Contents
Images...............................................................................................................5
Abstract .............................................................................................................8
Declaration.......................................................................................................9
Copyright .........................................................................................................9
Acknowledgements..........................................................................................10
Preface...............................................................................................................11
Conventions....................................................................................................13
Introduction.....................................................................................................15
  Public history and community tapestry ......................................................17
  The Bayeux Tapestry and community tapestry ..........................................22
  The tapestries and the structure of the thesis .............................................30
A note on sources............................................................................................36
  The tapestries..............................................................................................36
  The supporting narratives ..........................................................................37
  The oral histories.......................................................................................38

1: Inclusive and Accessible History ...............................................................41
Introduction .....................................................................................................41
Inclusive history?.............................................................................................43
  Authorship and authority ..........................................................................47
  Inclusivity circumscribed ..........................................................................51
Accessible history...........................................................................................61
  Image-led ....................................................................................................62
  Emotion and nostalgia ..............................................................................65
  Pictures and words ....................................................................................71
  Embroidery..................................................................................................75
Conclusions.....................................................................................................79
2: History and Genealogy ................................................................. 83
   Introduction ..................................................................................... 83
   Stitchers’ voices and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry ....................... 84
   Personalised history and identity ...................................................... 91
   Beyond personal identity ................................................................. 101
   Conclusions .................................................................................... 113

3: Towards a Critical Public History ................................................. 116
   Introduction ..................................................................................... 116
   Quaker story-telling ....................................................................... 117
   Constructive conflict ...................................................................... 124
   Dramatised dissent ......................................................................... 134
   The individual and history ............................................................... 141
   Conclusions .................................................................................... 149

4: Embroidery, History and Female Agency ..................................... 152
   Introduction ..................................................................................... 152
   The Last Invasion Tapestry and embroidery discourse .................... 153
   The Fishguard narrative and female agency .................................... 168
   Comparative depictions of women in the tapestries ........................ 175
   Historicity ....................................................................................... 185
   Conclusions .................................................................................... 189

5: The Everyday and the Heroic ........................................................ 192
   Introduction ..................................................................................... 192
   The Quaker Tapestry and everyday life .......................................... 193
   The Scottish nation, its diaspora and the settlement narrative .......... 199
   Reconfiguring battle narrative ....................................................... 212
   Humour and heroism .................................................................... 219
   Warfare and everyday life ............................................................... 232
   Conclusions .................................................................................... 240

CONCLUSION: Public History in the Making .................................... 242
History and affective engagement................................. 242
Pastness, making and everydayness.................................. 244
Identity, agency and the viewer ....................................... 247

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................. 252
APPENDIX A .................................................................. 275
APPENDIX B .................................................................. 289
APPENDIX C .................................................................. 294

Word count: 83,936
Images
1.1 Draft design for Charles Rennie Mackintosh panel ................. 52
1.2 Charles Rennie Mackintosh (GTS 116) ................................ 52
1.3 The Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (GTS 146) ............................. 52
1.4 Scotland and the Drive for Empire (GTS 77) ......................... 56
1.5 Scotland in Africa (GTS 100) ............................................ 56
1.6 The Hastings Embroidery.................................................. 58
1.7 Scots in North America (GTS 104) .................................... 58
1.8 Composite image (GTS) .................................................... 68
2.1 Bendigo Gold Rush, Australia (SDT AU19) ......................... 93
2.2 Gabriel’s Gully, New Zealand (SDT NZ06) .......................... 93
2.3 New Bride, Pakistan (SDT PK03) ...................................... 102
2.4 Indian Wedding: Bride, India (SDT IN19) ........................... 102
2.5 Rutherford Collies, Australia (SDT AU17) ............................ 109
2.6 Caithness Settlers, Argentina (SDT AR02) .......................... 109
3.1 Peace Embassies (QT F16) ............................................... 127
3.2 Recent version of ‘The Two Mules’ .................................... 127
3.3 George Fox’s Convincement (QT A1) ................................ 136
3.4 George Fox in Derby Gaol (QT F1) .................................... 136
3.5 Firbank Fell: George Fox Preaching (QT B1) ....................... 137
3.6 George Fox at Ulverston: Healing (QT E1) ......................... 137
3.7 Oaths (QT A9) ............................................................. 140
4.1 Jemima with the apprehended French soldiers (LIT) ............ 171
4.2 Women march around Bigney Hill (LIT) ......................... 171
4.3 Observing the red-cloaked figures at Bigney (LIT) ............... 171
4.4 Quaker Simplicity (QT D2) ............................................. 177
4.5 The Prince stays at Balhaldie House in Dunblane (PT 39) .......... 177
4.6 Composite image (GTS) .......................................................... 179
4.7 Men and women observers wearing hats (LIT) ......................... 181
4.8 Handover of the surrender note (LIT) ....................................... 181
4.9 The First Reform Act (GTS 89) ................................................. 184
4.10 Parliament of the Ancestors (GTS 156a) ................................. 184
4.11 The Scottish Parliament Reconvenes (GTS 155) ..................... 184
5.1 Publishers of Truth (QT B4) ...................................................... 197
5.2 Innocent Trades (QT D5) .......................................................... 197
5.3 Composite image (SDT) ............................................................ 202
5.4 Buralda & Dunbar Warren, Australia (SDT AU25) ...................... 202
5.5 Spinning Tales, New Zealand (SDT NZ05B) ............................. 202
5.6 Flora MacDonald, United States (SDT US10) ........................... 202
5.7 William McIntosh, United States (SDT US12) .......................... 205
5.8 Merrymeeting Bay, United States (SDT US03) ........................... 205
5.9 We Are All Related, United States (SDT US11) ....................... 205
5.10 John Ross, United States (SDT US13) .................................... 205
5.11 The District of Maine, United States (SDT US05) ..................... 205
5.12 Tents and Tipis (GTS 6) ........................................................... 209
5.13 Glenrothes (GTS 145) .............................................................. 209
5.14 Irish Immigration after the Famine (GTS 98) ............................ 209
5.15 The local people attack the French (LIT) ............................... 213
5.16 An encounter between officers (LIT) ...................................... 213
5.17 George Fox at Ulverston: healing (QT E1) ............................... 217
5.18 Eugène Delacroix: July 28: Liberty Leading the People .......... 217
5.19 Inebriated French soldiers (LIT) ............................................. 222
5.20 The Prince’s Standard is Raised (PT 25) ................................. 222
5.21 Sir John Cope arrives at Berwick (PT 95) ............................... 228
5.22 ‘A Race from Prestonpans to Berwick’: satirical cartoon .......... 228
5.23 Redcoats Turn and Flee (PT 80) .............................................. 230
5.24 Dragoons Flee towards Birsie Brae (PT 82) ............................... 230
5.25 The Jacobite Rising of 1715 (GTS 58) ....................................... 230
5.26 Colonel Gardiner Makes a Last Stand (PT 84) ............................. 231
5.27 Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* .................. 231
5.28 Bannockburn (GTS 30) .............................................................. 231
5.29 The Jacobite Rising of 1745 (GTS 60) ........................................ 233
5.30 The 1914-18 War (GTS 118) ..................................................... 238
5.31 The Second World War (GTS 131) ............................................. 238
5.32 The Clydebank Blitz (GTS 132) ................................................ 238
5.33 D-Day, 1944 (GTS 134) ............................................................. 238
Abstract

This thesis moves beyond scholarly critiques that interpret public history – the history consumed and produced outside the academy – according to academic method, to examine the utility and relevance of history in society. It is a detailed excavation of a particular public history practice – largescale historical community tapestry making – through the visual evidence of the tapestries themselves, and in-depth oral histories.

Community tapestry projects have received little attention except as a footnote in reception of the Bayeux Tapestry. Predominantly though not exclusively undertaken by women, these projects take inspiration from the Bayeux Tapestry’s form, but use it to bring to public notice a variety of different, lesser known histories. The thesis investigates how ideas informing ‘history from below,’ especially perspectives associated with women’s history and minority history, inform this lay history practice. It argues that the medium of embroidery facilitates a re-appropriation of these ideas in new and distinctive ways, as a function of embroidery’s strong identity as a female craft.

Using particular tapestry exemplars to drive discussion, analysis moves from situating community tapestry in relation to debates concerned with public history’s inclusive potential, to proposing new models for understanding its material and associative specificities. It demonstrates the strength of popular forms as a means of engaging a lay public where academic history fails. In particular, it elucidates community tapestry’s capacity for promoting reflection as well as emotion in viewers. It traces the variety of forms in which female agency is expressed through the tapestries at the level of image and narrative, and in the multiple inter-related ways in which women’s status as producers of history are enacted. Building on this, it draws on everyday life theory to decipher presentational strategies that destabilise heroic narratives and refocus attention on ordinary experiences of men and women, and the material detail of daily life.

Establishing community tapestry’s place as an important lay history-making practice thus offers to reinvigorate both the practice of public history and our understanding of its workings, by providing a feminised corrective to other histories in circulation.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and / or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and she has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, design, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and / or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DoculInfo.aspx?DocID=24420), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/regulations/) and in the University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

The research for this thesis would not have been possible without the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which funded the project.

Nor would it have been possible without the participation of the interviewees who agreed to tell me about their experience of taking part in community tapestry projects across the country. To these people, who took time to answer my questions and provided rich and thought-provoking source material, I am deeply grateful.

Many thanks to Julie-Marie Strange and David Matthews for their pragmatism and for reassuring that eventually all would come together; also to Cordelia Warr for her valuable perspectives, and for Gale Owen-Crocker for awakening my interest in the Bayeux Tapestry.

To Chris Baty, thank you for listening on the phone, and repeatedly reiterating faith in the project. I miss your words of wisdom, kindness and loyalty. This PhD is dedicated to your memory.

To the Crafty Group members, thank you for being staunch allies during my years in Manchester, and for undertaking the important craft work which I too plan to develop a facility for in future!

And thank you especially to Stuart: for willingly enlisting in the project of support and succour that partnering a PhD student involves; for listening when I could be persuaded to talk, for talking about the project to all who were prepared to listen, and particularly, for being there during the Devon months. I will be forever grateful.
Preface

The tension between history produced by the academy, often seen as too specialist to be publicly relevant, and lay history, often dismissed for lack of rigour, informs the choices faced by the academic publisher in reconciling scholarly standards with the desire to produce accessible books that appeal to a broader public.

Before I began my PhD, I published academic books across arts and humanities subjects at University of Exeter Press, with particular responsibility for developing the Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies series. In 2008 I began a part-time MA in medieval studies in order to develop my subject knowledge. This led to study of the Bayeux Tapestry with Gale Owen-Crocker and fascination with the Victorian replica, created by embroiderers in Leek in 1885-86 under the supervision of Elizabeth Wardle, which became the subject of my MA dissertation. I also became aware of a significant number of modern, largescale embroidered histories of the British Isles which take their cue from the Bayeux Tapestry but tackle different subject matter. This is a form of history-making in society to which little attention had been paid, owing in part to its identity as female craft, convincing me it offered a valuable untapped resource for interrogating the boundaries between academic and public history, and close study of lay history-making. Its distinctive narrative form rekindled in me, not facility with a needle, but the narrative interests of my earlier English and American literature degree at Warwick University (1988-91).

Much has changed since I opened the envelope notifying me of funding in early 2012. It was before the Olympics opening ceremony of summer 2012 offered viewers an idiosyncratic example of inclusive British history. It was before Scottish voters rejected Scottish nationalism by a slim margin in the 2014 independence referendum, and British voters rejected European Union membership by a slimmer margin still in the referendum of 2016. One of the questions this thesis eventually evolved to deal with is the relationship between stories concerned with nation and the diverse groups these stories claim to serve.

I also chose my PhD subject far in advance of the announcement in January 2018 that the Bayeux Tapestry is expected to grace British shores. The breaking news led to a piece to mike on Radio 4’s World at One in which, billed as a narrative embroidery specialist, I gave a step-by-step narration of the Bayeux Tapestry’s mise en scène. This new focus of interest has led me to begin to explore ways in which the new tapestries of the British Isles might be used to shed light in imaginative ways on how we understand the Bayeux Tapestry’s changing significance. Such a project would have quite a different audience to this thesis, and may be more suitable for TV treatment. I
have discussed this briefly with one of my interviewees, Uzma Mir Young, in her role as a TV producer, and hope to pursue the idea further in coming months. The Bayeux Tapestry is also the subject of a book which I co-edited with Gale Owen-Crocker, *Making Sense of the Bayeux Tapestry: Readings and Reworkings* (Manchester: MUP, 2016) and for which I contributed a chapter and wrote the introduction while working on the PhD.

During the final year of my thesis I have started working for I.B.Tauris, a publisher known for the diversity of its list, and with distinct trade and academic arms to its publishing. I like to see this as an opportunity to continue the conversation as regards how best to sustain lay interest in history.
Conventions

Referring to the tapestries
I almost always refer to the five main tapestries featured in the thesis by their full names, but occasionally I use acronyms, which are listed below:

The Great Tapestry of Scotland  GTS
The Last Invasion Tapestry  LIT
The Prestonpans Tapestry  PT
The Quaker Tapestry  QT
The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry  SDT

The Last Invasion Tapestry’s full name is technically the Last Invasion Tapestry at Fishguard, which I have shortened for convenience. I also refer occasionally to the Fishguard stitchers and the Fishguard project, since the tapestry is closely associated with its locale.

Referring to individual panels
The Last Invasion Tapestry is a continuous strip. The other tapestries consist of individual self-contained panels which have been given individual alphanumeric (or numeric) identifiers by the teams who produced them. In the main text, rather than use the alphanumeric identifiers (which are meaningless to the reader), panels are identified by the descriptive titles/explanatory captions appended to the embroidered panels and used in the guidebook facsimiles, or abbreviated versions thereof.

The alphanumeric identifiers are included in the captions. They will be useful if the reader wishes to consult the associated online or guidebook facsimile, details of which are provided below. For panels discussed in the thesis but not illustrated, I include identifiers in the footnotes, unless the mention is very fleeting. Note that there is no facsimile for the Last Invasion Tapestry (neither online nor in guidebook form).

Guidebook facsimiles

PT  Andrew Crummy et al., *The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745* (Prestonpans: Prestoungrange University Press/Burke’s Peerage and Gentry, 2010)
QT  *Pictorial Guide to the Quaker Tapestry* (Kendal: Quaker Tapestry Scheme, 1998)
Website facsimiles

GTS  http://scotlandstapestry.com/index.php
PT   http://www.prestonpanstapestry.org/tapestry/The_Tapestry.aspx
QT   https://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk/museum/tapestry-panels/
SDT  http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/thetapestry
LIT  http://lastinvasiontapestry.co.uk/ (a small selection of images)

Where I cite a specific image in a footnote or caption, rather than cite the associated guidebook repeatedly, I use the relevant tapestry acronym to make it clear at a glance which one I am discussing. When using the alphanumeric references I also include a guidebook page reference if I refer to the SDT. The PT and QT guidebooks substitute panel numbers for page numbers, and panels in the GTS guidebook are easily navigable without page numbers, but the reader with access to the SDT guidebook would struggle to find a particular panel without aid of a page reference.

Interviewees
I refer to the project participants by their first names, and if context does not make it clear, I add the tapestry acronym in parentheses. The first time I mention a participant I give a line of introduction. More information concerning the participants can be found in Appendix B.

Coordinating figures to whom I refer in the thesis (including some I interviewed), are listed in Appendix C.

The Bayeux Tapestry
I have occasionally cited scenes from the Bayeux Tapestry. These are taken from the accordion-fold facsimile reproduction at one-seventh scale: *La Tapisserie de Bayeux: Reproduction intégrale au 1/7e* (Bayeux: Edition ville de Bayeux, 2002), which reproduces the inked numbering on the strip attached to the upper edge of the Bayeux Tapestry itself.
Introduction

This thesis sheds new light on the public history paradigm by making a collaborative form of history-making undertaken predominantly (though not exclusively) by women the focus of study. It moves beyond debates that represent public history – defined here simply as history produced outside the academy – either as democratic history-making or a threat to academic rigour, to examine how it works in practice, and what insights it offers for academic historians. The thesis is an interdisciplinary study, seeking to bring to bear a range of materials and perspectives on public history, and borrowing terms and ideas from across humanities disciplines where relevant. In particular, by focusing study on the community tapestry, a visual-cum-material expression of history, it demonstrates the importance of culture’s material forms in mediating our relation to history, and takes its cue from everyday life studies’ orientation towards a re-grounding of culture in materiality. It reminds us that we live in the material world, as opposed to on the page, and experience through our senses as well as through our imaginative and intellectual faculties.

Community tapestry involves utilising embroidery, a gendered craft identified with the domestic sphere – as Rozsika Parker argued in her ground-breaking study of the cultural construction of embroidery – as a form of public history. The embroidery projects I examine take their cue from the important contribution made by the Bayeux Tapestry to the stock of narratives we characterise as public history, on account of its status as one of a handful of surviving accounts of the Norman Conquest, and the only pictorial one. The modern tapestry projects analysed here emulate the Bayeux Tapestry’s expansive dimensions and historical subject matter; and although they are

---


technically embroideries, they are usually known as tapestries.\(^3\) In this thesis, I use the term ‘embroidery’ when discussing the technique but refer to the genre and its exemplars as ‘community tapestry.’ Community is used to denote the projects’ collaborative aspect, and their identity as independent projects instigated within communities, as opposed to institutionally generated. This sets them apart from the Bayeux Tapestry, which is generally believed to have been commissioned by Bishop Odo, William I’s half-brother.\(^4\)

A community is commonly understood as either a geographically located group, or one with common interests.\(^5\) Such interests can be broadly defined: sociologist Peter Wilmott includes ‘ethnic origin, religion, politics, occupation, leisure pursuits or sexual propensity,’ observing that a community may involve both cultural and territorial common ground.\(^6\) However, the term is problematic. Cultural historian Raymond Williams noted that its connotations are always positive and little interrogated.\(^7\) Scholars customarily point out the strong association between community and nostalgia, and the recurring motif of the community endangered or lost.\(^8\) Recent public discourse distinguishes between the thick and the thin community, the first, relatively homogenous and exclusive, the second with greater levels of diversity and freedom, but less of a sense of solidarity.\(^9\) Detailed examination of particular community tapestries allows me to interrogate how projects express and embody differing ideas of community identity, and the levels of inclusivity (or exclusivity) involved. My principal sources are five tapestries produced between 1981

\(^3\) By analogy with the Bayeux Tapestry; Nicole de Reyniès, ‘Bayeux Tapestry or Bayeux Embroidery? Questions of Terminology,’ in *The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidering the Facts of History*, ed. Pierre Bouet, Brian Levy and François Neveux (Caen, France: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2004), pp.69-76 at pp.75-6 suggests the misnomer arose from lack of specificity in the use of the French term, but continued in preference to embroidery because (woven) tapestry’s connotations of monumentality and prestige were thought more appropriate than embroidery’s domestic associations.

\(^4\) For further discussion see below at fn.52.


and 2015: the Quaker Tapestry, the Last Invasion Tapestry at Fishguard, the Prestonpans Tapestry, the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, with cross reference made to other tapestries that are not the focus of this study where appropriate. I draw on interviews I conducted with these tapestries’ stitchers and coordinators, and supporting narratives pertaining to the tapestries available in the public domain through the web and in other published forms.  

Public history and community tapestry

The concept of ‘public history’ can be traced back to the 1960s. Hilda Kean, who ran the first British MA in Public History from 1996, makes the link with the earlier ‘history from below’ movement inspired by Edward Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963): history produced by and for ordinary people.  

Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, working in the Australian tradition, relate its development to the burgeoning heritage industry in the later twentieth century. The term also acknowledges that history’s academic professionalisation in the mid-nineteenth century, which liberated scholars from the need to engage broad book-buying audiences, resulted in a certain narrowing of perspectives, summed up in the idea of ‘history for its own sake.’ The qualifier ‘public,’ reminds contemporary academic practitioners that history belongs not just to the professional historian, but to a diverse general public. We see evidence of this, for instance, in the multiple ways society deploys history to remember and respond to the world wars and their far-reaching effects. The range of representations includes – but is not limited to – war memorials, Remembrance Day services, museum exhibitions, dramatic, filmic and artistic

---

10 For details of all the community tapestries mentioned in this chapter, see Appendix A, p.275.
responses, and personal testimony from those affected, including soldiers, Holocaust survivors and those who experienced the Blitz, demonstrating that members of the public do not necessarily gain their knowledge from academic sources.

This thesis interprets community tapestry as a form of history from below. One of the ways in which the ethos of history from below has replenished public history’s stock of narratives since the second half of the twentieth century, both in the British Isles and beyond, is by encouraging minority groups to recover and recount their own histories, leading to greater understanding of the way in which different people living in close proximity may inhabit different pasts.¹⁴ This problematises the idea of national identity as a unifying concept. The stories these tapestries tell are lesser known tales – aspects of the past that have been forgotten, or that few people knew of in the first place. Moreover, the people who make these tapestries – by which I mean the stitchers in particular – do not identify as historians. Additionally, the practice of telling history through embroidery is a little known phenomenon and a hitherto untheorised form of public history: for instance it is omitted from Jerome de Groot’s important book on history in popular culture, Consuming History.¹⁵ Community tapestry thus functions as history from below in three ways: first, at the level of the untold tale, second, as unofficial history-maker, and third, as a marginalised form. As we shall see, at times the tapestries struggle to encompass the complexities of diversity.

Postcolonial scholarship, and especially Paul Gilroy’s insightful observation that British history has tended to minimise a difficult imperial past to such an extent that we see black and Asian inhabitants of Britain as ‘alien intruders,’ provides a useful critical framework for this aspect of the thesis.¹⁶

The new interest in women’s history associated with Second Wave feminism has also been a prominent constituent of history from below. The History Workshop movement initiated by the radical historian Raphael Samuel provided a supportive

---

¹⁵ Jerome de Groot, Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ayt-CwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&q=groot+consuming+history&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi5gZ_O9unZAhUFksAKHYcEC5gQ6AEILTAB#v=onepage&q=groot%20consuming%20history&f=false (accessed 13/03/18).
The feminist concept of ‘herstory,’ which seeks to unearth evidence of female perspectives in history, is useful in tracing evidence of female agency in the tapestry projects. Feminism also provided impetus for reappraisal of craft practices traditionally seen as naturally feminine, including Rozsika Parker’s critique of embroidery, *The Subversive Stitch* (1984). The earliest tapestries date from this period. In the light of this, discussion in the thesis moves from establishing community tapestry’s particular credentials within a public history framework in the first three chapters, to reinterpreting it according to feminist and craft-oriented principles in the remaining two chapters. The final chapter deploys elements of an additional critical toolkit, everyday life theory, which offers a fruitful way of accounting for aspects of community tapestry that a public history framework leaves insufficiently explored. The everyday ethic I uncover in community tapestry’s presentational strategies offers a fruitful counterbalance to apparently heroic subject matter, for which we might expect to encounter interpretive strategies that understand the past as concerned primarily with the actions of great men. In this way, everyday life theory helps to bolster my hypothesis that community tapestry is heir to the democratic and inclusive principles established by the history-from-below movement.

Manifestations of history in its public and academic forms often appear to have little in common. Pondering on the uneasy relation between the rarefied scholarship of art historians at the prestigious research centre Villa I Tatti, and the experience of the tourist throng who visit to sample Florence’s heritage, the philosopher John Armstrong suggests, ‘It is not merely that the scholarly route is too long – too meandering and slow a path to enlightenment and fulfilment. It is rather that it has taken off on its

18 *OED Online*, s.v. ‘herstory, n.’ http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/243412?redirectedFrom=herstory (accessed 15/02/18), punning on *his*tory. The word’s initial use is attributed to Robin Morgan (1970). The term was popular among feminists in the 1970s and 1980s and has continuing currency; see for instance Lyse Doucet, *Her Story Made History*, BBC R4, 1-5 January 2018, on the relation between women and democracy.
18 *OED Online*, s.v. ‘herstory, n.’ http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/243412?redirectedFrom=herstory (accessed 15/02/18), punning on *his*tory. The word’s initial use is attributed to Robin Morgan (1970). The term was popular among feminists in the 1970s and 1980s and has continuing currency; see for instance Lyse Doucet, *Her Story Made History*, BBC R4, 1-5 January 2018, on the relation between women and democracy.
20 The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.
own.21 When Armstrong asks the centre’s director, who studies camels’ legs in pictures of the Magi, ‘Why is it good to know that?’ his question is considered in poor taste.22 His point, however, is that as a result, I Tatti functions as a closed circuit, and this kind of self-absorbed study of the past is no longer believed to be productive for societies in the present.23 By contrast, Samuel, one of the great democratisers of history during the second half of the twentieth century, suggested that understanding the ‘imaginative dislocations’ by which historical knowledge is transferred between high-brow and popular, textual and visual learning circuits, provides a route to greater appreciation of history in society.24 I use this idea, together with Ludmilla Jordanova’s persuasive claim that the specificities of particular genres are central to our understanding of public history, as the catalyst for this study.25

One of the ways in which academic history presents a reductive critique of history in its popular forms is by underestimating the complexity of image-based media. For instance, John Tosh has suggested that image-based narratives lack sophistication because, unlike a text-based narrative, they struggle to present more than one perspective or version of events, simultaneously.26 Community tapestry’s status as an image-based form problematises this idea. Close analysis of individual panels and thematic treatments across the tapestry exemplars, in conjunction with the cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s thesis that dominant meanings co-exist with less apparent readings,27 reveals pictorial narrative to be a productive site for deciphering concurrent levels of meaning. As Jerome de Groot observes, academic historians have tended to disregard the role of reading and viewing audiences in co-constructing meaning, and Hall’s critical analysis helps to counterbalance this.28

De Groot’s ideas, particularly his suggestion that history’s popular forms provide lay users with diverse means of ‘seeking to reinsert the body and the emotion

---

22 Ibid., p.159.
23 Ibid., p.162.
28 De Groot, *Consuming History*, pp.5-6.
back into the stories of the past,’ provides a useful frame of reference for exploring another theme of my work: the utility of affective approaches to history. De Groot’s point is that the past, once it is in the past, loses its vitality and requires revivifying if it is to engage audiences. It is a metaphor that also works as a way of understanding qualities academic history is perceived as lacking. Jorma Kalela, the Finnish academic, has envisaged this as the failure of academic historians to give sufficient thought to the potential audiences for particular pieces of work when mapping out their research projects. Dipesh Chakrabarty, writing of the conflict between popular and academic history in India, acknowledges that while historians can bring reasoned argument to the public, there is no guarantee that the public will offer its attention in return. The work of these historians interrogates the intersection between public and academic history without proposing easy answers. How, they ask, should historians make their arguments when people can opt not to listen. It is a productive critical context for delineating what the attractions of community tapestry might be for those for whom history may be of only peripheral interest.

Chakrabarty has noted the shift in public history discourse towards the ascendancy of experiential knowledge as a guide to the past. Studying other people’s perspectives on the past, he recognises, helps us to ‘see the limits to the mode of viewing embodied in the practices of the discipline of history.’ Bain Attwood, the scholar of Australian history, highlights the increasing popularity of a strain of historical writing that mixes ‘the personal and the collective, the historical and the memorial, the intellectual and the affective,’ to argue that the pervasive influence of experience as an evidence base has altered historical practice irrevocably. Although historians see increasing reliance on experiential evidence as a betrayal of the ideal of historical objectivity, there are attendant benefits. With regard to individual history-makers and

audience members, expert witnesses help us to see the limits of our own perspectives, while at the same time encouraging us to engage in acts of imaginative empathy. This too is explored in the thesis. Like the mixed model that Attwood identifies, community tapestry is a version of Jorma Kalela’s ‘shared’ history, drawing on academic and popular forms in different admixtures across the variety of tapestry exemplars explored here. While it has been the inclination of some historians to retain as clear a distinction as possible between academic practice on the one side, and, on the other, regimes such as the heritage industry, popular memory and histories of identity, my argument will be that history in society in its varied manifestations offers useful insights that feed and rejuvenate history in practice.

The Bayeux Tapestry and community tapestry
To choose public history as a critical framework for interrogating community tapestry is to reject other potential interpretive contexts – most obviously those that attempt to understand these projects as part of a broader textile history. Since these are projects specifically conceived as vehicles for commemorating history, and in some instances designed and stitched by those with little knowledge of embroidery and its artistic conventions, the study will focus primarily on how these works function as historical narrative as opposed to deciphering a particular craft context. It is a choice that also acknowledges the role played by the Bayeux Tapestry, the ur-template for the modern tapestries, in contributing to the stock of shared narratives that make up the history of the British Isles. The date of the Battle of Hastings is often referred to as the one date that the British can remember; and Sylvette Lemagnen, formerly curator of the Bayeux Tapestry, has suggested there is greater familiarity with the tapestry among the British public than its French counterpart (outside Normandy). In her study of the continuing significance of the Norman Conquest in British cultural

34 Kalela, Making History, p.75.
35 Constance Howard’s series on twentieth-century embroidery in Great Britain, which ends with the fourth volume: Twentieth-Century Embroidery in Great Britain from 1978 (London: Batsford, 1986), provides a contextualising history up to the inception of the earliest community tapestry projects. Tanya Harrod’s wide-ranging, The Crafts in Britain in the Twentieth Century (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999), places embroidery in its craft context.
37 Pers. comm. Sylvette Lemagnen, 09/06/11.
memory, Siobhan Brownlie argues that the Bayeux Tapestry functions as an important visual mnemonic. The pervasive utilisation of images of the Bayeux Tapestry in classroom, media and merchandising opportunity (from bookmarks, fridge magnets and t-shirts to DIY tapestry kits) helps to keep memory of the Norman Conquest in circulation. To interpret the modern genre’s significance through a public history framework is to understand it as functioning in similar ways to the Bayeux Tapestry – as bringing to light new stories and contributing new visual referents that replenish the stock of shared stories on which we draw. The decision to use the British Isles to geographically delimit the field from which exemplars are drawn was taken because of the particular significance of the narrative of Norman invasion to British history, although Bayeux Tapestry-inspired community tapestries exist elsewhere in the world.

The Bayeux Tapestry is often used as a legitimation for those initiating community tapestries; and sometimes the relationship goes further. In the case of the Last Invasion and Quaker tapestries, the contemporary work imitates particular aspects of the antecedent’s design and technique; in the case of the Fulford and Alderney Bayeux Finale tapestries, the subject matter relates to the periods immediately before and after the battle of Hastings. In other instances, however, the Bayeux Tapestry is the catalyst, but that is all. The Scottish tapestry designer, Andrew Crummy, commented that he avoided looking at the Bayeux Tapestry until he had finished designing the Prestonpans Tapestry. The Jersey Occupation Tapestry and the Bailiwick of Guernsey Millennium Tapestry also have little in common with Bayeux in terms of style and subject, and make little of the connection. An early guidebook for Jersey’s tapestry touches on the relationship, but a more recent one dispenses with mentioning it, suggesting a desire on the part of its custodians for it to be seen on its

---

40 Pers. comm. Andrew Crummy, 02/08/12; see also Appendix C, p.294.
own terms. Two Guernsey participants claimed their project bore no link to the Bayeux Tapestry at all, although curator Caroline Drake suggests it can be understood as an element within the cultural context on which the Guernsey Tapestry draws. Discussion in the thesis acknowledges links between the modern genre and its medieval ancestor at a number of points, however it demonstrates that this is a looser relationship than scholars of the Bayeux Tapestry have suggested. Notably, not one of the stitchers raised the subject of the Bayeux Tapestry during interview. When prompted, some showed only passing familiarity with the medieval forebear and were vague about its role in shaping projects, others showed a level of resistance to its influence, focusing instead on ways in which the modern projects distinguish themselves from their antecedent.

Rather, then, than interpreting them as deferential emulations of the Bayeux Tapestry, the community tapestries of the British Isles can be understood as providing alternatives that move beyond it. In the nineteenth century, the British compensated for the French authorities’ refusal to lend the Bayeux Tapestry – a medieval artefact but an eighteenth-century discovery – by producing replicas. Of particular note are Charles Stothard’s hand-drawn copy for the Society of Antiquaries (1819), Cundall & Co.’s photographic reproduction for the South Kensington Museum (1872) and the Leek embroidered copy supervised by Elizabeth Wardle (1885-1886), which became a touring exhibit. In the second half of the twentieth century, the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings in 1966 marked the emergence of a different approach to the difficulties presented by the Bayeux Tapestry’s remote Normandy locale. Battle Abbey, on the alleged site of the Battle of Hastings, showed the Leek embroidered replica;

---


42 Pers. comm. Joan Ozanne (historical researcher for the tapestry); Terry Morgan (embroiderer); Caroline Drake (curator) 19/08/13. The Channel Islands, which lie off the Normandy coast, are the remnants of the medieval Duchy of Normandy; the cultural links are clear. Guernsey’s resistance may have more to do with its relation to its larger neighbour, Jersey, and desire to avoid the Guernsey project appearing to emulate the earlier Jersey project.


however, a newly completed tapestry, the Hastings Embroidery, commemorating British history since the battle of Hastings, went on display in the Triodome, a dedicated exhibition space on Hastings Pier. During the same period, initial plans were laid for an Overlord Embroidery, a hanging commemorating the Allied invasion of mainland Europe in World War II, which was completed in 1972.45 These two projects were paid commissions undertaken by professional embroiders of the Royal School of Needlework as opposed to productions generated from within a particular community; nevertheless, in acknowledging the influence of the Bayeux Tapestry while at the same time adopting stylistic and narrative difference, these tapestries pointed the way for later community-based projects.46 Difference distinguishes the British tapestries from counterparts in Normandy, which Sylvette Lemagnen has characterised as overly deferential to their model compared to the more detached level of intertextuality exhibited by the British exemplars.47

The Hastings and Overlord embroideries can be seen as history presented as unifying national story. For instance, Lord Dulverton talked in terms of the Overlord Embroidery commemorating the ‘national effort’ that preceded the successful Normandy invasion.48 By the time of the appearance in the 1980s of the first true community tapestry projects using volunteer embroiderers, interpretations of British history as a unified narrative were less dominant. The stories they tell have more in common with ‘four nations’ interpretations of history, a term proposed by Hugh Kearney in his The British Isles: A History of Four Nations (1989).49 They remind the viewer of disruptive incursions since the Norman Conquest: a Stuart challenge to the throne originating in Scotland (the Prestonpans Tapestry); a short-lived eighteenth-century invasion of the British Isles on the Welsh coast (the Last Invasion Tapestry at Fishguard); and a reminder that parts of the British Isles suffered under German occupation during World War II (Jersey’s Occupation Tapestry). The Irish Ros Tapestry,
on the other hand, celebrates Anglo-Norman visitors who came at the inhabitants’ invitation. Raphael Samuel’s suggestion that when considered from a four nations perspective, 1066 begins to have less resonance, is apposite here.50 Other alternative histories involve a dissenting religion (the Quaker Tapestry), a history of Scotland that treats the subject as narrative entity in its own right, as opposed to as a subordinate part of British history (the Great Tapestry of Scotland), and histories of the British overseas (the New World Tapestry and the Scottish Diaspora tapestries). No single story makes a claim to encompass a history of the whole of the British Isles. The emphasis is on providing new and unexpected perspectives on British history.

There is potential here for interrogating radical currents in history through an apparently traditional form. This brings the tapestries into dialogue with another fruitful context, that of folk art. Sometimes defined as (just) utilitarian or decorative as opposed to being concerned with ‘ideas and imagination’, the varied practices encompassed by folk art are often learned informally or self-taught, take place beyond the reach of academic discourse, and are considered to be ‘of, by and for the people’.51 In the early twenty-first century, artists Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane combed the UK with an anthropological eye to both new and old expressions of folk art, and included crop circles, radical protest banners and the art of tar-barrel rolling, the annual event that takes place at Ottery St Mary in Devon on 5 November, in the resulting archive.52 More recently still, in 2014, a largescale exhibition at Tate Britain brought to wider notice what Jonathan Jones, writing in the Guardian, described as ‘a small taste of the truth that museums and stately homes hide’.53

In her article on well-dressing, one of the practices foregrounded by the Tate’s exhibition, and an ancient practice dating back either to the 1300s or the 1600s

51 Jonathan Jones, ‘British Folk Art review – Welcome to the Old Weird Britain,’ The Guardian, 9 June 2014; and Museum of International Folk Art (Santa Fe, New Mexico) website, http://www.internationalfolkart.org/learn/what-is-folk-art.html (accessed 23/10/18), which includes a list of the common characteristics of folk art.
depending on which origin myth one follows, Rosemary Shirley touches on the waning of this tradition during the 1940s, and then its rejuvenation after World War II, in the era of the Festival of Britain.\footnote{Rosemary Shirley, ‘Festive Landscapes: The Contemporary Practice of Well-Dressing in Tissington,’ \textit{Landscape Research}, 42:6 (2017), 650-62 at 652-3.} In common with the ‘valorisation’ of folk art that took place in the post-war decades, community tapestry’s preoccupation with narrating the British Isles reflects the upsurge in interest in asserting our links with the past, and increasingly, using it as a means of expressing more complex and varied identities. However, unlike well-dressing and other traditional folk art forms, tapestries are an ‘invented tradition’, drawing inspiration from the old form of the Bayeux Tapestry, but appearing for the first time only in the twentieth century.\footnote{The idea of the invented tradition comes from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), \textit{The Invention of Tradition}, New ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; orig. ed. 1983).}

Much folk art is also performative (dance, song, poetry), short-lived, and may be linked to the seasonal calendar, as is the case with well-dressing. Community tapestry, on the other hand, is a long-winded production and those involved understand its significance in terms that are quite different from more ephemeral, cyclical practices. One stitcher at Fishguard expressed the hope that the Last Invasion Tapestry would one day be as well-known as the Bayeux Tapestry; another, that it would last as long.\footnote{Stitchers speaking on Barrie Thomas, \textit{The Making of the Tapestry}, DVD (self-published, 2007).} Thus while there are some useful analogies owing to the shared identity of folk art and public history as vernacular practices, this study is more interested in using the tapestries as a source of insight for the practice of public history in the field. On the whole, therefore, I have used exemplars from other public history projects as a comparative framework, as opposed to drawing on folk art.

The common identity of the Bayeux Tapestry and modern community tapestry as public history provides the enabling structure. While the Bayeux Tapestry as touchstone and comparator enriches my narrative, the modern tapestries signify more than just its hold on us. They have something to say about how history is regarded and practiced in this country today, and the roles it inhabits. Their variety, and the issues they raise with regard to diversity and inclusivity, reflect historic and present-day tensions between different perspectives among those who inhabit the British Isles.

One of the things we lack certainty about with regard to the Bayeux Tapestry is its provenance. Scholars have deployed a variety of evidence, including textual and
stylistic markers from the tapestry itself, to construct elaborate theories concerning its patron and production. A modern embroiderer looking at the Bayeux Tapestry may notice the absence of the names of its embroiderers. Grayson Perry’s curation of the British Museum’s exhibition ‘The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman’ highlighted the anonymous status of the skilled craft worker throughout much of history, which he contrasted with the modern celebrity status that attaches to artists. The anonymity of the Bayeux Tapestry’s stitchers was thrown into relief by the Leek replica, for which a blue strip was appended below the tapestry to provide space for each embroiderer to include her name. The modern projects also respond to this issue. During the course of the thesis I will discuss the variety of solutions that have been developed, both within and without the hangings, to deal with the question of how project participants’ involvement is acknowledged.

The issue of the (chiefly) female workforce’s agency with regard to history-making through community tapestry can be extended to encompass questions of women’s varied degrees of agency in the past. When the Leek replica was created, it was popularly believed that William I’s wife Matilda and her ladies had embroidered the Bayeux Tapestry, although the idea was increasingly discredited by male historians. These men, custodians of an emerging professionalised history

---

57 Scholarly consensus names Bishop Odo, King William’s half-brother, as the patron of the textile and the English abbey of St Augustine’s, Canterbury as the locus of its production. For a resumé, see Brown, ‘Origin and Patronage,’ in The Bayeux Tapestry: Bayeux, Médiathèque Municipale: MS.1, pp.lxx-lxxi. However, Elizabeth Carson Pastor and Stephen D. White, The Bayeux Tapestry and its Contexts: A Reassessment (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014) seek to overturn parts of this theory. The authors suggest that Odo-as-patron is a nineteenth-century confection to which subsequent scholars have been content to add, and disputes St Augustine’s need for an external patron, suggesting instead that it was an internally initiated project under Abbot Scolland.


59 Henderson, ‘Through Victorian Eyes: Re-assessing Elizabeth Wardle’s Replica,’ pp.157-8. Brenda King has pointed out that it was not unusual for embroiders to include signatures on their work at this period (King, ‘Embroidering the Truth or Putting the Record Straight about the Leek Embroidery Society,’ paper given at Manchester Dress and Textile Discussion Group, Manchester University, 10/03/16).

characterised as rational, objective and masculine, were also at pains to emphasise the Bayeux Tapestry’s status as reliable documentary evidence and downgrade its identity as embroidery. But as Rosemary Mitchell has argued, for female history-writers, the popular association between Matilda and the Bayeux Tapestry had particular resonance because it simultaneously cast Matilda as a feminine, embroidering woman, and a recorder of history, making of her a role model for female history writing, and legitimising the female authoring of history. In particular she cites the historian of embroidery, Elizabeth Stone, on the tapestry:

It is worthy of remark, that many of the turbulent spirits who then made earth echo with their fame would have been literally and altogether as though they never had been – for historians make little or no mention of them – were it not for the lasting monument raised to them in this tapestry by woman’s industry and skill.

Here Stone implicitly contrasts the destructive power associated with ‘turbulent,’ combative males, with constructive female power. There is a suggestion that what we remember of historical deeds is more important than the deeds themselves. Conceptually, the historian (including the embroidering historian) is thus endowed with greater agency than history’s protagonists: the true ‘maker’ of history becomes the embroiderer as opposed to the heroes she embroiders. Mitchell’s article thus casts embroidery in Victorian society in a more positive light than the more confining picture presented by Rozsika Parker, and provides an interesting counterbalance.

Andrew Crummy et al. (Prestonpans: Prestoungrange University Press/Burke’s Peerage and Gentry, 2010), pp.vii-x at p.vii.


exchange with regard to the Bayeux Tapestry’s intended loan to Britain. A female commentator pointed out that although she had heard someone in government comment on the lack of women in the Bayeux Tapestry, in fact ‘There is a woman in every stitch because it was stitched by women!’ It is significant, I think, that a comment concerning the tapestry’s paucity of women and disregarding female effort, is presented as emanating from our predominantly male halls of political power. Both modern and Victorian observations offer up useful insights into the ways in which the embroiderers insert themselves into the narrative when they produce modern community tapestries.

The tapestries and the structure of the thesis
I have chosen to focus the body of the thesis on five particular tapestries. This allows the study to encompass a reasonable range of exemplars from the genre at the same time as facilitating close analysis of imagery, and detailed engagement with the associated oral histories. It anchors the arguments of the thesis in a way that a broader survey would not. Where brief reference to exemplars from beyond the study sample enriches discussion of a specific point, I have made use of them. Appendix A (p.275) provides a complete list of the tapestries cited in the thesis, many of which are named in this introduction, and presents them in a standardised format to allow easy comparison of features such as subject matter, dimensions, dates and methods of production. I note any particular debates arising, and indicate where there is evidence that one tapestry influenced the initiation of another. Appendix A thus circumvents the need to interrupt the flow of argument with potted biographies of tapestries as they are introduced, and works as a single source of information for the reader to consult in relation to a particular tapestry. The geographical term British Isles, which refers to the United Kingdom, Ireland, and surrounding smaller islands including the Channel Islands, is used to designate the body of tapestries cited in the thesis, as opposed to Great Britain or the United Kingdom, owing to inclusion of tapestries based in the Republic of Ireland and the Channel Islands.

---

65 Maria McErlane, Broadcasting House, BBC R4, 21/01/18.
66 In fact there are three women in the main register of the Bayeux Tapestry and three more among the naked figures of the margins.
The five tapestries of which detailed study is made are the Quaker Tapestry (conceived 1981, completed 1996); the Last Invasion Tapestry (begun 1993, completed 1997); the Prestonpans Tapestry (begun 2009, completed June 2010); the Great Tapestry of Scotland (conceived November 2010, first stitches September 2012, unveiled September 2013); and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry (begun 2012, 167 panels complete May 2014, 305 panels on display November 2015). The five tapestries thus include both early exemplars and more recent projects. The decision was made to include three Scottish exemplars because they have a common designer, and elements of their respective design and organisation appear to have evolved across the three productions, adding an extra dimension to comparative analysis. Other ways of differentiating the tapestries are also illuminating. The two early tapestries were initiated by women; the three later Scottish tapestries, by men. The Last Invasion and Prestonpans tapestries and the Great Tapestry of Scotland follow chronological treatments of history, whereas the Quaker and Scottish Diaspora tapestries involve thematically structured subject matter. The chronological tapestries subdivide further into narratives that present a series of contingent events over a short time frame (the Last Invasion and Prestonpans tapestries), and the more expansive approach of the Great Tapestry of Scotland, for which the narrative involves events occurring across a much longer timeframe.

The status of the individual tapestries as one-off community projects arising in particular contexts is reflected in the way they are funded. Broadly this falls into three categories: sponsorship, philanthropy and grants. The Quaker Tapestry stands somewhat apart from the other four projects, in having been entirely financed from the funds of the Religious Society of Friends (the official title of the Quaker organisation), which set up the Quaker Tapestry Scheme as a separate charity in 1986, once the project gained momentum. The Fishguard project was funded in part by the Arts Council of Wales, but also by the Welsh Development Agency, an executive body

67 The relationship between the three tapestries is not straightforward since two different teams are involved. The Prestonpans and Scottish Diaspora Tapestry are both projects arising from the Prestoungrange Arts Festival. The Great Tapestry of Scotland was the idea of the novelist, Alexander McCall Smith and evolved separately. See also Appendix C.

established in 1976 to promote economic regeneration, and the private sponsor, Stena
Line, which runs ferries from Fishguard to New Ross in Ireland. 69

The establishment of the National Lottery (1994) provides a dividing line
between the initiation of the two older and the three newer tapestries. The
Prestonpans Tapestry was funded by the Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage
Charitable Trust, which had been established by Gordon Prestoungrange, the
tapestry’s initiator, some years earlier, and although the tapestry itself did not receive
a lottery grant, other aspects of the Trust’s vision for regeneration at Prestonpans
through stewardship of the memory of the Battle of Prestonpans have received lottery
funds, such as a programme of schools’ visits and an archaeological survey of the
battle site. 70 Prestoungrange himself is major a benefactor of the project. 71 For the
second project originating at Prestonpans, the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, the team
was able to access generous funding linked to a tourism initiative that branded 2014 as
Scotland’s ‘Year of Homecoming’ in conjunction with the Commonwealth Games, from
Creative Scotland. 72 The Great Tapestry of Scotland benefited from grants from both
Creative Scotland and Historic Scotland, as well as funding from private sponsors,
including its initiator, the novelist Alexander McCall Smith, and from numerous
companies and trusts, thereby achieving a mix of funding that encompasses all three of
the categories outlined above. 73 Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that the
participant-stitchers donate large amounts of time to these projects.

Over the course of the thesis, the distinctions between the five projects provide
useful material for interrogating community tapestry, but do not in themselves suggest
a programme for discussion. Instead, the arc of the thesis moves from situating
community tapestry in relation to particular debates in public history to proposing new
models for understanding its specificities. Each chapter uses different exemplars to
drive discussion. Chapter 1: Inclusive and Accessible History lays the groundwork for

69 Audrey Walker, introduction to The Last Invasion Tapestry: The Story Behind a Community
Project/Tapestri Glaniad Y Ferancod: Y Stori y tu ôl i Gywith Cymunedol, New ed. (Pembrokeshire County
70 Prestoungrange, ‘The Tapestry Background,’ p.viii, and The Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust:
Our Campaign and Our Prospectus for the Nation [Trust prospectus], p.8.
71 ‘Prestoungrange Says Bye Bye to Baron,’ East Lothian Courier, 9 December 2010, reports
Prestoungrange’s ‘investment’ in Prestonpans arts and community projects as totalling about £1 million.
72 Creative Scotland is the public body for the arts that distributes funding from the Scottish
Government and the National Lottery.
the thesis by exploring the character of public history through the twin concepts of inclusivity and accessibility, using the nationally oriented narratives of the Prestonpans Tapestry and the Great Tapestry of Scotland. Questions concerning access to history – with who controls history and who in turn is excluded by it – are at the heart of the idea of public history. History that is academically rigorous but so specialist and abstruse as to speak only to a tiny group of the author’s peers has been charged with elitism and irrelevance by sections of the popular press and those engaged in more accessible forms of history-making. But academic historians themselves have engaged in redrawing the boundaries of history to encompass broader fields of enquiry and more varied methodologies to facilitate the study of groups traditionally marginalised by professional history’s focus on the written record. Chapter 1 uses the work of Raphael Samuel and Dipesh Chakrabarty, scholars who have questioned the boundaries of what we define as history, to unpick the way the themes of inclusivity and accessibility feature in the observations of initiators, and the tapestry narratives and images. This provides a productive means of exploring the way this particular public history practice functions. A key concern is analysing the way tapestry’s pictorial and material qualities imbue the medium with an affective quality that appeals to those who may feel daunted by text-based histories. My hypothesis is that the processes by which makers and viewers engage with history in popular form are more complex and nuanced than has hitherto been acknowledged.

Chapter 2: History and Genealogy develops discussion with regard to community tapestry’s affective properties. It uses the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry panels stitched by interviewees to explore whether the genealogical frame of reference for which stitchers often opt offers a more accommodating model for history-making than the national narratives informing the tapestries considered in Chapter 1. Drawing on Jerome de Groot’s work on popular history and Anne-Marie Kramer’s reception study of the popular TV genealogy series *Who Do You Think You Are?*, I consider on the one hand, the utility of empathy in stimulating imaginative identification with the past, and on the other, the restricted perspective associated with family as a locus for history. My hypothesis is that at its best, a personalised

---

74 In particular, Samuel, ‘Unofficial Knowledge,’ and Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories.’
75 In particular, Jerome de Groot, ‘The Genealogy Boom: Inheritance, Family History and the Popular Historical Imagination,’ in *The Impact of History? Histories at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century,*
frame of reference not only provides audiences with accessible entry-points but also enriches understanding of the past by contributing diversity to its representations.

Chapter 3: Towards a Critical Public History uses the Quaker Tapestry, the history of a dissenting religious group, to challenge the conceptual opposition between rational and emotional responses that is a theme of the two previous chapters. The chapter explores to what extent it is possible for lay history-makers to cultivate critically engaged approaches to history-making. Analysis of stitcher and initiator perspectives in conjunction with central tenets of Liberal Quaker thought provides a productive tool for problematising the scholarly critiques of identity history provided by Chakrabarty and John Tosh.  

Chapters 4 and 5 re-engage with the material context of community tapestry. Chapter 4: Embroidery, History and Female Agency explores how scholarly and popular discourse have undervalued embroidery as a feminine, and by extension, domestic and non-academic pursuit, and the ways in which, alone of the exemplars examined here, the Last Invasion Tapestry engages with this context. The unexpected levels of female agency apparent in the Fishguard narrative facilitate a recalibration of the polite and domestic overtones of embroidery. Furthermore, although the other exemplars discussed in earlier chapters do not foreground female agency as unequivocally, the act of making embroidery public, which all the tapestries share, enacts a similarly important symbolic role, drawing the contemporary embroiderers and their embroideries into public discourse and making embroidery matter. The chapter uses the paradigm of ‘herstory,’ history written from a feminist perspective, and insights from Ludmilla Jordanova’s work on representations of female figures, to investigate the diverse expressions of female agency decipherable through the exemplars.  

Chapter 5: The Everyday and the Heroic proposes that community tapestry, with its simultaneously restrictive and enabling formal qualities, be seen as a


way of adopting an irreverent presentational mode towards the historic subject. With an aesthetic celebrating the mundane materials of everyday life, and a delight in humorous detail and unexpected conjunctions, these domesticated craft narratives of history challenge heroic stories of the past. Drawing on everyday life scholarship, particularly the work of Rosemary Shirley and Naomi Schor, the chapter reasserts community tapestry’s credentials as history from below, and as a feminised, non-idealising perspective on history that provides an important corrective to other forms of public history.78

The thesis thus sheds light on the variety and diversity of public history in Britain through a detailed excavation of a particular public history practice. In the process, it traces the way ideas informing history from below, and its multi-faceted expressions (in the form of women’s history and minority history) continue to inform lay history practice. It argues that the medium of embroidery facilitates a re-appropriation of these ideas in new and distinctive ways, as a function of embroidery’s strong identity as a female craft.

This is important for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrates the strengths of public history as a means of engaging a lay public where academic history has failed, and offers sophisticated lessons with regard to aspects of popular history that academic historians have disregarded. In particular, it demonstrates that popular forms promote reflective as well as affective responses. Moreover, establishing community tapestry’s place within public history practice offers possibilities for reinvigorating both its practice and its scholarship by providing a feminised corrective to other histories in circulation. At the same time, I show that embroidery’s identity as domestically situated female craft is fruitfully complicated by its utilization in public history practice. Recontextualising it as collaborative and public as opposed to private and domestic involves assigning new status to female craft. Finally, as a medium that uses its genteel association with Victorian femininity to adopt a subversive, under-the-radar quality of unassuming intimacy together with the authority of its self-proclaimed link to the Bayeux Tapestry, community tapestry shows female voices commanding attention in unexpected ways.

A note on sources

My sources are the tapestries, the oral histories I took during a set of specially conducted interviews with participants and coordinators between May and September 2014, and a variety of additional material relating to the tapestries, including published guidebooks, DVDs, websites and audio files, generally referred to in the thesis as supporting narratives. For details of the conventions used to refer to the tapestries, the interviewees and other sources, see p.13.

The tapestries

Although they involve words and pictures, the tapestries are understood by participants and members of the general public as image-based cultural productions. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these are composite forms, and that without textual accompaniment the pictures would be hard to decipher. I have been careful to acknowledge text and image working in tandem in specific ways, where relevant to the argument, particularly with regard to the Quaker Tapestry, where text is endowed with greater significance within the text-image unit than in the other tapestries.

With regard to how I use the images, Ludmilla Jordanova’s observation that meanings of texts and images always go beyond authors’ explicit intentions is a useful starting point, the aim of my analysis being to interrogate what she refers to as the implications of particular images, as opposed to distinguishing between conscious and unintended meanings.79 The use made of images is not art historical, rather I use them as an aspect of the evidence I present for suggesting that the tapestry projects can be interpreted as conveyors of particular social and cultural meanings. Historian Peter Burke’s culturally-oriented perspective is helpful here. He suggests we understand images neither as reflecting an unmediated social reality nor as a sign system unrelated to social reality, but as positioned somewhere in between, such that they ‘testify to the stereotyped yet gradually changing ways in which individuals or groups

view the social world, including the world of their imagination.\textsuperscript{80} Similarly Jordanova reminds us that ‘those who offer representations are always selecting and choosing, both consciously and unconsciously, rather than merely reflecting a pre-given world.’\textsuperscript{81} Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘negotiation’ is also a fruitful context for thinking about the effects of images. It positions the viewer as an actively involved meaning-maker rather than a passive consumer of images.\textsuperscript{82} Image interpretation is understood as a complex interplay between the viewer, his or her personal and cultural contexts, the image, its dominant meaning and other potential readings. And Hall distinguishes two further levels of reading – negotiated and oppositional – involving increasing levels of resistance to the dominant or consensus interpretation.\textsuperscript{83} Similarly, Burke argues for a view of different interpretations of the same images as a normal state of affairs rather than for particular interpretations as aberrant. These perspectives situate my own discussions of images.

\textbf{The supporting narratives}

The supporting narratives are useful sources of information for the projects, and help to establish coordinator objectives and coordinator/participant standpoints. However, the top-down approach to their production sometimes results in coordinator viewpoints taking precedence, as discussed with reference to the Prestonpans Tapestry DVD \textit{Stitches for Charlie} in Chapter 2.\textsuperscript{84} Jordanova’s point about the way the medium in which public history is presented acting as a constraint is also relevant. Like her example of the war memorial, the supporting narratives for tapestries are designed to present their subject matter in a positive light, meaning serious critical engagement is generally off limits, although, as I explore in Chapter 3, the Quaker Tapestry publications mitigate this issue to some extent by devoting substantial space to difficulties encountered. Both the internal evidence of tapestry imagery and the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Peter Burke, ‘The Cultural History of Images,’ in \textit{Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence} (London: Reaktion, 2001), pp.178-89 at p.183.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Jordanova, \textit{Sexual Visions}, p.46.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Hall, ‘Encoding, Decoding.’
\item \textsuperscript{83} Hall’s ideas are discussed in Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, \textit{Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture} (Oxford: OUP, 2009) at pp.72-75.
\item \textsuperscript{84} See Eric Robinson, \textit{Stitches for Charlie: How and Why the Prestonpans Tapestry was Created}, DVD (self-published: 2010).
\end{itemize}
perspectives provided by the participants’ oral histories are counterbalances which can be utilised to engage critically with the supporting narratives.

The oral histories
I recorded interviews with eleven female stitchers across four tapestries. Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, with a view to obtaining rich qualitative data. They took place with the embroidered history to which each stitcher had contributed nearby, acting as a visual mnemonic for reminiscence. The demographic of the interviewee group was broadly representative of community tapestry projects as a whole – all female, mostly white (nine out of eleven), mostly from older age groups (only one was in her forties, and several were pensioners) and from within a limited range of socio-economic grades (A, B and C1). It is evident that this is not an activity that appeals to everyone. The most obvious absence is men, and issues concerned with the gendered identity of community tapestry are taken up in Chapter 4. However, the absence of lower social grades was also a feature, suggesting that individuals from some social groups are more likely to feel they have the necessary cultural capital to participate than others, even if, in some cases, they have not attempted embroidery since childhood. Appendix B (see p.289) provides basic information for each stitcher-participant, including their comments on their level of expertise. I also carried out interviews with a limited number of coordinating figures. These are included in Appendix C (see p.294), along with details of other coordinators who are featured in the thesis. However, the focus of the interviews was lay involvement in history-

---

85 The decision was made not to interview Prestonpans Tapestry stitchers because it would overstock the sample with voices of the Scottish tapestries. I interviewed three Quaker Tapestry stitchers, two Last Invasion Tapestry stitchers (together), two Great Tapestry of Scotland stitchers and four Scottish Diaspora Tapestry stitchers (two together). One of the four Scottish Diaspora Tapestry stitchers had in fact previously taken part in the Prestonpans Tapestry, while a Quaker interviewee told me she planned to contribute to a Scottish Diaspora panel.

86 Social grade is a particular occupation-based classification system. Groups A, B and C1 range from higher managerial and professional groups to supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional groups. D and E include skilled and unskilled manual workers and state pensioners. See ‘Social Grade,’ on the National Readership Survey website, http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/ (accessed 02/01/17).

87 Cultural capital is Pierre Bourdieu’s term for ‘The symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action ... By analogy with economic capital, such resources can be invested and accumulated and can be converted into other forms’: John Scott, ed., A Dictionary of Sociology, 4th rev. ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2015), s.v. ‘Cultural capital,’ http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199683581.001.0001/acref-9780199683581-e-4747?rskey=JE8to9&result=5 (accessed 15/02/18).
making: to ascertain why stitcher-participants take part in embroidered history projects and what they gain from the experience.

The use of oral history as a research method is a valuable resource for reconstructing ‘muted’ voices. It emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, as part of a broader project of reinstating the voices of those described as voiceless: groups whose perspectives on the past had hitherto been ignored – which included women. As with any source material, a level of caution is required and I follow the work of Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli in understanding oral texts as expressions of individuated experience, as opposed to data for reconstructing particular events, where the fallibility of memory is an issue. Nor does oral history provide direct, unmediated access to a subject’s interiority: rather, what the narrator says is a co-construction of interviewer and interviewee.

The semi-structured interview format was chosen with these points in mind, in order to afford interviewees opportunity to talk about aspects of their experience that were of particular interest to them with regard to project involvement. They were able to direct the conversation in response to three broad topics – the tapestry as craft, history and communal activity. Questions from me were geared towards encouraging respondents to share thoughts and feelings on participation and reflect on a project’s significance.

Recording the interviews enabled me to listen to each self-narrative repeatedly and elicit subtle indications of attitudes to subjects under discussion. I was able to reflect at leisure on the significance of a modified vocal tone, a particular pause, the oddly constructed sentence, or the point at which a subject struggled to express

---


89 Nor does oral history provide direct, unmediated access to a subject’s interiority: rather, what the narrator says is a co-construction of interviewer and interviewee.

90 See, for instance, Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the Subject,’ at p.94.
herself. Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet suggests we treat a speaker’s words as embedded within a larger, socially-constructed narrative influenced by a range of factors. The narrative can be mined for information regarding how particular norms and expectations operate in practice.\(^91\) Paying careful attention to the value judgements a female narrator makes about her experiences may be particularly rewarding because women’s experience is ‘overdetermined’ by the condition of being a woman.\(^92\)

In the context of this thesis the stitcher-participants’ voices offer a counterbalance to potential biases in the perspectives offered by coordinators, and the dominant position afforded them in published supporting narratives. They are an aid to deciphering potential discrepancies between differences of perspective, which appeared to be more marked where projects were initiated by men but almost entirely stitched by women. They also offer useful insights with regard to the status of homecraft. Perhaps most importantly of all, they ensure that this study remains anchored firmly in deciphering history’s significance to ordinary people.


\(^{92}\) Chanfrault-Duchet, ‘Narrative Structures,’ p.78.
1: Inclusive and Accessible History

Introduction

An important part of public historians’ rationale is claiming to speak both for and to a broad constituency. In this first chapter I use two Scottish tapestries – the Prestonpans Tapestry and the Great Tapestry of Scotland – together with what their initiators have said about them, as a way of introducing basic themes concerned with public history’s democratic aspirations. I use initiator perspectives on these tapestries as a kind of manifesto for community tapestry and dissect their comments with reference to scholarly public history discourse, and by looking at the way these ideas are expressed in the tapestries themselves. This enables me to begin to assemble a picture of how community tapestry operates, and, at the same time, to consider the practical application of public history discourse. Discussion also provides a basis for mapping out the concepts of public history that are of relevance to this thesis, in particular, Raphael Samuel on ‘people’s history,’ Dipesh Chakrabarty on ‘minority history,’ and, striking a more precautionary note, John Tosh on ‘identity history.’ I also make use of Svetlana Boym’s work on nostalgia, and the work of postcolonialists Paul Gilroy and Alan Rice when looking at imagery in particular panels. Finally, I draw on ideas associated with theorists of visual studies, including Rosemary Shirley, together with Rozsika Parker’s work on embroidery, The Subversive Stitch, and Elaine Freedgood’s analysis of understandings of the handmade artefact, in order to establish the
particular characteristics of this material-cultural-cum-historical medium. My hypothesis is that the way in which community tapestry functions as public history is a more nuanced and varied process than some critics have claimed.

The main sections of the chapter interrogate two particular themes. The first of these, an artefact of the upsurge in scholarship associated with minority history in recent years, is the idea that public history plays an important role in appending previously disregarded voices to dominant historical narratives and thereby contributing to a more inclusive history. The initiators position these tapestries as bringing to light such accounts. However, inclusivity by one measure may fail by another, and discussion unpicks the particular difficulties encountered by these two exemplars in encompassing varied perspectives at the same time as maintaining coherence. One of the issues is that each project was instigated by a privileged white male in his sixties (Gordon Prestoungrange in the case of the Prestonpans Tapestry and Alexander McCall Smith in the case of the Great Tapestry of Scotland), the chapter explores how much agency the projects delegate to the largely female workforce.

The second theme of the chapter is the argument that public history should be framed in such a way as to make it accessible to a broad general public. Detractors of public history have presented accessibility and credibility as inversely related in their critiques of the forms taken by popular history. Tosh dismisses popular heritage sites as an adjunct to tourism rather than education, and suggests radio is superior to television because it functions ‘without the distraction of images.’ But to present image-based forms as unsophisticated in their approach is to underestimate the image’s facility for working at a variety of levels, and the active role the viewer may take in deciphering meaning. In the case of the tapestries, material form bestows an additional frame of reference: a particular associative context which requires deciphering. In the light of the complexity uncovered in the course of the first two sections of the chapter, the concluding section proposes that we understand the tapestries to be offering a looser, less-structured form of engagement with history, but

---

98 See Appendix C for biographies.
99 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.11 and p.131.
one that nevertheless offers the opportunity for what the cultural historian Carl Schorske called ‘thinking with history.’

Inclusive history?
Since E.P. Thompson’s path-breaking *The Making of the English Working Class*, and the advent of the idea of history from below, or people’s history – history concerned with common rather than elite experience – historical inclusivity has been explored by scholars from a variety of perspectives. In particular, Samuel’s work with the History Workshop in the 1970s and 1980s fostered the idea and practice of valuable historical study taking place beyond the academy in the community, providing an important impetus for working class history and for history’s potency within the women’s movement. Imaginative minings of the archive and oral history made it increasingly possible to historicise sections of society hitherto considered marginal to dominant historical discourse, and beyond the reach of history-makers. In addition to women’s history, these included the histories of ethnic, race, gender and religious groups, for which the post-colonialist Dipesh Chakrabarty has used the term minority histories – minor designating their position in relation to dominant discourse. He observes that the work they perform expresses ‘the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies.’

---

rather than being the domain of academics, history is ‘a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands,’ is also a useful distillation of the democratic ideal running through these developments.\textsuperscript{103} Others, including Tosh, have been more critical of the democratic potential embodied in delegating authority to particular identity groups, focusing on the constraints involved in what he refers to as identity history (as opposed to minority history), or a group’s ‘stated need for a usable past.’\textsuperscript{104} National identity history is a theme taken up by Stefan Berger, who cites the opening lines of a recent book on Scotland’s history: ‘Scotland’s history is important. It gives us as individuals and as members of Scottish society a vital sense of where we are and how we got here,’ to demonstrate the continuing, and, in his view problematic, allure of ‘national and nationalist storylines’ in the post-Cold War era.\textsuperscript{105} Nevertheless, the title of the Scottish book he cites, \textit{The Manufacture of Scottish History}, signals its authors’ awareness of its status as a self-conscious engagement with how Scottish history is/has been remembered. The title also reminds us that all histories are constructions. Hayden White persuasively argued that all those engaging in historical interpretation – including academics – select and edit the past to suit their arguments.\textsuperscript{106}

It is by enriching the store of historical narratives that history ‘renews and maintains itself,’ according to Chakrabarty.\textsuperscript{107} The two Scottish tapestries at the centre of this chapter, one, the tapestry of a battle, the other, the tapestry of a nation, are positioned by their initiators as overlooked histories deserving to be brought to public attention. We see this expressed variously. Gordon Prestoungrange, speaking for the Prestonpans Tapestry, which commemorates the battle won by the Jacobites before

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{103} Samuel, ‘Unofficial Knowledge.’ Many scholars of public history treat Samuel’s assertion as a foundational tenet, including de Groot, \textit{Consuming History}, p.3; Pedro Ramos Pinto and Bertrand Taithe, ‘Doing History in Public,’ in \textit{The Impact of History?} ed. Pinto and Taithe, pp.1-20 at p.2; and Kean, introduction to \textit{The Public History Reader}, p.xxi.
\textsuperscript{104} Tosh, \textit{Why History Matters}, particularly pp.10-17, quotation from p.12.
\textsuperscript{107} Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ 16.
\end{flushleft}
they lost at Culloden,\textsuperscript{108} positions the tapestry’s narrative as having something distinctly different to the over-familiar story of failure to say. Using as a comparator the expensive new visitor centre opened at Culloden’s battlefield site in 2008, he comments:

In telling the whole story, the significance of the Prince’s campaign to Victory at Prestonpans all too frequently gets lost amidst other details. In Prestonpans it is our particular ambition to ensure that does not happen . . . The Prince’s quite extraordinary campaign leading to his Victory . . . can and should be exemplified in its own right.\textsuperscript{109}

So Prestoungrange’s tactic is to present Prestonpans as a narrative of success in opposition to Culloden’s narrative of defeat, the customary frame of reference for the Jacobite rebellion of 1745.\textsuperscript{110} By focusing on Prince Charles Edward Stuart’s significant achievements and the sense of possibility that victory at Prestonpans opened up, the tapestry departs from the dominant public discourse of failed rebellion and its aftermath, and claims to restore an alternate strand of the narrative. Prestoungrange does not criticise Culloden’s visitor centre for omissions, rather he presents the issue as one of emphasis: resulting in a diminishing and muting of victory at Prestonpans. By contrast, the tapestry ends at the highpoint of the Jacobite campaign, as the troops march on England flushed with success. Culloden is beyond the remit of the tapestry, and so is the Prince’s flight over the sea to Skye, a stock image of popular histories that cast the Prince as tragic hero.\textsuperscript{111}

The explanation of novelist Alexander McCall Smith, instigator of the Great Tapestry of Scotland,\textsuperscript{112} is a little more elliptical:

\textsuperscript{108} Completed 2010. See also Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{109} Prestoungrange, ‘The Tapestry Background,’ p.x.
\textsuperscript{110} For instance the timelines of Scottish history on both the popular encyclopaedia website Wikipedia, ‘Timeline of Scottish History,’ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Scottish_history and the tourist website Scotland.org under ‘History,’ https://www.scotland.org/about-scotland/history-timeline include Culloden but not Prestonpans (accessed 06/12/17).
\textsuperscript{111} L. du Garde Peach, Bonnie Prince Charlie (Loughborough: Ladybird Books, 1975), concludes that the Prince’s ‘adventurous evasions … are amongst the most romantic of episodes in the history of the British Isles,’ p.42. His escape is also immortalised in the lyrics of the Skye Boat Song.
\textsuperscript{112} Completed 2013. See also Appendix A.
After I’d seen the Prestonpans Tapestry I was struck by the effect that it had on me and on others: it’s such a vivid and immediate art form. It then occurred to me that it would be a very good idea to have a tapestry depicting the whole of the history of Scotland.113

The implication is that the Great Tapestry of Scotland fills a gap; that resources providing Scottish history in accessible form are scarce. No further explanation is provided. Use of the empty third-person pronoun, ‘it would be a very good idea,’ lends McCall Smith’s statement the air of objective truth. Charlotte Linde’s work on linguistics and social practice has highlighted the way day-to-day conversation often rests on the shared ‘coherence-system’ of common sense, allowing explicit justifications of particular positions to go unsaid.114 McCall Smith’s assertion rests on the common-sense inference that history is written by the victors, in this case, the neighbouring English, and that Scottish history is ripe for expansive illustration in tapestry because it has been lacking in Scottish treatments. Increasing devolutionary momentum across Britain from the late 1970s and greater scholarly awareness of the distorting effect of Anglocentric British history has encouraged cultural debate regarding the way in which the histories of the three non-English nations have been muted by the dominance of their neighbour, giving rise to a new ‘four nations’ history, a term proposed by Hugh Kearney.115

Alistair Moffat, the historian responsible for the tapestry’s narrative, builds on the preoccupations that underlie McCall Smith’s comment, characterising the project as: ‘a tapestry that distils Scotland’s unique sense of herself, to tell a story only of this nation, the farthest north-west edge of Europe, a place on the edge of beyond.’116 In its preoccupation with identity, his statement of intent echoes the quotation selected

---

by Stefan Berger above (p.44). Moreover, Scotland is positioned in relation to Europe rather than Britain. Note the emphatic inclusion of the word ‘only’ in this context, which seems to work to keep Britain, certainly England, out of the picture. At the same time, the idea of being spatially ‘beyond,’ together with self-conscious repetition of the word ‘edge,’ emphasises geographical marginalisation. Finally, the combination of uniqueness with distance positions Scotland’s Scottishness as elusive and difficult to grasp. Peripherality is thus both symbolic and a function of geography: a suitably slippery and challenging goal for the tapestry’s participants.

For both tapestries, then, the issue is the way aspects of Scottish history have been treated as a minor note within British historical discourse, and the interest lies in restoring balance by reinserting overlooked elements of the narrative. As Chakrabarty makes clear, minority status is primarily a function of lack of power-base as opposed to a matter of numerical inferiority. Minor/minority is thus a term that has been applied not only to Scottish history in relation to Anglocentric British narratives, but to women in history in relation to men, and to the non-European parts of the world attributed subsidiary status in relation to European colonial interests. These too are issues that the tapestries in this thesis can be used to engage with.

Authorship and authority
As the balance of power among history-makers shifts away from historians and towards groups lacking a history, questions of authorship and authority arise. Cultural commentator Roshi Naidoo cautions against heritage industry projects that build in preconceived terms of engagement with a particular minority group prior to consultation with that group, resulting in disgruntled participants: ‘Either it’s all to do with me or it’s nothing to do with me.’ Irritation at a dominant group making assumptions on behalf of a minority group is commonplace in public discourse. See, for instance, the following exchange between MPs Tristram Hunt (Labour, pro-union) and Stewart Hosie (Scottish National Party) during the 2014 Scottish referendum campaign:

Tristram Hunt: all parties are committed . . . once we have the No vote, to make sure that . . . the Scottish people . . . are given their voice . . .

Stewart Hosie: Tristram said Scotland would be given its voice . . . Tristram, Scotland has a voice of its own. It’s about to exercise it with a vote on 18th September, next week.119

In Hosie’s eyes, Hunt’s comment undermines ideas of Scottish autonomy and conceptualises the Scots as mute recipients of a British-endowed voice. There is a balance to be struck here between sensitivity to different interest groups and the essentialism that accompanies the belief that only, for instance, a black historian can write Black history.120 Thomas Holt, the scholar of African-American history, reminds us that knowledge can be ‘learned as well as lived,’121 and in an apposite piece of popular journalism, Hadley Freeman, discussing the acceptability of a cisgender man portraying a transgender woman, writes ‘The issue is not so much who tells the stories but that they are told well.’122

There are various levels of narration in the tapestries. These are Scottish authored tapestries telling Scottish histories, but as the term community tapestry suggests, one of the functions of these collaborative projects is to act as communal expressions, where various kinds of authorship are delegated among participants. This is problematised, however, by the top-down structure of these projects’ modus operandi. Not only were they instigated by successful white males, the processes of production are led by men: illustrator Andrew Crummy designed both, with Arran Johnston and Martin Margulies as historical consultants on the Prestonpans Tapestry,

---

119 World at One, BBC R4, 10/09/14. My italics.
122 Hadley Freeman, ‘Jeffrey Tambor is the Key to Transparent’s Success: Does it Matter that He’s Acting?’ The Guardian, 8 October 2016. (Cisgender denotes a person whose birth sex and gender identity match.)
and Alistair Moffat as historian on the Great Tapestry of Scotland.\textsuperscript{123} Perhaps to counterbalance this, in the process of researching the Prestonpans Tapestry’s narrative, Crummy – an experienced community artist – encouraged stitchers who live along the Highland routes trodden by the troops during the 1745 campaign to draw on: ‘local knowledge and myth that enabled them [the stitchers] to add their own references.’\textsuperscript{124} Some sections of the tapestry thus deploy a form of ‘memory work’: anecdotal history passed down through communities and families, and for which personal relics of material culture may provide useful visual mnemonics.\textsuperscript{125} In this way, the tapestry project works to bring to public notice the peripheral perspectives associated with small but significant undocumented details of privately held versions of Scottish history. The particular value of drawing these communities into the narrative lies in the Highlands’ marginalised role in Scottish history following the retributive destruction it suffered in the wake of the failed rebellion of 1745.\textsuperscript{126}

In addition, each stitcher/stitching group was able to design an individuated signature tag to appear in a specially designated space in the bottom right-hand corner of her panel. This inscribed a further layer of stitcher-specific history within the panels. Some are self-consciously historic choices: the Dunblane panel team’s tag shows a tiny stylised Dunblane Cathedral; the tag of the Halfbarns Schoolhouse Weaving Group depicts the remains of the eighth-century Aberlady Cross.\textsuperscript{127} Others cite personal biography. Meg Porteous memorialises her late husband with a rhododendron in memory of how he loved to grow this flower.\textsuperscript{128} Flowers and animals are popular symbols. Shona McManus describes her tag as a tribute to ‘my brave and loyal little dog JED – which stands for Jacobite Endurance and Dedication. He was as brave as the Prince himself.’\textsuperscript{129} In the citing of the dog’s name there is a convergence between the stitcher’s biography and her interest in Jacobite history. She also comments cryptically that she was brought up with the romance of Bonnie Prince Charlie, but the purpose of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{123} See Appendix C.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Andrew Crummy, ‘Designing the Prestonpans Tapestry,’ in \textit{Prestonpans Tapestry 1745}, pp.210-15 at p.212.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} For discussion of the prominence of memory within historical studies, see Geoffrey Cubitt, \textit{History and Memory} (Manchester: MUP, 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Tom Nairn, \textit{The Break-up of Britain}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: Verso, 1981) describes it as an under-developed double periphery (of Britain and Scotland), pp.111-12.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Stitchers’ explanations cited in panel commentaries accompanying PT 39 and 42.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Stitcher explanation accompanying PT 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Stitcher explanation accompanying PT 53.
\end{itemize}
his campaign was ‘not well told to us.’\footnote{Ibid.} The implication is that she has learnt more about the context of the rebellion as a result of involvement in the tapestry.

Shona’s tag is unusual in the way the personal choice involved in the tag cross-refers to Jacobite history: most do not. Indeed, this layer of autobiographical producer detail sitting alongside the controlling narrative of the tapestry is something new. It is a different type of democratic interaction to the people’s contributions to history envisaged by Thompson, Samuel and Chakrabarty, or Crummy’s stitcher contributions from the Highland routes, where nuanced lived or remembered experience of a particular event shared across the generations ‘expand[s] our vista and make[s] the subject matter of history more representative of society as a whole.’\footnote{Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ 15.} Here, instead, the personal detail and the controlling narrative butt up against one another, providing the tapestry with different types of narrative. The tags do not add to the controlling narrative, but they do provide an additional dimension to the tapestry as an artefact: autobiographical production notes that locate it as part of the contemporary lived history of the stitchers. Thus by enlarging on the tapestry as a history production, they contribute something extra.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland builds on this participatory approach. The identifying tag continues to be important, but provision has been made for participants to contribute to the historic content of each panel in a more formalised, integrated way. To facilitate this, as part of the initial designs prepared on the basis of Alistair Moffat’s panel histories, Crummy included vacant marginal areas. And stitch coordinator Dorie Wilkie’s letter to stitching groups provided further encouragement:

> While you are stitching away, think about your stitched signature or designated tag area that represents you or your group and what you are calling your group. Also think about images relevant to your panels that could be included.\footnote{Quoted from Dorie Wilkie’s letter to the embroiderers, kindly supplied by Sue Whitaker.}

Moffat also emphasised the tapestry’s inclusive agenda: ‘If the tapestry was to speak clearly of Scotland, then it had to tell a story of our people, of all who lived here for all
those who live here now.’ Framing the narrative as a record of ‘how change affected the many,’ as opposed to the history of leaders and elites, he draws attention to a series of generic panels independent of the main timeframe devised by himself and Crummy to be interspersed with the chronological event panels. These images ‘of people working, walking their lives under Scotland’s huge skies,’ involve the everyday lives of ordinary people. They are a method of countering the silence of the archive; especially, he tells us, with regard to women. And he highlights the project’s success in drawing together a community of stitchers from across the nation: ‘Shetland, Lewis, Aberdeenshire and all postcodes south to Galloway and the banks of the Tweed,’ and its status as the biggest community arts project ever undertaken in Scotland. These comments help to establish the project’s democratic potential and position it as heir to the work of Samuel and Thompson: ‘a people’s history of a people,’ and ‘a history of a nation written and made by a thousand people.’

**Inclusivity circumscribed**

Despite the rhetoric, the model of inclusive history established here exhibits signs of strain. Foregrounding the past as it affects ordinary people imparts symbolic ownership to all Scots, but there are tensions between Moffat’s authorial role and the tapestry’s status as democratically produced history. Moffat remained the controlling agent as regards panel subject matter and narrative coherence. So while the marginal imagery was ceded to the stitchers, those aspects of the past available for selection were defined and delimited by Moffat (through the medium of Crummy’s panel design) and are often images suited to providing a decorative accompaniment to the principal subject matter. Crummy’s approach with regard to the Prestonpans Tapestry attributed more agency to the stitcher, since he added entire panels in response to stitchers coming forward along the route and volunteering new material.

134 Ibid., p.xiv.
135 Ibid., p.xiv.
136 Ibid., p.xiv-xv.
137 Moffat, introduction to *Making a Masterpiece*, p.13.
139 See Robinson, *Stitches for Charlie* (DVD) where a Dunblane stitcher comments that Andrew drew a special panel for the six Dunblane stitchers relating to an episode in Dunblane, in addition to their individually assigned panels.
1.1 Draft design for Charles Rennie Mackintosh panel, without marginal images. By kind permission of Sue Whitaker.


1.3 The Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (GTS 146): Jimmie Macgregor’s lyrics appear in two roundels, top-left and third down on the right. The songwriter’s name appears in the partial roundel top-right. © Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘West of Scotland Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers,’ Kilmacolm, Glasgow, Paisley, Fintry, Johnstone.
The Great Tapestry of Scotland’s stitchers’ voices, on the other hand, are both literally and metaphorically relegated to the margins, with Moffat assuming the role of ventriloquist for the story of ‘our people.’ The comments of Sue and Liz, the two Great Tapestry of Scotland interviewees, are illustrative. Sue undertook a lot of research for the borders of the panel commemorating the Glasgow School of Art and the work of artists Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald, but in the end, she and her group were keen to limit the images to small, under-stated decorative motifs in order to avoid overpowering the central design (figs 1.1 and 1.2 show the design with and without margin images). Liz’s influence is rather different, but also relatively low-key in terms of visibility. She was one of the stitchers on the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’ panel and a friend of Jimmie MacGregor, a musician who wrote and recorded a song about the shipbuilders’ work-in led by Jimmy Reid in the early 1970s. Some of the lyrics are inscribed inside the decorative roundels used to represent heavy industrial chain in the margins (fig. 1.3). Liz’s contribution serves as an example of the potential enrichment the stitchers’ memory work brings to the tapestry, whereas Sue’s experience shows existing design and subject matter operating as a more restrictive influence on the history the stitchers added. Despite this, Sue communicated enthusiasm for the research involved in choosing the images, and ownership of the decision-making process, explaining that: ‘Rather than take the actual objects, because we felt . . . it would take away from what is the School of Art . . . [Crummy] took the principles.’

Constraints on participant agency with regard to the Prestonpans Tapestry concern the way in which the pre-ordained choice of narrative endpoint guides the memory work. Questions about the broader significance of the rebellion, especially within Highland communities, fall beyond the scope of the limited time span of the tapestry, and accounts concerned with the deprivations suffered as a result of British retaliation after Culloden are irrelevant. Furthermore, critical reflection on Charles Edward Stuart’s motivation, and the merits of his bid to regain the crowns of the United Kingdom, is closed down by Gordon Prestoungrange’s emphasis on the Prestonpans victory, and on presenting the Prince as an example of single-minded

---

140 Interview with Sue, 1 June 2014. She is referring to the series of black squares in the margins relating to the distinctive Mackintosh clock, a version of which appears bottom-left. A stylised Macdonald flower bud on a long stem also appears on either side. See also Appendix B.
commitment to a goal, although Shona McManus’ comment (p.49) is a tantalising hint of a more sophisticated level of discussion going on beyond the bounds of the tapestry itself.\textsuperscript{141} The findings of a personalised exercise in popular history-making provide an interesting counterpoint to the tapestry project. Gregor Ewing of Falkirk decided to combine his love of walking with a form of re-enactment by re-tracing the route of the Prince’s flight, taking in the monuments and hiding places with which he has become associated. His interactions along the way led him to comment that the strongest feeling people have about the Prince is of the ‘pain and disruption’ visited upon lives as a result of the campaign.\textsuperscript{142} This is not an aspect of the rebellion the Prestonpans Tapestry project can encompass. The tapestry narrative is a minor history by virtue of its overlooked status, but the supporting narratives are not much interested in exploring the ramifications of rebellion, or indeed what the United Kingdom would have looked like if absolutist monarchy had been reinstated, an idea that sits uneasily with minority history understood as an outgrowth of liberal and representative democracies.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland’s minority status is also problematic, for while it functions as such in relation to English majority experience, its instigators appear to wish to position it in the role of a dominant narrative of Scottish experience, ‘speaking for all those who live here now,’ leaving it vulnerable to claims that it fails to acknowledge some of Scotland’s own minority histories. Inclusivity by one measure becomes exclusivity by another. The Finnish social historian Jorma Kalela’s observation that in any society, ‘different people have different pasts,’\textsuperscript{143} underlines why modern polyglot societies may benefit from a more granular approach to making sense of the past than narratives assembled on the basis of national identity can encompass.

Discussing nationalism, Steve Grosby observes that arguments concerning cultural homogeneity and the unifying effects thereof are overstated, with local identities only ever incompletely subsumed, and concludes that the idea of nation is a compromise between the local and the transnational.\textsuperscript{144} The contrast between Grosby’s provisional

\textsuperscript{141} Prestoungrange, ‘The Tapestry Background,’ p.x.
\textsuperscript{142} Gregor Ewing on Saturday Live, BBC R4, 11/05/13; Ewing is author of Charlie, Meg and Me: An Epic 530 Mile Walk Recreating Bonnie Prince Charlie’s Escape After the Disaster of Culloden (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2013). Conversely, Steve Lord, Walking with Charlie: In the Footsteps of the Forty-Five (Witney: Pookus Publications, 2004), retraces the Prince’s route prior to the battle of Prestonpans.
\textsuperscript{143} Kalela, Making History, p.51.
and incomplete conception and Moffat’s vision of an entity that speaks with a reassuringly unified voice, a ‘unique sense of herself,’ lends the latter a nostalgic romanticism. In narrative terms, the trade-off is between coherence, and a lack of specificity with regard to human experience that threatens the visibility of particular groups.

The difficulties of using nation as a unifier can be traced in the way the Great Tapestry of Scotland handles empire and race. Just five panels in the tapestry refer directly to the British Empire, a potential signifier of uneasiness with regard to Scotland’s part in the empire-building project. These are panels on the Glasgow Tobacco Lords, and on Glasgow’s status as the workshop of the empire, on the Scottish in Africa and India respectively, and one entitled ‘Scotland and the Drive for Empire.’ The Tobacco Lords panel depicts giant expensively dressed men on the deck of a ship blown by trade winds; the India panel shows a Sikh in a richly decorated turban; the Glasgow panel is a stylised image of a male worker superimposed on a factory townscape. The two remaining panels juxtapose coloniser and colonised in the same panel, resulting in more problematic conjunctions of imagery. ‘Scotland and the Drive for Empire’ is the only panel to acknowledge empire’s negative aspects explicitly (fig. 1.4). The panel is principally taken up with eight white men and two white women dispersed across the outlines of a map, some on land, some seaborne and doubling as nautical figureheads, leaning forward or reaching out to embrace adventure. One ship carries missionaries, other figures are clearly prospectors; there is a farmer broadcasting seed and other men trek in northern climes. Text indicates significant sites – the Atlantic, the Caribbean, Africa, Nova Scotia, the names of particular American states and the Hudson Bay Company. Drawing the eye in the right foreground, the closest, and thus the largest figure, one of the prospectors, assertively balances a ship on his head and another on his back, as part of the composite, emblematic design. But the ship on his back includes three black slaves, heads bowed.

145 Ibid., p.15, alludes to romantic conceptions of nation of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte in the 18th and 19th centuries.
146 Nairn, The Break-up of Britain, p.129: a ‘hugely profitable junior partnership’ for the Scottish ruling class.
147 The tobacco lords: eighteenth-century merchants controlling trade of tobacco from the American colonies. On Glasgow as workshop of the empire, see Hamish W. Fraser and Irene Maver, eds, Glasgow: 1830-1912 (Manchester: MUP, 1995).
148 GTS 69, 109, 92, 100, and 77 respectively.
1.4 Scotland and the Drive for Empire (GTS 77).

1.5 Scotland in Africa (GTS 100).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘Wardie Church Stitchers,’ Edinburgh.
The ship’s position acknowledges with a distilled elegance that the destruction of lives took place through the actions of others: the thrusting individuals we see are agents of their own destiny but also of others’ destruction.

The design for ‘Scotland in Africa’ (fig. 1.5) does not explicitly acknowledge the negative effects of colonialism, but there are disconcerting overtones. Two faces in large-format profile dominate the panel. While the black and white faces are aligned side by side suggesting congruence and brotherhood, the white face is to the front of the image, rendering it visually dominant. The upper edge of the black profile is rendered as a landscape, acknowledging a backdrop of European expansionism, but also essentialising the black profile by way of the linkage it performs between indigenous peoples and the natural world, a common trope. The white face is taken up with a collage of images of influential named Scots, and a single black girl, unnamed. The female missionary, Mary Slessor, the most prominent of the figures owing to inclusion of her torso and a projecting left arm, leans forward purposefully and reaches down to clasp the face of the black girl positioned below. Slessor worked against the abandonment of twins and adopted several as her own, so the gesture presumably signifies concern for the black girl, but it is also uneasily suggestive of a domineering, possessive stance. Once again the black figure is represented as passive in the presence of Scottish agency.

Empire’s treatment in these images is vastly different from that of the mid-twentieth-century Hastings Embroidery, a history of Britain from the Norman Conquest up to the 900th anniversary in 1966 (fig. 1.6). Its images of empire include a triptych showing Victoria enthroned flanked by two turbaned guards, with, to the right, a Boer War battlefield, and to the left, Florence Nightingale tending wounded soldiers. The Victoria image is formal, static and posed as if the monarch is receiving an audience. The images on either side have the quality of the film still depicting the largescale historical set-piece. Together they represent British power abroad through a long-lens perspective that imparts an impersonal, universalising quality. By contrast,

149 N.E.Currie, Constructing Colonial Discourse: Cook at Nootka Sound 1778 (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2005), p.65: ‘Culture and nature, often divided along gender terms in Western thought, are divided in natural history discourse along racial lines: “culture” (civilization) is the province of Europeans who define “nature” as everyone else,’ and, ‘to be exploited.’
151 Commissioned 1965; completed 1966. See also Appendix A.
1.6 The Hastings Embroidery: triptych showing (from left to right) Florence Nightingale; Queen Victoria; the Boer War. © Hastings Borough Council.

1.7 Scots in America: 19th Century Emigration (GTS 104). © Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered Sally Wild and Frances Fettes, Eskbank.
the two Scottish panels, ‘Drive for Empire,’ a collection of small figures in poses of momentum, and ‘Scots in Africa,’ a montage of intent close-ups, encourage the viewer to see empire as a combination of diverse personal motives. Correspondences between these panels and ‘Scots in America: 19th Century Emigration’ (fig. 1.7) support a view of empire and emigration as essentially the same thing, subtly depoliticising the representations of Scottish colonial ambition.

In order to tell a coherent story, a design adheres to principles of organisation. Holding the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s narrative together is a perspective associated with the Scots and Scotland as nation. To present such events from an Indian or an African perspective would be to destabilise narrative coherence. Although the slave trade can be acknowledged, it holds the status of a regrettable by-product of Scottish involvement overseas, resisting detailed examination. Similarly, missionary zeal is hinted at, but not appraised. Instead, the principal contribution these panels make is to the tapestry’s portrayal of Scottish agency. In a useful foil to this, the transatlantic studies scholar, Alan Rice, has discussed an attempt to counter ‘monoglot’ nostalgic versions of empire through a public sculpture in Lancaster entitled ‘Captured Africans.’ The artwork includes the names of individual slave traders, many with traditional Lancashire surnames and some known previously only for their civic contributions, as a way of signalling the interconnectedness of prosperity and slavery in the British inheritance. He has called this naming exercise a ‘guerrilla memorialisation,’ counterbalancing the built-in silences in memorials that often go unnoticed. Paying careful attention to the tapestry’s deployment of names and absence of names offers a potentially useful indicator of the incidence of difficult-to-negotiate aspects of the past. Unsurprisingly the named figures tend to be those who are lauded for their achievements – Robert Owen, founder of the co-operative movement; Robert Burns, poet; Kirkpatrick Macmillan, inventor of the bicycle, we are told. On revisiting the ‘Drive for Empire’ panel, it is notable that although significant locations are identified, neither the black nor the white figures are individually named.

---

152 Artist Kevin Dalton-Johnson was commissioned to devise and develop the project by lottery funded STAMP (The Slave Trade Arts Memorial Project). Three-hundred young people from across Lancaster were involved, and ten supporting artists. It was unveiled in 2005. For a montage of images see http://kevindaltonjohnson.blogspot.com/search?q=captured+africans (accessed 21/10/18).

153 Rice, ‘Creating Memorials,’ pp.323-39. Alan Rice and Lubaina Himid, the winner of the 2017 Turner Prize for art, whose work also addresses Black invisibility, are colleagues at UCLAN.

154 Rice, ‘Creating Memorials,’ p.337.
Visually, this makes of slavery a generalised, geographically dispersed evil, its prominence muted through lack of specificity. By contrast, ‘Scotland in Africa’ names nearly all the positively inflected white individuals, but not the black child, who functions as representative type.

The five black figures discussed here are five of only nine non-white figures in the entire tapestry. The only others are the single turbaned figure in ‘Scots in India,’ and three non-white figures in ‘Parliament for the Future,’ one of the tapestry’s concluding ensemble panels. Only one of these three is a named individual: Geoff Palmer OBE, the black Scottish scientist. The absence of black and Asian figures in a number of panels relating to modern Scotland, including panels relating to World War II, and one depicting the National Health Service, is surprising, undermining the idea that this narrative stands for all those living in Scotland now. Postcolonialist Paul Gilroy has suggested that British history has tended to minimise difficult aspects of the imperial past until they have become, if not invisible, diminished to such an extent that we see black and Asian inhabitants of Britain as ‘alien intruders’ as opposed to an integral part of a long history and culture of international connectedness. His comment offers a convincing explanation for the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s exclusions.

The recent initiative to erect Black history plaques, accompanied by a BBC TV series written and presented by David Olusoga, is an example of public history engaging with this absence and attempting to provide a counterbalance.

In this section I have shown how these tapestries affirm specifically Scottish historical perspectives and employ a variety of tactics designed to achieve an inclusive narrative. Analysis shows, however, that certain measures of inclusivity are privileged over others. Like Gilroy, Jorma Kalela counsels that we need to be alert to the anachronistic representations of race and ethnic diversity implicit in the restricted

---

155 GTS 92 and 157.
156 There are seven more females with headscarves who appear to be Indian Hindu and Pakistani or European Muslims in the ensemble panels, but their skin colour is white as opposed to the pale brown used elsewhere. See Chapter 4 for discussion of significance of veiled women.
157 GTS 131-4 and 137.
158 Gilroy, After Empire, p.98.
perspective of the single national narrative, and I have used the Great Tapestry of Scotland to illustrate the way the national model subordinates plurality.160

Provision is made within the tapestry designs for a level of participant autonomy, however, the requirements for consistency and coherence favour retention of a relatively strong degree of centralised control over narrative content, restricting the dispersal of decision-making among participants. Inclusivity is circumscribed. The signature tags, which apportion space to representing the stitcher’s historicised self in distilled visual-cum-textual form, offer an interesting anomaly, a parallel history of the stitchers that evades circumscription. If the tapestries are understood as a form of archive, a representation of those fragments of the past thought worthy of conservation at a particular point in time, the signature tags stand as representations of the archivists: not the decision-makers who set down the principles for conservation and rejection, but those whose lives are usually hidden from view, except as evidenced in the labour that assembles the archive. In this way, the Scottish tapestries encompass the mark of stitcher-as-author in the fabric of the tapestry itself. Other projects have been less whole-hearted about making space for this perspective. Charles Jones, the initiator-designer of the Fulford Tapestry, confided that he had wanted to follow the Bayeux Tapestry’s lead and maintain anonymity in the fabric of the new embroidered hanging, perhaps seeing the Bayeux Tapestry’s documentary status as legitimised by it remaining unencumbered by definitive details of a particular production context.161 However, the embroiderers over-ruled him and worked their initials into their handiwork, a counterbalance to Bayeux and a form of visible corrective a little like the Black history plaques erected around Britain.

**Accessible history**

Samuel’s conceptualisation of history places it within the wider social body as opposed to the limited regime of academia. His work with the History Workshop facilitated lay-academic collaborations such as a book he edited on the 1984 miners’ strike, entitled *The Enemy Within*, which collected together diverse personal experiences, opening up

---

161 Pers. comm. Charles Jones, 24/06/13. The Fulford Tapestry, completed 2013, comes closest in spirit to the Bayeux Tapestry. See also Appendix A.
history-making to people who would not otherwise have become involved.\textsuperscript{162} However, the idea of public history served up in book form may itself register as inaccessible to certain audiences. In this section I explore the reasons for this, and unpick the ways in which the project initiators establish tapestry as an accessible alternative. The medium is of relevance here, but also the way it is characterised and deployed. Analysis begins with an evaluation of the significance of tapestry’s pictured form, develops discussion with reference to the emphasis placed on its affective qualities, and the significance of nostalgia as an extension of this, and concludes with an examination of tapestry’s material qualities, drawing together prior strands of discussion.

**Image-led**

Community tapestry is an image-led form. It is a little as if a story book had been cut up and pasted along the wall in a linear progression. The analogy most commonly drawn by those involved with the Prestonpans Tapestry (the first Scottish production), is the comic strip. Stitch coordinator Dorie Wilkie describes it as a strip cartoon, schools programme devisor Fiona Campbell calls it a giant comic-strip, and designer Andrew Crummy explains that one of his sources, especially for the depictions of battle, was the graphic novel.\textsuperscript{163} His initial workings took the form of a cartoon storyboard composed of thumbnail sketches of each proposed panel. Comics and graphic novels are often cited as helpful aids for those who experience difficulty learning to read because they present multiple cues for understanding a story, in a playful format.\textsuperscript{164} Campbell represents the Prestonpans Tapestry’s formal idiosyncrasy as a factor in making it easy to enjoy, suggesting effectiveness at engaging diverse audiences was integral to the project’s inception.

These analogies foreground tapestry’s pictured quality. Analysis that engages directly with the idiosyncrasies of tapestry’s material identity is rarer. See, for instance, Alexander McCall Smith’s estimation of his first impressions of tapestry: ‘After I’d seen


\textsuperscript{163} Dorie Wilkie, ‘Stitching the Prestonpans Tapestry,’ pp.216-34; Fiona Campbell, ‘Conserving and Learning our Nation’s History,’ pp.245-50, and Crummy, ‘Designing,’ pp.210-15; all in *Prestonpans Tapestry 1745*, at pp.232, 246 and 212, respectively.

\textsuperscript{164} See, for instance, ‘Graphic Novels’ Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity website, [http://dyslexia.yale.edu/EDU_GraphicNovels.html](http://dyslexia.yale.edu/EDU_GraphicNovels.html) (accessed 06/12/17).
the Prestonpans Tapestry I was struck by the effect that it had on me and on others: it’s such a vivid and immediate art form.165 He does not explain what exactly he means – whether it is a matter of colourful idiosyncrasy, variety, scale, handmade character, unexpectedness of medium, or a combination thereof that provokes such a description – but his comment positions the tapestry as eye-catching and approachable. Moreover, what this obscures is the fact that the complex narrative of military manoeuvres depicted in the tapestry is not something that can be grasped at a glance. While the medium’s diverting aspect draws the eye, this does not of itself make the mise en scène transparent and easily decipherable. In fact the two things are in tension. What underlies McCall Smith’s characterisation is the myth of the image’s transparency, and the tendency to situate it in a state of pre-verbal simplicity, a classification that is disputed by scholars of visuality. For instance, Ludmilla Jordanova comments that ‘those who offer representations are always selecting and choosing, both consciously and unconsciously, rather than merely reflecting a pre-given world.’166 Similarly, Irit Rogoff observes that ‘what the eye purportedly “sees” is dictated to it by an entire set of beliefs and desires and by a set of coded languages and generic apparatuses.’167 And she quotes the French scholar Henri Lefebvre’s critique, ‘The illusion of transparency goes hand in hand with a view of space as innocent, as free of traps and secret places.’168 Innocence here connotes a pre-lapsarian, child-like state. There is a trace of this in Victorian historian E.A. Freeman’s rationale that because the Bayeux Tapestry’s stitch-work ‘must tell its tale simply and straightforwardly,’ it holds ‘first place among the authorities on the Norman side.’169 His words provide a close parallel to McCall Smith’s description of tapestry as a ‘vivid and immediate art form.’ Neither man acknowledges the essential artificiality of pictorial constructs. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall has suggested that an image’s power is, ‘that its impact is immediate and powerful even when its precise meaning remains, as it were, vague, suspended – numinous.’170 This capacity of the image to

165 McCall Smith, ‘Listen to Our Story’ (Audio file).
166 Jordanova, Sexual Visions, p.46.
command attention while remaining obscure is a useful reference point for the tapestry viewer’s experience and helps us distinguish between the naivety and the grain of truth in Freeman and McCall Smith’s observations.

The level of interpretive freedom available to the viewer has been a preoccupation of scholarly work on visual media. The process of deciphering an image is understood to take place at both conscious and unconscious levels, and to involve a complex interplay between the viewer and his/her accompanying personal and cultural contexts, together with the image, its dominant meaning and other potential readings. Stuart Hall’s concept of negotiation is important here, positioning the viewer as an active meaning-maker rather than a passive consumer of images. It is an aspect of the Prestonpans Tapestry’s quality of being open to interpretation that informs the perspective offered by historian Arran Johnston, a member of the tapestry’s initiating team, when he talks about how people respond, and why deciphering the narrative is of secondary concern here:

When they see it all laid out before them like that there are all sorts of small details that are really important to individual communities, but will never make it into a history narrative of 1745. . . . People connect to the story much more directly.

In contrast to Prestoungrange, who focuses on the Prince, Johnston is suggesting the tapestry’s power lies in the way it enables people to home in on small details which hold particular significance for them individually, as opposed to requiring its audiences to appreciate the narrative in its entirety. The conception of an active relationship between audience and image is again central. Hatti, a stitcher on the Welsh-history-led Last Invasion Tapestry, makes a similar point: ‘If you get a family come in, the men are looking at all the guns— and the flags. Everybody’s looking at different things.’ Tapestry is being conceptualised as approachable because it offers the individual the opportunity to pick out what is personally meaningful. The implication is that the

171 For a succinct survey of these arguments see Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking.
172 See Hall, ‘Encoding, Decoding,’ and Sturken and Cartwright, Practices of Looking, at pp.72-75.
173 Interview with Arran Johnston, 30 May 2014. See also Appendix C.
174 Interview with Hatti and Tricia, 5 September 2014.
imagery is capacious enough to facilitate a range of understandings on the part of different viewers.

Significantly, these understandings of images and their readers can be used to problematise the criticisms historians have made of image-led history. For instance, John Tosh, discussing television history, observes that, ‘A narrative composed of a sequence of visual images has many virtues, but it cannot represent argument and counter-argument; it is almost bound to convey a confident certainty.’\textsuperscript{175} No distinction is made here between the intended meaning of such a sequence – what Hall would term the ‘dominant’ meaning – and the potential for more subversive ‘negotiated’ meanings, which draw on contextual factors, or ‘oppositional’ meanings, which challenge or reject authorised meaning.

\textit{Emotion and nostalgia}

McCall Smith’s description of responses to the Great Tapestry of Scotland privileges its emotional power: ‘I need not have worried . . . people stood before the tapestry with wonderment and delight on their faces. Some cried with emotion– the greatest tribute, I think, that any work of art can be given.’\textsuperscript{176} McCall Smith’s crying viewers echo the dominance of the trope of the weeping celebrity in the long-running genealogical TV series \textit{Who Do You Think You Are?},\textsuperscript{177} suggesting he is drawing on its influential role in popular culture to legitimise the power of tapestry as affective history. Sociologist Anne-Marie Kramer has suggested that emotion in the \textit{WDYTYA?} format becomes ‘evidential of historical understanding and connection with the past,’\textsuperscript{178} a sort of embodied demonstration of knowledge that underwrites the authenticity of what we, the assenting viewers, are seeing and feeling, albeit within this highly mediatised format. Jerome de Groot identifies preoccupation with reinserting ‘the body and the emotion back into the stories of the past’ as an important feature of history in its popular forms.\textsuperscript{179} But as Stephanie Trigg notes, the challenge to the mind/body hierarchy presented by the turn to affect, which she

\textsuperscript{175} Tosh, \textit{Why History Matters}, p.133.
\textsuperscript{176} Alexander McCall Smith, foreword to \textit{The Great Tapestry of Scotland}, pp.v-vi at p.v.
\textsuperscript{177} Henceforth \textit{WDYTYA?}
\textsuperscript{179} De Groot, ‘Affect and Empathy,’ at 594.
describes as, ‘an emphasis on personal feeling or individual modern response to the historical past,’ also has the capacity to enrich scholarly work.\textsuperscript{180}

In the quotation above, McCall Smith’s suggestion that those cultural productions with the power to inspire our tears deserve the greatest respect privileges the affective response over rational reflection (the negative standard here), with the matter-of-fact tone of his statement helping, as before, to frame personal opinion as common-sense consensus. Our emotional responses are being coded as separate from and superior to considered judgements because they are understood as unpremeditated and as a result, more authentic. Emotion is thus understood to have a similar status to the image itself: a pre-verbal, uncomplicated innocence. It is evidence of the ‘immediate’ connection with history that he envisages community tapestry offering the viewer:

I saw elderly people recognise images and references and share them with each other with all the joy that goes with discovering something one has long known about but perhaps forgotten or not thought about for a long time.\textsuperscript{181}

Here a connection is established between the emotional resonance of the tapestry and the shared memory work of nostalgic reminiscence. Scholarly historians have been dismissive of nostalgia, defined as a sentimental longing for, or imagining of, the past.\textsuperscript{182} In part, this is a result of its association with sentimentality, a response viewed as an artefact of the Victorian age and interpreted, through the modernist lens, as excessive, indulgent, undiscerning emotion, though some recent scholarship seeks to reclaim it.\textsuperscript{183} However, a more productive frame of reference for nostalgia arises from

\textsuperscript{181} McCall Smith, foreword to \textit{The Great Tapestry of Scotland}, pp.v-vi.
Svetlana Boym, who identifies it as ‘historical emotion.’ She distinguishes ‘restorative’ from ‘reflective’ nostalgia: the first focuses on the project of restoring the past and is the impulse from which nationalist sentiments arise; the second cultivates longing for the past at the same time as maintaining an awareness of the past’s inaccessibility, and scepticism concerning its restoration. Boym’s distinction does not involve any attempt to dismiss sentiment from its place as a constituent part of nostalgia then, but rather importantly in view of modernist unease with sentimentality, she posits that discernment can coexist alongside sentiment.

Boym’s ideas can be used to inform the way we read Moffat’s sentimental anecdote concerning loss and change at the start of the tapestry guidebook. It is the story of Donald MacIver’s famous lyric ‘An Ataireachd Ard,’ which was inspired by his old uncle Domnhall Ban Crosd’s return from a successful life in Canada. Hoping to see his childhood home one last time before dying, he is confronted with empty space and the sound of the sea. The poem is said to invoke a powerful atmosphere of what Moffat refers to as ionndrainn or ‘something that is missing.’ Moffat is positioning the past as a universally understood site of loss and longing, as does the poem. But while the old man’s restorative impulse towards the past is doomed to unhappy failure, we the readers, in a position of greater critical knowledge, appreciate the past for its pastness: reflectively and at an ‘aesthetic distance.’

How, then, does nostalgia inform the viewer’s experience of the tapestry itself? The generic panels are deliberately set outside the tapestry’s chronology, allowing them to float free and inhabit a conveniently non-specific time zone. The imagery incorporates time-honoured practices such as droving, shearing, weaving and spinning, Borders’ tweed, Fair Isle and Shetland knitters, whaling, and the herring girls who followed the fishing fleet (composite fig. 1.8). While some, such as the washer-woman

---


185 Moffat, Great Tapestry, pp.vii–ix.

186 The subject of GTS 159.

187 Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.viii.

1.8 composite image –
top 2 images: nostalgic ‘retro-chic’: Linwood and the Hillman Imp (GTS 143) and Pop Music Booms (144); bottom 3 images: time-honoured practices: Driving (51), Borders Tweed (86), Herring Girls (112); central image: Washer Woman (139) encompasses both: retro soap-powder box designs / memorialised redundant practices.

© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust.
Embroiderers listed in same order as panels: ‘Tillicoultry Needles and Pins,’ Devonside, Alva, Tillicoultry, Menstrie, Cambusbarron; ‘Jacquie & the Juniors,’ Musselburgh; ‘The Highland Stitchers,’ Muir of Ord, Culloden Moor, Beauly; ‘Melrose Group,’ Melrose, St Boswells; ‘Herring Gulls,’ North Berwick; Gail Hughes and Kate Mackenzie, Montrose.
at work in the public wash-house, or ‘steamie,’ have vanished,\textsuperscript{189} others such as knitting, sheep-farming and the tweed industry, have continued up to the present day. Yet their non-specific periodisation, often against a backdrop of Scottish land and seascape, evokes a timeless past. The version of tradition deployed here is centred not on the symbols and rituals of self-conscious national revival, constituents of Boym’s restorative nostalgia, but on embodied practices grounded in the humble routine of daily life. A second, more concrete strand of imagery draws on the recent past, but seeks to memorialise fondly remembered icons of consumer culture: the Hillman Imp, a war-time radio-set, the designs of early washing powder packets, children’s television characters, rock ‘n’ roll icons and Tunnock’s teacakes, which are still going strong, despite their retro styling. The images are celebratory but fragmentary – sometimes divorced from context and reappropriated to form repeating patterns. Here the reflective reminiscence takes delight in detail in a way that is akin to the sensibility of what Raphael Samuel calls ‘retro-chic,’\textsuperscript{190} a magpie-like plundering of the past as a rich form of visual shorthand.

Certainly these versions of the past are partial and selective, an issue to which commonly raised critiques of nostalgia draw attention. For instance, Tosh has remarked on the tendency of older members of society to use selective nostalgic reminiscence as a retreat from the present into pessimism.\textsuperscript{191} Samuel convincingly critiqued the way Thatcherite nostalgia for the Victorian age highlighted markers such as family values, and muted others, such as the strong public service ethic.\textsuperscript{192} And Alan Rice foregrounds ‘national narratives that refuse to give up nostalgia for the imperial past,’ clinging instead to the past’s reassuring sense of order while ignoring its brutalities, a critique of particular relevance to the Great Tapestry of Scotland, as I have shown.\textsuperscript{193} Nevertheless, appraising the tapestry’s deployment of the nostalgic past helps us appreciate the ways in which the narrative moves beyond the ‘single plot’ to inhabit the ‘many places at once’ characteristic of Boym’s reflective

\textsuperscript{190} ‘Retro-Chic’ is the title of a section in Samuel, \textit{Past and Present}, pp.51-135, on appropriating the past.
\textsuperscript{191} Tosh, \textit{Why History Matters}, p.34.
\textsuperscript{193} Rice, ‘Creating Memorials,’ p.333.
nostalgia. While we might formulate the tapestry’s dominant reading as a progressive, or ‘Whiggish’ history, moving towards increasing levels of political and social autonomy, equity and education to conclude with the 1999 reconvening of the Scottish parliament, there is also room for other narratives. The generic panels look back to a time before manual skills became a scarcity; the twentieth-century panels celebrate popular consumer culture; other panels memorialise Scottish cities as monuments to capitalist modernity; still others, which show humanity combining together for mutual benefit – the Trades Union movement, the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in – have the flavour of socialist-realism art. And significantly, emphasis is placed on depicting the less predictable aspects of the past: establishment of the first British school for the deaf and dumb (1760); the publication of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1771), blacksmith Kirkpatrick Macmillan’s invention of a prototype bicycle (1839). Boym coined another term, ‘off-modern,’ for the habit of critical reflection that compels us to ‘explore side-shadows and back alleys’ and ‘take a detour from the deterministic narrative of twentieth-century history,’ which works as an apt distillation of the twin experiences of modernity and nostalgia on offer in the tapestry. Similarly, visual culture scholar Rosemary Shirley has employed the metaphor of collage to productively engage with how we experience modernity. Shirley’s source materials include a set of jubilee scrapbooks consisting of real collages made by members of the rurally-based Women’s Institutes in the 1960s to encapsulate their experience of village life. However, she is drawing on the art critic Lucy Lippard, who describes the mechanism of collage, of putting ‘this up against that,’ as a metaphor for the modern condition, and a spur for observers to create ‘new realities

---

194 Boym, Future of Nostalgia, p.xviii.
197 GTS 64, 66, 90.
or new ways of thinking.' This too is a productive analogy for thinking about the way in which the extended narrative of the Great Tapestry of Scotland brings together a series of parallel interspersed histories, whose juxtaposed panels create new interpolations of the narratives they intersect. It also describes the viewer’s experience – her freedom to select which panels to pause and study; which new realities to create.

**Pictures and words**
The uneven, multi-layered complexity emerging here problematises binary conceptions of history as image-based or word-based. The visual culture critic W.J.T. Mitchell characterises the word/image binary as shorthand delineating not only different types of representation but different social worlds: elite versus mass culture, professional/academic versus public, book-based versus image-based, affective versus rational. His point is that the dichotomy is a false one because all media are mixed media and interaction between pictures and texts ‘is constitutive of representation.’

Like Irit Rogoff, he is alluding to the complex network of words and images on which we draw each time we make sense of an apparently discrete representation.

With regard to the tapestries, the image is attributed with immediate, universal appeal, whereas the implied other of text is perceived as difficult, opaque, inaccessible. Despite their hybrid form, it is the images that are the focus of almost all that is said: the role of text is marginalised. This is reflected in the way Prestoungrange relates his story of involvement in community history. On moving to Prestonpans he established Prestoungrange University Press, a press without a university – a move that appears to have been calculated playfully to blur the lines between academic and non-academic categories – and produced an academic-style volume of collected articles to memorialise the town’s rich local history. But he was disappointed to find

---

202 Ibid., p.5.  
the book lacked public appeal, acknowledging ‘virtually no-one was using it.’

There is a congruence here between Prestoungrange’s discovery that reproducing elements of the academic model from beyond its boundaries was not sufficient to inspire participation, and Jorma Kalela’s learning process during his time training trades unionists in historical research skills in Finland from the late 1970s. The resistance Kalela encountered led him to recognise that the academic approach to history is considered inherently patronising by many who are interested in understanding the past. Kalela spent much time convincing these groups that history did not equate to narratives of the elite and that they could define the terms of the material they would be researching.

Prestoungrange’s solution to community disengagement from academic-style history was to employ the visual arts in history-making. In this he was inspired by a visit to Chemainus, a small Canadian sawmill town famous for its historical murals. It was success with murals at Prestonpans – ‘by painting history, people become proud of it,’ he says – which led Prestoungrange to propose an emulation of Bayeux’s tapestry. He continues to express surprise, however, at the level of enthusiasm engendered by the project.

Neither Prestoungrange nor McCall Smith show much interest in interrogating the specificities of embroidery’s attraction. On the other hand, Anne Wynn-Wilson, the Quaker Tapestry’s initiator-designer and herself an embroiderer, provides an illuminating comment on the differing appeal of embroidered history and book history: ‘Printed words in prepared statements might not be read, but embroidery is immediately attractive and presents no threat.’ The comment positions embroidery’s decorative aspect as endowing it with an unassuming, non-threatening status. A book’s didactic function may intimidate, by contrast, and cause the eye and the mind to shy away from engagement, she says. The comment works as a critique of Prestoungrange’s under-utilised, self-consciously academic history of Prestonpans, a thick dark-jacketed tome on thin paper printed in a small typeface. The activist and self-proclaimed introvert Sarah Corbett makes a similar comment about the non-

---

205 This experience informs Kalela, Making History.
206 Ibid., p.55.
207 Prestoungrange in ‘Prestonpans Says Bye Bye to Baron.’
confrontational appeal of using craft as a form of activism, or ‘craftivism,’ challenging people’s assumptions in small, quiet ways. For instance, she and her group sewed handkerchiefs bearing messages for the fourteen members of the Marks & Spencer board to convince them to increase the hourly wage for their staff.\footnote{Sarah Corbett, ‘If We Want the World to be Beautiful, Kind and Fair,’ \textit{The Simple Things}, October 2017, pp.34-5}

In the ground-breaking and extensive review of popular engagements with history carried out by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen in America in the 1990s, books and classroom learning faiired poorly as a source of connection with the past, compared to museums and personal accounts from relatives.\footnote{Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ pp.30-55, at p.34.} We find support of these findings in comments from coordinator Dorie Wilkie, who mentioned that she doesn’t read history books, and stitcher-participant Sue on the Great Tapestry of Scotland, who commented that she finds book history boring, as opposed to the pictured history of the tapestry, which she alluded to as being like ‘seeing it as it happened.’\footnote{Interview with Dorie Wilkie, 31 May 2014. See also Appendix C. Interview with Sue.} Sue, a retired speech therapist whose work entailed making use of visual approaches to learning, contrasted the exploratory \textit{modus operandi} of science lessons at school, which engaged her, with the rote-learning of history lessons. She also singled out the excitement of \textit{Time Team}’s investigative style for comment, expressing a wish that history at school had been more like that.

There are a variety of reasons for the difficulties people encounter with book history. Rosenzweig and Thelen concluded that one explanation is that participants felt more of a connection through those forms of history where they felt able to participate actively.\footnote{Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ p.35.} As a result of their association with formal learning, books are not perceived as offering this opportunity. Sue told me she believed she only passed O-level history because she drew herself a set of steps, wrote the different elements of Napoleon’s career on to the steps, and used that as a basis for answering the exam question on Napoleon’s rise in Europe. By translating the material into a visual form she was able to reconstruct her own version of the past from the version that had been served up to her.

She also told me she uses historical themes in some of her embroideries and that she has created an audio-visual record of her stitching group’s work on the

\footnotesize{209} Sarah Corbett, ‘If We Want the World to be Beautiful, Kind and Fair,’ \textit{The Simple Things}, October 2017, pp.34-5
\footnotesize{210} Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ pp.30-55, at p.34.
\footnotesize{211} Interview with Dorie Wilkie, 31 May 2014. See also Appendix C. Interview with Sue.
\footnotesize{212} Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ p.35.
tapestry panel, a form of personalised history-making that demonstrates her enjoyment of the processes of selection and assemblage this entails. Her comments also suggest she prefers the informal character of some engagements with history over others. Rosemary Shirley observes that women rather than men have traditionally been the creators and conservers of the family photo album. She points out that in choosing to record village histories through scrapbooking as opposed to written histories, the WI aligned its female history-makers with a tradition of ‘informal, amateur and personal history recording by women.’ Artist Jo Spence and curator Patricia Holland suggest that in pioneering forms ‘which are themselves marginal, impure, apparently trivial,’ women link the personal with the political and comment on their own experiences, which encompass both trivial and great events. Sue’s audio-visual digital slideshow about the tapestry panel fits with this tendency. Indeed, at one point Sue felt compelled to point out that she is ‘not a history buff,’ suggesting a desire to distance herself from claims to expert knowledge, and perhaps from the elitist association implied in such a term. Prathama Banerjee highlights the shift in subaltern studies from a focus on subjectivity to critique of ‘dominant forms of knowledge and language’: the way particular discourses, including historical discourse, are implicated in patterns of authority and power relations. The everyday life theorist Michel de Certeau, whose interest lies in the way individuals engage with power structures, has catalogued diverse ‘tactics,’ or multiple small acts of resistance deployed by individuals as a response to authority in daily life. The observations and activities touched on in Sue’s self-narrative – her critique of learning methods, her assertion of non-expert

214 Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, ‘Introduction,’ in Spence and Holland (eds), *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991), pp.1-11 at p.9. ‘The Personal is Political’ was the title of an article by American feminist Carol Hanisch in *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation; Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, ed. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), and became a feminist political slogan highlighting the link between personal circumstances and the social and political power relations in which they are embedded. Christopher J. Kelly, ‘The Personal is Political: Description, Origin and Analysis,’ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1 May 2017, https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-personal-is-political (accessed 08/12/17), points out that Hanisch’s generation was not the first to interrogate such structures of inequality, and cites the American sociologist C. Wright Mills who published *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) and feminist Betty Friedan’s discussion of female discontent with home-making, or ‘the problem that has no name,’ in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).
status, and by implication, her rejection of expert language, her audio-visual record of the tapestry and her reappropriation of Napoleonic history – can be understood as a discreet form of resistance to dominant forms of historical discourse that do not speak to or for her.

Subscribing to history conceptualised as ‘a mode of making more sense of the world and one’s place within it,’ Jorma Kalela suggests that the historians who write books are part of the problem.\footnote{Kalela, Making History, p.57.} Academic authors have conceptualised readers as passive, non-individuated consumers of their work, as opposed to understanding readers to be creators of their own histories with particular sets of concerns which may or may not be met by a particular book. Shirley discusses how the book commemorating the scrapbooking project suppressed the voices and labour of the women scrapbookers beneath its male author’s irreverent writing style.\footnote{Paul Jennings, The Living Village (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968).} The author did not include a list of the participants, nor any images from the scrapbooks, and in what Shirley sees as a commentary on what was to be valued as an appropriate contribution to history (and what was not), complained to the publisher about the modern predilection for the visual.\footnote{Shirley, Rural Modernity, pp.99-100, quoting evidence from correspondence between author and publisher.} To what extent the book satisfied its readers, we do not know. What is evident is that the position of the history book is less assured when reconceptualised in the face of more discriminating audiences, and the more ‘vivid and immediate’ alternatives that community tapestry embodies.

**Embroidery**

The physical specificities of the embroidery medium itself contribute to the affective immediacy of these projects. The visible embroidery stitches are a persistent reminder of community tapestry’s handmade nature, drawing the viewer’s attention to the artefact’s constructedness and invoking the hands behind the needle. Since component stitches are visible to the naked eye within each image, the individual is in a position to appreciate simultaneously the image represented and the method by which it has been produced. Furthermore, the idiosyncrasies common to collaborative lay projects – the varying degrees of expertise in stitch execution together with the
contrasting approaches to representing familiar and frequently occurring visual data such as water or trees – remind us that this is a group effort. The viewer is able to linger over small details, in one instance admiring the ingenuity of a particular representation, in another, perhaps puzzling over what the reconstruction in question is intended to represent.

This unevenness distinguishes it from machine-made work. Elaine Freedgood has argued convincingly that a particular aura, inherited from the Victorians, attaches to that which is handmade – an ethical charge that relates to ideas about work and industry, craft, leisure and the domestic. She contends that moral and aesthetic elevation of the handmade through the philosophy of John Ruskin and William Morris answered the anxieties of the Victorian middle-classes, who, despite their embrace of commodity culture, mourned the loss of the human touch resulting from mass production. At the same time, as Talia Schaffer has pointed out, the Arts and Crafts movement worked to distinguish principles of high craft skill and under-stated good design from feminine handicraft’s associations of the amateur and the domestic, which they criticised for lacking in quality and taste, and exhibiting an excess of sentiment.

A nostalgic attachment to the merits of the handmade remains with us today, manifested, for instance, in the uncritical acquisition of the handmade souvenir of doubtful provenance. The symbolic value we place on craft skill informs sociologist Richard Sennett’s recent work The Craftsman, which explores the tension between modern capitalism and our desire to take pride in the work we do. It operates in the contemporary setting of community tapestry, where the viewer may marvel at the time and effort expended. Quilter and sociologist Colleen Hall-Patton notes that the ‘huge investment of time’ involved in domestic art is one of the ways it stands outside commodity culture and implicitly critiques its values.

As art historian Rozsika Parker has convincingly argued, embroidery’s gendered identity also comes to us over-determined by Victorian discourse, this time with regard

---

221 Ibid., pp.631-2.
to conceptions of womanhood. Femininity was defined – in opposition to masculinity – in conjunction with the domestic sphere, the moral welfare of the family and emotional matters. Parker sees embroidery as emblematic of this discourse, indeed she contends that in some quarters it was co-opted as an ideal expression of Victorian femininity. If we listen carefully to the language in which project initiators appeal to their audiences, the mark of this associative context is perceptible. The tapestries, we recall, are conceptualised as ‘vivid’ and ‘immediate’; they ‘delight,’ and appeal ‘directly’ to ‘emotion.’ The underlying message is that this is an unassuming and approachable medium, associated with homely tale-telling and the domestic fireside: the perspective, unstated but understood, of the female embroiderer. Shirley has referred to barely detectable aspects of the domestic everyday as, ‘a knowledge that is transmitted not through the structured channels of formal education, but the familial environments of the kitchens of mothers and grandmothers.’ This is the regime of childhood memories, perhaps of intense emotions, the place in which we first learn how to relate to others.

Parker has also discussed the way in which her own motivation for studying embroidery was interrogated:

The unspoken assumption was that, as an art historian and a feminist, I would probably be contemptuous of embroidery and those who do it. For, historically, a categorical separation has grown up between embroidery, seen as a feminine pastime, and serious professionalism – considered the province of masculinity.

Perhaps this is the reason why these two Scottish tapestry projects place men at the helm as regards history and design, and women in charge of the embroidery. But if we look closely at the embroidered narratives and their audiences, what we see is a new ingredient, additional to the binary discourse concerning the accessibility of images versus the complexity of language. We might bring to mind again, here, Anne Wynn-

---

225 Parker, The Subversive Stitch.
226 Shirley, Rural Modernity, p.12.
Wilson’s comment that the medium of embroidery presents no threat to audiences, as opposed to the way some might feel about the printed word. In the context of a discourse that positions the written word as part of a forbidding realm belonging to the professional historian, Wynn-Wilson comes close to articulating the source of community tapestry’s unexpected allure. For here we have a discourse that conceptualises the female embroiderer’s perspective as suitably egalitarian and intimate, by contrast. It is this that lends the initiators’ descriptions a new context. Community tapestry, a medium distinguished by a strong gendered identity – regardless of who the designer or initiator of a particular project may be – is accessibly unpretentious, and as such, those who adopt it as a means of telling history are empowered to command our attention. Both nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics warned of the dangers of sentiment, a feminine excess of feeling without the moderating effect of masculine-coded rational thought, but the tapestry initiators frame emotion, its contemporary equivalent, in an approving light. Thus despite the limited agency of its stitcher-participants, the medium of embroidery becomes a new form of authority, subversively running away with the story despite its over-determined status.

In addition to the way the embroidery itself foregrounds a handmade identity, the mode of exhibition celebrates the individual stitcher. The Scottish tapestries’ signature tags are something of a special case, but the names of stitchers are almost always an important component of the presentation of tapestries, in exhibition and through supporting narratives. Guidebooks for the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Quaker Tapestry integrate diverse quotations from stitchers within an overarching narrative. The guidebook for the Prestonpans Tapestry devotes a double-page to each panel and its associated stitcher/stitcher group, with dedicated space for each to comment on her involvement. Prestonpans also offers a DVD incorporating stitcher perspectives, Fishguard provides a similar resource for the Last Invasion Tapestry as a film playing on a continuous loop in the auditorium, and the Scottish Diaspora

228 Burdett, ‘Sentimentalities: Introduction,’ at p.188, identifies Victorian anti-sentiment discourse with anxieties about extension of the political franchise to sectors of society perceived as emotion-led: women and working classes. Burdett, ‘Is Empathy the End of Sentimentality?’ distinguishes empathy as an early twentieth-century substitution for sentiment. Similarly, the male tapestry initiators seem to be substituting the concept of emotion for sentiment.
Tapestry’s website devotes dedicated space to the personal stories of stitchers.\textsuperscript{229} Participants have also been encouraged to act as volunteer stewards for touring exhibitions, providing an opportunity to share first-hand experience of projects.\textsuperscript{230} As the sociologist Igor Kopytoff has observed, the singularization of an eventful biography is animating: community tapestry is brought closer to the audience by virtue of this humanising context.\textsuperscript{231} By encouraging us to think about the hands and humans behind the needle, community tapestry performs an act of embodiment, an important feature of the cultural work undertaken by popular history, according to de Groot.\textsuperscript{232} It provides a useful way of understanding the connection between apparently divergent forms of popular history such as battle re-enactment: typically masculine-coded, short-lived, performative and visibly embodied;\textsuperscript{233} and community tapestry: feminine, aspiring to permanence, and infused by the hand and narrative of the stitcher.

To conclude, then, the affective framework within which community tapestry is experienced, together with the human interest lent by its producers, combine together to make available to viewers a rich web of associations. It is no wonder, then, that audience members are sometimes moved to tears. As engaged viewers we find it difficult to separate our feelings about the making of a tapestry from our feelings about the history depicted therein. It is the experience as a whole that moves us.

Conclusions
This chapter acknowledges tensions between impulses towards narrative coherence and the urge to build inclusivity into contemporary history production. As Jorma Kalela has observed, what is historically important for one person within a society is not necessarily so for another. The scant treatment of race and empire in the Great

\textsuperscript{229} Moffat, Great Tapestry; Levin, Living Threads; Crummy et al., Prestonpans Tapestry 1745; Robinson, Stitches for Charlie (DVD); Thomas, The Making of the [LI]Tapestry (DVD); The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry website, http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/personal-stories (accessed 08/12/17).
\textsuperscript{230} The interviewees Sue and Liz (The Great Tapestry of Scotland) were curating at Anchor Mill in Paisley when I interviewed them.
\textsuperscript{232} De Groot, ‘Affect and Empathy,’ 594.
Tapestry of Scotland appears to be the result of choices informed by a narrative perspective that echoes minority history’s earliest iteration, Thompson’s history of the white working classes. At the same time, unpicking the workings of community tapestry shows that public history offers greater complexity and nuance than academics have given it credit for. In particular, the incorporation of signature tags in the tapestries authorises unexpected voices and demonstrates subversive potential for distributing ownership amongst the variety of interest groups involved in history production.

Rather than looking to John Tosh, who conceptualises visual narrative as a forum for confident certainties which he would see as constraining community tapestry from representing argument and counter-argument, the words of project coordinator Arran Johnston are insightful. He focuses on the small meaningful details facilitated by community tapestry’s baggy capaciousness, which, he says, would never make it into a conventional narrative history. Tosh’s model of history does not account for the different layers of meaning that may co-exist in an image or a series of images and underestimates the role of the viewer in negotiating such a reading. Johnston’s model permits a more intimate and differentiated relationship between viewer and tapestry. For Johnston, the tapestry is ‘a piece of historical interpretation’; a catalyst for making people think more about underlying events; and the ‘trigger point’ in a broad educational programme including story-tellings, re-enactment, music and a variety of talks. It has the status of raw material rather than definitive account.

This idea of historical interpretation favours the heritage site that offers an imaginative gap for individuals to participate in co-creating experience, acknowledges that the visitor is active participant rather than passive consumer, and resists the idea of overly prescriptive guidance. Jerome de Groot has observed that critics of popular heritage sites underestimate consumer agency, arguing, like Stuart Hall, that individuals are capable of a sophisticated level of reading against the grain. Johnston’s perspective is significant because it positions Prestonpans as interpretively potent historical material. For instance, one of the ways we can understand the Scottish tapestries is as cultural productions concerned with providing opportunities

---

234 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.133.
235 Interview with Johnston, 30 May 2014.
236 De Groot, Consuming History, pp.5-6.
for viewers to think about some of the issues involved in Scottish self-determinism. Both tapestries came to fruition in the period of heightened debate immediately preceding the 2014 referendum. The Great Tapestry of Scotland provides a taking stock of Scottish achievement at a fulcrum moment. The Prestonpans Tapestry encourages an exercise in counterfactual imagination (what if the Jacobites had kept winning?), and sets in motion a playful parallel in ‘what if?’ thinking with regard to Scotland’s future in the twenty-first century. On counterfactual narrative, Kalela suggests we pay close attention to the difference between what is said and what is meant, since such exercises may have more to say about the present than the past, as seems to be the case in this instance.

Community tapestry thus responds to the calls of Tosh and Carl Schorske for public history to contribute to democratic discourse by helping us ‘orient ourselves in the living present.’ Certainly it is a looser and less restrained model for thinking with history than they envisage. Indeed, community tapestry’s broader amalgam of cultural and social concerns aligns more comfortably with Samuel’s approach to public history, and Kalela’s ‘shared history,’ which I discuss in the next chapter, than with Tosh’s perspective, which involves cultivating critical distance in order to pinpoint what is distinctive about past and present. Some participants, such as Sue, may be attracted as much by virtue of its identity as craft as its status as public history. Audience members may be drawn into exhibitions by friends and relations’ interest, finding themselves engaged by virtue of the affective materiality of the history on display. Discussion has shown how the discourse of community tapestry foregrounds emotional response rather than critical engagement, and here, Boym’s perspective on nostalgia – positioning it as a critical tool for interrogating the past, as well as a mode of relating emotionally to it – provides a useful corrective. When she observes that ‘longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement, or critical reflection,’ she reminds us that tendencies on the part of popular and academic debate to place rational and emotional responses on either side of a binary do not mean they do not co-exist.

---

237 Kalela, Making History, p.90.
238 Tosh, Why History Matters, pp.6-7, quoting Schorske, Thinking with History, p.3.
239 Ibid.
simultaneously in the individual.\textsuperscript{240} Community tapestry has the potential to inspire both. In the next chapter I will explore this idea further by interrogating participant perspectives on the panels they stitched.

\textsuperscript{240} Boym, \textit{Future of Nostalgia}, p.49.
2: History and Genealogy

Introduction

This chapter explores the significant use made of the stitcher-participants’ perspectives in the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry. This is the only tapestry under discussion which assigned the stitchers the freedom to propose particular panel histories. It thus realises the ideal of history from below rather differently from the other projects, where stitchers are allocated pre-existing panels and are thus part of a top-down structure, despite the projects being voluntary and community-based. What emerges in place of the national stories discussed in Chapter 1 is a strong preoccupation with family history. Stitcher self-narratives are interrogated in conjunction with the tapestry panels to uncover the intricacies of particular expressions of this tendency, and its implications. Drawing on arguments concerned with popular history-making from Jorma Kalela and Jerome de Groot, 241 and more particular insights concerning genealogy from de Groot, Graeme Davison and Anne-Marie Kramer’s discussion of the genealogical television phenomenon Who Do You Think You Are?, 242 I use my material to contest the idea that family history entails narrowly focused histories with little potential for situating the past within a wider social context. I argue that when an individual makes use of family stories, they provide not just a means of projecting the self into a historical past, rather, in personalising the past, they offer a point of entry for others. My thesis is that the personal need not be hampered by its parochial frame of reference: a personal story can embody and make concrete diverse experiences of the past that would otherwise remain hidden, abstract and elusive. In this way the chapter continues the project of


delineating community tapestry’s potential as a model for nuanced engagements with history.

In the first section, I consider the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry’s preoccupations and modus operandi as a way of redressing the somewhat downplayed relationship between the stitchers and history with regard to the Prestonpans Tapestry and the Great Tapestry of Scotland projects. In the two sections that follow, I use the participants and their panels to appraise a range of manifestations of the personalised, genealogically oriented relationship to history, and assess its broader significance as an influential strand within public history. Among these, a panel stitched by a mother and daughter team of British-Asian heritage demonstrates how the format of this tapestry offers solutions to the failure of the Great Tapestry of Scotland to encompass minority ethnic perspectives.

Stitchers’ voices and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

The custodians of family history, who are more often women than men, are often associated with a narrowly parochial perspective of history. This section seeks to problematise this idea with reference to Stitches for Charlie, the film celebrating production of the Prestonpans Tapestry, and by conceptualising the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry in the form of a response. In their largescale study of popular history-making in America, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen show that women’s history-making activity is more likely to be motivated by genealogical interests than men’s, and that family members tend more often than not to turn to older women of the family, rather than older men, for information regarding previous generations. Similarly, commenting on responses to a survey of Australian genealogists, Graeme Davison concludes that genealogy ‘is more likely to appeal to women, who are the customary nurturers and keepers of family tradition.’ Here we see a link being made between

243 The research, for which 808 people were interviewed by telephone, was initially published as Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). The version reproduced in The Public History Reader, ed. Kean and Martin is a distilled excerpt.
244 Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ 73% of women, as opposed to 58% of men chose family. Of thirty-six respondents who described their activity as furthering family ties and traditions, thirty were women (pp.39-40).
245 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ p.68. This 1988 survey of 1500 genealogists in the state of Victoria asked questions about personal background and motivations. Anne-Marie Kramer’s more recent work on
nurturing the family and nurturing that family’s past: positioning genealogy as ‘women’s work’ as opposed to men’s. Conversely, an insight into those historical pursuits deemed suitable for men is provided by Rosenzweig and Thelen’s observation that men continue to occupy the majority of seats on US Civil War roundtables. Thus although both women and men engage in the past through a range of activities, and men as well as women invest importance in family history, its association with women and the home makes it an easy target for accusations that it presents an ‘introspective’ and ‘privatised’ approach to history. Family history is the most visible and popular demonstration of history cast as a subjective viewpoint and a route to understanding ourselves, as opposed to the ‘universalistic’ perspective on the external world adopted by the intellectual. ‘Parochial,’ literally of the parish, used metaphorically to mean confined or limited, as if by the borders of one’s parish, is also used as a critique. It is in the light of these observations that this chapter seeks to appraise the inferences of what the stitcher-participants say, and how history is portrayed through their panels. I explore the association between the personal and the parochial and not only whether it is justified, but also, whether the parochial might itself be reclaimed.

We saw in Chapter 1 that little attempt was made by Gordon Prestoungrange, Alistair Moffat and Alexander McCall Smith, the principal initiator figures, to understand the motivations for stitcher participation. References to the stitchers tended towards generalisation. During our interview, Prestoungrange suggested the women working on the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry fall into particular categories – older women and women who have settled down – and that participation should be seen

genealogy and public history in Britain, which included in-depth quality interviews and a Mass Observation directive, seeks to interrogate similar issues. See also the results of a five-year collaborative study, ‘Canadians and their Pasts’ website, http://www.canadiansandtheirpasts.ca/ (accessed 09/09/18).


248 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ p.70.

chiefly as a social activity.\textsuperscript{250} In the course of emphasising the visual acknowledgement of women’s place in Scottish history in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, Moffat commented, ‘Not that we would have been allowed to [forget]. Almost all of the stitchers are women and they would not have let us do anything less.’\textsuperscript{251} Again the stitchers are conceptualised as an amorphous body. In the case of \textit{Stitches for Charlie}, the film on DVD celebrating the Prestonpans Tapestry’s gestation, the disinclination to think in detail about participant motivation results in noticeably divergent accounts of history’s capacity to stimulate engagement, illuminating the differences between the ways stitchers and initiators relate to history. Early on in the film, Prestoungrange voices the opinion that:

\begin{quote}
Because it’s \textit{such a good story} – Bonnie Prince Charlie is such an integral part of the whole of Scottish history, the romantic dimension of the whole thing – it wasn’t surprising that people were interested in it and they were therefore willing to step forward.\textsuperscript{252}
\end{quote}

Similarly, Martin Margulies (author of \textit{The Battle of Prestonpans}, a source text for the tapestry) asserts that ‘it just has \textit{this power, this story, to cast its spell over intervening centuries},’ and suggests that this, together with the power of Prestoungrange’s pitch, convinced people to do ‘whatever [was] necessary to keep the story alive.’\textsuperscript{253} The innate appeal of the story of the 1745 rebellion is being posited by the male initiators as the principal driving force behind persuading individuals to sign up to stitch the tapestry.

However, the stitchers say something different. None of the three stitchers who talk about why they took part in the tapestry during the course of this film mention a fascination with the Jacobite struggle. Margaret McCabe’s comments sum up how she feels about her relation to history as follows:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[250] Interview with Gordon Prestoungrange, 30 May 2014. For further discussion of Prestoungrange’s observations on the stitchers see Chapter 4: pp.158-9.
\item[253] Martin Margulies, ibid. My italics.
\end{footnotes}
I really wanted to be involved in this . . . because it is part of living history, and my granny and my grandad had a lot to do with Prestonpans, and they’ve left their mark, in their time. My granny worked in Fowler’s Brewery. My pa worked in the mines in West Lothian. So really, what an opportunity for me to dedicate this to them and all their contributions in the past, [be]cause I think it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity. Maybe one day if I have a family, they’ll be able to look back and say, ‘Well, do you know . . . . ’ like I’m doing—my grand-daughter—it’s a legacy to leave.254

It is not depicting the story of rebellion that motivates Margaret, nor her enjoyment of stitching. Rather, she conceptualises participation as a way of inserting herself into the historical record. The process of creating the tapestry is ‘living history’; an important act of memorialisation in the present that will itself be registered as a historic event in the future. Furthermore, she sees this as affirming the link to her ancestors and to shared experience of Prestonpans. Contributing to the tapestry is a significant act of participation akin to her father’s work in the mines and her grandmother’s for the brewery: each is a historic contribution to posterity that others will remember them by, and through which all three will be identified as ‘Panners’ (inhabitants of Prestonpans). The history referred to here, then, is the history of her family in the recent past, and the act of making history by producing the tapestry; it is the history that she feels an immediate and personal relationship to as a result of her own experience and her family’s experience, rather than the temporally and relationally remote history of the Jacobites.

The commentary of the other two stitchers revolves around explanation of the designs devised for signature tags, but raises similar themes: personal connections to Prestonpans and familial relationships. Christina Philip talks of her tag as ‘a wee bit of my history’ inserted in the tapestry,255 echoing Margaret’s desire to leave a mark. Elizabeth Jones’s tag consists of five pink and blue love hearts to symbolise her children, matched by the five balloons of the same colours which they subsequently

254 Margaret McCabe, ibid.
255 Christina Philip, ibid.
brought her on Mother’s Day. She expresses her surprise and delight that ‘they have been observing from a distance.’

For these women a sense of their participation’s significance is invested in the judgments of others. This is not just about family, it is about situating the self in time; in relation to past, present and future event. Use of the words legacy and history in Margaret’s narrative suggest an effort of imaginative projection back and forward in time. Annette Kuhn argues that the value of this sort of memory work is that it facilitates a coalescing of ‘outer and inner, social and personal, historical and psychical,’ illuminating ‘the web of interconnections that binds.’ The active mental engagement envisaged here is in sympathy with Margaret’s commentary, which involves situating her own participatory act as part of a continuum of discrete meaningful engagements. It is at odds with the initiators’ assertion that the attraction of the tapestry project is the battle’s appeal as narrative, an assertion that is problematic since it appears to conceptualise the campaign’s essence as what it holds in common with the fairy story and the tall tale, not its historicity. Margaret’s observations, on the other hand, involve a level of reflection concerning what makes particular aspects of the past fit for commemoration, and some awareness of the way historicisation involves processes of selection and assemblage, this being an opportunity for making her mark that she did not wish to neglect.

The narratives of initiator and stitcher in the film may not strike the viewer as being at odds with each other. After all, the split between the women’s familial preoccupation and the men’s military enthusiasm may recall the dichotomy between civil war history and family history in the US, as identified by Rosenzweig and Thelen. The way the film is edited obscures discontinuity and naturalises difference, presenting its tropes as complementary, as opposed to highlighting contradictory perspectives. Where the editor could have chosen to juxtapose the male and female perspectives in dialogic fashion, allowing one perspective to inform or undercut the other, instead they are embedded in such a way as to assert a hierarchy among the voices. Prestoungrange’s commentary tops and tails the film and is interspersed throughout, with Margulies in a supporting role. Prestoungrange is thus understood as the controlling voice. By contrast, the stitcher perspectives emerge a substantial way

256 Elizabeth Jones, ibid.
through the film as self-contained cameos. Treating them as detached from Prestoungrange’s overall view of the tapestry’s broader significance lends them secondary status. The opening sequence is instrumental in establishing this frame of reference: Prestoungrange explains the inception of the project while the viewer is treated to a series of scene-setting images including a dark, silent profile of a stitcher, suggesting he, the narrator, offers the ideas and vision, and she provides the labour. In this way, the editorial framing of the female stitchers’ views in this record of popular history-making parallels the way family history is framed by the academic community – the personal appears parochial, in the sense of it being cut off from larger preoccupations rather than connected to them. There is particular irony, here, in the fact that it is possible to make the case that it is Margaret McCabe’s history that is a more relational and connected use of the past.

At the same time, by virtue of inclusion of the stitchers’ perspectives, the film is also demonstrating that history for its own sake is not necessarily sufficient to engage participants, and that a personal connection with emotional resonance offers a way into history. Arran Johnston’s emphasis on the importance to the Prestonpans Tapestry project of community memory work (discussed in Chapter 1) is one way of acknowledging this; in this chapter, the stitchers’ deployment of family as a frame of reference provides another. Here we may recall Jerome de Groot’s proposition that we should see embodiment as a key feature of popular history practices, whether in physical form through re-enactment, or in imaginative form. Elsewhere, he makes specific reference to the genealogical construct as a useful method of ‘picking a route’ through the past, identifying the intellectual path with the journey a body might take.  

It is in the light of the observations above that the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry can be understood as a conceptual development of the two earlier Scottish works, all three being the work of designer Andrew Crummy. The later tapestry differs from the earlier tapestries in important ways. First, its method of assembling material was more egalitarian. There was no historical expert as gate-keeper to decide on the subject matter of panels. Instead, the organisers sought involvement from countries

---

259 In practice, production of the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Great Diaspora Tapestry overlapped. The former was completed and displayed in September 2013; panels continued to be added to the latter until 2015.
with substantial diasporic populations, and then encouraged those who wished to participate as stitchers to suggest particular diasporic histories for inclusion. Stitchers were actively encouraged to draw on personal anecdote where possible, and to collaborate with Crummy regarding the detailed design of panels.\(^{260}\) Steve Grosby’s discussion of nationhood is a useful pointer to how we should see the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry’s change of emphasis. He frames it as part of a broader preoccupation with origins in which the family takes precedence and the nation is secondary to our sense of belonging, encouraging us to regard relations between members of a nation and members of a family in a similar light.\(^{261}\) Rather than envisaging one as involving the external world and the other the private domain we can understand both as concerned with identity, offering parity between the apparently grand themes of defining battles and national stories (the focus of Chapter 1), and anecdotally led stories of the past.

At the same time, in envisaging this tapestry as diasporic in its thematic emphasis: ‘not Scotland telling the diaspora but listening to what the diaspora had to tell us,’ the coordinating team endow the project with a post-colonial flavour.\(^{262}\) The conception of the project as an exercise in listening rather than telling may involve a veiled criticism of the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s deployment of the more restricted perspective of nation, and a more centralised mode of decision-making.\(^{263}\) It offers the prospect of encompassing minority voices that the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s organising principles have a tendency to stifle, and provides a response to Rosenzweig and Thelen’s call for history-making that is at once more local and intimate and more global and cosmopolitan.\(^{264}\)

But Rosenzweig and Thelen envisage this as a programme by which the academic historian might constructively influence public history-making to avoid charges of parochiality. Whereas, Kalela’s more inclusive ‘shared histories’ model offers a more productive perspective for thinking about community tapestry. He

\(^{260}\) Stitcher panels were supplemented by additional panels selected by the organising committee to fill gaps in coverage.

\(^{261}\) Grosby, Nationalism, pp.119-20.


\(^{263}\) Prestoungrange remarked critically on the Great Tapestry of Scotland project’s absence of a large party on completion in order to thank the stitchers – unlike at Prestonpans. Interview with Prestoungrange, 30 May 2014.

\(^{264}\) Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ p.51.
proposes that rather than persisting in judging public history according to a narrowly academic agenda, scholarly pursuit should involve greater effort to understand the variety of history practices in society, as ‘jointly produced collective views of the past, conglomerates of various public, popular and scholarly histories.’ Tapestry itself might be understood as a medium that actively encourages the production of shared histories, since it brings together in different measures elements of expert knowledge, public narrative, myth, local history and personal anecdote. It is to investigation of the individuated stitcher perspectives, and whether or not they are able to encompass both the local and the global, that discussion now turns.

**Personalised history and identity**

Acknowledgement and incorporation of the stitchers’ identity as a contributory history within the body of the Scottish tapestries can be understood as operating on a continuum. In the Prestonpans Tapestry, the grand narrative of the Jacobite rebellion is enriched by autobiographical stitchers’ nametags, a metanarrative concerned with the history of the tapestry’s production. With regard to the Great Tapestry of Scotland, while the narrative remained under centralised control, marginal areas of the panels were left blank to encourage stitchers to research related subject matter and contribute ideas to the design. In the case of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, ideas for whole panels were sought from stitcher-participants, giving them an active role in using family experiences to shape the narrative. As we have seen, we can read the inspiration for the looser, more democratic approach of the Diaspora-based project in the value the Prestonpans stitchers placed on personal history in *Stitches for Charlie*. Their comments contain the kernel of the idea for the later tapestry, which facilitates a personal relationship to history, stitched large, as opposed to confining it to a nametag in the corner. This section appraises particular iterations of the personalised relation between stitcher and panel in order to establish history’s utility as a resource when individuals engage in life review.

Of the four interviews on which I draw below, the three with Rosemary, Jenny, and Uzma and her mother Almas were conducted during the initial exhibition for the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry (May 30-31, 2014), and the fourth one, with Sue, at the

---

265 Kalela, *Making History*, pp.75f.
Great Tapestry of Scotland’s exhibition in Anchor Mill, Paisley (June 1, 2014). The wide geographical spread of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, and its sheer size (over 300 panels) mean that the material covered in this chapter – as with all the chapters, but in this instance especially – cannot be assumed to be representative of the stitchers’ concerns across the project as a whole. And while the three interviews concerning the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry all manifest strong personal relations between the participants and the historic material of their panels – each was responsible for choosing the history depicted – this is not the case throughout the tapestry. However, my argument is that personalised and/or genealogical modes of relating to history represent a clearly discernible strand. The Great Tapestry of Scotland participant, Sue, and her panel operate as a foil because here the panel was allocated to the participant rather than chosen by her; nevertheless, her interview too manifests a personalised frame of reference. To be clear then, most but not all of the panels discussed here involve participants’ personal history, and I discuss how this is reflected in the panels, but of greater interest are the ways participants utilise personal history, and may even append a personalised frame of reference to apparently unrelated historic subject matter in the course of discussion.

Rosemary, in her sixties and New Zealand-born but living in Australia, told me about the two panels that she stitched to memorialise her Scots-born ancestors. Her great-great-grandparents were involved in successive gold rushes in Bendigo, Australia (1852), and Gabriel’s Gully, New Zealand (1861). Both panels include the names of Rosemary’s forebears Mary Ann and William Hay, and focus on William, portrayed as a dynamic male figure, panning for gold at Bendigo and holding aloft a nugget at Gabriel’s Gully (figs 2.1 and 2.2). The Bendigo panel also commemorates the Red Ribbon Agitation (a protest against a tax on the miners), so Hay sports a ribbon in his hat, and the supporting narrative in the official guidebook to the tapestry explains its significance. The textual commentary on the Gabriel’s Gully panel devotes space to the stitcher’s connection to the subject matter:

266 She also features in Chapter 1 of the thesis.
267 Ibid., p.295.
2.1 Bendigo Gold Rush, Australia (SDT AU19 p.295). Mary Ann Hay’s name is at the top. © Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Rosemary Farmer, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

2.2 Gabriel’s Gully, New Zealand (SDT NZ06 p.320). Initials of both Mary and William are bottom-left. © Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Rosemary Farmer, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.
Many Scots joined the rush (including the stitcher’s great great grand parents, William and Mary Ann Hay) William went ahead from the Bendigo gold fields in Australia; Mary Ann followed with their four children, carrying them and their goods fifty miles along the bush track to Lawrence Tuapeka, and their new life.\textsuperscript{268}

The Australian historian Graeme Davison has noted that fortitude in difficult circumstances, rather than virtue, tends to be the common motif where Australian ancestors are held up for inspiration, and as might be anticipated, Rosemary dwelt on anecdotes that reflected her Antipodean-Scots forebears’ strong vein of ‘get up and go,’ during our discussion.\textsuperscript{269} She also referred to episodes from her own life. Without explicitly stating that she sees her ancestors’ resilience as a source of her own strength of character, she set in place clear parallels. Rosemary too has led a peripatetic existence owing to the career of her husband, who was a consultant trouble-shooter for the smelting industries at an international level. Note, in particular, the spirit of pragmatism with which she presents her response to her husband’s suggestion that they might move to South Africa at a particular point in their lives: ‘Well . . . don’t buy shoes without trying them on! So, off we went to have a look, and it was like it was a business trip [?] that— oh, I’d like to live here!’\textsuperscript{270} The exclamation on which this sentence ends seems intended to indicate that her own enthusiasm for the move was the deciding factor. It also echoes the account of Mary Ann’s removal to Gabriel’s Gully. In the twenty-first-century removal, the couple make an exploratory visit together, as opposed to the wife bringing up the rear, but female grit can be seen as fundamental to both stories if we understand one of their functions as conceptualising the marriage-partnership as an affirmation of the successful family unit. In this way, she aligns her own can-do attitude with the sturdy settler stock of her ancestors.

Carolyn Steedman calls this process historical identification: ‘The past is searched for something . . . that confirms the searcher in his or her sense of self, confirms them as they want to be, and feel in some measure that they already are.’\textsuperscript{271} It is of note, here,

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., p.320.
\textsuperscript{269} Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ p.69.
\textsuperscript{270} Interview with Rosemary, 30 May 2014. See also Appendix B.
that Rosemary told me that her interest in her family’s genealogy pre-dates involvement with the tapestry. Commenting on one genealogist’s response to the fruits of her search – ‘I now have an identity, knowing exactly who I am and where I come from,’ – Davison cautions against the academic tendency to dismiss the satisfactions of heredity, and argues that its reconstructive processes might help to counter a sense of disruptive change and the loosening of family links in the modern world.272 Interestingly, Rosemary mentioned one of her children has chosen to live back in Scotland, which is why she happened to be in the vicinity of Prestonpans at the gestation of the original tapestry project; providing evidence of both disruption to the family unit, and, at the same time, new opportunities for reaffirming the link with Scottish roots.

Nevertheless, de Groot highlights the commercial and automated operations of genealogy in its modern guise, which systematise, monetise and serve up datasets according to algorithms that may blunt distinction and variety because they work by interpreting commonality among individual records, rather than difference.273 At one point Rosemary expressed frustration at the lack of a birth certificate for her great-great grandfather, demonstrating the way this kind of defined documentary evidence mediates the genealogist’s sense of achievement. Nevertheless, towards the end of the interview, the satisfaction she expressed at what she had found out suggested that the process of narrativising her family tree is at least as important as the assembling of hard data: ‘Oh my goodness me, what a great heritage we have– every one of those nine children achieved beautifully!’274 This is in tune with the ‘gentle strain of feminism’ read, by Davison, into approaches to family history that are less concerned with tracing lineage than identifying common experience, often with particular focus on female rather than male antecedents.275 I have already discussed the underlying parallel between Rosemary and Mary Ann’s lives. Significantly, although the male figures are memorialised in the tapestry imagery, both male and female antecedents’ names appear in the embroidery, and in the Bendigo panel, Mary Ann’s name is visually the more prominent, spanning the brow of the marginal border of the image, and drawing the eye. The perimeter borders encircling the images are commonly

272 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ pp.69-70.
274 Interview with Rosemary.
reserved for names and dates and by virtue of their slightly piecemeal, often heavily distilled treatment, stand less clearly in the relation of captions to the images than is the case with the other two tapestries.276 It is principally by virtue of the delimiting effect of these textual markers that we are encouraged to read the images as specific individuals, but we do not have to do this: we might instead understand the two components to work independently – a memorialising text and a generic image. Clearly Rosemary identified the male pioneer figure with her forebear. However, if we choose to ignore the text, these two panels work equally well as portraits of common experiences of the gold rush.

What is lacking in the pioneering preoccupations these panels express is acknowledgement of the pre-existing relation to the land of the indigenous populations of Australia and New Zealand, something else that Davison remarks on with regard to family history.277 Genealogy may be deployed to provide a conveniently restricted perspective, a ‘privatising of the past’: a rationale according to which broader historical perspectives are avoided.278 Davison makes the point, however, that female and feminist historians of recent years have turned family history to radical ends in order to probe the ‘guilty knowledge’ of trespass, wielding the form in such a way that it may not just console, but also disturb.279 A case in point is Sally Morgan’s autobiography in which the subject, searching for the truth of a past that she discovers involves miscegenation, declares to relatives who wish to paper over the cracks that she has a right to know her own history.280 In this and other cases the unflinching search for origins provides an incentive for confronting fracture, discontinuity and broken lineage, leading Davison to propose that family history may be both powerful and unsettling; redemptive and restitutive.281

Unlike Rosemary, who worked on material in which she saw herself as having a direct stake, Sue worked jointly with a group of friends and acquaintances on a panel for the Great Tapestry of Scotland allocated them by the organisers: an image of Glasgow School of Art framed by the figures of its designer, Charles Rennie

276 Compare the Great Tapestry of Scotland images in Chapter 1.
277 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ p.73.
278 Rosenzweig and Thelen, ‘Presence of the Past,’ p.49.
279 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ pp.73 and 76.
280 Sally Morgan, My Place (South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987).
281 Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ pp.77, 80.
Mackintosh, and his wife, the artist Margaret McDonald (see Chapter 1, fig. 1.2). Her panel thus offers a comparator and foil to Rosemary’s. However, Dorie Wilkie took care to match the subject matter of panels to groups of stitchers living in relevant areas where possible. Although born in Yorkshire, Sue has lived near Glasgow for thirty years, so she referred to the art school as local and the panel’s subject as one to which she felt close, since she admires the work of the two artists. Sue interwove discussion of the subject of her panel with personal anecdote in such a way as to establish a personalised and idiosyncratic frame of reference which appropriated the past of the panel to her own experience. She reacted to my mention of the November 2014 fire at Glasgow School of Art in the following way:

On that Friday it was not funny, I was nearly in tears. I was out gardening and C. in the village said, ‘Have you seen the news?’, so I went on the net because obviously I’d missed the news [. . .] and thought, ‘I don’t believe this . . .’. And a little later:

. . . a friend said to me ‘I nearly sent you a text that said you need to go back and embroider some flames coming out and then I thought, maybe not,’ and I thought, ‘No, you’d not have been my friend, I was very delicate on the Friday.’

Choice of the word ‘delicate’ aligns her sense of self with a comprehension of the fragility of the material world. She claims special status for herself with regard to the effects of the fire by virtue of involvement in the embroidered depiction, and this is validated by the anecdote regarding a friend who held back a flippant text message in acknowledgement of Sue’s heightened sensitivity. Sue thus presents herself in an empathetic, connected, quasi-proprietorial relationship with the building, by virtue of

---

282 Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.233. The Great Tapestry of Scotland’s square panels are larger than the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry panels: a metre squared as opposed to half a metre squared: more suitable for groups than individuals.
283 Interview with Wilkie, 31 May 2014. See also Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.xiii.
284 Interview with Sue, 1 June 2014.
285 Ibid.
her association with its embroidered representation together with her status as local to the area. This is conceptualised as an enhanced emotional connection as opposed to an enhanced understanding of the work, recalling Prestoungrange’s comment with regard to the murals at Prestonpans that people became proud of their history by painting it. It is a further manifestation of de Groot’s idea that the point of popular expressions of history is to offer us embodiment in physical or imaginative form in ‘a performance of pastness,’ that reinserts emotion and fosters intimacy by association.\footnote{De Groot, ‘Affect and Empathy,’ 594.}

At another point in our discussion I suggested to Sue that her interest in the tapestry, a visual means of representing history, might be linked to the emphasis of her speech therapy career:

*Sue:* I was a speech and language therapist but now I’m retired. But I’m very much into that sort of thing, um— if somebody’s not understanding, you show them something— um, I did alternative and augmentative education as my speciality [. . .]

*AH:* Do you think it sort of links in to being interested in visual culture— because *this* is show and tell?

*Sue:* I’m wondering if it is a lot of— why I did the speech therapy that I did, because my granny was a weaver— my mum’s mum was a weaver, dad’s mum was a lace-maker— because— in Yorkshire— was all the textiles, and the mills. And my grandad was very creative; although he was a blacksmith, he did wrought ironwork and he did things that now it would be— ‘Wow.’ So I come from that side of it and then got into the— [work with those who] can’t communicate— but this is me going down my— history— and I do a lot of photography, I’m in to— and I make audio-visuals. I’m doing an AV of how we made our panel. I don’t do the videos, but I do the slides to music.\footnote{Interview with Sue.}
My reference to the tapestry is oblique: ‘this is show and tell,’ and either she misunderstands my train of thought, or it is superfluous to her own, which has turned to relating the visual emphasis of her own professional career – during which she worked with those who ‘can’t communicate’ – to her grandparents’ craft skills. Perhaps because she is talking about livelihoods rather than hobbies, and perhaps because she is assuming that the tapestry provides an unspoken context for these parallels, she doesn’t draw attention to her own embroidery skill as a further textile link to her two grandmothers. The point she is making revolves around non-verbal dexterity and the potential it offers for communication, in which context, the audio-visuals she makes (including one commemorating the tapestry panel’s production) offer further support. So while she does not at this point relate our discussion to the tapestry’s role in making history meaningful, in a summing up piece near the end of her interview, she went on to affirm that:

I see [i.e. understand] in pictures, and when I see a picture like that, I can actually, although it’s an embroidery, I can actually imagine it actually happening and then– ooh– I wonder what happened after.288

My argument here is that her digression into discussing the particular family propensities she believes she has inherited illuminates how she feels about her panel. The skills of her forebears offer an indirect link between Sue and the School of Art itself, renowned for artistic excellence in a variety of media, including textile design, and celebrating craft skills including joinery and metalwork (recalling the skill of her grand-father) through its built structure. Thus Sue uses family as a way of affirming affinity with the subject of her panel. The use of the present-continuous to frame the digression on family indicates that her observations are experienced as part of an ongoing process of life review. Sociolinguist Charlotte Linde identifies this commonplace oral practice of open-ended life story revision as an important facet of how we make sense of ourselves as coherent individuals.289 The sense of immediacy communicated by use of the present-continuous ‘I’m wondering if,’ suggests this train

288 Ibid.
289 Linde, Life Stories, p.4.
of thought may be relatively recent, and thus possibly prompted by involvement in the tapestry.

There is supporting evidence from other stitchers to suggest that the mental space afforded by work such as embroidery may be fertile ground for reminiscence and life review. In particular the group working jointly on Jenny’s panel (see the next section, ‘Beyond personal identity’), who took turns working on it at home in between collaborative sessions, passed an accompanying notebook around to record details of work done. In three consecutive entries, these practicalities are interspersed with personal reflection:

First stitcher: My first sewing for a few years. April Fool’s Day!!! Remembering when I used to sit with my grandfather who was a tailor and who taught me a few stitches.

Second stitcher: Stem stitched the corners for two hours, thinking of my grandmother who taught me to sew, my own grandchildren, my friends at church and the knitting group.

Third stitcher: Stitched my maiden name SUTHERLAND. Thought about my father and brother. No more Sutherlands in our line.

The first stitcher’s entry acts as a catalyst to those that follow. Each reflection takes a subtly different form and can be seen as a taking stock on different terms: accounting for one’s accomplishments; situating oneself in the family line, and within friendship networks; and coming to terms with the dwindling and death of one’s family members and name. Family and life review are related themes again.

What we might derive from the similarly personal relationships to history expressed by Sue and Rosemary, despite the looser link to panel subject in the case of Sue, is that historical material can provide fertile matter for thinking about our own lives. Where this is the case, however, the past may essentially be functioning as an extension of the present and the individual’s requirement for what John Tosh has

---

290 Sutherland is both the name of the stitcher and the Scottish county.
called ‘a usable past.’\textsuperscript{291} Both stitchers can be understood as interpreting history from a single viewpoint, and to this extent, the level at which they engage with history remains limited.

\textbf{Beyond personal identity}

Some among the participants, on the other hand, exhibited an ability to express and interrogate conflicting perspectives and stand in a dispassionate, though not indifferent, relation to their material. Examination of these instances demonstrates use being made of history to illuminate ideas for others, not just within the confines of the self-narrative. The commentary of Uzma, an independent television producer and the daughter of Pakistani immigrants, on the panel that she and her mother Almas embroidered is an example. This commemorates Almas’ arrival in Scotland from Pakistan as a new bride with her husband in 1966 (\textbf{fig. 2.3}). In the image, her veil is decoratively inscribed with the hopes and expectations she scribbled in Urdu on her copy of the in-flight menu during the plane journey to Scotland, here translated into English:

\begin{quote}
I am so full of enthusiasm at the thought of starting my new life, facing new challenges and experiences, and the love of Arif, who just three weeks ago was a stranger to me.\textsuperscript{292}
\end{quote}

It was Uzma’s idea to include this text because the menu, a family keepsake, has always fascinated her as a window on to her mother’s feelings at the time. By making reference to the recent status of Arif as a stranger to Almas, the text embeds the detail of the couple’s arranged marriage in the panel. Uzma herself also volunteered this information to me early in the interview, and then a little later, she brought it up again:

\begin{quote}
People say, ‘Oh– arranged marriages!’– you know, it’s got a bad repu– connotation, you know. They got married, they’d never seen each other, and here and now, forty-seven years later, my dad still introduces my mum as the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{291} Tosh, \textit{Why History Matters}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
2.3 New Bride, Pakistan (SDT PK03 p.105). Almas’ expectant menu scribblings are embroidered on her veil.
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Almas Mir and Uzma Mir-Young, Glasgow, Scotland.

2.4 Indian Wedding: Bride, India (SDT IN19 p.131). This bride’s tears are interwoven with the paisley pattern.
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Nusrat Parveen, Rukhsana Hussain, Shabnum Bashir and Shamrooz Channa, Edinburgh, Scotland.
most beautiful woman in the world, and she gets so embarrassed. She goes, ‘Oh for God’s sake everybody’s looking at me, they’re going— what? Is that it?’ You know.\footnote{Interview with Uzma and Almas, 31 May 2014. See also Appendix B.}

Uzma here acknowledges conflicting opinions around arranged marriage, but turns the narrative into an amusing anecdote that clearly underlines the bond between this husband and wife. Almas picked up on her daughter’s commentary and developed the anecdote further, by confirming, amidst laughter, how Arif still insists on the beauty of his wife when he has an audience of grand-children, to their general bemusement in the face of her advanced age. Near the end of our interview Uzma returned to her theme a third time:

People are shocked, you know, when I tell them it was an arranged marriage, but my dad still does that bit about, you know— and they’re still in love, and things like that— at the end of the day, you know, there’s a lot of bad stuff, obviously, but there’s good stuff too; you don’t always get to hear about the good stuff because it’s not sensational, it’s not headline news really.\footnote{Ibid.}

Uzma’s concluding comment suggests that creating the panel is one way of airing the ‘good stuff’ concerning arranged marriage in the face of the lack of exposure this perspective receives in modern Britain. Reflecting on the value of the genealogical TV series \textit{WDYTYA?}, Anne-Marie Kramer concludes that at its most potent, personalised history such as this ‘challenges and corrects’ authorised history and enables the personal to enrich our understanding of the social formation.\footnote{Kramer, ‘Mediatizing Memory,’ p.441} Her particular point of reference for this assertion is the way in which an episode on chef Ainsley Harriott’s unexpected family history problematises binary views of Black heritage. His ancestors are revealed to have included a white slave-owner, which causes Harriott himself to question his preconceptions and assert the significance of his role in bearing witness to the complexity of Black history.\footnote{Interestingly, Kramer’s example echoes Graeme Davison’s in foregrounding miscegenation.}
Uzma’s narrative highlights a different form of cultural disjuncture. I met Uzma and Almas at the launch event for the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry exhibition, and Uzma’s observation was made just after I had asked what she and her mother thought of the exhibition as a whole. Uzma commented on the diversity of stories and the opportunity for telling one’s ‘back-story’ and listening to the stories of others. Almas again followed up on her daughter’s observations with a supporting comment: ‘I think it creates the variance, you know: perceptions of people.’ Amongst the Indian panel series there is a second panel incorporating a bride who travels from the Asian sub-continent (fig. 2.4). Unlike the excited trepidation of Almas, leaving home causes this bride to shed tears of sadness which dissolve into the paisley pattern of her veil. Thus repetition with subtle differentiation expresses the rich, untidy variety that individuated voices bring to history. It is a characteristic that is not easily assimilable, but the bagginess of tapestry offers space to such voices and plays an important role in counterbalancing more restricted exercises in affirming identity. For instance, Hilda Kean refers to the one-dimensional nostalgia of Ah’d Gaa Back Tomorrwal, a volume of reminiscences that resulted from a community project bringing together a group of female pit-brow workers from the north-west of England to talk about their poorly-paid, back-breaking work.²⁹⁷ By contrast, the dual representation of Asian migrant bride experience illustrates the way in which Jorma Kalela’s inclusive and potentially cross-cultural ‘shared’ mode of history-making can encompass an ‘amalgam of different and often contradictory views,’ amongst which the academic historian’s temptation to arbitrate between true and false falls away.²⁹⁸

Uzma’s return to the theme of arranged marriage in the context of reference to the stories of others may indicate sensitivity to social attitudes. However, the shift of perspective in the course of the narrative, from that of an externalised (other) ‘people’ at the beginning of the observation, to ‘you don’t always get to hear’ where the first-person plural, ‘we,’ would serve as easily as ‘you,’ is a covert acknowledgement that she is including herself. Significantly she nowhere says that arranged marriage is a path that she herself would follow, hinting at potential difficulty in assimilating her mother’s experience. In conjunction with the reference to back-story, this suggests that for Uzma (as for Sue) this is an opportunity for life review: an exercise in memory work

²⁹⁷ Kean, introduction to The Public History Reader, p.xxiii.
²⁹⁸ Kalela, Making History, p.79.
and negotiating personal identity: specifically, how she feels about her parents’ arranged marriage. In an interesting development, a film entitled *Partition: Legacy of the Line*, produced and co-directed by Uzma Mir Young, appeared as part of the BBC’s Partition season in 2017.\textsuperscript{299} In the film, TV and radio broadcaster and journalist, Aasmah Mir (Uzma’s sister), and fellow-journalist Sanjeev Kohli investigated the Partition stories of those who later migrated to Scotland, including their own fathers, Muslim and Sikh, respectively, living on opposite sides of the Partition line. The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry panel also featured. The suite of programmes of which this was part focused on exploring Partition through a diverse variety of voices, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and British colonial, and their children and grand-children. The material communicated a sense of the pain of memories for the older generations, the gulf between their experience and that of their descendants, and at the same time, in an example of Marianne Hirsch’s concept of ‘postmemory,’ the way the experience leaves its imprint, for some, in a sense of rootlessness and insecurity.\textsuperscript{300} Those taking the role of narrator-protagonists were often people of early middle age (the age of Uzma herself); individuals old enough to be conducting a process of life-review of their own, at the same time as affording opportunity to those with first-hand memories to attempt to verbally piece together experience. The frame of reference was thus simultaneously one of closeness to, and distance from events, and absorbs lessons from the *WDYTYA?* format, in terms of the empathetic charge of a personally involved narrator.\textsuperscript{301} At the same time the particularity of Partition’s divisive subject matter required that each programme opted for use of two or more narrators.

In the panel, the prominent position of Uzma’s mother’s name and the date of her arrival in Scotland – directly below the image of her parents – suggests Uzma associates her mother’s experience with a bygone era. It attaches a sense of *in

\textsuperscript{299} Uzma Mir Young, producer and co-director, *Partition: Legacy of the Line* (Turmeric Media for the BBC; first aired BBC2 Scotland, 13 August 2017). Other programmes included *My Family, Partition and Me: India 1947* (Wall to Wall Media), *Dangerous Borders: India & Pakistan* (October Films and Open University) and, for BBC R4, *Partition Voices*. Mir’s TV production comes as a late addition, enriching the last draft of this chapter.


\textsuperscript{301} *My Family, Partition and Me: India 1947*, narrated by Anita Rani, built on her appearance in *WDYTYA?* (series 12, first aired 1 October 2015), and involved continued exploration of her own history as well as others.
memoriam to it, although this idea is in tension with the fact that the lack of an end-date indicates that her mother is alive and well. She was, of course, standing beside her during the course of the interview. The historical fact of the way her parents were brought together is in the past, but its results – the strong marriage and Uzma herself – are in the present. Uzma also recounted that at the beginning of the project’s gestation she said to her mother, ‘Your menu is– going to actually do something!’ and this too suggests a desire to historicise her mother’s experience: to show it respect while at the same time situating herself at a critical distance from it. Uzma’s panel, as well as her TV production, illustrate Annette Kuhn’s understanding of memory work as an opportunity to examine the relations between “public” historical events and family dramas, relations of class, national identity and gender, and “personal” memory. Among this suite of concerns, the association between family and origins is the incentive for navigating potentially difficult material: de Groot’s ‘route’ through the past; Davison’s ‘redemptive quality’; and for Kramer, the ‘idiom’ facilitating an imaginative engagement with the past that would otherwise be absent, such that Stephen Fry, a past participant and advocate of WDDTYA? points out that, ‘While the slaughter of . . . 6 million is hard to fathom, the murder of a named . . . family can move us inexpressibly . . .’

Alison Landsberg argues that even where the memories of others are served up in accessible, ‘prosthetic,’ form, the simultaneous empathetic and distancing mental acts this stimulates involve us in a complex set of engagements with the past. Uzma’s speech act, which struggles to reconcile her own present-day narrative with her mother’s past and present narratives in an effort to contain these multiple perspectives, offers a flavour of this. The concept of the lay excavator of family history as the disseminator of a form of expert knowledge is relevant here. Michael Frisch argues that academics should acknowledge the ‘authority’ of audiences and popular history-makers, ‘grounded in culture and experience rather than academic expertise.’

302 Kuhn, Family Secrets, p.5.
He argues for dialogue and ‘shared authority’ between these two forms of knowing. Kramer comes close to saying the same thing when she presents Ainsley Harriott’s act of bearing witness to the idiosyncrasy of personal history as a challenge to official history. The popular history-maker’s individuated experience (and that of his or her family) is a form of expertness that provides the distinctive textural wrinkles in the project of history-making conceptualised as a shared enterprise. Thus as a second generation British-Asian with close personal proximity to the model of arranged marriage, Uzma’s experience gives her the authority to present it from more than one perspective.

Jenny provides another example of a Scottish Diaspora Tapestry participant negotiating multiple perspectives. Casting herself as an artist first, a historical researcher second, she explained she had become interested in history while working on an art project on Glasgow’s industrial heritage for which she investigated a Clyde port authority building that was once the largest granary in Europe. She put together what she calls a ‘holistic’ exhibition encompassing the research she unearthed, along with sculpture, oil paintings and old video footage of employees, and realised, ‘I enjoyed that digging.’ Her use of the word ‘holistic’ provides an affirmation of the idea that visual media give us special access to the past, recalling the observations concerning immediacy made by Alexander McCall Smith and Sue in Chapter 1.

Jenny contacted Andrew Crummy with suggestions for a tapestry panel on the history of the Border shepherds after she noticed there was nothing dealing with this in the Great Tapestry of Scotland. Once the panel design was established she worked closely with a local knitting group who agreed to stitch the panel, ‘Rutherford Collies’ (fig. 2.5). The panel relates to the shepherds’ movements, first as internal migrants to Caithness and Sutherland in the far north of Scotland, to farm Cheviot sheep as part of the Clearances, and then overseas. Many of these families’ descendants subsequently followed those they displaced, emigrating to Australia and New Zealand during the famine years of the first few decades of the nineteenth century.

---

306 The project was part of Glasgow’s European Capital of Culture year (1990).
307 Interview with Jenny, 31 May 2014. See also Appendix B.
308 She has written an as yet unpublished book on the subject entitled Shepherds in the Straths.
century. The panel incorporates references to both removals through embroidered family and place names, while the imagery focuses on the Border collies introduced at each location. This can be seen as another instance of difficult material muted through the choices made with regard to the panel design. The human experience is reduced to a condensed, cipher-like text, while the story of Clyde and Lassie, the two dogs sent on request to the Rutherford family in Australia in 1864 (which became progenitors of the Rutherford Rough Collie), become the prominent narrative. The material would be clearer if it had been dealt with as two separate panels. On the other hand, commemorating internal and international migratory movements at once contains and submerges the less palatable elements of the story.

Jenny’s unfolding commentary gave voice to the difficulties the episode of internal migration involves. She began at the end of the story, with an anecdote about families working together to overpower the outlaw ‘Mad Dog Morgan’ in order to free his hostages, using it to demonstrate the close bonds that grew up between the emigrant families in Australia:

And this is this kinship, which I’ve noticed throughout the whole of the story when I was working on it. This incredible kinship is there, because families—working together. 309

In this way she re-framed the initial emphasis of the narrative she was telling through an affirmation of family as opposed to Scots displacing Scots. She moved from kinship abroad to an emphasis on the size of native Border families (some with fourteen or more children), as the motive for the spirit of ‘enterprise,’ with which internal migration was undertaken. She also deployed the analogy of contemporary Polish immigrants: ‘They’ve just said, –look, we need to do something new,’ a useful comparator since it reminds us of the similarly indignant public discourse around the threat of displaced workers, though she herself used this to espouse the perspective of the incomer. Only after highlighting the challenge presented by the harsher environment of the far north did she go on to acknowledge the nineteenth-century conflict between incomers and native inhabitants:

309 Interview with Jenny.
2.5 Rutherford Collies, Australia (SDT AU17 p.293). © Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Helmsdale Knitters: Joan Murray, Ros Hulme, Muriel Amey, Rona Ellis, Linda Letton, Anne Sinclair, Gerry Wood and Jennifer Bruce (coordinator), Caithness, Scotland.

They [the Borders migrants] were up against— the hatred. They were loathed. They were despised. They were probably spat on [. . .] because they had taken the houses away from those people; they had taken the land [?] away from those crofters. But— the story isn’t— hasn’t been told, and it hasn’t been documented as well as it could be, because of the back-history there: poverty, um, famines, poor— the whole— in 1807, the whole area of Durness— all the local sheep were wiped out.\textsuperscript{310}

Here Jenny focuses on how poor documentation means our knowledge is patchy, seeming to suggest this disadvantaged the shepherds to a greater extent than it did the native cotters,\textsuperscript{311} and draws attention to the fact that genuine hardship was experienced not just by the cotters but by the Border shepherds, through the reference to loss of the sheep. Note the use of the passive voice, focusing attention on the Border folk as opposed to the crofters. The short, jerky sentences seem to communicate Jenny’s struggle to find a way of talking about the subject. This is in contrast with the relaxed enthusiasm of the first extract on kin working together to outwit Mad Dog Morgan; a narrative that facilitates easy identification with a group in distress against an enemy-interloper figure.

Family was not Jenny’s only theme. She referred to Borders expertise in sheep farming in the tradition of the monastic farmers of the area, and the demand for wool from Flanders weavers from the fifteenth century onwards, deploying these narratives as legitimising historic contexts for the internal migration. But by beginning with the Mad-Dog anecdote concerned with family unity, Jenny’s narrative offered a way of negotiating the complexity associated with other parts of the Borders story. By conceptualising this as a history that focuses on family loyalty, the pressure of numerous mouths to feed, and the enterprising spirit of deciding, ‘look, we need to do something new,’ she is encouraging us to ask what we would do for our own families faced with straitened circumstances. As Kramer argues in the context of \textit{WDYTYA?}, family as a mode of shared identification thus becomes the idiom through which

\textsuperscript{310}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{311}Cotter/cottar: farm labourer or tenant occupying a cottage in return for labour; crofter: a person who rents and works on a small farm. Jenny used the terms interchangeably.
broader social issues raised by the past can be tackled.\(^{312}\) The halting prose communicates something of the effort of conveying a dual perspective. The way the words are measured out seems to enact an attempt at even-handed recognition of the common currency of poverty experienced by the families of both constituent groups. It bears out Landsberg’s argument that empathy requires imaginative effort, not easy identification.\(^{313}\)

The difficulties of acknowledging the place of this narrative of displacement, outsider status and assimilation within public history manifested themselves in other ways. Jenny related that the first local embroidery group she turned to declined her advances since its members were already involved in a panel celebrating the success of the Border shepherds and their sheepdogs in Patagonia, ‘Caithness Settlers’ \((\text{fig. 2.6})\). This may indicate that other histories offer more immediately accessible material: notably the Patagonia panel includes two human settler figures, in addition to a sheep. Moreover Jenny admitted to some trepidation regarding the preconceptions of the Caithness-based knitting group she eventually persuaded to work with her:

They were, they were— I must admit, because they were very much attuned— you see they’re very much attuned to the other dramatic side of the Clearances from Kildonan. This was a different side . . . [to] the English. This was a different side. And for them, to begin with I felt am I gonna [. . .] Step on toes, or am I gonna encourage them in the right direction on it, erm, but I felt they actually, they’ve warmed to me— and they’ve warmed to my ideas.\(^{314}\)

She is touching here on the fact that one of the difficulties with reconstructing the history of the Border shepherds is that it has been easier for Scots to focus on the injustices meted out by the English during the Clearances than to think about intra-Scottish discord and displacement. It is not just that poverty and illiteracy mean there is little in terms of written records (sheep stealing records were, she says, a valuable resource), but that the shepherds’ story has become submerged because it is a harder subject to accommodate. Jenny’s interview was one of the only instances where a

\(^{312}\) Kramer, ‘Mediatizing Memory,’ pp.437 and 441.

\(^{313}\) Landsberg, Prosthetic Memory, p.135: ‘Empathy, unlike sympathy ... starts from the position of difference.’

\(^{314}\) Interview with Jenny.
subject talked in terms of feeling responsibility for disseminating historical complexity. Nevertheless, she saw the exercise as a qualified success, and informed me that the knitters were planning a commemorative panel of their own which would draw on some of the same material: ‘They’ve warmed to my ideas.’

On two occasions during the course of the interview, Jenny referred to the Border shepherds as ‘my story’ and then appeared to draw back from such close identification, choosing to frame her interest as professionally motivated instead:

Well basically it was part of my story. –Well, part of my research I’d done for three years.

Ok, this is part of my story; it’s part of the beginning of this book that I’ve put together.

Her reticence suggests she believes that to claim too personal a stake in history is to undermine its significance, an artefact of thinking associated with the disinterested stance of the academic. On her web profile, however, she acknowledges ‘personal archival research’ alongside artistic and historical work relating to the heritage of Caithness, suggesting she also recognises that the one provides both explanation and legitimising narrative for the other.

Kalela has warned that ‘the separation of the public past from the private does not always make sense.’ A given public event may be perceived from a standpoint that incorporates it inextricably with an individual’s personal history. And in some instances, the individual’s status as custodian of expert knowledge by virtue of experience means they come to speak for us as powerful emblems of public history, as did Harry Patch (1898-2009), the last surviving fighting combatant of World War I. Jenny’s story involves distant ancestors as opposed to lived experience, but the personal connection appears to inflect her standpoint in an example of Marianne

---

315 Ibid.
316 Ibid.
317 Ibid.
319 Kalela, Making History, p.62.
Hirsch’s cross-generational postmemory. Moreover, the knitting group’s response to what she rather measuredly refers to as ‘my ideas,’ suggests the narrative assembled from her research has encouraged the knitters to reappraise whether ‘existing concepts and values continue to hold true,’ the proper role, according to Kalela, of the historian.

Conclusions
Broadly, two attitudes towards history emerge in this chapter. Some stitchers convey an interest in distinguishing and differentiating between perspectives, others follow a single narrative; some are primarily concerned with situating themselves with regard to history, others appear to see what they are doing at least in part as a question of facilitating others’ appreciation of alternative historical perspectives. Uzma distils from a single episode of family experience a counterbalance to the normative frame of reference in which arranged marriage is viewed in Britain, interrogating both her own beliefs and those of others. On the other hand, the moral significance Rosemary draws from her panels is wholly self-referential despite featuring the potentially rich subject matter of the Antipodean gold rush. The multiple perspectives offered by Jenny and Uzma involve an appreciation of the granularity of history. Like Arran Johnston’s deployment of open interpretation, they do not attempt to close down historical readings and provide an answer; instead they are concerned with putting forward different points of view for consideration. If Rosemary’s panel functions a little like a desk graffito claiming ‘I was here,’ Uzma’s panel is an invitation to re-examine our beliefs in the spirit of Kalela. Thus the unexpected message of Uzma’s panel is more akin to the utilization of embroidered banners by the Women’s Suffrage Movement who wished to persuade onlookers that women could be both feminine and political: both involve(d) a challenge to assumptions.

At its most effective, then, personalising history through the idiom of family can aid historical engagement and facilitate the navigation of complex and difficult material by reducing the perceived remoteness of historical subject matter, and promoting imaginative empathy. Moreover, personal perspectives are not valuable to

---

320 See footnote 300 for Hirsch.
321 Kalela, Making History, p.61.
audiences purely by virtue of their affective charge. Kalela suggests academics underestimate motives for popular history-making when they assume them to be grounded chiefly in a preoccupation with expressing a unified sense of national culture and continuity; rather he emphasises their value as manifestations of little explored diversity: something we see in the dual representation of the Asian migrant bride, or Jenny’s effort to restore less palatable aspects of Border history. It is diversity that provides a rationale for Kalela’s emphasis on the value of attempting to study history through a shared histories model, as an aid to identifying and exploring the full variety of history’s expressions in society.

While the memory work engaged in by Rosemary, Sue and the three Prestonpans stitchers on film is more limited in perspective, significantly it demonstrates individuals utilising a historical frame of reference to situate themselves as part of a continuum in which comprehension of difference as well as similarity is distinguishable. The past operates here as a malleable cultural resource for active engagement as opposed to in the guise of the innately enthralling narrative held up for passive consumption by Prestoungrange and Margulies. The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry works as a way of bridging the conceptual gap expressed in these divergent views of history by realigning and reconfiguring the tapestry template to encompass greater emphasis on personal voices. Moreover, careful analysis of the Stitches for Charlie film uncovers that it is not so much that the stitchers’ approach to history is innately introspective and the initiators’ perspective is outward-looking as that the film’s narrative frames these different conceptions of history in particular ways. The personalised perspective is not necessarily parochial, then. Furthermore, the parochial need not be represented as inward-looking and closed-off. It might instead be represented as a perspective that attends to rich detail. And, taking a lead from the parish’s place within the diocese, we might also reinterpret the parochial as a stance that conveys awareness of its own position as a small unit networked within a larger unit. Its position is at once self-contained and modular, and related to a more ambitious shared project from which it gains meaning and stature – as is the case with the panels of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry. Indeed, more relevant still are the Jersey

---

323 Kalela, Making History, p.158, drawing on Raphael Samuel’s experiences.
and Guernsey tapestries, where the division of labour and number of panels was organised on a parish-by-parish basis, acting as a spur for friendly rivalry.\textsuperscript{324}

The status of being a module within a bigger entity is also a way of describing the individual family’s relation to its membership of other identity groups such as religion, ethnicity and nationality. The more sophisticated Diaspora panels, such as Jenny’s and Uzma’s, encompass a perception of the tension between different identities, different histories, which may be both productive and, at times, uneasy. Family may thus provide the common currency – the lowest common denominator to which most can relate – enabling the forging of imaginative empathetic links between those from diverse backgrounds, and providing a more inclusive organising framework than the narrative of nation.

Nevertheless, the varied levels of sophistication displayed by the stitcher narratives and their panels suggest history-making exercises that vest a high degree of individual autonomy in participants may do so at the expense of devising robust strategies for developing awareness of the links between personally meaningful histories and larger narratives. In response to Thomas Holt’s optimistic, but vague reference to ‘collective and general histories’ that transcend ideas of a universal history, Dipesh Chakrabarty wonders how we might achieve a history that is ‘both collective and general, thus superseding the conflict of various perspectives.’\textsuperscript{325} And it is an issue to which insufficient attention is devoted in the organisation of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry. As one way of addressing this, the next chapter explores a project that deploys a rather different balance between the individual panel and the structure within which it resides.

\textsuperscript{324} See also Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{325} Holt, ‘Experience and Politics,’ pp.394-5; cited in Chakrabarty, ‘Public Life of History: India,’ 166. Holt is a historian of the African diaspora, among other topics.
3: Towards a Critical Public History

Introduction

This chapter moves beyond the previous chapter’s emphasis on genealogical history to investigate the usefulness of a community’s identity as the central organising principle of public history. It uses as its case study the Quaker Tapestry scheme, which, like the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, is thematic and non-chronological, but for which panel subject matter was chosen by committee. This resulted in a more centralised decision-making structure than that of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry but one where the agency of stitcher groups remained important, and discussion and dissent were acknowledged parts of the production process.

The chapter offers a counterbalance to scholarly critique of identity history, proposing instead that where a sensitive balance between organising centre and a scattered periphery of volunteer groups is achieved, identity history may provide a useful and thought-provoking critical lens for history-making. Close analysis of perspectives on the project in conjunction with Quaker philosophy and the panels themselves is central to discussion, together with the critical commentaries on identity history provided by John Tosh and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Tosh has called identity history ‘an uncertain asset’ for a critical public history concerned with making careful distinctions between past and present. Chakrabarty judges the excavation of ‘subaltern pasts,’ pasts that resist historicisation, to have been good for the democratic functioning of societies, but deleterious to the health of historical method. I seek to demonstrate that the Quaker Tapestry scheme complicates these perspectives, since scholarly method exerts some influence but is combined with an

---

326 Tosh, Why History Matters, pp.12-17.
327 Chakrabarty, ‘Public Life of History: India,’ at 157.
idiosyncratically Liberal Quaker line that tempers religious belief with rationalism, resulting in an elegantly synthesised approach to history.\textsuperscript{328}

In the first section I examine the Quaker Tapestry in the context of academic discussions of identity history, and explore its characteristic mix of the rational and the affective with reference to initiator Anne Wynn-Wilson’s observations. In the second section I explore how the role of constructive conflict in Quaker ethics was reflected in the Quaker Tapestry scheme’s practical organisation and the management of stitcher dissent (by the committee and by the stitchers themselves). In the third and fourth sections I use analysis of particular panel designs as a basis for understanding Quaker history as a narrative of dissent, and develop discussion through analysis of how the stitchers themselves express an attitude of critical engagement with the world. I draw these ideas together to consider Quaker history as critical public history.

**Quaker story-telling**

As the only tapestry under discussion that uses history as a medium for giving expression to religious identity, the Quaker Tapestry does something rather different to other exemplars. All can be understood as expressing forms of cultural identity, but while the three Scottish tapestries discussed in earlier chapters and Fishguard’s Last Invasion Tapestry, the subject of Chapter 4, are primarily concerned with histories that express a relationship to place and nation, the Quaker Tapestry uses history to delineate an ethics of living. This is not to say that Quaker history is not also a strand within British history, but the late development of Quakerism as a discrete religious identity and the prominent role played by conscious choice in living as a Quaker, means this is identity history without the essentialism that Tosh has criticised.\textsuperscript{329} This character underwrites the distinctive way the Quaker Tapestry functions as a public history of Liberal Quaker values, and provides a critical tool for analysing identity history as envisaged by the work of Tosh and Chakrabarty.

\textsuperscript{328} There are three main strands of Quakerism – Evangelical, Conservative and Liberal, which take distinct lines. Since Liberal Quakerism is dominant in Britain, and the Quaker Tapestry is British, I assume a Liberal Quaker perspective. For a useful summary of the differences, see the tabular representation in Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp.108-9. Of Liberal Quakerism, Dandelion (p.132) says, ‘Based on a rationalist expression of Christianity... it is characterised today by a permissive attitude to belief and caution over explicit theology.’

\textsuperscript{329} Tosh, *Why History Matters*, p.15.
Tosh suggests we might more usefully understand identity history under the aegis of ‘collective memory’ rather than history. In so doing he suggests it belongs beyond the bounds of historical enquiry as understood by academics. Similarly, Chakrabarty distinguishes between ‘minority histories,’ which are assimilable to historical enquiry because they can be organised and understood as logical narratives presented from ‘rationally defensible’ standpoints, and ‘subaltern pasts,’ which lie beyond the discipline of history. Subaltern pasts, he says, cannot be historicised because they fall outside ‘the deployment of reason in public life,’ and instead rely, for instance, on the supernatural regime, or personal opinion. Chakrabarty’s subaltern pasts are not exclusively the pasts of socially subordinate groups, since members of elite and dominant groups may acknowledge subaltern pasts as part of their life-world. This is the case, for instance, with creationism in Western society (and indeed, much religious belief). In this chapter I use the Quaker Tapestry project as a foil to academic critique that inclines towards designating identity history and/or public history with identity oriented preoccupations – as a form of ‘non-history,’ conceptually banished beyond history’s rational bounds. I argue instead that it is hybrid in character and propose that we engage more fully with the elements that provide a productive, thoughtful corrective to dominant narratives. Tapestry initiator Anne Wynn-Wilson’s introductory comments on the tapestry are a useful starting point:

Since the dawn of recorded history, craftspeople have used their skills to tell stories. Such a record is The Quaker Tapestry. . . . The Tapestry is not an academic history, but a celebration of insights – that is perceived wisdom – that have motivated the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) since their founding in 1652 by George Fox.

. . . The outcome is an experiment in education and communication made possible by embroidery and story-telling.

---

330 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.16.
331 Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ p.16. For a recent resumé of the origin of use of the term subaltern in a politised context in Gramsci’s prison writings of the 1930s, and its appropriation by the Subaltern Studies Group in the 1980s, see Banerjee, ‘The Subaltern,’ 39-49.
332 Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ 18. His starting point is Ranajit Guha’s important article ‘The Prose of Counter-insurgency,’ in Selected Subaltern Studies, ed. Guha and Spivak, pp.45-84, which attempts to explain the religiously motivated Santal rebellion of 1855.
333 Wynn-Wilson, prologue to Quaker Tapestry, p.1. Wynn-Wilson died in 1998; see also Appendix C.
She appears to distance the tapestry from academic history. In an exercise that Tosh might recognise as embodying the tendency to mine history for ‘a usable past,’ as opposed to delineating a subject in ‘full social and cultural context,’ she conceptualises the tapestry as celebratory.\(^{334}\) And she talks in terms of stories/story-telling rather than history, relating the Quaker scheme to the ideas discussed in Chapter 1 which privilege the tale-teller’s familiarity over the historian’s formal authority. However by linking embroidery and story-telling together as traditional crafts, she authorises the status of the embroidering tale-teller through the precedent of tradition. And she deploys a subtext connoting historical authority, including the words ‘record’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘education.’ The passage may thus serve to remind us that all narratives – whether fairy-tales, embroideries or histories – involve a degree of artifice in the imparting of shape and meaning. As Hayden White has influentially argued, the historian is essentially a story-teller, and the urge to impose shape on the past through historical interpretation involves a forfeiting of claims to objectivity and truth-telling, productively blurring the lines as regards academic claims to disinterested historical method.\(^{335}\) In identifying academic history as, ‘primarily concerned with the crafting of narratives,’ and minority histories with narratability, Chakrabarty too foregrounds issues of artifice and construction in the craft of the historian.\(^{336}\) Wynn-Wilson’s comments also problematise the straightforward division between the idea of academic history as authorised and legitimate, and non-academic history as illegitimate.

If we revisit the quotation from Wynn-Wilson used in Chapter 1 in the light of these points, we can now tease out further significance:

*Printed words in prepared statements might not be read, but embroidery is immediately attractive and presents no threat. The craftsmanship and illustrated stories catch the imagination and the message gets through.*\(^{337}\)

---

\(^{335}\) White, ‘The Value of Narrativity.’  
\(^{336}\) Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ 16.  
\(^{337}\) Wynn-Wilson, prologue to *Quaker Tapestry*, p.26.
The first sentence concentrates on embroidery’s unthreatening appeal, as discussed previously. The second sentence qualifies this idea. It refers to embroidery’s impact on the imagination, mobilises the verb ‘catch’ in its capacity to arrest the attention, and relates this to the idea of communicating a message. So here Wynn-Wilson is offering something new. Embroidery’s power is presented as more than simply the power to evoke an affective response (a major theme of Chapters 1 and 2); the medium is conceptualised in a pedagogic, message-bearing role. The past is the subject matter through which the message is conveyed and the interpretive success of the tapestry is predicated on the designers’ and embroiderers’ finesse. Wynn-Wilson thus captures here a sense of how such a medium might engage the public intellectually in a way that academic history often fails to do; for as Chakrabarty has acknowledged, the historian may ‘bring his or her reasoning to the public, but there is no guarantee that the public will bring their attention.’

Assertions of tapestry’s capacity to prompt both the emotional and the reflective response in tandem appear at a number of points, for instance in the way the Quaker Tapestry’s potential for provoking tears is invoked:

The first time someone wept in front of an embroidery we were surprised, but now we know that the panels can speak to the deepest emotions and open the way for people to rethink, and even in some cases return to the Society [of Quakers].

Here the emotional response is presented as a catalyst for approaching difficult subjects with fresh eyes. Emotional and contemplative responses are conceptualised as interlinked and mutually reinforcing rather than as belonging to the different realms of discourse invoked by the Scottish tapestries.

Wynn-Wilson also offers a thesis on how tapestry’s multimedia format makes an impact on us as viewers: ‘The first time you just look, the second time you consider the insights, and then return again to enjoy the embroidery.’ Enjoyment and learning, the sensory and the thought-provoking are presented as part of a sustained

---

338 Chakrabarty, ‘Public Life of History: India,’ 144.
340 Ibid.
viewing experience, incorporating repeat visits to the individual panel. The affective is conceived as providing a point of entry that opens the mind to deliberation and reflection, as well as the delight of visual stimulation. While her comment on the respective impact of words and embroidery appears to demarcate separate emotional regimes of picture/word as appealing/threatening, on closer inspection we find she distinguishes not between words and pictures, but between the printed words which might be emblematic of certain kinds of book (word-heavy; academic), and embroidery’s word-and-picture form. The vision presented by Wynn-Wilson is thus more synthesised, both in terms of her appreciation of its multimedia identity, and its impact on our rational and affective faculties.

The way Wynn-Wilson, herself a Quaker, envisaged tapestry can be plausibly related to the role of ‘discernment’ in Quaker life. This is a reflective, deliberative practice by which Quakers work towards spiritual enlightenment in daily living. It is also the basis of social interaction, shaping the way mutual decisions are reached and meetings for worship are conducted. Silence, perhaps a more familiar identifying characteristic of Quakers for non-Quakers, is intimately related to discernment: ‘Friends’ (members) only break their silence when convinced they are truly moved to ‘ministry’ (speech). And a comment from craftivist Sarah Corbett suggests congruence between hand-work and Quaker discernment: ‘The slow pace of the activity encourages reflection on the issue: while the lack of eye contact when stitching means people don’t feel under pressure to talk.’

Furthermore, the decentralised approach to religion, which privileges the personal relationship with God, and individual agency, helps explain the value placed by historic Quakers on the highly personal practice of journaling. It is singled out as the ‘distinctive art form’ of early Quakers in recording both worldly travel and the internal

---

341 For useful commentary on this concept see Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, Fifth Edition (London: The Yearly Meeting, 2012-13), Sections 1.02.7; 3.02 and 3.05. The book is arranged by chapter and paragraph number, not page number. Composed mainly of extracts, and described as ‘an attempt to express Truth through the vital personal and corporate experience of Friends,’ it is the latest iteration of a volume that has undergone numerous revisions since initial printing in 1783. Henceforth referred to in this thesis as QFAP.
342 The meeting for worship replaces the religious service of other faith groups, since no minister is involved.
343 Corbett, ‘If we want the world to be beautiful, kind and fair,’ p.36.
spiritual journey. Journal extracts and other writings of prominent Quakers provide important source material for the tapestry, often in preference to biblical quotation, lending the tapestry a democratic and experiential flavour and underwriting the significance of the individual as meaning-maker in enriching the stock of Quaker philosophy. George Fox, viewed as the religion’s founder, is most prominent; other figures include Margaret Fell, who later married Fox, and is seen as the mother of Quakerism, James Parnell, James Nayler, Stephen Grellet, Robert Barclay, William Penn and Daniel Wheeler.

The Quaker attitude of reflective engagement is visually inscribed in the tapestry through the significance attributed to text. This marks the Quaker Tapestry out from other exemplars discussed in this thesis, where text tends to be spatially delimited, and subject to literal and metaphorical marginalisation. There is substantially more text in the Quaker panels, it is more prominent, and it can appear anywhere within a design. In some instances it occupies more space than the accompanying images. More attention has been devoted to ensuring its legibility. Wynn-Wilson worked with stitch forms to devise a technique that aids production of smooth, rounded edges on lettering, now known as Quaker stitch, and upper and lower case forms were devised to suit the embroidery medium. In some instances, heavier headings draw the eye like newspaper headlines, adding subtle variation of the import attributed to different parts of text. By comparison, the Welsh and Scottish tapestries’ text is spindly. Upper case letter forms only are employed; easier to stitch, but less immediately legible than they would be in a mix of upper and lower case. Semiotically, the Quaker text operates at more than one level by virtue of the use of personal insights in addition to the minimal descriptive explanations of the history depicted in the images (which all the tapestries deploy). Quotation amplifies or glosses the significance of past events for present viewers, and distils understandings of Quaker identity. The interplay between text and image is thus more complex and

---

344 QFAP, Section2.76: ‘Enriching worship.’
345 Dandelion, The Quakers, p.65.
346 QT ‘ Margaret Fell’ (C2) acknowledges this epithet below the headline.
347 Reasons of space preclude detailed examples here, but I make reference to these points in the captions to the panel images in this chapter.
348 Co-designer Joe McCrum was responsible for developing the upper case letters: Wynn-Wilson, prologue to Quaker Tapestry, p.7. Quaker stitch was recognised as an entirely new stitch: see ‘Quaker Stitch,’ Textile Research Centre Leiden, https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/techniques/embroidery/embroidery-stitches/quaker-stitch (accessed 18/02/18).
involved than in other tapestries. Each panel demands from the engaged viewer a degree of alternation between the deciphering of image, the reading of text and reflection on meaning.

The combination of affective and contemplative, word and picture, experiential, informational and interpretative material on display to pedagogic effect here moves beyond what Tosh has referred to as the ‘single emotional response’ of identity history.³⁴⁹ Certainly, the experiential emphasis of the tapestry is significant, reflecting what Chakrabarty has conceptualised as the central tension facing history in liberal democracies – an opposition between ‘testimony’ and ‘historiography.’³⁵⁰ Bain Attwood, Chakrabarty’s co-editor (with Claudio Lomnitz) on an edition of the journal Public Culture devoted to the public life of history,³⁵¹ presents this as the difference between conceptions of the past that rely on memory, and on history: ‘Memory challenges the discipline’s foundational premise of the clean break between past and present.’³⁵² Interestingly, however, the important role accorded to experience in the Quaker Tapestry is counterbalanced by a critically reflexive attitude to the subject matter in question. For instance, an early project newsletter from Wynn-Wilson warns participants that panels ‘must not show misplaced pride and nostalgia,’ in their portrayal of the past.³⁵³ She appears to have in mind the dangers of a tendency to mine the past for the pleasing rather than the difficult detail. We may remember Kean’s example of the pit-brow workers’ sentimental nostalgia for time past. Wynn-Wilson’s success in cultivating historical discernment is illustrated by an anecdote from the official project biography, Living Threads: Making the Quaker Tapestry. We are told that those participants researching the panel that commemorates Quaker protest against the slave trade discovered that British Quakers joined the pro-abolition struggle rather later than they felt comfortable with. The author explains that they had to ‘face the fact’ that prior to 1783, a decade elapsed in which despite entreaties from American Quakers, their British counterparts were slow to act, illustrating the way the

³⁵⁰ Chakrabarty, ‘Public Life of History: India,’ 164.
³⁵² Attwood, ‘Aboriginal History, Minority Histories and Historical Wounds,’ at 178.
³⁵³ Levin, Living Threads, p.27.
research process had potential to initiate a level of critique of Quaker forebears as well as their oppressors.\textsuperscript{354}

**Constructive conflict**

The Quaker Peace Testimony is an expression of pacifism, but not passivity:

Conflict happens, and will continue to happen, even in the most peaceful of worlds.

. . . Through conflict handled creatively we can change and grow; and I am not sure real change – either political or personal – can happen without it.\textsuperscript{355}

Early figures in Quaker history provide inspiration. A handbook entitled *Conflict in Meetings* points out that a George Fox or a John Woolman would not fear to confront other people’s opinions and challenge lifestyles.\textsuperscript{356} Quakers have played valuable roles in conflict resolution worldwide. In the light of Quakerism’s origins in dissent, this section considers the ways in which conflict worked as a fundamental part of the process of bringing the Quaker Tapestry to fruition. Reflecting on the response to the call for panel ideas for the tapestry, Wynn-Wilson comments:

Individually we submitted our ideas, each expressed differently, but we were in accord that the headings taken from *Christian Faith and Practice* provided the ideal expression of our intentions.\textsuperscript{357}

Her words suggest that although there was general agreement on structure, varying opinion existed from the beginning as to how the project might best be fulfilled. Thus

\textsuperscript{354} Ibid., p.26. Quaker voices against the slave trade are commemorated in QT ‘The slave trade’ (F3): the panel referred to above; and ‘The Underground Railroad’ (F10).

\textsuperscript{355} Mary Lou Leavitt (1986) in *QFAP* 20.71, quoted in *Conflict in Meetings*, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: Quaker Books, 2005), p.11.


\textsuperscript{357} Wynn-Wilson, prologue to *Quaker Tapestry*, p.18. The book referred to is Archibald C. Craig, Oswald Bell Milligan and Donald Macpherson Baillie, *Christian Faith and Practice* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Committee on Publications, 1959), henceforth *CFAP*, the version of the book of discipline in use by British Quakers when the tapestry was devised.
implicit acknowledgement is made of the underlying tension between individual and community. This struggle to reconcile the interests of individual and group is not exceptional, either in religious, or other social contexts. Steven Grosby comments on the human tendency to seek out ways of structuring experience through a variety of social relations based on familial, national, political and, as here, religious preoccupations, which involve striking a balance between personal freedom and regulating structures. What is less common is the honesty with which the issues that arose are discussed.

Of 403 suggestions from the membership for panel subject matter, just 60 were initially taken forward by the organising committee. The approach is far more regulated here than that taken by the organisers of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, where a comparably loose schema was adopted, unlimited by linear and chronological patterns of arrangement. For the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, this facilitated the addition of new panels as new volunteers and new ideas emerged; only a final deadline eventually worked as barrier to new entrants. In contrast, Wynn-Wilson explains that achieving a balance of material was important for the Quaker Tapestry, and while some ideas were combined in a single panel, others were rejected to avoid overlap.

In some respects the project demonstrates that a more ambitious level of collaboration was sought from participants. Those Quaker meeting groups who wished to participate were asked to adopt a panel and tackle its subject by researching relevant factual information, deciding on appropriate quotations and storyline, and assembling the visual material required for a design. This required a substantial level of mental investment in the project at the pre-design stage, encouraging a sense of ownership on the part of the group, and setting up certain expectations. The fruits of this exercise were submitted to the design committee. However, according to Wynn-Wilson, not all groups provided adequate input and some ideas were rejected as unsuitable. Others needed much modification. Once the committee had worked up and approved a design, it required acceptance on the part of the adoptive group. This provided a potential stumbling block, and several groups were sufficiently unhappy

---

359 Wynn-Wilson, prologue to Quaker Tapestry, pp.18-19.
360 Ibid., p.24.
with the results to refuse to continue work on the panel.\textsuperscript{361} Sometimes a compromise could be reached, but where this was not possible, the committee implemented a policy of finding the contentious panel a new home by offering it to a different group. The tension between centre and periphery on display here is a feature of the accounts of both Wynn-Wilson and Jennie Levin, the authorised project ‘biographer’ writing several years later. Both writers frame dissent within the context of what the project achieved, which reminds us of Ludmilla Jordanova’s comment that public history’s varied forms each come with a particular set of constraints, and that these publications are, after all, ‘supporting’ narratives.\textsuperscript{362} However, the way the narrative acknowledges and makes space for dissent differs from the resolute tone in which supporting narratives for other projects record success. Compare, for instance, Wynn-Wilson’s reflections with a comment from Gordon Prestoungrange on the Prestonpans Tapestry:

\textit{Wynn-Wilson:} I wanted to give people opportunities, to see a problem, to work out how to solve it, and to encourage sharing and interdependence.\textsuperscript{363}

\textit{Prestoungrange:} We expect to see a greater surge in the continuing re-assertion of our community self-esteem.\textsuperscript{364}

Both initiators focus on the effect of their respective projects at the level of community, but Wynn-Wilson’s emphasis is on the value of the process itself as a problem-solving enterprise, whereas Prestoungrange’s comment is results-driven.

Jennie Levin focuses on another aspect of conflict, the tactics deployed by stitchers in response to disagreements that arose over subject matter. Groups whose research was rejected as superfluous to the needs of a panel found ways of putting it to use elsewhere. In one instance an exhibition based on unused research took place, and in another, an alternate version of a panel was embroidered for the local meeting house, incorporating the material provoking disagreement. Where a group that wished

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{361} Wynn-Wilson, prologue to \textit{Quaker Tapestry}, p.24; also discussed in Levin, \textit{Living Threads}, p.28.
\item \textsuperscript{362} Jordanova, ‘Public History,’ especially at pp.134-5.
\item \textsuperscript{363} Wynn-Wilson quoted in Levin, \textit{Living Threads}, p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{364} Gordon Prestoungrange, ‘Working Together Has its Own Creative Magic – and it’s Fun!’ in \textit{Prestonpans Tapestry 1745}, pp.257-60 at p.260.
\end{itemize}
3.1 Peace Embassies (QT F16).
Approximately half the space is devoted to text in this panel, an indication of the textual orientation of this tapestry.
© Quaker Tapestry. Designed Joe McCrum/Wynn-Wilson; embroidered Chichester and Lewes area groups.

3.2 Recent version of the Quaker peace poster ‘The Two Mules.’

‘The Two Mules’
A fable for the nations

Co-operation
is better than conflict
www.quaker.org.uk
to adopt a particular panel was allotted a different subject owing to a clash of interests, a participant who was ‘initially horrified’ by an emphatically political subject became enthralled on reading about the subject.\textsuperscript{365} Reference is also made to quiet acts of unilateral rebellion in the form of small unapproved additions to the designs, such as a boomerang in a child’s pocket, or a black cat.\textsuperscript{366} Everyday life theorist Michel de Certeau’s ‘tactics,’ multiple small acts of resistance deployed by individuals as a response to authority, are one way of understanding how small acts beyond the reach of the committee diffused the irritation associated with decisions imposed from above.\textsuperscript{367} They reveal the participant base taking evasive action in order to remain enfranchised project members.

The self-narrative of Grace, a retired health visitor and stitcher-participant from Lewes, facilitates close analysis of personal experience of a stitching group’s difficulty with the centralised decision-making process, and particularised tactics used in response:

When we got the cartoon back we were all very, very disappointed. We didn’t feel they’d listened to any of what we had suggested except the donkeys. So there wasn’t time to do anything about it. We had— I think Ann Nichols said Joe Mccrum, who was the designer, had got engaged, and got married. His mind was on other things, that’s how she— she just said, ‘Well, you’ve got to get on with it!’ So we thought, ‘Right we’ll embroider people we know into it as figures, we’ll make it come alive, we’ll make it personal!’\textsuperscript{368}

Grace makes no attempt to gloss over the disappointment she and her group experienced regarding the design. The panel, entitled ‘Peace Embassies,’ takes as its subject the instrumental role of Quakers in establishing peace embassies early in the twentieth century (fig. 3.1). It is rather static, consisting of two tables of people, denoting the Quaker United Nations office in Geneva, and the Bradford School of Peace Studies, established by a Quaker donation. Indeed, there is an undramatic quality to the scenes of anonymous people talking at tables, representative of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[365] Levin, \textit{Living Threads}, p.25.
\item[366] Ibid., p.33 and p.43.
\item[368] Interview with Grace, 1 June 2014. See also Appendix B.
\end{footnotes}
dogged persistence and ongoing activity that maintaining (or establishing) peace demands. The bottom margin is a representation of ‘The two mules,’ a popular Quaker peace poster embodying cooperation (fig. 3.2). The upper margin contains a long quotation attributed to 1943 yearly meeting, ‘True peace cannot be dictated, it can only be built in co-operation between all peoples,’ below the two tables there is an unattributed statement, ‘Every step to diminish fear is a step towards peace,’ and below the donkeys, the maxim from the peace poster, ‘Co-operation is better than conflict.’

Quotation is used to press home the pacifist message. The date of the top margin’s citation is significant, situating Quaker activities for peace as concurrent with World War II. As alluded to in the panel commentary, the Quakers received worldwide recognition as a non-governmental organisation at this period, and were an important presence within the United Nations programme from its inception in 1945. 

Panels such as this depict Quakers responding to world issues and offer an alternative perspective to that provided by wartime images of combat, politicians, bomb damage and Holocaust with which we are more familiar. John Tosh asserts that the value of critical history is that by clearly differentiating past from present it provides ‘another vantage point’ which ‘allows us to evaluate our world from another position,’ alerting us to the possibility of an alternative present. As expressions of lives lived in accordance with a strong pacifist identity, this and other Quaker panels, such as those in honour of conscientious objection in the Great War, and the Friends Ambulance Unit in WWII and beyond, offer a potent way of prompting non-Quakers to consider British history from novel standpoints.

The Lewes group came to the project at a relatively late stage in proceedings. While groups joining the scheme early on were encouraged to adopt subjects that suited their particular enthusiasms, the Lewes group was given a panel that no one else had volunteered for: ‘You have to do the peace embassies’ (the panel on Quaker international peace work). This may have contributed to a sense of disenfranchisement with regard to involvement from the beginning, since Grace

369 QT ‘Peace Embassies,’ panel commentary.
370 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.28.
371 QT ‘Conscientious Objection’ (A7) and ‘Friends Ambulance Unit’ (F8).
372 Interview with Grace.
admitted to being ‘pretty thin in my knowledge of the peace negotiations.’ Her concluding comment in the excerpt provided above (at p.128) alludes to how the group moved from disengagement to re-engagement through a conscious decision to make the panel their own at the level of detailed embroidery. Grace explained that they substituted what she referred to as a ‘politically correct’ black woman for one of the existing figures, and changed the hair colour of another from blonde to a red ponytail, as sported by their youngest group member: ‘We thought, good, we’ll have her in.’ In addition, Grace included a friend with a comb-over and someone else used the likeness of a professor with whom she was acquainted. The mules at the bottom were depicted as local Sussex donkeys.

However, right at the start of our conversation, before telling me about the group’s disappointment, Grace described being particularly keen to work on an Asian woman in a sari who the designer had included:

But the reason I did the Asian lady was that I was a health visitor and I had a lot of Pakistani women on my patch, rather isolated, and the children were going to school without any English and I managed to access some funding and set up an Asian women’s support group with a crèche, with a teacher of English for the children, so when I saw the design—[. . .]

—When I saw the design I just said I have to, I grabbed it— I have to do the Asian lady—it looks as if I’m being greedy, I’m doing the most colourful picture—person in the picture but I just felt that’s meant for me.376

According to the timeframe she invokes (‘when I saw the design’) her individual enthusiasm for this section was experienced alongside the group’s disappointment with the design as a whole. This suggests her impulse to treat the Asian woman as emblematic of a particular episode of personal achievement was independent of the group’s decision to customise the panel by including people they knew. Indeed, Grace’s personal act of appropriation may have been the catalyst that inspired the
group policy of making the panel personally meaningful in the face of feeling disenfranchised.

Alison, a farmer’s wife living near Callander in the Scottish Central Belt at the time of the project, also alludes to particular ways of animating the human figures:

We had to give them personalities. And that was what was so fun about doing it— We had the drawing by then, and Anne Wynn-Wilson and I chose the colours and gave the people personalities.\textsuperscript{377}

Alison worked on different panels to Grace. Her account indicates that techniques designed to bring the figures to life were more widespread than Grace’s commentary recognised. Moreover, Alison’s reference to Wynn-Wilson suggests the practice evolved at the lead designer’s instigation. There may also be a link to the anecdotal story-telling encouraged as a warm-up exercise by the team running the workshops (which included Wynn-Wilson), in order to instil the idea that the tapestry was emphatically a narrative form of crewel embroidery.\textsuperscript{378} Where Grace’s group drew on people they knew, Alison’s group used fictional backstory to flesh out physical detail. Alison explains that in her panel one man’s smooth stockings equate to a symbol of his happily married status, whereas another one’s scruffy stockings are emblematic of the fact that he’s a bachelor with only an inattentive house-keeper to look after him. The difference between Alison and Grace’s techniques may in part be a function of the differing eras in which the two panels are set – the figures in Grace’s panel look roughly contemporaneous with the stitching period (despite the wartime context of the quotations), whereas Alison was working with eighteenth-century material. It is also understandable, however, that the group that felt alienated by the process developed a personalised frame of reference to counterbalance this, as opposed to imparting a fictionalised context.

For Grace’s group, bringing personal context to bear on the panel accommodates the sense of disjuncture experienced as a result of unwelcome decisions imposed from above. Certainly, then, it acts as a safety valve; but there is more to be said. As protagonist of the self-narrative under discussion, Grace’s

\textsuperscript{377} Interview with Alison, 1 June 2014. See also Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{378} Interview with Grace.
motivation facilitates particular interrogation. Using the Asian figure in the design as a means of revisiting the personal contribution she has made to effecting change in the world appears to function as a way of displacing dissatisfaction with working within the project’s constraints. It is a method of rising above her reservations and focusing on the bigger picture of shared Quaker principles. Both here, and in the framing narratives provided by Wynn-Wilson and Levin, the Quaker Tapestry project is being positioned as emblematic of the enacting of Quaker community, encouraging ‘sharing and interdependence.’ Grace’s self-narrative demonstrates the way this feeds through at the level of the participant, who ultimately gains a level of satisfaction from working within the constraints of the project as an expression of her responsibility to Quaker community. Her comments also demonstrate that she appreciates the panel as an emblem of socially engaged participation beyond the Quaker community. Towards the end of the discussion, standing in front of the panel, she talked about its effect on others. She referred to a potter who has used the image of the donkeys on mugs and explained that reproductions of the panel can be found hanging in a number of venues:

Grace: There we are, and it’s been one of the most successful panels because—not just the donkeys, but because, the peace embassies, they’ve got a copy of it in Quaker House in Brussels.

AH: Have they?

Grace: Yeah, and there’s obviously one in the Bradford School of Peace Studies and there’s, I’ve seen it somewhere else, so it’s one of the ones—

AH: Do you mean photographic copies or people have—?

Grace: Photographic copies. It’s not the design that captures, it’s the message that captures, really.

AH: Well it’s very modern, it’s so much a modern concern, it needs to be— our concern.

Grace: So they were quite right, it was a gap.

---

379 Levin, Living Threads, p.5.
380 Interview with Grace.
Reconceptualising the panel’s importance in terms of its role as carrier of a message allows Grace’s dissatisfaction to fall away. Her concluding comment (‘they were quite right,’) is an acceptance that the committee, with a sense of the bigger picture, was, after all, better placed to judge how each particular stitching group might best serve the needs of the project. The framing of this speech act, which opens with an assessment of the panel as one of the most successful, and closes with judgement on the committee’s decisions as well-founded, is philosophical and evaluative in tone, distancing the eventual fruits of the project from the emphatic expression of disappointment communicated earlier on. Sociolinguist Charlotte Linde observes that people give different accounts and evaluations of the same event at different times and to different people. It is more than twenty years since project completion, so the interview offered Grace an opportunity to re-evaluate the experience with fresh eyes. The sanguine tone suggests a high degree of assimilation of events to her worldview. And she presents the collective response as an exercise in sublimating discontent to creativity (‘we’ll make it come alive, we’ll make it personal!’). The narrative thus becomes an exemplar of group resourcefulness. This is reinforced by a second anecdote operating along similar lines in which she recounts her experience of an expedition to Normandy during the Quaker Tapestry’s exhibition at Bayeux. To her disappointment, Grace’s name was not among the list of volunteers carefully selected to provide the right mix of required skills in attendance on the tapestry. But her decision to accompany the Quaker camping expedition that visited Normandy during the exhibition meant she was on hand to step in when it transpired that the exhibition committee had not planned for the hand-over period between volunteers leaving on the ferry at the end of the first week and the new party arriving:

So us Quaker campers, get in there– we all came in and we helped out over that period, and the new helped out while the next group was settling down. So we did contribute and that was great fun.

Grace’s concluding comment, ‘So we did contribute and that was great fun,’ echoes the concluding comment in her previous anecdote: ‘So they were quite right, it was a

---

381 Linde, Life Stories, p.4.
382 Interview with Grace.
gap.’ Both tales are characterised by the subject’s disappointment at being passed over, a level of critique of the decision-makers, and then a refashioning of the self as part of the plucky outsider group that remedies organisational shortcomings through its ability to respond flexibly and adopt a constructively resourceful attitude to life’s difficulties. Thus the self-narrative Grace wove around our discussions recalls the spirit of the cooperative donkey motif and its accompanying quotation. Whether it was a conscious or unconscious echo, this appears to illustrate the subject’s strong investment in Quaker values. Linde suggests that the narratability of a set of events, and the effectiveness of the story-teller, are aided by the extent to which the subject inhabits a moral universe and is able to perceive the communicable significance of those events. Grace’s anecdotes dealing with acknowledging and engaging with conflict are specific and personal to her but also accord with a larger Quaker perspective on communal problem-solving, as envisaged by Wynn-Wilson.

Dramatised dissent

The tapestry panels concerned with early Quaker history consist of images that depict scenes relating to its origins as a dissenting religion. In effect these panels dramatise dissent. Tosh makes the argument that the clear differentiation of past from present facilitated by historical method enables us to re-evaluate our present from alternative perspectives. Similarly, Thelen and Rosenzweig argue that the role of professional history-makers is to ‘make people aware of possibilities for transforming the status quo.’ And Bain Attwood suggests that the ‘deep’ encounters with traces of the past that historical method facilitates equip us with an understanding that ‘there have been other ways of being in the world than those that prevail today.’ But as the oral historian Michael Frisch observes, there is also a danger that we use the idea of the past’s difference to make allowances for it and for ourselves in the present. He cites the example of an American official who explained away the CIA’s unedifying interference with 1950s Cuba under Fidel Castro as the anti-communist ‘spirit of the

---

383 Linde, Life Stories, p.23: Moral meaning does not necessarily equate to spiritual meaning: she gives the example of a protagonist who would announce ‘It’s a crime to do this to a good steak!’ as opposed to ‘This is inedible.’
385 Attwood, ‘Aboriginal History, Minority Histories and Historical Wounds,’ 185.
times,’ a danger to which the administration was now immune, he implied, ignoring
more recent instances of anti-communist interference in Latin America.

By depicting a narrative in which dissent from historic norms is dramatised, the
Quaker Tapestry offers a powerful antidote to the idea that everyone thought the
same way in the past. It provides an illustrated dramatisation of differences of
perspective. A number of panels set during the violent conflicts of the seventeenth
century (the era in which the Quakers became established) focus on acts of peaceful
resistance and religious persecution. A particular series of scenes focus on George Fox:
his ‘convincement’ (transforming religious experience), preaching on Firbank Fell in
Cumbria, receiving a beating at nearby Ulverston, and being incarcerated in Derby
Gaol. The episodes of Fox’s convincement (fig. 3.3) and incarceration (fig. 3.4)
involve distillations of a range of ideas and experience. In the convincement scene he
sits deep in thought, in the gaol scene he is writing. Influential scenes from daily life
surround him. Both images incorporate figures of soldiers, emblematic of civil war and
religious questioning. The illustrations are interwoven with excerpts from his writings.
We receive a strong sense of the individual’s alienation from the world and, at the
same time, the necessity for his interaction with it; of disjunction feeding individual
agency with regard to thought, word and deed, and of the limits placed on that
agency. The lives of religious dissenters were often fragmented by frequent spells in
gaol, rendering their experience open to interpretation as a form of subaltern history.
The postcolonial historian Prathama Banerjee reminds us that Gramsci asserted the
need to write subaltern history in order to give expression to the difference between
the unified perspective of the dominant classes and the subaltern’s fragmentary and
episodic experience of history. Understood in the secular terms of reference of
historical enquiry, the practical effects of gaoling would have had a severely
disintegratory effect on the lives of Quakers, although religious belief presumably
provided a powerful counterbalancing unity of perspective.

In both the preaching and beating panels (figs 3.5 and 3.6), a single image takes
precedence. In the first of these Fox dominates the illustration, positioned centrally,
3.3 George Fox’s Convince-ment (QT A1). Note headline style in this early panel differs (curly ‘G’ and ‘E’). It was stitched before McCrum designed a headline font.

3.4 Fox in Derby Gaol (QT F1). Half the space is devoted to text, as 3.1. Audaciously, text runs down the centre and the word ‘Truth’ is the focal point, with Fox to the right.
3.5 Firbank
Fell: Fox
Preaching
(QT B1).
This and 3.6
show the
versatility
of Quaker
stitch, in
combination with
the letter
forms, for
executing
varied sizes
and weights
of text while
retaining
legibility.

3.6 Fox at
Ulverston:
Healing
(QT E1).
The broken
line delimiting upper
and lower
margins is an
organising
framework
but leaves
the designer
free to
deploy ideas
in different
ways.

his back to the spectator, preaching to the tiny masses spread before him on the lower slopes of Firbank Fell. In the second, he is again centrally placed, but this time surrounded by his adversaries. These panels can be interpreted as a pair in their thematic concerns and treatment of material. In the first instance, Fox commands a rapt audience in speaking out against conventional religious doctrine, in the second he has invoked anger through dissent. In the first scene he commands the viewer’s attention through the solidity of his pose, broad shouldered, with outstretched hands and firmly planted booted feet. His solidity is also an artefact of the thick textures with which his clothes are rendered and the detailed contouring of his breeches. This delineation contrasts with the more impressionistically rendered crowds and landscape in the background. Our position as viewers in the room places us behind Fox, as if in his shadow: when an individual viewer stands before the panel, she and Fox-as-protagonist are identified, communicating a sense of the power of individual agency.

In the second scene (fig. 3.6), Fox is surrounded by a crowd angered by his challenge to the teachings of their parish priest. He and his eight persecutors are conceived as a single group in the foreground with each figure rendered in heavy, richly coloured embroidery, imparting volume and a sense of bulk and threat. A number of weapons are brandished. These are described in the accompanying text as consisting of willow rods, hedge stakes, clubs and staves. A thick blunt instrument is dragged, another is gripped in a menacing two-handed pose, while lighter bunches of willow rods are raised aloft. A pitchfork is also visible and a snaking whip is cracked in the air top-left. However, aside from the movement implied by the whip, the image is composed as if Fox’s beating has been arrested mid-clash. Fox, his knees bent to suggest the exertion of recent struggle, has his attention focused on his outstretched right arm rather than his assailants, who peer in bemused fashion. He is the protagonist not only by virtue of his central position, but owing to the way he towers over the crouching figures around him. The material is thus arranged in the shape of a triangle with its wide base at the bottom, a powerful ‘pyramid composition,’ making it easy for the eye to decipher the hierarchy of the information presented. Fox’s tall
stature, with head inclined upwards, requires a break in the text of the subhead, and his clothing is delineated in lighter, brighter colouring than the other figures, features which project him forward in the field of view. His body dominates the space both vertically and horizontally: his outstretched arm takes up almost a third of the panel’s width. The strong sense of movement and structure, heightened by the negative space around the group of figures, render the design a strong dramatisation of individual conviction pitted against conventional belief.

Fox recorded in his journal that on this occasion his hand, wounded and bleeding from the beating, healed on the spot when ‘the Lord’s power sprang through me and through my hand.’ The lower margin makes use of this text as both explanation and commentary. This subtly inflects the event to present it through Fox’s eyes. The experiential status of the panel’s headline – ‘George Fox at Ulverston: His experience of true healing’ – takes the place of a historicised commentary on the factual accuracy of the scene. It is a way of avoiding the need for the viewer to make a direct judgement on what happened. Dandelion is useful here, conceptualising truth according to Liberal Quaker thought as best described as ‘only personal, partial, or provisional,’ facilitating a considerable degree of leeway with regard to individual interpretation. The framing of the image encourages viewers to imaginatively interrogate Fox’s position, but also provides space for their own individually useful interpretations. On the other hand, the panel commentary in the pictorial guidebook encourages critical distance in the modern reader by referring to a lost book of miracles said to have been performed by Fox as ‘best understood’ as to have involved naturalistic medical cures and empathy. There is a parallel here with the issues that Chakrabarty explored through his critique of Ranajit Guha’s article on the religiously inspired Santal rebellion of 1855. His point was that the way the historian understands how such subalterns of history as these would understand their own thoughts and experience resists historicisation and prevents the historian representing them as agents of history because that is not how they understood themselves. The


Dandelion, The Quakers, p.108.

‘George Fox at Ulverston: Healing,’ panel commentary.

3.7 Oaths (QT A9).
The particularly heavy headline shows off the rope-like twist of Wynn-Wilson’s Quaker Stitch to good effect.
© Quaker Tapestry. Designed Avril Brown; embroidered Friends in Scotland.
only options are either to take religion seriously as opposed to treating it as a form of false consciousness, or to reinterpret – to convert religious belief into an object of the historian’s study to make it amenable to the rationalism of historical method. But Chakrabarty also acknowledges that tactics such as multivocal strategies of presenting history, resistance to assimilating multiple voices to a single perspective, and ‘deliberately leav[ing] loose ends in one’s narrative’ are all techniques developed subsequently to Guha’s early exemplar of the Subaltern Studies project that offer a partial response to these issues. The Quaker Tapestry makes elegant use of elements of these strategies. It deploys first-hand experiential testimony from a variety of sources across the tapestry to problematise the idea of a coherent perspective, and in the case of the ‘Fox at Ulverston’ panel, refrains from the imposition of a historicised perspective, while providing a historicised gloss in the supporting narrative. The way the individual’s interpretive agency is built into Liberal Quaker thought is at once an acknowledgement of Chakrabarty’s ‘loose ends’ and the prospect of their resolution, albeit at a subjective rather than a universalised level.

**The individual and history**

In dramatising dissent, the scenes involving George Fox, as well as those involving other Quaker dissenters, offer nuanced commentary on the relation of individual and society, and the difficulty and potency involved in assuming a position at odds with society’s norms. Grace’s rather less dramatic panel on the peace embassies, set in the twentieth century, also embodies a standpoint of critical dissent, here in relation to world war as opposed to civil war. Alison’s panel, ‘Oaths’ ([fig. 3.7](#)), dramatises the struggle between dissenters and authorities in a further way: here we encounter the moment at which Quakers regained rights sacrificed as a result of their dissent. This early eighteenth-century panel commemorates the passing of laws which allowed Quakers to affirm rather than swear an oath when conducting transactions. The practice of giving an affirmation in court as opposed to swearing on the Bible survives

---

395 Ibid., 21 and 23.
396 Ibid., 22.
397 QT ‘Oaths’ (A9).
today as a reminder. Quakers believed that the widespread use of oaths to demonstrate sincerity in the business of daily life created a ‘double standard,’ because truthfulness was the non-negotiable bedrock of how they lived. Prior to the passing of a series of affirmation laws, refusal to swear oaths excluded them from involvement in a variety of trading and legal matters and made them vulnerable to imprisonment for refusing to swear allegiance to the Crown. The panel depicts Quaker Robert Barclay presenting Aberdeen Town Council with the act of parliament (1714) that enabled Quakers to affirm rather than swear, and regain their burgess rights (full rights of citizenship). Additional to text explaining this, the panel includes the prominent headline, ‘Swear not at all,’ with its biblical attribution, and, in the lower margin, a text from the Quaker handbook encapsulating beliefs about truth and double standards.

The focus of Alison’s self-narrative was her understanding of the impact of her life experience on the range of available meaning in the panel. Consequently, this panel can be used to think further about interpretive agency and meaning in the Quaker Tapestry. This is how Alison elucidates her panel:

Well it’s the whole double standards of Quakers. That you don’t swear on a bible— you affirm you’re going to tell the truth because you tell the truth anyway? The ‘Swear not at all’ was actually the title. It’s from Matthew, but it was used because at that stage I was the wife of a farmer, and my language was very ‘agricultural’— And my friend’s mother had spent the last twenty years of her life trying to clean up my language!”

398 ‘In law, a promise by a witness concerning testimony allowed in place of an oath to those who cannot, because of conscience, swear an oath. For example, members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other persons who have objections against taking an oath are allowed to make affirmation in any manner they may declare to be binding upon their consciences in confirmation of the truth of their testimony.’ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. ‘Affirmation,’ https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmation (accessed 16/02/18).
400 Matthew, 5.34.
401 Interview with Alison. The question mark at the end of line two shows this sentence ended with an upward inflection: although phrased as statement, Alison was asking me to confirm I understood, acknowledging that the Quaker double standard is not common knowledge.
Alison focuses on her idiosyncratic relationship with the subject matter. She explains that the panel’s prominent headline, ‘Swear not at all,’ fitted equally well as an appropriate reminder to her against the frequent cursing for which she was known, and which a friend’s mother had been trying to curb at the time. To Alison, her self-narrative and the panel’s theme are mutually reinforcing narratives, perhaps owing to the sense of struggle or of feeling out of kilter with social mores that might be understood to apply in both instances. Accordingly, her personal experience provided the whole group with a useful way into the subject, she suggests. Her experience is not, of course, a direct analogy of the panel’s theme, since seeking to refrain from unpremeditated cursing is a different thing from abstaining from taking a premeditated oath. However, if we understand its use today in terms of its function in providing speech with rhetorical emphasis or assertion, cursing is a vestigial remnant of the important role the oath played in everyday life in the past.

One of the criticisms that Tosh makes of popular forms of history is that they make the past ‘too familiar.’ He observes that, ‘The temptation is to populate the past with people just like us [. . .] instead of getting inside a fundamentally different mentality.’402 Bain Attwood makes a similar critique of conceptions of the past that rely on memory rather than history, suggesting memory tends to collapse the past into the present.403 Alison’s self-narrative appears to provide an example of this. However, the panel offers a more complex range of meaning than this critique allows. Certainly, the straightforward prohibition of ‘Swear not at all’ offers a clear textual hook for contemporary appreciations of Quaker sensitivity around swearing, and may indeed reveal the influence of Alison’s agricultural language on choice of headline. Indeed the juxtaposition in her commentary suggests it was the group not the design committee that chose the text. Co-ordinator Ann Nichols explains that often space was left blank for a quotation in a panel design on the assumption that inspiration would strike as work progressed – a surprising level of flexibility, we might note, in view of the tensions between centre and periphery discussed previously.404 The heavily

402 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.27.
403 Attwood, ‘Aboriginal History, Minority Histories and Historical Wounds,’ 178.
404 Levin, Living Threads, p.2
embroidered, emphatic text and insistent double quotation marks may reflect the group’s enthusiasm for making an impact with this particular element of the panel.\textsuperscript{405}

On the other hand, as a direct scriptural reference from the \textit{King James Bible} (1611) from which Quakers drew their authority for the scruple over swearing,\textsuperscript{406} the headline may always have been intended for the panel. Alison’s anecdote may simply reflect the group’s (or her unilateral) appropriation of its significance. In the pictorial guidebook, the commentary makes explicit the Quaker refutation of the double standard and elaborates on the effects of this scruple on personal conduct. Its meaning is also made clear through the lower margin text, which refers to the double standard in daily life.\textsuperscript{407} In this way, the historical import of the panel is available to viewers who can decipher it. At the same time, the apposite choice of headline opens up the availability of meaning and potential for discussion around swearing at a more general level. While not all viewers may be familiar with the intricate Quaker dilemma, child and adult, Quaker and non-Quaker alike will be familiar with admonitions concerning swear words. In this way the panel operates at different levels for different viewers. Nevertheless, a level of disjunction between the different functions of swearing in the past and the present is apparent, and requires a level of reflective deliberation on the engaged viewer’s part. While Alison’s personal anecdote illustrates that the headline is malleable to interpretation through familiar terms of reference, her commentary does not exclude acknowledgement of the obsolete Quaker context. Past and present are in dialogue here, but in line with Tosh’s conception of critical history, they are not elided.

What we can derive from this is that both Grace and Alison were able to move easily between personal anecdote and a broader Quaker context. In this they differ from the participants of the Scottish tapestries, from whom there were no meditations on how project involvement made them feel about Scottish identity, apart from Scottish Diaspora Tapestry participant Uzma’s brief allusion to a sense of the sheer diversity on display. Alison, on the other hand, drew overt links between how she and her group approached researching panel subject matter and how she feels about being a Quaker: ‘The whole thing is part of the– where Quakers stand on– a whole pile of

\textsuperscript{405} This is one of very few quotation marks in headlines.
\textsuperscript{406} Muers, \textit{Testimony: Quakerism and Theological Ethics}, pp.110-11.
\textsuperscript{407} Full text: ‘We regard the taking of oaths as contrary to the teaching of Christ, as setting up a double standard of truthfulness, whereas sincerity and truth should be practised in all dealings of life’ ‘Oaths,’ panel commentary, quoting London Yearly Meeting’s declaration (1911), \textit{CFAP} 571.
stuff (laughs). Yes.\textsuperscript{408} She went on to share an anecdote regarding a visitor to the Quaker Tapestry’s exhibition in Bayeux who drew enthusiastically on living memory in recalling the good deeds of Quaker Mary Hughes (1860-1941), subject of another panel,\textsuperscript{409} and took delight in enumerating visible memorials to Hughes in street and building names where she lived. Alison used this as a springboard to tell me of Hughes’ reluctance to distinguish between her working time and leisure, leading her to set up a drop-in centre for the poor called the Dewdrop Inn which was to be utilised day and night. She also told of an occasion on which while leading a march, Hughes was knocked down by a tram, but insisted on making a signed record of the incident on the spot, stating that she (not the tram driver) was to blame, believing he would otherwise be penalised for her error of judgement. Hughes’ life, like many Quaker lives depicted in the tapestry, acts as a vehicle for illuminating the shortcomings of society; in this instance, the inadequacy of part-time philanthropy and the vulnerability of low-status individuals in the face of institutional inadequacy. Alison concluded, with emphasis, ‘You know, she was just very aware of people,’\textsuperscript{410} suggesting this embodiment of Quaker values offered her a particularly absorbing example.

This permits development of previous discussions of the tapestry as a medium for dramatising dissent, and as a medium through which participants are able to enact and/or reflect on their agency as Quaker individuals in society/participants in the tapestry. We can hypothesise that the Quaker stitchers respond to the exemplars of constructive dissent embodied in the Quaker Tapestry by cultivating critical stances of their own. For instance, as a Scot, Alison knew of the Scottish Diaspora and Prestonpans tapestries, for which she expressed her enthusiasm: ‘I think [the Diaspora Tapestry] is brilliant, and I love the Prestonpans one,’\textsuperscript{411} but she was also eager to talk about her particular ‘Quaker’ approach to the Prestonpans’ battle narrative:

\begin{quote}
I always go backwards, I don’t do it from the beginning to the end I do it backwards because I don’t like all that dead body stuff [laughs self-deprecatingly] I’m a Quaker! I don’t do killing!\textsuperscript{412}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{408} Interview with Alison.
\textsuperscript{409} QT ‘Mary Hughes’ (E9).
\textsuperscript{410} Interview with Alison.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid.
This idiosyncrasy is essentially an enacted critique. It is a vivid example of the subject deploying subversive tactics in her interactions with public history in order to sidestep a dominant narrative: in this particular context, an underlying discourse that positions violent conflict as the most effective way of resolving disputes. It can be understood from the perspective of the de Certeausian small tactical act of insurrection, or in the light of Stuart Hall’s oppositional approach to interpretation. It also neatly demonstrates de Groot’s point about the spectator’s ability to pursue heritage on her own terms, with critical faculties engaged. Walking around the Prestonpans exhibition in the opposite direction to the chronological history has the effect of facilitating a visual unravelling of the deleterious effects of warfare. It might also be seen as undermining historical narrative’s reliance on endings: the historian’s choice of end point controlling the choice of material to be included in the narrative.\footnote{In a literary parallel, Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow, or, the Nature of the Offence* (London: J. Cape, 1991) enacts an unravelling of Nazi atrocity in novelistic form.} At a personal level Alison is enacting a rejection of perspectives that conceptualise warfare as fundamental to the development of modern democratic society, by negating its advance bodily through her footsteps. The radical implication here, and written into Liberal Quaker theology, is that individual evaluations of events are as important as the consensus reading: both bodily and intellectually there are ways of negotiating the terms on which we engage in society.

Significantly, the comments made by Grace regarding her experience of visiting the Bayeux Tapestry during the Quaker Tapestry’s exhibition in Normandy bear the mark of a similar approach: ‘You could go round the Bayeux Tapestry for free and I did it every day. I went backwards and forwards— and I went – reverse.’\footnote{Interview with Grace.} While she does not explicitly refer to going round the exhibition in reverse as a way of rejecting its embodied conflict, as Alison does, in the light of the latter’s comment, we may deduce that this is a tactic that is shared amongst Quakers. In Grace’s speech act, travelling in the reverse direction takes precedence over forwards motion and dominates it through repetition: the linguistic patterning thus communicates the subject’s emotional preference. Furthermore, she moves directly from this observation to make a broader point about contrast:
It was absolutely wonderful to have the contrast, one of course was the war and this [the Quaker Tapestry] was peace. It exuded a peaceful atmosphere . . . specially with Margaretta there. There she is [shows photograph]. She sat in the hallway, just quietly sewing.415

Peace counterbalances war here as she moves from discussion of her personal experience of the Bayeux Tapestry to discussion of the significance of the Quaker Tapestry. She is talking in terms of a central semiotic contrast: the Quaker Tapestry as peace narrative operating as a foil to the Bayeux Tapestry as battle narrative. Her embodied negation of the representation of war through a reversal of direction of travel is linked to her conception of the Quaker Tapestry as its visual refutation. Both self and tapestry are presented as offering a counter-narrative questioning the value we attach to some events over others, though interestingly, in a recent article written in recognition of the decision by the French to lend the Bayeux Tapestry to Britain, art critic Jonathan Jones interpreted the Bayeux Tapestry’s unflinching portrayal of dead bodies, terrified horses and gory wounds as suggestive of a pacifist perspective on the part of its female embroiderers.416

For Grace, the embroiderer’s patient, constructive labour is a reminder of the embroidered identity the two textiles share. In contrast to Grace’s personal and private enaction, the stitching Margaretta is positioned in the hallway at the opening of the exhibition so as to broadcast tapestry’s identity as a constructive practice, rather than simply a means of representing war.417 And Grace’s allusion to Margaretta’s positioning is sensitive to the potential of the combined effect of the Quaker Tapestry and its representative stitcher for modifying viewers’ responses. Another Quaker involved in stewarding the Bayeux exhibition made similar connections:

It was a very hot week. All round there were tanks and war and graveyards and landing beaches, even the Bayeux Tapestry is a history of war and invasion –

---

415 Ibid.
417 Recalling again de Groot’s comment that embodiment in physical or imaginative form offers ‘a performance of pastness,’ that reinserts emotion and fosters intimacy, ‘Affect and Empathy,’ 594.
and the Gulf war broke out while we were there. So many people came in and said ‘It’s so cool here, and so peaceful.’

For this commentator, the Bayeux Tapestry becomes part of a Normandy landscape of memorialised war, a landscape recently described as holding ‘iconic status’ for the Allied forces as a symbol of D-Day, with the Quaker Tapestry offered as a form of antidote. Bringing to viewers’ attention key moments in the history of a pacifist faith group is here envisaged as recontextualising the idea that war and violent conflict are unavoidable. The first Gulf War (1990-91), the contemporary context to the Quaker exhibition in Bayeux, further heightens the sense of the tapestry’s status as foil.

In this way, the symbolic role of the tapestry in these comments – reinforced by the exhibition organisers’ deployment of Margareta, and the bodily enactions of Alison and Grace – echoes the emphasis the Victorian historian Elizabeth Stone placed on the needle’s ‘beautiful and useful’ creations. In her preface she presented embroidery as both a suitable medium for history, and an appropriate subject, in place of traditional glorifications of war: ‘the progress of real civilization is rapidly putting an end to this false prestige [accorded to war].’ Similarly, we can hypothesise that the Quaker lives depicted through thought and word and deed provide a critical gloss on a range of dominant histories of Britain that conceptualise it through unifying discourses of protestant identity, military prowess and empire. Each stitcher-participant draws on Quaker history as inspiration for assuming a critically engaged standpoint herself which she communicates with measured self-assurance. While the Scottish stitchers too show enthusiasm for the way their individual contributions relate to the project as a whole, their interest is chiefly manifested in terms of being part of a historic happening which becomes part of public discourse. For the Quaker stitchers there is an additional context. Personal significance and public event are important, but these

---

418 Anon. quoted in Levin, Living Threads, p.9.
419 Mark Worthington, Nathalie Thiesen and Geoffrey Bird, ‘The D-Day Commemoration Committee and its Contribution to Commemoration,’ in Managing and Interpreting D-Day’s Sites of Memory: Guardians of Remembrance, ed. Geoffrey Bird, Sean Claxton, Keir Reeves (London: Routledge, 2016), p.20. They observe that significantly, Pierre Nora, the scholar of French national memory, did not include it as one of his lieux de memoire, the memory of WWII being considered too divisive to French memory owing to competing narratives regarding collaboration and resistance.
420 Stone, preface to The Art of Needle-work, from the Earliest Ages, pp.v-vi.
421 See, for instance, Linda Colley’s influential Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837.
factors are triangulated with the serious matter of the tapestry as carrier of a critique, and a consciousness of their own role in conveying that critique.

**Conclusions**
The Quaker Tapestry scheme uses history to express Quaker identity. To achieve this, it brings Quaker history into conjunction with dominant narratives of British history concerned with religion, war and Britain’s relations overseas. This conjunction, together with a habit of constructive conflict expressed in aspects of the participant experience, and through the published narratives concerned with production, enables Quaker history to act as a form of critical gloss on familiar elements of British history.

The stitchers’ comments on their individual panels, and on the Bayeux, Quaker and Prestonpans tapestries in exhibition, demonstrate their cognisance of the usefulness of Quaker history in general and the Quaker Tapestry in particular, as a medium for interrogating how and what we choose to remember of the past and how we choose to live in the present.

This is enacted dramatically at the level of design in individual panels; the combined effect of carefully selected and assembled images together with texts that frequently deploy personal experience and thought as a form of critical annotation of events. Often these are drawn from extant personal journals and letters, usually those of men, but historic female Quakers provide exemplars too. Their words are intimate and soul-searching, providing an affective focus. At the same time, the speech patterns of these protagonists distance them from modern viewers and help situate them in their time rather than ours, speaking their thoughts and ideas rather than ours. We cannot ventriloquise them; we are, however, able to draw our own conclusions from the exemplars they provide. Their habit of critically interrogating and interpreting events encourages viewers to be similarly active in interacting with panels and negotiating the way they are read as part of a deliberative and reflective process of engagement.

Tosh and other scholars have argued that one of the most important functions of an applied critical history, in its role as citizen’s resource, is fostering in society ‘an awareness of alternatives.’\(^{422}\)

belief in deliberative democracy as the fairest way of organising society, accords closely with Liberal Quaker emphasis on rational persuasion, that the Quaker Tapestry appears to respond to Tosh’s brief: both are interested in reasoned, nuanced, persuasive presentation of history as a means of convincing their audience that alternative perspectives are available to them. Philosopher Amartya Sen’s concept of ‘open impartiality’ – the facility to see one’s own position from a distance and think one’s way into unfamiliar value systems is also relevant here.  

Tosh and Chakrabarty’s exercises in delineation of the relative merits of academic history compared to identity-oriented public history lead both to dwell on the limits of historical method. Their phrasing is similar: Tosh’s ‘plurality of historical interpretation,’ which acknowledges the parameters of factual information, is echoed in Chakrabarty’s ‘irreducible plurality,’ referring to the notion of the unassimilable perspectives contained within subaltern pasts. Chakrabarty’s reading appears more pessimistic. He talks in terms of ‘the disjointed nature of our own times,’ and ‘the limits to the mode of viewing embodied in the practices of the discipline of history’: plurality is irreconcilable and a cause for anxiety. For Tosh it is proof of the rigour of a field that advances by thorough testing of evidence. Even acrimonious public disputes between historians, he suggests, are a positive phenomenon because they help us improve our understanding of the limits of our knowledge of the past and make us better historians. Owing to its emphasis on a shared method of living rather than a shared belief system, Liberal Quaker thought is able to encompass a permissive level of plurality with regard to interpretation, as the panel depicting George Fox’s experience of healing suggests. However, this is moderated by an attitude of rational scepticism: in the deployment of text as a means of communicating experiential rather than historical truth, it contextualises such truths as valuable yet limited sources of wisdom, thereby offering a partial solution to Chakrabarty’s anxieties from history-beyond-the-academy. This sceptical view of language and truth as personal, partial and provisional is combined not with nihilism but a doctrine of ‘progressivism’ – the belief that future generations build on those of the past, discarding what is no longer

426 Ibid., 24 and 22.
427 Tosh, Why History Matters, p.138.
relevant, in order to enrich and develop the sum of human knowledge.\footnote{Dandelion, The Quakers, p.65.} On the one hand, then, the Quaker Tapestry shares with historical method a basis in scientific rationalism, on the other it embodies the inspirational and affective charge of experiential anecdote and makes use of the unpretentious appeal of embroidery. This model of public history is thus usefully assimilable to Michael Frisch’s idea of a synthesised public history, which draws on and adapts the ‘insights of scholarship’ in more subtle and thoughtful ways than we have yet dealt with, while at the same time utilising the energy and fresh perspectives that history from beyond the academy offers.\footnote{Michael Frisch, introduction to A Shared Authority, pp.xxi-xxii at p.xxi.} It is perhaps important to acknowledge a level of Quaker exceptionalism here: as an identity group, the Quakers have not suffered the recent severe persecution or discrimination that other groups must navigate in engaging with the past, nevertheless, the Quaker Tapestry scheme offers a useful blueprint for constructive approaches to history-making.

In this and the previous chapter, the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry and the Quaker Tapestry offer differing solutions for achieving a balance between the panel ‘unit’ and the tapestry as a whole: an organisational ‘centre’ and a diverse workforce of locally based volunteer groups/individuals. In conjunction with the first chapter, these chapters have begun the work of assembling a model of history practice that can be seen as an enriching and rejuvenatory resource for history in society. The following chapters re-engage with community tapestry’s material identity, conceptualising it as central to community tapestry’s originality. Chapter 4 interrogates the way embroidery’s association with femininity has affected its status, and explores the implications of the Last Invasion Tapestry’s foregrounding of female historical agency for interpreting community tapestry as a medium that acknowledges a variety of female voices and perspectives. Chapter 5 investigates whether it is possible to isolate features relating to aspects of community tapestry’s form, content and design that can be categorised as a distinctive perspective on history, a characteristic strain of ‘history from below.’
4: Embroidery, History and Female Agency

Introduction

Is embroidery a feminist issue? Long considered a domestic craft, embroidery has historically been associated almost exclusively with women. Rozsika Parker’s *The Subversive Stitch* persuasively delineates the nineteenth-century’s particular distillation of the bond between embroidery and femininity.  

Alone of the exemplars under discussion, the Last Invasion Tapestry and its gestation address this gendered trajectory directly. In this chapter I move beyond academic critique of popular and public history and seek instead to shed further light on community tapestry’s identity as embroidery. Using the Last Invasion Tapestry as the focus of discussion, and drawing on the work of Parker, Talia Schaffer and others, I explore embroidery’s devaluation by scholarly and popular discourse as a gendered and, by extension, domestic and non-academic pursuit. Not only did Fishguard’s all-female initiating team address these preconceptions at interview, the tapestry itself facilitates a recalibration of the polite and domestic overtones of embroidery. Making use of the feminist concept of ‘herstory,’ history emphasising women’s role or perspective, or by or about women, and Ludmilla Jordanova’s observations on women and veiling in visual culture, I show that embroidery is deployed here to depict female agency, with the historic women of Fishguard playing important public roles in the success of the local militia and the functioning of civil society.

Although the other tapestry exemplars do not foreground female agency in so unequivocal a fashion, an analogy can be drawn between the Last Invasion Tapestry’s narrative focus and the broader project of community tapestry. The use of embroidery as a medium for conveying public history draws the embroiderer-participants themselves into public discourse because their agency as history-makers becomes part

---

431 Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*.
of the narrative. What this public history practice facilitates, therefore, is a subtle redressing of imbalance, reinstating women in history’s narratives in one form or another and reframing embroidery as a public-facing activity, a process a little like the re-evaluations of ‘street art’ (graffiti) or musical subcultures that have taken place.432

The first section of the chapter explores the negative elements of public discourse with which embroiderers contend. The remainder of the chapter considers the treatment and significance of female figures in the Fishguard narrative, compares them to depictions of women in the other tapestries, and finally, evaluates the effect of history on embroidery. The significance of this analysis for our understanding is that it demonstrates that by recontextualising embroidery, public history imparts new meaning and resonance to embroidery’s craft identity.

The Last Invasion Tapestry and embroidery discourse

The way embroidery is understood and what viewers expect to see is coloured by a particular associative context. John Berger wrote cogently about the way ‘what we know or what we believe,’ affects how we understand images in *Ways of Seeing*.433 Particularly striking is his deployment of Van Gogh’s *Wheatfield with Crows*. On one page his caption is a straightforward description: ‘This is a landscape of a cornfield with birds flying out of it.’434 He asks us to turn the page and the image is repeated, this time with text that tells us, ‘This is the last picture Van Gogh painted before he killed himself.’435 The relationship between what we (now) know and what we see has changed how we experience the picture. The relationship between beliefs and visual experiences underwrites the desire of the female artist-embroiderer support network known as the ‘62 Group to reclaim embroidery as ‘not merely a lady-like hobby but

---


434 Ibid., p.23.

once again a live art form appropriate for its day and age.'  

This quotation from Audrey Walker, one of the tapestry’s three coordinators and a founder member of the ’62 Group, gives clear insight into coordinator awareness of the effects of embroidery’s alignment with the feminine. In Chapter 1, I examined the way in which embroidery’s gendered status contributes to the affective charge of community tapestry and the way people feel about the history depicted therein. This chapter explores the detrimental effect embroidery’s feminisation exerts on its status, and argues that the tapestry can be read as operating to disperse such negative associations.

Consider the remark made by Kate Edmunds, an embroiderer on the Great Tapestry of Scotland, concerning her attitude to embroidery before she got involved with its predecessor, the Prestonpans Tapestry: ‘I don’t know how embroidery missed me but it did; it just never crossed my path. I thought it was all tablecloths and antimacassars.’ Antimacassars became shorthand in the twentieth century for the fussy, over-ornamentation of the Victorian period. Anthony Vidler has referred to the twentieth century’s rejection of Victorian taste as modernism’s ‘house-cleaning’ project, dispensing with the previous century’s messy accumulations. Edmunds’ recollection associates embroidery with outdated and superfluous stuffiness and propriety and, she tells us, for this reason she ignored it prior to involvement in the project. Her comment demonstrates that embroidery’s strong association with the Victorian interior remains part of its identity up to our own period. Parker’s analysis identifies the nineteenth century as an important factor in aligning embroidery decisively with the feminine. Embroidery functioned as part of the discourse of separate spheres, an ideology that compartmentalised middle-class lives according to gender. At this period, the masculine became increasingly equated with public and

---

437 Kate Edmunds cited in Mansfield and Moffat, Making a Masterpiece, p.38.
438 OED Online, s.v. ‘antimacassar, n.’ http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8663?redirectedFrom=antimacassar (accessed 15/02/18): ‘Transf. applied attrib. to that which is typical of the period (chiefly the 19th cent.) when antimacassars were in general use.’
professional life, as male businesses were progressively relocated in offices away from the household, leaving the private, domestic sphere to become coded as the feminine realm. The leisured status of the mistress of the house became a measure of middle-class success, and embroidery’s significance as a symbol of industrious leisure became emblematic of the good wife.441

There is a further context here. Talia Schaffer has argued in her survey of domestic craft and the Victorian novel that one of the concerns of Arts and Crafts movement ideology was with distinguishing craftsmanship, professionalism and taste from the reactionary and amateurish overtones with which the feminine handicraft of the middle-classes, including embroidery, became associated.442 In a related comment, literary scholar Carolyn Burdett makes the point that the domestic realm and the feminine touch were deleteriously linked with sentimentality, an excess of feeling without the moderating effect of masculine-coded rational thought.443 Significantly, Schaffer contends that attitudes to feminine homecraft today remain tainted with Arts and Crafts fastidiousness.444 And design historian Judy Attfield notes ‘the site which has been most neglected apart from the attention accorded to it by feminist historians, is craft production which takes place in the home,’ remarking on its invisibility, low status and failure to conform to aesthetic judgements.445

Although women’s autonomy as political agents and members of the workforce has expanded dramatically since the late nineteenth century, Parker’s arguments about the influence of the past on perceptions of embroidery in the present are compelling. Attfield’s observation that we need to take account of ‘the pervasive effect


442 Schaffer, Novel Craft, p.57.


444 Schaffer, Novel Craft, p.179.

of that ideology built into the material environment that outlives social changes,’ is useful here.\(^{446}\) Nevertheless, The Subversive Stitch, a work of the 1980s, also needs to be seen in context, as part of a reassessment of the significance of female craft in the wake of second wave feminism.\(^{447}\) This was a period in which unpaid female labour in the home was subjected to increasing critical scrutiny, and domestic craft acquired new radical resonances, as a contributor to the feminist collaborative project *Women and Craft* (1987) indicates:

*Pen Dalton:* Communicating through craft can give the woman tied to the home a voice outside to penetrate the dominant sphere of cultural exchange. Only the housewife can give an authentic account of her life, work and material conditions.\(^{448}\)

Craft is represented here as a mode of expression and agency and a bridge between private and public worlds.\(^{449}\) The Greenham Common Peace Camp with its trademark home-made peace banners – a symbol of the politicisation of domestic space\(^{450}\) – was a visible reminder of opposition to the siting of US nuclear missiles in the UK at this period. The Quaker Tapestry, one of the earliest community tapestries, and itself a narrative of peaceful dissent, was initiated in 1981, the same year that the Greenham...
Common movement mobilised.\textsuperscript{451} This, however, was against the backdrop of Margaret Thatcher’s premiership, a period at which more nostalgic models of domesticity were also in circulation, as well as a popular prosecution of war in the Falklands/Malvinas. The radical historian Raphael Samuel has highlighted the way Thatcher made effective use of a discourse of Victorian family values in arguments that placed the autonomy of the family unit above social cohesion, reminding us that the earliest community tapestries arose against diverse strands of discourse, popular and academic, mainstream and alternative.\textsuperscript{452}

The project at Fishguard was initiated in 1993, over a decade later than the Quaker Tapestry, however, Audrey Walker, one of its coordinators, held an influential position as Head of Textiles at Goldsmiths’ College throughout much of the 1980s (1975-88), suggesting the two tapestries are a product of similar social and political structures of feeling.\textsuperscript{453} Moreover, the Last Invasion Tapestry’s genesis at the hands of three female artist-embroiderers who learned their craft and went on to teach within the art school system (Walker, Eirian Short and Roz Hawksley) distinguishes the project from other exemplars under discussion. There is a difference in emphasis not only from the male-initiated and designed Scottish tapestries, but also from the Quaker Tapestry, initiated by the City & Guilds-trained Quaker, Anne Wynn-Wilson.\textsuperscript{454} City & Guilds typically focuses on technical proficiency whereas art school training emphasises experimentation and the expression of ideas,\textsuperscript{455} the two approaches being loosely identifiable with popular mainstream and more radical, self-reflexive strands of embroidery practice. Thus Wynn-Wilson’s writings display little interest in contextualising embroidery with regard to art discourse, whereas in interview for this project, Walker, Short and Hawksley proved willing to interrogate the value system of which embroidery is a part.

It is unsurprising, then, to find that in the case of the Welsh tapestry, an explicit desire to counter the trivialising effect of discourse concerned with amateurism and

\textsuperscript{451} The Quaker Tapestry is the earliest tapestry examined in this thesis. The New World Tapestry, initiated by artist Tom Mor in 1980, is the earliest: see Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{452} Samuel, ‘Mrs Thatcher and Victorian Values.’

\textsuperscript{453} Goldsmiths’ College (now Goldsmiths, University of London) established the first National Diploma in Art and Design (NSAD) to incorporate embroidery, from 1964.

\textsuperscript{454} Dorie Wilke, stitch coordinator for the Prestonpans Tapestry and the Great Tapestry of Scotland, also studied for City and Guilds. Interview, 31 May 2014.

women’s work became detectable for the first time. Lead coordinator Eirian Short stated unequivocally that when the question of how to commemorate the bicentenary was raised at a meeting of the Fishguard Arts Society, her reaction was ‘We should get the women round here to do something.’ By indicating that female authorship of a commemorative piece was her priority, she suggests that an explicitly female-authored work might have something specific to offer. This is quite different from the way the Scottish tapestries were conceptualised. Despite facilitating two successful tapestry projects, Gordon Prestoungrange admits to underestimating embroidery when he talks about the Prestonpans Tapestry: ‘It was a pure surprise that embroidery proved to be, and it could actually be the jackpot, it could actually be the most powerful form of art [. . .] by accident.’ Moreover, he displayed an inclination to typecast the women to whom these projects appeal as home-based and limited in outlook, remarking jovially: ‘This sort of thing is erm . . . if you are at home for most of your life, then getting out . . . it’s better than going shopping,’ and, further on, ‘We like women who . . . we don’t like women who go out to work and have careers!’ ‘We,’ here, is Prestoungrange presenting himself as if he speaks for the coordinating team. He went on to refer to the social aspect of the project as ‘their bitch and stitch session.’ The expression ‘stitch and bitch’ has been a tongue-in-cheek way for social knitting clubs to self-identify since at least the mid-twentieth century, but Prestoungrange’s inversion of its terms, so that the negatively coded word in the pairing comes first, is a marker of his condescension. Prestoungrange was seventy-six at the time of interview. He grew up in the 1940s and ‘50s and conducted much of his life in a masculine work environment: his views reflect his ideological background. His particular experience of married life and employment, much of it conducted abroad, also frames his perspective:

---

456 Interview with Eirian Short, Roz Hawksley and Audrey Walker, 05 September 2014. See also Appendix C.
457 Prestoungrange speaking in Robinson, Stitches for Charlie (DVD).
458 Interview with Gordon Prestoungrange, 30 May 2014.
My wife’s generation never did a day’s work in their life, right! —She did, she worked til she was— twenty-five . . . then she became my mate, and off we went! She worked very hard, really, but the point is . . .

When he says here that his wife worked hard ‘really,’ he is acknowledging, as an afterthought, the support she gave him at home in enabling his career and family life. However, the qualifier demonstrates that we are being invited to agree that work in a domestic environment does not quite measure up to paid work. It is perhaps less surprising that Prestoungrange is dismissive of embroiderers than that he felt it was acceptable to be so candid about his views to somebody researching the significance of community tapestry. Rozsika Parker has observed that the question she was repeatedly asked in the wake of writing *The Subversive Stitch* was, ‘Do you embroider?’ Parker believed that faced with the apparent anomaly of an academic book about embroidery, they were seeking her attitude towards the subject:

The unspoken assumption is that, as an art historian and a feminist, I would probably be contemptuous of embroidery and those who do it. For, historically, a categorical separation has grown up between embroidery, seen as a feminine pastime, and serious professionalism — considered the province of masculinity.

In adopting a dismissive tone towards the stitchers, Prestoungrange brought this same unspoken assumption to our conversation. It echoes the perspective that positions the Prestonpans stitchers on the *Stitches for Charlie* DVD as inward-looking, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Discussion with the Fishguard coordinators Short and Hawksley helped to unpick the issues they face as artist embroiderers. Both characterised their own work as art rather than craft because it is concerned primarily not with technique but with

---

461 Interview with Prestoungrange.
462 Clare Ungerson, ‘Gender, Care and the Welfare State,’ in *Handbook of Gender and Women’s Studies*, ed. Kathy Davis, Mary Evans and Judith Lorber (London: Sage Publications, 2006), pp.272-86 at p.277, notes the attribution of moral, symbolic, and practical superiority to paid work over unpaid care is a common motif of societies where paid work is ‘the preferred route in the acquisition of social rights.’
463 Parker, foreword to *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery in Women’s Lives*, p.5.
the communication of ideas. However they acknowledged ruefully that it tends to be reviewed in *Crafts*, the magazine of the Crafts Council, as opposed to art magazines (such as *Art Review* or *Frieze*).\(^{464}\) Short recounted how in the early 1950s only one London art gallery, Foyles, would show embroidery, but felt that gradually the barriers have come down. Hawksley was more concerned with interrogating the barriers that still exist. She remarked that while the embroidered works of established artist Tracey Emin were seen as new and radical in the 1990s, the art of those who work mainly or solely in textile media does not achieve the same level of notice. Arguably, Emin’s work has not made embroidery more acceptable as a fine art medium; it simply became an adjunct of Emin’s celebrity.\(^{465}\)

Hawksley made her observations despite considerable prestige as an artist in her own right: an exhibition of her work entitled *War and Memory* was displayed at the Royal Museums, Greenwich throughout much of 2014 to commemorate the centenary of the beginning of WWI.\(^{466}\) She also expressed irritation at the enduring abundance of craft magazines offering instructions for making fluffy animals. Rather than critiquing attitudes to embroidery in the broader population, she here expressed frustration with consumer culture by characterising it as unimaginative and reductive in its approach to homecraft. The concern here is with the category confusion that beleaguerers craft, which at one point led her to comment, ‘You know, it’s such a broad thing that it’s still looked down upon.’\(^{467}\) In other words, embroidery as practiced by the hobbyist affects the way the artist-embroiderer is viewed. In a related example, art curator-scholar Elissa Auther has highlighted fibre arts’ struggle for acceptance within the fine art hierarchy in the face of the enormous popularity of homecrafts such as macramé in the 1970s.\(^{468}\) The strength of the popular form overwhelms and

---

\(^{464}\) There is analogous to the lack of scholarship on community tapestry in history journals: Schmamann, ‘After Bayeux: The Keiskamma Tapestry,’ and Jones, ‘Embroidering the Nation,’ appear in *Textile.*

\(^{465}\) For a piece putting Emin’s embroidery work in context, see Outi Remes, ‘Replaying the Old Stereotypes into an Artistic Role: The Case of Tracey Emin, *Women’s History Review,* 18:4 (2009), 559-75; particularly at 569, https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020903112208 (accessed 10/12/16).


\(^{467}\) Interview with Short, Hawksley and Walker. Anxiety with regard to the status of craft is reflected in many of the contributions in Peter Dormer, ed., *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester: MUP, 1997).

undermines status as a valid high art form. Yet there are, of course, large numbers of hobbyist painters, and this does not affect the high-art status of painting. The issue is the way embroidery is identified exclusively as a feminine practice associated with the unremunerated domestic realm, and consequently downgraded. As Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock asserted in their ground-breaking feminist art history (1981), 'The sex of the artist matters. It conditions the way art is seen and discussed.'

The Last Invasion Tapestry offers a counterbalance to these ingrained responses. Those who wished to participate were asked to complete a practice piece to ensure a base level of accomplishment, but importantly, the coordinators placed emphasis on embroidery’s expressive potential, identifying the project with art discourse. Hawksley characterised the process of translation from artist’s illustration to embroidery as that of the individual stitcher making her mark on the project: ‘So sometimes what had been, perhaps, a rather fabulous hoof, by the time it came out and was embroidered, looked slightly quirky— which was good, wasn’t it?’ An anecdote from stitcher-participant Hatti demonstrated the liberating effect of the interchange between artist-embroiderers and lay stitchers:

So you know when you do embroidery it should be as tidy on the back as on the front, ‘This is what you do.’ Well, when we all started, for some reason I mentioned this to Audrey [Walker] and she said, ‘Come up to my house— bring your panel up,’ so we went up to her studio and her panel and she said, ‘Have a look at mine!’ and she turned hers over and it was a mess: ‘I don’t do any of that! Now let’s get started!’

Here Walker uses artistic authority to challenge lay indoctrination with the rule-bound character of embroidery as taught in school; its hinterland of polite, tidy femininity. And Hatti (of all the tapestry stitchers I interviewed) felt sufficiently empowered by her experience to draw attention to her project’s importance as women’s work:

---

470 Interview with Short, Hawksley and Walker.
471 Interview with Hatti and Tricia, 5 September 2014. See also Appendix B.
Maybe it’s just that women work better together. It’s like they used to talk about the quilting bees in the olden times. I remember the three of us—even though they were much younger than me—we would talk, you know, as we were working, about the family relationships . . . and you really felt a bond with them when it was over . . . That still lasts, you know, whenever I bump into them.472

Hatti, who is able to speak Welsh, and moved to Pembrokeshire with her husband when he retired from a university career abroad, was talking about tensions between English and Welsh speakers in the local population as a whole, and how this contrasted with her stitching group, who were, ‘blissfully happy—without a squabble about anything.’473 Her allusion to quilting bees draws on the tradition of female collaboration: quilting historian June Freeman makes the point that in the past even expert quilters often chose to work together on projects because it met a social need that was not open to them as a matter of course through the workplace.474 At another point in discussion, Hatti and her co-interviewee, Tricia, referred approvingly to an active local Women’s Institute (WI). Maggie Andrews has argued that craft practice in the WI has served as a way of ‘challenging and deconstructing boundaries between art and craft, between male and female spheres.’475 It also provided a forum for the public exhibition of homecrafts. The presence of a strong WI in addition to the Arts Society at Fishguard may have been an additional factor in encouraging Eirian Short to conceptualise the Fishguard project as a way of showcasing female potential—not only in artistic terms, but also as an assertion of cooperative and organisational prowess. This is rather different from the emphasis of the Scottish projects. For instance, an underlying visual hierarchy is established by the photographs in the early pages of the guidebook The Great Tapestry of Scotland: The Making of a Masterpiece. A frontispiece shows Alexander McCall Smith seated with hands folded and mouth closed in a slight smile, photographed against the backdrop of a replete book case: the public-facing man of letters. Stitch coordinator Dorie Wilkie, whose expertise made the

472 Ibid.
473 Ibid.
474 June Freeman ‘Sewing as a Woman’s Art,’ in Women and Craft, ed. Gillian Ellinor et al., pp.55-63 at p.60.
475 Andrews, Acceptable Face of Feminism, p.68.
tapestry possible, is on p.21, smiling and informal against a plain backdrop, apparently
detached from a public context. She brandishes an embroidered cushion, on which a
humorous message alluding to team effort is stitched.476 In other images, men are
represented as decision-makers, and speakers commanding a room, whereas when
women speak they are shown doing so from positions within the audience.477 Another
image shows McCall Smith looking on benevolently as the first stitch of the Great
Tapestry of Scotland is taken by a woman with eyes fixed on her work. Tricia Marwick
is the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, we learn, and yet the configuration
conjures traditional male/female roles.478

All the stitcher-participants I interviewed for the thesis were female, but Hatti
was the only one to make specific reference to women’s work, and even at Fishguard,
it registered only as a minor part of the discussion. Elsewhere, the fact that tapestry
projects have an overwhelmingly female participant base went unremarked (except for
in Prestoungrange’s disparaging comments), suggesting women may prefer not to
comment on this aspect of projects precisely because they have internalised the sense
that exclusively female activity lacks the weight and seriousness of other activity. An
apparently gender-blind comment from one among the cohort of Fishguard stitchers
who contributed to the commemorative film accompanying the tapestry exhibition
supports this perspective:

Anon. female 1: When the idea first came up of doing the tapestry after the
style of the Bayeux Tapestry, we thought it was— we thought it was a wonderful
idea to get everybody working together in the community.479

The project is presented as involving the whole community, despite the fact that no
men were involved in the stitching, as if to draw attention to the project’s female-only
status would make it less of an achievement.480 On the other hand, the book on the
making of the Great Tapestry of Scotland is explicit about presenting this more recent

476 Mansfield and Moffat, Making a Masterpiece, p.21: ‘A team effort is a lot of people doing as I say.’
477 Ibid., pp.24 and 29, during planning discussions for the tapestry at the Festival of Politics (2012) and
the Borders Book Festival.
478 Ibid., p.35.
479 Thomas, The Making of the Tapestry (DVD).
480 Two men helped make the frames on which the embroiderers stitched the panels, one of whom was
Short’s artist husband; a third helped with the tracings.
tapestry project as a mixed-sex activity: ‘Many are women, but there are also a number of men and at least two husband-and-wife stitching teams.’\textsuperscript{481} Two men’s stories are included within the twenty or so anecdotal pieces. A retired upholsterer of ocean liner interiors from the Clydebank shipyards is introduced as having never considered himself a stitcher, his interest being in the historical research involved: ‘I’m familiar enough with needles, but I didn’t sign up because I wanted to make a tapestry.’\textsuperscript{482} The other is presented as having discovered in retirement a liking for bargello work, a style where stitches are laid in a mathematical pattern.\textsuperscript{483} The anecdotes affiliate the male stitcher with normatively masculine-coded pursuits: shipbuilding and mathematics. Only one man, Micheál O Dailaigh, took part in stitching the earlier Prestonpans Tapestry, suggesting that as Andrew Crummy’s tapestries have garnered public attention, men have become more interested in participating. O Dailaigh was taught to sew by nuns looking after him when he had tuberculosis in his knee aged six, and worked on his panel while convalescing after a recent knee operation.\textsuperscript{484} Not once but twice incapacitation has supplied the opportunity for him to pick up a needle. The motif of the man occasioned to stitch by some form of curtailed liberty is a familiar one; as noted by the paradigm-shifting needlecraft enthusiast Jamie Chalmers, who goes by the name of Mr X Stitch, ‘We get told stories about society.’\textsuperscript{485} A Victoria and Albert exhibition, ‘Quilts 1700–2010,’ featured military quilts, work by sailors, and work by convalescent soldiers and prison inmates as therapeutic practice.\textsuperscript{486} Artist Cornelia Parker used male prison inmates to stitch the major part of her 2015 work, Magna Carta (An Embroidery), linking embroidery with current debates about the shape of liberty and dissent in modern Britain.\textsuperscript{487} This non-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[481] Mansfield and Moffat, \textit{Making a Masterpiece}, p.37.
\item[482] Ibid., pp.39, 43.
\item[483] Ibid., pp.48, 51.
\item[484] Micheál O Dailaigh quoted in Crummy et al., \textit{Prestonpans Tapestry 1745}, panel 74.
\item[485] Jamie Chalmers on \textit{Saturday Live}, BBC R4, 15/03/18 and his website Mr X Stitch, established in 2008, https://www.mrxstitch.com/mr-x-stitch/ (accessed 25/03/18). He claims that 20-25% of the embroiderers he knows are ‘manbroderers,’ and Myzelev, ‘Whip Your Hobby into Shape,’ discusses male knitters, suggesting male interest in traditionally feminine craft is not insubstantial.
\item[487] See Appendix A. Inmates were sourced through the charity Fine Cell Work, set up to teach skills and help prevent reoffending: Fine Cell Work, https://finecellwork.co.uk/pages/about-us#our-vision (accessed 21/01/18).
\end{footnotes}
normative motif of masculinity divorced from public life provides an ironic commentary on the way restriction experienced historically by women in their everyday lives fostered the opportunity to acquire dexterity with the needle.\(^{488}\)

The ambivalence expressed by individual stitchers towards homecraft underwrites the thesis of Parker, Schaffer and others that feminine identity problematises craft’s value:

*Freya: I’d always liked to dabble with various types of needlework, and I had in fact done one night class in embroidery, and I had embroidered a tablecloth for my sister, which I always liked—so, when I got my own house I did a tablecloth for me; and the one I did for my sister took me about five weeks to do, the one I did for me, I think took five years [laughs].*\(^{489}\)

The trivialising overtone of the word ‘dabble’ as used by Freya, a retired children’s nurse and stitcher on the Quaker Tapestry, suggests she attached a lack of status to domestic craft, and this may underlie the problem she has justifying time spent working on an object undertaken for herself. However, the speed with which she completed the tablecloth for her sister suggests she had no problem with craft when it was framed as a gift-giving practice. This suggests another vestige of Victorian gender discourse at work. As Anthea Callen, the scholar of gender and visual culture points out, female handicraft in middle-class circles circulated principally through gift-giving, since to sell one’s wares beyond the confines of the charity bazaar was unacceptable, being the symbolic equivalent of selling oneself.\(^{490}\) While paid work today provides women with previously unimagined levels of autonomy, craft conceptualised as an expression of the personal or caring connection appears to retain its hold. Female care-giving continues to make claims on leisure time, such that a male respondent to a household activities study in the late twentieth century enumerates his wife’s leisure activities as ironing, sewing and reading.\(^{491}\) This conceptual entanglement may be at

\(^{488}\) Parker, introduction to the new edition of *The Subversive Stitch*, p.xxi.

\(^{489}\) Interview with Freya, 21 June 2014. See also Appendix B.


the root of Freya’s unease, together with the under-valuation of unpaid domestic ‘women’s work,’ relative to the superior status of paid work.\textsuperscript{492}

Freya’s colleague Grace manifested similar ambivalence with regard to value and purpose through reminiscences concerning early experience of needlecraft. Her memories were pleasurable, but she expressed frustration at her convent school education for teaching her the unnecessary art of embroidery as opposed to the useful skill of dress-making:

\begin{quote}
When I got to sixteen my mother realised I couldn’t do anything useful and sent me to a night school to – and I made some pyjamas and a dressing gown, which I needed when I went off to be a student. So then I became useful, so I had done some sewing.\textsuperscript{493}
\end{quote}

Her tone here turned faintly ironic. The detached and impersonal turn of phrase (‘So then I became useful’), seemed to indicate she was voicing social expectation and distancing herself from the comment. As well as acknowledging its value in imparting self-sufficiency, she may have been hinting that dress-making made her marriageable in her mother’s eyes, and expressing a level of dissatisfaction at how this impinged on her initial equation of utility with value. A more explicit critique of how particular skills have been considered useful and appropriate for the marriageable female is provided by Stella Minahan, an Australian scholar in consumer behaviour, in a tongue-in-cheek retelling of personal experience:

\begin{quote}
Her teacher, Mrs. McNamara, demanded that all the girls in her class master cross-stitch . . . . [Stella] found knitting much more satisfying as it gave faster results and was quite a forgiving task. Mrs. McNamara sensed Stella’s lack of interest (and covert hostility at being required to sit still and do this work). She reviewed Stella’s messy attempts at cross stitch and, shaking her head,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{492} For instance Jan Pahl’s research demonstrated men within a household are more likely to set aside part of their earned income as personal spending money, whereas women’s spending tends to come out of the pooled housekeeping, which affects how they feel about spending the money on themselves: ‘Household Spending, Personal Spending and the Control of Money in Marriage,’ 131-33; see also S. Jackson and S. Moore, eds, \textit{The Politics of Domestic Consumption} (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall, 1995).

\textsuperscript{493} Interview with Grace, 21 June 2014.
announced for all to hear that Stella would never have a decent trousseau to present to her husband. Her prophecy was fulfilled.  

The teacher’s privileging of certain types of domestic craft as desirable accomplishments by virtue of their associations with femininity (embodied in the need to sit still) – is held up for ridicule through the author’s position of retrospective humour. Both Minahan and Grace end on a note of ironic detachment, and in Grace’s case, we can infer that she finds the idea of a woman deemed valuable for her dress-making ability at odds with her self-narrative at the time of the interview.

The diffident tone in which Sue (GTS) expressed herself was similar in import to the observations of Freya and Grace: ‘So I get— a lot of relaxation out of it, and I just get the pleasure of doing it and then I don’t know what to do with it so I give it away.’ Her recognition that what she refers to elsewhere as her ‘weird and wonderful’ produce is surplus to requirement (‘I don’t know what to do with it’), suggests that giving her craft output away to charity feels provisional and unsatisfactory. There was a marked difference, however, when she talked about her panel of tapestry:

And I now have something that I don’t normally have— but I can’t stop wittering about it— ‘That’s my panel!’ And I’m not that sort of person. I’m not normally like that— But with this, it’s like, ‘Did you do a panel?’ and, ‘Oh yes! Would you like to look at it?’ ‘Well! Why did you do it? Which bit did you do?’

She remarks on the difference between her usual self, which, we infer, means a tendency not to put herself forward, and the sense of purpose conferred by the tapestry, which leads to a less inhibited state in which she shares her experience enthusiastically, though, we might note, she still deploys the self-depreciating ‘witter.’

Equally, Grace’s apparent discomfiture at the hint of a link between sewing proficiency and marriageable status was quite different from the way she framed her appreciation of the value of the Quaker Tapestry. In particular, she highlighted her enjoyment at

---

494 Minahan and Wolfram-Cox ‘Stitch’nBitch: Cyberfeminism, A Third Place and the New Materiality,’ 16.
495 Interview with Sue, 1 June 2014.
496 Ibid.
having been asked to give ‘lectures’ on it.\textsuperscript{497} To refer to it as lecturing, rather than simply giving a talk, appropriates embroidery to a scholarly context and presents her satisfaction as intellectual. There appears to be a form of rebuttal at work here, a desire to overcome Rozsika Parker’s observation of the tendency to compartmentalise embroidery and professionalism as entirely separate.

During her tenure as Head of Textiles at Goldsmiths,’ Audrey Walker spoke of truanting from school to avoid sewing lessons because she had no desire to be a good housewife like her female relatives.\textsuperscript{498} Similarly Luce Giard resisted cooking in her childhood because ‘no one ever offered it to my brother.’\textsuperscript{499} Yet as she came to understand, it was what embroidery stood for rather than the craft itself that she was rejecting, and she was able to take it up later on her own terms, as part of her artistic development. Thus Walker the artist was able to appropriate embroidery to her own purposes, subverting aspects of its identity. One way of understanding community tapestry is as an opportunity for others to experience a similar sense of liberation from common preconceptions, as manifested in Hatti’s delight at Walker’s untidy working habits and Grace and Sue’s sense of purpose before an audience. The ideological context discussed above informs my reading of the Last Invasion Tapestry’s content below.

\textbf{The Fishguard narrative and female agency}

The Last Invasion Tapestry can be understood as a piece of community history that challenges both historic conceptions of embroidery and women’s status as historical actors. It delineates a narrative in which female agency is writ large, confounding Alistair Moffat’s stress on the paucity of the archive with regard to women’s experience, and his rather sweeping explanation that women lived lives of informal slavery prior to the last two centuries.\textsuperscript{500} Moffat’s solution with regard to the Great Tapestry of Scotland, is to give women a strong presence through the generic panels. Fishguard, on the other hand, counters with narrative specificity. We can read both

\textsuperscript{497} Interview with Grace.
responses as forms of herstory within the narrative. As I will go on to demonstrate, however, the Last Invasion Tapestry’s vivid particularity has a special place in augmenting the Fishguard stitchers’ sense of satisfaction at participating in the project. In the light of the active careers of its originating forces as artists and teachers during the 1970s and 1980s, the era of herstory’s heyday, this tapestry appears to come closer to it in spirit. Furthermore, by representing active female protagonists in public life, the tapestry emblematically draws attention to the role of the embroiderers on this project as makers of public history, such that we can use this particular tapestry to think more broadly about how history lends embroidery a new context.

Fishguard’s embroidered women are active participants in the normatively masculine realm of battle narrative: a depiction of the short-lived invasion of South Pembrokeshire by 1400 Napoleonic troops blown off course in 1797. The troops were defeated within forty-eight hours of landing, through local effort and luck. Throughout the tapestry, scenes depicting military men are interspersed with scenes involving local inhabitants of both sexes. Nelly Philips, a nine-year old cowherd, is the tapestry’s opening image, she having been among the first to sight the French ships from her vantage point in the high pasture. A little further on we encounter women struggling to protect the livestock from pillaging soldiers. A small marginal image provides a more disturbing illustration of a Frenchman on top of a woman whose hand is outstretched above her head in a gesture of protest. Women are among the observers as the local militia advances, then later as the French surrender note is delivered, and again as part of the crowd watching the foreign troops retreat up the beach. But two images act as principal foci in the mise en scène. First, the image depicting Jemima Nicholas, a formidable local cobbler celebrated as a local heroine for capturing twelve French soldiers during the invasion, and second, the image of Welsh women marching around a local landmark, Bigney Hill. Popular tradition holds that one of the reasons for the French surrender was misidentification of a group of women in distinctive local dress as British soldiers, leading to the mistaken belief that the size of the opposing force was greater than it really was.

Let us look in more detail at these images. Jemima confronts the viewer face-on, a pitchfork in one hand and the shoulder of a soldier grasped fiercely in the other (fig. 4.1). The soldier, who appears markedly shorter than Jemima, is hanging his head and covering his face. Her stature is such that from the top of her hat to the toes of her
shoes she encompasses almost the full depth of the main register of the tapestry. Narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, she herself is another example of pyramidal composition, and this contributes to the effect of a sturdy and imposing presence.\textsuperscript{501} The visible line of her chin, along with the tilt of her hat’s brim and the deployment of foreshortening (her face appears to be about the same width as her substantial calves), indicates that we are meant to feel she is towering not just above her captives, but above all the spectators of her handiwork, including ourselves. It may also indicate a double-chin, in keeping with the ample curve of her bosom, her hefty arms and her thickset stockinged ankles. Her robust physique encourages two readings. First it suggests she is well-fed, which may be an indication of a healthy Welsh economy, and what is at stake for the locals when faced with the French intruders. Second, it presents her as confidently self-reliant. This idea is borne out by observations made by stitcher-participant Frances Chivers, who pointed out that as a fishing community with men frequently away at sea, Fishguard would have been a comparatively matriarchal society.\textsuperscript{502}

In the light of this it is believable that a lone Fishguard woman might have been able to intimidate a group of men unfamiliar with the environs into capitulation. We note the confident way Jemima inhabits space in contrast to the puny bunch of soldiers to her rear – downcast in demeanour and eyeing her nervously. Moreover, Jemima’s attire, which consists of the distinctive red of woollen gown and fringed shawl, a wide-expanse of white apron picked out in blue, a high-crowned black hat, coarse knitted stockings and heavy buckled shoes, marks her out from her captives as female and identifies her as a commanding authority figure.\textsuperscript{503} Armed as she is with her pitchfork, and posed as if reporting for duty, her costume functions as uniform. The cross-over of her shawl even mimics the white cross-belts worn by military men in the tapestry.

The distinguishing features of dress belonging to the women of Bigney Hill are simpler (fig. 4.2). Most are seen only from the rear, and thus we identify them by their

\textsuperscript{501} Compare Chapter 3, fig. 3.6: George Fox at Ulverston.
\textsuperscript{502} Frances Chivers in conversation with Sam Willis, presenter, Invasion! Episode 3, first aired BBC4, 19 December 2017.
4.1 Jemima with the apprehended French soldiers (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.

4.2 Women march around Bigney Hill (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.

4.3 Observing the red-cloaked figures at Bigney (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.
long red capes and tall mannish black hats. Some women carry pitchforks, like Jemima, others have scythes (war scythes, with blades positioned vertically, rather than agricultural tools), and one has a shepherd’s crook, giving the group a makeshift appearance. Individuated striped petticoats, woollen stockings and heavy shoes are visible embellishments below their capes and one woman in three-quarter pose can be seen sporting an apron like Jemima. But these women look more mysterious. They are marked out by marginal text identifying them as ‘The Myth,’ to acknowledge that this part of the narrative is not historically verifiable. They are seen from a distance, and in most instances their faces are only partially visible, or not visible at all. They are parading around the base of a mound and many are facing away from us, and they have their red hoods up, some drawn over and some drawn under their hats, reducing our ability to distinguish amongst them and signalling intent to dissemble. Here also, costume stands in for military uniform according to the narrative of misidentification, but the procession in which they engage endows the scene with a ritualistic quality – they are reminiscent of witches, especially in view of their hatted and hooded garb. An identity historically assigned to powerful and subversive women, the witch is a complex, culturally constructed category with both positive and negative layers of signification.

In the commemorative film for the tapestry, Jemima is consistently singled out for comment. Of approximately fifty participants providing reflections on their experience of the project, five chose to highlight Jemima. Here are three of the comments:

504 It is unclear whether the French were deceived by the large number of country folk assembled on the hills to take in the spectacle (including red-mantled women), whether local women aided the military in engaging in a deliberate act of pretence, or indeed whether red cloaks played any decisive part in the decision of the French to surrender. Stuart Jones, The Last Invasion of Britain (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1950), p.117, comments, ‘If the part played by the red-cloaked women in compelling the French troops to lay down their arms is difficult to determine at this distance of time, it is but natural that so picturesque an incident should have captivated popular fancy sufficiently to lend itself to some degree of embellishment.’

505 Danielle Dumaine and Mary-Margaret Mahoney note early modern witch-hunts are attributed to the perceived threat to the Church’s authority; prior to that, ‘cunning people’ coexisted with Christianity. Scholarly consensus suggests women were targeted as witches for their autonomy as widows, and non-normative behaviour. In the 1960s and 1970s, radical feminist groups such as WITCH (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) appropriated the term. Recent popularity of shows such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer have served as more mainstream positive role models for girls and women (The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies 1-3, s.v. ‘Witches,’ http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss771, accessed 15/03/18). It is with reference to her membership of WITCH that Robin Morgan uses the term herstory, re-assigning the ‘ever-changing acronym’ as ‘Women Inspired to Commit Herstory’ (OED Online).
**Anon. female 2:** Having been brought up in Fishguard and heard all about Jemima in my childhood, I felt really I had to belong to [the project].

**Anon. female 3:** I first heard about Jemima when I was a little girl in Swansea. And she became my heroine . . .

**Anon. female 4:** Jemima’s a favourite with all of us here in Fishguard, isn’t she?\(^{506}\)

The stitchers are at ease celebrating Jemima’s historic agency as a way of rationalising their own involvement. They are less at ease with regard to their own ability: several recounted initial anxiety as to whether they would measure up to the embroidery standards required. Jemima acts as a proxy for expressing a more robust stance, a sense that when called upon, women can step up to the mark. Note the emotive frame of reference: ‘belong’, ‘heroine’, ‘favourite.’ The final quotation acknowledges Jemima’s status as common currency by playfully implying that she is alive and well in the world today. Jerome de Groot has talked about our past and present inhabiting the same space, and the way the past ‘interpolates and interprets our nowness.’\(^{507}\) The stitchers’ understandings seem to encompass this sense of cohabitation so that the present of making the tapestry gains additional meaning from the empathy they feel for this historic female character.

The two scenes of female agency are arrestingly self-contained, unlike the military logistics of much of the tapestry’s activity, which involves men on horseback conferring with each other, and busy troop transfer between one location and another. In the image depicting Jemima, she is the focus, with the group curved inward around her and divorced from scenes on either side. The Bigney scene, with its participants forming a similarly semi-circular configuration, but this time in a line curving away from the viewer around the bottom of the Bigney, is also focused in upon itself. A soldier on horseback points in the direction of the women: perhaps in confusion, perhaps to emphasise their potential impact (fig. 4.3), but the women form

---

\(^{506}\) Stitchers speaking on Thomas, *The Making of the Tapestry* (DVD).

\(^{507}\) De Groot, ‘Affect and Empathy,’ at 592.
an autonomous unit disconnected from the masculine activity on either side. By presenting Jemima as a rare full-frontal close-up confronting and involving the viewer in her moment of triumph (most faces depicted in the tapestry are in profile or three-quarter view), illustrator Liz Cramp underlines that Jemima’s is the achievement with the power to reach out to future generations. The Bigney scene reaches out to the viewer in a different way. By inserting the metatext ‘The Myth’ – it is the only scene with such a qualifier – Cramp signals that she is engaging in a knowing dialogue with the viewer concerning the way in which the narrative as depicted incorporates different levels of historicity.508 This is a rather sophisticated manifestation of Kalela’s shared history, acknowledging the incomplete merging of materials from a range of sources with varying levels of truth status.509

The way in which these two scenes effect significant visual disruptions to the main thrust of the narrative is reinforced by the panel of photographs in the tapestry exhibition, which records the re-enaction activities on the anniversary in 1997. The photographic panel too separates female and male manoeuvres, suggesting it is not conceptually easy to reconcile them.510 A reading in line with what Stuart Hall designates dominant ideology might pass over these two scenes as uneasy anomalies and posit the tapestry’s message as the importance of members of a community pulling together to overcome adversity. But the scenes are potentially subversive. They encourage the viewer to pause for thought and negotiate more nuanced meanings from what she sees.

These women are recognisably female, but they are not conventionally feminine representations, either in terms of the way they look, or the attribution of agency. The hinterland of the figures is masculinised. Popular belief about Bigney revolves around women being mistaken for men, and Jemima is said to have been, ‘a tall and masculine woman.’511 It is of note that the hats in the Last Invasion Tapestry that we think of as a distinctive part of women’s Welsh national dress are, and indeed were, worn by both sexes, a less rigid gendering of clothing than we might expect to

508 Liz Cramp, ‘The Design,’ in The Last Invasion Tapestry, p.16: ‘I figured without the myths little would be left.’
509 Compare Chapter 3, fig. 3.6: George Fox at Ulverston for similar levels of sophistication.
510 Twenty pictures of the soldiers’ operations followed by five pictures of the women, the latter all involving Jemima.
511 Jones, The Last Invasion of Britain, p.104.
encounter in late eighteenth-century Britain, albeit in the attire of the rural working
class. Costume/outward signifiers of identity can be seen as an empowering
assertion of a non-gendered group identity – more prominently an attribute of
Welshness than femaleness, especially in the context of Jemima’s imposing physique.
Her attire is thus a reinforcing signifier of the community-spirited act of apprehending
enemy soldiers. The costume of the women of Bigney Hill is a more complex and
playful identifier, powerful by virtue of the fact that it is understood to mean different
things to different groups, but nevertheless affirming the importance of being an
insider rather than an outsider.

When Raphael Samuel alluded to the new national past being ‘more feminine
and domestic,’ in the 1990s – the era of the Last Invasion Tapestry’s production – he
was noting a substantial redirecting of popular and academic interest towards private
over public; hearth and home over sceptre and sword: regimes traditionally identified
as feminine. However, the tapestry’s concern lies in making clear that the last
invasion of Britain is a story of women acting alongside men despite it dealing with the
traditionally male regime of military affairs. This gives it more in common with feminist
‘herstory’ than Samuel’s feminine regime which can be critiqued as perpetuating a
binary which is somewhat exclusionary and patronising.

Comparative depictions of women in the tapestries
The Last Invasion Tapestry’s non-traditional representation of femininity as a mark of
female agency offers a useful comparator for the other tapestries. There is a notable
parallel with the presentation of female figures in the Quaker Tapestry, where Quaker
identity is to the fore as opposed to female identity. Plain attire marks Quakers as
distinctively Quaker, and often part of a group, rather than highlighting individual
distinctiveness. Significantly, on two particular occasions where emphatically non-
Quaker females are part of the narrative, it is these women’s exoticism as women that
makes an impact, in contrast with their Quaker equivalents. In the panel entitled

---

512 National Museum of Wales: ‘The hats generally worn were the same as hats worn by men... The tall
‘chimney’ hat did not appear until the late 1840s... an amalgamation of men’s top hats and a form of
high hat worn during the 1790-1820 period in country areas.’
513 Raphael Samuel, ‘Resurrectionism,’ in Past and Present, pp.139-68 at pp.161-2. See also ‘Living
History,’ in the same volume, pp.169-202, especially pp.194-6. These themes are touched on throughout
the two volumes of Theatres of Memory.
‘Simplicity’ (fig. 4.4), Quaker David Barclay and his sombrely dressed family (to the left) host King George III who is accompanied by a resplendent Queen Charlotte in a pale peach outfit with train. The panel ‘John Bellers’ depicts a richly attired Queen Anne, with low-cut décolletage, the recipient of Bellers’ prolific writings on how to address the causes of her subjects’ poverty.\textsuperscript{514} Each panel works through contrast, injecting a little-deployed note of satire into the tapestry. Intriguingly, the motif of the red-cloaked female appears in two images in this tapestry too. The first is a marginal image of the Quaker Elizabeth Fry and her six sisters in red cloaks with hoods raised, taking part in a prank holding up the London mail (highwaymen’s cloaks are sometimes red in popular depictions). According to the panel text, other Quaker families censured the Fry s for worldly attire and deeds, so this image of colourful high spirits sets Fry apart from Quaker norms prior to her religious awakening aged eighteen. However, as an image of dissembling, this provides a parallel with the depiction of women in the Fishguard myth.\textsuperscript{515} Mary Hughes, another Quaker known for her unconventional life, also stands out in the red cloak she is believed to have worn.\textsuperscript{516} In the context of the tapestry narrative, the red cloak reinforces the image of the potent female Quaker. Elsewhere Quaker women are shown as dissenters, activists and publishers; as members of adventurous settler families, relief-work efforts, medical teams and peace embassies. The function of these female figures as an active element of a cohesively presented Quaker social milieu is more significant than their femaleness.

By comparison, the Welsh women can be read as subversive representations of female agency, with a potentially destabilising effect on the narrative. The implication of the Bigney scene is that dressing up as a soldier is enough to fool your enemy; at a symbolic level, cunning is more important than strength. And Jemima, her group of feeble French captives in tow, physically gives the lie to the idea that feminine strength is no match for masculine strength. Both images thus involve an emasculating subtext that undermines the masculine prowess of French and British soldiers alike. These portrayals of women exude a confident autonomy in comparison to the women of the Prestonpans Tapestry (the other military-led narrative), who function principally as admirers of the Stuart Prince. At Dunblane a serving maid kneels to kiss the Prince’s

\textsuperscript{514} QT ‘John Bellers’ (E2).
\textsuperscript{515} QT ‘Elizabeth Fry’ (E5), panel commentary.
\textsuperscript{516} ‘Mary Hughes’ (QT E9). See panel text. See also discussion of Hughes’ life in Chapter 3 at p.145.
4.4 Quaker Simplicity (QT D2).
© Quaker Tapestry. Designed Joe McCrum; embroidered Ann Castle/Bournemouth & Swanage area group.

4.5 The Prince stays at Balhaldie House in Dunblane (PT 39).
boots (fig. 4.5). At Edinburgh’s Mercat Cross the admiring crowds include Maddie Pringle, the woman who coined the epithet ‘Bonny Prince Charlie,’ we are told. And we see the Prince grandly presenting the Jenkinson sisters with a snuff box and a ring on account of them being ‘the bonniest lassies’ in Scotland. These images cast women as appendages of the Prince’s romantic appeal.

The Fishguard women are also rather different from female images in the Great Tapestry of Scotland – a tapestry designed by a male designer, though stitched by female embroiderers – whose attributes are more conventionally feminine. Of particular note are the repeated representations of grieving women. In the composite image (fig. 4.6), see the central figure in the Black Death panel (top-left), the two prominent female figures with hands clasped at Flodden, two more behind, with others in the distance (top-right), the bowed heads of witches about to suffer death by burning (top-centre), the two girls with heads bowed and hands clasped representing the Covenanters killed for their beliefs in the 1680s (mid-left), two cowled women with babies suffering exposure to the elements after the Glencoe massacre (mid-right), and women with hands to their mouths in grief in response to the Clearances (bottom-left).

It is not that there are no men in these panels. At Flodden a tall male piper is the structuring ‘backbone’ of a group of figures in the foreground; in the Clearances panel a bearded man is entreating his persecutors. However, the greater level of stylisation accorded to the female figures, usually with arms raised and heads covered and bowed, provides a useful visual short-hand for representing tragic events. The stoic suffering of ordinary Scots is effectively being represented through the leitmotif of female suffering. In the twentieth-century panels, the figure of the nurse is a modified reiteration of the earlier images of grieving women: stylised nurses in blue uniform and white head-dress frame the Battle of Ypres (bottom-right), and a similarly attired nurse (bottom-centre) tends a wounded soldier in the panel depicting Elsie Inglis, Scottish doctor and suffragist (she herself is mannishly attired in hat and tie) (fig. 4.6). In each instance, the nurse’s arms reach outward and downward to care for an injured man. The presentation recalls and simultaneously conceptually transforms the images of

517 ‘The Prince meets Beatrix Jenkinson and her sister’ (PT 59); KJVIII and III proclaimed at Edinburgh’s Mercat Cross’ (PT55).
518 I have not dealt with the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry’s females. Since the decision-making for panel subject matter was dispersed across the diaspora and 300 panels, there is insufficient space to avoid unrepresentative generalizations.
4.6 composite image – left to right along each line: Female figures with and without covered heads in poses of pathos: The Black Death (GTS 32), Witches (49), Flodden (40), The Killing Times (53), Massacre of Glencoe (54) and Clearances (72); bottom line centre and right: care-giving: Elsie Inglis (120), Battle of Ypres (119).
earlier panels, with the suffering female victim becoming the means by which relief is provided to others.\textsuperscript{519}

The detail of the covered head is significant. Ludmilla Jordanova notes that veiling and cloaking are common motifs in relation to women and project a complex range of associations, one of which is religious.\textsuperscript{520} The position of arms and hands in the tapestry images, often entreating in an act akin to prayer, reinforces such a reading, and we may recall that the traditional nurse’s attire with trailing head-dress is based on the nun’s habit. Part of the power of these images may be attributed to the emotive charge lent them by their relation to religious archetypes of women – the Virgin Mary and the nun at prayer – which connote an affective subtext of selflessness and steadfastness. More broadly, the female as witness and emblem of suffering is pervasive in art. The Bayeux Tapestry itself depicts Queen Edith weeping into a long loose head-dress with hand held to her face at her husband Edward’s death bed.\textsuperscript{521} In this way, suffering and care-giving are conceptually related in the tapestry through modulated repetition and associative context. They provide an important corrective to the scenes of battle that pepper the narrative, and, as a female perspective from the sidelines, a particular ‘herstory.’ However the images also conform to an established tradition of femininity conceptualised as rather more passive, unlike the Fishguard women.

The motif of women in Welsh dress is conspicuous in the images of Bigney and Jemima, but significantly, it recurs throughout the narrative. It is less overt elsewhere because much of the time we encounter figures watching and witnessing events with their backs to us. In particular, where figures are shown from waist-level upwards, if the viewer does not look carefully, those wearing tall hats may be mistaken for men, since the two sexes wear similar headwear. On careful inspection it can be seen that men in the tapestry usually wear a lower crowned hat with an upturned rim, like a

\textsuperscript{519} There is an interesting recalibration of men’s role in these panels too, with the bowed male figure, bearing the brunt of war, becoming the principal carrier of the affective burden: see GTS 121, 131.
\textsuperscript{520} Jordanova, \textit{Sexual Visions}, p.91 and p.177, notes 7 & 9.
\textsuperscript{521} Gale R. Owen-Crocker, ‘The Interpretation of Gesture in the Bayeux Tapestry,’ in \textit{Anglo-Norman Studies} 29 (2007) 145-78 at 169 notes that she echoes the weeping Virgin of Anglo-Saxon crucifixion iconography, such as the widows and female mourners depicted in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch (London, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B. iv, fols 10v, 11v, 12r). In a stark twentieth-century example, Picasso’s \textit{Guernica}, 1937, Museo Reina Sofia, also includes three distraught women.
4.7 Men and women observers wearing hats (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.

4.8 Handover of the surrender note at the Royal Oak (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.
bowler hat but depicted in natural shades and broader brimmed (fig. 4.7). The hats worn by women have attributes of a masculine sensibility as well: they are plain and unadorned, and unexpectedly, their height and dark colour give them a gravitas and authority that are lacking in the men’s hats.

Most notably, women are integral to the scene in which the French surrender note is delivered to the British (fig. 4.8). In this scene, two French soldiers are accompanied by three local men in hats and breeches, one with a torch and one a pitchfork, who usher the French into the headquarters of the British soldiers. But the scene also includes three female figures in tall-crowned hats. The female in the middle-ground, dramatic in her sweeping red cloak, is at the shoulder of the soldier with the surrender note. Since the scene is by torchlight, it apparently occurs after dark. It is surprising to find women playing such an important role at such a moment. If it were not for the identifying red-cape-plus-hat we might assume this figure was a man. We can read women’s presence, watching and witnessing here in equal numbers to the local men, and again later on the hill as the troops retreat and surrender, as indicative of their important function in calling to account the male-dominated polity: assuring its proper functioning. The hat is a signifier of the assumption of a public role in the Last Invasion Tapestry. The tall hat signifies an acceptance of women’s involvement within the masculine-coded public sphere. And, at the same time, the potential for confusion the tall hat engenders in the French – and in us as viewers – is linked to the overtones of authority it lends to the wearer. Here we interpret veiling and cloaking quite differently to in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, then; in this instance, to clothe oneself in hat and red hood is to assume one’s public persona, and also to conceal and protect oneself from assumptions of feminine vulnerability on the part of others. The Great Tapestry of Scotland’s representation of Elsie Inglis offers an interesting parallel to the Fishguard women, and an anomaly among the women of the Scottish tapestry. She too is an unconventional female figure, by virtue of her atypical engagement in civil society in the early twentieth century. For her too, hat (and tie) are markers of this. She provides a notable contrast to the image of a nurse below whom

---

522 In some instances, women appear in a white frilled cap only, or this is visible below the tall hat. Anthony (Welsh Folk Museum) comments that the frilled cap was worn indoors by all women at this period.

523 A fourth individual, bare-headed except for frilled cap, peers between the others. Absence of hat may be for reasons of space or may indicate junior status.
she appears, as if a counterbalance of traditional femininity were judged appropriate at this point (fig 4.6 bottom-centre).\\footnote{Ironically, I originally interpreted the nurse as Elsie, and Elsie as a male figure.}

Jordanova has observed that the female form in Western culture has often worked as a convenient vehicle for the depiction of abstract concepts in human form, or ‘personification.’ This is pertinent to picking apart the different ways female figures function in the two tapestries.\\footnote{Jordanova, Sexual Visions, pp.134-5; Eugène Delacroix’s image of the French revolution, July 28: Liberty Leading the People, 1830 (Louvre, Paris) would be an example.} The broader expanse of history covered in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, and its compartmentalised, panel-based approach to subject matter, means a level of personification offers a convenient visual tactic for distilling information within a panel and building resonance across disparate material in unrelated panels to promote narrative cohesion. It is facilitated by Andrew Crummy’s emblematic representational style, which often fuses several elements in a single image. The paucity of named as opposed to unnamed women in the tapestry – and relative to men – makes women suitable candidates for such treatment. For instance, the central image in the panel depicting the First Reform Act of 1832 is of a giant figure of a woman with back bowed on whose body supplementary images and text are inscribed, symbolic of the subjugation of workers that voting reform was meant to redress (fig. 4.9). Jordanova has also suggested that personification is a way of endowing an issue with ‘cultural dignity’ and ‘defusing potential threats.’\\footnote{Jordanova, Sexual Visions, p.134.} Representing the powerlessness of ordinary people to affect the outcome of events as an aestheticised image of female suffering may be more palatable to viewers than a succession of male victims would be. I am not suggesting that all female figures in the tapestry are submissive. In particular, the earliest scenes of pre-historic Scotland incorporate strong female figures alongside the men, and from the late 1800s, women are presented as agents of progress: winning rights as tenants, voters, and union members. We can also read this trajectory of developing female agency through images linking women and textiles in home and factory.\\footnote{At Robert Owen’s New Lanark Mill (GTS 78), weaving paisley (GTS 105 and 107), as union members (GTS 110), producing jute (GTS 114), as knitters (GTS 115 and 126), and the artist Margaret MacDonald (GTS 116).} The imagery culminates in a series of closing panels which bring the embroiderers of the tapestry within the aegis of depicted history. The framing device of paired female stitchers recurs in eight
4.9 The First Reform Act (GTS 89).

4.10 Parliament of the Ancestors (GTS 156a – the left side of a double panel).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘Cupar Needles,’ Cupar, Ladybank, St Andrews; ‘Liberton Ladies,’ Edinburgh; ‘Firth of Forth Stitchers,’ Prestonpans, Port Seton; Sylvia Robertson, Pitlochry.

4.11 The Scottish Parliament Reconvenes (GTS 155).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘Scissor Sisters,’ Eskbank.
variants across two double panels entitled ‘Parliament of the Ancestors’ and ‘Parliament for the Future’ (fig. 4.10). In preceding and succeeding panels, two hands stitch the thistle symbolising the 1999 reconvening of the Scottish Parliament (fig. 4.11). Eight more stitch Scotland’s land-mass and its flag. These embroiders signify both the tapestry’s stitchers, and women’s contributions to Scotland’s past, present and future. The imagery works to displace more conventional readings of female craft, acknowledging it as at once social, public and political as well as domestic. In this way, women in the Great Tapestry of Scotland too, are emblematically represented as embedded in the polity. Nevertheless, repeated iteration of stylised female forms (the stitcher, the carer-sufferer) renders the women of the Great Tapestry of Scotland less robustly human and more idealised than those in the Last Invasion Tapestry. It disperses status as distinct beings and identifies them instead as representatives of a common condition: anonymous figures universalising experience. Conversely, the Fishguard women appear grittier and more life-like because they are depicted as individuals engaged and grounded in a particularised set of events. So while their act of ‘veiling’ – hooping and hatting – is associated with assuming power and agency and confounding expectation, the bowed and hooded females in the Great Tapestry of Scotland convey a discourse concerned with submitting – or ‘bowing’ – to circumstance.

**Historicity**

As we have seen, it is with regard to the Last Invasion Tapestry in particular that the female strand of the narrative, focused through the figure of Jemima, is singled out by the stitchers as a history held in common. In retrospect, Eirian Short’s desire to get women together to commemorate the invasion of Fishguard can be read as a recognition that the uncommon level of involvement of women in this historical narrative would lend the project particular resonance for contemporary women. In this context, the gendered medium of embroidery works to reinforce the gendered narrative: it is a coherent part of the presentational strategy because, like the narrative of invasion, it too documents female effort.

---

528 GTS 158.
It is also possible that the peripheral roles of women in the Prestonpans Tapestry narrative have the opposite effect to Jemima’s prominence, perhaps imparting a sense of alienation on the stitchers, and contributing to the disjunction between the coordinators’ enthusiasm for the tale of the 1745 uprising, and the stitchers’ preoccupation with talking about the personal and familial relationships embodied in their nametags.\(^{529}\) One of the ways the autobiographical nametag functions is as a visual device for reconciling and accommodating the rather different perspectives on history voiced by stitcher and initiator. This minor but nevertheless formalised intrusion of the stitcher’s own narrative is underwritten by the guidebook’s supporting narrative. Each panel appears in full colour on a recto, with the opposing verso incorporating a brief explanation of the narrative; three images – a panel detail, a picture of the stitcher(s) and the nametag in close-up; and a biographical note for the stitcher(s) providing explanation of the nametag. Thus while the female protagonists of the Fishguard history operate as a feminised counternarrative to the masculine conceit of the battle narrative from a position internal to the \textit{mise en scène}; for Prestonpans, tag and guidebook moderate the masculinised narrative from an external position.

Nametags also drew comment from stitchers on the other Scottish tapestries:

\textit{Sue}: There was always a bit where you could put your names, or your motif, or whatever you wanted, so it’s— it’s yours.

\textit{AH}: Yes.

\textit{Sue}: And no matter what happens to it.

\textit{AH}: You’re embedded.

\textit{Sue}: Yeah, you’re embedded in it and nobody can ever take it away.

\textit{AH}: That’s nice isn’t it?

\textit{Sue}: Which I think is nice because, it personalises it. And makes it so that— historic: so that, when somebody comes to do the history in two, three hundred years’ time— That— oh, they were the ones.\(^{530}\)

Sue (GTS) captured a sense not only of her tag’s importance at a personal level, but her conception of its power in endowing the tapestry with historicity. The tags are


\(^{530}\) Interview with Sue.
positioned as vital to the tapestry’s imagined cataloguing and deciphering as history (as opposed to myth or a diverting story) in the future. In their function as production notes, she saw them lending the tapestry its importance as a historical artefact and anchoring it to a particular present context, a historicity that is bound up with its survival, and interest value, a few hundred years hence. Almas too (SDT) was interested in tapestry’s longevity: ‘It’s history [. . .] And it’s gonna be, you know, when I’m gone, still there.’

In both instances the stitchers saw their panels’ identification with history as the element that endowed it with permanence. And in a related comment, Rosemary (SDT) gave voice to the attitudes to homecraft to which this historicity provides a challenge:

This is– this is also– I know this will stay and be looked after. When I’m dead, it won’t end up in the tip, cos a lot of people make beautiful things and– [they get] thrown away– no one looks after it, and so most of the ladies are thinking, well, we’re doing this because it will be looked after for future generations.

Here she acknowledged that privately produced embroidery is at the mercy of fashion and individual predilection, with changes in taste apt to negate the work of preceding generations. Talia Schaffer provides a Victorian parallel, citing instances of male aesthetes disposing of their female relatives’ embroideries around the home in favour of older fragments of doubtful medieval pedigree. The allure of the historicity of a medieval provenance trumped the ‘fuss, flimsiness, and fashion,’ attributed to contemporary female handicraft, a context of ephemerality that positioned it outside history. Of note too is that at this period the Bayeux Tapestry’s value was conceptualised more in terms of its documentary significance than its material identity. This was not just on the part of those such as E.A. Freeman, historian of the Norman Conquest, for whom it provided a vital historical source. J. Collingwood Bruce,

531 Interview with Uzma and Almas, 31 May 2014.
532 Interview with Rosemary, 30 May 2014.
first to write a full-length study of the tapestry, referred to it as document, monument, authority and chronicle, and summed up, ‘the Bayeux record is a large roll of historic drawings rather than a piece of tapestry,’ a statement that appears intended to convince the reader of the tapestry’s legitimacy as a serious subject by downplaying its identity as embroidery.535 As discussed in the introduction, women writers such as Elizabeth Stone were also interested in interpreting the tapestry’s significance as history as a means of asserting their own validity as historians.536

The Bayeux Tapestry retains its importance today as a source of information for the Norman Conquest and British history, as widespread coverage in the national media of the French President Macron’s announcement of its intended loan to Britain in 2022/23 demonstrated in January 2018. As antecedent of the modern tapestry projects, its credibility as history is a significant element of the historicising framework under discussion. The initiators are careful to cite it in supporting narratives as inspiration for their own projects.537 While the stitcher-participants were more reluctant to allude to it as a way of legitimising a particular project’s historicity, Fishguard was again the exception here. On film two individuals make reference to the Bayeux forebear in expressing their hopes and expectations for the new tapestry:

Anon. female 5: I’m sure that one day the Fishguard Tapestry will be as well known as the Bayeux Tapestry.

Anon. female 6: If this tapestry lasts as long as the Bayeux, it will be wonderful.

Again value as history is being interpreted through the framework of longevity, but the Bayeux Tapestry, survival, and embroidery’s worth as artefact are interrelated concepts here. To suggest the Last Invasion Tapestry will be well known in the future is


537 The Quaker Tapestry is referred to as ‘a Bayeux in bits’; Fishguard’s work is the Last Invasion Tapestry, a more recent ‘invasion’ than that of the Normans; Prestoungrange says the Prestonpans Tapestry records a battle fought against another usurper of the English throne, the Hastings Embroidery, is named after the location of the battle of Hastings; the Overlord Embroidery was styled a ‘Bayeux Tapestry in reverse’; the Fulford and Alderney tapestries commemorate what happened before and after events recorded on the Bayeux Tapestry; the Maldon Embroidery refers to another medieval battle, and a lost tapestry depicting it. See also Appendix A.
to suggest it will continue to have information of value to impart to us. The Fishguard stitchers’ comments, together with the comments of Rosemary (SDT), Sue (GTS), Grace (QT) and Almas (SDT), indicate that participants are cognizant of the repurposing of embroidery involved in the project of community tapestry. This is more than simply the display of homecraft in a public space: the tapestries’ identity as public history – as ambitious historical narratives of relevance and interest to a broad public – challenges the private, personal and domestic coding of embroidery.

**Conclusions**

I began by discussing the way embroidery’s gendered identity adversely affects assessments of value, tracing this discourse in the comments of both initiators and stitchers. A subtle change of stitchers’ tone is noticeable when discussion moves from relating private experiences of homecraft to their involvement in community tapestry: ambivalence with regard to the former is replaced by enthusiasm and conviction with regard to the significance of the latter. Sue’s self-deprecating comment about not knowing what to do with her superfluous craft output is replaced by a sense of the Great Tapestry of Scotland as transformational in effect. Similarly, the scholarly context with which Grace framed her enjoyment of ‘lecturing’ on the Quaker Tapestry was quite different from her discomfiture at aspects of sewing’s connotations of usefulness. As a medium for telling history, community tapestry’s public-facing relevance and identity as history act as moderating influences on its identity as embroidery, loosening the influence of its polite hinterland of domesticity and the Victorian withdrawing room.

Ideas concerned with female public engagement and woman’s experience are reinforced in a variety of ways through the tapestry narratives themselves. They are a particularly dominant feature in the Last Invasion Tapestry’s deployment of unexpected female interventions. Depiction of these familiar set pieces of local history can be read as a broader preoccupation with embedding female agency in public discourse. For the other tapestries also engage with questions concerning women and history. Each tapestry offers a version of herstory, bringing women and history into dialogue in some way. So while the Last Invasion Tapestry offers a subversive,
disruptive narrative, the Great Tapestry of Scotland offers a more conventional, integrated picture of female involvement: the suffering, caring witness to events, the participant in social and political change over time. The Prestonpans Tapestry offers a third approach, visually negotiating through the nametag the intersection between the masculine-coded battle narrative and the stitchers’ individuated experience as inhabitants of Prestonpans. If women are more peripheral to this narrative, they come closer, symbolically, to the women who created the Bayeux Tapestry. As the Victorian historian Elizabeth Stone pointed out, it is the women who execute the stitchwork who bring to light and make history of the ‘turbulent spirits’ whose violent deeds were executed on the battlefield, endowing these recorders of history with symbolic agency.\textsuperscript{538} There is an interesting parallel here with Uzma Mir Young’s position as modern-day producer/co-director of Partition: Legacy of the Line. She does not appear in the film but it is she who has moulded the narrative, and thus speaks through it.

What of the other two tapestries under discussion? The dispersed authorship of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry means it would be misguided to attempt to identify unified presentation of women or the presentation of a particular perspective in this tapestry; the mix of themes and subjects, the range of historical periods encompassed and the prominence and agency of women varies widely with the panels’ countries of origin.\textsuperscript{539} What Chapter 2 shows, however, is that we can read this tapestry as an exercise in delegating the task of authoring the panel narratives to women themselves. In the case of the women I interviewed, all from countries of the Global North, this facilitated a refocusing of history on genealogical themes: preoccupations previously confined to the signature tag became the organising principle of entire panels. Although this does not necessarily lead to a focus on women’s stories, women are integral to shaping the material, providing raw material, design input and embroidery work for these histories: a little like Mir Young in their roles as producer/directors. The Quaker Tapestry differs again. Female figures are singled out as remarkable Quaker exemplars as opposed to remarkable females. Nevertheless, the exclusion and marginalisation from public life involved in Quaker pacifism and dissent sets in motion parallels between female experience of the past and the experience of both female and male Quakers. Thus although the intimations of feminist sensibility underlying the

\textsuperscript{538} Stone, The Art of Needle-work, from the Earliest Ages, p.115 and Introduction, p.29.
\textsuperscript{539} It includes parts of Europe, the Americas, Africa, Southern Asia and Australasia.
Last Invasion Tapestry are absent from the Quaker Tapestry interpreted through Quaker discourse, its potential as a recalibration of conventionally gendered understandings of particular human attributes offers productive material for feminist readings, and a further site for locating a version of herstory.

This chapter has elucidated how community tapestry extends embroidery’s reach, focusing in particular on the ways in which it brings women into dialogue with history. Distinctions between tapestries have been a particular feature of a discussion concerned with the variety of approaches deployed to depicting women. The following chapter develops exploration of the intersection between community tapestry’s identities as history and embroidery in the tapestries. It examines whether it is possible to isolate elements of a common discourse for presenting history, and how this might relate to shared formal qualities, design and narrative content.
5: The Everyday and the Heroic

Introduction

The study of everyday life has burgeoned in recent decades, and this final chapter seeks to relocate community tapestry with reference to this body of scholarship. In doing so, it considers the extent to which community tapestry might offer a more inclusive alternative to public histories already in currency. In particular, the chapter examines how far a domesticated craft narrative can challenge a heroic narrative of the past. My arguments draw especially on everyday life scholars Ben Highmore, Naomi Schor and Rosemary Shirley,540 and work on popular humour, including that of Andy Medhurst,541 but I begin by turning to quilter and sociologist Colleen R. Hall-Patton, who has highlighted the way women’s creative work often foregrounds an ethic of ‘emotional labour,’ which distinguishes it from canonical art. This was a discourse that was perceptible in many of the stitchers’ commentaries, for instance, in the Quaker sense of responsibility for Quaker history, the Prestonpans stitchers’ family-oriented tags and the Diaspora stitchers’ genealogical narratives, and the comments from Fishguard stitchers which linked motivation for involvement to a sense of connection to Jemima.542 Rather than interpreting their work in terms of individual creative achievement, they situated it relationally. Often they presented themselves as tenacious and dogged in the face of an exacting task. The thesis explores how aspects of this unostentatious, rather stoic perspective extends to the way history is presented in the tapestries themselves, manifested through a loose spectrum of overlapping tendencies. Building on the model of female agency discussed in the

542 Hall-Patton, ‘Quilts and Everyday Life,’ 152.
previous chapter, we can propose that particular elements of the narratives, the way they are treated and the format in which they are produced confer a feminised perspective on what the viewer sees, and an important corrective to public history practice.

The chapter begins by considering the Quaker Tapestry’s pacifist narrative as an exemplar for a history of everyday life, and goes on to explore the way a domesticated ‘settlement’ narrative is made manifest in the two Scottish tapestries that consist of modular, non-continuous narratives: the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry. In the subsequent sections the chapter considers how the deployment of community tapestry’s presentational strategies, in particular its use of humour, undermine more orthodox ‘heroic’ histories. The two episodic battle narratives, the Last Invasion Tapestry and the Prestonpans Tapestry, provide the material of analysis for this section. I end by returning to the Great Tapestry of Scotland, to consider, in turn, scenes from its conflict narrative as a basis for drawing together discussions of the everyday and the heroic, and how the presence of the former conditions how we see the latter. The object is to draw out and consider the implications of less easily detectable aspects of the tapestries, and how they affect the versions of public history on display here.

The Quaker Tapestry and everyday life

Community tapestry’s realist ethic grounds it in the materials and experience of everyday life. Realism, ‘the impulse towards forms of representation which insist that the viewer be convinced that they have a referent beyond themselves,’ relies on deployment of particular visual conventions. The art historian Norman Bryson’s argument that a central tenet of realism is the incorporation of detail that is extraneous to the principal rationale of a work is useful here. Stitchers may display a high level of attention to achieving subtle modulations of effect on objects that appear to the viewer to be of secondary importance. However, the tapestry narratives under discussion suggest that the stuff of everyday life is more than simply a convincing backdrop: it is integral in other ways. For instance, the soap powder box and the

543 Jordanova, Sexual Visions, p.47.

193
wartime wireless-set evoke a comforting mood of nostalgia. And material context is also used to provide stark reminders of how historic events disturb daily living – the Quaker pacifist deprived of his liberty in the tiny, bare prison cell; rural life in Pembrokeshire ruptured by plundering French soldiers. These depictions emphasise what is at stake for individuals caught up in events.

As a methodological approach, everyday life theory productively draws our attention to the common-place assumptions and invisible biases involved in what we choose to acknowledge and value in our lives and our narratives – and what we leave out. It opens up neglected regimes to new scrutiny. Literary theorist Maurice Blanchot talked of everyday life opening onto history in times of revolution, and Ben Highmore has suggested we should pay attention to precisely those moments when daily life breaks down and becomes dysfunctional. The minutiae of food sources, spatial restriction, or what a person is holding or wearing can direct the viewer’s attention to the details of a situation. Highmore has also proposed that particular media lend themselves to making the familiar strange, and thereby commanding the attention of the viewer. By requiring the viewer to pause and look carefully in order to understand, embroidery affects history in this way. This gives it power to slyly recalibrate what we see, and the way we see it. In an interesting early manifestation of a proto-everyday life mentalité, Victorian historian Elizabeth Stone used the introduction to The Art of Needle-Work (1841), the book in which she would use the Bayeux Tapestry as a vehicle for legitimising female historians, to assert that embroidery itself was ‘a fitting subject of historical and social record,’ because ‘it is entirely of insignificant details that the sum of human life is made up.’ In other words, she attributed its suitability as a subject for everyday history to its cultural invisibility, an emphasis that anticipates the arguments of everyday life scholarship.

As a narrative that places the ethics of daily life under the microscope, and reconfigures the emphasis of history from big events to small acts, the Quaker Tapestry offers a particularly fruitful exemplar of what we might term an ‘everyday history.’ It is a history that visually resists the heroic narratives of the battlefield and

547 Ibid., p.3.
poses an alternative vision. As we saw in Chapter 3, dissent and debate are conceptualised as central to daily life as opposed to something to be repressed and banished to the margins of life only to erupt with destructive force as violent armed conflict. Despite the turbulent Civil War backdrop of the tapestry’s early panels, undramatic scenes of lived experience take precedence over the more easily dramatised moments of decisive action that characterise military events. For instance, the peace embassies panel exemplifies the value of dogged persistence and incremental change. Often a moment of stasis rather than action is depicted; the central focus of a panel is a motionless individual; we see individuals thinking, reading, or writing in representations of inner life.

Literary critic Naomi Schor’s observation that narratives of the everyday have been compartmentalised into feminised and masculinised versions illuminates another aspect of the everyday that is of relevance here. Characterising these narratives in terms of the ‘countless repetitive gestures’ of the housewife’s daily rituals, and the chance encounters of the flâneur in the public space of the street, Schor’s response was to explore a manifestation of the two elements in a single medium. By studying either side of the Parisian postcard circa 1900 – street scene on one side, voice from indoors on its reverse – and by unearthing elements of the street narrative that involved female as well as male participants, she was able to problematise clear-cut distinctions between masculine and feminine; private and public; demonstrating the complex and interrelated texture of everyday life. In Chapter 4 I discussed the way the Last Invasion Tapestry’s female interventions in public life complicate Raphael Samuel’s rather restricted interpretation of the feminine regime. Schor’s example confirms the inadequacy of such characterisations.

Quaker Tapestry panels involving domestic interiors provide further exemplification of the way tapestry brings the public and the private into dialogue, reframing the home as a site of productive, ethical activity. The panel ‘Publishers of Truth’ depicts three women working together in an ample kitchen (Fig. 5.1). At a large table to the right, one woman is measuring out paper and another appears to be checking printed folios. The table also holds a substantial leather-bound book and an ink quill in a pot. To the left, working at a smaller table, a woman stands over a type case arranging movable type. These

---

549 Schor, ‘Cartes Postales,’ 188.
activities are superimposed on a scene of domesticity. There is a basket of kittens below the big table and a large broom in the foreground. A baby’s wooden crib sits in front of the table to the left and a basket covered in a white cloth – perhaps containing baked bread – stands on a low cupboard. Large stone flags recede towards the back wall drawing the eye to the open fire furnished with cooking pots and, off to one side, a full basket of logs.

At first sight, the woman measuring paper could be rolling pastry and the woman with the type case could be laying out biscuits on a tray. The scene is linked to subterfuge. Quaker tracts could only be published illegally in the early years of the religion, and publishing from the kitchen was a covert operation.551 Evidence might be easily concealed if advance warning of a raid was received, with the participants reverting swiftly to domestic duties. Peaceful, if risky, dissent is here harnessed in productive labour, and the home front is presented as a vital part of the publishing process. The women go unnamed, unlike the author, represented top-left as Robert Barclay, whose Apologia was published in 1676.552 Their activity proceeds in private, unlike the pedlar and his wagon travelling the roads to physically disseminate printed materials (bottom left). However, it is through the women’s activity that publishing – the act of making public – is achieved. The domestic regime is thus characterised as powerful, subversive, and vital to disseminating Quaker truth to the wider world. On the surface the scene looks innocuous but its title encourages us to look with more care and appreciate the immanent power of everyday life contained within the scene.

Domestic imagery is differently configured in the ‘Innocent Trades’ panel (fig. 5.2), which shows two women baking. The woman in the foreground rolls out dough; behind her a pot and kettle heat over a blazing fire, while her co-worker tends a bread oven. On either side of this image we see small-scale industrial mills, and in the lower margin, a butcher, a clockmaker and a grocer. The panel portrays the varied picture of ethical Quaker commerce as an alternative to the discourse of rupture, shock and human suffering commonly seen as accompanying industrialisation.553 Bread-making,

552 Barclay appears in one of the American panels of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry (see discussion, p.204).
553 See Thomas Carlyle’s ‘Condition of England Question’ (coined 1839), a central preoccupation of his Past and Present (1843).
5.1 Publishers of Truth (QT B4).
© Quaker Tapestry.
Designed Wynn-Wilson; embroidered Friends in Scotland.

5.2 Innocent Trades (QT D5).
© Quaker Tapestry.
Designed/embroidered Irene Grey/Newcastle area group.
an image of both basic sustenance and thriving cottage industry, affirms the link between a pre-industrial past and Quaker industrialism, and positions the kitchen as part of a productive continuum. The kitchen is also the most prominent image of the panel – centrally positioned and in vibrant colours – although most of the text arranged around it relates to the other images. ‘Publishers of Truth’ follows a similar pattern, suggesting these kitchen interiors are designed to provide an affective and imaginative ‘heart’ moderating the text-based informational load. The panel ‘Swarthmoor Hall,’ home to Margaret Fell and her husband Judge Thomas Fell,\(^{554}\) which, owing to the Fells’ influential support for Quakerism, became the pastoral and administrative centre for Friends, pictures a third domestic scene arranged around a fireplace.

By envisaging home and hearth as centre of activity in a variety of contexts, the Quaker Tapestry conceptualises the domestic arena as integral to the ideal society. The kitchen is presented as on a par with normatively masculine-coded workplaces, as opposed to hived off as a separate feminised sphere of childcare and leisure.\(^{555}\) The floating cultural signification of ideas such as the home in the Quaker Tapestry is enhanced by the way the exhibition panels function in practice: rather than inhabiting fixed spaces in relation to each other the panels can be rearranged to suit particular exhibition spaces: when they tour, a small quantity of the total seventy-seven panels are carefully selected to fit themes of particular interest to the venue in receipt of the exhibition, thus panels such as these might be used to denote Quaker values, everyday life, fellowship, or industry, depending on context. Interviewee-stitcher Alison made the additional point that the work depicted in ‘Publishers of Truth’ may have fallen to women precisely because the men who wrote the tracts were often in prison, thus emphasising the complementary roles taken by men and women in order to foster the movement, and the way in which this panel complements those panels depicting imprisoned men.\(^{556}\) The panel depicts these women as in some ways in a position of

---

\(^{554}\) QT ‘Swarthmoor Hall’ (C1). Margaret Fell married George Fox after Judge Fell had died.

\(^{555}\) These images depict events from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not the nineteenth-century era of separate sphere discourse, but Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres?’ has argued persuasively (403-4) that even in the proto-industrial family unit, division of labour operated along sexual lines, and the public–male, private–female division of spheres of influence is ‘an ancient phenomenon,’ (411).

\(^{556}\) Interview with Alison, 21 June 2014. Dandelion notes Quaker acceptance of female ministry was notable for its time, and important to the movement’s success, although ideas of political equality were
greater freedom to propagate Quakerism than men because of their invisibility – their non-public everydayness. This foregrounding of the link between the individual life and its political dimension through enactment at the everyday, domestic level, rather than on a grand scale, recalls, like Schor’s analysis of postcards, the feminist equation of personal and political. Maggie Andrews has argued a similar point from a pre-second wave feminist perspective with regard to the effect of the Women’s Institute and its demands for reform, made from a position within the home: ‘the meaning of domesticity was challenged, its boundaries redefined. Domesticity became not passive but assertive.’ The Quaker panels encourage the viewer to reassess assumptions regarding the balance of power between men and women, and public and private domains, in particular contexts. The vision described is of society evolving through the multifarious interactions that take place not only within the social sphere, but also at home and as a product of our inner lives – despite, rather than because of, violent conflict. There are echoes here, too, of Michel de Certeau’s small but significant individually enacted everyday tactics of resistance, the concept underlying his The Practice of Everyday Life, however the individual deed is conceptualised as socially impactful as opposed to meaningful solely at a personal level.

The Scottish nation, its diaspora and the settlement narrative

Another manifestation of domestic preoccupations, this time with regard to the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry and the Great Tapestry of Scotland, is what might be loosely termed the ‘settlement narrative.’ This too involves histories concerned with the texture of ordinary lives, but here the emphasis is on establishing a new life. It is a theme that connects the four panels of the featured interviewees for the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry (Rosemary, Jenny, Uzma and Almas). These panels offer two versions of the diaspora-settler experience. Rosemary and Jenny’s panels (figs 2.1 and 2.2 on p.93 and fig. 2.5 on p.109) exemplify common narratives of Scottish settlement to the Antipodean and New World colonies; Uzma and Almas’ panel, based on Almas’ experience of emigrating from Pakistan, exemplifies the story of the naturalised Scot.

557 Andrews, Acceptable Face of Feminism, p.152.
As Andrew Crummy has pointed out, inclusion of the “reverse” diaspora, a significant outcome of the initial diasporic movements, was necessary for the tapestry to reflect the multicultural nature of contemporary Scotland.\textsuperscript{559} While it is not possible to treat this small group of panels as representative, diasporic movements can be used as a basis for identifying common features, and drawing out discussion to explore thematic concerns common to these and other panels of countries of the Global North.\textsuperscript{560}

Ordinary men and women are commonly the subject matter of the settler panels. Home, livelihood and family – my theme in Chapter 2 – are major preoccupations. For instance, a group of Canadian panels with titles including ‘Pioneers First House,’ ‘From Croft to Clearing,’ and ‘Scarborough Logging Bee,’ show pioneers working together to open up land (fig. 5.3 composite). There is a strong emphasis on man and his activities in the natural world, such as Rosemary’s two panels featuring gold rush terrain, and the plentiful depictions of domesticated livestock of various kinds: sheep, cattle, horses, and in the case of Jenny’s panel, sheepdogs. Here and elsewhere nature is characterised as source of sustenance and site of human survival rather than simply an object of thrilling and poetic contemplation, placing nature in a domesticated relationship to man in what Samuel identified as a particular strand of a more wide-ranging feminization of history’s themes.\textsuperscript{561} For instance, the Canadian panels repeatedly juxtapose natural-world imagery with a log-cabin motif to indicate particular concern for representing the pressing need for shelter. Similarly, a miner’s tent features in both Rosemary’s panels – rather small, but front and centre in the New Zealand panel; on a grander scale and centre-back in the Australia panel. Also included is a mineshaft with windlass, further evidence of man’s impact on the land. Rosemary talked about the logistics of depicting the tent’s guy ropes in the right position so the tent would not appear to have been pitched in such a way that it would blow away. She highlighted the painstaking use of four different browns to give the

\textsuperscript{560} Almas’ story (Chapter 2) will not be explored further since it involves a different trajectory to the initial diasporic settlers. My interviewees and discussion are confined to countries of the Global North. Categorising the countries of the world is problematic. The ‘Global North’ includes Australia, New Zealand and sometimes South Africa, distinguishing these countries from a less wealthy ‘south’: see Vincent J. Del Casino, \textit{Social Geography: A Critical Introduction} (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.26. It attempts to avoid biases associated with earlier terminology.
\textsuperscript{561} Samuel, ‘Resurrectionism,’ p.161. Nature is often conceptualised as object of sublime contemplation in writings from Edmund Burke’s \textit{A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful} (1757), onwards.
texture of tweed, and the distinctive green of gum trees which required her to substitute particular colours in order to do justice to the Australian landscape. She kept her husband’s hat to hand in order to get the shading and contours right on the hat in the image; she corrected the shovel in the draft drawing to give a more authentic reflection of the tools of the time. Each detail – gold, wood, corduroy, a rolled-up sleeve – is represented with as much care and attention as the rest, with a view to rendering a richly convincing narrative-whole to the viewer. Rosemary Shirley suggests the significance of de Certeau’s work with Giard and Mayol is in bringing the *modus operandi* and the ‘lived fabric of the everyday’ to our attention. Rosemary’s panel demonstrates embroidery’s capacity for prevailing on both panel producer and tapestry viewer to think about the stuff of daily life.

If elements of the settlement narrative conform to what Samuel describes as a feminised agenda, relating as they do to home economy, it is nevertheless depictions of males rather than females that predominate. The three Canadian images provide a typical exemplar of the gender balance: the first is an unpeopled arrangement of nature’s bounty, the second depicts a group of male loggers, and the third, men, women and children. Both Rosemary’s gold-rush panels portray William, not his wife, suggesting that even where women decide on content, their male antecedents’ deeds are often deemed more appropriate as the subject of public history. Thus although William’s hardy resourceful temperament makes of him a modern-era Australian hero, rather than a hero of superhuman qualities or martial greatness, he is nevertheless a conventional hero by virtue of his maleness. On the other hand, taken as a series, these panel narratives are imbued with a spirit of joint male-female effort as a result of the proliferation of images involving mixed groups and couples. For instance, although males are more numerous across the Australia panels, a man-and-wife-in-profile motif is utilised on three occasions *(fig. 5.4)*, and two strong pioneer females and a number of other notable women are depicted. And in the New Zealand panels, representations

---

563 *OED Online*, s.v. ‘hero, n.’
http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/86297?rskey=qccAP0&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 15/02/18) offers four main senses: the Classical hero of superhuman strength; the illustrious warrior; the individual lauded for great achievements in any field; the central character of a work. Normatively male, in the last case an allowance is made for increased incidence of female protagonists.
5.3 composite image, left – Pioneers First House (SDT CA06 p.160); From Croft to Clearing (CA12 p.166); Scarborough Logging Bee (CA13 p.167); all Canada.
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroiderers on one or more of these panels: Myrna Babineau, Margaret Lawrie Bell, Patricia Bradley, Megan Weir Burbridge, Dale Kennedy Clarke, Jennifer Clarke TSE, Joelle Clarke TSE, Jean Clow, Joan McCowan Conway, Isabel Court, Ashley Barr Cullen, Hon Valerie Docherty, Carolyn Drake, Eileen Drake, Lawson Drake, Thelma Fraser, Mary J. Gallant, Kirsten Burbridge Garstshore, Margaret Hatcher, Debbie Joy, Diane Kennedy McCarter, Betty McCowan, David McCowan, Nancy Weir McCowan, Carol Nicholson, Valerie Pike Stormer, George Poole, Aggi-Rose Reddin, Marian Pike Simpson, Christine Lawrie Trought, Ann McCowan Wakelin, Vicki Hallworth Weir, Janet Lawrie Whiteley: Scarborough, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island, Canada.

5.4 Laura Buralda & Francis Dunbar Warren, Australia (SDT AU25 p.301).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Jo Fort, Marie Laurie, Jessie Bignell and Annette Meldrum, Birdsville and Adelaide, Australia.

5.5 Spinning Tales from Applecross, New Zealand (SDT NZ05B, p.319).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Maggie Ferguson, Ian Ferguson and Christine Davidson, Edinburgh, Scotland.

5.6 Flora MacDonald, United States (SDT US10, p.206).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival. Embroidered Janet Rae, Kirstie Colam, Angela Chisholm, Ruth Murray, Edinburgh, Scotland.
of men and women together are more numerous than male-only panels (five mixed; three men-only; one women-only) resulting in a more egalitarian sensibility.

In fact, Rosemary’s Australia panel does commemorate the name of Hay’s wife Mary Ann prominently at the top of the outer margin and the New Zealand panel’s supporting narrative affirms that she followed with children and possessions, ‘walking the 50 miles along the bush track [. . .] their new life.’ 564 It is in a minor key, but she is there. Moreover, the New Zealand series includes the only panel to depict a female engaging in the domestic art of spinning (fig. 5.5). Ironically, nowhere else do participants of the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry elect to show female ancestors involved in similar activity, such as knitting, stitching or quilting. By contrast, in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, Alistair Moffat included recurring images of women undertaking domestic textile production, suggesting that in this instance, the more reflexive stance of an author who stands outside the production process has given rise to greater visibility of a gendered aspect of the domestic everyday that would otherwise be overlooked. 565 The level of ambiguity we met in Chapter 4 with regard to women’s attitude to domestic craft, often at a barely conscious level, is pertinent here. Giard has commented on the level of ‘social invisibility’ and ‘cultural non-recognition’ that infects women’s daily work of home-cooking; she writes about its practices to illuminate them. 566 It brings to mind too, Rosemary’s account of making her panels:

*AH:* What do you think you need—what qualities do you need to be good at this sort of thing? A lot of it sounds like—ingenuity?

*Rosemary:* A lot of it is practice—because by the time I got to the next one [the second panel] I had a few ideas about what I would do first . . . 567

Her substitution of ‘practice’ for my proffered ‘ingenuity’ rejects associations of flair and creativity – which would provide a faintly heroic subtext – in favour of persistence: the stoic rather than heroic. This focus on trial and error, and perseverance recalls Naomi Schor’s distinction between the ‘feminine or feminist’ domestic everyday of the

564 SDT NZ06, p.320, panel commentary.
565 As discussed in Chapter 1, this is not the case with regard to race.
566 Giard, ‘The Nourishing Arts,’ at p.156.
567 Interview with Rosemary, 30 May 2014.
unexceptional and repetitious, and the ‘masculine or masculinist’ everyday of the street. Ben Highmore has characterised the latter as the ‘heroic realm of modernity,’ suggesting the domestic everyday’s repetitiveness gives it a more authentic everyday quality, precisely because it doesn’t lend itself so easily to heroic plotting. In effect, Highmore is referring to a tendency associated with masculinised mode of self-presentation, which, in an echo of her panel depictions, which place male as opposed to female experience at the centre, Rosemary, a woman speaking about female craft, appears resistant to assuming.

The settlement narrative is not the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry’s only theme: great lives and military exploits are also on display, especially in the panels encompassing relations with Europe, and Old and New World themes intersect and compete for our attention within the scope of particular lives in some of the American panels. We learn that Robert Barclay, a Quaker persecuted for his beliefs in Scotland, migrated to America in 1682, becoming first governor of East Jersey. Hugh Mercer, who became a fugitive after serving as assistant surgeon during the Jacobite rebellion, escaped to America and befriended George Washington. And Flora McDonald, instrumental to Bonnie Prince Charlie’s escape, is shown in North Carolina with her army officer husband, a Royal Highland emigrant soldier in the revolutionary war (fig. 5.6). Both McDonald and Barclay returned home to Scotland and are buried there, suggesting it is misleading to see these lives in terms of a transformative movement from restrictive Old World Scotland to a New World of opportunity. The way panels acknowledge varied, geographically disparate experiences over the course of a single lifetime evokes art critic Lucy Lippard’s use of the metaphor of collage – of juxtaposing ‘this up against that.’ Lippard applied it to the surreal quality of modern experience, and in Chapter 1 I applied it to the way different narratives butt up against each other in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, but it works equally well as a way of understanding the diasporic life encompassing risky, protracted travel and extensive periods on widely divergent continents, bringing into being ‘new realities or new ways of

569 SDT US01, p.197. The same Barclay appears in QT B4 (see above, fig. 5.1).
570 SDT US07, p.203.
5.7 above
William McIntosh, US (SDT US12, p.208).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival.
Embroidered Darlene Watts, Mary McDonald, A.C. Leggett, Joanne Henderson, Irene MacDonald, Kenneth MacDonald, and Margaret Lynn Ellis, Mobile, Alabama, US.

© Prestoungrange Arts Festival.
Embroidered Mary McDonald, Deborah McDonald Roswe, Pamela McDonald Kotis, Cynthia McDonald Zakrzewski, Mobile, Alabama, US.

5.8 above Merrymeeting Bay, US (SDT US03, p.199).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival.
Embroidered Cindy McFadden, Dottie McFadden, Bowdoin, Maine, US.

5.9 left We Are All Related, US (SDT US11, p.207).
© Prestoungrange Arts Festival.
Embroidered Stanley ‘One Horse’ Groves, Bonnie Lewis, Bear Bozarth and Paula Groves, High Springs, Florida, US.

© Prestoungrange Arts Festival.
Embroidered Melanie Anne Liss, Bowdoin, Maine, US.
Moreover, the metaphor can be extended to the way the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry brings into conjunction parallel but geographically distinct narratives. Within the tapestry, then, each panel remains both individually self-contained, and related to more ambitious shared narratives from which it gains meaning and stature. Shirley similarly emphasised the importance of both fragment and whole with regard to her study of collaged scrap-books.\(^573\)

The tension between the opportunities afforded by migration and the deleterious effects of European colonisation is acknowledged where space has been made for stories of indigenous peoples displaced by Old World settlement.\(^574\) The subject is tackled variously. Almost a quarter of the America panels (six of twenty-six) interrogate aspects of First Nation/European settler conflict. While the normative perspective is that of the American of migrant heritage – this is, after all, a tapestry of the diaspora – the panels do not attempt to erase conflict from the narrative and it is a significant if minor motif. Two panels commemorate the lives of Scots-Native American chiefs, William McIntosh and John Ross (\textit{figs 5.7} and \textit{5.10}). The latter, of Scots/Cherokee ancestry, negotiated unsuccessfully for the Cherokee people to retain their land and, when they were forced to vacate it, migrated alongside them.\(^575\) The former, of Scots/Creek parentage, is a more controversial figure, appearing to profit from his associations with white Americans and eventually assassinated by discontented tribe members for signing away land.\(^576\) The two chiefs’ lives are emblematic of the complexity of interracial dealings: Ross is depicted in the sober garb of an American gentleman, while McIntosh mixes a feathered head-dress with a soldier’s greatcoat and sword, perhaps emblematic of his conflicting loyalties. A third panel memorialises ‘The Trail of Tears,’ the 1,000-mile route along which the Cherokee and other tribes were forced to migrate to new lands in Oklahoma, after the Indian

\(^{572}\) Shirley, \textit{Rural Modernity}, p.21, drawing on Lippard. The period TV drama \textit{Taboo}, set in 1812 (aired BBC1, January 2017), features an adventurer returning to London to settle scores with the East India Company, and deploys a darkly surrealist style intercutting brutal experiences in the streets of London and overseas.


\(^{574}\) Chakrabarty’s discussion of the significance of the terms ‘major’ and ‘minor’ and cultural norms provides a useful introduction to the ideas informing European colonialism: ‘Minority Histories,’ 18.


\(^{576}\) \textit{American National Biography Online}, s.v. ‘McIntosh, William,’ http://www.anb.org/search?q=william+mcintosh&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true (accessed 14/05/17).
A fourth panel depicts Merrymeeting Bay, where the earliest settlements of Ulster Scots were wiped out in 1722 by Indian attacks (fig. 5.8), and a fifth offers symbolic reconciliation in a celebration of mutual strengths, including resilience, symbolised by the beaver (fig. 5.11). The suffering of both sides is acknowledged across the series of panels, and their interconnectedness. The title of the sixth panel, ‘We are All Related,’ is in keeping with these themes, but the panel proves rather more interesting (fig. 5.9). It was created on behalf of the Native Nations Museum, Florida, by four stitchers of mixed European/Native-American ancestry. Various symbols of friendship including hands extended in greeting, a peace belt and two crossed arrows – which replace the compass points that provide the standard organising structure in Andrew Crummy’s design – are included. Only by virtue of its circular shape does this panel conform to the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry template. Apparently there was a misunderstanding about what was expected, and the stitchers went ahead and stitched a version of their own sketched ideas without Crummy’s mediation. But the non-conformist design is rather more subversive than this explanation allows. While the bold, condensed style of the lettering and heavy facial contours look somewhat clumsy next to Crummy’s panels, the design’s interest lies in its confident utilization of Native Nations images. These include a large green turtle for the creation myth that conceives North America as Turtle Island, and feathered shields representing the totems of the four stitchers. Stylised animal symbols in silhouette remind the viewer of more holistic ideas of the natural world, casting the panel title, ‘We are All Related,’ in a new light. Perhaps this is a case of the Native Nations stitchers displaying something of de Certeau’s tactical resistance as a way of ensuring that they were able to present things in their own way. The more subtle deployment of text and outline in Crummy’s panels may have served the traditional iconography poorly, adulterating the vibrancy of the images, with their generous use of black thread. In this way, the stitchers appear to have avoided allowing their design ethic to be colonised by a Eurocentric perspective. Cultural critic
Barbara Black employs domestication as a metaphor for understanding the effect on non-European cultural artefacts of the appropriative urges of Victorian collectors and translators.\footnote{582} We might imagine the Native Nation imagery becoming somewhat tamed or domesticated if it had been integrated in the standard panel design. As it stands, however, the particularity of this panel as fragmentary part affects the American series as a whole, presenting an assertive reminder of the effect of settlement on the indigenous Americans by virtue of its insistent difference. We observe here the capacity of the individual panel to hold its own and not necessarily meld neatly and unobtrusively with a particular theme, either visually or conceptually.

Just five of thirty-seven Canada panels tackle indigenous-migrant race relations, and these focus chiefly on treaties and inter-marriage. Antipodean acknowledgement of settler displacement is even more muted. Across forty-one panels, just two in the Australia series memorialise the lives of men who championed Aboriginal rights (\textit{fig. 5.4});\footnote{583} and a third depicts an Aboriginal boy taking part in the extensive droving exercise memorialised therein.\footnote{584} The theme is altogether absent from the New Zealand panels. Graeme Davison has discussed the suppression of conflict between settlers and Aborigines in Australian pioneer history of the mid-twentieth century.\footnote{585} It is only recently, since the 1990s, that scholarship has begun to unearth the ‘guilty knowledge of trespass.’\footnote{586} However, the American panels too involve significant omissions, concerned with slavery’s role in the establishment of European settlers. The slave trade may typically be associated with prosperous plantations and later generations of Europeans, but struggling early colonists are known to have used traded Africans as labour, and slavery was legalised early in the history of the American colonies, in 1641.\footnote{587} This may remind us of the uncomfortable minor presence of slaves in a single panel of the Great Tapestry of Scotland. Such omissions are fraught


\footnotetext[583]{Francis Dunbar Warren in SDT AU25, p.301 (with Aboriginal wife and their children); and Charles Duguid in SDT AU31, p.307.}

\footnotetext[584]{SDT AU07, p.278.}

\footnotetext[585]{Davison, ‘Use and Abuse,’ p.73.}

\footnotetext[586]{Ibid., p.73.}

\footnotetext[587]{See, for instance, ‘Slavery in America,’ History (educational site owned by History Channel), http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery (accessed 17/02/18).}
5.12 Tents and Tipis (GTS 6).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘Halfinbarns Schoolhouse Weaving Group,’ North Berwick, East Linton.

5.13 Glenrothes (GTS 145).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘The Coo’s Tail,’ Old Kilpatrick, Helensburgh, Glasgow.

5.14 Irish Immigration after the Famine (GTS 98).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘Trinity Stitchers,’ Edinburgh, North Berwick.
with difficulty. Nevertheless, the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry’s identity as a series of parallel narratives offers a form of corrective by productive juxtaposition. Thus the American panels might be understood as an interpolation of the Australian reluctance to encompass Aboriginal experience, while a series of Jamaican panels engage directly with slavery from a position conveniently adjacent to the American panels, and counter the muting effect of their neighbours. In this way, once again the placing of ‘this up against that’ holds out the possibility for new ways of thinking to emerge.

The settlement narrative is differently expressed in the Great Tapestry of Scotland. Moffat has stated that although certain ‘pivotal set-pieces’ demanded to be included in Scotland’s history, he wished to avoid the temptation of allowing the military option to lead the narrative. He also says that the generic panels were intended as a way of foregrounding the everyday life of ordinary people.588 Apparently these are conscious decisions to compensate for the emphases and omissions of documented history, and to mute military narratives, at least in relative terms, in favour of a rebalancing towards domestic themes. The generic panels, celebrating vernacular craft and localised pre-industrial food production (such as whisky and smoked fish) conceptualise a non-specific rural-domestic locus. Moreover, by beginning the tapestry narrative in pre-history, with the rudimentary shelters of the first humans to establish a foot-hold in Scotland after the last ice age as the opening of the Scottish story, the idea of home becomes an integral building block of Scottish identity (fig. 5.12). Moffat refers to the first Scots as ‘Pioneers,’ and remarks that ‘every Scot is an immigrant.’589 This calls attention to the character-building Scottish terrain, through which home-making acquires stature. At a symbolic level, these panels, which draw on archaeological evidence of prehistoric living, hold up the everyday as vital to life, rather than mundane and unworthy of our notice, and set the tone for the penchant exhibited elsewhere in the tapestry for memorialising material culture,590 and in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century panels, the domestic becomes an important barometer of social progress. Panels commemorate Irish immigrants arriving in Scotland after the famine (fig. 5.14), and the Battle of the

588 Moffat, introduction to The Making of a Masterpiece, pp.11 and 13.
587 Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.8.
590 See Chapter 1: ‘Emotion and nostalgia.’
Braes for crofters’ rights as tenants. These panels also provide a rebuttal of earlier episodes of injustice such as the Clearances and the massacre at Glencoe, where women and children died of exposure after their homes were burned. Even Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are represented at home, though they are depicted in the informal surroundings of the countryside: Balmoral, depicted in the distance, is disarming small, giving the viewer the illusion that the royal couple stand for every couple. Later, tenement life and institutions such as the public wash house, or ‘steamie,’ give way to panels celebrating the optimism of the planned new towns: East Kilbride, Cumbernauld and Glenrothes, a further form of resettlement (fig. 5.13).

The home and home-making are interwoven with Scottish history as indicators of the development of a modern, socially inclusive nation. Domestic autonomy expressed in this way is redolent not of Victorian family values and a moral subtext concerned with the undeserving and deserving poor, but with the home as emblem of a basic level of social welfare and inclusiveness.

The settlement narrative provides a tangible way of refocusing history on the matter of ordinary people and their lives. As a medium for the everyday, it displaces grander, more abstract themes and, by facilitating a concentration on detail, addresses history’s under-representations. It helps draw our attention to the ubiquity of the everyday: its common dilemmas and its time-consuming practices. Its themes are therefore conceptualised not as parochial but as universal, embodying features of human experience to which we may all relate. At the same time, the way it is depicted resists generalisation, and insists on the particularity of recognisable, vivid detail. Certain aspects of the representational style, such as the mining of pre-history for imagery and the use of personification, ennoble the settlement narrative, lending it unexpected stature. Indeed, Moffat comments on the ‘hieratic,’ bold profiles of individual figures. The Quaker Tapestry’s narrative is located in multifarious, smallscale, everyday activities; a quiet heroism, conceived on a homely, personal and sometimes private scale. Yet George Fox and other Quaker role models demonstrate
considerable bravery in opposing prevailing norms. From one perspective, the sheer diversity and quantity of figures peopling these tapestries, named and unnamed, resists nineteenth-century thinker Thomas Carlyle’s heroic narrative of history as ‘but the biography of great men,’ and his emphasis on the influence of martial heroes.\textsuperscript{597} On the other hand, the tapestries offer up figures who unexpectedly occupy some common ground with his concept of the hero as messenger of the people: Carlyle’s heroes included not just Oliver Cromwell but also Martin Luther. The object here, however, is not to raise particular figures up for collective ‘hero-worship,’ but to provide a selection from amongst whom viewers may pick and choose their individual sources of inspiration and contemplation. In the following sections I will explore the ways in which these and other perspectives on heroic narrative and lived experience inform and reconfigure battle narrative as depicted through tapestry.

\textbf{Reconfiguring battle narrative}

During the upsurge of interest following the news of the French undertaking to lend the Bayeux Tapestry to Britain for the first time, art critic Jonathan Jones wrote movingly in \textit{The Guardian} of the woman holding her boy’s hand in front of a blazing building who ‘asks for humanity with a dignified, civilised gesture.’ He characterises the Bayeux Tapestry as replete with war atrocities that undercut ‘the myth of chivalry’:

\begin{quote}
The ambivalence of the Bayeux tapestry is what makes it so mysterious and majestic. While its creators will always be anonymous, it surely is the perspective of women embroiderers that helps it see so many sides of this story of the male ego run riot. It is both a propaganda narrative of the Norman conquest and a totally honest exposure of the brutality of battle.\textsuperscript{598}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{597} Carlyle, \textit{On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History}, p.15/34, originally presented as lectures. The great man theory of history has had opponents from early on. It was attacked by Herbert Spencer, who argued that men are products of circumstance and do not have the autonomy the theory attributes to them: Herbert Spencer, \textit{The Study of Sociology} (New York: Appleton, 1896).
\textsuperscript{598} Jones, ‘The Bayeux Tapestry: Is it Any Good?’
5.15 The local people attack the French (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.

5.16 An encounter between French and English senior officers (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.
Notable here is the assumption that we are looking at the handiwork of women, and that this may colour the way war has been portrayed, rendering it a more balanced and authentic truth – a theme discussed in Chapter 1. Jones’s reference to the tapestry’s function as both propaganda and exposé means it problematises Ludmilla Jordanova’s assertion – made with particular reference to war memorials – that commemorative purpose restricts the ability to be critical of one’s subject matter. He suggests, and he is not the first to do so, that this particular memorial of war evades such constraints. Among the characteristics he lists as contributing to its honesty are its teeming details of everyday life and its refusal to hide the horrors of war. This intrusion of the Bayeux Tapestry into public discourse thus provides a useful way of framing discussion of the modern battle narratives. My argument in this and following sections will be that particular aspects of the tapestries’ representational armoury enable them to subvert putatively heroic subject matter. These tactics involve a determined focus on ordinary, everyday experience and on its material, worldly context; presentation of behaviour that problematises heroism in various ways; the deployment of humorous undercurrents of various types; the exploitation of particular formal qualities of tapestry; and the use of unexpected conjunctions of subject matter.

For instance, with regard to the Last Invasion Tapestry, we note that the designer’s interest lies in how such events affect ordinary women and men. Theirs is the perspective that frames the tapestry: they are the first to sight French ships, and, at the end, the witnesses to the French retreat. The urgent scenes of struggle are those which involve civilians, not military-on-military clashes. Significantly, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the French and English soldiers dressed in an assortment of primary reds and blues. Clashes between the marauding French and the local men are vivid because the two sides look so different – troops in striped trousers against pitchfork-armed civvies in dull breeches (fig. 5.15). By contrast, the machinations of military-on-military appear mannered: marching regiments, brief confrontations on horseback, circuitous negotiations (fig. 5.16). These men never involve themselves in combat. However, the tapestry includes concrete memorials of

French despoliation: Llanwnda Church suffused with billowing smoke; the grandfather
clock that to this day boasts embedded pistol shot. Events are presented as a
disruptive incursion into everyday lives, visiting real damage on the community, before
the status quo can be re-established.

In the Bayeux Tapestry, the stripped and looted dead bodies in the margin
draw the eye, but the blazing building, a tantalising glimpse of war’s collateral damage,
is easily missed. At Fishguard, there is no field of battle, instead incursions on home
territory become an integral part of the dramatic focus. One way of reading Liz
Cramp’s conception of Fishguard is as an extended digression on Bayeux’s glimpse of
domestic trauma. Fishguard’s rape scene, like the dead, naked soldiers, appears in
the margin; in both cases marginalisation signifies the status of seemingly casual
brutality as the collateral damage of war – elements that receive little attention when
the size of armies and the tactics of military leaders are the focus of narrative. In the
case of the rape scene the marginalisation may also be a way of subtly muting the
impact of the image by divorcing it from naturalistic surroundings in the main register
where it would jar with the comedic depiction of drunken soldiers in front of the fire.
Nevertheless, its position immediately below lends an ominous note to the fireside
antics, reminding us that home and hearth are often coded as part of the feminine
regime and perhaps encouraging us to see this despoliation as symbolic of a more far-
reaching assault on order. The well-ordered industry of the Quaker Tapestry’s
hearthside scenes adds intertextual weight to such a reading.

Heroism is in short supply. The French soldiers are clearly unheroic – drunk,
disorderly, greedy and brutal by turns, even turning their guns on their own officers. However, the narrative stance towards the British commanders is also equivocal. None
on the British side disgraces himself, but the agency of women in the narrative calls
into question the honour of the officers who ride about performing militariness
without engaging in combat. The person who performs a heroic feat is Jemima, who is
neither a soldier, nor a man. She has outmanoeuvred her captives, but it is unclear how. Her appearance, together with the faintly ludicrous idea of her rounding up Frenchmen, punctures ideas of heroism and presents us with its inversion – a mock-heroic parody. For heroism is a fragile ideal. Max Jones has noted that when we discuss heroes of the past they are ‘as likely to be objects of derision as veneration.’

Fishguard’s tapestry exhibition concludes with panels describing a number of unpalatable aftereffects of the invasion, including attempts on the part of the establishment to discredit religious nonconformists by equating ‘dissent with disloyalty.’ A sequence of subsequent false alarms concerning coastal landings suggests the rebuffed invasion did little to dispel a feverish atmosphere. It is a context that encourages the viewer to engage with a critical eye, and to think not in terms of heroic deeds, but about what particular interest groups stood to gain from exploiting the febrile situation. This tapestry thus problematises heroism.

Additional to this, the dimensions of community tapestry subtly condition our perception of heroic subjects. The diminutive human cast of the Bayeux Tapestry and its modern counterparts is the antithesis of largescale academic history painting, where the stature and dominance of the protagonist contributes to the ennobling of subject matter. Many of the tapestries are long and thin, taking their proportions from the distinctive narrow (c.0.5m in depth) linen strip on which the Bayeux Tapestry’s narrative unfolds. Comments on the Bayeux Tapestry in the Victorian press describing the figures populating it as ‘droll’, ‘comical’ and ‘quaint’ are in part attributable to a perceived disparity between the size of its protagonists and the seriousness of the subject matter of the Norman Conquest. Many of the modern

606 Quotation from the exhibition panel ‘Aftermath,’ in Fishguard Library.
607 Jones, The Last Invasion of Britain devotes a chapter each to the ensuing recriminations and treason trials.
609 We have no evidence for the decisions involved in the Bayeux Tapestry’s proportions: some talk about the narrow strip being convenient for two embroiderers to sit across from each other; the dimensions may have been specified by the patron; or this may have been a common size for textile hangings of the time (there are no comparators): pers. comm. embroidery expert Alexandra Makin 23/10/18.
610 See The Leeds Mercury (28 May 1887) and Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper (1 June 1890).
5.17 George Fox at Ulverston: Healing (QT E1).
© Quaker Tapestry. Designed/embroidered Wynn-Wison/Wendy Gillett and others.

5.18 Eugène Delacroix: 28 July: Liberty Leading the People (1830).
tapestries also follow the Bayeux Tapestry in deploying the device of a marginal strip, top and bottom, carrying supporting text and/or imagery, reducing further the available image area in the main register. 611 This means that the panel format physically constrains any full-height figure from commanding a scene by virtue of his imposing stature. Even where the figure stands out from the crowd compositionally, his stature militates against him appearing superhuman or god-like.

Compare, for instance, the intimate proportions of the Quaker panel, ‘George Fox at Ulverston: His Experience of True Healing,’ 0.53m tall by 0.64m wide (fig. 5.17), with Delacroix’s July 28: Liberty Leading the People, 2.6m tall by 3.25m wide (fig. 5.18). The Quaker panel is one of the most painterly and dramatic panels of embroidery I have discussed, by virtue of its composition, and strong but subtle deployment of colour, for instance in the glassy reflection in the puddle. The similarities with Delacroix’s painting, often seen as the defining image of the French Revolution, 612 are striking: the pyramidal arrangement of figures, the dramatic brandishing of weapons, the golden tones on the upright central figure juxtaposed with contrasting blues on the figure below, the positioning of the weapon diagonally in the air to the left in order to emphasise the central figure. The protagonists are almost identically placed, slightly right of centre, with their feet about a third from the bottom. However, Liberty is c.1.75m high, including the out-stretched arm with flag cropped by the picture edge. Jonathan Jones pointed out that by the standards of the gallery in the Louvre where this image hangs (a gallery reserved for great French history paintings), this is ‘a rather small and modest’ image. 613 Yet Liberty dwarfs George Fox, who is only about 0.3m tall. Fox’s head protrudes into the panel’s headline, but he and the image as a whole are physically confined by the textual frame. And this text, we may recall, is concerned with Fox’s understanding of healing, which reminds us of the limits of human experience, making it conceptually as well as physically a delimiter of the man portrayed. While the French painting, its protagonist towering above the viewer, appeals by personifying a romantic ideal, the Fox panel, its protagonist the height of a homely school ruler, engages at eye-level and reminds us of the partial nature of human understanding. In this way, tapestry’s proportions cut heroism down to size.

611 See Appendix A.
613 Ibid.
I have discussed already (in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter) Rosemary Shirley’s productive redeployment of Lucy Lippard’s metaphor of collage, and this is something I will return to as I develop my analysis. However, here I want to draw attention to an aspect of her chapter on the Women’s Institute’s jubilee scrapbook collages and modernity in the countryside which is of particular relevance. For Shirley singles out an embroidered image of electricity pylons in silver thread in one of the collages. She sees the pylons as having undergone a ‘domesticating’ process to ‘bring them under control in some way, incorporate them into a balanced design where their enormous scale can be tamed.’ Her observations with regard to the effect of design and scale reinforce my preceding discussion concerning the effect of the dimensions of tapestry on the human figure: she is acknowledging a similar diminishing. However, Shirley’s conceptualisation of embroidery as ‘domesticating’ difficult subject matter also touches on interesting territory. She remarks on the new and disturbing aspect presented by the pylon in the countryside at the time of the project (1965), and conceptualises embroidery as a way of appropriating the pylon, integrating it into the worldview of the collaging female. My observation here is that community tapestry may represent for producers a way of tackling the difficult subject of violent conflict. At the same time, it may offer viewers a style of presentation that tames, transforms and domesticates these matters through the particular visual language of embroidery. What I propose, then, is that the very incongruity of the transposition of subject matter relating to war into a domestic medium involves rendering the familiar exceptionally strange, and at the same time, imposing a disciplining, taming exercise on that subject. This, together with Chapter 1’s analysis of the way embroidery displaces attention to the hand behind the needle, offers a further context for thinking about the way the everyday character of embroidery brings the subject of violent conflict under control through unexpected conjunction.

**Humour and heroism**

These ideas merit further development in the context of the deployment of humour as a presentational strategy in the tapestry narratives. My interest, here, is in

---

614 Shirley, *Rural Modernity*, pp.87-120
615 Ibid., p.111.
investigating potential congruence between rendering a subject in an embroidered design and humorous presentation of a subject. Both, it seems, hold potential as methods of destabilising problematic topics. Laughter’s significance as a method of subverting power has been fertile territory for scholarly work. Humour offers cultural producers a tool for building alliances with audiences, so attending carefully to the way humour works in a representation gives important clues as to how the audience should understand a contentious subject. In particular, Julie-Marie Strange suggests humour is a tactic ‘for articulating what [is] significant,’ and that the act of appearing to ‘trivialise’ a subject may be a veiled signal that it is of particular importance to the person concerned. In the tapestries too, the deployment of humour may provide a language for negotiating attitudes towards warfare and heroism and may provide a subtext that allows us to single out particularly problematic episodes.

Jonathan Jones observed the irony of Bishop Odo depicted brandishing a club on the battlefield at Hastings: ‘As a churchman he can’t wield a sword, but there’s nothing in the Bible about braining people with oak.’ Whether this is indeed a note of satire on the part of the designer, or whether Odo, who is believed by many to have been the tapestry’s patron, chose to have himself depicted in line with contemporary sensibilities concerning the proper involvement of bishops in battle, we do not know. The modern tapestries are easier for modern minds to decipher. For instance, Fishguard stitcher Hatti drew attention to ‘the way the horses kind of look at each other, their quizzicalness,’ as a function of designer Liz Cramp’s sense of whimsy. Animals in the tapestries offer a convenient way of signposting how the viewer is meant to interpret the mise en scène. They can be deployed to intercede between audience and action, as disinterested bystanders commenting on action through their expressions. In this instance they contribute to our sense of the ludicrousness of

---


618 Jones, ‘The Bayeux Tapestry: Is it Any Good?’

619 Interview with Hatti and Tricia.
events. All at Fishguard appeared eager to draw attention to the humour of this tapestry. Cramp’s sense of fun was alluded to on several occasions. Eirian Short and Rozanne Hawksley cited it as a reason for commissioning her to design the tapestry in the first place. Stitcher Hatti suggested that the scene involving drunk and disorderly French soldiers in front of the fire is ‘all very Gilbert and Sullivan.’ And her co-stitcher Tricia, who visited Bayeux after the Fishguard project, reinforced this: ‘If you’ve seen the Bayeux you’ve got some idea—ours is jokey. It’s meant to be amusing.’ Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon points out that parody performs a modified form of repetition that highlights difference rather than similarity. This point is reinforced by Audrey Walker’s comment that, ‘A designer had to be found who would enjoy the links with the Bayeux Tapestry and yet produce a design of the 1990s.’

Closer analysis of the humour in the scene of drunken debauchery helps us understand this tapestry’s difference from its antecedent (fig. 5.19). The scene is integral to the section concerned with the struggle between the French soldiery and local farming folk. Inebriated troops are ranged before a roaring fire. One is on his back, two slump untidily against each other, asleep at the fireside, and two more occupy the centre foreground, one wielding a bottle of wine, the other kneeling and holding up chickens for the pot. Their commanding officer appears to be remonstrating. He holds up his palm as if entreating them to stop, but he may simply be making the most of the fire’s heat, and his sword hand rests nervously on his scabbard. In the background another man takes a pot-shot at farmyard geese making their escape, and hits the grandfather clock. The large walk-in fireplace frames the


621 Interview with Hatti and Tricia.

622 Ibid.

5.19 Inebriated French soldiers rape and pillage (LIT).
© Barrie Thomas/Fishguard Invasion Centre Trust.

5.20 The Prince’s Standard is Raised at Glenfinnan (PT 25).
scene, and wing-backed wood-panelled settles dating from the late eighteenth century are positioned on either side.\footnote{My thanks to Stuart Coote (professional upholsterer of period furniture) for this detail: pers. comm. 25/05/17.} The legs of a chicken protrude from the large pot on the fire. The surfeit of chicken legs and the relaxed, lolling poses of the men are comical. \footnote{My thanks to David Matthews for suggesting the focus on chickens being cooked by French soldiers may be an ironic reference, conscious or unconscious, to the famous dictum of the French king, Henry IV, that peasants should have a chicken in every pot, suggesting the hapless French reverting to some imagined right: pers. comm. 05/12/17.} But the men are out of control; the officer ineffectual. No one pays attention to him – there is an air of mutiny, chaos and suppressed violence which only the bottles in hands seem to subdue. The man firing at geese on the left and the rape scene in the margin below are reminders of these men’s capacity for brutality. So this depiction of French ill-discipline underlines what is at stake for the Welsh. By contrast, the scenes involving men and food preparation in the Bayeux Tapestry contribute to a vision of a hierarchically ordered military machine cranking into action prior to the great battle.\footnote{Scenes 41-43.} Here too, there are occasional comic flourishes, such as foodstuff being passed along a line, a little like firemen with a bucket of water, but the scenes do not detract from the status of William the conquering hero, whereas the comedic, dissolute behaviour in the Last Invasion Tapestry displaces any pretension to heroism.

At the same time, the humour is a way of visually containing the aggression. Making the men preoccupied with chickens the focal point does not eliminate the more violent details, however it moderates the violence. Julie-Marie Strange makes a similar point with regard to an autobiographical author who treats her coarse, belligerent father as a family joke and in so doing ‘contains’ his depressing presence in her childhood.\footnote{Strange, \textit{Fatherhood and the British Working Class}, p.158.} Containment also aptly describes the effect of consigning the rape scene to the lower margin: it is visible, but marginalised with regard to the narrative in the main register of the tapestry.\footnote{Donna M. Goldstein, ‘What’s So Funny About Rape?’ in \textit{Laughter Out of Place: Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown} (London: University of California Press, 2003), pp.259-74.} Donna Goldstein usefully unpacks the function of a ‘funny’ story about rape told by two victims as a comment on the difficulties between men and women in everyday life. The Fishguard rape scene’s position is a similarly scantily veiled exposure of power relations. Thus both structural decisions with regard to the design, and particular approaches to depiction, operate as part of a subtle
containment strategy. In the discussion that follows I pursue this theme of containment at the same time as seeking evidence of the use of other tactics of subversion, with regard to the Prestonpans Tapestry.

Consider first the panel in the Prestonpans Tapestry where the clans rally to Prince Charles Edward Stuart at Glenfinnan (fig. 5.20). At first sight this may appear a rather straightforward heroic treatment of the Prince. As emblem of the Jacobite cause and the winning side, the dashing Prince appears more often and more prominently in the tapestry than his opponents, and particular scenes, such as one in which he ‘calls a halt to the battle and insists all prisoners must be helped,’\textsuperscript{629} are included to show him in a sympathetic light. The Glenfinnan panel presents the Prince as the central focus of a low triangular configuration; he is in the foreground with his back to us before a crowd of onlookers.\textsuperscript{630} It is a scene of optimism and elation. Nevertheless there is a playfulness to the upbeat presentation. The crowd, the Prince’s raised sword and the waving war flag or ‘standard’ in the foreground are familiar symbols of uprising,\textsuperscript{631} but prominent in the sky above the crowd is an odd assortment of irregular oval items, which it takes a moment to recognise as the Highlanders’ berets. Simply drawn, with spiky ribbons protruding, they are an incongruous touch of humour. But they serve equally well as an eruption of the everyday. They divert viewers’ attention to matters of dress: how such a hat might be constructed, what it was made of, whether it would keep its owner’s head warm, whether, indeed, it would stay in place in inclement conditions.

The crowd is impressionistically conveyed, with some figures in outline only. Our eyes are drawn to out-stretched, sometimes disembodied arms throwing the berets, and to the faces in the crowd. Most heads are thrown back. Nearly all are in profile, often bearded, many open-mouthed in grimace-cum-shout of approbation, while those with closed mouths look on, more thoughtful. Facial features are depicted with simple black lines against the natural ground cloth and they lack modelling, which imparts clarity but also a naivety and gently comedic effect to expressions. The standard bearer, shoulders straining, eyebrow defined and nose held high looks to be

\textsuperscript{629} GTS 89.
\textsuperscript{630} Pyramidal composition: see also Jemima (Chapter 4, fig. 4.1) and ‘George Fox at Ulverston’ (this chapter, fig. 5.17). Compare also ‘George Fox preaches at Firbank Fell’ (Chapter 3, fig. 3.5), where the protagonist has his back to us.
\textsuperscript{631} Used, for instance in Delacroix, July 28: Liberty Leading the People.
struggling under the standard’s weight. The open-mouthed proclamation reader looks pleased with himself. No one here looks particularly menacing. The pig-tailed Prince, neatly attired in long blue frock coat and black boots and beret, and framed on either side by proclamation reader and priest on bended knee, looks an unlikely leader for the rough-and-ready crowd. The frock coat appears to shorten his legs and dwarf his stature: he looks a little like a child who has raided the dressing-up box. Moreover, the sparsely populated upper and lower margins with their double-ruled inner and outer lines, frame and contain the scene in filmic fashion, ensuring that he remains a diminutive figure.

The focus on small comic details is a device for communicating how we should feel about what we see here. Humour enlists producer and consumer in a knowing alliance. Andy Medhurst sees laughter as communal and collective and working as a shared language of observation: ‘life’s like that.’ To contribute a mildly comic undercurrent to the upbeat message of hope that the Prince exemplifies is to puncture the scale of his endeavour. There is a suggestion of incongruity and chance in the positioning of one man as a leader and others as followers. Significantly, we cannot see the Prince’s face but we can see those of many of his supporters and thus it is to their collective experience of the moment, rather than his, that we are drawn. Here and elsewhere in the Scottish panels humour is a function of illustrative style as well as content. The deceptive simplicity of the draughtsmanship endows people and objects with a child’s-eye quality. Stylistic decisions such as these aid clarity and ease of translation into embroidery: a large-scale project for lay stitchers entails a level of simplification and stylisation in order to impose a recognisably cohesive style and achieve a consistent standard of embroidery. Nevertheless, where required, faces

632 Medhurst, A National Joke, p.65.
633 In contrast, the professionally embroidered Overlord Tapestry on World War II is a mix of appliqué (where images are assembled from fabric cut and stitched to a ground cloth) and, for the major figures, closely stitched facial features, to create a finely modelled appearance and a semi-photographic documentary quality which imparts heroic gravitas to its cast of players. For more information on the Overlord Embroidery, and brief observations on the Quaker Tapestry and the humour of the child’s eye perspective (excluded from discussion here since the Quaker narrative does not deal with war), see Appendix A.
and limbs convey a level of expressive power. Close-up figures betray an air of self-preoccupation through awkward poses and naively intent expressions of entreaty, thoughtfulness, anxiety, concentration, struggle, adulation. The humorously earnest expression on the face of a figure such as the standard-bearer draws us in so we intuit that he is thinking something along the lines of, ‘Am I going to manage to keep this in the air for much longer?’ – a moment of ‘life’s like that’ which anchors the grand theme in everyday life. Intriguingly, individual embroiderers’ varying degrees of dexterity may work in such a way as to accentuate the slightly ungainly humour and ‘everyday’ homeliness of these figures: the homespun and the heroic as antitheses.

Broadening discussion to the rest of this narrative, if we pay careful attention to the mise en scène, a subversive satirical undercurrent in line with the mock-heroic quality of Fishguard is detectable, despite the focus on the Prince. Andrew Crummy explains that the image that inspired the first panel design, and the style of the tapestry, was a contemporary satirical cartoon depicting Sir John Cope’s ignominious arrival at Berwick on Tweed to report his defeat (figs 5.21 and 5.22). The Berwick panel also makes reference to the popular Jacobite ballad, ‘Hey Johnnie Cope, are ye Wauking yet,’ which has been described as ‘one of the most brilliant of Scottish comic songs.’ Both of these cultural productions ridiculed Cope’s apparent lack of preparedness for engagement with the Jacobites; both deploy a derisory perspective concerned with the comic aspects of being on the losing side. We can read the tapestry back through this as an important influence on the way the story is told. It demonstrates Crummy’s interest in integrating popular perceptions of the battle into the version of shared history on display. Moreover, by deploying stylistic elements of the eighteenth-century satirical cartoon – the most prominent being the decorative

---

634 Not all tapestries benefit from Crummy’s lightness of touch. The Guernsey Tapestry’s human forms – large-eyed, with wide, flat faces, urchin-like straight hair, and a rather uniform expression – are static, doll-like and lack interiority in their appearance; see also Appendix A.


637 In so doing, it utilises source material quite differently from Martin Margulies’ book, The Battle of Prestonpans 1745 (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), which vindicates Cope.
scroll device used to convey additional textual detail – he provides the material with a period feel and a mock-heroic hinterland.\textsuperscript{638} The long panels with generous borders are a little reminiscent of engraved and framed satirical prints; the episodic format recalls Hogarth’s popular moral series.\textsuperscript{639}

A large number of panels concerned with the events of the battle focus on confusion and rout among the government forces. Six panels refer to ‘fleeing’ soldiers. In one, bolting foot soldiers crowd the foreground, and the background is peppered with tiny toy-soldier-like depictions of running men, arms out-stretched (fig. 5.23). In another, three mounted dragoons are riding away from battle, while in the distance, beyond a stone wall, two small figures and a horse without a rider run in the same direction – the man at the back losing his hat in his haste (fig. 5.24). These men have partially open or wide-open mouths as if panting with effort or hollering in fear. Panel margins are used to underscore the tragi-comic effect, depicting more fleeing soldiers, a succession of dropped hats, and the words of Cope’s entreaty to his men to stand and fight. There is a preoccupation here with providing a vivid account of losing, not winning. The battle itself is said to have lasted no more than fifteen minutes, and did not involve the Prince because it was over before he arrived on the scene.\textsuperscript{640} The refusal of the Hanoverian soldiers to stand their ground before the Highland charge – despite their larger numbers – was fundamental to defeat. Thus a narrative ostensibly concerned with the campaigning of great men, turned on, and in this instance, dwells on, the experience of unnamed subalterns, whose only available tactic of resistance is to run, however disastrous this may be.\textsuperscript{641} Drawing out the humour inherent in the idea of fleeing redcoats to a large extent avoids the butchery of battle. Panels do show the injured and dying, but depictions of the act of slaughter have been avoided. The Prince is nowhere to be seen.

Nevertheless, Colonel Gardiner’s last stand does present the aspect of a hero. Gardiner, on the Hanoverian side, died as a result of his efforts on the field, unlike

\textsuperscript{639} William Hogarth, \textit{A Harlot’s Progress} (1732-3), and \textit{The Rake’s Progress} (1734-5). Grayson Perry’s designs for six digitally woven tapestries, \textit{The Vanity of Small Differences} (2012) pays homage to Hogarth’s series.
\textsuperscript{640} Margulies, \textit{Battle of Prestonpans}, p.173.
\textsuperscript{641} A glimpse into the rawness of Gramsci’s subaltern’s perspective on historical events.
5.21 Sir John Cope arrives at Berwick to confirm his own defeat (PT 95).
© Battle of Prestonpans [1745] Heritage Trust. Embroidered Kate Edmunds, ‘a Welsh incomer to Scotland.’

5.22 ‘A Race from Prestonpans to Berwick’: contemporary satirical cartoon.
From original print held by Scottish National Portrait Gallery.
Public Domain.
Cope and the Prince, meaning outright mockery would be a problematic mode of engagement here. He is depicted on horseback surrounded by a small detachment of men and accosted by Jacobites on either side (fig. 5.26). The rearing horse, a popular pose for horseback monuments, may call to mind Jacques Louis David’s 1801 painting *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (fig. 5.27). But Gardiner does not have the upright, confident posture of Napoleon – his bent back and shoulders make of him a slightly awkward figure. As remarked previously, subverting the heroic is a function of illustrative style as well as subject matter. The rider is embattled, his small clenched mouth perhaps signalling intensity of concentration, or possibly surprise, but his sword is valiantly extended. If we think of Napoleon on seeing him, the difference of scale and medium between tapestry hero and painted hero is striking. Thus in drawing attention to difference as much as similarity, the analogy functions as a parody of heroic art. Gardiner does not look preposterous; rather the scene presents him as having taken on a task that is too ambitious, and that he is doomed to fail. Even Napoleon was defeated; perhaps there is a hint of the vain-glorious here. Or perhaps the dignified white charger represents the impossible ideal on the back of which we, in the present, feel ill at ease, in empathy with Gardiner. We may remember here Max Jones’s observation that venerated heroes of the past may become objects of derision in the present.

By harnessing contemporary popular memory of 1745 in a reworking for our own time, the Prestonpans Tapestry is able to acknowledge a subversive undertow in attitudes towards battle and heroism. The presentation of war as a zero-sum game is a counterbalance to elements of the tapestry that idealise the figure of the Prince, and a reminder that the Jacobite victory was only temporary respite: these men too would know loss in the near future. In the light of this, Strange’s comment that ‘To laugh at someone is to gain authority over them or to resist the indignity they would inflict,’ is apposite. Laughing at Cope and the Hanoverians enacts the spirit of contemporary cultural productions (such as the song and cartoon) in currency before defeat at

---

642 Margulies, *Battle of Prestonpans* is dismissive of Gardiner, referring to him as ‘a dangerous old lunatic,’ cast as hero by the Hanoverians (pp.145-6).
643 Jaques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1801 (Belvedere Palace, Vienna, Austria) dimensions: 2.61×2.21m (one of five versions of comparable size).
644 Jones, ‘What Should Historians Do With Heroes?’ 439.
5.23 top
Redcoats Turn and Flee (PT 80).
Embroidered Sarah D. McCabe, Prestonpans.

5.24 middle
Dragoons Flee towards Birsie Brae’ (PT 82).
Embroidered Marilyn Nicholson, who lives locally.
5.26 top
Colonel Gardiner Makes a Last Stand (PT 84).
Embroidered Gloria Holly and Susan Thebeau, Orlando, Florida, of Scottish ancestry.

5.27 middle-right
Jacques-Louis David, Napoleon Crossing the Alps (1801).

5.28 bottom-right
Bannockburn (GTS 30).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust.
Embroidered ‘Two Toxophilists,’ Falkirk, Stirling.

5.25 p.230, bottom-left
The Jacobite Rising of 1715 (GTS 58).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust.
Embroidered ‘Dunblane Group,’ Dunblane, Stirling, Auchterarder.
Culloden, and presumably afterwards, but with greater circumspection. Tellingly, a stitcher in the Prestonpans film remarks with humour that when faced with the idea of stitching a panel, ‘like one of the redcoats – I was fleeing into the mist.’ The ease with which she called up the reference suggests that in a modern secular society we identify ourselves more easily with comic than heroic analogues. It is an apt foil to the parallel deployed by project consultant Margulies: ‘the Baron [Gordon Prestoungrange], who is another very charismatic guy, same as Charlie [the Prince] was, drives his battle bus around, he has no trouble whatever finding volunteers.’

While Margulies’ comment is tongue-in-cheek, it nevertheless works to draw attention to Prestoungrange’s influential role, and conceptualises this project in terms of its great men. Whereas the stitcher, a ‘foot-soldier’ of the project, sees her experience in terms of the common soldier’s lot and laughs at the shared response of wanting to turn and run: ‘life’s like that.’ Laughter, Medurst’s leveller, thus provides a democratic antidote to elitist idealism.

**Warfare and everyday life**

In the previous two sections I discussed the way the deployment of humour and various expressions of the everyday – including aspects of community tapestry’s material qualities – problematises heroism in the two battle narratives. I also introduced the concept of containment as a useful way of understanding how difficult subject matter is managed through tapestry’s presentational tactics. Revisiting the Great Tapestry of Scotland, where a greater chronological reach encompasses a broader variety of thematic material, moves my arguments on in a variety of ways. First, it allows me to conclude discussions concerning the implication of the treatment of conflict in the Scottish tapestries. Second, it facilitates reintroduction of the metaphor of collaging, which, as discussion in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter indicates, applies particularly well to the two larger, later Scottish tapestries, but, I suggest here, is also a fruitful way of understanding the effects of tapestry on the public consciousness of World War I and the reputation of Field Marshall Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, demonstrates the subversive power of humour, as noted by de Groot, *Consuming History*, p.171.

---

647 Martin Margulies quoted ibid.
648 Elsewhere, Margulies is scathing concerning the Prince’s character: *Battle of Prestonpans*, pp.14-15.
649 The impact of the 1989 TV series *Blackadder Goes Forth* on public consciousness of World War I and the reputation of Field Marshall Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, demonstrates the subversive power of humour, as noted by de Groot, *Consuming History*, p.171.
5.29 The Jacobite Rising of 1745 (GTS 60).
© Alex Hewitt/Great Tapestry of Scotland Trust. Embroidered ‘EH41,’ Haddington.
viewer. Third, it means I am able to draw together discussions of humour and everyday life and propose that humour itself be seen as a manifestation of everyday-life tactics.\footnote{Henri Lefebvre’s work is an important resource here. See for instance volume 3 of his \textit{Critique of Everyday Life: From Modernity to Modernism} (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life), trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005), p.64, and \textit{Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959-May 1961}, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1995), p.8, where he discusses the Anglo-Saxon predilection for humour as a coping mechanism for the boredom and unfairness of modern life: ‘Humour resolves the conflictual situation, though the resolution is not a lasting one.’}

Warfare is a recurring motif in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, especially in the early panels, where Romans, Northern Irish, Angles, and Vikings arrive in successive waves. Liberal use of pattern and repetition, and the artefactual iconography of early warfare occupy the compartmentalised panel structure. These are heavily stylised men-only zones associated with a reassuringly distant deep past. The more recent past, populated with named individuals and defined events, is more problematic. The two panels concerned with the Jacobite rebellions provide useful comparators to the Prestonpans Tapestry. The first depicts the battle of Sheriffmuir of 1715, where Jacobite rebels vastly outnumbered the government forces, but an inconclusive battle enabled the government to halt the rebels’ advance (\textbf{fig. 5.25}, p.226). The chaos of battle is treated as farce, with the two sides chasing each other in a circle. The second panel, representing the 1745 uprising, is of Charles Edward Stuart, head thrown back in thought, resplendent in heavily embroidered frock-coat on which significant place names (including Prestonpans and Culloden) and the bereted heads of Highlanders, are intertwined with fronds of foliage (\textbf{fig. 5.29}). In his raised right-hand the Prince holds a miniature ship below which the name of his landing place, Eriskay, appears. His lowered left-hand is cupped behind him as if to push away the evidence of ignominious flight, embodied in the form of a humbler craft. The elaborate coat indicates its owner’s privileged status and captivates the eye, but its beauty is subversive. The heads embellishing it are decorative, but their disembodied state refers to bloody sacrifice, indicating that the campaign’s failure rests on the Prince’s shoulders. These panels distil the satirical inclination of the Prestonpans Tapestry and dispatch the risings quickly and dismissively. It is of note that Culloden appears solely as a name on a frockcoat; there is no other representation of the battle, despite its resonance as a defining moment in Scottish history. Both here and at Prestonpans the
muting of Culloden counterbalances its prominence in Anglocentric narratives. If, as Strange suggests, humour is a way of both articulating and containing what is difficult to assimilate, Crummy’s treatment may involve an estimation of the risings as misguided from the outset, owing to the bitter legacy of government revenge.

Jonathan Jones’s comment concerning the Bayeux Tapestry as portrait of the male ego run riot is useful here. Jones infers that it is the perspective of female embroiderers that provides this insight, the gendered embroidery medium appearing to moderate his judgement, since there is no evidence that the embroiderers intervened in this way. It raises an interesting question. Might Crummy, a male designer designing for a feminine medium, find tapestry design cathartic, a little akin to the way nineteenth-century male novelists such as Leo Tolstoy and Gustave Flaubert found writing from the point of view of an Anna Karenin or a Madam Bovary fruitful as a method of critiquing society?651 Ben Highmore suggests ‘male professionals can find themselves feminised as they conduct their business in domestic settings.’652 Alistair Moffat comments on Crummy’s relish for designing ‘what stitchers liked to stitch.’653 While I am not suggesting that designing for tapestry effects a transformation on Crummy’s thinking, he may find it an enabling medium for establishing alternative perspectives on history.

In contrast to the risings, Robert the Bruce’s victory at Bannockburn might appear a straightforward matter for celebration (fig. 5.28, p.227). Bruce is presented on horseback in the foreground, crowned head thrown back, wielding an axe and riding away to the right. Behind him, to the left, Sir Henry de Bohun, a helmeted knight on horseback with an enormous lance whom the Bruce has just met in single combat, is shown on an even larger, caparisoned horse, slumped against its neck. Much of this panel is rendered sparsely in black and brown outline, to maximise impact of the encounter in the foreground. As in Crummy’s other battle scenes, we do not see the moment of impact, only its aftermath. Perhaps unintentionally, the two figures on horseback are hard to distinguish from one another because at first glance the eye understands them as being in the same plane. This is in part a side-effect of the leached colours used to the rear of the field of view, and in part a function of eye-

---

651 He continues to design for tapestry, with several minor projects in progress: https://www.andrewcrummy.com/tapestry (accessed 07/02/18).
652 Highmore, ‘Questioning Everyday Life,’ p.16.
653 Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.xiii.
catching coverings on de Bohun’s horse. The viewer’s attention is at once commanded by the bare-headed Bruce and the horse of de Bohun travelling in the opposite direction, as a result of the large, emphatic blue circle around the horse’s eye. Bruce’s horse looks puny by comparison, bringing a suggestion of the biblical David and Goliath to the combat. Bruce does not look in control, however; his eye rolls back in his head due to the effort of wielding the heavy axe. The depiction is reminiscent both of Gardiner’s last stand and the standard-bearer at Glenfinnan. If this is an image of fortitude, it is again an image inflected with humour. The presentation speaks of chance, as opposed to effortless valour. Perhaps the message is heroism is effortful. Behind Bruce’s head, the long, heavy diagonal lance of the dead man draws the eye. It forms the side of another pyramidal construction (like the weapons held up to the left of Delacroix’s July 28 and Wynn-Wilson’s George Fox), but in this instance, the confusion of the two men on horses leads to an impression that the burden of the lance is dragging Bruce’s head backwards. Even here, then, a straightforward reading of unproblematic male prowess is resisted, prompting a parallel with Jones’s emphasis on non-heroic detail in the Bayeux Tapestry, and aligning Crummy’s depiction with a feminised perspective.

Two panels earlier, Alexander III also appears with drawn sword riding a horse, but the panel commemorates a foolhardy ride by night which led him to fall to his death, prompting a succession crisis. The recklessness of this earlier act may prompt the spectator to think a little differently about the later act, owing to the close proximity of panels: a collaging of disparate events. As one representation of the putatively heroic is subtly modulated by others, the themes of battle, war, invasion, and heroism are moderated by positioning within a wider-ranging narrative. Two panels on from the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), a panel memorialises the Black Death, which reached Scotland in 1348. By bringing discrete ideas and events into conjunction, the tapestry affords the viewer the opportunity to think about different constituent themes in relation to each other: not only, then, the decisive victory, but the catastrophic and far-reaching effects on daily life of the amorphous spread of plague, an example of a moment when life breaks down, as Highmore observes. Juxtaposition thus moderates the viewer’s response to heroic themes. It gives war-

---

654 See also ‘Bannockburn,’ panel commentary (GTS 30).
655 ‘The Black Death,’ panel commentary (GTS 32).
mongering a context outside itself; it reminds the viewer of its potential impact beyond the field of battle; or that other events may be of greater import. War is ‘contained’ within a bigger picture. The democracy of the repeating, square, deep-framed panel, demanding that each subject be reduced to a consistent format, contains in a further way.

Appropriately, the depiction of the world wars towards the end of the tapestry develops the idea of presenting war in context most fully: experience of these wars starkly underlined for both scholars of war and the general population the complex interrelations between war and society, home and battle front. The first panel shows a mother waving a handkerchief and watching from diminutive cliffs as her kilted soldier-son strides away across the water (fig. 5.30). The body of each figure is loosely but conspicuously swaddled in a continuous tape, an adaptation of the text banner motif which recurs throughout Crummy’s tapestry designs. The swaddling, a limitation on physical movement, is symbolic of the constraints on individual agency, a condition that unites the son on active service and the mother who waits at home. The image thus resists the easy attribution of passive and active status to the respective protagonists. The text inscribed on the woman’s banner is a poem lamenting her son’s death, a feminised perspective of daily grief experienced at home. I have discussed elements of the affective presentation of the subsequent WWI panels in Chapter 4 (at p.178), where I explore the parallels with earlier depictions of women and war at Glencoe and Flodden. The four WWII panels show a kneeling solider with head bowed (fig. 5.31); burning buildings in the Clydebank blitz with civilians shielding their heads (fig. 5.32); concrete defences and a look-out post on the Scottish coast; and finally, troops engaged in the D-Day landings (fig. 5.33). The experience of total war involves multiple perspectives of combatants and members of society, and includes liberal use of supplementary margin images to convey its multifarious intrusions. Unlike the individual panel depicting Bannockburn, where the modulating, collaging effect is

---

656 Panels 118-21 and panels 131-4. Michael Howard, ‘What is Military History?’ History Today, December 1984 explains that military history was previously regarded as the study of campaigns: ‘What happened, or was likely to, away from the battlefield was left out of the account.’ The twin BBC R4 dramas in the BBC’s World War I centenary season, Tommies and Home Front, tackle the battlefront and home front separately, but accord the two regimes similar status: both are set across the entire period of the war and are being broadcast intermittently across the entire 2014-2018 anniversary period.

657 Lines from Violet Jacob (1863-1946), ‘The Field by the Lirk o’ the Hill,’ one of a number of poems in which she directly or indirectly laments the death of her son at the Somme, Scottish Poetry Library, http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/violet-jacob-0 (accessed 26/11/17).


performed by surrounding panels involving disparate subject matter, here, each series of four panels forms a sub-narrative of war involving intertextual citation of repeated motifs (nurses, poppies, planes).

There is little to laugh about, seemingly, in these panels. The place of these wars in recent memory encourages a gentler form of visual critique than adroit satire. During discussion of the Prestonpans Tapestry’s Glenfinnan panel, I suggested that the hats tossed in the air serve both as an aspect of humorous presentation, and an intrusion of the everyday: a quiet puncturing of an ostensibly heroic event. Like the detail of the straining standard-bearer, they evoke bodily concerns as opposed to abstracts, which ground the viewer’s response and constrain the ideal of heroism.

With regard to the world war panels, I propose that we see the interpolation of heroic subject matter with the details of everyday life as a subtle visual subversion of heroic themes. Men in brightly coloured tank-tops lay concrete obstacles on beaches, women listen to a wartime radio, an air-raid warden carries a child, a lopsided bird-cage and other abandoned belongings are evidence of bombing. Like the Glenfinnan berets, these details demonstrate that the everyday may be implicated in the provision of a humorous subtext by virtue of the unexpected juxtaposition: quiet but intentionally bathetic in effect. In this sense, humour in the tapestries becomes elided with the everyday perhaps more often than we consciously recognise, perhaps sometimes knowingly on the part of producers, at other times unconsciously. Nevertheless, this form of humour is familiar to us elsewhere from comic acts built on observation of daily life’s incongruities. It is a humour characterised by Andy Medhurst as survival laughter: ‘communal, collective, resigned, blunt, basic, a way of getting by.’

Its object of derision is everyday life; but as part of the fabric of everyday life, laughter’s everyday ordinariness may cause it to be overlooked. Significantly, Medhurst’s characterisation of survival laughter occupies some common ground with the ethic of women’s craft summed up by Colleen Hall-Patton in ideas such as embeddedness, continuity, and ‘making do,’ with its overtones of wartime thrift (and its nod to de Certeau) – both are inclusive; both involve resilience. This returns discussion neatly to the domesticating effect on heroic themes of the everydayness of embroidery itself,

---

659 Hall-Patton, ‘Quilts and Everyday Life,’ 153.
which, as Shirley suggests, bring difficult subjects under control.\textsuperscript{660} We may note also here that the humorous aspect of the everyday infuses the feminine-domestic medium of embroidery with a note of irreverence, a counterbalance to the sentiment that attaches to its handmade aspect. The humour of everyday incongruity also facilitates a broader reinterpretation of the metaphor of collage as part of the everyday presentational strategies discussed here. Incongruity of subject matter within a panel becomes simply another form of the unexpected placing of ‘this up against that’ which takes place when panels containing disparate subjects are placed next to each other.

If, as Lippard suggests, collage is a metaphor for the modern condition, humour is a credible response, and a way of containing its uncomfortable aspect.

\textit{Conclusions}

This final chapter draws together discussion of depictions of everyday life and violent conflict in the tapestries, arguing that they should be understood as interconnected narratives, modulating the way ostensibly heroic subject matter is presented. In this way, it accounts for the tapestries’ preoccupation with, and deployment of, everyday life by exploring its integral role in these narratives. Moreover, close analysis of the way these narratives function facilitates a more expansive interpretation of the everyday to include the deployment of humour within its aegis, along with attributes and potentials inherent to tapestry’s material specificity, and a narrative focus on ordinary lives. Taken together, these become the everyday-life tactics which subvert the idealised figure of the military hero, a little like de Certeau’s own subversion of the grandeur of military campaigning through appropriation of the language of ‘tactic’ and ‘strategy’ to everyday life.

It is also possible to trace the destabilisation of heroism through particular figures. The pacifism and personal vision of the Quaker Tapestry’s George Fox is a retort to martial models of masculinity. At Fishguard, Jemima’s against-the-odds capture of twelve French soldiers is heroic in its dimensions, but the reversal of normative male-female roles renders the scene a parody of soldiery. In the Prestonpans Tapestry, the heroism of the Prince and Gardiner is problematised, and a comic text of losing becomes the focus. Conversely, homely subjects focusing on the

\textsuperscript{660} Shirley, \textit{Rural Modernity}, p.111.
private individual, such as establishing a viable livelihood, or, in the case of the conscientious objector, resisting powerful societal norms, are treated with gravitas and dignity. Chapter 4 provides an appreciation of how various forms of herstory are implicated in this subversion of the heroic. There is a further point to be made here with regard to the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s portrayal of the heroic, which connects Bruce, who looks as though he has won by chance, and a lone piper, Bob Millan, in the final D-Day panel. Millan is depicted playing the bagpipes unarmed at the head of the Scottish charge on the Normandy beaches. He was later decorated for bravery. Moffat’s supporting text recounts that German snipers said they did not fire on him because they believed he must be crazy (fig. 5.33).661 Like the Bannockburn panel, Gardiner’s stand, or Jemima’s unexpected bravery, the incongruous presence of the piper negotiates the thin line between foolhardiness and heroism, a problematising context. In this way, everyday-life tactics work to destabilise our expectations with regard to traditional narrative histories led by masculine agents and perspectives. In so doing they undermine and transform masculine conceptions of heroism, and substitute what we might characterise as a feminised conception. The idiosyncratic mode of public history on display is thus a sideways swipe and corrective, deflating and renegotiating ideas of historic greatness and imparting a feminised perspective to history.

CONCLUSION: Public History in the Making

This thesis has sought to change the narrative with regard to public history practice, positioning it as a site of important lessons concerning history in society. To achieve this it undertakes a detailed analysis of the way community tapestry is produced and understood by its makers. The first three chapters, Chapter 1: Inclusive and Accessible, Chapter 2: History and Genealogy and Chapter 3: Towards a Critical Public History, use community tapestry to establish the credentials of public history and problematise academic critique. Chapter 4: Embroidery, History and Female Agency, and Chapter 5: The Everyday and the Heroic, refocus discussion on community tapestry’s identification with female craft. Chapter 4 examines the ways in which tapestry brings female experience into dialogue with history and Chapter 5 distinguishes a distinctive, irreverent subtext concerned with the everyday that counterbalances heroic narratives and exerts a ‘containing’ influence on difficult subject matter. These arguments are the building blocks for drawing out key ideas with regard to lay history-making.

History and affective engagement

Public history’s critics conceptualise difficulty and effort as central to critical appreciation of the past, and promote the importance of expert knowledge and impartiality in cultivating awareness of the past’s difference and distance from the present. This thesis demonstrates that a medium that fosters affective responses to the past may provide valuable empathetic insights, and simultaneously act as a resource for promoting a reflective and critically engaged relation to history. This is particularly the case with the Quaker Tapestry’s cerebral approach to the melding of text and image.

Eamonn Callan, the Irish-born philosopher, argues against ‘sentimental’ approaches to history: ‘If my pride in the blood sacrifice of 1916 hinges on disregard of the political potency of patience and compromise, I will hardly be sufficiently alert to
their possible potency in the present.\textsuperscript{662} However, Dorie Wilkie, the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s stitching coordinator, provides an interesting counterbalance to this while also affirming the specificity of Irish experience, when she singles out an Irish visitor’s comments on the tapestry:

He said this could educate some of the Irish. And I thought, this is too political, we can’t really get into that— but, if we take it as an artwork, then that’s fine— He got quite emotional about it, you know, the Irish— problems, and the Scots-Irish and all that— really interesting.\textsuperscript{663}

The man’s response, together with Wilkie’s observation that presenting history as art allows us to tackle difficult subjects, reinforces the idea that embroidering history may be a way of performing an act of containment on problematic episodes in history. Similarly, musician and visual artist Brian Eno used the John Peel lecture in 2015 (an annual keynote speech by a leading figure in music or broadcasting) to suggest that art, which he defined as the broad spectrum of creative practices in which we engage, provides a safe space for us to have feelings about difficult subjects.\textsuperscript{664} As discussed in Chapter 1, Boym’s nostalgic discernment – a sense of longing for the past which simultaneously appreciates its inaccessibility – may also play a part in the way the tapestries work. The arousal of ‘reflective’ nostalgia offers the viewer a contemplative tool for approaching difficult subject matter – a simultaneously distanced/engaged position of sentiment-with-discernment which may explain the response of Wilkie’s visitor, and allows for the ambiguities and differentiated responses involved in particularised interpretations.

This is not to propose community tapestry or other forms of affective history as a panacea. For instance, the BBC’s \textit{Partition} season metaphorically brought horrific events home to viewers and listeners through narrated personal experience: an


\textsuperscript{663} Interview with Dorie Wilkie, 31 May 2014.

important way of helping us identify imaginatively. However, it was less productive as a medium for explaining the complex origins of tensions between Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, and the role of British colonialism, because individual perspectives were partial and concerned with explaining what had happened, as opposed to why. Nevertheless, as Chapters 2 and 3 have argued, personal testimony provides valuable insights into what it might be like to experience a particular past from the vantage point of another person. Jerome de Groot has made the point that all forms of historical narrative, amateur or professional, witnessed or researched, may be productively conceptualised through the framework of re-enactment. Telling history is always a kind of performance in the present, of a past that we know to be past: ‘a rehearsing of things that have been asserted to have occurred.’665 This provides a useful leveller of academic practice and lay history-making because it reminds us that something is always lost when the past is reconstituted as history. By focusing on the peculiarities of particular processes of transposition and their social and cultural context, we become critically alive to how a particular medium moderates both representation of the past and the viewer’s response to it. In the light of this we understand the process to involve both subtractive and additive aspects.

**Pastness, making and everydayness**

Tapestry production can be understood as stimulating a variety of enactions of pastness. For instance, when the Fishguard stitchers admiringly bring to mind Jemima, they empathetically recover an aspect of the past depicted in the tapestry narrative. They also perform a kind of re-enactment in the process of creating a stitched image. While it seemed not to be the case that to stitch an image was to cultivate some form of mental replay of the event concerned, the process did prompt stitchers to reflect on the past in a variety of ways. For instance Hatti, at Fishguard, summoned a parallel with a non-specific past of female comradeship embodied in the quilting bee.666 Another Fishguard stitcher invoked the past in which the Bayeux Tapestry’s stitchers embroidered, in a comment in which she expressed a hope that her work will last as

666 Interview with Hatti and Tricia, 5 September 2014.
long as its forebear. Margaret McCabe, at Prestonpans, drew an analogy between the places occupied by her father and grandmother in local history and her own involvement in the living history of tapestry, and Rosemary’s self-narrative also drew parallels between her own resourceful, peripatetic life and that of her ancestors. We may recall, too, comments recorded by the Scottish Diaspora knitting group, who found themselves remembering being taught to stitch by particular members of their family while they were embroidering. It is plausible to infer that embroidery’s strong associations with the past – by virtue of its links to the Bayeux Tapestry, the Victorians, and pre-industrial manual craft – make it a powerful catalyst for thinking about the past. Invoking times past provides the individual with convenient reference points for situating the present self in relation to time, a process that the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has argued is integral to how humans make sense of themselves within the world. By drawing parallels between their own experience and the past, whether recent and genealogical, or more distant, the stitchers use the past to make the present meaningful.

The knitters’ reminiscences also suggest the process of embroidering is itself conducive to reflection. Craftivist Sarah Corbett has observed that making craft ‘allowed me to think deeply about what I was doing and it was empowering because I could see that I was achieving something.’ The musician Brian Eno suggests cultural work helps us synchronise ourselves with change in the world, echoing social scientist Paul Willis’s earlier proposition that to understand the world we need to feel our cultural work changes it, however minutely. This brings to mind especially the Quaker stitchers’ mental investment in making a difference in life, discussed in Chapter 3. Research suggests the rhythmic, repetitive movements of craft activity can raise levels of mood-enhancing chemicals and promote a state of mind associated with

---

668 Chapter 2, p.100.
670 Corbett, ‘If We Want the World to be Beautiful, Kind and Fair,’ p.34.
671 Eno, ‘BBC Music John Peel Lecture.’
672 Paul Willis et al., *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), p.22. He uses the term ‘symbolic creativity’ in order to encompass both creative and curative forms of cultural production.
meditation. Educational theorist Etienne Wenger developed the term ‘communities of practice’ to describe how we learn by sharing information, and a branch of sociologists called practice theorists argue that we understand the world we live in (objects, humans, ourselves) through the shared, routinised knowledge to which practice provides access. Essentially their point is that the individual is ‘constituted’ through practice, which provides an interesting counterpoint to the human as storytelling animal posited by Ricoeur’s contemporary, Alisdair MacIntyre. Material and making are thus conceptualised as important ways to ‘mark out physical and mental space and time.’

The conjunction of craft practice and history practice explored through the tapestries offers something new. If the task of depicting history, together with embroidery’s associations of pastness, promotes imaginative engagement with the past, the repetitive routine involved in embroidery grounds the participant in the moment of practice: the physicality of here and now. Furthermore, deploying a craft skill adds an additional re-enactive dimension to this form of history-making. To wield a craft is to re-enact both one’s own and others’ encounters with past practice of craft, re-using and building on what one knows and remembers. Representing history through craft thus enacts and asserts continuity between the pasts of others, and the present self. When Anne Wynn-Wilson asserts that ‘Since the dawn of recorded history, craftspeople have used their skills to tell stories,’ she conjures an idea of fellowship between dissenting Quakers and other dissenting, narrating individuals and groups in the past – a radical conception of history. Alternatively, the everyday uniformity of producing embroidery stitch by stitch instils these productions with what we might characterise as an ‘anti-history’ quality. They resist the dramatic orientation of narrative’s inclination towards beginning, middle and end by foregrounding patterns

---

677 Wynn-Wilson, prologue to Quaker Tapestry, p.1.
of repetition, and aligning experience with models that resist the heroic, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. Not only, then, does tapestry depict people ‘making do,’ ‘getting by,’ and marking out time through routinised craft practice, it becomes evidential artefact of a shared, crafted experience of time; of time marked out and memorialised in making. This, then, is a further way in which the everyday of tapestry undermines the place of the heroic past: by reasserting common, unsung experiences of being and doing in the world over the uncommon life of the (usually male) visionary protagonist. It may not write this figure out of history, but it destabilises his presence by highlighting quiet, anonymous toil.

**Identity, agency and the viewer**

In understanding community tapestry as history from below, another of this thesis’s preoccupations has been to demonstrate how the tapestries make provision for marginalised voices. In Chapter 4 I have shown that versions of female agency are variously inscribed in productive ways. The motif of paired embroiderers in the final few panels of the Great Tapestry of Scotland is useful here (fig. 4.10). The elongated female figures, arms outstretched, needles in hand, frame each square of tapestry but also dissect panels internally; the blocks of colour comprising their hair, torsos and skirts to the front of our field of view stand out more strongly than the detailing of the heads, torsos and nametags of the ancestors, which form the backdrop. These women appear simultaneously to be a part of the narrative but also outside it. This is emblematic of the agency community tapestry offers participants as embroiderer-narrators; potentially a historicising role, with the power to contain and assimilate potentially difficult subjects. Making history in this way becomes a method of gaining perspective.

Embroidery also provides a convenient analogue for the way women’s part is disregarded. We witness this in the MP who remarks on the lack of a female presence in the Bayeux Tapestry, despite there being a woman in every stitch, and Prestoungrange’s acknowledgment – only as afterthought – that his wife had worked ‘very hard, really.’ Moffat’s comment on the generic female figures in the Great Tapestry of Scotland, ‘We recognised that always they were there, giving life to the nation, and we tried never to forget that,’ acknowledges the same tendency, perhaps
with more humility.\footnote{Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.xv.} There is a parallel here with the rendering invisible of unpaid slave labour on which wealthy societies, including our own, have been built. Dalton-Johnson’s ‘guerrilla memorialisation’ of those implicated in slavery seeks to redress this. Those involved with the Lancashire memorial have expressed hopes that it might ‘haunt’ passers-by and ‘enter into the fabric of the day,’ through its presence,\footnote{Rice, ‘Creating Memorials,’ pp.335 and 337.} providing, perhaps, a greater sense of connectedness to the different viewpoints. Chakrabarty’s reading of Holt’s ‘collective and general’ history would encompass.\footnote{Holt, ‘Experience and Politics,’ pp.394-5.}

I have acknowledged that the multi-ethnic picture is more problematic in the tapestry projects. Kalela usefully reminds us that as individuals we are more complex than our membership of any particular identity group can account for, ‘because individuals contain within themselves so many different identities.’\footnote{Kalela, Making History, p.78.} We witness this when, for instance, Hatti moves from talking about tensions between Welsh and non-Welsh speakers to a sense of female solidarity within her stitching group, or when Uzma shifts between second-generation Pakistani family experience and modern British social norms concerning arranged marriage. Kalela’s comment offers the basis for a more inclusive conception of community. In place of community as a focus for restorative nostalgia (often a white working-class, or white middle-class nostalgia), or alternatively, community as the particular identity group singled out for special notice, we can envisage a dynamic, permeable state of community consisting of overlapping, interrelated and superimposed groupings. This multi-layered community is continually in flux. We see its inherent flexibility enacted in the timely establishment of volunteer embroidery groups, the ‘communities of practice’ that come into being to meet the needs of tapestry projects. And if popular discourse cautions that diverse communities lack cohesion, the utility of a public history that provides engagements with the past through which individuals can assimilate different viewpoints is clear.

The enabling formal framework featured by many of the community tapestries is crucial here. The modular configuration of multiple self-contained word-and-image panels which tell individual stories, but also contribute to an encompassing narrative (and embedded sub-narratives), provides a structure of relations between parts, and a productive level of flexibility between those parts, offering a formal solution to

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
Chakrabarty’s anxieties concerning the ‘irreducible plurality,’ of narratives.\textsuperscript{682} Such flexibility operates both at the interpretive level and at the physical level, since panels can be moved relative to one another – especially with regard to the non-chronological Quaker and Scottish Diaspora tapestries. The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry continued to grow beyond its initial remit. Although the Great Tapestry of Scotland’s extent is ostensibly fixed, there is nothing to prevent the addition of panels to provide new interpolations of the narrative; to give, for instance, a stronger expression of ethnic diversity. Formal possibilities thus offer a way of countering restrictive and anachronistic aspects of national identity.\textsuperscript{683} Touring subsets of the Quaker and Scottish tapestry panels establish new thematic emphases; and my own selections of panels in this thesis involve new assemblages of ‘this up against that.’ This narrative openness offers intriguing possibilities for keeping such cultural productions in step with the times. Discussion of the Diaspora Tapestry in Chapter 5 demonstrates the way in which the blind-spots of a particular country’s narrative of its own past may be indirectly glossed and critiqued by that of another country, helping to provide viewers with a fuller picture – a more global perspective. Herein lies the strength of plurality in public history – it is not, as Chakrabarty suggests, irreducible, or at least, not quite, but it does require the engaged viewer to interrogate the different narrative strands as if they were pieces of a jigsaw, working out how the parts fit together, whether some are missing and others need to be discarded entirely.

To conclude, then, this study uses community tapestry as a case study for exploring what lay history achieves that academic history does not; in particular, an affective-reflective mode of engagement with the past. It uses the gender-specific craft identity of community tapestry to uncover illuminating interrogations of female agency at a variety of levels, and a particular mode of treatment of the past. This involves domestic-everyday, comic and non-heroic tropes which problematise and subvert heroic narratives by highlighting the multifarious small acts and material details of everyday survival. The feminised perspective that emerges is a means of presenting a

\textsuperscript{682} Chakrabarty, ‘Minority Histories,’ 23.
\textsuperscript{683} A new thirteenth panel was added to the Jersey Occupation Tapestry to mark the seventieth anniversary of Jersey’s liberation from the Nazis. It travelled round the parishes enabling islanders to add stitches, reaffirming the centrality of the tapestry to commemorating liberation. See Appendix A.
new form of history from below, which, by virtue of its affective charge, is unexpectedly assertive in its effect on the viewer.

The thesis makes a number of important contributions to the public history paradigm. It provides a corrective to other lay histories in circulation, and moderates and informs our understanding of public history’s practice in the field. It employs a visual-cum-material form to offer a nuanced perspective on affective and embodied presentational strategies favoured by practitioners of public history, and their utility in engaging a broad public. It demonstrates that a focus on everyday material details has greater inclusive potential than an abstracted heroic past. It also provides a counterbalance to those popular history practices that depend heavily on harnessing late-capitalist technology: the photograph’s immediacy; digital genealogical research; the project-specific web resource that may fall swiftly out of use. Instead, as a form of ‘slow’ history, it inhabits common ground with quieter, alternative trends in food and craft. It is an experience of making history more in accord with Boym’s ‘off-modern’ – modern but not part of mainstream cultural discourse – and is more likely to attract older age groups, and appeal in particular to women.

As I have showed, community tapestry’s inclusivity is largely predicated on the agency projects succeed in building in. This is expressed in a variety of ways, both as a function of subject matter and in terms of stitcher-participant involvement in decision-making. The way that this is experienced is project specific. Gordon Prestoungrange suggests that in the end, volunteers will only volunteer if they are able to do what they want, and his approach has been to tolerate a level of ambiguity.\footnote{Interview with Prestoungrange, 30 May 2014.} The more centralised approach to organising the Quaker Tapestry meant that dissent became an acknowledged, accepted part of the sum of project experiences. The functioning of varying degrees of permissiveness embedded in the operation of different projects offers fruitful lessons for practitioners of public history. It is largely a matter of embracing pragmatism in project design.

Perhaps most potently, however, community tapestry offers a potential, if partial, solution to Chakrabarty’s concern with how we contend with the irreducible plurality of voices concerned with the past that emerged in the twentieth century as an artefact of minority history. Community tapestry is a demotic form with capacity to
‘contain’ multiple voices within a bigger picture. In the various solutions on offer through the tapestry case studies, we see different balances between structure and structural flexibility that move towards the collective, general history that Chakrabarty holds out as an ideal – that is, histories that make room for plurality of perspective but also achieve a level of synthesis. My analysis of the different voices these projects express, along with the decisions and processes they embody, thus provides lessons for future tapestry projects, and a template for the practice of public history that encompasses the challenges of providing the British Isles with collective and general histories that are genuinely inclusive.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Amis, Martin. Time’s Arrow, or, the Nature of the Offence (London: J. Cape, 1991).


Carroll, Bret, ed. *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia* (London: Sage, 2004), https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=c5t2AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA121&lpg=PA121&dq=The+Cult+of+Domesticity+and+Middle-Class+Manhood+in+the+Nineteenth+Century&source=bl&ots=KEXuZu7TiG&sig=hOQSQaObB6LZfflooyVwfnKVr16I&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjjrV9-7ZAhWhBsAKHUR9CCgQ6AEiRjAC#v=onepage&q=The%20Cult%20of%20Domesticity%20and%20Middle-Class%20Manhood%20in%20the%20Nineteenth%20Century&f=false (accessed 15/03/18).


Cook, Alexander. ‘The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Trends in Public History.’ In ‘Extreme and Sentimental History,’ ed. Vanessa Agnew


De Groot, Jerome. *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016; orig. ed. 2009), https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ayt-CwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=groot+consuming+history&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ved=0ahUKEwi5gZ_O9unZAhUFKsAKHYcECSgQ6AEILTAB#v=onepage&q=groot%20consuming%20history&amp;f=false (accessed 13/03/18).


Freeman, Hadley. ‘Jeffrey Tambor is the Key to Transparent’s Success: Does it Matter that He’s Acting?’ *The Guardian*, 8 October 2016.

Freeman, June. ‘Sewing as a Woman’s Art.’ In *Women and Craft*, ed. Elinor et al., pp.55-63.


Giard, Luce. ‘The Nourishing Arts.’ In Living and Cooking, by de Certeau, with Giard and Mayol, pp.151-176.


Hanisch, Carol. ‘The Personal is Political.’ In *Notes from the Second Year: Women’s Liberation; Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, ed. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970).


Jones, Chas. *Yorkshire’s Preface to the Bayeux Tapestry* (no publication data). Tourist pamphlet.


King, Brenda. ‘Embroidering the Truth or Putting the Record Straight about the Leek Embroidery Society.’ Paper given at Manchester Dress and Textile Discussion Group, Manchester University, 10/03/16.


Levin, Jennie. Living Threads: Making the Quaker Tapestry (Kendal: Quaker Tapestry Scheme, 1999).


Margulies, Martin. Foreword to *The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745*, by Crummy et al., pp.v-vi.

McCall Smith, Alexander. Foreword to *The Great Tapestry of Scotland*, by Moffat, pp.v-vi.


Tourist guide.


Prestoungrange, Gordon. ‘The Tapestry Background.’ In *The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745*, by Crummy et al., pp.vii-x.
Prestoungrange, Gordon. ‘Working Together has its Own Creative Magic – and it’s Fun!’ In The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745, by Crummy et al., pp.257-60.


[Prestoungrange, Gordon?] Preface to Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, by Crummy et al. pp.v-x.


The Ros Tapestry: A Norman Odyssey Unfolds in Thread (no publication data). Tourist guide.


Samuel, Raphael. ‘Resurrectionism.’ In Past and Present in Contemporary Culture, pp.139-68.


Schaffer, Talia. The Forgotten Female Aesthete (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000).


https://doi.org/10.2752/175183511X13055600095428 (accessed 21/02/18).


Short, Eirian and Audrey Walker, Stitching from the Last Invasion Embroidered Tapestry (Pembroke County Council, 2009).


Steedman, Carolyn. Dust (Manchester: MUP, 20011).

Stone, Elizabeth, writing as the Countess of Wilton. The Art of Needle-work, from the Earliest Ages: Including Some Notices of the Ancient Historical Tapestries (London: Henry Colburn, 1841),
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=tl5XVhV8hyAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Art+of+Needle-work&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi0lbS4hrrZAhWML8AKHQIICp8Q6AEIITTAB#v=onepage&q=The%20Art%20of%20Needle-work&f=false (accessed 05/02/18).


Wilkie, Dorie. ‘Stitching the Prestonpans Tapestry.’ In *The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745*, by Crummy et al., pp.216-34.


APPENDIX A

20th and 21st CENTURY TAPESTRIES IN THE THESIS

Alphabetically listed

The names of the five principal tapestries discussed in the thesis appear in bold. A note of the chapter(s) in which each tapestry appears is provided. Alternative/short form names by which the tapestries are known are listed where applicable. Published reference sources appear in full in the bibliography.

ALDERNEY BAYEUX TAPESTRY FINALE [introduction; Ch.4]

Name(s): The Alderney Bayeux Tapestry Finale; The Alderney Tapestry
Dimensions: 0.5m high x just under 3m long, margins top and bottom
Rationale: To provide the notional missing end to the Bayeux Tapestry, which is assumed to have become torn and detached from the rest of the textile over the centuries.
Subject matter: Conclusion of William the Conqueror’s campaign against the English; William crowned king of England.
Personnel: Kate Russell, instigator and head embroiderer; Pauline Black, designer; over 400 residents and visitors contributed.
Present location: Alderney Library on the island of Alderney in the Channel Islands.
Production: Crewel embroidery, or ‘crewelwork’ (a free as opposed to counted-thread embroidery, worked in wools on linen or a comparably firm fabric); Alderney uses similar colour wools to the Bayeux Tapestry and a linen-style cloth.
Intertextuality: The most recently produced of the trio of Channel Island tapestries (see also Jersey Occupation Tapestry and Guernsey Tapestry); based on embroiderer Jan Messent’s 2.43m Bayeux Tapestry Finale, completed 1997, hanging in the atrium of the James Cook Memorial Teaching Hospital, Middlesbrough. The Alderney Finale was displayed at Bayeux in 2014 in a room adjoining its predecessor.

FULFORD TAPESTRY [introduction; Ch.1/4]

Name(s): The Fulford Tapestry; The Yorkshire Preface to the Bayeux Tapestry

---

685 The dimensions of the Bayeux Tapestry are c. 0.5m high by c. 70m long: see Bayeux Museum http://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/en/la_tapisserie_de_bayeux_en.html (accessed 18/03/18).
686 See https://www.janmessent.co.uk/bayeuxtapestryfinale (accessed 18/03/18).
**Dates:** Six years to make: grant received 2002; stitching began 2006 after design completed and threads spun and dyed; project completed 2012

**Dimensions:** c.0.53m high x 5m long; 6 panels each c.0.76m wide; margins top and bottom

**Rationale:** Prompted by the search for the site of Fulford battlefield (search begun 1999), as a way of publicising awareness of the battle and debate about the site.

**Subject matter:** Events leading up to the battle of Fulford, which preceded the battle of Hastings in 1066.

**Personnel:** Archaeologist Charles Jones designed the tapestry and coordinated the project based on an original idea from colleague John Crocker; a small group of volunteers stitched the tapestry. Stitcher Dorrie Worrall saw the project through from beginning to end.

**Present location:** No permanent display venue; on completion it was displayed at venues in and around York and in London, including the House of Lords.

**Production:** Crewelwork, following the Bayeux Tapestry for stitch forms; colours dyed and threads spun specially for the project using traditional methods. The stitchers’ initials are worked into the design.

**Intertextuality:** The guidebook discusses lessons from the Leek Replica and Jan Messent’s Bayeux Finale. The close emulation of the Bayeux Tapestry’s style, content and production make this tapestry a form of experimental archaeology. Together with the 950th anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Hastings in 2016, this tapestry helped inspire the Battle of Stamford Bridge Heritage Society to embark on a Battle of Stamford Bridge Tapestry (original idea Tom Wyles, designed by Chris Rock, with stitching overseen by Shirley Smith, a professional textile artist and York Minster ‘broderer.’)

**Key debates:** The tapestry was part of the campaign for a Fulford battle site to be officially recognised by English Heritage, which would have protected the site against development.


---

**GREAT TAPESTRY OF SCOTLAND** [throughout; focus of Ch.1]

**Name(s):** The Great Tapestry of Scotland


---

687 Also known as ‘Britain’s Bayeux Tapestry’ owned by Reading Borough Council, and located in Reading Museum: see [http://www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk/](http://www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk/) (accessed 02/04/18).
**Dimensions:** 160 panels in three different shapes and sizes: the majority are 1m squared, the generically themed panels (about a quarter of the total) are half-width (1m high x 0.5m wide), and four panels at the beginning and end are double width (2m wide); total length 143 m long

**Rationale:** A pictorial history of Scotland created by and for the Scottish people.

**Subject matter:** A broadly chronological depiction of well-known and lesser-known events and individuals from Scottish history, interwoven with generic scenes of common experience; begins with scenes of the emergence of the Scottish land formation in pre-historic times and the first settlers; ends with the Scottish parliament reconvened in 1999 and an assemblage of figures representing Scotland past and future.

**Personnel:** Alexander McCall-Smith, initiator; Andrew Crummy, designer; Dorie Wilkie, stitch coordinator; Alistair Moffat, historical consultant; and 1,000 stitchers from across Scotland.

**Present location:** Currently touring; a permanent home in a dedicated exhibition centre in Galashiels opens in 2020. The Scottish government will contribute c.£2.5m and Scottish Borders Council will contribute £3.5m. On tour, the tapestry is sometimes displayed as a selection of panels rather than in its entirety, to suit the constraints imposed by available space.

**Production:** Crewelwork on oatmeal-coloured cloth made from a linen-cotton mix; the wide variety of stitches includes buttonhole, chain, couching, Cretan, fly, herringbone, Rumanian, satin, stem, Turkey. As with the Prestonpans Tapestry, stitcher groups were encouraged to include a name-tag, although sometimes this is limited to inclusion of initials.

**Intertextuality:** The project was inspired by Alexander McCall Smith’s first view of the Prestonpans Tapestry at the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh. Designer Andrew Crummy is responsible for all three Scottish tapestries included: the Prestonpans Tapestry, the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry and this one. Production of this project and the Diaspora project overlapped temporally, but apart from Crummy, involved different personnel.


---

**GUERNSEY TAPESTRY** [introduction; Ch.2/5]

**Name(s):** The Bailiwick of Guernsey Millennium Tapestry; The Guernsey Tapestry

**Dates:** Conceived 1995; stitched between Sept. 1996 and early 1999

**Dimensions:** 10 self-contained portrait-shaped panels, each 1.22m high x 0.91m wide; no margins, but brief textual descriptors included around the edges

**Rationale:** A commemorative project to celebrate the millennium on Guernsey.
Subject matter: 1,000 years of history in the Bailiwick of Guernsey (the Bailiwick includes the islands of Sark, Alderney, Herm, Jethou, Brecqhou).

Personnel: Sue Payne and Joan Ozanne (Chair of the Guernsey Community Arts Association) instigated the project; Valerie Chandler, artist and designer; Jenneth Fitzgerald, head embroiderer; a core of 215 stitchers from the ten parishes of Guernsey were responsible for the embroidery, but residents of the islands were allowed to add a stitch in exchange for a certificate costing £1 acknowledging their participation.

Present location: The Guernsey Tapestry Gallery, St Peter Port, Guernsey, a dedicated space refurbished to house the tapestry.

Production: Embroidered canvas work (counted-thread embroidery) including more than twelve varieties of stitch.

Intertextuality: This is one of many millennium tapestries produced in the British Isles to celebrate the year 2000. Participants claim not to have been inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry, although curator Caroline Drake believes it was part of the cultural mix. See also Jersey Occupation Tapestry.

Key debates: The initiators struggled to have the project adopted as an official millennium project. The idea was put forward to Guernsey’s Millennium Forum in 1995, and while there was sufficient support to get the tapestry made, the Millennium Committee resisted adopting it until just months before the start of the millennium year, meaning no arrangements could be agreed in time for permanent display and it was exhibited for just a week that year. A project member suggested it was seen as insufficiently reflective of the population of Guernsey as a whole because the committee was mainly male. Resistance may also have been on account of the fact that neighbouring Jersey had already produced a tapestry. Ozanne’s self-published guide discusses the difficulties encountered by the project.

References: Ozanne, Stitch by Stitch (tourist guide); The Bailiwick of Guernsey Tapestry (tourist guide); http://www.guernseytapestry.org.gg/ (accessed 11/03/18).

HASTINGS EMBROIDERY [introduction; Ch.1/4]

Name(s): The Hastings Embroidery

Dates: Commissioned 1965; completed 1966

Dimensions: 0.92 high x 74m long in total; 27 panels each 2.74m wide; no margins

Rationale: To celebrate the 900th anniversary of the battle of Hastings.

Subject matter: Defining events in the history of Britain since the Norman Conquest

Personnel: The Royal School of Needlework was commissioned to produce the embroidery by Group Captain Ralph Ward on behalf of Hastings Borough Council. As a paid commission undertaken by professional embroiderers, this is not a true community tapestry, but it is included because it plays a significant part in the history of largescale commemorative embroidery of the twentieth-century in the British Isles.
**Present location:** In storage for the last twenty years. It was initially displayed from May 1966 onwards in the Triodome on Hastings Pier. It also spent a period on display in the town hall.

**Production:** Appliqué with cords, metal and other threads.

**Intertextuality:** This is the first large-scale historical embroidery of the twentieth-century commemorating British history. See also *Last Invasion Tapestry* and *Overlord Embroidery*.

**Key debates:** This tapestry has not been on public display for two decades. Its themes are perhaps too Empire-centred for modern taste (see Chapter 1 for discussion). In the wake of news of the Bayeux Tapestry’s intended loan to Britain, Hastings Council has offered the Hastings Embroidery free on long-term loan to any organisation with the wherewithal to display it, saying it cannot justify spending money on staff and display in a time of cuts to frontline services. The announcement highlights the difficulties these large, fragile hangings may encounter.


**JERSEY OCCUPATION TAPESTRY** [introduction; Ch.2; conclusion]

**Name(s):** The Jersey Occupation Tapestry; The Occupation Tapestry

**Dates:** Conceived 1988; first stitches Feb. 1987; last panels completed Christmas 1994: ‘7 years in the making’

**Dimensions:** 12 panels each measuring 0.86m high x 1.82m wide; no margins; the main design for each panel incorporates small, superimposed framed images, akin to the convention used for postcards

**Rationale:** To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Jersey from Nazi occupation.

**Subject matter:** The German Occupation of the Channel Islands during WWII (June 1940-May 1945).

**Personnel:** Cynthia Rumboll, coordinator; Wayne Audrain, designer; Doug Ford of the museums service drew up the list of subjects; Marie Mourant advised on the embroidery; 233 embroiderers from the twelve parishes took part, with additional stitches from hundreds of others.

**Present location:** Occupation Tapestry Gallery, Maritime Museum, New North Quay, St Helier.

**Production:** Basket weave tent stitch on canvas. 275 shades of 52 colours were used.

**Intertextuality:** Jersey was the first of the Channel Islands to produce a tapestry. Jersey is on the direct ferry route from Southampton, home of the *Overlord Embroidery,* and
19 miles from the coast of Normandy. Tom Mor, designer of the New World Tapestry, was recruited as a tapestry consultant (however the two tapestries are very different). **Key debates:** A new thirteenth panel was commissioned to commemorate the 70th anniversary of liberation. It travelled around the parishes during the anniversary year, enabling islanders to add their stitches to those of the core of volunteers. The panel memorialises victims of Nazism and acts of resistance, and depicts liberation day celebrations across the years, including a couple taking a selfie at the front. It provides an example of how community tapestries can be kept fresh and introduced to new publics.


**LAST INVASION TAPESTRY** [throughout; focus of ch.4]

**Name(s):** The Last Invasion Tapestry at Fishguard; The Last Invasion Tapestry; The Last Invasion Embroidered Tapestry


**Dimensions:** 53m high x 30m long; the top margin is used for a Welsh text and the bottom margin for an English text

**Rationale:** Commissioned by Fishguard Arts Society as a permanent legacy of the invasion bicentenary commemorations in 1997.

**Subject matter:** The 1797 invasion of West Wales by French Napoleonic troops. Includes scenes of local cobbler Jemima apprehending twelve French soldiers and local women marching round the Bigney Hill.

**Personnel:** Eirian Short with Audrey Walker and Rozanne Hawksley, initiators and embroidery advisors; Elizabeth Cramp, illustrator-designer; Bill Fowler, historical consultant; 77 people helped make the tapestry, including three men, two of whom made the embroidery frames.

**Present location:** In a purpose-built gallery at Fishguard Library, South Pembrokeshire, Wales. For the first five years it was displayed in St Mary’s Church Hall; it then went into storage 2002-2007 until a permanent home was agreed, with the new gallery being constructed as part of the refurbishment of Fishguard Town Hall.

**Production:** Crewelwork on a cotton fabric that looks like linen. Stitches are mostly the same as the medieval work and include back, chain, couching, running, satin, split and stem stitch, and French knots. 178 shades of wool have been used. An embroidered panel at the end of the tapestry lists the stitchers’ names.

**Intertextuality:** Despite her life-long association with embroidery, Eirian Short claims it was a conversation with a local resident Phyllis Clifton which alerted her to the
Hastings Embroidery and gave her the idea of commemorating the bicentenary in embroidery.

References: The Last Invasion Tapestry (tourist guide); http://lastinvasiontapestry.co.uk/ (accessed 15/03/18).

MAGNA CARTA (AN EMBROIDERY) [Ch.4]

Name(s): Magna Carta (An Embroidery); Cornelia Parker’s Magna Carta (An Embroidery)

Dates: Wikipedia article on Magna Carta captured 15 June 2014; embroidery on display May 2015

Dimensions: 1.5m wide x nearly 13 m long; unlike any of the other tapestries the viewer reads across the width, and inspects the tapestry by looking down into a glass exhibition case as opposed to along a wall

Rationale: To commemorate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta; to interrogate ideas of law and liberty in British society today.

Subject matter: Magna Carta represented through its entire Wikipedia article, complete with inset images.

Personnel: Artist Cornelia Parker’s idea; commissioned by the Ruskin School of Art at Oxford University in partnership with the British Library; produced in association with Fine Cell Work (the social enterprise that trains prisoners to do paid needlework), the Embroiderers’ Guild, the Royal School of Needlework and Hand & Lock (an embroidery company). It was stitched by over 200 individuals including Brian Eno, Eliza Manningham-Buller, Peter Tatchell, Baroness Warsi, Caroline Lucas MP, Germaine Greer, Kenneth Clarke MP and other public figures, peers, campaigners, prisoners, politicians and lawyers. Individuals were invited to stitch words or phrases that were significant to them.

Present location: Not on display at present. It was shown at the British Library, London, the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, and the Bodleian Library, Oxford in Magna Carta anniversary year (2015) and at other venues in the UK in 2016 and 2017.

Production: The Wikipedia image was output as a printed pattern on half-panama cotton fabric, divided into 87 sections and stitched in free embroidery, chiefly in back, cable and stem stitch, but with the detailed pictures, some of which incorporate delicate goldwork, worked by the skilled professional embroiderers.

Intertextuality: Parker comments, ‘Echoing the communal activity that resulted in the Bayeux Tapestry, but on this occasion placing more emphasis on the word rather than the image, I wanted to create an artwork that is a contemporary interpretation of Magna Carta.’ Also in Magna Carta anniversary year, an unrelated ten-panel embroidery was commissioned by Runnymede Council, designed by Rhoda Nevins of the Royal School of Embroidery and stitched by Nevins and others; and the village of Odiham produced a single-panel embroidery to mark Odiham’s place in Magna Carta history.
**Key debates:** The status of this work is rather different from the other community tapestries under discussion. It is primarily a piece of concept artwork for which the form of a tapestry produced as a community enterprise has been chosen to enact the piece’s artistic message. The particular individuals/groups chosen to add stitches contribute to the artwork’s status as an interrogation of Magna Carta’s contemporary significance. Its verbal emphasis and the awkwardness associated with viewing it can also be understood as artefacts of its status as a conceptual art work rather than a piece of visual storytelling.


---

**MALDON EMBROIDERY**

**Name(s):** The Maldon Embroidery, The Maldon Millennium Embroidery, The Millennium Embroidery

**Dates:** Conceived 1987; stitched 1987-1990, taking more than three years; unveiled 1991

**Dimensions:** 7 panels, each measuring 0.66m high x 1.82m wide; 12.8m long in total; margins top and bottom

**Rationale:** To celebrate the millennium anniversary of the battle of Maldon in 991 AD (as opposed to the 2000-year anniversary millennium).

**Subject matter:** 1,000 years of Maldon’s history from the Battle of Maldon in 991 to the millennium year, 1991.

**Personnel:** Artist Humphrey Spender (brother of poet Stephen Spender) was commissioned to design it; Lee Cash, a professional embroiderer, coordinated volunteers, chose materials and collaborated with Spender; 86 women worked on the embroidery.

**Present location:** Maeldune Heritage Centre, Maldon, Essex; previously housed in the Moot Hall, Maldon.

**Production:** An appliqué of embroidered motifs; overlapping coloured nets in the background provide subtle colour changes and draw the elements together in a cohesive design. A supplementary panel contains the stitchers’ embroidered signatures; their reflections on the project are recorded on an exhibition board.

**Intertextuality:** The battle of Maldon is commemorated in an Old English poem. The elderly Anglo-Saxon Byrhtnoth and his men are said to have heroically resisted a Viking
incursion. Byrhtnoth was buried in what is now Ely Cathedral and his widow is said to have given Ely an embroidery of her husband's deeds. The Maldon Embroidery thus pays homage to both the battle and the long lost tapestry that is assumed to have been similar to the Bayeux Tapestry (and, if it existed, pre-dated it by c.100 years). Similarly Lewes in East Sussex has a Battle of Lewes Tapestry to commemorate the 750th anniversary of the battle in 1264.


*NEW WORLD TAPESTRY* [introduction; Ch.4]

**Name(s):** The New World Tapestry

**Dates:** Work began in 1980, continuing for 20 years

**Dimensions:** 24 panels, each 1.2m high x 3.4m wide; total length 81.3m; no margins

**Rationale:** To depict the history of English colonisation in an accessible way.

**Subject matter:** English colonisation attempts in Newfoundland, North America, the Guyanas and Bermuda between 1583 and 1642.

**Personnel:** Artist Tom Mor designed the tapestry with help from researchers on the botanical and heraldic aspects; 256 tapissiers from across Dorset and Devon stitched the panels led by chief tapissiers Joan Roncanelli and Renée Harvey.

**Present location:** In storage since 2008. Displayed at Cold Harbour Mill, Devon and then at the Bristol Empire and Commonwealth Museum from 2003 until its closure in 2008 (for associated controversy see *Guardian* article below).

**Production:** Tent stitch on canvas.

**Intertextuality:** In chronological terms, this is the first of the community tapestries listed here. See also *Jersey Occupation Tapestry*.

**Key debates:** Mor described the concept behind the project as ‘history without tears,’ explaining that the tapestry’s ‘many touches of humour’ are there specifically to interest the younger generation. The bold style bears some resemblance to the unrefined graphic style of children’s comics such as *The Beano*. The tapestry has recently been criticised for depicting racist stereotypes of Native Americans. Mor has retorted that the cartoon-like manner of depiction has been taken out of context, and makes the point that the 2017 accusation is the first time anyone has made a complaint. The criticism suggests that aspects of the treatment of subject matter are no longer in sympathy with contemporary cultural mores. See also *Hastings Embroidery*.


OVERLORD EMBROIDERY [introduction; Ch.4/5]

Name(s): The Overlord Embroidery; informally, a ‘Bayeux Tapestry in reverse’ (Lord Dulverton)

Dates: Design commissioned May 1968; embroidery completed Dec. 1972

Dimensions: 34 panels, each 0.9m high x 2.4m wide, extending a total length of 83m; the margins are not embroidered, but a wide purple band frames the textile top and bottom

Rationale: To remember the successful D-Day assault and celebrate the peace thereby achieved, with particular emphasis on national effort.

Subject matter: The war effort, with particular focus on ‘Operation Overlord’: the Allied invasion of Europe.

Personnel: Lord Dulverton of Batsford, instigator; Sandra Lawrence, illustrator; Colonel Ben Neave-Hill selected the narrative episodes; stitched by 25 Royal School of Needlework embroiderers under Margaret Bartlett (head of workroom). As a paid commission undertaken by professional embroiderers, this is not a true community tapestry, but it is included because it plays a significant part in the history of largescale commemorative embroidery of the twentieth-century in the British Isles.

Present location: Dedicated space as part of the D-Day Museum, Portsmouth, newly built in 1984 (currently undergoing refurbishment). Initially intended for a new wing of the Imperial War Museum, London, for which planning permission was withdrawn; it toured abroad in America and Canada for 12 months and then went on display in the Guildhall old library (1975); the Royal Scottish Museum (1976-77) and Whitbread Brewery’s Porter Tun Room (1978-1983).

Production: Appliqué with cords, metal and other threads; incorporates more than 50 different materials including fabrics taken from uniforms and headgear of those involved in the three services.

Intertextuality: It appears likely that knowledge of the Hastings Embroidery had some influence on decisions to take the Overlord project forward. Brooks and Eckstein (p.12) confirm Dulverton saw reproductions. They note (p.2) that he got the idea for a tapestry from a friend in the 1950s, but the first serious discussion with army personnel took place in spring 1966, when the Hastings Embroidery was nearing completion.

**PRESTONPANS TAPESTRY**

**Name(s):** The Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry 1745; The Prestonpans Tapestry

**Dates:** Conceived 2008; stitching begun early 2009; completed June 2010

**Dimensions:** 104 panels, each 0.46m high x 1m wide, with margins top, bottom and to the right-side, creating a consistent-width frame round the panels when they are mounted as a continuous strip, 104m long

**Rationale:** To bring to public notice and conserve memory of the battle of Prestonpans. Part of a broader cultural initiative, under the aegis of Prestoungrange Arts Festival, to attract interest, visitors, investment and jobs to Prestonpans and encourage its regeneration following industrial decline in the mid- to late twentieth century.

**Subject matter:** The early stages of the second (and final) Jacobite rising in 1745 (the ’45), led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart (‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’), including his initial landing in Scotland, the raising of campaign troops across the Highlands, successive out-maneuverings of the government forces, and eventual victory at Prestonpans.

**Personnel:** Gordon Prestoungrange, initiator; Andrew Crummy, designer; Dorie Wilkie, stitch coordinator; Arran Johnston and Martin Margulies, historical consultants. More than 200 stitchers from across Scotland, with additional contributions from English, French, Australian and US volunteers.

**Present location:** Currently a touring exhibit with no fixed home. Has toured widely across Scotland, also London and Harrogate, and in 2013 it was displayed in Bayeux. Insufficient funds have so far been raised for an exhibition centre in Prestonpans.

**Production:** Crewelwork on fine Scottish linen called Ecru. A stitcher name-tag is included in the bottom right-hand corner of each panel. There is also an embroidered stitchers’ roll.

**Intertextuality:** Directly inspired by Gordon Prestoungrange’s visit to the Bayeux Tapestry. The guidebook acknowledges the Quaker Tapestry, the Overlord Embroidery and the Last Invasion Tapestry, the French Shore Tapestry, and the wealth of projects created for the millennium.


**QUAKER TAPESTRY**

**Name(s):** The Quaker Tapestry, a ‘Bayeux in bits’ (Wynn-Wilson)

**Dates:** Conceived 1981; work continued for fifteen years until completion in 1996

**Dimensions:** 77 panels, each 0.53m high x 0.64m wide; margins top and bottom designated by a broken line

**Rationale:** To give Quakers a better understanding of their heritage. Largescale participation in the scheme was intended to combat isolation of smaller Friends groups and build a stronger sense of Quaker community.
Subject matter: The Quaker way of life embodied through representations of significant moments in Quaker history and central aspects of Quaker belief.

Personnel: Anne Wynn-Wilson, initiator-designer; Jonathan Stocks, eleven-year old who suggested that instead of drawing Quaker history it would be fun to embroider it; others, including artist Joe McCrum, were involved in designing individual panels. Ann Castle, Margaret Simpson and Ann Nichols, core committee members; 4,000 women, men and children from 15 countries contributed stitches, though much of the work was undertaken by Friends groups in the UK. As general manager at the museum since 1994, Bridget Guest has been instrumental in fostering the tapestry’s reputation.

Present location: The Quaker Tapestry Museum, Friends Meeting House, Kendal, since the permanent exhibition opened in 1994. Prior to that, touring venues included public libraries, Quaker meeting houses, churches, stately homes and museums. Following the re-mounting of all panels in new frames which better conserve the textile (completed 2014), a change in exhibition policy means only 40-50 of the panels are on display at one time. Smaller selections of panels are available for touring exhibits.

Production: Freestyle crewel embroidery built up in three layers. Six stitch types are used: chain, split and stem stitch, Peking knot and Bayeux technique (laid-work with couching stitches), and Quaker stitch, a stitch developed by Wynn-Wilson to suit embroidered lettering, which was subsequently confirmed as being an entirely new stitch. The woollen ground fabric is more prominent than for other tapestries. The mid-tone with a slight stripe was chosen to set off both lighter and darker shades and to make a convincing colour for areas of skin and buildings. Its hairy, variegated texture necessitates the design being traced on calico attached at the back and then transferred through as an outline of stem-stitch – a variation on the Trapunto quilting technique. Stitchers are not named individually, instead the stitcher group is acknowledged, reflecting the communitarian ethic of Quakerism.

Intertextuality: Wynn-Wilson was inspired to create the tapestry in part by studying the Bayeux Tapestry for her City and Guild qualification; in 1981 the only other community tapestry in development was the New World Tapestry.

Key debates: Wynn-Wilson developed different figurative styles to suit differing skill levels. For young stitchers, who illustrated and stitched the lower margins, she developed a style based on a Miro design. The conscious decision to deploy spatially discrete styles means the tapestry addresses viewers simultaneously in two different tonal registers: the child’s-eye perspective in the lower margin provides touchingly comic annotations on the main part of each panel, which preserves a more sober tone, with human faces delineated with understated sureness of touch. For instance, ‘Richard Sellar’ (QT A4), provides the adult and child’s respective understandings of Sellar’s brutal treatment on refusal of orders after being pressganged. The lower margin does not detract or distract from the main register. Humorous notes in the children’s naively lucid depictions of a grim subject, are managed, or ‘contained’ so as not to undermine serious intent. In this way the child’s-eye view provides an additional dimension.
**References:** Levin, *Living Threads*; Wynn-Wilson, Prologue to *The Quaker Tapestry*; Wynn-Wilson, *Quakers in Stitches*; https://www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk/ (accessed 15/03/18).

---

**ROS TAPESTRY**

**Name(s):** The Ros Tapestry

**Dates:** Conceived 1999, first panel completed 2002; final panel ‘nearing completion’ at the point of thesis submission

**Dimensions:** 15 panels, each c. 1.22m high x 1.82m wide; narrow top and bottom margins

**Rationale:** To correct New Ross’s failure to commemorate its Anglo-Norman foundation and heritage.

**Subject matter:** The history of the Anglo-Norman arrival in the South East of Ireland from the late-twelfth century, including the founding of the town of New Ross, Co. Wexford, by the illustrious Norman knight, William Marshall.

**Personnel:** Initiated by Rev. Paul Mooney, appointed to St Mary’s Church in New Ross in 1998, aided by Alexis Bernstorff, art historian and textile specialist. Ann Griffin-Bernstorff, local artist and mother of Alexis, was commissioned to research and design the tapestry cartoons. The embroideries were stitched by over 150 volunteers from Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Laois, Cork, Wicklow, together with a few English stitchers, trained by Alexis Bernstorff with initial help from Jean Barry and Mairin Dunne.

**Present location:** Ros Tapestry Exhibition Centre, New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland; originally planned for St Mary’s Church in New Ross.

**Production:** Crewelwork on linen; also described as ‘needle painting’ in publicity for the tapestry. Stitches include stem, satin, straight, French-knots, seeding, chain, long and short, fly stitch and couching.

**Intertextuality:** The Norman influence on the history of New Ross inspired Rev. Mooney to plan a project like the Bayeux Tapestry, which relates the Norman conquest of England. There is a direct ferry crossing between Fishguard and New Ross. Fishguard stitcher Hatti said she and some of the other stitchers went to New Ross with leaflets about the *Last Invasion Tapestry* during the bicentenary year (1997, two years before the inception of the Ros project) and met people who wanted to come over and learn about it, suggesting knowledge of Fishguard’s project may have been an additional factor inspiring the Ros production.

**References:** *The Ros Tapestry* (tourist guide); http://www.rostapestry.ie/ (accessed 13/03/18).
The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry [throughout; focus of Ch.2]

**Name(s):** The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, The Diaspora Tapestry

**Dates:** Work begun 2012; initial launch with publication of guidebook containing 167 panels in May 2014; new ed. guidebook containing 305 panels, 2015; possibility of further additions

**Dimensions:** 305 panels, each 0.5m squared

**Rationale:** To build on the success of the first Prestonpans tapestry project and the work of Prestoungrange Arts Festival in nurturing Prestonpans as centre of cultural activity. To make creative use of 2014’s designated status as ‘the Year of Homecoming’ by VisitScotland. To bring home to Scotland and tell the stories of the global Scottish Diaspora.

**Subject matter:** The stories of the global Scottish Diaspora and the ‘reverse diaspora’ (migrants to Scotland), using material supplied by individuals and communities from round the world as a basis for panel designs.

**Personnel:** Gordon Prestoungrange and the Prestonpans Tapestry team as a whole initiated this second project, with Andrew Crummy again producing the designs; Gillian Hart and Yvonne Murphy coordinated the stitchers and the stitching; Arran Johnston and Prestoungrange oversaw fund-raising, publicity, guidebook production. Several hundred stitchers from 34 countries took part.

**Present location:** Currently a touring exhibit with no fixed home. Has toured widely throughout Scotland and across the world, in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Iceland. Insufficient funds have so far been raised for an exhibition centre in Prestonpans.

**Production:** Crewelwork on linen-type material. In many instances the panels express a personal relationship between the stitcher(s) and the past; stitcher signatures/motifs also included where practicable.

**Intertextuality:** This second tapestry from the Prestonpans stable was directly inspired by the success and enthusiasm generated by the Prestonpans Tapestry.

**References:** Crummy et al., *Scottish Diaspora Tapestry*; http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/index (accessed 15/03/18).
LAST INVASION TAPESTRY

HATTI (interviewed with Tricia)

**Interview:** 5 September 2014 at Fishguard Library, the home of the tapestry

**Age:** 70+

**Home:** Fishguard, from the point at which her husband retired

**Born:** ?South Africa

**Work:** Active in local campaigning, secretary of the Welsh Transport Forum; her husband was a university lecturer and they spent time abroad in Zambia and Nigeria before he retired.

**Craft skills:** Had not embroidered prior to the tapestry, but knitted, sewed, and did ‘tapestry by numbers.’

**Other tapestries:** ‘It’s exactly like the Bayeux Tapestry and half the length.’ Talked of how her husband visited the Bayeux Tapestry on a scoping-out trip when an invasion centre was initially planned to house the tapestry at Fishguard. Has visited the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Leek Replica at Reading. Knew about the Ros Tapestry and the Jersey Occupation Tapestry.

TRICIA (interviewed with Hatti)

**Interview:** 5 September 2014 at Fishguard Library, the home of the tapestry

**Age:** 60+

**Home:** Fishguard

**Born:** Gloucester

**Work:** District midwife and then health visitor, retired.

**Craft skills:** Had not embroidered, but talked of being coached by the two ‘experts’ with whom she formed a group. Working on the tapestry ‘started her off again.’ She joined a sewing group for three winters and did patchwork and quilting. She commented that she loves hand stitching, but hates it ‘when I’ve got to get the machine out.’

**Other tapestries:** Visited the Bayeux Tapestry after completing the Fishguard project; has also visited the Great Tapestry of Scotland; knew about the Jersey Occupation Tapestry or possibly the Overlord Embroidery: ‘something to do with the Second World War with Churchill in it.’
GREAT TAPESTRY OF SCOTLAND

LIZ
Interview: 1 June 2014, interviewee was stewarding for the tapestry at Anchor Mill in Paisley
Age: 60+
Home: Kilbarchan, near Paisley
Born: Glasgow
Work: Costume designer for television, particularly millinery and corsets; has now scaled back except for occasional commissions and occasional craft stalls.
Craft skills: Main specialism is felting, but she studied embroidery under Kath Whyte at Glasgow School of Art.
Other tapestries: Has visited the Bayeux Tapestry and the Prestonpans Tapestry. Asked about the modern project’s relation to its ancestor, she said ‘In some ways I think it’s a pity that—what we were doing here didn’t use a lot more modern techniques.’

SUE
Interview: 1 June 2014, interviewee was stewarding for the tapestry at Anchor Mill in Paisley
Age: 60+
Home: Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire
Born: Horbury, West Yorkshire
Work: Speech therapist, retired.
Craft skills: Technically proficient. Embroiderers’ Guild member. Designs her own embroideries; also does a lot of knitting.
Other tapestries: Little knowledge of the Bayeux Tapestry, but knew of the other tapestries discussed in this thesis, plus the Overlord Embroidery and the three Channel Island tapestries; has visited the Prestonpans Tapestry and the Quaker Tapestry.

QUAKER TAPESTRY

ALISON
Interview: 1 June 2014, during Quaker Tapestry members’ weekend at the Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal
Age: 60+ during the project
Home: Edinburgh, Scotland
Born: Bath, Somerset
Work: Farmer’s wife living near Callander in the Scottish Central Belt at the time of the project.
Craft skills: Made her children’s clothes, and was an occasional embroiderer, mostly tent-stitch (basic needlepoint). ‘I was desperate to do something else, and I couldn’t find anything else and this was like – thank God! [. . .] I was learning a whole new way of embroidery, which I had not learnt before.’

Other tapestries: Good knowledge of the Bayeux Tapestry; knew about the Overlord Embroidery; has also visited the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Prestonpans Tapestry, and was going to make a panel for the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry.

FREYA
Interview: 1 June 2014, during Quaker Tapestry members’ weekend at the Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal
Age: In her forties during the project
Home: Sheffield
Born: Street, Somerset
Work: Children’s nurse, retired.
Craft skills: A bit rusty; had not embroidered for a number of years.
Other tapestries: Good knowledge of the Bayeux Tapestry, and resistant to seeing the Quaker Tapestry as its adjunct: ‘I— like the fact that it has those connections— but in actual fact although it has the connections it is in essence very different from the Bayeux Tapestry.’ Also knew of the Great Tapestry of Scotland and the Guernsey Tapestry.

GRACE
Interview: 1 June 2014, during Quaker Tapestry members’ weekend at the Quaker Tapestry Museum, Kendal
Age: Remembers celebrating her fiftieth birthday during the project
Home: Lewes in Sussex
Born: London
Work: Retired nurse.
Craft skills: ‘A practical sewer,’ particularly children’s clothes; enjoyed embroidery as a child and teenager.
Other tapestries: Good knowledge of the Bayeux Tapestry, including time spent stewarding when the Quaker Tapestry was exhibited in Bayeux; has visited the Prestonpans Tapestry; brought the Battle of Lewes Tapestry to my attention.
**SCOTTISH DIASPORA TAPESTRY**

**ALMAS (interviewed with daughter, Uzma)**

*Interview:* 31 May 2014, during the tapestry’s initial launch in Prestonpans at the 3 Harbours Art Festival  
*Age:* 60+  
*Home:* Glasgow  
*Born:* Pakistan  
*Work:* Company director of her husband’s business.  
*Craft skills:* Proficient at dress-making.  
*Other tapestries:* Knew of the Bayeux Tapestry.

**JENNY**

*Interview:* 31 May 2014, during the tapestry’s initial launch in Prestonpans at the 3 Harbours Art Festival  
*Age:* 60+  
*Home:* Caithness  
*Born:* Caithness [?]  
*Work:* Artist working in watercolour and mixed media, slate collage and sculpture; arts activator; historical researcher and local history author.  
*Craft skills:* Art school training at Gray’s School of Art, Aberdeen, and Manchester College of Art, rather than a background in craft. Jenny supplied the research for the panel design and found a knitting group that was prepared to stitch it. Although her own role in the embroidery was peripheral, she attended the group’s sessions.  
*Other tapestries:* Has visited the Great Tapestry of Scotland; some knowledge of the Bayeux Tapestry: she focused on the greater freedom the modern project’s broader colour palette provides.

**ROSEMARY**

*Interview:* 30 May 2014, during the tapestry’s initial launch in Prestonpans at the 3 Harbours Art Festival  
*Age:* 60+  
*Home:* Sydney, Australia  
*Born:* Auckland, New Zealand  
*Work:* Her husband’s career as a smelting plant consultant required that the couple led a peripatetic lifestyle including spells in Wales, North America and South Africa; Rosemary has supported this career and brought up their several children.  
*Craft skills:* Technically proficient: she has always done a lot of embroidery; also quilting, knitting, and making clothes for herself and her children. ‘If I haven’t done
anything I feel agitated, I love to do it, and the other thing is— I really like the hand embroidery better than machining— though that has to be done.’

Other tapestries: Has visited the Bayeux Tapestry four times; knew about the other Scottish tapestries, the Quaker Tapestry, the Overlord Embroidery, the Jersey Occupation and Guernsey tapestries. Also stitched a panel on the Prestonpans Tapestry.

UZMA (interviewed with mother, Almas)

Interview: 31 May 2014, during the tapestry’s initial launch in Prestonpans at the 3 Harbours Art Festival

Age: 40+
Home: Glasgow
Born: Glasgow
Work: Television producer/director.

Craft skills: Uzma said she knew how to stitch, but not specifically embroidery. Almas commented, ‘she’s very creative, anyway.’

Other tapestries: Knew of the Bayeux Tapestry.
CRAMP: Elizabeth/Liz Cramp
Illustrator-designer, Last Invasion Tapestry

He [Bill Fowler, local historian] did suggest I had used too many myths, but I figured without the myths little would be left, so I tactfully forgot that bit of his advice.\(^{688}\)

1929-2010. Born near Rye, Sussex. Artist trained at Hastings School of Art and then the Royal Academy, London. Moved to Pembrokeshire with husband, 1954. Known for her watercolour work, she was elected to the Royal Watercolour Society, London, in 1970. Her work was exhibited in galleries in Wales and London, and she travelled twice to Japan, first with a Welsh Arts Council Grant and then with the BBC Welsh Orchestra to illustrate its visit. She also taught art privately 1973-84.

Cramp was commissioned to provide the illustrations for the tapestry by the Fishguard Arts Society (of which Eirian Short and Audrey Walker were members). The Society specified that the artwork should be the same depth (top to bottom) as the Bayeux Tapestry, and emulate its use of borders. Cramp researched the history and specified the colours.

CRUMMY: Andrew Crummy
Illustrator-designer, Prestonpans Tapestry / Great Tapestry of Scotland / Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

Myriad people can come together to produce artworks that embroider and enrich a tale in such an intriguing manner that we all learn a great deal from it. This form of Community Art is demonstrably able to work across many countries. The potential shown of working in such a cooperative and sharing manner has many possibilities and goes far beyond any individual artist, stitcher, funder or historian.\(^{689}\)

Born 1959, Craigmillar, Edinburgh. Son of Helen Crummy, founder of the Craigmillar Arts Festival Society (1962). Trained as illustrator at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, followed by an MA in design at Glasgow School of Art.

\(^{688}\) Cramp, ‘The Design,’ p.16.
Worked in London for the band Everything But The Girl, and for New Musical Express, The Observer, Time Out and Good Housekeeping, then moved into mural work, at national and international levels. He was mural convenor for the Prestonpans Murals Programme, and Chairman of the 3 Harbours Arts Festival 2006-2015.

Crummy knew nothing about embroidery. He responded to Prestoungrange’s suggestion that a Prestonpans Bayeux Tapestry might be created by experimenting with the help of wife Carmel, who had been taught embroidery by her father, Micheál O Dailaigh (see p.161), using a sewing kit that Prestoungrange brought back from Bayeux and then creating a test panel.

Crummy collaborated with colleagues on the tapestry guidebooks, The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745 and Scottish Diaspora Tapestry/Grèis-Bhrait Diaspra na.

See also https://www.andrewcrummy.com/ (accessed 03/04/18).

HAWKSLEY: Rozanne/Roz Hawksley Interview: 05 September 2014 (+ Short/Walker)
Initiator and embroidery advisor, Last Invasion Tapestry

We didn’t make it hard and fast rules, we gave [the embroiderers] some leeway themselves as to which stitches they used and how they used them; so it gave them a creative bit which helped keep them interested.690

Born Portsmouth, 1931. Studied at Southern College of Art, Portsmouth, and the Royal College of Art (RCA), School of Fashion. She worked as a designer, illustrator and columnist while also teaching art on the south coast, then in Washington DC for three years, and at Battersea College of Education. Sabbatical leave to study at Goldsmiths’ College, London led to a postgraduate diploma in textiles in 1980 and an offer of part-time lecturing work from Audrey Walker at Goldsmiths’, as well as work at the RCA and Slade. She is a member of the 62 Group. Her work is mixed media and non-figurative. Gloves are a recurring motif, but also unexpected items such as animal skulls.

Like Short and Walker, Hawksley moved to Pembrokeshire and established a studio in the late 1980s, after which her work gained greater exposure. It was featured (as was Walker’s) in The Subversive Stitch, the important Manchester exhibition in 1988 named after Rozsika Parker’s book. The Imperial War Museum refers to her as an official war artist following her work, The Seamstress and the Sea, an installation for HMS Belfast in 2005-06. Her exhibition for Royal Museums Greenwich, War and Memory, ran May-November 2014.

Hawksley worked with Cramp on the complex colour-coding exercise involved in converting Cramp’s 178-colour water-colour illustrations for the stitchers to follow.

See also http://rozannehawksley.com/ (accessed 03/04/18).

690 Interview.
JOHNSTON: Arran Paul Johnston
Interview: 30 May 2014
Historian and coordinator, Prestonpans Tapestry / Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

My aim is always to make history accessible, engaging and inspiring, whatever the project and whoever the audience.691

Born 1985, Derbyshire. MA in Latin and ancient history from Edinburgh; currently working towards a PhD on the Scottish diaspora at the University of the West of Scotland.

Historian, re-enactor, battlefield expert and consultant. His initial encounter in Derby as a child with the world’s only statue of Charles Edward Stuart led to him playing the role of the Prince in the town’s annual re-enactments in his late teens, and later at Prestonpans as part of the annual re-enactments, at the head of the Alan Breck Regiment of Prestonpans Volunteers.

Executive trustee of the Battle of Prestonpans (1745) Heritage Trust since 2010, and founding director of the Scottish Battlefields Trust. He has been heavily involved with both the Prestonpans tapestry projects. He was a member of the Prestonpans Tapestry’s initiating team and advised on aspects of the narrative. He contributed a panel to the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, and his PhD relates to it. He helps manage the ongoing touring programme for both tapestries.

He is the author of several books on the Jacobite risings, as well as having collaborated with colleagues on the two tapestry guidebooks.

See also http://www.arranjohnston.co.uk/home/4593086417 and http://www.battleofprestonpans1745.org/heritagetrust/ (accessed 10/03/18).

MARGULIES: Martin Margulies
Historian advising on the narrative, Prestonpans Tapestry

US human rights lawyer with a holiday home on South Uist, close by Eriskay, where the Prince landed on 23 July 1745.

In 2007, Margulies published The Battle of Prestonpans 1745, a scholarly work assessing the rising, the battle of Prestonpans, and the extent to which Lieutenant-General Sir John Cope, leader of the British army, was to blame for defeat, which became a key source text for the Prestonpans Tapestry. Margulies advised on elements of the narrative as the tapestry took shape. He also became the first ‘Colonel-in-Chief’ of the Alan Breck Regiment of Prestonpans Volunteers (see under Johnston). He provided the foreword to the tapestry guidebook, Crummy et al., The Battle of Prestonpans 1745.

691 http://www.arranjohnston.co.uk/home/4593086417 (accessed 10/03/18).
MCCALL SMITH: Alexander McCall Smith CBE FRSE
Initiator, Great Tapestry of Scotland

There have always been two ways of telling a story – through words or through pictures. The persistence of the narrative image throughout history tells us something important about ourselves: we love seeing our story told in a sequence of pictures.  

Born 1948 Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

British writer and Emeritus Professor of Medical Law at the University of Edinburgh. Known for his late-flowering prolific writing career, particularly for The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency series, also for children’s books.

He is Co-Chairman of the Great Tapestry of Scotland project. He was inspired to create it after seeing the Prestonpans Tapestry in 2010. He contacted Crummy and Moffat and persuaded them to take part.

He is author of the forewords to Moffat, The Great Tapestry of Scotland and Mansfield and Moffat, The Great Tapestry of Scotland: The Making of a Masterpiece.

See also https://www.alexandermccallsmith.co.uk/ (accessed 03/04/18).

MOFFAT: Alistair Moffat
Historian responsible for the narrative, Great Tapestry of Scotland

The Great Tapestry of Scotland is, then, a people’s history of a people, made by a thousand of those people.  

We’re simply the sum of the past, and understanding that helps us understand ourselves in a very straightforward way.


Writer, historian, former Director of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Director of Programmes at Scottish Television and founder of Borders Book Festival. He co-founded a commercially run DNA testing company, which, like the tapestry, he has framed as a form of ‘people’s history.’ However, he was criticised for making inaccurate claims for the tests: see https://www.nature.com/news/the-right-to-speak-out-1.12758 (accessed 07/03/18) and https://www.ucl.ac.uk/mace-lab/genetic-ancestry/Correspondence/britainsDNA (accessed 07/03/18). He stepped down as a director at the end of 2015 and the company closed in 2018.

692 https://www.alexandermccallsmith.co.uk/off-the-page/the-great-tapestry-of-scotland/ (accessed 07/03/18).
693 Moffat, Great Tapestry, p.xi.
He is Co-Chairman of The Great Tapestry of Scotland and responsible for the narrative’s historical content, on which he worked with Andrew Crummy.

He is author of a number of Scottish history books and television programmes, and the two supporting narratives, The Great Tapestry of Scotland and The Great Tapestry of Scotland: The Making of a Masterpiece (co-authored with Mansfield).

See also http://www.alistairmoffat.co.uk/ (accessed 07/03/18).

PRESTOUNGRANGE: Gordon Wills Prestoungrange MBE Interview: 30 May 2014
Also known as ‘The Baron’
Initiator, Prestonpans Tapestry / Scottish Diaspora Tapestry

In my very first week in Prestonpans a Scottish history teacher advised me in no uncertain terms to live in the past. So my family and I have done just that. […] Extensive anthropological evidence shows that honouring heritage in this way can help communities regain their self esteem.695

Born 1937, southern England. After the RAF and a spell with ICI, Prestoungrange had an academic career in business, management and marketing posts across the world. On retirement he acquired the titular barony of Prestoungrange (1999) and moved to the de-industrialised dormitory town of Prestonpans, 10 miles from Edinburgh. His grandfather was a miner at Prestoungrange Colliery.

The Baron Courts of Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun, an adjunct of the barony converted from its original judicial status to a charity, sponsors the Prestoungrange Arts Festival, a loose affiliation of organisations, including a publishing venture, Prestoungrange University Press, the 3 Harbours Arts Festival, which runs for a week each summer, and the Battle of Prestonpans 1745 Heritage Trust (est. 2006), which focuses on conserving and presenting to the public the battle history at Prestonpans. One of its aims was to establish a living history centre at Prestonpans, but insufficient funds have so far been raised.

The Prestonpans Tapestry was conceived as part of the campaign to raise public awareness of the battle site after Prestoungrange and family visited the Bayeux Tapestry during a rainy holiday in Normandy. He was also instrumental in establishing the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry project.

Prestoungrange wrote opening and closing pieces in each of the tapestry guide books, Crummy et al., The Prestonpans Tapestry 1745, and Scottish Diaspora Tapestry.

See also ‘Prestonpans says bye bye to Baron,’ East Lothian Courier, 9 Dec 2010 and http://www.prestoungrange.org/prestoungrange/index.html (accessed 10/03/18).

---

I don’t think what we do is craft. Craft is making things that you can use [. . .] There’s a message in art.696

Born Fishguard 1924. After a spell in the army she studied sculpture and embroidery at Goldsmiths’ College, London, beginning in 1947 and went on to teach art in London for thirty years alongside continuing her own art practice in embroidery. In the 1970s she also wrote popular books on needlework and other craft for Batsford and Reader’s Digest, including *Introducing Macramé*. She returned to Fishguard after her teaching career, but commented during interview, ‘I never retired – I’ve been stitching this morning.’ Her work is figurative and draws on the natural world.

Her active membership of Fishguard Arts Society (alongside her husband, the artist Denys Short), led her to suggest a Fishguard version of the Bayeux Tapestry as a celebration of the bicentenary of the unsuccessful French invasion when she learnt of the Hastings Embroidery. She says she was keen to get “the women round here to do something.”697

The great thing was that a lot of the women became very inventive in the way they used stitches– they used them in all kinds of ways, so it has an individual touch throughout– but the craftsmanship is superb.698

Born West Cumberland, 1928. Studied painting and drawing at Edinburgh College of Fine Art (1944-48) and Slade School of Fine Art (1948-51). Discovered textiles and stitching ten years later, through an exhibition of fabric collages by Margaret Kaye; attended evening classes at the Embroiders’ Guild, joined the 62 Group and made embroidery central to her practice. She succeeded Constance Howard, the first Head of Embroidery at Goldsmiths’ College. Her work, which is held in private and public collections in the UK and abroad including the Victoria and Albert Museum, is figurative, and consists of wall-hung stitched textiles based on myth, memory and observation.

Walker moved to Pembrokshire after retiring from Goldsmiths’. In addition to providing inspiration to the stitcher volunteers through her own work, Walker became chairwoman of the trust responsible for the tapestry, helping to ensure that it was

---

696 Interview.
697 Ibid.
eventually provided with a semi-permanent home (a twenty-five year lease) in an extension to Fishguard’s Library. She introduces the guidebook, *The Last Invasion Tapestry*.

**WILKIE: Dorie Wilkie**  
*Interview: 31 May 2014*  
*Stitch coordinator, Prestonpans Tapestry / Great Tapestry of Scotland*

Although the long standing Arts Festival team were vastly experienced at mobilising volunteers [. . .] none of them were yet aware how different sewing is [. . .] especially in the time needed to complete the task. Hand sewing is not a quick thing to do and people vary in the speed and the confidence with which they work.699

City and Guild in Art, Design and Embroidery at Telford College followed by further study at Leith School of Art. Also trained as a counsellor. Wilkie says she has always been interested in textiles and making things. She founded a patchwork group in the 1980s.

She attended the initial meeting where plans for the Prestonpans Tapestry were being discussed, asked incisive questions about aspects of the project’s organisation, and was persuaded to enrol as stitch coordinator, when it became clear the project coordinators did not really have answers. She then took on the larger and more ambitious Great Tapestry of Scotland project, seeking out groups of people from all over the country who might be interested in contributing. She says her training as a counsellor has proved useful.

**WYNN-WILSON: Anne Wynn-Wilson**  
*Initiator and illustrator-designer, Quaker Tapestry*

The project was an example of ‘inreach’, not ‘outreach’: a wider interest from the public was not recognized until later.700

Quaker, 1926-1998. Enrolled part-time for a City & Guilds embroidery course at Taunton College of Art and Technology in 1974. ‘After a lifetime’s embroidery experience,’ she wanted to widen her knowledge prior to becoming a freelance lecturer. Previously she was involved in political work (campaigning for the Liberal Party), 701 ran a craft business making toys, and taught home economics.

---

699 Wilkie, ‘Stitching the Prestonpans Tapestry,’ p.217.  
701 Grateful thanks for this last minute detail to Rev. David V. Evans. Pers. comm. 21/03/18.
The Quaker Tapestry scheme was in part inspired by studying the Bayeux Tapestry, but was also a response to becoming part of the Quaker Home Service Representative Council, also in 1974, which made her aware of the problems faced by small and isolated Quaker groups and the lack of knowledge and facility among Friends for sharing Quaker heritage with younger members. She herself had recently relocated and started attending a ‘quiet and retiring’ Meeting in Taunton, with few children, unlike the more vibrant groups of which she had previously been a member. It was also promoted by the eleven-year old Jonathan Stocks’ suggestion that it would be fun to embroider Quaker history rather than draw it.

See Wynn-Wilson, Prologue to *The Quaker Tapestry* and Wynn-Wilson, *Quakers in Stitches*. 