as a component in a museum's interpretation of past inter-cultural encounters could, in my opinion, go a long way towards repurposing the museum so that it opened doors for difficult conversations and for the kinds of confrontations that might shift how people understand each other in both their experience of the past and their perspectives today.

Inter space is also characterized by blurred boundaries as demonstrated by uncertainty and ambiguity and by questions that attempt to define a person's or a culture's place in a community. I found myself encountering this theoretical criterion of inter through my own uncertainty in how to analyze Member C's Figure 5-28, "*Watchful Eyes*" and her Figure 5-34, "*Shared Goods*" and in Member F's Figure 5-66 picture of the icebox at the Scott Joplin House. Member D's Figure 5-42, "*Oh, Ragtime, Be Not Worthy of Such Genius*" questioned the rightful place of this musical genre among other genres. Her title insisted that the boundaries between respectable, genius-composed music should not be as firm as one elite musician required. It had to blur, in her opinion. What if museum interpretation intentionally blurred boundaries between cultures and

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polarizing perspectives or positions? Perhaps by intentionally inserting uncertainty, unanswered questions and ambiguity into the interpretation, thus by courageously inhabiting the space of inter, the museum might become regarded by its spectrum of diverse visitors as more respectful of each other's yet to be understood perspectives.

This leads to another theoretical characteristic of the space of inter: the existence of paradox. None of the participant submissions contained paradoxes unless it is indicated in their use of juxtaposition, such as in Member D's Figure 5-41 "*And An Ocean Away From Their Stolen Home*", for example. There she vividly demonstrated two simultaneous and incompatible emotional viewpoints about White Haven. Future research into how museum's recognize and treat paradoxes is needed to explore the usefulness of this device and phenomenon as a strategy for a more sensitive handling of past inter-cultural encounters at a history museum.

Inner space is also known to be a place where articulating shared meaning can be problematic. It is a space characterized by misread, misappropriated and losses of meaning such as was blatantly shown in Member B's Figure 5-18 in which she wrote in her caption that Africans had "*no experience*" with time-keeping, for example. Actually, it is the function of the interpreter, in the most basic definition of the word, to accurately translate from one language to another so that two people who do not share a language can communicate. Where the potential for problems of shared meaning are shown in a museum, it can incorporate objective, factual resources into its interpretive strategy to make arriving at a mutual meaning more effective and efficient for its visitors, without insisting on anyone arriving at the same conclusions from the presented facts.

The last theoretical criterion to characterize the space of inter, the existence of interstitial intimacy, should, in my opinion, be the museum's ultimate goal. These small openings that allow for an interruption, that innovate in terms of what can be questioned or understood differently and that are shown when a visitor

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risks to share some personal connection in the public space of the museum should be valued by the museum as successes. They prove that, at least as far as that visitor was concerned, the museum served as the hermeneutic interpretive pause. This happened and is attested to by Member E's Figure 5-57, "*Bed Quilt*", and Figure 5-27, "*European Heritage*". The frequency and variety with which visitors express their experience of the museum as an inter space filled with interstitial intimacy could become an important evaluative tool of the effectiveness of its interpretive strategy. Further research is needed to explore how to use these theoretical criteria that define and describe inter space to derive new ways to evaluate and measure a museum's interpretation of past inter-cultural encounters. This has the potential to profoundly impact, understand and perhaps change the ways that history and historic house museums present and, even market, their collections to today's audiences.

What about Ferguson matters and why?

This project has its roots in two personal experiences within my professional role as the executive director of the Bolduc House Museum. One of them is inextricably linked to Ferguson. I heard about the death of Michael Brown the day after it happened from the African-American educator who visited my site during a large community festival. She had been Michael Brown's high school

math teacher and told me that she had tutored him so that he could graduate. She also told me that she feared that Ferguson would riot and burn, which it did. When we walked past the Green Tree Tavern, she is the person who recognized that its porch could have been used as a slave market. Her credentials as a college professor of African Studies make her opinion about this porch compelling, even though I can, to date, find no documentary evidence to either endorse or refute it. However, this experience juxtaposed in my mind with the challenging question from Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Chief Glenna Wallace, *"How will YOU tell OUR story?"*. I was, thus, *"addressed by the topic"* (Moules et al 2014), as well as disturbed and interrupted enough to have to investigate what we, as a museum whose story is about *"this community of cultures"* in Ste. Genevieve, needed to do in order to shift the interpretation to be more inclusive, to honor each culture, family and individual involved, and to confront, disrupt, and replace long-held white stereotypes that derive from the time in history when whites benefited more from essentializing and controlling non-whites than from building trust for the sake of understanding and community.

Each of the museums under consideration for this project is located just a few miles from Ferguson and is also connected politically and economically with Ferguson within the limits of the Greater St. Louis Municipal Area. Because each of them self-identifies as interpreting the history of diversity, specifically race relations, in St. Louis, Ferguson should have intruded on each of their stories, in my opinion. White Haven did take a proactive lead role in a collaborative effort to create and fund programming linking the unrest triggered by the death of Michael Brown to the history of race in America. They provided a field trip organized around the history of Civil Rights in the United States for every eighth grader in the Ferguson-Florissant School District in 2015. Their newsletter celebrated the success of this program, and I applaud it as a necessary conversation. However, the participant team critiqued White Haven for maintaining a white bias in its interpretation of diversity. I wondered if that bias would predominate in the lesson plans for these field trips. The Scott Joplin House responded to Ferguson as a gallery space for black artists who

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were creating raw, emotionally charged pieces of art, to help the community process what was, and continues to be, happening. As the only historic house museum in St. Louis dedicated to an African American person's experience, this site has a unique potential to become a platform for demonstrating how the old stereotypes persist, and are root causes for yet-unhealed social wounds that need to be taken seriously by the whole community, white and black, until, in my opinion, a strategy emerges to bring to bear a multi-faceted truth that will promote a transformation through wisdom in the space of inter. Unfortunately, the Eugene Field House, in spite of raising money to build an extension where the history of race in St. Louis would be interpreted "*at a child's level*" (Eugene Field House 2014), at least by July 2015, had not yet seemed to notice that Ferguson relates to their stated priority.

Ferguson matters to the participant team members. This is demonstrated by what the members posted on Facebook. The posts claimed that the events of Ferguson triggered fear in Member E, shock in Member C, a search for examples in which African Americans were doing good by Member A, and a call for prayer by Member B. In my opinion, Ferguson destabilized the community in St. Louis, making people's choices about where to drive, what to say, and which side of the divide to agree with, shift, as the emerging facts and opinions complicated and confused the various status quos. Ferguson mattered and, I believe, caused the team members to be courageous and vulnerably transparent in their decision to participate in the project and to spend a day with strangers whose heritage touches various aspects of the issues of race in St. Louis, looking specifically at the way museums handle the same issues, nearly a year after Michael Brown's death but while the Black Lives Matter Movement was continuing to escalate nationally.

From a hermeneutical perspective, Ferguson matters as well. Because the "lessons" to be learned from Ferguson are not established even two years after the shooting death of Michael Brown and, in fact, continue to unfold with the development of the Black Lives Matter Movement, as well as with the increasing attention to and escalation of the disparities between the races in the United States, Ferguson becomes a specimen to be observed. As

museums wrestle with how to respond to these current, unfinished, cultural issues, before the traditional pedagogical interpretive strategies can be invoked, there is the potential to activate a hermeneutic circle of understanding that may indeed release a different “aha” interpretive inter space that can be reapplied to predict ways to re-purpose museum interpretation so that it fulfills a more inclusive, social justice-conscientious role. While that may seem naive and overly ambitious, there is a developing “breaking news” aspect to Ferguson, that, when viewed as an example of how inter can be utilized as an observational tool, and when its criteria are juxtaposed theoretically with the data, from these sites, created by these participant team members, may push the museum’s interpretive boundaries past what we have so far embraced.

How do the submissions reflect a hermeneutic process of understanding, interpretation and expression at work within the participants?

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, knowledge, understanding and how meaning is made and then expressed. The simplest way to explain it, in my opinion, is to envision an internal, cognitive space, or a pause, in which any new idea, opinion, experience or fact combines to challenge or reinforce what is already known, like the pan in which wet ingredients for a cake are combined, and mixed together with the dry ingredients, and then baked. The finished, iced cake is the result of hermeneutic interpretation, or of what happens in the space of the pause. It is the expression, the utterance. For the participants, it is the photograph submitted, along with its caption and title. The museum’s exhibits and what the rangers and docents said are one set of utterances that indicate what the museum already “knows.” The prior knowledge and opinions, or Gadamer’s “prejudices”, of the team members are what each of them already “knew” on entering each site. The prompt focused attention for the team members to look for particular things at each museum. When the prompt resonated with an item at the museum strongly enough for the participant to photograph it, a new ingredient went into the individual’s hermeneutic interpretive “bowl.” As the interpretive process progressed, each participant was encountered by the museum’s exhibit and had to develop their

own utterance in response. The submissions are the new utterances and, as such, shift the member to an updated starting place, a new knowledge or prejudice to be “addressed” by another utterance so that the iterative hermeneutic circle of understanding is poised to start its next turn.

What does this project indicate for a repurposing of museum interpretation to a Gadamer-influenced, hermeneutics-informed strategic approach that prioritizes honor and humility?

My argument is that as long as the museum considers itself to be an expert, a knowledge broker, and continues to produce its interpretation using a strategy based in pedagogy, with learning objectives that it believes the visitor should leave having absorbed, it risks alienating and offending people who arrive with different truth-claims for the interpreted artifacts and events. The mirror, disguising a digital frame and the video of a dinner table conversation about slavery at White Haven, was so offensive that Member E “*hated it*” and “*had to walk away,*” actions that, likely, influenced how he experienced the rest of that site.

When Member E commented that “*not acknowledging anyone cheats everyone*” (Barker 2015), he again touches on another aspect at the heart of the problem. Just as I did not know how to tell the Shawnee story, even though we were the repository for several artifacts pertaining to that tribe whose history mingled with our French colonial story, and just as I could not recognize that the porch on the Green Tree Tavern might have been a slave market, even though I walked past it daily for several years, from a hermeneutic perspective, truth conceals itself (Moules et al 2014).

Michael Ames counsels that the museum should avoid:

the imperialist assumption that the scholar, curator, or museum has a natural or automatic right to intrude upon the histories and cultures of others in ‘the interests of science and knowledge’(Ames 1992 p.14).

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The participant submissions critiqued each museum for this kind of bias, offering suggestions for how to restate messages to be more inclusive. They rejected the museum's expertise whenever they found it to be out of sync with their rendition of truth.

In my opinion, it is the self-identification of the museum as expert and teacher for the benefit of the visitor who needs to learn something, akin to Patricia West's research on the founding motivations of house museums in the United States as vehicles to manipulate political and social outcomes (West 1999), that needs to change. The American historic house museum is operated and interpreted by an overwhelmingly white professional and volunteer staff. Even though many of these house museums are governed by boards made of female members of these owner organizations with legacy-based memberships, they tend to tell a male-dominant story, even within the context of a domestic space. This project produced evidence that there is considerable potential for the house museum to contribute to conversations about race, ethnicity, culture and the past domestic experiences of men and women by documenting how each aspect of our social fabric developed and continues to drive our behavior, opinions, and controversies.

As Robert Janes writes,

We are in urgent need of museums of holistic, cultural frameworks to identify and explore the myths, perceptions, and misperceptions that now threaten our existence (Janes, 2013).

He thinks that:

the presentation and the nurturing of reflection are unrealized opportunities for most museums (Janes 2009).

This project points a way forward to such a new approach to nurturing within the museum. It, perhaps, uncovers a key to making the museum actually function as James Clifford's imagined "cultural contact zone" (Clifford 2013). This can happen if the museum re-imagines itself as a place where

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hermeneutic interpretation is invited and expected. As this project has proposed, such a place may best be designed as inter space by the intentional strategic employment of the criteria of inter that I discussed above. It cannot happen as long as the museum remains the knowledge expert, broker and manager, in my opinion. However, if the museum were to assume a humility that invites and honors, as valid, the stories that the visitor supplies, with a commitment to incorporate them alongside their own exhibits and to keep their “uttered” exhibits and interpretive text flexible enough to be “addressed,” disrupted and confronted by the topics so that new utterances flow out of the “aha” of hermeneutic pauses, an exciting new interpretive integrity might become visible. As Chimamanda Adichie, a Nigerian novelist, explained on a National Public Radio interview with Guy Raz,

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity (Adichie 2013).

If the museum becomes a place where many stories matter, it will also become Clifford’s “*cultural contact zone*” and an inter space where we may be able actually to “*touch each other*” (Golding 2013). With this new orientation to interpretation, this invitation to engage with and impact the museum’s story-telling, the museum has the potential to provoke and provide hermeneutic pauses between encountering stories and versions of truth, those inter spaces between prior knowledge or prejudice and utterance, where “aha” transformative insights form to start the hermeneutic circle of understanding on its next rotation. If the museum can re-purpose itself as a hermeneutic provocateur instead of as a teacher/expert, then the museum can possibly utilize its collection to become a venue for honor, redemption, transformation and wisdom.

Is this kind of transformation likely to be practical given the long-standing interpretive practices at house museums in particular?

Whether the museum and the American historic house museum, in particular, will risk shifting away from its long-standing role as knowledge expert and broker is another question. As an owner/operator of house museums, the

National Park Service is best poised to experiment with this approach, in my opinion. The fact that their sites are funded by federal taxes and that their mandate is to provide a multi-layered story that resonates with all Americans makes this so. Sites that are owned by other government entities, such as states, counties and cities, have less money available but would be the next most likely to be willing to experiment with this kind of approach. The fact that the State of Missouri acquired, funds and operates the Scott Joplin House is an indication that it values the interpretation of diversity, in spite of the critique this project leverages against imbalances in the way that site approaches that priority. Sites owned by private, most often legacy-based organizations, will probably be the least open to a shift away from their role as expert. The fact that these organizations are made up of members whose family heritage is that of the victors, who wrote the traditional narrative of American history as the triumph of Manifest Destiny moving west, may mitigate against a willingness to entertain other versions of the same events, in my opinion based on my experience working for such an organization. However, because these museums are desperate to gain larger audiences, there may be a willingness to make some preliminary experiments. But, the lack of attention paid to Ferguson by the Eugene Field House and the insensitive approach to the interpretation of Roswell Field's role in the Dred Scott case, revealed by the jumble of toys throughout that law office, may predict the way truth is hiding from the understanding of the ones there who need to authorize and fund any such interpretive shifts.

What could the museum as hermeneutic provocateur look like?

Suppose that the museum adopted this new role, not as an educator who knows what the visitor must learn, but as a space in which an honor-driven hermeneutic interpretation is both expected and invited. What supports would the museum need to provide to make this happen? First, the museum would need to revise its interpretive claims so that it does not present specific conclusions about any motivations and meanings inherent in the items, documents, events and cultures they present. With this content erased, the

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museum could, then, promote itself as a space of inter where historic objects and events are displayed along with objective information about what, where, how, when and who was encountered by and through the objects and events. Background information to provide context for every party in such a past encounter should be made available. This content must honor each party's perspectives, purposes, problems and solutions as they relate to the object or event under consideration. Juxtapositions, both visual and verbal, are likely to be vital methods to make this parallel content accessible. The museum would thus show itself to be humble enough, and committed enough, to stand for the redemption and restoration of the stories and experiences of each individual, family and culture including those whose perspectives have traditionally been marginalized and essentialized. With this commitment, the visitor must be prepared for the museum to have become a place for personal encounter and transformation so that they will leave asking very different questions than they asked upon arriving. The visitor must be introduced to the idea that they enter each display with their own sets of beliefs, ideas, questions and emotions. They should be told to expect to be "addressed" by the display if it challenges or endorses one of their pre-existing knowings. The museum could develop and provide a set of open-ended questions to help the visitor define what about a display might personally address a person's prejudices. The museum could also provide comments, or even videos, of visitors and experts going through the experience of being encountered by a display, disclosing their initial response to the display, and then narrating how what was concealed in the display disrupted their original understanding to produce a new question or conclusion. This collection of how visitors expressed any experiences of interstitial intimacy could be made a component of the orientation to a museum that models for the visitor how to approach this new way of exploring the collection or site.

The process I am suggesting here is similar to what the participant team members underwent during this project. They encountered something within the museum that evoked an emotion, a question, a retort or a discovery. Then they "uttered" a visual statement, supported by words, to share that encounter. In the sharing, whether at the restaurant, or with me, as I and we processed the various submissions, new understandings were formed. Rather than polarizing

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the visitors by asserting an authorized version of truth, this approach honors each participant, the historical characters and objects, as well as the modern visitors and interpreters, calling forth the concealed and revealed “*tricky*” truth (Moules et al 2014) that happens in the space of inter as much as in the hermeneutic interpretive pause between knowledge and new understanding for and within everyone at the museum who touches and is touched by its artifacts and presentations. Herein is a possible strategic wisdom that demonstrates vulnerability and could perhaps bring dialog between people who might otherwise not be heard, whose voices have always been important to the conversation but whose perspectives have not often or intentionally been sought out, invited or honored.

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