

**UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ**

**HERITAGE, COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL MEMORY IN KATE  
ATKINSON'S *BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM***

**A Pro Gradu Thesis**

**by**

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on hahmottaa kulttuuriperinnön käsitettä ja sen ilmentymiä Kate Atkinsonin romaanissa *Museon kulisseissa*. Työssä pyritään selvittämään niitä keinoja, joilla kulttuuriperintöä otetaan haltuun ja tehdään menneisyyttä ja elettyjä kokemuksia ymmärrettäviksi. Yhtenä ymmärrettäväksi tekemisen keinona tarkastellaan romaanissa esiintyvien esineiden roolia kulttuuriperinnön luomisessa ja menneen hahmottamisessa. Samalla pohditaan, kenelle kulttuuriperintö kuuluu, ja mikä on institutionalisoidun kulttuuriperinnön ja yksilöllisen menneisyyden kokemisen suhde.

Tutkimusote on monitieteellinen. Tutkimusaihetta lähestytään pääasiassa museologian ja tämänhetkisten museoteorioiden valossa. Toisaalta menneen hahmottamista tarkastellaan narratiivis-diskursiivisesta näkökulmasta sekä postmodernin kirjallisuudentutkimuksen keinoin. Romaanin ja teoriakirjallisuuden vuoropuhelu on kaksisuuntainen: toisaalta pyritään analysoimaan romaania ja sen kulttuuriperinnöllisiä viittauksia museologian avulla, toisaalta taas romaani avaa näkökulmia museologian suuntaan heijastellen museoiden maailmaa. Yksi tutkimusmenetelmistä on tekstuaalinen interventio, jossa kriittiset ja luovat keinot yhdistämällä pyritään analysoimaan tekstin ja lukijan suhdetta. Tutkielman interventio kohdistuu niihin jännitteisiin, joita romaanissa voi havaita menneisyyden yksilöllisen ja kollektiivisen kokemisen välillä.

Romaanin nimessä esiintyvä museo voidaan ymmärtää metaforana pyrkimykselle luoda ja ylläpitää yhteys menneeseen olennaisena osana identiteettiä. Tältä osin romaanin museokäsite heijastelee nykymuseologian näkemyksiä museosta kulttuuriperinnön yhteisöllisenä toimintayksikkönä, joka ylläpitää kulttuurista identiteettiä.

Romaanin esineet tukevat ja monipuolistavat menneisyyttä koskevaa tietoa sekä kerronnan tasolla että romaanin päähenkilön, Rubyn, luodessa omaa 'kulttuuriperintökertomustaan'. Esineet toimivat sekä todistuskappaleina että muistin ja unohtamisen apuvälineinä, ja niiden avulla hahmotetaan ympäristöä niin ajallisesti kuin paikallisesti sekä yhteisö- että yksilötasolla. Koska esineet ovat monitulkintaisia, niihin voidaan liittää lukuisia merkityksiä, ja niillä on merkittävä rooli osana kulttuuriperintökertomusta.

Tekstuaalinen interventio tarjoaa kiinnostavan kanavan tuoda julki yksilöllistä kokemusta kollektiivisin – museonäyttelyn – keinoin. Vaikka interventio pikemminkin herättää lisää kysymyksiä kuin antaa vastauksia, se on käyttökelpoinen keino käsitellä romaanissa olevia teoreettisia diskursseja. Interventio tarjoaa mahdollisuuden luoda vaihtoehtoinen, subjektiivinen synteesi tutkimusaiheesta.

Asiasanat: heritage, museology, museum studies, textual intervention, postmodern fiction

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## PROLOGUE

### 1. How I chose this topic and how it relates to my life-story

The beginning of this particular branch of my story was my brief return to my hometown after several years to work in the local museum for the summer. It meant entering the past and the present through the back door (also my own personal history!), lurking behind the scenes at the museum, taking care of the objects, organising photo archives, and occasionally coming out from behind the scenes through to the other side, that of the public, to show people around and tell them stories of the town and its surroundings.

So my days were spent in this 'museum reality' while at night I was reading books on museum theory and some fiction just for my own pleasure. For pure nostalgia, I used the services of the travelling library (an occasional traveller myself) that stopped every two weeks behind the house we used to live in. Apart from the nostalgia and the childhood memories of early encounters with exciting books, I was drawn to this miniature library on wheels for new reasons, partly due to my studies in museology. If museums, archives and libraries provide for the collective memory and continuity for the society, what kind of representations were put forth with this selection of books made available for me? This enterprise of pre-selection from the totality of the collection intrigued me, and even now it is thrilling to think about the fact that I grabbed this particular book by Atkinson as a sum of all these reasons (the pre-selection, my preoccupation with museum theory and practise, my venturing the miniature library for nostalgia and as another 'encyclopaedic' project of organising material and making sense of the world on this basis).

So this is how I chose the book, and how it chose me to plunge deeper into the worlds of perceiving the past through the present, and in this, using museum and the notion of heritage as a tool. Here I could cite the words of Stephen Greenblatt, who, in his introductory chapter to *Learning to curse* (1990), tells in considerable detail about his years of study and uncertainty with regard to deciding on a topic to which devote



himself for dissertation. Then he says: "I recount this personal history precisely because it is not entirely personal ---". In a similar fashion, I feel I have to make explicit my point of departure as far as this study is concerned, since all the aforementioned aspects shape my project and the ways I approach it.

Eventually, I feel that what I am aiming at with my study is not so much about analysing the novel from a certain perspective but talking about it with the help of certain key concepts and related material. I regard the novel as a good reason for me to explore these questions further, and for this the novel gives me a good basis, as it is so loaded with cultural theories and criticism. I do not want to tie the novel down too much in the form of analysable categories, since I feel it would not be the most useful way to deal with these issues (and pay homage to the book). This does not mean that I would not attempt to be precise, critical or analytic, but maybe not in a totally consistent manner. Therefore, more than a consistent analysis and argumentation from A to be and then C, this is more likely a mosaic-type of approach, a patchwork. I believe I can justify my choice with the complex and multi-layered structure of the novel: I do not think I would do it justice by cramming it into an ultra-systematic mould. My aim is rather to keep my discussion dynamic all the way through and not digest everything ready for the reader. So I will try to weave my patches together as meaningfully as I can.

## 2. How has this study become possible?

This question is posed by Sintonen (1999) onto himself in the beginning of his thesis, and it will be adopted for the purposes of the present study, too. Essentially it is about contextualizing one's study in the academic discourse, also historically. In its core stands the question: what has made it possible to discuss the research topic the way that it is done?

Strictly speaking, the present study seems to stand rather alone in the field of literary research in the sense that there are hardly any studies conducted from an explicitly museological standpoint. Most of the

existing studies tend to focus on the role of collecting and the representation of collectors in fiction (e.g. Edgar 1997 and Wilkinson 1997). However, Pearce (1997:7-9) provides interesting insights into the role of objects in the heart of popular writing. Pearce divides literature into 'classic literature' and 'popular fiction' according to their perception of living: whereas classic literature "considers life as it is" and "tends to take material world as given", "popular writing features the object world to a much greater extent and in a more fundamental way". Further, Pearce (1997:9) claims that since the eighteenth century, 'serious fiction' has had its focus on social relationships rejecting object-oriented discourse, whereas popular fiction draws on the same inheritance as 'serious fiction' but with materially centred elements. *Behind the Scenes* can hardly be included in this category of 'popular fiction' (if it is necessary to make such categories at all), a task made even more complicated due to the 'postmodern' features of the novel. However, judging by the characteristics above, the novel undeniably falls under the category of 'non-serious' or 'popular fiction' as a result of the central role occupied by material culture. In fact, objects "work" in much the same way in the novel as Pearce (1997:8) claims is characteristic of contemporary and post-war popular fiction:

objects are not simply the necessary furniture of the story; they provide goals and ends, they animate the relationships between the actors, and they give structure to the narrative and mechanism of the plot.

Setting aside such categories as 'popular' and 'serious' fiction, it is nevertheless these aspects of *Behind the Scenes* that the present study sets out to explore. However, the novel can be regarded as 'popular' in the sense that it deals with themes that are common and close to 'ordinary' British (English) people: it explores family ties, the encounters of generations and the over-all relation to the past the present and the future. But at the same time it is also a highly complex and self-reflexive 'postmodern' novel, which is likely to reveal something in relation to the academic discourses which it has been influenced by. Not claiming that these could be taken as one-to-one correlation between fictive realities and societies, they do have an intriguing relation that is worthy of

exploring. Although fictive worlds are undeniably fictive and personal constructions by the authors, they nevertheless mirror something of their contexts of production, the contemporary social realities in which the texts are born.

What the present study at least in part owes to is the recent rise of cultural materialism as an approach in several disciplines. Apart from this methodological tendency, collecting has been given increasing attention in the academic field (e.g. McCracken 1988, Pearce 1992, Pöyhtäri 1996 and Moore 1997). According to Pöyhtäri (1996:2), the perceivable increase also in the practise of collecting is an indication that something is happening with human beings in relation to their physical environment. He points out that in the 1980s especially in anthropological research, an idea that was beginning to spread among scholars was that despite mass production and consumption, the meanings of objects in the formation of identities and making sense of the surrounding environment is not changing in an equally profound way. What makes focusing on material culture an all the more interesting enterprise is the way it inevitably brings forth issues related to the individual and the collective attachment of meaning and the control of these meanings.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Aims of the study: museology meets narrative analysis meets new historicism

The goal of the present study is attempting to define 'heritage' in the novel: what is it that is culturally passed on and how is it "attainable"? Whose heritage is it? How is it communicated? What kind of tools and strategies are employed to make the past make sense? (How) do objects verify past experience? (How) do they fulfil a mediating role with the past in the world of the novel? Do objects have a role in adjusting together the individual and collective memory?

These questions will be tackled from the point of view of the main character in the novel, Ruby Lennox, followed by an attempt to figure out in what ways the collective memory, history, is intertwined with Ruby's personal memories, and how these two make a 'mélange', a certain representation of the past.

It is fruitful to use museology as the point of departure for the entire study, since the ultimate object of museology is "the way the individual and the community perceive and control the temporal and spatial environment though taking into possession pieces of evidence from the past and the present" (Vilkuna 2000b:9-10). In this definition, environment is regarded as including both the tangible and spiritual environment, while taking into possession is seen to take place by selecting and demarcating parts of reality and incorporating them as cultural reality. What this means is that the focus of the present study coincides with the focus of museology, but mainly within the microcosm of *Behind the Scenes*. With regard to certain theoretic considerations, museum theory is used as a window to shed light on the novel. However, there are also instances in which there is a kind of 'projecting outwards', that is, the novel is used as a window to explore museum theory or the 'museum reality' as we know it.

Further, the use of a museological approach in this study is linked with the title of the novel in a curious way. Considering the appearance of the word 'museum' in the title, there are very few references to museums as

such in the novel. Moreover, the museum in the title appears as a kind of a metaphor of an attempt to establish and maintain a connection with the past as an indispensable element of one's identity. This metaphorical thinking in relation to museums in fact seems to reflect the current museological thinking: whereas formerly museology focused on the museums as institutions embodied in the museum buildings, the emphasis has shifted towards looking at museums as a tool, as a process of posing questions of our identity. At the same time, 'the museological gaze' has been extended outside the museums, to include the totality of heritage. In a similar fashion, there seems to be an attempt in the novel to use the notion of museum and related practises (e.g. preserving physical objects to communicate past experiences) to question the community's and individual's relation to reality. In current museum theory, museum is preferably seen as a tool for creative problem-solving (e.g. Šola 1997). Šola (1997:28) calls museum a 'heritage action unit', which gives some indication of the broadening of the focus. Šola has also introduced the terms 'heritology' and 'mnemosophy' to lay emphasis on the shift of interest. While the first term focuses on the totality of heritage and its dialectics, the second, as a philosophy of heritage, raises memory as the "basis of the homeostasis of identity" (Šola 1997:21-2).

In a sense, the presence of 'museum' in the title of the novel could in itself be regarded as sound enough a justification for starting to look for it in the text. What becomes evident in the course of reading the novel is that there is at least the need to define the past and communicate it. Therefore, if 'museum' is difficult to find, at least there is some form of torso-heritage to explore, to reflect upon and consider how it could be made more whole.

As the modes of analysis, the aim is to bring together several disciplines. Thematically, the focus will be on heritage, past and memory basically from a museological standpoint. In addition, the study draws on literary and narrative-discursive analysis and postmodern notions of history. The leading questions in combining these modes of analysis are: what tools and strategies are employed by Ruby as a character within the narrative to make the past make sense? Secondly, how is the past and the

heritage narratively constructed and what implications does this have? Therefore, the aim is to pinpoint correspondences between certain narrative devices employed in the text, the themes and imagery of the past and the heritage, along with possible parallels with current cultural criticism/theory.

This study could be seen as a case study of a fictional process of working out meanings related to experiencing the past. The overall framework is then, eventually, different (and often opposing) representations of the past that actually co-exists with the present and expectations for the future. The entity which encompasses all these levels of time is identity, which is the ultimate focus of museology as well. Therefore, this study deals with identity but with a special emphasis on the creation and preservation of cultural reality and values. So, apart from this study being literary analysis, it has its counterparts in recent approaches to museum theory and practice.

In recent museological thinking museum and literature as institutions are perceived as in approximation to each other. According to Hutcheon (1994:180), both institutions could be regarded to “work toward the acquisition of knowledge through collecting, ordering, preserving and displaying the ‘objects’ of human civilization”. What is more, narrative analysis is being used in museums as a tool in setting up exhibitions – the current tendency is moving away from illustrated, room-sized books towards narrative exhibitions, to ones that tell a story. Sherman and Rogoff (1994:xii) suggest that “museums can serve as a site for the construction of fictitious histories that respond to unconscious desires.”

The present study is not intended as an attempt to come up with bold suggestions for improving the set-up for museum exhibitions, but eventually this type of research will be beneficial for both a more profound understanding of literary texts, and experimenting further with elements of narrative texts in exhibition design. Though the practical uses of combining these two approaches go beyond the scope of this study, it may, at its best, contain implications for a deeper understanding of the role and communication of heritage. Further, approaching fiction from a museological viewpoint, it could be possible to learn more about the

ways in which the narrative and stylistic element could be enforced in museums in the process of highlighting the immediacy and personal experience of relating to the past.

## 2. The structure of the thesis

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into five parts. The first one works as an orientation, explicating the discursive-narrative approach adopted as a way of reading. This is followed by defining the notion of cultural heritage and its nature as an institution. Further, the dichotomy of tangible and intangible past is given attention.

The second part focuses on the narrative choices and make-up of the novel. These include the use of irony and metafictional devices, which lead to the question of the 'truthfulness' of the narrated past, including viewing history as narrative construction and as a literary endeavour. Also the narration of time is given attention, with special emphasis on objects as a tool for narrating time and organising the narrative.

The third part sheds light on the museum as a collecting and classifying institution. This is related to the tension that can be detected in the novel between the institutional and individual representations of the past. Further, the trip to Scotland is analysed as a case of heritage tourism. It is discussed how objects are used to structure lived experience and as a tool for remembering both on the individual and the collective level.

The fourth part, the textual intervention, is a "synthesis of analytical, critical and creative work" (Pope 1995), exploring the possibilities of combining the theoretical issues discussed within the frame of the novel.

Finally, the fifth part summarises the ways in which the past is sensed in the novel and suggests reasons for this.

### 3. "Story-telling listening hearing framework" – ethnographic reading of fiction

An interesting consideration in relation to literary genres is to ask to what extent *Behind the Scenes* is a 'realistic' novel. In fact, it appears as highly such, despite its extensive manipulation of narrative time and self-consciousness of the text. What is more, it fulfils all the criteria that for example Sintonen (1999:66) mentions for realist fiction: the story is from the every-day life of people, with characters that are identifiable as 'real': the characters have names, consciousness and memory, and they live in a 'natural' social environment with identifiable settings, which makes the events possible. Further, Sintonen takes up the question of 'truthfulness to history'. This means that the utmost object of reference of the text is events in the past, not fictive events. All this is characteristic of the novel.

At the same time it could be argued that *Behind the Scenes* is not a purely realistic novel since it contains fantastic elements, such as the occasional presence of the ghosts from the remote past (e.g. p. 10 and 378). However, with closer inspection, it becomes evident that these elements are accounts of intense, subjective experience, often relating to experiencing time as a 'mélange' of the past and the present and the future. Besides, in a world of 'Ally McBealization'; of valorising intense subjective experience as an imaginative tool for the construction of identities, the fantastic elements in the novel are hardly baffling, or likely to be perceived as something that would tarnish the realistic credibility of the narrative. In other words, the events could still be taken for real.

The possibility of taking something for real can be extended to the treatment that is given to characters in the act of reading. They can be taken as merely textual agents that exist only as semiotic units, or, as having an existence also outside the text as 'real characters'. Sintonen (1999:72) points out that taking the characters as real frees them from the text, and consequently the text no longer determines the conditions for existence. This enables pondering over the past, the present and the



future, along with the psyche of the character even outside the text; the possible words and deeds in an imaginary situation not mentioned in the text.

Sintonen (1999:73) speaks for the realistic viewing of the characters, calling the semiotic view problematic in relation to exploring questions of identity, since it denies any relation between characters and living people. If, he asks, the character exists only in a semiotic sense, how can personal pronouns produce ingredients for the construction of identity? (1999:73).

What has to be pointed out is that Sintonen's text derives from a significantly different source: it is ethnographic texts, inscribed social discourse that through the inscription become an ethnographic account drawing on the interviews he has conducted with Finnish Canadians. Thus, he emphasises the fact that the utmost object of reference of his study is the reality in which these people live (1999:31). Although the context of production of *Behind the Scenes* is inherently different and there is no denying its fictive nature, on the level of the text these same considerations are equally important in explicating the reader/researcher position in relation to the text. Therefore, if the present study is essentially about making sense of the past, the present and the future from the standpoint of cultural heritage, it is eventually about personal and cultural identity in the reality according to the novel. In this sense, from a discursive-narrative point of view which Sintonen represents, the same questions about the characters' relation to the text become relevant in the present study, as they are in Sintonen's ethnography.

Sintonen (1999:73) goes on to claim that although characters in the text do not stand for living people, they possess characteristics that have their counterparts in real life. The same could be said about the characters in *Behind the Scenes*, since the world of the text is in fact a possible world, even in 'realistic' terms, even though the textual characters do not specifically point at any living or dead historical persons. If characters then become alive in the act of reading, new stories and characteristics can imaginatively be attached to the characters. This is how, in Sintonen's view, a character can symbolically express different identities.

Furthermore, the realistic reading of the characters is a precondition to the textual intervention conducted in the present study which aims at exploring the relation between collective and individual memory, through an experiment of using canonical, public modes of communicating personal meanings by selecting and displaying objects of cultural value in museum space, and exposing them to 'museum gaze'. This all becomes possible through the very notion of characters symbolically expressing various identities.

This study adopts the discursive-narrative approach, which here is taken to mean a specific dynamics between the textual and the discursive features of the novel, including the reader's response. In addition, what is to permeate the study as a whole is what Denzin (1997:268) has called a "hearing, listening, story-telling framework". The primary interest is not in the text's relation to other texts – intertextuality, which will be given some attention, mainly in the textual intervention – but the various discursive spaces that open up in the act of reading, and more specifically those related to museological/heritological considerations. In other words, the aim is to explore how the story can be made more understandable as it is placed more explicitly among the discourses around the museum institution and the heritage as its object. The discursive side means freeing the discussion from textuality, with the world as the ultimate object of reference. In this world Ruby is a real person who goes through a process of sorting out her identity in several spheres, both the personal and the collective. In addition, she is constructing herself in a narrative way, reinterpreting narratives in the process of telling, and thus constructs identities for herself. In Ricoeur's words (quoted in Sintonen 1999:51) she is creatively using the contextual cultural narratives in this process. Therefore, intertextuality is discussed as far as it explicates the role that these contextual narratives serve in Ruby's identity narrative.

Apart from looking at intertextuality in relation to the cultural contextual narratives, textuality and the texture of the narrative is given attention as far as narrative construction is concerned. That is, Ruby as the narrator of the story, apart from telling, simultaneously composes a

heritage narrative which can be abstracted from the text by focusing on certain museological key terms. This deals with the questions of a sense of place and origin, and finding out the cultural meanings of the things that have been handed down by the previous generations, and can thus be considered 'heritage'.

#### 4. Cultural heritage: authentic? representational?

It is hardly difficult to justify the extensive discussion and analysis of the museum institution in the present study, since its thematic relevance is obvious: 'the museum' is encountered already in the title of the novel. 'Cultural heritage', in contrast, is a notion that does not come up in the novel itself. However, it can be viewed as a key concept in discussing the past as it is experienced in the world of the novel.

In its broadest and most abstract sense, heritage is a manifestation of "specific relationship of man to reality" as defined by the influential museum theorist Stranský (quoted in van Mensch 1992 <http://www.xs.4all.nl/~rwa/> 31.12.1998). It can therefore function as a useful tool for the ordering of cultured experiences. But heritage is also a problematic and loaded term that is much used and abused. What makes the concept of heritage highly interesting to explore is the tension that it inherently is grounded upon: it appears as constantly moving between the poles of authenticity and fabrication. These opposite aspects are apparent in van Mensch's (1992) two-fold definition of heritage:

- "1) That part of our material environment which our ancestors considered worthy of preservation,
- 2) the idea of some modern value inherited from the past as well as a legatee for whom this inheritance is intended."

In other words, point one refers to the idea of heritage as being the bundle of things that have come down to a community from the past; the exhibits that work as witnesses to what was before. The second point is a more problematic one, immediately drawing attention to "some modern value", the ideological make-up of 'heritage'. This means that heritage is always based on selection done by some people according to certain

varying criteria and is therefore but one possible way of perceiving and representing the past.

Several theorists and writers have paid attention to this essential paradox of 'heritage'. According to David Lowenthal (1985:xvi), there are two meanings to 'past' that have to be differentiated: the past as what happened and the past as our own creation. The essential paradox is that the more people become aware of the fragility of the past and attempt to preserve it, the more they change it by intervening into historical processes, thus alienating themselves even more from authentic experiencing of the past and making it more of a fabrication. This is when "It is no longer the presence of the past that speaks to us but its pastness" (1985: xvii).

Kevin Walsh (1992:26-27) links this process of alienation and distancing from the past with modernisation, which "removed the processes from the direct experience of the community". At the same time, everyday consciousness became more fragmented due to the growing autonomy of sectors that were dealt with specialists. In other words, the past went through a professionalisation that gave the power of interpretation and selection to certain appointed organisations and institutions, such as The National Trust and English Heritage in Britain. The break of modernity coincides with the vast expansion of museums around Europe, including Great Britain: according to the statistics of Museum Database Project (quoted in Walsh 1992:122), three thirds of the museums in Britain have been established since the Second World War. It may thus be justified to claim that the burst of museums, conservation and heritage industry in post-war times is at least in part an attempt to cross bridges to the past(s) that people felt they were losing.

Further, Walsh (1992:177) claims that "Heritage should be partly considered as an attempt to articulate an idea of 'nation'". He sees a strong connection between the loss of the British Empire since the Second World War, along with the diminishing power of the landed class and the emergence of a national heritage industry. To him, it is this very interconnectedness of 'heritage' and 'nation' that makes the notion of heritage so problematic: "The representation of an exclusive set of

monuments as those which constitute a unified phenomenon representative of the nation" (1992:178).

A similar attempt to make monuments and aspects of material culture stand for something "larger than life" can be sensed in the definition for cultural heritage decided upon by UNESCO in 1972. Among the numerous definitions for 'cultural heritage', this is probably the most widely known. In the Article 1 of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, cultural heritage is divided into three categories: monuments, groups of buildings and sites of historic and "outstanding universal value" (ICOM Statutes <http://www.ico.org/statutes.html> 12.12.2000). UNESCO maintains a World Heritage List of sites which fulfil specific criteria. What is characteristic of the enterprise is a certain universalism in representationality, that is, specific sites around the world are designated as "unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition" or as "an outstanding example" illustrating "a significant stage in human history". What is essential is that the sites be "representative of a culture or cultures", that they be authentic and stand for "universal significance". Therefore, heritage is essentially about selecting various elements that are then taken to stand for a specific phenomenon or value related to the past.

A further problematic feature of 'heritage' is that it is prone to be uncritical and celebratory. Walsh (1992:126-7) claims that all nations and societies aim to produce a collective memory which is "founded on an idea of age-old organic traditions": "This tradition demands that history is placed in a past-pluperfect, and is therefore beyond question".

Apart from being a celebratory and uncritical attitude to the past, 'heritage' is a vigorously growing business taking on several forms from professional interpretation of sites to proper museums, heritage centres and "a-historical 'historical' theme parks", as Peter J. Fowler (1992:155) has called them. What is symptomatic to heritage is how closely it has become linked with 'attractions': occasionally it appears but one branch of leisure industry attempting to fulfil people's needs to have "a good day out" (Pearce 1992:208). In addition to its tourist abuse, heritage is a

powerful tool for creating impressions and evoking feelings, and is thus used for various political aims, such as nationalism (e.g. Fowler 1992, Walsh 1992).

In an administrative sense, the responsibility of managing heritage is divided and over-lapping between various institutions on international, national, regional and local levels. Peter J. Fowler (1992:81) claims that “all heritage management occurs in a state of tension --- The past is a very powerful liberator of misunderstandings, strong emotions – and large bills”. However, heritage is not merely about physical presence of the past and taking practical measures in order to manage it. According to Jukka Jokilehto (lecture at the University of Jyväskylä, 3.5.2000 on architecture and conservation), the concept of heritage is essentially modern, and relates to the modern concept of history and to the relativity of values. At its core is the idea of authentic representation of a particular culture. Although cultural heritage is maintained through the protection and management of tangible products of a culture, is eventually intangible, since it aims at preserving cultural values.

The institution that occupies a central role in preserving these cultural values is the museum, along with other memory-focused institutions: the archive and the library. According to Stranský (quoted in van Mensch 1992), the above mentioned special relationship of man to reality is characterised in a set of activities carried out by museological institutions. These activities encompass preservation (including collecting, conservation, restoration and documentation) and communication (exhibition and education). Together these activities create and use a selected part of material environment – the heritage.

Since the 1970s and the 1980s, the idea of the ‘ecomuseum’ and a movement called ‘New Museology’ has promoted active involvement of the population and de-centralised structures as opposed to the high degree of institutionalisation on the field of heritage (e.g. van Mensch 1992). What is crucial to these approaches is “making everyday life meaningful” by involving communities in heritage-related activities (Poulot 1994, in Sherman and Rogoff 1994:78). Museums and the study and preservation of heritage need to combine the solid ground of theory

and meaningful practise rooted in everyday life. It is not difficult to detect similar efforts in *Behind the Scenes* on the protagonist's part: Ruby needs to make sense of her experiences, make her everyday life meaningful, and she does this through practice.

The tension and dynamics of the two poles of heritage can be sensed in the novel. It involves several encounters with various heritage institutions which result in clashes between the institutionalised and personal modes of experiencing the past. By analysing the notion of heritage as filtered through the novel on the one hand, and as perceived in theoretical literature on the other, more light can be shed on the dialectics of the individual and the collective experience.

### 5. Objects, narrativized past and personal heritage narrative

As pointed out above, heritage is eventually about identity, or rather, heritage is one aspect of identity. The views on the construction of identity can be roughly divided into psychological ego-identity and narrative construction of identities (Sintonen 1999:51-3). Here, it is worthwhile to adopt the narrative view, as it relates to the discursive-narrative view discussed above. According to this view, as persons as individuals construct themselves in a narrative way, they select certain parts of their life-story, and adjust these segments to the current situation (Sintonen 1999:45). Therefore, understanding of the self is not unified and stable, as it is tended to be viewed psychologically, but dynamic and situated, that is, also historical and spatial. An individual's heritage narrative can be perceived as dealing with these very aspects: the individual's location in space and time, and her relation to those living in another temporal and spatial locations but to whom she feels she has a cultural bond through some form of concrete and symbolic inheritance.

However, although language and narrativity are essential elements for people in making sense of their relation to their surroundings, this does not exclude the existence of a 'real world' of some kind. As Sintonen (1999:45) puts it,

Various geographical sites belonging to nature, or man-made objects exist as physical objects independent of language, but meanings they can obtain only through language and narration. In relation to this, we could talk about two worlds: the material world of physical objects, and the narrative world that is produced and obtains meanings through language.

This dual division has persisted for a long time: according to Appadurai (1986, in Pearce 1994:77), contemporary Western common sense, with its historical traditions in philosophy, law and natural science, is prone to place words and things to opposite ends. While Sintonen makes a distinction between the material and narrative worlds, also the notion of cultural heritage is often given the same treatment, placed into the categories of tangible and spiritual heritage, even though ‘ideally’ they are inherently different sides of the same phenomenon. Probably as a reflection of the conventional body/soul or mind/matter divide (e.g. Pearce 1992:15-21), spiritual heritage is often considered a more fundamental or wider category encompassing the totality of heritage.

If we consider the different ways in which the past comes down to us or survives, it is possible to make a distinction between three or four ways: as objects or material culture, as physical landscape (as reflecting the conventional nature/culture divide), and as narratives (Pearce 1990:27). The fourth possible dimension is that of individual memory consisting of images and emotions, which in turn form the basis of constructing narratives. Thus individual memory can also be seen as a branch of the third dimension of narrative. Lowenthal (1985), in turn, uses a three-fold division of the different accesses to the past as memory, relics and history, of which the first refers to personal narratives, the second to artefacts and the third to collective memory, which works as a synthesis of extending memory and interpreting relics. No matter which of the two approaches we choose, the question remains the same: that of how the past (or heritage) is ‘knowable’, how we can obtain knowledge about it.

In chapter I.3., the discursive-narrative approach used by Sintonen was introduced to the extent that it is applicable for the purposes of the present study. In a similar fashion, the narrative approach will be adopted



also in relation to the past as objects. While material objects can be studied in a number of ways and they can “provide unmediated impressions from the past” (Lowenthal 1985:245), they also tell stories of the past in their own way. According to Pearce (1990:26), texts are created by the object and its contexts, and by interacting with the object, individuals can ‘read’ these texts and make their own interpretations on them.

What is characteristic of objects is that they, as a mode of communication, relatively lack intentional bias and are accessible in different ways than the other accesses to the past and thus they pluralize historical knowledge (Lowenthal 1985:244). This pluralizing effect is partly related to the inexhaustable and polysemantic nature of objects (e.g. Pearce 1990). Firstly, they contain much more than is perceived at one time; secondly, they can be read as standing for a variety of things. This leads to a situation in which selection has to be made: what elements and aspects to pick, and what to make of them. Therefore, much the same way as narratives really come into being through them being read by their reader, so do objects ‘come to life’ through the interaction that individuals engage themselves in with an object. Whether dealing with material objects or narratives, heritage always includes selection and this selection is manifested in one way or another. According to Fowler (1992:5), “We shape elements of our present in the light of those parts of the past we select for imitation and emulation”. As with narrative texts, also with objects the meanings are never ready-made and are always debatable.

It is partly due to this inexhaustable and polysemantic nature of objects that many objects of the novel are taken up several times and discussed in different contexts and under different headings. Although this choice may at first seem as scattered, it can also be regarded as a reflection of the special nature of material objects: to do them justice, they cannot be thoroughly dealt with and then put away, but rather they may appear in a different light or show themselves from another angle in a way that they offer themselves for new inspection. Objects have the ability of forming various metaphoric or metonymic sets with other

objects, and as part of a particular set their meaning inevitably changes (e.g. Pearce 1990). This is how, according to Kiuru (2000:681), objects create networks of meaning that are in constant flux. To take an example from among the objects in the novel, the Victorian doll's house has varying meanings as part of the set that stands in a metaphoric relation to the Renaissance cabinets of curiosities, and as part of a set symbolising gender roles.

That both words and things are approached from a narrative perspective is not to ignore their inherent differences. They can be accessed in different ways, their way of mediating information is different and they are likely to have a different kind of emotional impact. Words and things are often deployed side by side in order to enforce or highlight the point that is being made. However, objects are not mere illustrations but another dimension that, at its best, enable 'enriched communication', drawing on "an original object enriched by an informatic aura" (Šola 1997:272). Further, objects are a powerful way of validating personal narratives and a means that help ordering the lived experience through the meanings and memories attached to them. Since the reader can have no access to the physical objects of the novel as such, and only to their verbalised and narrativized representations, it would be impossible to focus on the objects as objects. The narrative approach enables the discussion of both the material and the narrative world in order to explore the multi-faceted interaction and networks of meaning that are created between the individual, the community and the world of objects.

Pearce (1997:2) talks about our constant need of remaking ourselves, "through the only medium available to us, our physical surroundings organized by internal narrative; and in this process neither surroundings nor narrative is primary, but each perpetually feeds the other". So, the way to go about it is to make artefacts and language go together: view Ruby's past as textured through objects – signifiers of the past to build up a past – and looking at how her heritage narrative is built in the novel. The question is how Ruby makes her past make sense: this making something make sense involves some form of texturing, in other words a

narrative is necessary for communicating the past, just the same way as with histories as fabrications of the past (and not fabrication in a negative sense).

As with the canonical representations of past (heritage), selection is a key element also in building personal heritage narratives as cornerstones of identity. In Ruby's case it may be that a unifying or connecting narrative is missing, and therefore it is difficult for the protagonist to find her way around in the over-flow of historical monuments. Pearce says that "together the words and things create our alternative selves". In the novel, the objects are plenty, but their vast amount may be an implication of the lack of a specific (heritage) narrative that could have these objects organised. Maybe the past is only absent-mindedly present in the objects and the landscape is overcrowded with meanings without this organising narrative. Indeed this idea of organising the lived experiences by narrativising or verbalising them is apparent in the novel as well: in the end of the novel, Ruby tells that she is starting on a grand project of "a cycle of poems based on the family tree". And then she confesses: "In the end, it is my belief, words are the only things that can construct a world that makes sense".

## **I. *BEHIND THE SCENES* AND THE DYNAMICS OF NARRATION**

The novel can be regarded as a 'typically' postmodern text in its self-reflexivity and (new) historicism. It is political in the way it challenges theory and institutions. It includes allusions to contemporary critical museum theory, and in this sense it could be considered a contribution to the on-going discussion on the ground on which communities and individuals build their identities and sense of the past. It reflects a critical attitude to traditional institutions, such as the museum, the school, even literature itself. At the same time it questions ways of (historical) representation and validation. It is playful and highly intertextual, and it draws on irony in its modes of narration. It contests the linearity of time with

breaking up the general body of the narrative with extensive, page-long footnotes, the focus of which is different people in different time, still each adding to the overall story of the extended family.

### 1. Self-reflexivity

According to Bennett and Royle (1995:41), “Stories always have something to tell us about stories themselves”. Narratives vary in the amount of information that focuses on the telling of the story and its conditions. In the novel, much of the discussion of the past contains a high degree of self-awareness, ‘self-reflexivity’, which can be defined as “self-critical commentary regarding the process and context of production within a work of art” ([www.english.upenn.edu/Travel99/Abstract/oflynn.html](http://www.english.upenn.edu/Travel99/Abstract/oflynn.html) 24.4.2001). As Hutcheon (1988:4) points out, the past in postmodern art, fiction or poetry is “always a critical reworking, never a nostalgic return”. Much of this critical attitude is directed to the medium itself, which in postmodern fiction is language. Hutcheon (1988:19) goes on to claim that postmodernism can be viewed as a dialogue with the past in the light of the present. The problematizing of language results in the problematization of history: questioning whether we can know the past other than through its textual remains (Hutcheon 1988:20). What is more, she (1988:9) points out that postmodernism brings institutions under scrutiny, and in this context she mentions also museums. In other words, the museum can be viewed as another system of signification parallel to that of language through which we make sense of our experiences.

The self-reflexivity of the novel is manifested in several ways. One of these is the sense of having in-built theories within the narrative, in addition to various allusions to other theoretical discourses. One aspect that can be viewed in terms of theory that is partly infused into the novel as its content is the naming practises both as a means of structuring the narrative and as a topic of discussion. The fact that the footnotes are called footnotes can be seen as an instance of narrative self-awareness

with regard the structural conventions of written accounts. Further, the titles of the chapters provide an interesting procession from 'Conception' and 'Birth' to the 'Coronation' of Queen Elizabeth II, and further to 'The Naming of Things'. This fourth chapter, apart from being an account of Ruby's struggles of coming to terms with the outside world through reading and writing, it at the same time draws attention to the ways of making sense of the world through systems of symbols, naming and classification. The human desire and tendency for classification is made use of in an ironic way in a passage in which Ruby is taken to Aunt Babs' after the death of her twin sister Pearl. Ruby finds everything around her unfamiliar and frightening:

There are a handful of crocodiles and a small dragon but mainly they are nameless things without clear definition of taxonomy. (p. 115)

Similar theoretical allusions that can be read as references to the history of science can be detected later in the same chapter as Ruby and Gillian are fighting over toys. The situation is resolved to Ruby's defeat but Ruby knows where to find her consolation from:

I don't really care – I still have Teddy and an Alexandrian library of books, in the form of the Children's Section of the York City Library, is waiting to be deciphered by us. (p. 126)

For those acquainted with the history of science or studies in historical museology it is impossible to miss this allusion to one of the most famous ancient temples of the Muses and its extensive library (e.g. Pomian 1990:164, in Pearce 1994). This merging of various kinds of theory and literary discourse has also been remarked by Hutcheon (1988:90):

The postmodern enterprise is one that traverses the boundaries of theory and practice, often implicating one by the other, and history is often the site of this problematization.

What this means is that a fictional work can also work as the site of theoretical discussion, in other words it may include an in-built commentary on the current criticism discourses. In this way, such novels inevitably position themselves in relation to the discourses surrounding them, in this case to museological ones.

Further, Ruby describes her efforts of learning to read by stating that

I understand the meaning all right, it's the form that escapes me. The cards have pictures on them – Apples, Buses, Cats, Dogs, Elephants, Fish, Goats – hermeneutic symbols that drive me into a frenzy. (p. 123)

To use such terminology as 'taxonomy' or 'hermeneutic symbols' when describing the daily struggles of a four-year-old is striking: most probably it will be read as irony, whose edge is not on the doings of the little girl but rather on the conventional mystified way in which great inventors and discoverers are constructed. The irony deployed in the novel will be discussed in more detail in chapter II.2.

The title of the fifth chapter is 'Interlude', which again draws attention to the narrative construction itself. Also the title of the closing chapter, 'Redemption', seems carry a double-meaning in it, both the spiritual and the material level. It is psychological falling of things into place but also getting worldly goods out of the pawnbroker's, figuratively. The heap of objects coming and going in the narrative finally begin to occupy their meaningful place in the system.

Another aspect of self-reflexivity in the novel is a kind of transparent symbolism or allegory that draws on 'ready-made' meanings. The symbols, the signified, often seem to "know themselves". One such instance takes place at Sandra and Ted's wedding, where Ruby has her hands full and has no time to eat anything. Her cousin Lucy-Vida tells Ruby that she has accidentally got pregnant, while she is "gazing at the wedding-cake, which is growing in my [Ruby's] eyes, not in stature but symbolic significance" (p. 290).

Another ready-made meaning is suggested in a passage in which Patricia is reading *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which Ruby learns to be about "the metaphysical ambiguity of time and death and the power and sensation to retrieve memories and reverse time" (p. 210). Interestingly enough, this theme seems to bear close resemblance to that of *Behind the Scenes* itself. Even though this is a description of another literary work, it can still be interpreted as an alternative message of the present novel. It has been argued ([www.ovidian.freemove.co.uk/media/selfreflex.html](http://www.ovidian.freemove.co.uk/media/selfreflex.html) 24.4.2001) that self-reflexive elements, through

making the reader aware of the processes at work within the novel, offer “a window into criticism, which itself is, in cultural terms, an index of artistic status”. Here, what can be sensed is a play with the institution of literature, with criticism and interpretation. It is as if saying: “What you are reading could be about this, too”. At the same time it could be about something else. This question of the relation of *Behind the Scenes* to the theme above is discussed in more detail in the conclusive chapter.

## 2. ‘Seriously ironic parody’

Another manifestation of self-reflexivity in the narration of the novel is its extensive deployment of irony. According to Hutcheon (1994:30), “The subversive functioning of irony is often connected to the view that it is a self-critical, self-knowing, self-reflexive mode that has the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very “sites” of discourse”. In her (1994) definition, irony is a ‘rhetoric trope’, ‘a way of seeing the world’ (1994:1) that involves the ironist who intends to set up an ironic relation between the said and the unsaid, and the interpreter who decides if something is ironic or not (1994:11). What is essential to irony is that it ‘happens’ in discourse and within discursive communities, so that it has to be considered in connection to social, historical and cultural contexts apart from its semantic and syntactic dimensions (1994:17). However, what needs to be pointed out is that irony is not necessarily a matter of ironist intention but always a matter of interpretation and attribution, of purposeful attitude on the interpreter’s part (Hutcheon 1994:45). In fact, as Gaunt (1989, quoted in Hutcheon 1994:116) claims, “The only way to be sure that a statement was intended ironically is to have a detailed knowledge the personal, linguistic, cultural and social references of the speaker *and* his audience”. Therefore, with the present study, too, the focus is on explicating where and why the reader is inclined to attribute irony in her reading of the text rather than considering the ironist intentions at length. Moreover, the discussion of irony in the scope of the study is focused on the

communication of the heritage and clustered around the inter-discursive oscillations pointing at recent museological theory. Of course, there is a vast amount of irony in the narration that goes beyond this chosen focus and will thus be left without attention. Further, it is quite probable that much of this latter type of irony is passed unnoticed since it relies on aspects of British culture or other local realities that fall outside 'the general culture' or 'particularities of time and place' (Hutcheon 1994:91) that would have to be shared by the ironist and the interpreter for the irony to actualise. As an example of the deployment of irony in relation to communicating the heritage is the discussion of Chapter Nine as 'heritage-tourism gone wrong' that will be taken up later.

Linda Hutcheon (1994:37) characterises irony as a "weighted mode of discourse in the sense that it is asymmetrical, unbalanced in favor of the silent and the unsaid". What this may lead to is that "Irony can make you edgy, nervous about how to fix meaning securely and how to determine motivation." (Hutcheon 1994:38). Indeed, with this novel too, the reader is likely to feel she is walking on a hollowed ground, because of what Hutcheon calls 'the unbearable slipperiness of irony', its being in flux and loaded with various tensions may change and turn around, with its target on the interpreter attempting to analyse it. What is more, much of the cutting edge of the irony in the novel is in its intertextual allusions and interdiscursivity, mostly in the form of embedded 'scholarly' terminology.

The question of placing the novel in the context of literary genres opens up an interesting view into the relationship between historiography and fictional text. Hayden White (quoted in Sintonen 1999:22-3) has identified features in the nineteenth century writing of history that remind of elements in fictive texts. He claims that historiography in the nineteenth century is a plotted spiral beginning and ending with irony, and in between there is romance, tragedy and comedy, in this order. This is very interesting from the point of view of the overflowing irony manifested in *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, especially if we consider irony as being related to the notion of the "inadequacy of language to its full presentation of its object" (White 1978:207), and consequently, used



as a self-conscious rhetoric technique as form of intentional alienation (van Mencsh 1992 <http://www.xs.4all.nl/~rwa/> 31.12.1998). This sense is present in the narrative to a varying extent, but the irony is clearest in the chapters proper, that is, narration that deals with the period from the 1950s to the 1990s. In fact, a great number of the themes discussed in the present study bear some relation to irony: the way the queen is pictured as a wind-up doll, the coinciding of the football world cup and the wedding, the way the tangible heritage is talked about. All of these could be discussed here, but instead, in spite of them being narrated in an ironic manner, they are discussed in relation to the implications they carry concerning heritage and memory.

Even though White's categories are not applicable as such, for the simple fact that they deal with exclusively 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography, the basic idea is useful and revealing. White defines 'Romanticism' in historiography as a product of time in which the writer considers his or her work as belonging to a historic moment which mediates the changing of eras. A perfect example from the novel is Footnote (viii) New Boots, which opens with the announcement:

The end of the Boer War! All day long the streets had been full of people celebrating the news. By happy coincidence there was a great travelling fair visiting St George's Field and Lillian and Nell were hoping to visit its gas-lit stalls and experience the thrill of being amongst the crowds on such a patriotic occasion. (p. 242)

For a 'postmodern reader', reference to 'such a patriotic occasion' may at first appear as ironic but in fact there is no irony in the passage that could be pinned down. Moreover, it is a compassionate account of the way Nell, Ruby's grandmother, and her sister Lillian relate to the events around them at a specific point in time. The narrator is careful not to make any value judgements but mediates the experience through dialogue and inner focalisation.

In fact, this Romantic attitude and the feel of historic significance is subverted and becomes ironic in the chapters proper. As Ruby tells of her birth:

In fact, my gestation has neatly spanned the old and the new, for I've arrived just after the King's death, making me one of the first babies

born into the new Queen's reign. A new Elizabethan! I'm surprised they haven't called me Elizabeth. (p. 40)

Apart from this kind of parody of historical discourse, the irony deployed in the novel serves a variety of other functions. The alienating mentioned above would in Hutcheon's (1994:50) terms be 'distancing'. It refers to the use of irony in order to bring in new perspectives for broadening the view and perceiving incongruities. An example of this is Ruby's rhetoric question after giving an account of the way that the family members talk to each other: "How am I to pass my 'Verbal Reasoning' paper on Tuesday when I see so little of it in the course of my everyday life?" (p. 226). Another function that can be detected is 'complicating' (Hutcheon 1994:48), which has the tendency of increasing the complexity, richness and ambiguity of the text, both verbally and structurally. However, to set these functions aside, irony in the novel is looked at mostly through the 'inclusionary view' (Hutcheon 1994:55) that relies on the assumption of superiority and sophistication on the part of both the ironist and the intended interpreter. What this means for discussing the irony in relation to communicating the heritage is that this type of irony happens at the expense of an excluded audience, to whom the ironic cues remain unnoticed or not understood, since it is not familiar with the discourses of museology or heritology. To this category belongs the above mentioned reference to the Alexandrian library (p. 126).

### 3. New historicism, historiographic metafiction and the question of voice

In the opening of the novel, as Ruby-the-narrator briefly goes through the historical layers of the city of York, she gives a list of historical figures that are linked with the street her family lives on:

In this street lived the first printers and the stained-glass craftsmen that filled the windows of the city with coloured light. The Ninth Legion Hispana that conquered the north marched up and down our street, the *via praetoria* of their great fort, before they disappeared into thin air. Guy Fawkes was born here, Dick Turpin was hung a few streets away

and Robinson Crusoe, that other great hero, is also a native son of this city. Who is to say which of these is real and which a fiction? (p. 10)

What is most likely to grab the reader's attention in this list is that Robinson Crusoe is a fictional character. However, the more thought is given to the other items or personages on the list, the more obvious it becomes that it is impossible to draw the line between purely historical and fictional characters or events. As White (1978:104) points out, "to historicize any structure, to write its history, is to mythologize it". Currently, what cultural critics and new historicists have emphasised is the "fact" that "Both history and fiction are discourses that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past" (Hutcheon 1988:89). What is more, many historians today see the writing of history in the form of narrative representations of the past a highly literary endeavour that draws on conventional forms of expression (e.g. White 1986, quoted in Hutcheon 1988:96). This "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" is what Hutcheon (1988:5) calls 'historiographic metafiction'. She regards this feature as typical for postmodern literature.

One example of this is the ironic play of historical eras and chronologies. After the death of her sister Gillian, Ruby occasionally uses the term "After Gillian era – 1960 AG" (p. 201) in her narration, or refers to "the BG routines and rituals" (p. 210), obviously referring to the time before Gillian. This method could be seen as an example of historiographic metafiction, which, according to Hutcheon, (1988:97) works as a reminder of the fact that "while event did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning". In this way the novel draws attention to the arbitrary nature of naming in historiography.

Play of parallelisms in terms of naming historical events has a similar effect: "Just as the Great fire of London helped to purge the Great Plague, so the Great Pet Shop Fire helped to purge the death of Gillian" (p. 215). Apart from shedding light on the narrative construction of chains of cause and effect, there are interesting comparisons drawn between a large-scale, "collective" disaster and one that touches only one

family. The Pet Shop Fire really is 'Great' and grand-scale for those who are faced with it. In other words, it is a question of naming a private experience by using the terminology of collective historical events.

Further, there is interesting use of tense in the novel, as if to highlight the present moment or draw attention to what is to come in the future. One summer, Ruby and her friend Kathleen go to Edinburg to work in a hotel. As they are shown their room, Ruby-the-narrator remarks that "The attic window is better than the camera obscura on the Royal Mile *will be*" (p. 354) (*italics of the present writer*). What this means is that she prefers the view from the attic window to the images that open up on the Royal Mile. Even though she could not have known this as she first saw the view from the attic, she knows it at the time of narrating her story, so she might as well point it out. In a similar fashion, as Ruby-the-narrator tells about the lack of communication in her family, she concludes: "I don't have the right words anyway – I won't have the right vocabulary for several years" (p. 175-6). These references to the future are rather startling, despite the fact that the moment in which Ruby is telling her story is in 1992 or after, as she has already lived through the events she is narrating and is "logically" able to include such references in her narration. In any case, this narrative tool constantly draws attention to the moment of narration. The reader is reminded of the fact that the narrator – either having 'been there' or by claiming authority of narrating events she actually has no access to – knows her story and can manipulate it the way she wants, also in terms of chronology.

Apart from highlighting the moment of narration, there are instances in the narrative in which the time that is the subject of narration is given additional emphasis. For example, there is a passage in which Bunty, Ruby's mother, is reported making George, Ruby's father, a cup of tea. This is followed by the remark: "(Well, this *is* 1959)" (p. 176, original *italics by the author*). This obviously refers to the gender roles: in the 1950s it was more or less taken for granted that women did all the housework, including making tea for their husbands.

As a whole, the historiographic metafiction deployed in the narration appears to be a reflection of Doctorow's (quoted in Hutcheon 1988:3)

claim that "History is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive, and fiction is a kind of speculative history".

The last aspect to be looked at in relation to new historicism and validation of historical knowledge is the question of narrative voice. The story is narrated mainly by the protagonist Ruby Lennox, starting as an embryo after being conceived in 1951, and extending to the year 1992. Ruby's voice is dominant throughout the chapters, with the exception of the footnotes. The voice of Ruby is a mature, educated adult voice but it combines with 'immediate' focalization, stressing the word choices, perceptions and thinking of a given moment at the time the events took place. The adult voice is in control, however, and inserts anachronistic views and value judgements into the narration. Also other points of view are present in the narration through direct discourse but they are dominated by Ruby's voice.

The footnotes are a more complicated case in terms of voice. The reader is seduced to read them as accounts narrated by Ruby, but this Ruby has a different voice, relying more on conventional historical narration of realist texts. It is characterised by third-person, omniscient narration that is more neutral and transparent than the chapters proper, and in relation to them, irony is used sparingly. In the majority of the footnotes, Ruby is hardly present at all (if she is the narrator in the first place) but the first and the eleventh footnote is different in the sense that a 'you' is being addressed. This 'you' is likely to be interpreted as the reader to whom the story is being told, for instance with phrases like "Picture the scene" (p. 29), "If you had been watching" (p. 342). Further, these footnotes are characterised, not only by the presence of the reader but also of Ruby-the-narrator as participant in the events, as a character of the story that is narrated. In the first footnote, there is another scene in another time (present) from which a plunge is taken into the past through the photo of Ruby's great-grandmother that Ruby and her mother Buntie are looking at. Interestingly, as already stated, the transition is marked by Ruby's request to the reader to picture the scene that is soon to be depicted. This eventually leaves open the question whether the scene pictured lies on some historical source of information that Ruby is

drawing on, or whether she is imaginatively filling in the slots in the narrated past that she would otherwise have no access to. Once again we arrive at the question: “Who is to say which of these is real and which is fiction?” In the eleventh footnote, moreover, Ruby is present through her explicit role as narrator, including her point of view and deictic expressions (e.g. “my silly great-grandmother”, p. 342). This position clearly differs from that of the other footnotes that are characterised by the apparent absence of Ruby-the-narrator.

It becomes evident from the footnotes that their narrator - be it Ruby or someone else- is taking sides: the great-grandmother Alice and Lillian, the sister of Ruby’s grandmother, are portrayed in very favourable terms, while Bunty and Nell get mostly ‘bad treatment’. Therefore, if we suppose that Ruby is the narrator of the footnotes too, we have to question where she gets her inner-circle information from. For example, with regard to Lillian, inner focalization is used as a narrative tool. What this means is that the narrator gets inside the person’s head and is able to perceive her environment the way she does. How can Ruby as the narrator know all this?

#### 4. The footnotes: authenticity vs. feel-good heritage

As discussed above, the historical authenticity of the accounts given in the novel is debatable. Moreover, the reader is offered several truths in relation to the great-grandmother Alice, since different characters commit themselves to different versions of the past. Therefore, some aspects of the past appear as ‘joint and several pasts’ (Fowler 1992:4). These ambiguities revolve around the life-story of Alice: according to Bunty, she died giving birth to Nell, but Lawrence’s, her son’s truth, is that she hurried out of the house one night, got on a black cart and never came back. Even though he shared this knowledge with his brothers and sisters, they did not believe him, so that the ‘collective’ version of Alice’s fate was that she died. A more elaborated account gives Alice’s deed an explanation: she escaped the unbearable life she was living, and ran away

with Mr Armand but returned to look for her children and was eventually killed in 1940 in Sheffield in one of the air-raids. As pointed out earlier, the presence and involvement of the narrator varies from footnote to another to the extent that it becomes almost impossible to tell whether Ruby herself is in charge of all the footnotes. It is obvious that she has not witnessed any of the events told about in the footnotes, and accordingly cannot possibly get access to the minds of her deceased relatives. Therefore, the footnotes in which the narrator does not make his or her presence explicit, the accounts are given either by an unidentified narrator, or Ruby, in which case the information in the footnotes has to be at least partly fabricated. What is more, in one of the footnotes the parallel narrative status is made explicit by starting the footnote with the words "This is the story of my grandmother's..." (p. 45). Once again, we have to be contented with Ruby's remark, "Who is to say which of these is real and which a fiction?" (e.g. p. 10). How is the reader to deal with these contradictory 'truths'?

What is intriguing is that Ruby is explicitly present in very few of the footnotes either as a character or as a narrator. It is possible that she is not the narrator of all the footnotes – it is difficult to tell because the narration in the footnotes relies on historic, third-person narration, to a more 'realist' tradition. Hutcheon (1988:10) points out that it is generally with these tools that 'history' is narrated, as a claim for objectivity and authority. Further, the footnotes rarely contain downright irony that the chapters are full of. *If* Ruby is the narrator of all the chapters and the footnotes, we may wonder why she uses so different stylistic devices. Is it to (re)claim authority of past narratives/narrative past in the footnotes through doing it more like the historians have traditionally done it? Is she trying to persuade us on her side, to believe her truth, by adapting a different voice, as if to pluralize the historic sources, to make it more valid in traditional historiographical sense?

One way of approaching the narrative, that is, Ruby's narrative construction of Alice, is as a feel-good narrative that she step by step refines and alters, so that it would be better suited for her own purposes. Ruby needs someone to identify with, and her mother's words "She looks

just like you” (p. 29) gives a good basis for searching parallels between their lives and fates. And, if needed, these parallels are enforced or simply made up in the process of narration.

In a sense, the entire narrative can be regarded as being constructed on a specific (three-fold) dynamics between this feel-good tendency aiming at wholeness and chronological progression of events and a different sense of time or temporal existence represented by the wealth of objects in the narrative. The other factor adding to the dynamics and going against the grain of the feel-good progression is the deployment of irony, which enriches and complicates the narrative. At times irony has the effect of alienation, at other times it seems to underline the discontinuities in the narrative that the feel-good principle attempts to override.

It should be noted, however, that the feel-good tendency is not identical with the feel-good of light entertainment, especially film industry, with the aim of offering something enjoyable and most of all easily digestible. In contrast, feel-good in this context is the attempt to narratively construct coherent enough an identity, through which the past, present and future can be atoned. Ruby’s experiences of struggling to find justification for her existence and getting over her past traumas are far from feel-good entertainment; it is rather a question of constructing an acceptable past, a ‘livable’ present and a future with some perspective. As Susan Pearce (1992:208) puts it, “heritage, for better or worse, has little to do with history. Heritage is about feeling good in the present”.

In a similar spirit to that of Pearce, Brook (1991:98) poses a question:

Since past experience no longer exists to verify statements about it, can it really be that a usable past is necessarily a true past, with the measure of its truth being its ability to do work in the present?

He goes on to claim that the truth of a statement concerning the past is more a question of persuasion and construction, rather than of demonstration and discovery. In fact, Hutcheon (1988:96) claims that in historical inquiry, there has been a shift from validation to signification, which in turn implies a pluralist view of historiography as consisting of different but equally meaningful constructions of past reality. It could be



claimed that together with the chapters proper the footnotes give a more pluralist view of past events with multiple, and at times contradictory, voices.

##### 5. Glass buttons, rosaries and Walter Benjamin: the synchronicity and montages of history

Narrative is said to be “characterized by its representation of a series of events or actions which are connected in time and through causality” (Bennett and Royle 1995:42). However, the order of events in the narration does not necessarily follow the order in which they may have taken place in ‘reality’. The aforementioned footnotes following each chapter break the conventional temporality of the narration in the form of analepses or as brief references to events that are to come in the future. What is characteristic of these movements in time is that they are mostly connected with objects, for instance, the footnotes may give more detailed accounts of the fate of the coronation spoon mentioned in the third chapter, or the sentence “The great rabbit-shaped clouds hang in the sky like Zeppelins” (p. 211) takes the reader to footnote (vii), which tells about the air-raids during the second world war. So, rather than in terms of allegory, the chapters and their footnotes are linked according to a certain kind of associative synchronicity: while the sequence of events in the chapters proper is always chronological, even shown by the succession of years in the titles of the chapters, the events in the footnotes unexceptionally take place in another time than the one in the chapter.

Studies that have dealt with the temporal existence of objects have remarked it to differ from narrative time. According to Fowler (1992:6),

It [the past] is often embodied in artefacts ranging, from both cultural and highly personal reasons, from matchboxes to Mycanae, from a seaside souvenir to a Monet. Such ‘thens’ do not involve a sense of sequential, correlated past. They are not about history in the sense of either a rational investigation of time past or the coherent result, narrative or otherwise, of such inquiry. A salient characteristic of this sort of ‘then’ is its selectivity for preconceived visions of some parts of our yesterdays.

Indeed, the objects in the novel seem to resist the temporal arrangement of the narrative. If, as Pearce (1992:28), points out, signs are available for constant symbolic reuse, then it is likely that the objects in the narratives and the multiplicity of webs they (can) produce are some sort of carriers of instability in the text also in terms of narrative time. The practical textual solution for this has been the inclusion of the footnotes. The references to the footnotes in the body of the narrative work as indicators of the possibility of the narrative to take an alternative turn, to follow another path than the one that has been taken. It is as if saying, "But that would be another story". Naturally, the footnotes can be read as footnotes as usually read: as providing additional information on a certain topic but which deviates somewhat from the line of the topic under discussion. Then again, many of the footnotes of the novel could be regarded as little stories of their own: they all have a title, that is, a topic or a theme they are about. Furthermore, footnote (ii) opens with the following statement: "This is the story of my grandmother's continually thwarted attempts to get married" (p. 45). In other words, also Ruby, as the narrator of the footnotes, is conscious of them being stories, at least some of them. However, what is essential about the footnotes is that they rarely can be embedded into the chronology of the basic story-line, as they often 'accumulate' information from various times. The story could be reconstructed according to the chronological progression of events but this would require the deconstruction of the footnotes into smaller units: as such there is no unambiguous place for them in the chronological progression of the narrative.

This 'object time' apparent in the novel stands in an interesting position in relation to the postmodern notion of history. According to David Roberts (quoted in Pöyhtäri 1996:136), in the postmodern, history is not understood as narration serving linear progression, in which eras form a homogeneous continuity follow the principles of the grand narrative. Instead, the postmodern notion of history is formed through fragmentary montages, in which historical eras can synchronically relate to each other. This Roberts sees as bearing resemblance to Walter Benjamin's allegorical philosophy of history. According to Benjamin,

history is momentarily appearing entities: the sequence of events of history are not to be told like the beads of a rosary. Instead, moments in history should be grasped as constellations which the era has formed with a definite earlier one. This is how a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' is established (Walter Benjamin On the Concept of History <http://www.tasc.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/ls/Wbenjamin/CONCEPT2.html> 6.5.2001). By these chips of the Messianic Benjamin means fragments of the past that can be 'resurrected' within a collection.

If Benjamin's philosophy of history is allegorical, so is its relation thematically to certain aspects in *Behind the Scenes*. An important set of objects are the pink glass buttons, the few exhibits of the great-grandmother Alice after her disappearance. A button is encountered for the first time as Gillian, Ruby's sister, is playing with her grandmother's button box, and is reported to deliberately swallow a pink glass button. There is a reference to footnote (i), of which the last page is dedicated to the buttons. The part begins: "The fate of the three glass buttons was as follows – " (p. 38). Therefore, what is interesting is how the fate of the objects is given attention, much the same way as Benjamin talks about reading objects: by studying the pasts of the objects, a passage can be opened up into the past. In fact, something of the kind can be detected in the passage: by following the fate of the buttons, something can be said about the fate of the family members, too. As the fates of the buttons are briefly looked at, the attention is turned to the lives of the people holding the buttons in their possession: "As to the fate of the children – " (p. 38). The buttons appear both in concrete terms and figuratively, for example in the first chapter, the foetus-Ruby sees herself as "hanging like a pink glass button by a thread" (p. 26). What is characteristic of the buttons is that they are not kept in a silk floss for long, as if to follow Benjamin's advice to abandon the beads of the rosary. Each button has a life of its own, dispersed in several synchronic constellations, and its fate is something that can be returned to from time to time.

Benjamin (quoted in Pöyhtäri 1996:81) promotes historical materialism as 'unique experience of the past', as opposed to linear history, which, according to him, strives for creating an 'eternal image of

the past'. He criticises the historicist method for its tendency to mere listing: the method spills out a bunch of facts in order to fill a homogeneous empty space. So, whereas linear perception of history is mainly syntagmatic, materialist historiography is paradigmatic, based on the idea of removing elements from their original context, which in turn enables comparison, as things can be perceived as their essence.

The idea of removing things from their original context is fundamental also in collecting. This involves bringing objects from different times and places, and displaying them in (our) here and now. According to some, the persistence of the synchronicity in relation to the perception of time has been claimed to be a characteristic of the postmodern condition. Andre Malraux (quoted in Pöyhtäri 1996:136) regards the postmodern as a way of seeing history as a museum without walls, in which different eras can be united as synchronically simultaneous wholes. What is characteristic of both collecting and the postmodern is looking into the past through such constellations, which remove the fragments of history that exist vertically and chronologically, and bring them into contact with each other horizontally and synchronically, as Pöyhtäri (1996:139) summarises. Further, these constellations are on the one hand timeless, since they are artificial, new contexts, and on the other, they contain all time, since their reservoir is the events in the past in their entirety.

The synchronicity of the past is also manifested in the novel in several ways. Firstly, the footnotes discussed above can be regarded as a practical narrative choice reflecting the notion of the simultaneous. That is, on the concrete level of the narrative, it is impossible to follow the vast number of different times in the past that the objects in their intangibility embody and draw from. In addition to this, the synchronicity comes up also through personal experience in relation to the past. One of these instances happens in the final chapter, as Ruby and Patricia visit 'Above the Shop' that used to be their home, but what is later turned into a tea-room:

The tinkle of spoons on saucers and the polite murmur of foreign voices, American, German, Japanese, floats down the stairs. I close my eyes. If I concentrate I can just hear an older murmur, equally foreign

but less polite – Latin, Saxon, Norman-French. They are still here, swishing and clanking. (p. 378)

What is worth noticing is how this ‘older murmur’ contains voices of people in the past who have occupied or visited York(shire) at different moments in history but still their voices merge into a simultaneous, synchronic experience.

In a similar fashion, as Ruby as Patricia enter the Museum Gardens a bit later, the same sense of synchronicity is encountered:

The water level in the Ouse is very low for this time of year, exposing the different strata of earth and mud which line it. Everyone has left something here – the unnamed tribes, the Celts, the Romans, the Vikings, the Saxons, the Normans and all those who came after, they have all left their lost property – the buttons and fans, the rings and torques, the *bullae* and *fibulae*. (p. 379)

This is how the different strata of earth reveal the various layers of the past that offer themselves for inspection for those who know how to look for them. This synchronicity is not oral as the murmur mentioned above, but something tangible: physical remains as evidence of the past as accumulated fragments deriving from different times but perceivable in the present.

To return to the discussion of the footnotes for a moment, their deployment as optional gates into another time, place or topic is somewhat parallel to the (almost) limitless choices of individual composition provided by virtual texts on the Internet. In the same way, the footnotes can be regarded as links to other sites of discourse, the order of which can be manipulated by the reader/user. Therefore, what becomes a prominent feature is the perception and movement in time within the narrative, and the extent to which it can be done by choice of paradigmatically lifting something for inspection.

This takes us back to the idea of heritage as ‘feel-good in the present’: this can be achieved by selecting items from the reservoir of the past that at a given moment seem important or appropriate. According to McCracken (1988:45), the curatorial pattern of consumption that Lois Roget is an example of, provides possibilities for such selection:

Louis often looks up from a book to gaze at a table or a chair and recalls the ancestor who owned it. This individual returns as an image and a

memory that can be glimpsed and let slip, or explored in exhaustive detail. Lois pursues one or the other option, depending on her mood. The constant present of this visual archive make the family history ever present and ubiquitous. Lois can return to it as she will return to her book, *picking up the narrative at her leisure*. (the present writer's italics)

Although not this explicitly, something similar can be detected in the novel in Ruby's relation to the past and her role as a narrator. It could be claimed that Ruby's narration is at least partly driven by the feel-good principle. What is essential is the presence and the availability of the past, free to be used at will, whenever Ruby wants to 'activate' it. As with Lois Roget, this seems to work much more deliberately and successfully with objects relating to family history: these narratives are elaborate and seem to be more controlled. Understandably, the way Ruby tells about the rabbit's foot, the photos, the silver-locket or her grandmother's clock is more singularised. The objects appear as unique, and possessing them gives the family members a 'mnemonic ability to read the past' (Pöyhtäri 1996:75), what is more, several and joint pasts in the case of Alice's life-story. Her story is activated several times, as objects encountered in the narration 'generate' footnotes. The first object that provides a mnemonic link to Alice is the pink glass button already mentioned that once belonged to her. However, the footnote does not begin with the button's fate but with a photo of Alice which Ruby is looking at. The past that is being brought to the present begins with Ruby's close observation of the photo, making remarks, which then turn into a partly imaginary sketching of a day in the life of Alice. The cornerstone of this fantastic reminiscing is the photo itself, dated twentieth of June, 1888. This is the time that Ruby goes back to, and the majority of the things she does and cannot know, she lets her imagination fill in.

According to Danet and Katril (1989:256), collecting is longing for something outside of the present, something that they call 'as-ifness'. By this they mean an imaginative game in which the aim of the collector is to import an unfamiliar reality into his or her own space and reality. Even though in the passage there is no question of collecting as yet, rather of

attentive looking, Ruby's relation to Alice and to the objects related to her later becomes 'curatorial'. In fact, it is Ruby who eventually gets the photo of Alice, as the photos of the family are divided between her and Patricia (p. 377). Pearce (1992:24) claims that objects have the power of bringing the past into the present, and this is what Ruby's words suggest: "I want to rescue this lost woman from what's going to happen to her (time). Dive into the picture, pluck her out – " (p. 29). Ruby's story of Alice could for a reason be characterised as 'based on a true story' (in the world according to the novel), but much is inevitably make-belief, feel-good narration. In fact, Ruby's words seem to point at some sort of personal intervention into history, as it were: She talks about *rescuing* Alice from what *is going to* happen to her. She cannot change the past as past events that have happened. What she can change, however, is the past in the present; the way it is remembered and has come down to the people in the present. And it might just be that this heritage narrative is later passed on as family 'history'.

Later, in chapter 11, the memory of Alice is activated by the silver-locket that Ruby finds in a shoe-box among other valuable 'documents' in her mother's cupboard. Also the locket belonged to Alice, and the footnote mentions how the locket was taken by Lillian, Alice's daughter, and hidden under her sister's pillow as a kind of a souvenir of their mother. But, more essential than listing the links between objects and stories is realising that objects in the narrative do evoke parallel narratives that happen in another time than the one in question. Anyhow, this other time is as possible from the point of view of the objects, since eventually the objects embody all the past from the moment the objects have existed.

History of the public sphere, in contrast, appears as more haphazard in Ruby's narration and experience, and seems to be less easily controllable. One possible reason for this could be that the material memory in the form of objects relating to the public historical sphere is far less singularised. What is more, the history of the public sphere that appears in the novel tends to be distant past, going back several centuries. In comparison, the time-span dealt with in relation to the extended family,

ranging from 1888 to 1992 appears to be easier to handle, perhaps due to these tangible objects that can be observed and organised in order to make experiences make sense.

Especially in the beginning of the novel, there appears to be tension between the narrative choices in relation to the manipulation of time and Ruby's impressions on the nature of time. Ruby keeps drawing attention to her perception of time as endlessly trotting, cantering and galloping towards something with nobody ever coming back. However, this linearity of time is not so straight-forward after all. Also in the opening of the novel there are hints at the historical synchronicity already discussed, e.g. in the form of the simultaneous mumble of languages from the past. What appears to be in focus towards the end of the novel is the interchangeability of the past and the future. The 'redemption' (the title of the last chapter) that takes place for Ruby, to some extent fuses past and present, acknowledging that the past is somewhat one's own creation, an 'artefact of present' (Lowenthal 1985:xvi). This "resurrection of past into an ever-changing present" (Lowenthal 1985:412) shows in Ruby's reply to her sister Patricia's statement "The past is what you leave behind in life". Ruby reverses this by saying: "The past's what you take with you" (p. 381). In fact, Ruby's words could be taken as a new definition of heritage with the emphasis on the active role of the legatee: it is not so much a question of what has been passed on, but what the legatee takes on and chooses as building-blocks of her life.

## 6. Getting a hold of things I: i) objects as actors in the story

In the present study, the role of objects will be discussed in two parts. These parts have a slightly different focus: in this chapter, objects are examined above all in stylistic and textual terms, whereas later the role of objects will be taken up again in a more precisely museological context. The two cannot be strictly divided, however, and in practise the levels merge.



Since participants, in stylistic terms, refer to entities, identities and persons and things, it may be helpful in the present study to take a look at the way they are presented in the novel. What is especially interesting is the idea of participants as finished products that realise action (e.g. Pope 1995:194). This relates to Susan Pearce (1992:211) calling objects ‘actors in a story’, since “their embodiment of meaning has an active role in relation to the experiencing individuals”. Therefore, if we presume that objects *play* a central role in the novel, that is, as active participants, it might be worthwhile to explore this factor further.

Even though not all participants in the text are ‘objects’, the text is heavily nominalised. It contains a startling amount of “worldly goods”; objects that are brought into the story for some reason or other. Mostly they seem to be inanimate (e.g. silver locket, buttons, calendar) but concretely particular, since they strikingly often are proper nouns, for instance brand names. Kleenex and possibly Durex can be passed as common nouns but coming across things like John Smith’s Best Bitter drunk in the Punch Bowl with Walter and Bernand Belling (p. 9) has a considerably different air about it than having someone drinking beer with a couple of friends in the local pub. They appear as very accurate, “valid” pieces of information. Even if “tenpence halfpenny tins of Antiseptic Foot Powder from Coverdales in Parliament Street” (p. 55) were an every-day mass-produced commodity, it becomes particular through this information. What is more, a reader looking for implications on the relationship to objects is inclined to read into it some allusion to the way in which objects are treated in the museum where they are preserved, classified and documented in detail.

Certain participants, although generally considered inanimate, are animate in the novel, with various personality features or ability to e.g. walk. These are mainly toys (Panda, Teddy, Mobo), and they become particularly active in chapter 11 in Ruby’s hallucination when she is lying in the wardrobe having taken a fair dose of sleeping pills. Teddy comes and takes her hands and talks, while generally the toys in the novel take no initiative and do not utter a word. At night at Auntie Babs’, when Ruby is afraid, the furniture is animated and has human intentions.

It is active and powerful, and it “takes on a new malevolence” and “possess[es] a profound ultra-blackness that hints at anti-matter” (p. 113). In contrast, the majority of the animals in the pet shop are hardly portrayed as animate; they are mere commodities, as Ruby points out.

Interestingly enough, objects do not have to be animate to be active in the narration. This factor is shown by the opening of the novel, in which Ruby’s great-grandmother’s clock’s “tired chime counts me into the world” (p. 9). The narrative choice is actually giving the clock an active, decisive role. Further, when Ruby is wondering why she is at Auntie Babs’ place after the ‘accident’ that happened with her twin sister, she is inspecting the contents of her suitcase, thinking from the amount of clothes she has brought with her that she will probably have to stay for a while. Anyhow, there is only one pyjama, which gets her hopes up, and she tries to comfort herself by thinking that perhaps the pyjama, or the fact that there is only single pair, *tells* the real story of her stay (p. 113). Here the object has been given an active role; the ability to offer an explanation.

Even though certain objects have no active role in the narrative, they can still be used for reasoning, as becomes clear from the example above. When Alice has just run away, and Rachel is still uncertain of her new position in the family, she resorts to backing up her poor self-esteem by going through the objects that Alice has left behind: “All Rachel Barker had in her button tin was an old George IV coin and a violet cachou. That was the kind of woman she was.” (p. 130). This is how material evidence can be used to draw conclusions on the characteristics of their owner. Obviously, according to Rachel, the scarce contents of the tin proved Alice a “dizzy and idle” mother and housewife, as she has characterised her earlier (p. 129).

In contrast to the majority of participants being particular and individual, it seems to be the case that the further back in time the participants belong to, the more likely they are to be represented as collective. This is the case with pinters, craftsmen, Romans and the ghosts of the past people, including their whispers, voices and “the shuffle of ancient feet” (p. 10).

What is interesting is how inanimate participants can be affecting and affected at the same time. They are often affected in the sense that they are the objects of action (e.g. the glass buttons and how they are stored away in boxes or swallowed by children) but, from the point of view of the narrative, they are decisive in the way they carry and structure the story; how they actually have the power to direct the narration. In other words, as the fate of the glass buttons is being followed, the narration may change radically in time, place and point of view. Therefore, even if the objects (participants) do not have the power to intervene into the actual events in the lives of the people, the objects have the narrative “working for” them.

The overwhelming consciousness and insistent presence of sense of time and place in the novel comes through also in relation to the participants. In the very first sentence of the novel, the reader gets a series of co-ordinates, which, broken down, look like this:

I am conceived to the *chimes*  
of the *midnight*  
on the *clock*  
on the *mantelpiece*  
in the *room*  
across the *hall*. (italics by the present writer)

All of these participants carry within them some notion of either time or place. It could be claimed that this sentence is overloaded with this type of information. In any case, stylistic and narrative choices of this kind draw attention to themselves and at the same time to the narration as such. This time-place information is highlighted in a way that makes the reader question the motives behind these narrative choices. This can be seen as yet another outcome of ‘historiographic metafiction’ that “self-consciously reminds us that, while event did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning” (Hutcheon 1988:97).

Although we can hardly use the term ‘real empirical past’ in relation to this work of fiction, the utmost object of reference of the text is events in the past, so-called ‘historical facts’ that are easily recognisable for the reader. This extensive use of widely acknowledged historical events is

also a narrative tool traversing the border between individual experience and memory and collective record, and these two enforce each other. This enforcing works in interesting ways in the narration. There are instances in which this intermingling of the individual and the collective is based on ironic use of the same notions or terminology. From the 'historical' scene of the Dome of Discovery, the attention is drawn back to Bunty's fresh pregnancy and "Ruby's own Dome of Discovery", her mother's womb (p. 11-12). In a similar fashion, the memorable national event of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, is made use of on the individual level as the perfect opportunity for Bunty to show off their new television set to friends and relatives who have been invited, although "our own Coronation guest list is not as long as the queen's. For a start we have no Commonwealth friends to invite" (p.79).

Since all the chapters have a year written under their titles, it is highly probable that a historically self-conscious novel like this *has to* mention one thing that took place in 1968 – the Russian occupation of Prague. Indeed, Ruby is finishing a therapy session with her psychiatrist and munching a Russian caramel, when the question "Did you see the tanks in Prague on the news?" (p. 334) is brought up.

An effective stylistic technique used by the author is comparing persons with objects. This often takes the form of object – person – similes, which are prone to create surprise and have a comic effect. Textually, the construction of similes involves crossing between several semantic fields even within one sentence or phrase. For instance, Ruby sees Queen Elizabeth II in her coronation as reminding her "of the wind-up Chinese doll that Uncle Ted has brought Patricia back from Hong Kong – both glide over the carpet without revealing their feet and wear an expression of grave serenity" (p. 77). A similar kind of doll comparison is encountered, when Ruby gives her account of Ted and Sandra's wedding: "The bride and groom, from the back anyway, display a remarkable similarity to the little figures on top of the wedding cake" (p. 285). Yet another case of having people bearing resemblance to mass-produced commodities takes place in Footnote (xi), in which great-grandmother Alice, who at the moment was staying in France waiting to

return to England, encounters an angel. The angel “did not speak, but simply smiled and raised a hand heavenward in a gesture remarkably like that of the cheap statues of saints and madonnas and Christs with which France was infested” (p. 347).

A somewhat different case is comparing a scene of a group of children to a photograph. Alice has run away with the French photographer Mr Armand, and her children are left to the mercy of their father and Rachel, Alice’s cousin, who takes over Alice’s place soon after her disappearance. Rachel sees the children as they are returning home from school: “They all three stood framed by the door, like a sentimental photograph, and then Ada pouted, --- and kicking off her clogs, broke free from the frame and marched across the wet floor” (p. 130). In this scene, too, people are momentarily seen as elements or parts of an object, in a frozen moment, until the impression is broken as people start moving. At the same time, this reference to a photograph, and moreover a sentimental one, provides an interesting link to the photos of the children taken by Mr Armand. These will be dealt with below in relation to objects as tools of remembering.

### **III. THE DISCURSIVE SPACES OF THE MUSEUM: LURKING *BEHIND THE SCENES***

#### **1. The museum: mirrors and lenses**

To slightly shift the focus of the museological viewpoint in analysing objects in the novel as constellations of identified and selected material, we can emphasise the view of the collecting institution, the museum. Current museological thinking has been prone to call the museum a tool or a process, (Šola 1997). The museum is regarded as an apparatus that helps to make sense of the world, a ‘heritage care unit that should actively take part in the gradual process of change of the community striving for the continuity of identities (Šola 1997:22). However, partly due to its history, museum is a problematic tool with a specialised gaze.

As Sherman and Rogoff (1994:xii) point out, “by presenting objects as signifiers within an artificially created institutional frame, museums underline their irretrievable otherness, their separation from the world of lived experience.” This implies that museums occupy spaces of their own, not only in terms of discourse, but also in concrete terms. The construction of a ‘museum reality’ requires the removal of objects from one context and placing them in another, moving material - “objects, gestures, rituals, and phrases --- from one zone of display to another” (Greenblatt 1990:163). This is why museums embody within them an “interplay between the social histories of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating” (Sherman and Rogoff 1994:x).

The museum has come a long way since the private Renaissance collections in their attempt to accumulate and display wealth and power, but the museum of today is still entangled in the rituals of classification, knowledge and power (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill 1992). Museums are still about power, control and influence and through the representations they impose on their visitors. Even though not in such cosmic scale as the cabinets of the Renaissance and the Early Modern period, museums continue to provide explanations of the world and its phenomena: “To name an object is to know it and understand its position within the order of things” (Walsh 1992:20). This naming and positioning is done by a group of experts and often in ways that show that the museum institution still has not completely broken free from its disciplinary, Enlightenment-based ideals:

In the museum, the viewer’s perception of the object is often constructed through her/his acceptance of the naming/identification of the object by an ‘authority’. The display often promotes a process of de-differentiation as each object is placed within the legitimating context of the modern, linear narrative, which tacitly promotes the modern idea of progress.”  
(Walsh 1992:36)

As discussed above, the novel deploys its own techniques of ‘going against the grain’ of this linearity through the spatialized time, the object-time, that opens up in the networks of artefacts. At the same time it draws attention to the variety of ways that the events and themes of the novel

relate to each other and could be linked temporally – the chronological procession is but one option.

Furthermore, what appears as a sharp contrast is the dynamics and vitality of the personalia as opposed to the exhausted, worn-out elements of the public heritage sites. At least in part this can be seen as deriving from the very tradition the museum institution feeds on. Objects within heritage-space are placed within specific interpretative contexts that draw on the already known. This is a good thing as the viewer has something to which to attach her experience and understanding. The other side of the coin is that recycling these same representations of the past according to the same tradition may also ‘tire down’ the authentic experience. According to Bennet (1995:147),

They [museums] are places for telling, and telling again, the stories of our time, ones which have become a doxa through their endless repetition. If the meaning of a museum artefact seems to go without saying, this is only because it has been said so many times.

In the novel, there are several examples of these frozen representations and halted images encountered on various heritage sites. Many objects and elements put on display or ready to be viewed are overtly familiar and easily recognisable but as such they hardly provoke emotions in the viewer; at least positive emotions of recognition and belonging. The white ruined arches of St Mary’s Abbey are “like petrified lace” (p. 320), much the same way as Old Mother Shipton’s Dropping-well:

I moodily surveyed the eccentric array of articles left drip-drop dry at the soothsayer’s well, everyday objects turned into stone by the limestone water – teddy bears, a boot, an umbrella, a dishcloth. (p. 315)

Apart from this dissatisfaction and feeling of absurdity in relation to heritage sites, a certain kind of awareness can be sensed relating to the arbitrary and haphazard nature of the constructs that are offered to us as slices from the past:

We’ve just finished our A-level exams and are filling the empty time by behaving like tourists, spending the morning in the Castle Museum amongst the stuffed horses and fire buckets, muskets and period shops *that make up the past.* (p. 350) (italics by the present writer)

There is a longing for a past but with certain reservations: what comes through in the narration is the idea that neither the museum nor the heritage sites can offer paths to the past as it happened. Everything is coloured and arranged through personal interpretation and professional tradition, and thus through ideological undertones. There is no past to discover, no historical facts to reveal. As Pearce (1994:204) puts it, "The glass of a showcase gives both a transparent vision and reflection of our faces". All we have is representations based on what has come down to us, and often these representations would need some brushing up and new approaches. As Hooper-Greenhill (1992:2) claims, knowing alters seeing, and therefore new ways of classifying the world mean new possibilities of living in it. As the museums of the novel fail to satisfy Ruby's hunger for a past, she is forced to turn elsewhere to look for it. The two possibilities she turns to are heritage tourism and focusing on the individual memory. These will be looked at in the following chapters.

## 2. In search for roots and identity: the sad joke of heritage tourism

As outlined above, the discussion of irony in the novel focuses on the ironic effects of weaving scholarly arguments and viewpoints into the narrative. With this focus in mind, it becomes apparent, as Hutcheon (1994:118) claims, that all irony happens intentionally; namely as intentional acts by the interpreter. It is difficult to pinpoint any specific elements in the narrative or in the act of reading that as such would work as signals of ironist intention and thus encourage ironic reading. Although certain markers that possibly signal irony, either as 'metacues' or structural features, can be listed, there are no certain markers of irony (Hutcheon 1994:149). So, instead of pointing at certain signals, the discussion will focus on how the narration stands in interdiscursive relation to museological discourses and how this may arouse an ironic effect. Therefore, what is crucial is the role of the context in determining meaning. Hutcheon (1994:143-4) differentiates between three contexts: the circumstantial or communicative context, the textual and the



intertextual. The final one refers to the enterprise of bringing other relevant utterances “to bear on the interpretation of the utterance”, something that Umberto Eco (1979, quoted in Hutcheon 1994:144) calls “taking inferential walks”. In the following, these inferential walks will be taken between the actual holiday trip of the Lennoxes and the Ropers, and the current museological discourse. However, what has to be born in mind is that the context of irony is not given but produced, and what belongs to this context is determined by interpretive strategies (Hutcheon 1994:145). In other words, here the discussion of irony happens within the (intertextual) context of museological ‘knowledge’.

Nowadays there has been increased discussion of ‘quality’ and ‘heritage tourism’ that relies on the idea of building tourism around a specific concept, and through cultural commodification compiling a distinctive product (Boniface and Fowler 1993:3). This often involves choosing an appropriate ‘heritage narrative’: providing a ‘package’ and turning invisible links between ideas and things into visible ones (Boniface and Fowler 1993:11). These cultural patterns of perception and expectation are apparent also in the novel, especially in chapter nine, *Holiday!*. This joint enterprise of the Lennoxes and the Ropers, their neighbours, is obviously overloaded with expectations of all kinds, not least shaped by the ‘massed feast of cultural images’ (Boniface and Fowler 1993:4), the role of the media in the building of expectations. What is, according to Boniface and Fowler, emblematic to tourism of our time, is the extent that advertising and guidebooks shape and anticipate the experiences to come: rather than to explore, people go to see what they want to see (Boniface and Fowler 1993:152). As with much heritage tourism, there is a certain ‘give them what they want’ –attitude; authenticity is often secondary in filling the visitors’ expectations.

This is the case with the trip to Scotland, with the sadly comic consequences of expectations and reality colliding. As Ruby points out, “the Ropers and our parents have been seduced by a brochure temptingly entitled ‘Scottish Farmhouse Holidays’ “ (p. 252). What is more, destinations along the road are planned with regard to ‘places of historic and architectural interest’ (p. 258) as listed in Mrs Roper’s guidebook. As

it happens, the group leaves the guidebook behind, and consequently 'wonder the streets disconsolately' (p. 258). The irony is that resorting to the more or less arbitrary collection of pre-selected heritage sites for inspection, the Lennoxes and the Ropers are left feeling insecure, as they realise the script of their heritage journey missing. However, this particular expedition has a happy end, as the expeditors find their way to Wee Highland Gift Shop, where they "buy many totally useless objects adorned with thistles and heather" (p. 258). The gift shop can actually be viewed as the rural Scottish scene commodified, and by buying objects that to the visitors have something intrinsically Scottish inscribed in them, they feel they have attained something authentic and valuable – be it Whisky Fudge or Ruby's *Illustrated Pocket Guide to Scottish Tartans*. Here, certain resemblance can be seen with Stephen Greenblatt's ideas (1990:177) on the modern museum as evoking dreams of possession. According to Greenblatt, visits to the museum end with a visit to museum gift shop, since they are these 'dreams transferred'. Boniface and Fowler (1993:158) claim that "tourism exploits the creative urge to give meaning". After the non-satisfactory wandering in the heritage scene without the helpful co-ordinates of the guidebook, the group can be relieved as it is given an opportunity to symbolically purchase a bit of the Scottish heritage in the form of delicacies and other souvenirs.

Boniface and Fowler (1993:9) divide (heritage) tourism into holiday-making and journeys of discovery, based on the motives behind travelling. While the latter is conscious search for genuine experiences in order to find something that really is there, holiday-making is frequently characterised by a wish for the 'hyper-real' or 'extra-authentic'. The present trip to Scotland is a curious mixture of these two, although the discovery-nature is rather an unintentional by-product. In the beginning of the trip, Scotland is defined by Ruby as "possibly the most foreign location of all", while as a whole, she calls all the places that they pass on the way "exotic destinations" (p. 246). This mysterious approach to Scotland as 'the Other' is reflected also in Ruby's narration and account of the journey, as they are approaching their destination: "A highway of tranquillity lies ahead of us" (p. 251), or "the road grows narrower. The

weather grows wetter. The air seems darker ---“ (p. 253). The account of the succession of the journey is flavoured with pondering, such as “Where is Scotland? What is Scotland? Is it rain solidified into the shapes of houses and hills? Is the mist, carved into roadside cafés with names like the Crofter’s Kitchen? --- Who knows?” (p. 252). Along with mystery, the journey gets all the more ironic tones through a reference to pilgrimage that has its counterparts in ‘journey of discovery’: “We are approaching our Mecca” (p. 254). What is interesting (and ironic, again) is that at the time of the holiday the set-up seems to be reflecting one’s self through ‘the Other’. It is only later that Ruby finds out about her Scottish roots, through which the meaning of the mainly painful holiday becomes re-evaluated.

Soon after their arrival, the group has to face the reality of their Scottish farm, as the culturally fabricated extra-authenticity, as outlined in the brochure, is crumbling: instead of a host named McAllister or Macbeth or something instantly perceivable as typically Scottish, they are welcomed by the von Leibnitz’s, with the husband a former German POW. Instead of scones dripping with sun-yellow butter, they are given “lukewarm, salty porridge with neither milk, nor sugar” (p. 256). The consequent clashes of preconceptions and reality are reflected also in the ironic use of language, echoing the indigenous use of language with an ironic slant. The dramatic boat trip becomes “wee boat trip” in the accounts (p. 262), as if highlighting the tragedy with a lot of ‘cute’ diminutives.

Ironically, the novel points at, not only the effect of travel-guides on the experience of travelling, but also on the almost canonical role of ‘travel reading’ in order to pass into an appropriate state of mind for travelling, or to expand the historic perspective of a particular place. Accordingly, Patricia mumbles dreamily in the back of the car on the way to ‘Och-na-cock-na-a-leekie’: “it’s not the destination that’s important, it’s the journey”. Ruby’s judgement of this is that “(She is reading *On the Road* as well as *Tristram Shandy* so it’s hardly surprising that she is turning a bit zen.)” (p. 253). In addition, Ruby has “read *Rob Roy* and *Waverley* and *The Heart of Midlothian* in preparation for this

trip" (p. 256). It is these images of 'real Scotland' that Ruby is after and this pursuit holds right until the end: the desire for the 'hyper-real' becomes mystification that carries elements of the unreal or the unexplainable, also in relation to the harsh reality of the home: "We pull away from the farm in a thick, early-morning mist that muffles and baffles the normal world. --- Somewhere just beyond the mist, there's our real Scottish holiday – and perhaps all the other holidays we never had as well." (p. 266).

For Ruby, the holiday can be seen as a 'journey of discovery' but only with hindsight: it is only later that she finds out about "the true Scottishness of the Lennoxes" (p. 381). At the time of the holiday, she does not consider the possibility of Scottish roots as realistic, since her parents stress their being Yorkshire born (p. 265). But obviously, in the 'redemption' of the final chapter in which she reviews her heritage and identity, also the holiday in Scotland is re-positioned as an unconscious prelude to her self-discovery.

Interestingly enough, there is a reference in the narration to the issue of colonialism and imperialism in relation to tourism. On the boat trip around Oban Bay, Mr Roper gets into a minor argument with Mr Steward, the captain, and Ruby-the-narrator ponders over this by stating: "I don't know whether it's the Anglo-Imperialism in Mr Roper's tone --- but he turns a deaf ear and sails on into the storm." (p. 263). Also Boniface and Fowler (1993:19) point out that "tourism feeds on the colonial impulse" that often takes the form of intellectual colonialization in the exchanges between the tourists and the locals. What adds to the complexities of tourism is the historically unequal relation between the place of origin of the visitor and the place visited. On the British Isles, Scotland is still to some extent a periphery, 'the Other', in relation to the hegemonic 'Mother England'. Therefore, an Englishman coming to Scotland and telling the locals what to do can have unfavourable consequences.

As life appears to be rather lifeless and bleak compared to the images portrayed in the brochure, the Lennoxes and the Ropers resort to "old-fashioned pursuits" such as playing card-games and Cluedo (p. 259).

During these evenings the holiday turns into a curious journey of discovery – not as interpretive experience of the place visited, but as revealing new things about the relationships between the travellers as the affair between Bunty and Mr Roper becomes evident. Also Ruby has a discovery through an encounter with her deepest fears during the boat trip but she is yet unable to explain them to herself, since they have to do with the traumatic memory of the drowning of her sister which has been erased from her memory.

The reference to the scarcity of the available reading material on the farm can be seen as highly ironic. Apart from the Bible, the only thing there is to read is Reader's Digest's condensed novels. We do not have to go far in detecting a correspondence between the enterprise of the politics of selection and the providing of a simplified package practised by the Reader's Digest, and that manifested in heritage tourism industry. Both are essentially about selection, and reducing items and contents to the so-called essential and significant, which eventually is exercising power over the audience of the product. As Boniface and Fowler (1993:158) point out, what is 'well-known' and 'significant' is highly relative.

### 3. Getting a hold of things II: i) objects, collecting and the shaping of lived experience

Collecting, "the activity of selectively acquiring an interrelated set of objects, ideas or experiences" (Belk and Wallendorf 1994:244), encompasses private and public collecting alike. However, private collecting and that carried out by the museum are based on different premises and interests. As Pearce (1992:35) points out, there is a tension between 'cultural ideas of value' and 'the deepest levels of individual personality'.

To take the collecting institution, the museum, as the point of departure, material culture has to be authenticated in some way to justify bringing it into the gallery (Moore 1997:75). In other words, objects need to attain

'museality', a specific value, so that it would be worthwhile to preserve and display them in a museum (e.g. Stránský 1995, van Mensch 1992). If we view the 'collection' of objects in the novel as being there as a result of a conscious decision, they can be thought of as having passed a cognitive sieve of some kind; of being re-contextualized within a specific discursive field (van Mensch 1992). Indeed, within the framework of this discursive/cognitive context – be it museological – it can be claimed that all the objects in the narrative are there for a reason. They carry a potential for communication, and work as mediators in defining relationships between people living in different times and places. There is a curious continuity inscribed in the objects that would otherwise be lost.

According to Vilkkuna (2000:9), the aim of the collector is to construct a complete miniature world, in which each object stands for some bigger entity. What is behind the age-old 'instinct' to collect is the human need to control the environment. Part of this cognitive acquisition of both the physical and mental environment is naming as a form of classification. Whereas Benjamin (quoted in Pöyhtäri 1996:79) talks about the 'collector's magical encyclopaedia', Pearce (1992:66) characterises the strife for a personal universe as constructing a metaphor for reality:

The objects, being material, retain their link with the 'real' world from which they come, but the collection is a metaphor for this 'reality', a dream, an inscription on the world.

As remarked by Pearce (1992:4-5), it is selection that makes material culture cultural material. She (1992:35) proposes an interesting idea of collecting being "transformation of material into the heritage mode". In this sense, collecting is connected to the idea of a 'usable past'.

Pearce (1992) divides collected objects into souvenirs, fetish objects and systematics. While the second category refers to the psychological phenomenon of 'extending the self' through the collections, and the third is mostly connected with public, institutionalised collecting, the first category is essentially about history in the personal sphere. Souvenirs "speak of events not repeatable but reportable" (1992:72) and serve to authenticate the narrative in which the collector talks about events or experiences. There is a wealth of objects in the novel that serve the

purpose of (inter)personal memorabilia, and thus fall into the category of souvenirs. These objects belong inherently to the personal sphere and many of them are kept in private, though often dispersed, 'collections'.

In his book *Culture and Consumption* (1988), Grant McCracken presents an interesting insight into the material that Pearce would file under 'souvenirs'. McCracken deals with various patterns of consumption in contemporary societies, and as one of these, he introduces his notion of 'curatorial consumption', which he defines as "a pattern of consumption in which an individual treats his or her possessions as having strong mnemonic value, and entertains a sense of responsibility to these possessions that enjoins their conservation, display and safe transmission" (1988:49). He claims that this pattern is highly marginal nowadays, but that "until the eighteenth century, most individuals inherited more than they purchased and were heir in this way not only to their ancestors' possessions but also to their meanings" (1988:52). As a case, McCracken uses Lois Roget, who owns a farmhouse in which she houses objects inherited from several generations of ancestors. She can thus be seen as the curator of her home museum.

The category of curatorial consumption is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it bears clear resemblance to the relation that various members of the extended family in the novel have to objects that are related to family members. As with Lois Roget, the objects are valued and preserved for their family or other interpersonal connection. Therefore, it is not a question of actively collecting objects for their antique value, age or patina but rather acquiring objects that have or obtain a symbolic meaning as enforcing interpersonal relations. An interesting question, therefore, is whether the characters in the novel can be regarded as collectors at all. All collections in the possession of their owners consist of few or just one object, (or rather, more objects are not mentioned), 'treasures' or relics through which a relationship is symbolically cherished. According to Pearce (1992:49), collecting is 'passive' until the collector has a realisation that what he or she has is actually a collection. Weighted against this principle, the characters of the novel seem to be at least passive collectors, since none of them is

reported as consciously collecting something. An interesting exception is Albert, Alice's son, who "collected good days the way other people collected coins, or sets of postcards" (p. 74), though this is his friend Jack's realisation, not Albert's own. In the same way, Alice is not explicitly told having collected plaster statues. However, the circumstances of her death are given as follows: "My great-grandmother died, an old lady surrounded by her photographs and a collection of plaster saints, in 1940 during one of the worst wartime raids on Sheffield" (p. 349). Therefore, what appears as a collection from another viewpoint may not be one for the holder of the objects.

The second aspect that makes the notion of curatorial consumption interesting is the way it hints at the institutionalised practises of the museum. "Conservation, display and safe transmission" stand very close to the widely accepted tasks of the museum defined by ICOM, the International Commission for Museums, according to which a museum "acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment" (ICOM Statutes <http://www.ico.org/statutes.html> 12.12.2000). Curatorial consumption resembles thus a miniature museum that individuals maintain for the sake of their own identity. If museums take care of units of collective memory, be it national, regional or local, these personal collections stand for the survival of personal memory. This issue of the private and public is given more detailed discussion in III.4.

According to Pöyhtäri (1996:117), collecting reflects two kinds of longing: first, longing for a past time or place, or second, for the hermetic completeness of the collection. Also Danet and Katriel (1989, in Pearce 1994:230) mention the aim of completing a set or a series as one fundamental objective of collecting. Whereas the first kind of longing is evident in *Behind the Scenes*, as becomes clear from the discussion above, it could be claimed that the latter aim is a minor one in the novel, and even then subjected to the familial relationships implicated by the objects, with the exception of the accumulation of coronation memorabilia. In the sense of collecting as a dream of the 'whole', the



photos taken by Monsieur Armand provides an interesting case. The photos are handed over from an individual to another, and they also multiply on their way as reprints are taken of them. Anyhow, they are clearly perceived as an entity, a set, even when they are not physically stored or displayed in one location. This is suggested in the following passage, in which Lillian goes through 'Rachel's things' after her death:

Lillian went through all Rachel's things while Nell and Frank were on honeymoon and discovered the unframed photographs that Monsieur Jean-Paul Armand had taken. They finally had the full set – including the one Tom had of their mother – and in some small way the family was reunited. (p. 303)

Apart from the evident project of completeness, the passage works as an illustration of the aforementioned aim of constructing a complete miniature world and thus making the world more controllable. Furthermore, there seems to be a curious 'material closure' in the end of the novel, which relates to the photographs:

Tina Donner came up to visit me as well, bringing with her a copy that she had made of Lillian's photograph of Ada and Albert, the one that she took with her on the *Minnesota's* Atlantic crossing so many years ago. My copy sits in its frame on my desk, and I like to look at it and wonder about my links with these people. Monsieur Armand's photographs are scattered around the world now – with Hope, with Tina, with Patricia. Adrian has the one of Lawrence and Tom with baby Lillian, but I have the one of Alice – the foolish mother, the missing wife, the woman lost in time. (p. 381)

What is worth noting is how the photos are told to be scattered but this is still presented as something very meaningful; as the way it should be. In fact, in recent museological literature (e.g. Pearce 1992), attention has been drawn to the fact that a collection does not have to be in one place for it to be a collection. Since a collection is foremost a matter of perception, the scattered photos can be seen as a so-called 'dispersed' collection. All the photos are meaningful things on their own but at the same time can be viewed as objects of the collection, in which the objects together amount to more than the sum of its parts.

However, the strife for completeness can eventually be an attempt on the collector's part to complete his or her own self through the collection of objects. This relates to Pearce's notion of 'fetish collecting'. Even in its less extreme forms, Pearce (1992:55) suggests that collections can be

viewed as 'the extended self', while objects are 'confirmers of identities'. Baudrillard (1990, quoted in Pöyhtäri 1996:117) goes as far as to claim that "the collector always collects himself". Indeed, if we consider collecting in the novel as organised around few, singularised objects that the characters cherish as treasures, Ruby's way of identifying herself gets new undertones: "My name is Ruby. I am a precious jewel. I am a drop of blood. I am Ruby Lennox." (e.g. p. 44) This particular manifestation is linked with Ruby's birth but it comes up several times in the narrative and is thus a recurrent motif and a central 'object' of identity. As Ruby learns the basics of a new language, French, she can expand her repertoire: "*Je m'appelle Ruby. Je suis une pierre precieuse.*" (p. 239) Although it could be argued that this aspect has more to do with naming than collecting, eventually both are about selection and identification. Moreover, it is not Ruby's choice that she is called Ruby but she has adopted (selected) the name, and the object that it denotes as a core of her identity. In this sense ruby can be perceived as an object to which Ruby has attached a special meaning. Further, rubies can be considered an essential part of royal English heritage, more precisely in the form of English Crown jewels. Pearce (1992:197) discusses Black Prince's Ruby, the four large drop pearls in the Imperial State Crown as an example of relics from the past and of the value that is attached to them. These pearls were first owned by Mary, Queen of Scots, and, as Pearce points out, most recently they were worn by Elizabeth II at her coronation in 1953. Therefore, Black Prince's Ruby bears a metonymic relationship to crown jewellery, a powerful national relic. This connection is metaphorically extended to Ruby through the act of naming. The Crown jewels reveal also another metonymic relation: that of Ruby and her dead twin-sister Pearl.

The 'souvenir' function of objects explicated by Pearce (1992) often takes the form of 'memorabilia', and is a reflection of 'anniversaryism', which Fowler (1992:44) sees as "characteristic of the 'heritage age' in which we live". A revealing 'exhibit' – both in museological and legal sense – is 'Ye Olde England' calendar, which Ruby gets for Christmas from Aunt Gladys. According to Fowler (1992:5), the process of

compulsive preserving has been parodied by the term 'Ye Olde-ing'. In the novel, too, the concept gets tones of irony, especially since Ruby remarks that

This ye olde England is not a country we're very well acquainted with in our family – page after page, month after month, of thatched cottages, distant spires, haywains and milkmaids. It is also a fund of useful titbits of information – how else would I know when 'Dominion Day' was? Or the anniversary of the Battle of Hastings? (p. 222-3)

Fowler (1992:5) goes on to claim that the outcome of the process of this 'Ye Olde-ing' is creating a 'now', not a 'then'. Another item subjected to 'Ye Olde-ing' in the novel is 'Ye Olde Starre Inn', a sign in the centre of York that Ruby and Patricia pass by as they take a look around the town as grown-ups. What clearly comes through is the artificial nature of the whole enterprise:

We walk under the long wooden sign for Ye Olde Starre Inn that stretches from one side of the street to the other. The Roman *via praetoria*. The whole place has been turned into an upmarket shopping-mall; there are no more Richardson's and Hannon's, no more Walters and Bernards, no more barbers or bakers or stained-glass makers – it's like one big, incredibly expensive souvenir shop. (p. 378)

However, apart from the nostalgic, compulsive attempt to preserve that 'Ye Olde-ing' stands for in the form of the inn and the calendar, the latter is more revealing in the sense that it provides an interesting path into the construction of heritage worlds. This has been increasingly popular since the Second World War in the form of popular television series and heritage magazines (e.g. Walsh 1992:121). More clearly, the calendar points at the perception of time and selection of the 'significant'. What is symptomatic and ironic is how, in use, the calendar becomes a dubious patchwork of patriotic historical dates combined with events of personal importance. To Ruby and Patricia, the eighth of January is one of these occasions, since it is Elvis's birthday. Fowler (1992:44) further explicates his idea of anniversaryism:

We celebrate ourselves, organizations, our places, our heroes, sometimes our authentic, significant history; we even celebrate celebrations and commemorate disasters. That deemed worthy of official national celebration comes from a very filtered sort of history.

Another manifestation of anniversaryism in the novel is the wealth of coronation memorabilia on the coronation of Queen Elisabeth II. The coronation has already been discussed in relation to the perception and manipulation of time but apart from this aspect, the coronation as depicted in the novel is fruitful for the consideration of material culture in anniversaryism and celebration of cultural heritage. At the Lennoxes, too, as the new queen inherits the throne, all the past kings and queens are simultaneously commemorated by digging out the accumulated objects:

Coronation memorabilia begins to pour out of every nook and cranny now – my father's Edward VIII Coronation jug, an item of commemorating an event that never took place thus giving it a curious philosophical value, not to mention Ena Tetley's George VI Coronation teaspoon, now in Bunty's possession and which is, of course – technically speaking – stolen property (see Footnote (iii)).  
(p. 82)

What the end of the extract brings up is that apart from being objects that symbolically unite the kingdom and serve remembrance on the collective sphere, the objects gain meanings connected to inter-personal relations as well, the same way as with the above mentioned rabbit's foot and the photos. The George IV Coronation spoon originally owned by Ena Tetley which appears several times in different parts of the narrative, actually provides a link via the footnote into another context in which the object gets a slightly different meaning. In the chapter, the spoon appears primarily as a celebratory object highlighting the significant historical change-over, whereas in the footnote, what is emphasised is the past relating to the personal sphere; keeping people close symbolically through objects. The footnote gives an account of the life-story of the spoon, tells how it has been passed on. After Ena's death in the second world war, the spoon is picked up by Nell, Ruby's grandmother, and is handed over to Bunty, who has it at the time of the coronation of Elisabeth II. In this way, as she takes out the spoon for display, it is as if its former owners were present in the coronation of the new queen.

What was already discussed earlier is how the individual and the collective are brought together as a narrative tool. Apart from looking at this as a way of joining several levels of experience, is focusing on these

specific landmark events in the collective memory from a museological point of view. One of these is the coronation of Queen Elisabeth II, which is also the title of chapter three. Here, the Lennox family, relatives and neighbours have gathered around the brand new “little Ferguson set” to watch the coronation and enjoy the “coronation baking” by Bunty and Aunt Gladys (p. 77-8). As Moore (1997:117) points out, the coronation really was a unique event in the British society, and that people tend to remember where they were as it took place. What is characteristic of these landmark events is how closely they are connected to specific material emblems. In the case of the coronation, it is the wealth of “coronation memorabilia” that gets a fair amount of attention (or rather, steals the attention!) in the narrative. For example, the memorabilia in Patricia’s possession is listed and numbered by Ruby-the-narrator, including objects from coronation mugs, coins and toffees to the *Daily Graphic Coronation Book for Boys and Girls*. Ironically, these objects are referred to as “best trawl of loot” (p. 82). What is intriguing is the narrative choice of bringing an ‘authoritative’ voice into the narration through the character of Patricia, or rather, the stretches that she reads aloud from her *Daily Graphic Coronation Book for Boys and Girls*:

Meanwhile, back at the television set, the young Queen is being “Girded with the Sword” and Patricia is helpfully supplementing Richard Dimbleby’s reverent commentary with snippets from the *Daily Graphic Coronation Book for Boys and Girls*. We learn that it ‘signifies an act of beautiful symbolism, the power of the state placed at the service of God’. Her squeaky voice stumbles over ‘symbolism’ – she is seven years old after all, although top of her class in Reading --- (p. 80-1)

Simultaneously, including these literary pieces of information, cultural history written around the time of the coronation and for a range of didactic and patriotic reasons, what is inserted into the narrative is condensed irony, as it were. And yet, it is a contemporary record, which in a way authenticates the narration, even to the extent that what could be seen as the utmost point of reference of the narrative is the past events of 1950s Britain as they have come down to us through historical record.

A somewhat similar instant takes place in chapter ten, in which Ted and Sandra’s wedding date coincides with the football world cup final,

which for Ted is bad enough. What is worse: it is 1966, and England is playing West Germany. Here, ironically, two turning-points collide: the personal and the collective, and with tragic-comical consequences. At the wedding reception, all the men gather in the TV lounge to witness, apart from the historical victory of England, a terrible fight between the newly wed husband and wife: Sandra is bursting with anger, since the match is spoiling *her* historical wedding-day.

What is interesting is how the authentic, historic voice of the TV commentator has been brought into the narrative, and how it intermingles with the other voices and actions. Characteristically, it is the words of the commentator that have since become legendary and inherent part of national history. Not only football fans but many other English people can recite the commentator's words during the last minutes of the game: "It is all over, I think – no it's ... And here comes Hunt...Some people are on the pitch – they think it's all over – it is now!" (quoted in Moore 1997:109). These words of authentic historical record are included in the novel as well but they coincide with the events at hand at the wedding.

Actually it is not surprising that the men at the wedding are absent from the festivities and retreat into the TV lounge: according to Moore (1997:116), it is estimated that that 25 million people in Britain had watched the game, which means over half of the population. Moore (1997:115) quotes an enthusiast, who has stated that "people remember it [the match] like the day of the Kennedy assassination. It is a piece of our history". Indeed, these media inserts in the narration seem to have a role of authenticating the events and the related meanings communicated. These partly cultural historic accounts of the coronation and the 1966 world cup final do play a certain "Where were you when Kennedy was murdered?" –effect, highlighting a certain moment in history, in which the individual and the collective momentarily meet. What is more, the narration appears highly conscious of the fact of having proud national history in the making. The italics in the following passage are the quotation of a 'historical voice', that is, the words of the 'real' commentator. What has to be noted is that they are the author's, and not added by the present writer.

The tension coming out of the TV lounge is visible, like the smoke of gunfire. A terrible groan rises up from somewhere deep within the collective national unconscious, *Jack Charlton has collapsed head in hands.* (p. 293)

Moore (1997:106-134) has dealt at length with the aforementioned match and its significance from the viewpoint of material culture studies/museum studies as one particular but significant aspect of British popular culture. What is interesting is how he concentrates on the victorious ball of the game, and carries out a material culture analysis according to Pearce's (1992:265-273) model of object study. Moore goes as far as to claim that the particular ball is the most important post-1945 object in English cultural life. He quotes the maker of the ball, Malcolm Wainwright, who says that the ball is "part of our heritage" (1997:133).

Even though there are no references as such in the novel to the ball or other related aspects of material culture, it is interesting enough that the match is given such landmark position in the narration, with its ironic effects. Moreover, the irony does not deny the historical importance of the match as a building block of national pride and identity – and heritage.

As already mentioned above, collecting does not necessarily have to entail concrete activity, it can also be an enterprise of selecting and naming. The idea lying behind collecting is often related to a 'dream of possession' (Greenblatt 1990:177). One form of mental collecting is sorting material into valuable and non-valuable categories, which often coincide with the categories of desirable and undesirable. Interestingly enough, there is something in the novel that remind of Thompson's (1979, in Pearce 1994:269-278) division of objects into the three categories of rubbish, transients and durables. In the opening of the novel, Bunty is having a dream of dustbins the night after the conception, and Ruby-the-embryo narrating this opposes her mother's dreams of discarded objects and announces: "I want a mother who dreams different dreams" (p. 11). To use Thompson's categories, Ruby would most probably want a mother who would dream of durables as a reaction to her expecting a baby: as a reflection of her feelings towards the yet unborn

child as something that will always remain precious to her. “We call all those objects valuable that resist our desire to possess them”, as Simmel (quoted in Appadurai 1986, in Pearce 1994:77) points out, but sometimes, what is more important is the very dream of possession much rather than actual possessing. In fact, there is an allusion to this enterprise of selection of pleasure: the awkward nature of Bunty’s dream is emphasised by stating that she had been “Given free choice from the catalogue of dreams” (p. 10), and in spite of this, she has not chosen anything better. In the field of collecting, Danet and Katriel (1989) have focused on the play involved in collecting, including the way that people aesthetically attend to objects. They have called this phenomenon ‘same-but-different’ –principle: how objects ‘rhyme’, and how in collection, there is “the occurrence of repetition, of sameness-in-difference, within the flow of ever-changing experience which creates the illusion of beauty” (in Pearce 1994:227). In the novel, what may grab the careful reader’s attention, is the deployment of several objects in the narration: a similar sensation of sameness-in-difference is created for the reader with the possible collectables, varying sets of forget-me-nots and pink buttons on a silk floss. In other words, the reader is the one to reframe and enjoy the perspective of a possible collection. The reader is thus handed another dream catalogue, from which she can pick and choose, and possibly compile a personal collection of her own.

Until objects in the novel fall into their meaningful places, they could be regarded as transients that eventually, through redemption, become durables. As Pearce (1992:35) points out, it is these very durables that museums are housing. Another question is, who grants the objects their position as durables, individuals or the museum institution. This issue will be discussed in III.4.



### 3. Getting a hold of things II: ii) objects as tools for remembering (and forgetting)

It could be claimed that a number of objects in the novel work as tools through which people (re)frame their pasts and presents and futures. Moreover, objects serve as a form of mnemonic aid.

A phenomenon which Pearce (1992:72) calls 'tears of things' appears in the novel in relation to numerous objects. The term refers to objects as emotive carriers of meaning in relation to the past, which is most characteristic to the category of souvenirs (Pearce 1992:69-73). It is interesting how particular objects, their life-spans and fates are given much attention. Among these are the already mentioned three glass buttons that first belonged to Alice, Ruby's great-grandmother. At the time of Alice's death, Ada, her daughter, puts one of the buttons in a silk floss around her neck but it is later taken away by her step-mother Rachel. When Ada cannot find the button, it is "as if she had lost her mother a second time" (p. 38). For Ada, the button is a tool for maintaining the connection with her mother and as this tool is taken away, she is afraid of losing this bond.

Another factor for which there are several implications in the text is the use of objects in the narration as tools of remembering and realisation, some sort of 'crystallisation'. Two of these instances have to do with photographs. The first one is in the first footnote, in which Ruby accidentally comes across the photo of her great-grandmother Alice. This discovery leads into making a distinction between her, "the real mother, the true bride" (p. 28) and her follower Rachel, whom Ruby's great-grandfather married soon after Alice's death. Ruby wonders why her mother has never told her about Alice, and when she asks this, the answer goes: "I forgot", though she had "a vague, handed down memory" of her. This sudden state of being faced with "the woman lost in time" from the past results in a rush of emotion in Ruby and she is determined to fight oblivion, the threat of which tends to grow with time. The photo works as an impetus, sparking of emotion and knowledge.

Another instance involving photos and forgetting is in relation to Ruby herself and her dead twin sister. Having for years blocked her out of her memory, Ruby slowly reclaims her sister in memory. This starts to happen through a variety of objects that Ruby finds in her mother's "collection" of "bits of paper that made our lives official and random objects that couldn't find a home anywhere else but somehow couldn't be thrown away" (p. 327). Through these she realises that she has had a sister and that she lost her. Further, she realises that the two photos of herself in her mother's silver locket are not both pictures of her, but the other is of her sister Pearl. And as an answer to her question of why this matter was never talked about she hears: "You forgot" (p. 329). In both these cases forgetting is explicitly brought up in contrast to something reclaimed. Therefore, apart from a tangible found, these photographs stand for finding family members that have been lost and forgotten.

An intriguing detail with regard to tools for remembering is the recurring motif, forget-me-nots, which takes several (physical) forms in the narrative. Although it can be simply taken as denoting a kind of a blue flower, here it can be seen as serving other purposes, too, due to its literal semantic meaning. As has been discussed above, objects can work as tools for remembering, either in an unconscious way, or as deliberate 'souvenirs'. Here, forget-me-nots seem to occupy both functions. However, an aspect that has not been dealt with in relation to physical objects is that they can be used to leave a mark of oneself, to be remembered; something that the name of the flower conveniently points at. According to Jukka Jokilehto, heritage is, despite its aims to preserve physical objects, about striving for spiritual continuity, but also contribution: to remember and to be remembered.

In one of the passages in which the forget-me-nots appear, Frank, who is later to be Nell's husband, comes home from the front during the First World War, and Lillian and Nell invite him over for tea. Having witnessed many horrors of the war and felt "the smell of death" (p. 57), he suddenly feels unable to communicate with the sisters, who have been going on with their daily routines in the home front, without realising,

what he has possibly been through. This enormous divide between the two worlds seems to intensify around the set of forget-me-not teacups:

But when they were all sat around the table, drinking their tea from the best service, the one that had gold rims and little blue forget-me-nots. Frank found himself unexpectedly tongue-tied. He had thought there were a lot of things about the war he wanted to tell them but was surprised to discover that the neat triangles of bread and jam and the prettiness of the little blue forget-me-nots somehow precluded him from talking about trench foot and rats, let alone the many different ways of dying he had witnessed. -- He was thinking of all these things while chewing his bread and casting around desperately for conversation, until with a nervous gulp from the gold and forget-me-nots he said, 'That's a grand cup, you should taste the tea we get,' (p. 57)

It is as if the silence of the muted experiences and memories would be more dense around the teacups; in them materialises Frank's realisation of the extremely personal nature of his memory, which is almost impossible to be communicated. Yet the memories are there, although not verbalised, and at the table they silently pronounce: "Forget-me-not!".

There are two instances where the forget-me-not cups appear as a result of an encounter with a person (or a human-like being), which, in turn, has the consequence of the cups being traced down in the memory. More precisely, both have to do with meeting a pair of 'forget-me-not blue eyes'. The first young man with such eyes is Cousin Edmund, the son of Nell's sister, Lillian. She had emigrated to Canada long ago, and her family had heard hardly anything from her, so the unexpected visit paid by the Canadian cousin in the midst of the war takes everyone by surprise. His impact is even deeper on the young Bunty and her sister, Betty, who in Edmund have "something to pin their romantic feelings on" (p. 104). Betty wonders how to describe the blue of his eyes: "'Sky-blue? Sea-blue?' 'Forget-me-not blue,' Bunty said, thinking of the saucer that Totty got his food in, with the faded forget-me-nots and scratched gold rim." (p. 106). What is worth noting here is that Bunty and Betty, Nell's daughters, belong to the next generation, and for them, too, the cups are somehow part of the organising of the experiences. Edmund promises to visit again, but cannot keep his promise, because he is soon killed in the war. One night, Bunty and Betty are out in Betty's Bar "where it was the thing for all the forces to scratch their names on the big

mirror there, and Bunty was sorry for Edmund because he hadn't been in York long enough to even have a drink in Betty's, let alone scratch his name in the mirror" (p.107). In fact, the reader finds out that Edmund both had been in the bar and had his name eternalised in the mirror. Fowler (1992:71) discusses people's urge of not only taking something with you but also leaving a mark "to share in something venerable to an out-to-out ego-trip probably with overtones of the anonymous individual seeking mortality". So there it is: the mark of the young man with forget-me-not blue eyes that made him less mortal, if not immortal.

Interestingly, there is one reference to forget-me-nots without a word of tea cups. On the night of the first of July, 1916, Alice is suddenly woken up and sees someone she takes for an angel. He has "golden curls and forget-me-not blue eyes" (p. 347). Even though Alice interprets the vision as an angel, the reader is likely to give it another interpretation, since s/he has been introduced this motif several times. Forget-me-not eyes, and the 'cherub gene' that materialises in the form of blond curls run in the family, so that the angel is likely to be a trick of the memory, an image of some member of the family sending a brief reminder of their existence. Most likely the angel is her son Albert, who in Footnote (ii) is reported to have been killed on July 1, 1916 (p. 66). Lest we forget – forget me not.

There is one more construction that can be read as a reference to the forget-me-not teacups. Whereas the example above had no mention of the cups, there is one that in turn involves cups but does not mention forget-me-nots. In footnote (xii), in which Lawrence is thinking back to the time when their mother Alice disappeared, he remembers his little sister Ada as "white faced, with blue cups of grief under her eyes from sobbing her heart out" (p. 364). It is easy to sense a connection between these 'blue cups of grief' and forget-me-not cups: here is yet another case of 'tears of things', of the embodiment of something lost in everyday objects.

A different kind of method for resisting the phenomenon that Lowenthal (1985) calls 'cultural amnesia' is deployed in the novel with

regard to the physical environment. This is listing the damage that a single air-raid did in mid-April in 1942:

St Martin-le-Grand destroyed, the roof of the ancient Guildhouse turned to ash. The riverside warehouses, the *Evening Press* offices, the Art Gallery, the School for the Blind – all in flames. Not a pane of glass left in the magnificent arched roof of the railway station. The carriage works smashed, trains damaged,, schools and houses wrecked – five nuns killed at the Bar Convent School, the emergency mortuary in Kent Street nearly full. (p. 102)

The material environment that is destroyed overnight is threatened to be erased from the collective memory of the inhabitants, unless it is woven into a narrative. This narrative may provide a new layer of heritage narrative to be preserved, before the area is rebuilt and gets a new historical layer which buries much of the past under itself. The past is there but it is not visible, and this is why material memory needs other forms of memory to replace the damage.

One fundamental turning-point in the life-span of objects may take place as a result of death. In the novel, too, death of people often means that the life of objects takes a new turn. The objects are either stored somewhere, handed over to another person's possession, or simply disposed of. In any case, the link or relation that objects may provide between people at the moment of death can be telling. As McCracken (1987:49) points out, Lois Roget was highly concerned about the fate of her collections after her death, so she has already chosen a legatee from within the family. In the novel, some objects change their owner in a similar way, in anticipation of death. Lillian, the sister of Ruby's grandmother, sorts out the objects she has and calls it "clearing out" before her death (p. 312). While discarding material she considers useless, she gives the photograph of her brother and sister to Tina, her daughter-in-law.

Tina had been often moved by the poignancy of this photograph of the dead siblings – her own brother had been killed in a childhood accident – and she had to squeeze back the tears when Lillian gave it to her, not just because the dead children made her sad but because she knew it meant that Lillian wasn't kidding when she said she was going to die. (p. 312)

This act is worth more than handing over an old photograph: it also works as symbolic exchange between the two women, strengthening their

emotional bond. By giving Tina her highly treasured piece of memorabilia, Lillian hands over her memories embodied in the photo, trusting an important part of her past into Tina's care. The photo, now in Tina's possession, provides for a certain (narrative) continuity in Lillian's life now that she is dying. The past is passed on and at the same time Lillian's life.

Also Lillian had got the photograph due to a death in the family but then it was not given to her personally; on the contrary, it had been kept hidden by her stepmother Rachel. After her death, Lillian "went through all Rachel's things" (p. 302) and found several photos taken by Monsieur Armand. This found evoked forms of 'curatorial consumption' in Lillian: she had the newly-found unframed photos framed.

A strikingly different example of the role objects may have at the moment of death is the way Bunty treated the objects relating to her husband after his sudden death:

Bunty redecorated everything and bought new furniture with George's insurance money so that now there's hardly anything left that is evidence of the past, of other lives. --- It was surprising how easy it was for Bunty to eradicate George, not a sock nor a cigarette end remains. (p. 324)

Here, the discarding of objects amounts to erasing memory. Bunty does this erasing to a startling extent, as if to deny that George even existed and was part of her life. Indeed, Bunty acts as if she was "freed now to reinvent the past" (p. 299), as Ruby puts it.

Another, and not less striking example is the way Ruby expresses the relationship to her old mother who is suffering from dementia:

I've come back to dispose of the remains of my mother, a task made more complicated by the fact that she isn't dead yet.

What Ruby means is that she has come to take her mother to Silverleas, a nursing-home, since she is no longer able to take care of herself. Of course, Ruby's remark is highly ironic, but even as that it arouses fundamental questions. Since Bunty has "lost her personality", as Adrian, a family friend, expresses it, all that there is left to do is discard the material belongings of the woman who herself is almost reduced into a commodity, ready for disposal. Having lost much of her memory and not

being able to recognise certain people and objects around her, she is fit for transportation to the nursing home with *modern facilities* and *pleasant views* (original italics by the author). Then the 'doll-mother' is taken to Silverleas for 'final delivery' (p. 370). As they get there, Ruby sighs: "That was my mother", as if she was talking about a worn-out object and, what's more, in past tense. Then, what is left, is emptying the house, disposing of the useless material and dividing the valuable ones with Patricia. As a result of this, many central objects – the silver-locket, the photographs, the rabbit's foot, great-grandmother's clock – get their new owners. Another cycle is completed.

#### 4. Private/public historical sphere: i) Whose heritage?

It is now time to return to the question posed already in the introduction of this study: that of whose heritage it is that comes through in the novel. Earlier on, the power held by the museum was touched upon in relation to the representations of the past they impose on their public. This issue is intertwined with the idea of different spaces, both discursive and concrete, that vary in accessibility to different groups of people. Bennett (1995:103) talks about "the division between the hidden space of the museum in which knowledge is produced and organized and the public spaces in which it is offered for passive consumption". He believes that this division still prevails in the museum of today, despite the attempts at democratisation. According to Hooper-Greenhill (1992:167-8), this democratisation had its beginnings in the French Revolution, as collections and places were made public: things were being appropriated. As Seth Koven (in Sherman and Rogoff 1994:23) points out, there was a larger project in Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that aimed at establishing free libraries and public spaces. These public spaces included the public parks, many of which have been since turned into historic parks that successfully combine the rural and the historical experience (Walsh 1992:126). The question of parks in the novel is an interesting one. In the first chapter, Bunty, Gillian and Ruby-the-embryo pay a visit to Museum

Gardens. Bunty thinks that “there’s something indulgent about parks, something wasteful – holes in existence filled with nothing but air and light and birds” but she makes the sacrifice of letting Gillian play in the park and “pays a precious sixpence at the gate of the Museum Gardens and guarantees that our fresh air is exclusive” (p. 18). In the final chapter, however, forty years later, there is a hint at the process of democratising public space:

In the Museum Gardens, now entirely free to the public – no sixpence needed – we pick our way through the peacocks and squirrels and tourists that litter the grass and make our way down to the path by the river --- (p. 379)

The park that in the beginning was ‘exclusive’ has become far less protected and controlled: it is a space for anyone to enter and explore – and for free. But even though the park is made more accessible, it does not seem to fulfil the role it has been appointed: instead of evoking a sense of the past, of history, it appears as an absurd patchwork, the same way as Ruby sees the entire city of York as “a fake city, a progression of flats and sets and white cardboard battlements and medieval half-timbered house kits that have been cut and glued together” (p. 377). What Ruby seems to be reacting to is the endless preservation conducted in the city. By clinging to all those remains that have survived from the past, unwilling to let any of it go, we may be faced with a heap of absurdities that appear as mere curiosities. For Ruby, this overflow of history, or rather historicity, first makes her puzzled, then indifferent and alienated. By displaying and preserving a wealth of material culture as cultural heritage, Ruby is eventually made dumb and passive: she is being fed something as heritage but is too weak to oppose the representations designed by ‘experts’. Though she feels that she cannot really relate to these images of the past, she does accept parts of it, resorting to the nostalgia of the Victorian fireplaces, the idyll resurrected. She is comforted by this nostalgia but does not feel at home in it. Ruby is forced to look for something of her own.

According to Kern (quoted in Walsh 1992:66), since Einstein’s general theory of relativity, there has been an increasing consideration of



personal pasts; there has been a shift from homogenous public time to various, private times. Walsh (1992:66), in turn, claims, that this emphasis on personal pasts is mostly articulated through nostalgia – the collection and appreciation of objects often relating to personal history. Also in Ruby's case, the search for a past is turned into several personal projects including words and things: the branches of the family-tree become a collection of poems and the fate of several objects is followed in Ruby's narration, intermingled with the fate of the owners of these objects, or of the individuals interacting with them.

The question "Whose heritage?" entails further divisions and more accurate definitions with regard to the 'consumers' of heritage. Being essentially selective and ideological, heritage is bound to be biased in several respects. One of these biases relates to gender identity and construction. According to Belk and Wallendorf (1994:241), gender can be linked to collecting in three different ways: firstly, through the gendered meaning of collecting activities, secondly, the gender associations of the objects collected, and thirdly, the gendered uses of collections. What can readily be noticed in the novel is that it mostly deals with 'feminine heritage': it is centred around matrilineal history, around mothers and daughters. Therefore, it is interesting to look at the tension created between parallel heritage representations from the viewpoint of gender.

In the novel, the memories and objects maintained in the personal sphere belong mostly to women, and the array of objects consists to a great extent of 'feminine' objects: trinket boxes, buttons, silver-locket, great-grandmother's clock. Belk and Wallendorf (1994:251) provide an interesting insight into this by their claim that

From a societal perspective, collections represent and enact the achievement orientation of the collector. Achievement may represent different ideas to men and women. Women's collections tend to represent achievement in the world of connection to other people – achievement of sentiment.

Indeed, these objects are entangled in emotions: they are the carriers of 'tears of things' in Pearce's (1992:72) sense.

Further, what requires attention is that the objects present in the novel, apart from being feminine, belong mostly to the domestic realm of everyday life, as part of which the women are portrayed. What may grab the reader's attention is the dynamism with which the narration flows, also within this private sphere and everyday activities. In the novel, there are no references to or depictions of women or people in general being presented in museums, so it is impossible to examine the alienation from 'heritage' judging by their presence or absence in museums. Even though this theme of women's representation in museums does not come up in the novel, it may still be useful to briefly look at the place that women usually occupy in museum displays. Potter (1988:106) has remarked that in Britain, women in museums are mainly represented in the home. This is hardly surprising, since traditionally the home, childcare and housework have occupied the women and tied them to the home or its surroundings. However, Porter (in Lumley 1988:107) believes that it is not enough to simply place women in the house and engage her in needlework; moreover, there appears to be over-representation of the Victorian parlour, as a result of which domestic life seems to be increasingly separated from public life. The displays are, according to Porter, unrepresentative of everyday existence and lacking its dynamics, while museums at the same time are housing sentimental and ceremonial items from a highly specialised, "comfortable and comforting culture" (1988:107-9). If the feminine heritage really can be found in the home, and if museums fail to produce successful representations of it, there are few possibilities to encounter satisfactory representations of feminine heritage that mainly feeds on the realm of the private, the everyday and the domestic. In other words, presenting feminine heritage seems to require turning the private into public to a larger extent than with masculine heritage. Weighed against this aspect, the dualism of the public, often monumental and celebratory heritage and the domestic everyday heritage of Yorkshire pudding and shepherd's pie appears all the more intriguing. It would be too simplistic to claim that the public and private heritage are felt to be so far apart just because of this gender

bias. Anyhow, Belk and Wallendorf's (1994:242) claim is thought-provoking:

traits defined as masculine seem especially useful in acquiring objects for collections, while traits defined as feminine are important in curating and maintaining the resulting collection.

Even though Belk and Wallendorf talk about feminine and masculine traits and not women and men, the thought arises further questions. If men are more prone to collecting, while women ideally maintain these collections, it is possible that, historically, we have come up with 'man-made' (public) collections in which feminine heritage plays only a marginal role. Somewhat polemically, Rigby and Rigby (quoted in Belk and Wallendorf 1994:241) have claimed that

Grand scale, collecting almost always calls for aggressive and material ambition to a degree uncharacteristic of women, aside from women's historic economic position.

If this is the case, it is likely that women as active actors are absent from many a collection.

The portrayal of the Victorian doll's house provides an interesting aspect to the discussion of gendered heritage, more precisely, the make-up of a Victorian reality and the woman's place in it – naturally from the viewpoint of the present. Again, Ruby's voice is highly ironic and playful but through this playfulness, critical undertones clearly come through. Ruby sees "something eerie about it" in its "little, little leather-bound books (Great Expectations!)" and she could not think of a worse fate than being destined to becoming a little girl in the doll's house, playing in the nursery, or the scullery maid blacking the kitchen range (p. 114). Even though she is not contented with her own life, Ruby would not change hers by moving into a Victorian past as she imagines it, despite the socially learnt nostalgic longing she feels for the Victorian fire-place (probably of the 'Victorian parlour') in the Castle Museum (p. 350). Partly her determination is due to the fact that she would not want to adopt the role of the Victorian woman (as she knows it).

As becomes apparent from these examples, there appears to be a tension between the various pasts at different levels. With regard to

heritage, it is often the case that ‘nation’ or some other bigger unit is promoted with the expense of smaller units and localities. The quotation from George VI on the homepage of the City of York is telling: “The history of York is the history of England”. This is where much of the problem lies: when some heritage items are elevated as emblems of something even bigger, there is the risk of exhausting the phenomena themselves by pumping them dry of their own special character. If the history of York is made to stand for that of the entire England, it is hardly surprising if some feel ‘overcrowded by the past’ as Ruby does. This overcrowded nature of the past is made apparent in the opening of the novel, as Ruby introduces York. The swiftly moving images almost seem to parody themselves: it is as if it were from a tourist brochure – colourful, compact and enticing – if the irony is ignored.

These streets seethe with history; the building that our Shop occupies is centuries old and its walls tilt and its floors slope like a medieval funhouse. There has been a building on this spot since the Romans were here and needless to say it has its due portion of light-as-air occupants who wreath themselves around the fixtures and fittings and linger mournfully at our backs. Our ghosts are particularly thick on the staircases, of which there are many. They have much to gossip about. You can hear them if you listen hard, the splash of water from Viking oars, the Harrogate Tally-Ho rattling over the cobblestones, the pat and shuffle of ancient feet at an Assembly Rooms’ ball and the *scratch-scratch* of the Reverend Sterne’s quill. (p. 10)

If “streets seethe with history”, we can be sure that something out of ordinary is going on. Ruby draws a parallel between the building her family lives in and a medieval funhouse with its tilting floors. To the reader, moreover, it is this representation of the city as a whole that resembles a funhouse, or rather, a noisy and colourful carnival that overrides the town – a depiction that goes over the top, turns against itself – or at least turn’s its clown’s face at the reader.

From this synchronous overflow of historic images, it may appear a good option to turn to a personally experienced past. As Fowler (1992:162) has formulated the possible slogan for today’s heritage seekers: “I want to be involved in *my* heritage on my terms”. Fowler (1992:161) believes that the tendency to promote larger political and economic frames of reference is bound to enforce “the retreat to small pasts at personal level”. In the following some of these will be explored.

#### 4. Private/public historical sphere: ii) From cabinets of curiosity to the museum and back again

Pearce (1992:1-4) divides the history of museums into four main periods: the archaic, the early modern, the classical modern and the postmodern. The first one of these refers to the prehistoric European tradition of accumulation and to the temples of the classical world, the 'museia'. The early modern is characterised by medieval treasuries, Renaissance collections and cabinets of curiosities. It is only in the classical modern period in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the museum proper is born, whereas the postmodern museum refers mainly to museums from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Although this division cannot be accepted as a norm, these elements, with slight variation, have been rather influential in drawing the major lines of historical understanding of museums.

In her extensive study *Museums and the Shaping of knowledge*, Hooper-Greenhill (1992) begins with the Renaissance period, and presents various accounts of what it is to "know" in museums, and on what grounds the phenomenon called museum bases its ways of classifying the world. Her work gives an historical overview of knowing in museums, but since her approach is heavily Foucaultian, she criticises the traditional historical pursuits of the searching of the origins of things and imposing chronologies and emphasising continuity. Instead, she relies on Foucault's ideas of 'effective history' in identifying historical forms of rationality and 'epistemes' as productive sets of relations within which knowledge is produced (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:9-22). Like Pearce, Hooper-Greenhill discusses the cabinets of curiosities as one development prior to the museum. Although she claims that they were constructed from different frame of reference than museums proper and thus are by no means direct ancestors of museums, she nevertheless regards them as a 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century project of ordering material to demonstrate knowing of the world, much the same way that museums have done since their birth. Whereas (classical) modern museums are seen as based on Enlightenment ideals of order and rationality, pre-

modern museums and cabinets of curiosity are characterised by “jumbled incongruity” to create surprise or provoke wonder (Bennett 1995:2). All the same, the idea behind both can be seen as providing representations of the world and thus demonstrating its character.

*Curiously* enough, the theme and image of cupboard persists throughout Atkinson’s novel, and these numerous cupboards have a curious air about them. When Ruby tells of her birth, she says: “I spent my first night on earth in a cupboard” (p. 41), referring to a separate space into which she was taken in order to not to wake up the other newborn babies. Later on, as a young adult, when her friend Kathleen is making plans for the future and intends to marry her boyfriend, Ruby and Kathleen go through the contents of Kathleen’s bottom drawer; the Irish linen towels and the cake forks. When Ruby asks her friend what the point of the whole bottom drawer is, she gets the answer: “To save things for the future” (p. 317). This is when Ruby too begins to feverishly question what she would put in her bottom drawer if she had one, swaying between several and very different possibilities. At one moment, she wants to fill her drawer with sharp objects: “I weigh knives in my hands like strange comforters” (p. 320). But when she momentarily feels she has a hold of things, the insides of the drawer are radically different: “I would put the horizon, and some snatches of birdsong, the blossom like snow in the garden of the Treasure’s House and the white ruined arches of St Mary’s Abbey below, like petrified lace” (p. 320). Although petrified, this latter scene appears as harmonious and beautiful; “the town laid out below is like a street map (p. 320)” – it can easily be perceived and made sense of. At moments like these the historicity of the landscape does not bother Ruby; moreover, the sight of the centuries old buildings become usable cornerstones for the future. But the strength of these images is not enough on its own. Ruby keeps on looking.

“Somewhere just out of reach”, says Ruby, “there is the key” (p. 321). She introduces her ‘Lost Property Cupboard theory of life’ that she calls a “recent development in my philosophical quest for understanding” (p. 321). This theory has been born out of practise in her school, where Ruby and Kathleen run a real lost property cupboard that was made to

work like clock-work according to the ideals of the school. It was open on Thursdays at four o'clock and that was the only possible time for students to reclaim their lost goods. What is interesting is how the location of the cupboard is given in relation to class rooms of Domestic Science, physics, chemistry and biology, as if this new branch of philosophy were introduced in the context of the established sciences.

This theoretical construction seems to be self-mocking, ironic and serious all at the same time. It can be read as including critical remarks on social practises, for instance with regard to name tags –policy that reigned in the school: ownership had to be easy to trace and therefore every possession was to have a tag on it. What is more, there were constant checks that “we were tagged properly” (p. 322). If one was to read this as implied criticism of museum practises, it is not difficult to draw links between the contemporary accumulation of materia in collections, and the worship of quantity at quality's expense. The result is that we end up with unidentified piles of things that no-one claims as their own: “the lost property cupboard remains full to overflowing with abandoned things” (p. 322). The Lost Property Cupboard theory of life is supplemented by that of afterlife, according to which we are taken to a great cupboard after death and given back the things we have lost. Ruby starts with listing concrete every-day objects but moves onto “perhaps less tangible things”, patience, meaning, oceans of time. Interestingly, also these less tangibles have their place in the cupboard. In other words, they are pictured to occupy a certain space in the undeniably tangible cupboard. The attaching of material qualities to abstract concepts is an interesting attempt on the protagonist's part to ‘get a hold of things’ to come into an understanding.

What can be seen as crucial in Ruby's attempts at understanding is how she seems to be torn between a bundle of representations of the past from different sources: her own memories (and the lack of them), the memories and narratives constructed by her family and friends, and the accounts from the ‘public historical sphere’ (Bommes and Wright 1982). The latter includes institutions involved in producing and circulating meanings about the past, e.g. museums, heritage sites and historical TV

series. Therefore, the combat that Ruby is faced with is partially about choosing between the various voices, with also the individual and collective voices colliding. For Ruby, the cupboard seems to function as a filter, discarding the elements of the past which are not so essential for her in the present, and in this way making more room for the living, which is one of Ruby's major concerns: "There is too much history in York, the past is so crowded that sometimes it feels as if there is no room for the living" (p. 352). So, whereas generally the cabinet of curiosities is discussed as the museum's jumbled incongruous predecessor, in the novel it is a machine that reorders things and makes them seem meaningful. As Bennett points out,

For the curieux, the singular and exceptional objects assembled in the cabinet are valued because they stand in a special relationship to the totality and, hence, offer a means of acquiring a knowledge of, and privileged relation to, that totality. But this form of knowledge is, like the objects through which it is accessible, a rare one only available to those special few who actively seek it.  
(Bennett 1995: 40-41)

Thus, if intelligibility is due to familiarity, as Bennett (1995:41) claims, it is a question of congruity and familiarity on the individual level. Obviously, elements from the public historical sphere permeate the individual one to some extent since we all are subject to our time and cultural training, but basically all the elements tend to be arranged according to the individual, to Ruby in the case of the novel.

Eventually, unable to cope with her loneliness, memories lost to the unconscious and the accumulated misunderstandings, she returns to the cupboard of her first night on earth in the form of the airing cupboard in the upstairs bedroom (p. 324-5). She makes her "nest" in the bottom of the cupboard and swallows a fair amount of sleeping pills. This is when a powerful reordering of things begins, and Ruby feels she is floating and rushing through a vast amount of objects and people somehow tied up with her life, and one thing takes her along to another. What is interesting is that in this cupboard-scene there seems to be no over-all structure imposed on the elements from the outside: the objects seem to be bursting out in space with no linear order but rather a web of associations working according to its own logic.



To again highlight the role of the objects as actors in the story, all other elements except participants have been removed from the cupboard-passage. By thus stripping them bare from all other syntactic/stylistic elements, possible participant patterns in the text may be detected. The following is the four-page passage in the cupboard that in the novel is broken down into two distinct passages (p. 325-6 and 330-1):

I space time darkness I I force organs walls body stars end  
world I voice words noise head oceans  
world I confluence parachute I objects darkness things stone  
dolls spoons I something Mobo Horse  
marble I delight I him stag 's head darkness it mouth horse  
's head 'The Goose Girl'

Thistledown panda Sooty radio I thrill delight I  
Lost Property Cupboard I bottom memories everything

Someone paw hand head Teddy me end world he  
I Teddy he Lost Property Cupboard animals I him  
Face he Rings Saturn Ruby paw brain skull thread  
pains nerves arms sunbursts side me world they  
I this journey I mind thing punishment

darkness something Ghost-Train ride Scarborough  
face me I words ear voice mother everything  
bitch I hands vision he You girl I I he I I noises  
mouth noise person air apparition well time me  
I hands ears I he I voice You sister Ruby You sister

We time Sweep Denise doll 's house  
I myself Ruby Pearl Ruby Pearl jewel twins witch treasure  
chest Hansel Gretel opals duck eggs  
rubies hearts diamonds ice-floes emeralds glacier-lakes  
sapphires pieces summer sky pearls globes pearls  
ropes treasure-chest I hand rope pearls fingers  
spheres I hail pins shower buttons meteors  
Eamon Andrews Ruby Lennox Life parrot ear gift  
speech cupboard

blackness darkness I diver pearls  
Flash light I light world I bottom cupboard middle light figure  
I she Botticelli 's Venus shell mother-of-pearl I figure  
twin double mirror smiles arms me me I anything  
clock head sound door blackness blackness shroud  
blackness me mouth nose ears fleece  
I earth coffin cracks cracks light

Although the syntactic cohesion is lost by the removal of all other elements except participants, there still appears to be a certain pattern. The participants that at first glance appear as formless lumps, actually have rhythm and repetition. What is striking is the use of the first person singular pronoun combined with a wealth of body-parts. It is as if Ruby

were working out her identity by mirroring on the objects that actually are subjects. On the one hand, body parts appear as parallel to other objects, on the other, the twin sister Pearl is another, though central, object, among the body-parts.

Further, what catches attention is the infusion of the public historical sphere into the private individual one. With no special effort, Hansel and Gretel are brought into the picture as a step in the Ruby-Pearl-Ruby-Pearl –development: the canon of fairy-tales easily ties in with the images of personal relationships. Similarly, Botticelli's famous painting, a 'pearl' of art historical heritage (though not national) finds its place as a mediator between Ruby and her twin sister Pearl.

With a bit of oversimplification, the cupboard in the novel can be looked at as a space where the rules of the linearity of text no longer hold. This is of course controversial, since the narration happens through written text that inevitably positions the elements in a certain order. However, the novel contains elements that both thematically and structurally hint at the problematic nature and the relativity of linearity. In the first footnote, Ruby's great-grandmother Alice experiences a sensation of floating as a sudden consequence of being overburdened with a number of things: the heat, her being eight months pregnant, the heavy housework, her feelings of dissatisfaction with her life. She is in the midst of cutting up the dough, as "she suddenly feels herself being pulled towards the marigolds on a straight, fast trajectory; it is automatic and entirely beyond her control and she has no time to think as she is sucked on her giddy journey towards the heart of the flower that looks like the sun" (p. 34). Two paragraphs down, the narrative voice states: "What the world has lost in sound, it has gained in texture" as Alice moves into the landscape. What is strongly present is the absence of sound, while everything expands into space.

Eventually, the story can be seen as stretching out between two different claims, points of reference: the novel is a journey from one cupboard to the other. In the end of the first chapter, in the atmosphere of great promise and expectations lingering over the Dome of Discovery projecting 'the emerald city of tomorrow', "The future is like a cupboard

full of light and all you have to do is find the key that opens the door” (p. 26). In the last chapter, on the riverbank in the Museum Gardens, as Ruby is looking at the ‘lost property’ left by all those that have been there: “The past is a cupboard full of light and all you have to do is find the key that opens the door” (p. 379). Maybe the cupboard, the cabinet of curiosities, however jumbled and incongruous perceived through the public eye, is the salvation, the redemption that reorders the things and makes them meaningful. It is the individual effort to come to terms with the various pasts available to us, and through this quest new spaces of personal knowledge may open up.

There is yet one more object that can be regarded as belonging to this ‘cabinet/cupboard set’ of the novel: the doll’s house belonging to Daisy and Rose, Ruby’s cousins. It is true miniature:

It has pictures the size of postage stamps and postage stamps the size of dots; it has gilded chairs fit for a fairy-queen and chandeliers like crystal earrings and a kitchen table groaning under the weight of plaster hams and plaster moulded blanc-manges. (p. 114)

As Susan Stewart (quoted in Danet and Katriel 1989, in Pearce 1994:232) points out, “There are no miniatures in nature”. Moreover, miniatures are cultural products, a way of perceiving and relating to the physical world. Further, Stewart (quoted in Danet and Katriel 1989, in Pearce 1994:232) claims that “a miniature world is a more perfect world” since it has the ability to hide all the shortcomings that are visible in life-size objects. It becomes clear, however, that Ruby is not drawn to this miniature world. It is rather one more reflection of a system she finds frightening and unfamiliar.

The doll’s house is another cupboard embodying the distress Ruby feels in relation to her environment. It is a miniature universe, a representation of a certain world, but at the same time an unfavourable order of things that Ruby, at least not for some time, can neither escape nor has the means to re-order.

In his discussion of heritage in the (post)modern era, Walsh (1992) lays emphasis on the sense of place. He claims that the presentation of the past to the public is being and has been increasingly institutionalised,

and at the same time these representations have been removed from the wider public sphere (1992:148). He also explicates his notion of 'timing space', attempting to find a diachronic dimension of a place as opposed to the 'synchronous spectacles' all too common in postmodern representations of heritage. In a similar fashion, also the novel contains similar elements in its narration, that for a reason can be called synchronous spectacles, as for instance the passage in the opening already quoted above (p. 10). Therefore, according to Walsh (1992:152), the key to developing a sense of place is to allow people to develop their own understandings, rather than to impose institutionalised meanings onto space, which eventually would only produce artificial places.

One way of developing understandings of our own is to individually compile cupboards and doll's houses – cabinets of curiosities. This production of personal representations based on personal networks of meaning can take a variety of forms, as the novel also proves: there is the fetish collector, the great-grandmother Alice, who is portrayed as an extension of her collection of plaster saints; there is Albert, the carefree young man with the 'cherub-gene', who collected good days. There are also the mass-produced collectables of coronation memorabilia and the sets of photos that tie the family together over generations. However, collecting in the novel is often a mere act of naming and thus "a means of controlling the surrounding material chaos", as Kiuru (2000:66) has put it. Therefore, personal collecting can be viewed as a retreat from the space of institutionalised, canonical and often stiff meanings into a personal space, a room of one's own. This space may in fact be crucial in order to maintain the balance between the individual and the collective modes of experiencing the past. Also from the viewpoint of material culture, there is a divide between the institutional collection practises conducted by the museum and those carried out on the realm of private collecting. Whereas the museum focuses on the typical and the representational that can easily be generalised and categorised, the enterprise of personal collecting is more dynamic and relies on the merging of the collective and personal values and meanings.

It is evident that historical experience should not be entirely cut off from collectivity, since the community dimension offers a corrective measure in the three-partite communication between the individual, the community and the world of objects (e.g. Kiuru 2000). What is more, the museum still remains the possible forum (at least ideally) for exchanging interpretations of objects. Museums also provide means by which the information embodied in objects can be released and explicated. Despite its long tradition of scholarship and curatorship which is not without its biases, the museum still offers tools for 'reading objects' and thus making them meaningful also in a wider historical context.

It seems that both these spheres of historical experience need their autonomy to a certain extent but also interchange between the two, so that meanings can be communicated. To use Walsh's (1992:152) dichotomy of space and place, it may be worthwhile to ponder over the possibility of having both shared places (i.e. with a sense of place) and private spaces. From this perspective, it is good that Ruby has her figurative collection in her mental bottom-drawer, and her poems of the family-tree, and, in the end, the Scottish landscape that she can relate to and recognise as hers. Another question is how this parallel structure of public places and private spaces could be best realised in practise but to go into this would also go beyond the scope of this study. Nowadays there has been much talk about 'coming out of the closet'. Perhaps, in many cases, it may prove to be as useful to go *into* them, at least pay a brief visit. In these cupboards, cabinets, bottom-drawers and closets there is a wealth of material that might lead into interesting discourses with the words and things of the public sphere.

#### IV. WHERE THE COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL PASTS (ARE MADE TO) MEET: TEXTUAL INTERVENTION

##### 1. The Method

The basic idea of this intervention comes from Rob Pope's (1995:i) claim that "Reading is a form of rewriting. Every interpretation is an act of intervention." Pope's (1995) method of textual intervention draws in part on the tradition among cultural studies of producing counter- and alternative texts, 'reading against or across the grain' of the text in order to produce a response differing from that produced by an 'ideal reader'. Pope (1995:189-90) uses Barthes's notion of 'writerly' texts and refers to his claim of all texts being potentially writerly. According to Barthes, the reader is never a passive consumer of meanings but reworks meanings to own ends.

In a similar fashion, referring to the ideas of Paul Ricoeur, Sintonen (1999:47) points out that no narrative is complete in itself but is made complete in the act of reading, in which the world of the text and that of the reader meet. In this sense, the intervention can be seen as a highly subjective enterprise of engaging in a dialectic relation with the text, and thus recording meanings. Because of this high degree of subjectivity, the analysis following the intervention is written in first person.

The intervention can also be perceived as a document of reading, a record of the encounter or a series of encounters which, without inscription, would not leave a concrete record of the act of reading. This is how such accounts of reading, and of inscribing discourses, approach ethnographic inscription and reading. Again, this means providing a Denzinian "hearing, listening, story-telling framework" (Denzin 1997:268), but apart from mere observation, also active personal involvement. At the same time, it is an experiment through which I wish to explore the possibilities of etching together fiction, museum theory (and displays) and narrative. One of the aims of my intervention is to create a meeting-point for the individual and collective representations of

the past, or, rather, deploying the collective modes of displaying, narrating or organising the past to mediate individual experience of the past. My intervention also shows the problematic nature of this etching – the need to have both the artefacts as exhibits and the narrative, the linguistic context.

As Sintonen (1999:21-33) gives a brief historical account of the discipline of anthropology to contextualize his study, he mentions the traditional claim that the anthropologist has to prove/indicate in the text that she has been to the field and lived among the subjects of the study in their every-day life. In a sense, especially considering the 'preoccupation' of recent ethnography with problematising subjectivity, it is not all that far-fetched to view the textual intervention as a visit to the field with a specific frame of mind and a research question in mind, producing an inscription as something of an equivalent of "the researcher, Veera R. was here". Obviously this method is far from objectivity and reproducibility but instead it enforces the researcher to become self-reflexive and ponder over her relationship to her subject(s), and the nature of knowledge that can be produced by conducting the research.

So, by no means is the textual intervention an attempt to 'better' the author's product or to fill in the blanks in the narration: there is no attempt to lesser the integrity of the work that can be viewed on its own as a piece of skilful craft. Nor is its aim to ride on the words and work of others, slipping the researcher's clever word in. Malinowski (quoted in Sintonen, 1999:33) has discussed the notion of 'killing with science', a term originally used by Mary Louise Praff, to refer to scientific practices which destroy the dynamics and texture of cultural phenomena by stealing their souls. The advantage of the discursive-narrative approach, according to Sintonen (1999:33) is that it acknowledges the multi-interpretive nature of cultural texts, in the sense that there is no right or wrong knowledge, which in turn makes 'killing with science' impossible. What is characteristic of discursive-narrative approach is that the idea that the truthfulness of knowledge is defined in discursive practises, in which various interpretations of reality appear in hierarchical formations.

These formations are in dynamic combat with each other and are continuously changing in the combat.

Pope describes a variety of possible ways of intervening in a text both on micro- and macro-linguistic level, varying from the nuances of punctuation to 'total recasting' in terms of genre, time or place. The interventions can be parallel, opposed or alternative texts or including preludes, interludes or postludes: the main idea is deliberately putting the text 'off balance' and thus altering its emphasis. The dominant types used in the following intervention are 'narrative intervention' and 'collage' (Pope 1995:200-1). The former type is characterised by "refocalising the narrative so that the very process of narration is reoriented, and perhaps made more (or less) obvious", while the latter has to do with gathering a range of materials directly or indirectly relevant to the base text, which are then arranged to make statements about the base text.

## 2. Intervention

Adrian and I are eating sandwiches in front of the television, Bunty's television-snack trays perched on our knees. We're watching the *Antiques Roadshow*, with the religious intensity of people who've got nothing better to do. Tomorrow we'll have to start packing the house into boxes and disposing everything. Then the phone rings.

Perhaps it's Mr Nobody. It's not, it's Ms Twaites, the curator of City of York Museum, making inquiries about the stuff that I took there the other day for her to take a look. It was bits and pieces I packed into a box and hurled it over the desk in her office. Standard memorabilia: a forget-me-not cup glued together, a silver coin, Barker and Dobson's Fruit drops tin (she encouraged me to bring all kinds of every-day objects, including from the recent past, which, according to Ms Thwaites, has been poorly documented and presented in the collections). Now she wants to find out more about the objects, about their stories.



‘Thank you very much, this makes a valuable contribution to our collection,’ Ms Thwaites smiles and hands me the reception form to sign. I have just come to an end of my detailed account of the various paths that the rabbit’s foot took in the course of its life before starting a new one in the museum. I have told Ms Thwaites what I know and hope that I haven’t been lying. But who is to say which of these is real and which is fiction? ‘Is there anything else that you could think of that would be of use to us?’ Of use how? I am curious about how the photo of my great-grandmother could be of use in the museum, next to the stained glass works and Viking swords. ‘It’s stories of people that we’re after,’ says Ms Thwaites and turns the rabbit’s foot in her white-cotton-gloved hands. ‘It’s a question of mediating experience, feeling and knowledge. Objects are one possible entrance’. ‘We can always stick tags and labels on objects separated in their microclimatic showcases and ask people to *believe* that there is a past. Stuffing our showcases with valuables we are asking people to *admire* this past. But it is only when we narrate and reconstruct the past that we ask people to *learn* and – more important – *understand*. Then she adds with an uncanny smile: ‘If you were to tell your own story with, say, ten objects, what would they be?’ Could I think of something?

### **A Drop of Blood: Ruby Lennox Projected in Time and Space**

I carry with me the photograph of my great-grandmother Alice, the woman lost in time, the way she once carried the pictures of her children in their travel-frames. How do I believe (in) this woman, how do I understand her? What is my expensive silver frame of mind good for? (One down. My first object in ‘Ruby Lennox displayed’: the photo of Alice.) In my story of my great-grandmother, she is a woman parallel to me. She gives me comfort, backs me up. A hundred years ago she realised she was living a wrong life, the way I was. In my story of my great-grandmother, there has to be a way out for her: I believe in it, as I believe in the new life I found for myself. My grandmother learned that her mother died and she built her story accordingly. But for me, looking

at the result of the chemical explosion of eternalization sends me on another track of thought – that of possibility, of change.

The second object of my story is Mobo, the most important word of all in two-year-old Ruby's vocabulary. The Mobo horse is perhaps still the most handsome creature manufactured by man with his scarlet saddle and scarlet reins. There was nothing to stop us from cantering across the Back Yard – except for my jealous sister Gillian, who was the original owner of the white-tinned and scrolled-maned thing. She got Him when I was born, and outgrew him soon enough. Such rites of passage are always painful and dangerous, and I was the one to follow.

Yet another object embodying danger and control is the big four-storey Victorian doll's house that my twin cousins had in the corner of their room. I was sent to Auntie Babs' after 'the accident' and I was terrified of being minitaturized into this controllable micro-cosmos that opens up and can be viewed like the little leather-bound books in it (*Great Expectations!*). Also my mother was a victim of a doll's house of sorts, rather of Ibsenesque kind – slave to housework. And now, in her later years, she truly has inhabited the doll's house ('How did she shrink so much?' wonders Patricia) and I catch myself feeling for her, wanting to take this new doll-mother home with me and look after her. No, remember, Ruby, soon you will take her to Silverleas.

Then there are animals (they are stuffed for the purposes of my exhibition but they all died a natural death with preferably no traces of burning. I'll never forget the smell of burned fur.) The pets we sold were not pets but commodities I could rarely take out of their cages. In my exhibition, there is a stuffed scapeparrot, signifying the one I was turned into in the family. And there are loudspeakers that are not that loud but still let out the sound of rapid, rabbit heartbeats that the visitors can't escape hearing. (After all, it's a 'total exhibition' we are talking about here, one that has food for all senses.)

A variety of documents are displayed, speaking my existence in their official and institutional discourse – school reports (*Ruby works hard and is a pleasure to have in the class; summer term, 1966 - Ruby has a great talent for acting..*), medical cards, and two birth certificates, the one of

Ruby Eleanor in intriguing proximity to that of Pearl Ada Lennox – born on the same day, of the same month, of the same year as – me. Hers is tied up with a death certificate: cause of death – drowning. And next to the documents, there is a swan-white, snow-feathered pearl ('my pearl,' says Bunty), placed appropriately in a spotlight (an expensive fibre light – the only one that can be placed safely inside the showcase with relatively little damage done to the material, with high colour rendering, at least Ra 90+). Bathing in the same pond of (optical) light is a ruby. (I am a precious jewel. I am a drop of blood. I am Ruby Lennox.) Behind Pearl and me, as a backdrop, hovers the Imperial State Crown (a copy of course. A perfect hologram is good enough.) with its four drop pearls and the Black Prince's Ruby.

A telephone sits below the scapeparrot. The Telephone. Any telephone, really, for Mr Nobody to call me ('It's after midnight, it'll be Mr Nobody I expect'). And the visitors to my exhibition can wait for the longest time and listen to the silence very carefully in case it is a message in itself and discover that it has a soothing quality. (George? Patricia?) The phone serves the locus of the household ghosts as well – they can shuffle their ancient feet in its silence and be quiet in Latin, Saxon and Norman-French.

After viewing the exhibition the visitors go home, floating about in their cultural amnesia, unable to trace their sudden urge to put on a crackling record or its less nostalgic CD-version. They hesitate between Joan Baez and a more recent woman, Kristin Hersh. Joan Baez is the woman lost in diamonds and rust: *well I'll be damned, there comes your ghost again but that's not unusual its' just that the moon is full and you happened to call*. Kristin Hersh is a trickier case though. Although her debut solo-album 'Hips and Makers' will come out only in 1994 and my narration will extend to 'The Redemption' in 1992, the album will have been out for a good year before this novel will be first published. So there is a good chance the author will hear the opening track 'Your Ghost' before writing down the narrative, so her ghost thematic may be influenced by this haunting song to come: *If I walk down this hallway*

*tonight it's too quiet so I pad through the dark and call you on the phone  
push your old numbers and let your house ring 'til I wake your ghost.*

In relative distance from the other display units (to add depth and create alternative ways of crossing from one display unit to another) stands a large photo of Minster Tower, a piece of architectural heritage, managed by the Secretary of State for National Heritage (and I certainly can hear the capital letters when it is pronounced). At the top of the tower you are almost in the realm of angels, so high that the town laid out below is like a street map that fades away at the edges into the Vale of York and beyond. On the level of the display this works equally well, linking information hierarchy and visitor flow, working both inductively and deductively, connecting my individual experience to the landscapes and in expanding spheres into The Worlds. But why Minster? Really it could be almost anything else, St Mary's Abbey or the Treasure's House but I pick the Minster. See there's too much history in York, the past is so crowded that sometimes it feels as if there's no room to the living. That's why you need to poke holes into it, holes in existence filled with nothing but air and light and birds. Easily you could lose yourself among these relics if you don't watch what you breath in. You need a historical filter that lets through what's good for you, or less damaging. But the Minster is elevating, almost divine and frightening, in underlining and undermining the sense of belonging. It invites to love the world and to take a fall from it at the same time. *(Pieces acting as 'community souvenirs'. Souvenir role of acting as a tangible means by which past history can be selectively rearranged so that continuity is stressed while dislocation and fragmentation is denied, and a romantic wholeness and significance is achieved. For heritage, for better or worse, has little to do with history. Heritage is about feeling good in the present.)*

The bottom drawer of my exhibition? It's a hope chest for the future, an airy cage of birds and bone. That's what you'll find if you walk all the way through the elements projected in time and space.

These are the ten objects I pick to tell my story with. They easily fit in the hope chest, they won't wear me down. The hope chest is an x-ray of Ruby Lennox's anatomy, it figuratively contains all the other objects

displayed. That's what you go out with. And out you go of the exhibition, into just another park of air-light birds.

You know, Ms Thwaites, I still have a handful of footnotes, breaks in tradition, discontinuous taxonomies, incomplete sets, cracks in the ice of my duck pond. But I am alive. I didn't burn in the fire, I didn't drown in the water (and the River Foss would be too shallow for that anyway), I didn't fall through the air and wasn't strangled by the blue chiffon of horizon.

\* \* \*

### 3. Explanation and reflection upon the intervention

My point of departure for the intervention is the title of the novel. 'Behind the scenes' gave me an excuse to give Ruby a 'back-stage pass' to go and talk to the curator and get a chance to take part in building her own exhibition. This is how I tried to do Ruby a favour, since there is not much that she could identify with in the existing museums. Perhaps that is why she dreams about the Castle Museum and of being there alone at night while everything comes to life: the Victorian fireplaces and the eighteenth century harpsichords were playing. According to Ruby, "The secret museum at night was much more interesting than the daytime one where visitors shuffling into Dick Turpin's cell and disturbing the peace." (p. 350). So my attempt was to create a museum for Ruby where she would have her peace.

I also wanted to explore the museum aspect further because of the recent trends in critical museum theory and museology that lay emphasis on the role of narrative and stories in relation to talking about the past and finding out 'things' about it. One of the aims of the postmodern museum display is constructing it into a narrative that would challenge the conventional ways of thinking and knowing and pose questions on identity: who are we/they? Where have we been, where are we going?

How do I come to know what I know about myself/us/them? This making-sense-of –question is symptomatic of our ‘Age of Anxiety’, the one we are living in according to the influential museologist Šola (1997:14). Ruby, too, is struggling with her personal memories and traumatic events of her life, in addition to making her own versions of the collective history and its representations. In the end of the novel, Ruby seems to manage to create a working and meaningful connection with the past, partly due to narrativizing it – she is planning on writing the lives of the family-tree into poems, since, eventually, “words are the only things that can construct a world that makes sense” (p. 382). These words by Ruby echo the above quoted view put forth by Hutcheon (1988:20): “dialogue with the past in the light of the present questions whether we can know the past other than through its textual remains”. Historiographic metafiction, that also this novel is full of, carries theoretical self-awareness that of history and fiction as human constructs.

Poems are one possible way to verbalize/narrativize and communicate the past; an alternative one would be making a narrative museum display out of it, projecting the story in time and space. This is how the objects present in the novel would be harnessed to give an alternative account of Ruby’s story. However, exhibition is a very demanding medium of communicating a story, and in contemporary museum theory (and practice) focusing is seen as a crucial factor in order to bring out the essential message of the story. This may involve narrowing down the number of objects displayed, so that the message would not be drowned in a cacophony of material. Ruby experiences this over-crowded wealth of material on two levels: on the public historical sphere as she walks on the streets of York and also in the private historical sphere – something that culminates in her own private cupboard that she uses as a hiding-place as she takes a fair dose of sleeping pills. As a result of this, she has an experience of floating and falling uncontrollably among objects that are meaningful for her, but which cannot be interpreted in a meaningful way since they randomly follow one another, so that they can hardly be read as a story that makes sense. Therefore, what I decided to do was to bring in one of the frequently asked questions by Janne Vilkkuna, the

professor of Museology in the University of Jyväskylä: "If you were to tell this story with X number of objects, what would they be? How would you do it?" I picked the aforementioned ten objects for Ruby and told her story through them as she might do it. But then you never can tell what she would have done (unless Atkinson writes a sequel to the novel making use of this idea!).

My intention was to use Ruby's words and phrases as much as possible in the intervention to convey my impressions on her relationship with the past. Therefore, most of the justifications for choosing these particular objects are from Ruby herself, though somewhat rearranged and with some changes in tone and emphasis. Of the ten objects chosen, the photo of Alice is different from the rest in the sense that Alice's role in Ruby's life is explicitly spelled out - something that she does not do herself. The only explicit stance she takes in relation to her is her willingness "to rescue this lost woman from what's going to happen to her (time). Dive into the picture, pluck her out--" (p. 29). But in the novel she does not state her reasons for being so determined with altering the fate of her great-grandmother, who has been dead for a good while. In my intervention, however, it is there explicitly ("she gives me comfort, backs me up in my choices"), perhaps a bit flatly or even bluntly. Anyhow, by 'putting it bluntly' in the intervention is taking a stand in relation to Ruby's role as a narrator already discussed in relation to postmodern notions of history. At the same time it is a comment on the two interpretations of Alice's life that appear in the novel that have been discussed in more detail in chapters II. 3. and II. 4.

As the approach of the present study is from a hybrid perspective – museology, narrative-discursive analysis and postmodern literary theory combined – I decided to insert elements of these discourses into the intervention. I feel that my approach is justified and not too far fetched, since these themes and embedded discourses spoke up to me from the body of the text – I was not really looking for them but they found me. Therefore, the intervention points at the enterprise of reading the novel through the theoretical discourses that surround it, and respond to it accordingly, including voices of the discursive field and responding to

this blend in a subjective way. But, as already noted, the novel has also been *written* through theoretical discourses, and from this follows that whatever is said in relation to the theoretical discourse that is going on around museums or in postmodern historiography, it will somehow position itself in relation to the novel. Therefore, to achieve something, there is no meaning in simply pointing out aspects in the novel that are dis/continuous with some theory. What is more fruitful is poking this intertextual/discursive beehive with several tongues and seeing what happens.

In addition to Ruby's voice, Susan Pearce (archaeologist, director of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester) is the one that is present the most. She is behind the curator's longish monologue concerning presuppositions on which exhibitions can be built on – displayed relics ask us to believe, art and treasure ask us to admire, the past narrated asks us to learn, and reconstructed past asks us to understand (1992:208). Pearce has her say throughout the intervention, commenting on the information hierarchy (entropy) of the display, and finally regarding the Minster Tower as a 'community souvenir'. I rely on Pearce also with my infusion of the notion of 'heritage' into the text. I wanted to include the word, since it appears in the title of my thesis – as a phenomenon and a theoretical construct it is both a corner stone and a stumbling block. The inclusion of Secretary of State for National Heritage is rather striking – it is an 'institutional intervention' emphasising the fact that heritage is a construct based on selection and maintained by a whole range of institutions.

There is yet another bit in the intervention that has been borrowed from Pearce: Black Prince's Ruby, crown jewels, which Pearce (1992:197), interestingly enough, uses as an example of viewing meaning in history through relics of the past. To me it seems very likely that Atkinson is deliberately alluding to a relic that stands in the centre of the coronation ceremony generation after generation.

One of the fundamental questions of preserving cultural heritage is deciding on what to preserve and with what costs and consequences. In other words, it is necessary to consider the relation between the tangible



and the intangible heritage. The idea of the 'perfect hologram' as replacing the 'real thing' is a much-debated claim of Šola (1997:189). He fervently argues for the primacy of information in mediating knowledge and emotion, since it is the ideas and values behind the objects and their mediation that counts.

One factor speaking for the primacy of valuing information before material things are the problems of conservation and preservation. The allusions to Anne Vesanto's (conservator in the Conservation Centre in Jyväskylä) teachings of the right kind of conditions (lighting, temperature, humidity etc.) is an attempt to demystify the action taking place behind the scenes at the museum, but also to interrogate the entire enterprise of investing huge amounts of money and effort to freeze the effects of time on material evidence of (our) experience.

The inclusion of the voices of Joan Baez and Kristin Hersh takes a radical leap as far as possible fictive worlds are concerned. Reintroducing Baez is easily justified, since she already appears in the base text as one of the influential figures of Patricia's teenage years. I chose the telephone as one possible object to be displayed, and it came to me entangled with other "phone-ghosts" that I knew – only that Hersh is a more controversial case since it exceeds the time-span dealt with in the novel. So to back up my choice and 'validate' it, I had to do an attack on the author, which brings a whole new dimension of exploring history/memory, fiction and truth in the novel. Although the novel is highly self-reflexive and historicist, with the implication that the plausibility of historical representation is continuously being questioned, my intervention in this sense is a step further: it is actually questioning the author's authority of recording the story of a character that she herself has created.

A factor that qualifies as a problem is the extent of irony in the novel. As discussed in chapter II.2., much of the narration has been filtered through irony, even to the extent that there would be a lot less to tell if it were not for the irony. This is to say that irony is such an intrinsic element of the narration that it has partly merged into the actual content, the subject of telling. As already mentioned, it was my intention to use

Ruby's voice and point of view as much as possible. However, this is done with hardly a trace of irony. What has to be noted is that the intervention is yet incomplete from the viewpoint of praxis, since it only contains the selection of the objects to be portrayed and their stories – a tentative script for the exhibition – but what it lacks is detailed exhibition design including technical choices. In order to make the exhibition look and sound like Ruby, one possibility would be to make use of, for instance 'ironic montage' in Walter Benjamin's sense. However, not to include irony into the stories of the objects is to avoid the several risks of causing misunderstandings due to the demanding nature of the museum exhibition as a medium. These risks include what Hutcheon (1994:176) calls the 'transideological complexities of irony'. As a case to discuss the politics of appropriateness, she uses an exhibition in Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, opened in the November of 1989 with the title *Into the Heart of Africa* (Hutcheon 1994:176-199). She gives an account of how an exhibition that originally was intended to expose the imperial ideology and "to put into play irony and reflexivity to deconstruct the ideology of the Empire" (Hutcheon 1994:182) ended up in misunderstandings, court injunctions and harassment against the curator of the exhibition. According to Hutcheon (1994:178), the crucial question regarding the failure to convey the intended message was whether the general public and the curators shed enough assumptions 'to make irony safe'. It seems that they did not, and the imperial racist attitudes that were put in an ironic light were taken literally by a great number of visitors and as mere repetition of racist attitudes. Again, what has to be taken into account are the differences between various discursive communities and the extent to which they are inclined to attribute irony to something. It has been claimed that "jokes do not travel well because of the need for shared knowledge" (Chiaro 1992, quoted in Hutcheon 1994:195), and, as Hutcheon points out, "this is even more the case with irony". Therefore, even though it would be consistent with the voice that Ruby adopts in most of her narration, it is probably safer to leave out the irony and not run the risk of undermining the actual message that, no doubt, is important and serious.

Another fundamental problem in terms of getting across the message of Ruby's exhibition is that her story and collection of objects to tell it with have to do with highly intense, individual experience. Their connotations and historical context are extremely personal, many of them 'souvenirs' in Pearce's (1994:21) terms: "nostalgic, backward-looking and bitter-sweet". As she points out, these intensely individual experiences rarely arouse great interest in other people, for the simple reason that that they are so difficult to mediate. Further, 'souvenirs' can be problematic to the museum both in terms research and display, since both have a tendency "to operate within a broad and generalizing intellectual tradition" (cf. Kiuru 2000). Thus, what has to be considered is the question who would possibly be interested in Ruby's exhibition, what kind of an audience it would be intended to and how it should be carried out in order to meet the demands of the intended audience.

It is evident that the intervention leaves many questions open, and that as such it does not provide a working framework for etching together fiction, narrative and museum theory. Nor would Ruby's exhibition as such work in practise: it is loaded with figurative language that does not unfold on its own before the visitor observing the objects. What is symptomatic of the fictive exhibition of my intervention is the way Ruby talks about certain objects, poetically. She introduces one of the displayed objects as "swan-white snow-feathered pearl". Here I have condensed some of the images around white in the novel. In the novel itself there is no such thing. What would it look like? Ruby's exhibition is a narrative exhibition narrated through fiction. It would be too risky to rely on material things only. The display language might be extraordinary and effective but what is naked language good for on its own without a message? And museums have a mission, they want to communicate, mediate something. We could have Ruby as the guide in the museum, for instance. The intervention itself could be polished, or its analysis taken further, but somehow it seems that without language Ruby's exhibition would be a cabinet of curiosities – intriguing but haphazard.

## V. CONCLUSION: HOW IS THE PAST PRESENT?

Let us now return to discuss the thematic resemblance of *À la recherche du temps perdu* to that of *Behind the Scenes* already mentioned when discussing self-reflexivity. In the disguise of the description of another literary work, many central aspects of the novel are summed up:

**“the metaphysical ambiguity of time”.** The novel works to underline the fact that time is a matter of perception. The different faces of time are pointed out by Ruby herself. There is an instance when she remarks that “time gallops forward, clippity-clop and *nobody ever comes back*” (p. 210, original italics by the author). However, she later has a moment of realisation: “Nothing’s lost forever, Patricia, it’s all there somewhere. Every last pin.” (p. 380). By the word ‘pin’ she refers to her ‘Lost Property Cupboard theory of the afterlife’, according to which “when we die we are taken to a great Lost Property Cupboard where all the things we have ever lost have been kept for us – every hairgrip, every button and pencil, every tooth, every earring and key, every pin” (p. 322). What this shows is how artefacts, tangible objects, exist in time but *at the same time* provide for a different sense of time from the linear, progressive sense of time characteristic of Western historiography. What is more, this object-time is different also from ‘time narrated’, and is able to co-exist and form limitless networks that link together different points in time. Even though time passes, it does not disappear, and of this the numerous objects of the novel serve as exhibits of. Even people from different historical periods, the Romans, the Vikings, the Saxons, and the Japanese tourists of the present are capable of co-existing in Ruby’s imagination.

**“the metaphysical ambiguity of death”.** There are numerous deaths in the family: the death of two of Ruby’s sisters, Pearl and Gillian, the death of her father and later of her mother. Also the deaths of members of the extended family in the past are touched upon. All of these people have to be retrieved in memory to defeat the erasing effect of time, including the great-grandmother Alice. Even though these people are

dead, their presence is often sensed, either as ghosts on the telephone, as angels appearing from somewhere, as people symbolically embodied in objects, or as the clank of the forget-me-not teacups.

**“the power and sensation to retrieve memories”** Apart from maintaining the bond between the dead, often with the help of ‘souvenirs’, there are memories in Ruby’s own past that she has no access to, until “Dr Herzmark returned the past” (p. 351) to her as the result from the therapy she went through. There are also attempts to retrieve memories of the collective record in the form of entering the Castle Museum or by taking a retreat into the nostalgia of the rural past of ‘Ye Olde England’.

**...“and reverse time.”** Ruby has the power and will to reverse time in relation to her great-grandmother, whom she wants to pluck out of the picture and rescue her from what is going to happen to her. She does this by constructing her story of Alice accordingly. The footnotes, rather than reverse time, subvert it by enriching the narrative as loops into the past with plural voices and points of view, and with little certainty of the source of the this information. However, there is less reversing time than resurrecting the past into an ever-changing present, to a history that is open and in the process of being written.

It is evident that the objects in the world of *Behind the Scenes* work as pluralizers of historical knowledge and add to the dynamics of narration and the elaboration of cultural heritage. They do this both on the level of the narration and in the world that is depicted in the novel. They are not just material but cultural, selected objects that are tied up in various and changing networks of meaning and interpretation. As Greenblatt (1990:161) has pointed out, “cultural artifacts do not stay still” but “are bound up with personal and institutional conflicts, negotiations and appropriations”.

What the discussion of the cultural heritage within the framework of the novel points at is the necessity of having both private and public, individual and collective representations of the past. These two spheres balance each other and form a fruitful dialectic that keep in flux the

values and meanings attached to the heritage. Another factor that works to maintain the heritage in balance is the combination of the tangible and the intangible, the spiritual heritage. Objects can be sensed, interpreted and 'known' in a variety of ways but for all this to be mediated and communicated, some form of narrativizing is needed. Ruby constructs her own heritage narrative(s) often through relying on objects and their power of validating her narrative. She moves between the tangible that has been preserved and the imaginative re-creation: she uses what has come down to her and uses her right to build representations of her own. Eventually, she uses words to make her world make sense.

From the point of view of material culture studies, what is apparent in the novel is the 'power of the real person': we gain insight into the meaning of material culture to its user (Moore 1997:136). In the novel, Ruby-the-narrator works as a key to the interpretation of primary evidence: material objects of the past, the present and the future. The wealth of material culture present in the novel could be interpreted in limitlessly different ways but the account given by Ruby is her attempt to make her surroundings meaningful, both the private and the public sphere that eventually merge in this (fragmented) heritage narrative. What is characteristic to her heritage narrative is the way she questions the canonical modes of representation of cultural heritage, and to an extent, she is able to subvert these modes. At times this does not succeed, however, and Ruby is left feeling alienated despite her attempts to relate to the public notions of presenting heritage.

The critical intervention provides a tool for exploring this complex issue, presenting one possible way of using the conventional collective modes to communicate historical meaning with a highly personal taste to it. Apart from being an intriguing experiment, the intervention is prone to raise further questions, rather than give an answer to the issue uniting the individual and collective past in such a way that it would consist of several distinct voices, even to some extent contradictory ones, but which together would produce a 'mélange'. Nonetheless, the new questions that

emerge can be considered crucial in further exploration the dynamics of communicating heritage. Pondering over these questions may take us further on the road to understanding.

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