Dark Tourists at Bedlam:

The Politics of Looking at Eighteenth-Century Suffering

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'Of all things called Sights in London, which every stranger is supposed desirous to see, Bedlam is one.'[1] So wrote the sentimental novelist Henry Mackenzie in his *Man of Feeling* (1770)*,* consolidating the place of Bethlem Royal Hospital as one of Georgian London's tourist hotspots. Yet in the same year, Bethlem opened its doors to visitors for the last time. For almost two hundred years, London's only public hospital for lunatics had served as a multifunctional, highly contentious site, merging themes of spectacle, the freak show and Enlightened thought with the act of viewing its mad.[2] Its symbolic closure to visitors no longer provided Londoners with the opportunity to gawp at the insane, marking a crucial turning point in the display of human suffering. It related to a wider change in attitudes concerning the treatment of 'poor lunaticks', as Bethlem's governors were prone to calling them — not only for those who resided in the asylum, but also within a public sphere that throughout the eighteenth century was becoming increasingly visual. Within this shifting societal context, heightened by the rise of Sensibility, viewing the mad became problematic, ultimately leading to the asylum's closure to casual visitors.

This essay considers the relationship between madness, spectacle, and the politics of looking at suffering in the build-up to Bethlem's closure. Alongside argu-

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[1] Henry Mackenzie, *The man of feeling* (London: Eighteenth Century Collections online, 1800), Wellcome Library Website ebook, p.51.

[2] My choice of vocabulary such as 'mad', 'madness', 'insane', 'inmate' and 'lunatic' takes it cue from Andrew Scull in his *Madness in Civilization (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015),* p.1-2, where he elucidates his usage of similar terms not to exacerbate stigma surrounding the mentally ill, but to express the historical and often non-medicalised use of these terms.

ments put forward by Peter De Bolla that characterise this period as a 'Culture of Visibility' and stress the innate spectacle that eighteenth-century culture embodied,[3] these explorations will be framed within discourses on 'dark tourism' and 'freakery'.[4] Via these alternative disciplines, this article casts new light on previously asked questions about Bethlem: why did people visit, what did visiting mean to the eighteenth-century viewer and what were the psychological ramifications of viewing the insane within the asylum? Ultimately, it argues that viewing the mad constituted a distinct cultural activity, at odds with ideas that capsulise the asylum as a mere freak show, and rather complicates this narrative by exemplifying the myriad of experiences that awaited the spectator at Bethlem. As the sympathetic gaze, strengthened by the growing momentum of sentimental, humane and philanthropic discourses, found itself drawn to pitiful objects, visitors shied away from the freakish inmate, and rather gazed at a less troubling, feminised conception of madness: the melancholic madwoman.

A mushrooming topic in academia, 'dark tourism' concerns itself with tourist attractions that deal with death, disaster and difficult heritage. First coined by Malcolm Foley and John Lennon in 1996, the term refers to discourses that chart the shift of certain cultural spaces from historic landscapes or sites to tourist 'products' available for consumption.[5] A meeting point for various disciplines, dark tourism spans the inter-

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[3] Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.2.

[4] Led by writers such as Leslie E. Fiedler, Robert Bodgan and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'freakery' considers the commercial success of the nineteenth-century freakshow, alongside cultural processes of 'enfreakment' through which the abnormal body was commodified and displayed. See Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[5] Malcolm Foley and John Lennon, 'Editorial: Heart of Darkness', *International Journal of Heritage Studies 2*, 4 (1996), 198. See also John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The attraction of death and disaster* (London: Cengage Learning, 2010), p.3. In recent years, scholarship has focused less on the specific activities of tourists who are drawn to dark spaces, looking instead to the production and management of these sites, and the interpretation of their displays. For more on the changing nature of dark tourist studies, see Jessica Moody 'Where Is

stices of visual culture and museum studies, bringing together commentators on cura-

torship, ethics and spectatorship. As curators and academics monitor the potential

commodification of 'dark' histories into satisfyingly bite-size, take-away forms, often re-

lating to the most unimaginable moments of human history and so existing on the very

limits of representation, alternate modes of presentation have developed.[6] Emphasis is

instead placed on authentic displays, highlighting original artefacts rather than purely

historic narratives, and stress individual experience within a 'potentially overwhelming

narrative of catastrophe'.[7] The importance of dialogical, participatory and disruptive dis-

plays is now stressed, within museum spaces which are adaptable, inclusive and rele-

vant.[8] The display of difficult objects can therefore be justified, through the sociological

work that museums do in exposing and challenging the realities of 'hot topics', troubling

histories and traditional museological orthodoxies.

Despite the tendency for debates on dark tourism and difficult heritage to centre

around a post-modern world, applying these debates to the eighteenth century proves

constructive. Yet if we comply with the notion that 'dark' equals 'death and destruction',

we risk relying solely on corporeal histories which are characterised by binary opposi-

tions — alive or dead — thus negating a cluster of sites that consider mentally or cor-

poreally distinct bodies. Expanding these museological parameters allows us to apply

these curatorial concerns elsewhere, including disciplines such as the medical humani-

ties. By focusing on the politics of looking at suffering, rather than death, we can gain

greater understanding of how individuals experienced a multitude of 'dark' eighteenth-

''Dark Public History''? A Scholarly Turn to the Dark Side, and What It Means for Public Histori-ans', *The Public Historian*, 38 (August 2016), 110.

[6] Lennon, *Dark Tourism*, p.27. See also Griselda Pollock, 'Holocaust Tourism', in *Visual Culture and Tourism*, ed. by David Crouch and Nina Lübrren (Oxford: Berg Books, 2003), pp.175-188, p.180, and *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution",* ed. by Saul Friedlander (England: London, 1992), p.2.

[7] Dan Stone, 'Memory, Memorials and Museums' in *The historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. by Dan Stone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.508-532, p.517.

[8] Fiona Cameron, *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*, eds. Fiona Cameron and Lynda Kelly (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.6.

century sites, and the impact that the display of mental difference had on the Georgian individual.

Bedlam spectacularised

Visitors to Bethlem during the 1740s were given the chance to buy and bring home with them a printed broadsheet poem. Available for three pennies, along the edge of the broadsheet were the instructions 'proper to be had an Read by all when they go to see Bedlam'. Written in 1744, the poem provided visitors with a glowing report of the asylum:

> Our Meat is good, the Bread and Cheese the Same;
> Our Butter, Beer, and Spoon Mean, none can blame:
> The Physick's mild, the Vomits are not such
> But, Thanks be prais'd of these we have no much:
> Bleeding is wholsome, and, for the Cold Bath,
> All are agreed it many Virtues hath.
>
> The Beds and Bedding are both warm and clean,
> Which to each Comer, maybe plainly Seen;
> Except those Rooms where the most Wild do lie;
> There all is torn and litter'd, like Hog Sty.[9]

The poem neatly encapsulates the highs and lows of asylum life: the good food and decent lodgings contrasted with the frisson of the torn, littered rooms where the 'wild do lie'. Perhaps most significant is the mention of the institution's focus on visibility, 'which each Comer, maybe plainly Seen'. The poem assists historians of Bethlem to better understand what a visit to the asylum might mean to contemporary Britons: part of a journey within a space designed to showcase the individuals within it. Its existence evinces that this was a journey that Bethlem's governors wanted to be remembered, its materiality as an ephemeral yet transportable souvenir collapsing boundaries of private and public, and its associative features meaning that it functioned as an object through

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[9] Printed poem entitled 'Bethlem, A Poem', with engraving of exterior of Bethlem Royal Hospital, Moorfields, as it was before 1733, at top of page. 1 May 1744. EO-037 Series Box Number A07/3. Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archives.

which madness could be considered privately.[10] Most importantly, the poem reveals the ways that consumption, spectacle and looking, both voyeuristic and self-conscious, were vital aspects of a trip to the asylum.

When arriving at Bethlem, visitors were greeted by Caius Gabriel Cibber's *Raving and Melancholy Madness* (Fig. 1), the imposing figures that flanked the asylum's gates. These opposing conceptions of insanity were well-known, commonly reproduced in typographical imagery of the hospital, and served as a formal announcement that the visit had begun.[11] Once inside, the hospital boasted one of the longest galleries in England, along with ornamental pavilions, coats of arms and cupolas.[12] Its architecture, both exterior and interior, bolstered Bethlem's role as an aesthetic spectacle, further reinforced by the theatricality through which the patients themselves were bestowed. Often portrayed as a crew of dramatic actors spanning a range of personalities, commentators would discuss the unsavoury types on show. Richard Steele described how he encountered 'five duchesses, three earls, two heathen gods, an emperor and a prophet' on his visit,[13] whilst Ned Ward described the menagerie of madmen, whores, lechers and loiterers who frequented Bethlem.[14] These accounts stress the different modes of madness on display, a range of personas at once fascinating and terrifying, for spectators to laugh at, empathise with, flee from, or even adopt.

The mad were viewed in a variety of ways. Split across two levels, its first floor was made up of cells where, as one visitor commented, 'lunatics of every description are shut up, and you can get a Sight of these poor creatures, little windows being let

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[10] For the associative functions of the souvenir and its status as an object between the miniature and the monumental, see Susan Stewart, *On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp.137-138.
[11] Fiona Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson: medicine in art in eighteenth-century Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), p.151.
[12] Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and magnificence: British hospital and asylum architecture, 1660-1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp.64-65.
[13] Richard Steele, *Tatler*, No.127, January 28, 1710.
[14] Ned Ward, *London Spy*, 1699.

into doors'.[15] The upper floor was reserved for the hospital's most dangerous maniacs, 'most of them being chained and terrible to behold'.[16] The hospital had not always been at such a large site; originally founded in 1293 as a religious priory at Bishopsgate, in the late 1600s plans began to relocate Bethlem to a grander building at Moorfields further east, which was completed in 1676. The move increased its capacity from 50 to 100 and by 1734, two more wings were added for another hundred individuals. The new space meant that the mad could be viewed from various vantage-points; some in small cells, some behind closed doors and others able to wander the public spaces, mingling with visitors.

Throughout the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, visiting was actively encouraged by Bethlem's governors. This allowed the hospital to exploit public curiosity to raise additional funds.[17] The governors described the ideal visitor as a 'person of quality', someone who would support the mad through a donation or become a benefactor. To this end, an inscription on the donation box asked that visitors remember the 'poore Lunaticks' after their visit.[18] As well as inspiring donations, visiting was intended to raise extra revenue for the asylum via an admission charge. In 1748 the names of several Benefactors 'will be put upon Tables erected for that Purpose, and

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[15] César-François de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reign of George I and George II*, trans. and ed. by Madame Van Muyden (London: J.Murray, 1902), pp.92-93.
[16] Saussure, *Foreign View of England*, pp.92-93.
[17] Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: a history of madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), p.130.
[18] Jonathan Andrews, with Asa Porter and others, *The History of Bethlem* (London: Routledge, 1961), p.182. The cost of a visit to Bethlem is discussed by Patricia Allderidge, 'Bedlam: fact or fantasy?' in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry,* eds. W.F.Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, v.2 (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.17-33. Historians have debated how much the fee for entry really was, as for some time it was assumed that visitors paid just a penny for entry. Formerly archivist at Bethlem, Allderidge has pointed out that whilst a donation of payment was required, the amount was not fixed and that many generous visitors may have given more.

old ones decayed be renewed, to perpetuate former, and to encourage future Benefactions; where they would be very acceptable, as very much wanted'.[19] From this, Bethlem already appears as a multi-functional space, designed to inspire pity whilst proving attractive to large numbers of visitors.

Other displays relating to asylum life peppered a visit. As well as the broadsheet poem, which would have been sold from a stall or table, the governors prominently displayed a table showing a typical patient's diet.[20] Two ornately decorated alms-boxes would have towered over visitors, alarmingly large depictions of a man and a woman that were depositories for donations and currently stand in the Reading Room of the Wellcome Collection, London (Fig.2). These spectacular elements, frankly unnecessary for a patient's cure and care, suggest that the visitor experience was carefully considered. Certainly, asylums were run and maintained with the visitor firmly in mind, as arguments put forward by Erving Goffman on the theatrical performance of institutional visiting show.[21] Staff developed carefully orchestrated and stage-managed routines through which to entertain visitors, having ample time to prepare since visits were restricted to a certain day of the week. These examples allow the asylum experience, at least for the visitor, to be understood as a mediated one, curated or designed by its governors, staff and architects to make visitors *feel* a certain way — much like museum spaces today. This is not to overstate Bethlem's role as a museum, complete with postcards and a ticket kiosk, but rather it speaks of its intentional interactivity between staff, mad and visitor. They allude to an unspoken level of reciprocity between

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[19] *Old England*, 19 November 1748, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers <http://bit.ly/2cMZ55X> [accessed 20 July 2016].

[20] Andrews, *History of Bethlem,* p.211.

[21] Graham Mooney and Jonathan Reinarz, eds., *Permeable walls: historical perspectives on hospital and asylum visiting* (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 2009), p.15.

the tourist and the asylum's proprietors, as via the coins paid upon entrance or exit, an entertaining display was expected, turning the asylum into a museum-like space.[22]

To be sure, visiting the infamous 'Bedlam' proved a form of escapism, intended to entertain, excite and titillate. Roy Porter and Jonathan Andrews agree that at the heart of Bethlem's character was its freakish nature, with the 'frisson of the freakshow' motivated the majority of sightseers.[23] For those unable to visit, the frisson could be experienced remotely, as Christine Stevenson has argued; the public were titillated to a lively satirical print culture that focused on the hospital.[24] Textual and visual culture tended to portray the mad in freakish, bestial terms: near-naked and straw-covered, oscillating between dormant behaviour to preternatural violence, they were gesticulative, lice-ridden, suicidal and 'anti human'.[25] Howling like wolves or tied up in chains, contemporary commentators described clanking chains, terrifying cries and 'wild beasts on show'.[26] These representations were key in translating the unnerving realities of Bethlem into entertainment: a bestial inmate was far from resembling a human being. Wild lunatics proved reassuring, collapsing the terrifying reality of descent into madness to a sub-human 'freak'. Looking thus becomes voyeuristic, the spectator cast into the role of the voyeur who relishes the spectacle.

This form of voyeuristic spectatorship is felt in the final plate of Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*, undoubtedly Bethlem's best-known representation. The engraving shows a menagerie of characters populating a gallery-like setting, as doors appear like

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[22] The similarities felt between an asylum and a museum have been noted, with historian of psychiatry Andrew Scull even naming his definitive text on asylums 'Museums of Madness'. See Andrew Scull*, Museums of Madness: The social organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England (*London: Allen Lane, 1979)

[23] Andrews, *Bethlem,* p.186.

[24] Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and magnificence: British hospital and asylum architecture, 1660-1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p.62.

[25] Andrews, *Bethlem,* p.186. See also Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles,* p.35, p.122.

[26] Henry Mackenzie, *The man of feeling* (London: Eighteenth Century Collections online, 1800), Wellcome Library Website ebook, p.52.

paintings along its walls. A jester, astrologer, magician, bishop and musician are all present in the foreground, displaying varying degrees of insanity.[27] Hogarth's unfortunate rake — who has been on a debauched journey of immoral behaviour, culminating in Bethlem— dominates the scene. Behind, two fashionable ladies peruse the inmates on display, tittering behind their fans. Voyeurism was not just reserved for the women in the print itself; its widespread proliferation, and subsequent reprinting in 1764 meant that it was available to multiple audiences and served as a recognisable representation of madness throughout the century's latter decades. Historical analysis of the print is ample: Jane Kromm emphasises its infamy and explores its plagiarised versions; Fiona Haslam locates it within the eighteenth-century preoccupation with folly and delusion; and Mark Hallett uses it to stress the innate spectacle that a trip to Bedlam embodied.[28]

In line with Hallett's arguments, it is clear that the spectacularisation of Bethlem allowed a tangible sense of distance to be felt between viewer and mad. If we consider Edward Schwartzchild's arguments surrounding freakery, the psychological impact of viewing otherness within pseudo-museum environments can be felt:

> Museums can function as 'powerful identity-defining machines', capable of determining and displaying how a community sees itself and, simultaneously, how it views and interprets "others". Understood broadly, museums offer carefully designed, framed spectacles, enabling and encouraging visitors to form various distinctions [...] Freak shows, of course, function similarly. Unlike the blurring of extant boundaries, the framed spectacles of museums and freak shows tend to be structured by distance, by marked divisions between "us" and "them".[29]

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[27] Sander L. Gilman, *Seeing the insane : a cultural history of madness and art in the western world* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p.54.

[28] Jane Kromm, *The art of frenzy: public madness in the visual culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (London: Continuum, 2002), p.115; Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson,* p.146; Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p.171.

[29] Edward. L. Schwarzschild, 'Death-Defying/Defining Spectacles: Charles Willson Peale as Early American Freak Showman', in *Freakery: cultural spectacles of the extraordinary body,* ed. by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), pp.82-97 (82).

Like Schwarzchild, we can understand the 'framed spectacle' of Bethlem as success-fully reinforcing oppositions between 'us' (the spectator) and 'them' (the freakish luna-tic). These arguments lend themselves to others which consider the freakish nature of the 'other', and the ways that freakish bodies are created. The explorations of Rose-marie Garland-Thomson on the anomalous body and its bearings on individuals locate a proclivity 'to textualise, to contain, to explain our more unexpected corporeal manifes-tations to ourselves'.[30] The human preoccupation with the body, she maintains, is a lin-ear one, an ongoing attempt to explain the extraordinary recesses of its many forms, at times leading to an unsettling powder keg of tension. Crucial to Garland-Thomson's ar-guments are the set of criteria she delineates as necessary when producing 'freaks', a process that David Hevey has called 'enfreakment'.[31] To become a freak, an individual is framed within a set of museological apparatus that highlights and intensifies their in-nate otherness. These rituals include an oral spiel, delivered by a showman; a textual account of the freak's extraordinary life; a form of staging, such as costume or perfor-mance; and the distribution of visual souvenirs, such as photographs or postcards, which ultimately enable the creation of a freakish body.[32]

These processes can be seen at Bethlem. Descriptions of the personalities and histories of inmates were commonly found in the press, in line with Garland-Thomson's condition of a textual account. Whilst photographs were not available, we know that items such as the printed poem functioned as souvenirs. The voyeuristic figure of the quack-doctor or asylum-keeper could be understood as a showman, a medical ring-master within the circus of the madhouse, as contemporary prints by Rowlandson or Gillray utilised an iconography that revealed a loquacious figure. These factors all

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[30] *Freakery: cultural spectacles of the extraordinary body,* ed. by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), p.2.
[31] Garland-Thomson, *Freakery*, p.10.
[32] Garland-Thomson, *Freakery*, p.7, p.10.

worked to distance visitors further from the freakish Bedlamite, stressing the abnormal social category that the inmates occupied.

Crucial to Garland-Thomson's arguments is the notion that freaks function to make the non-freakish comfortable, whereby the sensationalised or exaggerated discourse heightens the freaks 'differences from viewers, who were rendered comfortably common and safely standard by the exchange'.[33] In this way, the freak functions like a magnet to which culture secures its anxieties, questions and needs'.[34] Indeed, the social atmosphere of the mid- to late-eighteenth century meant that Bedlamites had the capacity to tweak deep-rooted cultural anxieties within its audience. This approach allows us to understand Bethlem as a unique cultural space, which exhorted an extreme, very different viewing experience to the city's other cultural offerings. There was no shortage of social and political anxieties for the eighteenth-century collective to divest into the asylum space; Britons felt anxious over their country's growing commercialisation and its negative effect on culture, whilst politics witnessed growing factionalism and radicalism, and controversies surrounding the king's abuse of power.[35] The binary stances expressed by Schwarzchild, therefore, promising the psychological separation between the viewer and objects on display, proved reassuring against a politically turbulent backdrop including the Seven Years War, revolutionary stirrings in France and a period of lunacy for George III. Through this reading, the freakish Bedlamites had the capacity to become emblems for society's problems, strengthened through the plethora of characters on view. In this sense, Bethlem can be categorised as a site of absolute otherness, where contemporary concerns could be deposited along with the mad. The act of visiting, paying and then *leaving*, supports this notion. Viewing this type of lunatic, in Bethlem or elsewhere, served to confirm the viewer's whole, sane self, and thus alleviated a sense of anxiety

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[33] Garland-Thomson, *Freakery*, p.5.
[34] Garland-Thomson, *Freakery,* p.2.
[35] Kromm, *Art of frenzy,* p.128.

that surrounded the mad. By reinforcing their own mental and corporeal superiority, Georgian individuals were able to extrapolate themselves from an uneasy proximity with the bestial madman, and leave the hospital metaphorically unscathed.

Yet, as Mary Floyd Wilson states, it would be easy to 'simplify the eighteenth-century response to madness into monolithic hostility'.[36] By compressing the mad into a specified role, we run the risk of simplifying the kaleidoscope of responses that they evoked. The failure of the mad to comply to a certain categorical framework allowed them to prompt many reactions; the compulsion to gawp and the asylum's function as a well-trodden tourist hotspot were just some of these. Bethlem's characterisation as a 'dark' site means that a visit to the space had wider moralistic connotations, as an in-flux of contemporary responses reveal. Reactions such as the poet William Cowper's, who recalled his visit to Bethlem in 1784, signify the simultaneous push and pull that the mad evoked, whereby voyeuristic curiosity is complicated through his ethical concerns about looking:

> In the days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of Holiday ramblers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the Madness of some of them had such a humorous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so.[37]

As Bethlem's current archivist Colin Gale has expressed, this source bears similarities with modern works that debate the value and dilemmas surrounding looking at difficult

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[36] Mary Floyd Wilson, 'Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: "Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds"', *Women's Studies*, 21, 4 (1992), pp.397-409 (407).

[37] William Cowper, 'Letter to Rev. John Newton, 19 July 1784' in *The life and works of William Cowper*, v.2 (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835). Cowper's ethical dilemmas were not just reserved for viewing madness at Bethlem. As Joanne Tong describes, he 'clearly possessed a keen awareness of certain issues, the abolition of the slave trade in particular among them'. For more on Cowper's writing on and his feelings towards abolition, see Joanne Tong, '"Pity for the Poor Africans": William Cowper and the Limits of the Abolitionist Affect' in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830*, ed. by Stephen Ahern (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp.129-150.

images, most significantly discussed in Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others.*[38] In response to Sontag's suggestion that repetition and representation weakens the power of difficult images, Gale extols the moral necessity of viewing images of suffering, so long as it is done with sensitivity.[39] This alignment of old and new sources proves productive, with the positioning of contemporary and modern debates alongside visiting or viewing difficult objects or images, be they humans within the asylum or photographs depicting war, allowing us to conceptualise these conflicting debates and attitudes tangentially. These ideas stress the simultaneous feeling of distance and proximity that these experiences provoked; or to put it another way, as Andrews has stated about contemporary responses to Bethlem, the tension between squeamishness and sentimentality.[40] Accounts such as Cowper's disrupt any notions of a straightforward or homogenous response to viewing the mad exhibited. And if we move away from a strictly spectacularised identification of the hospital, we can understand more clearly the moral ambiguities that a visit to Bethlem entailed, as the latter decades of the eighteenth century witnessed new attitudes coming to the fore which revolved around a more sentimental and sympathetic gaze.

Eighteenth-century Dark Tourism and ways to look

Despite Bethlem's spectacular, stage-managed character and its inclusion within London's cultural sites, it was during this time that letters criticising the practice of visiting Bethlem solely to gawp were disseminated. In 1753, a letter to *The World* periodical revealed contemporary concerns over visiting the mad:

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[38] Colin Gale, 'The Lost Hospitals of London: The Bethlem Hospital', 19 March 2012 < http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-lost-hospitals-of-london-bethlem-hospital-worth-a-visit>.

[39] Gale, ' Lost Hospitals of London', 2012.

[40] Andrews, *History of Bethlem*, p.189.

> To those who have feeling minds, there is nothing so affecting as sights like these; nor can a better lesson be taught us in any part of the globe than in this school of misery […] But I am sorry to say it, curiosity and wantonness, more than a desire for instruction, carry the majority of spectators to this dismal place.[41]

These feelings echo a letter written a few years before to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which castigated visitors who came just to mock those on view:

> But those are fallen yet lower, who resort to an hospital, intended for the reception and for cure of unhappy lunatics, purely to mock at the nakedness of human nature, and make themselves merry with the extravagances the deface the image of the creator, and exhibit their fellow creatures, in circumstances of the most pityable infirmity, debility and unhappiness.[42]

These letters serve, not as a call to halt visiting entirely, but rather to stress public understanding for the *right* sort of visitor, alongside further requests that Bethlem's governors 'take care that proper persons are appointed to attend the spectators'.[43] By stressing the validity of a visit for 'instruction', and framing the hospital as a 'lesson' or 'school' rather than a site of 'curiosity', the 1753 letter implies the value that a visit entailed, whilst introducing ideas around appropriate ways to look at suffering; in this case, through an instructive, rather than an inhumane, lens. These commentaries evince a new set of responses to the hospital, as contemporary commentators began to express the same ideas as Bethlem's governors: that visitors should come with a sense of empathy and humanity. This interplay between the governors and the public can be seen in newspaper reports of generous visitors, designed to inspire an urban audience and stress that for London's polite society, visiting the hospital was now an act of charity, rather than an amusement.[44] By 1820, guidebooks were expressing the

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[41] 'Correspondence to Adam Fitz-Adam', The World, 7 June 1753, p.138. See also Mackenzie, M*an of feeling*, p.51.

[42] 'Letter to Mr Urban', Gentleman's Magazine, May 1748, p.199.

[43] 'Correspondence to Adam Fitz-Adam', p.138.

[44] Daily Journal, 27 March 1731, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers *<http://bit.ly/2cfNES1>* [accessed 20 July 2016].

importance of a charitable response[45]; viewing the unfortunate was now a moral duty and actively encouraged across cultural mediums.

The most fervent expression of self during this period—Sensibility—further emphasised and complicated the relationship between ethics and spectatorship. Characterised by this cultural movement, the middle third of the eighteenth century is now understood as a time driven by sentimental preoccupations and intense feeling, during which the importance of viewing those less unfortunate in a sympathetic light was commonly expressed. Not just aligned to madness, this period witnessed the rise of humanitarian reform movements that focused on the experiences and suffering of marginalized groups, including slavery, prisoners, the poor, children and animals.[46] To this end, frivolous, empty entertainment was criticised and the importance of sightseeing for individual consciousness was promulgated. So long as it was undertaken meaningfully, tourism was now viewed as crucial for 'the development of a certain type of mind'.[47]

Conceptions of mental illness in the eighteenth century were no doubt influenced by these sentimental preoccupations, proving central to our understanding of how asylums functioned as spaces through which to proactively engage with the mad. Read by Barker-Benfield as 'the popularisation of sensational psychology in its earlier phase',[48] the movement saw a new focus on the sensory, the sensitive and the feminine. And as proposed concepts of looking favoured a thoughtful and sympathetic air, the gaze of the sane rested on the female lunatic. Women served as an ideal foil for

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[45] William Darton, *A visit to London, containing a description of the principal curiosities in the British metropolis* (London: William Darton, 1820), p.86.

[46] Jamie Rosenthal, 'The Contradictions of Racialized Sensibility: Gender, Slavery and the Limits of Sympathy' in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830,* ed. by Stephen Ahern (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp.171-188, pp.171-172. See also Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment and Slavery, 1760 - 1807* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[47] Haslam, *Hogarth to Rowlandson,* p.15.

[48] G.L. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: sex and society in eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.6.

the display of male sentimentality, and gradually, the concept of the freakish madman was replaced with a new model which sought to instruct and provide moral value. In the face of external events which threatened the sensibility of the common man, the female became a potent symbol, the threat of the madman translated into a reassuring mode of feminised madness, allowing the spectator to in turn be recast into this vital humane role.[49]

With sensibility galvanising a self-conscious, inward-looking form of spectatorship, publications, exhibitions and cultural activities began to focus on the look. As John Brewer remarks, didactic literature of the period proved 'overwhelmingly preoccupied with teaching its readers how to appear and how to look'.[50] And the act of looking had serious ramifications, providing viewers with the opportunity to explore and articulate a sense of self. If we turn to contemporary writers who stress the importance of museum structures and spaces to build communities and display heterogeneity,[51] we can see similarities, however latent, between modern dark tourist sites and specific eighteenth-century cultural arenas; both spaces through which personal and collective identities can be explored via the kaleidoscope of moral ambiguities and ethical concerns they evoked. Indeed, Huyssen's mention of memory brings to mind the value of the souvenir as a dialogical object, giving renewed meaning to the poem available for purchase within the asylum's walls.

In the eighteenth century, different modes of meaningful looking were often proffered: John Urry highlights how a neutralised gaze was encouraged when looking

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[49] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (London: Virago, 1987), p.10

[50] John Brewer, 'This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in *Subject in Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of the Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp.1-21, p.15.

[51] Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight memories: marking time in a culture of amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.35.

in galleries or museums, whilst Rosie Dias has discussed the ways that print culture served as 'laconic guides' on how to look within the newly politicised galleries of Pall-Mall.[52] Models of how to look at the mad were also shared. Despite its inclusion on London's tourist trail, somewhere like Bethlem existed on the peripheries of normal exhibition spaces and did not come with a prescribed set of guidelines instructing a visitor how to look. Letters from the period and public accounts of visiting, therefore, proved instructive in advising visitors how to behave when at the asylum, as did topographical prints of Bethlem's façade which showed the correct way for onlookers to peek through the grates to have a closer look at the mansion behind.[53] Sentimental literature made plain the expectation that visitors should be intensely moved when at Bethlem; Samuel Richardson's account of his visit in 1741 emphasised how 'the heart must be abandon'd indeed' when viewing so much misery.[54] Newspapers in particular shared advice on how to act: Philanthorpus, the *Guardian* correspondent, encouraged individuals to take 'a walk of mortification' at Bethlem and 'pass a whole day in making oneself profitably sad'.[55] Similarly, on seeing a female lunatic, Mackenzie's male protagonist in his *Man of Feeling* exhibits the appropriate behaviour when he is moved to tear:

> Separate from the rest stood one, whose appearance had something of superior dignity. Her face, though pale and wasted, was less squalid than those of the others, and showed a dejection of that decent kind, which moves our pity unmixed with horror: upon her, therefore, the eyes of all were immediately turned.[56]

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[52] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications,1990), p.4. See also Rosie Dias, ''A world of pictures': Pall Mall and the topography of display, 1789-99' in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on space, place and landscape in the eighteenth century* ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W.J.Withers (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press,2004), pp.92-113, p.100.

[53] For more on the use of topographical prints as guides, see Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence, p.238.*

[54] Samuel Richardson, *Familiar letters on important occasions,* with an introd. by Brian W. Downs (Norwood, P.A: Norwood Editions, 1975), p.153.

[55] Quoted from Andrews, *History of Bethlem,* p.185.

[56] Mackenzie, *Man of feeling*, p.57.

This new spate of moralistic, intensely emotional responses was didactic, giving advice on ways to look at ill, vulnerable or impoverished individuals. In a time of increasing sensibility, when extreme, often self-indulgent, feelings were expressed within fashionable circles, looking at the mad through a sympathetic lens, tearful eyes, and with particular focus on the mad*woman,* was promulgated and encouraged. As Urry and MacCannell stress, tourist attractions involve 'complex processes of production in order that regular, meaningful and profitable tourist gazes can be generated and sustained'[57]; and here it is plain that through various cultural processes taking place both in and outside of Bethlem, meaningful and profitable gazes that focused on sentiment and sympathy rather than spectacle and voyeurism could be enacted. Perhaps most importantly, sensibility not only ushered in more humane and compassionate ways to look at difficult 'objects' on display, but allowed many to voice their anxieties over their behaviour within these sites, even when visiting Bethlem had formally finished. Within this context, 'dark' sites such as asylums had become subject to moral debate and ethical ambiguities.

The ethics of spectatorship in eighteenth century England

By the 1770s, the focus on sensibility meant that keeping the asylum open for casual visitors proved too problematic. Alongside sources that stress the *right* sort of visitor, came letters that requested an end to the practice altogether.[58] The 1760s witnessed mounting opprobrium directed towards the practice, along with expressive disdain for disorderly visitors which saw visiting hours restricted.[59] Despite a set of worthy reasons for visiting, circulating around duty and the performance of pity, the swell of sentimentality towards unfortunates meant that the practice felt too cruel and Bethlem's doors

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[57] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze,* p.9. See also Dean MacCannell, *The tourist : a new theory of the leisure class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[58] 'Letter to Mr Urban', Gentleman's Magazine, May 1748, p.199.

[59] 'Letter to Mr Urban', p.199. . See also Andrews, *Bethlem,* p.190.

were closed to the public unless the visitor had permission directly from the keeper. As Andrews eloquently puts it, 'for the man of feeling, the face of madness was now almost too terrible to be shown'.[60]

This journey towards Bethlem's closure proves a vital moment within the history of human responses to suffering, making it a compelling comparison with modern curatorial concerns surrounding the display of human beings as visual commodities.[61] Issues surrounding the politics of looking are crucial to dark tourism and mark a vital parallel between modern day and eighteenth-century tourist sites, both operating via an understanding, however faint, of the ethics that impact the act of looking at difficult objects. Certainly, within the capsule of Bethlem, we see a far more elementary model of a dark tourist site; in comparison, modern spaces prove anti-redemptive, designed to provoke responses in the viewer and leave the visit open-ended, hopefully leading to further debate.[62] They rely on wall texts, multimedia and visitor books to bolster the experience and incite dialogical thought. Surely, then, any attempt to draw parallels between these viewing experiences would seem overambitious.

Yet it can be argued that eighteenth-century concerns over viewing mental suffering acted as a forerunner to the ethical issues expressed by museological commentators today, as they question how difficult histories can be displayed and viewed by a modern audience. Today, dark tourist sites are not designed as receptacles for spectatorship, but rather as cultural arenas where emphasis is placed on authentic displays, with original artefacts and a focus on personal testimony, sensitively portrayed to an unknown public. If we consider Bethlem as a site where modes of looking were tried

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[60] Andrews, *Bethlem,* p.191.
[61] For example, recent scholarship has criticised aspects of the display of human teeth in the Wellcome Collection's exhibition, 'Teeth'. See Claire Dungey and Neil Stephens, 'Learning about dentistry: enacting problems at the Wellcome Collection exhibition 'Teeth'', *Journal of Science Communication*, 17 (03) 2018, R03. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.17030603.
[62] Pollock, 'Holocaust Tourism', p.175.

and tested, then we can begin to rethink its function as a site of entertainment. Shifting attitudes towards the display of the mad, and the new focus on individual experience in the mid-eighteenth century, thus becomes early evidence of the anxieties over display-ing human suffering. The sense of duty that Bethlem inspired bears further similarities between the ways that modern sites and the eighteenth-century hospital functioned through the duty, and even guilt, felt by visitors. Bethlem's governors were well aware of this, highlighting the importance of visiting to support their inmates around the asy-lum itself. Obligation is also a feeling expressed within multiple accounts of Bethlem in eighteenth-century guidebooks, and links to ideas of how people should behave within polite society. Similar attitudes can be felt in tourist sites today. In *Dark Tourism,* Foley and Lennon quote the director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, who explains how visitors spent hours reading everything within the museum space, due to the guilt triggered from the displays.[63] Failure to examine exhibited items or read the la-bels within museum spaces often makes the audience feel 'naughty'.[64] Through this lens, we can understand sensibility's issues around looking as early stirrings of anxie-ties concerning ethics and spectatorship, as Georgian individuals felt pressure to be-have in a certain way — much like today's museum visitors.

As Dora Apel has discussed in her work on looking at lynching photographs, the simple act of looking at a difficult image morally implicates the viewer.[65] Likewise, look-ing at the mad in the eighteenth century had the capacity to implicate the viewer in both positive or negative ways, and a trip to Bethlem constituted an opportunity to flex one's compassionate sensibilities. In particular, it was the melancholic madwoman that could

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[63] Lennon, *Dark Tourism*, p.156.

[64] Elaine Gurian, 'Noodling around with exhibition opportunities' in *Exhibiting Cultures: the poet-ics and politics of museum displays,* eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp.176-190, p.185.

[65] Quoted in James Polkin, 'Not Looking at Lynching Photographs', in *The Image and the Wit-ness*: *Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture,* ed. by Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), pp.207-222, p.207.

implicate the viewer positively, the repercussions on the viewer's sense of self proving far less abhorrent than masculine, raving and troubling figures on view in representations such as Hogarth's. Through her, the insane could serve as a foil for the display of sentimentality, offering an opportunity to embrace strong feelings, whilst bolstering their identities as refined, tender-hearted individuals.[66]

Most importantly, Bethlem provided Georgians with a framework to begin discussions surrounding these issues, and solidified ways to look at unsettling objects. By aligning these practices and spaces with modern-day attractions, we can develop our understanding of the place of 'dark' sites in society, and their importance as dialogical, identity-defining spaces, as they often prove reassuring for the sane, healthy and alive visitor, thereby positively reinforcing the visitor's own sense of wellbeing, both mental and physical.

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[66] Kromm, *Art of frenzy,* p.149.

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FIGURES *in front of* BETHLEM HOSPITAL.
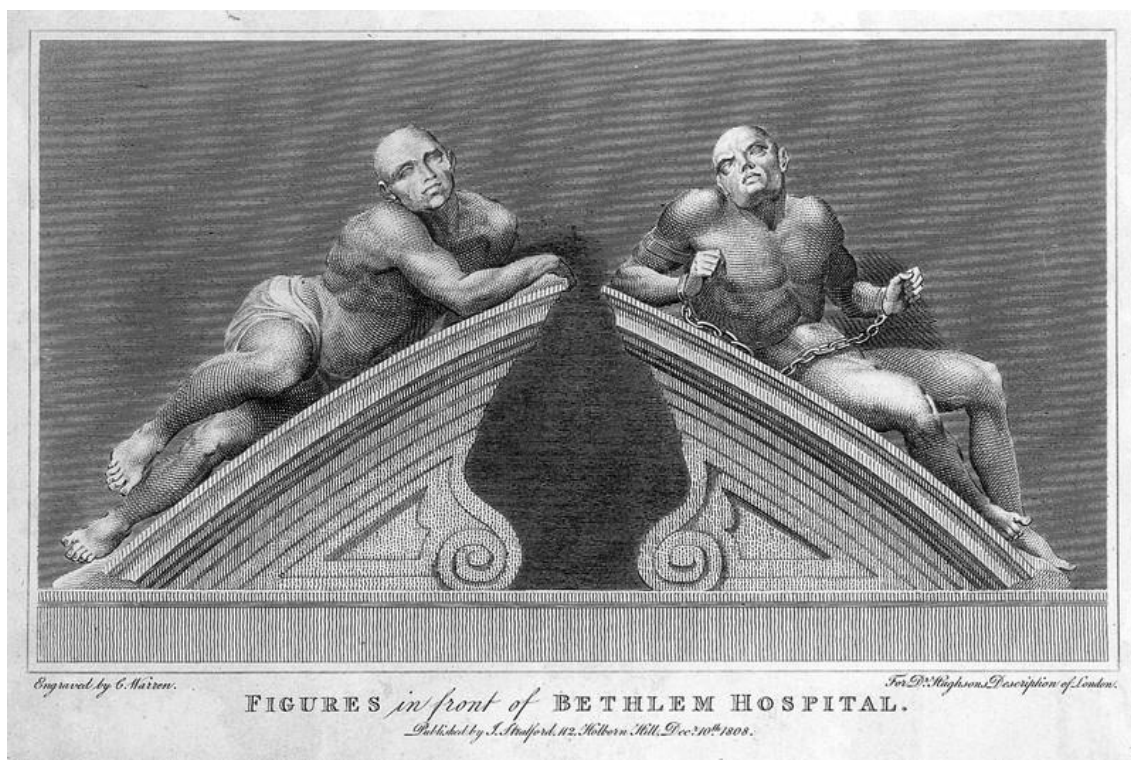
Illustrations

Fig 1

Statues of "raving" and "melancholy" madness, each reclining on one half of a broken segmental pediment, formerly crowning the gates at Bethlem [Bedlam] Hospital. Engraving by C. Warren, 1808, after C. Cibber, 1680.

Credit: Wellcome Collection

https://wellcomecollection.org/works/xu75c9s2?query=cibbe

r&page=1

Fig. 2
Alms box figure from Bethlehem Hospital, England
Credit: Science Museum, London
https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jxxgx599

Fig. 3

Hogarth's The Rake's Progress; scene at Bedlam. T. Cook

Credit: Wellcome Collection

https://wellcomecollection.org/works/hfrudd44?query=rake%27s%20progress&page=1