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Portrayals – in educational settings – of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust

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Abstract

This thesis offers an original examination of how the intricate British response to the Holocaust has been portrayed in different educational contexts. Learning about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has manifest benefits. Exploring the topic can complicate national historical narratives, while mitigating against glorified interpretations of the past. But to what extent has this topic been addressed in schools and museums?

Section I considers the classroom as educational setting. Using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, I analyse textbooks, along with resources produced by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMD).

Section II focuses on two burgeoning museums: the National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) and the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC). I study the exhibition content of each setting, whilst my interviews with key staff members provide texture to these outward-facing representations of the Holocaust.

My research finds that portrayals of the British response lacked depth, and rarely encouraged substantial critical reflection. Classroom resources typically dealt with the issue in a cursory fashion, or simplified the topic through its use as a 'lesson' for modern society. At the NHCM and HELC, practical constraints limited the extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is considered. The centrality of individual survivors to the operations of both museums created internal political pressures to portray the British response in sympathetic terms. However, in both classrooms and museums, these limitations were not necessarily accompanied by triumphalist narratives of British history.

From the fine detail at its heart, this thesis looks outwards. It considers broader issues relating to pedagogy, history, and memory. Centrally, I question the purpose and form of Holocaust education, along with the manner in which societies have negotiated memories of uncomfortable pasts. Fundamentally, in spite of existing sweeping

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Abbreviations

AJR	Association of Jewish Refugees
BAHS	British Association for Holocaust Studies
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BL	British Library
BoD	Board of Deputies of British Jews
CAfS	Churchill Archive for Schools
CCJ	Council of Christians and Jews
CfHE	Centre for Holocaust Education
CST	Community Security Trust
DfE	Department for Education
DP	Displaced Persons
HELC	Holocaust Exhibition & Learning Centre
HET	Holocaust Educational Trust
HETI	Holocaust Educational Trust Ireland
HGRP	Holocaust & Genocide Research Partnership
HMD	Holocaust Memorial Day
HMDT	Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
IoE	Institute of Education
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
IWMHE	Imperial War Museum Holocaust Exhibition
JC	Jewish Chronicle
NHCM	National Holocaust Centre and Museum
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SF	Shoah Foundation
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TNA	The National Archives
UCL	University College London
USC	University of Southern California
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
WJR	World Jewish Relief
WHL	Wiener Holocaust Library
WRB	War Refugee Board

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INTRODUCTION: DOMESTICATING THE HOLOCAUST

History, today

Human beings like to see themselves reflected in clouded mirrors[1]

- Per Lägerkvist, Swedish author (1944)

In 2015, a striking survey of over 9,500 secondary-school students conducted by the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education exposed uncertainty over the position of Britain during the genocide.[2] Of the students surveyed, some '34.4 per cent incorrectly believed that the Holocaust triggered Britain's entry into war and a further 17.6 per cent of students thought the [wartime British government] drew up rescue plans to save the Jews'.[3] Nearly 23.8 per cent also incorrectly thought the British government did not know about the Holocaust until the end of the war in 1945.[4]

More recent investigations into the educational landscape of the United Kingdom have highlighted equally troubling patterns in the study of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[5] A UNESCO report in 2016 noted that in British history textbooks (a key vehicle of classroom education) 'links between the Holocaust and English history, such as the ineffectual diplomatic negotiations among Allies, and the initial failure to either believe or respond to the discovery of the death camps, are striking omissions'.[6] Yet also missing in these textbooks is detailed information relating to other connected actions taken by Britons, such as the Kindertransport scheme.[7]

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[1] Per Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf* (translated by Alexandra Dick) (Hill and Wang: New York, 1986), p.225.

[2] Foster et al., 'What do students know and understand about the Holocaust? Evidence from English secondary schools'. *Centre for Holocaust Education* (London: Centre for Holocaust Education, Institute of Education, University College, 2016).

[3] Foster, in Pearce, A., *Remembering the Holocaust in educational settings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p.241.

[4] Foster, in Pearce*, Remembering the Holocaust*, p.241.

[5] Adamson, D., *Many young people still lack basic knowledge of the Holocaust*, The Conversation (October 6, 2020)

[6] UNESCO, *The International status of education about the Holocaust: a global mapping of textbooks and curricula* (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), p.150.

[7] UNESCO*, The International Status of Education*, p.149.

In this thesis, I survey the different ways in which the British response to the Holocaust has been portrayed in educational settings. It is a piece of both historical and educational research. The originality of this thesis is its tight focus on depictions of the *British response* to the Holocaust. Previous studies have only been able to allude to deficiencies in the educational presentations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[8] This thesis explores such portrayals in unprecedented depth. Throughout, I interrogate a wide range of source materials, including classroom resources. I also analyse settings which have hitherto escaped sustained scholarly attention: namely the NHCM and HELC. By foregrounding these two Northern museums, this thesis complements existing London-centric studies of British Holocaust memory culture.

Centrally, my research contributes a unique survey of how the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been represented in schools and museums. Crucially, I offer a range of both abstract and practical explanations for the limitations of depictions. From the fine detail of previously unstudied source materials, this thesis offers a basis to pose broader questions relating to the adequacy of Holocaust education and the nature of museum memory.

What is more, this thesis matters *now*. As of 2022, there is a growing appetite – and need – for critical reappraisal of Britain's historical pasts.[9] Revision of historical interpretations is a phenomenon which has touched multiple different subject areas. Movements such as Black Lives Matter and Decolonise the Curriculum continue to gather momentum. At the same time, 'live' debates on a proposed Holocaust Memorial in Westminster demonstrate the ongoing ability of Holocaust memory to provoke passion and controversy alike.[10] In other words, educational representations of the past have real-world implications.

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[8] For example, Foster, S. & Karayianni, E., 'Portrayals of the Holocaust in English history textbooks, 1991-2016: continuities, challenges and concerns', *Holocaust Studies*, 23(3), (2017) pp.314–344.

[9] Otele, O., 'These anti-racism protests show it's time for Britain to grapple with its difficult history', *The Guardian* (9 June 2020).

[10] Adamson, D., *Plans for UK Holocaust Memorial looked promising, but now debate has stalled*, The Conversation (30 October 2020).

Meanwhile, antisemitism in the United Kingdom and beyond is an issue that fails to subside. Jewish life in Britain remains a topical issue. In February 2022, the Community Security Trust (CST) released their report into antisemitic incidents.[11] Alarmingly, it recorded 2,255 anti-Jewish hate incidents reported across Britain in 2021. This is a 34% increase from 2020, and the highest figure ever recorded by the CST. The timing of this thesis is apt, at a point when it is more fitting than ever to challenge the hegemonic *status quo* of Holocaust memory which has formed over the years.

'Complex' is the adjective best applied to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Yet, engagement with the topic in educational settings – despite its difficulties – carries identifiable potential. Critical reflection on the British response to the Holocaust can allow children and adults alike to problematise their national history, and thus protect against homogenised interpretations of the past. Presentations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust allow us to unpick different historical strands, as well as prompting thought-provoking questions about modern society. It can encourage sophisticated discussion of concepts such as causation, victimhood, and historical judgment.

Yet memory of the past is full of ruptures. Often, what has been 'forgotten' can be as revealing as what has been 'remembered' in different *milieux*. Modern British society occupies a privileged position: it supports freedom of expression. It *is* possible to challenge 'official' narratives and reflect critically on the past. This is a luxury not afforded to every country. This thesis, therefore, explores the extent to which educational settings have actually supported substantial consideration of Britain's own historical record. In essence, this project highlights the potential for greater critical engagement with Britain's relationship with the Holocaust. Through original interview material, it also advises wariness against sweeping characterisations of Holocaust memory: my research demonstrates the pivotal role played by individual educators in the transmission of historical knowledge.

[11] CST, Antisemitic incidents report 2021 (10 February 2022).

Structural outline

The opening chapters of this thesis establish the historiographical and methodological framework of the project. Next, *Section I* centres on the classroom as educational setting. Sample sets of school textbooks and resources produced by the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust are analysed.

What, then, to look for? My analysis was steered by crucial research questions:

- How has the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust been depicted within classroom materials (particularly through history education)?
- Has the content and form of depictions of the British response to the Holocaust evolved over time?
- Have portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust differed depending on the intended audiences of educational materials?

In in the interest of facilitating as broad an investigation of educational materials as possible, conventional textbooks were considered alongside other types of printed books intended for use in the classroom, such as teaching handbooks, source books and revision guides. Peripatetic educational resources produced by the HET and HMDT were also examined, in order to add an additional layer of research detail,.

In *Section II*, this thesis moves on to consider the museum as educational setting, with a specific focus on two case studies: the National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) and the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC).

Central research questions guided my exploration of depictions of the British response to the Holocaust in the selected museums. These concerns could be grouped under interrelated aspects of the museum 'process': content, curation, and mediation. I employed different research methods to address each category of enquiry.

Content:

- Which dimensions of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust found representation in each museum?
- In what ways was relevant material presented and framed within the selected museums?

Method selected: qualitative analysis

Curation and mediation:

- How did key staff at each institution interpret the significance of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust?
- What were the curatorial aims in the presentation of relevant material?

Method selected: one-to-one interview. Unforeseen restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic necessitated interviews via online video call.

These interviews drew on a model which is common in educational research.[12] I used interviews with key museum staff members – such as curators and education officers - to collate professional experiences and opinions relating to depictions of the British response to the Holocaust. These findings were then placed within their sociological and educational context. Herbert and Irene Rubin have termed this approach of qualitative interviewing as 'the art of hearing data'.[13] This was not oral history *per se*, in the sense of collecting personal memories of lived-events.[14] My interviews were intended more as a commentary on contemporary museum practice. This said, I was open to borrowing certain approaches associated with the praxis of oral history. For example, I strived to establish a 'deep exchange' (as termed by Alessandro Portelli) with my interviewees,

[12] See, for example, interviews with teachers in Pettigrew, A., Foster, S., Howson, J., Salmons, P., and University of London Institute of Education Holocaust Education Development Programme, *Teaching about the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools : An Empirical Study of National Trends, Perspectives and Practice* (London: Holocaust Education Development Programme, Institute of Education, University of London, 2009).
[13] Rubin, H., & Rubin, I., *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995).
[14] Abrams, L., *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

whereby openness was established through assurances about my ethical integrity and academic objectives.[15] Chapter 2 will provide greater detail on methodology.

As indicated by these guiding research questions, the primary objective of this research was not to evaluate the efficacy of educational materials and museum exhibitions, nor to assess the relative accuracies of different interpretations presented. Rather, this thesis seeks to chart *how* and *why* certain portrayals of the relationship between Britain and Holocaust have found representation in different educational settings.

Finally, in the conclusion, readers will find a summary of key findings, along with exploration of broader themes and musings on the future of Holocaust memory and education.

Spheres of memory

Memory is a slippery concept. This thesis is concerned mostly with the *practice* of memory, rather than memory itself. Nonetheless, a succinct consideration of some key concepts in the 'fragmented field', as described by Alon Confino, of memory studies is a useful framing device for this thesis.[16]

Maurice Halbwachs' foundational work defines collective memories as the shared pool of historical knowledge in any given society.[17] For Halbwachs, individual memory is inextricable from the social contexts in which it is remembered.[18] This is a compelling theory, and would suggest that educational settings both influence and *are influenced by* the societies within which they exist.

More than the 'autobiographical memory' conceptualised by Halbwachs – in other words, lived memory of events we experience ourselves – this thesis is concerned with

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[15] Portelli, A., *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p.72.
[16] Confino, A., 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of method', *The American Historical Review*, 102:5 (1997), p.1387.
[17]Halbwachs, M., *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).
[18] Ibid., p.53.

cultural representations and interpretations of the past.[19] This thread of memory studies was galvanised by the work of Jan Assmann, who distinguished between 'communicative memory', transmitted orally between generations, and the 'cultural memory' enshrined through institutions such as the classrooms and museums that lie at the core of this thesis.[20] The educational materials surveyed in this thesis are examples of the 'vehicles of memory' identified by Alon Confino as key in the transmission of 'shared cultural knowledge'.[21] It is in this sense that memory becomes an 'explanatory device that links representation and social experience'.[22] Cultural memory can become ritualised in forms such as Holocaust Memorial Day, and is often reliant on a stable historical narrative which is preserved by bodies of authority such as governments.[23]

Elsewhere, Wulf Kansteiner's differentiation between 'memory makers' and 'memory consumers' is significant.[24] My thesis highlights the important role played by individual agents in both creating *and* transmitting historical interpretations of the Holocaust. Educators, such as the museum staff I interview, are involved in a dynamic relationship of consuming and passing on Holocaust memory. For Confino, 'the sharing and formation of memory by various agents' is responsible for a 'mutation of meanings'.[25]

Holocaust education does not take place solely in private. The idea of public memory is thus relevant – in other words, how memory transcends the individual and becomes passed along a broader collective network. In some senses, public memory is a cognate of cultural memory. Institutions such as schools and museums act as mediators of public memory. In contexts such as those examined in this thesis, narrative – or how the 'story' of the Holocaust is told – becomes important.[26] As I explain in Chapter 2, I employ techniques such as 'content analysis' widely. This is an acknowledgment of the communicative aspects of educational memory, and draws on Stephen Browne's

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Assmann, J., "Communicative and Cultural Memory", in Erll, A., and Nünning, A., (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies* (New York: De Gruyter, 2008), pp.8-19.
[21] Confino, A., 'Collective Memory', p.1386.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Assman, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory'.
[24]Kansteiner, W., 'Finding meaning in memory: A methodological critique of collective memory studies', *History and theory,* 41(2), (2002), p.180.
[25] Confino, 'Collective Memory', p.1395.
[26] Confino, A., *Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p,50.

assertion that ‘public memory lives as it is given expressive form; its analysis must therefore presume a theory of textuality and entail an appropriate mode of interpretation’.[27]

My thesis also incorporates new spheres of Holocaust memory, namely a range of digital source material.[28] But memory is not exclusively an abstract concept. There can be physical sites of memory too, such as the museums analysed in this thesis. Pierre Nora labelled such sites *lieux de mémoire*.[29] With specific regard to the Holocaust, James Young also noted the relationship between public memorials and the construction of national narratives.[30] Holocaust memorials ‘recall both the events and the national myths, religious archetypes and ideological paradigms along whose contours remembrance has been constructed’.[31] My research considers how depictions of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have both reflected and influenced the perpetuation of such narratives.

At times, this thesis grapples with what I term ‘forward-facing’ educational approaches, including how ‘lessons’ of the Holocaust are deployed in order to inform future social conduct. As such, there is alignment with Carole Blair’s observation that public educational settings ‘instruct their visitors about what is to be valued in the future as well as the past’.[32]

But my analysis of educational materials also seeks to identify gaps in narrative. Forgetting is as much a part of memory as remembering. Barbara Zelizer posited that a ‘repressive form of forgetting brought forth by repetition and habituation…threatens

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[27]Browne, S., ‘Reading, rhetoric, and the texture of public memory’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81, (1995), p.248.

[28] Kansteiner, W., “Transnational Holocaust Memory, Digital Culture and the End of Reception Studies” in Andersen, T. & Törnquist-Plewa, B., *The Twentieth Century in European Memory* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

[29] Nora, P., ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, no. 26), pp. 7–24. (1989).

[30] Young, J., T*he texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[31] Young, J., ‘After The Holocaust: National Attitudes To Jews: The Texture Of Memory: Holocaust Memorials And Meaning’, *Holocaust And Genocide Studies*, Volume 4, Issue 1 (1989), p.63.

[32] Blair, C., Jeppeson, M. S., & Pucci, E., ‘Public memorializing in post-modernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as prototype’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 77, (1991), p.91.

our collective ability to confront the recurrences of atrocities'.[33] In relation to portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, it was therefore in my interest to highlight aspects of the history which did *not* find representation, and suggest how this affected the educational scope of surveyed materials.

Central to most theories of memory is the idea that *depictions* of the past are frequently more revealing of contemporary concerns than of historical events themselves. It is for this reason that my thesis focuses on *portrayals* of the British response to the Holocaust, and considers what these tell us about modern educational landscapes.

A transnational framework

This thesis centres primarily on English educational settings. But 'memory travels', as Astrid Erll remarked.[34] To an extent, the United Kingdom has been party to the transnational growth of Holocaust education, commemoration and memory, which arguably climaxed with the Stockholm Declaration in 2000. Later, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider posited the concept of 'cosmopolitan memory', whereby an abstractified memory of the Holocaust has come to transcend ethnic and national boundaries.[35] By the 1990s, the Holocaust had 'become a "decontextualised" symbol of absolute evil that helped articulate a new rights culture', and represented the moral touchstone *par excellence* around the world.[36]

One can point to individual milestones in the formation of Holocaust consciousness: the trial of Adolf Eichmann (1961), Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* (1985), the release of *Schindler's List* (1993).[37] But there were also broader processes at work. The Holocaust was mobilised as a moral symbol by the burgeoning human rights movement

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[33]Zelizer, B., *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera's eye* (Chicago: Chicago University Press. 1998), p.23.
[34] Erll, A., 'Travelling Memory', *Parallax*, 17:4, (2011), p.4.
[35] Levy, D., & Sznaider, N., 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5:1 (2002), p.88.
[36] Dreyfus, J.M., & Stoetzler, M., 'Holocaust memory in the twenty-first century: between national reshaping and globalisation', *European Review of History*, 18:1, (2011), p.73.
[37] Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory", p.308.

from the 1970s onwards.[38] Social changes were also influential. Namely, increasing multiculturalism also gave voice to the histories of marginalised groups.[39]

Yet, Britain was not necessarily affected by all of the same factors which steered the growth of Holocaust memory in the febrile geopolitical context of post-Cold War Europe. In France and Italy, Holocaust commemoration efforts were in part a response to the growing threat of far-right movements.[40] In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, the break-up of the Soviet Union allowed access to previously-sealed historical archives.[41] As this thesis will demonstrate, the United Kingdom struggles to draw on material sites of Holocaust memory. Conversely, in Poland certain barracks at the Auschwitz State Museum were converted into 'national pavilions', including one devoted to the elucidation of the Jewish experience in Poland.[42] The site of the Holocaust has itself become a site of national Polish memory, in a manner that it is not possible in the United Kingdom for obvious reasons. As such, Young surmised that 'the Shoah of Polish Jewry is not only contextualized here in the midst of other nations' suffering, but it is often linked specifically to Poland's own overwhelming destruction.[43]

The compulsory Holocaust education in England and Wales decreed by the National Curriculum of 1991 is not totally unique in a global context. Some states in the USA mandated Holocaust education in the 1980s.[44] As of 2022, several members of the European Union insist on provisions for Holocaust education in schools, and provide teacher training opportunities.[45]

Why, then, was the United Kingdom such an early and enthusiastic adopter of teaching, remembering, and learning about the Holocaust? There is no straightforward answer.

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[38] Moyn, S., *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[39] Kammen, M., *Mystic chords of memory: The transformation of tradition in American culture* (New York, Kopf, 1991).
[40] Clifford, R., *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[41] Kucia, M. & Sierp, A., 'The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe', *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures*, 30(1), (2016), pp.97–119.
[42] Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, *The Exhibition The Struggle and Martyrdom of the Polish Nation 1939-1945* (2021).
[43] Young, 'After The Holocaust', p.64.
[44] See, for instance, California Government, *Education Code - EDC § 51220* (1985).
[45] European Parliament, *Holocaust Education*, briefing paper (2021), p.4.

The UK did not have the same national imperative as Israel, for example, where the Holocaust was 'both the consequence and the panacea: the Holocaust wouldn't have occurred if a Jewish state had already existed, and since the Holocaust did occur, a Jewish state becomes a necessity'.[46] Nor, as in the case of the newly unified Germany, did Holocaust memory represent a 'mediated collective agreement among significant cross-sections of society perceiving a lack of collective identity and purpose'.[47]

As I note in Chapter 1, politics may play a part. Commemorative activities both inscribe the past *and* modulate the frameworks of contemporary events. Indeed, Confino noted how the '"politics of memory" (at times, "the politics of identity") has emerged as a leading theme in the growing body of literature about memory'.[48] In a pedagogical sense, the abstract moral lessons inspired by Holocaust education and commemoration suited the civic agendas of successive British governments from the 1990s onwards, as well as justifying interventions in foreign crises such as the conflict in the Balkans.[49] Holocaust memory was also a vehicle to promote European political integration.[50] Directives produced by the European Parliament (EP) in the 1990s and early 2000s encouraged countries to embrace the 'universal meaning' of the Holocaust 'for all humanity' because it 'fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization'.[51]

But there were perhaps less pragmatic reasons for Britain to embrace the Holocaust memory boom. For Dan Stone, the Holocaust was a 'screen memory', which diverted attention away from more problematic periods of British history by focusing on Nazi atrocities.[52] Nevertheless, even *within* the sphere of Holocaust history, existing studies

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[46] Hansen-Glucklich, J., *Holocaust Memory Reframed : Museums and the Challenges of Representation*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), p.66.

[47] Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory", p.307.

[48] Confino, A., 'Collective Memory', p.1393.

[49] Critchell, K., 'Remembering and Forgetting: the Holocaust in 21st Century Britain', *Quest, Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 10, (2016), pp.23–59.

[50] Pearce, A., "Britain and the Formation of Contemporary Holocaust Consciousness: A Product of Europeanization, or Exercise in Triangulation?", in Bond, L. & Rapson, J. (eds.), *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (New York: De Gruyter, 2014).

[51] Kucia & Sierp, A., 'The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory', p.107.

[52] Stone, *History, Memory and Mass Atrocity: Essays on the Holocaust and Genocide* (London: Portland, 2006), p.175.

suggest that European school textbooks grapple with gritty local realities to a greater extent than their English counterparts.[53]

In a broader sense, Michael Rothberg's theory of 'multidirectional memory' suggests that Holocaust memory has 'contributed to the articulation of other histories" of victimization and genocide'.[54] But Michelle Gordon challenged this notion, suggesting that the prominence of Holocaust memory in the United Kingdom has actively *occluded* Britain's inglorious record of colonial violence and slavery.[55] In other words, a focus on remembering the Holocaust has helped avoid engagement with other areas of history, in which Britain's role was more problematic.

I detail the idiosyncrasies of British Holocaust memory in Chapter 1. But overall, this thesis contributes an important survey of how far educational materials have grappled with the ambiguous aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. It also seeks to explain why certain portrayals have failed to engage with these uncomfortable historical questions. However, there is perhaps a certain danger in seeking to universalise the complex history of the Holocaust. Neglecting the appropriate national contexts of certain topics – such as the intricacies of the British response – risks creating a simplified version of the past, which both lacks nuance and specificity. It is for this reasons that my focus remains tightly on educational settings in the United Kingdom.

A note on terminology

i) The Holocaust

Some of the complexity of the Holocaust as a research topic stems from the discourse surrounding the Holocaust's precise definition. Necessarily, this thesis took into careful account different conceptualisations of the Holocaust. However, it is not the objective

[53] UNESCO*, The International Status of Education*.
[54]Rothberg, M., *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.4.
[55] Gordon, M., 'Selective Histories: Britain, Empire, and the Holocaust', in Lawson, T., & Pearce, A., (editors), *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

of this thesis to moralise upon the relative merits of competing definitions of the Holocaust. Sprawling debates centred around definitions of the Holocaust risk collapsing under their own weight.[56]

Michael Gray has offered three concise common definitions of the Holocaust. Drawing upon an extensive survey of existing historical literature, Gray posited the notion that most interpretations of the Holocaust can be considered to subscribe to at least one of the following conceptualisations:

> (a) "the persecution and murder of Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945"
>
> (b) "the systematic mass murder of the Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1941 and 1945"
>
> (c) "the persecution and murder of various groups by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945" [57]

Each definition has obvious limitations. Definition (c), for example, fails to capture the fact that only the Jews, as a group, were specifically singled out for total extermination. Definition (b), meanwhile, presents a somewhat parochial chronological interpretation, that disregards the sufferings of victims of Nazi persecution during the 1930s.

It is a mark of the complexities of the topic that even authoritative institutions have struggled to promote any tangible sense of semantic Holocaust standardisation. The definition of the Holocaust offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) identifies:

> the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators[58]

[56] Lawson, T., *Debates on the Holocaust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.8.
[57] Gray, M., *Teaching the Holocaust: Practical Approaches for Ages 11–18*, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), p.8.
[58] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, online encyclopaedia, 'Introduction to the Holocaust' (2020).

The definition provided by Yad Vashem was more inclusive. This definition presents the Holocaust as a broader process, while acknowledging the specific persecution of Jews and the interrelationship with the Second World War:

> The Holocaust was the murder by Nazi Germany of six million Jews. While the Nazi persecution of the Jews began in 1933, the mass murder was committed during World War II.[59]

Examination of portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust benefit from the interpretation of the Holocaust as a 'process', rather than an 'event'. As noted by a CfHE research briefing, 'if students are to understand that a genocide does not happen merely because someone wills it, it is important that they see how the development from persecution to genocide unfolded and evolved over time; that key decisions were taken by a range of individuals and agencies'.[60]

Yet, no single definition can be said to have emerged as the *status quo* within either historical literature or popular parlance. As such, I approached the task of identifying portrayals of 'the Holocaust' with a degree of plasticity. In order to survey a broad range of source material, I was keen to adopt as broad a definition of the Holocaust as possible (in terms of geography, period and agency). In this regard, Christian Gerlach's suggestion that the Holocaust truly began with the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941 is unsatisfactory, and relies on an interpretation of the Holocaust centred almost exclusively on systematic mass killing.[61]

Usefully, recent scholarship has expanded the boundaries of what is considered to be part of Holocaust history, and offered inspiration in terms of historical flexibility. For instance, Rebecca Clifford's *Survivors* foregrounds the aftermath of the Holocaust as its subject.[62] Elsewhere, Russell Wallis has taken a longer-term view of British attitudes to

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[59] Yad Vashem definition, quoted, Teacher Resource Centre online catalogue, 'Holocaust Defined' (2019).
[60] CfHE, *An unfolding genocide*, research briefing (2020), p.3.
[61] Gerlach, C., *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[62] Clifford, R., *Survivors : Children's Lives after the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

the Holocaust by using the broader terminology of 'Nazi atrocities', incorporating the pre-WWII period of the 1930s into its historical sweep.[63]

ii) National identity

Broadly speaking, this thesis addresses Holocaust memory and education in the United Kingdom. Equally, in a historical sense, the 'British response' has come to refer to actions of those from England, Scotland, and Wales.[64] But memory does not run along neat national boundaries. There is scope for variation between different regions. Pearce noted:

> The National Curriculum, as mandated by the 1988 Education Act, was to be delivered within England and Wales. Northern Ireland introduced a National Curriculum in 1992 which contained many of the features of the English and Welsh curriculum, but had some differences. Scotland – which has always had measure of independence in educational affairs – has never followed the National Curriculum.[65]

The frameworks of existing educational research suggested the need for defined geographical parameters. For instance, the Scottish educational model, especially since 1999, is quite different to its English and Welsh counterparts. In 1999, the Scottish Parliament was re-established and responsibility for issues such as education were devolved to this Parliament, which is situated in Edinburgh. Equally, Cowan and Maitles noted how 'prior to the establishment of a national Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001, the Holocaust was not part of Scotland's historical narrative and its teaching was marginal in Scotland'.[66] In 2021, Pearce also observed the 'recent evidence of a form of nationalisation of Holocaust memory within parts of the United Kingdom' which

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[63] Wallis, R., *Britain, Germany and the Road to the Holocaust: British Attitudes towards Nazi Atrocities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).
[64] Sharples, C., and Jensen, O., *Britain and the Holocaust : Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[65] Pearce, A., 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 Years', *Holocaust Studies*, 23 (3), (2017), p.254.
[66] Cowan, P., 'Reconceptualising the Holocaust and Holocaust education in countries that escaped Nazi occupation: a Scottish perspective', *Intercultural Education*, 24(1-2), (2013), p.168.

spanned 'talk of Irish and Scottish "heroes" of the Holocaust to attempts to institutionalise memory through initiatives like the Scottish Holocaust Era Study Centre, Holocaust Education Trust Ireland, and the Jewish History Association of South Wales'.[67]

The spread of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom is not necessarily inconsistent. The HET advises that 'in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, participation in the Trust's Outreach programme and Lessons from Auschwitz project as well as programmes sponsored by other organisations suggests that the Holocaust is widely taught'.[68] But this dissertation centres its research on examples of English educational settings, both for practical and conceptual reasons, as outlined in Chapter 2. Fundamentally, I approach 'national' terminology in this thesis with some caution, and acknowledge that my source material is primarily rooted in *English* settings.

iii) The 'British response' to the Holocaust

An outline chronology of the British response to the Holocaust provides an essential framework for the educational portrayals which form the focus of this project. Although history is always subjective, there is now a relatively established version of events. The Holocaust *was* part of British history, and in a certain sense Britain contributed to the Holocaust's causal nexus. Nevertheless, a short summary of the issue perhaps falls foul of the historical simplification also observed in source materials throughout this study. The British response to the Holocaust was complicated, to say the least. It represented a curious blend of action and apathy. In alignment with the definition of the Holocaust as a process which began in 1933, this thesis understands the 'British response' to be applicable to years beyond the boundaries of the Second World War alone.[69]

Following the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the rate of Jewish emigration from German territories increased dramatically. However, at this stage, German politics remained somewhat internalised, and persecution was not sufficient to warrant a decisive response from British quarters. Britain, for instance, did not partake in the boycott of

[67] Pearce, A., 'Britishness, Brexit and the Holocaust', in Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*, p.503.
[68] HET, *Holocaust Education in the UK* (2022).
[69] Yad Vashem definition..

the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In the mid-1930s, public membership of the British Union of Fascists peaked at over 40,000, with its accompanying antisemitism.[70] During the later 1930s, the British government famously pursued a policy of appeasement towards Hitler's Germany.

During the 1930s, an estimated 75,000 Jews entered Britain.[71] Elsewhere, approximately 60,000 Jews immigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine in the same decade. However, the British White Paper of 1939 significantly limited future Jewish entry to the territory.[72] In July 1938, Britain attended the Evian Conference, which was intended to discuss the issue of Jewish refugeeism. However, none of the major powers present at the Conference proved prepared to expand immigration quotas, or provide any other workable solutions.

In the wake of the 1938 November pogrom, an association of community organisations and relief agencies in Britain were granted governmental permission – but not funding – to organise refugee programmes for Jewish children from Nazi Germany. Between November 1938 and September 1939, approximately 10,000 children were transported to Britain.[73] However, it should be noted that the scheme was administered by agencies such as the Central British Fund for German Jewish Relief, the Children's Inter-Aid Committee and The Society of Friends, rather than the British government. Yet, after the outbreak of war in September 1939, Jewish refugees often faced internment in Britain. As public suspicion of foreigners grew throughout 1940, refugees – classed as 'enemy aliens' by the British government – were interned in a camp on the Isle of Man.[74]

By 1941, Allied governments had begun to receive incomplete reports of mass killings in Eastern Europe. In December 1942, the Polish government-in-exile based in London published a more detailed pamphlet on developments, entitled *The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland*. But the British government did not take decisive

[70] The Wiener Holocaust Library, 'British Response', *The Holocaust Explained* (2021).
[71] Foster, S., 'Holocaust education in England: concerns, controversies and challenges', in Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*, p.385.
[72] USHMM, 'Refugees' (2020).
[73] The Wiener Holocaust Library, 'British Response'.
[74] Ibid.

action in response. As at Evian in 1938, the Anglo-American Bermuda Conference in 1943 failed to result in an effective plan to combat the exterminations. This impasse came despite the issuing of a joint Allied declaration on 17 December 1942, which both acknowledged and condemned the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Europe.

In June 1940, the Channel Islands were occupied by German forces, and would remain so until May 1945. During this period, in islands such as Jersey and Guernsey, inhabitants played out a full range of roles, ranging from collaboration to persecution. A small number of Jews lived on the Channel Islands during the war, and were victim to discriminatory measures such as the confiscation of property or deportation.[75] The example of the Channel Islands shows that there is nothing specifically continental about the experience of Nazi persecution. Even now, research continues to uncover the full extent of persecutory activities which occurred in the islands.[76]

Until the end of the Second World War, the British war cabinet maintained the position that military victory would be the most efficacious way to end the genocide (or what was known of it). Indeed, in the summer of 1944, debate involving the cabinet and the RAF resulted in the concerted decision *not* to bomb the camps at Auschwitz. Instead, modest supplies were flown to Warsaw to assist the underground uprising in the Polish capital. As war in Europe drew to a close, in April 1945 it was British forces that liberated Bergen-Belsen: an event captured by British Pathé newsreels and popularised by a report from journalist Richard Dimbleby.

The entanglement of Britain and the Holocaust did not end with the end of the Second World War in 1945, however. Many displaced victims of the Holocaust – such as those whose stories are found at the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC) – settled in Britain.[77] British authorities also played a key role in the 1946 trials in Nuremberg of Nazi officials on charges of war crimes (including the Holocaust), and the creation of

[75] Carr, G., 'Occupation heritage, commemoration and memory in Guernsey and Jersey', *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past, 24*(1), (2012), pp. 87-117.
[76] Pogrund, G., 'Exposed: the Nazi horror camp on British soil', The Sunday Times (30 May, 2021).
[77] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes' exhibition.

Israel in 1948. The formation of Holocaust memory in Britain was set in motion immediately following the end of the war.

Existing understandings of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have commonly approached the topic from a political angle.[78] The political scientist Irving Horowitz – perhaps in a justification of his own academic field – once made the provocative claim that 'genocide is always and everywhere an essentially political decision'.[79] By extension, primary responses to genocide are similarly political in nature. In other words, a synonymity has emerged between 'Britain' and 'the British government' when considering the 'British response' to the Holocaust. This approach has promoted a narrow sense of an issue which, in reality, touched several layers of British society.

It is problematic to construct a single characterisation of a 'British response', *per se*. It was not a simple morality story. To give one example, Dan Stone has conducted a comprehensive study of public British responses to Nazism between 1933 and 1939.[80] Stone produces material evidence of the wide variety of discussions of Nazism – through the vehicles of press publications, political debates, philosophical treatises and more – accessible to the British public during the 1930s. Through a vast catalogue of primary sources, Stone concluded that 'many books were published that subjected Nazism to tough-minded analysis' and 'almost every issue of a "quality" journal dealt with the subject in one way or another"'.[81] The response to the Holocaust in Britain was not solely played out in Westminster, in other words. Yet, Stone's work also provides a reminder of the potential perils of ahistoricism. It is easy to frame the British response to the Holocaust against what later became common knowledge of the genocide, rather than what was known at the time. The need for contextualisation, as emphasised so strongly in Tony Kushner's work, is warranted.[82]

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[78] Kushner, T., '"Pissing in the wind"? The search for nuance in the study of Holocaust "bystanders"', *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 9(2-3), (2000), p.62.

[79] Churchill, W., 'Genocide', *Alternatives; Global, Local, Political*, 11(3), (1986), p.407.

[80] Stone, D., *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939 : before War and Holocaust*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[81] Stone*, Responses to Nazism*, p.191.

[82] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"'.

The Holocaust *is* part of the British story. In British educational settings, it merits representation as a strand of national history in its own right. In 1999, reacting to plans to instigate Holocaust Memorial Day, a correspondent to the *Independent* letters page opined: 'Britain is not a Jewish nation […] we should not allow our grief for those atrocities to confuse the issue of what is a suitable cause for any British national remembrance ceremony'.[83] Yet to view the Holocaust as irrelevant to British history is both parochial and misrepresentative. The Holocaust was a catastrophe not only for its victims, but for the European civilisation to which Britain belongs.

Historiographical debate on the British response

Interpretations of history rarely stand still, and Chapter 1 explores historiographical contours in depth. Unsurprisingly, the considerable historical complexity of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has made it a contentious historiographical issue for some time. Far from the topic's vitriolic historiographical origins, this thesis aligns itself with a more reflective present-day interest in study of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The arrival, in 2021, of the *Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust* was of note.[84] Born from concern that 'the Holocaust story we are telling ourselves and our children is not as complex as it might be', the publication of the *Handbook* in itself marked a historiographical landmark.[85] It elevated the topic to a historical mainstream, and united disparate strands of research in a coherent volume. Contributions to the *Handbook* were also significant. Reflecting the dynamism of the field, they exhibited new historical evidence, and reframed Britain's relationship with the Holocaust to meet changing socio-political contexts.[86]

Elsewhere, there is ongoing work to reconcile the historical detachment of Britain from the Holocaust. For example, in 2020 Russell Wallis deployed testimonies held by the Imperial War Museum to demonstrate how British POWs themselves bore witness to

[83] Larg, 'Letter: In Brief', *The Independent*, 7 July 1999.
[84] Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*.
[85] Ibid., p.1.
[86] See, for instance, Hammel, A., "'I remember their labels round their necks': Britain and the Kindertransport" and Pearce, A., 'Britishness, Brexit and the Holocaust', in Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*.

the Holocaust.[87] This thesis builds on the critical work that is characteristic of contemporary historiography: 'reflecting both upon the presence of the Holocaust in the British past and indeed accounting for the role that the Holocaust plays in the British present'.[88]

Looking further back, Kushner surmised that, by the 1960s, the British handling of Middle-Eastern relations had rendered the United Kingdom as 'enemy number one' amongst Zionist circles.[89] This was reflected in the timbre of works produced by Jewish historians in particular. Such works were bold in the moralistic judgments they bestowed upon the British wartime record in particular. Andrew Sharf's *The British Press and Jews under Nazi rule* (1964) represented the crest of one polemic historiographical wave. Approaching the British response to the Holocaust through the lens of the contemporary printed press, Sharf accused Britain of failing to act despite the fact that 'few facts of Nazi antisemitism were left unstated by the British press'.[90] It is significant, however, that Sharf's work was commissioned under the auspices of the independent Institute for Race Relations (IRR), and therefore might have had its own political agenda in promoting such a critical image of a British society unwilling to assist persecuted minorities.[91] Writing at roughly the same time, the American author David Wyman rebutted the notion that 'nothing was known or that nothing could have been done' by the Allies.[92]

In recent decades, a more measured tone has been struck. Kushner, along with Andy Pearce, is one of the foremost figures in the field of modern British Holocaust memory. Writing in the 1990s, Kushner posited the thesis that the British response to the Holocaust was shaped, and indeed inhibited, by the liberal traditions of the nation.[93] According to Kushner, it was the Allied inability to cope with the prospect of alien Jews and ethnic differences that stymied British refugee policy. Rescue efforts were hindered by the potential of immigrants to provide a challenge to the 'Britishness' of the age. The

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[87] Wallis, R., *British PoWs and the Holocaust: Witnessing the Nazi Atrocities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).
[88] Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*, p.1.
[89] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"', p.62.
[90] Bolchover, R., *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (London: Littman, 1993), p.7.
[91] Sharf, A., *The British Press and Jews under Nazi rule* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).
[92] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"', p.62.
[93] Kushner, T., *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination : a Social and Cultural History*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

contemporary asylum issues in the diversifying society of the 1990s added new gravity to this particular mode of thought.

Even more compelling is Kushner's assessment of the characterisation of Britain as a 'bystander' to the Holocaust.[94] The striking title of Kushner's seminal article of 2000 ("*Pissing in the wind?"*) captures the lack of nuance in existing portrayals of the Allies either as helpless onlookers to the Holocaust or, less commonly, as *de facto* collaborators. The historical reality was far more complex. Kushner's article lamented the way in which the term 'bystander' - popularised by the historians Goldhagen and Browning to refer to the actions of ordinary Germans - had been appropriated by critics of the British response to the Holocaust.[95] Kushner advised that the actions and inactions of Britain during the Holocaust are not a matter for moral judgment, but rather 'need to be placed in their specific contexts, recognising their own particular specific limitations'.[96] It is implied that existing portrayals of Britain and the Holocaust have too often been crafted from positions that lack historical understanding, and are too sweeping in their characterisations. My research indeed confirms a widespread lack of nuance in this regard.

Louise London's meticulous interrogation of Whitehall's treatment of Jews between 1933 and 1948, published in 2000, is one instance of modern scholarship which displays the contextual nuance prized by Kushner.[97] London's overarching thesis contends that the British government's response to the Holocaust was driven by political self-interest above humanitarian concerns. London, as a trained lawyer herself, is well-placed to understand the bureaucratic and legal obstacles that prevented a more substantial reaction to the Holocaust.

The *Kindertransport* scheme – the acceptance of nearly 10,000 predominantly Jewish refugee children into Britain between November 1938 and September 1939 – provides

[94] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"'.

[95] For example, see Goldhagen, D., *Hitler's Willing Executioners : Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

[96] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"', p.72.

[97] London, L., *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948 : British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees, and the Holocaust*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

another example of a battleground on which existing public narratives and revisionist critiques continue to clash. Indeed, Kushner has described the *Kindertransport* as 'the fastest growing story relating to Britain and the Holocaust'.[98] However, Kushner has expressed concern at the development of *Kindertransport* public consciousness, and has implied that prevalent unawareness of the episode's details has had a negative impact on its contribution to British Holocaust memory. According to Kushner, the status of the *Kindertransport* as a superficial symbol for moral rescue has mythologised the child refugee movement to such an extent that 'the problems associated with it (not just the separation from parents but the physical, economic, sexual, and mental abuse suffered by some of the children in Britain) have become totally obscured'.[99]

Jennifer Craig-Norton, in recent years, has emerged as an eminent critic of celebratory *Kindertransport* narratives. *Contesting Memory*, the title of Craig-Norton's book of 2019, is indicative of the revisionist stance adopted by the author. Craig-Norton's research is grounded in close examination of primary sources, comprising new archival discoveries and interviews with *Kindertransport* transportees. The crux of Craig-Norton's argument was that the *Kindertransport*, 'long interpreted as a heroic response to the refugee crisis of the 1930s', in fact entailed 'myriad difficulties' for the Kinder.[100] Craig-Norton highlighted the neglect and abuse experienced by some refugees in their new homes, for instance.

Moreover, Kushner implied that the *Kindertransport* has been seized upon by those in authority as a means of sidestepping more problematic British responses to the Holocaust. Kushner depicts a certain over-eagerness to celebrate the *Kindertransport* in modern Britain, evidenced by the creation of the British Holocaust awards and the 'Heroes of the Holocaust' award.[101] Kushner posited that this approach, to an extent, pandered to popular tastes. For instance, the labelling of rescuers Nicholas Winton and Frank Foley – who received an award - as 'Britain's Schindlers' was 'what the public

[98] Kushner, quoted, Pearce, A., *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p.217.

[99] Kushner, T., 'The Holocaust in the British imagination', *Holocaust Studies*, 23(3), (2017), p.379.

[100] Craig-Norton, J., 'Contesting the Kindertransport as a 'Model' Refugee Response', *European Judaism*, 50(2), (2017), p.25.

[101] Kushner, T., 'Britain, America and the Holocaust: Past, Present and Future Historiographies', *Holocaust Studies*, 18(2-3), (2012), p.39.

wanted to hear'.[102] Critchell, equally, was puzzled by the overwhelming commemorative focus on *Kindertransport* rescuers, rather than the survivors without whose memories 'the journey could not be relived'.[103] Sharples has suggested that the infusion of the *Kindertransport* narrative with British self-congratulation is, in part, also attributable to the understandable gratitude towards Britain expressed within survivors' writings. By 'listing their academic, occupational or personal achievements since the end of the war', Sharples noted that there is almost a sense of 'repayment to the country which saved them…which it appears is expected if not demanded by British society'.[104]

Evidently, historiography of the British response to the Holocaust is a controversial field, and indeed a landscape which continues to evolve. This thesis is an important engagement with a such a 'live' debate.

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[102] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"', p.70.

[103] Critchell, K., 'Remembering and Forgetting: the Holocaust in 21st Century Britain', *Quest, Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 10, (2016), p.43.

[104] Sharples, quoted in Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.18. See also ongoing research by Bill Niven and Amy Williams.

CHAPTER 1 - HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

British history is *not* straightforward. This thesis finds itself at the centre of an intricate historiographical nexus. As an interdisciplinary project, it engages with the spheres of history, pedagogy and memory studies. It is useful, therefore, to site this thesis within the competing debates that have characterised the subject fields at play. Centrally, educational portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust continue to be influenced by the pushes and pulls of scholarly debate. It is a topic which cannot escape the tensions of broader frameworks.

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive summary of relevant existing literature in just one short chapter. By some estimates, an average of 4,000 newly-published books relating to the Holocaust are added to the library at Yad Vashem each year.[1] Yet, the sample of historiographical debate in this chapter provides some illustration of how the educational mediation of how the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust interacts with wider societal concerns.

[1] Bulgin, J., 'IWM's new Holocaust galleries', British Association for Holocaust Studies virtual lecture (19 November 2021).

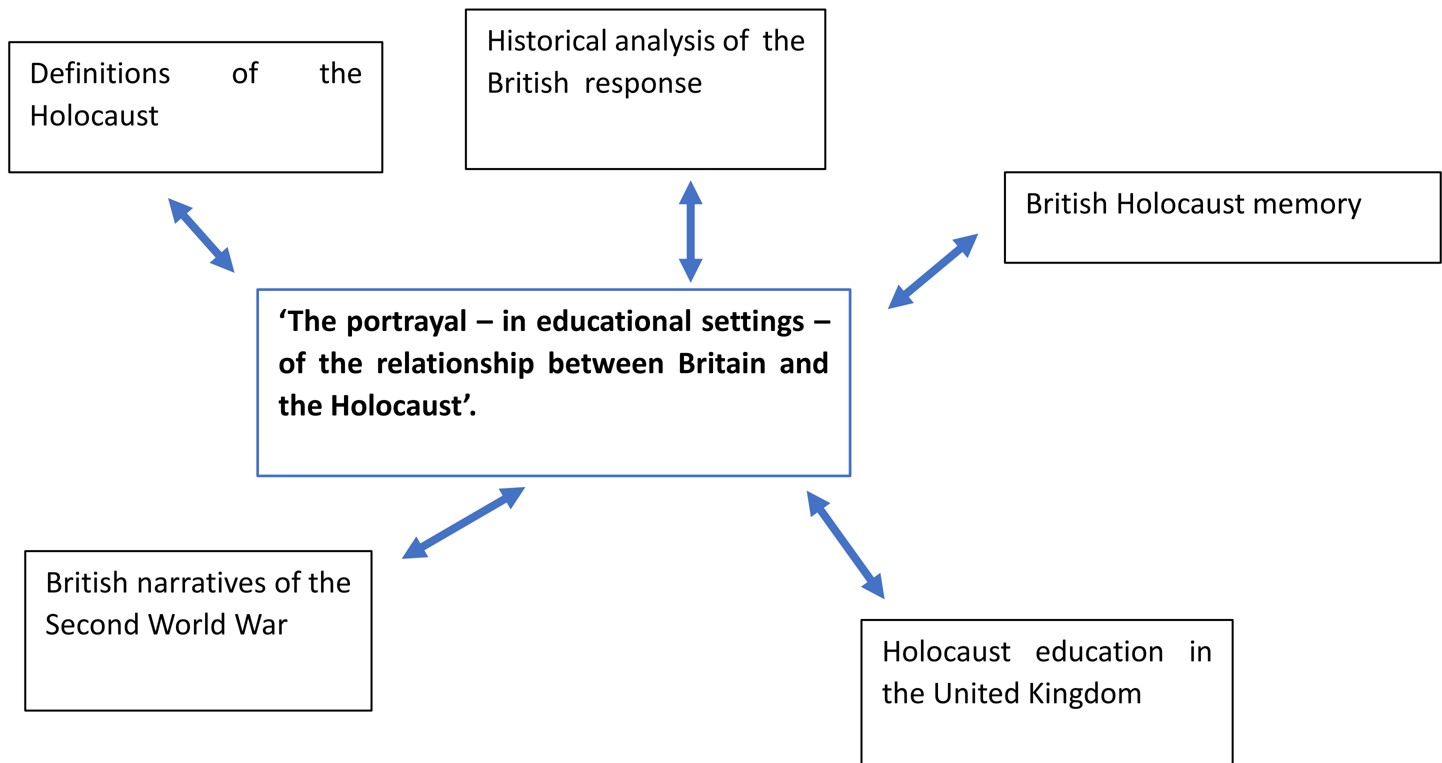

Figure 1: A diagrammatical representation of the historiographical context of this thesis.

British Holocaust memory

While Holocaust memory in Britain has, to a degree, formed an element of wider narratives of the Second World War, it is nonetheless a discrete organism within the landscape of British historical consciousness. Yet memory, public consciousness, and similar phenomena are slippery concepts. To articulate collective memory is challenging, and perhaps explains why related semantics must on occasion go in search of foreign words: *zeitgeist, milieu*, and so forth. The Hungarian philosopher Agnes Heller constructed a characterisation of historical consciousness that is as workable as any: 'a recognition that our past is the future of others and our present is the past of others'.[2]

There is scope for a greater examination of the way in which the *British* involvement in the Holocaust has been remembered within the United Kingdom, as opposed to memory

[2] Heller, quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.8.

of the Holocaust alone. This thesis addresses this lacuna. The growth of British Holocaust memory has been, at best, episodic. Sharples perhaps captures this trajectory most effectively, suggesting that Holocaust consciousness has experienced 'ripples of interest' at certain points, rather than following a linear path towards more sustained critical engagement,.[3] Consequently, one might expect that portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have proved inconsistent, both in terms of content and context. Yet, Cesarani has proved a prolific challenger to the thesis of 'Holocaust silence' in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s.[4] Cesarani instead argues that a lack of tangible evidence of Holocaust consciousness in Britain from the period is misleading, stressing the difference between the scale of the Holocaust in public imagination and the actual expression of the issue in public arenas.[5]

In recent years, Andy Pearce has emerged as perhaps the doyen of British Holocaust memory studies. In brief, Pearce characterised the formation of Holocaust consciousness in Britain as follows: a period of relative post-war neglect of the Holocaust, followed by limited consideration in the 1970s and 1980s, before momentum was created by a 'process of popularisation' in the 1990s.[6] In general terms, Pearce suggested that the narrative of Holocaust memory reveals a 'movement from marginalisation to centralisation' within British society.[7] Centrally, Pearce's characterisation of British Holocaust memory guided the research outlook of this thesis. The suggestion that evidence of relevant portrayals would be limited until at least the late 1980s encouraged my research focus on post-1991 contexts.

The 1980s, according to Pearce, provided evidence of the non-linear development of Holocaust consciousness, as touched upon in the introduction to this section. Pearce asserted that Thatcherism heralded a movement towards 'an ossified understanding of history and bombastic conception of the national past', of which inhibitory war narratives formed a significant component.[8] This was not an era conducive to the critical

[3] Sharples & Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*, p.2.

[4] D. Cesarani and E. Sundquist (eds), *After the Holocaust : Challenging the Myth of Silence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

[5] Sharples & Jensen*, Britain and the Holocaust*, p.54.

[6] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*., p.2.

[7] Ibid., p.11.

[8] Ibid., p.176.

self-reflection required to explore fully the British response to the Holocaust. Equally, the growth of the heritage industry, which in Pearce's view was predicated on the 'commercialisation of an idealised past', served only to simplify narratives of the Holocaust, and divert attention away from the more complex issues of the matter.[9]

Pearce attributes the growth of engagement with memory of the Holocaust in the 1990s to a combination of cultural and contextual factors. Indeed, in certain literature, 1993 has been christened the 'Year of the Holocaust', due in part to the high-profile opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).[10] Throughout the 1990s, the historical parallels offered by the Balkans crisis and the genocide in Rwanda, coupled with the success of films such as *Schindler's List* (1994), heightened the awareness of the Holocaust in public consciousness.[11] Through this analysis, Pearce highlights a useful 'turning point' in the development of British Holocaust memory. The 1990s also witnessed a 'spate of memorial and museum construction' in Britain.[12] As this thesis aims to chart the continuities and changes in portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, the context of the 1990s therefore appeared to herald a key period within which significant developments might be concentrated. Indeed, many of the educational resources analysed in *Section I* date from this decade.[13] As the 1990s progressed, Holocaust education acquired an inner momentum.

By the early 2000s, Britain had established itself as a cog in the international Holocaust memory machine. As a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Britain took part in several global liaison projects, and attended the Stockholm International Forums of 2001, 2002, and 2004, which grappled with Holocaust remembrance and education.

Popular culture and public consciousness form a dialectic relationship. Each reflects the other, while also mutually shaping their future identities. The innovative academic

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Marshman, S., From testimony to the culture industry : representations of the Holocaust in popular culture, unpublished doctoral thesis, (Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth 2005), p.4.

[11] Pearce, A., 'An Emerging 'Holocaust Memorial Problem?' The Condition of Holocaust Culture in Britain', *The Journal of Holocaust Research*, (33:2), (2019)., p.122.

[12] Ibid.

[13] See, in particular, analysis of textbooks in *Section I*.

sphere of mass media studies, as with the history of memory, has grown quickly on a global scale over the past thirty years. Such is the perceived importance of the role of mass media in fostering British Holocaust memory that an entire section of Sharples and Jensen's *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (2013) is devoted to 'The Holocaust on Screen'. Cole centred his analysis on the 1978 television film *Holocaust*. Cole argued that, on a superficial level, *Holocaust* encouraged a greater awareness of the genocide within Britain, by virtue of the large television audience it reached. Substantiating such claims in tangible terms appears challenging, however. Cole pointed towards a crucial difference between public *awareness* and public *understanding*. Approaching *Holocaust* through the secondary lens of press reviews and audience feedback, Cole concluded that 'it is clear that the screening of *Holocaust* did not result in in-depth engagement with the historical specificity of the "final solution"'.[14]

Holocaust memory has not only occupied nebulous realms of public imagination. It has found expression through physical commemorations of the past. Cooke's doctoral thesis of 1998 offered an original consideration of the 'landscapes' of the Holocaust in Britain.[15] Cooke noted that British mnemonic sites have been 'structured by a number of discourses which construct the Holocaust as apart from the histories and the geographies of British people'.[16] These frameworks included 'the heroic myths that pervade British society about the role of Britain during the Second World War' and 'the ontologies of Anglo-Jewry within the assimilationist framework of British society'.[17] Ultimately, Cooke posited that the 'virtual absence of Holocaust memorials in this country reinforces the notion that the Holocaust is not part of this country's history'.[18] Absence of memorials is equated to the sense of 'detachment' from the Holocaust in Britain that is also identified in other literature.[19]

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[14] Sharples & Jensen*, Britain and the Holocaust*, p.81.
[15] Cooke., S., The Hidden Landscapes of the Holocaust in Late Twentieth Century Britain, Unpublished doctoral thesis, (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1998).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p.15.
[19] See, for instance, Bunting, A., '"My Question Applies to this Country": British Identities and the Holocaust', *Holocaust Studies*, 14(1), (2008) pp.61–92.

More recently, Pearce has considered the significance of the *Kindertransport* memorial sculpture, installed in its current iteration at Liverpool Street Station in 2006. Pearce suggested that the memorial has become a 'fixture in the consciousness of regular commuters'.[20] Yet, the difference between conscience and understanding is implied. Pearce questioned how many passing commuters truly appreciate the history and the values underpinning the statue. For *Kindertransport* survivors, the statue represents 'trauma and loss, upheaval and dislocation, and the emotional heartache of separation from parents and families'.[21] However, Pearce noted that 'these sentiments are not those of the thousands passing the memorials each day'.[22] The simple existence of representations of the British relationship with the Holocaust is not enough to ensure their actual *impact* on public consciousness. Presence of the issue in educational settings does not guarantee lasting appreciation of the topic. Consequently, I am aware of the limitations in 'reach' of any existing portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.

The interaction between politics and Holocaust memory has attracted concern. Kushner suggested that a governmental concern to mediate Holocaust memory has not been an approach that has developed gradually, but rather has been present from before the end of the Second World War. According to Kushner, 'for the British state, it was important in the last days of the conflict…to ensure that the "right" message was conveyed to the public'.[23] Stone has similarly argued that this political impulse to control the past is observable in essentially every government since 1945. Termed by Stone as the 'domestication of violence', government action has sought to influence depictions of the Holocaust in several spheres of public life, including culture and education.[24] Stone theorised that this mediation was 'born of a need not to face up to the scale of the disaster, of feelings of guilt about the failure to save people despite knowledge of the events from as early as 1941, and of the necessity of forging a manageable collective memory'.[25] More specifically, Donnelly suggested that, in historical terms, the liberation of the Belsen camp in April 1945 has been misappropriated as a 'British' event, to the

[20] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.216.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Kushner*, The Holocaust in the British imagination*, p.367.
[24] Stone, quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*., p.13.
[25] Ibid.

historical detriment of the mainly-Jewish inmates of the camp.[26] In this regard, Donnelly has corroborated earlier scholarship by Kushner. For Kushner, the liberation of Belsen became an affirmative moral stamp on the British war effort.[27]

Elsewhere, Pearce identified the turn of the millennium as a moment of 'substantive change' in the scale of political engagement with the Holocaust.[28] The New Labour government ushered in a 'considerable upsurge in governmental involvement in memory-work and educational initiatives in a relatively short period of time'.[29] It might be expected that this increased governmental engagement with Holocaust issues could have resulted in more substantial critical self-reflection upon the contemporary British response to the Holocaust. However, Pearce's thesis seemingly suggests otherwise. It is posited that, in the Blair governments from 1997 onwards, the Holocaust became a legitimising 'framing device' to justify foreign policy ventures, such as military intervention in Kosovo in 1999.[30] In more general terms, the political scientist Hindmoor has noted that New Labour consistently sought 'to define and construct political debate by framing particular issues and events in particular ways'.[31]

Furthermore, Pearce was sceptical of the motivations behind the governmental launch of the Holocaust Commission in September 2013. To re-sharpen specific political focus on the Holocaust was surprising, given that the position of United Kingdom Envoy for *Post*-Holocaust Issues had been created in 2010.[32] Pearce hinted that the driving force of the Holocaust Commission was a wider concern to tie 'Holocaust commemoration and education to events in the Middle East – specifically the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war, concerns over Israeli national security, and the "genocidal intent" of the Iranian government'.[33]

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[26] Sharples & Jensen*, Britain and the Holocaust*, p.176.

[27] Kushner, 'From "this Belsen business" to "Shoah business"'.

[28] Pearce, A., 'In The Thick of It: 'high politics' and the Holocaust in millennial Britain', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53(1), (2019), p.102.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Hindmoor, quoted in Pearce, 'In The Thick of It', p.102.

[32] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.130.

[33] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.130.

Correspondingly, Lawson identified the seemingly arbitrary deployment of the Holocaust in speeches by Tony Blair that called on Britain to support New Labour's social vision and conceptualisation of liberal democracy.[34] This sense of political manoeuvring would be reliant upon a historical narrative of the Holocaust which largely aligned itself with existing conceptions of Britain as a liberating 'force for good' in international contexts. Once again, this is a framework within which critical assessment of the limitations of British action during the Holocaust would appear not be encouraged, nor indeed supported.

Theorisations of the way in which Holocaust memory in Britain has been used as a tool of national self-affirmation echo sentiments expressed in historiography of memory studies. Eelco Runia has argued that commemoration is 'the prime historical phenomenon of our time' yet discerns an unhelpful tendency to frame history and memory as oppositional concepts.[35] Critchell has argued that, in twenty-first century Britain, Holocaust memory has 'implicitly and explicitly' been connected to discourse on 'what constitutes British identity'.[36]

Ultimately, existing literature has explained how the perception of the Holocaust as a vehicle to promote 'British values' is problematic in relation to portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. Existing literature would suggest that it has encouraged a focus on use of the Holocaust to teach 'value-laden lessons' (as described by Critchell), rather than facilitating the critical historical evaluation which study of the British response necessitates.[37] Yet, as commentators turn their attention to the future of British Holocaust memory, there have been useful reminders that portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust need not exclusively be critical or negative. Indeed, Pearce noted that 'Britain has reason to be proud of the Kindertransport'.[38] In parallel, Craig-Norton has also suggested that competing narratives do not have to be mutually exclusive: 'gratitude for the efforts that were made by the British nation...can coexist

[34] Lawson, T., *The Church of England and the Holocaust: Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.179.

[35] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.120.

[36] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.24.

[37] Critchell, K., '"Proud to Be British; and Proud to Be Jewish": the Holocaust and British Values in the Twenty-First Century', *Holocaust Studies* (2018), p.13.

[38] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.217.

with a truthful examination of the policies'.[39] In practice, existing literature would suggest that a binary interpretation of the British response to the Holocaust has prevailed either way.

Holocaust education in the United Kingdom

Literature concerning Holocaust education is extensive. However, the objective of this thesis is not to argue *whether* or *how* the Holocaust should be taught, as has been the focus of much research. Rather, this project is concerned with how the Holocaust *has* been presented in educational settings, and – specifically – how the British response has been depicted. Overall, it is evident that educational settings have acted as a crucible for the political and cultural narratives of both the Holocaust and the Second World War. Holocaust education has reflected, rather than driven, wider public consciousness of the genocide.

The actual history of the concept of 'Holocaust education' in itself has not been examined extensively. This thesis provides a useful contribution to gaps in such knowledge. In a British context, literature focused more on notions of broader Holocaust memory within society as a whole, rather than examining the ways in which the Holocaust was presented in educational settings. Tellingly, in private correspondence, Andy Pearce acknowledged the lack of existing scholarship on the development of Holocaust education:

> In terms of your question about literature on the history of Holocaust education, I think that the absence you are encountering tells you all you need to know. Put simply, if you are talking about the "British" context, there really isn't very much on this…in terms of secondary literature, you're working in something of a vacuum – which, of course, is revealing in and of itself.[40]

[39] Craig-Norton, J., *The Kindertransport : Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.323.

[40] Pearce, A., Private email correspondence with Daniel Adamson (7 October 2019).

This assessment is 'revealing' indeed.[41] It carries both immediate and secondary implications. Firstly, it would appear that the extent of Holocaust education itself has been limited in the United Kingdom since 1945. Second, it highlights a lacuna in existing scholarship which this thesis plugs: the charting of historical patterns found in British Holocaust education.

In general, most literature supports Susan Hector's assessment that, before 1988, 'teaching about the Holocaust in England was rather a hit-and-miss affair, dependent upon individual teachers' interests'.[42] Carmon has suggested that this was not a phenomenon unique to Britain, noting that 'prior to 1961, it was difficult to find the Holocaust on the educational agenda of any community (even those in Israel and the Jewish communities throughout North America)'.[43]

Pearce's research suggested that the development of Holocaust education may have been stymied by structural considerations before the Holocaust itself had even ended. Although the 1944 Education Act 'engendered immense structural reform', Pearce noted how it 'stopped short of the State explicitly dictating curriculum content'.[44] In turn, school curricula were largely determined by individual teachers, and influenced by type of school as well as 'pressures and expectations from within and without the educational system'.[45] Consequently, this appeared to facilitate fluctuations in the breadth and depth of Holocaust education within Britain itself, and further reinforces the impracticality of characterising 'national' trends.

Intriguingly, John Slater suggested that, in the immediate post-war years, 'there was no perceived need to teach anything other than an essentially Anglocentric history'.[46] By extension, Pearce claimed that the Holocaust 'did not register in this framework' at the

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Hector, S., "Teaching the Holocaust in England," in Ian Davies, (ed.), *Teaching the Holocaust* (London: Continuum, 2000), p.107.
[43] Carmon, quoted, Gray, M., Preconceptions of the Holocaust among Thirteen and Fourteen Year-olds in English Schools, unpublished doctoral thesis (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2014), p.17.
[44] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.46.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Slater, quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.46.

time.[47] Indeed, Hector has suggested that the Holocaust itself was not necessarily even considered a 'historical' topic in school settings. Before 1991, the Holocaust featured in 'several agreed syllabuses for RE as well as in religious studies public examination courses'.[48] Critchell has offered a more sympathetic interpretation of the limited scale of Holocaust education during its formative years. Before the 1990s, Critchell suggested that 'it was not that the British people were unaware of the Holocaust or its significance, nor was it the case that they were callously indifferent…It was more that the event itself remained on the margins of mainstream society and culture'.[49].

The general absence of the Holocaust from English school curricula in the 1950s and 1960s is attributed by Pearce to the issue's status within wider British public consciousness at the time.[50] Pearce ascribed the paucity of Holocaust education in this period to a widespread perception that the events of the Holocaust were 'a Jewish concern'.[51] Pearce astutely pointed out, however, that this curricular absence is not necessarily indicative of the absence of the Holocaust from public memory as a whole. Pearce advised that 'we should not presume the topic was never broached or referred to (however tangentially) in schools', although to prove otherwise has proved challenging due to a lack of relevant contemporary evidence such as textbooks.[52] In the 1950s and 1960s, there were not yet ways in which the Holocaust could be taught which 'did not efface its distinctive characteristics'.[53] Judging by these conclusions, it seemed logical to orientate my research around source material from a later period of history – specifically, the 1990s onwards.

The seeds of more coordinated Holocaust education were sown during the 1960s and 1970s. Kushner's theorisation of greater engagement with memory of the Holocaust (albeit from the 1980s onwards) as a product of multiculturalism and diversification is

[47] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.46
[48] Hector, 'Teaching the Holocaust in England', p.106.
[49] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.26.
[50] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum', p.238.
[51] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.28.
[52] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum', p.238.
[53] Ibid.

of relevance here.[54] An additional factor to those identified by Kushner might also be a growing interest in the human rights movement, and a concern to 'use' education for contemporary social purposes.

Pearce identified the report of state-sponsored investigation into the practice of Holocaust education as a transformative moment in the organisation of the exercise.[55] In 1989, a report was overseen by John Fox.[56] 112 bespoke questionnaires were sent to 506 schools, colleges, universities, and local authorities. Fox's report was one of the first of its kind, despite its obvious limitations in both scale and scope. Pearce argued that amongst its most useful contributions was the conclusion that 'teachers were motivated more by a sense of 'Never Again' than by 'Never Forget.''.[57] This implied that teachers 'did not see remembrance as an end in and of itself', as is more commonplace in the twenty-first century.[58] Fox further concluded that 'among teachers, there was an 'overwhelming feeling' of opposition to the Holocaust being 'treated as a "special" or distinct area of study'.[59] This would appear to tally with the suggestion in several existing works of literature that British public consciousness has been hallmarked by an inability to detach the Holocaust from broader national historical narratives.[60] The findings of the Fox report prompted a campaign for the state-led organisation of provision for Holocaust education. This campaign was spearheaded by the Holocaust Education Trust (HET), founded in 1987, which was driven by a belief in the need 'to educate the public in a period of renewed interest in the Nazi war crimes and the Second World War'.[61]

The Education Act of 1988 created a framework for standardised national school curricula in England and Wales. The Holocaust was first introduced as a topic in the National Curriculum in 1991. Pearce is keen to emphasise the abstract complexities

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[54] Kushner, T., 'The impact of the holocaust on British society and culture'. *Contemporary Record*, 5(2), pp.349–375. (1991).

[55] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.122.

[56] Fox, John P., et al. *Report on 1987 Survey of United Kingdom Teaching on "The Holocaust" or "Nazi Final Solution of the Jewish Question" and Related Subjects*. (National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust ; Centre for Holocaust Studies, University of Leicester, 1989).

[57] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.122.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Fox, quoted, Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.52.

[60] Connelly, M., *We Can Take It! : Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2004).

[61] Fox, quoted, Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.53.

associated with this move. Pearce accented the difference between 'intended and actual learning experiences', whereby official curricula are complemented by 'the existence of the "hidden" curriculum: that tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools'.[62] In this sense, Pearce revealed a useful distinction between the encounters of the British public with memory of the Holocaust in an 'official' form, and the interaction with the topic in a more informal sense. Pearce built upon the earlier theories of the educational researcher Tim Oates, who perceived the following distinctions:

- National Curriculum: operates as a means of giving all pupils access to a common body of essential content.
- 'The curriculum': represents the totality of the experience of the child within schooling.[63]

As such, Holocaust memory is perhaps more accurately characterised as Holocaust *memories:* it is possible for multiple strands of public consciousness to coexist. Equally, the former director of the Institute of Education (IoE) Denis Lawton has described the school curriculum as 'a selection from the culture of the society'.[64] Accordingly, the focus of this thesis – educational portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust – might offer as much insight into the contexts within which such depictions were conceived as the content of these presentations themselves.

The inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum in England and Wales brought with it practical concerns, which in turn may have influenced the extent to which portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust were encountered. Pearce perceived a lack of 'specialised teaching materials' in the 1990s.[65] In an immediate sense, this might have limited the extent of teachers' knowledge of the issues surrounding the Holocaust. Yet Pearce also believed it led to survivors becoming 'invaluable classroom

[62] Pearce, A., 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 Years', *Holocaust Studies*, 23 (3), (2017), p.234.

[63] Oates, quoted in Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum', p.252.

[64] Lawton, quoted in Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum', p.234.

[65] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.65.

resources'.[66] In a general sense, this is not problematic: survivors 'provided an access point for students and teachers, bridging the temporal and experiential gap between contemporary Britain and the atrocities of wartime Europe'. However, if anything, it appears likely to have encouraged a focus on both victim-led and continental European narratives, both of which do not necessarily include consideration of the contemporary role played by Britain.

The position of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum in England and Wales has experienced a series of iterations since 1991, each of which has been examined in thorough terms by Pearce.[67] The 1995 iteration, according to Pearce, catalysed the development of Holocaust education. The topic was 'elevated to the status of a 'main event'', and was 'uncoupled from the war to now stand alone as a discrete occurrence'.[68] Also observable in 1995 was a new 'allusion to "legacy"', though only when approached through the Second World War'.[69]

For these reasons, it seems possible that portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust may be increasingly identifiable in educational settings from 1995 onwards, as the Holocaust was gradually interpreted in a less constrained historical framework. For the purposes of this thesis, analysis of educational materials produced in the years *after* 1995 promised to be most fruitful, when wider conditions for national self-reflection were more accommodating. In the 2000 iteration of the National Curriculum, the eventual acknowledgment that the Holocaust had some 'impact on Britain' has clear implication for the focus of this thesis.[70]

Of particular interest to this literature review was Pearce's analysis of the 2007 iteration. Students were to be taught '"the nature and impact of the two world wars and the Holocaust, and the role of European and international institutions in resolving conflicts"'.[71] Pearce characterised this as 'bizarre' in several senses.[72] The Holocaust was

[66] Ibid.
[67] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum'.
[68] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.68.
[69] Ibid., p.65.
[70] Ibid., p.72.
[71] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the Curriculum'., p.249.
[72] Ibid.

rendered 'elementally abstract' and 'devoid of either perpetrator(s) or victim(s)'.[73] The 2007 model also 'maintained the collapsing of the two world wars into one another, and separated them from the Holocaust'.[74] This is a significant development in relation to the subsumption of the Holocaust within alternative narratives of the Second World War. The curricular separation of the world wars and the Holocaust could be seen as an attempt to counteract this effect, by affording the Holocaust narrative importance in its own right.

However, as Pearce noted, this uncoupling also had the ironic effect of making the 'requirement that students learn the '"causes" and "consequences" of the Holocaust, its "nature" and "impact," only more, not less difficult to achieve'.[75] Curricular conceptualisations of the Holocaust, therefore, appear to have been confused at times. Concurrently, British public memory has framed the Holocaust against a self-constructed national identity, while the National Curriculum has inadvertently encouraged a detachment of the subject from its wider historical context (such as the Second World War). This makes it all the more challenging to sustain depictions of complex events such as the British response to the Holocaust, which require a simultaneous understanding of both the genocide *and* its placement within a wider historical setting.

Overall, Pearce depicts Holocaust education in its modern form as driven forward primarily by the enthusiasm of the New Labour government (1997-2010). While this might have expanded the scope of provisions for Holocaust education nationwide, Pearce also acknowledged that it also brought with it issues related to political interference and *dirigiste* state control of educational initiatives. For instance, the Lessons From Auschwitz (LFA) project – originally a private enterprise – was commandeered by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) with government backing in 2005. The Labour government pumped £1,500,000 per year into the project until 2008,

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

when annual investment rose to £4,650,000.[76] The project therefore became increasingly touched by the hand of government.

The difference between institutions and institutionalisation is one of several nuanced distinctions made by Pearce in relation to the development of Holocaust education. It is noted that Holocaust-related 'institutions' are longstanding in Britain. The Wiener Holocaust Library established its base in London in 1939, for example. However, Pearce depicted 1991 as the 'dawn of an institutionalisation of the Holocaust', in a process that was 'aligned to the formation of cultural memory'.[77] As such, this thesis will seek to place portrayals created after 1991 of the British response to the Holocaust within this framework. But it should be acknowledged that 'official' depictions of the Holocaust after 1991 were increasingly part of an ossified national conception of the event, which was solidified by the absorption of Holocaust memory into mass-coordinated schemes such as HMD.[78]

Still, memory is a nebulous concept. There are relatively few metrics with which it is possible to gauge public consciousness. Certain attempts, however, have been made to evaluate the impact of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom. Schools-based research can act as one barometer of trends and methods in Holocaust education. Since its creation in 2008, the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education (CfHE) has become a key proponent of research-based evidence of the state of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom. In 2009, the Centre oversaw the most extensive survey of English teaching practices to date.[79] The experiences of more than two thousand secondary-school teachers were received. Several areas of the subsequent report explored pedagogical concerns which are not of immediate relevance to this thesis, such as teaching techniques and approaches to genocide.

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[76] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.128.

[77] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.58.

[78] For an example of debates surrounding HMD, see Bloxham, D., 'Britain's holocaust memorial days: Reshaping the past in the service of the present', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 21(1-2), (2002), pp.41–62.

[79] Pettigrew, A., Foster, S., Howson, J., Salmons, P., and University of London Institute of Education. Holocaust Education Development Programme, *Teaching about the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools : An Empirical Study of National Trends, Perspectives and Practice* (London: Holocaust Education Development Programme, Institute of Education, University of London, 2009).

However, assessment of teachers' content knowledge yielded revealing results in relation to the issue of Britain and the Holocaust. Teachers were encouraged to share their conceptions of the 'British Government's policy towards Europe's Jews during the Second World War'.[80] A 'very low percentage of teachers from all subjects who believe that Britain declared war in 1939 to "free Jewish people from Nazi oppression"', suggesting an erosion of 'this particular national myth'.[81] Contrastingly, the survey found 'few teachers also take the most condemnatory view of the wartime British Government'. Overall, however, the survey found most teachers to occupy somewhat of a middle ground, which included a tentative belief that British knowledge of the Holocaust only became clear after the end of the war. The report suggested that this 'as an explanation of British policy are perhaps over-influenced by the commonly-held misconception that the 'Final Solution' was a well-kept secret'.[82] Many teachers also subscribed to the 'more convincing explanation of British policy – which recognises that there was early and accurate knowledge of the mass murder of Jews, but that no rescue plan was developed beyond winning the war as quickly as possible'.[83] The report suggested a certain refinement of consciousness amongst teachers over time, with moves away from misconceptions of the Holocaust as Britain's *casus belli*.

Few precedents to the 2009 survey exist, which makes it difficult to track continuities and changes over time. Where such comparisons can be made, they are often illuminating. For example, teachers in both the 2009 CfHE study and a survey conducted by Hector in 1999 'lamented the lack of time available' to teach the Holocaust.[84] As such, practical constraints appear to have been almost as enduring as abstract issues. Indeed, Geoffrey Short – in 1997 – warned that his own research demonstrated that 'allocating too little time to teaching about the Holocaust risks trivializing the issue'.[85] Equally, Short suggested that such simplifications – which to some degree are enforced by curricular constraints – could have counterintuitive results in relation to the state-sponsored eagerness for a 'lessons-based' approach to Holocaust education'. It would be ironic,

[80] Ibid., p.57.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Hector, 'Teaching the Holocaust in England', p.107.
[85] Short, quoted in Burtonwood, N., 'Holocaust Memorial Day in schools - context, process and content: a review of research into Holocaust education', *Educational Research*, 44(1), (2002), p.71.

argued Short, if 'children acquired ill-founded prejudices as a result of studying the Holocaust' through exposure to crude generalisations of 'Germans both at the time of the Third Reich and since'.[86]

In 2016, the CfHE published a report into school students' understandings of the Holocaust, which was unprecedented in scope and scale. The study involved more than 9,500 secondary- school students (aged 11– 18), and was primarily based on analysis of 7,952 survey responses and focus group interviews with 244 students.[87] Foster's summary of the findings of the report as identifying 'myths, misconceptions and mis-memory' amongst students is self-explanatory.[88] In general, it found:

> Many students had a very limited understanding of pre-war Jewish life and most appeared to have 'skewed, distorted or plain incorrect ideas about how many Jews lived in Germany, their socio-economic status and their personal beliefs…Most students also had a very Hitler-centric and German-centric view of the Holocaust and its geographical reach. Students typically had limited understandings of the Holocaust and its relationship to the Second World War.[89]

In an immediate sense, student engagement with portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust in educational settings appears to have been limited in several senses. Subsequent results within the report confirmed this hypothesis. Of the students surveyed, some '34.4 per cent incorrectly believed that the Holocaust triggered Britain's entry into war and a further 17.6 per cent of students thought the British drew up rescue plans to save the Jews'.[90] Nearly '23.8 per cent' also incorrectly thought the British government did not know about the Holocaust until the end of the war in 1945'.[91]

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[86] Short, quoted in Burtonwood, 'Holocaust Memorial Day', (2002), p.76.
[87] Foster et al., *What do students know?*)
[88] Foster, in Pearce*, Remembering the Holocaust*
[89] Ibid., p.241.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

Consistently, existing research has pointed towards a pervasive sentiment of geographic and historical distance within portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Despite this, the report hinted at certain shifts in previous modes of consciousness. In particular, the mythologisation of the liberation of Belsen appeared to have faded somewhat amongst students, overshadowed by an 'Auschwitz-centric' understanding of the Holocaust. It was noted in the 2009 CfHE report that 'only 15.2 per cent associated Bergen-Belsen with the Holocaust and, revealingly, no student mentioned the liberation of this concentration camp by the British Army in April 1945 during group interviews'[92].

Given the compelling criticisms of the existing interaction of memories of Belsen and the Holocaust outlined above, this trend does not appear immediately to be problematic, *per se*.[93] As Kushner noted, it does suggest 'a more nuanced, less British liberation-centred understanding of the "Final Solution" with Auschwitz more prominent than Belsen'.[94] However, Kushner is also sensible to note the other side of this argument, whereby students seemed unable to 'comprehend the complexity of the camp structure (and mass murder outside it) beyond one potentially distorting example'.[95] The apparent difficulty of English schoolchildren to juggle multiple narratives of the Holocaust is troublesome in relation to portrayals of the British response. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is itself multifaceted, as well as forming one strand of the broader genocide history. Learning about the topic requires dexterity.

This thesis charts continuities and changes in British Holocaust education. Yet, somewhat confused existing characterisations of Holocaust education are evident. In one sense, Holocaust education appears to have broadened its depth and breadth, especially since the 1990s. In another sense, some literature has suggested a continued simplification of Holocaust narratives in Britain, which has obscured substantial engagement with issues such as the British response to the Holocaust. The findings of my research suggest a combination of these two patterns. The British response to the

[92] Foster et al., *What do students know?*, p.190.
[93] Sharples & Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*, p.176.
[94] Kushner, 'The Holocaust in the British imagination', p.369.
[95] Ibid.

Holocaust has not been ignored in recent educational settings. But portrayals that *do* exist rarely afford the topic adequate depth to explore its many different aspects. In modern Britain, there is scope for greater criticality on complicated historical matters.

Glories of war?

Given the commanding influence of Second World War consciousness in British society, it is perhaps inevitable that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has come to be framed against public memory of the global conflict. In part, this thesis set out to unpick narratives of the British response to the Holocaust from those of the Second World War as a whole. My research tests the notion that glorified interpretations of British military history have occluded the extent to which British society has grappled with the complexities of its own response to the Holocaust.

Mark Connelly's conceptualisation of British narratives of the Second World War has emerged as authoritative within the historiographical field.[96] A single definition of the British war narrative is difficult to devise, but Connelly's offering represents a well-rounded attempt:

> In 1939 Britain falls into war unprepared and lacking a genuine leader. In 1940 Britain gained the leader it deserved in Winston Churchill, faced humiliating defeat in France but thanks to an extraordinary rallying of the nation an Armada of small boats crossed the Channel to rescue the soldiers on the beaches of Dunkirk. Britain then stood alone, without allies, surrounded by the enemy. The Battle of Britain was won by the Few in the skies over the rolling countryside of southern England. Defeat in this battle forced the Germans into an indiscriminate bombing campaign. Far from causing the collapse of Britain, the people drew together in an even tighter bond and they embarked fully on their People's War. Surviving the blitz did not bring about victory, however. Britain went on to suffer defeats in virtually every theatre of war until Montgomery came along and won a decisive victory in the desert.

[96] Connelly, *We Can Take It!.*

> After that, with new allies, it was a glorious adventure. On D-Day 'Monty' led the way back to France, and the war culminated in the suicide of Hitler and the defeat of the Third Reich.[97]

In essence, Connelly perceives a memory of war that is heavily skewed towards the early period of the conflict (1939 to 1940). Connelly argues that the 'myth' of the Second World War might be considered to have started 'with the strange amnesia of the British public concerning its post-1933 pro-appeasement, anti-rearmament stance'.[98]

Connelly's work is substantiated by other theorisations of British war memory. As part of a perceived detachment of the British experience from wider European events, Angus Calder has pointed towards a sense of geographical removal.[99] A preoccupation with the 'People's War' and the 'Home Front' was manifest in British culture from 1939 onwards. This concern to emphasise the domestic experiences of war has continued to the present day, and is evident in the centrality of such topics that can be found in educational environments.[100]

Whereas Connelly *et al* have identified the common patterns of memories of the Second World War in Britain, Reynolds has *problematised* these narratives.[101] Even in 2016, Reynolds suggested that the persistent issue of 'Brexit' had demonstrated the difficulty Britain has faced in 'moving on from the era of the two world wars' by locating the conflicts within a positive narrative, in contrast to French and German national narratives.[102] The intensification of the Brexit debate since 2016 appears to have confirmed Reynolds' judgment.

Reynolds further suggests that the phenomenon of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ('mastering the past') was far from limited to post-1945 West Germany alone. Similar

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[97] Ibid, p.2.
[98] Ibid, p.3.
[99] Calder, A., 'Britain's good war? Victory and 'Zero Hour' 1945: The Experience and Consequences of the World at War', *History Today*, 45(5), (1995), pp.55–61.
[100] See, for example, the extensive teaching resources found at TES, *The Home Front* (2021).
[101] Reynolds, D., 2017. Britain, 'The Two World Wars, and the Problem Of Narrative', *The Historical Journal*, 60(1), (2017), pp.197–231.
[102] Ibid., p.197.

forms of 'historical therapy' were evident in most countries that participated in the Second World War.[103] By extension, Reynolds implies that triumphalist war narratives in Britain were, in part, linked to a post-war healing process in society. In relation to the issue of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, Reynold's thesis would suggest that the limited public consideration of such an ambiguous issue is attributable to the fact that it would fall out of step with more common British attempts to reconcile the past and the present.

Research by Lucy Noakes and Juliette Pattinson into the cultural memory of the Second World War provided a useful complement to political and military interpretations of British narratives.[104] At times, this thesis relies on 'silences': lacunas in research, or portrayals that seem simply to have been missing from British society over time. Noakes offers an insightful consideration of this phenomenon of silence which has particular relevance to the issue of the Holocaust. It is noted that 'traumatic memory is not the same as amnesia'.[105] A form of historical post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can severely limit the extent to which disturbing events remain in public consciousness. It is possible that uncomfortable memories of the Holocaust (and the British response to the tragedy) has been suppressed, either consciously or unconsciously, due its uncomfortable nature.

Eva Hoffman, the child of Holocaust survivors, recounted of her upbringing: 'the past broke through in the sounds of nightmares, the idioms of sighs and illness, of tears and acute aches'.[106] The effects of such unspoken histories, although pervasive, starkly contrasted the pomp of the material culture associated with wider British war narratives. A more congratulatory narrative of Britain as the saviour of Europe has proved altogether more palatable. The annual ceremony – or *ritual?* - of nationwide VE Day and VJ Day parades has reinforced this pattern.

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[103] Ibid., p.198.

[104] Noakes, L., and Pattinson, J., *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[105] Ibid., p.5.

[106] Hoffman, quoted, Noakes & Pattinson*, British Cultural Memory*, p.35.

Thomas Colley has made a novel attempt to solidify conceptualisations of public belief in perceptions of Britain as a historical protagonist. Colley sought to explore the core assumption that 'Britain's military is a "force for good" in the world…based on the myth that it is a morally exceptional nation'.[107] Using semi-structured interviews conducted with a range of British citizens in 2017, Colley recorded perceptions of Britain's role in global warfare. Colley himself acknowledges that the scale of his research was small, and therefore its results cannot necessarily be taken as representative of national trends. However, it was found that Britain was often portrayed as a 'transhistorical force for good…the idea that Britain is a morally exceptional nation that has always acted for the good of the world'.[108] Of particular significance for this thesis was Colley's finding that 'the general assumption of Britain as a transhistorical Force for Good also enables the storyteller to exclude events that might not fit the narrative'.[109] This finding carries weight when applied to the example of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. The uncomfortable history of the Holocaust is incompatible, to an extent, with competing narratives of British triumph in the Second World War.

In simple terms, existing literature has identified the creation of a narrative arc that rests upon the assumption that the Allies actively opposed and defeated Nazism. The suggestion that the Allies, in any way, may have been passive 'accomplices' or 'bystanders' to Nazism – and by extension the Holocaust – is largely discordant with more pervasive conceptualisations of the war. This phenomenon is not necessarily unexpected. As Connelly opined: 'memory tends to marginalise moments of misery, fear and loss...it is not inaccurate, but simply emphasises positive elements'.[110] Critical self-reflection is a harder pill to swallow than self-congratulation. This thesis examines how far educational settings have supported engagement with the British response to the Holocaust: an ambiguous and challenging historical topic.

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[107] Colley, T., 'Is Britain a force for good? Investigating British citizens' narrative understanding of war', *Defence Studies*, 17(1), (2017), p.3.

[108] Ibid., p.9.

[109] Ibid., p.10.

[110] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, p.5.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGIES

Within the unavoidable limits of time and space, I was concerned to engage with source material which might be representative of broader trends. Yet, I needed to balance this with a research focus which allowed for analysis in suitably granular detail. Ultimately, two key educational settings were selected: the classroom and the museum. *Section I* examines portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in school textbooks and resources produced by the HET and HMDT. *Section II* approaches the same topic through case studies of two burgeoning Holocaust centres: the NHCM and the HELC. The justifications for these decisions, and the methods used, are outlined below.

Analysing classroom materials

There was a compelling argument to support exploratory analysis of textbooks and other published educational materials, given their traditional position as a major vehicle of teaching and learning in schools.[1] Yet, printed classroom resources appear destined to become a ghost of the past.[2] As such, this thesis offers a valuable legacy snapshot of 'live' material which will soon be consigned to archives.

Textbook analysis is also, by most accounts, an underrepresented field. Accordingly, this thesis's original textbook-based research employs relatively uncommon methods and techniques. A UNESCO report has highlighted how 'existing international assessments focus almost exclusively on the general framework for Holocaust education without looking at the actual concepts and narratives which feature in the educational media used'.[3] Previously, Marsden referred to the 'black hole of textbook research in England', with only three articles based on textbook analysis published in leading British educational journals in the 1980s and 1990s.[4] By 2017, Foster still felt that 'more studies

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[1] Woodward, A., Elliott, D., and Nagel, K., *Textbooks in School and Society : An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988).

[2] BBC News, 'Education publisher Pearson to phase out print textbooks' (6 July 2019).

[3] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.9.

[4] Marsden, quoted, Foster, S. & Karayianni, E., 2017. 'Portrayals of the Holocaust in English history textbooks, 1991-2016: continuities, challenges and concerns', *Holocaust Studies*, 23(3), (2017), p.315.

are required that illuminate the various ways in which history textbooks are used in specific classroom contexts' and 'more studies examining how students negotiate and learn from history textbooks'.[5] My research addresses this lacuna, within the precise framework of educational portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.

Arguably, the topic of Britain and the Holocaust is primarily a historical issue. Thus, I approached the issue through the lens of history education. Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon characterised history textbooks as 'still the dominant translation of the curriculum in schools and they continue to constitute the most widely used resource for teaching and learning, despite the development of new media and educational technologies'.[6] A relatively recent school-based study by Haydn, although small in scale, suggested that textbooks were still used in an average of around 50% of history lessons by those surveyed.[7]

Analysis of classroom materials is an invaluable tool for educational researchers. It can provide empirical substantiation for theorisations of ways in which the past has been remembered. In wider pedagogical terms, Barton and Levstik theorised that that educational 'tools' are key in constraining and shaping thoughts and actions.[8] In particular, the practice known as 'textbook analysis' provided a particularly instructive model. I was able to apply the key principles of textbook analysis to examination of wider genres of educational material. Nonetheless, the limitations of analysis of classroom resources alone must be acknowledged. Recent evidence-based research has pointed towards the influential role played by teachers' personal philosophies, memories and practices in the enactment of Holocaust education in secondary schools.[9] In other words, the *deployment* of educational resources themselves is a conditional process.

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[5] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.335.

[6] Repoussi, M., and Tutiaux-Guillon, N.,. 'New Trends in History Textbook Research: Issues and Methodologies toward a School Historiography', *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society* 2.1, (2010), p.156.

[7] Hadyn, T., 'The changing form and use of textbooks in the history classroom the 21st Century: a view from the UK', *Yearbook of the International Society of History Didactics*, (January 2011), p.73.

[8] Barton & Levstik, quoted, Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.315.

[9] Mann, H., Holocaust memory and its mediation by teachers: a study of England and France (1987 – 2018), unpublished doctoral thesis, (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2020).

Existing methodological explorations of textbook analysis provided me with inspiration for research design. Nevertheless, textbook analysis remains an evolving field of study. In 1992, Weinbrenner lamented the fact that ‘"we do not yet have instruments and processes at hand for the dimensioning, categorization and evaluations of textbook research"’.[10] With no definitive *pro forma* for textbook analysis, I was afforded slightly more methodological freedom.

UNESCO justified its research into textbook materials due to the manner in which such resources ‘provide an objectified record of institutionally sanctioned analytical concepts and historical narratives which may be systematically compared on an international level’.[11] Moreover, Foster identified the tendency of ‘many teachers…to rely on history textbooks when teaching about the Holocaust’ which stemmed from a misleading assumption that ‘because experienced historians and educational experts author textbooks, they provide accurate content and informed pedagogy’.[12]

Key precedents: existing studies of educational materials

In 2014, a UNESCO report offered the most ambitious international mapping to date of the presentation of the Holocaust in textbooks.[13] Textbooks from twenty-six countries, spanning five continents, were analysed alongside valid curricula from 135 nations. While the geographical ambit of this report was striking, it nevertheless highlighted the difficulties in locating Holocaust educational materials published before the 1990s. The resources selected for analysis by the UNESCO report mainly dated from 1991 onwards. The international trends in Holocaust portrayals revealed by the UNESCO report are illuminating in their own right. Of even greater significance for this thesis, however, was the suggestion that Britain has proved an *anomaly* to global patterns. In a historiographical sense, the UNESCO report suggested that English-language textbooks have been relatively slow to transition from a ‘traditional’ approach (‘written in an impersonal tone by authors who denied the role of human agency in the telling of their

[10] Weinbrenner, quoted, Morgan, K., and Henning, E., ‘Designing a Tool for History Textbook Analysis’. *Forum : Qualitative Social Research* ,14.1, (2013), p.1.
[11] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.19.
[12] Foster & Karayianni, ‘Portrayals of the Holocaust’, p.315.
[13] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education.*

histories) to a 'scientific' approach (with a focus on 'skills and concepts of historical analysis' and the acceptance of 'different perspectives').[14] In an abstract sense, this could explain the limited extent of self-reflection on the British involvement in the Holocaust in textbooks, which Foster alluded to in his research.[15]

More strikingly, Britain did not conform to the general worldwide trend of Holocaust 'domestication', whereby 'countries place emphasis on the local significance of the event or appropriate them in the interests of local populations'.[16] Internationally, most textbooks were seen to 'appeal to local readerships, in particular in countries whose populations have no direct experience or inherited memory of the event'.[17] In most cases, this took the form of description of local events connected to the Holocaust, or a focus on national responses to the genocide. In the British example, however, this 'domestication' of the Holocaust primarily appeared to fulfil the interests of more self-congratulatory nationalistic paradigms. The UNESCO report noted:

> Apart from the partially fictionalized treatment of the kindertransport…links between the Holocaust and English history, such as the ineffectual diplomatic negotiations among Allies, and the initial failure to either believe or respond to the discovery of the death camps, are striking omissions. The lack of detail about the history of antisemitism before 1933, and the lack of treatment of the aftereffects of the Holocaust as an object of international diplomacy and social memory, confine the scope of the Holocaust to the period of the Second World War in these textbooks.[18]

In a similar vein, 'none of the [English] books feature collaborators or collaborating countries'.[19] To this extent, the prevailing framing of the Holocaust within wider narratives of the Second World War again comes to the fore. Similarly, where other countries have 'appropriated' memory of the Holocaust through forging local

[14] Ibid., p.20.
[15] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.
[16] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.3.
[17] Ibid., p.167.
[18] Ibid., p.150.
[19] Ibid., p.147.

connections, English-language textbooks again appear to have reinforced a certain detachment from the events. The reluctance of English-language textbooks to engage in national self-reflection when considering the Holocaust is exceptional. This is not necessarily to be criticised. The UNESCO report acknowledges the need to avoid 'overemphasis of local aspects of the Holocaust [which] detracts from learning about the Holocaust in all its dimensions' and an 'overemphasis of the general aspects [which] may detract from the contested local dimensions of the Holocaust'.[20]

Foster (in 2013 and 2017) has provided the two major existing studies of general Holocaust portrayals in English-language textbooks in particular. The first study, co-authored with Burgess, analysed four English-language textbooks, and used teaching guidelines issued by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) as an evaluative framework.[21] These textbooks were found to contain 'a common tendency for textbooks to present an "Auschwitz-centric, "perpetrator narrative" and a widespread failure to sensitively present Jewish life and agency before, during, and after the war'.[22] In other words, a simplified narrative of the Holocaust prevailed.

In keeping with the findings of the 2009 CfHE survey of teachers, Foster suggested that simplification of the Holocaust was as much a practical issue as a theoretical one.[23] In 2009, 'one of the most commonly reported challenges to teaching about the Holocaust was deciding what content to cover within an average of just five or six lessons'.[24] Accordingly, it is implied that abridged narratives which are oriented around 'perpetrator-narratives' ('narratives that focus on the actions of the Nazis and their collaborators and position Jewish people and other persecuted groups as objects rather than subjects') have gained textbook currency in the interests of time-efficiency.[25] In educational settings where time is at a premium, It seems unlikely that textbooks or teachers would choose to focus on complex depictions of the British response to the

[20] Ibid., p.181.

[21] Foster, S., and Burgess, A., 'Problematic Portrayals and Contentious Content Representations of the Holocaust in English History Textbooks.', *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society*, 5 (2), (2013), pp. 20–38.

[22] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals', p.20.

[23] Pettigrew et al*., Teaching about the Holocaust.*

[24] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals', p.26.

[25] Ibid.

Holocaust. Indeed, Foster found that 'no textbook, for example, provides readers with a range of perspectives from the viewpoints of victims, perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders, and rescuers'.[26] These conclusions chime with the limited range of perspectives observable in the 'traditional' English-language textbooks analysed in the UNESCO report of 2014.[27] To this extent, Foster theorised a cycle of perpetuation, whereby textbooks 'exacerbate existing problems and support enduring misconception', which subsequently become engendered in future generations of teachers' practice.[28]

In 2017, Foster was the lead author in a study of English-language textbooks conducted alongside Karayianni at the IoE.[29] This study was more expansive than the 2013 precedent, and examined portrayals of the Holocaust in a sample of 21 secondary school history textbooks published in England between 1991 and 2016. A more rigorous analytical framework was also employed: 'to ensure a coherent spread of textbooks produced from 1991 to the present, the sample included five textbooks from each of the distinct periods following the publication of new National Curriculum guidelines in 1991, 1995, 1999, as well as the only textbooks published after the 2007 and 2013 guidelines'.[30] The results of this study were similar in tenor to the report of 2013. Textbooks typically 'failed to provide clear chronological and geographical frameworks and adopted simplistic Hitler-centric, perpetrator-oriented narratives', and 'paid limited attention to pre-war Jewish life, the roots of antisemitism, the complicity of local populations and collaborationist regimes'.[31] Simplistic narratives again predominated, with 17 out of 21 textbooks emphasising the 'pivotal role' and 'primary responsibility' of Hitler alone in the Holocaust.[32] Significantly, Foster's second report identified gaps in knowledge which I address in this thesis. Portrayals of the role of British 'bystanders and rescuers', for example, were deemed to be 'beyond the scope' of the 2017 article.[33]

[26] Ibid., p.28.
[27] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.20.
[28] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals', p.28.
[29] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.
[30] Ibid., p.317.
[31] Ibid., p.315.
[32] Ibid., p.324.
[33] Ibid., p.318.

The methodology of these studies was of use to this thesis. The research design of Foster's work appeared logical and incisive, and therefore seemed well-suited to exploration of the specific issue of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. In Foster's studies:

> Textbooks were analysed primarily using story line, content, and pictorial analysis. Attention was also paid to the pedagogy of the text and the perspective and positionality of the author. For the most part, qualitative analysis was employed; however, quantitative measures were also used to explore the relative emphasis on selected areas of content.[34]

To a degree, Foster's studies appear to have been inspired by earlier work by Wenzeler, which sought to critically compare the presentation of the Holocaust in English and German textbooks.[35] Quantitative analysis demonstrated that the Holocaust is afforded greater attention in German textbooks than in English counterparts.[36] The qualitative aspects of Wenzeler's analysis, unsurprisingly, identified a number of themes that have recurred in earlier sections of this literature review, particularly in relation to the construction of self-fulfilling national identities. The 'tendency to portray the English as the Allies that came to bring lasting peace to the world' was interpreted by Wenzeler as an attempt to 'foster a pride in Englishness'.[37]

Although Witschonke's research in 2013 centred on portrayals of the Holocaust in North American textbooks, the methodology employed nonetheless represents a model which could be applied to a British context.[38] Witschonke's research was large in scale, and captured material from nearly forty textbooks. A primarily statistical approach to analysis was adopted (for example, see below table). [39] While this is useful in providing

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Wenzeler, B., 'The Presentations of the Holocaust in German and English School History Textbooks. A Comparative Study.' *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 3.2, (2003), pp.107–118.

[36] Ibid., p.111.

[37] Ibid., p.113.

[38] Witschonke, C., 'A "Curtain of Ignorance": An Analysis of Holocaust Portrayal in Textbooks from 1943 through 1959', *The Social Studies, 104*(4), (2013), pp.146-154.

[39] Ibid. , p.149.

digestible overviews of broad patterns, it perhaps lacks the nuance of the qualitative interpretation observable in the work of other authors such as Foster and Wenzeler.

Holocaust Portrayal in Textbooks from 1943 through 1959 149

Table 1. Percentage of the Historically Appropriate Timeframe Devoted to Discussing the Holocaust.

	Overall	*Highest Percentage for a Single Book*	*World History Textbooks*	*United States History Textbooks*	*High School Textbooks*	*Middle School Textbooks*
1940s $N = 19$	1.111%	9.955%	1.981%	.479%	1.241%	.626%
1950s $N = 21$	.335%	2.36%	.755%	.167%	.517%	.135%

Figure 2: Table evidencing percentage of timeframe devoted to discussion of the Holocaust in American textbooks

Nonetheless, Witschonke posited that textbooks not only reveal information about the context in which they were created, but that more careful deployment of textbooks in future could 'be used to create more critical and historical thinking in today's classroom'.[40] In relation to this thesis therefore, Witschonke's work suggests that it is not only 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' that should be asked of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, but also 'whither?'. In other words, the conclusions of this thesis have the potential to yield suggestions of how textbook material might evolve in future.

Methodological frameworks

Unlike many existing studies of textbooks and similar educational materials, the purpose of this research was *not* to evaluate the quality or effectiveness of the publications encountered. This thesis does not seek to moralise on existing pedagogical practice. Nor was the historical accuracy of these portrayals a prime focus. Rather, the principal concern was to undertake an exploratory historical survey of the ways in which the British response to the Holocaust *have* (or have not) been portrayed. Accordingly, my

[40] Ibid., p.147.

approach to analysis was perhaps more fluid than other studies, which have imposed rigid criteria against which source materials are judged.

In this regard, I drew inspiration from Stradling's approach to textbook analysis, which 'is not written with the intention of seeking to offer a definitive answer to the question "What is a good history textbook?"'.[41] Stradling acknowledges that 'what counts as being a good textbook in one place by a certain group of people is likely to be perceived differently in another place by other people and that "a definitive answer usually leads to little more than broad and rather platitudinous generalisations"'.[42] To this extent, it was beyond the ambit of this thesis to speculate in detail on the didactic implications of the educational portrayals encountered. Nor was it my place to assert what is the 'right' or 'wrong' approach to Holocaust education. To gauge the real-world impact in schools of existing depictions of Britain and the Holocaust, further fieldwork would be required.

Ultimately, I selected a mixed methods approach. The simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative methods offered a balance between detailed analysis and broader overviews of trends. In qualitative terms, techniques such as linguistic and discourse analysis offered channels through which to speculate 'what information, groups and events the author values, takes for granted, valorises or regards as unimportant', and to 'unearth hidden meanings and messages in textbooks'.[43]

Quantitative mechanisms provide an impression of the frequency and space of aspects of text and images. This allowed me to capture 'how much (or how little) space is allocated to a particular theme, event or topic' - in this case the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[44] However, there was also a requirement for qualitative and interpretative analysis to unpick the nuances of relevant content. Moreover, the need for controlled and accessible graphical presentation of data was acknowledged.

[41] Stradling, quoted, Nicholls, J., 'Methods in School Textbook Research', *History Education Research Journal,* 3.2, (2003), p.6.
[42] Ibid., p.6.
[43] Nicholls, 'Methods', p.4.
[44] Ibid., p.2.

Lindmark has been a vocal critic of 'overwhelming' existing studies – namely those by Holmen – which rely upon dense tabulated data.[45]

Content analysis was selected as a suitable research framework within which to answer my key research questions. In broad terms, content analysis places emphasis on 'what is included in the text, what is omitted and why?'.[46] Krippendorff provided a fuller definition:

> analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes to ascertain its meaning and probable effect.[47]

Content analysis facilitates the interpretation of implicit and explicit information. This holistic approach was appealing, especially given the complex nuances inherent within the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Krippendorff noted how content analysis can consider discourse ('text above the level of sentences') and rhetoric ('how messages are delivered') at the same time.[48] Indeed, language is the archaeology of how societies have interpreted the past.

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[45] Lindmark, D., *Methods in Swedish History Textbooks Research* (unpublished, 2008), p.92.
[46] Nicholls, 'Methods', p.2.
[47] Krippendorff, K., *Content Analysis : An Introduction to Its Methodology* (London: Sage, 2004), p.xvii.
[48] Ibid., p.16.

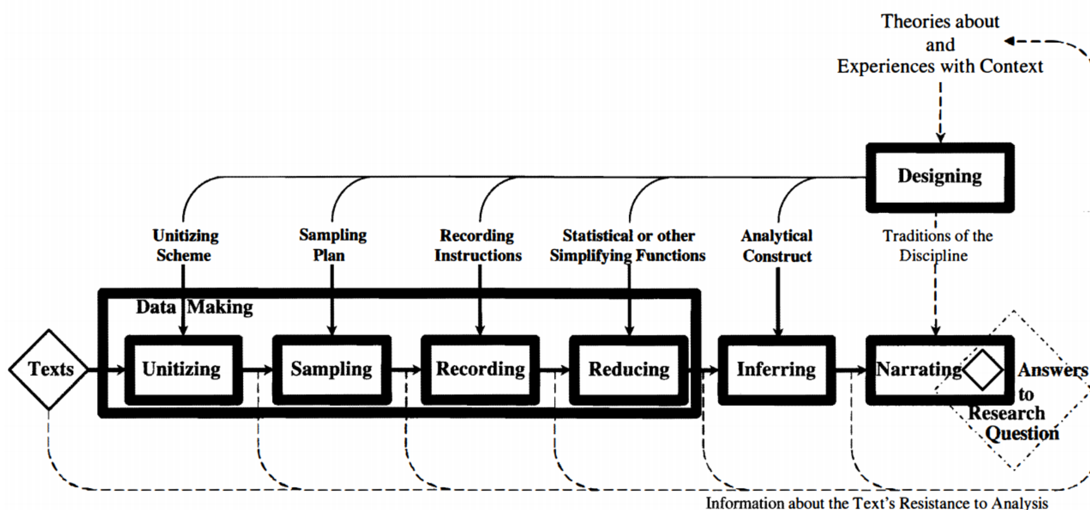

Figure 3: Diagram illustrating components of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004, p.86.)

Thematic coding also provided a workable method of unitising and categorising recurrent patterns uncovered in the source materials analysed. The 'freedom to identify units of meaning' and to 'code units of text from the books inductively' appealed to the desired framework and outcomes of this particular research project. [49] Coding provided a helpful mechanism of comparing the themes found in different source materials.

Organisation of source materials in chronological order was also a useful research mechanism. Primarily, this allowed for the identification of developments of patterns over time, and also provided a sense of logical flow to the vertical cross-section of materials selected for analysis. Pingel recommended such an approach if an 'aim is to investigate how the presentation of topics has changed over time or whether the image of a society's history, geography or political system has remained stable'.[50]

Above all, it is acknowledged that this interpretative analysis is inherently subjective. The analysis conducted was reliant on intuition, to a certain extent. It also required a

[49] Morgan, Katalin & Henning, 'Designing a Tool', p.3.

[50] Pingel, F., *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (Paris: UNESCO, 2010), p.30.

close reading of mere snippets of source material. As such, the conclusions of this research do not claim to be wholly representative of wider trends or viewpoints.

Sampling strategy

i) Printed educational materials (textbooks)

I sourced printed educational materials from either private sellers or the extensive textbook archive in the Special Collections library of the University College London Institute of Education (IoE). In the interests of originality, care was taken to avoid overlap with the textbooks analysed in existing studies by authors such as Foster.[51] Resources intended for use in the teaching of history were prioritised, although it is possible that the issue is also explored in educational resources pertaining to other school subjects, such as Religious Education.

I decided to set the temporal parameters of eligible source material as 1988 to the present day. This approach was grounded in both practical and abstract concerns. Educational materials printed before the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1988 are difficult to source. Focussing on a contained time period also allowed for a more manageable command of an extremely saturated market of educational resources, which has the potential to yield endless examples of source materials. Moreover, history education in general prior to 1988 was, naturally, less standardised. Source material from this era, as such, might be less representative of the wider British educational experiences captured by this thesis.

Indeed, in private correspondence, Eleni Karayianni – the co-author in 2017 of a study of Holocaust portrayals in English-language textbooks – substantiated my decision to focus on educational materials produced after 1988.[52] Exploration of pre-1988 textbooks in the UCL IoE archive confirmed Karayianni's inklings:

[51] For instance, Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.
[52] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.

> Before the publication of the national curriculum, schools were free to choose what topics to teach and history education was largely Anglocentric. I had a look in some of the older textbooks (beginning of the century onwards) for another small project I was involved in and they were largely about the kings and queens of England. I seriously doubt you will find any references to the Holocaust in any of the textbooks published before 1990.[53]

Although this thesis focuses broadly on the Holocaust memory culture of the United Kingdom, only materials published in the English language were considered. This was a practical decision, and does not to ignore the presence of educational materials in other languages such as Welsh.[54] My research sampled examples of materials published by each of the major educational publishing houses in the U.K (Hodder, Heinemann, Pearson and Oxford University Press). Equally, I selected examples of history textbooks relating to each of the major public examination boards (OCR, AQA and Edexcel).

In the interest of creating a varied and balanced sample, the selection pool of printed educational materials was diverse in several senses:

- *Form*: conventional textbooks were included alongside other types of books intended for use in the classroom, such as teaching handbooks, source books and revision guides.

- *Date*: within the parameters of the designated date range, examples of materials from throughout the period were selected.

- *Audience*: materials intended for each of the major age groups to which the Holocaust is commonly taught were selected (Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-Level).

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[53] Karayianni, E., Private correspondence with Daniel Adamson (5 November 2019).
[54] Welsh Government, *Resources Hwb* (2022).

- *Topic*: materials that dealt specifically with the Holocaust were examined alongside more general historical works (including textbooks on modern world History and the Second World War).

During the search process, textbooks which covered directly relevant eras (such as the Second World War) were considered alongside works which might address the Holocaust in more tangential ways (for example as part of a 'Modern World History' scheme of work).

This flexibility allowed a broad sample set to be collected, and ensured that the analysis of educational materials did not become parochial. Additionally, obtaining a temporal and topical spread of printed materials proved useful in constructing comparisons of continuity and change.

ii) Holocaust Educational Trust and Holocaust Memorial Day Trust resources

Textbooks are not the sole resources deployed in classrooms. In order to provide supplementary research material aside from school textbooks, I considered other individual educational resources for separate qualitative analysis. Specifically, the two major organisations in the landscape of British Holocaust education were of interest: the HMDT and the HET.

Both organisations have created a number of Individual educational resources, such as lesson plans and class handouts. Alongside materials that addressed the British response to the Holocaust in whole, the HMDT and HET catalogues contain resources that cover associated topics, such as the *Kindertransport*, Bergen-Belsen and Jewish refugees.

Accessibility was a key criterion in my archival search process. Selected materials needed to be relatively easily reachable by teachers (i.e., through internet or library searches), in the interests of enhancing the representativeness of the sample set collected as far as possible. Kansteiner has observed how Holocaust memory and education in

increasingly occupying digital realms.[55] Moreover, open-access teaching resources have acquired renewed importance during the COVID lockdown periods.

Limitations of the sample set

I was aware that the practice of textbook analysis does not come without caveats. Foster warned:

> In many respects England is very unusual in matters of textbook production, selection, and use… Unlike many other countries, state regulated or "approved" textbooks do not exist. Rather, individual schools, and often individual teachers, are free to choose which textbooks to purchase from the open market.[56]

The decision of *which* textbooks to choose for analysis, from a saturated market, was therefore challenging. Copies of published textbooks are often hard to source, and typically are also afforded only limited print runs. Moreover, there must also be a concomitant acknowledgment that variations in use of textbooks limits the validity of perceived 'national' trends. As Foster observed, in theory it is 'possible that hundreds of different textbooks may be used for history education at any given time'.[57] Foster also offered the balanced observation that textbooks cannot be said to 'neatly parallel' student knowledge, but rather offer a 'window into how young people learn about the Holocaust'.[58] Therefore, while Foster characterised the lack of research into textbook portrayals of the Holocaust as 'astonishing', it is perhaps understandable given the methodological challenges associated with this mode of analysis.[59] Nevertheless, it is a challenge which this thesis embraces.

[55] Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory".
[56] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals', p.22.
[57] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.317.
[58] Ibid., p.315.
[59] Ibid.

While this exploratory research project aimed to be as expansive as possible, it is acknowledged that the results produced are far from comprehensive. Moreover, given the differing functions and forms of the materials analysed, there was a concern not to rely too heavily on direct comparisons between individual sources. Instead, more general trends and patterns were sought. As indicated by their titles, different textbooks had varying chronological and geographical scope. To compare such works directly could risk constructing somewhat of a 'straw man', and ignore the discrete educational aims of different publications.

Furthermore, the exact reach of the materials selected for analysis cannot be confirmed in definite terms. Circulation figures for classroom materials are not readily available, and fail to take into account secondary exposure (such as resale and reuse). Pingel notes that, even internationally, 'official statistics on sales figures are available for only a few countries...To find out what books are most commonly used you have to rely on the experience of the teachers and booksellers'.[60] Accordingly, I consulted online educational forums and the websites of publishers to inform which source materials might be collected for this thesis.

Fundamentally, the materials selected for analysis in this thesis represent a vertical cross-section of all available resources, and is not an exhaustive survey of relevant works. As such, Pingel's assessment that 'the basic question for textbook analysis with a view of international understanding is therefore: "How does a text represent and confirm group identity"?' is perhaps too sweeping.[61] Caution must be exercised when asserting the existence of 'national' or large-scale patterns.

Research design: classroom materials

An odyssey through different archives secured some 43 English-language textbooks for investigation.[62] This sample set included a mixture of general history textbooks and Holocaust-specific publications. As detailed above, the textbooks sampled in the initial

[60] Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook*, p.30.

[61] Ibid., p.38.

[62] See bibliography for full list of textbooks examined.

research phase dated from between 1987 to 2016. Key Stage 3, GCSE and Post-16 level works were represented, as were textbooks from the major UK publishing houses (such as Hodder, Pearson, Collins and so forth). Of the 43 textbooks selected initially, 14 were designed for KS3 classrooms, 25 for GCSE, and 5 for Post-16 learning stages.

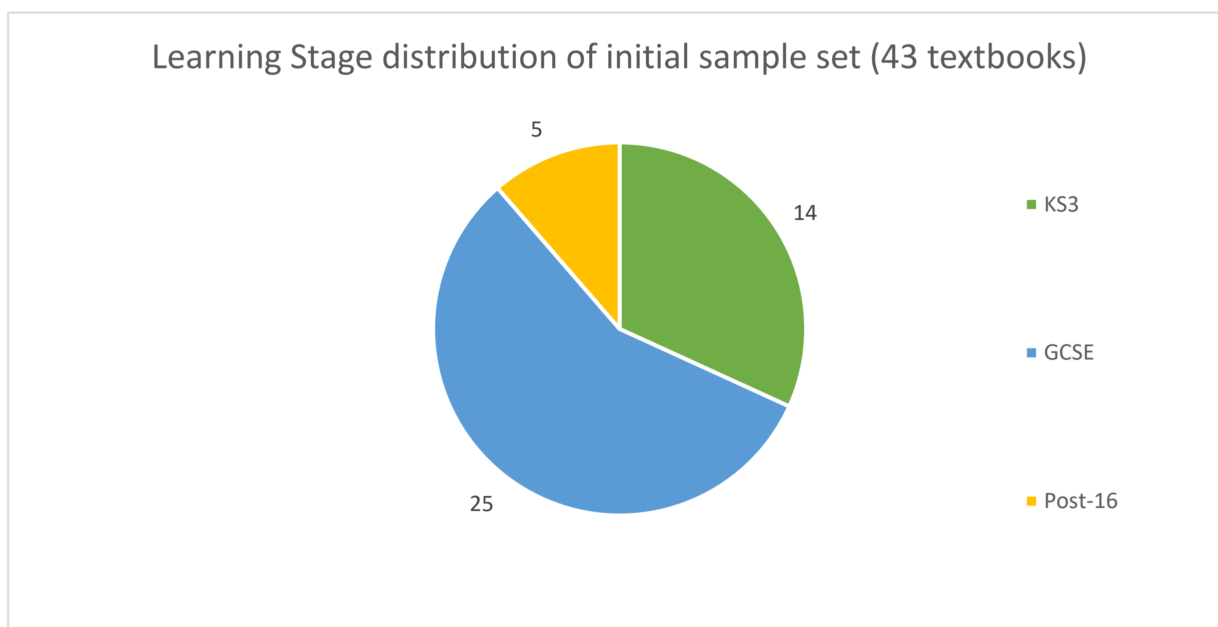


Figure 4: Chart illustrating distribution of learning-stages of initial sample set (43 textbooks).

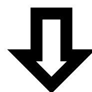
I carried out a triage exercise on the 43 acquired textbooks. Firstly, I established whether the printed materials contained any reference to the Holocaust in general. In total, 35 textbooks (81.3%) of the initial sample set were found to cover the topic of the Holocaust in some form.

Secondly, if textbooks met this criterion, I scoured relevant textbook content for mentions (in any capacity) of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. A broad analytical framework came into play here. For the purposes of this research, topics such as the Nuremberg Trials and British antisemitism were considered to be of relevance.

Following these two stages, a final set of 23 printed educational materials was taken forward for further close analysis. As such, 53.4% of the initial sample set of 43 textbooks contained engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

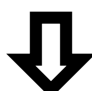
43 textbooks/printed educational materials (initial sample set)

Mention of the Holocaust?



Secondary sample set: 35 textbooks/printed educational materials (81.3%)

Mention of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust?

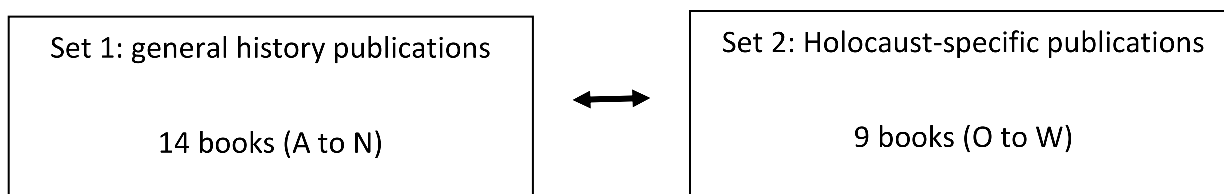


Final sample set: 23 textbooks/printed educational materials (53.4%)

Further close analysis

Figure 5: Flow chart illustrating the triage of initial textbook sample set

It must be acknowledged that textbooks within the final sample set had differing objectives and schemes of work. Accordingly, to mitigate misrepresentative comparisons between different materials, the final sample set was divided into two subsets. Set 1 contained general history textbooks, while Set 2 contained Holocaust-specific publications (as illustrated below). For ease of analysis, and to minimise unconscious bias, textbooks within Set 1 and Set 2 were arranged chronologically and assigned an anonymising alphabet letter.[63]



[63] See appendix for details of anonymised lettering and corresponding publication.

Content analysis of individual materials – according to the principles explored in this chapter – was then carried out using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. During quantitative analysis, data was converted to proportional percentages where appropriate, in recognition of the differing lengths and formats of each textbook. As such, there were measures in place to ensure standardised comparisons of sampled materials as far as possible.

A rationale for museum analysis

It would be naïve to assume that Holocaust education only takes place within the walls of classrooms. In brief, the prominent role occupied by museums in general society, coupled with the common assumption that 'authoritative' narratives are presented within them, makes them a compelling educational setting in which to explore portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. I selected two specific institutions for detailed case study in this thesis: The National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) in Nottinghamshire, and the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC) in Huddersfield. The reasons for this targeted study should become clear throughout this thesis.

Museum studies itself is a broad field. Its sprawling debates cannot be summarised satisfactorily in this thesis. However, the significance of museums as crucibles of public consciousness suggests that such institutions deserve examination. Pearce has captured this notion in the observation that 'as much as Holocaust museums and exhibitions seek to shape the cultures surrounding them, they inevitably also operate as reflections of these'.[64] In a specifically museal context, Desvallées and Mairesse have observed that 'education is the mobilisation of knowledge stemming from the museum and aimed at the development and the fulfilment of individuals, through the assimilation of this knowledge, the development of new sensitivities and the realisation of new experiences'.[65] Museums, in other words, are mediators of knowledge and historical interpretations.

[64] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.110.
[65] Desvallées, A., & Mairesse, F., *Key Concepts of Museology* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), p.31.

As educational settings, museums bridge several gaps within society. They are visited by a broad range of demographics, from students to members of the general public. Museums also provide a link between school-based education and social engagement. To a greater extent than public memorials, museums can educate and commemorate at the same time, especially if learning programme opportunities are on offer. The German scholar Huyssen has perceived an increasing closeness of the museum and public spheres. Huyssen affirmed that 'boundaries between the museum, the memorial, and the monument have indeed become fluid in the past decade in ways that render obsolete the old critique of the museum as a fortress for the few and of the monument as a medium of reification and forgetting'.[66]

Equally, empirical research has pointed to the authoritative role occupied by museums within society. Put simply, the public believes what museums present. The American sociologists Rosenzweig and Thelen conducted a survey in 1998 of over 1,500 Americans, and found that 'when asked to rate the "trustworthiness" of different sources of information about the past on a 10-point scale, museums topped the list – ahead of grandparents' stories, eyewitness testimony, college history professors, and high school teachers'.[67]

Holtschneider has suggested that museums also occupy a noteworthy position within constructions of national identity. Exhibitions are said to be 'understood and treated by their staff and the public as official and authoritative statements of a nation or a community about the subject matter displayed'.[68] This conclusion would suggest that museal depictions of the Holocaust can offer further insights into conceptions of 'Britishness'. Equally, given the 'political attention and public funding they receive', museums can also present an indication of the contemporary concerns of the societies within which they operate.[69]

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[66] Huyssen, quoted, Cesarani, D., 'Should Britain Have a National Holocaust Museum?', *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 7(3), (1998), p.25.

[67] Berenbaum, M., & Skolnik, F., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), p.432.

[68] Holtschneider, K.H.,*The Holocaust and representations of Jews : history and identity in the museum* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p.2.

[69] Ibid.

Marshman suggested, correspondingly, that Holocaust museums should be treated with historical caution. Marsham asserted 'memory of an event is just as constructed in a museum exhibit as it is within testimony or popular cultural representation', and as such 'the faith we place in museums to tell us the "true story" of the past may be misplaced'.[70] The institutionalisation of Holocaust education – through organisations such as the HET and HMDT - may have lent an air of authority to depictions of the genocide within museums, which is not always warranted.

Inspiration: existing museum analyses

Existing studies of Holocaust museums offered guidance for suitable research methods. Stiles used interviews with museum staff to good effect, to obtain a sense of the internal mission of the IWM during the development of the Holocaust Exhibition (IWMHE).[71] Innovatively, not only did Stiles examine the materials of the exhibition itself, but also delved into its planning archives. This allowed for a sense of the debates that surrounded the inception of the exhibition, rather than a sole focus on the end product. While engaging with museum exhibits, research for this thesis could benefit from asking 'why?' and 'how?' exhibitions were created, alongside exploring their actual educational contents.

'Where?' is an additional question which might be posed. For Lawson, a major issue was the location, rather than the content, of the IWMHE. The placement of the narrative of the Holocaust within a building which, by its nature, celebrates a glorified interpretation of British military adventures was deemed inappropriate.[72] Even before setting foot in the exhibition, Lawson suspected that the IWMHE, as a state institution in London, would ultimately validate the existing British sense of self and its past. Indeed,

[70] Marshman, *From testimony to the culture industry*, p.120.

[71] Stiles., E., *Narrative, Object, Witness: The Story of the Holocaust as Told by the Imperial War Museum*, unpublished doctoral thesis, (Winchester: University of Winchester, 2016).

[72] Lawson, T., 'Ideology in a Museum of Memory: A Review of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum'. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 4*(2), (2003), p.174.

geographical location and regional variation emerged as a key consideration in my own analysis of the HELC and NHCM within this project.

Meanwhile, Holtschneider has adopted attractive analytical techniques inspired by the 'New Museology' school of thought.[73] Notably, examination of curatorial practice was blended effectively with exploration of the semiotics of exhibition content. Broader overviews were therefore complemented by more precise close examination of specific detail. To a greater degree than Stiles, Holtschneider was also able to link the development of the IWMHE to wider cultural and political circumstances. This was achieved through adherence to the central recognition of a museum as 'a social-political institution with a complex history', of which 'questions regarding its purpose' must be asked.[74]

Existing literature has also highlighted how absences in museums can also be revealing. A *lack* of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust might reveal as much about contemporary society as the limited depictions that *do* exist.

Research framework and methodology

The field of museum studies is extensive. It has already been acknowledged that this thesis does not centre on museology alone, but rather considers the place of museums within a wider survey of portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. As such, *Section II* represents a respectful gesture towards the practice of museology. I recognise that I borrowed only certain elements of the practice to address the research topic in question. In this sense, I used museum analysis as a tool – rather than the keystone – of the wider educational issues considered by this thesis.

This research centres around two specific institutions: the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC) in Huddersfield, and the National Holocaust Centre and Museum

[73] Holtschneider*, The Holocaust and representations of Jews*.
[74] Ibid., p.13.

(NHCM) in Laxton, Nottinghamshire. The decision to deploy exploratory case studies of two selected museums was informed by both conceptual and practical considerations.

In an abstract sense, study of the HELC and NHCM offers an original contribution to the field of British Holocaust memory studies. As outlined in the review of existing literature, analysis of Holocaust memory in English museums has hitherto focussed largely on London-based establishments, namely the IWMHE. This thesis seeks to re-orientate the geographic axis of analysis by exploring museums in more northern locations within the United Kingdom. Given the relative recency of the opening of both the HELC (2017) and NHCM (1995), there was also an opportunity to survey emerging – rather than long-established – public educational environments. However, with the choice of targeted case-study came an unavoidable limit on representativeness. As such, this research does not purport to speak for wider trends, either in a national or museal context. However, this research *does* offer a contribution to broader understandings of Holocaust memory in Britain, alongside portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust itself.

The IWM in London is infused with nationalism. To all intents and purposes, the IWM is a mechanism of preserving memory of national military engagements. It is inescapable that the IWM was founded as a national institution, and indeed was mandated by an Act of Parliament in 1920. To the present day, the museum is funded by state grants, and operates as a non-departmental public body under the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. At the time of writing, the board of the museum is led by Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, while other board members are typically appointed on the advice of either the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, or the Culture Secretary. Even so, Young noted that 'once created, memorials take on lives of their own, often stubbornly resistant to the state's original intensions'.[75]

As such, both the NHCM and the HELC represented opportunities to explore more independent British narratives of the Holocaust that have been constructed in the comparative absence of overarching nationalistic influences. Stephen D. Smith, founder

[75] Young, *The texture of memory*, p.3.

of the NHCM, noted that his Centre has never been driven by a '"passing need to express a particular narrative"'.[76] Unlike the IWM, there is clear water between state bodies and the centres in Nottinghamshire and Huddersfield. Of course, this is not to deny other factors which may have shaped the historical narratives presented in each respective museum. Indeed, original interviews with museum staff revealed such pressures.

In a more pragmatic sense, selection of just two museums acknowledged the constraints on this thesis. This thesis focuses on a specific aspect of Holocaust memory: the *British response* to the genocide. Given the focused nature of this enquiry, close examination of two case studies offered a workable framework within which research could be undertaken. Accordingly, I prioritised permanent museum installations, rather than temporary exhibitions. In doing so, a greater sense of the *sustained* interpretation of the British response to the Holocaust could be acquired.

Methodology: museum analysis

Within the practice of museology, there is a range of analytical methods which might theoretically be employed. However, it was apparent that there is not a 'perfect' research model of museum analysis. Each method has its limitations. Equally, by not evaluating each museum against a rigid set of criteria, it was more practical to combine multiple different methods throughout the analysis process.

i) Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis emerged as the most suitable framework within which to examine the exhibition content of relevant museum portrayals. Dodd *et al* have provided a concise summary of the practice: 'the attempt to understand the interpretations and meanings that people make about the world and their experiences, as far as possible, from their perspective'.[77] While quantitative analysis has its merits in some instances of museology – such as gauging 'energy efficiency, per visitor gross sales income, marketing

[76] Smith, quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.97.
[77] Jocelyn D., Jones, C., & Tseliou, M., *Voices from the Museum: Qualitative Research Conducted in Europe's National Museums*, EuNaMus Report No 6 (Stockholm: Linkoping, 2012), p.35.

efficiency' – its deployment is perhaps better suited to more scientific investigations that those in this thesis.[78]

Qualitative analysis, by its very nature, requires interpretation. However, given that a primary objective of this research was to study in detail the different interpretations of the British response to the Holocaust, the emphasis placed by qualitative analysis on subjective judgment and exploratory reasoning seemed appropriate. The task of exploring the construction of meaning in museums further lent upon techniques such as content analysis, as used in relation to textbooks in *Section I*.[79]

Qualitative analysis is often an interdisciplinary process. Indeed, this thesis is concerned with both the content *and* form of different portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. As such, a holistic approach to museum analysis was adopted that sought to incorporate both the information presented by exhibitions alongside the environment it inhabited. Thomas, for example, has correspondingly suggested that 'outline aspects of curatorial work, such as captioning objects and juxtaposing them in displays, may have more suggestive dimensions than has been recognized previously'.[80] In a more physical sense, Samson *et al* have identified certain locations within exhibitions – 'simplified paths, stop-points, surprise-points' – that possess particular significance. As far as possible, therefore, the aesthetics and layouts of each museum were considered alongside its exhibition content.[81]

It was therefore important to adopt a rounded framework which allowed for the contextualisation of different exhibits within museums as a whole. Again, Thomas has articulated the fact that 'objects are seldom exhibited on their own', and the subsequent need for researchers to 'ask what it [an exhibit] goes with, what it may be placed in a series with, or what it may be opposed to'.[82] In other words, a balance was

[78] Basso, A., & Funari, S., 'A Quantitative Approach To Evaluate The Relative Efficiency Of Museums'. *Journal Of Cultural Economics*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (2004), p.197.
[79] Krippendorff, *Content Analysis* .
[80] Thomas, N., 'The museum as method', *Museum Anthropology, 33*(1), (2010), p.6.
[81] Eidelman, J. & Samson, D., 'Elements of a Methodology for Museum Evaluation', *Visitor Studies* , 4.1, (1992), p.138.
[82] Thomas, 'The museum as method', p.6.

required between examining individual exhibits in isolation, and linking such objects to their wider situation within the narrative presented by each museum.

ii) <u>Interviews</u>

One-on-one interviews offered a useful mechanism through which to probe in depth the attitudes and objectives of key individual figures involved in the operations of each museum. It seemed important to have some method to explore the reasons *why* certain interpretations have been created – or maintained – in selected museums. Scratching beneath the surface of museum exhibitions is a way of contextualising and explaining presentations of the past.

My approach to research required flexibility. Through extensive survey of existing interview-based studies, Roulston has suggested that 'interviews often do not proceed as planned, and that researchers must continuously deal with challenges as they arise during interviews.[83] Equally, there was a concern to allow conversation to develop around certain topics as required, depending on the different individual experiences of each interviewee. Accordingly, semi-structured interview was the most appropriate approach. Although a central list of key questions provided a useful structural framework for interviews, the willingness to deviate from prescribed topics also allowed for spontaneous exploration of areas of particular interest.

To this end, I selected open-ended questions, primarily.[84] Although eliciting such detailed answers entailed thorough analysis – in the form of transcription and similar – it was a worthwhile approach to generate responses that contained real depth. Nevertheless, the language used in questions required careful attention. As Gillham has noted, a 'point you have to watch is that your questions are genuinely open, i.e., that they don't signal the desirability or the expectation of a particular

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[83] Roulston, K., 'Working through Challenges in Doing Interview Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 10*(4), (2011), p.349.

[84] See appendix for an example of semi-structured interview guide questions.

answer'.[85] As far as possibility, the use of neutral questioning language appeared prudent, to avoid any unconscious bias.

As with any qualitative practice, a certain degree of speculation is required. In order to delve beneath the surface of interviewee answers, responses must be interpreted, rather than simply recorded. Gillham again observed, perceptively, that 'a meaningful analysis of what people have said' requires the researcher 'to construct categories which bring together what they [interviewees] have expressed …and make judgements about latent meaning, i.e., what they "meant" by what they said'.[86]

Table 2.1 Is a face-to-face interview appropriate, necessary or possible?

No if	*Yes* if
Large numbers of people are involved	Small numbers of people are involved
People are widely dispersed	People are accessible
Most of the questions are 'closed', i.e predictable, factual	Most of the questions are 'open' and require an extended response with prompts and probes
A 100 per cent response is not necessary	Everyone is 'key' and you can't afford to lose any
The material is not particularly subtle or sensitive	The material is sensitive in character so that trust is involved
You want to preserve anonymity	Anonymity is not an issue, though confidentiality may be
Breadth and representativeness of data are central	Depth of meaning is central, with only some approximation to typicality
Research aims are factual and summary in character	Research aims mainly require insight and understanding

Figure 6: Table entitled *Is a face-to-face interview appropriate, necessary or possible?* (Gillham, 2000, p.11). The table proved instructive in the decision to pursue interview as a research method.

[85] Gillham, B., *The research interview*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), p.49.

[86] Ibid., p.69.

To an extent, the interdisciplinary methods of this thesis might address existing critiques associated with memory studies and oral history. Oral history has been seen to avoid engagement with the public dimensions of memory, whilst memory studies suffer from a preoccupation with 'collective trauma, national history and heritage, grand-scale ritualistic social practices and macro-cultural memory, rather than with individual and small group micro-processes of remembering'.[87] The methods I employ in Section II of this thesis, in particular, reconcile the surface narratives of educational settings with the human decisions which underpin them. In doing so, I acknowledge Gillis' warning that memories which may appear 'consensual', such as in museums, are 'in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and, in some instances, annihilation'.[88] Equally, in considering how portrayals of the Holocaust might be *received*, my analysis heeds Kansteiner's advice to avoid neglecting the audiences of the representations in question.[89] This thesis balances the outward projections of cultural memory with the granular human influences which underpin Holocaust education.

Ethical considerations

Research was carried out in accordance with the guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA).[90] The project received ethical approval from Durham University and from each respective museum. Human participation was entirely voluntary, and the option of anonymity was offered. Participants were issued with approved Information Sheets and Consent Forms.[91] I stored data stored securely, and retained it only for the duration of the research project.

[87] Bosch, M., *Memory studies: a brief concept paper*, unpublished concept paper, University of Leeds (2016), p.5.

[88] Gillis, J., *Commemorations: The politics of national identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1996), p.5.

[89] Kansteiner 'Finding meaning in memory'.

[90] British Educational Research Association (BERA), *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition* (13 August 2019).

[91] See appendix for blank copies of Information Sheet and consent form.

SECTION I: THE CLASSROOM AS EDUCATIONAL SETTING

PRÉCIS – REPRESENTATIONS AND REINTERPRETATIONS

> *If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us.*
>
> - Samuel Taylor Coleridge (18 December 1831), *Table Talk* (London, 1835).

It is difficult to understate the importance of the classroom in children's development. It is an environment where they learn; grow; form their worldviews.

This section explores portrayals - in published classroom materials - of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[1] Its analysis centres on resources designed to support students and teachers, and revolves around the school as an educational setting. This research contributes a specific focus on presentations of the British response to the Holocaust. Previous studies have primarily considered educational depictions of the entire Holocaust as a historical topic. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, I interrogate portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in a sampled collection of history textbooks and individual classroom resources produced by the HET and HMDT. This contributes a valuable legacy survey of an educational medium which soon might not exist in physical form.[2]

The limitations of the sample set are acknowledged. Overall, however, it was found that engagement – in some form – with Britain and the Holocaust occurred more frequently than initially expected. Regardless, coverage of the British response to the Holocaust was commonly cursory, and lacking in substantial depth. The temporal, geographical

[1] See bibliography for full details of primary sources.

[2] BBC News, 'Education publisher Pearson to phase out print textbooks'.

and abstract parameters of the subject area were typically limited. In general, a relatively mild tone of language characterised several different portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Nevertheless, certain publications did demonstrate a willingness to interpret British history in more critical terms. There was not a prevailing focus, necessarily, on redemptive aspects of British involvement in the Holocaust, such as the *Kindertransport*.

Within a wider historiographical framework, sampled educational materials displayed only partial conformity to existing paradigms of British Holocaust memory. As such, educational materials appeared to have been influenced by external cultural factors to a limited degree. For example, glorification of the British role in the Second World War occurred only in a handful of instances. Equally, within classroom resources, a noteworthy issue appeared not to be the reluctance to engage in any national self-reflective history at all, but rather the depth of this approach. This analysis made the intriguing discovery that the predominance of either a triumphal national mythology or a general 'amnesia' of the Holocaust was not as widespread as might be suggested by existing literature.

On a broader pedagogical plane, my research also raised a number of thought-provoking issues, which are interwoven throughout. Namely, the very purposes and means of Holocaust education itself were thrown into sharp focus. At its heart, my analysis exposed a key limitation of recent experiences of school-based education: a curriculum which promotes learning and knowledge as a box-ticking exercise in the fast-paced pursuit of factual information.

CHAPTER 3 - 'OFFICIAL' HISTORIES? AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

Earlier, I outlined the importance of textbooks in school settings. In everyday speech, even the adjective 'textbook' implies authority; lucidity; tradition. I also explained the design of my analysis of this crucial educational tool.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis of the sampled textbooks provides a useful surface sense of the general trends across educational portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. This methodological approach supplies a superficial impression of general patterns, which can be substantiated by subsequent close qualitative analysis. Often, graphical representation of statistical data can speak for itself. However, I supply explanatory commentary below in the interests of clarity.

Overall, I found more coverage of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust within history textbooks than expected. The British response to the Holocaust was not entirely ignored as a topic. After all, of the 35 books from the initial sample set that were actually found to cover the Holocaust, 23 of these also provided at least some mention of the role played by Britain during the period. However, the characteristic brevity with which the latter topic was covered suggested a lack of sustained engagement within the educational materials surveyed. Such a trope appeared particularly pronounced in comparison with the coverage in the same source materials of other aspects of British history and contemporaneous events (such as the Second World War).

Quantitative analysis of history textbooks reinforced a perception – identified in existing historiography – that the history of Britain and the history of the Holocaust have been separated within some educational settings.[1] In a broader sense, this quantitative analysis highlighted the role which textbooks are designed to play in classroom settings. Textbooks are effective at providing pacy overviews of broad historical topics, but often lack the space and resources to facilitate sustained critical analysis. As educational

[1] See Reynolds, 'The Two World Wars'.

resources, textbooks are thus perhaps *not* best placed to be used as learning materials when teaching about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

Distribution of learning stages

A screening process of 43 textbooks yielded 35 books that covered the Holocaust. Of these 35 publications, 23 mentioned the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in some guise. The charts below illustrate the learning-stage distribution of these books that addressed the Holocaust and the British response, respectively.

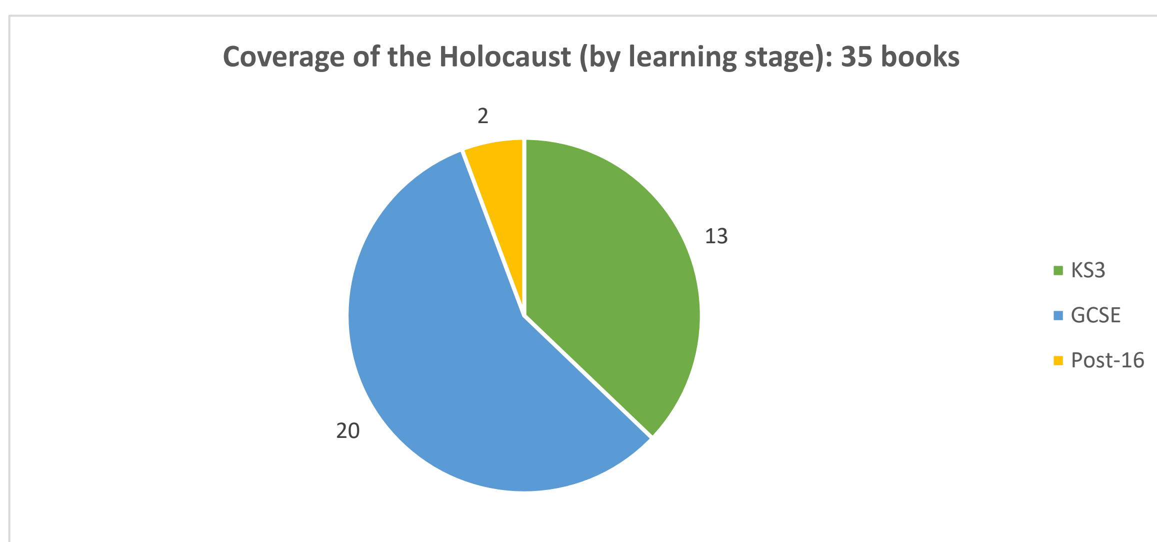


Figure 7: Chart illustrating number of books within which there is coverage of the Holocaust (by learning stage).

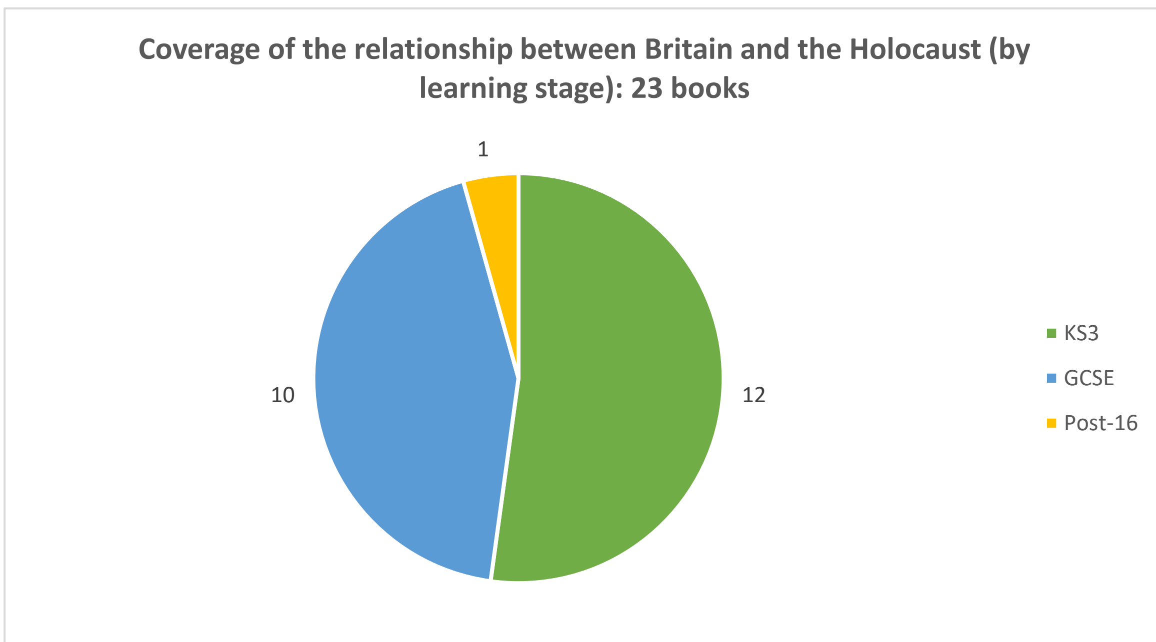


Figure 8: Chart illustrating number of books within which there is coverage of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust (by learning stage).

Comparison of the differences between these two charts offers intriguing suggestions regarding the distribution of coverage both of the Holocaust and the British response to the genocide. Naturally, the uneven distribution of learning stages represented within the initial sample set of 43 textbooks should remain in mind (14 KS3, 25 GCSE, and 5 Post-16). Proportionately, however, both the Holocaust itself and its relationship with Britain found more frequent representation at KS3 level than at GCSE or Post-16 level. This in itself is perhaps unsurprising, given that the Holocaust is a mandatory element of the National Curriculum in England and Wales

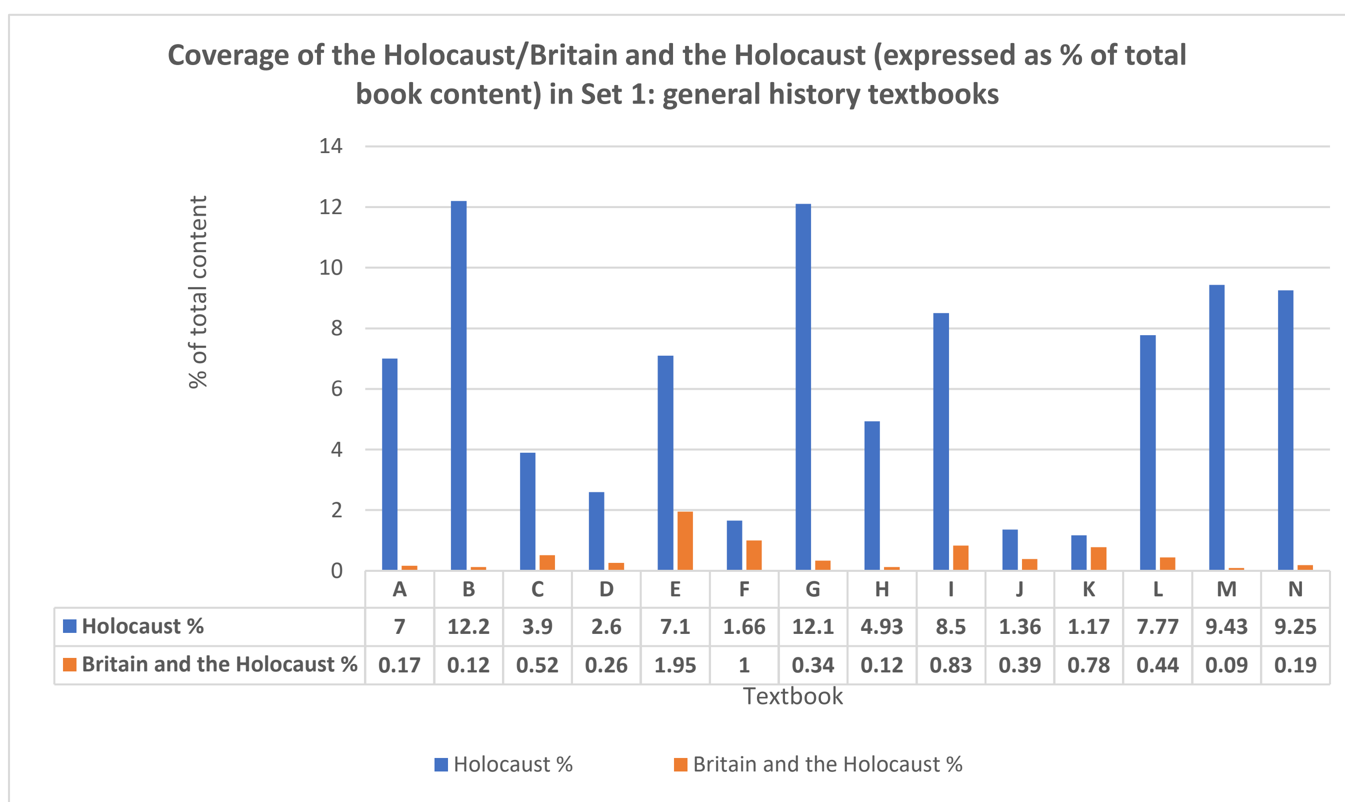
to KS3 level. Nevertheless, it suggests that students might have less chance of encountering either topic after the age of roughly 14 years-old. Moreover, as further qualitative analysis demonstrated, KS3 textbooks commonly conveyed more superficial and simplified accounts of the Holocaust than GCSE or Post-16 counterparts.

The distribution of topics by age group within the set of sampled textbooks hints that students could only engage with the complex issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust at an earlier educational stage, when the scope for deep critical evaluation is more limited. By extension, it could be concluded from the above results that students' engagement with the Holocaust – and its relationship with Britain – is

commonly confined to more simplified narratives by virtue of the younger ages at which such learning takes place.

Content coverage

Given the differing objectives, schemes of work, and intended audiences of the 23 books that were found to contain mention of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, some variation in the amount of total content devoted to the topic is to be expected. However, charting the proportional expressions of the extent to which both the Holocaust and the British response form parts of the overall content of textbooks is one mechanism of exploring the dynamics of educational portrayals. In gauging the amount of content coverage per topic, approximate total page space (including fractions of pages) was taken into account. In the interests of standardisation (due to the differing lengths of each textbook), the below figures are expressed as percentages of the sum pages of books.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Holocaust %	7	12.2	3.9	2.6	7.1	1.66	12.1	4.93	8.5	1.36	1.17	7.77	9.43	9.25
Britain and the Holocaust %	0.17	0.12	0.52	0.26	1.95	1	0.34	0.12	0.83	0.39	0.78	0.44	0.09	0.19

Figure 9: Chart illustrating coverage of the Holocaust and the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust (expressed as a percentage of total textbook content) in Set 1 (general history textbooks*)*.

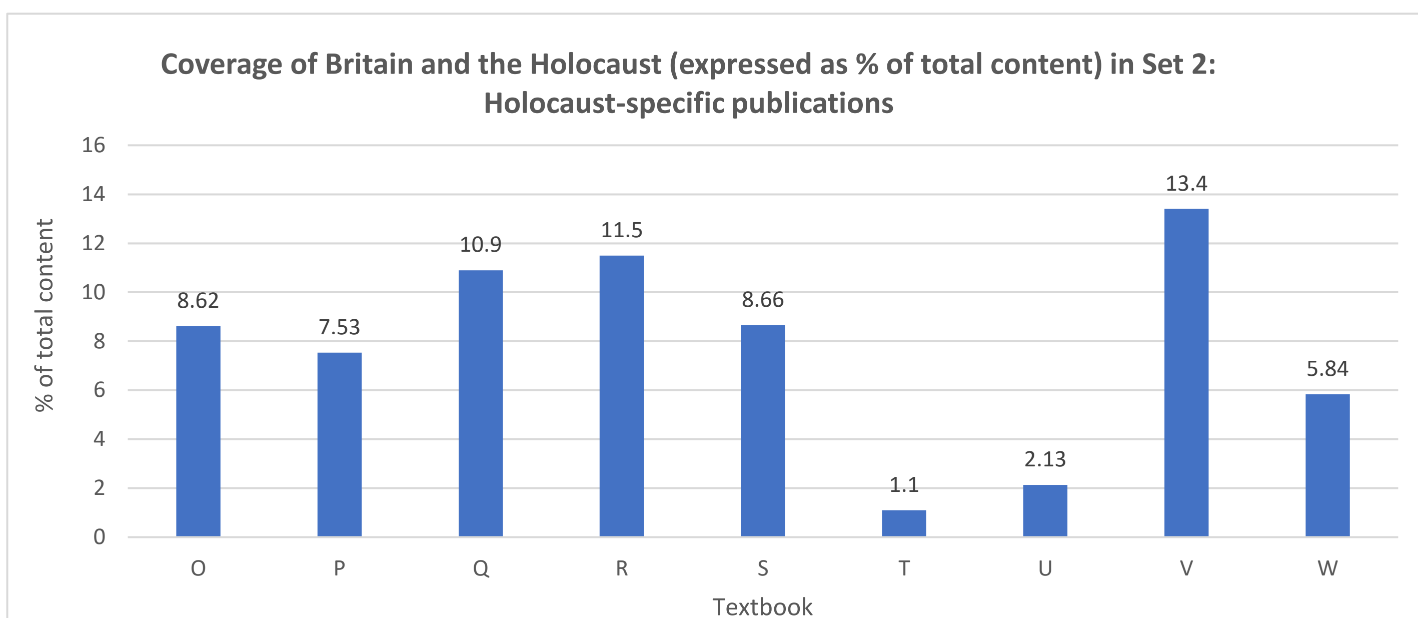


Figure 10: Chart illustrating coverage of the Holocaust and the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust (expressed as a percentage of total textbook content) in Set 2 (Holocaust-specific textbooks).

As these two charts illustrate, the approximate amount of space devoted to consideration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was small in both Set 1 (general history textbooks) and Set 2 (Holocaust-specific publications). In Set 1, the Holocaust formed on average 6.4% of total textbook content, while the topic of Britain and the Holocaust occupied 0.51% of total textbook page space. In Set 2, within books devoted to the Holocaust alone, the British response formed on average 7.74% of total page content.

These results hint at wider trends within textbook portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Although the topic is not neglected in its entirety, it forms only a small fraction of general coverage either of the Holocaust or wider time periods. Even within Holocaust-specific textbooks published in the United Kingdom, national involvement in the genocide is seemingly deemed a secondary issue. Throughout the textbooks sampled, continental European experiences of the Holocaust were afforded much greater coverage than those in Britain. Again, this was not unexpected, given the practical historical realities of the Holocaust. Continental Europe was the primary theatre of the Holocaust. Yet, equally, it is misleading to present the impression that the Holocaust has no relevance to the British historical narrative.

Moreover, given that the textbooks in each set are ordered chronologically (from earliest to latest date of publication), the absence of general trend lines in the above charts is noticeable. In other words, between 1993 and 2016, the amount of coverage lent to either the Holocaust or its relationship with Britain does not seem to have followed any definitive patterns. The topics have become neither more nor less central to wider schemes of historical content. This is a curious trope, given the contrasting way in which the profile of Holocaust education as a whole has increased over the years. The crescendo of the Holocaust education movement in the early 2000s – as perceived by Pearce and others – did not coincide with a significant increase in the amount of related coverage in the sampled textbooks from the same period, such as books K (2001), L (2004), R (2001) and S (2003).[2] In this regard, these findings found a certain alignment with the conclusion found in Foster and Karayianni's study of history textbooks (2017) that 'it is almost as if the majority of textbook publishers and authors have operated within a vacuum which has generally inured them against external influences'.[3] This is perhaps both an advantage and a disadvantage. Although seemingly immune from external cultural pressures, textbooks might also lack the ability to react to the shifting sands of historical memory. Recently, for example, there have been greater calls for more critical engagement with the British historical record on issues such as slavery and colonialism.[4]

Nevertheless, the frequency with which Britain and the Holocaust appeared, however briefly, in textbooks challenges the notion that there is a cloak of silence shrouding British educational memories of national involvement in the Holocaust. Indeed, Levi and Rothberg have theorised the unavoidable 'cultural lag' between the actual occurrence of historical events and the formation of sufficient vocabulary to describe them.[5] The two authors argued that 'the lack of a widespread consciousness of the murder of European Jews as a distinctive and unprecedented event should not . . . be confused with silence'.[6] Rather, within the textbooks sampled, the primary issue was one of

[2] See Pearce, 'In The Thick of It'.
[3] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.319.
[4] Muldoon, J., 'Academics: it's time to get behind decolonising the curriculum', *The Guardian* (20 March 2019).
[5] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.11.
[6] Levi & Rothberg, quoted in Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.11.

depth. Subsequent qualitative analysis revealed that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust only occasionally exceeded cursory mention, and was rarely probed in critical detail.

Thematic distribution

Within the content of the analysed textbooks, the recurrence of several key historical themes emerged:

- *1930s British society/politics*: including responses to Nazism and the decision to enter the Second World War in 1939.
- *Refugeeism*: including the Evian Conference (1938) and the internment of 'enemy' aliens.
- *The Kindertransport*
- *Wartime knowledge*: the extent to which Britain and other Allied powers were aware of the Holocaust during the Second World War.
- *Wartime action*: the measures which Britain took/did not take during the war, including the 1944 Auschwitz bombing debate.
- *Liberation of camps*: Bergen-Belsen in particular.
- *Justice:* notably the British involvement in the Nuremberg Trials.
- *Holocaust memory:* how the Holocaust has been remembered and contested in post-war Britain.

Quantitative methods offer a mechanism for mapping the summary distribution of different aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust within educational portrayals. Through the use of thematic coding, it is possible to create a tally of the frequency with which each theme occurred within the sampled textbooks.

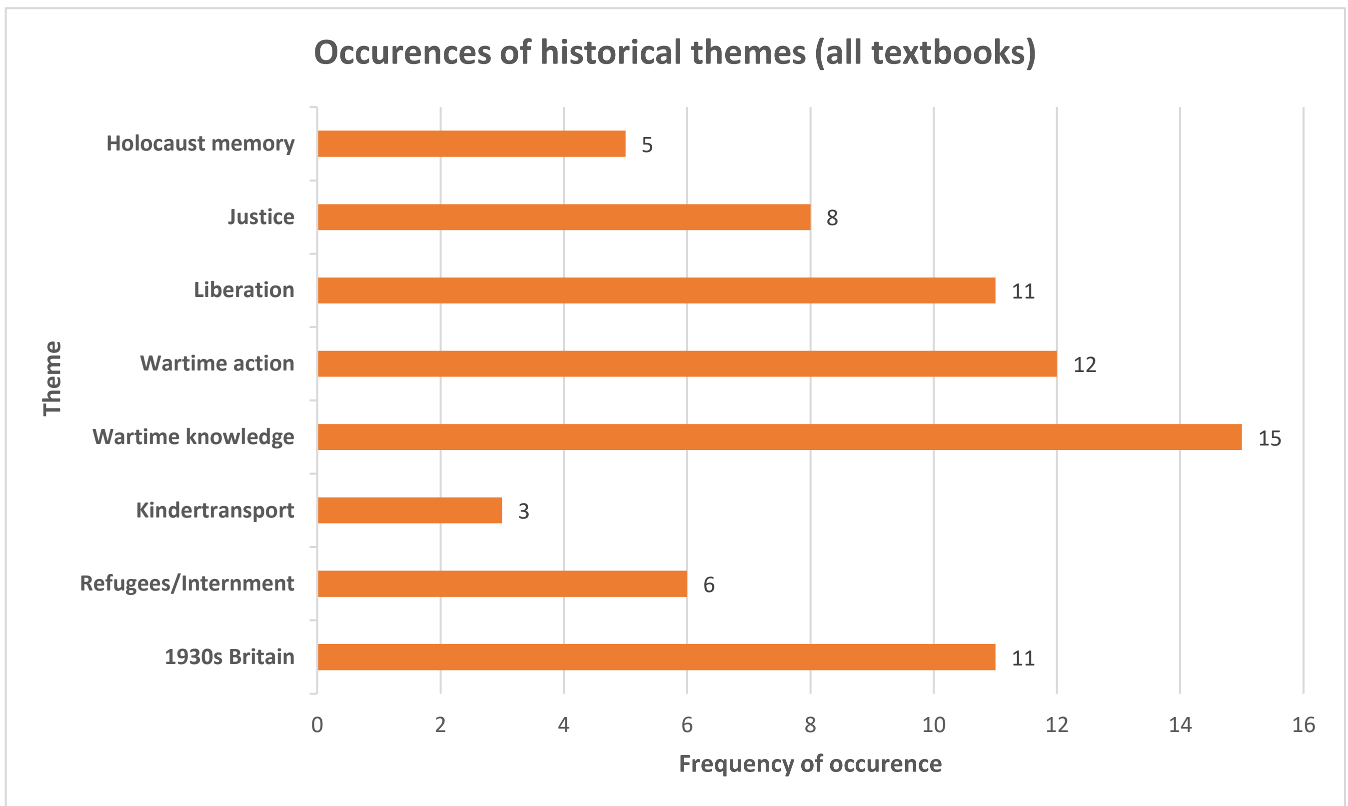


Figure 11: Chart illustrating the frequency of occurrence of different historical themes across textbook portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

The results of such investigation – as illustrated by the above chart – were somewhat unexpected. Several commentators have theorised a trend within British Holocaust memory towards the avoidance of the more troublesome historical aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[7] For example, Bloxham has identified a longstanding institutional reluctance towards historical self-reflection: a refusal to 'turn the mirror around'.[8] The problematic dimensions of the British response to the Holocaust have not historically sat easily alongside more triumphalist narratives of the defeat of the Nazi regime.

However, within the sampled textbooks, the uncomfortable facets of the British response recurred with equal – if not greater – coverage than more obviously redemptive episodes. The considerable extent of governmental awareness of the Holocaust during the Second World War was the theme that occurred most frequently.

[7] See Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.144.
[8] Bloxham, quoted in Sharples & Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*, p.203.

In close second place were mentions of the limited scope of the actions taken by Britain to counteract the Holocaust during the war, including the decision not to bomb the Auschwitz camps in 1944. Events which intuitively cast British involvement in a more positive light received more limited attention. The rescue of nearly 10,000 Jewish children through the *Kindertransport* scheme was, in fact, the least common theme within textbooks. Coverage of the British role in liberating concentration camps was also far from extensive. In other words, narratives traditionally associated with national self-congratulation did not receive greater coverage than thornier topics.

Yet, the clustering of theme occurrences surrounding wartime events is also revealing. In the sampled textbooks, it was the events of 1939 to 1945 (wartime knowledge, wartime action and liberation) which recurred most often. Only to a limited degree was the narrative of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust extended beyond the temporal parameters of the Second World War, in either direction. At face value, this would suggest a certain assimilation of Holocaust history into the history of the Second World War, along with a possible failure to detach the discrete periodisations of each event. It also points towards the pervasion of a certain decontextualisation. Clearly, only in some cases are the wartime events of the Holocaust foregrounded by exploration of pre-war conditions. Equally, limited consideration is afforded to the place of the Holocaust in post-war society and memory.

Overall, any thematic tally can only provide an imperfect impression of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. Mere occurrence of a theme is not indicative of the depth or tone with which it is actually explored within a textbook. Nevertheless, the superficial distribution of themes within this set of textbooks implies a depiction of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which is neither airbrushed nor valorised.

Stratifications within the distribution of historical themes can be probed further. There was variety in the intended audiences of the textbooks sampled. Publications were targeted at either KS3, GCSE, or Post-16 students. Quantification of themes by learning stage (as a percentage of overall total age-group coverage of themes) offers a way of capturing the differing historical priorities of each category of textbook.

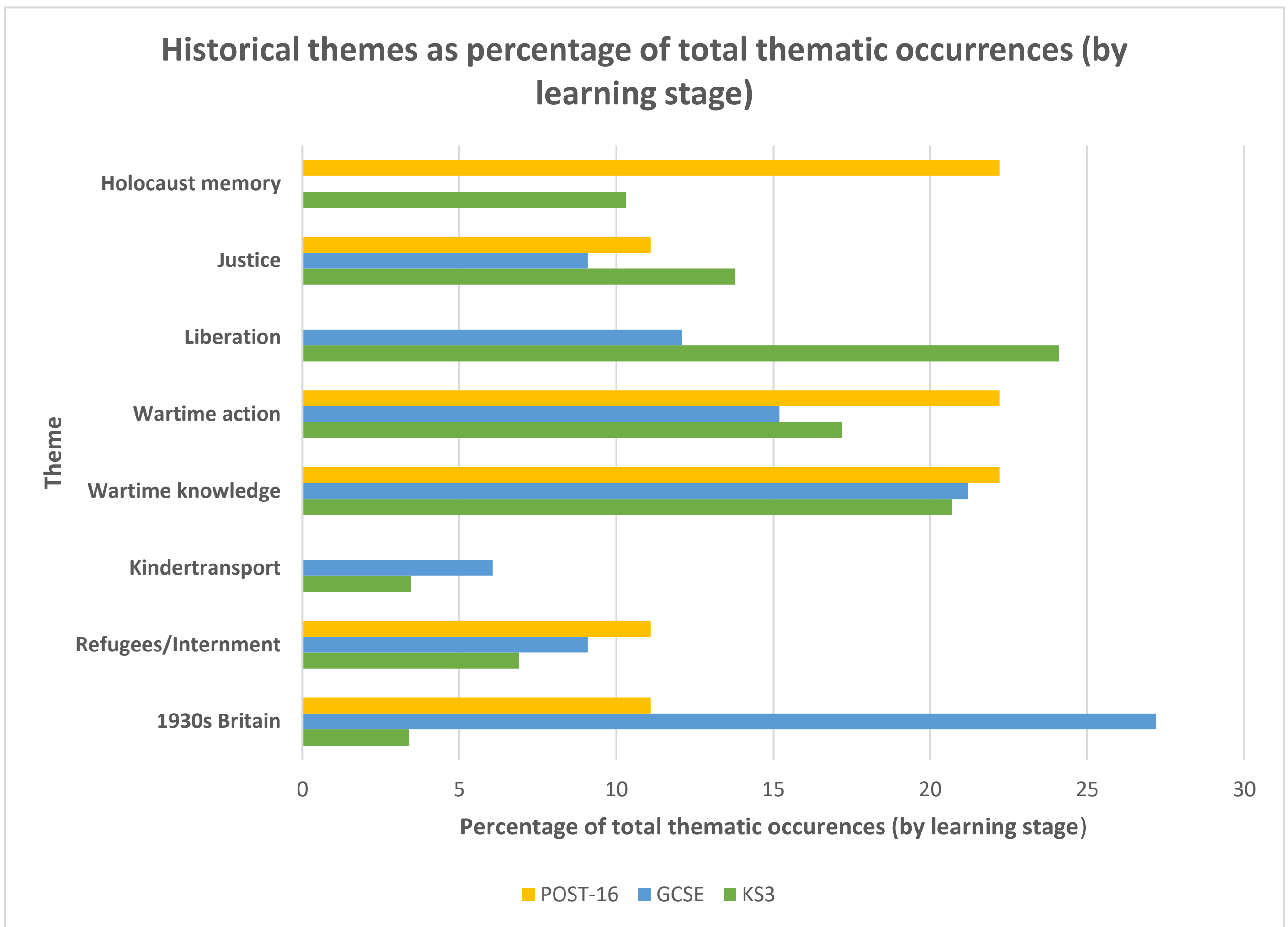


Figure 12: Chart illustrating distribution of themes by learning stage (expressed as a percentage of each learning stage's total tally of thematic occurrences).

The above chart demonstrates that distribution of themes across different learning stages was not entirely uniform. For KS3 students, emphasis was placed on wartime events, specifically the extent of Allied knowledge of the Holocaust and the liberation of concentration camps. Pre-war aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust received proportionately little attention. At GCSE level, there was a noticeably strong consideration of the British responses to Nazism and the Holocaust during the 1930s. But the post-war aspects (justice and Holocaust memory) of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were most commonly explored in Post-16 textbooks.

To an extent, such limitations can be explained by the differing curricular stipulations encountered at each educational stage. GCSE courses commonly include the Holocaust (and the British response) as part of schemes of work relating to interwar diplomacy or

depth studies of Germany between 1918 and 1945.[9] Iterations of the National Curriculum at KS3 level, meanwhile, have variously incorporated the Holocaust into study of the 'era of the Second World War' or 'the twentieth century world', which perhaps more obviously lend themselves towards study of the Second World War alone.[10]

Table 1. The Holocaust in the National Curriculum.

National Curriculum	Prescribed Content	Holocaust included in:	Holocaust framed as:
1991	Five core units and three supplementary units	Core study unit 5: "The Era of the Second World War"	An "experience of war," alongside "the home front in Britain" and "the dropping of the atomic bombs"[a]
1995	Six study units	Core study unit: "The Twentieth Century World"	A "main event" of the twentieth century[b]
1999	Six main areas of study	Area of study: "A World Study after 1900"	One of the four specified "significant events" after 1900 alongside the two World Wars and the Cold War[c]
2007	Two categories: (a) British history (with five areas of focus) and (b) European and world history (with two areas of focus)	Second area of focus within European and world history	Part of the study on conflict and cooperation between countries and people which included "the nature and impact of the two World Wars and the Holocaust"[d]
2013	Seven study units	Study unit about "Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day"	The *only* topic that pupils are required to study[e]

Figure 13: Table of National Curriculum iterations since 1991 (Foster & Karayianni, 2017, p.320.)

The results of thematic distribution by learning stage illustrated in the chart above carry certain implications. Older schoolchildren might be perceived as more reflective. Yet in a surface sense, there is no discernible expectation that younger students might be shielded from more uncomfortable topics. Subsequent qualitative analysis of portrayals of British wartime knowledge and actions showed that critical interpretation was not altogether avoided either.

However, there seems to be a certain illogicality in the sequencing of themes encountered by students. Despite the wartime aspects of the British response being most likely to be encountered within the sample set at KS3 level, it is only at GCSE or

[9] See, for example, AQA, *Subject Content* (2022).
[10] See, for instance, Department for Education, *History programmes of study: key stage 3* (2022).

Post-16 level that students had a greater chance of exploring the *preconditions* of the events of 1939 to 1945. In other words, if KS3 pupils are to encounter the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, it seems likely to be in a decontextualized fashion, without prior understanding of the British responses to Nazism or persecution during the 1930s.

Equally, it is notable that GCSE and KS3 narratives often concluded with either camp liberation or the Nuremberg Trials. Indeed, the theme of Holocaust memory was not explored by any GCSE publications. This trend is problematic in two senses. Firstly, it could reinforce an impression of moral triumphalism amongst students, whereby the British involvement in the Holocaust is defined by ultimately conclusive actions linked to victory in the Second World War. Secondly, it risks depicting the Holocaust as a self-contained event, with little regard for the significant historical shadow which the genocide cast in the decades after 1945.

Above all, it is noticeable that vaguely balanced distribution of themes only occurred within post-16 level textbooks. By implication, it is only at a relatively late educational stage that students might be exposed to a more rounded interpretation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, which stretches beyond the boundaries of the Second World War alone. However, this may be explained by the expectations of student ability. It is perhaps only at post-16 level that students are deemed competent enough to grapple with the intricacies of critical issues, including evaluation of British wartime action and the questionability of pre-war refugee policy. Indeed, at post-16 level, more redemptive episodes such as the *Kindertransport* were afforded comparatively *less* attention in textbooks than historically ambiguous themes including the internment of 'enemy aliens'.

As such, it would appear that the older the student, the more likely the chances of encountering a complicated account of the British response to the Holocaust. This is perhaps an intuitive correlation, but is problematic nonetheless. With History an optional school subject after KS3 level, many students will leave education without receiving the opportunity to engage critically with the more nuanced aspects of

Holocaust history. In turn, there is danger of engendering simplified understandings of the genocide as a whole.[11]

Summary of quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis can offer only a snapshot of trends across any given sample set. However, as part of my more rounded analysis, statistical interpretation of textbooks points towards certain patterns in the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Centrally, there was no overall reluctance within textbooks to engage with either the Holocaust or the British response to the genocide. Indeed, the topic received more frequent coverage across the sample set than perhaps might have been expected after reading existing literature on British Holocaust memory.[12] Rather, the key issue was one of depth. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust did not receive substantial attention in either general history textbooks or Holocaust-specific publications.

In a similar vein, there was a more frequent engagement in textbooks with the difficult aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust than might be implied by current assessments of the shape of Holocaust consciousness in the United Kingdom (*pace* Pearce, Bloxham *et al*). More significant in this regard were the layers within this thematic distribution. If the sample set of textbooks is, in any way, taken as representative of wider trends, students appear unlikely to engage with the British response to the Holocaust in an ordered chronological manner across the years of their school education. Equally, quantification of thematic distribution suggested a tendency – particularly at KS3 and GCSE level – towards exploration of the British response within the parameters of the Second World War alone. In a surface sense, there was a frequent assimilation of British involvement in the Second World War with the related – but discrete – issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

[11] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*

[12] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness.*

Qualitative interpretation

We must now make sense of the limited extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was covered in sampled textbooks. In sum, the combined coverage of the issue within each textbook was typically less than two pages. Nonetheless, within this headline finding, specific portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust can be unpicked through closer qualitative analysis. In the interests of continuity, the analysis of textbook content below is divided by the prevalent historical themes identified in *Quantitative analysis*.

Overall, the tone of language employed to address the British response to the Holocaust was generally placid. Often, exploration of the topic was neither markedly condemnatory nor sympathetic. To borrow the model of Paul Salmons, there was a seeming concern to 'teach' rather than to 'preach'.[13] It was rare to encounter 'forward-facing' student activities in textbooks, such as textbook P's question 'Do you think political uniforms should be banned? Should marches (organised e.g., by the BNP or Ku Klux Klan) be restricted?' (1998, p.107). This is perhaps reflective of the functional nature of many textbooks, in comparison with the social pragmatism that underpins other materials produced by organisations such as the HMDT and HET. For example, the stated objective of textbook F (1995) was to allow students to 'meet the requirements of the revised Key Stage 3 History curriculum' (p.1), while textbook I (1998) purported to provide 'a range of written and pictorial source material …specifically geared to the requirements of GCSE syllabuses' (p.1).

In other words, emphasis appeared to be placed on the acquisition of surface-level historical knowledge, rather than on the pursuit of *critical* interpretations of the past. This general framework is not immediately conducive to examination of the British response to the Holocaust in historical terms that are anything other than descriptive. Even within this general paradigm, compared to other textbook topics, discussion of the British response to the Holocaust was accompanied by proportionately few images,

[13] Salmons, Paul. '"Teaching or Preaching"? The Holocaust and Intercultural Education in the UK.' *Intercultural Education*, 14.2 , pp.139-49. (2003).

diagrams or similar graphics. The artefactual detachment between Britain and the Holocaust has perhaps proved difficult for textbooks to reconcile, in a similar manner in which museums have struggled to create material connections between the two, as explored later in this thesis.

Consistently, Holocaust-specific textbooks (set 2) had more freedom to explore historical issues in greater depth than general history textbooks (set 1). For instance, textbook P (1998) was able to offer 'a detailed account of the nature of what is now known as the Holocaust' (p.ix). Over the course of some 250 pages, textbook P had the ability to raise 'wider issues such as racism and obedience' and consider subsidiary topics such as the British response. In more general history textbooks, where space was often at a premium, there was typically an inability or unwillingness to stray too far from historical issues perceived as directly relevant to the scheme of work.

Textbook consideration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was often compartmentalised into discrete themes. Only in very few cases were there attempts to bring together differing historical strands, and form an overall evaluation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Given that textbooks often address schemes of work in rigidly periodised terms, it appeared difficult for many publications to create more continuous narratives of the British response to the Holocaust from the 1930s onwards: a relationship which was more of a process than a single event. Textbook U (2009) was essentially the only textbook to encourage students to consider the overall issue of 'Allied responsibility' as a product of several interrelated factors, rather than dealing with each theme in relative isolation. In other words, the 'bigger picture' of the topic was often lacking.

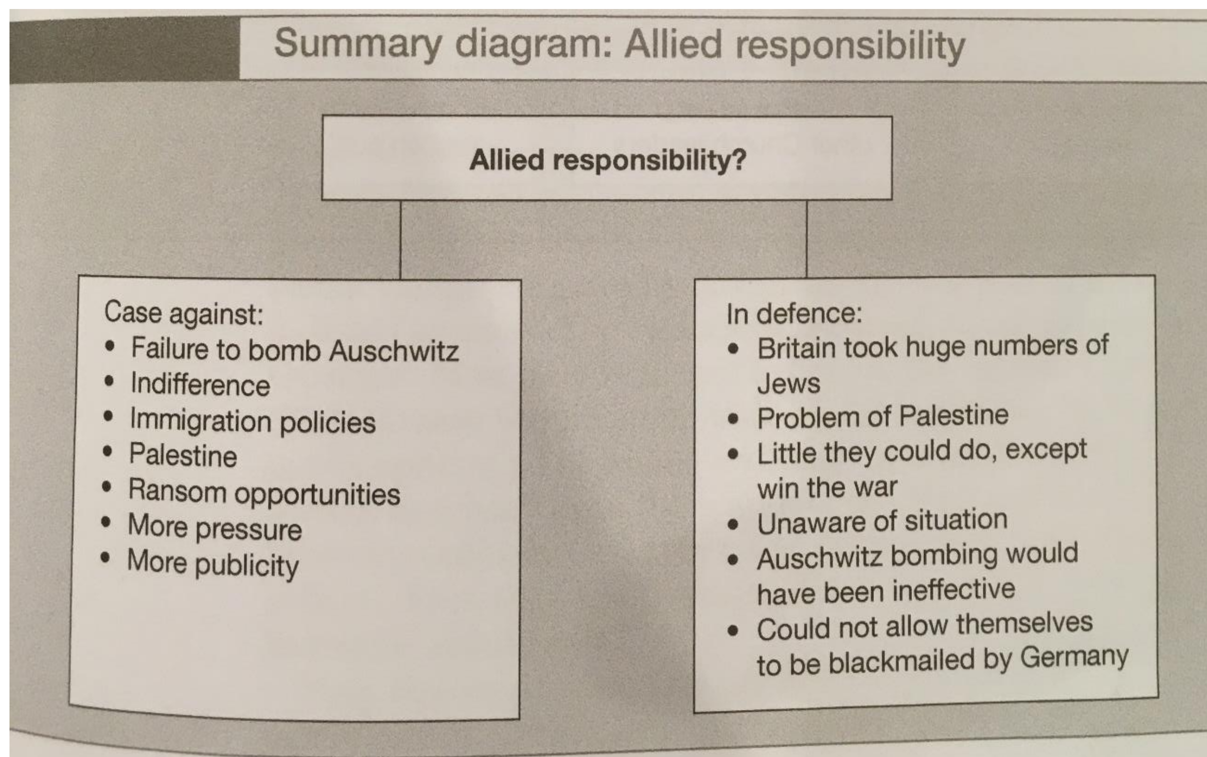


Figure 14: Summary evaluative table exploring 'Allied responsibility' (textbook U, 2009, p.157)

Britain in the 1930s

Although the interpretative tenor of British responses to Nazism in the 1930s did not foster a sense of exceptionalism, portrayals of the relationship between the British public and events in mainland Europe during the period lacked precise definition. There was a sense of abstract and physical detachment between Britain and the continent. Certain phenomena, such as European antisemitism, were rarely transferred to a British setting.[14] Equally, there was seldom a sense of the ambiguity of public attitudes towards the events and political movements of the 1930s. 'British' attitudes in the 1930s were often depicted in sweeping terms, and in doing so limited the extent to which divergences in contemporaneous opinions towards the Holocaust were explored.

Textbook P (1998) proved exceptional in its use of primary source material to furnish student understanding of the preconditions to the wartime events of the Holocaust.

[14] London, *Whitehall and the Jews*.

Extracts from the *Times* and the *Jewish Chronicle* articles from 1939 were reproduced to show that contemporary British media outlets had at least some understanding of the 'slow road to extermination' (*The Times*) which was identified during the 1930s (p.214). Textbook P's use of source material also allowed for effective contrast of the divergent attitudes observable in 1930s Britain. David Lloyd George's assessment, in 1936, that Hitler had enacted a 'marvellous transformation in the spirit of the [German] people' is counterbalanced by Lord Allen of Hurtwood's parliamentary speech of 1938 which condemned 'the persecution which is carried on in Germany' (p.106). Through the use of contemporary accounts, textbook P was able to provide a tangible demonstration of different opinions in 1930s Britain. Other textbooks, perhaps due to lack of space, instead relied on throwaway descriptions of mixed British responses to the Nazi regime before the Second World War. Portrayals of the latter kind are not necessarily helpful in allowing students to acquire a nuanced appreciation of the extent of public understanding of the early stages of the Holocaust.

As highlighted throughout this thesis, classroom resources produced by independent educational organisations frequently focus on the redemptive stories of British 'rescuers', such as Sir Nicholas Winton.[15] Yet curiously, only one textbook (V) made reference to any such examples: the diplomat Frank Foley, who was based in Berlin in the 1930s (p.38). This trend could be indicative of several different factors. It may be that the broad scope of textbook schemes of work are not conducive to focus on individual stories in the same way achieved by targeted resources created by the likes of the HMDT and HET. Textbook concern to fit a broad overview of a topic as significant as the Holocaust into the space of a few pages means that priority is given to the 'main events'. In most cases, such episodes are seemingly defined as occurring in continental Europe during the war years (1939 to 1945).

In contrast to educational materials produced by other independent organisations, there was also a lesser sense of history being presented through a national lens. While HMDT resources contain titles such as *British Heroes of the Holocaust*, textbooks are often orientated around broader global frameworks (such as 'World History') or time

[15] See analysis of HET and HMDT resources in following chapter.

periods (such as ‘The Era of the Second World War’). The scaffold of national history was less often deployed within sampled textbooks, which might in turn account for the limited attention afforded explicitly to the ‘British’ relationship with the Holocaust. The use of national history can be difficult to navigate. On the one hand, it can shine a light on closely-focused case studies. On the other, it can also foment unhelpful nationalistic interpretations of the past, and fail to take into account transnational patterns.

Refugeeism

The British response to the refugee crisis in the late 1930s and early 1940s proved a somewhat divisive topic within sampled textbooks. In textbook C (1993), there was an apparent attempt to moderate any extreme interpretations of British action in interning enemy ‘aliens’. Indeed, a corrective tone was struck. Textbook C affirms that Category A ‘aliens’ simply ‘had to be interned’ as they were ‘a serious threat’ to some unspecified cause (p.37). Moreover, textbook C is keen to stress that 64,000 of the refugees out of the 74,000 ‘Germans and Austrians living in Britain’ were ‘allowed full liberty’ as Category C refugees (p.37). Implicit in the assertion that ‘only 600’ Category C refugees were interned is the suggestion that there had hitherto been an overstatement of the scale of such, ultimately unjustified, detention.

Textbook C attributes stronger responsibility to the personal actions of Churchill alone. An uncited quote – ‘Collar the lot!’ – is attached to the description of Churchill’s Italian refugee policy in response to the Italian declaration of war against Britain in June 1940 (p.37). There is an unwillingness to align questionable attitudes to foreigners with either the wider British government or public, which in turn seems to occlude any broader national self-reflection. In a similar vein, textbook Q (1999) attributes responsibility for limited action to aid Jewish refugees in the late 1930s to the personal persuasions of successive foreign secretaries. Lord Halifax is described as admitting to being ‘“mildly anti-Semitic”’, while textbook Q also quotes an assessment of Anthony Eden as ‘“hopelessly prejudiced against Jews”’ (p.60). But excessive emphasis on the roles of individuals alone within broader historical episodes is often dangerous. However, certain textbooks appeared intent on distinguishing between personal and ‘British’ responses to the Holocaust. Intriguingly, in other educational materials encountered in

this thesis, a contrary phenomenon is observable. 'Britain' is often deployed as a catch-all term to refer either to more specific government or public responses, and thus can paint the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust with unrealistically broad brushstrokes. There are few obvious attempts to complicate the semantics of the topic, by pointing readers towards the fact that the 'British' response consisted of multiple different strands operating on various social levels.

Furthermore, there is again a temperate tone in textbook C's concluding statement that 'only 5000 committed Nazis and fascists were still in internment camps' by 1941 (p.37). The engagement with the refugee crisis in textbook C is symptomatic of an implicit couching of the British response to the Holocaust as a necessary element in the broader process of defeating the 'evils' of Nazism and fascism. The evaluation in some textbooks of the British response to the Holocaust was clearly guided by hindsight, with knowledge of the ultimate outcome of the Second World War. Less common were attempts to contextualise the response to the refugee crisis in its precise contemporary circumstance. In a similar vein, Kushner has argued that retrospective popular perceptions of the Second World War as a "just war"' have been used to provide '"proof positive"' that contemporary British action had indeed been vindicated.[16] Textbook B (1993) did not even conceal its propagation of such an opinion to KS3 students, stating that 'ridding the world of Nazism was a good cause and justified the war in moral terms' (p.79). Since textbook B's publication in 1993, this perspective has become less fashionable within historical discourse.

Contrastingly, textbook P (1998) was aligned more closely with recent scholarship by scholars such as Louise London in its consideration of Allied refugee policy.[17] Textbook P proffered that 'neither the British nor American governments wished to be seen as too "pro-Jewish"', and only released 'enemy aliens' after 'loud protests in and out of Parliament' (p.220). Divergent portrayals within textbooks of the British response to displaced Jews in the 1930s provide a salient demonstration of the contesting narratives that continue to characterise assessment of the relationship between Britain and the

[16] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?', p.68.
[17] London, *Whitehall and the Jews*.

Holocaust. Evidently, the historical accounts presented across the sampled textbooks were far from unilateral.

Textbook W (2012) proved an anomaly in the sharpness of its tone when exploring Allied responses to the Holocaust. In other regards, textbook W was also exceptional within the sample set. It is billed as a ‘powerful graphic guide’ (p.1) to the Holocaust, and indeed is heavily reliant on illustrations to convey its historical messages. The obstructions to refugees in the 1930s posed by the British civil service are portrayed almost in caricature. Wing-collared mandarins with upturned noses are depicted – literally – shutting the door on prospective immigrants. In one memorable image, British diplomats are sketched playing tennis while languidly declaring that ‘the question of immigration to Palestine can’t be discussed’ (p.47). This benighted approach of the British government is juxtaposed with descriptions of ‘enlightened opinion and organisations’ which were ‘active in helping refugees from Nazism’ (p.42). Textbook W adopted even stronger wording, labelling the Colonial Office ‘openly anti-Semitic’ (p.45).

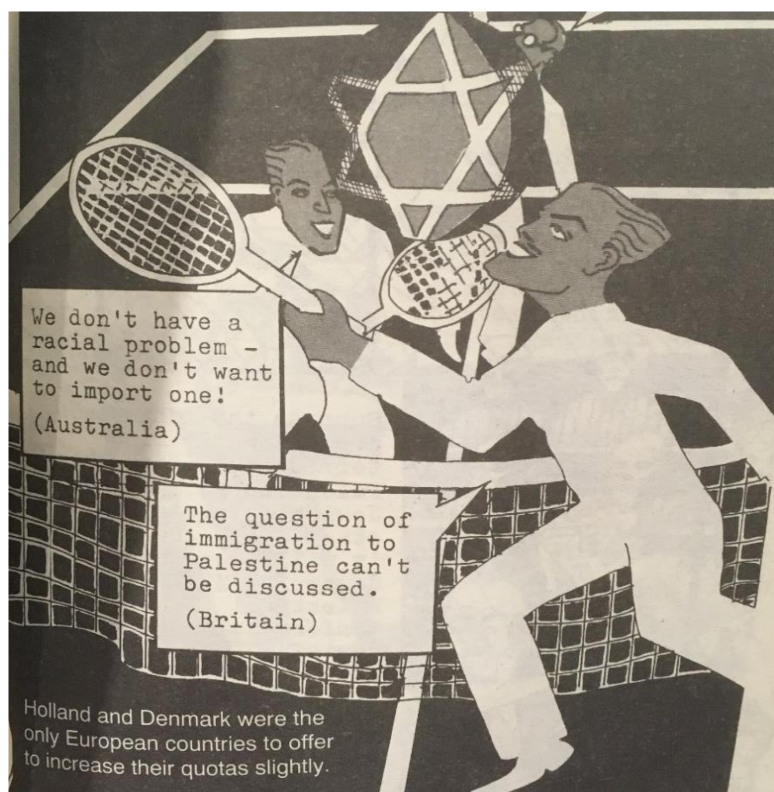


Figure 15: Cartoon of diplomats discussing the refugee crisis in textbook W (2012,

The strength of the views perpetuated by textbook W certainly catch the attention of the reader. However, such a bold interpretation of the relationship between Britain and

the Holocaust is also flawed. Textbook W's statements are rarely corroborated with firm evidence, and instead may risk leading students towards unsubstantiated historical judgments. In reality, the ambiguity of the British response to the Holocaust means that it is rarely easy to portray the relationship in such Manichean terms. Just as glorified accounts of British involvement in the Holocaust can promote a simplified narrative, so too can polemical interpretations. Moreover, it must also be questioned whether it is appropriate for a school textbook to corral students towards such opinionated assessments of the past, or whether classroom resources should promote more open-ended interpretations. Textbook W's author is Haim Bresheeth, an Israeli educationalist and filmmaker, who is perhaps more used to gripping audiences through visual communication. This could explain the cinematic depictions of history found in the resource.

The *Kindertransport*

My quantitative research highlighted that textbook coverage of the *Kindertransport* was surprisingly limited, especially given the prominence of the topic within wider British Holocaust memory.[18] Although a redemptive episode of the Holocaust, in a superficial sense, most textbooks which addressed the *Kindertransport* proved relatively adept at presenting a rounded interpretation of the episode, in keeping with recent scholarship by Craig-Norton.[19] Indeed, Craig-Norton's research highlighted how exploration of primary evidence can often complicate simplified narratives. As Craig-Norton concluded, 'one of the most common tropes of *Kindertransport* commentary is that, in spite of everything the children endured, they were the fortunate ones, their mere survival excusing lapses in oversight and aftercare'.[20]

Exceptionally, there *was* evidence of critical appraisal of the *Kindertransport* across a variety of learning stages. The KS3 textbook T (2007) recorded the recollection of the *Kind* Edith Weiss that 'it was obvious that I was not welcome' (p.25). Correspondingly, although the GCSE-level guide P (1998) recorded both the 'love and affection'

[18] Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*.

[19] Craig-Norton, 'Contesting the Kindertransport'.

[20] Ibid., p.26.

remembered in the testimony of refugee Helga Samuel, there was also note of the 'far less-welcoming homes' found by some children (p.116). However far memory of the *Kindertransport* has ameliorated the realities of the episode in wider British historical consciousness, such an effect cannot be said to be particularly noticeable within the sampled textbooks. Yet, the British response to the Holocaust proved a secondary topic within many textbooks: the *Kindertransport* formed an even less significant element of this historical issue. This in itself is surprising, given the relatively prominent place of the topic within wider public consciousness of the Holocaust.[21]

Wartime knowledge of the Holocaust

Of all the themes touched upon in sampled textbook portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, the issue of the extent of Allied knowledge of the Holocaust is the one which received the most sustained critical evaluation. In some cases, particularly at KS3 level, such criticism is implicit. Perhaps due to the complexity of the topic, most sampled KS3 textbooks stopped short of encouraging younger students to critically analyse the moral quandaries inherent within the thorny issue of 'how much the Allies knew'. Textbook A (1995), for instance, noted that after the liberation of death camps, 'Britain and France' in particular 'could no longer *pretend* that they didn't know what was happening' (p.45), although no further exploration is offered of why the Allies might have adopted such a pretence in the first place.

Typically, however, it was only in post-16 level textbooks that the specifics of British knowledge of the Holocaust were illustrated in detail. Textbook Q (1999), for instance, provided lengthy analysis of the Riegner Telegram of 1942 (an account of the Wannsee Conference) and Jan Karski's report of the same year concerning the liquidation of Polish Jews (p.62). In general, therefore, at KS3 level, students were commonly informed that Allied governments 'knew' of the Holocaust, but not exactly *how much* or *what* was known at the time. Even at GCSE level, textbook K (2001) vaguely recorded that 'the Allied governments were in a very difficult position. They were aware that something

[21] Ibid.

terrible was happening.' (p.130). While such historical conclusions are not necessarily inaccurate, they suggest that textbook portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust have on occasion lacked precision.

Textbook P (1998) was one of only two sampled publications truly to tease out the 'gap between what people heard and whether they actually believed it' (p.214). Elsewhere, textbook B (1993) explored the difference between the discrete concepts of knowledge and understanding in the public sphere. Citing the post-war testimony of a British Jew, it is described how contemporary 'articles and broadcasts' were often perceived as 'fearful rumours, people said, but of course exaggerated' (p.89). In most other cases, the issue of British wartime knowledge of the Holocaust was depicted – perhaps misleadingly - in more concrete terms; the genocide was either 'known' or 'not known'. Such an interpretation is simplified, as is symptomatic of the lack of nuance which characterised general portrayals of the British response in many textbooks.

Wartime action and inaction

Contrary to more recent materials produced by educational organisations such as the HET, the sampled textbooks were not overly concerned with leading students to question what course of action the Allies *should* have taken during the Second World War.[22] Indeed, textbook P (1998) poses the rhetorical question 'what *could* the free world have done to rescue or help Jews…without harming the war effort?' (p.218). Textbook P also appears keen to guard against unrealistic counterfactuals, noting that 'a distinction must be made between the time when rescue was possible before war broke out…[and] when the condition of total war meant that very few people could cross borders' (p.218).

Overall, while a slight sense of regret was implicit within several depictions of British wartime action and inaction, such events appear to be ultimately accepted as an inescapable by-product of the overarching British war objective. Indeed, a student activity suggested by textbook P (1998) tasked students to 'explain how each [factor]

[22] See analysis of HET and HMDT resources.

prevented Britain and America from taking more effective action' (p.221). Within this statement, there is acknowledgment that Allied action was often inadequate, alongside the suggestion that such inertia could not truly have been avoided. There were very few attempts by textbooks to encourage students to theorise alternative versions of history. The priority was to record what *did* happen, rather than speculate upon what should or could have been done. The sentiment behind textbook U's conclusion that 'it is hard to see what Britain or the USA could have done' (p.157) is shared by several publications. Counterfactual history is undoubtedly a dangerous game.[23] Yet, textbooks leave little room for historical imagination, or indeed exploration of the differing importance of competing historical factors.

Accordingly, textbook S (2003) was unusual in devoting some four pages to the question of 'Could the Holocaust have been prevented?'. A series of theoretical counterfactuals are posited to explore 'Why didn't the Allies help?', although notions such as the possible collection of Jewish refugees from Spain on troop ships destined for Britain are unsupported by any accompanying historical evidence (p.38). The loose statement that, by 1944, 'the Allies were flying bombing missions all around Auschwitz anyway' (p.39) is not corroborated by either existing historical scholarship or other sampled textbooks. Pat Levy, the author of textbook S, is described as a 'the author of many books for children' on a vast range of historical topics. This lack of expertise could possibly contribute to the vagueness with which the details of the complex British response to the Holocaust are portrayed. The depth and tone of textbook S contrasts sharply to the scrupulous nature of textbook V (2010), for instance, which was authored by the Holocaust scholar David Cesarani.

Conversely, textbook P (1998) appeared more concerned to challenge the intuitive stance that Britain could have done more to address the Holocaust at the time. Although it is acknowledged that 'the Allies did make clear and precise declarations condemning the war crimes', they only ever 'promised post-war retribution, not policies of rescue' (p.219). The decision not to bomb Auschwitz is further explained by virtue of the fact that 'it only became technically possible' in summer 1944, by which time 'the Hungarian

[23] Harvey, '"What If" History Matters? Comparative Counterfactual Analysis and Policy Relevance', *Security Studies*, 3.1, (2015), pp.413-24.

deportations' had stopped (p.219). The example of textbook P highlighted the worth of exploring the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in depth within a Holocaust-specific publication. Unlike the cursory treatment of the topic characteristic of general KS3 and GCSE textbooks, P provided firm contextualisation of the extents of the British response to the Holocaust. In doing so, it mitigated the risk of leading students towards vague impressions that the Allied response was inexcusably inadequate, or at least inexplicable.

Indeed, in relation to wider public consciousness of the Holocaust, Kushner has called for greater nuance and contextualisation within portrayals of the period.[24] Certainly, there appears to be some danger in including decontextualized details of the British response to the Holocaust in textbooks. Textbook K (2001), for instance, provided a standalone quotation from Winston Churchill, describing the Holocaust as 'the most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world' (p.158). Yet it is not recorded that this statement was made in July 1944, nearly a year before the end of the Second World War. As such, it is possible that students could misinterpret Churchill's perspective as retrospective, rather than questioning how such an opinion was formed even before the liberation of concentration camps, and why indeed no remedial British action was subsequently taken. Inadvertently, by extension, students are guided away from the possibility of undertaking critical evaluation of Churchill's contemporary wartime record.

There appeared to be some correlation between the complexity of assessments of British wartime action and their intended audiences. The more advanced the learning stage of textbooks, the more balanced an argument was presented, in general. The A-Level textbook U (2009) produced arguably the most nuanced depiction of the wartime British response. In separate sections, 'The Case for US and British Leaders' and 'The Case Against US and British Leaders' were explored, respectively (p.155). Factors such as 'disparaging attitudes towards Jews' held by some Foreign Office personnel were counterbalanced with the fact that 'as many as 160,000 Jews found refuge in Britain and its Empire' by 1941 (p.156). The notion of an 'insuperable barrier' formed by Britain

[24] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?'.

against Jewish emigrants is described as 'simply wrong' (p.156). Similarly, the decision not to bomb Auschwitz is explored in depth, with students shown how such action ultimately 'would have diverted Allied air forces from their real mission of destroying the strategic industries that fed the Nazi war machine' (p.157). Far from demonstrating vacillation, the balance of textbook U's arguments indicates a more authoritative grasp on historical events than is observable in the more opinionated judgments that occurred with greater frequency in KS3 and GCSE texts. The KS3 textbook R (2001), for example, simply recorded that 'it must be said that the leaders of Britain and the USA did not see saving the lives of Jews in Europe as a priority', with virtually no further explanation (p.25).

Authorial influence also appears to have been a factor, to some extent, in the portrayal of wartime British responses to the Holocaust. Publication V (2010), a *Guide for Students and Teachers* written by Cesarani, replicated several of the judgments offered in Cesarani's own monographs.[25] Exceptionally, textbook V was penned by a true authority in the field of Holocaust history, and as such proffered opinions on the issue more confidently than other general history textbooks. It is recorded that there 'is now no doubt that the governments in London and Washington knew a genocide was taking place' (p.37), while the Bermuda refugee conference of April 1943 is dismissed as 'nothing but an empty gesture' (p.37). It is not for this thesis to opine on the relative validities of arguments presented in textbooks, although few would argue against the reputation for scholarly rigour acquired by Cesarani. Nevertheless, textbook V offers some evidence of how textbook content, inadvertently or not, can be guided by the personal worldviews of its author. Although the theoretical function of a textbook is essentially to provide an objective account of history, it is clear that the Holocaust (and the British response) is a topic which is challenging to address in wholly impartial terms. Writing history in a vacuum is a challenging task, even for textbook authors.

The complex role of the Holocaust 'bystander', which has been fiercely debated in historiography.[26] Such an intellectual avenue was perhaps considered too specious for exploration in textbooks targeted towards meeting the specific requirements of

[25] Cesarani, D., *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–49* (London: Macmillan, 2016).
[26] Cesarani, D. & Levine, P., *'Bystanders' to the Holocaust: a re-evaluation*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

curricula. Even in longer Holocaust-specific publications, such as textbook P (1998), there was only a fleeting question of 'was anyone responsible for the Holocaust besides "the men at the top" and "the actual people who have done the foul work with their own hands"?' (p.239). This particular pattern offered some suggestion why portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust are limited both in educational and public spheres. Much of the contemporary British response was abstract: emotions, inactions, and misunderstandings. As such, it has perhaps proved difficult to translate such characteristics into tangible historical debate, particularly in textbooks designed to provide concise narratives to young students. Textbooks, by virtue of their provisions and functions, seem unable to host in-depth debate of particularly tricky topics.

Liberation

Although certain historiography has perceived a glorification of the British role in liberating Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, there was little evidence of such a perspective within the sampled textbooks.[27] In this regard, the factuality of many textbooks could have dampened any potential for triumphalism within portrayals of camp liberation. Perhaps this is reflective of the transnational horrors of camp discovery. To a general audience, images commonly associated with the Belsen liberation, for example, equally could be have been taken by Russian or American troops at other camps. Death, disease and suffering have no respect for national identity.

Most textbook coverage of camp liberation was accompanied by relatively graphic descriptions of the harrowing conditions encountered by British troops. Textbook I (1998), for example, used Leslie Cole's evocative 1945 painting of Belsen as a means of conveying the realities of the situation.

[27] Kushner, T., From "this Belsen business" to "Shoah business", *Holocaust Studies*, 12(1-2), (2016), pp.189–216.

Figure 16: *Belsen Camp* by Leslie Cole (1945), as found in textbook I (p.43).

Despite being aimed at KS3 students, textbook G (1995) similarly accompanied the description of British camp liberation with a graphic photograph of rows of corpses. Plainly, there was no attempt to airbrush the realities of the Holocaust in any sense. British involvement in liberation was not portrayed as cause for self-congratulation. Even at KS3 level, a handful of textbooks were clearly concerned to convey the scale and nature of the Holocaust to students. In doing so, emphasis could be shifted away from the British perspective of the liberation narrative towards one orientated around the universal suffering of victims themselves.

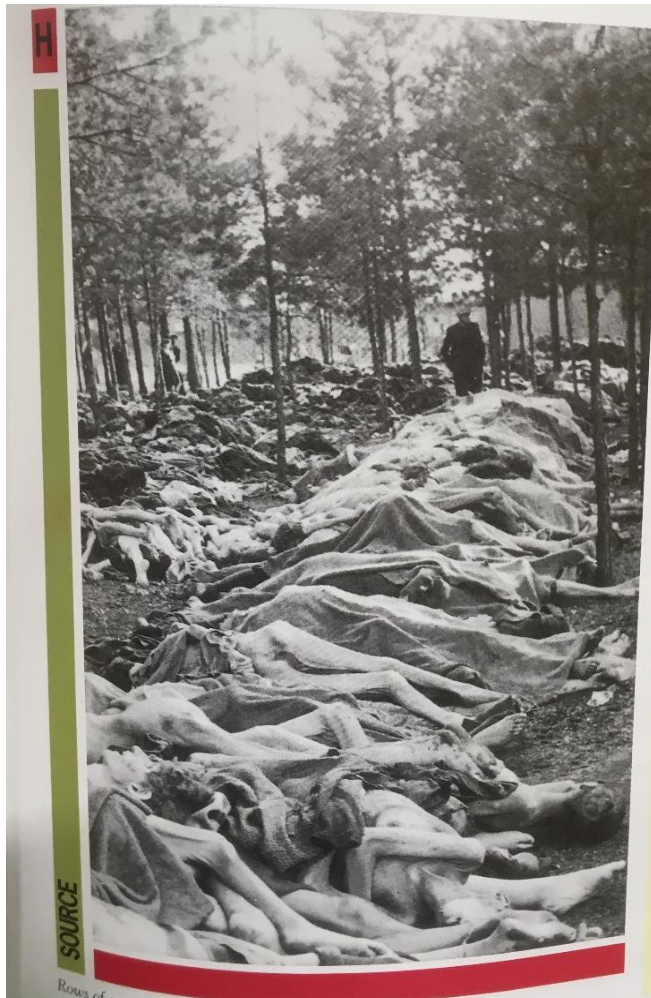


Figure 17: Image of corpses at liberated concentration camp, included in KS3 textbook G (1995, p.69)

Likewise, although intended for a young audience, the KS3 textbook B (1993) included a disturbing image of human remains piled high in a truck at Belsen in 1945:

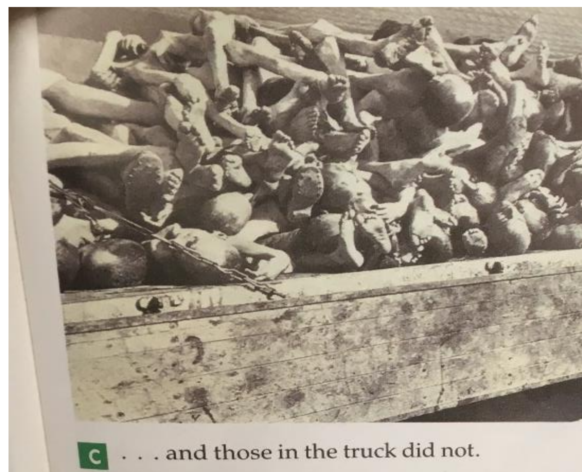


Figure 18: Image of human remains from Belsen camp (textbook B, 1993, p.57)

Although many textbooks were unable to draw upon primary source material to explore the British response to the Holocaust, the consideration of camp liberation in textbook P (1998) proved that it *is* an achievable goal. Several sources, including a *Daily Mail* article and testimony of British serviceman Frederick Wood, were invoked to illustrate responses to the discovery of Belsen (p.235). It is difficult to think of a more effective way of conveying the realities of Belsen than through Wood's first-hand testimony: 'heaps of unburied bodies and an unbearable stench' (p.235). Again, the advantages of Holocaust-specific publications such as textbook P were clear. Such books have the space and licence to include rich historical source materials. Alternatively, concise and surface-sense narratives are more commonly the concern of general history textbooks.

In textbook R (2001), however, a section entitled 'What happened when people found out about the Holocaust?' seemed to align itself with the more orthodox conceptualisation of Holocaust 'ignorance' amongst the British public (p.26). Textbook R posited that it was only with Richard Dimbleby's 'filmed broadcast' from Belsen in April 1945 that the 'British people…began to realise what crimes their enemy had committed' (p.26). In a secondary sense, this choice of vocabulary is perhaps also revealing. The notion, from a British perspective, of a nebulous 'enemy' guilty of enacting the Holocaust perpetuates a simplified sense of 'good' and 'evil' that has the potential to occlude exploration of cloudier issues such as the British response. Indeed, such an effect is only reinforced within textbook R by a description of how it was 'the British [government]' who 'decided that the men and women who ran these camps and organised the Final Solution were guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity' (p.26). In isolation, this single passage from textbook R has the potential to lead KS3 students towards the impression of Britain's role in the Holocaust as one of genuine ignorance, which was followed by the meter of justice.

The vocabulary deployed in textbook B (1993) also connoted a sense of contemporary Allied unawareness of the Holocaust. British armies are described as making 'discoveries in occupied Europe', and being 'shocked by what they found' (p.56). While not inaccurate in a surface sense, the implications of such wording are more problematic. Feasibly, to some readers it could promote the impression that the Holocaust – in any

guise – was a total unknown until the liberation of concentration camps. Furthermore, the statement that only after 'troops liberated the camps' did 'the hunt for the guilty' (p.89) begin presents the somewhat disingenuous impression that liberation was a Damascene moment for the Allied powers in relation to their knowledge of the Holocaust. Meanwhile, textbook O (1997) stated that photographs and films of Belsen in 1945 'provided the first and most lasting view of the Holocaust' for 'most of the world', including Britain (p.52). However, the distinction is not made between the first visualisation of the Holocaust and the first *knowledge* of the Holocaust. As fifteen of the sampled textbooks themselves record, the latter seems to have preceded the former by some years. Information of the mass murder of Jews in Europe had in fact reached the British government by late 1941.[28]

In turn, this retrospective understanding of the past could be mobilised to exculpate and explain the limitations of the British response to the Holocaust. Plainly, the historical realities were more complex. Contemporary factors other than 'ignorance' were at play throughout the decisions taken by the Allies in response to the Holocaust.

Retrospective justice

It was relatively uncommon to find textbooks willing to stretch the boundaries of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust beyond 1945. The Nuremberg trials of 1946 received mention in eight of the textbooks sampled. However, the depiction of the trials was invariably brief. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon for a certain degree of national appropriation to be visible. At face value, the reader might receive the impression that the trials were administered by Britain alone, in an independent serving of justice against Nazi war criminals. The roles of other interested parties, namely American and Russian legal teams, was rarely acknowledged. Although not misleading *per se*, the portrayals of the Nuremberg trials found in English-language textbooks could be charged as verging on national self-aggrandisement. The case for authorial expertise was therefore furthered. It was notable that textbook V (2010), written by Cesarani, was exceptionally precise in its use of language to refer to the transnational identities of

[28] The Wiener Holocaust Library, 'British Response'.

Allied prosecutors and the International Military Tribunal (IMT) (p.40). This was another example of the benefits of employing a subject-expert author.

Throughout coverage of the topic, the actual *impact* of the British response – whether in terms of the *Kindertransport*, liberation, or retrospective action – was rarely explored in depth. In pedagogical parlance, textbook portrayals often lacked substantial engagement with second-order concepts. Accounts of what happened were not always accompanied by considerations of 'why?' and 'how?', nor were ideas such as continuity, change and consequence embraced. In curricular terms, historical knowledge appeared to trump the development of interpretative 'skills', even if the two are symbiotic to an extent. In a historiographical sense, the UNESCO report suggested that English-language textbooks have been relatively slow to transition from a 'traditional' approach ('written in an impersonal tone by authors who denied the role of human agency in the telling of their histories) to a 'scientific' approach (with a focus on 'skills and concepts of historical analysis' and the acceptance of 'different perspectives').[29]

Three textbooks (K, P and T) did detail the case of Anthony Sawoniuk. Sawoniuk was 'a former British rail worker, tried for war crimes in Britain in 1999' (textbook K, p.131). In textbooks P and T, however, it was unclear exactly the point which was being made by inclusion of such content. Intriguingly, the portrayal of the case in textbook K was arguably laced with a cynical tone. It is noted that Sawoniuk was allegedly 'deaf in one ear, diabetic and had heart disease and brain damage' by 1999, and that the trial 'cost over £1 million' (p.131). In an accompanying activity, GCSE students were asked to assess the view that 'there is no longer any point trying to convict those of killing Jews in the war' (p.131). Whether deliberate or not, such frameworks are anathema to notions including the ongoing quest for justice which are implied by the mission statements of educational organisations such as the HMDT and HET.[30] Textbook K provided one example of an instance when treatment of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been, at best, casual.

[29] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.20.
[30] HMDT, 'Statement of Commitment' (2019).

Holocaust memory in the United Kingdom

The topic of Holocaust memory has the potential to be a rich point of discussion in the classroom. Yet, there was a common tendency within textbooks to consider the Holocaust, and the British role therein, as a self-contained historical event. The narrative of the Holocaust was rarely extended beyond 1945. The issue of Holocaust remembrance and memory was explored in only a handful of publications. With particular regard to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, there was therefore little sense provided of the Holocaust as a 'live' issue, or as a point of debate which could still affect the dynamics of modern society.

Despite the considerable debate that has engulfed Holocaust Memorial Day, textbook L (2004) suggested only a brief activity for KS3 students to explain in 'a short paragraph' why the Holocaust 'should be remembered' in such a way as HMD (p.57). Such wording does not provide teachers or students with much incentive to debate the relative merits and methods of different frameworks of Holocaust remembrance.

Nevertheless, given the relative aversion to controversial topics observable in most sampled textbooks, it was perhaps unexpected that the controversial issue of post-war Holocaust denial was explored in several publications. Within this, it was openly acknowledged that British individuals are among those who have denied the existence of the Holocaust. Despite being a KS3 level publication, textbook R (2001) devoted a disproportionate amount of coverage (nearly two pages) to the topic of Holocaust denial. The issue does not feature in most recommended schemes of work produced by organisations such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).[31]

Nevertheless, textbook R was not alone in not only mentioning Holocaust denial, but also explaining the arguments of its proponents. For instance, it was recorded how the British 'historian' David Irving claimed that Jews 'weren't gassed because there were no gas chambers. The chambers in the camps...were not for gassing the Jews to death but for killing the lice on them' (p.27). Inclusion of such information is nothing if not

[31] IHRA, *What to teach about the Holocaust* (2020).

questionable. It could be argued that lending Holocaust denial such oxygen might only fan its flames. Equally, there is scope for dangerous student misunderstanding. In the case of textbook R, a student might easily mistake the report of Irving's claims as the textbook's own account of historical fact. Clearly, great care must be taken when presenting sensitive topics in the classroom.

Nevertheless, British involvement in Holocaust denial was condemned in relatively strong language for the most part. Textbook Q (1999) stated that 'British contributors to the Holocaust-denial genre cannot claim to have written serious historical works…[and] for the most part they are a ragbag collection of former members of the neo-fascist National Front' (p.71). In this particular instance, however, the use of the present tense 'are' is telling. Subliminally, textbook Q hints that Holocaust denial is an ongoing issue in British society, at least at the time of its publication in 1999. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that more effort is not subsequently made to link the British response to the Holocaust through student activities which might invite consideration of social conduct in modern society, for example.

Again, this trope could be reflective of the rather clinical function of textbooks, in contrast to materials produced in conjunction with events such as HMD. The inclusion in textbooks of portrayals of more insalubrious British engagement with the Holocaust is perhaps symptomatic of a shift – since 1991, at least – towards an acknowledgment that the overall relationship in question is not one which can be solely characterised as redemptive. Indeed, textbook Q (1999) also went on to christen 1998 Foreign Office compensation schemes as 'miserly' (p.87). In doing so, appraisal of the *post-war* British response to the Holocaust was in many ways more unsympathetic than interpretation of actions taken during the height of the Holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s. The reasons for such a pattern are unclear. It is possible that memory of victory in the Second World War has cast a protective shield around British involvement in different aspects of the conflict itself, which in turn has limited scope for critical analysis of the wartime period.[32]

[32] Connelly, *We Can Take It!.*

Alternative perspectives: British experiences of the Second World War

Given that I suggest the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was afforded little proportionate attention within textbooks, it might well be questioned how both contemporary wartime British experiences and the Holocaust in general were instead framed.

To explore either issue in depth is beyond the scope of this project. In brief, however, portrayals of the Holocaust in general within the sample set most closely aligned themselves with those encountered in studies conducted by Foster and Burgess (2013) and Foster and Karayianni (2017).[33] This thesis found particular resonance in the findings, in 2017, that some textbooks contained 'simplistic answers to complex questions' which were reliant on 'superficial explanations'.[34] Within the initial set of 43 sampled textbooks, depictions of the Holocaust in general did indeed devote 'almost exclusive attention to events in the death camps' and were also often lacking in context 'beyond the plans and actions of the Nazi perpetrators'.[35] Equally, the limited attention paid by sampled textbooks to the idea of Holocaust memory was mirrored in previous findings that other publications contained little 'appreciation of the significance and legacy of the Holocaust in the post-war era'.[36] Both the Holocaust in general and the British role therein were often presented as self-contained issues, with the impression created that consequences after 1945 were rarely entailed.

Foster and Burgess concluded, that 'current textbooks typically present an "Auschwitz-centric"/"perpetrator narrative" focused almost exclusively on the brutal actions of the Nazis and their collaborators' with little consideration of 'the irrational motivation underlying antisemitic ideas either historically or during the period of Nazi domination'.[37] Such trends have implications for textbook portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust more widely. The narrow geographical and temporal focus afforded to the Holocaust does not necessarily facilitate study of the more

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[33] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals' and Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.

[34] Ibid., p.324.

[35] Ibid., p.26.

[36] Ibid., p.34.

[37] Ibid., p.34.

peripheral issue of the British response to the genocide. Exploration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust requires a certain degree of informed speculation.

Problematic chronological frameworks also require consideration. In 2017, it was found that several sampled textbooks 'took a leap from pre-war persecution to 1941 or 1942 and the creation of ghettos or the devising of the Final Solution'.[38] Such a phenomenon was also observable in the textbooks examined for this thesis. As such, the crucial period of 1938 to 1940, which included some of the most significant aspects of the British response to the Holocaust, was on occasion overlooked altogether.

As other previous studies have shown, there is a common trend for textbooks to use 'everyday experiences' and human testimonies as a vehicle for conveying the realities of the Holocaust to students.[39] Naturally, this is a model which cannot truly be applied to the British context, given the relative lack of direct killing and persecution which occurred on actual British soil during the Holocaust. As such, within the sampled textbooks, there was often a gravitation towards other domestic historical episodes as a means of supplying students with the 'lived-experiences' of the period. For example, textbook L (2004) devoted nearly three whole pages to accounts of 'living through a raid' in London (p.36). Contemporaneous British first-hand accounts, such as the memoirs of Bristol resident Gladys Locke, could be invoked in a manner not possible in relation to the British experience of the Holocaust, given the geographical detachment between the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe.

Regardless, some textbooks still managed to explore the abstract aspects of the British war experience. Textbook A (1993) speculated upon the 'fear' and 'non-stop worry' felt by civilians during the 'terrible worries' of the Home Front, despite providing no primary source material to substantiate such theorisations. It could be questioned, therefore, whether the geographical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust *should* preclude some textbooks from broaching issues such as public sentiment towards the

[38] Ibid., p.331.
[39] Wenzeler, 'The Presentation of the Holocaust'.

persecution of Jews. There is evidence that other topics are plumbed nonetheless, despite a similar lack of direct source material.

There was also a marked difference in the extent to which British military involvement in the Second World War was explored in comparison with the limited consideration of responses to social or political issues such as the Holocaust. In many textbooks, it was clear that the *military* role played by Britain on the global stage was foregrounded. Even at KS3 level, textbooks such as B and C (1993) delved into forensic detail of actions such as D-Day, providing precise statistics, terminologies and maps of different operations. Seemingly, in some cases the prescribed National Curriculum topic of 'the *Era* of the Second World War' was conversely interpreted as 'the Second World War'.

Mapping the Holocaust is an increasingly influential approach.[40] Within certain works in the initial sample set of 43 textbooks, there was a particularly evident sense of geographical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust as a whole. In certain cases, this pattern found expression through the selection of illustrative maps. In textbook F (1995), a map entitled 'Where did the Holocaust take place?' (p.60) furthered a purely physical sense of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was centred solely around 'concentration camps' and 'extermination camps', and thus inadvertently omitted any wider sense of the more abstract involvement of nations such as Britain and the United States.

The ineffective general use of maps to explore the Holocaust was also identified by Foster and Karayianni in 2017, whereby 'some maps were particularly small in size and unclear about what countries they portrayed' and 'other maps focused specifically on Germany and Poland, and even when they named other countries, they included no other information about them to explain their connections to the Holocaust'.[41]

[40] See, for example, Cole, T., *Holocaust Landscapes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
[41] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.332.

Figure 19: Map entitled ‘Where did the Holocaust take place?’, textbook F (1995, p.60).

This motif is even more blatant in one textbook in a map entitled ‘Responses to Nazi rule across the rest of Europe’. In the map, the image of Britain is obstructed by a generic textbox. As such, the British response is not considered at all, despite coverage of other national actions in several other European countries.

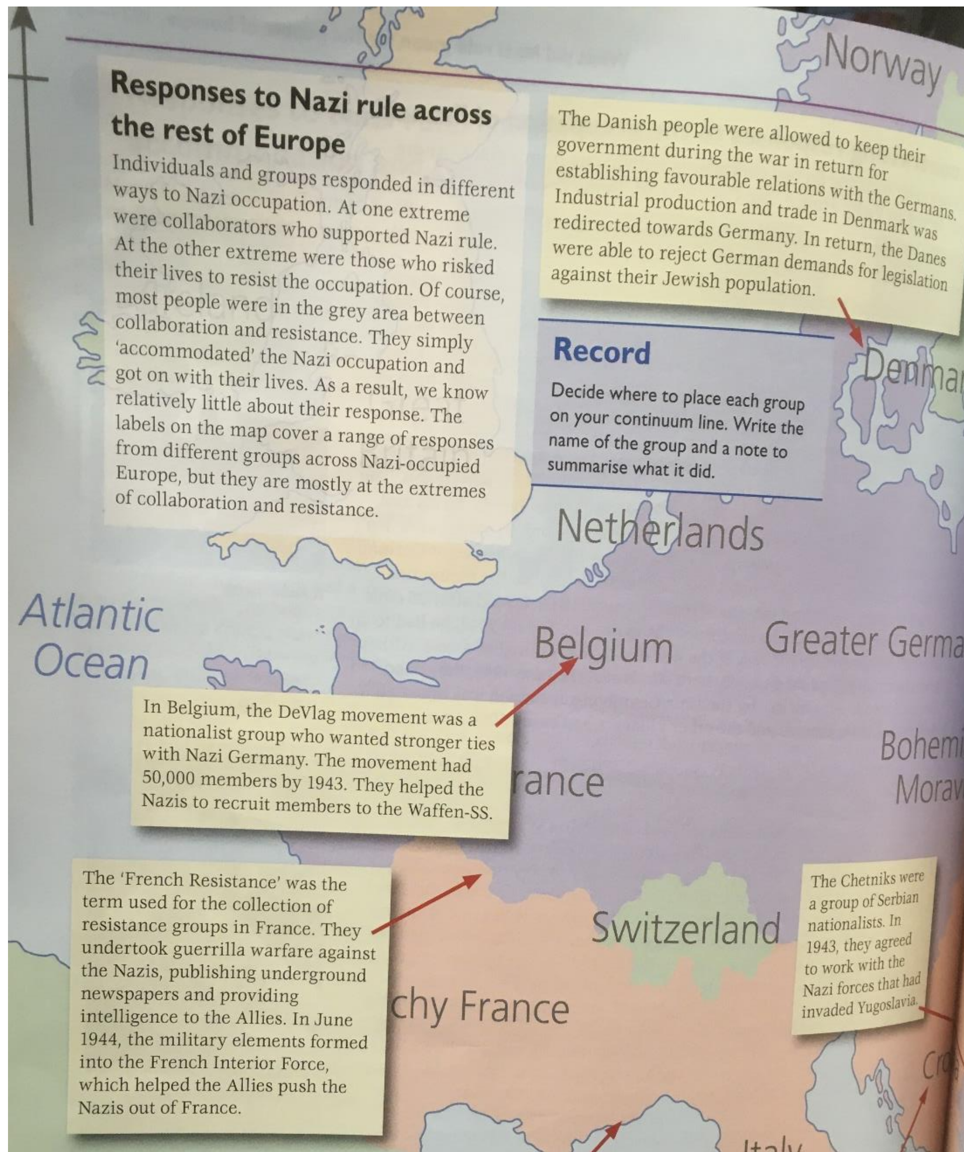

Figure 20: Map exploring 'Responses to Nazi rule across the rest of Europe'. Britain is obscured by an unconnected textbox.

Kennett, Richard. *Living under Nazi Rule, 1933-1945, OCR GCSE* (London: Hodder, 2017), p.94.

The inability of some textbooks - in the initial sample set of 43 publications - to reconcile the geographical gap between Britain and Europe resulted in further historical separation of the two regions. For instance, one textbook explored the issue of 'Responsibility for the Holocaust' purely in terms of German agency, despite the viability

of including many other groups (including Britain and the Allies) within such discussions.[42]

Of course, such trends were guided by the respective schemata of different textbooks, whether orientated around depth studies of Nazi Germany or twentieth-century Britain. At times, however, a conceptual parochialism was observable which obstructed engagement with the Holocaust from a British perspective. Through an emphasis only on the 'primary' events of the Holocaust (which admittedly occurred in mainland Europe), the subsidiary issue of the British response evaded consideration.

However, although the ambiguous relationship between Britain and the Holocaust often escaped sustained critical evaluation within textbooks, certain publications did display a willingness to challenge any impressions of faultless British involvement in the Second World War as a whole. How, then, *was* British involvement Second World War portrayed in textbooks, if not in self-congratulatory terms? Textbook L (2004), to give one example, noted that 'government planners…got several things wrong' (p.37) when planning for air raids, while also questioning the validity of the 'Blitz Spirit': 'the government and newspapers actively tried to promote this Blitz Sprit…news was censored…sometimes the censor actually wrote the news' (p.39). As such, it seems somewhat unfair to present portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust as irrefutable evidence of the reluctance of textbooks to engage in critical interpretation of British history. Rather, the lack of reflexive consideration of the Holocaust in English-language textbooks appears more to be a symptom of its limited coverage, rather than a directly obstructive abstract approach.

This tendency for decontextualized evaluations which characterised some textbook appraisals of the wartime British response to the Holocaust was also observable in portrayals of other contemporary events. Notably, in several cases, depictions of the appeasement policy pursued by Neville Chamberlain's government in 1938 were clearly constructed through the lens of what 'came afterwards': the ultimate violation of the

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[42] Whitfield, R., and Vance, S., *Oxford AQA History. A Level and AS. Component 2. Democracy and Nazism: Germany 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.193.

trust placed in Hitler by British foreign policy. In other words, the knowledge that appeasement proved short-lived obstructed any immersive exploration of why the policy might have been adopted in the first place. Students, as such, were not guided towards a rounded understanding of the preconditions of the Second World War. Equally, just as publications such as textbook C (1993) misleadingly attributed some British governmental actions during the refugee crisis solely to Churchill (p.38), appeasement also inspired some individualistic interpretations of history. At times, appeasement appeared almost to be a personal crusade led by Chamberlain alone, and as such lacked nuanced communication of the mechanisms of international politics, or indeed the contemporary *milieu*.

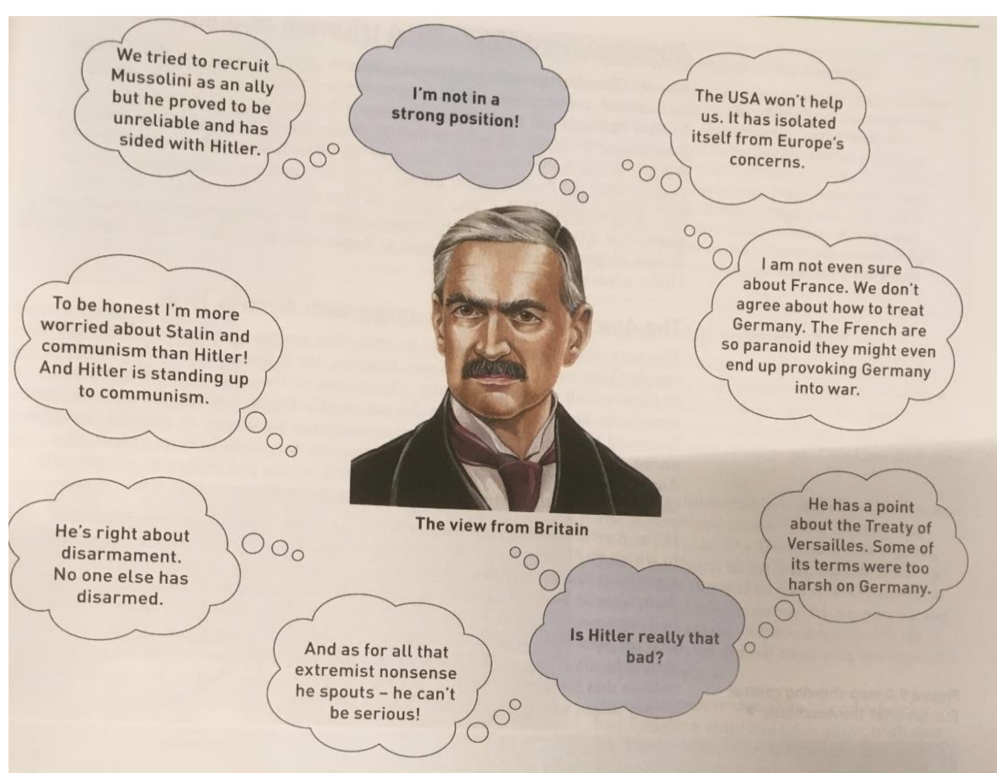

Figure 21: Textbook illustration demonstrating how Chamberlain has been attributed personal responsibility for the governmental policy of appeasement. Note the recurrent use of the personal pronoun 'I'.

Walsh, B., *Modern World History: Period and Depth Studies / OCR GCSE History A, Explaining the Modern World.* (London: Hodder Education, 2016), p.37.

Such examples suggest that an inability to engage with problematic aspects of British history in general was not necessarily the main reason for the limited extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was covered. Rather, it appeared

that there was a persistent opinion that the Holocaust simply did not form a part of British history at all. This approach fails to account for the plethora of secondary literature that challenges the assumption that the Holocaust is not part of the British 'story'.[43]

Other complex issues – which more obviously involved British action – were considered by some textbooks in the initial sample set of 43 publications. Five textbooks contained units assessing the justification of the RAF bombing of Dresden in 1945. Indeed, it was variously noted that 'Dresden suffered hideously', and that the bombing raid was more 'symbolic' than of actual practical use.[44] Textbook coverage of controversial events clearly had the potential to encourage balanced assessments of difficult issues. As such, it seems likely that failures to engage with the British response to the Holocaust can be attributed to benign neglect on the part of authors and publishers rather than any concerted effort to occlude consideration of the issue.

Most textbooks did not seek to mobilise the Holocaust for any particular general purpose. The objective of the majority of textbooks was to impart historical, rather than social or moral, 'lessons'. Transhistorical frameworks were only to be found in textbook B (1993). Even at KS3 level, textbook B presented the sophisticated insight that 'there is nothing in the German character which makes them more likely to commit war crimes', noting also that 'Britain committed war crimes against the Boers in the Boer War (1899-1902) and created the world's first concentration camps in which 20,000 Boer men, women and children died' (p.79). Centrally, textbook B argued that 'the circumstances which allowed the hatred of Jews to develop in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s could be repeated in another country at another time with another group as its victims' (p.79). As this thesis demonstrates, such sentiments more commonly find expression through socially-oriented materials produced by organisations such as the HET and HMDT.

[43] Stone, D., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[44] Catchpole, B., *History 1 / World History since 1914* (London: Pan, 1987), p.142.

Secrets of the trade: a publisher's insights

Textbook authors possess considerable educational influence. But how are these gatekeepers of memory monitored?

This analysis of educational materials has relied to a certain degree on somewhat impersonal methods, which draw inspiration from existing studies in the field of social sciences. Gaining an insight into the publication process can help to offer human explanations for the inconsistencies found throughout different textbook portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. It also helps us *explain* why certain educational materials have presented different interpretations of the British response. However, publishers are far from transparent when sharing the secrets of their trade. Disappointingly, very few publishers were willing to engage with this research project, perhaps through concern of exposing themselves to critical scrutiny.

It was telling that - of the ten publishers whose textbooks were sampled - only one publisher (Oxford University Press) offered its contributors any codified form of authorial instructions. In any case, this OUP *Handbook for Authors* appeared only in 2016.[45] It would therefore appear that the field of history textbook publication has for many years lacked centralised guidelines. History textbook authors, by extension, have not had a solid interpretative framework within which they operate. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that marked variations in the presentation of historical topics (including the Holocaust) have emerged, even in textbooks produced by the same publishing house. This is a crucial observation. Despite all the existing broad characterisations of national Holocaust 'memory', my research demonstrates that Holocaust representation is heavily dependent on the work of individual agents.

Moreover, the OUP guide is overwhelmingly pragmatic in its focus. It is concentrated on practical matters such as referencing, formatting, and positioning of images.[46] There is essentially zero guidance relating to content issues, such as what information should be

[45] Oxford University Press (OUP), *A Handbook for Authors* (2016).
[46] Ibid.

included, or the desired vocabulary to present issues. It is also revealing that the same handbook is offered to authors across the spectrum of disciplines. For example, identical advice is dispensed to authors of textbooks for both sciences and humanities. History textbook authors are not afforded any subject-specific advice, and therefore are left free to approach the presentation of topics such as the Holocaust in an independent manner. It is therefore possible that portrayals of the Holocaust in some history textbooks have the potential to reflect the authorial interpretations of the past (in the relative absence of modifying editorial influence).

I yearned to explore how the publication process might have influenced the portrayals of the Holocaust encountered in this study. With difficulty, eventually I secured an interview with a Senior Publisher in the Humanities and Social Sciences division of Hodder Education.[47] Due to an insistence on anonymity, the publisher will hereafter by referred to as 'B'. The insights offered by B suggested that textbook authors historically have operated with relative free rein, and that it is only recently that publishing houses have grappled with the specific issues associated with Holocaust education. Naturally, the experiences of one British publishing house cannot be taken as representative of those of the entire industry. However, this interview did offer a degree of explanation for the fluctuating focuses of existing textbook portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.

'B' revealed that Hodder has used a diverse pool of authors for its history textbooks. These ranged from school teachers to academic researchers and independent educational advisors. As such, it is possible that a wide range of subject knowledge levels have also been represented amongst authors. While the intended age-range of a textbook audience is a key determinant of the depth of subject coverage within publications, it might also be the case that differing levels of authorial expertise are responsible for the varying sophistication with which the Holocaust has been explored. In any case, it seems unlikely that engagement with the complexities of the British response to the Holocaust could be achieved by an author without strong subject knowledge of the period.

[47] Senior Publisher 'B' (Hodder Education), private interview via email (4 September 2020).

Guidelines issued to Hodder authors before writing were very informal, and took the form of casual 'conversations' rather than codified instructions.[48] As such, there are not necessarily safeguards in place to ensure academic rigour, or to establish firm educational objectives. Nevertheless, although manuscripts in the first instance are reviewed in-house by publishers, there was also evidence that that opinion of subject experts has been sought on occasion. For the most part, 'authors write and research the books themselves'.[49] However, if a textbook is deemed to contain 'very complicated or sensitive content', such as the Holocaust, an unspecified 'external expert' is commissioned.[50] Additionally, if the book is 'endorsed or approved by an awarding body, they will appoint their own expert to review the content, and then amendments are agreed between the awarding body, the author and the publisher before being implemented'.[51] This could perhaps explain why sampled textbook portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust could rarely be described as factually inaccurate *per se*, but rather displayed varying levels of sophistication. A key issue appears be to the perceived *relevance* of the British response to the Holocaust within the wider curriculum of the publication. Although B was adamant that uncomfortable or controversial Holocaust themes were not actively avoided by Hodder ('Absolutely not!'), this thesis has shown that such topics are not of pressing concern to publishing houses.[52]

While external subject 'experts' might ensure that the historical basis of depictions of British actions in the Holocaust avoid inaccuracy, it does not guarantee that the subject will receive sustained attention in comparison to other topics. Indeed, Publisher B commented that textbook length and detail is influenced by 'the number of teaching hours a course is likely to be delivered in'.[53] As research by the CfHE has demonstrated, teaching time devoted to the Holocaust is frequently constrained, and therefore obstructs study of 'subsidiary' issues such as the British response. A 2009 CfHE report found an average Holocaust unit teaching time of fewer than ten hours in British state

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

schools.[54] In recent times, practical constraints have severely hindered the breadth of topics which educators might hope to cover in the classroom. It is presumably for this reason, in part, that the extent of subject knowledge engendered amongst school children has been shown to be inadequate in many circumstances.[55]

B's responses appeared to suggest that textbook authors have tended to operate with relative freedom when selecting topics, even when working within the constraints of curricular requirements. The fact that the topic of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust did not appear in a notable portion of total textbooks sampled speaks for the vague position which the Holocaust in general occupies within the educational landscape of the United Kingdom. As described previously, Pearce's work has analysed the imprecisions of successive iterations of the National Curriculum from 1991 onwards, which mandated Holocaust education.[56] Although learning about the Holocaust is compulsory for those up to Key Stage 3 level, B euphemistically acknowledged that the wording of the National Curriculum offered textbook authors 'some flexibility', and allowed publishing houses to tailor textbook content towards creating 'engaging' courses.[57] Standardisation of content is lacking across the textbook industry, and therefore further rationalises the ranges of topics and approaches encountered in the analysis undertaken in this thesis.

Nevertheless, sampled textbooks generally found the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust to be presented in relatively objective tones. B's insight into the publication process highlighted the measures taken – at Hodder, at least - to mitigate the weight of influence imparted by authors' personal interpretations of history:

> We would not allow the author to write "and this is what I think", and we would edit words or phrases that could be seen as biased towards one viewpoint. As authors are generally writing content that follows an exam board specification, the content doesn't necessarily lend itself to 'opinion' in

[54] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust.*
[55] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*
[56] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum'.
[57] Publisher 'B', interview.

> the same way as a popular history book. We are also careful to avoid 'loaded vocabulary' such as "Of course …".[58]

The persuasions of authors and curricular bodies might influence the extent to which issues such as the British response to the Holocaust find representation in textbooks. But it is clear that some publishing houses take action to mediate an impartial presentation of the past. Again, in the context of the results of this thesis, this feature could also explain the limited degree to which overtly *triumphalist* interpretations of episodes such as the Second World War were observable in sampled textbooks.

It is encouraging that, since around 2018, Hodder Education has actively consulted CfHE research and IHRA teaching guidelines during the publication process of Holocaust-related texts. B affirmed Hodder's commitment to 'keep abreast of research on best practice when teaching the Holocaust'.[59] Nonetheless, it is notable that this is only a recent approach. By implication, older Hodder textbooks – and possibly those of other publishers – did not make full use of pedagogical research into Holocaust education. Of course, this is in part an issue of availability: the CfHE only published its first report in 2009. However, particularly in sampled textbooks from the 1990s and early 2000s, the depictions of the Holocaust and the British response at times betrayed a lack of understanding of what is now considered recommended practice.[60] Textbook G (1995), for instance, made controversial use of atrocity images of concentration camp liberation.[61] Other texts offered simplified accounts of the British response to the Holocaust, in contradiction of current thinking on the need to engage students with complex historical issues.[62]

Publisher B also offered some thoughts which might carry weight for the future of British history textbooks. If anything, it would seem likely that critical self-reflection on national

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] IHRA, 'How to Teach'.
[61] Lenga, R., "Seeing things differently: The use of atrocity images in teaching about the Holocaust", in Foster, S., Pearce, A., and Pettigrew, A. (editors), *Holocaust Education: Contemporary challenges and controversies*, (London: UCL Press, 2020).
[62] IHRA, 'What to teach'.

history will become an increasingly prominent feature of history textbooks.[63] This, in turn, could result in more meaningful engagement with the uncomfortable topic of the British response to the Holocaust. B remarked that Hodder Education are 'increasingly focused on making sure the history topics we cover are representative and inclusive' and have been 'listening closely to the conversations in the history teaching community about the importance of representing diverse histories'.[64] Although this approach is possibly of more direct relevance to the history of the British Empire, it can nonetheless also be applied to the complex relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Of particular note was B's comment that Hodder will in future use misconceptions found in CfHE research relating to Britain and the Holocaust to inform textbook content. In particular, B highlighted the following misunderstandings to be addressed:

- That the Holocaust was the trigger for Britain entering the war
- That the British had a rescue plan to save the Jews
- That the British didn't know about the Holocaust until the war was over.[65]

The increasingly close partnership between the CfHE and Hodder Education can only be constructive for the future of Holocaust education, especially if similar collaborations are replicated by other publishing houses. A working relationship between school-based researchers and educational publishers can facilitate the mediation of stimulating interpretations of the Holocaust and its associated issues. In specific relation to the issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, engagement with evidence-based research has the potential to lead to more nuanced depictions of the topic within textbooks. It can also help to address common misconceptions. 'Bridging the gap' between academic research and public educational settings is an overdue priority for those involved in Holocaust education.[66]

Overall, the consideration of textbook production from the perspective of publishing houses is a useful tool in the conceptualisation of this thesis's research findings. Despite

[63] Muldoon, 'Academics: it's time to get behind decolonising the curriculum'.
[64] Publisher 'B', interview.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Holocaust and Genocide Research Partnership (HGRP), *Our Mission* (January 2021).

best efforts, I could gain only a limited insight into the operations of publishing houses. However, a lack of standardisation across the publishing industry, both in terms of stylistic advice and content stipulations, has clearly contributed to the diversity of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. Evidently, given its limited coverage in a range of sampled textbooks, the topic of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has not commonly been deemed of essential importance by authors, publishers, or curricular bodies who influence textbook content. The treatment of the historical issue might be described best as inconsistent. While the publication process at Hodder seems to ensure a level of factual and historiographical moderation, it is unclear whether similar measures are in place at other organisations. Nevertheless, there is cause for optimism. The recent trend of publishers working more closely with Holocaust education organisations such as the CfHE offers hope that forthcoming textbooks will display a more sustained and nuanced engagement with the intricate issue of the British response to the Holocaust than is observable in the publications I sample in this thesis.

CHAPTER 4 – INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS: HOLOCAUST EDUCATIONAL TRUST AND HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY TRUST MATERIALS

Textbooks are far from the only educational resources available to teachers. In particular, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) and the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) – arguably the two 'big beasts' of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom – have been prolific in their production of open-access teaching materials.

Amongst their vast output, each institution has fashioned several resources pertaining to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Analysing resources created by these organisations allows the evolution of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust to be traced. It offers some insight into how and why different understandings of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have been represented in classroom environments.

It is noteworthy that independent British educational organisations such as the HMDT and HET have a relative degree of freedom to select topics for presentation in their classroom resources. Unlike textbooks, which are typically driven by the demands of examination syllabi or other curricula, the relevant individual educational materials selected for this analysis did not usually conform to a prescribed scheme of work. In theory, it might be expected that this freedom would allow for more extensive exploration of complex topics, such as the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. In reality, however, a precedence of historical width over analytical depth prevailed within the sample of materials analysed.

The HET and HMDT are cogs in a wider institutionalisation of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom. From a pedagogical perspective, Pearce and Chapman have suggested that this institutionalisation of teaching and learning has had unfortunate implications for school-based practice.[1] Existing literature across a variety of topics has

[1] Pearce, A. & Chapman, A., 'Holocaust education 25 years on: challenges, issues, opportunities', *Holocaust Studies*, 23(3), (2017), pp.223–230.

demonstrated that, for a variety of reasons, there has been a general reluctance from the 'top down' to engage with the more problematic narratives of the Holocaust.[2] For Pearce and Chapman, 'some non-governmental organizations have furthered this trend by promoting teaching the Holocaust to young children, and creating materials for this purpose'.[3] Particularly for primary-school teachers, 'many of whom are not trained historians', these are 'powerful and symbolic moves which, coming from organizations seen as authoritative, is taken to legitimize practice'.[4] As such, interpretations of history which elsewhere have attracted criticism are, in school environments, taken as authoritative. In other words, due to the inexperience of educational practitioners, external agendas can find projection within classrooms through the medium of Holocaust education.

Specific details of individual resources differ. Overall, however, a key issue appeared to be the precise aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which are given precedence (and the language in which they are couched), rather than the willingness to engage with British responses to the Holocaust at all. Over time, educational resources produced by the HET and HMDT have increasingly entertained the multiple different perspectives from which Britain and the Holocaust can be approached. Commonly, however, an uncomplicated portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was dominant. In particular, a tendency to explore the topic in question through the lenses of individual stories somewhat limited the scope for broader investigations of relevant historical issues.

Regardless, as far as possible, this analysis attempts to avoid moralisation on the relative merits of each individual teaching resource. There is no *pro forma* for the portrayal of the Holocaust in educational settings. Rather, the primary concern was to chart the ways in which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust *has* been depicted in the past, rather than how the topic *should* be presented.

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[2] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.19.

[3] Pearce & Chapman, 'Holocaust education 25 years on', p.225.

[4] Ibid.

Organisational backgrounds and their reach

i) Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT)

The IHRA was founded in 1998, and the Stockholm Declaration of 2000 cemented the commitment of 46 global governments' commitment to Holocaust education, remembrance and research. As part of this transnational drive for Holocaust commemoration, the inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) took place in the UK in 2001. For its first four years, responsibility for the administration of HMD fell to the UK government. Educational resources produced in conjunction with HMD were sparse, and are difficult to source today. However, from October 2005, a professional team working for the newly-registered Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) charity oversaw a transition towards a more coherent educational strategy. From 2005 onwards, the HMDT has steadily compiled a central catalogue of educational resources.[5] The bulk of these resources were added between 2005 and 2010, although some new additions and revisions continue to appear. The educational resources produced by the HMDT are intended primarily for use in 'primary, secondary or SEN schools', although they are also designed to be accessible to the wider public, particularly 'young people and HMD activity organisers'.[6] Materials created by the HMDT, along with those of the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), are also amongst the most downloaded from the popular TES teaching resource website.[7]

The superficial impact of HMD over time is clear. An impact survey conducted by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) between 2013 and 2015 concluded that 66% of respondents felt that HMD had increased their sympathy for people from different backgrounds.[8] In 2006, the HMDT recorded 266 local organised HMD activities[9], while in 2015, some 2,400 activities took place in schools to mark the

[5] HMDT, 'Resources' (2019).
[6] Ibid.
[7] TES, *Lesson resources* (2019).
[8] Allwork, Larissa, and Rachel Pistol. *The Jews, the Holocaust, and the Public: The Legacies of David Cesarani*, The Holocaust and Its Context (London: Palgrave, 2019), p.317.
[9] Ibid., p.310.

day.[10] By 2018, over 11,000 local activities marked HMD, and were supplemented by various educational materials issued by the HMDT.[11] Such resources are created and monitored by a dedicated team of education officers. However, Century and Marks-Woldman noted the practical constraints faced by the HMDT, with its 'small staff team with a limited budget and capacity'.[12] There is a perpetual challenge faced in balancing targeted educational resources and engaging the interest of the wider public. In turn, this may have the potential to translate itself into simplification of complex historical narratives, including that of the British response to the Holocaust.

The educational resources produced by the HMDT are predicated upon the organisation's *Statement of Commitment*.[13] Key affirmations include:

> • We believe the Holocaust must have a permanent place in our nation's and community's collective memory. We honour the survivors still with us, and reaffirm our shared goals of mutual understanding and justice.
>
> • We must make sure that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences. We vow to remember the victims of Nazi persecution and of all genocides.
>
> • We value the sacrifices of those who have risked their lives to protect or rescue victims, as a touchstone of the human capacity for good in the face of evil.
>
> • We pledge to strengthen our efforts to promote education and research about the Holocaust and other genocides. We will do our utmost to make sure that the lessons of such events are fully learnt.[14]

[10] Cowan, P. & Maitles, H., *Understanding and teaching Holocaust education* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2017), p.66.

[11] Allwork & Pistol, *The Jews, the Holocaust, and the Public*, p.312.

[12] Ibid., p.314.

[13] HMDT, 'Statement of Commitment'.

[14] Ibid.

ii) Holocaust Educational Trust (HET)

The HET was established as a registered charity in 1988. The organisation was instrumental in securing the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum in 1991, and is perhaps best known for its Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) outreach programme. As of 2020, over 40,000 students had taken part in the LFA project.[15] A central aim of the HET is to 'educate young people from every background about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today'.[16] The structure of the HET's educational division is similar to that of the HMDT, with a team of dedicated education officers administrating the creation and distribution of learning resources. The HET offers educators an accessible permanent catalogue of online teaching materials. The flagship catalogue resource *Exploring the Holocaust* is designed for use at Key Stage 3 level, while additional resources are available for primary, Key Stage 4 and post-16 students.

Review of HET classroom resources

Lessons of the Holocaust (1997)

Prior to the collation of its digitised teaching materials online from 2008 onwards, the HET's cornerstone resource was the *Lessons of the Holocaust* teaching pack.[17] It was originally produced in 1997 in partnership with the London Jewish Cultural Centre (formerly the Spiro Institute). The pack, which included flashcards, teaching guidelines, maps and more, was described by the *Times Educational Supplement* at the time as 'probably the most comprehensive package of resources on the Holocaust ever produced for schools in Britain'.[18] The pack was curated by the distinguished historian Robert Wistrich, and the popularity of *Lessons of the Holocaust* was undoubted. It was sold to well over a thousand secondary schools in a period of roughly a decade, and a

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[15]Tollerton, David C. *Holocaust Memory and Britain's Religious-secular Landscape : Politics, Sacrality, and Diversity*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), p.156.

[16] HET, 'About Us' (2022).

[17] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust: the complete teaching and resource pack* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 1997).

[18] TES, quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.71.

second edition was produced in 2001.[19] The educationalist Geoffrey Short, however, expressed concern that the teaching pack provided students with 'no more than a straightforward historical account with appropriate resources'.[20]

The historical scope of *Lessons from the Holocaust* is impressive. Short noted how the booklet entitled *Information for Teachers* commendably traced the roots of antisemitism back to 'ancient times', with few topics escaping 'critical scrutiny'.[21] Despite this, the *Lesson Resources* of the *Lessons of the Holocaust* pack appears to engage with the issue of Britain and the Holocaust in a circuitous fashion. There is sense that the resource skirts around the more controversial aspects of the relationship.

Nevertheless, *Lessons for the Holocaust* does show occasional willingness to acknowledge the involvement of Britain in the Holocaust. For instance, a poster map of continental European concentration camps contains a noticeable inclusion of the Sylt labour camp in the Channel Islands.[22] But the way in which the connection is drawn between Britain and the Holocaust within *Lessons of the Holocaust* is not always immediately logical. The inclusion of a map outlining the history of the Jews in the United Kingdom from 1660 to 1914 is, in Short's words, 'of questionable relevance'.[23] Still, presentation of maps which incorporate British history is at least some tonic to the geographical detachment between Britain and continental Europe which characterised some portrayals of the Holocaust examined elsewhere in this thesis.

[19] Short, G. & Reed, C.., *Issues in Holocaust education*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p.88.

[20] Ibid., p.95.

[21] Ibid., p.90.

[22] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'The Camps'.

[23] Short & Reed, *Issues in Holocaust education*, p.93.

Figure 22: Excerpt of *The Camps* map, including identification of Sylt labour camp (in top-left corner).
HET, 'The Camps', *Lessons of the Holocaust: the complete teaching and resource pack* (HET: 1997)

Given the title of the resource pack it is perhaps unsurprising that the British response to the Holocaust is considered more as a footnote to action to be taken in the present-day, and less as an object of historical scrutiny. Indeed, it is revealing that *Information for Teachers* places its emphasis on the opportunities of the Holocaust to provide lessons in citizenship, rather than history.[24] Teachers are encouraged to draw 'comparisons between the Holocaust and current or recent events', such as ethnic cleansing in the

[24] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Information for Teachers', p.28.

Balkans.[25] Indeed, *Lessons of the Holocaust* was published during a period when the Holocaust was deployed in New Labour rhetoric as a mechanism to justify government intervention in Kosovo.[26] While this is not a mode of interpretation which necessarily prevents critical exploration of the limitations of the British response to the Holocaust, it is not a framework that actively supports such an approach either.

Notably, responsibility for how to present historical information is very much left to educators. A map of the Evian Conference (1938) is accompanied by a quotation attached to 'the British Empire' declaring 'we have no territory suitable to the large-scale settlement of Jewish refugees'.[27] However, the resource does not offer precise guidance on how students might explore the uncomfortable historical implications of this statement. Subsequent engagement with the inferences of this quotation – namely whether British action worsened the situation of persecuted Jews – would depend on the initiative of individual teachers. The extent to which the topic is complicated within a classroom setting seems heavily reliant on individual teacher practice: a trait which in part might account for the discrepancies amongst educators identified in other evidence-based studies.[28]

Furthermore, the inclusion in the section entitled *Eyewitness Accounts* of a passage from a speech delivered by Winston Churchill in the House of Commons in 1935 is also somewhat confusing, given that Churchill had not actually observed first-hand the situation he described (as might be expected of an 'Eyewitness').[29] Churchill related 'every kind of persecution' of German Jews through the 'brutal vigour' of the Nazi regime.[30] This sense of historical syncopation within the teaching pack could be indicative of an underlying haziness regarding the precise way in which the topic of Britain and the Holocaust should be broached. The designation of Churchill as an 'eyewitness' to the Holocaust as early as 1935 might feed into certain existing hagiographic frameworks. In both popular and historical culture, Churchill has been held

[25] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Information for Teachers', p.28.
[26] Pearce, 'In The Thick of It', p.102.
[27] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Lesson Resources', p.6.
[28] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust.*
[29] Short & Reed, *Issues in Holocaust education*, p.94.
[30] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Lesson Resources', p.33.

as a 'prophet' of the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, even if more recent literature has cast his political attitudes as wholly more ambiguous.[31] By this one *Eyewitness Account* alone, students may be forgiven for assuming that Churchill possessed a full understanding of the Holocaust before its complete manifestations were clear. In other words, a lack of supporting context in *Eyewitness Accounts* simplifies the depiction of the British response to Nazi persecutions.

Conversely, the *Press Articles* section of *Lessons of the Holocaust* is both substantial and purposeful. It contains 26 newspaper articles, most of which are taken from the British press from 1933 to 1945. The very inclusion of *Press Articles* is instructive on several levels. In keeping with recent historiography by historians including Dan Stone, it provides evidence of public awareness of certain aspects of Nazi persecution during the period itself.[32] In doing so, the notion of total public ignorance of the Holocaust is rebutted, albeit in muted tones. Furthermore, it offers students an insight into the different ways in which different British channels of mass public opinion reacted to the Holocaust.

Notable examples include a *Daily Herald* article published as early as 1933, which details the 'torture and brutal ill-treatment' of Jews in Berlin.[33] Similar articles from throughout the 1930s are presented, and the series of documents climaxes with a *Daily Telegraph* piece from 1942 which described how 'over 1,000,000 Jews in occupied Europe' had been murdered.[34] As such, *Lessons of the Holocaust* avoids an overly-episodic portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. To a greater extent, there is a sense of continuum, whereby a certain degree of public knowledge of the Holocaust from 1933 onwards is evidenced. By the end of *Press Articles*, students are likely to be left in little doubt that the concept of contemporaneous Holocaust ignorance in Britain is unrealistic. This provides a useful framework within which students might progress to consider the limitations and explanations of wider British actions during the Holocaust.

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[31] For example, see Gilbert, M., *Winston S. Churchill: Volume 5* (Hillsdale: Hillsdale Press, 2009).
[32] Stone*, Responses to Nazism*.
[33] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Lesson Resources', p.56.
[34] Ibid., p.69.

Significantly, a range of contemporary perspectives are presented. Sympathetic depictions of Jewish persecution are counterbalanced by articles such as that of the *Daily Express* of June 1939, which declared that 'there is no room for any more refugees in this country!'.[35] Inclusion of a spectrum of historical responses within HET resources goes some way to guarding against a monolithic narrative of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, even if the impetus for consolidating this outlook lies with individual teachers. In a broader pedagogical sense, the section provides compelling evidence for the merit of bringing students closer to primary source material. In the case of the British response to the Holocaust, such an approach facilitated contextualised engagement with different aspects of the intricate topic.

It is noticeable that HET resources typically lack accompanying commentary for teachers. As such, less experienced educators might struggle to know *how* to use the information provided. Conversely, it might have been the concern of the HET to allow students to reach their own conclusions in response to the materials provided. It could be charged that greater inclusion of additional commentary would guide students towards certain historical assumptions. Rather, in the case of the British response to the Holocaust, *Lessons of the Holocaust* appears satisfied to provide examples of the contemporary British *milieu*, while allowing educators and students alike to retain control of their own learning trajectories. Again, this might not be problematic for teachers with a clear sense of educational objective. However, for less confident teachers and students, it seems likely that a more structured learning framework would enrich understanding of the topic. The psychologist Lev Vygotsky's ideas on 'scaffolded learning' still ring true, some decades after they were introduced.[36]

Above all, *Press Articles* provides another compelling demonstration of the efficacy of primary source material in educational resources in capturing a multi-dimensional perspective on historical issues. It is surprising, therefore, that it is the *secondary* implications of such materials which are emphasised within *Lessons of the Holocaust*. In the seven suggested lesson plans which incorporate use of the press articles, only one

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[35] Ibid., p.70.

[36] Kozulin, A. *et al*, *Vygotsky's Educational Theory in Cultural Context*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

activity centres on exploring 'what people in Britain knew about the Nazi persecution of the Jews'.[37] All other tasks involve using the press articles to create an impression of the life in Nazi Germany itself which the articles often describe. At play here might be a wider pedagogical issue: namely the reliance in history education on merely the superficial factual content of primary source material. Conversely, it is eminently possible to use source material to plumb deeper layers and conceptual implications. In other words, Britain and the Holocaust can be a launchpad for more metaphysical historical discussion: the utility of sources and what they can tell us about the very societies in which they were created.

Lesson resources in *Lessons of the Holocaust* are accompanied by a lengthy booklet of contextual *Information for Teachers*. However, transfer of the information from the latter resource into a classroom setting is again almost entirely dependent on independent educator practice, given the lack of HET commentary included within *Lesson Resources*. Due to the constraints on teaching time faced by many teachers, decisions must inevitably be made on which information to include and omit from actual lessons.[38] The limited consideration of the issue of the British response to the Holocaust in *Information for Teachers* might lead educators to prioritise other topics which are explored in greater depth. Even within discussion of topics such as refugeeism, more attention is seemingly afforded to North American dimensions, such as the 1939 Wagner Act and SS St. Louis crisis.[39] The impression is given that the HET considers Britain and the Holocaust to be a secondary issue in its scheme of work.

There is a compelling argument for greater time and space to be afforded to teachers to construct Holocaust education schemes of work. When constrained by practical pressures, it is perhaps inevitable that teachers might prioritise teaching of the 'main' events of the Holocaust – in other words, those which occurred in continental Europe. However, this will do little to remedy the sense of detachment between British and Holocaust histories, and deprive students of the opportunity to engage with a complex narrative with direct relevance to contemporary national identity.

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[37] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Information for Teachers', p.36.
[38] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust*, p.8.
[39] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Information for Teachers', p.13.

Where the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust *is* explored, *Lessons for the Holocaust* does so in a relatively nuanced manner. The 'truth' in contemporary Foreign Office fears that mass immigration to Palestine could create an unmanageable situation in the Middle East is counterbalanced by the assessment that it was nonetheless a 'callous policy in the circumstances'.[40] Equally, a lesson activity considering the 'Responses of the Outside World' is notable by virtue of the way it promotes a balanced outlook. Students are encouraged to think of reasons 'why Jewish refugees should *not* have been allowed into Britain in the 1930s'.[41] The tenor of coverage of the British response in *Lessons of the Holocaust* is neither celebratory nor condemnatory. The extent of these stimulating discussions, however, is constrained to a matter of paragraphs in sum. Nevertheless, *Lessons of the Holocaust* presented a less celebratory narrative of British action than is observable within HMDT resources.

Lessons of the Holocaust contains several posters intended for display in classrooms. The poster entitled *Time Line 1933-1945*, more than any other resource within the teaching pack, captures the concomitant triumphalism and ambiguity that has characterised interpretations of British actions during the period. In juxtaposing panels are placed examples of British victory and British inaction. The entry for 1942, for instance, records the triumph at El Alamein directly alongside the World Jewish Congress informing 'British and American governments about mass murders in Eastern Europe' (against which little action was taken).[42] In the same poster, the episodes of war enshrined in the myths of British public memory – such as the Battle Britain of 1940 – coexist with events that provoke more critical reflection, including the refusal of 'entry to Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution'.[43] In this sense, students are exposed to a somewhat rounded interpretation of the wider involvement of Britain in global events between 1933 and 1945, even if the level of detail provided by a single poster can only be superficial.

Lessons of the Holocaust is undoubtedly an extensive teaching and learning resource. It displays a willingness to engage with the problematic aspects of the relationship

[40] Ibid., p.18.
[41] Ibid., p.48.
[42] HET, *Lessons of the Holocaust*, 'Time Line'.
[43] Ibid.

between Britain and the Holocaust, but rarely does so in meaningful depth. Given its inclusion of stimulating primary source material, the HET's *Lessons of the Holocaust* is a more substantial resource than many offered by other similar organisations such as the HMDT. But it is conditional on the actions of individual teachers to implement effective learning outcomes: an approach which is far from certain to result in predictable outcomes.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2002: *Britain and the Holocaust*

Holocaust Memorial Day 2002 (theme: 'Britain and the Holocaust') did not spawn substantial classroom resources produced by the HMDT. However, at the time, the HET *did* publish a notable 24-page *Teachers' Guide* to support the event. The booklet was produced in consultation with the David Cesarani, and was designed to support 'teaching about the history of the Holocaust as part of a scheme of work within the National Curriculum'.[44]

In its introduction, the *Teachers' Guide* struck a corrective tone. Statements such as 'the Holocaust *is* part of Britain's history' and 'although Britain was not occupied, the impact of World War II was tremendous' seem to carry the implication that the Holocaust had hitherto been detached from British historical consciousness.[45] The guide is designed for use in the teaching of Key Stage 3 students (roughly aged 13-14 years). As such, the depth with which it explores the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is naturally limited. However, the HET produced a resource which still covers a relatively wide range of aspects of the British response, including 'The Kindertransport', 'What Did Britain Know?' and 'Fascism and the Far Right in Britain'.

Teaching guidance for 'The Kindertransport' is relatively objective in its scope. Skeleton factual detail is provided, including the precise numbers of children transported and corresponding dates. The 'Discussion Points' and 'Activities' provided by the HET provide a cursory acknowledgement of the complexities of the relationship between Britain and

[44] The Wiener Holocaust Library (WHL) OSP 2145, HET, *Teachers' guide to Holocaust Memorial Day 2002 : Britain and the Holocaust.*
[45] Ibid., p.2.

the Holocaust. However, in contrast to some of the classroom materials produced in later years (explored below), students are not guided towards explicitly critical evaluation of the British response. Pupils are instructed only to 'brainstorm the potential difficulties that an unaccompanied child would face', and the statement that 'the *Kindertransport* children had a variety of experiences during their time in Britain' is not followed up by any substantial learning activities.[46] As such, there is a somewhat superficial treatment of the topic in question. The *Teachers' Guide* appears to furnish teachers with an awareness of the nuances of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, without actively encouraging deep exploration of such issues in a classroom setting. It was perhaps felt that such an approach would compromise the overarching – and forward-facing – objectives of HMD as a whole. Torn between engaging with contemporary lessons of citizenship and more detailed historical exploration, the topic of the British response to the Holocaust is left in somewhat of an educational purgatory.

The internment of 'enemy aliens' in Britain during the Holocaust is portrayed in more critical tones. Indeed, it is an aspect of the British response to the Holocaust which rarely finds much coverage in other published educational materials. It is noted that 'many of those interned were Jewish refugees who had fled persecution in Nazi Germany', while internment camps had 'poor standards of accommodation and unsatisfactory sanitary arrangements'.[47] As such, students are guided towards an unfavourable impression of British actions during the Holocaust. Empathic exercises seemingly reinforce such direction, with students encouraged to consider 'how internees during World War II felt being called "enemy" aliens'? and whether 'internment is a morally justifiable measure in a time of war?'.[48] The validity of such empathy exercises has been called into question.[49] Whether valid or not, they do at least complicate student thinking, and direct pupils away from simplistic narratives of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

[46] Ibid., p.5.
[47] Ibid., p.6.
[48] Ibid., p.7.
[49] Rider, A., 'The Perils of Empathy: Holocaust Narratives, Cognitive Studies and the Politics of Sentiment', *Holocaust Studies*, 19.1 (2015), pp.43-72.

Significantly, the 'Internment' section of the *Teachers' Guide* offers a pathway for teachers to differentiate between the coexistent layers of the contemporary British response to the Holocaust. For example, one suggested activity included comparing 'the experiences of internees with that of the Kindertransport children', and as such guards against the risk of conflating the two discrete strands of British policy.[50] Moreover, in this instance, the British response to the Holocaust is framed within a more modern context. It is detailed how 'Britain was the only Western country' to use internment of 'enemy' aliens during the Gulf War.[51] By extension, it is implied that British policymakers failed either to learn from the experiences of the Holocaust, or indeed to modernise the national response to displaced persons. At times, therefore, the *Teachers' Guide* treads a fine line between historical description and socio-political commentary. The question of the *purpose* of teaching about the British response becomes germane. At times, it is not simply presented as a historical matter, but one which is intended to inform modern social conduct.

This said, while exploring 'What did Britain know?', the *Teachers' Guide* appears careful to temper any historical judgments. Certainly, it is acknowledged that 'Britain was well aware of the Nazis' treatment of Jews throughout the 1930s but made little public protest', and by 1942 had received 'several communications that highlighted the plight of the Jews'.[52] However, these details are counterbalanced by some contextual explanations for general British inaction throughout the period. During the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, 'Nazi Germany camouflaged much of its overt antisemitism', while 'only with the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen…the true horrors of the Holocaust were brought home to the British public'.[53]

Accordingly, students are not necessarily guided towards critical debate on what Britain could or should have done in response to the Holocaust. Rather, emphasis is placed on providing some form of balanced explanation of why the British response took shape in the way it did. Equally - perhaps unsurprisingly - given the intended use of the *Teachers' Guide* in conjunction with HMD, student activities are geared towards the future. Pupils

[50] Ibid., p.7.
[51] Ibid., p.6.
[52] Ibid., p.8.
[53] Ibid., p.8.

are asked 'what responsibilities do governments today have when they hear reports of atrocities?', and are tasked to 'cut out newspaper articles about world events and find out Britain's response to them…Do you think Britain has reacted appropriately?'.[54] The primary lens in this case is didactic, rather than historical. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is used as a mechanism to help students define their own social conduct, as opposed to providing fodder for critical historical debate *per se*.

The tropes of interpretative moderation and Holocaust 'lessons' are observable in the section entitled 'Rescuers'. In other educational materials elsewhere, it has been shown that stories of individual British rescuers (such as Frank Foley and Nicholas Winton) have often formed the core of schemes of work.[55] Within the *Teachers' Guide*, however, there appears a concerted effort to place British rescue efforts in international perspective, and by extension mitigate misrepresentative portrayals of the extent to which British actors were involved in the relief of Holocaust victims. Pointedly, it is recorded that only 13 British citizens have been awarded the title 'Righteous Among the Nations' out of 18,629 recipients of the award. Equally, in broader terms, students are led to consider why 'less than 0.5% of non-Jews did anything to help Jews during the Holocaust'.[56]

It is revealing of the objectives of both HMDT and the HET *Teachers' Guide* that over half of the booklet in question is centred around modern-day contexts. That is, the British response to the Holocaust is used primarily as an illustrative historical gesture while encouraging students to consider their own future conduct. Historical detail is not the principal concern. Rather, emphasis is placed on what the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust *symbolised*.

In the section 'War Crimes', for example, the Nuremberg Trials receive cursory mention within a wider exploration of Britain's 'moral responsibility to bring international war criminals to justice'.[57] Indeed, the unrelated case of the Chilean dictator General Pinochet is invoked as part of suggested student activities, rather than any examples of

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[54] Ibid., p.8.
[55] HMDT, 'British Heroes of the Holocaust' (2016).
[56] WHL OSP 2145, p.8.
[57] Ibid., p.15.

criminal trials directly relating to the Holocaust. Meanwhile, 'Fascism and the Far Right in Britain' explores the role of the modern British National Party (BNP). In this regard, only the more redemptive aspects of historical British responses to fascism receive mention. The Battle of Cable Street (1936) is used clearly to guide students to 'stand up' to contemporary fascism, by using the precedent of 1936 as an example of the power of public protest to subdue political extremism.[58] The extent and explanations of initial support for British fascist organisations in the 1930s is not explored, and thus feeds into a somewhat one-dimensional image of the British public as unilaterally aligned against right-wing politics during the period. As research by the likes of Stone and London has shown, this was far from the case in reality.[59] Subsequent sections, including 'Discrimination and Prejudice in Britain', provide similarly cursory reference to the British response to the Holocaust. Greater weight is afforded to using the Holocaust as a launchpad to explore more recent episodes, such as the racially-motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

Overall, therefore, the HET *Teachers' Guide* of 2002 certainly provided educators with a broad range of lenses through which to explore the British response to the Holocaust. However, the resource itself acknowledges that teachers are expected only to 'concentrate on a couple of issues/themes' within any single scheme of work.[60] The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is deemed by the HET to perform only a secondary role in wider curricular deployment of the genocide as a whole.

To a greater degree than educational materials produced in subsequent years by the HET and other organisations, the language of the *Teachers' Guide* is balanced. The historical events described are characterised neither by glorification nor condemnation. This is perhaps indicative of the authorial influence of David Cesarani, who – as a professional historian – might have been wary of imposingly overtly-subjective judgments on impressionable students. However, given the intended use of the guide as part of HMD, it is noticeable that the precise details of the British response to the Holocaust are of less concern than are the implications of this relationship in the modern

[58] Ibid., p.17.
[59] See Stone*, Responses to Nazism*.
[60] WHL OSP 2145, p.24.

age. Indeed, the *Teachers' Guide* is, at times, prosaic and marked by a distinct lack of visual attractiveness. Apparently, the primary concern of the resource is not critical evaluation of the past, but rather using history to inform and shape action in twenty-first century society. In alignment with this conclusion, Critchell's assessment of HMD 2002 is coruscating. The event theme and its corresponding resources missed a clear 'opportunity for critical self-reflection', and 'failed to stimulate a considered response to British actions either in the past or in the present'.[61]

Digitised HET resources

In more recent years, the HET has organised an extensive online catalogue of digitised resources, which are freely accessible to educators. Within this collection are certain materials pertaining to the British response to the Holocaust, although such resources form a relatively small fraction of the total available publications. This comparative scale exists despite the HET advice that the topic of 'British responses to the Holocaust' might form a central topic through which the Holocaust is taught to Key Stage 3 History students.[62] Nevertheless, in contrast to the *Lessons of the Holocaust* pack, these digitised resources display a tangible complication of several historical issues, including the British response to the Holocaust.

Since 2013, *Exploring the Holocaust* has been the HET's online 'flagship resource' for cross-curricular learning at Key Stage 3 level.[63] The resource represents more of a pedagogical guide than a source of historical information. It recommends core lessons and themes for teachers to explore with students, and thus again devolves responsibility for setting the parameters of Holocaust education to individual educators themselves.

Three main themes are provided for teachers to plan their lessons around, as below:

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[61] Critchell, K., 'From Celebrating Diversity to British Values: The Changing Face of Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain', in Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*, p.437.

[62] HET, 'Teacher Training' (2018).

[63] HET, 'Teaching Resources' (2022).

- The first theme explores the context of the Holocaust, first by addressing what it was and who its victims were, and then by proceeding to study pre-war persecution, its ideological roots, and British responses to it.

- The second theme focuses on the Second World War, beginning with increasing Nazi persecution of Jews and other groups. It then looks at the Holocaust itself and considers how different people, in Europe and Britain, responded or participated.

- The final theme looks more broadly at reactions to the Holocaust, firstly by addressing means by which it was resisted and then through three lessons which remind students that the impact of the Holocaust did not end with liberation in 1945.[64]

Regarding the issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, the wording of these themes is significant. Implicitly, a sense of detachment between Britain and the rest of Europe is engendered. By separating 'pre-war persecution' and its 'ideological roots' from the 'British responses to it', by extension it is suggested that such persecution did not exist in Britain itself. This is a view which recent historiography has challenged in particular.[65] In several HET resources, Britain is portrayed as an uninvolved observer to the antisemitism of the 1930s, despite the nuances of historical reality.[66]

A sense of geographical detachment is further promoted by questioning how 'different people, in Europe and Britain, responded'. The separation of 'Europe' and 'Britain' in this sentence is telling. In an immediate sense, this creates an impression that human responses diverged along national lines. Certainly, although the British position was unusual within Europe during the Holocaust due to its lack of occupation by the Nazi regime, actions by Britons and other Europeans can still be gathered under the same general themes. In other HET and HMDT resources, for example, European and British

[64] HET, 'Exploring the Holocaust' (2016), p.9.

[65] For example, see London, *Whitehall and the Jews* and Stone*, Responses to Nazism*.

[66] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?'.

'rescuers' are considered side by side. Equally, historiography on 'bystanders' has, at times, incorporated the roles played by members of Allied nations alongside those in occupied areas in a more complicated fashion.[67] Moreover, it is indeed telling that a four-page 'Timeline of the Holocaust' included within *Exploring the Holocaust* contains just two events in which Britain participated directly: the Evian Conference (July 1938) and the German surrender to the Allies (30 April 1945).[68] The British response to the Holocaust does not appear to be considered a primary historical issue by the HET, at least at Key Stage 3 level.

Nevertheless, the third theme offered by *Exploring the Holocaust* is somewhat unusual amongst comparable resources in its promotion of the concept of Holocaust *memory*. Encouraging teachers to 'remind students that the impact of the Holocaust did not end with liberation in 1945' could have the potential to inspire classroom activities centred around the concept of British Holocaust legacy.[69] It is somewhat unusual to find classroom resources which seek to expand the parameters of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust beyond the years 1939 to 1945. As before, however, the development of such ideas is reliant on the initiative of the individual teachers to whom they are directed. However, it is quite feasible for educators to use this as a stimulus for more sophisticated classroom debate: the notion of Holocaust memory, for instance, or the use of oral testimony as historical evidence.

Yet, in general, the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust cannot be said to be a prime issue within the catalogue of HET educational resources. Indeed, a six-page Key Stage 4 scheme of work centred around *Defining the Holocaust* makes no mention of the response of Great Britain.[70] This conceptual focus on mainland Europe is characteristic of a wider historical and geographic detachment that has on occasion marked British Holocaust memory.

[67] Cesarani & Levine, *'Bystanders'.*

[68] HET, 'Exploring the Holocaust', p.27

[69] Ibid., p.9

[70] HET, 'Defining' the Holocaust' (2019).

Despite this, to a much greater degree than analogous HMDT materials, there is some HET provision for engagement with the complexities of the British response to the Holocaust. In particular, this manifests itself in a selection of KS4 lesson materials. It is clear that lesson materials pitched at older student audiences are generally better equipped to facilitate substantial analytical discussion.[71] It might well be argued, therefore, that teaching of the topic of Britain and the Holocaust is best left until a later stage of school education, to afford justice to the nuances of the issues at hand. Yet, this approach is itself fraught with difficulties. By KS4 stage, the majority of students have dropped the study of History.[72] Teaching of the British response would therefore come too late to engender widespread engagement in schools.

In general terms, the KS4 lesson plan *Dilemmas, Choices and Responses* offers students the opportunity to engage with the abstract implications of the response of Britain – and other nations – to the Holocaust.[73] The resource notes how the 'loose categorisation' of the term 'bystander' has 'come to mean various things, being used to refer to individuals, neutral governments, citizens of occupied nations, ordinary Germans, and the Allies'.[74] Accordingly, the HET warns teachers against the 'very real danger of simply separating 'bystanders' into categories of 'saints and sinners' and to condemn rather than to explain'.[75] In doing so, there is a certain implicit mirroring of Kushner's insistence on the need for 'nuance' in historical consideration of such matters.[76]

The exploration in the lesson materials of different types of 'bystanders' – including 'active', 'passive' and 'uninvolved' participation – provide a theoretical framework within which it would be possible to site contemporary British action and inaction during the Holocaust.[77] However, *Dilemmas, Choices and Responses* ultimately fails to take advantage of this opportunity to establish such a direct connection. Accompanying 'scenario cards' – the appropriateness of which is perhaps questionable – challenge

[71] Turner, C., 'Teachers are 'shielding' children from full horrors of the Holocaust', *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 June 2021).
[72] Schoolsweek, *GCSE Results 2019*, (2020).
[73] HET, 'Dilemmas, Choices and Responses' (2019).
[74] Ibid., p.3.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?'.
[77] HET, 'Dilemmas', p.3.

students to consider how they might have acted only in a range of obviously 'German' situations, such as 'watching from the other side of the street as a Jewish shopkeeper clears up the smashed glass from his shop window, the morning after Kristallnacht'.[78] Therefore, there is the creation of a sense that the British response to the Holocaust, although at times imperfect, is not worthy of the same retrospective critical scrutiny which has been afforded to 'bystanders' or 'onlookers' in different geographical contexts in mainland Europe. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is perhaps too close to home for UK-based organisations to establish a suitably distanced critical lens through which to view this national history. In Germany, by means of contrast, critical engagement with the national relationship to the Holocaust is well-documented.[79] The notion of *Kollektivschuld* ('collective guilt') is perhaps the paradigmatic example of a country's perceived ability to confront challenging aspects of its national past.

A more recent lesson plan entitled *Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport* is particularly multifaceted, and itself acknowledges that 'as recent research has suggested, the history of the Kindertransport was rather more nuanced'.[80] In turn, evidence is provided for the role which historiographical engagement can play in complicating historical narratives for students. Throughout the accompanying *Guidance Notes*, several references are made to the concerted intention to create a 'nuanced picture of the society in which the Kindertransport arrived'.[81]

From the outset, therefore, the HET presentation of the *Kindertransport* is determinedly balanced. A stated lesson objective is to 'explore the ambiguities of Britain's responses to Nazi persecution of Jews in the 1930s'.[82] In a similar vein to a parallel HMDT resource (*The Kindertransport and Refugees*, 2009), the *Kindertransport* is identified as a 'symbol of British humanitarian commitment'.[83] However, this particular HET classroom material

[78] Ibid.
[79] See, for example, Rensmann, L., "Collective Guilt, National Identity, and Political Processes in Contemporary Germany", in Branscombe, N., & Doosje, B., *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[80] HET, 'Britain, Refugees and the Holocaust' (2019), p.1.
[81] Ibid., p.2.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

is set apart from its HMDT counterpart by the subsequent acknowledgment that 'some children had to contend with hostility or, more often perhaps, unintentionally distressing acts… It is therefore important to realise that the story of the Kindertransport is at once heart-warming and traumatic'.[84]

To a considerable extent, the HET's *Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport* provides teachers with the tools to achieve the desired objective of engendering student appreciation of the complex British response to the Holocaust. Again, the deployment of primary source material is a major asset in this regard. In itself, the HET recognised that such an approach has the additional benefit of allowing students to engage with a 'range of types of historical source material': oral histories, photography and historical documents are all deployed at times. As such, student perspectives can be broadened in both a factual and conceptual sense.

An attached worksheet – *Memories of the Kindertransport* – uses several *Kinder* testimonies to demonstrate the range of different refugee experiences. For example, John Richards recorded how, upon arrival in Britain, 'the Catholic faith was imposed on me; I was treated like a Catholic and I didn't want this'.[85] Conversely, the memory of 'some wonderful people who worked on behalf of those of us who came on the Kindertransport to Britain' is also described in the testimony of Bertha Leverton.[86] In other words, primary source material provided a mechanism for the HET to convey a sense of the ambiguous role played by British society in the Holocaust. Evidence which is common in form, but divergent in content is deployed to encourage a balanced historical interpretation, and also encourages greater alignment with the findings of recent scholarship on the matter.[87]

Crucially, *Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport* is supplemented by suggested 'Questions to Consider' which actively seek to challenge any student assumptions that the British response to the Holocaust was unilaterally constructive. Using contemporary

[84] Ibid.
[85] HET, 'Memories of the Kindertransport' (2019).
[86] Ibid.
[87] Craig-Norton, 'Contesting the Kindertransport'.

pamphlets and articles as launchpads for discussion, students are presented with questions such as 'Is there any evidence in the booklet that some people in Britain were not tolerant and sympathetic towards Jewish refugees?' and 'What might this tell us about some British people's attitude to Jewish refugees?'.[88] The core historical information provided within *Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport* speaks for itself, and contains essential contextual detail: 'almost 10,000 unaccompanied children, mostly Jewish, came to Britain from central Europe between December 1938 and September 1939'.[89] The real value of this particular HET resource, however, derives from the subsequent challenge to simplified narratives of rescue which is encouraged through a variety of directed learning activities.

Tellingly, the HET has placed *Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport* lesson 'within the Citizenship stream of the cross-curricular framework'.[90] Clearly, the HET intended the British response to the Holocaust to be viewed through a forward-facing, rather than historical, lens. The lesson is designed to highlight positive examples of 'immigration shaping modern society' and promote discussion about 'what makes a good citizen'.[91] Of less immediate concern to the HET is discerning exactly *what* happened, or why. The implications and consequences of contemporary actions in the modern day are presented as more urgent. Yet, as other source material in this section has shown, this forward-facing approach often comes at the expense of substantial historical contextualisation.

As in *Dilemmas, Choices and Responses*, students are not explicitly invited to *challenge* contemporary British responses from a citizenship perspective. Greater emphasis is placed on the lessons to be learned from the past. Appreciation of the complexity of the past stops just short of tangible critical self-reflection. This is not necessarily an unjustified approach. As outlined in the preface to the KS4 lesson plan *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust*, the HET perceives such methods as guarding against 'facile judgements of particular nations as "good" or "bad"'.[92]

[88] HET, 'British reactions to refugees' (2019).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., p.1.,
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

Indeed, *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* provides some evidence of the HET's appreciation of deficiencies in the landscape of Holocaust education. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is identified as both an 'ambiguous' and 'under-studied theme'.[93] Even if HET resources seem to make only a partial contribution to the redress of this imbalance, the organisation has at least been shown to display an intention to shift the axes of the educational field to a certain extent. Unusually, students are equipped with a meta-narrative of the preconditions of their own society:

> After a rather considerable delay, these questions of knowledge and response finally began in the 1980s to include Britain, but it was not until more general awareness of the Holocaust increased in the UK during the 1990s that the implications of these issues were widely recognised. For a long time before…the Holocaust was partly perceived and understood as the very embodiment of Nazi 'evil', which Britain, after much sacrifice, had defeated. [94]

In contrast to the learning resources produced by the HMDT, existing British Holocaust consciousness is *explained*, rather than itself perpetuated. Exceptionally, *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* is able to untangle itself from its own mnemonic context, and instead view British Holocaust memory from afar. In a similar vein, this HET resource expands the parameters of learning beyond 1945. Teachers are encouraged to discuss with students 'How and why has Britain remembered the Holocaust?'.[95] Moreover, students are actively encouraged to challenge the information they encounter. Points of discussion such as 'Do you think the idea of having a Memorial Day is a good one?' and 'Do you think the government was right to make study of the Holocaust compulsory?' are openly worded, to stimulate students without biasing them either way.[96]

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., p.2.

[95] HET, 'British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust', Worksheet (2015).

[96] Ibid., 'Cards'.

In several accompanying activities, the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust is complicated further. Again, through the assistance of primary source material, students are encouraged to differentiate between individual and institutional reactions. For example, the response of the 'British Government' is separated from that of 'rescuers' and 'protestors'.[97] This is a demarcation which has not always been made, and in turn has implied a certain misleading synonymity of the differing layers of contemporary British society. The response of the British government was not necessarily the response of 'Britain' as a whole in a public or individual sense. Complication of the British response comes, in part, from the ability to tease out the different strands which combined to create a 'national' response.

In fact, *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* is such a rich resource that it seems ambitious to expect teachers to deploy the material in a single lesson. This is, again, perhaps revealing of a timing issue that might have contributed to the simplification over time of educational narratives of the British response to the Holocaust. The kaleidoscopic nature of the topic is evident through the extensive range of issues presented by the HET in a single resource: the Auschwitz bombing debate (1944), Channel Island collaboration, the Battle of Cable Street (1936) and so forth. Practical constraints placed on teachers make it appear almost inevitable that at least some condensation of the topic must occur, and it seems highly unlikely that the full spectrum of case studies offered by the HET would be included in any individual scheme of work. With teaching time limited, a topic as broad as the Holocaust seems destined to be subject to some form of condensation, in practice.

If anything, *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* presents a case for a reframing of Holocaust history along thematic, rather than national lines, to ensure a more even spread of the issues explored. The uncoupling of national identity from certain actions could perhaps allow educators to foreground such issues to a greater extent. If the actions of Jane Haining – a Scottish missionary who was 'murdered in the [Auschwitz] gas chambers with a group of Hungarian Jewish women' – were primarily associated with 'resistance' rather than 'Britishness', it is possible that they would

[97] Ibid., 'Worksheet'.

achieve more attention in educational settings.[98] In some instances, national identity is a self-imposed shackle which creates a false sense of detachment between actions of a similar tenor which differed only in geographical context. Thematic exploration of the Holocaust might facilitate a more transnational historical approach, which in turn might alleviate the challenges faced by teaching time constraints. By focusing on broader themes, teachers could incorporate various geographical contexts into single topics.

British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust displays many of the educational characteristics that have been called for by historical and pedagogical commentators.[99] To a certain extent, the resource displays attempts at exploring the differentiation of individuals and institutions, the influence of the media and other such factors. *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* is evidence that it *is* possible to present students with the complexities of such an intricate subject. However, the fact that this resource was first published only in 2015 hints at the less nuanced depictions of the British response to the Holocaust which appear to have predominated beforehand. It is notable that the HET resource assumes a certain level of existing misconception or ignorance amongst Key Stage 4 students. For instance, it is proffered that 'many students may be unfamiliar with the fact that there was a significant British Fascist movement'.[100] Such an outlook might be pessimistic, although also reflective of the findings of subsequent investigations into student understandings of the Holocaust.[101]

Nevertheless, in HET resources produced after 2015, there is a detectable shift away from explicit criticism of the limitations of contemporary British actions. Concluding questions such as 'Did Britain and British citizens do enough?' (*British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust*) have generally given way to enquiries such as 'Is there anything we can learn from this?' (*Britain, Refugees and the Kindertransport*). In part, this could be attributable to the increasing centrality of Citizenship, rather than History, in the implementation of Holocaust education in Britain. The possible reasons for this shift are manifold, and have been explored by authors such as Critchell.[102] International

[98] Ibid., 'Worksheet'.
[99] Foster, Pearce & Pettigrew, *Holocaust Education: Contemporary Challenges.*
[100] HET, 'British Responses', p.5.
[101] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*
[102] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting'.

context is also of note: Holocaust education has undergone a certain reorientation towards 'lessons-based' learning in the wake of genocides in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s. In-depth discussion on the reasons for this wider trend is beyond the ambit of this thesis, although increasing multiculturalism and socio-political sensitivities appear to have played at least some role.[103]

The HET lesson *Liberation* represents a further attempt to contest existing depictions of the British involvement in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen.[104] However, this is achieved largely through consideration of *impact* rather than action. Rather than debating the actions and inactions of the British government, the glorification of the military operation is challenged through examination of the human consequences of the liberation of Belsen. *Liberation* relies on first-hand testimony to demonstrate that the emotional realities of the Belsen liberation were far grittier than might be suggested by a broader narrative, which is more likely to convey a sense of British self-satisfaction.

Letters and oral records from British servicemen variously relay the 'atrocious' and 'repulsive' conditions found at Belsen.[105] *Liberation*, therefore, guides students towards the impression that what Belsen has come to represent as a symbol in British society is far removed from the contemporary realities of the situation. The HET chooses to use human experience as a vehicle of transmitting this information to students. Teachers are encouraged to stress that liberators were 'often young themselves', and found the experience 'highly traumatic'.[106] While the classroom resources do not go as far as to present a revisionist interpretation which detracts from the British role in liberating the camp, it is nonetheless concerned to give voice to the 'overlooked part of the story'.[107] To this end, the resource attempts to redress a balance of perspective which, historically, has glorified British involvement in the camp liberation. Students are invited to consider the experiences of the victims themselves.

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[103] Chapman, A., "Learning the lesson of the Holocaust: A critical exploration", in Foster, Pearce & Pettigrew, *Holocaust Education*.

[104] See Kushner, 'From "this Belsen business" to "Shoah business"'.

[105] HET, 'Liberation Testimonies' (2019).

[106] Ibid., p.3.

[107] Ibid., p.1.

Above all, building upon the framework observable in *British Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust* (2015), *Liberation* encapsulates the further efforts of the HET to create a nuanced portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, which once again is described as 'ambiguous'.[108] Such an approach manifests itself in the concluding paragraph of the teachers' notes that accompany *Liberation*:

> While the horrors that they [British soldiers] witnessed generally reinforced their conviction that they were fighting a just war, they also often left deep psychological scars at a time when post-traumatic stress was not fully understood or treated… It is thus hardly surprising that liberation was often seen less as an occasion for joy and more a time for reflection on the catastrophic legacy of the Holocaust.[109]

Within certain schemes of work offered by some educational organisations, there is a sense that 1945 in some way represented closure, both to the Holocaust and the involvement of Britain therein. However, the Israeli historian Saul Friedlander, speaking in 1997, described the constant 'unease' that each historian of the Holocaust should always feel: in other words, an aversion to the impression that 'closure' can ever be reached.[110] The HET Citizenship lesson *Justice after the Holocaust* is therefore a significant addition to the catalogue of materials offered by the organisation. With a specific focus on the British context, the lesson seeks to explore 'the question of whether justice was done after the Holocaust', and extends the narrative beyond 1945.[111] In particular, this HET resource chooses not to focus on the conventional examples of Holocaust 'justice', namely the Nuremberg Trials or the suicides of high-ranking Nazi officials. Rather, emphasis is placed on a post-war 'legacy of the Holocaust with which many students may be unfamiliar – the arrival of hundreds, at least, of perpetrators in the UK in the late 1940s and the later, less than wholly successful, attempts to bring them to justice'.[112]

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[108] Ibid., p.1.

[109] Ibid., p.3.

[110] Friedlander, quoted, Bauer, Y., *Rethinking the Holocaust*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p.8.

[111] HET, 'Justice after the Holocaust' (2019).

[112] Ibid., p.1

There is a concerted effort within *Justice after the Holocaust* to shift student understanding towards a complicated portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust. Few would argue against the sophistication of entrenched Holocaust consciousness. However, it could be argued that the HET has swung too far in this direction. By overlooking the Nuremberg Trials, for example, in its core scheme of work, a key historical episode has been omitted. It is possible that an over-eagerness to present a nuanced depiction of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust risks distorting certain central issues of the genocide, regardless of how much exposure such topics have already received. In other words, previous overexposure of any given aspect of the Holocaust does not necessarily justify educational oversight.

To a greater extent than in its previous resources, the HET adopts a more critical tone of language in *Justice after the Holocaust*. The Allied 'denazification process' is dismissed as 'logistically impossible', while the description of a 'growing reluctance to focus on Nazi crimes' during the Cold War conveys a sense of underlying condemnation.[113] The British approach to historical justice is portrayed as introspective: trials 'mainly dealt with offences [committed] against their [British] own soldiers, rather than wider crimes'.[114] Through such statements, the HET might be charged with promoting an unhelpful sense of presentism. Students are not explicitly encouraged to consider why British authorities chose to adopt such an approach or, indeed, whether it was an unexpected *modus operandi*. Instead, when viewed in its entirety, the general thrust of the lesson plan appears to be directed towards reaching the conclusion that the Allies failed to fulfil some form of moral obligation to bring Holocaust perpetrators to justice.

Indeed, the post-war relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is characterised in much the same way as wartime British responses. Small, but significant, distinctions are made between what Britain *could* have done, *should* have done, and what it actually *did*. Notably, in the case of alleged war criminals who entered the UK after 1945, 'no action was legally possible until the passage of the War Crimes Act, after a long parliamentary struggle, in 1991'. It is subsequently noted that, although 'the new law allowed British

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[113] Ibid., p.2
[114] Ibid.

courts to try people suspected of committing crimes in Nazi-controlled Europe… only one person to date – Anthony Sawoniuk – has been tried under the law'.[115] Post-war British action is therefore characterised by its limitations within *Justice after the Holocaust*. This is a striking contrast to the focus on constructive British responses in resources such as the HMDT's *British Heroes of the Holocaust*.

This general tenor of disapproval is also replicated in consideration of other 'ambiguous' examples of retrospective justice enacted in 'countries which had been occupied by Germany'.[116] Perhaps given the intended use of *Justice after the Holocaust* in a Citizenship curriculum, there are clear connotations in the description of the Soviet 'tendency to attribute participation in atrocities mainly to members of minority ethnic groups whom the Communists wished to expel from their territories'.[117] Given the concern of the HET elsewhere to guard against 'facile judgements of … "good" or "bad"', this in itself problematic.[118] *Justice after the Holocaust* suggests an underlying assumption of a solidified central definition of 'justice', which might categorise involvement in the Holocaust as either 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. Yet this perspective on the issue of retrospective justice therefore appears a little contradictory. As HET materials are often at pains to note, the reality was far more nuanced.

Overall, HET educational materials offer a relatively extensive exploration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, perhaps to a greater extent than in the textbooks and HMDT resources analysed in this thesis. Earlier HET flagship resources, such as those created in 1997 and 2002, were generally marked by more tempered historical judgments. However, the desire to present a nuanced portrait of the British response to the Holocaust is particularly evident in materials created since 2010, and in part appears to have been guided by parallel developments in historiographical debate and societal thought. Over time, there has been an increasing public appetite for critical engagement with more uncomfortable elements of British history.[119]

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[115] Ibid., p.3
[116] HET, 'Justice', p.2
[117] Ibid.
[118] HET, 'British Responses'.
[119] Parliamentary Petition, *Change the school curriculum to reflect the true British Empire & Black History* (2020).

HMDT in the classroom

'We must make sure that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences': to a certain degree, HMDT resources pertaining to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust fulfil this organisational mission statement.[120] However, this conceptual framework within which the HMDT operates is significant. There is a clear emphasis on redemptive narratives, such as 'those who have risked their lives to protect or rescue victims'.[121] Equally, there appears to be a tendency towards presentism: that is, examining the significance of the Holocaust in modern society, rather than dwelling upon its historical intricacies. Both of these principles are not necessarily conducive to critical examination of the contemporaneous British response to the Holocaust. Within HMDT resources, the place of the Holocaust 'in our nation's and community's collective memory' appears to be guided by a sympathetic interpretation of the British involvement in the genocide. The dominant paradigm is retrospective, rather than one immersed in contemporaneous contextual detail.

Genuinely critical evaluation of the British response to the Holocaust is difficult to identify within many HMDT resources. The most obvious example is contained within a select few paragraphs of a brief Theme Paper produced as an accompaniment to HMD 2016 ('Don't Stand By').[122] It is acknowledged that 'our usual view of the British response to the Holocaust is positive', and that this interpretation 'disguises some less appealing aspects of this history'.[123] The Theme Paper proceeds to explain:

> [There was] appeasement of Nazi Germany in the mid-1930s, British flirtations with fascism, the UK's refusal to accept significant levels of Jewish immigration, either in Britain or Palestine, and the seeming failure to make any special effort to disrupt the extermination, such as by bombing the death camps – despite what was known at the time about the atrocities.

[120] HMDT, 'Statement of Commitment'.
[121] Ibid.
[122] HMDT, 'Don't Stand By' (2016).
[123] Ibid.

> Ultimately Britain and France were the only countries prepared to stand up to Nazi Germany in 1939, but assisting the Jews of Europe was never a particular or explicit motivation for doing so. In fact, the British Government ordered that Jewish suffering should not be highlighted in the media and in propaganda, for fear of stoking antisemitism and domestic fascism.
>
> The levels of collaboration seen in the Channel Islands, the only place where British people faced the reality of Nazi occupation, are not reassuring, although there were many who resisted or provided assistance. [124]

Each paragraph touches upon intricate topics, yet fails to provide much additional detail beyond superficial description. The evanescence of this particular Theme Paper resource is also significant. It was produced specifically for HMD 2016, and therefore was not added to the HMDT's central catalogue of educational materials. As such, it seems likely that the impact of this document 'on the ground' beyond 2016 was limited.

In keeping with other HMDT materials, accompanying questions intended to provoke deeper student-thought are rooted in present-day concerns: 'Can my HMD activity make reference to the current refugee crisis?' and 'What is the UK Government doing to stand up to Genocide in Darfur?'.[125] In other words, *Don't Stand By* – as an educational resource – simply represents a gesture towards to the complex historical issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, rather than a form of substantial engagement. The deployment of 'lessons' from the past in modern settings is in itself a contentious strategy.[126] Regardless, the orientation of educational materials around this educational aim appears to compromise the level of actual historical detail with which the British response to the Holocaust can be examined. The differing learning outcomes of history and citizenship teaching are evident.

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Chapman, 'Learning the lesson of the Holocaust'.

The permanent collection of HMDT resources relating to the British response to the Holocaust are spearheaded by a secondary lesson plan (designed for Key Stage 3 and 4 students) entitled *British Heroes of the Holocaust*.[127] In an immediate sense, the title of this scheme of work is revealing. The juxtaposition of 'British' and 'heroes' is intriguing. Intentionally or not, it has the potential to marry the concepts of national identity and valour in students' minds. In other words, Britishness could become a precondition of heroism, and heroic acts occurred *because* of – not despite – the nationality of their agents. Throughout the lesson plan, the individuals examined are consistently referred to as 'British heroes', which in turn reinforces a nationalistic interpretation of the actions described. In some cases within *British Heroes of the Holocaust*, this reclamation of heroes as 'British Heroes' could appear somewhat disingenuous. Sister Agnes Walsh, for instance, is introduced as a 'British Hero', despite accompanying information revealing that her life and work during the Holocaust was based in southwestern France.[128] Sister Walsh's Britishness, though not inaccurate, is somewhat irrelevant. Portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust therefore display at least some influence from nationalistic sentiment, even if such an effect is unintended by the HMDT.

British Heroes of the Holocaust does, however, display some attempts at qualification. It is acknowledged that British 'heroes' came 'from very different backgrounds'.[129] Accordingly, students are made aware that there was no fixed template of those who 'took risks' to 'save the lives of Jewish people during the Holocaust'.[130] The lesson plan falls short of extending this to the diversity of British responses as a whole, simply acknowledging that only 'some people became rescuers during the Holocaust'.[131] It conveys little sense of the fact that individual 'rescuers' in fact formed a minority of the British population. In other words, there is a misleading conflation of national and individual responses to the Holocaust. In an interesting contrast to *British Heroes of the Holocaust* (HMDT), the HET *Lessons of the Holocaust* section entitled *Rescuers' Case Studies* contains no examples of British individuals.

[127] HMDT, 'British Heroes'
[128] Ibid., p.5.
[129] Ibid., p.3.
[130] Ibid., p.1.
[131] Ibid.

British Heroes of the Holocaust centres on description of the actions of choice individuals. As such, it conforms to a model whereby individual responses are afforded greater attention, in a historical sense, than the broader perspective of the complex overall issue. The biographies of seven 'rescuers' are included for students to study. As such, focus falls upon smaller-scale events and actions – to the level of rescue of individual Jews such as a '16-year-old girl' found in a 'barn' by British PoWs in Eastern Europe – rather than on more sweeping historical overviews.[132] Students are therefore not imparted with an impression of the wider 'British' response. From this resource alone, students might be hard-pressed to understand that certain public and governmental actions during the Holocaust were in sharp contrast to the tales of rescue relayed in *British Heroes of the Holocaust*. Viewing the issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust through the lens of individuals' actions alone is problematic, in an educational sense, if an objective is to deliver a rounded interpretation of the issue.

To its credit, *British Heroes of the Holocaust* does employ precise factual detail at points throughout. For instance, the inclusion of the exact number (669) of *Kinder* processed by Sir Nicholas Winton adds a certain sense of authority to the teaching resource. A strength of the resource is also its attention to lesser-known figures of rescue, including Princess Alice of Greece (the mother of the late Duke of Edinburgh).[133] Nonetheless, its simplification of certain historical issues is perhaps unsurprising given the ages of the pupils targeted by the lesson resource. If anything, the actions of figures such as Sir Nicholas Winton are done a disservice by the impression of straightforwardness presented by *British Heroes of the Holocaust*. A class handout details that 'the government agreed to Winton's request for Czech children', with no mention of the administrative wrangles which in fact punctuated this process.[134] It is noted how Winton worked to ensure the arrangement of 'everything the children needed, including finding host families and raising funds to cover the travel expenses of the children'.[135] Again, this portrays only one dimension of the more complex Kindertransport narrative, which in recent years has been explored by Craig-Norton and others.[136] The challenging

[132] Ibid., p.7.
[133] Adamson, D., *A Righteous Princess*, Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre blog (June 2021).
[134] HMDT, 'British Heroes', p.3.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport*.

experiences of many Kindertransport refugees both while in transit and once settled in the United Kingdom pass without mention in this HMDT resource. In broader terms, the resource suggests that producing Holocaust education resources for younger audiences creates distinct challenges when it comes to analysing more complex aspects of the history.

Centrally, *British Heroes of the Holocaust*, and its associated collection of rescuer biographies, appears to demonstrate an imbalance of historical perspective. This is not to doubt the bravery demonstrated by British individuals who aided rescue and relief efforts during the Holocaust. Regardless, the experiences and actions of a British 'few' take precedence over consideration of the plight of the victims they 'saved'. It is perhaps too extreme to label this central lesson resource as triumphalist. For example, it is recorded that the actions of Winton were 'not well-known publicly because Winton did not think he had done anything extraordinary'.[137] Indeed, there is implicit acknowledgment of the failure of British society to engage fully with the histories of the Holocaust: 'during his lifetime, Foley received no recognition for his actions in the UK'.[138] However, in several instances, there is also an effort to augment the impression of risk and bravery demonstrated by British subjects. The lesson handout is at pains to emphasise that the 'breaking and bending of the immigration rules' by the British diplomat Frank Foley in Berlin in the 1930s 'made his efforts on behalf of the Jews even more dangerous'.[139] Equally, the statement that Foley acted while 'making no money and seeking no recognition or praise for his efforts' seems at best an unnecessary addition, and at worst self-satisfying.[140]

Moreover, there is a palpable sense that gratitude of rescued victims has – and should – outweigh any more critical questioning of the wider British response to the Holocaust. A closing observation details that 'honour and privilege' experienced by victims who were able to meet their British rescuers in the post-war years.[141] The educational focus is centred on the actions British rescuers took, rather than exploring exactly *from what*

[137] HMDT, 'British Heroes', p.3.
[138] Ibid., p.4.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., p.3.

they were saving these refugees. This general approach provides an interesting contrast to other Holocaust learning materials and environments – including the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust exhibition – which orbit around an appreciation of the *victims*' lived experiences of suffering.

The concluding lesson activities suggested by *British Heroes of the Holocaust* compromise its opening – more accurate - statement that British 'heroes' came 'from very different backgrounds'.[142] Students are encouraged to create a contrived *pro forma* 'Hero of the Holocaust'. The invitation for students to imagine what a 'hero would be thinking about when they started rescuing/saving' is a problematic empathy exercise. Emotionalization of historic figures without adequate contextualisation carries obvious risks.[143]

Furthermore, the encouragement to discover from students 'what can we learn about the Nazi regime and the attitudes of the British authorities from these stories?' appears imprudent, given the somewhat disingenuous presentation of the British response to the Holocaust as a narrative solely of rescue and heroism.[144] Students may be led to the false belief that the rescue of Jews was characteristic of the approach of British 'authorities' during the Holocaust, or indeed unanimously popular. In reality, as existing literature has explored in depth, both the governmental and public response to the Holocaust was far more complex.[145] Accordingly, the positivist framework of the supplied classroom question 'What lessons can we learn from the stories of these British heroes? How can we apply these to our own lives?' could be troubling. It fails to consider the equally important question of what Britain *did not* do during the Holocaust. Students are therefore encouraged to learn only from the – relatively limited – actions that *were* undertaken by Britain, rather than exploring the deficiencies of the British response. For example, the decision not to bomb Auschwitz in 1944 does not feature.

[142] Ibid., p.1.
[143] Cowan, P., & Maitles, H., *Teaching controversial issues in the classroom : Key issues and debates* (London: Continuum, 2012), p.126.
[144] HMDT, 'British Heroes', p.9.
[145] Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*.

Despite this, HMDT resources pertaining to the *Kindertransport* are more measured in tone. Descriptions of the child refugee system, along with *Kinder* testimonies, are neither overtly critical nor laudatory of the British response to the Holocaust. This in itself is atypical of past trends. Sharples has suggested that, for many years, the infusion of the *Kindertransport* narrative with British self-congratulation was partly attributable to the understandable gratitude expressed within survivors' writings. By 'listing their academic, occupational or personal achievements since the end of the war', Sharples noted that there is almost a sense of 'repayment to the country which saved them…which it appears is expected if not demanded by British society'.[146] More recent work considering the *Kindertransport* has focussed on the traumatic experiences of refugee children in Britain both during and after the war.[147]

Kinder testimonies provided for use in classroom lessons by the HMDT prioritise factuality over emotive description. Wolf Blomfield, who came to Britain in March 1939, recorded in a relatively objective tone:

> We arrived in England with little placards round our necks saying who we were. None of us spoke English, and when we arrived, there were kind ladies behind trestle tables offering us a drink, which I'd never seen before. I was very suspicious of it, but it was only tea with milk. We were all sent to children's homes and I was allocated to one in Croydon.[148]

Similarly, Bob Kirk, who arrived in Britain as a child in May 1939, tells:

> We were taken to a large underground hall, where we all sat on our little suitcases, with name labels round our necks, and waited to be called for. I was collected by a gentleman by the name of Smith - that is all I ever knew about him — and taken to a beautiful house in Hampstead, where I was

[146] Sharples, quoted in Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.18.
[147] Clifford, *Survivors*.
[148] HMDT, 'Wolf Blomfield' (2019).

> handed over to the housekeeper. … At this point I did not speak English, so perhaps I just had not understood what had been said.[149]

Compared to *British Heroes of the Holocaust*, the HMDT handout *The Kindertransport and Refugees* is considerably less celebratory of the role played by Britain in ensuring the asylum of Holocaust victims.[150] Clearly, even within the resources produced by the same organisation, there are multiple different interpretations of the nature of the British response. It is perhaps little wonder that variations in student understanding have been engendered, given that some inconsistencies in teaching resources exist.[151]

In this resource, more information is afforded to specific details of the *Kindertransport* scheme than is given to exploration of what the rescue programme might have represented in a wider historical sense. Through this single resource, it seems difficult for students to acquire a broader understanding of the *Kindertransport* process. Esoteric dates and figures (‘every child had a guarantee of £50 to finance their eventual re-emigration’)[152] pervade, rather than exploratory questions encountered in previous HMDT resources, such as ‘‘What lessons can we learn from the stories of these British heroes? How can we apply these to our own lives?’.[153] Despite this, the description of the *Kindertransport* as ‘a unique humanitarian rescue programme’ inevitably evokes a certain sense of British exceptionalism.[154] In reality, the *Kindertransport* was not the only refugee rescue scheme during the Holocaust, and similar programmes also operated outside of the United Kingdom.[155]

Nevertheless, this is still room within *The Kindertransport and Refugees* for contentious statements, namely that refugees were able to retain ‘their German-language culture and their “continental” identity, while integrating broadly successfully into British society’.[156] As explored in earlier reviews of literature, this evaluation has been

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[149] HMDT, ‘Bob Kirk’ (2019).

[150] HMDT, ‘The Kindertransport and Refugees’ (2019).

[151] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*

[152] HMDT, ‘The Kindertransport’.

[153] HMDT, ‘British Heroes’, p.9.

[154] HMDT, ‘The Kindertransport’.

[155] USHMM, *Jewish Aid and Rescue* (2020).

[156] HMDT, ‘The Kindertransport’.

challenged by recent evidential developments.[157] Equally questionable are HMDT descriptions of the experiences of Jewish refugees once they had arrived in Britain. A Theme Paper produced for HMD 2005 ('Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives') presents an uncomplicated image of integration:

> Jewish refugees and the camp survivors who reached Britain between 1938 and 1945 came through and avoided the canker of bitterness … They married and raised families. They maintained their religious affiliations and cherished memories of a culture that was now in ruins.[158]

Yet, there is some erosion of the unproblematic portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust, which is otherwise observable within *British Heroes of the Holocaust*. The *Kindertransport* handout touches upon the opposition to the admission of refugees led by 'sections of the press, right-wing political forces including Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, and by those arguing for the preservation of British jobs at a time of high unemployment'.[159] Such statements within HMDT resources at least convey to students that the British response to the crisis cannot be characterised as unilateral, even if historians such as Stone have argued that obstruction of British-led action against the Holocaust was far from split along neat political lines of 'left' and 'right'.[160]

Some examples of HMDT educational resources provide evidence of the ability of primary source material to guide students towards a more rounded historical understanding. In just three photos sourced from The Wiener Holocaust Library (*Wiener Library – Kindertransport and Refugees*), the realities of the *Kindertransport* experience are captured more effectively than in longer written HMDT materials found elsewhere.[161] A Czech refugee is forcibly removed from Croydon airport; relieved Jewish children smile as they arrive in Britain; Jewish children in transit display tiredness and fear on their faces.[162] Overall, the complexity of the multifaceted process of rescue and

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[157] Craig-Norton*, The Kindertransport*.
[158] HMDT, 'Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives' (2019).
[159] HMDT, 'The Kindertransport'
[160] Stone*, Responses to Nazism*.
[161] HMDT, 'Wiener Library – Kindertransport and Refugees' (2019).
[162] Ibid.

asylum is demonstrated. As often seems to be the case in history education, reversion to original source material can, to an extent, alleviate the issues associated with secondary interpretation.[163]

Figure 23: Triptych of images presented within *Wiener Library – Kindertransport and Refugees* (HMDT, 2019)

In addition, the HMDT offers educators encyclopaedic entries for key Holocaust 'Dates to Remember'.[164] Within this list, there is inclusion of some events relevant to the topic of Britain and the Holocaust. In this regard, the potential for geographical or historical detachment between Britain and events in mainland Europe is mitigated to a certain degree. Dates selected which implicate direct British action are as follows:

- 21 November 1938: Refugee Crisis Debate in House of Commons
- 1 December 1938: The first Kindertransport leaves Berlin
- 30 June 1940: Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands begins
- 15 April 1945: Liberation of Bergen-Belsen

Superficially, this selection of dates demonstrates a more balanced historical approach than is evident in other HMDT resources. British historical episodes are incorporated into a wider chronological sweep of the Holocaust. Equally, examples of constructive British action are placed along more ambiguous historical episodes, such as the

[163] Ankeney, K., Frankel, M., and Whisner, R.,. A Story Well Told: Primary Sources and History Education. *Social Studies Review* 43.2, (2004), p.12.

[164] HMDT, 'Dates to Remember' (2019).

occupation of the Channel Islands. However, subsequent factual information in this encyclopaedia of dates provided for use by teachers fails to engage with substantial debate or complexity regarding each topic. For instance, the impression is given of a united House of Commons in 1938, as the 'Home Secretary agreed that to speed up the immigration process', with no exploration of the true extent of parliamentary dissent.[165] The establishment of the *Kindertransport* scheme is portrayed as a compartmentalised occurrence which progressed from inception to fruition 'within a very short time'.[166] As such, there is little sense of the longer processes and debates which contributed towards British interventionism, nor of the broader arc of persecution suffered by Jews under the Nazi regime.[167]

Equally, the inclusion of details such as 'no limit was placed on the number of refugees' could again be interpreted as encouraging students to think of what Britain *did*, rather than what more they *could* have done. Again, this is a perspective which jars with early post-war historiography which rued the limitations of the British response to the Holocaust.[168] There is a sense of historical continuity lacking. The presence of antisemitism in Britain in the 1930s passes without consideration, despite extensive exploration in other HMDT resources of this particular phenomenon in a German context.

There is further misalignment with recent historical research by scholars such as Gilly Carr.[169] HMDT portrayals of the German occupation of the Channel Islands have at times been one-dimensional.[170] Although emphasis is placed on the undoubted travails experienced by Channel Islanders themselves, there is no mention of the quasi-collaboration which has also been shown to exist. Overwhelmingly, a focus on examples of both 'soft' and 'hard' repression – ranging from the censure of cinemas to the severe rationing of food – creates the subliminal impression that eliciting sympathy for Channel Islanders is the primary objective of the resource. However, the HMDT resource fails to

[165] HMDT, 'Dates to Remember - 21 November'.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Stone, *Responses to Nazism.*
[168] See, for example, Sharf, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi rule.*
[169] Carr, G., 'Occupation heritage, commemoration and memory in Guernsey and Jersey', *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past, 24*(1), pp.87-117. (2012).
[170] HMDT, 'Dates to Remember - 30 June'.

delve beyond the surface sense of the physical Nazi occupation to explore how this imposed system was actually facilitated by native Islanders. It is noted 'anyone breaking the rules faced imprisonment or deportation to Nazi prisons, labour camps and concentration camps': however, the benefits of adhering to the new occupation regime are not recorded.[171]

Notably, there is implicit criticism of the failure of the British government to accept displaced Channel Island Jews 'because they were classed as "enemy aliens"'.[172] Nevertheless, the resource stops short of passing explicit comment on such actions, perhaps in an attempt to retain some sense of historical impartiality. Students are not encouraged to link such information to modern events – such as contemporary refugee crises – in the same way in which British 'rescue' narratives in other HMDT resources have been presented as templates for conduct in the present day. The purpose of this thesis is not to judge whether either pedagogical approach is right or wrong. Yet, it is clear that the *purpose* of HMDT portrayals of different aspects of the British response to the Holocaust is variable. It is therefore difficult for teachers following these schemes of work to deploy the topic in a coordinated fashion.

The absence of any HMDT 'Dates to Remember' between 1941 and 1945 in relation to the British response to the Holocaust is itself revealing in several ways. Firstly, from a historical perspective, it is further indicative of the inaction and apathy that characterised British manoeuvres during the period in response to the Holocaust. Secondly, it offers an insight into the educational agenda of the HMDT. Actions that did *not* happen – such as the failure to bomb Auschwitz in 1944 following protracted debate and intelligence reports – are not deemed worthy of mention. Naturally, the attitude that only tangible historical actions are suitable for inclusion is problematic with regards to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust: a relationship which was often typified by prevarication. It is an educational approach that, inadvertently or not, can lead to an imbalance of perspective in favour of the constructive historical actions that did take place. It might well be argued that identifying historical 'silences' can be as instructive as focusing on events which *did* occur.

[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

Within this conceptual framework, details of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen camp by British troops are recorded. However, the liberation of Bergen-Belsen does not appear to have been afforded the same moral triumphalism in HMDT resources as identified by some commentators in other spheres of public memory.[173] If anything, the HMDT resource entries tend towards cold factualism. Priority is given to a more holistic impression of the significance of the camp:

> In the period from July 1944 to April 1945 the camp population grew from approximately 7,300 to over 90,000. The inhumane conditions in the camp, including lack of adequate food and water, poor sanitation, overcrowding and lack of shelter led to the spread of diseases such as dysentery, typhoid fever and tuberculosis.[174]

Although a secondary lesson plan entitled *Liberators and Liberation*, produced in conjunction with HMD 2015, utilises some individual case studies of British soldiers, the teaching resource is far from orientated around any sense of personal laudation.[175] Rather, as in the textbooks examined in the previous chapter, the grim realities of the liberation of Belsen are highlighted.[176] It is described how British soldier John Sangster 'started digging graves for the dead using shovels, but they quickly realised that this was not practical and so they waited for the bulldozers to bury the dead'.[177] The psychological effect of liberation was also mentioned. The liberation of Belsen left a 'profound impact' on Sangster, while Polish expatriate soldier Mietek Feldman 'was completely overwhelmed' by the experience.[178] This particular HMDT resource displayed concern to promote empathy – rather than triumphalism - amongst students. It is noted how 'John Sangster was just 21' in 1945, and students are directed to question why British soldiers rarely 'go into very much detail about Bergen-Belsen'.[179]

[173] Kushner, T., Cesarani, D., Reilly, J., and Richmond, C., "Approaching Belsen: An Introduction", in *Belsen in History and Memory*, (London: Frank Cass, 1997).
[174] HMDT, ' Dates to Remember - 15 April'.
[175] HMDT, 'Liberation and Liberators' (2015).
[176] See analysis of textbooks in previous chapter.
[177] HMDT, 'Liberation', p.2.
[178] Ibid., p.4.
[179] Ibid., p.5.

Accordingly, a more contextual – rather than retrospective - grounding of the British experience of the Holocaust is encouraged. From an outside perspective, at least, such an approach appears to be effective in creating a nuanced impression of the issue. The factual framework of the liberation is furnished with primary source material, which in turn demonstrates the complex human realities associated with the Belsen liberation. Certainly, there is alignment with IHRA advice for teachers to 'give broad coverage to this subject and contextualize the history'.[180]

In this sense, there is a contrast with aforementioned HMDT *Kindertransport* materials, which at times appear eager to emphasise the exceptional role played by individual British actors. Contrastingly, consideration of Belsen and other concentration camps is centred upon a more universal sense of scale and destruction. The British involvement in camp liberation is depicted as just one aspect of a wider *milieu* of confusion and trauma.

Equally, challenging emotional and historical frameworks may be at play. Events such as the *Kindertransport* can be appropriated as examples of direct rescue of persecuted victims. The liberation of camps such as Belsen to a greater degree represented exercises in damage limitation, and a reminder of the events which Britain – and other international powers – were *unable* to prevent. While the *Kindertransport* represented a new phase of life for refugees, concentration camps signified death. As such, in the HMDT educational materials relating to the latter topic, it is understandably more difficult to celebrate British historical participation. The liberation of concentration camps is a human narrative which can transcend national identity to a greater degree than programmes such as the *Kindertransport*, which ran along more recognisably political and administrative lines. In other words, the *removal* of national identities from historical episodes increased the nuance with which such topics were tackled.

The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, of course, did not end in 1945. Yet, there is little evidence of educational attempts to extend the narrative of the Holocaust beyond 1945. The HMDT has provided educators with few materials that consider

[180] IHRA, *How to teach.*

Holocaust memorialisation in Britain, for instance. Conversely, HMDT materials are available which address genocide memorials in other geographic and historical contexts (including Cambodia and Rwanda). A secondary resource titled *Seeking Justice* does provide some material on the Nuremberg Trials.[181] This resource is significant in two ways. It acknowledges the limitations of retrospective justice, and also distances itself from the interpretation of the Trials as a 'British' affair, which some historiography has suggested was prevalent in contemporary post-war Britain. To give one example. Lawson has cited the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals in 1946 as part of a distorted British public consciousness. Because, in wider British memory, the trials have been accepted as 'successful' in a legal and moral sense, the fact that they were divisive at the time has been largely forgotten.[182]

Seeking Justice also repeatedly notes that the Trials were coordinated by a transnational team of 'Allied powers', not Britain alone, and reinforces that the proceedings were conducted in accordance with 'international law'.[183] The resource affirms that the extent of retrospective justice was stymied by the breakdown in cooperation between the Allied powers after 1946, and describes attempts at 'denazification' by 'Americans, British and French' as 'rushed' and ineffective.[184] Moreover, *Seeking Justice* records:

> In 1988 an investigation revealed that Nazi war criminals were living in the UK. A law was passed in 1991 which allowed people to be tried for Nazi war crimes under UK law, but only one successful prosecution was carried out.[185]

Although light on precise detail, this statement does at least provide acknowledgment of the imperfections of the post-war relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Furthermore, it provides a certain barrier against the Manichean characterisation of Britain as the protagonist in a binary struggle between 'good' and 'evil' both during and after the Holocaust. As historical scholarship has suggested, the reality was far more nuanced. Nevertheless, Alec Ryrie suggested that the Second World War has become

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[181] HMDT, 'Seeking Justice' (2019).
[182] Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust.*
[183] HMDT, 'Seeking Justice'.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

the new moral compass – of 'good' and 'evil' – around which British society has now oriented itself.[186] The failure of HMDT resources to stretch engagement of British involvement in the Holocaust beyond the parameters of the Second World War does little to mitigate the assimilation of this complex topic into a more sweeping narrative of the war effort.

Overall, the depth of portrayals within HMDT educational resources of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is relatively limited. Commonly, the topic is explored through the lens of individual stories, which operate under the uncomplicated auspices of 'heroism' and 'liberation'. As such, HMDT resources are lacking in presentations of the deeper complexities of the British response to the Holocaust. My close examination of HMDT materials revealed implicit acknowledgments of the ambiguities of the contemporaneous British response to the Holocaust, but these difficulties are never plumbed in real depth. Of greater prevalence is the token deployment of the contemporaneous British response to the Holocaust as a means of illustrating present-day socio-political concerns.

There is no obvious reason for the principles outlined in the HMDT *Statement of Commitment* to preclude critical engagement with the British response to the Holocaust. Likewise, the themes assigned to each given HMD – including 'Don't Stand By' (2016) and 'Stand up to Hatred' (2009) – are rarely unsuitable for discussion of the British response in theory. However, these are educational opportunities that have not been grasped fully by the HMDT. It is indeed unfortunate that the HMD annual theme with the most explicit relevance to the issue in question – 'Britain and the Holocaust' (2002) – preceded by three years the establishment of the HMDT, and therefore missed the more coordinated production of substantial educational resources.

The increasing focus of the HMDT and its associated activities towards other examples of modern genocide aside from the Holocaust seems likely, if anything, to have reduced the scope for meaningful educational exploration of the complex issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Certainly, there are only a handful of

[186] Ryrie, A., 'Our dangerous devotion to the Second World War', History Extra magazine (5 January, 2021).

works in the official HMDT bibliography which address explicitly the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[187] *After Daybreak: The Liberation of Belsen 1945* by Ben Shephard and *British Jewry and the Holocaust* by Richard Bolchover are two such examples. Nevertheless, the limitations of the extent of the portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust may be explained through the wider scope of the mission of the HMDT. Increasingly, the Trust is concerned with promoting universal – rather than specifically historical or national – lessons of genocides which can be used to span several different contexts. Within this framework, there is perhaps little room for substantial engagement with specific national relationships with the Holocaust, even if the HMDT is itself a British organisation. A framework of Holocaust universalisation is not necessarily conducive to critical engagement with strands of history which might run along national lines.[188]

In a wider sense, a lack of semantic standardisation might have contributed to the differing portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust both in HET and HMDT materials. Although several resources purported to consider the 'British response to the Holocaust', it became clear that there were multiple different interpretations of what both 'Britain' and 'the Holocaust' actually meant in this context. On some occasions, 'Britain' was clearly synonymous with the British government. On others, 'Britain' seemed to imply a wider social concept which incorporated the attitudes of the general public and mass media. Moreover, the actions of a select few individuals came to be used – inadvertently or not – as a misleading metonymy for the British response, particularly in relation to 'rescue' operations.

There was also an implicit confusion over 'the Holocaust' to which Britain responded. Some materials adopted an interpretation of the Holocaust as a wider process of persecution which began in the 1930s. Other resources seemed to rely upon a narrower definition, which focused on the period (1941 onwards) after which the decision had been taken to pursue systematic extermination of Jews.

[187] HMDT, 'Bibliography for HMD' (2019).

[188] Salmons, P., 'Universal Meaning', *Teaching History*, 141, (2011), pp.57-64.

CHAPTER 5 - LEARNING FROM LEARNING

Key findings

This section has centred upon one particular educational setting: the school classroom. The social significance of school-based learning is obvious. It reaches the broadest population cross-section of any educational environment.[1] This section has contributed an unprecedented analysis of classroom materials produced in the United Kingdom: resources intended to equip students with portrayals of (at least some aspect of) the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

I have addressed a lacuna in existing scholarship. My research offers an original focus on educational depictions of the specific topic of the British response to the Holocaust. Previously, analysis has more commonly considered either portrayals of the Holocaust in general, or has explored the use of history textbooks as a genre in itself.[2] This thesis unites these two strands of research.

The research objectives of this chapter necessitated detailed thought. As outlined in *Methodologies*, research findings have at times relied on speculation, and incorporate somewhat abstract analytical methods. Although this study makes no claims to be either comprehensive or definitive, the range of educational materials sampled is nevertheless sufficient to offer at least some representation of relevant portrayals encountered by school students since the early 1990s. Centrally, the aim of this study was not to moralise on the relative validities of individual educational resources, but rather to provide an exploratory survey of narratives found within existing materials.

Across the sampled textbooks and independent educational materials, precise depictions of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust varied on an individual

[1] Institute for Government, *Schools* (2020).
[2] For example, Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.

basis. However, certain commonalities became apparent across the sample set. In a purely superficial sense, it was notable that there was not an overall reluctance to engage with the British response to the Holocaust. Yet, both textbooks and other educational materials covered the topic with less profundity and frequency than they treated other aspects of Holocaust history. The primary issue, however, appeared to be depth rather than width. Even though there were recurrent portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, such depictions were typically cursory. It was rare, either in textbooks or other educational materials, to find portrayals of the British response which displayed noticeable nuance or willingness to explore the true complexities of the topic.

Despite the extensive historiographical debates which have surrounded the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, very few textbooks acknowledged such discourse. Students were guided primarily towards *what* happened during the past, rather than *how* these events have been interpreted.

Even fewer textbooks actively sought to encourage student engagement with contesting historical points of view. Typically, mention of historiography came in post-16 level textbooks. However, in certain cases, there was little more than cursory reference to historians' names. Textbook Q (1999), for instance, merely added phrases such as 'as Marrus points out' and 'the historian Martin Gilbert may well be right in his suggestion…' (p.66), without explaining how such historians had reached their judgments, or how students might assess the relative validities of these opinions.

Historical debate has been an important facet of the development of Holocaust memory. Yet, in their existing forms, the sampled textbooks were unable to find the space or framework to introduce students to these secondary concepts in any meaningful ways. A lack of historiography is problematic, in that it can present history as uncontested. In reality, multiple different interpretations of historical 'facts' exist.

Explaining the portrayals of Britain and the Holocaust found in the source materials is not necessarily straightforward. In 2017, Foster and Karayianni found that their own study demonstrated that 'curriculum policies, historical scholarship, and classroom-

based research appeared to have minimal impact on history textbooks'.[3] However, my own research can offer no definitive answer to the question posed in the 2017 study: 'what *does* influence the content of history textbooks?'.[4] Individual textbooks appear to be driven by a series of factors that are unique to each publication.

Some books, such as textbook K (2001), were strongly guided by public examination board requirements and 'exam technique' which would allow students to attain the best possible grades. Textbook N (2016) is particularly notable for its persistent accompaniment of discussion of historical issues with 'Exam Tips', which somewhat cynically suggest how students can distil complex topics into exam-proof interpretations. Equally, despite the purported impact on public consciousness of cultural products such as *Schindler's List* (1993), there were few discernible references to such output within textbooks themselves.[5]

Textbook coverage was influenced by the function and intended audience of the publication. Sampled textbooks spanned a range of learning stages: KS3, GCSE and post-16. As might be expected, the sophistication of historical interpretations increased in parallel with the increasing ages of the students targeted by textbooks. This is itself raised a pedagogical paradox. Often, only older students seemed to be trusted with detailed explorations of the more complex aspects of the Holocaust, including the British response. However, to reach this level of educational maturity, it seemed to be accepted that the Holocaust must first be encountered at a younger age (specifically as part of the KS3 curriculum). Yet in turn, KS3 depictions of the Holocaust were simplified to reflect a less developed audience.[6] Therefore, it was harder for students to access the requisite intricacies of the subject area prior to GCSE or A-Level.

'Silences' are also a valid phenomenon. Within sampled educational resources, however, it cannot be said that consideration of the British response to the Holocaust was absent, even if coverage of the topic was characteristically brief. Pingel concluded

[3] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust', p.334.
[4] Ibid., p.335.
[5] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.65.
[6] Turner, C., 'Teachers are 'shielding' children from full horrors of the Holocaust', *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 June 2021)..

– in an authoritative 2010 UNESCO handbook of textbook analysis - that textbooks often 'try to avoid addressing historical periods that do not fit into a positive self-image in any detail'.[7] Although this pattern found representation to a certain extent in the findings of this section, it remained unclear whether the lack of critical engagement with the British response was a concerted editorial decision.

Within classroom materials, students appeared to be exposed to simplified interpretations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Linguistically, 'Britain' was often deployed as a broad term to combine governmental, public, and individual responses into one amorphous body. Detailed periodisation of the different stages of the Holocaust was lacking, as was precise demarcation of the specific figures and organisations involved in different aspects of the British response. There was a heavy focus, in textbooks in particular, on the years of the Second World War. In most cases, the narrative of the Holocaust was not extended beyond 1945.

In more methodological terms, educational materials often failed to accompany accounts of the British response to the Holocaust with supporting primary source material. Where it *was* deployed, however, primary source material was shown to be an effective mechanism of complicating the topic for students, and allowing for more extensive discussion of the issues presented. Moreover, the use of graphic imagery – particularly in relation to the liberation of Belsen camp – appeared to be an effective safeguard against potential glorification of the role played by Britain in certain episodes.

Some differentiation can be made between portrayals found in the two different genres of sampled educational resources (history textbooks and peripatetic classroom materials). This can be explained through the individual contexts of educational materials. The function of depictions of the British response to the Holocaust was one notable point of departure. Materials produced by the HET and HMDT were much more socially-oriented than in textbooks. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was sometimes used almost as a historical gesture as part of a wider concern to encourage students to consider their conduct in modern society. As such, these

[7] Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook*, p.38.

resources conformed more closely to the ‘lessons-based’ approach in Holocaust education which gathered steam in the 1990s.[8] It appears likely that such a trend was influenced, in part, by international context. The development of genocides in Rwanda and the Balkans coincided with a reorientation of Holocaust educational materials towards addressing contemporary socio-political issues. This same effect does not appear to have been found in school textbooks, however, which displayed a greater level of immunity from external influences.

Even if the intention of HET and HMDT materials was to ‘learn’ from Britain’s perceived past mistakes, there was rarely any sustained critical evaluation of the limitations of the British response. Indeed, more redemptive episodes such as the *Kindertransport* found far more coverage in independent classroom materials than in textbooks. This, in part, seems attributable to the individualistic historical approach adopted by several sampled independent resources. The British response to the Holocaust – unlike the general history of the Holocaust itself - was told through the lens of ‘heroic’ individuals such as Nicholas Winton. In textbooks, however, the tendency towards grander political narratives meant that the limitations of the British response as a whole were considered in more incisive terms. In this regard, while typical textbook concision limited the scope of detailed historical analysis, it did facilitate a broader sense of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust that was not always evident in materials produced by the likes of the HET and HMDT.

Crucially, the fact that definitive trends over time are not truly observable across textbooks or other sampled resources suggests that portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have not evolved in any major ways since the early 1990s. This stagnancy comes *despite* the pace of parallel developments in the landscape of Holocaust memory and education.[9]

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[8] Chapman, ‘Learning the lesson of the Holocaust’.

[9] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness.*

We need to talk about…British Holocaust education

This thesis employs granular detail to tease out thematic historical patterns. My research, in itself, provides a valuable historical record of the British educational landscape. But what do these findings *mean*? And what do they tell us about classroom learning experiences?

Throughout this study, allusion has been made to the wider pedagogical issues raised by analysis of classroom resources. These are difficult questions, and ones to which the answers are not straightforward. Future research might seek to engage more deeply with the pedagogical implications of the limitations of the portrayals unearthed in this thesis.

There is obvious complexity associated with teaching intricate topics such as the British response to the Holocaust. But rather than being judgmental, we might seek to *explain* limitations in educational practice. For one thing, there is a lack of teaching time. Even in 1999, when Holocaust education was still gaining momentum, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines in the United Kingdom recommended devoting a minimum of between 8 and 11 hours of teaching time to any individual unit of genocide education.[10] But CfHE research in 2009 indicated that those who teach the Holocaust to pupils at KS3 level spend on average 7.2 hours of lesson time on the subject.[11]

Moreover, although Holocaust education is a specialised discipline, analysis of classroom resources has shown that there is a heavy responsibility on individual educators to implement the intended objectives of such materials. Textbooks and HMDT/HET resources do not in themselves represent educational endpoints. Their actual deployment is a conditional process. In a 2009 survey of educators, it was found that 'very few claimed to have any specialist professional development in teaching the subject – with 83 per cent considering themselves 'self-taught''.[12] Indeed, 67 per cent

[10] Russell, *Teaching the Holocaust in school history*, p.123.

[11] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust*, p.125.

[12] Foster, in Pearce, *Remembering the Holocaust*, p.242.

'revealed they typically used textbooks to support learning'.[13] The palpable limitations of this textbook-based praxis have been explored in this section. It is feasible that a lack of detailed knowledge amongst teachers of the complexities of the topic of the British response to the Holocaust has, in turn, led to either neglect or simplification of the issue in classroom settings.

As such, there is a compelling case for teachers intending to teach the complex topic of the Holocaust to ensure that they have engaged with continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Respected CPD courses administered by institutions such as the CfHE are specifically designed to support teaching of the Holocaust, and in turn might help to mitigate the limitations found in the materials analysed in this thesis.[14] In 2020, the CfHE collated over a decade of research in a new exploratory compendium of Holocaust education practices.[15] Again, the CfHE was able to draw upon its distinctive position as 'the only Holocaust education institution in the world which explicitly employs applied research to develop and improve classroom practice'.[16] As such, this volume offered a significant evidence-based contribution to the field of Holocaust educational studies.

Of particular interest was Tom Haward's exploration of the evolution and impact of the CfHE CPD programme *British Responses to the Holocaust*. The very genesis of such a programme is in itself revealing. Clearly, it was felt necessary by the CfHE to 'open dialogue and encourage rethinking of dominant political and cultural narratives' which previous studies had shown to be lacking amongst British teachers and students. [17] In alignment with existing literature, Haward acknowledges that the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been characterised by a 'narrative of the country's relationship with the Holocaust that treads a sometimes uneasy line

[13] Ibid., p.243.
[14] CfHE, *CPD and Events* (2021).
[15] Foster, Pearce & Pettigrew (eds.), *Holocaust Education*
[16] Ibid., p.x.
[17] Haward, 'British Responses to the Holocaust', in Foster, Pearce & Pettigrew (eds.), *Holocaust Education*, p.115.

between triumphalist eulogy, on the one hand, and acknowledgement that Britain "could have done more"'.[18]

Haward's findings resonated with the conclusions of this thesis. Significantly, in his experiences of running CPD sessions, Haward uncovered 'a disconnect between how students understand British responses to the Holocaust, and the actual historical record'.[19] Haward attributes centrality, therefore, to the role of 'teachers and their own levels of knowledge and understanding of this history' in mediating such discrepancies.[20] However, as this thesis has demonstrated, discrepancies between historical reality and student understanding cannot be attributed solely to individual teachers. Analysis has shown that educational materials themselves – regardless of practitioners' own knowledge – can be lacking in substance and criticality.

But what is Holocaust education actually *for*? This is a central question prompted by the findings of this section. Across resources produced by different authors and organisations, there is far from a standardised understanding of the purpose of learning about the Holocaust. This in itself is not inherently negative. It can ensure that the Holocaust is approached with creativity, from a range of angles. However, it also noticeably affects the ways in which complex issues – such as the British response – are treated. Based on the materials sampled above, teachers often seemed force to choose whether to teach the Holocaust as a topic for a History curriculum, or as part of a Citizenship scheme of work. Very rarely do classroom resources blend the two approaches. In other words, the Holocaust is commonly presented either in chronological terms, or conversely as a launchpad for more prolonged discussion about how modern society should conduct itself.

Of the two, the historical approach would seem to facilitate more detailed knowledge of the precise nature of the British response. Then again, the citizenship approach might also have its merits in promoting understanding of the Holocaust's legacy in modern Britain. It might be charged that universalised 'lessons' of the Holocaust neglect the

[18] Ibid., p.114.
[19] Ibid., p.120.
[20] Ibid., p.120.

specific national contexts of precise aspects of Holocaust. But they are also a vehicle for teasing out transnational links, and increasing relatability to a modern audience. There is no obvious 'right' or 'wrong' path to tread. But forcing teachers into a definitive choice of which route to take seems unlikely to yield the maximum educational rewards on offer from the two different approaches.

Yet, the foundation of Holocaust education on grounds of its moral 'lessons' is not automatically conducive to critical self-engagement with the complex involvement of Britain in the genocide. In a wider sense, Peter Novick astutely noted that the 'lessons for dealing with the sorts of issues that confront us in ordinary life' are not necessarily found in extraordinary events such as the Holocaust.[21] Critchell also strikes at the core of this issue in the assessment that 'an event as historically and contextually complex as the Holocaust cannot, and arguably should not, be easily be distilled to provide messages for common humanity'.[22] This strand of argument in itself raises broader questions, which can be applied to the context of British Holocaust memory and education. Has the Holocaust proved an 'extraordinary' event *because* society has learned from it? Or has the Holocaust proved unique *in spite* of society's failure to heed its lessons? As of 2022, ongoing atrocities in Ukraine would support the latter judgment.

Relatedly, this thesis also asks: what is the purpose of different educational resources? Traditionally, textbooks have occupied an authoritative position in school-based teaching and learning.[23] However, analysis of history textbooks has highlighted both their strengths and weaknesses in a classroom context. Most of the publications sampled were effective at covering a broad curriculum in a concise and pacy style – ideal for the demands of the exam-based learning found in the United Kingdom.[24] But textbooks also demonstrated themselves far less suited to the task of exploring the nuances of Holocaust history. When aiming to complicate student understanding of the Holocaust, teachers might be best advised to avoid general history textbooks, and instead consult specialised publications. Indeed, existing research has already demonstrated the tendency of textbooks towards grossly simplified summaries of the

[21] Novick, P., The Holocaust and Collective Memory (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p.13.
[22] Critchell, 'From Celebrating Diversity', p.437.
[23] Repoussi & Tutiaux-Guillon, 'New Trends', p.156.
[24] Eloquin, X., 'The focus on exam grades is failing the next generation', LSE Blog (2016).

Holocaust.[25] Although the factual accuracy of sampled materials is not necessarily in doubt, this study has shown that – as educational resources – textbooks are far from infallible in a pedagogical sense. There is a pervading definition of classroom learning as a race to tick various factual-knowledge boxes, more often than not with a view to the requirements of public examinations.

In a different way, the form and function of the HMDT and HET materials was also problematic. As peripatetic classroom resources, it was difficult to be sure how such learning stimuli were intended to be incorporated into a broader scheme of work. In other words, these itinerant publications lacked a sense of overarching cohesion, which might otherwise be particularly helpful for less experienced teachers. In relation to the British response to the Holocaust, the use of just one short HMDT or HET resource in isolation might well impart a parochial impression of the topic to students. This issue is complicated further if educational resources lack accompanying directions for how they should be utilised in a classroom setting.

Conversely, it also seems that deployment of primary source material often helps to add complexity and nuance to explorations of the British response to the Holocaust, even though this approach was not particularly visible in either sampled textbooks or HET/HMDT materials. Where nuanced interpretations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were observable elsewhere, such evaluations were more often than not accompanied by supporting primary source material from the contemporaneous period. Variously, archive documents, photographs and oral histories all provided mechanisms through which students were able to access a range of perspectives on the issue at hand. Indeed, the 2020 CfHE volume reported that 'working with primary source documents from a range of different archives located in England' allowed the articulation of 'different voices and realms of knowledge that existed in Britain throughout the course of the Second World War'.[26]

[25] Foster & Karayianni, 'Portrayals of the Holocaust'.

[26] Haward, 'British Responses to the Holocaust', p.121.

One such case in point is the resources produced by The National Archives (TNA). The NA states its organisational commitment to 'the teaching of history through original sources'.[27] The NA also offers the opportunity for KS3 students to participate in a lesson entitled *Britain and the Holocaust* through a 'virtual classroom'. Central to this lesson is exploration of 'exactly how far the British government was aware of the events of The Holocaust'.[28] Immediately, a slightly different tone is struck to that observable in comparable materials produced by the HET and HMDT. The NA lesson appears to orientate itself around critical examination of the historical basis of governmental action and inaction, rather than considering the contemporary moral lessons which might be learned from such episodes.

One of the seven teaching enquiries recommended by the NA in its own collection of 'Key documents' relating to the Holocaust is titled 'What accounts for the Allies' (in)actions with respect to saving the Jews?'.[29] Conversely, it has been observed above how the Citizenship-based treatment of similar topics by the HET and HMDT is rooted in the modern-day implications of events that did occur, rather than a concern to dwell on the precise details of the past. Throughout the NA lesson plan, several documents, including Allied reconnaissance photographs of Auschwitz and decrypts of intercepted German Police Communications, are presented to students. Students are therefore afforded the opportunity to conclude for themselves, through close analysis of relevant source material, the extent to which the British government acted upon contemporary awareness of the Holocaust.

[27] TNA, *Education* (2020).
[28] TNA, *Britain and the Holocaust Lesson Preparation Pack* (2016), p.2.
[29] TNA, *The Holocaust*, 'Classroom Resources', (2020).

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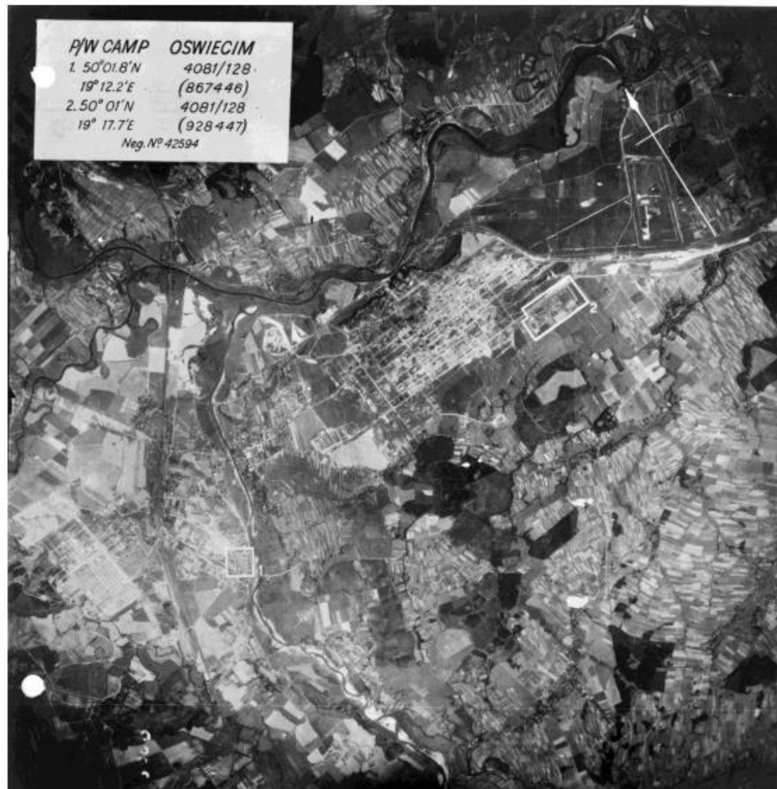

Figure 24: Allied reconnaissance photos of Auschwitz, provided in NA *Britain and the Holocaust Lesson Preparation Pack* (2016)

The range of perspectives presented in the NA lesson pack ensure that the portrayal of the complex British governmental response is considered from multiple angles. Ultimately, it is a topic which is treated in unemotional terms. Again, these observations are perhaps part of a wider pedagogical issue to be debated. In the case of Britain and the Holocaust, bringing students into closer direct contact with first-hand source material allowed for more nuanced interaction with a range of historical issues.

The sampled materials also pointed towards the limitations of certain educational frameworks. Particularly in HET and HMDT resources, there was a trend towards narrating the 'British' response to the Holocaust through individual life stories of rescuers such as Frank Foley. The teaching of history through the lens of individual experiences has its merits, particularly in making the past accessible to younger

students.[30] Yet, in the case of Holocaust history, it can also be a risky strategy in the classroom. As in the case of the British response, a focus on individual stories can create a narrow conception of what actually happened during the Holocaust. Moreover, it can further confuse the semantic vagaries found throughout Holocaust education. To use the example above, the 'British response' might become a conflation of individual, governmental, and societal reactions. Certainly, individual stories can be useful in adding human detail to broader historical overviews. But in the context of the complex history of the Holocaust, such a lens is perhaps best deployed only once a firmer understanding of the wider topic is established.

Finally, it would appear that the majority of the sampled resources could have been more ambitious in their scope. Particularly notable was the unwillingness of many materials to stretch the Holocaust narrative beyond the boundaries of the wartime years (1939 to 1945). The preconditions of the Holocaust, and the development of Holocaust memory, are topics which feasibly might inspire stimulating classroom discussion. However, as in the case of the museum settings examined later in this thesis, practical obstacles might limit the extent of future developments. In the pressured environment of school-based teaching, it is perhaps optimistic to hope for the greater time and space for Holocaust education which could support more nuanced exploration of such a complicated period of history. In any case, there are limitations in the potential reach of deeper engagement with Holocaust education. Only approximately a third of students study history between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, while just 6% study the subject after GCSE level.[31]

Historiographical reflections

Earlier, I explored the multifaceted discourse surrounding the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. I have noted that both textbooks and independent educational resources displayed a lack of engagement with relevant historiographical debate. Nevertheless, it is possible to place the contents of the sampled educational

[30] Smith, C., Guillain, A., and Noonan, N., *History through Stories : Teaching Primary History with Storytelling* (Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 2016).
[31] Foster, S., 'Holocaust education in England: concerns, controversies and challenges', p.378.

materials within the frameworks of the historiographical discourse which classroom resources often neglected (ironically). In brief, the sampled educational materials aligned with existing characterisations of British Holocaust memory only to a certain degree. It could be suggested, therefore, that the school as an educational setting has been less affected by circumstantial developments than other spheres of society.

With specific regard to the portrayal of the Holocaust in school textbooks, there was additional corroboration of the findings of an international UNESCO survey (2014). It surmised that English-language textbooks lacked 'domestication' of Holocaust education whereby 'countries place emphasis on the local significance of the event or appropriate them in the interests of local populations'.[32] Certainly, there was a pervasive sense of historical and geographical detachment observable in textbook portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. However, there was less resonance to Wenzeler's perception of English-language textbooks to have the 'tendency to portray the English as the Allies that came to bring lasting peace to the world' as an attempt to 'foster a pride in Englishness'.[33] Although textbook portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust were often lacking in depth, they were not necessarily superseded by any competing attempt to sanctify British involvement in the Second World War.

In a wider sense, therefore, the findings of this chapter found only limited resonance with existing characterisations of glorified memory of the British role in the Second World War.[34] However, in any form, unrepresentative narratives of the Holocaust – which lack the 'nuance' prized by Kushner - have the potential to engender universalised conceptions of Britain as the protagonist in a simplified struggle between 'good' and the 'evil' of Nazi Germany.[35] The 'heroic, historic, and populist language' of British portrayals of war, as perceived by David Reynolds, were not immediately observable within either textbooks or independent educational resources.[36] To the other extreme, the Holocaust was not employed in educational materials as a proxy for British self-flagellation.

[32] UNESCO, *The International Status of Education*, p.3.
[33] Wenzeler, 'The Presentations of the Holocaust', p.113.
[34] Connelly, *We Can Take It!.*
[35] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?'.
[36] Reynolds, 'Britain, the Two World Wars', p.208.

In general, however, the Holocaust was not used to support the construction of national moral exceptionalism. In a contrasting wider social context, Lawson has cited the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission report of 2015 as an example of exceptionalist discourse, where the government committed to remember the way the nation 'proudly stood up to Hitler'.[37] By extension, Lawson suggested that perpetuations of nationalistic interpretations of the Holocaust within educational settings are coming from the 'top-down', and have been influenced by overarching political developments. These influences do not necessarily appear to have manifested themselves in classroom materials, as yet. But there is still time…

Overall, while analysis of textbooks and other educational materials has identified the similar lack of self-reflection identified in wider British society by Donald Bloxham *et al*, there are some differences in the ways in which Holocaust memory has been *mobilised* within educational resources in comparison to its use in public settings.[38] Critchell has argued that, in twenty-first century Britain, Holocaust memory has 'implicitly and explicitly' been connected to discourse on 'what constitutes British identity'.[39] Critchell identified a longstanding sense of 'Britishness' that was carved out of an idea of Britain as 'the moral teachers of a defeated Germany'.[40] However, such nationalistic overtones rarely emerged within the materials sampled in this thesis. Particularly in textbooks, Holocaust events were not often explored along national lines, and instead tended to use thematic or chronological frameworks to present information to students.

The discrepancies between the perceived shortcomings of British Holocaust memory and the realities of educational content offers a suggestion as to the nature of the formation of national consciousness. It would appear that lasting trends in wider British society are not necessarily the product of the school education system. Rather, perhaps through external cultural influence, the synapse of schools and adult society is a juncture at which misrepresentation of British history can emerge. Certainly, the limited educational coverage of the British response to the Holocaust is unlikely to contribute

[37] Lawson, T., 'Britain's promise to forget: some historiographical reflections on What Do Students Know and Understand about the Holocaust?', *Holocaust Studies*, 23(3), (2017), p.349.
[38] Bloxham, 'Britain's Holocaust Memorial Days'.
[39] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.24.
[40] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting', p.51.

to more nuanced understandings of either the genocide or Britain's national history. However, it cannot be held solely accountable for the distorted ways in which British involvement in the Second World War has been seen to eclipse British involvement in the Holocaust and detach the British narrative from wider global history.[41]

The shape of things to come? *Understanding the Holocaust* (CfHE textbook, 2020)

As outlined above, educational organisations have not been blind to the possibility of refining classroom presentations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Autumn 2020 marked the publication of a new textbook aimed at KS3 students, authored by the UCL CfHE, in partnership with Hodder Education.[42] Significantly, *Understanding the Holocaust* offered a direct response to the findings of evidence-research conducted by the CfHE over the previous decade (which have been outlined elsewhere in this thesis).[43] Accordingly, the content of the textbook was tailored towards addressing existing shortcomings identified amongst students, and facilitating more accurate teaching practice. Professor Stuart Foster, Executive Director of the UCL Centre and co-author of the textbook, outlined the rationale behind the creation of the textbook:

> Our goal is to help teachers both deepen students' knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust and appreciate the contemporary significance of this disturbing history. We hope that teachers across the country will use this textbook to improve learning and challenge common myths and misconceptions that surround the Holocaust.[44]

Understanding the Holocaust portrays the British response to the Holocaust with a degree of nuance not necessarily characteristic of other textbooks sampled in this thesis. Certainly, the textbook addresses the topic in much greater detail than other educational resources produced for KS3 pupils. In a subsection entitled *How*

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[41] For instance, see Sharples & Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust.*

[42] Foster, Pearce, Karayianni & McCord, *Understanding the Holocaust (KS3)*, Hodder, 2020.

[43] See CfHE, *Research* (2022).

[44] CfHE, *Understanding the Holocaust: how and why did it happen?* (2020).

did the British government respond to the Holocaust?, the textbook offers a rebuttal of the misunderstanding that 'the British government didn't know about the persecution and murder of European Jews, or that Britain went to war with Nazi Germany to save the Jews of Europe'.[45]

The textbook subsequently offers a balanced factual interpretation. Although it is acknowledged that 'British decision-makers had knowledge of mass murder…as early as July 1941', it is also noted that 'there was very little they could have done to help the Jews of Europe'.[46] Unlike certain other textbooks, these broader overviews are substantiated by a detailed timeline of 'Key events'. Nevertheless, given that previous CfHE research demonstrated gaps in student understanding of pre-war Jewish life, it is surprising that the chronology offered by *Understanding the Holocaust* commences in November 1938, and therefore does not consider British responses to the persecution of Jews in the early 1930s.[47]

A key strength of *Understanding the Holocaust* is the manner in which it introduces relatively young students to historiographical debate. This is an important acknowledgment that historical 'facts' can be contested, and shows students that versions of the past are based on the *interpretation* of evidence.

In turn, the textbook has the potential to engender the awareness amongst pupils that the British response to the Holocaust remains a complex point of discussion. While acknowledging that 'many historians and politicians…have not always agreed' on the topic, the textbook offers three different interpretations for pupils to study: a self-congratulatory interpretation (from the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report of 2015), a critical account (from Bernard Wasserstein), and an apologist line (from Yehuda Bauer).[48] Equipped with requisite historical detail, students are well-appointed to engage with more exploratory questions such as 'which of the three interpretations…do you consider best reflects Britain's

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[45] Foster et al., *Understanding the Holocaust (KS3)*, p.80.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Foster et al., *What do students know?*.
[48] Foster et al., *Understanding the Holocaust (KS3)*, p.83.

response to the Holocaust?' and 'what do you think Britain should have done?'.[49] Often, in other sampled textbooks, student activities requiring complex thought were not supported by sufficient historical material. Equally, more thorough historical examinations of events were sometimes not directed towards meaningful learning activities. *Understanding the Holocaust* represents a skilled balance of factual information with the promotion of independent historical thought.

Understanding the Holocaust offers a promising glimpse of the future of textbook-based Holocaust education. The textbook provides an example of the merits of resources authored by subject-specialists, which respond directly to proven shortcomings in student understanding. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is explored through both historical and historiographical lenses, and stresses the intricacies of the topic at hand.

However, the creation of educational materials in such a fashion is not without its challenges. Evidence-based research requires regeneration on a continual basis, to keep pace with developments in student thought and pedagogical practices. The large-scale CfHE research upon which the textbook is based was conducted in 2009 and 2016, respectively. In turn, any resources produced in response to such studies will also need to be revised as required. It is quite possible that the types of 'myths and misconceptions' held by students in relation to the British response to the Holocaust will evolve over the coming years.[50]

As my research consistently demonstrates, there also remains the perennial challenge of reconciling textbook publication and textbook distribution. Despite the best efforts of the CfHE to subsidise sets of its textbook, effective implementation of its content will rely on individual school or teacher initiative (in the absence of standardised national educational materials).[51] In other words,

[49] Ibid., p.82.
[50] CfHE, *Understanding the Holocaust: how and why did it happen?.*
[51] Foster & Burgess, 'Problematic Portrayals', p.22.

schools will be required actively to request a copy of *Understanding the Holocaust*. Overall, however, *Understanding the Holocaust* does provide evidence of the ways in which responsive textbook content has the ability to add nuance to educational portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.

SECTION II: THE MUSEUM AS EDUCATIONAL SETTING

PRÉCIS – CRUCIBLES OF MEMORY

> *Distance is a measurement not only of "how far?", but of "how far away from me?".*
>
> - Susan A. Crane, historian of public memory[1]

Learning is not a process confined to the classroom alone – nor are textbooks the sole vehicle of historical memory. Notably, museums can act as many things: crucibles of knowledge, pillars of society, expressions of identity. Patricia Davidson affirmed that museums mediate the past in a way which lends material form to authorised and institutionalised versions of history.[2] In such cases, museums can essentially embody a certain form of memory.

Therefore, this section considers the museum as educational setting. In particular, two institutions were selected for specific case study: The National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) in Nottinghamshire, and the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC) in Huddersfield.

Through a combination of qualitative exhibition analysis and extended interviews with key museum personnel, the nature and justifications of portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust are explored. Holocaust representation in museums is a weighty topic. But this chapter provides a tight focus on the specific mediation of the British response to the Holocaust in museal settings.

[1] Crane, S.A., "Preface," to *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), p.xi.

[2] Davison, P., "Museums and the Re-Shaping of Memory", in Corsane, G. (ed.), *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p.186.

Overall, the findings of this chapter proved to be in general alignment with the findings of Section I's analysis of educational materials. Before visiting each museum, it was not certain that I *would* find depictions of the British response to the Holocaust. Although each institution did contain reference to different aspects of the topic, engagement was marked by a characteristic lack of depth. Equally, there was a significant weighting towards a focus on events of the late 1930s and the Second World War, with little stretching of historical narratives beyond these parameters. Each museum was not necessarily ambitious in the scope of its historical treatment of the British response to the Holocaust. Despite this, it was not the case that the British response to the Holocaust was triumphalised to any consistent degree.

This section provides an innovative study of under-researched locations. The nascent HELC in particular has been subject to very little existing research. In the case of the NHCM, only the thoughts of the Centre founder Stephen D. Smith which have been published. My interviews with a range of museum staff members shine light on new perspectives. The insights offered by 'on the ground' museum personnel were largely unexplored before this thesis.[3] Although interviewees did not represent the official views of each respective museum, there was a widespread acknowledgment of the limitations found in institutional portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. My research provides significant proof of the role played by individual educators in shaping broader currents of Holocaust memory.

In some cases, the theoretical museum mission statements and the personal philosophies of individual staff members could not be translated into reality. Museum staff pointed towards abstract and physical constraints which had hindered more substantial engagement with the subject matter. The physical sites of both the NHCM and HELC are small, as are staff numbers. Nuanced representation of the British response was not possible within confined exhibition spaces, as somewhat of a subsidiary issue within the broader history of the Holocaust.

[3] Smith, S., *Making memory: creating Britain's first Holocaust centre* (Newark: Quill Press, 2002).

But why is this granular study useful? The fine detail of this research study is a gateway to wider issues pertaining to Holocaust and museum memory. There is the need for a fundamental rethink of the time and space afforded to Holocaust education, if complicated interpretations of the past are to be facilitated. Equally, it highlights how museums – despite their vaunted position as bodies of authority in society – can be affected by external political and cultural pressures when creating narratives of the past. There is clearly also an issue in constructing physical presentations of the aspects of Holocaust history (such as the British response) which lack material artefacts. This is a bridge, in future, which museums might seek to cross.

This section is not intended as an explicitly-comparative study of the NHCM and HELC. Each institution has a different educational remit, which has affected the way in which the British response to the Holocaust has been depicted. Moreover, moralisation is not a prime concern: it would be parochial to identify 'right' and 'wrong' examples of museum practice. However, this section highlights the scope for future development of museal portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. With Holocaust education continuing to evolve, so too must engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. As the burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement has demonstrated in recent years, there is plenty of appetite for greater entertainment of self-critical historical reflection.[4] The detachment of British history from the history of the Holocaust is not only problematic: it is historically misleading.

Now, more than ever, museums should embrace the chance to have difficult conversations. As public debate on the role of public services continues, engaging with complicated and topical historical issues is one way for museums to prove their worth to society.[5]

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[4] Otele, 'These anti-racism protests'.

[5] The Art Newspaper, *'Be commercially minded or lose future funding': UK government's threat puts museums in peril* (28 August 2020).

Why these museums matter: context and importance

The National Holocaust Centre and Museum

i) History

The creation of the National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM) is an extraordinary story. In 1991, brothers James Smith (a medic) and Stephen D. Smith (a scholar of Theology) visited Yad Vashem in Israel. The experience proved so moving that the brothers resolved to create a centre in the United Kingdom that would be dedicated to Holocaust education. The Smiths' project was made more unusual by the fact that the brothers hailed from a Methodist background, and had no personal connection to the Holocaust. Typically, as Cooke noted, it was the 'Anglo-Jewish community who had been historically proactive in British Holocaust memorialisation'.[6]

A farmhouse owned by the Smith family in the rural Nottinghamshire village of Laxton was converted into Britain's first dedicated Holocaust museum, and opened to the public in 1995. The NHCM buildings have evolved to contain exhibition spaces and an education hall. The NHCM permanent on-site exhibitions are now complemented by digital exhibitions hosted online, and occasional temporary exhibitions displayed at the museum itself. Age-appropriate programmes of learning are offered to visitors from primary-school level upwards.

The Centre houses a small collection of Holocaust artefacts, and relies on private donations of objects for the expansion of its archived materials. Attached to the NHCM is a memorial garden, within which contemplative remembrance is encouraged. Throughout its history, the NHCM has also been known as 'Beth Shalom' (meaning 'House of Peace' in Hebrew).

[6] Cooke, S., 'Beth Shalom: Re-thinking History and Memory', *The Journal of Holocaust Education,8*(1), (1999), p.22.

The overarching vision of the NHCM has remained largely unchanged since the genesis of the Centre in 1995. At its heart, the NHCM:

> promotes an understanding of the roots of discrimination and prejudice, and the development of ethical values, leading to a greater understanding within society. The Centre uses the history of genocide as a model of how society can break down, and emphasises how current and future generations must carefully examine and learn from these tragedies.[7]

Much like organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), the outlook of the NHCM is forward-facing. The Centre 'encourage[s] personal responsibility and the promotion of fairness and justice but also challenge[s] learners to take positive action'.[8] In other words, there is an implicit suggestion that the British public has a role of social responsibility through its engagement with Holocaust education.

The NHCM is open to all members of the public. As of 2022, the NHCM employed a team of roughly 30 staff, and welcomed nearly 30,000 annual visitors on average.[9] Although a significant figure, visitor numbers still pale in comparison to those of the IWM London (nearly 1 million in 2019).[10] Nevertheless, the reach of the NHCM is of note. School visits were commonplace prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, and were often accompanied by a talk from a Holocaust survivor, organised by the Centre's operations team. By 2005, outreach partnerships had been established with over 1,000 schools throughout the United Kingdom.[11]

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[7] NHCM, 'About us'.

[8] Ibid.

[9] BBC News, *The brothers behind the UK's only Holocaust museum* (27 January, 2020).

[10] Imperial War Museum (IWM), *Annual Report and Accounts* (2019).

[11] The Holocaust Centre, *Witness: The Holocaust Centre 10 Years On* (Nottingham: Quill Press, 2005), p.159.

ii) Research significance

This thesis focuses on portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. As such, several features of the NHCM suggested that the Centre would represent a case study of direct significance for this project.

The geographical location of the NHCM is noteworthy. The agricultural village of Laxton offers an intriguing alternative to the London-centrism of British Holocaust commemoration which emerged during the 2000s, and which has been calcified by forthcoming plans for the UKHMM in Westminster. Accordingly, the NHCM offered an avenue for more original research, even if the location of the museum was simply the result of 'pragmatism and coincidence rather than specific choice'.[12] In several senses, it is a marginal site of Holocaust memory within the United Kingdom, and merits more meaningful attention.

For the purposes of the thesis, there is also a certain symbolism in the quintessential 'Englishness' of the NHCM's position in rural Nottinghamshire. This thesis considers memories of the British response to the Holocaust, which are sometimes tied up with jingoistic conceptions of the war effort between 1939 and 1945. It was therefore of interest to explore whether an educational centre located within an environmental embodiment of traditional 'English' identity in any way challenged existing national narratives.

In theoretical terms, the mission of the NHCM *should* lend itself to an open exploration of the British response to the Holocaust. As I later found, the realities of the museum content are more nuanced. Nevertheless, compared to other educational centres such as the IWM, the abstract foundations of the NHCM spoke to the topic at the heart of this research. Stephen D. Smith held the personal philosophy that the museum 'should be careful not to oversimplify things', and that exhibitions should avoid reproduction of tired narratives of 'perpetrator' and 'victim'.[13] In a surface sense, these tenets should

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[12] Cooke, 'Beth Shalom', p.25.

[13] Smith, *Making memory*, p.133.

facilitate critical engagement with the complex historical relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

Moreover, portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust would seemingly overlap with the function of the *Aegis* project, which operates out of the NHCM. *Aegis* was founded to 'work on preventative strategies in situations of potential or impending genocide'.[14] Amongst the case studies used by *Aegis* are examples in which there was notable British diplomatic involvement: the Holocaust, the Kosovo crisis, and the Darfur genocide. It was therefore of interest to observe how Britain's historic role in such episodes was used to inform future strategies devised by organisations linked to the NHCM. The Genocide Prevention All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) associated with *Aegis* was created to 'ensure that the United Kingdom does all it can to prevent genocides and crimes against humanity'.[15] As observed elsewhere in this thesis, it would seem intuitive that 'forward-facing' approaches to genocide policy in the United Kingdom must involve some degree of self-reflection upon national responses to historical precedents.

By 1995, the Smith brothers were well aware of the deficiencies in British historical consciousness of the Holocaust, including public understanding of the role played by Britain during the period. Pearce noted that the Smiths' 'overriding impression was of "ignorance" among "the British public", largely attributable to 'some kind of "victor's syndrome"' that had manifested itself from 1945 onwards.[16] For the purposes of this thesis, it was also of note that the Smiths detected a certain complacency amongst the British public which stemmed from the notion that '"the Holocaust did not take place on British soil"'.[17] Throughout this thesis, a sense of historical and geographical 'detachment' between Britain and the Holocaust is a recurring theme. In an abstract sense, this was a trait that the NHCM promised to address when it opened in 1995.

[14] The Holocaust Centre, *Witness: The Holocaust Centre 10 Years On*, p.349.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Smith, quoted in Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, p.96.
[17] Ibid., p.97.

More explicitly, Stephen Smith's original intention was to create '"some kind of museum, memorial and education centre . . .a place that could confront British society with its own negligence and pose important questions which until that time had been studiously avoided"'.[18] As Smith explained, '"as non-Jews, we can speak more strongly about anti-Semitism to the non-Jewish world"', and thus seemingly left open the possibility of critical self-reflection on the historical actions of British society.[19] The foundations of the NHCM make it an apt case study for further exploration of its portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.

The organisational aims and vision of the NHCM are of interest. Given that a certain emphasis is placed on the modern-day role of social action in response to Holocaust education, it was intriguing to explore how the British precedent of the 1930s and 1940s was itself presented within the museum. A stated aim of the museum is to encourage visitors to 'think about the role that each of us plays in conditioning the society we create'.[20] Responses to the NHCM from the wider community were also striking. The NHCM, has generally received fulsome praise. Sir Ben Helfgott, Holocaust survivor and Honorary President of the HMDT, recalled of 1995:

> those of us who were present at the opening of the Beth Shalom Centre were full of admiration that of all places, such a centre could have been established in Sherwood Forest, and that it was entirely due to one family, a non-Jewish family.[21]

Given that Smith believed that the reaction of the Jewish 'establishment' to the Centre was 'very enthusiastic', it provoked the question whether the NHCM might contain a markedly different interpretation of the British response to the Holocaust than those offered by other educational institutions.[22] The positive assessments typically afforded to the NHCM invited further investigation. This pattern is perhaps partly attributable to a lack of academic critical engagement *en tout* with the Centre (especially compared to

[18] Ibid.
[19] Smith, quoted in Cooke, 'Beth Shalom', p.26.
[20] The Holocaust Centre, *Witness: The Holocaust Centre 10 Years On*, p.23.
[21] HMDT, 'The Holocaust Centre Memorial Garden' (2014).
[22] Cooke, 'Beth Shalom', p.26.

the IWMHE). Nonetheless, there was a clear opportunity to explore whether criticisms in other contexts of British self-engagement with national involvement in the Holocaust were applicable to the exhibition spaces at the NHCM.

Indeed, the NHCM appears to have taken steps to detach histories of the Holocaust from other narratives of British involvement in the Second World War. The Centre states explicitly that, in relation to donations to its artefact collections, 'we will not accept English World War 2 items unless these have an obvious link to the Holocaust'.[23] Previous literature has considered in detail the extent to which British Holocaust memory has been intertwined with wider narratives of the Second World War. These representations of the British war story have often been celebratory.[24] However, the framework within which the NHCM operates offered an opportunity to explore portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which might have been disentangled from the broader context of Second World War consciousness.

In fact, the concerted avoidance of overly nationalistic interpretations of the Holocaust might in turn have tempered the extent to which the Centre included the 'British response' in its exhibition content. As a Methodist and a theological scholar, Stephen D. Smith was more concerned to explore the dynamics of the historical relationship between Jewish and Christian communities, rather than add to existing characterisations of 'national' responses to the genocide.[25] It is common within the NHCM exhibitions for the Holocaust to be explored through a universal lens of shared human experiences, which often leaves limited room for explicitly national historical frameworks.

It is nevertheless prudent to qualify the expectations of the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust which might be anticipated by visitors to the NHCM. Stephen D. Smith himself has noted his belief that no museum, 'however large…could really do justice' to the scale or the complexities of the Holocaust.[26] Stephen Smith has reiterated

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[23] NHCM, 'What to see' (2020).
[24] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*.
[25] Smith, *Making memory,* p.127.
[26] Ibid., p.80.

that the NHCM did '"not document everything we wanted it to, due to space restrictions"', which in part might explain its limited consideration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[27] Perhaps it would be ambitious for any museum to attempt to capture the intricacies of the British response to the Holocaust in a single exhibition.

Above all, Stephen D. Smith has reflected that the NHCM embodied the Hebrew phrase *Tikkum Olam* ('heal the world').[28] Accordingly, it is perhaps unreasonable to expect the Centre to engage in any sustained critical appraisal that could encourage moralisation or judgment of the past. There is an impression that the Centre is concerned primarily not with what Britain *did*, but rather what British society can *do now.*

The Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC)

i) <u>History</u>

Situated on the main campus of the University of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre (HELC) opened in September 2018. The HELC represented the most significant new Holocaust learning centre in the United Kingdom since the creation of the IWMHE in 2000. This importance was recognised by the presence of Lord Pickles (Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues and co-chair of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation) at the opening of the Centre. In its first year of operation, the HELC attracted roughly 5,000 visitors, and envisages expansion to 20,000 annual visitors in future.[29]

The HELC marked the fruition of a project campaign which had started several years previously, and was led by the Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association (HSFA). The HSFA was formed in Leeds in 1996 by a small group of Yorkshire-based Holocaust survivors, who sought a forum within which to share friendship and mutual life experiences. For many members of the HSFA, the organisation allowed them to speak

[27] Quoted in Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.97.
[28] Quoted in Cooke, 'Beth Shalom', p.30.
[29] HELC, 'About' (2020).

out about their connection to the Holocaust for the first time. As of 2017, the HSFA had close to 70 members, most of whom were either Holocaust survivors or descendants of survivors.

The HELC project came at a cost of approximately £1.1 million, and was supported by a range of organisations including the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLFH), the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), and the Pears Foundation. The foundation of the Centre was also assisted by donations from several individual benefactors and family trusts.[30]

The museum space at the HELC is characterised by sleek futuristic design. At its heart is the permanent exhibition entitled *Through Our Eyes*. The exhibition relates the stories of 16 children who survived Nazi persecution in Europe, and eventually settled as refugees in the north of England. The Centre hosts workshops for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 students, and is involved in an ongoing teacher education partnership with the Centre for Holocaust Education at University College London (UCL).

ii) <u>Research significance</u>

As in the case of the NHCM, the HELC possessed several distinguishing characteristics which made it an attractive case study for a doctoral project centred on portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

The novelty of the HELC is an important consideration. At the time of writing, there has been extremely little scholarly engagement with the institution in the few years since the opening of the Centre in 2018. As such, analysis of the HELC offered an opportunity for this thesis to offer a genuinely original contribution to the wider field of British Holocaust memory studies. To a large degree, the HELC remains an unplumbed resource.

[30] Ibid.

The location of the Huddersfield Centre is of importance. Like the NHCM, the HELC offered an alternative to the cluster of Holocaust-related sites that is concentrated around London. The opening of the HELC in 2018 represented a certain reorientation of the geographical axis of the landscape of British Holocaust education. It seemed important to assess how the narratives of the Holocaust were presented in the first major Holocaust learning site to be situated in the north of England. The connections of the HELC to local history were also an intriguing feature. By virtue of their remits, the NHCM and the IWMHE both present larger-scale national narratives of the Holocaust. It was therefore of interest to discover whether the localised stories included in the HELC museum contributed towards a differing presentation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

In the interests of research variety, the HELC also offered alternative abstract frameworks within which the British involvement in the Holocaust might find representation. As a project driven by a community of Jewish Holocaust survivors, the HELC harbours a tangible sense of personal connection between past and present. This foundational background prompted the question of whether the individualised versions of the Holocaust found in the HELC would influence broader interpretations of the British response to the genocide. In this regard, the involvement of the HSFA in the HELC also offered a vertical cross-section of Holocaust narratives. In other words, the content in the HELC was informed by multigenerational voices. There was the potential to encounter portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which incorporated the voices both of survivors and their secondary descendants.

Similarly, it has been noted elsewhere how the 'British' response to the Holocaust has often become synonymous with the contemporary response of the British *government*. The relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is frequently viewed through a political or military lens. Conversely, Emma King (the first director of the HELC) noted in 2020:

> An enduring focus [of the HELC] is on humanising the Holocaust and communicating that it happened to real, ordinary people, whose experiences form the backbone of the exhibition. to achieve this, a great

emphasis is on interaction with real items and even real people, with survivors who can speak about their stories. [31]

If depictions of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were to be found in the HELC, they seemed likely to have been filtered through this deeply personalised lens. The potential for such interpretations offered an enticing complement to more traditional analysis of the British response to the genocide. The determination of Lilian Black (Chair of the HSFA) that the HELC should be sited in '" a place of higher education"' was also promising.[32] As shown in *Section I*, Holocaust education targeted at older students often results in more nuanced explorations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The location of the HELC within the University of Huddersfield therefore had the potential to encourage sophisticated debate around the issue in question.

It is noted above how both the HELC and NHCM offer relatively independent educational environments within which Holocaust narratives might be related. Certainly, compared to the IWMHE, the influence of public and state bodies is markedly less pronounced. In particular, the HELC symbolised an opportunity to explore how some Holocaust survivor communities might present the actions taken by British society and government during the Holocaust, if indeed such portrayals were even included within exhibition content. The portrayal of the British response from the perspective of Holocaust survivors themselves is a less-commonly explored avenue of investigation.

Nevertheless, the exhibition content of the HELC should not necessarily be taken as representative of the views of the Anglo-Jewish community, nor of wider British societal perceptions of the past. Indeed, the text panels within the exhibition were largely composed either by Emma King (Centre Director) or Lilian Black OBE (Chair of the HSFA), and so are likely to reflect their personal interpretations of history to a certain degree.

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[31] King, E., 'The Holocaust: Humanising the inhuman', SecEd Digital Magazine (15 January 2020).
[32] Quoted in Rothenberg, R., 'Holocaust exhibition centre opens to warning about denial', *Jewish Chronicle* (14 September 2018).

Regrettably. Black unexpectedly passed away in October 2020 before it was possible to conduct a personal interview with her.[33]

[33] HELC, 'Tributes have been paid to Lilian Black' (November 2020).

The purpose of this chapter is to survey and unpack museal portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. Analysis of exhibitions at the NHCM and HELC is thus an essential contextual tool. As highlighted in *Methodologies*, the sequencing of museum exhibits is an important guiding influence in the overall impression created amongst visitors.[1] to retain this sense of educational transit, the analysis below proceeds in broadly sequential terms, as experienced by museum visitors. Equally, each museum has its own separate character: as such, their exhibitions are analysed independently.

NHCM: analysis of permanent exhibition

Overall, in the permanent exhibition of the NHCM, the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust might best be described as brief, yet discerning. Although a range of different perspectives on the British response to the Holocaust are represented, these issues are not explored with real complexity. The NHCM's mission to equip visitors with a firm historical narrative of the Holocaust means that a relatively impartial depiction of British involvement in the Holocaust is presented.

As Britain's first dedicated Holocaust centre, the NHCM will always occupy a significant position in the formation of Holocaust memory in the United Kingdom. However, sustained self-reflection on national interaction with the Holocaust appears to be beyond both the ambit and the capabilities of the NHCM. Ultimately, the NHCM is constrained by its size. The permanent exhibition, situated underground, consists of just a handful of small gallery rooms. There is not sufficient exhibition space at the NHCM to cover any aspect of the Holocaust in substantial depth. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust does not receive extensive attention. This pattern is exemplified by the memorial garden which surrounds the entrance to the NHCM. Over 2,000 memorial roses are dedicated to individuals touched by the Holocaust, yet fewer than twenty roses are attached to those who might be perceived as being part of the relationship between Britain and the

[1] Eidelman & Samson., 'Elements of a Methodology', p.138.

Holocaust (namely *Kindertransport* transportees). This scale of proportionality is aligned with the extent of coverage which the British response to the Holocaust receives in the museum itself.

Exhibition content

Upon entering the permanent exhibition, which was opened in 2000 and reconfigured in 2017, visitors are met with a board displaying a 'Chronology' of the Holocaust.[2] The chronology is far from comprehensive, yet contains brief descriptions of over thirty key events which occurred between 1933 and 1945. The representation of topics involving Britain in this chronology board immediately suggests that the British response will not feature heavily in the exhibition. Only two relevant episodes are included: 'Request from Jewish leaders to British to bomb rail lines to Auschwitz (1944)' and 'Bergen Belsen liberated by British forces (1945)'.[3] From the outset, therefore, visitors do not encounter detailed engagement with the contemporary relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Moreover, initially, at least, the British response is framed within the confines of the later stages of the Second World War alone.

Nevertheless, recent pedagogical research has pointed towards the value of contextualising the Holocaust in terms of wider Jewish history, and illustrating broader arcs of antisemitism.[4] The intention of such an approach is to highlight the fact that the Holocaust was not a self-contained episode of persecution, nor that it can be used solely to define the long history of Judaism in Europe. The NHCM fulfils this brief, with a gallery room dedicated to exploring the history of Jewish experiences since before the advent of Christianity. Notably, there are efforts to prevent a sense of historical detachment between British history and the Jewish community. Within a European context, it is noted that Jews were 'expelled from England in the 1200s'.[5] Moreover, the exhibition lays a certain groundwork that might guard against any assumption of British involvement in the Holocaust as evidence that Jews have always found refuge or support

[2] NHCM, permanent exhibition (2017), viewed 7 October 2020.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Foster et al., *What do students know?*.
[5] NHCM, permanent exhibition.

in the United Kingdom. Strikingly, there is a reproduction of an 'English caricature' dating from the Georgian period, in which an 'English nobleman is portrayed in contrast to a money-greedy "Shylock" character'.[6] As such, visitors might subliminally be guided away from any pre-existing conceptions that the British treatment of Jews during the Holocaust would intuitively be constructive.

Figure 25: Caricature of English nobleman and a Jew, NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

Often within the exhibition, the associations made between the Holocaust and the British response are implicit. That is, they are influenced by certain wording or position within the museum space. Naturally, such effects cannot be identified definitively, but rather rely on a certain amount of interpretation. One such example is a display board titled 'Rise of Nazism'.[7] Visitors are informed that in this section they will learn about topics such as 'the origins of National Socialism', 'Control of public institutions' and 'the road to war'.[8] Also included in this list is the topic 'Britain and the Jews'. It is perhaps unintentional, but the mere presence of this topic in a wider history of the 'Rise of

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

Nazism' might be seen to imply a certain responsibility of Britain in facilitating the foundations of the Holocaust. Conversely, as is indeed the case later in the exhibition, the identification of the topic could simply be a reference to the actions (such as the *Kindertransport*) that were galvanised *by* the rise of Nazism.

The portrayal of pre-war British immigration policy is concise, yet again is worded in such a way that implies a certain disapproval of some measures. A text panel details that 'British immigration was governed by the 1919 Aliens' law, which restricted immigrants unless they could provide financial guarantees and show that their stay was temporary'.[9] To a modern audience, such conditions appear particularly punitive. Subsequently, the exhibition notes that immigration 'policy towards refugees changed significantly'.[10] The transport of over 10,000 children to the United Kingdom on the *Kindertransport* is related. However, it is also noted that these transports were 'supported by the B'nai B'rith', the Women's Appeal Committee, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, The Children's Inter-Aid Committee and The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany'.[11] Visitors are left in little doubt that the successes of the *Kindertransport* were not attributable to the British government alone. By extension, there is an implicit discouragement from any impression that this redemptive episode of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust can be appropriated in a similar manner to other military or political state triumphs during the war. In relation to British Holocaust memory, it has been similarly observed how the public nation and the British government have assumed a certain synonymity.[12] The nuanced shading of portrayals such as those found in the NHCM can act as a counterweight to such a phenomenon.

In this regard, the positional framing of the *Kindertransport* within the exhibition is of note. Text panels highlight redemptive aspects of the scheme, for example through the individual story of the refugee Vera Löwyová who was sheltered by a Christian family after arrival in London in 1938. Nevertheless, the *Kindertransport* section of the exhibition is sandwiched between disturbing accounts of Kristallnacht and ghettoization

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"'.

in Europe. The fine historical line between escape from persecution and Holocaust victimhood is therefore apparent to visitors, and is accentuated by the cramped confines of the adjacent exhibition rooms themselves. However, the brevity of the permanent exhibition leaves little room for exploration of the complexities associated with the British response to the Holocaust. A relatively uncomplicated depiction of the *Kindertransport* is presented, with no engagement with more recent research into the mixed life experiences of child refugees in the United Kingdom.[13] An image of smiling, waving children arriving on British soil in 1938 is typical of the images adorning the exhibition coverage of the *Kindertransport.*

Figure 26: Exhibition image of *Kindertransport* refugees arriving in Britain. NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

Superficially, the treatment of the Evian Conference (6 July to 15 July 1938) in the exhibition is characteristically succinct. In brief terms, the failure of the 'conference to work on an overall solution to the refugee problem' is depicted as a failure, and resulted in 'the avenues of escape' for Jews being 'firmly closed'.[14] Representatives of any single nation are not blamed for the fruitlessness of the Evian Conference. A text panel records that 'delegate after delegate excused their country of responsibility for the refugees'.[15]

[13] See Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport.*
[14] NHCM, permanent exhibition.
[15] Ibid.

However, further close reading of this text panel betrays a certain sense of disapproval towards British conduct at the conference. It is noted that the 'British Empire was said to be overcrowded, and no space could be found the Jews. The option of Palestine, then under British Mandate, was not open for discussion'.[16] The use of the passive voice – 'the British Empire *was said* to be overcrowded' – hints that this justification was a mere excuse. Moreover, the brusqueness with which the option of immigration into Palestine was dismissed by British authorities is mimicked through the asperity of its description in the exhibition. Visitors are not explicitly guided towards any meaningful critical reflection on the nature of British refugee policy in the 1930s. Yet the undertones of the NHCM exhibition may leave some visitors in little doubt that the British response to the early stages of the Holocaust was far from constructive.

Earlier, I suggested that the ethos of the NHCM would not necessarily lend itself to explicit consideration of the 'national' role played by Britain during the Holocaust.[17] Founder Stephen D. Smith was concerned to explore the shared dynamics of universal human experiences and the broader relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Although some specific episodes involving Britain are included within the exhibition, it is also notable how British actions are often framed against comparable international examples. Juxtaposed with information relating to restrictive British immigration policy is a text display ('Seeking Refuge') outlining the *St. Louis* affair of 1939, where a German ship of 930 Jewish refugees was turned away from the United States by state authorities. More positively, although it is noted that Britain accepted 287 of the stranded *St. Louis* passengers, it is also recorded that '224 went to France, 214 to Belgium' and '181 to the Netherlands'.[18]

In this framing of British action within a global context, there is a certain mitigation of a sense of 'exceptionalism' when considering the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Pervading British narratives of the Second World War have engendered a sense of uniqueness to the experiences of the United Kingdom in the conflict.[19] However, the presentation of some information in the NHCM protects against an

[16] Ibid.
[17] See *Methodologies* chapter for museum contextualisation.
[18] NHCM, permanent exhibition.
[19] Calder, 'Britain's good war?'.

impression that Britain's response to the Holocaust was either unprecedented or unparalleled. Indeed, at the end of the exhibition, an interactive touchscreen map titled 'Rescue' is notable for the range of historical examples of rescue it offers aside from the British *Kindertransport*. Again, implicitly, there is almost a concerted effort to highlight the fact that relief of some Jews was not a policy pursued by Britain alone, but instead could be found throughout Europe.

Figure 27: Interactive touchscreen map 'Rescue', NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

In a trend unlike that found in textbooks I sampled, a transnational approach is also applied to the treatment of the topic of 'Liberation'. As a museum located in England, and given the mythology surrounding the event in British Holocaust consciousness, it might be expected that the liberation of Bergen Belsen would feature prominently in the NHCM exhibition.[20] However, description of the Belsen liberation is buried within a wider consideration of other camp liberations, such as Lublin (by Soviet forces), and Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora (by American forces). There is no sense of

[20] Pearce*, Holocaust Consciousness*, p.179.

triumphalism associated with the British liberation of Belsen. Rather, it is presented as just one element of a broader, traumatic process.

Equally, in no way are the post-war Nuremberg trials appropriated as 'British'. The trials are presented as a venture of the 'allied forces', and one which was not necessarily successful in its aims: 'many [Nazis] escaped justice altogether and went to safe havens in South America and the United States'.[21] Crucially, and again in contrast to certain patterns identified in wider British culture, there appears to be little infusion of glorified Second World War narratives with assessment of British actions taken at the conclusion of the Holocaust.[22] The final room of the NHCM exhibition contains details of how 'many Jews wanted to go to Palestine, but the British government was not willing to lift its immigration restrictions'.[23] The NHCM exhibition has the awareness to avoid the conflation of victory in the Second World War with the successful resolution of issues caused by the Holocaust.

As outlined above, the introductory gallery to the NHCM exhibition equips visitors with a contextual understanding that the histories of Britain and Jewish life have been intertwined for centuries. There is nonetheless evidence of a sense of geographical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust elsewhere in the exhibition. Such a relationship was also observable in educational materials analysed elsewhere in this thesis.[24] Once again, the NHCM exhibition points towards the demonstrable limitations in the cartographical presentation of the history of the Holocaust. Maps which focus on the physical sites of the Holocaust – namely camps and ghettoes – do not capture the complex abstract issues which sometimes characterised the British response to the Holocaust. A map of 'Key Sites', for example, could give the impression that Britain was untouched by the Holocaust. In any case, such a portrayal is misleading, as it fails to identify the existence of the Sylt labour camp which existed on Alderney during the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands, for instance.

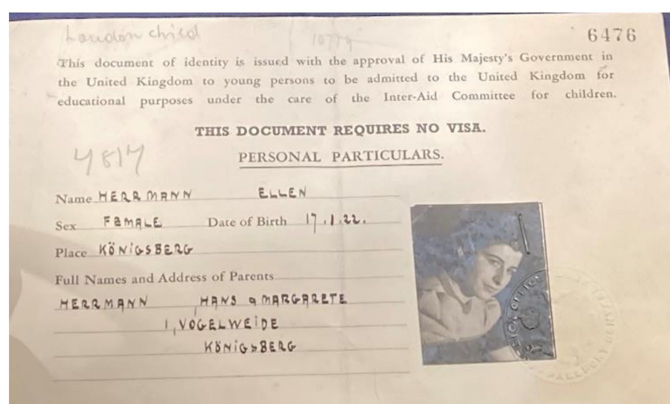
[21] NHCM, permanent exhibition.
[22] See Reynolds, 'Britain, the two World Wars'.
[23] NHCM, permanent exhibition.
[24] See Section I: analysis of educational materials.

Figure 28: Map of key Holocaust sites, NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

The sense of geographical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust – which is not necessarily unwarranted if interpreted solely in terms of physical human cost – perhaps contributed to the limited extent to which the British response found consideration within the exhibition. It is clear that a focus of the NHCM is to relay the 'lived-experiences' of Holocaust victims: the majority of which occurred on the continent. There is considerable space dedicated to topics such as 'life in the ghettos' and 'camp life', and one gallery room contains a reconstruction of a European railway line at the time of deportations.

Figure 29: Railway reconstruction, NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

The NHCM possesses only a small collection of physical artefacts related to the Holocaust, of which a fraction is on display in the permanent exhibition. The exhibition is much less centred around artefacts than its European counterparts, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, or even London's IWMHE. In any case, a certain lack of physical links between Britain and the Holocaust has made the relationship between the two difficult to present in material terms. An identification document owned by a child refugee is a rare example of a display object which relates explicitly to British involvement in the Holocaust. Accordingly, there is a sense of material detachment between Britain and the Holocaust. Such an interpretation highlights the limited means by which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust can be explored in museum settings. Primarily, exhibitions such as those at the NHCM must rely on brief text panel displays to try and capture the abstract complexities of the topic. In the absence of artefactual materials, historical simplification poses a danger.



6476

This document of identity is issued with the approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for educational purposes under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children.

THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA.

4817

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.

Name HERRMANN ELLEN

Sex FEMALE Date of Birth 17.1.22.

Place KÖNIGSBERG

Full Names and Address of Parents

HERRMANN HANS & MARGARETE

1, VOGELWEIDE

KÖNIGSBERG

Figure 30: Identification document of refugee to Britain, displayed at NHCM, permanent exhibition, viewed 7 October 2020.

Summary

The NHCM permanent exhibition offers a balanced, if concise, impression of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Redemptive episodes find representation alongside more questionable British action (and inaction). However, in both regards, the content of the exhibition appears to stress that Britain was not unique. There is little evidence of 'exceptionalist' narratives, nor interpretations that glorify British involvement in the Second World War. But visitors to the exhibitions should not expect to be encouraged to engage with the complex questions raised by the ambiguous British response to the Holocaust. Rather, the NHCM performs an uncomplicated function of furnishing visitors with an outline of the factual aspects of the relationship, while stopping short of grappling with the difficult issues raised by the topic.

For the most part, the portrayal of British actions in the 1930s and 1940s is expressed in relatively ambivalent terms. The controversial topic of appeasement, for example, is explained unemotively as an approach which traded 'concessions to keep the peace', although the policy is later recorded as a 'complete failure'.[25] In many cases, it appears that visitors would have to pay very close attention to the wording and vocabulary used in exhibition text displays to garner any real indication of curatorial judgment on the

[25] NHCM, permanent exhibition.

British response. But this pattern is perhaps unsurprising: as responsible mediators of historical memory, museums are not necessarily renowned for their partisan interpretations of the past.[26]

NHCM digital resources

In recent years, technological developments have facilitated a shift in the ways in which museums present their exhibition content. In the wake of the COVID pandemic, the importance of digital learning and remote access has been accentuated. With visitors less free to interact with museum materials in person, engagement 'at a distance' has become a key focus of many museal institutions.[27] The NHCM has made certain efforts to diversify the media platforms it uses to present exhibitions. Throughout the museum itself, interactive digital screens can now be found.

The digital exhibition *Legacies of the Holocaust* is of particular interest to this thesis, due to its partial exploration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The exhibition was opened in 2017, and curated by Professor Bill Niven (then Professor in Contemporary German History at Nottingham Trent University). The stated aim of *Legacies of the Holocaust* was to explore 'the different forms in which we remember: memorials, museums, films and literature, for instance'.[28] Within the exhibition, visitors are guided towards particularly well-balanced explanations of British responses to the Holocaust, with searching questions posed at the end of each sub-section. Yet this thought-provoking exhibition is not necessarily as accessible as might be hoped. Within the NHCM gallery, *Legacies of the Holocaust* is available only on a small screen that is positioned in a small room at the end of the permanent exhibition. Equally, an online transcription of the exhibition is somewhat buried within the 'Visitor Information' section of the NHCM website, and is not presented in a particularly aesthetic way.[29]

[26] Berenbaum & Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.432.

[27] Warwick University, *Online museum exhibitions will be more prominent post COVID-19*, Research press release (12 May 2021).

[28] NHCM, *Legacies of the Holocaust* exhibition (2017), viewed 7 October 2020.

[29] Ibid.

Although explicit questions relating to British public consciousness are not drawn in the first stage of the exhibition, *Legacies of the Holocaust* provides visitors with a useful theoretical framework of different forms of 'memory'. The general tenets of 'personal memory', 'collective memory', 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory', among others, are all summarised.[30]

These abstract frameworks are in turn fleshed out through reference to specific historical episodes of the Holocaust. Of most pertinence to the topic of this thesis is the subsection 'Kindertransport'. From the outset, the exhibition avoids monopolising British ownership of the 'the rescue and adaptation to a new way of life of about 10,000, mainly Jewish children' between 1938 and 1939.[31] It is noted that it was not just Britain, but also 'Sweden, Holland, and Belgium' that took in these refugees.[32] Although it is acknowledged that the 'groundwork for the rescue program was laid by the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF)', it is clear that the exhibition wishes to challenge the common perception of the *Kindertransport* as a scheme which involved British parties exclusively.[33]

In alignment with recent scholarship on the *Kindertransport*, the exhibition also takes steps to emphasise the mixed experiences of *Kinder* who arrived in Britain.[34] Although some children were collected upon arrival by foster families, it is also recorded that 'not all the *Kinder* found homes immediately… Many went to Dovercourt Refugee Camp where they were housed until further arrangements could be made'.[35] The travails of some *Kinder* in Britain are explored subsequently in greater depth. A panel entitled 'Difficulties and Challenges' expounds how:

> Most *Kinder* could not speak English when they arrived, and were not acquainted with British customs. Often, they came from different social, political and economic backgrounds to their foster families. Some of the

[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport.*
[35] NHCM, 'Legacies'.

> children also had to adapt to being brought up in Christian households. Foster families were very supportive of the Kinder in the main, but occasionally used them as domestics. The Kinder quickly learned English and many threw themselves into their studies. Sometimes, however, they had to face hostility at school.[36]

Consequently, this particular interpretation challenges any conceptions that the *Kindertransport* was solely a narrative of rescue and assimilation. The redemptive role played by Britain is acknowledged, yet is counterbalanced by exploration of the less positive experiences of refugees. The concept of national identity is used as an illustrative mechanism. An exhibition panel describes how 'identity of the Kinder became problematic as war continued', and touches upon the controversial internment of some *Kinder* as 'enemy aliens'.[37] Despite this, the exhibition also displays the flexibility to incorporate the shared experiences of *Kinder* and British children during the Blitz, which 'broke down distinctions' between the two groups.[38] In summary, the exhibition avoids the presentation of monolithic interpretations. Triumphalist narratives of the Second World War do not obscure examination of more uncomfortable issues, yet *Legacies of the Holocaust* is also far from a diatribe against the ambiguous actions taken within British society during the Holocaust.

Legacies of the Holocaust is particularly notable through its extension of the British Holocaust narrative beyond 1945. In purely conceptual terms, this helps to guard against a portrayal that suggests Holocaust-related issues were resolved by the conclusion of the Second World War. The relative reticence of Holocaust memory in the United Kingdom in the decades following 1945 is perhaps, in part, reflective of a compartmentalisation of the period.[39] In some cases, inextricable links have been created between the genocide and the wider conflict of the Second World War, resulting in difficulty separating the two events. The subsection 'Reunion and Return' notes that 'after the war, many of the Kinder received naturalisation papers declaring them to be

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Cesarani & Sundquist (eds), *After the Holocaust*.

British citizens'.[40] However, it also surmises that 'Britain was late in remembering the Kindertransport': indeed, Britain might be considered 'late' in remembering the Holocaust as a whole.[41] Accordingly, the exhibition guides visitors towards the notion that – in relation to the Holocaust - contemporary British actions and retrospective British remembrance were alike in their ambiguity.

Through exploration of 'Wider Contexts', the exhibition offers some searching final thoughts on *Kindertransport* history. Perceptively, the history of the *Kindertransport* is sited within several broader frameworks:

> The history of the persecution of minorities;
> The history of emigration, immigration and exile;
> The history of Nazi anti-Semitism and the Holocaust;
> The history of testimony and memory;
> Narratives of the Second World War [42]

All five of these themes continue to bear weight in British society today. *Legacies of the Holocaust* encourages a continuum between history and modern contexts, and thus challenges the detachment between Britain and the Holocaust which is encountered in different forms throughout this thesis. Indeed, the concluding panel of the exhibition captures eloquently the complexity of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust:

> The British national narrative of the Kindertransport suggests that Britain stood alone in rescuing the Kinder. It suggests that the nation was immediately welcoming to the new arrivals. However, although the efforts of the British government and the British people were remarkable, life was not easy for the Kinder in Britain, some of whom were even interned.[43]

[40] NHCM, 'Legacies'.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

The openness of the final question posed – 'Why do we tend to mainly focus on the transports to Britain rather than other transports to other countries?' – is also a skilful example of guiding visitors towards critical self-reflection upon existing historical narratives, without imposing an uncompromising portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust at the same time.[44]

It is unusual within the landscape of Holocaust education to find such awareness of the lack of nuance common in British public consciousness. *Legacies of the Holocaust* therefore makes an important contribution to an educational setting (the NHCM) where portrayals of the past are transmitted to visitors both young and old. Plainly, there are benefits to employing an expert curator such as Bill Niven.

Overall, *Legacies of the Holocaust* represents a thoughtful exploration of the issues associated with Holocaust memory in general. In specific relation to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, exhibition presentation of the *Kindertransport* encourages an appreciation of the complexity associated with an episode which has become celebrated within British historical consciousness. Professor Niven's exhibition notes display deft awareness of the myriad factors which have shaped national Holocaust memories since 1945. On popular culture, for example, it is recorded that the appeal of Holocaust films to a 'broad audience' has been a major influence of the formation of public memory:

> In Germany, for instance, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) was seen by 100,000 people in its first week alone. Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) grossed over $320 million worldwide.[45]

But *Legacies of the Holocaust* is equally prepared to challenge entrenched interpretations of the role played by the Allies in the Holocaust. In a section entitled 'Liberation', visitors are encouraged to question 'Was it right of the Allies,

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

in post-war posters for instance, to suggest that the German population as a whole was to blame for the atrocities in the Nazi camps?'.[46] Implicitly, there is some criticism here of Allied moralisation of the Holocaust. It is suggested both that nations including Britain have been reluctant to engage in critical self-reflection, despite the clear ambiguities in certain actions relating to the Holocaust period. Furthermore, a subsection titled 'Where now?' relates the British interception of the Jewish refugee ship the *Theodor Herzl* en route to Israel in April 1947, which resulted in the deaths of three passengers. Even after 1945, the British treatment of Holocaust-related issues was complicated: a fact acknowledged by this exhibition.

As demonstrated elsewhere in this thesis, other educational materials have not always demonstrated the same capability to engage with the complexities of the British response to the Holocaust, nor to extend the narrative of the Holocaust beyond 1945. The exhibition is characterised by balance: both between examination of contemporary events and their subsequent place in historical memory, and also between the positive and negative aspects of the British response to the Holocaust. It is a pity, therefore, that *Legacies of the Holocaust* does not feature more prominently in the physical or digital platforms offered by the NHCM.

[46] Ibid.

HELC permanent exhibition

In several regards, the HELC in Huddersfield represents a novel frontier in British Holocaust memory. It is situated in northern England, away from the London-centric concentration of Holocaust resources. As a museum which opened in 2018, the HELC makes full use of digital technology to offer visitors an interactive experience. It is a twenty-first century learning centre.

Accordingly, there is also some innovation to be found – in both content *and* form - in the HELC's portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. A focus on personal testimonies offers an alternative to the broad political or military narratives which have often characterised analysis of the British response to the Holocaust. While the NHCM aims to inform visitors *what* happened during the Holocaust, the HELC focuses on *to whom* the Holocaust happened. In practical terms, I explore throughout this thesis the challenge of presenting the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in material terms. However, the use of digital media in the HELC offers a new way of addressing this issue.

Through Our Eyes

Strikingly, the HELC tells the story of the Holocaust almost exclusively through individual survivor stories. *Through Our Eyes* is the permanent exhibition of the HELC. The exhibition relates the individual stories of '16 children and young people who survived Nazi persecution across Europe in the 1930s and 1940s…They came to the north of England as refugees or survivors of the Holocaust, settled and made new lives here.'.[47] Text panels are complemented by six interactive touchscreens, which allow visitors to access additional video and audio materials.

The HELC focuses on humanistic aspects of Holocaust history. Therefore, there are just a handful of displays intended to outline the 'objective history' of the Holocaust.[48] These

[47] HELC, *Through Our Eyes* exhibition (2018), viewed 14 October 2020.
[48] Michael Sharp (HELC volunteer guide), private conversation (14 October 2020).

particular text panels are concise, but manage to engage with a reasonable number of different perspectives. The efficiency of the chronological narrative provided is perhaps reflective of the input of an esteemed academic advisory board: Paul Salmons (University College London Centre for Holocaust Education), Ben Barkow (The Wiener Library), Alexander von Luenen (University of Huddersfield) and Stefan Hördler (Mittelbau Dora Concentration Camp Memorial). But given the restricted extent to which the broader historical overview of the Holocaust is considered within *Through Our Eyes*, the issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust receives limited coverage in the exhibition's contextualisation of the individual life stories around which it orbits.

As is the case in the NHCM, there is an effort to highlight that persecution of Jews was a historical phenomenon that was far from limited to Germany. A board titled 'Antisemitism' outlines theories of racial superiority which attracted support from 'ordinary citizens…across Europe' from the '19th century' onwards.[49] Britain is not singled out explicitly, but by implication is included in this bracket. However, the presentation of British involvement in the July 1938 Evian Conference is far from critical. Conference attendees are described as 'expressing sympathy for the Jews, and condemn[ing] Germany's actions'.[50] Britain's refusal to allow entry to additional immigrants is addressed in somewhat simplistic terms: 'the government was concerned about admitting refugees at a time of high unemployment'.[51] Such an interpretation tells only one - rather innocuous - side of the historical reality.

Moreover, there is an immediate juxtaposition with a wholly more positive description of the British response, whereby the government 'had admitted about 70,000 refugees from Hitler's Third Reich' by September 1939.[52] This type of portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust is not inaccurate, *per se*, but lacks texture. Reflecting Kushner's concerns, there is an absence of nuance.[53] A more complicated account, for

[49] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"'.

example, might have also acknowledged the xenophobia, and indeed antisemitism, which was also present within British society at the same time.

Subsequent historical overview panels do display a more critical approach to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Although the Kindertransport testimonies featured are ultimately redemptive, the exhibition makes room for less positive aspects of actions taken by the British government. In particular, examination of 'Enemy Aliens' informs visitors that 'about 73,000 German and Austrian nationals living in Britain' in September 1939 were ostracised by the British government.[54] Moreover, by May 1940 over 8,000 'enemy aliens' had been interned, and 'many internees were Jews who had fled the Nazi regime'.[55] The HELC employs striking framing devices at this juncture. The poignant words of a German refugee, Heinz Skyte, are quoted:

> In Germany we were kicked out because we were Jews, here we were interned because we were Germans…We were far more opposed to the Nazis than most of the British were.

This testimony offers direct challenge to the entrenched impression of a unified, and self-righteous, British war effort which has infused public consciousness.[56] Visitors cannot not help but notice that striking images of internees trapped behind the wire fence surrounding Hutchinson Internment Camp on the Isle of Man in 1940 are positioned directly adjacent to similar images of prisoners in European concentration camps during the Holocaust. The HELC stops short of drawing any explicit parallels between the two settings, but it is more than possible for visitors to adopt a comparative historical approach. Positioning is key.

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[54] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Connelly, *We Can Take It!.*

Figure 31: Image of internees at Hutchinson Camp, guarded by British troops.
HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

In the case of the NHCM, I noted that there were certain attempts to guard against historical 'exceptionalism' in the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust. A similar paradigm is observable in the HELC, to a certain degree. Despite the centrality of the *Kindertransport* to the exhibition, other European examples of rescue are also acknowledged. The display board 'Rescue' emphasises how 'across Europe, people from all backgrounds risked their lives to help Jews'.[57] Examples provided included the Muslim population of Albania, who 'refused to give up lists of Jews demanded by the German occupiers in 1943', and the Danish 'police, civil servants and local population' who facilitated evacuation of over 7,000 Jews to neutral Sweden in summer 1943. The merits of the British response to the issue of Holocaust rescue are not diminished, but this additional contextualisation guards against assumptions that British actions were unique.

[57] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

The delivery of 'experiential learning' has emerged as a core tenet of the HELC.[58] It is immediately noticeable that presentation of the lives of the subjects who form the core of exhibition is weighted towards their experiences before arrival in the United Kingdom. Broadly, each life story is divided into eight main categories: 'discrimination, persecution, escape, hiding, ghettos, forced labour, concentration camps and liberation'.[59] Information relevant to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust – as opposed to events which occurred in mainland Europe – are rarely found in more than one of these sections. Nevertheless, the overall scope of the exhibition tempers any positive framing of the role played by Britain in the lives of those affected by the Holocaust. Each life story is placed within a wider context of loss: loss of liberty, loss of family, and loss of home.

Indeed, at the conclusion of the exhibition, visitors are confronted with a sombre 'Book of Loss'. In the same room, a recording is played of *El Malei Rachamim*, a Jewish prayer which laments the loss of the dead. Accordingly, the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is treated with a degree of emotional complexity. Although there is acknowledgment of the new lives which Britain offered some victims of the Holocaust, the exhibition is careful not to present a celebratory narrative overall.

As visitors encounter each life story in turn, there is representation of different aspects of the role played by Britain during the Holocaust and its aftermath. Britain is portrayed as the setting for new beginnings, and indeed as a facilitator of relative prosperity. For example, it is noted how the burgeoning textile industry in West Yorkshire allowed Ibi Ginsburg to move to the region in 1948 to join the Gannex textile company co-founded by her cousin Margaret Kagan (another featured survivor).[60] In certain instances, assimilation is also presented as a relatively painless process: Ginsburg and her spouse Val 'quickly became British citizens' upon arrival.[61] Despite its merits, the focus on these individual experiences does not necessarily lend itself as easily to wider assessment of issues relating to immigration, as found in the NHCM. A microcosmic depiction of

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[58] HELC, *Learning rationale*, private document shared by A. Bucci, (September 2020).
[59] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

interactions between Britain and Holocaust survivors cannot truly capture broader historical narratives, such as British obstinance in relation to immigration to Palestine both before and after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, *Through Our Eyes* displays a greater alignment with recent scholarship on the movement of Holocaust survivors to the United Kingdom than is observable in settings such as the NHCM and IWMHE. The input of the Centre's academic advisory board has perhaps helped to address Cesarani's 'yawning gulf between popular understanding of this history and current scholarship on the subject'.[62] As ongoing research demonstrates, the historical experiences of immigrants were far from straightforward.[63] An introductory text panel to the exhibition section 'Settling in the UK' stresses that new surroundings were 'unfamiliar' to 'homesick' refugees.[64] Ruth Rogoff's testimony records how her father was required to 'attend the police station every day to sign a form stating his whereabouts' after escape from Czechoslovakia to the United Kingdom in September 1939.[65] Liesl Carter recounts, in some detail, being force-fed by her adoptive family.[66] Elsewhere, the a text panel records how *Kindertransport* refugee Martin Kapel 'struggled with the cultural differences of his new home' in Coventry, and his life in a household where 'he was scared of the vicious dog'.[67] Meanwhile, Kapel makes no attempts to conceal the dissonance of an 'Orthodox Jewish boy' and a 'typical working-class English family'.[68] In an accompanying video clip, Kapel recalls:

> For a child it was very frightening especially since I couldn't speak English and the people around me couldn't speak either German or Yiddish and so I found myself repeatedly in situations which were puzzling and which I couldn't handle in any way because I couldn't talk to anybody.[69]

[62] Cesarani., *Final Solution*, pp. xxv.
[63] Craig-Norton, 'Contesting the Kindertransport'.
[64] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

Amy Williams, a historian of the *Kindertransport*, has summarised eloquently how the layout of the exhibition can also contribute to visitor understandings of the ambiguities associated with the experiences of refugees:

> The emphasis on the splitting up of families prior to departure, but also when they arrived in Britain creates a sense of estrangement which is highlighted by the aesthetics: we see a large photograph of a refugee girl on arrival at Harwich on 2nd December 1938, holding onto her doll, standing isolated from the rest of the 'Kindertransport' section. This single image evokes abandonment, as the child waits unaccompanied. The imagery used does not suggest that the Kindertransport was an adventure but a lonely and painful process. Arrival is therefore not seen as a celebration even though visitors know that the child has been rescued; rather arrival solidifies the separation of families because the child is absolutely alone.[70]

Evidently, the portrayal of the experiences of *Kindertransport* refugees is far from airbrushed. Nevertheless, perhaps by coincidence, few of the recollections in *Through Our Eyes* of *Kindertransport* refugees or other immigrants offer description of experiences as uncomfortable as those endured by some contemporaries.[71] On the whole, a more conventional appreciation is offered to British society for the refuge it presented. Rogoff further opines that '[British] people are very tolerant and it's a wonderful country to live in, they're wonderful people to be with and I think people who live here are very very lucky.'.[72] The images used to illustrate the periods of life spent by survivors in Britain are also generally positive. For instance, a photo of Berta Klipstein shows her graduation in Chemistry from a college in London in 1951. By extension, the United Kingdom is portrayed as a land of opportunity and enrichment for those affected by the Holocaust. It is also notable that the transnational aspects of refugee rescue are not included. Although *Kindertransport* transportations took children to territories ranging from Australia to Canada, the predominant exhibition focus is on those who arrived in the United Kingdom. As such, visitors might be mistaken in believing that

[70] Williams, A., *Memory of the Kindertransport in National and Transnational Perspective*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University (Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University, 2020), p.143.
[71] Craig-Norton*, The Kindertransport.*
[72] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

rescue of Holocaust victims was a scheme unique to the British approach to the Holocaust. In turn, there is the risk of further entrenchment of 'exceptionalist' interpretations of British national history.

Figure 32: Berta Klipstein graduation photo (1951), HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

Likewise, the story of Arek Hersh illuminates the story of the hundreds of children transported to Windermere in the Lake District in August 1945 'to recuperate and learn English'.[73] This tale has only recently received public attention, thanks in large part to a dramatisation of the episode screened on ITV in January 2020.[74] Cultural representation of the Holocaust can certainly be positive, on occasion, as well as engendering misconceptions. Hersh's testimony is also contextualised by the information that he 'didn't speak about his experiences until 1995'.[75]

Yet, as is the case elsewhere in the exhibition, *Through Our Eyes* stops short of exploring the full nuances of the historical details it provides. However, the inclusion of such framing devices at least offers some visitors the opportunity to consider implications for the wider process of Holocaust memory. Namely, many survivors felt unable to relate

[73] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[74] The ITV drama *The Windemere Boys* was first screened 28 January 2020.
[75] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

their experiences for many years, which in turn contributed to relative gaps in public consciousness of the genocide.[76] In a video exhibit, Val Ginsburg notes that 'it was just too traumatic to relive everything again and talk about it', especially in the context of a new life in Yorkshire where 'people could not believe it'.[77] Although post-war Britain is portrayed as an environment where Holocaust survivors could move forward with life, there is also acknowledgment that society was not conducive to the establishment of solidified Holocaust consciousness.

Eugene Black's testimony is of particular interest in relation to the liberation of Bergen-Belsen in April 1945, where he had been held since March of the same year. Black focuses not on the British role in liberating the camp, but instead places emphasis on the terrible conditions encountered by arriving troops. Belsen is described as a 'hellhole', ravaged with typhus and lacking in any form of 'sanitation'.[78] The presentation of the British liberation of the camp is therefore in no way depicted as a glorious episode, but rather a solemn task within a more tragic broader narrative. Black's testimony also challenges any notion of contemporary heroization of the British forces by prisoners themselves. In a video clip, Black relates how he 'certainly didn't know who they [British forces] were' when they arrived, nor was their nationality of any concern. [79] Moreover, the camp liberation was far from orderly. Instead, 'hell broke loose', with hundreds of vigilante executions of *Kapos* (camp functionaries) by other prisoners. An image of such lawlessness in the camp jars with the more hallowed consciousness of the Belsen liberation which has pervaded in British historical memory.[80]

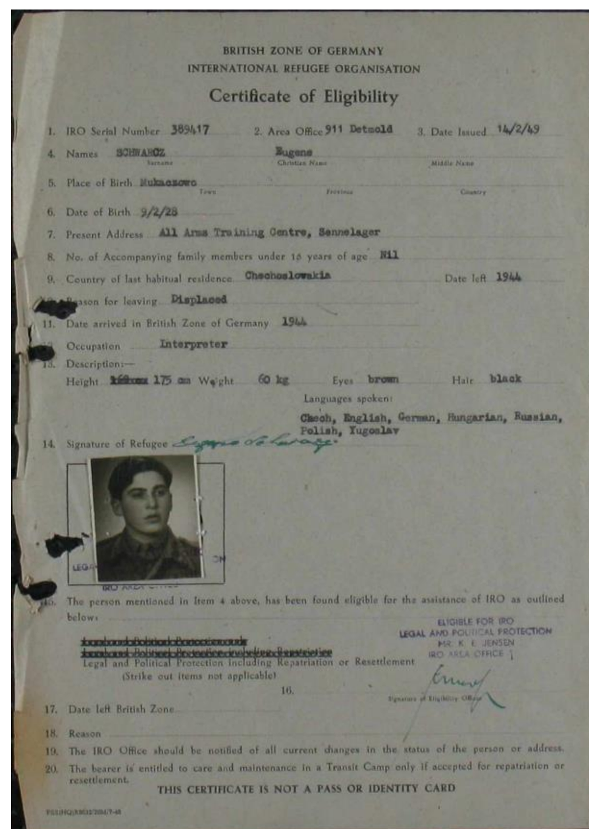
Given that *Through Our Eyes* is orientated around the stories of survivors who eventually settled in the United Kingdom, the exhibition is effective at extending the narrative of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust beyond 1945 (or the end of the Second World War). Unlike in other sampled museums and educational materials, exposure to experiences of life *after* the Holocaust helps to guard against a simplistic interpretation of the Holocaust as self-contained within the period of 1933 to 1945. The

[76] Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, p.17.
[77] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Petersen, J., 'How British Television Inserted the Holocaust into Britain's War Memory in 1995'. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 21(3), (2001), p.261.

Holocaust cast a long shadow over the years that followed. *Through Our Eyes* allows visitors to sample some of the considerations involved in post-war refugeeism. The story of Iby Knill, for instance, provides an example of how some Holocaust survivors married members of the British armed forces – who were stationed in mainland Europe – in the immediate post-war years.[81] In other words, European history in the years following the Holocaust was not defined by conventional 'national' boundaries, but rather was characterised by continued displacement and foreign military presences.

I have noted that the British response to the Holocaust – often an abstract topic - does not lend itself easily to presentation through the form of physical artefacts. However, Eugene Black's Refugee Certificate of Eligibility issued in the British Zone in Germany in 1949 offers an insight into the immigration procedures that were in operation to address displaced persons. It is also of interest that the document reveals Black's employment as an interpreter for the British Army. The mechanisms of post-war British society allowed opportunities for displaced survivors to integrate, professionally and personally. A different perspective on the issue of integration is offered: assimilation into British working structures in mainland Europe itself, as well as into territories of the United Kingdom themselves.

[81] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.


BRITISH ZONE OF GERMANY
INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANISATION

Certificate of Eligibility

1. IRO Serial Number 389417 2. Area Office 911 Detmold 3. Date Issued 14/2/49
4. Names SCHWARCZ (Surname) Eugene (Christian Name) (Middle Name)
5. Place of Birth Mukaczowo (Town) (Province) (Country)
6. Date of Birth 9/2/28
7. Present Address All Arms Training Centre, Sennelager
8. No. of Accompanying family members under 16 years of age Nil
9. Country of last habitual residence Chechoslowakia Date left 1944
10. Reason for leaving Displaced
11. Date arrived in British Zone of Germany 1944
12. Occupation Interpreter
13. Description:—
Height 175 cm Weight 60 kg Eyes brown Hair black
Languages spoken: Chech, English, German, Hungarian, Russian, Polish, Yugoslav
14. Signature of Refugee
15. The person mentioned in Item 4 above, has been found eligible for the assistance of IRO as outlined below:
Legal and Political Protection including Repatriation or Resettlement
(Strike out items not applicable)
ELIGIBLE FOR IRO LEGAL AND POLITICAL PROTECTION MR. K. E. JENSEN IRO AREA OFFICE
16. Signature of Eligibility Officer
17. Date left British Zone
18. Reason
19. The IRO Office should be notified of all current changes in the status of the person or address.
20. The bearer is entitled to care and maintenance in a Transit Camp only if accepted for repatriation or resettlement.
THIS CERTIFICATE IS NOT A PASS OR IDENTITY CARD

Figure 33: Refugee Certificate of Eligibility issued to Eugene Black in 1949. HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

The story of Heinz Skyte also offers evidence of a reciprocal social appreciation. Skyte was awarded an MBE in 1976 in recognition of his community work in Yorkshire, and thus represents an example of a Holocaust survivor whose contribution to his adopted home was acknowledged. Similarly, Trude Silman – a member of the HSFA – 'was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours 2020 for her work in Holocaust education'.[82] Visitors are reminded that the coats produced by the aforementioned Gannex company founded by the Kagan family were 'famously worn by Prince Philip and Harold Wilson'.[83] Again, the lens of individual life stories allows for a richness of historical interpretation, in contrast to the sweeping narratives which have been used elsewhere to characterise the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Moreover, the stories found in *Through Our Eyes* offer illustration of how Holocaust survivors themselves have enriched British society, as opposed to themselves alone being advantaged from the willingness of the United Kingdom to accept Jewish immigrants. Indeed, commentators such as Critchell have called for a more widespread

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

emphasis on the contributions which immigrants have made to British society, and for challenge to the perception that immigration benefits only one side of the relationship.[84]

Although visitors are presented with much worthy information and multimedia material, there is a general lack of guiding activities at the HELC. Visitors are not often challenged with explicit questions arising from the stimuli before them, and as such are not truly encouraged to consider the complexities of any topic presented (including the British response to the Holocaust). However, the location of the exhibition is itself effective at challenging any perceptions that the history of the Holocaust and the history of the United Kingdom are disconnected. A key feature of each survivor featured is the fact that they settled in Yorkshire for most of their adult life. The histories contained within the HELC have direct ties to the very location in which they are presented. The majority of featured survivors married English partners. Each life story, therefore, demonstrates how the experiences of the Holocaust have over time become entwined with a broader sense of 'belonging' in Britain. In some ways, this framework mitigates a misleading sense of detachment – human, physical or geographical – between Britain and the Holocaust.

Summary

The remit of the HELC ensures that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is presented through a lens of individual life stories. Centrally, the juxtaposition of life experiences in mainland Europe during the Holocaust with those in Britain somewhat inevitably cast the United Kingdom as a safe haven for victims, to a certain degree. The opportunities found in Britain, although far from straightforward, were far from the 'major massacres', 'atrocities' and 'deep depression' described by Val Kinsburg in her recollections of wartime life in Central Europe.[85]

Although the microscopic focus of the exhibition on individual life stories is not conducive to exploration of broader socio-political narratives, it does nonetheless

[84] Critchell, 'Remembering and Forgetting'.
[85] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.

expose underrepresented aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. For example, survivor testimonies allow divergent experiences of *Kindertransport* refugees to be represented. Although there is an overarching sense of gratitude towards the opportunities offered by Britain to those fleeing the Holocaust, there is equally no attempt to depict the relationship as completely positive.

The diversity of the stories represented highlights the possible deficiencies in generalising the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Behind familiar headline statistics – such as the fate of the 10,000 *Kindertransport* refugees – there lies a plethora of different experiences. *Through Our Eyes* suggests that there should not be one single depiction of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Even within the 16 video testimonies featured in the exhibition, it is impossible to ignore their diversity: some survivors have retained their native accents, while others have acquired strong Yorkshire intonations.

Through Our Eyes is significant for its *form*, as well as its content. The digital presentation of these testimonies allows visitors to be brought closer to British aspects of the Holocaust, even in the absence of hard artefactual resources. The innovative blend of multimedia platforms has created a learning environment within which younger generations can feel comfortable. Holocaust education is a living organism. If portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust are to evolve in step with modern societal developments, the *way* in which the relationship is presented must also develop. The technological innovation on display at the HELC is one example of an attempt to remain accessible to a modern audience, and represents a pathway for future exhibitions to follow.

CHAPTER 7 – MUSEUM STAFF AS AGENTS OF MEMORY

It is easy to characterise institutional memory in monochrome terms. But in reality, museums reflect the different historical interpretations of individual agents. Interviewing museum staff was, therefore, an attractive research tool. In an immediate sense, museum exhibitions represent an outward projection of any particular history: in other words, 'how' the past is presented. Yet it is also necessary to comprehend 'why' certain historical interpretations have been represented. In-depth personal interviews with museum staff from the NHCM and HELC provided a gateway to such understanding. It was possible to scratch beneath the surface of museum narratives, and unearth some of the human influences which have shaped the ways in which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been portrayed. This helps us to explain and contextualise educational presentations and responses.

In the interests of obtaining a rounded sense of museum operations, I took care to interview staff members spanning the curatorial, strategic, and educational arms of the institutions. Collectively, the results of these interviews can be arranged thematically to better explicate the limitations of museal portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, as surveyed in the previous chapter. As expounded below, a complex image emerged, befitting of the intricate historical issue at hand. To a degree, it became possible to site museum content within the framework of competing abstract and practical considerations, each of which have contributed to the impressions of the British response to the Holocaust.

About the interviewees, and their research significance.

i) NHCM

Stephen D. Smith OBE was integral to the creation of the NHCM, which opened in Laxton, Nottinghamshire, in 1995. Together with his brother James, Stephen Smith resolved to establish a Holocaust learning centre following a trip to Israel in the early

1990s. Originally a scholar of Theology, Smith acted as a director and curator of the NHCM. Amongst other work, Smith was a member of the British delegation to the Inter-governmental Taskforce on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) upon its formation in 1998, and was part of the steering committee which contributed to the inauguration of Holocaust Memorial Day in the United Kingdom in 2001. In 2009, Smith was appointed as Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, the archive of Holocaust survivor testimonies initiated by Steven Spielberg in 1994. Since then, Smith has not contributed directly to the management or curation of the NHCM.

Conversation with Smith added valuable texture and context to the portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust encountered in the NHCM. It also offered a chance to gain fresh insights not previously published in Smith's 2002 memoirs.[1] Smith's explanation of the foundational framework of the NHCM also offered a complement to more recent operational experiences recounted in interviews with 'on the ground' museum staff.

As an NHCM Educator and outreach coordinator since 2017, **Nicola Strauther** was well-positioned to offer insights into the educational programmes led by the Centre. Strauther was able to draw on personal experience to explore the ways in which museum visitors – mainly schoolchildren – have engaged with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

This chapter is not only concerned with the content of museum presentations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The ways in which such educational portrayals have been *deployed* is also an important consideration. From her position as Director of Learning at the NHCM, **Louise Stafford** was able to offer insights on how the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust features in the overall strategy of the Centre's learning programmes.

Curators perform vital roles within museums. Amongst other duties, they are responsible for the management of collections and the organisation of exhibitions. As

[1] Smith, *Making memory*.

such, curators are a significant determinant of the material which is presented to visitor museums. I interviewed the **NHCM Curator**, who wished to remain anonymous and will hereafter be referred to as **'R'**. R has been part of the NHCM staff team since 2005. To an extent, the ways in which educators such as Louise Stafford and Nicola Strauther work are reliant upon curatorial decisions. R was therefore able to offer certain insights into the rationale and contours of NHCM portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

ii) HELC

Having been involved in the HELC project since 2017, **Emma King** served as the Centre Director between 2018 and 2020. During this period, King also acted as museum curator, and was responsible for co-authoring the exhibition copy for *Through Our Eyes*. She was therefore able to provide valuable perspectives on both the creation and mediation of portrayals of the British response.

Having opened in 2018, the HELC remains a nascent institution at the time of writing. In 2019, the post of Learning and Audience Development manager was created to establish a defined programme of educational events associated with the Centre. Its first incumbent was **Alessandro Bucci**, who was charged with creating a strategy for engaging visitors – particularly secondary school students - in learning activities. The NHCM, in contrast, has had over two decades to refine its educational programmes, and can draw upon a bigger pool of educational staff. Nevertheless, an interview with Bucci offered insights into how the HELC plans to build upon portrayals of the Holocaust found in the *Through Our Eyes* exhibition over the course of the next decade or so. Bucci assumed the role of HELC Director in June 2021.

Key interview findings

As the United Kingdom's first dedicated Holocaust centre, the very existence of the NHCM is itself of significance in the wider scheme of British Holocaust memory. However, interviews with NHCM staff revealed the ongoing challenges – both practical and abstract – faced by the museum, especially in relation to the negotiation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. At the HELC, as a nascent institution, only opened in 2018, there has perhaps been less time for similar issues to make themselves apparent. However, the centre in Huddersfield displayed several themes in common with its counterpart in Nottinghamshire: namely constraints on space, and limits to educational capabilities.

Foundational frameworks and guiding principles

As illustrated by the developing field of literature on Holocaust memory, mediation of such complex histories necessitates a certain degree of flexibility. Changes in historical understanding and social circumstance can influence the public presentation of any given topic. Yet, insights into the foundational frameworks of the NHCM highlighted a potential issue. Although undoubtedly well-meaning, the determination of any institution to operate along a fixed set of guiding principles limits the directions in which it is possible to take historical exploration. In relation to the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust, the NHCM's contemporary social mission might have affected its terms of engagement with the topic. 'Forward-facing' Holocaust education, or the use of historical examples to guide present-day social existence, does not necessarily lend itself well to detailed investigation of the past. The search for the broad brushstrokes of moral teachings can restrict the scope for complication and contextualisation.

Nevertheless, Smith appeared to have opened the NHCM in 1995 with a conscience that the British response to the Holocaust hitherto had largely been ignored or airbrushed within Holocaust consciousness. Smith noted that, in the Christian community of his own

childhood, his encounters with the Holocaust came through a lens of 'Protestant redemptive narratives'.[2] Smith cited the 'Christian hero's story' of the 1975 film *The Hiding Place* as characteristic of the tenor of Holocaust interpretations that were prominent within British society at the time.[3] Upon reflection, the lack of 'anything in cultural literature or popular culture that really explained what the Holocaust was at all' seems to Smith likely to have contributed to the unchallenging narratives of British involvement in the genocide which pervaded until the 1990s.[4] Smith also observed that a 'deep resistance to go back to the issues of the Second World War and imply that in some way Britain had not got it right' was evident during Parliamentary debates leading to the War Crimes Act of 1991.[5] The apparent dominance of a 'victors' narrative', and the implication that 'we could just leave that [the British response to the Holocaust] in the past and walk away from it' was troubling to Smith.[6] Smith was frustrated at the ways in which public 'discussions around things like why we didn't bomb the camps' were met with 'such a big pushback'.[7] Smith's remarks displayed strong alignment with other theorisations of the cultural glorification of Britain's role in the Second World War.[8] Moreover, Smith metaphorised British war memory as an image of a 'British Tommy standing by mass graves', creating a 'narrative that "we defeated all of that" and "we are the good guys"'.[9] Such paradigms within British society fed into Smith's wider dissatisfaction with the state of Holocaust education as a whole in the 1990s.

Smith recounted further his determination that the history of the Holocaust should not solely be 'a Jewish problem, a problem which Jewish people confront and bear the burden'.[10] Part of this educational mission involved encouraging British society to reflect more openly on the way in which it had acted during the Holocaust and its surrounding periods: 'we should be confronting our own society'.[11] Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Smith did not believe such deficiencies to be limited to British society alone. Such

[2] Smith, S., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (29 October 2020).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Noakes & Pattinson, *British Cultural Memory*.
[9] Smith, S., interview.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

issues were ascribed to 'West European civilisation' as a whole, whereby 'perpetrators and bystanders' alike had been able to 'walk away as if it [the Holocaust] did not happen', leaving 'the victims to carry the burden of that memory and to tell that story'.[12] In other words, I could infer from Smith's comments that a lack of critical self-reflection – by the 1990s at least - was as much a transnational problem as one unique to the British response.

However, Smith also recorded that he wanted museum portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust to 'speak to British society at the time at which the Centre was built'.[13] For Smith, there was limited value in 'attacking Britain's record'.[14] Instead, the NHCM sought to 'contextualise' the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, and that it was placed 'very self-consciously within the narrative' of the wider historical period.[15] Again, this is perhaps one explanation for why exhibition depictions of the British response are often implicit, and rely on careful wording. As detailed earlier in this section, explicit criticism of action and inaction taken by Britain is not to be found in the NHCM.[16] However, by establishing connections between the Holocaust and British history, Smith hoped to move away from the notion that the genocide was 'not something that was alien to British society', as well as the tendency to 'lay blame at the door of some other entity'.[17]

The inclusion of the Holocaust as part of the National Curriculum in England and Wales in 1991 also proved problematic for Smith at the time. Smith recalled obtaining a copy of the new curriculum, and registering shock that the Holocaust was 'simply a bullet point' under the heading of the Second World War, with 'no notes, no explanation, no guidance for teachers'.[18] The lack of pedagogical direction within the National Curriculum does not seem to have been addressed in meaningful terms ever since. Pearce has charted how successive iterations of the syllabus have been characterised by

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] See exhibition analysis in previous chapter.
[17] Smith, S., interview.
[18] Ibid.

persistent vagueness.[19] By extension, the Smith brothers became aware of the sudden need to collate 'resources for teachers to use', given an absence of existing 'books for children or textbooks'.[20] Within this framework, Smith was aware that educators would be unable to explore challenging issues such as the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Subject knowledge, or a lack thereof, continues to be highlighted as a key determinant of the depth and breadth with which teachers prove able to engage with Holocaust education.[21] Above all, however, Smith stressed how NHCM depictions of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were guided by the intention of providing a starting point for visitors to develop their thoughts on the issue, rather than representing a definitive exploration of the topic.

Although Stafford was clear that this story of the creation of the NHCM lent the institution a unique position within the broader landscape of British Holocaust memory, the foundations of the Centre have also shaped the way in which the British response to the genocide has been interpreted. Stafford suggested that narratives of the Holocaust within the NHCM, particularly during the Centre's early stages as a Christian retreat, might 'potentially have been conceived' on the assumption that Britain was 'on the right side' and had made 'the right choices'.[22] To this extent, Stafford's views displayed alignment with conceptualisations found elsewhere that point towards the domineering influence in Holocaust consciousness of the notion of Britain's involvement in a 'good' war.[23] Such a paradigm, naturally, is not necessarily conducive to critical self-reflection. Stafford's observation also bore a certain parallel with a point raised by Nicola Strauther: that the Smith brothers were not trained historians, and as such did not establish the NHCM as an institution dedicated to rigorous historical analysis of complex issues.[24] Stafford highlighted how the Smiths' intention for visitors to gain 'a stronger understanding of the events of the Holocaust' has remained a cornerstone of the NHCM's mission since its creation.[25] Within this framework, the British response to the Holocaust has not featured as heavily as more 'mainstream' episodes of the period,

[19] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum'.

[20] Smith, S., interview.

[21] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust*

[22] Stafford, L., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (20 October 2020).

[23] Calder, 'Britain's good war?'.

[24] Strauther, N., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (12 October 2020).

[25] Stafford, L., interview.

most of which occurred in mainland Europe. By necessity, in such a small exhibition space, subsidiary issues cannot be afforded as much coverage as more central events.

Although the HELC shares certain guiding principles with the NHCM, its creation process appears to have been somewhat more coordinated. In the planning stages, it was decided that the HELC should primarily be targeted at secondary-school students, which in turn would allow for more detailed exploration of Holocaust-related topics. Accordingly, King outlined how the HELC 'did a whole load of consultation with survivors, with second-generations, and teachers' to shape plans for the exhibition.[26] To this extent, the HELC was influenced by market demand. By gauging what teachers felt the HELC 'needed to do in terms of curriculum', the Centre could respond to popular concerns.[27] The fact that the British response to the Holocaust does not feature more heavily in the exhibition is perhaps reflective of the limited extent to which educators were already engaging with the topic before the opening of the HELC in 2018.[28]

Nevertheless, King detailed how 'getting students to engage critically' was key to the educational mission of the HELC from its outset, specifically in relation to the issue of 'national history'.[29] To this end, King stated that the 'survivor stories and direct personal testimony' were intended merely as an educational 'hook', to 'interest and attract' visitors.[30] As with the NHCM, the 'exhibition was a starting point…to allow the Learning Centre to do something broader'.[31] Presentation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was intended to feed into this overall abstract framework, particularly given that King believed it was 'easy for young people to just see it [the Holocaust] as Nazi Germany and Auschwitz'.[32] Indeed, King noted that it 'blows a lot of kids' minds' to discover that there are Holocaust survivors living locally in Yorkshire, and indeed the fact that 'Britain *had* a role at all' in the Holocaust.[33] Moreover, King also hoped to diversify existing understandings of the British role. In King's opinion, 'the story of rescue can kind

[26] King, E., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (16 October 2020).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Pettigrew et al., *Teaching about the Holocaust.*
[29] King, E., interview.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

of overshadow everything else', and it was hoped that *Through Our Eyes* would move visitors away from a 'glorified' impression of 'what anybody in the U.K had done' during the Holocaust'.[34] Again, these observations shed light on conceptualisations of the British response which existed prior to 2018.

Accordingly, King also highlighted how existing research was consulted to address perceived gaps in the British educational landscape. King, together with her co-copy writers, 'leaned heavily on the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education research reports' of 2009 and 2016.[35] Amid a multiplicity of findings, these reports identified deficiencies in student and teacher understandings of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. For example, of students surveyed by the CfHE team, some '34.4 per cent incorrectly believed that the Holocaust triggered Britain's entry into war and a further 17.6 per cent of students thought the British drew up rescue plans to save the Jews'.[36] The HELC creative team also engaged extensively with recent research into the life experiences of *Kindertransport* refugees.[37] King believed the HELC should convey the fact that many child refugees 'had quite a tough time' after they arrived on British shores, and that the testimonies chosen to feature in *Through Our Eyes* should reflect these experiences.[38] As explored in the previous chapter, it is questionable whether this aim is achieved fully.

King also suggested that the HELC's portrayal of the British response was afforded nuance through collaboration with a respected team of academic advisors: Paul Salmons (University College London Centre for Holocaust Education), Ben Barkow (The Wiener Library), Alexander von Luenen (University of Huddersfield) and Stefan Hördler (Mittelbau Dora Concentration Camp Memorial). King described how these subject experts could refine the exhibition's 'use of language' and invocation of 'recent scholarship'.[39] The luxury of such a consultative panel is not available to every educational setting, which in turn perhaps explains the simplified or misleading narratives of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which have been found

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Foster, in Pearce., *Remembering the Holocaust*, p.241.
[37] For example, see Craig-Norton, 'Contesting the Kindertransport'.
[38] King, E., interview.
[39] Ibid.

elsewhere in this thesis. There is perhaps insufficient space in the HELC for the Centre to be certain of rectifying any visitor misconceptions related to the British response to the Holocaust specifically. However, the fact that the HELC team actively sought to bridge the gap between academic research and public memory is reflected in the nuance with which the topic is treated when it *does* appear in the exhibition.

Compared with institutions such as the NHCM, however, the HELC appears to attribute less value to 'forward-facing' interpretations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. In both its exhibition and associated learning programmes, students are not truly encouraged to consider how the British response might be useful to guide future social action. King recorded her scepticism towards 'lessons-based' Holocaust education. For King, examples of post-Holocaust genocides proved that lessons had not truly been learned, and she questioned the extent to which Holocaust education has 'genuinely and directly influenced shifts in human behaviour'.[40] King also warned against 'meaningless' aphorisms such as '"Never Again"', and pointed towards the 'slightly cynical' commitment of politicians to social justice each year on Holocaust Memorial Day.[41] Thus, King identified the important 'disconnect between what comes out of people's mouths around this subject matter…and then what they actually do'.[42] There is not a guaranteed connection between the mere presence of engagement with the British response to the Holocaust and the actual educational impact that such representations might yield.

Moreover, King thought it 'almost churlish' to pursue the interpretation that 'Britain didn't do enough'.[43] In fact, King implied that the academic advisory board had reiterated that it should not be overlooked that 'Britain *did* save people, we stood alone for a while in 1940 and we did "step up"'.[44] While acknowledging that recent movements such as Black Lives Matter have accentuated the importance of critical reflection, King deemed it unnecessary to be 'overly critical' and 'to judge everything through a "hindsight lens"'.[45] An intriguing notion presents itself. It could be argued that critical

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

engagement with the British response to the Holocaust has been lacking in British society not because it has been avoided, but rather because it is genuinely a less significant facet of the topic than the constructive actions that *were* taken.

Negotiating political pressures

Museums often occupy rather venerated positions within society. Studies by Rozenweig and Thelen have pointed towards the significant trust placed in museums by members of the public.[46] By extension, it is reasonable to assume that objectivity is one assumed condition of the esteem in which museums are held. But in several regards, museums are not – and cannot be – hermetically-sealed institutions. From museum staff, I could tease out the admission that negotiation of political influences was a notable element of mediating presentation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

Unavoidably, in a museum industry which treads a precarious financial path, institutions must be aware of the hand that feeds them.[47] Pressures which might be described as 'political' appeared particularly pronounced in King's insights into the operations of the HELC. King's responses demonstrated that such educational settings are far from immune to both external and internal influences.[48] King described the 'conversation within the project team about how much space to give to different stories' as 'almost political'.[49] The strong influence of the HSFA's second-generation community was undeniable. King suggested that members of the organisation felt that 'the Holocaust *was* the gas chambers, the death, the massacres', and that figures such as Lilian Black 'strongly wanted the emphasis to be on how that unfolded'.[50] As a result, 'some of the other stories got pushed to the side a little bit'.[51]

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[46] Berenbaum & Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.432.

[47] Lindqvist, K., 'Museum finances: challenges beyond economic crises', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, (27:1), (1990), pp.1-15.

[48] Berenbaum & Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.432.

[49] King, E., interview.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

Given the centrality of survivor organisations to the realisation of the HELC, it is perhaps unsurprising that the historical opinions amongst such groups found representation in the museum. King recalled that she had 'never really had a conversation with a survivor which has been particularly critical of Britain in the 1930s and 1940s'.[52] In King's experience, although survivors 'are extremely critical of recent government approaches to refugees and contemporary human rights issues', they also remain 'grateful' that the United Kingdom 'gave them an opportunity'.[53] Nicola Strauther recounted similar experiences during her time as an educator at the NHCM. Here, there is alignment with the observation of Louise Stafford of the NHCM that a museal reliance on testimonies from survivors who remain grateful to Britain can create obstacles to critical engagement with the topic of the British response.[54] It is therefore possible that the steering influence of the HSFA in the creation of the HELC limited the scope for substantial critical engagement with the British response. King suspected that any attempt to have included a more negative interpretation of the role played by Britain would have been met by 'pushback' from the HSFA committee, who were ultimately in charge of the project. Stephen Smith, in the context of the creation of the NHCM, highlighted the similar issues that can be created around basing exhibition content on the testimonies of survivors who eventually settled in the United Kingdom.[55]

In the case of the IWMHE, Pearce has surmised that, although the gallery 'did not set out to create a memorial space', for some survivors and their families 'the exhibition became precisely that: a place of memory'.[56] This effect might too have limited the appetite for critical engagement with more troublesome aspects of Holocaust history, including the British response. Elsewhere, historians such as Tollerton have highlighted the risks associated with a similar 'sacralisation' of Holocaust memory.[57] It has the potential to promote misrepresentative narratives. Yet, the HELC has

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Stafford, L., interview.
[55] Smith, S., interview.
[56] Pearce, *Remembering the Holocaust*, p.110.
[57] Tollerton, D., 'Britain's New Holocaust Memorial as Sacred Site', *Material Religion*, 13(2), (2017), pp.266–268.

become a place of emotional significance for the HSFA in particular.[58] In this sense, it is a *lieu de mémoire,* as conceptualised by Nora.[59]

King also admitted that she had felt some broader political pressures during the creation process of the HELC. King cited the example, in 2020, of Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden's letter to British museums warning against their removal of controversial artefacts.[60] In June 2021, this same government impelled educational institutions to implement a jingoistic 'One Britain, One Nation' day to celebrate 'pride in British values'.[61] King suggested that politicians have often 'undermined the arm's length principle' to interfere in curatorial decisions.[62] Although the small scale of the HELC project meant that 'nobody was watching for quite a while', King implied she felt unable to 'have gone further' with the criticality of her approach, lest negative external attention was received. More specifically, King was wary of the use of the Holocaust as 'a political football', and a governmental preference for the narrative that '"the Holocaust wasn't our fault"'.[63] Indeed, Pearce has examined in broader terms the politicisation of Holocaust education in the United Kingdom since the introduction of the subject to the National Curriculum in 1991.[64]

The exertion of political pressure on educational institutions continues to be felt in the United Kingdom. Such an effect is far from universal, however. Curator R of the NHCM reported that she had never felt any form of political pressure in decisions taken regarding the presentation of narratives within the museum.[65] Nonetheless, King's experiences illuminate the fact that it is difficult for museums to operate as impermeable institutions, particularly when critical self-reflection on problematic national pasts comes into play.

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[58] King, E., interview.
[59] Nora, 'Between Memory and History'.
[60] Stubely, 'Museums risk funding cuts if they remove controversial objects, culture secretary warns', *Independent* (27 September 2020).
[61] Mendick, R., 'Boris Johnson compared to Nazis and Soviets for supporting school's One Britain, One Nation song', *The Telegraph* (23 June 2021).
[62] King, E., interview.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Pearce, 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum'.
[65] Curator 'R', personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (27 October 2020).

Such political pressures, either internal or external, were not as easily identifiable in the responses of NHCM staff as those from the HELC. Perhaps due to the relative longevity of its existence, the NHCM has assumed a certain level of autonomy which shields it from external interference. Smith acknowledged that, in his experience, Holocaust survivors who found new lives in Britain, either through refuge or resettlement, frequently expressed deep gratitude towards the United Kingdom. Exaggerated social integration was not uncommon. Smith cited the example of the survivor Paul Oppenheimer, who was 'more British than the British in many ways…he cultured this British accent', and his memoirs were 'all about becoming British and adopting Britishness'.[66] Although Smith believed that NHCM supporter survivors 'were not afraid that we were going to critique British society', the sense of 'gratitude' towards Britain that infused many testimonies made it a challenging task in any regard.[67]

To a significant degree, the Smith brothers situated the original content of the NHCM around the testimonies of survivors who had come to Britain and subsequently forged new lives. In particular, members of the *Kindertransport* scheme are well-represented. These testimonies are often laudatory of the measures taken by the British government to mitigate the effects of the Holocaust. In itself, Stafford believed that this grounding posed 'really interesting and complex questions' in relation to portrayals of the British response.[68] Stafford posited that it was quite possible that 'through the work of the museum, audiences gain a slightly more positive understanding of the role played by Britain' as a result of the tenor of exhibition content at the NHCM. Stafford explained that 'many of the survivors who the museum continues to work with' will 'very frequently reference their gratitude to the UK' when 'speaking to the public and students'.[69]

But Stafford also identified a differentiating factor within the pool of such testimonies. There is variance: not in the gratitude felt by survivors towards Britain, but rather in the precise positioning of such praise. Some survivors 'place great emphasis on individual agencies or organisations', such as the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM), while other

[66] Smith, S., interview.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Stafford, L., interview.
[69] Ibid.

former *kinder* credit the 'British government for enabling the *Kindertransport* to take place'.[70] As such, it is apparent that there is some stratification of existing portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. Within an overarching framework which interprets actions taken through a positive lens, examples of success are attributed to different bodies.

These findings are important. When one calls to mind the idea of 'political' pressures, it is commonly in the form of the weighty hand of governmental control. But interviews with museum staff demonstrated that internal influences – particularly from survivor communities – are at least equally at play. Perhaps the reflex to attribute museal moderation to state authorities is a little too hasty. Censorship can come from within, too.

***Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*?**

Gatekeeping is an overlooked facet of Holocaust memory. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*? As might be expected, interviewees displayed a sense of loyalty towards their respective institutions. Yet, when probed, most interviewees were able to articulate limitations in the ways the British response to the Holocaust has found representation in their museum. There are tentative plans to broaden engagement with this specific historical issue. But historical scholarship usually thrives on open debate. A lack of corresponding historiographical debate in museum settings is potentially problematic. It has the ability to entrench stagnant, and inadequate, interpretations of eminently dynamic debates, including those on the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Museum staff reluctantly acknowledged the detachment between British history and that of the Holocaust: a separation which is contrived.

Strauther's personal conception of the way in which the British response to the Holocaust is presented in the permanent exhibition of the NHCM did not immediately suggest her belief in the presence of a complicated narrative. According to Strauther, with particular reference to text panels about the *Kindertransport*, 'I suppose the role

[70] Ibid.

that Britain played in terms of "us the good guy" is really brought to the forefront in the exhibition'.[71] Moreover, Strauther observed that the NHCM has three regular visiting speakers who are all 'Nicholas Winton survivors', and who use 'this kind of example of a gold standard and who we should all aspire to be more like'.[72] Survivor testimony is undoubtedly an invaluable resource, yet it does not appear to be one which is conducive to balanced examination of thorny historical topics. Overall, Strauther surmised that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is 'probably not talked about as much as it should be', despite the opportunities afforded to the NHCM over nearly two decades of existence.[73]

Moreover, Strauther was aware that, in the NHCM, the narrative of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is not truly stretched beyond 1945. According to Strauther, 'there's this kind of "Britain liberated Belsen" topic…and then the topic stops and it's almost like there's a neat little bow…they all live happily ever after'.[74] NHCM portrayals of the Holocaust mostly seemed to conform to a framework which is self-contained between the boundaries of 1933 and 1945. As in other educational settings sampled, the topic of *post-Holocaust* issues and memory is not one which is explored in substantial form. This would hint at a confluence of historical consciousness of the Second World War with that of the Holocaust: both are seemingly bookended at one end by 1945.

Yet it is reassuring that Strauther was conscious of the limitations evident in the NHCM's portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Strauther thought it important to 'remember that the exhibition is now 25 years old, and it was done by James and Stephen Smith, who are not historians'.[75] Although the Smiths had 'done their research', the NHCM was not set up 'in the same way that the Imperial War Museum was', but rather was intended to 'tell a story', rather than provide a rigorous historical analysis.[76] The British response to the Holocaust is not explored in great depth at the

[71] Strauther, N., interview.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

NHCM. But perhaps this was never a core intention of the Centre, and is a limitation which the NHCM seems content to acknowledge.

While individual life stories are favoured as the lens through which NHCM learning programmes present the Holocaust to younger students, Strauther again highlighted the constraints of such an approach. Although the NHCM 'put the survivors at the heart of what we do', there is a recurrent difficulty in ensuring that students 'go away thinking *that* is the story of the Holocaust… because by very definition of the fact that they are a survivor shows that they've not had the common experience of the Holocaust [i.e., death]'.[77]

In relation to learning about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, Strauther also identified the sequencing of activities as a key determinant of educational outcome. There can be problems if students have 'heard from a survivor before they've gone through the museum'.[78] If pupils have heard from a *Kindertransport* survivor 'who's gone on about how they were saved by the British Government and painted this very, you know, this heroic picture of what the British Government did…It can be quite hard to unpick'.[79] In a similar vein, 'Belsen survivors' who speak at the NHCM 'always end' their narrative with the sentiment '"I'm a Briton, I'm so grateful"'.[80] As outlined above, Stephen Smith was also attuned to the narrative complications caused by the NHCM's core foundation upon the sympathetic testimonies of survivors who eventually settled in the United Kingdom.[81]

Meanwhile, King was able to offer a number of perceptive explanations for the limited extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is explored within the HELC. However, she also acknowledged that the curatorial process might have occurred differently if it had been undertaken in the present day. Reflecting on the exhibition some two years after its opening, King stated that 'one of my realisations…is that I don't think we have given enough space to the pre-war story' of Britain and the

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Smith, S., interview.

Holocaust.[82] In particular, King believed that not enough space was afforded to unpacking the survivor testimonies from refugees who arrived in the United Kingdom before 1940. Rather, 'the bulk of space' in *Through Our Eyes* is 'allocated to the second cohort of survivors…who go through hiding, ghettoes, the camp system' before coming to Britain after 1945.[83]

Equally, King recognised that there are many 'conversations' to be had around the topic of retrospective justice and post-1945 history.[84] If afforded more exhibition space, King would have liked to have explored the 'post World-War Nuremberg Trials', and the 'sheer complexity' associated with the British treatment of 'perpetrators'.[85] As with many other subject areas, the limited size of the HELC stymied such ventures, and indeed King acknowledged that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust probably warranted a whole 'exhibition in itself'.[86] Such observations emphasised the intricacies associated with the topic of the British response to the Holocaust. Even if an institution such as the HELC, where critical engagement was central to the educational mission, there has been a tendency to confine focus on the wartime experiences associated with the Holocaust. Throughout this thesis, it has been suggested that there is work to be done in educational settings within the United Kingdom to stretch the narrative of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust beyond the self-contained parameters of 1939 to 1945.

In defence of the HELC, King pointed out that the rationale of the Centre was centred on life stories of the survivor community in Yorkshire, rather than aiming to provide a sweeping political or military narrative of the British response to the Holocaust. The museum narrative was explicitly conceived as a 'human-centred social history'.[87] According to King, a focus on individual testimonies unavoidably 'narrows' the ability of the *Through Our Eyes* exhibition to present a wider historical picture.[88] As such, it appeared the HELC's unique selling point was also a major limiting factor in the extent

[82] King, E., interview.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust could be explored. Bucci similarly acknowledged that the HELC's unique selling point – its basis on the stories of 16 Holocaust survivors who settled in Yorkshire – also entailed challenges when incorporating the British response into learning programmes for visitors. The HELC offers two different 'in-gallery' learning sessions, with students guided around the *Through Our Eyes* exhibition.[89] Yet, Bucci was aware that survivor testimonies in the exhibition commonly contain a 'very, very positive note that Britain was very welcoming', and so forth.[90] Despite Bucci's acknowledgment that such generalisations are 'not historically accurate', it was also evident that incorporating more critical competing narratives into an 'in-gallery' session had the potential to cause confusion and contradiction amongst younger students in particular.[91]

Despite her recognition of perceived deficiencies in the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, King still believed that the HELC manages to achieve a relatively balanced presentation. King recounted how Sir Eric Pickles (Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues) has praised the 'warts and all' experience of the HELC, and had 'picked up that we hadn't just kind of glossed things over, and we hadn't presented to a rose-tinted viewpoint on what Britain was doing'.[92] This is indeed a strong endorsement. Pickles is also co-chairman of the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation, whose own mission statement pledges to engage in a form of critical national self-reflection.[93] Overall, while museum staff alone are not always able to address perceived shortcomings in the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust, the ability to acknowledge that these problems exist does offer some protection from museal introspection.

Educational programmes: facilitating complex historical engagement?

Galleries and exhibits can only offer a somewhat superficial narrative of Holocaust history. Therefore, from the perspective of Holocaust education, the outreach work of

[89] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.9.
[90] Bucci, A., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (30 October 2020).
[91] Ibid.
[92] King, E., interview.
[93] UKHM, *Mission Statement* (December 2018).

museums is a crucial tool in deepening understanding of the Holocaust, particularly amongst school students. Presentation and implementation are two distinct strands of the learning process.[94] However, within this, there was variation in the weight with which museums treated the British response to the Holocaust. Therefore, there were inconsistencies of portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust across both institutions.

In Stafford's words, the learning programmes offered by the NHCM to visiting students aim to 'develop a sound understanding' of the Holocaust, while stressing the continued 'relevance' of the genocide to modern society.[95] Indeed, Stafford stated the belief that the NHCM's focus on using 'engagement of audiences' to explore the 'contemporary relevance' of the Holocaust sets it apart from other comparable institutions.[96] Learning about 'the decisions made by Britain at the time' feeds into the NHCM's overall commitment to enriching students' appreciation of 'contemporary' issues.[97] Stafford detailed that engagement with the British response to the Holocaust is designed to stimulate student 'thinking about persecution occurring today', and Britain's role in 'preventing or reacting to examples of genocide'.[98]

Surprisingly, however, Stafford was one of few interviewed staff to raise the issue of antisemitism in modern British society. In Stafford's view, the 'questions raised' by contemporary antisemitism can, in part, be debated with reference to 'Britain's actions in the past during the Holocaust'.[99] Such a sentiment is certainly thought-provoking, especially given social developments in recent years.[100] However, Stafford was less clear on how these theoretical objectives can be achieved in actual practice. As such, there was evidence of the difficulties in translating abstract aims of Holocaust pedagogy into workable educational realities. This is a challenge which underscores the field of

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[94] Anderson, S., Anderson, L., and Sosniak, L., *Bloom's Taxonomy: A Forty-year Retrospective* (Chicago: NSSE, 1994).
[95] Stafford, L., interview.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Reuters, 'PM Johnson vows support for UK Jewish community' (19 May 2021).

Holocaust education as a whole, not simply the particular issue of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

It was with relative firmness that Strauther explained her belief in the importance of learning about the British response to the Holocaust. Emphasis was placed on 'forward-facing' education, and 'making it relevant to today'.[101] Strauther believed children should be encouraged to 'think about what else they [the British government] should have done, and weigh in on those factors'.[102] Such views might be perceived as contentious by some. There is debate over the validity of 'lessons-based' Holocaust learning, which might either encourage decontextualised conceptions of the past, or prompt students to moralise on history.[103] However, Strauther's opinions are perhaps reflective of the reorientation of the NHCM itself that has occurred since its opening in 1995. The initial intention of the Centre was to provide visitors with an understanding of *what happened* during the Holocaust. However, in subsequent years, the foundation of organisations such as the Aegis Trust in association with the NHCM has pivoted the remit of the museum towards a sense of forward-facing social mission, and an 'an understanding of the roots of discrimination and prejudice'. [104] Whatever the benefits of this shift, it nevertheless risks compromising the precise contextualisation of historical events.

Centrally, Strauther and the rest of the NHCM educational team do not seek to avoid engagement with the challenging relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Even at primary school level, they 'make a big deal of talking about things like the Evian conference (1938) and the 'fact that… Britain, amongst many other countries...there was no intention of a full-scale help package being put together'.[105] When both primary and secondary school students are 'taken through the main exhibition', attention is also drawn towards the fact that 'Britain knew about places like Auschwitz'.[106] As observed in earlier analysis of educational materials, primary source-based work again emerged

[101] Strauther, N., interview.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Chapman, 'Learning the lesson of the Holocaust'.
[104] NHCM, 'About us'.
[105] Strauther, N., interview.
[106] Ibid.

as an effective educational mechanism for complicating the British response.[107] In the past, Strauther has used copies of the *Daily Mail* from the late 1930s to illustrate the contemporary 'backlash' against the *Kindertransport* and immigration, and to highlight the 'prevalent' resistance to 'enemy aliens'.[108] Primary sources are a tool of complication.

However, there is also a discernible intention within the NHCM educational mission to prevent a sense of British 'exceptionalism' from arising in any form. For example, Strauther has previously drawn the attention of students to the fact that Australian officials were equally obstinate as their British counterparts at the Evian conference, and that Australian history has been punctuated by poor 'treatment of their own indigenous people by kind of an immigrant government'.[109] In other words, Strauther has pursued critical reflection in transnational terms.

Nevertheless, Strauther herself was attuned to the anodyne narratives which sometimes underpin educational programmes coordinated by the NHCM. With particular reference to the *Kindertransport* NHCM learning experience entitled *The Journey*, Strauther noted that 'there is this tendency to do the whole '"Leo [a composite fictionalised Holocaust refugee] is saved on the *Kindertransport*" story', and that 'it's probably kind of lazy'.[110] In this instance, the NHCM appears to have chosen an uncomplicated historical depiction because 'it's an easy narrative that is this kind of tied up in a nice neat bow because they [visiting students] are 10 years old'.[111] Although it is significant that Strauther was aware of such patterns, it also raises a troubling question: is the British response to the Holocaust *worth* teaching to students who are unable to appreciate the full ambiguities of the topic? There is no clear answer.

Elsewhere, Alessandro Bucci shared a private draft copy of the HELC *Learning Rationale*, which formed 'a policy framework document for the development and delivery of our

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[107] See *Section I: analysis of educational materials*.
[108] Strauther, N., interview.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

learning programmes for schools'.[112] The document – hitherto unseen by external researchers - is extensive, and contains certain content which might prove to be of particular relevance to portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

A commitment to connecting Holocaust-related issues 'to the contemporary world' offers clear opportunities for schoolchildren in the United Kingdom to use British history to consider current and future societal conduct.[113] The validity of a 'lesson-based' approach to the Holocaust remains open to debate, but this educational framework does at least have the potential to encourage self-reflection on problematic national pasts.[114] Anecdotally, Bucci provided endorsement of this pedagogical approach. Citing a learning session undertaken with trainee (adult) cadets at a military base in Harrogate, Bucci recounted how exploring the British response 'really stimulated the moral judgments of these future members of the British Armed Forces'.[115] However, the vocabulary of this recollection in itself seemed problematic. It might be questioned whether the role of history education *should* be to moralise on past actions. Moralisation is a thorny practice: it risks decontextualisation, especially in relation to the British response to the Holocaust.[116]

The *Learning Rationale* also notes the systematic difficulties associated with teaching about the Holocaust. Of these challenges, 'those that seem most relevant to HELC include a lack of school teaching time to appropriately unpack the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, their lack of resources, and an excessive reliance on overarching themes, which often fail to capture the complexity of the topic'.[117] The document also engaged with existing research. It drew upon existing CfHE surveys to give particular attention to misconceptions regarding Britain's role:

- 35% of students believe that Britain joined the war to stop the Holocaust.

[112] HELC, *Learning rationale*.
[113] Ibid, p.2.
[114] Chapman, 'Learning the lesson of the Holocaust'.
[115] Bucci, A., interview.
[116] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"', p.72.
[117] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.3.

- 17% of students believe the British drew up rescue plans to save the Jews.
- 24% believe the British did not know about mass killing until the end of the war.[118]

Bucci further recorded that it was a 'priority to challenge the common assumption' that 'Britain joined the Second World War to save the Jews'.[119] While in an ideal world, the HELC would be able to address all of these issues, Bucci was attuned to the limited outcomes achievable in a contained school visit to the museum. But this example also illustrates how dialogue between academic and public education can help focus the lens of educational objectives.

From the HELC *Learning Rationale*, both 'facilitator-led' and 'in-gallery sessions' seem designed to prioritise topics other than the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[120] For example, there is particular concern to explore the 'broad spectrum of victims of Nazism, including Jewish victims of the Holocaust, disabled people and the LGBT community' alongside a timeline of 'policy changes in the Third Reich' and 'the experience within concentration camps'.[121] Within such a framework, the histories of Britain and the Holocaust are not detached from each other *per se*, but rather are cast as subsidiary issues which attract less urgent educational attention.

The abstract educational approach adopted by the HELC appeared to limit the extent to which the British response is likely to be considered in explicit terms. Bucci explained that there were 'elements of this topic in all of the learning resources that we are producing', but that the HELC had decided to take a more universal approach to presenting the history of the Holocaust.[122] Bucci hinted at a belief that definitively 'national' frameworks of Holocaust history were parochial, and instead pointed towards a preference for the 'interdisciplinary' and transnational approach outlined in the

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[118] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.3.
[119] Bucci, A., interview.
[120] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.6.
[121] Ibid, p.6.
[122] Bucci, A., interview.

Learning Rationale.[123] As such, there were 'no plans to have a session specifically about the British response'.[124] The 'universalisation' of the Holocaust is a growing trend within educational culture, especially as modern society itself has diversified.[125] Yet it is not necessarily a helpful approach if an aim *were* to be engagement with the British response in explicit terms.

Interestingly, Bucci also questioned the 'commercial viability' of educational sessions oriented around the British response to the Holocaust.[126] Bucci's impressions of customer demand suggested that there is limited appeal amongst educators for exploration of the topic, compared to other issues of Holocaust history. It might be posited that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has yet to enter the educational mainstream: it is less marketable than more well-known strands of the Holocaust story. In a wider sense, Bucci's observations also highlighted how museums cannot be driven by pure educational missions alone. For the most part, museums also operate as commercial businesses, and thus must also pay due attention to revenue opportunities.

However, the lack of demand for activities based on the British response to the Holocaust may also have more practical explanations, even by Bucci's own admission. Although unable to cite a source, Bucci noted that his 'understanding was that schools only have six weeks to focus on the Holocaust in general', despite the enormity of the subject.[127] When the HELC is 'approached with requests for educational sessions' by teachers, it is 'general introductory sessions' that are often desired.[128] With time limited, educators find themselves forced to prioritise a sweeping historical overview of the Holocaust to students. This observation prompts consideration of more systematic issues at hand. Although some teachers might choose to focus on topics other than the British response, there is general lack of sufficient curricular time devoted to the

[123] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.3.
[124] Bucci, A., interview.
[125] Gray, M.,. *Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2014), p.60.
[126] Bucci, A., interview.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.

Holocaust to facilitate exploration of intricate historical issues. Educational settings would benefit from greater time and space to engage with the past.

The 'human' factor

Holocaust memory is easily addressed in sweeping terms. But it is crucial to root my findings in some form of real-world basis. To a significant degree, museums hinge on a two-way human process. That is, the interpretations of the past presented by museum staff are themselves received and digested by visitors. Museum portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust represent only one side of a cultural transaction. The actual *effect* of such depictions on visitors is dependent on the willingness and ability of an audience to engage.

However, anecdotal evidence provided by museum interviewees made it clear that experiences in this regard have been mixed. Museums simply cannot rely on visitors, as consumers, to participate in complex dialogue. Museums can project an outward narrative: but it is contingent 'human' factors which will determine its educational impact. Museum staff hinted at the frequent inability of visitors to entertain nuanced interpretations of the Holocaust, and the British response. As such, wider questions are raised. Is school-based Holocaust education equipping students with the adequate tools to tackle this complex history? And are overarching frameworks of national historical memory inhibiting the public's ability to grapple with challenging topics? Certainly, existing evidence-based research would support both these propositions.[129]

The nature of visitor interaction with Holocaust education, and the associated issue of the British response, appeared to be heavily dependent on the audience it targeted. One can lead a horse to water without making it drink. Strauther reported that her own educational approach is necessarily influenced by the students she teaches on any single occasion. Sometimes, visits are used by schools as 'a launchpad for a topic they know nothing about'.[130] Equally, there are times were the 'ability overall of the class is not

[129] Foster et al., *What do students know?*

[130] Strauther, N., interview.

great', and must necessitate a simplification of the Holocaust history which is encountered by pupils.[131] Conversely, there are cases where 'the school have done incredible amounts of work and the knowledge of the kids is phenomenal'.[132] In these instances, Strauther has been able to plumb deeper more challenging topics, and 'start pulling out things that you might not always talk about', especially with primary school children.[133] Given these extenuating conditions, it is therefore unsurprising that the NHCM has been reluctant to implement a standardised approach in its learning programmes. The scope for complication of topics such as the British response cannot be guaranteed.

More specifically, the composition of visiting school parties has also had an effect on the aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which NHCM educators have chosen to relate. For example, Strauther noted that for a 'school which…had a high refugee population', she would 'talk about it [the *Kindertransport*] in different ways…because they were able to link their experiences to what you were talking about much more than a very white village school on the outskirts of Leeds or somewhere like that'.[134] In a different example, Strauther noted that addressing school parties where 'maybe 50 per cent of the students were Muslim inevitably led to conversations about Israel', and allowed discussions to extend to topics beyond 1945, such as immigration to Palestine in the 1940s.[135] This observation sheds light on a poignant phenomenon: the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust is influenced not only by its presenter, but also by its audience. It also suggested, in conjunction with research by Critchell and others, that the ethnic diversification of modern British society has the ability to reframe the historical narratives which find representation in educational settings.[136] Indeed, Stephen D. Smith noted the personalisation of visitor reactions to museum content, based on a range of interrelated factors including ethnicity, age and level of knowledge.[137] In a certain sense, the museum experience becomes what the visitor wants it to be.

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Critchell, 'Proud to Be British'.
[137] Smith, S., interview.

In alignment with the earlier observation that student ability has a modifying effect on the portrayal of the British response, Strauther admitted that she would be more likely to encourage a simplified narrative to school parties where it is clear that ‘their knowledge is very limited’ and ‘you are getting nowhere’.[138] Despite this, Strauther reinforced her personal belief that ‘it's really important that we don't fall back on that lazy narrative of, you know, “Britain saves these 10,000 children” and, you know, it should be held up as this wonderful example above everything else… actually it's much more complicated, much more messy than that’.[139] However, the translation of personal philosophy to educational reality is evidently difficult at times.

This said, although survivor speakers typically appeared to present students with a portrayal of Britain as quasi-protagonists in the narrative of the Holocaust, Strauther could recall little evidence of observing ‘glorified’ interpretations of the Second World War amongst visitors to the NHCM. For the most part, students and members of the public alike displayed a sympathetic awareness of the human tragedy which underpinned the conflict. However, in keeping with existing social science surveys, Strauther has also encountered examples of a general belief in the inevitability of positive British intervention in international affairs.[140] Amongst some students, Strauther has perceived a ‘patriotic sense that, *of course*, Britain would declare war when they see wrongdoing happening to others’.[141] The origins of this phenomenon are unclear to Strauther – ‘maybe from the internet or from the media’ – but regardless have contributed on occasion to the misleading assumption that ‘Britain was on this campaign to stop the Holocaust…then we took in all the survivors after’.[142] Such thoughts provide evidence that understanding of the British role in the Holocaust continues to orbit around a stronger sense of moral justification linked to national involvement in the Second World War.

[138] Strauther, N., interview.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Colley, ‘Is Britain a force for good?’
[141] Strauther, N., interview.
[142] Ibid.

Compared to other interviewees, Stafford was more reluctant to make generalisations of visitor conceptions and reactions to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Stafford, perhaps diplomatically, characterised a 'broad range of students in terms of prior knowledge and understanding' who visit the NHCM.[143] Implicitly, however, Stafford suggested that student understandings of the British response were often lacking. Such a perspective would tally with the conclusions drawn by Nicola Strauther.[144] Indeed, Stafford later admitted that 'many of the findings of the UCL [CfHE] research [into student misunderstandings of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust] are born out in relation to the students that we [the NHCM] work with'.[145] Further alignment with Strauther was found by Stafford's observation that visitor reactions to information regarding the British response to the Holocaust was affected by circumstantial factors, such as 'student age', 'stage of learning', and the respective proficiencies of visiting teachers. To an extent, therefore, it seems that museal portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust can only hope to go so far in a single museum session. The upper educational limits of student visitors appear, largely, to be predetermined before they visit.

Nicola Strauther, of the NHCM, explained how audience profile can affect the nature of engagement with the British response to the Holocaust. Emma King pointed towards experience of the same phenomenon at the HELC. King noted the advantages of the HELC's location within the campus of the University of Huddersfield. 'Passing staff and students' occasionally visited, although 'not as many as I [King] would have expected'.[146] Members of the university community were perhaps more knowledgeable than typical public visitors, and better equipped to grapple with the complex issues arising from the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. In terms of human interactions, this offered HELC staff the sporadic opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion on the topic.

On the whole, however, King was pessimistic about the understanding of the Holocaust engendered amongst visiting school pupils. Again, in parallel with Strauther's

[143] Stafford, L., interview.
[144] Strauther, N., interview.
[145] Stafford, L., interview.
[146] King, E., interview.

experiences, student ability is a limiting factor on the depth with which complex issues such as the British response can be engaged. King acknowledged that there is a lack of surveys of educational outcomes amongst visitors to the HELC. Anecdotally, however, King was 'quite often disappointed and quite surprised by how little young people knew when they came', despite requests to teachers 'not to bring students with no prior knowledge'.[147] Often, King found that she would have to 'start from a low base' with school groups attending learning sessions at the HELC. If, as King recounted, students struggled to contend with even the 'basic background information' to the Holocaust, there was perhaps little hope of exploring far more nuanced subjects such as the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[148]

King also identified broader frameworks of historical consciousness as an important influence of perspectives adopted by visitors to the HELC. In particular, King singled out how the Second World War was not treated with 'nearly enough complexity' by visiting members of the public, and a general tendency for one-dimensional heroization of figures such as Winston Churchill: 'the "fight them on the beaches" rescue narrative'.[149] These types of public history paradigms are far from conducive to widespread engagement with nuanced topics such as the British response to the Holocaust.

Moreover, King has observed first-hand how 'it horrifies young people' who visit the HELC to discover that 'there were statements made in Parliament about the Holocaust very early in the 1940s, and that gas chambers were known about, that the massacres in the East were known about' and 'that the scales didn't fall from people's eyes in 1945 when Belsen was discovered'.[150] The HELC might have been expected to predict such reactions, given their consultation of existing CfHE reports on endemic student misunderstandings of Holocaust history.[151] It is nevertheless telling that young people seem to have such limited knowledge of the place occupied by the Holocaust in British public spheres during the 1930s and 1940s.

[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Foster et al., *What do students know?*

Interview responses also suggested that the limitations of public Holocaust awareness are not necessarily a new concern, nor one confined to school-aged Britons. In recounting examples of resistance to his plans for the NHCM, Smith also suggested that many elements of British society in 1995 simply were not ready for a Holocaust museum to be situated in the United Kingdom. It seems probable that this response was a symptom of the aforementioned neglect of British society to engage with its own relationship with the genocide. Given the ferocity - in 2002 - with which David Cesarani defended the notion of a Holocaust Memorial Day[152], it was surprising that Smith recalled that the esteemed historian 'really didn't understand the need for there to be a Holocaust centre'.[153] Indeed, Smith claimed that 'the door was pretty well firmly closed to myself and James [Smith] from the academic community, and from the Jewish establishment I really got no traction whatsoever'.[154]

Equally, in 1995, the local council in Laxton was 'literally medieval' in its methods and outlooks, according to Smith.[155] There was a reluctance amongst locals to 'bring contemporary history into this medieval village', which reflected the sense of detachment felt between British history and the history of the Holocaust.[156] As analysis throughout this thesis has demonstrated, the distancing of Britain from the Holocaust has been a common trope within educational settings. Smith believes that the Laxton council 'had a very real concern about outsiders coming', both 'Jewish people' and 'Nazis'.[157] In this example, there is a certain ironic mirroring of the xenophobia which recent research has suggested characterised some elements of British society during the 1930s in the formative stages of the Holocaust.[158] At play, Smith believed there was a 'very British form of antisemitism…Everybody was quite careful not to be openly anti-Jewish but the actual intent was to ensure that the story of the Holocaust was not going to get a hold in that village'.[159] Clearly, however, the NHCM was conceived within a social

[152] Cesarani, D., 'Memorializing the holocaust in Britain: A critical response to Nira Yuval-Davis and Max Silverman'. *Ethnicities*, 2(1), (2002), pp.124–131.
[153] Smith, S., interview.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Stone, *Responses to Nazism.*
[159] Smith, S., interview.

milieu that was inhospitable to the concept of Holocaust memory as a whole, let alone critical engagement with the British response.

More recently, Smith has become increasingly appreciative of the significance of the NHCM's geographical situation in Nottinghamshire. The museum is located at an intersection of several culturally diverse cities such as Leeds, Sheffield and Leicester. According to the 2011 Census, the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in Nottinghamshire is some 35.6% .[160] Smith understood that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust will not be in the 'cultural heritage' of many of the school-students who visit.[161] In ensuring that museum content could be 'integrated into senses of British identity' in the modern age, Smith had to make sure that presentations of 'British' history were intelligible to contemporary visitors. The synonymity of 'British society' and the 'British government' – as identified by Kushner – is not necessarily constructive in this educational context.[162] Consequently, this influenced the strength of the narrative with which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust was presented in the NHCM. Smith wished to avoid depictions of the British response that were 'ideological', and hoped to entrust visitors with the 'responsibility to universalise it to their own lives'.[163] Again, such an approach is not necessarily one which rewards precision of historical detail, or deep exploration of historical intricacies. For the benefit of promoting a malleable 'forward-facing' educational remit, Smith hinted that the NHCM has applied deliberate historical vagueness in certain contexts within its learning spaces.

However, the issue of visitor profile is complex. Intriguingly, curator R's responses challenged some of the opinions exhibited by other interviewed colleagues. Educators such as Louise Stafford and Nicola Strauther related that there was general alignment between visitor understanding of the British response to the Holocaust and the misconceptions of the topic identified by existing research published by the CfHE.[164] Conversely, R painted a more diverse image in relation to experiences with museum

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[160] Runnymede Trust, 'Nottingham by numbers: the widening racial disadvantage gap' (14 March, 2014).
[161] Smith, S., interview.
[162] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind?"'
[163] Smith, S., interview.
[164] See, for example, Stafford, L., interview.

visitors (both students and members of the public). Drawing on anecdotal experience, R proffered that visitors tend to 'have more knowledge of the British side of the Holocaust than the other side, because it is a British story to be told'.[165] Strauther and Stafford also identified a tendency of visitors to hold triumphalised perspectives of British involvement in the Second World War.[166] In contrast, R judged that she did not think that war narratives 'overshadowed' understandings of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[167]

As such, R's responses demonstrated limited alignment with existing theorisations - proffered by the Connelly - of the pervasion of entrenched cultural celebration of the Second World War.[168] Indeed, if anything, R seemed to view the conflation of the war effort and the British response to the Holocaust as a logical occurrence: 'the Holocaust was the consequence of the war, that's a really important point to understand'.[169] As such, R challenged the notion that there *should* be a separation of war and Holocaust narratives within British historical consciousness.

R also made the striking claim that visitors she has encountered have more often visited the remains of Belsen camp than Auschwitz. Such a statement is especially surprising given the identification in existing research of a predominant 'Auschwitz-centric' understanding of the Holocaust amongst students and the general public.[170] The CfHE survey of students in 2016 found 71% of students associated the Holocaust with Auschwitz, and only 15% with Bergen-Belsen.[171] Nevertheless, the popularity of visits to Belsen made R think that 'actually, Britain *is* telling the story' of its involvement in the Holocaust, as it is providing the public with 'a reason to go and visit' Belsen.[172] Crucially, however, R was unable to speculate *which* story of British involvement is being told. It was unclear whether visitors who had visited Belsen possessed glorified impressions of

[165] Curator 'R', interview.
[166] See, for example, Strauther, N., interview.
[167] Curator 'R', interview.
[168] Connelly, *We Can Take It!.*
[169] Curator 'R', interview.
[170] Foster et al., *What do students know?*, p.190.
[171] Quoted, HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.3.
[172] Curator 'R', interview.

the British liberation of the camp, or whether they had engaged in deeper critical analysis of the British response as a whole.

Regardless, in warning against sweeping generalisations, R offered sage advice for this thesis as a whole. It is disingenuous to offer catch-all characterisations of portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, or indeed of how such interpretations have been received. R noted, probably justifiably, that 'we can all be guilty of just assuming that laymen walk through the door' of museums.[173] The reality is more intricate, and each visitor will have 'different learning points'.[174] Moreover, the divergences in opinion between R and her colleagues also demonstrated the variety of personal philosophies which might be found in any one institution. The concept of a museum's single 'approach' to any issue is perhaps misleading, and fails to take into account the individualities of thought found amongst its staff and visitors.

Cultural influences

If, as hinted above, limitations in portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust are as much attributable to public reception as to museal narratives, the question must be asked: what *is* responsible for colouring visitors' understanding of the Holocaust before they have even arrived at the museum?

Throughout this thesis, I observe that external factors, such as popular culture, can shape the course of British Holocaust memory. In alignment with recent scholarship, Strauther identified John Boyne's novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008) as a particularly troublesome influence on pre-existing conceptions of visitors to the NHCM.[175] Although Boyne's novel does not explicitly address the British response to the Holocaust, Strauther nevertheless has found the book to have instilled a certain sense of unrealism amongst young students. Equally, students often arrive at the NHCM with

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[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Jackson, D., '"'I know it's not really true, but it might just tell us…"', in Foster, S., Pearce, A., and Pettigrew, A. (editors), *Holocaust Education: Contemporary challenges and controversies*, (London: UCL Press, 2020), pp.135-150.

a 'camp-centric' interpretation of the Holocaust, having never before encountered subsidiary issues including national responses to the persecutions.

But the pendulum of public understanding can also swing the other way. The narrative arc of Smith's memories made it clear that he believed that Holocaust memory has undergone positive development in British society since the 1990s. From a position of glorified war narratives and reluctance to critique British actions in 1995, it proved quite a transformation for the first Holocaust Memorial Day to be launched in 2001. It is perhaps testament to the educative efforts of institutions such as the NHCM that such a shift occurred. Indeed, by the turn of the millennium, even the obstinate Laxton locals had 'become big supporters' of the NHCM, once they had observed the success and the key messages of the Centre.[176] Such a transition, for Smith, provided evidence of how 'you can actually change people's views and perspectives when they are confronted with something in a way that enables them to confront it safely, which I think the Centre did'.[177] Accordingly, one might conclude that the subtle ways in which the NHCM addresses the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust have allowed such a narrative to reach a wider audience. By avoiding outright criticism of the British response, the NHCM creates an environment in which more sensitive visitors might explore the topic in a comfortable manner.

Smith was also able to identify other factors which contributed to changes in the way in which Britain interacted with the Holocaust, and by extension its own national history. Popular culture was a key catalyst for change. Smith vividly described how the release of the film *Schindler's List* in 1993 meant that construction workers building the NHCM site went from having no knowledge of the Holocaust at all to 'talking to us [the Smiths] about it, and how they took their kids to it [the film]'.[178] As other commentators have noted, the power of popular culture to influence historical consciousness is not to be underestimated.[179] Smith concluded that, as a result of *Schindler's List*, 'people started to know how to talk about the Holocaust in British society'.[180] The groundwork was laid

[176] Smith, S., interview.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Petersen, 'How British Television Inserted the Holocaust'.
[180] Smith, S., interview.

for more reflective critical engagement with the past, 'and it happened on that as a result of that film'.[181]

The tyranny of time and space

It is certainly tempting to attribute limitations in museal portrayals to a raft of abstract factors. Yet, this risks constructing 'straw man'. As in the case of the extensive educational materials analysed in Section I, simplified interpretations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust did not necessarily coexist with compromising historical frameworks. In either the NHCM or the HELC, for example, there was no real sense of a glorified interpretation of Britain's role in the Second World War, which might otherwise preclude critical self-reflection on the intricate matter of responses to the Holocaust.

Rather, the prevalent reasons for such limitations were altogether more mundane. Throughout interviews with museum staff, practical constraints were consistently identified as a major limiting factor. This is in itself speaks to a wider issue, which in turn could necessitate a fundamental rethink of provisions for Holocaust education in the United Kingdom. Museums, and schools too, simply need more *time* and *space* to explore the Holocaust. Without it, historical sub-topics must inevitably be simplified or sacrificed. The dangers of this are evident, with student misconceptions of the Holocaust continuing to take an alarming variety of forms.[182]

At face value, the abstract framework for the NHCM described by Smith would seem eminently conducive to some substantial critical engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Explicitly, Smith noted that the NHCM was created at a time when he was certain that 'Britain needed to confront its own past in relationship to the Holocaust'.[183] As explored earlier in this thesis, however, the reality of the NHCM exhibition space is somewhat different.[184] For Smith, the major obstacle

[181] Smith, S., interview.
[182] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*
[183] Smith, S., interview.
[184] See Section II: exhibition analysis.

was 'the very limited amount of space to be able to say and do everything we wanted'.[185] Indeed, Smith revealed that at one point he 'felt it [the NHCM] could just be that: a response to Britain and the Holocaust'.[186] Ultimately, however, the Smith brothers moved away from this plan to fulfil the competing obligation to 'tell the whole Holocaust story, because most of the people that would come through just wouldn't know it'.[187] Even then, Smith was forced into a continual cycle of 'curating, then cutting' exhibition material. It seems that the ambitious educational scope of the NHCM, on such a small land site, eventually obstructed the depth with which the precise issue of the British response to the Holocaust could be presented.

To this end, Smith aimed simply to 'build points of contact' into the exhibition, which would equip visitors with at least some understanding that persecution of Jews was not exclusive to Nazi society. For instance, Smith wanted to show that antisemitism was 'not just German', but rather the 'roots of it were universal and existed just as much in Britain'.[188] Certainly, in the NHCM permanent exhibition, it is striking that the first gallery room contains multiple examples of historical British antisemitism, so provides somewhat of a safeguard against celebratory impressions of Britain's national past.[189] Moreover, Smith pointed out that the exhibition section 'Rise of Nazism' links, from a distance, the 'British response of appeasement in the 1930s to contributing to the ultimate outcome not only of the Holocaust, but of the Second World War more broadly'.[190]

The ambitious scope of the NHCM's educational vision allows room for exploration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Yet, paradoxically, the broadness of this same educational remit also appears to limit the extent to which any specific topic can be plumbed, especially as each school visit lasts only a few hours. The NHCM aims for students to have 'developed understanding and knowledge of humans, of chronology, and contextualisation of the Holocaust'.[191] This is a daunting task, especially

[185] Smith, S., interview.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] NHCM, permanent exhibition.
[190] Smith, S., interview.
[191] Stafford, L., interview.

in tandem with the desired 'challenge to students to reflect on their own considerations of othering, discrimination, prejudice and persecution'.[192] Accordingly, Stafford identified the difficulties posed by the 'centrality' of the 'evidence-based' approach used to support these learning objectives. The material detachment between Britain and the Holocaust has occluded the extent to which the topic can be incorporated in learning programmes. The collection of artefacts and historical sources housed at the NHCM relate mostly to events which occurred in mainland Europe. Therefore, given the use of such items – and the 'human experiences that are held within them' - as launchpads for educational discussions with students, it is perhaps unsurprising that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has not come to feature more heavily in the activities offered to visiting school parties.[193] As Stafford noted, the British response to the Holocaust is 'not a defining narrative' in the overall presentation of information to students who visit the NHCM, and thus suffers from historical relegation.[194] Throughout this thesis, 'detachment' emerges as a watchword of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

Curator R, meanwhile, also gestured towards the foundations of the NHCM as a reason why the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is afforded limited attention. Firstly, R noted that the NHCM 'was never meant to be a museum'.[195] The Centre's early stages as a Christian retreat did not facilitate particularly complex analysis of any one historical aspect of the Holocaust, let alone the intricate topic of the British response. Instead, the NHCM has always striven to give an 'overview' of the Holocaust.[196] R also highlighted the persistent sticking point of the geographical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust. The fact that Britain was 'not a site where the Holocaust happened' makes musealisation more challenging compared to the remit of the 'State Museum at Auschwitz' in Poland, for example.[197] Nevertheless, R did acknowledge that 'this [the NHCM] *is* a UK Holocaust site…and we could probably be doing more' to engage with the historical and mnemonic implications of such a fact.[198] As discussions

[192] Stafford, L., interview.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Curator 'R', interview.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

with HELC staff would also suggest, R explained that there are also difficulties associated with presenting the British response in material terms, given the limited extent of historical artefacts associated with the relationship.[199]

R did not doubt the importance of incorporating the British response into wider narratives of the Holocaust: 'it absolutely has to be told, otherwise you've left out part of the story'.[200] Centrally, R – on behalf of the NHCM – was willing to 'put our hands up' and acknowledge the limited depth with which the Centre engages with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[201] The precise nature of these portrayals found in the NHCM exhibition have been explored in greater depth earlier in this section. Although the permanent exhibition was 'upgraded in part' in 2017, R was aware that it is evident that the content of the museum has not been refreshed much in over 25 years.[202] The small size of the NHCM emerged as a significant limiting factor, and means that any one topic of the Holocaust cannot be explored in substantial depth. Indeed, R admitted that 'with space at a premium', an individual 'survivor story would always come first', given the NHCM's core mission to 'do as much as a service as possible to our Holocaust survivors'.[203] However, the impact of space constraints is not limited to portrayals of the British response alone. R surmised that space allocation is 'one of the challenges with every Holocaust museum, realistically', and is an unavoidable consequence of attempting to relate such an 'enormous' historical narrative.[204]

Although Strauther regarded the location and foundation of the NHCM as key distinguishing features, she also acknowledged that its position can also limit the reach of the Centre's educational programmes within the United Kingdom. Despite being a 'national' museum, the NHCM is in a 'tiny little village in the middle of nowhere…it's sometimes difficult to marry the two up'.[205] In recent years, it has been the concern of the NHCM to diversify the geolocation of British Holocaust education, to guard against London-centrism. Strauther identified a tangible 'north-south divide when it comes to

[199] King, E., interview.
[200] Curator 'R', interview.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Strauther, N., interview.

cultural institutions and museums'.[206] As such, she also cited the significance of the opening of the HELC in 2018 in Huddersfield. Centres such as the NHCM aim to ensure that 'the North doesn't lose out', and that regional variations in the nature of British Holocaust consciousness are not engendered.[207] Strauther also pointed towards the fact that the community of Holocaust survivors within the UK is relatively dispersed, and not all concentrated in London. Again, there appeared to be a convincing rationale for the orientation of the HELC around the survivor community based in Yorkshire.

The abstract framework of the HELC, outlined by King in relation to engagement with the British response to the Holocaust, should in theory enable meaningful exploration of the topic. However, the reality of the exhibition is somewhat different. Presentations of the topic are concise, and rarely accompanied by guiding activities (such as, for instance, prompting visitors to consider *why* the British government might have acted in the way it did).

However, King was able to offer explanations for the discrepancy between her vision for the museum and the realities of the HELC learning experience. As in the NHCM, theoretical and practical factors limited to extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust could feature in the final scope of the HELC. King hinted that practical challenges within the museum represented the greatest obstacle to a more substantial engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. King echoed sentiments expressed by both Curator R and Louise Stafford of the NHCM.[208] Most obviously, there is the intuitive fact that 'it is quite hard in material terms to actually explore the British response' given the geographical detachment between the United Kingdom and the events which occurred in mainland Europe.[209] Yet, King also related that 'the amount of space we have got' was constrictive.[210] King lamented the fact that 'there is not a huge exhibition space…and we had quite a compact space in which to tell a very, very complex story'.[211] Indeed, it might be concluded that any single gallery space is insufficient to capture the multifaceted narrative of the Holocaust, yet

[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] See for example Stafford, L., interview.
[209] King, E., interview.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid.

alone a setting as small as the HELC. Curator R observed similar constraints in the context of the NHCM.[212]

Again, practical difficulties also prevented the inclusion of more testimonies containing ambiguous experiences of life in Britain. King described how, by coincidence, often 'the quality of video was not good enough, the length of the interview was not good enough…in some cases the interviewee was interviewed at a point of life when their recollection was not great'.[213] Such an anecdote provides a reminder that external commentators must tread carefully when casting aspersions on the content of museums. Sometimes, historical perspectives are omitted due to practical issues, rather than because of a concerted interpretative policy on behalf on the curation team.

Future directions and possibilities

Interviewee responses showed that museums are not blind to the limitations of their educational output, particularly in relation to the British response to the Holocaust. But there was no firm consensus regarding how best to remedy these issues. Rather, interviewees proffered a series of tentative suggestions, with little guarantee of their enactment. It is beyond the ambit of this thesis to offer conclusive answers to these questions. However, without substantial inputs from experts in pedagogy and public engagement, it might be doubtful that meaningful change will occur in any immediate sense.

In interview with Emma King, the challenges posed by the limited size of the HELC exhibition space became clear.[214] It is challenging to drill into complex topics such as the British response when space is at a premium. Throughout conversation with Bucci, the constraints of the educational ambit of the HELC caused by similar limitations were referenced frequently. However, the HELC has taken steps to widen the foundational resources on which it can draw. Tentative partnerships have been struck with major

[212] Curator 'R', interview.
[213] King, E., interview.
[214] Ibid.

Holocaust research centres, including The Wiener Holocaust Library, The Royal Holloway Holocaust Research Institute, and the Imperial War Museum.[215]

Institutional collaboration may indeed represent one solution to the practical and abstract challenges faced by educational centres in the United Kingdom. This Holocaust and Genocide Research Partnership (HGRP) was launched in January 2021. The HGRP aims to 're–frame public engagement, education, and heritage practice about the history and memory of the Holocaust and genocide'.[216] If this nascent organisation succeeds in pooling the resources and expertise of each respective Holocaust centre, there is potential for future dissemination of well-informed interpretations of nuanced historical issues, including the British response to the Holocaust.

As such, even if the HELC does not itself have the provisions to engage visitors in substantial critical evaluation of nuanced issues such as the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, emerging research partnerships with institutions more suited to the task might present the chance for greater incorporation of such histories into the HELC visitor experience. For the time being, Bucci lamented that the HELC did 'not have the immediate capacity' to launch educational activities based around more complex issues including the British response to the Holocaust.[217]

In a similar vein to both Stephen Smith and Emma King, Bucci also identified the opportunities for the expansion of learning opportunities offered by digitalisation. The COVID pandemic has forced the hand of many institutions, and seen significant shifts towards online-based activities.[218] As outlined above, it proved difficult for HELC 'in-gallery' educational sessions to weave in more critical interpretations of the British response, given the predominance in *Through Our Eyes* of positive testimonies of British society. However, peripheral and 'one-off' events have allowed the HELC the chance to afford exposure to more contentious topics. In real terms, this has taken the form of a greater number of external speakers to deliver presentations via weblink. As such, the variety of topics covered has grown: in 2021, online lectures were held on issues

[215] Holocaust and Genocide Research Partnership (HGRP), *Our Mission* (January 2021).
[216] Ibid.
[217] Bucci, A., interview.
[218] Warwick University, 'Online museum exhibitions will be more prominent post COVID-19'.

including anti-fascism amongst homosexual British MPs in the 1930s, and the difficulties faced by Afghan refugees in Yorkshire in the early 2000s.[219] Although there is not the space for wide-ranging historical discourse within the permanent exhibition spaces of the HELC, online events allow for more breathing space.

Transitions to digital education have also facilitated the dissemination of remote learning programmes to an audience who might otherwise be unable to visit the HELC in person. Amongst such sessions include *"We Didn't Know": Responsibility on a Spectrum*, which aims to 'discuss the grey areas between different positions: rescuers, bystanders, collaborators and perpetrators'.[220] Although the initial iteration of the session mostly sought 'insights into the roles of other regimes/governments' based in mainland Europe (such as Vichy France and Italy), Bucci noted that there were tangible possibilities in the future to expand this remit to include *British* responses.[221]

Moreover, recent social developments had led Bucci to reconsider the HELC's educational approach to the British response to the Holocaust, given shifts in 'the perceptions that people have got about Britain with relation to a whole range of contemporary issues…and the role of Britain in general in a global context'.[222] Since Bucci joined the HELC in 2019, movements such as Black Lives Matter and Decolonise the Curriculum have heightened the profile of self-critical engagement with British history. By extension, if such a trend continues, it seems likely that interest will grow in exploring the ambiguities of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Bucci's reflections further highlighted that museums are not hermetically-sealed institutions.[223] Museum output responds to (and is shaped by) changing social circumstances. It seems probable, therefore, that public consideration of the British response to the Holocaust will continue to regenerate on a rolling basis. Yet Bucci believed that the reframing of British history is best targeted at younger visitors. While the interests of 'older audiences' can be captured by Holocaust chronology alone, in Bucci's experience the

[219] HELC, *Events* (2021).
[220] HELC, *Learning rationale*, p.13.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid, p.3.
[223] Berenbaum & Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.432.

way to 'connect with younger audiences' is to mediate the past through modern channels: 'Black Lives Matter, LGBT rights, the refugee crisis'.[224]

Bucci noted that the establishment of a firm learning programme will take several years, and will likely encounter teething issues. At the time of writing, the HELC was still in the planning stages of its educational strategy, and Bucci explained that 'a lot of this work is not visible yet'.[225] Once again, there was evidence of a theme that was recurrent throughout all interviews: the inability of a single Holocaust museum to cover every aspect of this vast history. Sagaciously, Bucci surmised that 'we can't expect a single learning programme to address all the misconceptions that sadly there are in Holocaust education today'.[226] The HELC must be realistic in its educational ambitions, and it remains to be seen whether engagement with the British response to the Holocaust can indeed form a core element of codified learning programmes.

Despite acknowledging some deficiencies in the NHCM's treatment of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, R signalled a clear intention for regeneration of the museum. R hoped that 'a redevelopment within the next five to eight years' will allow an 'overhaul of the exhibition, and the British story'.[227] R was attuned to the effects that contextual social developments might have on museum portrayals of British national histories. R posited that the 'need for a more balanced representation' of British involvement in past events has been 'prompted by Black Lives Matter'.[228] R also acknowledged that the NHCM curatorial team have been 'massively constrained by time' in the extent that they can keep abreast of new scholarship on the topic of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[229] However, it was encouraging that R hoped for closer collaboration with NHCM researchers in the future, to incorporate emerging research in museum content. To some extent, it is possible that such a working relationship would mitigate the self-acknowledged stagnation of the NHCM exhibition over the past two decades.

[224] Bucci, A., interview.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Curator 'R', interview.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.

Central to R's plans is making greater use of the NHCM's growing collection of historical artefacts. Interestingly, however, R suggested that this process will bring focus closer to the liberation of Belsen as one particular sub-topic of British involvement in the Holocaust. Commentators elsewhere have conversely suggested that a move away from the Belsen liberation narrative, which at times has bordered on celebratory, might be healthier for the interests of British Holocaust memory.[230] R explained that the NHCM collection is 'top heavy with items related to the liberation of Belsen', and therefore has the scope to present a relatively detailed narrative of the 'British involvement' therein.[231] Within this framework, however, R did display innovative intent. The possibility was raised of reorientating conventional narrative perspectives, to delve into the emotional experiences of liberators themselves. The NHCM has seen an increase in 'liberators contacting us [the NHCM] to give their side of the story as well', and these stories offer the chance to present visitors with more 'challenging material'.[232] It is only relatively recently that the profound impact of camp liberation on young British servicemen has been explored in depth, such as in certain educational materials analysed earlier in this thesis.[233] In the past decade, veterans such as the late Corporal Ian Forsyth have increasingly come forward to speak about the traumatic sights they encountered at Belsen in the spring of 1945.[234]

These curatorial goals are, again, perhaps reflective of R's opinion that there is not necessarily an actual need to seek alternative aspects of the British response to those which have already manifested themselves most firmly within British Holocaust consciousness. In other words, R seemed to believe that more established episodes, including the *Kindertransport* and Belsen, had achieved relative prominence in public consciousness for good reason. Such a stance is unfashionable within current historiographical frameworks. However, it is inescapable that these events *were* major elements of the interaction between Britain and the Holocaust after all, and cannot be erased from the narrative.

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[230] Kushner, 'From "this Belsen business" to "Shoah business"'.

[231] Curator 'R', interview.

[232] Ibid.

[233] HMDT, 'Liberation'

[234] Legion Scotland, *Ian Forsyth* (2018).

If anything, curator R seemed keen that stories of positive integration of Holocaust survivors into British society should be stressed *more* strongly in future. This is perhaps achieved to a greater degree in the HELC, whose exhibition *Through Our Eyes* revolves around survivors who settled and made their lives in the local Yorkshire community. In particular, R identified the possibility of exploring gendered narratives within the museum exhibition spaces. While 'knee deep in taking testimony from survivors', R realised that there are 'some phenomenal female survivors who went on to have really male-oriented careers…some were high achieving scientists in a very male dominated sector'.[235] Again, this is a vision which has been realised to a more notable extent in the HELC, through exploration of survivor stories such as that of Berta Klipstein, who graduated in Chemistry from a college in London in 1951.[236]

Nevertheless, change might be slow in occurring. Addressing portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is not necessarily the foremost priority of the NHCM in the coming years. Rather, R outlined how 'getting testimonies while we still can' is the most pressing curatorial concern. As outlined above, the centrality of testimony to British Holocaust museums comes with its own implications for associated presentations of the British response to the Holocaust. However, R seemed to suggest that this specific historical topic was not alone in its need for development, within the broader field of Holocaust history. In a contentious concluding statement, R suggested that the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust 'is not the area' that students, educators and the public 'need the coaching or the teaching on…it feels to me that they're more aware of that [historical topic] than the others [of the Holocaust]'.[237] Again, some divergence from other NHCM interviewees was observable. Nicola Strauther, in particular, presented a much more urgent need to deepen visitor and public critical engagement with the more ambiguous aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.[238]

[235] Curator 'R', interview.
[236] HELC, 'Through Our Eyes'.
[237] Curator 'R', interview.
[238] Strauther, N., interview.

In Strauther's responses, there was an obvious awareness of certain deficiencies in the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which is perpetuated in the NHCM exhibition spaces and the associated education programmes of the Centre. However, achieving meaningful alteration of these dynamics is difficult due to the institutional frameworks within which educators operated. For instance, Strauther reported that she had recently engaged with new research which illuminated the considerable extent to which the British government was aware of the existence of Nazi camps and similar during the Holocaust itself. Unfortunately, Strauther believed it would be difficult to weave the subject knowledge acquired in her own time into the formulated 'official programmes that we follow' at the NHCM.[239] Even though Strauther recognised that Holocaust education is a living organism, she admitted that the NHCM programmes have 'not really changed an awful lot' over the past decade or so.[240] In relation to understanding of the British response to the Holocaust, Strauther reflected that 'it has not really been things at the museum that has made me change my opinion', but rather her own independent consultation of research found elsewhere. Similarly, NHCM educators are encouraged by the institution not to go on 'tangents' that are 'not part of our core programme', and to 'avoid questions' on controversial political issues such as Israel.[241] If Strauther's example is typical of wider patterns, it might be suggested that the ability of educators to incorporate evolving Holocaust research into NHCM educational programmes is stymied by a rigid institutional operational structure.

Looking to the future, Strauther was hopeful that NHCM development work will refine the Centre's presentation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. According to Strauther, there is 'certainly space' for greater exploration of the topic, and 'recent discussions as a team' have centred on the viability of new displays related to antisemitism within Britain.[242] At the time of interview, the NHCM was 'bringing in experts' and 'talking to various professors' to refine the historical content of its exhibitions.[243] The reconciliation of the gap between current research and public memory would seem likely to result in a more nuanced portrayal of topics such as the

[239] Strauther, N., interview.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Ibid.

British response to the Holocaust. Strauther hoped that the NHCM will, in future, be more 'honest about Britain's role', and 'encourage that critical thinking' amongst visitors.[244] For Strauther, 'if we're going to spend time saying, "yeah, we saved all these children on the Kindertransport", we also need to say what criticisms there are of what Britain did'.[245]

To this extent, Stafford believed that NHCM mediation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been able to incorporate evolving elements of the historical topic, although it was acknowledged that the rapidly evolving nature of the field made it challenging to stay up-to-date entirely. In common with interviewed personnel across the NHMC and HELC, Stafford cited research undertaken by the CfHE as key in moulding the educational approach of the NHCM. Where possible, NHCM educators attempt to tailor their explorations of the British response to the Holocaust towards addressing the 'misconceptions' of the topic exhibited by 'many students' in existing surveys.[246] As overall Director of Learning, Stafford might be less well-placed than 'on-the-ground' educators such as Nicola Strauther to expound upon specific examples of misunderstandings observed amongst visiting students. However, it was clear that the theoretical basis of the NHCM's approach to teaching about the British response was one grounded in ongoing engagement with evidence-based pedagogical research. The achievement of this in reality, however, appears more challenging.

Despite these good intentions, Strauther was not necessarily optimistic about the possibility of developing public consciousness of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Entrenched collective narratives of the Second World War were cited as a key obstacle, particularly the impression that it was 'brilliant that "we" [Britain] attempted to stop him [Hitler]'.[247] Put simply, critical self-reflection might be difficult to achieve, not least because people 'don't want to hear' such narratives.[248]

[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Stafford, L., interview.
[247] Strauther, N., interview.
[248] Ibid.

Strauther was especially sceptical of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial in Westminster. She believed that the UKHM would do little to reach a new audience in Britain, but rather would simply be visited by the same 'middle classes' who fill the IWMHE.[249] Without substantial accompanying outreach programmes, students in 'Romford', for example, will be untouched by the development of the new learning centre: 'it's not on their radar'.[250] The UKHM's commitment to exploring the uncomfortable aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust would therefore, to an extent, be made redundant. Strauther worried that the UKHM would merely become 'an echo chamber'.[251] Historical diversification is one matter, but visitor diversification is also an associated concern, if modes of public consciousness are to be developed.

Recent events across the globe have provided evidence of the shifting sands of public historical consciousness. There is a growing appetite for transparency, critical reflection, and the asking of uncomfortable questions.[252] Given that Holocaust education is itself a living organism, it seems necessary for museums to move in step with social developments. Clearly, this is a responsibility of which museum staff are aware. Interviewees were able to point towards the need for a more nuanced engagement with the multifaceted British response to the Holocaust. However, there were also competing opinions on the urgency with which the British relationship with the Holocaust need be addressed in an educational sense. In practice, the extent to which change *does* occur remains to be seen.

[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Political Studies Association (PSA), *Decolonising the School Curriculum* (3 November 2020).

CHAPTER 8 - A PROBLEM SHARED…?

As its focus, this section has considered museums as educational settings. Analysis within this section has brought together different subjects which, hitherto, have received little detailed examination: the NHCM, the HELC, and the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Moreover, I garnered insights from members of museum staff whose opinions have not received prior publication. As such, this thesis has provided a new contribution to understandings of how the British response to the Holocaust have found representation within emerging Holocaust education institutions in the United Kingdom. Its findings asks searching questions of Holocaust memory more widely, and interrogates the place of museums in society.

Museums: common themes and observations

The purpose of my analysis of the NHCM and the HELC was not to produce an explicitly comparative study. Nor was it the intention to moralise on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each institution. This thesis demonstrates that both the NHCM and the HELC had particular justifications and methods for presenting their subject matter. Indeed, the diversity of interpretations recorded provides further evidence of how the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust remains contested. I have also shown the need to identify regional variations in Holocaust education, in contrast with the more sweeping characterisations associated with British Holocaust memory to date.

Nevertheless, when my investigations are viewed as a whole, certain key observations can be made in relation to museal portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Moreover, these findings act as launchpads to consider some broader issues facing the field of Holocaust memory today. In general, results displayed alignment with the conclusions drawn from the analysis of educational materials found in Section I. Analysis of exhibition content revealed portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust that were limited in depth. The topic itself was not avoided *en tout*. However, specific issues were rarely examined in great detail, and visitors were not often challenged to consider the complex subsidiary questions raised by the ambiguous British response to the Holocaust. In other words, each museum did not use the

narrative of the British response for any particular educational purpose. It takes skill for museums to avoid the presentation of the past as non-contested, and instead guide visitors towards questioning different interpretations of history.

This is not to say that there is necessarily a correct way to deploy Holocaust history. But without a clearer sense of what they want the presentation of the British response to be for, both the NHCM and HELC might continue to lack certain direction in their portrayal of the topic. The social authority associated with museums is a weighty responsibility.

- **Portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were characterised by a lack of depth.**

As in the case of educational materials analysed in Section I, there was not an absence of engagement with the topic of the British response to the Holocaust. However, breadth prevailed over depth. In sum, the NHCM and HELC covered several different aspects of the relationship, ranging from refugeeism to the Auschwitz bombing debate. Yet, in exhibition displays, each topic was typically addressed in no more than a few sentences. Constraints on available space – and limitations on visitor understanding – meant that the British response to the Holocaust could not be plumbed in substantial depth. It was notable that, despite being educational settings based in England, the history of British national engagement with the Holocaust did not feature heavily in the 'curricular' content of either the HELC or NHCM.

The inability to reconcile critical national self-narratives with the wider history of the Holocaust is problematic. Central to IHRA guidelines for Holocaust education is teaching 'the historical conditions and key stages in the process of this genocide'.[253] But providing an incomplete narrative of the British response to the Holocaust does not fully furnish visitors with a rounded awareness of how the genocide developed.

[253] IHRA, *What to teach.*

- **Subjective portrayals were generally circumvented: the British response was neither exculpated nor criticised overall.**

In a possible reflection of the sense of social responsibility assumed by many museums, portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust were relatively objective.[254] Wording was rarely strong, and a balanced range of topics found representation in various guises. Instead, visitors must rely on the implicit features of historical presentations to form an opinion. Likewise, visitors were generally not provided with stimuli for more complex debate. For example, guiding questions relating to whether Britain should or could have done more were noticeably absent. Neither museum encouraged moralisation of the past, and there was a general corresponding wish amongst staff members to avoid controversy. But by the same token, there were few celebratory narratives of British involvement in the Second World War to be found. As such, there is little traction in the possible thesis that glorified impressions of British actions at the time of the Holocaust have overshadowed substantial engagement with the topic.

Within this, however, the portrayal of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust displayed limited alignment with the foundational principles of each institution. At the NHCM, for instance, museum educators described using the British response as a forward-facing tool, to encourage students to think about modern social conduct. Indeed, a stated mission of the NHCM remains the emphasis on 'how current and future generations must carefully examine and learn from…the history of genocide'.[255] Yet there was little evidence of the British response to the Holocaust being used to this end. In other words, the theoretical rationales of Holocaust education were not always translated into tangible reality.

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[254] Janes, R., and Conaty, G. (editors), *Looking Reality in the Eye: Museums and Social Responsibility*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005).
[255] NHCM, 'About us'.

- **Artefact-based presentations of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were difficult to achieve.**

Neither the NHCM nor the HELC possess extensive archives of artefacts. Nevertheless, a sense of physical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust was inhibited further by the difficulties presented in empirical representation of the topic. Each museum exhibited only a handful of actual objects which related to British involvement. Instead, exploration of the topic was reliant on text-based displays or audio-visual testimonies. For obvious reasons, continental European experiences of the Holocaust lent themselves more easily to object-based representation. A genuine set of Buchenwald camp 'striped pyjamas', for instance, is central to the HELC exhibition *Through Our Eyes*.

Centrally, staff from both institutions acknowledged that the Holocaust *was* part of the British historical story. But at the NHCM or the HELC, there are not yet effective mechanisms in place to address the challenges posed by the lack of material connections between Britain and the Holocaust. Moving forward, digital technology might represent one vehicle through which museums can overcome the challenges posed by the physical detachment of Britain from the Holocaust.

In one sense, there is logic in French philosopher Paul Ricœur's assessment that 'collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective'.[256] This interpretation casts the formation of memory as a process, rather than an event, and accordingly chimes with the measured development of Holocaust consciousness in Britain over some decades. Yet, in relation to portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust, Ricœur's abstraction is also problematic. Few Britons can be said contemporarily to have encountered issues directly relating to the Holocaust in their 'life-worlds', by virtue of the major continental geography and agency of the genocide.[257] This, to some extent, is reflected in the recurrent 'detachment' with which the Holocaust is addressed in British educational settings.

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[256] Quoted in Stone, D., *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory : Essays in the History of Ideas*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.144.

[257] Quoted in Stone*, The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory*, p.144.

- **Within overarching institutional frameworks, there were divergent personal interpretations of the British response to the Holocaust.**

Interviews with individual museum staff members revealed a diverse range of readings of the British response to the Holocaust. As such, it became apparent that superficial exhibition portrayals acted as an umbrella for a collection of more varied perspectives on the issue. To characterise a single institutional historical 'interpretation' of the topic is perhaps misleading. Particularly in the case of educators involved in learning programmes, the presentation of Holocaust-related topics was dependent to a degree on the personal philosophies of those leading such sessions. Despite this, the direction and extent to which museum educators could pursue their own avenues of thought in practice was limited by the established parameters of institutional guidelines and curricula.

In broader socio-cultural terms, therefore, it is prudent to guard against characterising any definitive attitude or policy pursued by a museum. Despite any superficial standardisation of educational frameworks, it is clear that a multitude of different personal approaches are housed within museum staff bodies.

- **A historical lens of individual life stories was not always conducive to balanced exploration of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.**

In particular, the testimony-based approach evident at the HELC could not always facilitate an impression of the broader historical narratives at play. A microcosmic approach to Holocaust history has been shown to have pedagogical benefits.[258] But in the context of the sampled museums, this prism was unable to create a complicated image of overall British responses to the Holocaust. *Kindertransport* survivors in particular generally exhibited strong gratitude towards British society, and cast British responses to the genocide in a positive light. Inescapably, however, each individual life story featured in both the NHCM and HELC was unique, and therefore represented only one personal lens of historical interpretation. There were also similar challenges to

[258] Reid, L., 'Teaching the Holocaust: the power of personal stories', *The Guardian* (15 October 2012).

those found through artefact-based mediation. Attempts to convey a 'lived-experience' of the Holocaust itself naturally centred on individuals based in mainland Europe. The NHCM, for example, contains a striking reconstruction of a Jewish ghetto. As Nicola Strauther noted, there is a difficulty in students thinking that survivors who found refuge in Britain 'are the story of the Holocaust… because by very definition of the fact that they are a survivor shows that they've not had the common experience of the Holocaust [i.e., death]'.[259]

Given the centrality of testimonies to the core missions of both the NHCM and the HELC, it is perhaps unsurprising that substantial engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been lacking. Certainly, such lenses can offer a deeper human understanding of the genocide. But there appears to be a need to balance such interpretations with broader historical overviews to create a more nuanced historical narrative.

- **Narratives of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust were generally contained within the temporal boundaries of the late 1930s to 1945.**

There was limited consideration of the circumstances which preceded and followed the Holocaust. Compared to coverage of the wartime events of the Holocaust (and the British response therein), the nature of British society in the 1930s found little representation. For example, exploration of fascist movements in the United Kingdom during the period was a striking omission from both museums. The issue of British Holocaust memory was only touched upon in cursory terms, and there was very little evidence of engagement in exhibitions with the subsequent historiographical debates related to the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

As such, neither the NHCM nor the HELC were able to display self-awareness of their considerable significance within the schemata of British Holocaust consciousness. Both institutions might have placed more emphasis on their own importance as sites of Holocaust memory within a nation which, characteristically, has been detached from the genocide in various ways. There is certainly scope for museums to complicate their

[259] Strauther, N., interview.

historical outlook. As society moves further away from the Holocaust in time, there are opportunities to engage with the multifarious issues raised by historical memory, as well as historical events themselves.

- **There are ongoing developments in the ways in which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust is presented.**

Both the NHCM and the HELC displayed a willingness to engage with evolving methods of educational transmission. The HELC is heavily centred around interactive digital features, while the NHCM launched a mobile-app version of its primary-school *The Journey* learning programme in 2020.[260] As such, there are tangible attempts to sustain visitor engagement with presentations of museum content, including the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Staff members at both museums acknowledged the opportunity for future development of engagement with the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. It is encouraging that both institutions are involved in active consultation with specialist organisations, such as the CfHE, to achieve this goal.

As such, there was a prevailing recognition that presentations of the British response to the Holocaust is a form of mediation which must undergo continual evolution. There was a reminder, if at all needed, that Holocaust memory is very much a 'live' phenomenon: one which requires educational dexterity, rather than the entrenchment of historical interpretations.

Moving forward, this thesis has demonstrated the need for innovation in museum-based Holocaust education. Teaching and learning about the Holocaust is a phenomenon which undergoes continual regeneration. It is therefore the responsibility of museums to engage in continual appraisal of what is presented, and how it is done so. Often, these approaches will need to react to contemporary societal circumstances. With the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and similar self-critical frameworks within the United Kingdom, it seems likely that Holocaust museums will be required to grapple with more extensive reflective assessments of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust – and in different ways.

[260] NHCM, *The Journey App* (March 2020).

- **There were both abstract and practical explanations for limited portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.**

Interviews with staff members from each institution revealed widespread appreciation that there were limits to portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. There appeared to be both abstract and practical justifications for such a pattern. On occasion, portrayals were affected by theoretical considerations, such as the competing presence of redemptive narratives or the wish to avoid historical controversy. More often, however, constraints were imposed by physical issues. Both the NHCM and the HELC lack the size to explore the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in real depth. Exhibition space is at a premium, and staff teams are small in number. Equally, educational sessions hosted at each institution are usually condensed into sessions which rarely exceed a couple of hours. Coupled with Heather Mann's conclusion in recent evidence-based research that 'for most teachers, teaching about Britain's role detracted from the "important parts" of the history that occurred across the Channel', it is perhaps unsurprising that museums and visiting educators alike have focused on the British response to a limited extent.[261]

The challenges posed by these factors spanned the range of topics which found representation in the NHCM and the HELC. In any setting, it would be a daunting task to provide an overview of a subject as vast as the Holocaust. With reference to surveys of teachers conducted by CfHE, Pearce has previously criticised the IWM learning programmes which accompany the IWMHE in London. Pearce identified time constraints as perhaps the greatest hindrance to affect learning in Holocaust education. The majority of school visits to the exhibition were said to last 'no more than one hour', and it has proved difficult to strike a balance of 'impact, support the development of historical skills, and encouragement of learners to continue to ask questions long after their visit'.[262] Such a time-pressured learning environment does not appear conducive to exploration of nuanced issues such as the British response to the Holocaust.

[261] Mann, *Holocaust memory*, p.308.

[262] Pearce, A., *Remembering the Holocaust*, p.114.

Quite simply, Holocaust museums require more time and space to explore fully the complexities of the subject. Yet, without substantial redistribution of educational provisions, it is difficult to envisage how this change might occur. As such, it might well be argued that museums would do better to devote specific attention to precise topics such as the British response. Instead, most attempt to cover the entire history of the Holocaust in one fell swoop. Simplification of an extensive and complex historical period is a risk associated with current museum practice.

#

CONCLUSION: FRONTIERS OF MEMORY

> *What is history? An echo of the past in the future; a reflex from the future on the past.* [1]
>
> - Victor Hugo (1869)

My research has shed timely light on the limited extent to which the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust has been represented in key educational settings. Although the British response to the Holocaust is not absent from national Holocaust memory, it is rarely explored in a depth adequate enough to engage with the intricacies of the topic. Crucially, the granular detail of my thesis emphasises the need for nuance when dealing with interpretations of the past. My interviews with educators highlight the central role played by individual circumstances and agents 'on the ground' in shaping understandings of the Holocaust – a phenomenon which contributes to regional variations much more than previously acknowledged by other commentators. Museums and schools are reflections of their local communities and their local cultures

Through its specific focus on the portrayal of the British response to the Holocaust, this project offers an original contribution to existing studies of Holocaust education and memory in the United Kingdom. I did not intend to moralise on the relative strengths of the portrayals encountered, but rather to survey their variations and offer explanations for existing depictions. Equally, with its tight focus on the specific issue of the British response to the Holocaust, the findings of this project do not purport to speak for national trends in Holocaust memory and education. Nevertheless, the fine detail of this study is an important addition to the armoury of educational researchers and curriculum planners alike. The broader questions invoked throughout should also resonate with a wider audience seeking to debate the field of historical memory culture.

Overall, this thesis found that portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust in certain educational settings often lacked depth and critical engagement.

[1] Hugo, V., *The Man Who Laughs* (London: Athenean Club, 1887), p.316.

Either due to abstract or practical confines, it was rare to find examples of sustained exploration of this intricate historical topic. Bloxham's theorisation of British society's failure to 'turn the mirror around' has, to an extent, been supported by this thesis.[2] However, the limited extent of substantial engagement with the British response to the Holocaust was not overshadowed by a valorised interpretation of national involvement in the Second World War. As such, my thesis has also called into question the validity of British society's reputation for 'national self-congratulation' in at least some educational settings.[3]

Section I considered the classroom as educational setting. Using a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative analysis, textbooks – an archetypal tool of school education - were surveyed for their coverage of the British response to the Holocaust. More peripheral resources produced by the HET and HMDT were also examined. Portrayals of the issue in question generally lacked nuance. Reflecting their prioritisation of curricular pace, textbook depictions were frequently cursory. Meanwhile, HMDT and HET materials displayed a tendency to focus on redemptive aspects of Britain's involvement in the Holocaust, such as the Kindertransport. The orientation of such resources towards 'forward-facing' moral lessons was not necessarily conducive to detailed historical contextualisation. Above all, it was apparent that the effective deployment of the sampled educational materials was heavily dependent on the praxis of individual educators. Thus, it was possible to offer a partial explanation for existing variations in student understanding of the British response to the Holocaust.[4]

Museums formed the focus of Section II. Specifically, there were case studies of the NHCM in Nottinghamshire, and Huddersfield's HELC. This thesis has created a valuable record of the portrayals found in each museum, which will form a point of reference for researchers in the future. Interviews with key staff members also provided a subcutaneous perspective on the galleries in question. Although both museums made at least some attempts to engage with the British response, restricted exhibition space was the chief factor which inhibited the depth with which the topic was explored. Time

[2] Quoted in Sharples & Jensen*, Britain and the Holocaust*, p.203.
[3] Kushner, T., *Remembering Refugees. Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.199.
[4] Foster et al., *What do students know?.*

constraints also restricted the range of historical angles from which museum educators could approach the Holocaust with educational visitors. Both museums also struggled to reconcile the physical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust of mainland Europe. There are limited ways of portraying the relationship in artefactual terms. Less tangibly, museums felt some pressure from influential groups of Holocaust survivors and their descendants to cast British involvement in a positive light. Moreover, varying levels of Holocaust awareness and understanding amongst visitors also precluded the complication of historical issues.

Within a range of educational settings, this research has observed the value of learning about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The guidelines offered by the IHRA for general Holocaust education are equally applicable to the specific sub-topic of the British response: 'teaching and learning about the Holocaust is an opportunity to unpack and analyse the decisions and actions taken (or not taken) by a range of people in an emerging time of crisis'.[5] It offers an opportunity to complicate the history of the Holocaust, through the diversification of geographical perspective. Contrastingly, the increasing trend for Holocaust universalisation risks dilution of such topics. The American sociologist Jeffrey Alexander noted that 'rather than being presented as specifics and particulars, these now proverbial events are abstracted and generalized'.[6]

The topic also provides a more nuanced exploration of British history itself, and can facilitate modern appetites for critical self-reflection. The subject has the potential to provoke stimulating discussions about historical memory and contemporary social engagement. In a classroom setting, the intricacies of the subject are well-suited to leading students towards a more sophisticated understanding of concepts such as causation. As demonstrated by the HELC's orientation around Yorkshire-based Holocaust survivor communities, it is also possible to use the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust to tie the public to a defined sense of their local identity.

Yet, this thesis has highlighted the discrepancy between the theoretical richness of Holocaust education, and the actual realisation of its educational potential in different

[5] IHRA, 'Why teach about the Holocaust'.
[6] Quoted in Critchell, '"Proud to be British"', p.7.

settings. Children and adults alike deserve the chance to engage with the most accurate representation of history available at any given time. But this research has found that there is a lack of opportunity in certain contexts to take part in the 'live' debates surrounding the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. There is no better time than now for the British response to the Holocaust to step out of the educational shadows, and become an issue at the forefront of British classrooms, museums, and memorials.

Global UK?

It is beyond the ambit of this project to undertake a comprehensive transnational survey of Holocaust museums: and we must be wary of sweeping characterisations of memory. But from the evidence of this thesis, British Holocaust memory culture appears to tread a *via media*, between self-congratulation and self-flagellation. In theory, one might expect a certain standardisation of Holocaust representation across museums. Indeed, in 2012, the IHRA (representing over 30 member nations) established an international memorial and museums charter, to codify 'agreed-upon principles and ethics for commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, helping to avoid the politicization or nationalization of their memory'.[7] Reality has proved more complex.

Other nations have proved that critical self-reflection is far from an impossible task. In a German context, reflective engagement with the national relationship to the Holocaust has been well-documented.[8] The concept of *Kollektivschuld* ('collective guilt') is perhaps the archetypal modern example of a country's perceived ability to confront challenging aspects of its national past. Certainly, more explicitly than the portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust found in the NHCM and the HELC, German museums and monuments have provided a remorseful interpretation of the period. Strikingly, Fabian Franke and Sheri Halpern have characterised Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial in Berlin (located just metres from the Brandenburg Gate) as 'a self-

[7] IHRA, 'International Memorial Museums Charter' (2016).
[8] See, for example, Rensmann, 'Collective Guilt'.

serving admission of guilt'.[9] Germany's relatively longstanding efforts to come to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) are perhaps only starting to be mirrored in Britain by the planned opening of the UKHM in Westminster. Sir Eric Pickles, speaking in October 2018 in his capacity as co-chair of the UKHMF, affirmed "we are going to look at our history in an unblinkered way"'.[10]

At the other extreme, Peter Novick has characterised American Holocaust memory as a crucible for 'national self-congratulation', designed to accentuate the differences between the USA and the 'European Old World'.[11] Research in this thesis has not unearthed any comparably nationalistic portrayals. Meanwhile, Young has critiqued 'Liberation', described as 'one of the most publicly visible monuments to this era in the United States of America'. Located in Liberty State Park, New Jersey, 'Liberation' is said to depict:

> a young, solemn-looking GI walks forward, his eyes on the ground, cradling — almost *Pietà*-like — a concentration camp victim. With skeletal chest showing through tattered prison-garb, his arms spread, and his eyes staring vacantly into the sky, the victim exemplifies helplessness..[12]

For Young, the statue presents a myopic interpretation of the relationship between the USA and the Holocaust. It is said to promote a history of the Holocaust which 'excludes the conditions in Europe before the war, the wrenching break-up of families, deportations to the ghettos and camps and even the killing process itself', and instead focuses only on the effects of the genocide.[13] It might be misrepresentative to take one single monument as symptomatic of an entire national mnemonic framework. Young nonetheless pointed towards 'Liberation' as evidence of 'traditional self-perceptions and idealizations of this country's role as rescuer in war and as sanctuary for the world's

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[9] Franke, F., & Halpern, S., 'A Self-Serving Admission of Guilt: An Examination of the Intentions and Effects. of Germany's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe', *Humanity in Action* (January 2011).

[10] Quoted in Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?"', p.136.

[11] Quoted in Krasuska, K.,. 'Americanizations of Holocaust Memory and Museum Aesthetic Experience', *European Journal of American Studies* 13.3. (2019), p.4.

[12] Young, 'After the Holocaust', p.73.

[13] Ibid, p.73.

"huddled masses"'. In other words, there is little room for critical self-engagement with more challenging national narratives.[14]

Figure 34: 'Liberation' memorial, New Jersey.
Photo credit: https://www.tracesofwar.com/sights/10189/Liberation-Memorial.htm

British Holocaust memory culture might seek to emulate its Canadian counterpart. Jason Chalmers argued that Canadians have 'the ability to tolerate a hydra-headed memory that simultaneously views Canada as both the "good guy" and the "bad guy"'.[15] A balanced approach to history acknowledges that the past can be contested, and is not clear-cut.

[14] Ibid.
[15] Chalmers, J., 'Canadianising the Holocaust: Debating Canada's National Holocaust Monument', *Canadian Jewish Studies*, 24 (2016), p.160.

Specifically, the National Holocaust Monument unveiled in Ottawa in 2017 bears similarities to the HELC (opened in 2018) in both its genesis and focus. Just as the HELC sought to engage with the stories of Holocaust survivors who settled in Yorkshire, the Ottawa monument was designed to honour 'the role that Canada played in becoming a home to survivors after the War'.[16] However, as in the HELC, the ambiguities of national responses to the Holocaust are also afforded attention in the Canadian example.

Chalmers noted how the Ottawa monument and adjacent Canadian War Museum acknowledge that 'the government's post-war immigration policy does not necessarily reflect its inter-war attitude towards Jewish refugees' while emphasising 'the fact that Canada ultimately became home to tens of thousands of survivors', demonstrating the country's 'concern for the safety of persecuted Jews'.[17]

However, it might be suggested that the Canadian Monument exceeds its English counterparts in its critical self-engagement with the national response to the Holocaust. The monument itself declares that 'there is no question that Canada did terrible things to our Jewish friends by not letting them come here as refugees before [and during] the Second World War"', and that '"Canada has its own guilt to carry"'.[18] In this thesis, it is rare to find quite such an explicitly critical interpretation of the British response.

In the United Kingdom, it appears more common for there to be an *absence* of engagement with the national relationship with the Holocaust than to find sustained interaction with the issue. But although Aleida Assmann coined the term 'therapeutic forgetting' to describe a form of productive amnesia, it seems unlikely that this phenomenon can explain the limitations of contemporary portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust.[19] With reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa, Assmann stated that 'in these public rituals a traumatic event had to be publicly narrated and shared: the victim had to relate his or her experience, which had to be witnessed and acknowledged by the perpetrator before it

[16] Ibid., p.156.
[17] Ibid., p.157.
[18] Ibid., p.158.
[19] Assmann, A., *Forms of forgetting*, public lecture delivered at Castrum Peregini, Amsterdam (October 1, 2014).

could be erased from social memory'.[20] Yet in certain cases in the British context, this endpoint appears to have been reached *without* working the due processes of remembering the past.

Looking to the future: education and memory

Through the prism of this thesis's granular studies, it is possible to gaze outwards and consider the wider implications for Holocaust education and memory. Undoubtedly, these are not straightforward issues: and what is more, they lack definitive responses.

i) Teaching and learning about the Holocaust

It is difficult to identify precisely *how* teaching and learning about the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust might – or indeed should – develop in coming years. Even when taught well, Holocaust education cannot be guaranteed as a transformative experience for its audience. It must also be acknowledged that history is not static or objective. Historical 'facts' might be contested in future, and in doing so alter our understandings of the past.

Nor is it certain that greater engagement with the issue will receive 'official' endorsement. After all, this thesis was written in a political climate where schools were directed to celebrate a jingoistic 'One Britain, One Nation' day, including the singing of a specially-composed patriotic anthem. Some commentators likened this scheme to similar programmes that exist in North Korea's nationalistic culture.[21]

The uncertainty surrounding Holocaust education is evidenced by the lively debates on the issue that frequently occupy the *#edutwitter* online sphere. Simply, there is no 'one size fits all' approach towards Holocaust education, taking into account the different methods and styles of teaching found across the United Kingdom. The vagueness of the Holocaust's position on the National Curriculum – although a mandatory topic – makes

[20] Ibid.
[21] Mendick, R., 'Boris Johnson compared to Nazis'.

it unavoidable that it will be taught with differing educational objectives in mind.[22] Without more precise wording, the classroom coverage of specific aspects of Holocaust history cannot be guaranteed. Moreover, a centralised bank of Holocaust teaching materials (perhaps curated by subject experts) might also help to mitigate the divergences amongst portrayals of the topic encountered in this thesis. Nevertheless, it is clear that the British response to the Holocaust is a subject which requires nuanced treatment, given its historical complexities. In a practical sense, closer work with primary source materials in classrooms might help to sharpen student understandings of the intricacies of what happened.

On the other hand, this is not a counsel of despair. Although this thesis has often identified the scope for more critical engagement with the British response to the Holocaust, it is also important to note that it is a historical topic which need not be taught in an entirely self-flagellatory way. A 'negative epiphany' in understanding is not inevitable. There *were* positive aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust: yet these also need to be balanced with consideration of more uncomfortable episodes. Treating historical issues in binary terms is rarely prudent, and the British response to the Holocaust is no exception. It is a case of embracing, rather than shaming, the 'warts and all' approach to historical memory.

To this end, there is perhaps also a need for greater sophistication when approaching the question of what teaching the Holocaust is actually *for?* In the settings analysed in this thesis, there often seemed to be a stark choice between placing Holocaust education in either a historical or a citizenship framework. In reality, the division need not be so Manichean. It is possible both to teach 'the complex and nuanced history of the Holocaust', as sponsored in IHRA guidelines, while also using British history as a launchpad for discussions about contemporary social conduct.[23] In other words, learning about the past in its specific context and using historical case studies to guide the future are not mutually exclusive practices.

[22] Department for Education, *History programmes of study* (2022).
[23] IHRA, 'Why teach about the Holocaust'.

This said, 'forward-facing' deployment of the 'lessons' of the British response to the Holocaust is a practice wrought with potential pitfalls. Its enduring popularity in educational settings is perhaps a legacy of the 1998 publication of the Crick report, the final report of the QCA Advisory Group on Citizenship, which strongly recommended the fortification of education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools.[24] There is the risk of promoting a simplified narrative of British involvement in the Second World War, if the morals of the Holocaust are oriented around a binary sense of 'good' versus 'evil'.[25] Equally, transposition of British actions during the Holocaust onto a modern-day plane flies in the face of contrasting thought on the importance of detailed 'contextualisation' of historical topics in the classroom.[26] The citizenship route of teaching also requires a certain jettisoning of the notion that the Holocaust – and reaction to it – was a unique phenomenon, despite the specifics of its historical circumstances. In recent times, debates have raged concerning the validity of historical comparisons drawing on the Holocaust.[27] We return to Peter Novick's observation that the 'lessons for dealing with the sorts of issues that confront us in ordinary life' are not necessarily found in extraordinary events such as the Holocaust.[28]

In any event, suggestions for how teaching and learning about the British response to the Holocaust might develop can be only speculative. However many new educational resources or classroom materials on the topic might be produced, there is no way of ensuring their actual uptake. This, in part, is one downside of the methodological freedom afforded to teachers in the United Kingdom in the absence of a state-regulated market of textbooks.[29] Equally, Foster has identified the 'troubling paradox' stemming from introduction of the Academies Act of 2010, whereby 'the government decreed that academies (which now amount to almost three-quarters of all secondary schools in England) no longer have to follow the National Curriculum'.[30] Foster noted in 2021 that

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[24] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *The Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship*, (September 22, 1998).
[25] Ryrie, 'Our dangerous devotion to the Second World War'.
[26] Huijgen, T., Holthuis, P., & van Boxtel, C., 'Students' historical contextualization and the cold war', *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 67:4, (2019), pp.439-468.
[27] USHMM, 'Why Holocaust analogies are dangerous' (2018).
[28] Novick, P., The Holocaust and Collective Memory (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p.13.
[29] Oates, T., *Why textbooks count*, Cambridge Assessment policy paper (Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment, November 2014), p.5.
[30] Foster, 'Holocaust education in England', p.377.

'it is too early to tell what impact this will have in individual academies'. [31] But the potential threat to the presence of Holocaust education in school settings does not offer hope of greater engagement with the complex issue of the British response to the genocide.

More importantly, major structural changes would be required to address limiting practical factors. Without greater time and space allotted to Holocaust education in schools, it is difficult to envisage ways in which schemes of work might incorporate the intricate – but arguably secondary – topic of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. This is an issue which would necessitate intervention from the very highest offices of educational power. For the time being, curricular pace and breadth remains a priority in English schools, as evidenced by the cursory portrayals of the Holocaust found in materials sampled in *Section I*. Conversely, there is a strong case – in an ideal world – for the British response to the Holocaust to be taught through what has become known as 'slow pedagogy': a methodical and scaffolded approach to education.[32]

But to what extent do the findings of this thesis align with wider patterns identified by informed commentators? As evidenced by his influence on this thesis, Andy Pearce has become an authoritative voice on the matter of British Holocaust memory. In 2020, Pearce attempted the daunting task of condensing Holocaust education into five key 'trends'.[33] These thoughts offer a useful point of reference. Analysis of educational materials resonated with Pearce's observation of the 'not inconsiderable distance between how Holocaust education is perceived and understood by its champions and lobbyists, and how it is practised by teachers and experienced by school students'.[34] It was evident that the actual implementation of classroom resources produced to examine the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust would be heavily dependent on the practice of individual educators.

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Berg, M., and Seeber, B., *The Slow Professor : Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy (*Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016).

[33] Pearce, A., 'Marginalisation through commemoration: Trends and practices in Holocaust education in the United Kingdom', *War & Society*, 39:3, (2019), pp.215-220.

[34] Ibid., p.216.

There was also troubling evidence in this thesis of the 'yawning gulf between popular understanding of this history and current scholarship on the subject' identified by David Cesarani.[35] Similarly, Alex Maws - then Head of Education at the Holocaust Educational Trust – wrote in 2013 that, '"Holocaust studies" and "Holocaust education" sound like two concepts which are likely to be very closely related to one another… But regrettably, the reality is that practitioners in both of these fields too often operate in relative ignorance of each other'.[36] Due either to simplified narratives or lack of available space, portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust did not often incorporate contemporary research and debates. The most obvious example of this trait is the common lack of consideration of ambiguous *Kindertransport* life experiences, which has been the focus of recent testimony-based scholarship elsewhere.[37]

Frustratingly, the British government itself has appeared reluctant to grapple with these topical issues. A FCO report of 2012, in a slightly self-congratulatory tone, recorded how 'Holocaust studies and research at universities and museums and in specialist archives is thriving up and down the UK'.[38] However, the extent to which these activities were having an actual impact on wider British society was not considered. Equally, the FCO conclusion that 'there are no specific Professorships of Holocaust Studies because the custom in the UK has been for the study of the Holocaust to be deeply embedded in the study of European history' seems weak, and could be perceived as sweeping certain issues under the metaphorical carpet.[39] Rather than seeking to redress the lack of explicit engagement with Holocaust studies, the FCO report instead sought to brush off such a state of affairs with unsatisfactory explanations.

It could be argued that the use of 'forward-facing' educational programmes centred on the British response to the Holocaust feed into to the 'sweeping generalisations and empirically unsubstantiated claims' identified by Pearce in the 'ritual overtones' of

[35] Cesarani, *Final Solution*, pp. xxv.
[36] Andrews, K., Gray, M. and Maws, A., 'Responses to B.J. Epstein's "Inflicting Trauma"', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 19 (1), (2013), p. 297.
[37] Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport : Contesting Memory.*
[38] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *International Task Force Country Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (2012), p.2.
[39] Ibid., p.2.

modern Holocaust education.[40] On occasion, depictions of the British response to the Holocaust are accompanied by encouragement for students to reflect upon their own future conduct, or to consider the 'lessons' learned from the topic. However, such activities occasionally ring somewhat hollow, and do not demand truly rigorous historical engagement. As Pearce noted, when Holocaust education is used as part of a twenty-first century social agenda, 'encouraging young people to engage *critically* with cultural memories is neither a concern nor a priority'.[41] Pearce suggested, quite feasibly, that such a trend towards presentism is reflective of a desire to construct as 'practical or useful past, not a historical one'.[42]

Certainly, the findings of this thesis add heft to Pearce's affirmation that 'commemoration seeks to domesticate the traumatic or sublime historical event by creating distance and difference'.[43] Throughout this research project, there have been encounters with portrayals which create a sense of detachment between Britain and the Holocaust: both abstract and physical. Such trends create the misleading impression that there was *no* relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, or that the space between the two was sufficiently large to discard the need for critical engagement. Accordingly, Pearce's opinion that 'Holocaust history is often cast in monochrome tones' has been validated.[44] A defining feature of educational presentations of the British response has been the lack of 'nuance' called for by Kushner some years ago.[45] At key points, meaningful historical detail has been lacking in the educational settings analysed throughout this thesis.

Given the responsibility afforded to teachers to deploy educational resources as they see fit, this thesis has highlighted the ongoing need for effective CPD programmes. Bringing teachers closer to current pedagogy is one way of addressing Cesarani's 'yawning gulf' between academia and praxis.[46] It is also a medium through which new educational materials and schemes of work can be trialled. The CfHE CPD session 'British

[40] Pearce, 'Marginalisation through commemoration', p.217.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p.219.
[43] Ibid., p.217.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Kushner, '"Pissing in the wind"?', pp.57–76.
[46] Cesarani, quoted in Pearce, 'Marginalisation through commemoration', p.216.

responses to the Holocaust' (debuted in 2016) was a good start.[47] But for such schemes to have a truly national impact, they will need to operate on a much larger scale.

ii) Historical memory

The findings of this doctoral research project also speak to the wider culture of Holocaust memory in the United Kingdom. In broad social terms, collective memory is configured towards the construction of individual and collective identities. As Confino noted, the concept of memory is predicated on 'representations of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge by successive generations in "vehicles of memory"'.[48] The educational settings examined in this thesis are examples of these mnemonic 'vehicles'.

With specific reference to portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust, the scope for simplification in public memory has been evidenced by the findings of this thesis. Often, amalgamation of historical terms has proved responsible for a lack of nuanced narrative. The 'British' response, for instance, has become synonymous with actions more accurately traceable to the 'British government'. By extension, such presentations fail to highlight the multiple contemporary responses which operated on several different social levels at the same time. In a comparable fashion, some commentators have also suggested that 'Auschwitz' has become a 'metonymy' for the wider experiences of the extensive concentration camp system in the Holocaust.[49]

Particularly since the 1990s, the Holocaust has become a notable feature of historical consciousness in Britain.[50] Yet, throughout this thesis, I have argued that the Holocaust was more of a 'British story' than has found representation in certain settings. To this end, questions are raised concerning the way in which the Holocaust has been framed in public memory in the United Kingdom, particularly compared to other episodes of

[47] Haward, 'British Responses to the Holocaust'.
[48] Confino, A., 'Collective Memory', p.1386.
[49] Pettitt, J., 'Introduction: new perspectives on Auschwitz', *Holocaust Studies*, 27:1, (2021), p.1.
[50] Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness.*

Britain's past. Perhaps it is telling that a genocide which – often – is depicted as detached from Britain has found such cultural prominence. It might be argued that minimising the complex ties between Britain and the Holocaust has allowed for a more palatable narrative, fit for national consumption. Issues which require uncomfortable reflection on Britain's role in the world have found much less frequent representation. It would be difficult to claim, for instance, that the inglorious history of colonialism and slavery has had as great an effect on British memory culture as Holocaust consciousness. Memory of genocide in any context is rarely comfortable. But the perceived distance between Britain and the Holocaust has possibly allowed the latter to sit more easily within national consciousness – particularly in comparison with historical phenomena such as slavery, where Britain more obviously has blood on its hands.

However, this thesis's survey of portrayals over a period of time has demonstrated that memory of the past moves in step with contemporary social developments. This has long been the case with Holocaust consciousness. In the 1980s, Holocaust education leaned on the anti-racism movement which elsewhere found expression in race riots in major British cities in 1981.[51] Killings in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s further increased the urgency of genocide education programmes in English classrooms. At the time of writing, fast-moving social developments once again promise to change the framework of Holocaust memory. Movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Decolonise the Curriculum' have heightened calls for more self-critical reflections on British history. In an era of 'fake news', accurate understanding of historical and current global affairs has also accrued greater value.[52] In turn, it is feasible that these paradigm shifts might encourage greater complication of the British national relationship with the Holocaust. The *milieu* of the 2020s can allow for a more nuanced interpretation of the precise ways in which Britain reacted to the genocide.

Yet, the social movements which emerged in the late 2010s also have the potential to swing the pendulum of memory the other way. It remains to be seen whether the mandatory curricular status of the Holocaust will be called into question. It is not beyond

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[51] For instance, *ILEA, Auschwitz: Yesterday's Racism teaching pack* (London: ILEA, 1986*).*
[52] Cooke, Nicole A. *Fake News and Alternative Facts : Information Literacy in a Post-truth Era* (Chicago: ALA, 2019).

reason to ponder whether some will argue that Holocaust education has had its 'time in the sun', and that now is the point for other topics – such as slavery – to receive due attention instead. Coupled with this, there are also increasing signs of 'Holocaust fatigue' in classrooms, with teachers simply going through the motions of genocide education.[53] In wider pedagogical literature, recent research has considered the problems associated with the entrenchment in classrooms of the Holocaust as 'the paradigmatic genocide'.[54] Approaching teaching from lesser-deployed angles, such as the British response, has the potential to remedy this exhaustion of the repeated lessons of the Holocaust. Unfortunately, if competing social movements claim Holocaust education as their victim, understanding of the British involvement in the episode will suffer by extension.

<u>British Holocaust memory: *Quo vadis?*</u>

The future of British Holocaust consciousness is *terra incognita*. Holocaust memory is a living organism. Even during the writing of this doctoral project, evolutions in the landscape of British Holocaust memory have continued apace. It remains to be seen the precise direction in which British Holocaust memory will travel in the immediate future.

However, the title of Pearce's 2019 article *An Emerging 'Holocaust Memorial Problem'?* is indicative of the author's pessimism. The continuing politicisation of Holocaust history is of prime concern to Pearce, alongside 'the collapsing of commemoration and education into one another'.[55] Pearce perceived little hope of changing the way 'politicians and their mandarins look to instrumentalize Holocaust history and memory for their own ends, as has been the case in Britain throughout the last two decades'.[56] Mark Hobbs is similarly cynical, opining that a generation of British youth is destined to believe that Britain 'fought the Second World War to save the Jews of Europe', or that

[53] Whitehouse, R., 'The Failure of Holocaust Education In Britain', Tablet Magazine (16 October 2018).
[54] Chapman, A., Counsell, C. & Fordham M., 'The Holocaust and other genocides', *Teaching History*, 153, December 2013, p.2.
[55] Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?".
[56] Ibid., p.119.

Britain and the British did ‘everything possible to save the Jews in Europe’, despite the more complex historical reality.[57]

A significant – and controversial - development is the proposed United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial (UKHM), which received planning approval in July 2021.[58] A new Holocaust memorial in the United Kingdom offers the opportunity to rethink ‘how’ and ‘why’ the genocide is remembered. In January 2015, the British government confirmed its plan to construct a new Holocaust memorial and learning centre. In 2016, Victoria Tower Gardens, adjacent to the Houses of Parliament, was selected as the location of the building. The mission statement of the project envisaged a ‘striking and prominent national memorial’ that ‘will stand beside Parliament as permanent statement of our British values’.[59] Yet, Pearce was sceptical of the Holocaust Commission’s report, within which ‘the caliginous aspects of Britain and the Holocaust were not wholly ignored so much as partially illuminated, and then, seemingly, so as to provide a sharper contrast to the positive light emanating from the stories of the *Kindertransport* and liberation’.[60]

Coupled with the intention of the memorial to allow Britain to remember the way it ‘“proudly stood up to Hitler” (Prime Minister’s Holocaust Commission, 2015)’, Tollerton further perceived the new memorial not only to ‘sacralize but simultaneously nationalize this genocide’.[61] If, as Tollerton posited, the UKHM is intended to function as ‘a counter-testimony to the civic self-understanding that the government wishes to promote’, it might not be conducive to critical engagement with portrayals of contemporary British responses to the Holocaust that challenge the notion of Britain as the global ‘force for good’ *par excellence*.[62]

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[57] Hobbs, M., ‘Britain and the Holocaust: remembering and representing war and genocide’, *Immigrants and Minorites*, 34.1, (2015), p. 92.

[58] For an outline of the debate, see Adamson, ‘Plans for UK Holocaust Memorial looked promising, but now debate has stalled’.

[59] Quoted in Tollerton, ‘Britain’s New Holocaust Memorial’, p.266.

[60] Pearce, ‘In The Thick of It’, p.109.

[61] Tollerton, ‘Britain’s New Holocaust Memorial’, p.267.

[62] Ibid., p.267.

It is recorded that Sir Eric Pickles, speaking in October 2018 in his capacity as co-chair of the UKHMF, affirmed "we are going to look at our history in an unblinkered way"'.[63] This statement ostensibly paves the way for critically-engaged portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust. But there are obstacles to the achievement of this endpoint. The geopolitics of the UKHM's position next to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster are particularly contentious. Yoking the British response to the Holocaust with an archetypal symbol of liberal democracy feeds – inadvertently or not - into a conceptualisation of Britain as moral victors over the evil forces which implemented the genocide.

At this juncture, it is also possible to invoke a point raised earlier in this section: the possibility that the Holocaust represents a 'safe' historical narrative for political authorities by virtue of its perceived detachment from Britain.[64] To borrow an illustration of the issue from the poet Michael Rosen, would it not seem strange if the German government constructed a memorial to the victims of British slavery and positioned it directly next to Berlin's Reichstag?[65] It is indeed of note that the British government has repeatedly refused to fund the memorial to slavery originally proposed for Hyde Park in 2008.[66] Such examples elucidate the inherent problems connected to state-mandated orchestration of historical memory. It is a model which seems unlikely to result in portrayals of the past which force negative appraisal of a national historical record. Strikingly, Michelle Gordon has suggested that the Holocaust has the potential to be compared to historic examples of European colonial violence.[67] This parallelism would, of course, ask difficult questions of British history. Meanwhile, in 2022, unfolding events in Ukraine brings the role of British interventionism into the spotlight. Indeed, the Ukraine crisis looks set to reframe how genocide more widely is framed in the modern world.

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[63] Quoted in Pearce, 'An Emerging "Holocaust Memorial Problem?", p.136.

[64] See, for example, Stone, D., "Britannia waives the rules: British imperialism and Holocaust Memory", in Stone, D., *History, Memory and Mass Atrocity* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 187-190.

[65] Rosen, M., *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust* online launch event, The Wiener Library (29 April 2021).

[66] Booth, R, 'UK government refuses to fund slavery memorial endorsed by Johnson in 2008', *The Guardian* (10 December 2019).

[67] Gordon, M., 'Selective Histories: Britain, Empire, and the Holocaust', in Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*.

Meanwhile, the Imperial War Museum in London opened its new Second World War and Holocaust Galleries in autumn 2021. The IWM noted that its new format made it the 'first museum in the world to house dedicated Second World War and Holocaust galleries under the same roof'.[68] Yet, this juxtaposition of historical narratives carries implications for conceptualisation of the British response to the Holocaust. The coalescence of histories of the Holocaust and the Second World War risks subsuming the genocide into a broader narrative arc, despite the sustained dialogue between the two separate gallery curatorial teams.[69] By extension, visitors might further be guided towards the impression that the Holocaust, and its relationship with Britain, was simply one strand of the Second World War story: a period which ultimately resulted in British victory. The Holocaust is an important historical thread in the Second World War: but the Second World War is not the sole framework within which the Holocaust existed.

Throughout this thesis, I observed that educational institutions have struggled to reconcile the physical detachment between Britain and the Holocaust in mainland Europe. The focus of the new IWM gallery on 'objects' and 'personal stories' had the potential to occlude connections between Britain and the Holocaust.[70] Yet, in a private interview conducted ahead of the gallery launch, curator Lucy May Maxwell explained that the IWM had managed to procure several 'English-language sources' in the interest of domesticating the Holocaust narrative.[71] In other words, the museum was able to proffer primary evidence to tie together the histories of Britain and the Holocaust.

The educational objectives of the IWM are understandable. Combining the two galleries together is designed to promote an exploration of the 'global scale and impact upon people and communities' during the 1930s and 1940s.[72] In this sense, the museum is moving away from historical narratives constrained by rigid national frameworks. But at the same time, the Holocaust is such an intricate topic that its isolated treatment is often required to fully grasp the complexities of the history. The new IWM galleries risk engendering generalised conceptions of the Holocaust's place in history, and the

[68] IWM, 'Second World War and Holocaust Galleries' (2021).
[69] Maxwell, L., personal interview, conducted online via Zoom (2 June 2021).
[70] IWM, 'Transforming IWM London' (2021).
[71] Maxwell, L., interview.
[72] IWM, 'Transforming IWM London'.

deferment of critical engagement with the British response to a more celebratory narrative of the Second World War. A scheme intended to sophisticate visitor understandings of the past might result in simplified interpretations, counterintuitively.

Despite this, curator Maxwell was clear that one aim of the gallery was to complicate impressions of the British response to the Holocaust. By invoking a broader historical context, such as the 'violence of British colonialism', the gallery seeks to avoid the portrayal of Britain simply as the 'knight in shining armour' who entered the international stage only through the rescue of Holocaust victims.[73] When dealing with the Kindertransport, for instance, the gallery was not intended as an anodyne 'display of suitcases', but instead used source materials such as letters to ask difficult questions, such as 'why on earth were *Kindertransport* parents not permitted to travel?'.[74] At the same time, the new IWM gallery seeks to avoid moralisation. Maxwell described its prevailing framework as 'contemporaneous': hindsight plays a limited role in the presentations of the British response to the Holocaust.[75]

Regardless of their content, developments at the IWM and the UKHM have done little to alleviate the London-centrism of Britain's Holocaust memory culture. The placement of sites of Holocaust memory in (state-maintained) London settings might also be seen to encourage the dominance of a political framework. That is, 'British response' to the Holocaust might further be synonymised with the response of the 'British government'. In other words, the topic is viewed through the lens of Whitehall and Westminster. Emerging frontiers of Holocaust memory elsewhere in the United Kingdom have been less prominent than their London counterparts. Yet, as interviews with HELC and NHCM staff demonstrated, visitor reactions to museums are influenced by regional factors, such as ethnicity and class. The focus of Holocaust memory on London risks engendering a self-contained interpretation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust which is mistaken for the national engagement with the topic. Centrally-directed Holocaust memorials risk creating a hegemonic brand of Holocaust memory which obscures the pivotal role of individualism highlighted by my original research.

[73] Maxwell, L., interview.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

A concluding thought

The sticky wicket of Holocaust memory and education in the United Kingdom is characterised by 'live' debates.[76] As such, it is clear that interaction with the issue of how Britain responded to the Holocaust is a subject area which will require consistent regeneration. For instance, as the fallout of the Brexit referendum of 2016 continues, it will be interesting to observe how the uncoupling of the United Kingdom from the European Union affects the historical memory of our shared events and experiences.

Fundamentally, the Israeli historian Saul Friedlander, speaking in 1997, described the 'unease' that each historian of Holocaust should feel, or in other words an aversion to the impression that 'closure' can ever be reached.[77] Impressions of the Holocaust continue to evolve with new research, and the lenses through which it is viewed change depending on the circumstances of modern society. I expect portrayals of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust to develop in tandem.

[76] Lawson & Pearce, *Palgrave Handbook*.
[77] Quoted in Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, p.8.

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APPENDIX 1: TEXTBOOK LETTERING CODES

SET 1 (GENERAL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS)

LETTER	TEXTBOOK
A	Kelly, N., and Whittock, M.,. *The Era of the Second World War (*Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 1993).
B	Sauvain, P., *The Era of the Second World War.* (Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes, 1993).
C	Demarco, N., *The Era of the Second World War.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
D	Aylett, J. F. *The Era of the Second World War.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).
E	Cootes, R J., and Snellgrove, L., *The Era of the Second World War (*Walton-on-Thames: Nelson, 1994).
F	DeMarco, N., *Hodder 20th Century History: The Second World War 2nd Edition: Mainstream Edition (Hodder Twentieth Century History)* (London: Hodder, 2004)
G	Kelly, N., and Whittock, M., *The Twentieth Century World* (Oxford: Heinemann Education, 1995).
H	Lacey, G. and Shepherd, K., *Germany 1918-1945: A depth study: A Study in Depth: Student's Book (Discovering the Past for GCSE)* (London: Hodder, 1997)
I	Radway, R., *Hodder Twentieth Century History: Germany, 1918-45* (London: Hodder, 1998)
J	Taylor, D., *Modern World History : For OCR Specification 1937. Foundation*. (Oxford: Heinemann, 2001).

K	Kelly, N., and Lacey, G.,. *Modern World History : For OCR Specification 1937(*Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 2001).
L	Culpin, C., *This is History: The Twentieth Century Pupil's Book* (London: Hodder, 2004)
M	Wilkes, A. *Germany 1918-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
N	Waugh, S., and Wright, J., *Weimar and Nazi Germany: 1918-39 / GCSE History for Edexcel* (London: Hodder Education, 2016).

SET 2 (HOLOCAUST-SPECIFIC TEXTBOOKS)

LETTER	TEXTBOOK
O	Grant, R. G. *The Holocaust.* (Hove: Wayland, 1997).
P	Supple, C., *From Prejudice to Genocide: Learning about the Holocaust* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1998).
Q	Neville, Peter. *The Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
R	DeMarco, N., *The Holocaust: Hodder History Investigations* (London: Hodder, 2001)
S	Levy, P., *The Holocaust*. (London: Hodder Wayland, 2003).
T	Tonge, N., *The Holocaust (Documenting World War II)*, (London: Wayland, 2007)

U	Farmer, A., *Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (Access to History)* (London: Hodder Education, 2009).
V	Cesarani, D., and Holocaust Educational Trust, *The Holocaust: A Guide for Students and Teachers* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 2010).
W	Bresheeth, H., Hood, S., and Jansz, L., *Introducing the Holocaust: A Graphic Guide* (Cheltenham: Icon, 2012)

APPENDIX 2: MUSEUM INTERVIEWS QUESTION LIST

QUESTIONS INTENDED AS A GUIDE. ACTUAL DISCUSSION MAY VARY.

Background/Museum History

- What is your professional background?
- What is your role in the museum?
- Could you provide some background about how the museum came into existence?
- What are educational aims of the museum?
- How much involvement do Holocaust survivors continue to have in the museum?
- Significance in wider context of British Holocaust memory?
- Why is it important to have such a museum in Britain/this area of England versus London?

Museum Content

- Why learn about Britain and the Holocaust? Importance of self-critical narratives?
- Could you provide an overview of your personal impression of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust?
- How is this relationship presented in the museum?
- How decide which content to include?
- Is it intentional to implicate British response in wider 'rise of Nazism'? Balance of 1930s/40s
- Does the museum have a consciously centralised depiction of the British response to the Holocaust which it wishes to present?
- Could you comment on the balance between individual stories and wider historical overviews within the exhibition content?
- How does the British response to the Holocaust fit into broader historical narratives of the Holocaust in the museum?
- How does the British response to the Holocaust interact with other narratives in the museum e.g., WW2?
- Have any elements of relationship between Britain and the Holocaust surprised you/challenged pre-existing beliefs over the years?
- Do you sense any bitterness/resentment from survivors towards the role played by Britain?
- Have you often encountered any attempts to triumphalise British involvement in the Holocaust?

Curation

- How would you personally characterise the British response to the Holocaust?

- What are your curatorial objectives in relation to the presentation of the British response to the Holocaust?
- Have museum portrayals of the British response to the Holocaust changed over time?
- To what extent has public memory of the British response to the Holocaust been shaped by external factors (e.g., popular culture, WW2 glorification)
- Do you perceive differences in your own institution's presentations of the British response versus other museums (such as Imperial War Museum)?
- How do you think British narrative of its own involvement in the Holocaust differs examples of other European nations?
- What are the biggest challenges in navigating presentation of the British response to the Holocaust?
- What are the limitations of the museum's portrayal of the British response?
- If redesigning the museum now, what would you do differently?
- What is the importance of involving schoolchildren in visits to the museum?
- To what extent are children exposed to graphic elements of Holocaust history (e.g., liberation footage)?
- Do you aim to engage children in critical analysis/debate with complex issues related to the Holocaust?
- How do you think British Holocaust education will evolve?
- Do you think self-critical national narratives will become more prominent in Britain?

Reaction

- Do you think it important for Britons to learn about the British response? If so, why?
- What is the general level of visitor knowledge of the Holocaust/the British response before visiting the museum? Does it differ by age?
- Does visiting the Centre change visitors' perceptions of GB and Holocaust?
- Which aspects of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust do visitors engage most deeply with?
- Are there common questions about the British response which are encountered?
- Do you think there are modern lessons to be learned from the British response?

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM PROVIDED TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (AS APPROVED BY DURHAM UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE)

INFORMATION SHEET – RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

This fieldwork is being undertaken as part of a PhD project led by Daniel Adamson through Durham University (History Department).

About the researcher:

Daniel Adamson is a PhD student in the History Department of Durham University. He is an alumnus of the University of Cambridge (BA) and University College London (MA). Formerly a History teacher, Daniel also received a PGCE from the University of Buckingham.

Researcher contact details: daniel.e.adamson@durham.ac.uk (email).

Please contact the researcher directly for any further information.

About the project:

This PhD project seeks to explore portrayals – in educational settings – of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. Of particular interest are the ways in which the British response to the Holocaust has been depicted in schools, learning centres and museums. This research will contribute towards a final PhD thesis, to be submitted to Durham University in 2022.

Participation:

The purpose of this interview is to gain an insight into staff members' objectives and experiences with regards to the presentation of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust. The interview will take a semi-structured form, and participants will be provided with guide topics beforehand. Interviews will be conducted and arranged at the convenience of participants. Interviews may be digitally recorded via an audio device for future private reference.

Ethics and Privacy:

This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Durham University.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in the 'Participants Charter':

https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter/.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and can be terminated at any point. All information obtained during the study will be kept strictly confidential, and stored on an encrypted, password-protected device. Data will not be accessed by anyone other than the researcher.

Participant consent will be required for the use of any non-anonymised data in future publications. Upon request, published data can be anonymised. All research data and records needed to validate the research findings will be stored for no more than 10 years, and will be kept in accordance with Durham University data management policy.

Full details are included in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Privacy Notice

PART 1 – GENERIC PRIVACY NOTICE

Durham University has a responsibility under data protection legislation to provide individuals with information about how we process their personal data. We do this in a number of ways, one of which is the publication of privacy notices. Organisations variously call them a privacy statement, a fair processing notice or a privacy policy.

To ensure that we process your personal data fairly and lawfully we are required to inform you:

- Why we collect your data
- How it will be used
- Who it will be shared with

We will also explain what rights you have to control how we use your information and how to inform us about your wishes. Durham University will make the Privacy Notice available via the website and at the point we request personal data.

Our privacy notices comprise two parts – a generic part (i.e., common to all of our privacy notices) and a part tailored to the specific processing activity being undertaken.

Data Controller

The Data Controller is Durham University. If you would like more information about how the University uses your personal data, please see the University's *Information Governance webpages* or contact Information Governance Unit:

Telephone: (0191 33) 46246 or 46103

E-mail: *information.governance@durham.ac.uk*

Information Governance Unit also coordinate response to individuals asserting their rights under the legislation. Please contact the Unit in the first instance.

Data Protection Officer

The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising the University on compliance with Data Protection legislation and monitoring its performance against it. If you have any concerns regarding the way in which the University is processing your personal data, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Jennifer Sewel
University Secretary
Telephone: (0191 33) 46144
E-mail: *university.secretary@durham.ac.uk*

Your rights in relation to your personal data

Privacy notices and/or consent

You have the right to be provided with information about how and why we process your personal data. Where you have the choice to determine how your personal data will be used, we will ask you for consent. Where you do not have a choice (for example, where we have a legal obligation to process the personal data), we will provide you with a privacy notice. A privacy notice is a verbal or written statement that explains how we use personal data.

Whenever you give your consent for the processing of your personal data, you receive the right to withdraw that consent at any time. Where withdrawal of consent will have an impact on the services we are able to provide, this will be explained to you, so that you can determine whether it is the right decision for you.

Accessing your personal data

You have the right to be told whether we are processing your personal data and, if so, to be given a copy of it. This is known as the right of subject access. You can find out more about this right on the University's *Subject Access Requests webpage*.

Right to rectification

If you believe that personal data we hold about you is inaccurate, please contact us and we will investigate. You can also request that we complete any incomplete data.

Once we have determined what we are going to do, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to erasure

You can ask us to erase your personal data in any of the following circumstances:

- We no longer need the personal data for the purpose it was originally collected
- You withdraw your consent and there is no other legal basis for the processing
- You object to the processing and there are no overriding legitimate grounds for the processing
- The personal data have been unlawfully processed
- The personal data have to be erased for compliance with a legal obligation
- The personal data have been collected in relation to the offer of information society services (information society services are online services such as banking or social media sites).

Once we have determined whether we will erase the personal data, we will contact you to let you know.

Right to restriction of processing

You can ask us to restrict the processing of your personal data in the following circumstances:

- You believe that the data is inaccurate and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether it is indeed inaccurate
- The processing is unlawful and you want us to restrict processing rather than erase it
- We no longer need the data for the purpose we originally collected it but you need it to establish, exercise or defend a legal claim and
- You have objected to the processing and you want us to restrict processing until we determine whether our legitimate interests in processing the data override your objection.

Once we have determined how we propose to restrict processing of the data, we will contact you to discuss and, where possible, agree this with you.

Retention

The University keeps personal data for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was originally collected. Most of these time periods are set out in the *University Records Retention Schedule*.

Making a complaint

If you are unsatisfied with the way in which we process your personal data, we ask that you let us know so that we can try and put things right. If we are not able to resolve issues to your satisfaction, you can refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: *Information Commissioner's Office*

Durham University

CONSENT FORM
RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

This fieldwork is being undertaken as part of a PhD project led by Daniel Adamson through Durham University (History Department). This PhD project seeks to explore portrayals – in educational settings – of the relationship between Britain and the Holocaust.

Please refer to separate 'information sheet' for full details of the project.

Researcher: Daniel Adamson
Daniel.e.adamson@durham.ac.uk

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the project, what is involved and that you are happy to take part.

Please tick each box to indicate your agreement, or leave blank to indicate disagreement:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet and the privacy notice for the above project.	
I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	
I agree to take part in the above project.	
I consent to being audio recorded where applicable, and understand how recordings will be used in research outputs.	
I consent for my real name to be used in the above project.	
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, and other research outputs.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.	

Participant's Signature_______________________________ Date______________

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)____

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