EXPOSITIONS

Theory, Culture, Museum

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University.
I declare that apart from the sourced citations, this thesis is my own original work.

Signed,

Ben Dibley
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I dedicated this thesis to my parents, George and Sharone. Without their support much else besides this thesis would be simply impossible. Thank you.
Abstract

Expositions: theory, culture, museum examines the ways in which theories of culture have been entangled in museums. The thesis begins with an exposition on the 'ideal of the museum' and 'the end of History' in theories of modernity, considering theorists such as G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx and Walter Benjamin. It then reflects on the normative dimension of culture's theorisation in progress(ive) narratives, with a discussion of Matthew Arnold and E. B. Tylor, Raymond Williams and Tony Bennett, Homi K. Bhabha and James Clifford. The section concludes with an examination of the historical institutionalisation of cultural expertises in museums that draws on Nicholas Rose's mapping of transformations in the liberal problematic of government.

Secondly, focussing on a particular institution of exposition, The Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa, these formulations are explored with respect to a particular context. This institution's cultural policy, architecture and exhibitions, and their popular and critical reception are investigated in depth. Here, 'the idea of the museum' is located in the cultural narratives which marked the 1980s and 1990s and focused on Aotearoa/New Zealand's legacy of colonialism and its globalisation, producing a space doubly inscribed in de-territorializing and re-territorializing flows. This section explores an aesthetics of place and displacement which oscillated between the global popular and a national vernacular, to unsettling effect.

In the third part, the thesis discusses museum cultural criticism in some detail, considering theorists such as Tony Bennett and James Clifford. It raises the question of these and other critics' investment in the reformist logic of museums themselves and concludes by seeking and arguing for an alternative position.
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Preface

RUINS AND FABRICATIONS

Figure 1 Paul Klee, Angelus Novus, 1920

Paul Klee’s drawing Angelus Novus was purportedly Walter Benjamin’s most cherished possession. It was the inspiration for undoubtedly the most famous allegory on the experience of modernity that the archive of cultural theory has to offer – the Angel of History. Ceaselessly blown across pages of culture theory, the force of Benjamin’s allegory is hardly diminished by the now familiar figure of the angel. I urge you to read him again:

A Klee painting named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes starting, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he see one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage, and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught his wings with such violence
that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. ([1936] 1973:249)

On the eve of its attainment of Dominion status (1907) without any particular Scriptural authority, popular Labour Prime Minister, Dick Seddon, declared the settler state of New Zealand ‘god’s own country’. Later ironically shortened to Godzone, Seddon’s was a formulation widely repeated and broadly felt. A few years after Benjamin completed his allegorical narrative on progress, Allen Curnow produced his well-known poem *Landsfall in Unknown Seas*, commissioned for the 300th anniversary of Abel Tasman’s ‘discovery’ of New Zealand ([1942] 1990a:102-105). In many ways an Antipodean reflection on Benjamin’s global dialectic of civility and barbarity, Curnow concluded his poem with the poignant line: ‘The stain of blood that writes an island’s story’ (ibid.:105). It is a powerful image that at once evokes the fallen crimson pohutokawa blossoms that cover much of the country’s northern coastline in early summer when many New Zealanders take their holidays and head for the beach. However, Curnow reminds his readers that within this festive scene of holidaymakers there are spectres ‘haunt[ing] their familiar beaches’ (ibid.:104). These are the ghosts of deadly beach exchanges on which the national mythos has come to ‘dwell’; be it those left by the fatal incommensurability of First Contact or those of absent men slain a world away on ANZAC cove. Yet Curnow’s image has still other resonances, evoking the abattoir on whose bloodied foundation the national economy was built – briefly through the butchery of marine mammals and more enduringly through the slaughter of ungulates – to which the country’s export receipts and economic fortunes are still tied. Bringing together leisure and colonialism, war and agri-capitalism as this sanguine imagery does, Curnow reminds his compatriots of the stain in Paradise.

Curnow, however, did not share Benjamin’s melancholy. While the narrative of progress might be written in blood, Curnow’s cultural nationalism propels into the future a figure of hope rather then one of despair. In another
poem, born out of reflections at *Canterbury Museum* in Christchurch, Curnow wrote his most widely cited line: ‘Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year, Will learn the trick of standing upright here’ ([1946] 1990b:89). That year will be 2044 – if we believe the factitious biography of the virtual host of the institution now entrusted with narrating ‘an island’s story.’ In *Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa*’s exhibition and ride-film, *FutureRush*, Rima is a sassy time-travelling, ‘ethnically ambiguous’, ¹ eleven-year-old girl from 2055. She inhabits the national tomorrow where the Apocalypse has been indefinitely postponed; ethnic conflict resolved, environmental calamity averted, and technofascism forestalled.² Digital rather than ethereal, Rima³ is no angel, but her rush into the future suggests that the museum’s exhibitions, like Curnow’s poetry, offer an antipodean permutation on Benjamin’s allegory that finds its sensibility less with a historical melancholy for ruins and rather more with redemptive fabrications of the future – tomorrow’s children.

**Figure 2 Rima**
[source: http://www.tepapa.govt.nz]

*Angelus Novus* and Rima, Benjamin and Curnow – these are odd couples indeed. Yet, together the allegorical figures of a forlorn angel and some child ‘born in a marvellous year’, introduce the ruins and fabrications – the ruins of modernity and the fabrications of a settler national culture – on which I write.

¹ Cited in Museum of New Zealand: Decision Support Centre Futures Display Feedback Session, 18 October 1996, File Number TH35-03 Themed Attractions: concept and design documentation Vol 2, opened 1.4.96.

² Further reassurance can be taken from the fact that *FutureRush*’s scenario was work-shopped with The New Zealand Futures Trust ‘to ensure a broad accuracy in the political and social changes’ represented in the ‘ride experience’ (NZH., Mar. 28 1998:G1).

³ For some institutions with strong corporate cultures, the organization ethos is exemplified in fictitious biographies of corporate mascots. Disney has the mouse, and McDonalds’ the clown, Te Papa has Rima. There have has been proposals to promote her to the status of an organisational mascot (Hewitt cited in NZH., Mar. 28 1998:G1).
INTRODUCTION

Expositions: theory, culture, museum. My title, ‘Expositions’, plays on the associations of that word with a process of explanation, a setting forth of a point of view in the form of commentary, and, with the word’s use to designate an institutional location involved in the process of exhibition; of public showing and telling. The first association is aligned with the first term in my sub title, theory, in that, a setting forth of a point of view, an explanation, is always an exercise of analysis and abstraction. The second association, the process of public showing and telling, evokes the final term in my sub title, museum. Bringing the two terms together, then, establishes the theme of this thesis. It is an exposition of expositions. However, it is the middle term, culture, which carries the weight of this second order analysis. This is so since the types of expositionary statements I engage with, and the sites of expositionary display that I analyse, are respectively those of cultural theory and those of cultural institutions. It is ‘culture’ that establishes a currency between ‘theory’ and ‘museum.’ My thesis is thus an exposition on the ways in which culture has been theorised by ‘cultural experts’ and how culture has been deployed in cultural institutions. What it exposes is a mode of cultural analysis that rests on a normative and inherently reformist formulation of culture that, ultimately, coheres with the liberal project of the museum. This I argue has the unfortunate consequence of enmeshing the museum’s critics in the political rationality of the institution.

However, my motivation to write this exposition of expositions is driven, at least initially, not by a desire to lay bare the critical limitations of contemporary museum criticism, but by my engagement with a particular exhibitionary context: The Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa, branded Te Papa – Our Place. In the mid-1990s the national press was frequently the site of lively debate over the
proposed museum project. This sparked my interest. As part of a master’s degree at Auckland University I explored elements of the museum’s policy formulation, particularly around the vexed issue of national identity and a reconciliatory discourse of biculturalism (Dibley, 1997a). Having done that work I was curious to see what the museum might look like when it opened. I made arrangements to be in Wellington for its opening day celebrations in February, 1998 (see Chapter 5).

On first encounter, I was as charmed as I was confused. My earlier essay had focused earnestly on questions of national narration in terms of biculturalism, which seemed to be the dominant concern of the project, at least on my interpretation. On entering into the physical space of the new museum the pervasiveness of the museum’s commitment to biculturalism at the level of representation was immediately obvious: there was scrupulous bilingual signage for everything, from museum texts throughout to signage for the lifts and the toilets, and, there was no ghettoising of indigenous material to the ethnographic hall – indigeneity had a significant visual presence throughout the building. This I had expected. However, two other discourses that I had all but ignored in my earlier essay were immediately obvious. These rested in tension, not only with the discourse of biculturalism, but also with each other. On the one hand, there was an irreverent celebration of the vernacular, and, on the other, pervasive references to the ‘non-places’ of hotel lounges, supermarkets, shopping malls and computer screens that mark a global modernity (Auge, 1995). How this space, which served as a leisure and tourist destination in a developing commercial precinct, might operate as a zone for postcolonial reconciliation, and also function as a place of homage to the local popular, struck me as an interesting set of tensions. This seemed pertinent in a context where the major agenda of Te Papa was the presentation of a narration of discovery by which ‘we’, as New Zealanders, would discover ‘who we are’; or, as the museum’s interlocutors have framed it, discover ‘our place in the world’ (Wedde, 1998). Grappling with a legacy of settler colonialism, awash in the flows of an increasingly globalised economy, ‘our place in the world’ over the 1980s and 1990s was not, if we were to believe cultural policy makers and many cultural
commentators, something of which New Zealanders could be confidently assured. Conceived to secure ‘our place in the world’ at the level of representation, Te Papa was designed to address this predicament. The tensions in its representations, however, seemed to repeat rather than resolve this predicament. Given the opportunity in 1998 to pursue a PhD at the Australian National University in Canberra, this looked to be an engaging topic.

In 1999 I returned to Wellington for about six months and engaged in extensive research on the museum project. This included archival work on the formulation of the ‘idea of Te Papa’ and an exploration of media reception of that idea and its realisation. It also included discussions and interviews with curatorial staff, people involved in the conceptual architecture of the museum, people involved in market research of the museum’s product, and with the museum’s public critics. I analysed exhibitions and made non-obtrusive observations of visitors’ inter-actions with these spaces. The material generated over this period became one of the primary archives from which this thesis was built.

Given that Te Papa provides the context of and the motivation for my exposition, it is important to signpost how this archive has been mobilised in this thesis. Briefly defining its parameters in the negative provides me with an opportunity to both introduce some approaches others have taken to Te Papa and to justify aspects of my own orientation towards it. Firstly, then, my approach is not historical. It is neither an institutional history nor a history of the museum movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand1 (Gore, 2002; Thomson, 1981) nor is it a

1 Through this thesis I use the designation ‘A/NZ’ as shorthand for ‘Aotearoa/New Zealand’. The colonial violence of naming – that in some sense colonialism begins with a word – is a textual and discursive process that has been the focus of attention of postcolonial theorists and historians for some time (see Carter, 1988; Spivak, 1990:129). The appellation Aotearoa/New Zealand is caught in processes of transliteration and mistranslation that characterise (post)colonial exchanges. The social formation that I have signalled by this appellation is not its state-sanctioned title. It officially remains New Zealand, a translation of the Dutch ‘Nieuw Zeeland’, the name given to it by Dutch geographers in the 17th Century to correct Abel Tasman’s assumption in 1642 that it was part of the great southern continent, Staten Landt. Aotearoa/New Zealand is increasingly used by the country’s socially liberal to designate (a desire for) an emerging bi-cultural national condition (See Spoonley, 1995). ‘Aotearoa’ is translated into English as ‘the land of the long white cloud’. Periodically, in acts that Eco (1986:135-144) might describe as ‘semiotic guerrilla warfare,’ in graffiti on inner city walls it is transposed as ‘the land of the
history of the development of heritage and cultural policy in that country (Volkerling, 1995; Butts, 1996). Neither is it a comparative history. A number of writers have juxtaposed Te Papa to other recent museum projects that also refigure cultural and national narratives in the wake of colonial settlement, notably the National Museum of Australia, and also New Caledonia's Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou (Gore, 2003; Veracini and Muckle, 2002). Nor is it art history. Other writers have been concerned to locate Te Papa in relation to this history of art and visual culture in A/NZ (Brown, 2002; Williams, 2001). These historical narratives are important to write. Methodologically and theoretically, however, they offer limited purchase on the broader cultural, social, technological and economic landscapes whose 'deterritorialising' and 'reterritorialising' flows decisively shaped the Te Papa project in ways that this thesis seeks to map. Nevertheless, questions of historical narrative do raise the issue of the periodisation of my study. Although the Museum of New Zealand Act 1992 enacted the current institution, its two antecedent institutions, the National Museum and the National Art Gallery, have longer histories. The gallery was established in 1936 and the museum's beginnings were in 1865 (Dell, 1965). My investigation starts with none of these dates. Rather, the period with which I am most concerned is from the mid 1980s to 2000. In terms of the museum's life this chronology takes me from the report that initiated the project in 1985, Treasures of the Nation (commissioned by the Fourth Labour government), through to the Griffin et al Report (commissioned by the Fifth Labour government and released in 2000) that reviewed the Museum's operations. This is a periodisation that corresponds with a dramatic re-configuration of the country's cultural and economic alignments.

Secondly, this thesis is not ethnography. It has nothing to say of the complex negotiations between iwi (tribal) Maori, urban Maori and the museum, and their
conflicting positions on Kawa (protocol), Taonga (which includes spiritually invested material culture), and cultural property (intellectual and physical ownership). Paul Tapsell (1998) has written an important account of such discussions from the tribal perspective of Te Arawa. My thesis does, however, have something to say about the re-imagining of the country as 'essentially bicultural', to which Te Papa stands monument and whose plausibility, at least for socially liberal Pakeha (settler heirs), is conditioned on such negotiations.

Thirdly, it is not a detailed narrative of personality, politics, and policy as cultural and political power brokers go head to head to shape the new institution, as might be written by an investigative journalist. It is not concerned with behind the scenes power struggles, boardroom debate and corridor gossip. A Rats in the Ranks (Connolly and Anderson, 1996) style documentary, Getting to Our Place (Cottrell and Preston, 1999), provides an illuminating portal into such processes. I do not dispute the importance of telling these micro-narratives in contexts as different as Tapsell's work and Getting to Our Place. My interests simply lie elsewhere – in the Museum as a public event. That is, in the museum as a site of mass mediation of cultural difference and national identity whose narratives tack between the popular and the public, the cultural and the economic, the global and the local. In this I am as much interested in the museum's policy as I am in the images of its policy, images which circulate not only 'officially' though its architecture, exhibitions, public programmes and advertising, but also 'unofficially' in its media reception and other more or less public spaces.

Fourthly, this thesis is not positivist social science. It deploys neither qualitative nor quantitative methodologies as means of evaluating policy outcomes, measuring cultural consumption, engaging with public reception, or for analysing the content of its media coverage. While such research is so expensive and labour intensive as to put it beyond the scope of an isolated and under resourced doctoral student, there are particular questions of power/knowledge concerning the utility of this form of sociological investigation that need to be addressed. Where appropriate this thesis does engage with the type of research generated by the Ministry of
Cultural Affairs, the Museum Directors Federation of Aotearoa and the increasingly sophisticated and fine-grained data that the Museum itself generates about its visitors. Here I read this material not as giving access to some unmediated empirical reality – ‘the visitor’ or ‘the visitor experience’ – but as a mode for exploring the institutional images of differentiated and niche marketed ‘visitors’ as targets of, and for, knowledge.

Finally, this thesis is not museology. It is not written from a curatorial perspective and it is not explicitly structured by the debates of the literature in museum studies. These include questions of access and participation, debates on the object/idea nexus, commentary on the role of the museum as educator or entertainer, and issues concerning public or corporate models of museum management. As it turns out, however, it has things to say about all of these concerns but re-routes them through other modes of discussion. Although it gratefully draws on all of them, this thesis is not concerned to locate Te Papa in the discourse of history, ethnography, journalism, social science or museology. So what is it?

If the material on Te Papa provides one archive, it is its articulation in relation to a second archive that defines the thesis. The second archive is that of cultural theory and cultural studies. Concurring with Sharon MacDonald’s observation, that museums ‘act as “staging grounds” … for many questions which are also at the heart of debates in social and cultural studies’ (1996:2-3), I use Te Papa as the occasion to reflect on specific debates in cultural theory and cultural studies. To this end I map a trajectory through this literature which focuses on how the ‘idea of the museum’ and its associated social practices have been formulated in relation to questions of culture, government and colonialism. I take as points of departure two famous formulations, the ‘End of History’ thesis and culture ‘as a whole way of life’. These are associated respectively with Hegelian cultural theory and a cultural studies project inspired by Raymond Williams. With regard to the first formulation I examine how the ‘idea of the museum’ is positioned narratively and institutionally in the grand march of progress and concomitantly in the violence of imperialism. Despite our current ‘incredulity to grand narrative’ I contend that
this heritage shapes contemporary museums and the narratives of their critics in important ways. With regard to the second formulation I review the historical trajectory that posits culture ‘as a whole way of life’ and find it to be one less of relativism, as celebrated in the literature, and more a regulative and normative formulation that colonises its subjects. Bringing together the two formulations I consider how culture’s narration and institutionalization in museums coheres with the problematic of liberal government as postulated by Foucault. In so reviewing this literature on culture, government and museums, I develop analytical tools that I commit to two further activities. I return to the expositionary site of Te Papa, this time not as the charmed and confused national subject but more soberly as its analyst. And, I use these formulations to expose the limits of expositionary narratives of contemporary museum analysts.

In writing an analysis of Te Papa I am concerned to do three things. The first is to situate the idea of this museum, as it is articulated in official discourse and the popular media, in cultural and economic narratives decisively shaped by a project of liberal government. In this context I am concerned with two policy initiatives: biculturalism, a project of reconciliation between A/NZ’s indigenous communities and its settler heirs, and a project of economic restructuring determined by the dictates of global capital. Both were policy initiatives inaugurated by the Fourth Labour government, which also initiated ‘the idea of Te Papa’ in the Treasures of the Nation (1985) report. Secondly, following on from events after its opening in February 1998, I reflect on a certain sensibility that emerged in the responses to ‘the museum experience’, which at some levels undid Te Papa’s confident assertions about ‘Our Place in the World’. Finally, I review a particular opening exhibition, Parade, in which the tensions between the global and the local, art and the everyday, and the representation of Maori and Pakeha begin to unravel in interesting ways.

Reflecting closely on critical thinking about expositionary sites I expose a trope in which this scholarship is ensnared. This finds critics seduced by the museum’s own rhetoric of reform and thus they repeat its logic with their persistent
calls for that institution to be more representative of its constituencies, to have high levels of participation and to live up to its democratic ethos. Unconvinced by these accounts of contemporary museum critics, I argue for an ethical stance that refuses the normative operations inherent in the contemporary museums’ insistence on discovering ‘what we really are’, whether that ‘we’ be the humanity, nationality, ethnicity or other mode of cultural identity by which the constituencies of the museum might be interpellated.

In pursuing these activities I have composed this thesis in three parts. Part I, *Expositions*, explores the historico-theoretical co-ordinates that link culture, theory and museums with questions of liberal government. Part II, *The Exposition*, is concerned with an analysis of *Te Papa–Our Place* as a particular exhibitionary site. The third part, the *Coda*, is an engagement with the politics of museum criticism.

*Part I: Expositions*: Chapter One reviews the coupling of ‘the idea of the museum’ and the ‘End of History’ as they figure in the writing of two of modernity’s key nineteenth century theorists – Hegel and Marx. It does so with a view to exploring how this idea figures in their particular positions on the narration of History and its institutionalisation and their respective celebrations of Freedom and Progress. Historically and theoretically one end point to this trajectory is Francis Fukuyama’s (1989) (in)famous neo-liberal essay, ‘The End of History?’, which postulates the figure of the museum as the institutional form from which to survey ‘the post-historical period’. The correlation of the ‘idea of the museum’ with some imminent epochal shift – Hegel (1806), Marx (1851), Fukuyama (1989) – emerges as something of a minor trope in theories of modernity.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of History’s institutional arrangements, exemplified here by the advent of the museum, Chapter Two focuses on ‘the culture concept’. It maps the trajectory of the culture concept through an intellectual tradition indebted to Hegel and Marx, focussing, in particular, on the work of Arnold and Tylor, Williams and Bennett, Bhabha and Clifford. Here, my purpose is to review the relations established by these writers between theories of
culture and 'progress(ive)' narratives. I argue that in linking theories of culture with narratives of liberty, whether they be that of Progress (Arnold, Tylor and Williams), or more modestly progressive (Bennett, Bhabha and Clifford), culture becomes an inherently normative concept. That is, in linking culture with freedom, theories of culture aim to deliver subjects to some horizon of emancipation, which serves as an ideal to which the actual is to be moved. Formally I establish this normativity by demonstrating a basic tension in the culture concept that each of these writers repeats. This tension exists between culture's expression as an ethnographic 'totality', as 'a way of life', and, on the other hand, its application as an administrative 'reality', as 'a way to life'. By suggesting that culture is a power relation, 'a way to life', rather than simply representing, symbolizing or in some other way imaging power relations, I argue for its transformative and regulative effects over an ethnographic totality. In this chapter, then, I argue that the concept of culture as articulated by these writers is inherently normative and that it is through its association with formulations of freedom and progress(iveness) that it is rendered governmental.

However, at this level of analysis the normative thrust of culture appears to be one more of theoretical desire than administrative reality. Having demonstrated the inherently normative operations of the culture concept, the historical question remains, how is it made durable? How is it exercised as a 'power over life'? Addressing this question puts us in dialogue with Hegel's concern with History's institutionalisation. Chapter Three proceeds to trace a history of 'the liberal-space of the museum' as one moment in the articulation of cultural expertise and the apparatus of rule that has come to deploy culture as a means to responsibilize people's liberty. The chapter maps transformations in the relations of government that have come to regulate the order of things and peoples that enter into that space. It proceeds firstly by locating questions of government and culture in relation to a three-fold transformation in the liberal problematic – a formulation borrowed from Nikolas Rose (1996) – from classical, to social, to advanced liberalism. Then, it
maps these mutations in relation to culture's government deployment in the liberal-space of the museum.

**Part II: The Exposition:** As Stuart Hall reminds us, 'theory is always a detour on the way to something more important' (1991:42). This is to say that questions of theory have to be posed in contexts where the answers matter. In my case this extended excursion through theory is a necessary detour on the way to a particular cultural study. For my purposes this particular site, Te Papa, is the end point to the historical narratives on liberalism, culture and the museum that I theorise in Part I. Part II, then, deploys a number of critical operations that analyse Te Papa at various levels: Chapter Four considers the wider social, political and economic context in which 'the idea of Te Papa' was advanced; Chapter Five reflects on the institutional operations of this museum; while, Chapter Six is an analysis of particular exhibitions.

Chapter Four considers the wider cultural, political, economic and policy environment in which the Te Papa project was conceived. In a speech made while unveiling the foundation stone of the new museum building, Jim Bolger, then the conservative Prime Minister, offered a permutation on Fukuyama's 'the end of History' thesis. Bolger tightly choreographed the 'idea of the museum' with emancipatory happy endings to the historical: the end of colonialism with the promise of '[bi]cultural maturity', and the end of the recession in which the country was gripped, with the prospect of 'future prosperity'. However, in a period when the state was de-centralising and increasingly seeking to govern 'at a distance' through various 'market' and 'community' mechanisms, in a period increasingly designated post-national, and in a period where social regulation and cohesion no longer appeared conditional on a coherent national culture, Bolger's advocacy of an institution devoted to 'representing the totality of New Zealand culture' seemed, if not anachronistic, at least paradoxical. This point was not lost on many of the project's critics. Predisposed to reading biculturalism and economic deregulation as fundamentally competing policy initiatives, they argued that such contradictions could only be resolved at the level of representation in the national culture that Te
Papa was to constitute and construct. In contrast I argue that while these policies are not always consistent with one another, nor of course always internally coherent, they belong to the same broad governmental problematic, one to which the idea of Te Papa stands monument.

Chapter Five moves inside Te Papa’s building on opening day, 14 February 1998. It proceeds to analyse the ‘Te Papa experience’ as one which oscillated, to unsettling effect, between an aesthetics of place and displacement. As a tourist and leisure destination that owes much to a global ‘architecture of consumption’ (malls, theme-parks, hotels), while also a space dedicated to the signature of the local, the Te Papa experience is articulated in the tensions and accommodations, complicities and compromises between a national vernacular and the global popular. To analyse this space I locate it in a simultaneous double movement, between an aesthetics of displacement – of disorientation, dislocation and distraction – that Fredric Jameson (1984) associates with the hysterical sublime, and an aesthetics of place; that is, an antipodean aesthetics associated with ‘the idea of nation’ through which ‘a sense of place’ is fabricated in the flux of global flows.

Chapter Six focuses on one of Te Papa’s long term opening exhibitions, Parade, a cultural history exhibition on the artistic, design and media production of A/NZ. This exhibition included many cultural objects that, in a more orthodox exhibition, would have been framed within an aesthetic discourse. However, the privileged curatorial frame was not the aesthetic but rather that of the everyday. This shift in discursive framing solicited a public controversy over the apparent cultural loss that it entailed. Typically, local critics read a disparity in the museum’s treatment of cultural objects connected with Pakeha and with Maori, seeing the latter as being treated with a spiritual reverence and the former with a playful irreverence. For these critics this disparity reflects a deeper contradiction in the museum’s mandate between its commitment to biculturalism on the one hand, and to cultural populism on the other. In this chapter I reflect on the losses as well as the gains implicit in Parade’s shift from art to the everyday, which involves more than a commitment, or not, to the sanctity of European Art.
Part II is succeeded by the *Coda*. What I seek to demonstrate here is that critics of the contemporary museum have failed to understand the political rationality of this space. Instead of providing an adequate critique of its operations, they become seduced by its rhetoric and end up repeating the reformist logic that perpetuates its institutional form. To advance this argument I contend that most, if not all, of these critical analyses fail to disentangle themselves from the politics of reformism that has historically structured the liberal space of the museum. Despite a history deeply implicated in an imperial, bourgeois and phallocentric social order, it seems, at least to these scholars, that the museum is an institutional form that can be redeemed from this legacy of racism, classism, and sexism and so can be restored to its true democratic vocation. These reformist styles of analysis I term ‘narratives of redemption’.

I establish such narratives as an enduring trope in contemporary museum scholarship and, to explore the limitations of this trope, I focus on two of its most significant contemporary exponents, James Clifford and Tony Bennett. Then, drawing on Foucault’s work on subjectivation, I try to think outside this field of liberal governmentality in which the museum is embedded and which has mired its critics. In pursuing this line I return to Foucault’s politics and ethics for guidance. Inescapably bound to identity formation and thus to the subjectising regimes of individualisation and totalisation – of individuals and populations, of citizens and nations, of ethnicity and communities, and so forth – and thus the normative exercise of culture’s power, museums continually seek to answer the question: ‘who are we?’, thus defining the parameters of their constituency’s identity. Finding the museum’s answer to this question always inadequate in relation to some pattern of exclusion or another, the museum’s analysts become complicit in an ensuing discourse of reform. As I see it this line of criticism must be abandoned. Rather, the analyst’s task is to think how culture’s normativity and the museum’s operations of subjectification, of individualisation and totalisation might be refused and productively resisted, and made other than itself. Rather than cooperating in ‘better’ answering the museum’s quest for identity, the task needs to become, as Foucault
framed it, ‘not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are’ (1982:216). To this end I argue for an ethical position that refuses the subjectising operations implicit in Te Papa’s positing of ‘our place in the world.’
PART I
Chapter 1

'SOME INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN HURT':
on the 'idea of the museum' and the 'end of History'

Introduction

In closing his now (in)famous pop thesis, The End of History?, Francis Fukuyama writes: ‘In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history’ (1989:18). In his formulation the ‘historical period’ is over and no epochal events can be expected to change the trajectory of World History. With the advent of the end of the Cold War, signaled by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and, with it the communist alternative, Fukuyama declared that liberal capitalism had won out. Under these conditions he contended, ‘we’ are already living at ‘the End of History.’ Yet, even by his celebratory reckoning, in the post-historical period all ‘we’ can look forward to is a future of boredom presided over by a global democratic order and powered by a consumer led capitalism. Nevertheless, Fukuyama reasoned, this order is the only way humanity has to ensure its security, prosperity and liberty. Unsurprisingly, his thesis proved controversial, prompting a flood of commentary.1 However, it is not for his contentiousness – whose intricacies I won’t rehearse – that I open with Fukuyama; rather, it is for his deployment of the figure of ‘the museum’.

By positing the museum as the appropriate institution from which to curate the ‘new world order’ Fukuyama continues a rhetorical strategy that has marked a

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1 See, for example, the collection edited by Arthur M. Melzer et al. (1995).
number of modernity's key theorists: that of coupling 'the idea of the museum' with 'the end of History'. This coupling establishes a problematic group of concepts. They arise around the notion that History has an inherently progressive trajectory and that the end for which it strives is one in which truth, justice and emancipation are located, and concomitantly, that the 'idea of the museum' is a suitable emblem to designate this (joyous, if a little dull) 'post-historical' order. However, as Walter Benjamin famously noted, this relation of ideas, which we might designate 'civility', is at the same time 'a document of barbarism' (1973:248). He argued that 'a document of civilization' is simultaneously one of deceit, injustice and enslavement. This chapter analyses how 'the idea of the museum' has figured in relation to 'liberty' and 'violence' in the work of prominent theorists of modernity—Hegel, Marx and the Frankfurt School. Principally, it investigates how 'the idea of the museum' is complicit in the suffering which Hegel (1955) acknowledges in the Philosophy of History when he writes that in the course of World History 'some individuals have been hurt' (cited in Adorno, 1973:324).

Refusing 'the rendezvous of history'

It was in the introduction to that text that Hegel made his now infamous claim that Africa is unhistorical. Africa and its peoples, he argued, have no historical part to play in the dialectical unfolding of World History (1905:95–103). For the 'peoples without history', for those without the dynamic for historical momentum, the only possibility that the Hegelian narrative offered was the museum—as a mausoleum for the remains of their historical negation. He wrote: 'A people who refuse the rendezvous of history, which does not believe that it bears a unique message, that people is finished; you can put it in the Museum' (cited in Lamming, 1960:32).³

² The phrase is Wolf's (1982).
³ This was more than a metaphoric flourish on Hegel's part. Tragically for a number of those whose bodies bore in the Victorian imagination the atavistic mark of a different temporality or an unhistorical presence, the museum did indeed become the tomb of their physical internment. See for examples Gilman (1985a) on the Hottentot Venus, Turnbull on aboriginal remains (1994), and Lindfor (1983:10) on stuffed people on display. Jahoda (1999:209) reports that as recently as 1997 a stuffed Bechuana tribesman was on display in Banyoles, Spain. Corbey has noted that 'The Smithsonian Institution in
Hegel’s formulation is central to understanding the operations of emancipation and violence performed in the coupling of the idea of the museum and the narration of History. Analysing these operations requires reviewing both the narrative and institutional arrangements by which Hegel charts History’s progress.

Having confidently dispensed with the question of Africa at this early point in his thesis, Hegel vows ‘not to mention it again’ (1905:103). This disavowal has led to a great deal of critical reflection on Hegel’s narrative. Much of this criticism considers how the rationality motivating this narrative articulates a Eurocentric modernity that is complicit with imperial aggression and provides an ‘ideological’ justification for this violence. For example, Robert Young contends that, grounded in the Self’s negation of the Other, the dialectical logic of Hegelian narrative ‘uncannily simulates the project of nineteenth-century imperialism’ (1990:3). Young asserts that the logic of ‘expropriation and incorporation mimics at a conceptual level the geographical and economic absorption of the non-European by the West’ (ibid.). On this reckoning the mechanics of colonization in the field are discursively mapped out by Hegel’s narration of the ‘Absolute Spirit’s conquest of the world’. Young is no doubt right to posit such connections. Yet, given his poststructuralist credentials, his formulation does establish a peculiar division between power (colonialism) and knowledge (the dialectic). As Stuart Hall (1996:254) observes, this distinction between colonization as a system of rule, power and exploitation, and colonization as a system of knowledge and

Washington, DC, ... at this moment harbors the remains of about forty thousand non-Western individuals.’ (1995: 77, note 6). Notwithstanding Spivak’s contention that Hegel’s ‘virulent racism’ cannot be ‘written off... when we worship at the shrine of the dialectic’ (1992:77), I might add that Hegel’s position is not a simple denial (although it is ultimately the negation) of Africa’s historical agency. Immediately following his statement that opens this section, Hegel adds: ‘The Negro African is not finished before he is started; above all let him act. Let him bring like a leaven his message to the world. To help in constructing the Civilisation of the Universal’ (cited in Lamming 1960:32).

4 See, for examples, Spivak, (1990); Derrida, (1978); Bhabha, (1994); Said, (1978), and McClintock, 1995). This is, of course, not a domain exclusive to Hegel. As others have argued, this logic profoundly shapes not only the academic discipline of the philosophy of history, but also other humanist knowledges more generally. In these critical analyses Hegel is frequently made exemplar of Enlightenment thought (see Chakrabarty, 1992; Godzich, 1994; Gandhi, 1998; Young, 1990).

5 For criticisms, however, see Hall, (1996:248-9) and Frankenberg who perhaps too flippantly argues that it would indeed be remarkable if the ‘key object and achievement of the Algerian War of Independence was the overthrow of the Hegelian dialectic’ (1993:101 cited in Hall, 1996:249).
representation is false and disabling. This limiting division between power and knowledge is certainly not one that characterised Hegel’s own formulations.

Though he did invest most of his energy in the narration of the dialectical progression of History, it is important to recall that Hegel also argued that Reason develops through a procession of institutionalised forms. So, as Wlad Godzich writes, commenting on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977), ‘another way of describing history is to record the progressive institutionalisation of rationality until it becomes absolute in the ultimate institution, the Hegelian State, at which point history comes to an end’ (Godzich, 1986:xviii). For Hegel then, History’s narration is not simply discursive; it proceeds through the development of institutionalised forms associated with the rise of the modern state. Commenting on this aspect, Godzich, like Young, makes claims for the broad descriptive power of Hegel’s formulations. He contends that the nation-state and its attendant institutional formations (including, in particular, the University) were, and continue to be, organised in terms accurately described by the Hegelian process of institutionalisation (see Godzich 1992). However, it is precisely these institutional arrangements that slip from the analytical vista of critics like Young. By restoring, as Godzich does, the interconnections between Hegel’s narrative project and the institutional arrangements by which that narration progresses the gap between knowledge and power is impossible to sustain. This is so because History’s narration is a process of institutionalisation. Rather than simply being that which discursively mimics the imperial negation of the Other, Hegel’s narrative articulates the institutional arrangements through which such violence is performed as Spirit progresses to its ultimate realisation in the Hegelian Super-State.

The museum as one of the modern state’s pre-eminent institutions exemplifies both the narrative and institutional project of Reason that Hegel

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6 The various modern disciplinary knowledges and their concomitant institutions, for example, those associated with the nation-state like the map, the census, and the museum, were vital, as Benedict Anderson argues, for they rendered other spaces, other peoples and other times ‘knowable’ and thus ultimately assimilable/extirminable (1991: Chapter 10).

7 See Bill Readings (1996) for an alternative and influential analysis of the university.
articulates. Though limited, Hegel’s comments on the museum in relationship to his central themes of History and Aesthetics are instructive. Here Hegel supplies leverage on the museological genres of collecting the ‘aesthetic’ and the ‘anthropological’. While Fukuyama might close History from Washington in 1989 with the figure of the museum, Hegel has anticipated him. His famous announcement that History ended at Jena in 1806 coincides with his involvement in a museum project that marked the advent of the Prussian state and with it the post-historical period. Hegel’s museological affiliations are with the Altes Museum, which was built to celebrate the Prussian State, housing works of art repatriated after Napoleon’s defeat. The museum’s architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, was Hegel’s close friend and the museum’s first director, Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Hegel’s protégé (see Crimp, 1993:292-3). Douglas Crimp (1993) compellingly argues that these associations established the Altes as the first institutional expression of Hegel’s Aesthetics (1975). In this it constituted the paradigmatic modern art museum committed to the articulation of a new historicist discipline, art history, which established the idealist aesthetic tradition of the modern art museum (Crimp, 1993:290). In this project Art ceded its place to Philosophy as the supreme mode of knowing the Absolute, and that Art was merely an object of philosophical contemplation. Thus, the collection was arranged in a historical progression, by which the visitor was to ‘march through the history of man’s striving for Absolute Spirit’ (Crimp, 1993:301-2).8

Figure 3 The Altes Museum, 1823-1830

8 See Bann, (1984) for an account of the development of historical art museum exhibitions in Britain and France.

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Hegel’s reflections on cultural objects from Africa in the *Aesthetics* echo his pronouncements in the *Philosophy of History*. Motivated by an undeveloped Spirit such objects lack aesthetic merit and as such serve as the counterpoint to truly aesthetic. The museumified Africa is to provide the not to be mentioned supplement to History’s progress (Hegel, 1905:103). Through this institutional narration of History, Hegel articulates the enduring distinction between the museum of art and that of ethnography; as the summit of civilisational achievement, on the one hand and the alterity against which that achievement is defined, on the other.⁹

From these observations on the museum and History’s narration, the museum survives History as it comes to be the institutional expression of Reason’s dialectical unfolding. In this Hegelian schema, the museum supplies institutional bookends for the narrative of History. At one end stands the ethnographic museum as the mausoleum for the remains of the unhistorical, and at the other stands the art museum at the summit of Reason’s striving. In this sense the Museum survives History by bearing testimony to the unhistorical and witness to a post-historical order. Thus, in its Enlightenment formulation the idea of the museum and its institutional expression exist as a space outside historical time. Bookending the narrative of Reason’s progress, the museum stands as testimony to its dialectical struggle, as the monument to History that survives its end.

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⁹ A distinction that Jan Nederveen Pieterse has recently cast in the following terms which accord with Hegelian formulations: ‘Occupying a derivative status as a scientific, moral and political annex of the majority museums … ethnological museums serve as a counterpoint to them, politically marginal while symbolically central’ (1997:121).
In Marx’s oeuvre, like Hegel’s, institutions of exhibition have a negligible role. Nevertheless, in Marx’s writing too they metonymically capture the machinations of liberty and violence that mark his thinking on the processes of temporality in modern ‘society’.

While Marx was epistemologically indebted to Hegel’s logic, he did not share Hegel’s proposition that History progressed through a series of institutional forms whose ultimate synthesis was represented by the idealist Absolute State. Marx shared in the Young Hegelians’ radical rejection of Hegel’s idealism. Rather than positing Spirit as the ultimate reality, Marx, along with the Young Hegelians, inverted Hegel’s schema arguing that it was the material conditions of social life that determined human consciousness. This led to Marx’s famous materialist corrective to Hegel’s idealist dialectic. This epistemological inversion had profound consequences for the narration of history in the Marxian schema. Here the privileged site of History’s narrative was not to be the state, but was rather to be production. That is, History’s progress was marked not by Spirit’s struggle through various institutional forms until it became absolute in the Hegelian Super-State, but rather it was the successive transformations in the modes of production that ultimately drove History’s progressive narration toward greater spheres of human emancipation. In this materialist formulation, rather than the State emerging as the ultimate institution from which to announce History’s end, it was, in fact, historicized as the artifice of a particular mode of production. As Marx famously

\[10\] Marx cited in McLellan (1975:8). This observation on the 1851 exhibition alludes to his theory of the commodity fetish that for him characterizes capitalist social relations, and on which his subsequent theorizations of ‘ideology’ were built (Eagleton, 1991). Here, Marx analysed the operations by which the artefacts of human toil are estranged from their makers and come to confront them as alien commodities to whose pursuit they slavishly devote themselves (see Marx, 1976: Chapter 1: section 4). Walter Benjamin has captured this formulation when he wrote that international expositions served less as vehicles for the technical education of the working class, and more as instruments for its stupefaction before the reified products of its own labour; as he put it, ‘places of pilgrimage to the fetish Commodity’ (1973:165).

\[11\] Althusser’s (1979) Marx notwithstanding.

\[12\] Marx wrote: ‘The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell’ (1961:20).
and problematically postulated, it was an artifice that would ‘wither away’ with the demise of capitalist social relations.\textsuperscript{13} Given this epistemological orientation, it is unsurprising that it was not the Art museum but the industrial exhibition that had metonymic resonances for Marx. The end point and institutionalisation of History was not to be found in the edifice of the super-state exemplified by the idealist art museum, but rather, in that institution which manifestly celebrated the achievement of capitalist production. Living in London, shortly after his exile from France for his activities in the Paris Revolution of 1848, Marx was to witness an unprecedented spectacle of Victorian laissez-faire liberalism – \textit{The Great Exhibition}, 1851.\textsuperscript{14}

![The Great Exhibition, 1851](source: http://65.107.211.206/victorian/art/architecture/feist/35.html)

As the \textit{Altes} project did for Hegel, so for Marx the \textit{Great Exhibition} arises at a point of epochal change. However, where the idealist philosopher celebrated the advent of the Art museum, the materialist social commentator derided the 1851

\textsuperscript{13} The state inevitably falls with them. In his writing on the withering of the state, Engels has deployed the rhetorical figure of the museum as that space for the socially obsolete: ‘The society which organizes production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong - into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze axe’ (1975:232).

\textsuperscript{14} Of the recent histories on \textit{The Great Exhibition}, 1851, see in particular Auerbach (1999).
exhibition as an expression of ‘bourgeois megalomania’. Marx and Frederick Engels observed:

This exhibition was announced by the English bourgeoisie already in 1849, with the most impressive cold-bloodedness, at a time when the whole Continent was still dreaming of revolution .... By putting on show the massed resources of modern industry in a small concentrated space, just at a time when modern bourgeois society is being undermined from all sides, it is also displaying materials which have been produced, and are still being produced day after day in these turbulent times, for the construction of a new society. With this exhibition, the bourgeoisie of the world has erected in the modern Rome its Pantheon, where, with self-satisfied pride, it exhibits the gods which it has made for itself .... The bourgeoisie is celebrating this, its greatest festival, at a moment when the collapse of its social order in all its splendour is imminent, a collapse which will demonstrate more forcefully than ever how the forces which it has created have outgrown its control.

There are several points to make on this exhibition with regard to Marx’s social theory and the machinations of liberty and violence. The first concerns the narrative of historical progress that informs the passage cited above. According to the Mansion House resolution the Great Exhibition ‘was expected to inaugurate universal peace’ (Spencer, 1971:210). Clearly, Marx was hostile to the exhibition’s interlocutors’ ‘cosmopolitan-philanthropic-commercial hymns of peace’. This was not simply because they belied revolutionary dissension on the continent, but

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16 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue, May-October 1850, see http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/11/01.htm.
because they denied the historical operations on which the event was contingent. For Marx the laissez-faire liberalism celebrated at the bourgeoisie’s ‘greatest festival’ masked the inherent contradictions of class society from which ‘the new society’ would blossom. In the volatile political climate of mid-nineteenth century Europe, Marx could (optimistically) figure this festival as the flowering of the capitalist forces of production that were soon to wither and release the seeds of a new social order. Given the herbaceous metaphor deployed in Marx’s social theory, it is perhaps appropriate that the exhibition signalling the imminent transition to this ‘new society’ took place in Paxton’s gigantic greenhouse.18

Secondly, Marx suggests that the *Great Exhibition* stands as a metonym for capitalist social relations at the limit of their flourishing. This highlights an imperialistic violence that marks Marx’s own narrative of History. Marx saw the *Great Exhibition* as marking a radical rupturing of ‘spatial barriers’ that could only break the ‘reproductions of old ways of life’ (1973a:410). As Engels was to comment: ‘The exhibition of 1851 sounded the knell of English insular exclusiveness. England became gradually internationalized, in diet, in manners, in ideas’ (1936:xiv). More generally, Marx and Engels observed: ‘This exhibition is a striking proof of the concentrated power with which modern large-scale industry is everywhere demolishing national barriers and increasingly blurring local peculiarities of production, society and national character among all peoples.’19 For Marx, this internationalisation and socialisation of humanity, conditioned by capital, was a progressive force.

Intellectually, however, his commitment to this progressive narrative left him in a problematic relationship with the violence of imperialistic capital

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18 For example in the Grundrisse Marx wrote: ‘The highest development of this basis itself (the flower into which it transforms itself; but it is always this basis, this plant as flower; hence withering after the flowering and as consequence of the flowering) is the point at which it is itself worked out, developed, into the form in which it is compatible with the highest development of the forces of production, hence also the richest development of the individuals. As soon as this point is reached, the further development appears as decay, and the new development begins from a new basis’ (1973a541).

19 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue, May-October 1850, see http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/11/01.htm.
expansion. While ‘India’, as a pageant of peoples and possessions, was the crowning glory of the 1851 Exhibition, it was a thorn in the side of Marx’s grand narrative of human emancipation. Marx, of course, was alive to the paradox of liberty espoused by the utilitarian liberals, pertinently observing that ‘to be free at home, John Bull must enslave abroad’ (Marx and Engels cited in Kiernan 1974:193). However, in his formulations it seems that the natives must first be put in chains by capital before they might break free in the uprising of a global proletariat. Ultimately Marx could not condemn the imperialising capitalism that brought ‘India’ to London in 1851. Indeed, he was to write of India’s colonization that, while its violence was to be lamented, the transformation of the Indian peasantry into the proletariat was historically for the best since it would bring them into the revolutionary struggle of the international working class. Like Hegel before him, Marx’s narrative repeats the imperial violence of modernity’s teleological narration.

20 Marx, in his article The British Rule in India, wrote, ‘England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. Then, whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings, we have the right, in point of history, to exclaim with Goethe:

Should this torture then torment us
Since it brings us greater pleasure?
Were not through the rule of Timur
Souls devoured without measure?

[From Goethe’s “An Suleika”, Westöstlicher Diwan]

21 Interestingly, however, Marx himself was not averse to comparing contemporary capitalism with the colonial violence that is now seen as conditioning its future. He was to write: ‘the drive toward the extension of the working day, the werewolf-like hunger for surplus, is an area where capital’s monstrous outrages unsurpassed, according to an English bourgeois economist [John Wade, 1835] by the cruelties of the Spaniards to the American red-skins’ (Capital Vol. 1, 1976:353).
'a document of barbarism'

In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* Walter Benjamin forcefully articulates Enlightenment thinking with the subsequent history of European despotism, writing ‘There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’ (1973:248). As the Hegelian deployment suggests, the modern museum might well be read as an exemplary monument to Benjamin’s doubly inscribed ‘documentation’. Most obviously, and close to Benjamin’s concerns was, of course, the Nazi Degenerate Art Show of 1937, staged by the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in Munich (see Hinz, 1979). The curatorial strategy of this exhibition articulated a series of binaries – progressive and degenerate, healthy and pathological – which posited a ‘robust’ tradition of German conservatives against the works of the “mentally ill” – the Avant-garde, the Jew, the African, the Communist, all of whom were ‘denied any true aesthetic sensibility’ (Gilman, 1985b: 594).

![Figure 5](http://www.portal-ns.com/thecensure/art6.htm)  
*Figure 5 Installation view of the Degenerate Art exhibition*  
(source: http://www.portal-ns.com/thecensure/art6.htm)

22 Paintings: Emil Nolde: The Mulatto; Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Portrait of B. R.; at far right, a portion of Emil Nolde, Man And Woman. Translation of the wall statement reads: ‘The niggerising of music and theatre as well as the niggerising of the visual arts was intended to uproot the racial instinct of the Folk, and to tear down blood barriers’. See http://www.portal-ns.com/thecensure/art6.htm.
Reflecting on the discursive formation in which this exhibition was located, Sander Gilman writes: ‘The aesthetic ... assumed a major function in defining the outsider, a position which it had held since Hegel’s discussion of the nature of African art in the mid-nineteenth century. The difference was, of course, that by the 1940s direct measures were taken to excise the “disease” from the “body politic”’ (ibid.:595).

While this might be seen as an ‘aberrant’ example, the point to take from both Benjamin and Gilman, if not Hegel and Marx, is that it shares in a more general logic. Indeed, the institution of the museum supplies ready testimony to the dialectical violence that propels modernity ‘forward’ and, in its dialectic configuration, it archives the scene of destruction and despair that Benjamin’s ‘Angel of History’ surveys. (1973:249). Modern exhibitionary institutions have articulated the logic endemic to modernity that both fetishises difference and seeks, in the Hegelian sense, to overcome it. This history of dialectical violence includes, for example; *Musée Napoleon* (the Louvre), rhetorically announced as the institution for the liberty of Arts and Letters, embodying an imperialist museological gaze which plundered occupied territories in the wake of military expansion; metropolitan museums collecting the cultural and corporeal remains of ‘vanishing peoples’; colonial expositions conflating the colonised and raw materials as natural resources to be exploited; World Fairs celebrating America’s modernity while denigrating Black communities (Rydall, 1984); exhibitionary institutions being mobilised, in Britain and the United States, to disseminate the message of eugenics; and Imperial international exhibitions devoted to bio-political concerns of colonisation (Stolar, 1995) which would effect the best distribution of the ‘white race’ globally to bring non-European spaces into the narrative of capital (Miers, 1928; McKenzie, 1984). If, as Hegel euphemistically puts it, in the course of World

24 Among others sited above see also Coombes, (1995); Stocking (1985); Durran, (1988).
History ‘some individuals have been hurt’, it is the museum that chronicles this violence (cited in Adorno, 1973:324).

‘the last European’

‘History is what hurts’ (Jameson, 1982:102). It is difficult to disagree with Fredric Jameson’s observation that ‘the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror’ (1984:57). This is a perspective that he inherits from the Frankfurt School. However, given their deep insight into the violence of the logic of progress, there is a curious myopia in the Frankfurt School’s tendency to see modern despotism as an aberration from modernity’s ‘incomplete project’27 (see Bauman, 1989) while being blind to the question of colonialism (Said, 1993:336; Young, 1990:125). That is, the Frankfurt School is seen as seriously limited by its incapacity to see beyond Europe. In fact, Martin Jay describes Adorno as having ‘a provincial streak’ (1973:187).28 However, this ‘provincialism’ cannot be written off as a personal predilection, for even the second generation Frankfurter, Jürgen Habermas, has said ‘we have nothing to say to “anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles in the Third World”’ (Habermas cited in Said, 1993:336). While Adorno argued that the Enlightenment conception of freedom, grounded in the principles of ‘the universal rights of man’, of equality before the law, exist alongside real inequality, injustice and unfreedom, the analysis is not to be extended into ‘the contact zones’29 of bourgeois colonialism. It took Frantz Fanon (1967:71)30 to point out that Fascism is colonialism bought home to Europe, confronting Europeans with the unpalatable truth that the Enlightenment narratives of universal citizenship, democracy, equality

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27 This term belongs to Habermas (1983).
28 He cites Hans Meyer: ‘Adorno, as far as I see, never took a trip out of the simple desire to see. Europe sufficed for him entirely. No India or China, no Third World, not the people’s democracies and not the workers’ movements. Even in his needs for life experience, he remained a citizen – and sovereign – of a small state’ (cited in Jay, 1973:187).
29 The term is Pratt’s (1992).
30 In The Wretched of the Earth Fanon asks, ‘what is fascism if not colonialism when rooted in a traditionally colonialist country? ([1961] 1967: 71). Hannah Arendt was also to make this connection in her The Origins of Totalitarianism when she argues that the ‘civilizing mission’ was to return home to haunt Europe, plunging it into Fascism ([1951] 1967). For a commentary see Prakash, (1996).
and liberty that underline modern culture and civilization rest on the suppression of these ideals elsewhere by slavery, indentured labour, and colonisation (see Gilroy, 1993). There is, then, a failure in theorising to take full account of the truth that Hegel had already so blandly understated: in the course of World History ‘some individuals have been hurt’. To figure the world of this hurt it is necessary to expand the ruinous scene of destruction and despair that Benjamin’s ‘Angel of History’ witnessed.

While arranging to take flight from modernity’s European carnage and preparing himself for the journey to New York that tragically he for would never make, Hannah Arendt recalled Benjamin saying wryly – no doubt full of melancholy for the devastation wrought on European culture by the Fascists – that the Americans ‘would probably find no other use for him than to cart him up and down the country to exhibit him as the “last European”’ (Arendt, 1973:23). Perhaps, in his use of this imperialist exhibitionary trope – ‘the last of’ – to describe his predicament there is an affinity with Frantz Fanon’s recognition that ‘Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony’ (1967:80).31 Caged on both sides of the Atlantic by the iron bars of modernity’s instrumental rationality,32 Benjamin could only imagine his future in the United States as a spectacle, as part of the Culture Industry; an industry, that he wrote, ‘elevat[es] people to the level of commodities’ (1978: 152).33

31 It is interesting to note that Frantz Fanon cites an exhibitionary/fiction nexus an example were racism is bedded down into the unconscious: ‘The European knows and he does not know. On the level of reflection, a Negro is a Negro; but in the unconscious there is the firmly fixed image of the nigger-savage. I could give not a dozen but a thousand illustrations … [in] Presence Africaine, Emile Dermenghem, who cannot be accused of Negrophobia, said: “One of my childhood memories is of a visit to the World’s Fair 1900, during which my chief enthusiasm was to see a Negro. My imagination had naturally been stimulated by my reading: Capitaine de quinze ans (A Captain at Fifteen), Les Aventures de Robert (Robert’s Adventures), Les Voyages de Livingstone (Livingstone’s Travels).” Dermenghem tells us that this was the manifestation of his taste for the exotic. While I may be prepared to put my two hands into his and believe the Dermenghem who wrote the article, I ask his permission to entertain doubts about the Dermenghem of the 1900 Fair.’ (1967:199-200))

32 This, of course, is an allusion to the Weber’s ‘iron cage’ which was the ‘inevitable’ the outcome of progress bureaucratization (see Giddens, 1971:235).

33 This would seem to anticipate Jean Baudrillard observation. In an evocation of Foucault’s (1991) carceral archipelago, he argued, ‘Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in it entirely in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral)’ (1983:23).
Figure 6 The Couple in the Cage: a Guatinanui odyssey

Exhibited in a cage, performance artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena toured the United States in 1992.³⁴ As part of the counter-quincenenary commemorations of Columbus’s ‘discovery’, their project – Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit ... – was intended to satirise the imperial trope of exhibiting ‘exotics’ in the ‘West’ that posits ‘white’ audiences as global consumers for a fetishised alterity.³⁵ By drawing on the history of non-modern others who have been

³⁴ Indeed, they travelled more broadly than the United States. Performances were held at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C.; the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; the Whitney Museum, New York; the Art Gallery of the University of California, Irvine; the Australian Museum of Natural History, Sydney; Columbus Plaza, Madrid; Convent Garden, London, and Fundacion Banco Patricios, Buenos Aires (Fusco, 1995:50). For a commentary see Behar and Mannheim (1995).

³⁵ This practise has a long history (Fusco, 1995:41-2). Columbus’ kidnapped Arawacs, displayed in the Spanish court in 1493; Montaigne’s vision of ‘cannibals’ inspired by viewing Native Americans gifted to the King of France in 1562 (Certeau, 1986: Chapter 5); Saartje Baartman’s, (‘the Hottentot Venus’), steatopygia captured the imagination of Londoners and Parisians in 1810, and was identified as the mark of her ‘bestial and excessive’ sexuality (Gilman, 1985); Ota Benga, a Pygmy, was displayed in the primate cage at the Bronx Zoo and at the St. Louis World Fair in 1904 (Bradford and Blume, 1992); Tambo, an Aborigine from North Queensland Australia, and his companions moved through the exhibitionary circuits of late nineteenth century Europe (Poignant, 1997; 2004) and ‘Tiny Teesha, the Island Princess’, a black woman midget from Haiti, was exhibited at the Minnesota State Fair has recently as 1992 (Fusco, 1995:42, 50, 58).
forced to perform their identity in "civilised" places', Fusco and Gomez-Pena's
dissimulation sought to invest this 'other history of intercultural performance' with
a disruptive agency (Fusco, 1995). The performance involved Fusco and Gomez
Pena portraying a couple from an (imaginary) previously undiscovered Caribbean
island, Guatinaui. However, disrupting the logic of History's 'not to [be]
mention[ed]' supplement proved unexpectedly difficult (Hegel, 1905:103). Fusco
reports:

a substantial portion of the public believed that our fictional identities
were real ones .... [and] a substantial number of intellectuals, artists and
cultural bureaucrats sought to deflect attention from the substance of our
experiment to the 'moral implications' of our dissimulation, or in their
words, our 'misinforming the public' about who we were. (1995:37-8).

'The literalism implicit in the interpretation of our work by individuals
representative of the "public interest"', Fusco observes, 'bespoke their investment in
positivist notions of "truth" and depoliticised, ahistorical notions of "civilisation"'
(ibid.). Here, then, Fusco and Gomez-Pena dissimulation became accounted for in
terms that accord with Godzich's (1986; 1992) understanding of modern institutions
as 'unconsciously Hegelian'. 'In this pervasive allegory', James Clifford observes,
'the non-Western world is always vanishing and modernizing – as in Walter
Benjamin's allegory of modernity, the tribal world is conceived as a ruin'

In the early nineteenth century Whig commentator, T. B. Macaulay, reversed
this allegory. In this he supplied a Rankean counterpoint to the teleology Hegel
announced with the advent of the Altes. In concluding a review of von Ranke, in
which Macaulay forewarned of any complacency in the face of the triumph of
protestant progress, he imagined, surveying the future ruins of London, not an angel,
but a visitor from the New World, a New Zealander (Skilton, 2004; Denoon,
1984:206).
New Zealander, Left republican, and political commentator, Bruce Jesson, never visited London, or for that matter, Berlin or Washington. He did, however, reflect on the implication of Fukuyama’s thesis, and worried about just what the end of History signalled for New Zealand (Jesson, 1990). The triumph of the right celebrated by Fukuyama had seen the collapse of ideological distinctions between political parties in the West, exemplified, in New Zealand, by a monetarist Labour government. For Jesson this loss of ideological difference was more than a loss of political choice, rather it risked the ‘the continuity of cultural paradigms and the history that has produced them’ (1990:119) Parodying Fukuyama, he wrote:

It is not only the political situation that has changed so fundamentally, but our political culture as well ... The end of history will be a very sad time ... there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the prospect of centuries of boredom (ibid.).

Perhaps, it is no surprise that the government that ushered in the post-historical epoch in A/NZ also initiated an unprecedented museological project. First mooted in 1985 by the Fourth Labour government, The Museum of New Zealand–Te Papa Tongerawa looked to be the country’s pre-eminent institution from which to curate the boredom of the post-historical order.

36 Passionate nationalist, Jesson extensively toured New Zealand, but never left the country.
Chapter 2

‘A WAY OF LIFE’ / ‘A WAY TO LIFE’:

on culture’s normativity

Introduction

*The Ministry of Culture and Heritage*, the ministry responsible for Te Papa, provides the following definition of culture:

In its broadest sense, ‘culture’ refers to the whole way of life of a nation or people, and encompasses every kind of phenomenon that gives a significance and identity to that way of life .... Culture and cultural activities are about our way of life and are a combination of our past and present as reflected in museums and libraries, on marae and in films, activities such as dance, classical and pop music, theatre, books, magazines, films, paintings, ... food, sports, religion, and a host of other things. In this sense, ‘culture’ refers to something broader than the typical interests of government. (Italics added)¹

However, as the document continued, the ‘government has an interest in securing for New Zealanders the benefits produced by cultural activities’.² Since these activities ‘satisfy our desire ... for aesthetic experience’; develop ‘our full capacities, including our capacity to be creative in other areas of life’; and ‘enhance

¹ This is a composite quote taken from http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/govt_role_in_cult_sect/2.html and http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/important/index.html
² http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/govt_role_in_cult_sect/2.html
our ability to participate in social and civic life' (ibid.). Thus, such cultural activities 'enhance our quality of life' and 'contribute to other goals of public policy such as good health and social cohesion' (ibid.). This document, then, posits a familiar distinction between culture as — evoking, it seems, Raymond Williams' (1961: chapter 2) maxim — 'a whole way of life' and the more limited interests of government in social regulation. It registers a governmental interest in culture since by intervening in the 'whole way of life of a nation or people' policy seeks to 'enhance life', shaping life in the direction of desirable outcomes — in this instance, those of creativity, civic life, good health, and social cohesion. However, while an inclusive anthropological description of culture 'as a whole way of life' and an administrative politico-ethical project to 'enhance life' might appear, as they do in the document cited above, as quite distinction spheres of social life, they, in fact, represent an enduring dialectic that rests at the heart of the culture concept. That is, culture is both 'a way of life' and a way to it. This chapter is an elaboration on this central dialectic that marks not only cultural policy, but also the formulations of culture's theorists.

**A Keyword**

Raymond Williams credits Matthew Arnold with first giving an intellectual tradition 'a single watchword and a name' (1963:124). Culture was that keyword. What Arnold bequeathed is no simple rubric for a tradition. It is an appellation that designates a powerful conceptual apparatus: one that is conservative in its effects and normative in its operations. This is no doubt an obvious point to make in relation toArnoldian formulations of culture. However, by exposing the structure of culture's operations identified by Arnold, it becomes equally obvious that more multicultural and postcolonial, more populist and demotic deployments of culture are similarly invested with this normativity. In relativising and pluralising the concept critics lay claim to de-colonizing its imperialist authority and democratizing its classist elitism. Yet they have failed to see the inescapably normative aspect of the culture concept. In what follows I demonstrate that Arnold's watchword
operates more as a watchman that aims to supervise a way of life. In this chapter I examine how this regulatory operation is reiterated across the archive of cultural theory.

This legacy is demonstrated by examining how the formulations of culture deployed by politically and historically diverse thinkers – Matthew Arnold, E. B. Tylor, Raymond Williams, Homi K. Bhabha, Tony Bennett, George Steiner and James Clifford – repeat a basic tension. That is between, on the one hand, culture’s expression as an ethnographic ‘totality’, as ‘a way of life’, and, on the other hand, its application as an administrative ‘reality’, as ‘a way to life’. Formulating my analysis around this tension – culture as ‘a way of life’ and culture as ‘a way to life’ – I wish to high-light a structuring of the culture concept that continues to mark not only the tradition to which Arnold gave a ‘watchword’ but also its counter-tradition, Cultural Studies, to which Williams supplied the key phrase: culture as ‘a whole way of life.’

While the first part of my formulation acknowledges Williams, the second element has less well-recognised antecedents. Describing the operations of power in Foucault’s bio-political formulations, one of the Frenchman’s early English interlocutors, Colin Gordon, designated power as ‘a way to life’ (1991:5). By suggesting that culture as a power relation is ‘a way to life’ I argue for its transformative and regulative effects over the ethnographic totality that the analysts of culture might neutrally claim to describe as ‘a whole way of life’. In this second sense I wish to signpost the governmental aspect, in Foucault’s sense of that word, which is central to the culture concept.3 This leads me to questions concerning the political and theoretical

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3 While Williams is credited with giving the word culture its broader anthropological meaning, as ‘a whole way of life’, it is important to note that in Keywords, in which he has written an etymology of culture, we find the evidence of culture’s administrative meaning (1983:86-93). That is, the etymology of culture suggests the continuing presence of culture as a governmental concept, as ‘a way to life’. As Williams has it, ‘culture’ is derived from the Latin cultura and colere; whose meanings include ‘inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship’. These meanings begin to separate out; with Christianity, the sense of ‘honour with worship’ embraced by cultura became the Latin cultus from which the word cult is derived. More importantly, the ‘inhabit’ meaning included in cultura develops through the Latin colonus – farmer – from which the modern word colony is derived. The primary meaning in early usage of culture thus lay in husbandry – in the cultivation of ‘natural growth’. As Williams puts it, culture ‘was a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals’ (ibid.). The culture of the land always involves questions of management; the husbandry of livestock and crops. If we are to believe Foucault it is this culture of the land that has bequeathed us one particularly enduring mode of government, one based on the
consequences of the continued investment in that conceptual apparatus designated by the term culture. To this end I conclude this chapter by exploring three possible trajectories for the future of culture. By drawing attention to this basic structuring dialectic shared by those who invest in the culture concept, its inherently normative operations can be made more apparent. The theoretico-historical co-ordinates of this chapter owe a lot to Tony Bennett’s (1998: in particular chapter 4) formulations of the relations between certain currents of cultural studies and the legacy they inherit, largely unacknowledged, from reformist conceptions of culture – exemplified by nineteenth century thinkers such as Arnold and Tylor. However, while Bennett’s formulations have been vital for my own thinking, I seek to distance myself from the types of political programmes he supports in the wake of his historico-theoretical analysis.

**Modern Culture: Aesthetics and Evolution**

Historically, the antecedents for the two modern definitions of culture in English, as aesthetic perfection, on the one hand, and, ethnographic totality, on the other, have been cast as a split between the conservatism of Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* ([1869] 1960) and the liberalism of Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* ([1871] 1891). For a considerable period this distinction has prevailed in the history of the culture concept (see Stocking, 1982). This orthodoxy has identified Arnold’s position with elitist and authoritarian formulations of culture in which it is understood as an ideal state of, or as striving for, aesthetic perfection, while Tylor is credited as an early proponent of culture in the plural, relativistic anthropological sense. Williams has logic of animal husbandry. This is the ‘shepherd-game’ of pastoral power, adopted and vastly elaborated by Christianity as the care of souls, secularized and expanded in regimes of liberal welfarism. From its earliest incarnations as a ‘noun of process’ – from the husbandry of crops and stock to the cultivation of souls for salvation – culture, then, has been managerial, ‘a way to life.’ In *Keywords* Williams finds that at the heart of culture lies colonization, which is ironic given the absence of the analysis of colonialism that has been a long standing criticism of his oeuvre (see Viswanathan, 1991; Said, 1993). Commenting on this Robert Young contends ‘colonization rests at the heart of culture’. That is, ‘culture always involves a form of colonization, even in relation to its conventional meaning as the tilling of the soil.’ ‘The culture of land’ Young continues, ‘has always been in fact, the primary form of colonization; the focus on soil emphasizes the physicality of the territory that is coveted, occupied, cultivated, turned into plantation and made unsuitable for indigenous nomadic tribes’ (1995:31).
played no small part in sustaining this division. In his etymology of culture, Williams writes, using this word to ‘indicate a particular way of life’ ‘was decisively introduced into English by Tylor’ (Williams, 1983:90, 91). However, this has proved to be a dubious distinction. In fact, culture in its anthropological sense as process is dependent on its conservative meaning, as perfection, for its transformative power. Reviewing how culture and power operate in the works of Arnold and Tylor is instructive.

Written in the mid-nineteenth century Arnold’s theory of culture was conceived in a volatile climate; social unrest and civil crises in metropolitan cities were compounded by those in the colonial outposts. Here, the Paris Revolution (1848), the Hyde Park riots (1866), the Indian Mutiny (1857), and the Jamaican insurrection (1865) were pivotal events that were symptomatic of deep social antagonisms driven by industrialism and imperialism (see Hobsbawn, 1968). This environment fanned middle-class fears of an impending social collapse. These events and their associated anxieties were to have a profound effect on the trajectory of social and cultural theory. Arnold’s was an influential middle-class response to this environment. In an exposition characteristic of Culture and Anarchy he recommends:

culture as the great help out of our present difficulties: culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world .... Culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us … to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society. (1960: 6, 11)

While it is of course true that in its Arnoldian formulation culture is about perfection, its study and its achievement – ‘the best which has been thought and said’ – it is, however, not simply that alone. It is equally important to acknowledge
that Arnold’s definition of culture is as much about process as perfection. That is, it is not just concerned with the attainment of perfection in an elite few, but is also centrally concerned with the process of its dissemination and its broad cultivation. While principally an aesthetic concern, in Arnold’s conception perfection is given an increasingly expanded focus that targets individual and societal spheres outside the strictly aesthetic; i.e., it is concerned to develop ‘all sides of our humanity’ (ibid.: 11). These non-aesthetic concerns are principally moral and social. In this broader conception culture is as much about an absolute (perfection) as it is about ethical and social development (a process). With this expanded conception in mind Arnold’s culture most certainly has an anthropological bent: in as much as it is concerned with ‘all sides of our humanity’ (ibid.: 11) it focuses on ‘a way of life’. Similarly, in as much as it targets both individual subjectivity and social totality as spheres to be brought under culture’s influence, it is also governmental in its intended effects. Arnold’s conception of culture is clearly a political theorization: i.e., culture’s effects are political for it is ‘the great help out of our present difficulties’ (ibid.: 6). As Williams notes, in Arnold’s formulations “Culture”, quite explicitly, is offered as the alternative to “anarchy” (1963:123). Here culture is not to be some zone of retreat for the middle class intellectual from impending social chaos. Rather it is to supply a political alternative to anarchy. In so opposing culture to anarchy Arnold invests culture with a power that is both transformative, in that its aim is ‘total perfection’, and, regulatory, in that it seeks to foster in individuals an aesthetico-ethics of ‘harmonious perfection’, what he terms their ‘best self’. In Arnold’s estimation, by such operations culture can preempt an impending anarchy.

The agent of culture’s power for Arnold is principally embodied in ‘the State.’ Insofar as this is true Arnold’s theory of culture is also a theory of the State. Indeed, for him ‘culture suggests the idea of the State’ (Arnold, cited in Gandhi, 1998:50). For Arnold it is via the agency of the state that culture’s perfection will

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4 In this, he is part of the nineteenth century humanist revival. Arnold shares in that tradition’s formulations in which the State is seen as ‘the archetypal and representative form of humanitas’, and where culture is to operate as an aesthetico-ethical technology that seeks to shape the conduct of the citizen-subject (Gandhi, 1998:49). As Martin Heidegger put it in his Letter on Humanism: ‘Homo Humanus [as opposed to Homo barbarous] is concerned with ... training in good conduct’ (1977:200).
be both totalised, in an idealised social formation, and, individualised in the realisation of the ‘best self’ of each citizen. Following in the English Romantic tradition, Arnold pits his formulation of culture, at least in part, against the calamities of industrialism and its apologists, the middle class utilitarian liberals. To this end Arnold writes:

He who works for machinery, he works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater! – the passion for making them prevail. It is not satisfied till we all come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkind masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. (1960:69, emphasis in original)

It is the State that is to make perfection ‘prevail’ and (with an ironic nod to Levi-Strauss) cook ‘the raw’ to perfection. In this sense the State is to be the agent of general perfection, and so the ‘organ of the best self’. To cite Arnold again: ‘We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our best selves’ (cited in Gandhi, 1998:50).

In some senses here Arnold advances a liberal critique of the State in that, while not a direct assault on that institution, he criticises the operations of power in its existing arrangements that appeal to the partisan interests of ‘our ordinary selves’. In this, Arnold’s is not a Jacobin opposition to State power per se, rather it is an argument about who is, and who ought to be, the ‘State’. In Arnold’s view the social world exists in a triadic arrangement split between the aristocracy, middle class, and the working class, which for reasons associated with his polemic he respectively terms the Barbarians, Philistines and Populace (see Young, 1995:chapter 3). In Arnold’s estimation none of these classes were fit to meet the requirements of the state as agent of general perfection, since each could only be
expected to meet the partisan interest of their ordinary, classed, selves. The aristocracy was no good since as a class their characteristic virtue was associated with the maintenance of the status quo. The middle class was equally inadequate because of their investment in material civilizational achievement. This class’s commitment to ‘machinery’ – wealth, industry, production, progress – and in individual success ‘denied, respectively, the ‘harmonious’ and the ‘general’ pursuit of perfection’ (see Williams, 1963:129). Similarly, the working class were unfit for the task of government on the grounds that they either share the middle class’s investment in material civilization and actively seek what Marxist’s would term their ‘embourgeoisment’, or they are simply too degraded and brutal to possibly be the repository for the authority of general perfection. To be the organ of the best self the State must transcend the sectarian interests that mark the ordinary selves of the three great classes. This is where ‘culture suggests the idea of the State.’ (Arnold, cited in Gandhi, 1998:50)

Since classes, the standard candidates for political power in nineteenth century thought, are the embodiment of ordinary selves, they cannot possibly be the source of authority for ‘sweetness and light’. It is only with the creation of the State driven by the disinterested passions of our best self that perfection can be embodied and generalized. Arnold proposed that the forces to bring about this creation were individuals that were not inhibited by the stock notions and habits of their class and were moved ‘not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection’ (1960:70). Arnold wrote:

The men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the
clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time. (ibid.)

Through the process of culture ‘the great men of culture’ had managed to transcend their ordinary, classed self and give full expression to their best self. And, hence the great stress that Arnold was to put on the broad dissemination of pedagogical regimes, thus making culture an institutional and technical arrangement. The only hope for the development of the State of perfection and, with it, future social stability and security, was education based on ‘the best that has been thought and written in the world.’ It was only by developing and disseminating this archive of the ‘best self’ under the auspices of the State that a condition of harmonious perfection could be secured. In fact it was only culture so figured that could secure humanity’s freedom and security. As Arnold was to write: ‘in praise of culture, and in evidence of its special utility for the circumstances in which we find ourselves, and the confusion which envelops us. Through culture seems to lie our way, not only to perfection, but even to safety’ (1960:202).

What Arnold elaborates is a structure of culture, the apparatus of which, I contend, repeats throughout culture’s operations in the formulations of subsequent theorists. This structure takes the following form: both the social totality and the individual subject are split, divided between their ordinary selves and their best selves. At one level this is a division between, on the one hand, an ethnographic present, the different mentalities that arise from different social interests in a class structured society, and, on the other hand, an aesthetico-ethical ideal of a general and harmonious perfection. For culture to have its normative effects as a transformative and regulatory relation of power, a particular relation must be established between the two halves of this split totality and divided subjectivity. Here a gradient is established between the ordinary and the best, where culture is to act as the conduit that is to bridge the gap between the actual, the ordinary self, and the ideal, the best self. It is in this dialectical relation between perfection and process that culture acquires its normative function. Here culture established an
ideal 'way of life' as harmonious perfection, identified the inadequacies of the actual in the existence of 'our ordinary selves' and instigates the processes under the auspices of 'the State' by which culture would move the actual towards the ideal in its normative operation, and so act as a way to life. Importantly, the distinction between high and anthropological definitions of culture misses how they are intimately linked in culture’s normative operations.

A very similar structure can be found at work in Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*. However, this is not how things have been cast in the orthodox narratives of culture’s history. For example, historians of the culture concept like Williams and the anthropologists, A L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn ([1952] 1963), have positioned Tylor’s work as a break with the Arnoldian formulation of culture; decisively moving the term from the realm of aesthetico-ethics to a relativistic anthropological definition as a ‘complex whole’. The standard evidence for this reading is to cite the opening paragraph of *Primitive Culture* where Tylor writes: ‘Culture or Civilisation taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (1891, vol. I: 1). The historian of anthropology, George Stocking (1982: chapter 4), has challenged this orthodoxy that posits a clean break between Arnold’s culture as perfection and Tylor’s culture as a complex whole. Although Tylor’s text is not without innovations Stocking finds it to be considerably indebted to *Culture and Anarchy*. As Stocking argues, Tylor’s achievement was not the introduction into English of a relativistic conception of culture, but rather it was to invest the Arnoldian formulation with a social evolutionary dynamic. While it is possible to impose a contemporary anthropological sense of culture into Tylor’s formulation cited above, as Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) have done, it is a mistake to do so. Stocking argues this on two grounds. Firstly, Tylor’s early ‘relativistic’ formulations in *Primitive Culture* are not characteristic and quickly disappear from the rest of the text to be replaced by a more evolutionary conception, which, nevertheless, as Stocking persuasively demonstrates, retains an affinity with Arnold. Secondly, this
back-projection of relativism too quickly passes over the intellectual, social and political milieu in which *Primitive Culture* was produced. In particular, it misses the importance for dissenting liberal reformers of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* ([1859]).

In suggesting Tylor fostered a notion of culture’s plurality Stocking contends that historians of culture reproduce Tylor’s ‘Culture or Civilization’ as an ellipsis in which the first word comes to obscure the latter. Yet, further on in his opening paragraph, Tylor writes: it is with regard to the ‘consideration of the civilization of the lower tribes as related to the civilization of the higher nations, [that] the present volumes are devoted’ (1891, vol. I: 1). It is clear, as Stocking argues, that his text is concerned with the ‘degree rather than type or style of civilization’ (1982:74 emphasis in original). While Tylor was much more generous in his assessment of those classified as ‘savages’ than his contemporaries, there can be no doubt that their achievement was ‘lower’ and that the European is, ‘though not perfect, “at least what is most perfect in human achievement.”’ (ibid.). As Tylor writes:

> From an ideal point of view, civilization may be looked upon as the general improvement of mankind by higher organization of the individual and of society to the end of promoting at once man’s goodness, power, and happiness. This theoretical civilization does in no small measure correspond with actual civilization, as traced by comparing savagery with barbarism and barbarism with modern educated life. (1891, vol. I: 27)

Stocking points out that this evolutionary scheme – given increasing scientific weight with the controversy that followed the publication of *Origin of Species* ([1859]) – is vital to Tylor’s formulation of culture. For while culture only

5 Though, as the citation below demonstrates, such generous assessments were always qualified: ‘Among accounts of savage life, it is not, indeed uncommon to find details of admirable moral and social excellence … but it must be remembered that these rude people are on their best behaviour with foreigners, and that their character is apt to be foul and brutal where they have nothing to expect or fear’ (Tylor, 1891, Vol. I: 29-30).
comes to its full fruition in the final stage, ‘modern educated life’, what is central is that the earlier stages, those of savagery and barbarism, are secured as earlier grades of civilization and human achievement. By retaining this notion of civilization in the singular, ‘what is most perfect in human achievement’, Tylor holds onto Arnoldian notions of culture as perfection. As Stocking records it, Tylor’s innovation was to move this formulation of culture from the realm of aesthetics to the social by investing it with an evolutionary dynamic that established a progressive hierarchy of the degrees of culture or civilization. From a contemporary perspective, far from supplying the antecedents of culture in the plural, Tylor’s cultural evolutionism looks tantamount to racism, and subsequent racialists did deploy it. It is however important to recognize that in his milieu Tylor is taking the politically progressive position. Tylor needed to invest in an evolutionary schema because of its monogenist implications. He had to secure the unity of humanity against conservative polygenesis and degenerationist arguments that were coming to prominence in Britain, Europe and America, driven by debates over industrialism and colonialism, slavery and the American Civil War. The attraction of Darwin’s evolutionary science to dissenting liberal thinkers was precisely that he supplied an orderly model for social progress, that, on the one hand, rejected the ideas of revolutionary social change advanced by radicals, and, on the other, rejected the polygenesis and degenerationist arguments advanced by conservatives. On this second point it is important to note that it was only once the concept of the unity of the species was assured and polygenesis arguments put to rest, that a figure like Franz Boas could, in the early twentieth century, take the further step of arguing for cultural relativism. To advance such an argument in Tylor’s milieu would have risked playing directly into the hands of his intellectual and political opponents, the racialist conservatives (see Stocking, 1982:80-1; Young, 1995:46).

For my present purposes it is important to elaborate how Tylor’s culture shares the same basic structure as Arnold’s formulation and reproduces culture’s normativity in the dialectic of perfection and process. Like Arnold’s, Tylor’s culture, it is clear, is politicized through and through. It is necessarily governmental
in its effects in that it is a mechanism that is individualizing and totalizing, targeting both ‘the individual’ and ‘society’. In his theory of culture is simultaneously also one of government; indeed, as he was to write in concluding *Primitive Culture*, ‘the study of culture is essentially a reformer’s science’ (1891, vol. II: 453). In the history of the culture concept Tylor’s innovation, of investing Arnold’s culture with an evolutionary dynamic, is one that posits a powerful temporal mechanism – that is largely absent from Arnold – within the individualizing and totalizing regime of culture. It is arguable that, despite Arnold’s considerable commitment to culture as a pedagogic technology, it was with the introduction of progressive time in culture’s formulation that its potential as a mode of government was more fully realized. That is, this temporal dimension further strengthened culture’s normative operations. While perfection remains the social horizon of human achievement, here the dynamic for its development is conceived in ethical subjects that are formed less as the subjects of aesthetic experience and more as subjects positioned in progressive time.

This regulatory apparatus is exemplified in Tylor’s famous notion of ‘the survival’ (1891, vol. I: chapters 3 and 4). Survival are, he writes:

> processes, customs, opinions and so forth which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an old condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved. (1891, vol. I: 16)

The concept of the survival splits culture’s temporality into two discontinuous times – the time of the primitive and archaic and the time of the modern. However, it also establishes a relationship between these two temporalities, which comes to organize the time of the primitive and the archaic and that of the modern into a single unified temporality. This is so in that it posits the existence of cultural traits that occur ‘out of time’, those traits that exist outside their designated temporal zone: i.e., a past
that exists in the present. The conceptual power of this formulation is that it enables Tylor to read the cultures of colonized peoples as ‘survivals’ whose presence, on the one hand, suggests what the prehistory of modern Europeans must have been: ‘Its investigation [Survival in Culture] tells strongly in favour of the view that the European may find among the Greenlanders or Maoris many a trait for reconstructing the picture of his own primitive ancestors’ (Tylor, 1891, vol. I: 21). And, on the other hand, survival in culture presents a temporal difference that is to be negated with the advance of modernity: ‘It is a harsher, and at times even painful office of ethnography to expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition and to mark these out for destruction’ (ibid. Vol. II: 453). The survival thus suggests two powerful operations, one intellectual, the other political. Firstly, they supply the resources from which to reconstruct a European prehistory and secondly they represent cultural traits that are to be removed from the social body through the modernizing projects of improvement exemplified in colonialism’s ‘civilizing missions’. Indeed, as the high-minded Victorian would write, the demolition of ‘harmful superstition’ ‘if less genial, is no less urgently needful for the good of mankind’ (ibid.).

Structurally, then, Tylor’s culture of temporality shares a similar mechanism of transformation and regulation with Arnold’s culture of aesthetics. In doing so it provides another expression of culture’s normative operations. Both Arnold and Tylor invest in the perfectibility of human achievement and promote political strategies for its development. In this investment they share a basic structure in which culture is internally split, aesthetically for Arnold between the ordinary and best selves, temporally for Tylor between the survival and the modern. For Arnold, culture’s operations are to overcome the anarchy of ‘social confusion’ in the pursuit of an aesthetico-ethical perfection. For Tylor, culture’s operation as ‘a reformer’s

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6 On the primitive as a temporal category see Fabian (1983). The phrase ‘out of time’ is Thomas’s (1989).
7 In his analysis of completing late nineteenth, early twentieth century European theories on ‘the origins’ of Maori, which was split for a time between those who claimed Semitic and Aryan origins, M. P. K. Sorenson notes that Tylor viewed Maori as ‘remnant of one of the most ancient races of Egypt’ (1978:25). On the position of Egypt in Victoria racial theory see Young (1995).
science’ is ‘to expose the remains of the old crude culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction’. Thus ‘the science of culture’ performs a twofold, function acting ‘at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance’ (ibid.). Here Tylor repeats the normative operations that lie at the heart of Arnold’s watchword. Tylor established an ideal ‘way of life’ – a perfectible modernity – and an actuality that represents a lack – the survival. This division between the ideal and the actual generated a gradient of improvement by which temporal difference, the survival, is to be overcome in the unity of modern time. Thus, like Arnold before him, Tylor’s culture was normative and as such provided a means to act on the social and operated as ‘a way to life’.

Cultural Studies: Resistance and Ambivalence

With considerable justification Williams is frequently positioned (along with E. P. Thompson and Richard Hoggart) as a founding figure for Cultural Studies. In shifting the analysis away from the aesthetics of high culture to focus on the processes of ‘everyday lived experience,’ Williams’ achievement was to provide an emergent Cultural Studies with an ethos and methodology (as well as some of its most enduring catchphrases). That is, ‘the sociology of culture’, as Williams was later to term his project, was concerned with the demotic processes by which culture designated a particular ‘structure of feeling’ and constituted ‘a whole way of life’ (1977; 1981). Williams, of course, advocated a political programme very different from Arnold’s conservatism or Tylor’s liberal reformism. Nevertheless, his Marxism embraced a formulation of culture that shared the basic structure elaborated by culture’s early interlocutors; i.e., that of a hierarchical splitting of culture against itself so as to exercise its normative operation and thus bridge the gap between the actual and the ideal. Here, Williams too designated both a desirable social totality and a mode of subjectivity and activated culture’s normativity as a means to act on the social, to move it towards that desirable horizon. His political goal was not the establishment of the authority of ‘the State’ as the ‘organ of the best self’ or the demolition of cultural ‘survivals’ that hinder modernity’s progress.
Rather, it was concerned with mobilising the resistive cultural resources of working class communities. Despite this rather different and more attractive political deployment, culture, in Williams’ hands, shares its reformist operations with his nineteenth century antecedents: i.e., his culture ‘as a whole way of life’ is also a culture that seeks ‘a way to life’.

This basic structuring dialectic can be identified in Williams’ (1977) influential *Marxism and Literature*. In this text Williams advances a cluster of concepts – ‘the dominant,’ ‘the residual’ and ‘the emergent.’ These are developed to analyse the ‘dynamic interrelations’ of the numerous elements that come to constitute ‘the complexity of a culture’ (1977:121). What is striking about these concepts is that – despite the considerable degree of theoretical sophistication and subtlety that has made Williams such an attractive thinker to so many – they repeat in elaborate complexity the basic structure of the culture concept first made coherent by Arnold and subsequently filled with the dimension of temporality by Tylor. At the risk of repetition, it is this structure that gives culture its normative orientation by splitting the culture concept into two constitutive parts – the best and the ordinary, the modern and the primitive, and in Williams’ case, the resistive and the dominant. In each case the first term is given a positive value over the latter. This dialectic establishes a normative gradient by which individual subjects and social totalities are to be reformed and regulated by establishing a transformative anxiety between the actual and the ideal. In complex variation this mechanism can be seen to play itself out in *Marxism and Literature*.

In this text the central term to which the others – ‘the residual’ and ‘the emergent’ – relate is ‘the dominant’. For Williams this term refers to those cultural practices that hold hegemony over a social formation and correspond with the cultural interests of the dominant social class in any given epoch. The process of forming the dominant culture involves that of a selective tradition. This concept, deployed earlier in *The Long Revolution* (1961: chapter 2), concerns those mechanisms by which elements from the present and previous social formations are selected and incorporated into an effective dominant culture. As the process of
selective tradition suggests there is much that is cultural that falls outside the dominant. As Williams writes: ‘there is always, though in varying degrees, practical consciousness, in specific relationships, specific skills, specific perceptions, that is unquestionably social and that a specifically dominant social order neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize’ (ibid.:125). What is a ‘distinctive and comparative feature of any dominant social order’, he continues, ‘is how far it reaches into the whole range of practices and experiences in an attempt at incorporation’ (ibid.). In this formulation, then, the dominant culture is split between that which it does and that which it does not incorporate. For Williams, who is interested in pursuing a political programme that cultivates cultural resources that are resistive to this incorporation, what is important to analyse are those cultural elements that originate outside the dominant and have the potential to be alternative or, better still, oppositional to the dominant social order. This is where the concepts of the residual and the emergent find their utility.

So while, as Williams contends, the notion of the dominant is an important analytical category as ‘a significant generalizing description and hypothesis’ for the culture of the dominant social order of any given epoch, the cultural analyst also needs to ‘find terms which recognize not only “stages” and “variations” but the internal dynamic relations of any actual process’ (ibid.:121). It is to this purpose that the concepts of the residual and the emergent are deployed. As the terms suggest, it is necessary to introduce a temporal dimension to analyse this dynamic. Like the concept of the dominant, each of these terms is internally divided against itself: split between those elements that are positively valued; i.e., those that are alternative or oppositional, and, those that are more negatively valued; i.e., those elements whose resistive potential has been lost in their incorporation into the dominant social order. It is with this hierarchical splitting that Williams inherits culture’s normativity. For my purposes, this double movement that conditions these two concepts, the residual and emergent, requires further elaboration.

Williams defines the residual by juxtaposing it against the archaic. Any culture, of course, includes elements from the past; however, their effects on
Contemporary culture are varied. Williams defines the archaic as that which is entirely located in the past, and 'which is wholly recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even on occasion to be consciously 'revived', in a deliberately specializing way' (ibid.:122). That is, the archaic is that which has passed into 'past-ness' and has no active continuity with the present culture. The residual, however, is an element that expresses this continuity with the present and, while its origins are in another epoch, it continues to have an active effect on contemporary cultural processes 'not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present' (ibid.). Thus, as Williams continues, 'certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation' (ibid.). However, there is an important division to be maintained within residual elements. This is between those elements that are resistive and those that are incorporated into the dominant culture. 'It is crucial to distinguish', Williams writes, 'the residual, which may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture, from the active manifestation of the residual (this being its distinction from the archaic) which has been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture' (ibid.). To identify and help foster a progressive common culture, the analyst's political task with regard to the residual is to distinguish those residual elements that are alternative or oppositional to the dominant culture and thus actively resistive to it, from those actively residual elements that have been incorporated into the dominant culture 'by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating, inclusion and exclusion' (ibid.:123).

As Bennett (1998:97) argues this concept of the residual is similar in structure to Tylor's concept of the survival. Both capture temporalities that have their origins in an earlier epoch but continue to be effective into the present. They differ in that for Tylor the survival represents a temporality that is a hindrance to the development of contemporary 'society' and the 'individual' and so must be
demolished, while for Williams, the resistive potential of the residual to the dominant culture is something to be actively fostered and harnessed to a better 'socialist' future. Nevertheless, despite their different political orientations they share a reformist concern to identify and develop cultural elements that will advance the general conditions of humanity.

If the residual focuses on a past-present axis, the emergent has a future-present orientation. The emergent is concerned with the ‘new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships [that] are continually being created’ (ibid.:123). The emergent presents an analytical problem that is structurally similar to that of the residual: i.e., ‘it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense ‘species-specific’) and those which are substantially alternative and oppositional’ (ibid.). To contend with this complexity, as with the residual, Williams splits the concept of the emergent into two differently weighted parts that identify the differentiated ways by which emergent elements are articulated in relation to the dominant culture. Doing this makes it possible, at least conceptually, to identify what is ‘emergent in the strict sense’ and hence resistive and not ‘merely novel’ and thus bound to the dominant culture (ibid.).

To summarise: in Williams’ formulations of the residual, the emergent, and the dominant, the basic structure of the culture concept is repeated in an elaborate variation. Like Arnold and Tylor before him, Williams’ analysis of culture aims to contribute to a general account of humanity’s progress, development and growth by identifying and encouraging those cultural elements that are deemed helpful to this project and alternatively exposing and seeking to resist those that are a hindrance. The modernist narratives in which all three invest differ in their concerns about the ends to which culture’s regulatory apparatus is to be put – an authoritarian statism in the case of Arnold, a social evolutionism for Tylor, and in Williams’ case, a complex theoretico-historical account of the unfolding of the aesthetico-ethical conditions of a common culture. What they share is a commitment to the reformist
mechanism on which the culture concept is built. So while culture might well be ‘a way of life’ in each of these modernist narratives, it is equally a way to it.

It is obvious that culture’s normative operations as expressed in its different manifestations by Arnold, Tylor and Williams are products of their modernist commitments. However, it is not clear, in an intellectual environment in which ‘an incredulity towards metanarratives’ has fundamentally put the project of modernity into question, that culture in its current theorisations has relinquished any of its regulatory power (Lyotard, 1991). The influential essay, ‘DissemiNation’, by the postcolonial scholar, Homi K. Bhabha is a case in point (see 1990: chapter 16). Despite his post-structuralist affiliations this essay repeats yet again culture’s reformist dialectic.

Bhabha’s essay is concerned with the social and cultural operations of ‘the idea of nation’. Following Benedict Anderson, Bhabha sees ‘nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation’ (1990:292). However, contra Anderson, he identifies in the narration of nation a ‘disjunctive temporality’ that disrupts the flow of ‘homogenous empty time’ – in which the events of the official nation story are coordinated and a national communion imagined. Bhabha locates this ambivalence in the tension between a pedagogy of an epochal idea of nation, on the one hand, and the everyday performance of national identity, on the other. In Bhabha’s words this disjuncture is located in the ‘tension signifying the people as an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory “present” marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign’ (ibid.: 298-299). For Bhabha the performative introduces a temporality that interrupts the teleology of the national story. He contends that nation as narration ‘becomes a liminal form of social representation, a space that is internally marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations’ (ibid.: 299). Bhabha highlights this tension between a national narrative that takes the people as given and the quotidian performance that enacts the people.
It is in this mundane performance that the disjunctive temporalities of the minority and marginalised in the nation-space disrupt the homogenous narrative of nation.

What is interesting from my perspective is that Bhabha's analysis of National Culture repeats the basic structure of the culture concept. It is divided against itself – split between the performative and the pedagogic – where the performative is positively valued over the pedagogic for its introduction of a resistive temporality or ambivalence in/to the National Sign. In emphasizing the temporal dimension of the performative as resistive to the time of the pedagogic, the structure of his formulations look very similar to those that condition the resistive components of Williams' concepts of the residual and the emergent. Bhabha acknowledges this point when he writes:

This double writing or dissemi-*nation*, is not simply a theoretical exercise in the internal contradictions of the modern liberal nation. The structure of cultural liminality – *within the nation* – that I have been trying to elaborate would be an essential precondition for a concept such as Raymond Williams' crucial distinction between residual and emergent practices in oppositional cultures which require, he insists, a 'non-metaphysical, non-subjectivist' mode of explanation. Such a space of cultural signification as I have attempted to open up through the intervention of the performative, would meet this important precondition. The liminal figure of the nation-space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because the subject of cultural discourse – the agency of a people – is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contestation of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative. This disjunctive temporality of the nation would provide the appropriate time-frame for representing those residual and emergent meanings and practices that
Williams locates in the margins of the contemporary experience of society. (ibid.:299)

Unsurprisingly, given that it is another sophisticated variation on culture’s basic structure, this ‘double writing’ of the time of the National Culture is at heart reformist. While Bhabha is perhaps less committed to a general common culture like that of Williams, or indeed, that of his intellectual antecedent, Edward Said, the purpose to which his formulation of culture is deployed is for a common good – that of reconciling the heirs of colonialism to a purportedly more just and cosmopolitan future. And, like Williams’ truly residual and effectively emergent, it is the resistive temporalities – ambivalence in Bhabha terms – of the performative that are positively identified as the cultural elements that need to be fostered for this future. Like other reformist discourses, however, this narrative of postcolonial reconciliation is ultimately conservative. Citing Bhabha’s ‘DissemiNation’ as an example of reconciliatory postcolonial thought, Simon During (2000) importantly reminds us that such thought has limited resistive – he calls it critical – potential because it operates as an analytical device by which the marginalised and minorities are ultimately to be reconciled to the structures of their subordination and marginalisation. During states that reconciliatory postcolonial thought ‘invoked modernity’s triumph over so-called ‘traditional society’, with the twist that this triumph radically unsettled modernity, most of all by dismantling the notion that historical temporality enacts reason’s unfolding, a notion which had underpinned colonialist developmental values and practices in the first place’ (2000:386). Given the inherently normative operations of the modern conception of culture, During’s criticisms are perhaps no surprise. Tylor’s ‘reformer’s science’ casts a long shadow.

**Refusing Culture’s Normativity**

By drawing on some key figures in cultural theory I have sought to demonstrate an enduring reformist mechanism and normative structure that is reiterated through that theoretical archive. It now seems clear enough that while culture might be
relativised and democraticised as 'a way of life' it must be recognized that this has
not excised the 'civilising mission' that rests at its heart, at least, since Arnold. Even
in resistive and reconciliatory formulations, exemplified respectively by Williams
and Bhabha, culture still operates as 'a way to life'; as a way to transform and
regulate individual and aggregate subjects towards some social horizon, be it a
resistive community striving for a common culture, or a reconciliatory
postcoloniality reaching for a cosmopolitan future. The problem, however, is that
the normative operations of culture as 'a way to life' are profoundly conservative
and see radical positions like Williams' and Bhabha's dissolve into orthodoxy:
Williams never quite shakes off the social evolutionism of Tylor's modernist
narrative; Bhabha's reconciliatory postcolonialism looks increasingly to supply the
(multi)cultural logic of global capitalism (see, Dilrik, 1999; Žižek, 1997). Culture
here starts to look like a very dangerous idea and one that gives rise to deep
theoretico-political dilemmas for its contemporary analysts.

There seem to me to be three possible responses: The first is to abandon the
culture concept altogether as hopelessly conservative; the second is to embrace its
normativity knowingly and actively; and, the third is to follow in Williams'
footsteps and continue the advance into hostile territory while always vigilant to
analyse culture's normative operations, but, unlike Williams, not repeat it in one's
political programmes. Firstly, consigning the culture concept into the dustbin of
antiquated ideas has some appeal. However, in Williams vocabulary, far from being
an archaic element in own our epoch, it is in fact an effective residual element
firmly incorporated into the dominant social order (as the institutionalisation of
Cultural Studies in the University no doubt ironically illustrates). As such it would
be foolhardy to ignore the concept, rather it must be contended with.

This leads to the second proposition; that of actively embracing culture's
normativity and knowingly perpetuating its reformist mechanism. One
contemporary intellectual who takes this position and indeed actively advocates that

8 See Readings (1996).
we continue in the tradition of Tylor’s ‘reformist science’ is Bennett (1998). In advancing the field of cultural policy studies, Bennett advocates what he terms a ‘strategic normativity’ when it comes to engaging the culture concept. Bennett’s political programme, which sees him committed to a form of cultural policy activism, accepts culture’s normativity not as a negative condition, but as a political resource to be utilized. He writes:

in recovering the normative aspect of the concept of culture as a way of life, to argue for its retention in view of its capacity to lend a degree of definitional coherence to the concerns of cultural policy studies in proposing a way of understanding the concept of culture that can both, as the anthropological usages propose, span an expanded range of cultural activities, as well as including the arts of governing that are applied to them ... my purpose is to detach the concept of culture as a way of life from the resistive credentials it has accumulated through its use within cultural studies and to attach it to ones which accentuate both the governmental component which inevitably enters into the constitution of the cultural field and the reformist disposition which this brings with it. (ibid.:92)

Here Bennett throws in his lot with liberal reformism and positions himself as the intellectual heir of Tylor. This is clear enough where he states:

Far from being agnostic ... in accepting the equal value of all forms of culture, the strategic normativity which characterises the [culture] concept has meant that it has functioned to lay open the ways of life of different sections of the populace to reformist programs of government .... [Normativity] has to be regarded as an essential component of the concept of culture in enabling the study of culture to function, as Tylor envisaged it should, as a ‘reformer’s science’ which inescapably
involves difficult and sometimes intractable normative questions. (ibid.: 91, 89)

As a historico-theoretical account there is much merit in Bennett’s analysis, and I have relied on it considerably to draw my own argument. However, his political readiness to positively and actively embrace culture as a ‘reformer’s science’ is problematic.

It is one thing to diagnose culture’s administrative operations; it is another to find them perfectly politically acceptable. While Williams perhaps ultimately failed to rescue the culture concept from the enemy territory of Arnold’s Tory liberalism or Tylor’s dissenting liberalism, he was engaged in resisting the hegemony of the dominant culture over the lives of the marginalised. However, I don’t think that his ‘failure’ should see the critic running into the arms of Tylor. Bennett’s embrace of contemporary culture’s administrative operations and his readiness to enter into ‘the arts of governing’ bring him uncomfortably close to culture’s deployment in the regimes of ‘advanced liberalism’ (cf., Bennett, 1998a). Having given up on resisting their hegemonic effects, Bennett resorts to a reformist ‘tinkering’ – the term is his – with present cultural arrangements (1998:212). The problem here is that, rather than finding an alternative theoretico-political position like that which witnesses Williams’ dangerous liaison with liberal theorists of culture, it appears Bennett has Switched allegiances.

This takes me to the third proposition. I think we need to continue in the resistive spirit of Williams, but reject the modernist formulations that he had not yet shaken off. One term that has been put forward to mark a break with the violence of culture’s modern legacy is that of the post-cultural.9 An early interlocutor for this term is George Steiner (1971:chapter 3). He writes: ‘The whole issue of a working theory of culture in the absence of a dogma or genuinely felt metaphoric imperative of progress and perfectibility, seems to me one of the most difficult now facing us’

9 While the term postculture features in the title of Joel Kahn’s book (1995) it is not developed in that text and, curiously, antecedents for the term like Steiner and Clifford are absent from his bibliography.
As a means to theorising cultural conditions after 1945 Steiner proposed the concept of 'post-culture'. This need for a new diagnostics of the present is driven, in part, by an unprecedented 'rate of social change ... [whose] metamorphoses and hybridisations across lines of time, of sexuality, of race, are now occurring more quickly than ever before' (ibid.:67). In this context the culture concept seemed unproductive. More damaging, however, in Steiner's view, was culture's complacency and, quite possibly, complicity in the violence exercised in colonial theatres and brought back 'home' to Europe with the advent of war. Writing in the aftermath of the 1939-45 War and with Third World nationalism in mind Steiner asks:

Is there a conceivable defence of the concept of culture ... ? It is on the fragility and cost of that 'way of life' [modern culture] that the attack has borne. Why labour to elaborate and transmit culture if it did so little to stem the inhuman, if there were in it deep-set ambiguities which, at times, even solicit barbarism? ... granted that culture was a medium of human excellence and intellectual vantage, was the price paid for it too high? In terms of social and spiritual inequality. In regard to the ontological imbalance – it ran deeper than economics – between the privileged locale of intellectual and artistic achievement, and the excluded world of poverty and underdevelopment. (ibid.:68)

Further, Steiner contends: 'This instability of essential terrain, and, the psychological evasions which it entails, characterize much of our current posture. At once realistic and psychologically hollow, our new stoic or ironic pessimism is a determinant of a post-culture' (ibid.:65). His formulation of the post-culture seeks to capture a particular social condition, that of living in social flux without the promise of progress, on the one hand, and on the other, a particular orientation toward the ambiguous achievements of culture, that of an ironic pessimism. Steiner ends his chapter on post-culture:
It is not ... 'some notes towards the re-definition of culture', that I feel able or competent to put forward. Rather, I hope to look at what might be components and meeting-places in a new, but probably transitional and divided, literacy. That is, obviously, a smaller concept than culture. But I do not think there is, at present, another available to us. (ibid.:74)

James Clifford has also championed the idea of 'the postcultural' (1988:95). He has suggested it 'may be true that the culture concept has served its time' (ibid.:274). While it is not clear if Clifford is familiar with Steiner's formulations – he makes no reference to Steiner's work – their respective concepts share an affinity. For Clifford too the "postcultural" situation is one in which the certainty of evolutionary 'history' and progress are impossible to sustain in the midst of a heteroglossic present (ibid). As he elaborates:

These objects and epistemological grounds are now appearing as constructs, achieved fictions, containing and domesticating heteroglossia. In a world with too many voices speaking all at once, a world where syncretism and parodic invention are becoming the rule, not the exception, an urban, multinational world of institutional transience ... it becomes increasingly difficult to attach identity and meaning to a coherent 'culture' or 'language'. (ibid.)

Glossing Clifford's position During contends: 'One has entered postculturalism when, accepting that the construction of a non-modern cultural identity is the result of interaction between coloniser and colonised, of mutual misrecognitions and forgettings, one celebrates the productive energy that is released in these processes' (1989:767). This is similar to Steiner's formulations in that 'the postcultural' for Clifford is both descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive in diagnosing the operations of a particular 'predicament of culture', and prescriptive in that it demands a celebratory orientation to those objects, identities, and narratives that are products of the "postcultural" situation.' While Steiner's 'post-culture' may
predispose one to a Nietzschian pessimism, Clifford's “postcultural” situation' provokes the 'fröhliche' (joyful) disposition of Nietzsche's *Gay Science* (1974)

I am inclined to agree with both Steiner and Clifford in their recognition that the post-culture is all that now remains to be reclaimed from the ruins of the modernist dreams of culture. Nevertheless, in the face of this post-cultural present I wish to signal the limits of these formulations. While the conceptual modesty and generosity of ‘the post cultural’ is to be applauded, nevertheless, it perpetuates the basic structure of ‘the culture concept’, including its normativity. The post-cultural can designate ‘a way of life’ – living in ‘a post-culture’ – no doubt more voluntarily for some than for others for whom it is necessity. It is equally clear that the concept’s ethical attractiveness at the present can, as it indeed has, slip into moral assertiveness; for example, by undermining claims of injustice that are grounded in ‘essentialist’ identities (see Spivak, 1988). As such the post-cultural operates as a regulatory power; i.e., ‘as a way to life’. That is, notions of living ‘in a post-culture’ or of ‘post-culturalism’ share in the structural legacy of the ‘culture concept’ that I have been at pains to outline in this chapter: i.e., this formulation once again establishes a hierarchical splitting of culture; in this case, between a modernist, imperialist, authoritarian, violent, monologic culture and a more modest, tentative, syncretic, dialogic post-culture. And thus we remain in the machinations of the culture concept even while we announce its passing. The prefix ‘post’ like other markers of culture’s division against itself like high, folk and popular, designates the structuring dialectic of the term, and in this sense culture, with its normativity, still remains while we live in ‘a post-culture’.

At this level of my analysis the normative thrust of culture appears one more of theoretical desire than administrative reality. Having demonstrated the inherently normative operations of the culture concept, the historical question remains, how is it made durable? How is it exercised as a ‘power over life’? Addressing this question puts us in dialogue with Hegel’s concern with History’s institutionalisation. This concerns questions of how cultural narratives on progress(iveness) are linked to the apparatus of rule. Under conditions of modernity
the short answer is that they are linked through educational institutions and cultural policy, institutions and industries: cf., for example, in additions to their positions as university teachers, Arnold’s employment as inspector of schools, Williams’ activity in adult education, Bennett’s in cultural policy. In supplying a longer answer to this question the next chapter concerns itself with a particular set of historical developments. Here, it proceeds to trace a history of ‘the liberal-space of the museum’ as one moment in the articulation of cultural expertise and the apparatus of rule that has come to deploy culture as a means to regulate people’s conduct. Centrally this concerns mapping the transformations in the relations of government that have come to regulate the order of things and peoples that enter into that space. This prepares the way for an analysis of how Te Papa, while claiming to representing ‘a whole way of life’ seeks away to that ‘life’ – shaped the conduct of its visitors, in accordance with the ‘life enhancing’ policy directives of creativity, civic life, good health, and social cohesion (Chapters 4, 5, 6).
Chapter 3

‘Power Over Life’: on the liberal-space of the museum

Introduction

This chapter sketches a history of what I term the liberal-space of the museum. Centrally this concerns mapping the mutations in the relations of government that shape the order of things and peoples that enter into that space. To this end I begin by reviewing Foucault’s theme of government, focussing particularly on his elaboration on liberalism as a mode of governmentality. I then proceed to locate questions of government and culture in relation to historical mutations in the liberal problematic that Nikolas Rose has postulated as being one from classical to social, social to advanced liberal formulas of rule. Subsequent sections develop these transformations with regard to the history of the public museum.

‘A way to “life”’

‘A museum is like a lung of a great city’, Georges Bataille wrote, ‘each Sunday the crowd flows like blood into the museum and emerge purified and fresh’ ([1930] 1986:25). In his brief comments on the history of the public museum in France, Bataille wryly notes that the ‘origin of the modern museum is … linked to the development of the guillotine’ (ibid.). In this he reminds his readers that the Louvre became a public museum as a result of the demise of Royalty. The museum, for
Bataille, is an invention of the Terror to replace the king, to replace the irreplaceable.

Yet, of course, it is the guillotine, not the museum, that is more widely appreciated as the revolution’s technical innovation. The guillotine was for Marx the handmaiden of the Bourgeois revolution, and for Foucault a technology that marked a transition in the operations of power. In *Discipline and Punish* he argues that the guillotine was one of the last technologies of spectacular punishment. In contrast to the epic horrors meted out on ‘the patient’ of torture, the guillotine made only the briefest, but most devastating, contact with the body of the condemned (Foucault, 1991:12-13, 58). The guillotine signalled the end point of a spectacularly murderous power. With the rise of ‘the modern age’ the efficiencies of ‘disciplinary power’ were in ascendance – and with its application the scene of punishment retired from public view.

Bataille’s juxtaposition of the public execution and the public museum – of the bloody demise of the *ancien régime* and the arterial pulse of the Sunday crowd – is, in one sense, a juxtaposition of two modalities of power. That is, of the power of the Law-and-Sovereign that exercises a ‘Right of Death’, and, a new modality of power – a ‘capillary power’ – directed at the administration of life and having ‘Power over Life’ (Foucault, 1990:135-159). In his Durkhiemian organic formulation of the museum Bataille seems to suggest that power exercised through its agency has ‘assigned itself the task of administering life’ (ibid.:139). It operates as ‘a way to “life”’ (Gordon, 1991:5). As the great city’s ventilator it oxygenates the Sunday visitors so that they ‘emerge purified and fresh’ (1986:25).

*Cut off the king’s head*

Foucault’s investigations into this ‘capillary power’ have paid particular attention to its *techné* – to its strategies, technologies and techniques – that serve to govern the conduct of both the individual and extended populations. Famously, this was part of Foucault’s own theoretico-political quest to ‘cut off the king’s head’ as it had
persisted in the top-down or 'Law and Sovereign’ models of power that have characterised both liberal social theories and Marxist theories of the state (Foucault, 1990:89). Foucault disputed that this epi-centre for the cohesive coordination of power existed in modern ‘societies.’

In the nineteenth century one finds all kinds of mechanisms and institutions – the parliamentary system, diffusion of information, publishing, the great exhibitions, the university, and so on: ‘bourgeois power’ was then able to elaborate its grand strategies, without one needing for all that to impute a subject to them. (Foucault, 1980a:207)

To conflate ‘bourgeois power’ with a centralised apparatus, the state, is, he suggests, to invest it with a unifying and coordinating omnipresent power that it simply does not possess. At the same time this conflation creates blindness to the all-pervasive web of power-relations that come to govern life in its most mundane details. Under these conditions the scrutiny of the analyst must be directed to the specific procedures of power in their discrete micro relations in order to comprehend power and develop an appropriate counter-politics. To this end Foucault produced his influential historical analyses of the operations of power in an array of institutional environments and focused on how such techné and the ethos of its incumbent experts generated specific political rationalities. For Foucault institutions such as the asylum, the hospital, the workhouse, and the prison, came to constitute distinct and specific modalities for the exercise of power and consequently generated their own particular fields of political problems and relations. They did not represent instances in the exercise of a general form of power.

'The subject of power’

This reformulation of power puts Foucault in a rather different position with regard to History and the institutionalization of its narrative from those whose intellectual apparatuses were committed to the logic of Modernity’s reason (see Chapter 1).
Foucault's historical narratives of power's micro-physics found neither history's origin nor its essence, nor, for that matter, its termination, in the twin sites, the state and capital, that have for dialectic thinkers propelled history forward. For writers like Marx, Weber and the Frankfurt School Critical Theory (and subsequently the Heritage Industry critics (see Chapter 5)), the advance of a technicism associated with the increasing 'colonisation of the life-world' by an instrumental rationality limits human potentiality and curtails the actualisation of their 'freedom.' (cf., Habermas, 1984). Second generation Frankfurt School analyst, Jürgen Habermas, for example, has analysed the 'scientization of politics', where processes that were once political decisions have been increasingly rendered into technical evaluations (Habermas, 1971: chapter 5). These analysts, then, pose 'a certain antimony between aspirations to the full realization of human potential and the rise and domination of the technological, with its instrumental reasoning, its rationalizations and "objectifications", its specialists and its bureaucrats, its dreams of order, predictability and control' (Barry et al., 1996:12).

In Foucault's analysis these thinkers have fundamentally misrecognised their object. He argues that power, as it comes to shape the conduct of its subjects, is not accomplice to the central authority legitimising bourgeois 'ideology'; it is not a top-down relation that 'manipulates us', curtailing 'our' capacity for self-realisation. This position, he asserts, radically misunderstands 'the politics of truth' in which the analyst is enmeshed and in which 'the subject of power' is constituted. In his criticisms of Habermasian legitimisation theory he argues that the field of subjectivity does not equate to that of bearers of consciousness whose capacity for a just and free life can be simply activated by unmasking the mechanics of 'ideology.' 'The problem', as Foucault puts it, 'is not changing people's consciousness – or what's in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional régimes of the production of truth' (1980b:133).
'The art of government'

So for Foucault the liberalism of the bourgeois is not the state's 'ideological' mask over capital's inherently fascist operations as it is for the Critical Theorists. It cannot be analysed and politicised by 'ideological' critique. Rather, liberalism is a political rationality whose operations, complexities, and pervasiveness must be analysed with particular attention to the distinct ethics and techniques of its deployment. In his later work Foucault has redefined liberalism, not as a political ideology or an economic theory or a moral philosophy, but rather as a specific ethos and techné which constitutes particular relations of government. Formulated in this way liberalism is identified as a recent manifestation in a broader history of ethical and technical arrangements that Foucault designated 'the art of government'. He deploys this concept of government to propose a new set of parameters for the analysis of the problematics of rule. The political domain is not circumscribed as that of, or pertaining to, 'the State', or a defined set of institutions and actors, but rather is posited as the variety of political rationalities. In this history he links together several disparate domains: the theme of 'pastoral power' as it developed in antiquity and early Christianity; the themes of 'the reason of state' and 'the theory of police' developed in early modern Europe, and the theme of 'governmentality' proper that characterises 'our' current era which emerged with the beginnings of liberalism in the late eighteenth century, and developed in post WWII neo-liberal thought in Western Europe and the USA (cf., Foucault, 1981; 1991).¹

'Omnes et singulatim'

Foucault's concern with 'the art of government' is to focus analytical attention on those aspects of human experience that are constituted in the multiplicity of reflections and actions designed to shape, guide, effect, manage or regulate the conduct of some person or persons in the light of certain principles or goals, be it

¹ For the now classic overview of this aspect of Foucault's work see Gordon (1991), which, while very useful, rather streamline Foucault's diverse and discontinuous intellectual activities into an oeuvre.
souls to salvation or citizens to prosperity. What distinguishes governmental reflections from those of philosophy, theory, or morality, is their ambition to link themselves up with various technical arrangements, procedures and apparatuses, so as to make themselves practical, durable and effective in the world. Reflection on the conduct of the self and others becomes governmental when it seeks to ‘render itself technical, to insert itself into the world by “realizing” itself as a practice’ that aims to shape human conduct (Rose, 1996: 41). More particularly the linking of ethos and techné in the ‘realization’ of relations of government establishes formulae of rule with a distinct form. What distinguishes Foucault’s discontinuous historical forays into a history of the art of government is that each share a common concern, one encapsulated in the title of his Tanner Lectures, ‘Omnes et singulatim’ (all and each) (Foucault, 1981). Foucault asserts that the political rationalities in ‘the West’ tend toward a form that aims simultaneously to be the government of all and of each and thus towards practices that are at once ‘totalized’ and ‘individualized’. To ensure the salvation of the flock, pastoral technologies must act on the souls of each of its members, and to ensure the prosperity of the population neo-liberal technologies ethically reconstruct individual citizens as entrepreneurial selves. Here, then, the history of ‘the art of government’ is also the history of machinery of subjectivation – of those technical arrangements, procedures, apparatuses and so forth that make ‘subjects’. Such machines are subjectifying in a twofold sense: they are instruments of subjection, where one’s conduct becomes ‘subject to someone else’s control and dependence’, and they are techniques of subjectivity, whereby ‘one’s identity is tied by a conscience or self-knowledge to oneself’ (Foucault, 1982: 212). Foucault analysed the problematic of liberalism from this perspective of government as the machinery of subjectivation.

**Liberalism**

Foucault views the emergence of liberalism over the course of the nineteenth century as a major new development in the history of government. For him liberalism inaugurates a profound innovation in the art of governing in that it
proceeds not as a doctrine of government, like that of the Church or the Prince, but rather as a restless and dissatisfied ethos that sustains a critique of State reason. Historically, liberalism emerges with the discovery that political rule can be its own undoing; that is, with the observation that to govern too vigorously is to frustrate the very aims of government. The force of this observation corresponds with another discovery, that of ‘society’, where liberalism postulates the existence of a new ‘social’ reality – ‘civil society’. This new entity is comprised of a variety of ‘natural’ processes that shape economic activity, population growth, culture, language and morality. From the liberal perspective, this composite ‘Society’ is in possession of its own regulatory mechanisms that operate successfully, independently of the will of any particular human agency. This position is exemplified most famously in the realm of political economy by Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’. Given this nature of ‘society,’ it is the responsibility of rulers to secure the conditions whereby the processes like that of the ‘invisible hand’ can continue without interruption. However, given their ‘naturalness’ – in the sense that they are not artifices of ‘the State’ but are instead viewed as having an autonomous existence – rulers must aim to secure these conditions in ways that do not exercise direct control over the free actions of the individuals who collectively constitute these processes. Thus, the ethos of government that liberalism espouses is both a way of acting and not acting on ‘society’; one that seeks actively to secure and guarantee the conditions for society’s natural processes, while simultaneously putting limits on the direct activity of rulers so as not to frustrate a population’s liberty on which their good government necessarily depends. The novelty of liberalism as a formula of rule is that it inaugurates a perpetual dissatisfaction with the operations of government. Profoundly reformist, it is distinguished by ‘a recurrent diagnosis of [its] failure coupled with a recurrent demand to govern better’ (Rose, 1996: 47).
Security and Liberty

Liberal governmental concern with security demands that ‘individuals do not freely choose to behave in such a way as to undermine the workings of the “natural” processes on which their security depends’ (Hindess, 1997: 268). This leads Foucault to an important observation on the liberal problematic: the liberty of a governed population is a condition of its security. This is so in the sense that a necessary requirement to securing the processes of ‘civil society’ is an individual who is in possession of a well-regulated and ‘responsibilized’ freedom. While liberal governmentality sets limits on the direct forms of control over a subject population, it must nevertheless endeavour to ensure that its members conduct their activities in accordance with the standards of reason, civility and orderliness necessary for the proper functioning of markets, households, state agencies and other dimensions of sociality. This requirement means that liberal political reason and action continually seek out numerous technologies, techniques and practices and align them with its aims so that they can serve as indirect means to ensure that the behaviour of individuals conforms to standards expected to promote security. This process Foucault terms ‘the “governmentalization” of the state’ (1991:103). Locations remote from the cabinet or the colonial office or other ‘centres of calculation and action’², such as the family home, the school, the factory, the social security office, the department store, the exposition, the museum and so on – each with their adjunct or residential experts on love, learning, labour and life-style – ensure that individuals acquire suitable techniques for analysing and regulating their own behaviour in accordance with a grammar of living conducive to that of ‘free societies’. Through such alignments a subject’s liberty can be ‘responsibilized’ and the conditions of security fostered.

Thus, Foucault characterises liberalism as a governmental ethos and techné that seeks to rule indirectly; it governs, spatially and constitutionally, ‘at a distance’, via a multiplicity of devices, apparatuses and practices that utilise the individuals’

liberty as a resource of government, establishing their freedom as a mode of subjectivation through which they are to be regulated and responsibilized as docile citizens of free and democratic 'societies.' In contrast to the assertions of Frankfurt School thinkers and their heirs (among many others) Foucault proposes that technicism is not the antithesis of the full realization of humanity's potential. The Foucaultian perspective recognizes instead that 'subjectivity is itself a matter of the technologizing of humans' (Barry et al., 1996:13). Moreover, this process is not to be regarded 'as amounting to some kind of crushing of the human spirit under the pressure of a corset of habits, restrictions and injunctions' (ibid.); rather it is only through such technologization that the human becomes – in Foucault's twofold sense of the term – the subject of freedom.

**The Liberal Space of the Museum**

The insatiable mechanism of reform that lies at the heart of the liberal problematic of government has generated mutations in its formula of rule as it seeks to better optimise the conditions of liberty and security. Nikolas Rose provides a useful schema for mapping these transformations (see 1996:39-41). He has postulated a threefold division in the history of this problematic: classical liberalism, social liberalism, and advanced liberalism. The history of the public museum echoes that of Rose's mutations in the problematic of liberal rule, for in as much as the museum's history is one of cultural explication, pedagogical intention and democratic expansion, it is part of this history of transformation in liberal government. The corresponding mutations in the liberal-space of the museum can be identified and the broad contours of which can be cast as follows.

The classical liberal-space of the museum emerged over the early to mid nineteenth century; philanthropic, moralistic and disciplinary formulas of rule informed its exhibitionary rationality and institutional rhetoric. These regimes

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3 The terms Rose uses for this periodising are liberalism, governing the state of welfare and advanced liberalism (see 1996). I use the terms classical, social, and advanced for simplicity.
targeted ‘the working man’ and, via him, the family, with the express aim of transforming the ‘rowdy’ into the ‘respectable.’ In so doing the museum invested ‘the working man’ as a prudent subject. In this liberal-space of the museum it was deemed that ‘Art’ was a particularly suitable vehicle for this ‘civilising mission’ responsibilizing the workingman’s liberty. Mutations in the liberal-space of the museum over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century increasingly governed from ‘the social point of view’. Here, in this social liberal space of the museum, Art ceded its place to ‘Time’ as the privileged governmental surface to regulate conduct. The ‘social’ citizenry subject of the museum was an anxious figure split in the dialectic of the temporal processes of progress and degeneration (see Bennett, 1997: chapters 5 and 6). The final mutation in the space of the museum is associated with the advanced liberal formula of rule. In the contemporary space of the museum progressive time has ceded its place to a form of presentism that privileges everyday ‘experience’. Correspondingly, the museum no longer targets the social citizen, but rather the active consumer. In this formula of rule the liberal-space of the museum targets ‘the enterprising self’ that seeks to self-actualise via choosing a particular ‘life-style’ option. The ‘responsibilized’ life-style choice maximiser in the liberal-space of the museum is targeted via several techniques of which ‘interactivity’, ‘community’, and ‘consumption’ are the more important. It is the shifts in culture’s governmental deployment from the social to the advanced liberal space of the museum that I seek to address below.

**Time: Social Liberal Space of the Museum**

The novelty of liberalism as it developed as a formula of rule during the nineteenth century concerned questions that set limits to the political authority’s control over individuals, families, markets and populations. Here, a political rationality emerged that insisted on the necessity of fostering spheres of social life that were autonomous from that authority’s direct influence—particularly with regard to the sovereignty of choice in economic life, the freedoms of debate in public life, the independence of expression in religious life, and the autonomy of the head of the
household in family life. Resolutions to the apparent conflict in government – that between security (ruling for order and morality) and liberty (necessarily restricting rule to respect ‘the natural’ operations of social life, particularly in regard to the freedoms of the individual and the market) – were found in the figure of the expert. The disinterested and efficient knowledge of the expert supplied a means to link up the interests of the ruling authority and those of the individual, the household, and the business. Here, then, classical liberal rule was realised, not simply through a set of politico-theoretical propositions on the inviolability of ‘the opposition of public and private, politics and market, state and civil society’, but also ‘through the capacity of various knowledgeable persons [experts] to render this formula operable’ (Rose, 1996:39). It was the philanthropist who emerged first as one of these experts exercising a novel mode of ethical and technical authority. However, over the latter half of the nineteenth century philanthropy was increasingly displaced by the regimes of truths generated by the positive sciences, biology, economics, medicine statistics, sociology, psychiatry and psychology, and, deployed by their various experts the bureaucrat, the civil servant, the engineer, the scientist and the doctor. Through the expert dissemination of these positive knowledges new techniques for the ethical formation and regulation of subjects emerged that facilitated the possibility of government while resolving the problematic of security and liberty.

However, mutations in the liberal formula of rule took place over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. From a range of positions the governmental rationality of classical liberalism was increasingly deemed to be inadequate in bringing about the desired economic, social and moral outcomes. To manage the objectionable consequences of industrialism a new formula of rule emerged in which an array of ‘social’ strategies were advanced: ‘social solidarity, social security, social peace, social prosperity.’ Governing from this ‘social point of view’ was contingent on the aims of the formal political authority linking up with those experts authoritative on ‘the social’. The theories, explanations and techniques of these experts came to be articulated into apparatuses that aimed to re-integrate
persons in a social form. The conduct of individuals was to be acted on through social norms. In this way it was possible to govern through ‘society’ as an individual’s conduct was evaluated and regulated in relation to such norms. In this mode of government the regimes of truth of the experts on the social were important, since it was via the deployment of their normative judgement that activities at some remove from the centre of calculation could be governed. Here, the political authority did not outline that nature of normative conduct, rather it regulated indirectly by empowering a multiplicity of social experts to operate in the name of social normativity. In establishing such ‘professionals’ the target of government was refigured. Under regimes of classical liberalism the subject of government was one of an ‘individualizing moral normativity’ (Rose, 1996:40). By contrast, under regimes of social liberalism, this subject was one of ‘welfare’ – ‘a subject of needs, attitudes and relationships, a subject who was to be embraced within, and governed through, a nexus of collective solidarities and dependencies’ (ibid.).

Matthew Arnold was pivotal in linking up cultural expertise with questions of ‘social’ government, particularly through his association with proto-welfarist bureaucrats like James Kay-Shuttleworth. His central theoretical work, *Culture and Anarchy*, figured culture as the terrain on which to manage social life and consequently formulated culture as a social theory of the State. Culture was to regulate populations and responsibilize individuals through the apparatus of the State, civilizing the potentially anarchic popular classes (see chapter 2). Thus opposed to anarchy, Arnold’s culture spoke to the liberal problematic of security. His activities in popular education rendered technical this theoretical association of culture and security. In Arnold’s educational writing this ‘social’ formulation of culture is counter-posed to that articulated in classical liberal formula of rule. For example, Arnold objected to the laissez-faire arguments in the education policy of Robert Lowes because it restricted ‘the State’s interest solely to reading, writing, and arithmetic’ (Arnold, 1990:230, cited in Danahay, 1997:38). Rather, taking the social point of view, Arnold argued that if the State’s role in education is so restricted ‘other matters, really of vital importance to the State – the humanizing of
that multitude of children where home-training is defective, who are very rude, ignorant or dull ... the forming of those habits of order, discipline, and neatness ... will be made to suffer’ (ibid.). Kay-Shuttleworth, who employed Arnold as Inspector of Schools, similarly considered education vital for civilizing the dangerous and potentially revolutionary working classes. Social peace could be secured by popular state education that had a social mission greater than the minimalist ‘three Rs’ advocated by classical liberal positions. Education was a means for establishing security and order and thus vital, as Arnold put it, for ‘the protection of society.’

‘Arnold’s beliefs reflect,’ Inderpal Grewal writes, ‘the ideological underpinnings of the public museum in the nineteenth century’ (1996:89). And continues: ‘Though Arnold had suggested that the availability of culture signified the democratisation of England, what it effectively concealed was the social reality that a large number of working-class men and women had no part in such a culture’ (ibid.). Thus, echoing Bourdieu (1984), Grewal contends that the nineteenth century public museum demonstrated that the ‘possession of cultural capital in the hands of the dominant classes was presented as a disinterested and gratuitous sharing of national wealth’ (ibid.). This is only part of ‘the social reality’, however, for the democratising ethos of culture’s advocates like Arnold was one that sought not explicitly to exclude, although this might have been its effect, but rather to deliver up the multitude to its civilising mission. That is, the ethos and expertise of Arnold’s culture sought to reponsibilize the liberty of the popular classes. ‘Freedom’, Arnold wrote, ‘is a very good horse to ride, but to ride somewhere’ (cited in Williams, 1963:127). That destination, of course, was ‘human perfection as a harmonious perfection’ (Arnold, 1960:11).

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4 See his report on The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class in Manchester in 1832. This concern with security is powerfully made in ‘The Twice revised Code’ Arnold rhetorically links the prison and the educational system:

But in prisons, it will be said: The State has another interest besides the reformation of the criminal – the protection of society. We answer: And so, too, in schools the State has another interest besides the encouragement of reading, writing and arithmetic – the protection of society. (228 cited in Danahay, 1997:46)
This influence of Arnoldian formulations on the social liberal space of the museum is exemplified in Henry Pitt-Rivers’ displays of evolutionary ethnology. The doctrine of survivals was central to Pitt-Rivers’ methodology (see Chapter 2). Formalised by E B Tylor in his assimilation of Arnold and Darwin in *Primitive Culture*, the doctrine is deployed governmentally in Pitt-Rivers’ museology. In a lecture given at the opening of his collection’s first public display at the new Bethnal Green annex of the *South Kensington Museum* Pitt-Rivers glossed his method thus:

I have commenced my descriptive catalogue with the specimens of the arts of existing savages and have employed them as far as possible, to illustrate the relics of primeval men, none of which, except those constructed of the more imperishable materials, such as flint and stone, have survived to our time. All the implements of primeval man that were of decomposable material have disappeared, and can be replaced only in imagination by studying those of his nearest congener, the modern savage. (Lane Fox, 1874: 295)

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5 Frustrated with his collection’s interpretation by the South Kensington Museum, Pitt-Rivers offered it to Oxford University in 1882. E B Tylor, among others, persuaded University authorities to take the collection (Chapman, 1985:35). As a leading figure on *Primitive Culture* (1871) Tylor was well suited to lecture on the collection, however, to Pitt-Rivers annoyance, material culture was only of secondary importance to him (ibid.:37).

6 Pitt-Rivers knew John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, and Darwin’s *Origin* (1859) had an immediate impact after its publication on his thought (Chapman, 1985:19). William Chapman (1985) has mapped the influence of these thinkers on Pitt-River’s typological method.

7 Pitt-Rivers stated that his collection began in ‘the year 1852’ (Lane Fox, 1874: 293). The stimulus for Pitt River’s systematic collecting is generally credited to that monument to classical liberalism, the Great Exhibition (Stocking 1987:5; see also 1982:71; Chapman 1985: 16). ‘It is hardly surprising,’ George Stocking has written, ‘that the Exhibition forced some to think about the origins and progress of the civilization it epitomized. Much in the Crystal Palace encouraged speculation of a more specific sort: the overall system of classification’ (Stocking 1987:5). He continues, ‘even the copper coal scoops of Joseph Tylor and Sons which were arranged so as to demonstrate ‘the changes in their patterns’ and their ‘different improvements from 1780 till the present time.’ Whether the later evolutionary interests of Tylor’s nineteen-year-old son Edward owe any direct debt to the Exhibition can only be a matter of speculation’ (ibid.). In addition to intellectual speculations about the progress and classification, the Great Exhibition, might well have pressed on Pitt-Rivers the importance of Henry Cole’s ‘museum idea’; that of public exhibition as an important and effective device for popular education. Pitt-Rivers viewed his collection as much a tool for public instruction as one for scholarly research (See Chapman, 1986; Coombes, 1991; 1994).
In the exhibition, then, the material culture of contemporary colonised peoples was deployed as a metonym for 'the degrees of culture' exhibited by 'modern savages', which, in turn, was to echo the earlier stages of 'civilised' European 'Man's' development (ibid.: 301, 295). Or to put the relation the other way round, cultural objects from the colonies stood for non-European ways of life that exemplified states of arrested development, where the mechanism of progress had stalled, and had thus failed to evolve into European civilizational achievement. These 'primitive' others were of interest because they were (like) fossils – ossified outside the flow of progressive time, they could be made to stand in for a European pre-History. 'What the palaeontologist does for zoology,' Pitt-Rivers contended, 'the pre-historian does for anthropology' (ibid.:308). Elaborating on the notion of the survival, Pitt Rivers addressed his audience:

[The purpose of the collection] is to trace, as far as practicable, the succession of ideas by which the minds of men in a primitive condition of culture have progressed from the simple to the complex .... each successive improvement constituting a link in the chain of progressive development. Each link has left its representatives, which, with certain modifications, have survived to the present time; and it is by means of these survivals, and not by the links themselves, that we are able to trace out the sequence that has been spoken of. (ibid: 294, 302)

Thus the typological method divorced the material culture of non-European peoples from the social conditions of its production and put it to the service of illustrating the initial evolutionary steps of the history of Man's technical advancement, as 'the degrees of culture' move 'from the simple to the complex' (ibid.:301 294). The concept of the cultural survival functions in ways analogous to the 'quirks and imperfections' that Darwin thought vital for studying the evolution of the biological world. For Pitt-Rivers, as for Darwin, perfection is a state of 'timeless balance', its evolutionary trajectory can only be retraced by studying 'the oddities' that have slipped off the path of progress (Bennett, 1997:185). In Pitt-Rivers exhibitionary
schema survivals serve a twofold purpose: firstly, they stand as metonyms for the actual links in evolutionary sequences whose progress has demolished a record of those links. Secondly, their terminating arrested development demonstrates that each stage in an evolutionary sequence must be passed through; none can be jumped or circumvented. 'Progress is like a game of dominoes', Pitt-Rivers would write, 'like fits on to like. In neither case can we tell beforehand what will be the ultimate figure produced by the adhesions; all we know is that the fundamental rule of the game is sequence' (Lane-Fox, 1874:308).

As a working class district in London's East End, Bethnal Green was a site of political dissension and socialist activity. It was no accident that this location was selected for the first public exhibition of Pitt-Rivers' collection. Later advancing formulations on the need for a popular 'educational museum' first articulated at Bethnal Green, Pitt-Rivers wrote:

[the State has thought it proper] to place power in the hands of the masses ... The masses are ignorant ... the knowledge they lack is the knowledge of history. This lays them open to the designs of demagogues and agitators, who strive to make them break with the past ... in drastic changes that have not the sanction of experience. (1891:116, cited in Coombes, 1991: 197)

Museum education in this formulation is deployed as a mechanism for social regulation by locating the museum visitor in a matrix of evolutionary time. It was Pitt-River's conviction that 'the law that Nature makes no jumps' could be 'taught by the history of mechanical contrivances, in such a way as to at least make men cautious how they listen to scatter-brained revolutionary suggestions' (1891:116; cited in Chapmen, 1986:39). As a bulwark against impending 'anarchy', Pitt-River's museum pedagogy addressed the liberal problematic of order and security. Here, his typological method, like Arnold's culture, is deployed as a device for 'the protection of society'.
In so articulating the doctrine of survivals in a pedagogy demonstrative of civilization's evolutionary progress, the museum visitor comes to be located in a dialectic of incompletion/completion: between less and more evolved human races, technologies, civilizations. That is, the museum itinerary positions the visitor within the degree of culture that marks the gap between the survival and civilizational perfection. As Bennett argues, typological displays 'were calculated to produce a regulated-restlessness, a worrisome insertion of the self into a developmental time which generated a requirement for a progressive movement through time while simultaneously restraining that movement' (Bennett, 1997:185). Richard Altick (1978) captures 'this worrisome insertion' less formally. Reflecting on visitor responses to the display of colonised peoples and their material culture in the contexts of evolutionary exhibitions, he writes:

confronted with possible models of their former selves ... [visitors] murmured with mingled awe and gratitude, 'There, but for the grace of the evolutionary process, go we.' ... the experience of gazing on such creatures must have induced thoughts too troubling for easy utterance. (ibid.:287.)

*Experience: The Advanced Liberal Space of the Museum*

In the decades after the Second World War the formula of rule characterised by social liberalism was to mutate. Dissatisfaction with 'welfarist' government came from two directions. Firstly, the 'failure' of social liberalism led to allegedly harmful outcomes for 'public finances, individual rights and private morals' (Rose, 1996:40). Secondly, the apparent 'success' of social experts in embedding in citizens an interest in the pursuit of their own civility had lead individuals to becoming experts of themselves. In asserting their rights to such 'expertise' they refused the authority of welfarism and expressed dissatisfaction with its experts. 'In the multiple encounters between these two lines of force' a new formula of rule took shape, one Rose contends 'that we can perhaps best term "advanced liberal"' (ibid.).
As a new formula of rule advanced liberalism articulates expertise and the apparatuses of political rule in ways different to those modes of liberal government that have gone before it. It aims to 'de-governmentalize the State and to de-statize practices of government' (ibid.:41). Here, it seeks to disconnect the authority of expertise from the apparatus of rule and reconnect that authority within relations of the market, regulated by the logics of competition, accountability and consumer demand. Thus advanced liberal regimes of rule govern 'through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now constructed as subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfilment' (ibid.). Unlike classical liberalism these subjects of regulated freedom are not the isolated individuals of political economy, rather they are figured as individuals located in 'heterogeneous communities of allegiances' (ibid.). Unlike social liberalism, advanced liberalism no longer governs through 'society'; rather, "community" emerges as a new way of conceptualising and administering moral relations amongst persons' (ibid.).

Writing in 1981 Williams offered some reflections on his membership of the Arts Council, a key organization in the development of cultural policy in post war Britain, and one of John Maynard Keynes public policy initiatives (see Williams, 1989:141-176). Williams identifies four definitions of cultural policy historically shaping the Arts Council that he directly attributes to this institution's Keynesian legacy. These were: 'state patronage of fine arts; pump-priming; an intervention in the market; [and] an expanding and changing popular culture' (ibid.:143). Although very critical of the Arts Council Williams found himself in accord with certain elements of its agenda. In his fighting words:

I am ... on strictly artistic and cultural grounds, a proponent of the fourth definition. But I am also its proponent on the plainest political and economic grounds. Any of the first three definitions might attract some limited public support, but it is really only from the fourth definition that we can, in good conscience, raise money for the arts from the general revenue. The struggle for this idea has important cultural
intentions, but it is the only safe way of meeting the more limited and at
their best valid needs of the alternative definitions of policy. Thus
instead of apologising for the principle of public funding of the arts, or
nervously excluding or reducing those aspects of policy which either the
pillared and patented or the political and commercial hangers-on
disapprove of, we should get together, in such numbers as we can, and
fight the real battles. (1989:148-149)

In the environment in which Williams found himself, his advocacy of this fourth
definition did put him in a position sympathetic to elements in Keynes’
formulations. Partly, of course, this alliance was politically driven to resist the
further marketisation of the cultural sphere increasingly evident in the early years of
Thatcher’s ‘rolling back of the state’. Williams writes: ‘I have criticized Keynes, but
in the present social climate I look across to him ... in an open and recognizing
spirit [of his ‘broader humanity’]’ (ibid.:149,142). However, this political
expediency is not without theoretical grounding. Williams’ defence of the socially
liberal position, against that of the New Right – in ways that (distantly) echo
Arnold’s criticisms of Lowes – is motivated by a philosophical commitment to
culture’s ‘social mission’. That is, for Williams, as for Arnold, culture is the terrain
for the progressive improvement of humanity’s condition. Williams’ (1963) Culture
and Society, of course, offered a powerful critique of Arnold and his cultural elitism.
Nevertheless, Williams’ formulations of culture, initiated in that book and
subsequently formalised in The Long Revolution (1961) inherited from Arnold a
commitment to culture’s ‘social mission’, in Williams’ case, the fostering of a
progressive common culture (see Chapter 2). Here, then, Keynes fourth definition of
cultural policy – ‘that of encouraging a serious, expanding and changing popular
culture’ (Williams, 1989:148) – is not that radical a departure from Williams’ own
position. However, Williams’ position is one that was ultimately to be at odds, not
only with developments in regimes of advanced liberalism, but also with the
trajectory of cultural studies.
In the face of Thatcherite transformations, Williams’ alliance with Keynesian cultural policy perhaps signals the last gasp of a societal formulation of culture. Here his theoretical and political commitment to pursuing an ‘undifferentiated culture and society’ through ‘the acceptance and the possibility of broader common relationships’ has become untenable (Williams, ibid.:175-76). Increasingly, over recent decades the relationship of culture and society no longer appears analytically persuasive or politically salient for positions on both the left and the right. The reasons for this – complex and various as they are – can be accounted for in terms of how ‘the cultural’ has come to be deployed in the wake of mutations in liberal formulations of rule. In a period in which the state has been decentralising, increasingly seeking to govern ‘at a distance’ through various ‘market’ and ‘community’ mechanisms, ‘society’ has lost its epistemological and political force in identifying a governable entity. It is similar with associated totalising formulations of culture: cf., for example, national culture. In a period increasingly designated post-national, social regulation and cohesion no longer appear conditional on a coherent national culture. From one direction, this fragmentation of culture and society is the result of ‘social’ subjects resisting the ‘welfarist’ intervention in their lives, cultivating identities and communities that refuse the ‘hegemony’ of national culture. From another direction, the ‘success’ of government ‘from the social point of view’ has so thoroughly ‘responsibilized’ individual liberty that its historical techniques for promoting ‘social order and security’ are now cast as generating economic inefficiencies and ethical deficiencies that are to be ‘rolled back’. This dissolution of ‘society’ as an instrument of the political imaginary – of governing from ‘the social point of view’ – has significantly transformed culture’s ‘social mission’. ‘The real battles’ on the terrain of culture have come increasingly to concern questions of the recognition and regulation of cultural difference and community diversity, not the pursuit of a common culture. In this advanced liberal context, much as Keynesian welfarism has lost it political purchase, the ‘undifferentiated culture and society’ that Williams’ posited as a social horizon has lost its ethical eloquence (ibid.).
For some, the institutional rise of cultural studies is testament to this fracturing of ‘culture and society’. Bill Readings, for example, argues ‘the emergence of Cultural Studies must be understood as a symptom’ of transformations ushered in by Thatcher and Reagan and supervised by their political heirs (1996:102). In his estimation, cultural studies comes to pre-eminence at precisely the moment in which culture – in its idealist formulation, inherited from Hegel and Arnold – ceases to matter. In Readings’ words, cultural studies marks ‘the incommensurability between reason and history as modes of legitimation for the modern state, once the notion of cultural identity can no longer serve to bridge the abyss’ (ibid.: 89). Cultural studies’ institutionalisation, thus, signals ‘the end of “culture” as a regulatory ideal that could unite community and communication [read society] so as to allow … the modern state to function.’ (ibid.). For Readings this demise of culture’s ‘metadiscursive project’ is conditioned on a ‘global system of capital’ that ‘no longer requires a cultural content … to interpellate and manage subjects’ (ibid.:103).8 If contemporary social life is no longer regulated via this project, cultural critics are mistaken to advance analyses that presume its coherence. Perhaps it is no surprise that Bennett has declared leftist investment in this idealist culture ‘really useless “knowledge”’ (see 1990: chapter 6). For Bennett, this is so on the grounds that such ideological or aesthetic formulations posit a universal critical subject that can not be usefully deployed by marginalised political subjects, since their interests rest not in the unity of a common culture, but in the recognition of cultural diversity.

However, while totalising formations of culture have lost their regulatory purchase in an environment in which the corresponding entity ‘society’ has waned, it does not follow that ‘the cultural’ no longer functions as a normative surface and that culture’s attendant experts are rendered redundant in securing a governmental ‘way to life’. Far from it. Rather these relations have mutated. Readings argues that in the contemporary environment, regulative operations are achieved

8 Readings writes, ‘the word “culture” no longer names a metadiscursive project with both historical extension and critical contemporaneity from which we might be excluded‘ (ibid.: 103).
'technologically' rather than 'ideologically'. That is, with the demise of the idealist formation of culture, the cultural has come to operate in a more explicitly technical or administrative guise. Readings cites the rise of the opinion poll as an example: 'The statistical poll performs the work of normalization indifferently to the content of the information it discovers; its hegemony is thus administrative rather than ideological' (ibid.:103). However, from the perspective of culture’s governmentality this historical split between the ‘ideological’ and the ‘technological’ is unsatisfactory. Earlier deployments of culture – idealist or not – were also always technical, in that for their regulatory effects they relied on numerous apparatuses, from architecture and timetables, to styles of self-reflection and confession. What is significant in the current moment, then, is less the demise of culture in its idealist guise per se and more the technological transformations attendant on culture’s articulation with formulas of rule associated with advanced liberalism.

Under these conditions in which the governmental relations of culture and society are no longer salient in contemporary formulas of rule, the institution of the museum in general and the national museum in particular might look to be an anachronism that embraces the meta-discursive project of culture that Readings convincingly declares defunct. This, however, would be mistaken.9 Perhaps, like

9 Here Penelope Harvey’s analysis of the representations of nation-states at Expo ’92 is instructive. Loosely drawing on Foucault she contends that expositions can be usefully thought of as ‘technologies of nationhood’, whose practices historically have played an important role in the standardisation of the forms of modern national expression which naturalize the nation-state as heir to a long cultural tradition and guardian of progressive liberal modernity; in so doing they postulate and fabricate a cultural entity, the national society, of which the state is the natural guarantor and just representative. As writers like Benedict Anderson (1991) have argued this project of legitimating the nation-state has been contingent on the construction of subjects as citizenry individuals with allegiances to a common and fictive community – the national society. For him, the possibility of such subjects imagining their commune with this extended community is facilitated through modern social institutions whose effects are those of cultural homogenisation; standardising time (railways), fixing a vernacular language (newspapers), and universalising the commodity form (capitalism). Historically, as Anderson (ibid.: chapter 10) himself notes and Harvey among many others argues, museums and international expositions have played spectacular, if not leading, roles in this process of cultural homogenisation and standardisation (Harvey, 1996a:56, 57). Indeed, as Bennett (1995:141) has noted, few other mechanisms offer the state such direct control over the spatio-temporal co-ordinates necessary for the ‘historicising of territory and territorisation of history’ that Nico Poulantzas (1980) has identified as central to the emergence of the modern state. However, Harvey’s position is to argue that the theories of nationalism and its institutions proffered by the likes of Anderson, Hobsbawn, Gellner and Poulantzas (not withstanding their important differences) are inadequate to analyses the operations of nation-states at Expo ’92. While practices standardising national expression persisted at this exposition – national
Readings contemporary university in which the rhetoric of excellence fills the space vacated by an idealist culture, the equivalent space in the contemporary museum has been filled by the rhetoric of experience. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes: ‘the term “experience,” … has become ubiquitous in both tourism and museum marketing’ (1998:138). For her, experience ‘indexes an engagement of the senses, emotions, and imagination’ (ibid.). Here, in this new space of the museum, it seems that knowledge is taken, as Sharon MacDonald writes, ‘into the non-transferable realm of the individual, [where] it becomes fetishized into experience’ (1998:131, italics in original). However, the significance of the term experience in the advanced liberal space of the museum is less in its fetishization, but rather more in how it refigures the subjectivity of visitors in a new regulatory grid. In this way experience in the space of the museum functions as an ethos and as a techné which links new regimes of expertise to projects of democratizing, and new modes of subjectivity to active communities. Thus, it becomes complicit in the regulation of the active citizen that is posited as the target of advanced liberal formulas of rule.

In Rose’s formulation one of the key strategies for reorganising the relations between expertise and politics that characterises advanced liberalism is marketization. Marketization, he contends:

seeks various forms of distance between the political and the expert machines: an apparent devolution of regulatory powers from ‘above’ –

flags flew, anthems were sung, natural environments venerated, citizenry populations calibrated, and technological achievements celebrated – cultural homogeneity was no longer, however, fabricated or postulated as foundational for the administrative operations of the contemporary nation state. Rather, she found these pavilions busy ‘deconstructing’ their nation’s self-image, resisting ‘stereotypical’ portrayals and perceptions, asserting flux, plurality and difference, to such a degree that the ‘cultural and territorial integrity’ of the entity supposedly represented risked collapse (Harvey, 1996b:94). Or so it would seem. What Harvey is at pains to demonstrate is that this hardly signals the end of the nation-state, but rather a shift in its cultural mode of operations: one that disarmingly mimics practices advocated by radical cultural critics, but whose affects are far from radical (ibid.). This, of course, is a localised version of the global arguments of those trenchant Marxist critics of ‘the postmodern condition’ and its post-structural theorists, which established the later as the ideological apologists for the former (cf., Jameson, 1991, Harvey, 1989). However, there is another way to rephrase Harvey’s observation, one that expands on her under-utilisation of Foucaultian formulations, which does not have the problematic consequences of risking the charge of ‘economic determinism’ that has been discussed ad nauseam with regard to ‘postmodern controversies’ (Smart, 1993). That is, is to pursue the museum as a mode of advanced liberal government.
planning and compulsion – to ‘below’ – the decisions of consumers. In its ideal form, this imagines a ‘free market’ where the relations between citizens and experts are not organized and regulated through compulsion but through acts of choice (1996:54).

The significance of marketization for expertise is that it presents ‘a new way of “responsibilizing” experts in relation to claims upon them other than those of their own criteria of truth and competence’ (ibid.:55). Marketization has been central in refiguring the museum, no longer the obligatory site for the rituals of citizenship, it becomes the actively chosen leisure destination of the consumer. Here, the museum’s entry into what Pine and Gilmore (1999) term ‘the experience economy’, has not been inconsequential for refiguring relations of expertise. The production of *The Museum Experience* – the title of John Falk and Lynn Dierking’s (1992) handbook for the industry – has seen a resultant shift in authority from curatorial authority to consumer autonomy. This shift has ‘responsibilized’ the expertise of the curator in new ways which accord less with the ‘regimes of truth’ established by various curatorial disciplines. Rather, the ‘grey sciences’ of accountability have responsibilized curatorial activity outside the enclosures of their formal expertise. Similarly, the museum’s entry into the experience economy has established the visitor as an increasingly important target of the museum’s knowledge. If the ethos and techné of experience in the space of the museum ‘are expected to enhance the agency of the visitor and to channel it in the most productive direction,’ then as Andrew Barry writes, ‘the specific dynamic of this agency must itself be known’ (1998:105). Among the various techniques for this calibration of agency, alongside market research, the visitor evaluation and community consultation are some of the more important.

One museum professional, proclaiming the space of the new museum as ‘very democratic’, has stated: the museum’s customers are to “take control” of what they learn and experience ... they have to be able to engage touch, pull things up on the screen’ (Gorby cited in Corner, 1998:1). Echoing an older Cultural
Industry critique this transformation of the museum visitor into a customer has been cast by some critics as one that reduces them to ‘passive consumers of knowledge and experience’ (Delaney, 1992:142). However, this transformation is more usefully thought of as part of a process that Rose has termed ‘a new specification of the subject of government’ (1996:57). Here the ethos and techne of the museum experience have been central in refiguring the museum visitor not as a passive dupe, but as the active subject of advanced liberalism. Rose writes:

The enhancement of the powers of the client as customer – consumer of health services, of education, of training, of transport – specifies the subjects of rule in a new way: as active individuals seeking to ‘enterprise themselves’, to maximize their quality of life through acts of choice, according their life a meaning and value to the extent that it can be rationalized as the outcome of choices made or choices to be made. (1996:57)

It is in this context that Barry (1998) argues that the museum’s embrace of interactivity has particular saliency. He writes: ‘interactive devices have a function, for they may foster agency, experimentation and enterprise, thus enhancing the self-governing capacities of the citizen’ (ibid.:102). ‘Interactivity promises,’ he continues, ‘to turn the museum visitor into a more active self’ (ibid.). The active visitor-consumer is not only interpellated by the devices of interactivity, it is hailed pervasively in the museum’s script. As MacDonald and Silverstone note:

it is the active, creative, released visitor who is constructed for the museum text, and in active consumption the consumer – the visitor, the viewer, the reader – is assumed to bring to their involvement with the texts and objects of consumption their own socially defined experiences and interests which provide both context of, and the control for, the meanings which emerge … The visitor in the museum is more and more
inscribed in the text as active, as a contributor to, if not a creator of, their own experience of the museum. (1990:187)

As Iain Chambers has written of popular culture more generally, museum culture is increasingly positioned as 'a field in which we are all “experts”' (1986:185). The active visitor ‘takes control’ of their museum experience and becomes an active agent in their own subjectivation.

For Heritage Industry critic Kevin Walsh (1992) this orientation toward the autonomy of the individual choice and experience of the visitor as customer accords with a wider ‘conception of isolated individuals removed from the wider network of political, economic, social and cultural phenomena, [and] denies the importance of communities and societies per se’. This criticism is misplaced. The advanced liberal space of the museum in targeting the active consumer-citizen does not target them as radically isolated individuals, but rather as subjects located admittedly not in ‘society’ but in multiple, active communities. Museologist Ivan Karp captures this relationship when he writes: ‘the best way to think about the changing relations between museums and communities is to think about the audience, a passive entity, becom[ing] the community, an active agent’ (1992:12). This relationship between the active museum consumer and their active communities coheres in the broader formulations of advanced liberal rule that Rose has characterised thus:

Within this new regime of the actively responsible self, individuals are to fulfil their national obligations not through their relations to dependency and obligation to one another, but through seeking to fulfil themselves within a variety of micro-moral domains or ‘communities’ – families, workplaces, schools, leisure associations, neighbourhoods. Hence the problem is to find the means by which individuals may be made responsible through their individual choices for themselves and those to whom they owe allegiance, through the shaping of a lifestyle according to grammars of living that are widely disseminated, yet do not
depend upon political calculations and strategies for their rationales or for their techniques. (1996:57)

Addressing a graduation ceremony at Victoria University of Wellington, Cheryl Sotheran, Te Papa’s inaugural director, characterized the subjects of the contemporary nation-space, and presumably those that the new institution would hail in the following terms. Against the preoccupations of mid-century cultural nationalists such as Allen Curnow and Keith Sinclair, she argued, New Zealanders ‘seemed too busy to bother with ... questions [of national identity]’ (Newsletter, 1997:.n.p.) Rather, Sotheran continued, ‘we are fashioning a place for ourselves ... in a world which increasingly has a clear picture of us as energetic, can-do, determined progressive risk takers’ (ibid.). The historical specificity of the advanced liberal space of Te Papa as one that marked this transition from the museum of a national society to one that governs communities of enterprising selves takes me to the next chapter.
PART II
Chapter 4

'THE MoNZter' OR EXHIBITING SETTLER PANIC:

the idea of Te Papa and 'the ends of history'\(^1\)

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**Wellington's Waterfront, 2 July 1994**

In a bicultural performance which has come to mark ceremonial life in Aotearoa/New Zealand (A/NZ), Jim Bolger, then the conservative Prime Minister, and Maori elder, Te Ru Wharehoka, unveiled the foundation stone for the new Museum of New Zealand (MoNZ). Addressing a small audience of dignitaries and onlookers, Bolger congratulated himself on his foresight in giving the project the 'go-ahead' in those 'dark days' of the 1992 recession. For him the Museum not only announced a new national 'cultural maturity' and 'celebrated,' as the inscription on the foundation stone read, 'the many journeys and identities of all the communities and peoples of New Zealand', but presciently, it also stood as 'a symbol of the economic recovery' after a long period of decline (Bolger cited in The Evening Post, 27 Jul. 1994). Thus with shades of Francis Fukuyama (1989) Bolger tightly choreographed the 'idea of the museum' with happy endings to the historical: the end of colonialism with the prospect of '[bi]cultural maturity', and the end of the recession with the promise of 'future prosperity'.

Bolger's positing of 'the idea of Te Papa\(^2\)' as a metonym for happy endings to the nation's cultural and economic predicaments rests, however, in tension with

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1 The phrase is Perry Anderson's (1992).
2 The 'idea of Te Papa' is strictly speaking historically incorrect, since the institution did not come to have its abbreviated name until 1998, the details of which are canvassed later in this paper.
another metonymic deployment of that idea. Here, the Museum becomes enmeshed in a counter narrative; one that articulates not the happy endings officially espoused, but rather a fear in the dominant culture in the face of the sublimity of the global economy, and on the other hand, a racial alterity.

1984

To begin to gain critical leverage on the processes by which the official metonym for happy endings became unofficially articulated in a narrative of fear, it is helpful to return to 1984, a decade before Bolger’s foundation speech. A confluence of critical texts arose in that year. Bolger’s position linking the museum with the end of History, might be read as exemplifying a global situation characterized, depending on one’s epistemological orientation, by ‘the postmodern condition’ (Lyotard, 1984)\(^3\) or ‘the cultural logic of late capitalism’ (Jameson, 1984). Treasures of the Nation, the report initiating the new Museum was commissioned by the fourth Labour government in the same year that Lyotard and Jameson published their diagnoses on global culture. No doubt an assertive, perhaps anachronistic, response to the more global processes that Lyotard and Jameson signalled this report adhered to a more strictly modern, perhaps colonial, definitely local, commitment to national ‘foundations’ (Treasures, 1985:1). It focused principally on the cultural predicament of Pakeha (the settler heirs) whose contradictions Donna Awatere’s (1984) Maori Sovereignty\(^4\) had brought to the fore in the nation’s public culture. Nevertheless, acknowledging these global transformations and their local articulations the Treasures report readily conceded: ‘This is a period in which traditionally held views of New Zealand history are being scrutinised and, inevitably, reassessed. For many New Zealanders this process is a disturbing one’ (1985:7).

Simon During’s (1985) essay brings into tighter focus this confluence of texts which suggests the global/local flows in which the idea of Te Papa came to be

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3 This is the year of the publication of its English translation.

4 First published as articles in the feminist journal Broadsheet, Awatere’s essentialist indigenous critique established the terms for ‘race relations’ debate in late twentieth century A/NZ.
narrated. Written in 1984 and tellingly titled ‘Postmodernism or Postcolonialism?’ this was a seminal, locally salient and internationally contentious analysis of A/NZ’s contemporary culture. While During may have ‘got it wrong’ in terms of the subsequent trajectories of cosmopolitan postcolonial theory, he did nevertheless capture a distinct trajectory in the country’s cultural nationalism. New Zealand, he contended:

can be characterised by the equilibrium of its postcolonising and postcolonial forces .... The asymmetry between socio-economic/political power and ideological power is a result of the indirection, illegitimacy and emptiness of postcolonising discourses. Post-colonised needs and self-image come to dominate in the absence of postcolonising voices. (ibid.:370-1)

For During the success of this ‘play of passions’ that he terms postcolonial is:

founded upon the survival of residual forms of economic life. In New Zealand it turns upon the survival of an earlier capitalist agriculture, the absences of an indigenous industrialism and the maintenance of protectionism at home and abroad. Cultural sanctuaries flourish behind trade barriers. (ibid.:369)

I contend that the play of passion embraced in ‘the idea of Te Papa’ was decisively shaped by the forces of an emergent cultural nationalism and a residual economic nationalism that During identifies here. This relationship can be articulated by focusing on two locally significant developments that shaped the new museum both discursively and institutionally. These were the Te Maori exhibition

5 Initially published in the New Zealand literary journal, Landfall, a version of this essay was more globally circulated in Textual Practices (During, 1987).
6 During (2000) has reflected on his earlier formulations.
and the programme of structural readjustment designated the New Zealand Experiment (see Kelsey, 1997).

**Te Maori**

Te Maori opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York in 1984 and subsequently toured the US, before returning to A/NZ and touring the main centres in 1985 (see Mead, 1984). Famous for its radical aesthetic decontextualisation, Te Maori was an exhibition of predominantly of woodcarving from numerous collections in A/NZ. It was a complex event: complex in its organization, reception and effects. It was celebrated by some cosmopolitan academics and criticized by others. For James Clifford (1988:209-10) and Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (1991:2) it exemplified museological practices by which an indigenous community was able to represent itself on an international stage. Raymond Corbey (1995:71) read the primitivist reception of the exhibition in the US as uncomfortably repeating elements of colonial displays of alterity. Nicholas Thomas (1994), also saw Te Maori as articulating an essentialist Maoriness that repeated elements of primitivism as a timeless spiritual, holistic other. In this instance, for him, this was not such a bad thing, since it had been used strategically to empowering effect for Maori communities (ibid.:184).8

Locally the exhibition was contentious among Maori. There were heated debates as to whether taonga9 should tour the US. Communities were divided over

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7 For different contemporary perspectives see those of Maori scholar Sidney Moko Mead (1985) and American curator Carol O'Biso (1987).
8 Stephen Turner makes as important observation on Thomas' position. 'The unintended condescension of this justification – essentialism can be good for others but not for those who know better – is perhaps forced on Thomas by the putative wholeness of this collection of Maori carved objects, an effect that he knows is something of a Maori mirage. Informed Maori would have recognized many tribal traditions in the display, could identify the locations from which the objects were drawn, and would not accept that the exhibition made up a properly integrated whole .... For informed Maori the cut-and-paste of the exhibition is transparent, as transparent as self-conscious references to other artworks might be to spectators of postmodern art. (2002:81-82)
9 'Taonga' refers to all dimensions of a tribal group's estate, including the material and the intellectual.
the exploitation of taonga as art in a major foreign institution: should taonga remain in a context in which they had mana, and a non-aesthetic function, or should they be used to communicate Maori culture and skills to a wider audience and increase Maori international prestige? (During, 1989:169; Clifford, 1988:209-10). The experiences of local museums in organising this exhibition were salutary and led to widespread recognition that such institutions needed to dramatically renegotiate their relationship with their Maori constituencies. On its return tour of A/NZ the collection of taonga, each imbued with complex tribal associations, caused unprecedented issues of protocol for tribal Maori as they negotiated their relationship with each other, the tribal lands in which the taonga were rooted and the whakapapa with which they were invested (Mead, 1985; Tapsell, 1998). For Pakeha, American interest in Te Maori was seminal in generating a large national audience for its return home tour. As columnist Rosemary McLeod glossed it: for a broad public the exhibition ‘suddenly showed the Maori cultural heritage as art as much as artefact, as unique and as a sleeping asset’ (1994:76). Published at a time when hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders were flocking to see Te Maori, the Treasures report aimed to capitalise on that asset:

10 Mana embraces authority, control, power, prestige, influence, self-esteem, and psychic force.
11 Te Maori corresponded with the advent of trenchant anti-colonial activism that deemed Maori the only adequate interlocutors for their taonga, radically questioning the legitimacy of Pakeha scholarship (see Walker, 1990). The complexities of negotiating new relationships between museums and Maori under a broadly bicultural mandate have been the stuff of much professional reflection, policy scrutiny and iwi consultation and have been widely commented upon (cf., for example, Tapsell, 1998, 2004; Mead, 1985; Allen, 1998; Henare, 2004).
12 Defining whakapapa, Tapsell writes: ‘[G]enealogy; to layer one upon the other; kin ties; systematic framework ordering descendants under common ancestors; genealogical descent lines connecting gods with all things living’ (1997:326).
13 This has translated into an enduring public for Maori cultural achievement. Indeed, a recently commissioned survey on cultural participation funded by Creative New Zealand and the Hillary Commission, observed the considerable and broad participation in ‘Maori arts’ – with well over half of those participating in Maori arts over a twelfth month period identifying as non Maori (1999). For a commentary see Anthony Hubbard (1999:C3).
14 As McLeod was to ironically cast the success of Te Maori: ‘we should cash in quickly on our new realisation that we could show the world something it wanted to see and build a new museum to do it in’ (1994:76). Nor did Treasures let this point slip, noting that it ‘is cause for reflection that such a major event [like Te Maori] should have occurred in another country’ (1985:7). That ‘Maori art and culture’ displayed at the Met to enhance Maori mana internationally was nationalised as the impetuous for the new Museum repeats an older antipodean habit. That cultural achievements have to be vindicated off-shore before being taken seriously by their national audience has, of course, been a regular feature of ‘the colonial cringe’ that Australian cultural critic, A. A. Phillips, diagnosed as endemic to the antipodean condition many years ago ([1958] 1980).
The outstanding success of the exhibition Te Maori in the US has demonstrated that the taonga of New Zealand, sensitively presented and appropriately housed, is a potent force in the processes of identifying our culture in all its richness and diversity and enhancing its relevance to all New Zealanders. (1985:7)

On the one hand, then, a 'nationalised' Maoriness, exemplified for Pakeha in Te Maori and vindicated by American consumption, looked to provide a suitable export image for a cosmopolitan gaze and one around which a renovated settler nationalism could cohere, instituted in the form of a bicultural museum. On the other hand, such Maoriness gave indigenous communities unprecedented access to an international stage for self-representation and a certain cultural capital to exploit in Pakeha New Zealand.15

**The New Zealand Experiment**

Historically, small capitalist economies have sought protection from the vagaries of the world economy in what have been termed 'domestic defense' policies (see Katzenstein, 1985). These policies have their roots in a tradition of Keynesian welfare statism that, in many ways, was pioneered by the social democracies of the Antipodes. Frank Castles has identified four intimately interrelated policies that have characterised the Antipodean version of this tradition. These he has glossed as:

The protection of manufacturing industry through tariffs and other trade restrictions, the conciliation and arbitration of industrial disputes, the control of immigration, and a residual system of income maintenance of those outside the labour market. Each may be seen as interlocking components of a system of shock absorbers designed to defend and stabilise the existing systems of economic opportunities and rewards

15 This, of course, is to put to one side the complexities of what constitutes self-representation.
against any rapid or excessive disturbance from exogenous forces.


Following a twenty year period of economic decline, exacerbated by the loss of the country’s traditional market for agricultural products when Britain joined the EEC in 1973 and the OPEC shocks beginning the same year, New Zealand’s unemployment, inflation and public debt by the 1980s had spiralled to levels unprecedented in the post war period. By the mid 1980s the policies of this ‘domestic defense’ tradition had all but run their course. It was clear that this regulated economy was no longer able to meet the expectations of prosperity of the country’s citizens’ – both Maori and Pakeha. Driven, in part, by the imperatives of this global transformation in the regime of accumulation and by the rhetoric of Chicago School public choice economists, there followed a rapid dismantling of these legislative shock absorbers, which subsequently exposed the country to the full force of the world economy.

In a relatively short period New Zealand’s economy was transformed from one of the most highly regulated in the world to one of the least regulated, with reforms involving the deregulation of the financial sector and reduction in levels of protection and industry assistance. Domestic production had come to be dominated by international money markets, large corporations and international speculators, in particular from Australia, Japan and South-East Asia. Labour market legislation individualised employment contracts between employers and workers, and changes to immigration legislation encouraged wealthy and highly skilled immigrants from ‘non-traditional source countries’ to counter negative migration and encourage investment. Substantive steps were also made towards the dismantling of the welfare state. Further, in addition to the ‘corporatisation’ of many government departments which were required to operate on a commercial basis, a programme of asset sales introduced to reduce New Zealand’s level of overseas debt resulted in a number of these corporations being fully privatised, which saw much local industry and assets pass into foreign ownership.
Ironically enough, it was following the election of the Fourth Labour government in 1984 that New Zealand made this switch to 'Thatcherism', initiating a restructuring programme in which the old 'laboratory of welfare statism' was to be transformed into the new 'laboratory of economic rationalism' – the New Zealand Experiment (see Kesley 1997; James, 1986; Easton, 1997). If Te Maori cultivated an export image for the country that was celebrated by cosmopolitan cultural commentators, the New Zealand Experiment fostered another. Celebrated by, among others, The Economist, it was for a time widely advocated by neo-conservative economic and public policy analysts as a model for the world to follow.

As one of the most significant statements of cultural policy of this period, one would expect that the idea of Te Papa would negotiate a cultural space between Te Maori and the New Zealand Experiment. Yet in its early reception critics found that this idea resonated with a nostalgia for the policies of welfare statism which ignored the lessons of Te Maori or the harsh medicine of a programme of structural readjustment.

‘Homogenous Monolith’: Assimilation and the Idea of Te Papa

The downturn in the market for New Zealand agricultural production, along with the abandonment of ‘domestic defence’ policies of ‘import-substitution’ that promoted a local manufacturing sector, increasingly propelled rural Maori into the ranks of the urban working class. This process had begun in the 1950s and accelerated over the 1960s and 1970s, leading to the disenfranchisement of many Maori from their tribal affiliations. Facilitating this process and all the while seeking to ameliorate this social fragmentation, was the welfarist policy of assimilation (See Hunn, 1960). Here Maori were to be progressively ‘raised’ to the level of Europeans through enlightened policies in education, health, housing and social welfare. Assimilation remained the dominant model of social policy until the late 1970s. The situation of tribal disenfranchisement and institutional racism gave rise to an insurgent anti-
colonial activism over the late 1970s and 1980s (see Walker, 1990). Significantly, this political movement secured the legal recognition of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi that the British Crown had signed with Maori chiefs to regulate relations between indigenous communities and European settlement. Although the Waitangi Tribunal was initially established in 1975, it was not until the passing of the Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act in 1985 that the Treaty was officially acknowledged and the Tribunal was given the power to investigate Maori claims of injustice and loss back to 1840. From the early 1990s government policy developed to acknowledge past wrongs and to supply compensation to recapitalise tribes.

In this context a number of commentators were suspicious of the Museum’s conceptual architecture and its totalising thrust, which they felt threatened to flatten out cultural difference in a mode that disconcertingly appeared to mimic the ambitions of mid-century social policy. Museum policy planner, Apirana T. Mahuika (1992), appeared to explicitly articulate this nationalizing agenda. He was the architect of the policy governing the Museum’s relation to Maori material culture, iwi (tribe) and other cultural groups and their patrimony (see Mahuika, ibid; Gorbey, 1992). In a detailed analysis, Te Arawa scholar and museum curator, Paul Tapsell (1998), argues that this policy developed directly from the ad hoc protocol that had emerged to contend with the demands of the Te Maori national tour of 1985. Mahuika articulated the integrationist ambitions of the idea of Te Papa: with ‘the Papa Tongarewa concept many Maori tribes have paused a while [with their calls for Maori nationhood] to see what cultural recognition will result from the proposed Museum’ (1992:9). ‘Maori disquiet’, he continued, ‘can be calmed only by a program such as that proposed by Te Papa Tongarewa’ (ibid.:11). Unsurprisingly, the protocol that Mahuika designed has been very controversial among tribal Maori (see Tapsell, 1998:156-217). Indeed, Tapsell has argued that the passing over of the customary lore of local iwi, Te Ati Awa and Ngati Toa, inherent in the concept abrogates the Museum’s obligations to tangata whenua under the Treaty (ibid.). In this way the ‘nationalised taonga’ of Te Papa repeated the colonial injustices experienced by the tangata whenua of the Wellington region. Both Te Ati
Awa and Ngati Toa had claims before the Waitangi Tribunal, which argued ‘that the aboriginal title to Wellington’s reclaimed harbour-front [on which the Museum stands] has never been extinguished by the Crown and that it continues to belong to the tangata whenua’ (ibid.:179).

Unsurprisingly, former director of the National Gallery, Luit Bieringa, found the Te Papa concept to be ‘an out-dated piece of assimilatory nationalism’. He argued:

[It is] anachronistic to create a homogenous monolith, which, in confusing [cultural] unity with similarity represents an order reminiscent of 1950s and 1960s assimilation. Not only does it speak of centralised bureaucracy of the kind being demolished by the present Government, but it is also out of step and shows an insensitivity to the aspirations of ... [Maori] communities. (1989:11-12)

Cultural critic, and Te Papa curator to be, Ian Wedde, was to argue along similar lines. He stated that the Museum’s concept ‘runs absolutely counter to Maori culture’s fundamental base in tribal regionalism’ (1992:43). He contended that ‘the scheme’s implication as a national identity showcase, [was] surely an anachronism at the turn of the century’ (ibid.).

‘Cultural Clyde Dam': domestic defense and the Idea of Te Papa

There were other critical responses to the idea of Te Papa that cast it in similarly anachronistic terms. These narratives, however, found their impetus in a different orientation to the trajectory of New Zealand’s economic development and were less concerned with the historical situation of the Maori experience of colonialism, and more with a ‘middle New Zealand’ hard hit by the recession of the early nineties. Here, commentators invoked the discredited ‘Think Big’ policies which had promoted projects like the hydropower scheme at Clyde and had been the last gasp
of the ‘domestic defense’ tradition. That the public face of the new museum project was Wallace Rowling, a former Labour leader from the protectionist era, further encouraged the reading of the proposed Museum as public policy nostalgia. Certainly, in his efforts to enlist support for the project, Rowling did express discontent with the current policy direction, he stated, ‘a country needs more than monetary policy to weld its people together and create a sense of identity’ (cited in ‘Time to delay museum plans’, 1991). When the finalised plans of the new building were released for public perusal (to a less than warm reception) and details of government expenditure on the project were disclosed (to a scandalised media), the national press ran editorials whose headlines rang with the alarm of a certain deja vu: the Sunday Star warned ‘Another grandiose monument to insanity’ (Rudman, 31 May, 1992), while the New Zealand Herald feared ‘Think Big Reincarnate’ (29 May, 1992). For these commentators the project looked like an unwarranted turning away from the tight fiscal policy that two terms of a Labour government had told New Zealanders was the tough medicine that would ultimately be good for them. The hydro-power scheme, which was (finally) plugged into the National Grid the week the Museum project was given the ‘go ahead’, was years behind on its projected completion schedule and vastly over budget; the ‘taxpayer’, commentators declared, could not afford a ‘Cultural Clyde Dam’ (Rudman, Sunday Star, 31 May 1992). For at least one commentator the project took the form of what might be described as the economic, not to mention the aesthetic, grotesque. He characterized it as a massively expensive ‘job creation’ scheme and declared it a ‘Monztrosity’ (ibid.).

16 Designed to buffer the national economy from further shocks in the supply of energy, policy makers sought to interest trans-nationals in the possibility of producing or using energy at state-subsidised prices (see Perry, 1992). In this context it is not incidental that Mobil Oil, which was in negotiation with the New Zealand government on the construction of a natural gas conversion plant, was the major sponsor of Te Maori.

17 Yet, even if the images of the structure in the Museum’s press release looked like an impossible object doomed to be a costly failure, they did have a certain seduction – there was a civic ‘desire’ for the Museum’s (im)possibility. An Evening Post (Feb. 28 1991) editorial captured the mood: a ‘new national museum for Wellington’, the writer categorically declared, ‘is highly desirable’, but was equally emphatic in asserting that it was an extravagance that we simply could not afford. In the event, to the credit of its project managers, the Museum was realised on time and under budget – a national first, and no doubt an international rarity.
Fragments of Empire, ‘fault lines’ of Ethnicity

This popular (mis)reading of Te Papa’s post-1984 cultural policy as welfarist assimilatory social policy or protectionist economic policy can be contextualised in relation to the process of the ‘scrutinisation’ and ‘reassessment’ of New Zealand’s history that the Treasures report identified as ‘disturbing’ for ‘many New Zealanders’ (1985:7). During (2000) has usefully sketched the forces driving this reassessment: The ‘strategies of state minimalization, deregulation, orientation to global, and especially East Asian, markets fractured the colony’s hegemonic, if blind, understanding of itself as an outpost of British culture and civility’ (ibid:391). Here, a once pervasive ‘ideology’ of an utopic little Britain in the South Seas – purified by the hard work of forging a nation, liberated from the class inequalities of the Old World, and free from the racial injustices of much of the New World (expressed in the popular refrain ‘the best race relations in the world’) – became an increasingly unsustainable settler mythos post 1984. Two ‘ideological’ projects arose around the collapse of this settler myth.

The first: If the possibility of this utopic little Britain was eroded by transformations in the regimes of accumulation driving the country’s economic restructuring, the ideologues of the New Right also made a direct assault on the residue of this once pervasive myth. They argued that it was ‘the culture’ of the nation that was holding the country back from accelerated economic growth. As the authors of the Porter Project (a state sponsored neo-liberal think tank) wrote, New Zealand’s only constraint to achieving its potential was the ‘people’s inability or unwillingness to adapt, change and thus compete successfully in the global economy’ (cited in Kelsey, 1997: 327). This concerned not only the desire to install a neo-liberal ethos in the citizenry, which cultivated the ‘entrepreneurial self’ and moved ‘the culture’ from one of egalitarianism and ‘welfare dependency’ to an internationally viable ‘Enterprise Culture’ based on competitive individualism, but it also concerned a cultural change in regional orientation away from the old economies which had so painfully rejected the country, towards the new economies
of the Asia-Pacific rim to which its future might hopefully be secured (see Kesley, 1997; Easton, 1997).

The second: To re-kindle for Pakeha at least good faith in the future possibility of harmonious race relations a prominent and increasingly state sanctioned discourse of biculturalism announced its utility. This sought to acknowledge and bridge the economic, social and psychic fault-lines of a nation whose inheritance is a culture forged in the violence of an earlier globalising moment of capital – nineteenth century British colonisation (see Bedgood, 1982; Denoon, 1983). The concept of biculturalism was imported from Canada and began to be used in academic circles from the late 1960s (see Sissons, 1995:61). However, from the mid 1980s it has increasingly been advocated in public policy and superseded earlier policy formulations of racial amalgamation and social assimilation. Controversially, over the 1980s and 1990s biculturalism has emerged not only as a legislative practice of compensation of Maori for colonial injustice and loss, it has also served as a discursive practice of reconciliation, to promote a new ‘postcolonial’ national imagining. This has seen the Treaty of Waitangi recognised, not only as the basis for Maori to seek redress for loss and injustice, but as the constitutional origin of the nation, and, over the 1980s and 1990s it was increasingly articulated as such in public culture.

Over this period ‘Treaty-oriented’ histories have discursively reorganised the country’s ‘past-present alignments’ (Wright, 1985). Particularly important has been the work of Anne Salmond (1991; 1997; 2003), whose narratives seek to articulate early encounters from both sides of the colonial divide and accord with officially sanctioned definitions of bicultural parity (see Maxwell, 1994:395). Other important works include those of James Belich (1988) and Judith Binney (1995). Belich has re-figured the colonial conflicts not as the ‘land wars’ but as the ‘New Zealand Wars’, investing them, as Benedict Anderson has put it, as ‘the reassuring

18 Eric Schwimmer (1968) introduced the term ‘biculturalism’ into the country’s academic discourse in his The Maori People in the Nineteen Sixties.
19 Salmond is on the Board of Trustees of Te Papa.
fratricide"20 central to national imaginings (also Belich, 1996; 2001). Binney’s (1995) biography of Te Kooti, the late nineteenth century Maori resistance poet and syncretic prophet in the mould of Robin Hood or Ned Kelly, whose surrender without compromise, while embracing the Law, seems to provide an allegory for the legal accommodations of the 1980s and 1990s (see During, 2000:390). In works more directly concerned with the contemporary there has been much anguishing over the meaning of ‘Being Pakeha’ inaugurated by Michael King’s book of that name (1985; also see 1991; 1999). Other media and institutions of public culture were to embrace biculturalism. This effort to reinvent the nation in a bicultural image was also embraced by numerous social documentaries and historical dramas. These developments were exemplified by the events and the outpouring of Treaty oriented historical and cultural production to mark the sesqui-centennial commemorations in 1990 of the document’s signing.

This environment, in part, created new public spaces for the cultivation of maoritanga21 that required new modes of reproduction: ones less directly participatory, and more mass mediated in form. Major forays in print, film, and television at the time included: Keri Hulme’s (1985) Booker Prize winner, The Bone People; Merata Mita’s (1980) documentary, Bastion Point Day 507 on the land occupation at Auckland’s Bastion Point; the ‘postcolonial’ Maori western, Utu (Murphy, 1983) and the Billy T James Show (1981-1991). In the volatile political climate of the 1980s and early 1990s James let the nation laugh at itself, (not so) delicately ‘taking the piss’ out of both Maori and Pakeha preoccupations.22 Indeed, playing on the cultural insecurities of the majority culture, James, in one skit, in the guise of the earnest arts show host, stood before a shipping crate that, we were informed, contained museum exhibits about to depart for New York, and with a rhetorical flourish he concluded, ‘Te Pakeha, bullshit or not.’ This period, then, saw a media savvy appropriation of cultural technologies of both the ‘high’ and the

20 During (1989:772) attributes the phrase to Benedict Anderson.
21 Maoritanga refers to Maori culture; a way of life and view of the world.
22 See Blythe (1994) for an analysis of representations of Maori in New Zealand film and television.
‘popular’ to cultivate and interrogate ‘Maori-ness’ and ‘Pakeha-ness’ in the contemporary nation-space.

Here, anti-colonial efforts by Maori to reassert aspects of their traditional culture and political autonomy, have given rise to a socially liberal desire among Pakeha to reinvent the national imagining and ‘change the culture’ (in ways that are not theoretically, historically, and politically unproblematic) from ‘the colonial’ to ‘the post-colonial.’ The idea of Te Papa was very much of this moment. This is voiced in an early policy statement:

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa ... will express the bicultural nature of the country, recognising the mana and significance of each of the two mainstreams of tradition and cultural heritage and providing the means for each to contribute effectively to a statement of the nation’s identity.23

Export Image: The Idea of Te Papa and ‘the wider world’

Unsurprisingly, the relationship between the processes of economy restructuring that forced the hegemony of a utopic little Britain to fragment, and the narrative of biculturalism that emerged to replace it, has been contentious. For many commentators of the time restructuring and biculturalism appeared to be deeply antagonistic agendas. For example, sociologists, Wendy Larner and Paul Spoonley, enthusiastically emphasised biculturalism’s progressive potential:

Biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand provides a powerful expression of progressive and inclusive forms of politics based on self-defined identities and reflecting local sensitivities .... [It] provides one of the most effective counters to New Right ideologies and the harsh realities

of the monetarist experiment based on market competition and individualism. (1995:61; also see Spoonley, 1995)

Other commentators conceded it was not a coincidental conjuncture that as A/NZ became increasingly assimilated into a new regime of global economics and cultural politics – what US President George Bush senior was to call the ‘new world order’ – that the country simultaneously became ‘more sensitive to [cultural] differences ... within society’ (Simpson, 1992:573). Cultural critic, Mark Williams, for example, found biculturalism rather less oppositional. More cautiously, he wrote, ‘biculturalism has clearly been advantageous in fashioning an acceptable national self-image in a world where colonialism and racism are bad for business’ (1996:12).

In addition, it is increasingly recognised that the calls for self-determination of the Maori Renaissance, while, at least in part, the historical legacy of protectionism, were facilitated by the general policy orientation that characterised the 1980s and 1990s (see, for example, During, 2000). That is, the state’s commitment to de-regulation correlated to a Maori desire – that was, at least to some degree, achieved – to access the global on their own terms, unmediated by the state. This is exemplified, complexly, by Te Maori. Other examples might include the 1983 privatisation of the old Maori Arts and Crafts Institute (est. 1963) into, tellingly, Maori International Limited, a significant tourism and artefact-export business (During, 2000:391; see also Te Awekotuku, 1981; Stafford, 1993). It also includes other iwi business ventures with international consortiums (which have had mixed outcomes). The point here is that many of the Treaty settlements that sought to re-capitalise iwi have not been inconsistent with a political agenda that seeks to devolve social responsibilities to local communities. That is, the fostering of modes of social management that ‘govern at a distance’ has not been un-conducive to creating space for Maori autonomy and agency.24

24 The complexities from which Maori gain and lose under these social conditions are interestingly analysed by Rata (2000).
In this broader context, deploying the idea of Te Papa to promote 'a sense of identity for New Zealand in the wider world' (Report of the Interviews, 1989:9) looks less like a policy anachronism and more like a project directed at fostering a suitable export image for this 'new world order' and fostering an appropriate national self-image to cope with such contingencies. Or to put it another way, while in the mid 1980s and early 1990s the Te Maori experience and The New Zealand Experiment might have looked like antagonistic bids for the national imaginary, they find their partial resolution in the 'idea of Te Papa'. These threads are nicely drawn together in the figure of Bolger. Perhaps reflecting the cultural schizophrenia and fragmented subjectivities of a postmodern world (Bell and McLennan, 1995:5), but more convincingly articulating the historical predicament of Meaghan Morris's (1992:471) 'Dominion subject', Bolger had within the course of 1994 declared himself a Republican, an Asian and tangata whenua (an indigene). On his reckoning it seems that Te Papa would be the site to hold this complex identity together. Signaling the official happy endings to both colonialism and economic deprivation, it metonymically established the space in which such an economic-cultural identity would soon come to prosper. However, a counter-narrative to the

25 On the dominion subject, Morris writes: 'Dubiously postcolonial, prematurely postmodern, constitutively multicultural but still predominantly white, we oscillate historically between identities as coloniser and colonised' (1992:471).

26 Bolger had suggested that New Zealand should move further away from Britain, become a Republic, and that New Zealanders should re-orient their ethnicity (moving them closer to the Asia-Pacific rim). This received a muted public response. He further announced over the course of 1994, to some confusion, that he was both Asian and tangata whenua (ethnically he is what the Australians call Anglo-Celtic). Left Republicans, Jane Kelsey (1995) and Bruce Jesson (1995), both argued, as they sought to rescue the idea of the Republic from Bolger's neo-liberal vision, that the National government had sought to mobilise republicanism as part 'of the drive into Asia'. By the time the collection of essays that included Kelsey and Jesson's papers was published, Republicanism had disappeared from the political agenda (see Trainor, 1995). It was raised again briefly in response to the Republican referendum held in Australia in 1999. Recently elected Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark stated that while it was inevitable that New Zealand would become a Republic it was not something that she, nor, she felt, the public, was interested in pursuing. Despite the failure of the Australian referenda, Republicanism is still much more likely to be realised in that country than in New Zealand. In ways that are not true of Australia, issues of constitutional law and questions of cultural identity in A/NZ are complexly entangled. The Treaty of Waitangi would have to be renegotiated or somehow ignored altogether. To renegotiate it would require the uncomfortable acquiescence by Maori to the presence of Pakeha in New Zealand. To ignore it would not only be intolerable to Maori, but difficult for Pakeha to sustain in good faith given the popular, although somewhat bruised, view of relatively 'harmonious race relations' (Turner, 1999; Marharey, 1996:1). This apparent catch-22 situation might explain the lack of appeal for Republicanism in New Zealand, and why a leader of a centre-left government would seek to set it as a social horizon but not an active debate.
idea of Te Papa captured a popular fear, which the politician’s promise of progress could not suppress.

‘The MoNZter’ and Pakeha panic

In the months leading up to the February 1998 opening of Te Papa the advertising company Saatchi and Saatchi was contracted to establish a new brand and corporate image for the museum. Public relations experts asserted that the institution’s official title, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, was too difficult to say and read, particularly for international tourists, and the acronym MoNZ too bureaucratic and static. The new name, Te Papa, and its new positioning statement, Our Place, sought to address these concerns. Te Papa, while being easy to say, was still anchored in the official Maori name and according to front end evaluations had friendly warm connotations for all ethnicities. Our Place, with its resonances of the vernacular – as in ‘come round to our place’ – suggested informality, accessibility and popular ownership (Panui, 1997:3). However, more was at stake than a simple semantic shift in the popular vocabulary from MoNZ to Te Papa. Routinely, in a press deeply antagonistic to the new project, the acronym MoNZ was wilfully and playfully corrupted. Here the ‘idea of Te Papa’ was sardonically baptized ‘the MoNZter’. This casting of the museum as ‘MoNZtrous’ capitalises on what one senior Te Papa staff member described as a genuine ‘public fear’ of the new institution (Ken Gorbey, taped interview, 21 May 1999). Indeed, as the building emerged on Wellington’s landscape this sentiment was expressed in comparisons of the building’s appearance with the architecture of totalitarianism. Former director of the Waitangi Tribunal, Buddy Mikaere, invoked the Fascists, describing the museum as ‘Fuhrerbunker II’ (Evening Post, 22 July, 1998), while, former editor of

27 See Paul Tapsell (1998:291-298) for an interesting account of the negotiations between iwi Maori and the museum over what the new museum was to be called.
the mid-brow glossy Metro Magazine, Warwick Rogers, invoked the Communists, describing the building as 'East Berlin brutalisf' (Evening Post, 15 June 1998).29

At one level this hostility perhaps captures a widely commented upon popular antagonism to monumentalism. As Georges Bataille has noted: 'It is obvious that monuments inspire socially good behaviour in societies and often even real fear' (cited in Hollier, 1989.ix). Similarly, cultural populists John Fiske et al have commented: 'many monuments are monsters, deformed by the weight of significance they carry. If it's difficult to ignore them, it's equally inappropriate to like them.' (1987:137). At another level this public fear has more particular coordinates.

The unofficial narratives in which ‘the idea of Te Papa’ was inscribed were marked by what might be termed a pakeha panic. Here middle New Zealand was fearful of losing what cultural and economic power it had secured behind the edifice of protectionism. The dismantling of this edifice, as I have argued, fragmented older images of the settler-nation as an utopic Britain of the South Seas. Into the cultural vacuum that this created, there entered a renovated settler cultural nationalism. At the heart of this project was a high-cultural nationalized Maoriness; the official reception of the Te Maori experience proved to be the pre-cursor to this discourse. However, for a middle New Zealand, whose vernacular culture was historically sceptical of the attributes of high culture in general, and continued to be marked by the spectre of colonial racism, this discourse of biculturalism looked to be a cultural disenfranchisement that mimicked the racialised economic discourses of disenfranchisement, ‘the Asian invasion’ and ‘the Maori takeover’, that were

29 Aggravating criticisms of this order were images reproduced in the local media of the shimmering, organic curves of Frank Gehry’s, titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum, which had also recently opened in Bilbao, Spain. In comparison with the monumentality of Bilbao, Te Papa, with its eclectic assemblage of the international and the vernacular, looked like a missed opportunity. All the more so, as critics were quick to point out, given that Gehry in partnership with Wellington architect Ian Athfield, had submitted an unsuccessful design proposal for the architectural competition for the new building (see Hunt, 1990; Hubbard, 1992:33). For at least one despairing critic, Gordon Campbell, the new museum was an example of ‘Kiwi timidity’, an unfortunate ‘pastiche’ and an expensive ‘monstrosity’ (1998:27).
That is, middle New Zealand perceived a threat from the redistribution of national assets, conditioned, on the one hand, by the restructuring of the national economy which led to increasing foreign, designated ‘Asian’, ownership of the country’s assets, and, on the other, by the process of Treaty settlements which appeared to be returning those public assets that remained to Maori control.31 Under these conditions a bicultural museum that spoke of cultural and economic confidence in ‘the new world order’ (Bolger’s promises of happy endings) generated a phobic counter-narrative: one that tended towards a pakeha panic.

Gripped by the fear of exogenous global economic and cultural forces that were profoundly disrupting the social and cultural landscapes that had once secured the foundations of their identity, middle New Zealand found no comfort in the idea of Te Papa. Perhaps there is no surprise that the idea of the museum became articulated, not in terms of home, self, and the intimacy of Our Place, but rather as the unhomely, alien, and threatening MoNZter.32

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30 Lamentably, in 1996 in an attempt to allay this fear of ‘a Maori take-over’ of its exhibition space, the museum published a series of pie-charts that showed the proportion of floor display devoted to various ethnic groups.
31 The threat posed by Treaty settlements was, however, minimal. The National Government’s ‘Fiscal Envelope’ policy of 1993 restricted total settlements to $NZ 1 billion. Although this policy is not currently followed, early settlements such as Tainui and Ngai Tahu, have effectively established benchmarks that new settlements comply with. My thanks to John Hutton for clarifying these points.
32 And as befits a global world, echoing Jane Kesley’s cautions about the foolhardiness of following The New Zealand Experiment, the New Statesman offered this on Te Papa and neo-liberalism: ‘the institutional exemplar of the lowest common denominator turned into official cultural policy [Te Papa] … stands as a terrible warning to the rest of the world’ (Dalrymple, 1999:34).
Chapter 5

OUR (DIS)PLACE(MENT):

on the aesthetics of place and displacement

Shipley's Spectacle

Wellington's Waterfront, 14 February 1998: In July 1994 Prime Minister Bolger's foundation stone ceremony passed me by. Living in Auckland a thousand kilometres to the north, what seemed minor official performances in Wellington were, no doubt, out scaled by the challenges of finding gainful employment after graduation in the context of Bolger's shaky 'economic recovery.' Nevertheless, four years later I was present at another, more widely attended, moment in the museum's life – its official opening. The foundation stone's inscription reference to 'the many journeys and identities of all the communities and peoples of New Zealand' was about to be turned into a dramatic public spectacle.¹ Disembarking from the over-night train from Auckland, I arrived in Wellington shortly after sunrise and made my way across town to the Museum's harbour-side site. There, events – later reported as a 'spine-tingling dawn ceremony' – were already in full swing (Capital News Feb. 14, 1998:4). Under overcast skies fifteen thousand people were assembled around Chaffer's Marina, local media and representatives of CNN and BBC jockeyed for vantage points to observe the spectacle of thirty waka (canoes) making their passage to the foreshore to the sounds of putatare (Maori trumpets) and conch shell horns (Walsh, 1998). Among this inter-tribal flotilla was the double-hulled Te Auere. A

¹ For an account of the opening day other then the news paper reports cited in my text see Horton (1998).
replica of the ocean-going canoes that brought the first Polynesians to these shores under the guidance of Kupe, a Maori navigator, cast in the national imaginary, in the mould of James Cook (see Sorrenson, 1979:84). Representatives from Te Ati Awa, the indigenous people of the Wellington region, greeted this flotilla with a haka (war dance) to which the crew of Te Aurere responded in kind (‘Valentines gift to NZ’, 1998:3). One newspaper later described this as a ‘frightening, majestic and defiant’ performance. Meanwhile, echoing from the Museum’s marae above the water, was a karanga (welcome) sung by Te Ati Awa women, which, the same paper was to characterise as an ‘emotive welcoming’ (ibid.). After this performance Te Ati Awa’s guests – dignitaries, museum officials and members of other iwi – filed onto the Marae to continue the process by which the tangata whenua (people of the land) welcomed the advent of the new Museum on their traditional land. This was closed to the general public so I returned to the city and headed to McDonalds on Courtney Place for breakfast.

Mid-morning I returned to the Museum site this time to the building’s forecourt that linked the building to its urban environment. Although not due to open for another couple of hours a significant queue was forming. There we waited for the next installment of the official proceedings. No tallships arrived. There was to be no enactment of Cook’s arrival, which might have echoed the Kupe-sque
arrival of Te Aurere, or, for that matter, any other illusions to the Whence of the Pakeha, or, to watershed events of inter-cultural exchange, like, for instance, the bloody first encounter in Poverty Bay in 1769, or, the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. In the opening ceremony, if Maori-ness was associated with a history of seafaring, Pakeha-ness was associated with the contemporariety of air-travel. Here, then, symmetry might be found in the charmingly dismal display of military hardware – a pass over by what may have been the entirety of the New Zealand Air Force – four jet fighters, the roar of which inspired no one to wax lyrical in terms equivalent to those evoked by the display of Maori militarism. However, it was with the arrival of the Prime Minister that the semiotic power of aviation was less equivocally expressed. Arriving not by waka but by helicopter, Bolger’s successor and first woman PM, Jenny Shipley, hovered down with maverick businessman, New Right lobbyist, and Te Papa chairman, Ron Trotter. No doubt, expressing the technological sophistication, but also the presentism of the Pakeha ruling classes, arriving not by sea, but (seeming out of thin) air, the official Pakeha party, unlike the Maori ceremony, conveniently made no reference to how they came to occupy this land.

Launching into her opening speech, Shipley unsurprisingly sidestepped the vexed issues concerning the nation’s foundations in colonialism. Rather, she performed the (all too) familiar trope of cultural (im)maturity. She proclaimed:

As New Zealanders, we think of ourselves as young, as raw and fresh, but one day, in looking in the mirror, we find, to our surprise, we have grown up. This building behind us is such a mirror. It is a place where we can look at ourselves, at our past and at our present, at our natural

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2 I allude, of course, here to the bicentennial celebrations in Australia and to events like the 1940 Exhibition in Wellington that marked a century since the signing of the Treaty.

3 These I am sure would be museum pieces in most of the nations that New Zealanders like to think are their peers.
heritage, at the unique mosaic of cultures that is New Zealand. ('Valentines gift to NZ', 1998 Feb. 14:1)\(^4\)

However, as the subsequent trajectory of proceedings suggested, the nation had not quite reached this threshold of maturity. Perhaps, echoing Allen Curnow's famous line - 'Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year, Will learn the trick of standing upright here' ([1946] 1990:89) – this achievement was metaphorically deferred to the country's future citizens. This was signaled by the choice of the museum's first official visitors – little Tama Whiting, aged 5, and Grace Sweeney, aged 8. Before these children set forth on their voyage of national/self discovery, their passage was facilitated by two further acts performed by a brace of middle-aged men: the national anthem was sung in English and Maori by Howard Morrison, Maori crooner (OBE, which he self-ascribed as Outstanding Beige Entertainer), and, the official ribbon was cut.\(^5\) Pneumonia prevented the Museum's first choice for this task from making an appearance, antipodean archetype and 'conqueror' of Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary. However, returning things to sea level, Peter Blake, endurance sailor and 1995 Americas Cup winner, who was a late ring in, performed the task admirably (Berry, 1998: 1, 2). Declaring the building open he led the children's transition across the Museum's threshold.\(^6\) Thus entered the youthful bicultural envoys on whose small shoulders the promise of a better tomorrow rested.

\(^4\) The vision of this totalising and integrative reflective surface, the museum as 'colossal mirror', shares in an enduring image of the institution of the museum itself (Batilale, 1986:25). As Hooper-Greenhill has written: 'The Museum acted and in many ways still acts (not least, conceptually) as a microcosm of the world, as a universal sacred space where Man can rediscover and reconstitute his fragmented self' (1990:58). In an increasingly global(ised) economy and culture, where the autonomy of a national economy and culture is increasingly questionable, fragmenting the self around many axes, it is, of course, a microcosm of an idealised world that the Museum embraces.

\(^5\) Fortuitously, as Te Papa's relocation from its Mt Cook site beside the National War Memorial to its harbour-side tourist precinct already signalled, it was not the site for the celebration of a militarised masculinity. Rather than taking the form of a now antiquated ANZAC figure, idealised masculinity was to be expressed in the opening ceremony in the shape of the rugged outdoorsman, who was to be given the (rather emasculating) task of cutting the official ribbon.

\(^6\) In the spirit of a democratic inclusiveness other masculinities were included in the 'poignant and theatrical event', as the Museum described the programme that followed the opening. This included an act from the brilliantly outrageous Maori transgender performer, Mika, admittedly scheduled later in the evening when the kids had gone home to bed.
Inside Te Papa - Our Place: What constituted this space already the subject of so much controversy, into which Tama and Grace now entered, with thousands of others to follow? After duly queuing I entered into the lower lobby, was greeted by a friendly host and directed up stairs into the main lobby. There I acquired the Six Track Pack: six ways to tour Te Papa. This offered self-guided tours organised, either, by theme (nature, Maori, history, and art), or age (‘Te Papa for kids’), or, time constraints (‘Te Papa in a hurry’). On the edges of lobby’s expansive granite floor, milling crowds gathered at a number of portals into various exhibitions Here, Time Warp, resonated with the vibrancy of the theme-park; Awesome Forces, beckoned with the molten glow of simulated volcanic activity; while, Mountain to Sea, reverberated with the sound-scape of the bush which spilled into the lobby. Distracted by these visual, sonic and crowd scapes I folded the guide into my back pocket.

![Figure 8 Time Warp, Te Papa](http://www.denisdutton.com/te_papa.htm)

Initially I was drawn toward Time Warp. I purchased tickets for the motion simulator ride films; in BlastBack I tussled with pre-historic animals and mystical Maori figures in a bumpy but narratively seamless spectacle that blended the continental splitting of Gondwana with Maori creation stories. In FutureRush, my virtual host Rima chaperoned me through Wellington, 2055. I soared through the techno-green, multi-cultural matrix of the city’s future in which all the impending calamities of the late nineties around ethnicity, environment and technology had
been adverted. In *Virtual Bungi*, kitted-out with a virtual reality helmet, harnessed and inverted on a motion simulator I plunged into Skippers Canyon. I, and my fellow museum-goers it seemed, revel in *Time Warp*’s ‘riskless risks’⁷. We are attacked, but are not devoured, by a prehistoric eagle that pursued us across a primeval landscape; we were battered, but not obliterated, in a high speed pursuit through a wind farm powering Wellington’s techno-green future; and, as we plummeted into the abyss, the bungi cord never broke. *Time Warp* delivers reassuring scenarios where Nature never destroys us, where Technology never fails, where the Future always redeems.

Buffeted by a blast of hot air I entered *Awesome Forces* which took me on a geological excursion of the formation of the landmass that is now designated New Zealand, and culminated in a simulation, in a suburban house, of the experience of the Edgecum earthquake (1987). Passing through a theatrette, entitled Papatuanuku, which recounted Maori creation stories I entered in the natural history exhibition, *Mountain to Sea*.

![Figure 9 Mountain to Sea, Te Papa](http://www.xs4all.nl/~dolfin/images/Wellington/WELL_TePapa1.jpg)

⁷ Commenting on American amusement parks rides, Russell Nye terms them the "‘riskless risk’, a place where one may take chances that are not really chances’ (1981:71). This is notwithstanding signage that warns: [Time Warp includes] exciting attractions that involved motion simulation and laser effects. People are advised not to experience these attractions if they suffer from the following conditions: epilepsy, dizziness, neck disorders, back disorders, heart disorders.
In this surreal grotto an articulated skeleton of a pygmy blue whale was suspended amongst a canopy of simulated native flora in which indigenous fauna perched or were frozen mid-flight overhead. Shimmering in their air-conditioned aquarium an inter-species school of Pacific fish swirled up toward the ceiling. From speakers young children’s voices instructed on the taxidermied specimens and complemented labels that were salted Hollywood allusions. Repeating Arnold Schwarzenegger’s famous line from Terminator 2, one read: ‘For any fish, frog or insect that crosses the path of a kingfisher, its “Hasta la vista baby!”’

Back in the lobby I looked up into the atrium, people leaned on the rail peering down; other exhibition spaces beckoned behind them. On this second level a cafe/bar space that would not be out of place in any international hotel was bustling.

Figure 10 Espresso Lounge, Te Papa
(Source: http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/TePapa/English/FoodDrink/)

The strident graphics of Parade pulled me into a gaudy shopping-mall-like environment that accommodated a cultural history exhibition on the artistic, design and media production of A/NZ.
There I passed the now nationally (in)famous juxtaposition of Colin McCahon’s canonic paint, *The Northland Panels*, with a department store display advertising a Kelvinator refrigerator, both circ. 1958. I then queued to enter *Golden Days*. This transpired to be an object theatre staged in a junk store hosted by the gruff voice of the proprietor and accompanied by a nostalgic cinematic montage that thematically spliced fragments of the nation’s visual archive on war and sport, disaster and love, work and play. Tardy on exiting after the film’s end, I paid a little too much attention to some of the objects and solicited a proprietorial remonstrations: ‘Hey you keep your sticky hands off the merchandise.’
My next attraction was *Exhibiting Ourselves*. Exploring 'the Disneylands of our past' – the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, the 1906 Christchurch International Exhibition, the 1940 Centennial Exhibition in Wellington and the 1992 Seville Exposition – *Exhibiting Ourselves* simulated exhibitionary environments in a consideration of the historical fabrication of national identity (Phillips, 1997:116). This seemed to deliver a genealogy, whose effect ironically distanced me from for my earlier Te Papa experiences which constantly hailed my national self in terms of nature, culture and technology.

I made my way back to the atrium, and was drawn into *Signs of a Nation*, the exhibition on the *Treaty of Waitangi*.

![Figure 13 Signs of a Nation, Te Papa](http://personal.engin.umich.edu/~hhuang/New%20Zealand/Wellington/WellingtonRecap.htm)

Approaching the Treaty display I passed through clusters of rusted steel poles, a babble of voices emitted from these poles conveying various opinions on the Treaty. Suspended beyond these poles was a huge, visually impressive, glass relief of facsimiles of fragments of the Treaty. On either side of this space are the versions of the Treaty in English and Maori. A ‘Pepper’s ghost’ offers a series of personal historical narratives. Maori warriors and colonial soldiers, Maori wahine and petticoat pioneers spoke of how the Treaty dramatically affected their lives.
The summit of ‘the Te Papa experience’ for me, as for many visitors, was to move through the mid-level exhibitions into the zone of nationalised Maori spiritualism, *Te Marae*.

![Figure 14 Te Marae, Te papa](http://www.hfmgv.org/research/publications/symposium2002/papers/gurian.asp)

At one end stand the remarkable contemporary carvings by Te Papa’s Kaitiwha, Cliff Whiting, which are designed to invoke the whakapapa (genealogies) of all the nation’s citizens. At the other end are panoramic views across Wellington’s harbour and the rugged hills of its headlands. While disparaged by some as ‘the purest Disney, with its pantheon of pastel cartoon ancestors’ (Dutton, 1998:A15), it is with *Te Marae* that the Museum hails the arrival of a new national maturity, a bicultural coming of age, where the cultural fissures of colonialism can be sutured in a hybrid present for the inhabitants of this geologically volatile archipelago.

If ‘Maori-ness’ and ‘Pakeha-ness’ were the determining coordinates for Te Papa’s utopia future-becoming-present, they were also to frame the representation of others that would contribute to the spectacle of Shipley’s ‘unique mosaic’. This was explicitly performed on *Te Marae*, and was tellingly bookended by Te Ati Awa’s welcoming ceremony in the morning and a live *Lotto* draw in the evening. Members from just about every cultural minority in the country performed their ethnicity on this stage in twenty-minute slots from the mid-day opening until the eight o’clock draw. Here, quite literally, multiculturalism was performed within the
frame of the bicultural. If the spectacle of Maoriness and Pakeha patronage in the morning demonstrated the museum’s commitment to the bicultural, and the performances of cultural diversity on *Te Marae* its embrace of the multicultural, the live *Lotto* draw cemented the Museum’s dedication to the national popular. This was a canny device that connected two major producers of national narratives in a television spectacular that broadcast the ‘happy hybridity’ of the Museum’s populist celebration into the homes of millions of New Zealanders. At least one cultural commentator read this as ‘A convenient gesture that firmly signalled [the museum’s] ... refusal to act as a bastion of high culture’ (Skinner, 1998:28). Read another way, it also finally acknowledged publicly and spectacularly what was formally only fine print on museum labels; that is, the two institutions, the national museum and the Lotto, have an intimate connection. After all, many of the ethnographic cultural objects and works of art, that do in fact signal the Museum’s investment in the country’s high cultural achievement, have been purchased with the public’s gambling losses channelled to the museum via the *Lotteries Commission*.  

As they left the Museum precinct on opening day, Te Papa’s first visitors were encouraged to leave the impression of their thumbprints in a special visitors’ book. Many did, leaving behind a uniquely personal testimony to their attendance. The reason for all these inky digits had little to do with a nostalgia for dermatoglyphics and rather a lot to do with a shrewd *Saatchi and Saatchi* campaign.  

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8 Perhaps a more telling decision of the Museum’s commitment to seduce a broad popular audience, one seemingly at odds with its much-vaulted bicultural rhetoric, was the choice of its opening date – Saint Valentine’s Day. No doubt an appropriate date to romance a nation with its self-image, however, eight days earlier on February the 6th, New Zealand commemorates the 1840 signing of the Treaty of Waitangi with a national holiday. This is the document that established the constitutional origin of the bicultural nation and is the foundation for partnership of a bicultural museum. Waitangi Day is marked with much dissent and has become for many years, the rallying point for vigorous anti-colonial activism on the part of Maori. In fact, the Waitangi Day celebrations of 1998 were decisively marked by an incident in which PM to be, Helen Clark’s presence at Waitangi was violently challenged and were she was spat on and subsequently reduced to tears. She has since steadfastly avoided Waitangi events and on the day has pointedly attended multicultural events. To open on Waitangi Day, which surely was logistically possible, would have been to politicise the Museum around the divisive issue of the country’s colonial legacy; rather than the monologic spectacle of cultural diversity carefully managed by Museum. One can all too easily imagine another more explosive, but dialogic, spectacle tensely mediated by protesters, police and cultural policy makers. This is, of course, no place for Tama and Grace and their utopic bicultural future, nor is it one for the image of a cohesive ‘cultural mosaic.’
This established a thumbprint as the iconic signature for New Zealand’s new national museum.

![Te Papa Logo](http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/Rings/images/TP_logo.jpg)

**Figure 15 Te Papa Logo**

Chosen for its rich semiotic resonances, a press release informed the public that there is more to this logo than immediately meets the eye. As a unique corporeal signature the thumbprint is to capture the intensely personal experience of visiting the museum, which is rich in emotive resonances and identifications. The logo also signals the museum’s commitment to a kineastic experience, since it is a ‘hands on’, ‘please touch’ museum. These experiences of the emotive and the corporeal are, of course, anchored in larger group identities. Visitors are pressed to imagine themselves in a continuity with social wholes, significantly the nation. Here the museum positions its thumbprint as the signature of the social, rather than the individual, body. And in this we are instructed to look closer. In the centre of the logo is a koru, which is at once like the chiefly signatures that mark the *Treaty of Waitangi*. It is also a Maori design element that has a long history in a settler visual culture searching for a national signature (See Thomas, 1999). This logo is but the latest. Accordingly, as the press release announced, it is ‘a thumbprint for the nation’ that ‘captures the essence’ of Te Papa – being at once ‘very personal’ and ‘monumental’ (*Panui*, 1997:3).

This polysemic logo might seem entirely appropriate for an institution whose mandate is to represent a plurality of identities in the nation-space. Perhaps, it might even support my idiosyncratic reading that starts with other, certainly not monumental, but similarly state solicited, fingerprints. These I found in Te Papa’s
Community Gallery and belong to Chen Gee Lum, aged 12. Formerly a resident of Canton, Chen disembarked from the Maheno in Wellington on the 25 March, 1907. The inky impressions of the ridges and whorls of this child’s fingers were left on an immigration certificate administered by the Collector of Customs who commanded a £100 poll tax under The Chinese Immigration Amendment Act 1896. This certificate is part of a temporary exhibition that catalogues popular and state racism, as well as the triumphs and hardships faced by Chinese in New Zealand since the middle of the nineteenth century. Material displayed alongside this certificate demonstrates how organisations such as the White New Zealand League articulated the xenophobic fears of white settlers – not only were hard-working ‘Asiatics’ a threat to men’s jobs, their lust threatened the virtue of both European and Maori women (also see Ip, 1995). The most effective mechanism to contain this menace to the social body was immigration policy. In the exhibition it is Chen’s fingerprinted Immigration Certificate that comes to represent this legislative artifice. In a curious way the exhibition of Chen’s fingerprints9 supplies another history for Te Papa’s logo – linking thumbprints to national identity, one that is anchored less in a cultural history of the koru’s appropriation and more in the bio-politics of state racism. Not only did this legislation, which secured New Zealand’s identity as a ‘white’ Dominion, ultimately rely on fingerprinting to identify otherwise ‘difficult to individuate “Asiatics”’, immigration legislation also, until recently (1987), preserved the fundamental dyad of settler colonialism that conditions the possibility of a bicultural nationalism (Pearson, 1995), the cultural policy to which Te Papa stands as monument. Hauntingly, then, Chen Gee Lum’s fingerprints are in many ways the pre-condition for those that Tama Whiting and Grace Sweeney left as they departed the museum site.

9 Fingerprinting or dermatoglyphics was a vital tool in the effective management of a criminal under-class in the metropole and racial alterities in the outposts. The colonial state in New Zealand was quick to pick up this technology, employing it to strictly control Chinese and South Asian immigration into the country. Labelling these peoples as ‘suspect aliens’, all, including children, had to be fingerprinted on entry. Like many administrative technologies of the modern state, the use of fingerprints to certify identities ‘owes everything to modern colonialism’ (Taussig 1993:222). Initially, fingerprinting was used by mid-nineteenth century British colonial administrators in India to prevent people committing fraud by impersonating pensioners after their death (ibid.). Building on such colonial applications, Francis Galton’s 1892 book, Finger Prints, formalised a system for the use of fingerprinting in State surveillance.
By the time the Museum shut at midnight Shipley's spectacle had been witnessed by the 35,000 individuals that had passed through its doors, many more around the country had watched broadcast footage, and on the other side of the globe CNN's potential audience of 180 million were stirring and about to flick on the morning news. I returned to my Cuba Street backpackers to sleep.

_Dis/placement_

Despite a tense relationship with its public while under development there can be little doubt that the museum was enthusiastically received in the immediate period after its opening. In the face of public hostility the provocation of branding the institution as Our Place had worked. A broad public has taken the bait and embraced the museum as theirs. In the first nine weeks Te Papa had already received two thirds of it projected annual visitation of 750,000 (which had been considered by some as hopelessly optimistic) and it had exceeded two million visitors by its first birthday. And, if quantitative measures were impressive, so too were its qualitative evaluations: as the Museum's interlocutors frequently liked to point out, the overwhelming majority of visitors (93%) reporting satisfaction with their experience.\(^\text{10}\) Yet, despite this positive identification of being comfortable with, at home at, Our Place, there emerged a simultaneous counter narrative, one of displacement. While Te Papa's customer focus orientation and its policy mandate sought to cultivate a sense of place and of the past for its visitors and deliver predictability via an architecture, design environment and corporate culture that solicits 'the recurrence of reassurance',\(^\text{11}\) being physically perplexed and cognitively confused became a frequent, if not the experience for many of the museum's visitors. It seems that for many visitors Te Papa was anything but a reassuring, predictable discursive and physical space. The labyrinthine qualities of what is the largest public structure in the country have been frequently bemoaned in commentary on the Museum. For example, internationally renowned Swiss


architect, Mario Botta, found Te Papa's interior cluttered and confused (Dom., 20 Aug., 1998). He opined: 'It's a labyrinth, not a space. I question if it isn't better to have more direction ... life is already complicated – why do we have to make it more confused' (cited in 'Te Papa like supermarket', 1998). Numerous others have echoed Botta's sentiments, from the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, to letters to the editor, many found the museum's interior 'jumbled and incoherent' (Clark cited in Forsyth, 2000). Indeed, a 'post-occupation evaluation' of 'the museum experience', conducted several months after opening, clearly indicated that the failure to successfully deliver a coherent space that could be readily cognitively and physically negotiated was causing distress among visitors (see Watson, 1998). It reported that feeling lost was, for a number surveyed, among the worst aspects of their 'Te Papa experience'. For them, the Museum's wayfinding system advanced 'vague routes' by which 'you just drift in to things' in a 'spasmodic' experience (cited in ibid.:131, emphasis added). Overwhelmed by the Museum's indeterminate narrative and pedestrian flows, these visitors complained they had little choice but to be thrown into an itinerary of drifting. Taken together, the popular embrace of the Museum's as 'ours', and, this experience of disorientation, marks Te Papa's space as one caught in a simultaneous double movement of place and displacement.

12 Botta's recent buildings include the Jean Tinguely Museum in Basle, Switzerland and the San Francisco Museum of Art (1995).

13 It is interesting to note how it was proposed that this particular predicament of (un)predictability – the displeasure of being lost – might be ameliorated. True to the strategy of the 'reoccurrence of reassurance', the Report's author recommended that, as a means to alleviate anxieties associated with being lost, the museum should create positive expectations of bewilderment. That is, 'actively generating expectations consistent with customers' experiences' by promoting Te Papa with 'a challenge to Lose Yourself in New Zealand's Treasures at Te Papa' (ibid., italics in original). Here, then, by positing a new means to a new end, a new measure of reassurance is established – that is, not only is being lost okay, it is in fact the aim. Magically, the previously unpredictable is rendered predictable. This remedial option, although positively received by the Museum, was in fact not implemented (Cox, taped interview May 1999). In an interview Nigel Cox, who was ultimately responsible for what is institutionally know as the 'Te Papa Text' – which includes everything from toilet signs to exhibition and catalogue text – suggested that the main problems with the wayfinding system were resolved with time. That is, repeat visitation expanded public knowledge of the internal structure of the building and this, he contended, allows for those with previous physical knowledge of the space to act as a 'capillary', pulling other, first time visitors, through the building.

14 In an analysis of the populism of the Georges Pompidou Centre Nathalie Hienich has remarked: 'the outward appearance of freedom ... is likely to give rise to aimless wandering which itself becomes transformed into anxiety. The capacity to "drift" is not so easy to acquire as one might think' (cited in Lumbley, 1988:9). See Shields (1994) on 'drifting' in the urban space of the shopping mall.
It is the aesthetic experience that emerges from this dis/placement that the second part of this chapter seeks to theorise.

**Time-Space Compression:**

First mooted in his *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey’s (1990) notion of ‘time-space compression’ is helpful in taking a step in this direction. Following Marx’s contention in which the philosophical abstract Capital is conditioned on a tendency towards the annihilation of space through the conquest of time; Harvey argued that successive bouts of accumulation crises result in ‘intense phases of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices ... as well as upon cultural and social life’ (ibid.: 284). As sites which ‘aspire to some kind of coherent ordering’ in the flux of capital accumulation, Harvey has explicitly positioned the idea of the museum and its associated social practices in regard to these phases of time-space compression (ibid.:272). He locates them in relation to a more general ‘ambiguity’ in (post)modern representation, one split between the themes of ‘unity’ and ‘difference’, that ensues from the experience of this compression (ibid.:270). ‘The heritage industry’ as sites for cultural representations that share in this theme of unity and, as such, are complicit with processes of time-space compression. For example, the contemporary heritage industry often, despite a mandate to differentiate place to attract capital, paradoxically helps make it uniform. That is, this industry produces ‘a “recursive” and serial “monotony”’ in which the built environment follows ‘already known patterns or moulds, places almost identical in ambience from city to city’ (Boyer

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15 See, in particular, Harvey (1990: chapter 16 and 17).
16 While it is indisputable, of course, that communication and transportation technology have dramatically shortened time-space horizons, as Harvey puts it ‘annihilating space through time’. There is, however, a sense in which the experience of ‘time-space compression’ is a profoundly euro-centric one. While Harvey does admit to being ‘somewhat ethnocentric’ in his examples, the implications of this for his theorising are left unexplored (1990:240). Nevertheless, while for an European observer space-time horizons might seem to be dramatically contracting to the point where the whole global seemed to be present in London – the inaugural event here, of course, being the 1851 exhibition – for antipodeans even writing a hundred or more years later, space had not been (adequately) annihilated through time. This is made obvious in the titles of works by mid century historians in both Australia and New Zealand, Blainey’s (1968) *Tyranny of Distance* and Keith Sinclair (1961) edited *Distance Looks Our Way.*
1988 cited in Harvey, 1990:295). The waterside recursions of ‘mixed development’ ‘leisure destinations’ are for Harvey exemplary of the serial monotony in which representatives of the heritage industry are regularly found. On the other hand, Harvey associates the museum movement and other museal activities with a defensive response to the maelstrom of time-space compression and associates these developments with the theme of ‘difference’. Here, he cites the growth of ‘historical presentation and museum culture’ that emphasises the importance of ‘difference’ necessary for cultivating a sense of place and in so doing contribute to the ‘ideological labour of inventing tradition’ (ibid.:272). This, as Harvey continues, was of ‘great significance in the late nineteenth century precisely because this was an era when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity’ (ibid.). This historicist and preservationist concern to cultivate a sense of local place in the face of a sublime global space finds an analogue in a similar museal desire on the part of the ‘postmodern’ subject. In the contemporary environment – where the sensory overloading of consumerist culture and fashion flattens other times and other places into the simultaneity of the global market space – Harvey draws attention to anthropological research on the material culture of urban Americans (Rochberg-Halton, 1986). This reveals that the objects most highly valued in the domestic environment were not ‘the “pecuniary trophies” of a materialist culture’ that index socio-economic status. Rather those artifacts were ones that anchored the owner to place, and embodied ‘ties to loved ones and kin, values, experiences and activities, and memories of significant life events and

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17 Historically, for example, emphasising the ‘unity’ of space were the international expositions of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century that advanced as ‘imperial commodity spectacles’ (see McClintock, 1995:56). Representing the world’s spaces reterritorialized ‘according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration’, Harvey continues, ‘international expositions not only celebrated the world of the international commodification but also exhibited the geography of the world as a series of artefacts for all to see’ (1990: 264, 272).

18 Unsurprisingly, the model for these waterfront developments is to be found in the United States, beginning with Baltimore’s Harbourplace, followed by Boston’s Fanueil Hall, New York’s South Street Seaport, and across the Atlantic, London’s Docklands (see Urry, 1991:188; Harvey, 1990:58-96). Antipodean versions include, of course, Sydney’s Darling Harbour, Auckland’s Viaduct Basin and Melbourne and Brisbane’s respective Southbanks (see Docker, 1994:101; Morris, 1999; Bennett, 1995:chapter 8).

19 The term is Adorno’s (1967:175).
people' (Rochberg-Halton, 1986:173 cited in Harvey, 1990:292). This observation leads Harvey to postulate that the ‘home becomes a private museum to guard against the ravages of time-space compression’ (ibid.). On Harvery’s account, then, museums and museal practices are ambiguously enfolded into these representational themes of ‘difference’ and ‘unity’ that are contingent on time-space compression.

Here, ‘the idea of the museum’ and its associated social practices can be usefully formalised by locating them in the ‘double movement’ that, for Deleuze and Guattari, is characteristic of ‘the capitalist machine.’ In *Anti-Oedipus* the Frenchmen theorise this movement thus:

> There is the twofold movement of decoding or deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other. The more the capitalist machine deterritorializes, decoding and aximatizing flows in order to extract surplus values from them, the more its ancillary apparatuses, such as government bureaucracies and the forces of law and order, do their utmost to reterritorialize, absorbing in the process a larger and larger share of surplus values. (1984:34-5; Young, 1995:169)

Capitalism, on this account, ‘is continually reterritorializing with one hand what it was deterritorializing with the other’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984; Harvey, 1990:238). In this, the capitalist machine is a double movement ‘that deterritorializes the socius’ and ‘then reterritorializes – “institutes or restores all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities” such as states, nations, or families’ (Young, 1995:169). It is precisely this movement that Harvey emphasises when he positions museums and museal practices in relation to the ambiguous representational themes of unity and difference. As Harvey notes,
museums are an institutional form profoundly shaped by the machinations of capital. It at once ‘determinantalizes the socius’, represented in an unifying aesthetics productive of a serial monotony, all the while being complicit in the simultaneous movement of reterritorialization, represented in an aesthetics that seeks to designate the difference of place. Museums, then, are complexly located in this double movement of capital: caught between, on the one hand, the deterriorializing flows that generate a hyper-space of dislocation and disorientation (c.f., the heritage industry, with its serial harbour-side leisure destinations), and, on the other, the reterritorializing processes of differentiation (c.f., the reinvention of tradition, for example, ‘Our Place in the world’). Te Papa’s location in this movement can be read into the observation of Hamish McDonald who in the months after Te Papa’s opening asked: ‘Could it be that Te Papa emphasises [that New Zealanders] ... fear they are globalising themselves out of existence?’ (1998:7).

*The McDonaldization of Society*

To begin to tease out this double movement in which ‘the Te Papa Experience’ is located it is useful to recall the cultural policy orientation that drove the project. This sought to use a ‘McDisney’ service model to deliver national identity. In 1993, shortly after her appointment as CEO for the new museum project, Cheryll Sotheran acknowledged the mission with which the state had charged her institution. When it eventually opened she announced presciently that the Museum would be ‘as popular, in Kiwi terms, as Disneyland’ (Collins, 1992). As Sotheran saw it, to generate her theme-park audience, the Museum must be ‘an irresistible leisure attraction that [can] compete with activities as popular as ... McDonalds’ (MacLennan, 1995:6). Unsurprisingly, in this environment the purveyors of fun and fast-food were not mere market competitors, evidently, they also served as desirable

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22 This rhetoric confirmed that the legislative authority was purchasing an ‘info-tainment experience’, which, if the museum was to fulfill its statutory obligations, must ‘create a new audience’ whose demographic profile extended traditional patterns of attendance and more adequately mapped the contours of the country’s total population (See MoNZ-TPT Act, 1992).
corporate models: 'The great private sector institutions of Disneyland and McDonalds', Sotheran opined, 'have a lot to teach us' (cited in Collins, 1992).

The Museum took these lessons very seriously. A themed architectural environment was commissioned that owed as much to fun-park and shopping mall design as it did to museum architecture. The innovative theme parks, heritage sites and leisure destinations of Europe and North America were toured by senior staff (see Gorbey, 1994). US Themed Attraction trade shows were attended and UK leisure industry consultants hired. Multi-million dollar themepark-like rides were invested in. Front-of-house staff or 'hosts' – a term borrowed from Disney – were comprehensively trained in the 'customer focused' and 'scripted' manner pioneered by Walt Disney and McDonalds founder, Ray Croc. Echoing the acculturation programmes of these American institutions, a corporate culture (The Te Papa Way) was actively instilled in all staff (Team Te Papa) as management sought to bed down an institutional ideology (Te Papa Culture). Very extensive and increasingly sophisticated quantitative and qualitative measures were implemented throughout the development of exhibitions and continued after the Museum's opening to evaluate visitor response to its product – 'the Te Papa Experience'. All of this has been instituted to facilitate the 'repositioning' of the museum product, which, while entry remains free, delivers customers to 'sixty-four revenue-generating

23 Yet this demand for a new, expanded audience was, of course, only partially motivated by a desire to 'democratize' the Museum. For, while making a substantial fiscal investment in the project, the state was making no on-going commitment to meet the full costs of its operations once the Museum opened. Rather, it sought to construct conditions in which the Museum would have to market itself to attract the discretionary income of consumers and the sponsorship of corporations. In addition to the policy of under-funding, to further foster this 'marketisation', central government, along with the city council financial commitments were contingent on the Museum reaching visitation 'performance targets'. In this 'advanced liberal' policy environment the Museum's administrators identified their task as that of 'repositioning' their organisation as part of the entertainment industry (see Sotheran and Whiting, 1995).

24 London based Grant Leisure Group were hired as consultants to advise on the development of the Museum's themed attractions zone. This organisation has been involved in a broad range of leisure, tourist and educational projects internationally that includes, according to their promotional material, 'Industrial Tourism, Museums, Heritage, Zoos, Theme Parks, Country Parks, Waterways, Hotels, Golf, Catering, Merchandising, Mixed-use Development, [and] Leisure Strategies.' See their web site http://www.grant-leisure.co.uk for a list of links to specific projects that they have been involved with. A number of the Museum's staff attended the IAAPA Trade Show and Convention in New Orleans in 1995.

opportunities’. In the words of its promotional material, the museum was to constitute, a product ‘different from any other museum ... Playful, imaginative, interactive, bold, even cheeky – Te Papa is quintessentially Kiwi, stunningly high-tech, and seriously fun’.

Perhaps, then, Te Papa’s adoption of the McDonalds–Disney template supplies yet another example of ‘McDisneyization’ (Ritzer and Liska 1997) – a formulation that George Ritzer extends from his famous pop thesis, *The McDonaldization of Society* (1996a). For Ritzer, McDonalds establishes a model of rationality and, as such, provides an ‘irresistible’ template for innumerable institutions that colonise ever-increasing aspects of the contemporary life-world. In short, as Te Papa’s administration acknowledges, McDonalds and similar operations are immensely successful because they offer service which is efficient in its optimisation of the movement of bodies and commodities through space and time; sell products that can be readily calculated in terms of volume, duration and of course, price; offer highly predictable service, products and environments which harbour few surprises; and, exercise considerable organisational control over both customers and workers. For Ritzer these McDonaldist dimensions are but the latest chapter in the history of purposive-instrumental rationality that Weberians argue is our Enlightenment legacy. In mapping this colonisation of the social landscape Ritzer establishes the fast-food giant, or rather the processes exemplified in its operations, as the paradigm of rationality for contemporary society as a whole.

27 Audaciously, perhaps, Ritzer has pronounced his pop thesis on The McDonaldization of Society ‘a key idea in sociology’ (1996b). It is a book whose forte is one that many contemporary museums also aspire to, being, as Martin Parker describes it, ‘one of those strange and rather marvellous books that manages to be both academic and popular, but without doing particular violence to either genre’ (1998:1).
28 Ritzer marshals considerable evidence for the ever-increasing march of these processes into innumerable experiences that constitute the contemporary social landscape – birth and death, work and leisure, shopping and education, all have, he contends, been subject to McDonaldization. More specific to the concerns of this chapter, Ritzer has singled out tourism for an extension of his concept. Here, Disney has been the conduit for ‘bringing the principles of McDonaldization (or of rationalisation) to the tourist industry’ (Ritzer and Liska 1997:97). And it is with this observation that Ritzer justifies his second neologism, proposing ‘the 'McDisneyization' of the tourist industry’ (ibid). Bryman however makes a counter claim that ‘the [Disney] parks have not succumbed to the ravages of McDonaldization, and in not having succumbed to the demands for calculability, they still represent islands of quality’ (1995:126).
However, in positing this modernist grand narrative on the progress of rationality, he does not celebrate the end of History with the global domination of American liberal capitalism (cf., Fukuyama, 1989). While Ritzer concedes that there have been genuine gains facilitated by these dimensions of rationality that he has identified, they have, however, come at considerable cost. In the spirit of Max Weber’s ([1925] 1968) theory of rationalization that he popularises, Ritzer’s thesis is marked by a dystopic vision of modernity’s ‘iron cage’ whose instrumental rationality increasingly homogenizes culture and ‘dehumanises’ social relations, and, often leads to an array of irrationalities or unintended consequences. According to Ritzer’s thesis, while, the ‘McDisneyfied’ museum might seek to deliver the ‘reoccurrence of reassurance’ in the experience of ‘our place’, it is no surprise that irrationalities of disorientation and dislocation emerge as unintended consequences of Te Papa’s commitment to the McDonalds–Disney template.

**Symmes’ Hole**

Elements of Ritzer’s thesis are echoed in Ian Wedde’s (1986) novel *Symmes’ Hole*, whose protagonist is cast adrift by the cultural and capital flows that secure McDonalds global future. This novel is centrally concerned with the possibility of cultivating a sense of place and of a past in A/NZ caught in the maelstrom of global flows. Wedde’s protagonist, an unnamed researcher, is obsessively trawling through the archive, searching for the facts behind Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Interwoven with this recovery of the facts behind the fiction is an account of an actual historical character, the nineteenth century whaler, James Heberley, whose journal the novel fictionalises. Through the perspective of the increasingly hallucinatory mind of the

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29 While Ritzer has voiced his agreement with Harvey’s thesis, he gestures rather weakly at the complicity of the process of McDonaldization in time-space compression. He notes the accelerating technology of the microwave oven that supplies some fast-food with its particular velocity and, suggests, not the accelerated compression that took the McDonalds burger to the world, but that McDonaldization accelerated the world’s fare across America with ‘the spread of fast-food chains dispensing Italian, Mexican or Cajun food’ (Ritzer, 1996:155).

30 This ‘vulgarisation’ of Weber’s thesis has been one dimension along which Ritzer’s work is regularly criticised. For diverse critical responses to Ritzer’s thesis from across the humanities and social sciences see two recent collections edited by Barry Smart (1998) and Mark Alfino et al. (1998).
Researcher, the narrative weaves between the temporalities of both men. In 1980s Wellington, the Researcher, fringe dweller and marginal writer, is struggling with the cultural and social fall-out of the dramatic globalisation of a peripheral national economy that is increasingly demolishing his sense of place. Combing beaches and living on the fringes of mid-nineteenth century European and Maori societies, Heberley, the (ex)whaler, naively strives for a sense of place in the contact zone that conditions a rapidly expanding colonial Pacific modernity. Although his literary intervention was to be lamented by some as the conduit by which 'the postmodern' was introduced to the local scene, epistemologically Wedde's novel perhaps is more modernist than magic realist.31 Despite the Researcher's hallucinatory disorientation, which brings many times and spaces into an increasingly paranoid present, the profound dislocation and rupture in the two men's lives, the Researcher and the whaler, are not cast as some epochal schism between a colonial modernity and a contemporary postmodernity or postcoloniality. Rather, the same imperial machinery, American corporate capitalism, disrupts their respective social horizons. In the novel this establishes a chain of power – 'the same greasy money' (1986:23) – from the nineteenth century corporate whaling that violently delivered the whaler to these distant shores, and the advent in downtown Wellington of the fast-food giant, McDonalds, which traumatically demolishes the Researcher's favourite 'hang-out' – a milk-bar.

One of A/NZ's cultural mutations, a cross between the American drugstore and the British tea-room, the milk-bar is a nostalgic cultural icon. It is emblematic of an egalitarian, prosperous, post war popular culture, which, in the Researcher's Wellington of the 1980s, is fast being demolished – along with the welfare state that was its guarantor – as New Zealand's economy is being deregulated. It is being effaced culturally by the 'Yuppie' rush of hedonistic materialism which itself was to crash before the decade's close. The Researcher's much beloved milk-bar provided some respite from both this increasingly bankrupt present and the Melvillesque spectres that haunt him. His tentative sense of place, seemingly secured only by the

31 For an analysis of Symme's Holes and theories on the postmodern see Brophy (1988).
milk-bar’s presence, by the company of its colourful cosmopolitan clientele, is demolished by the irruption of the latest outlet of greasy capitalism. His outrage, while profoundly personal, is also parochially patriotic. Imported ‘as is’ there is, as the Researcher sees it, no chance to bend the McDonalds outlet to the more egalitarian local forms exemplified by the milk-bar. The milk-bar is ‘quintessentially kiwi’, McDonalds can only be an imposition on the cultural landscape.

Wedde’s national narrative seems to accord with Ritzer’s meta-narrative: the instrumental rationality of McDonalds negates the possibility of the vernacular and is ultimately de-humanising in its effects. Here, they might be read together as predicting the disorientation and dislocation that characterised the experience of some in the ‘McDisneyifed’ museum.

The Heritage Industry and ‘the hysterical sublime’

It is the Heritage Industry critique that has generated the most extended formalisation of the relations between contemporary museum spaces and instrumental rationality, capital flows and the cultural experiences of distraction, dislocation and disorientation.\(^{32}\) In the context of the heritage debate in Thatcher’s Britain, critics like Patrick Wright (1985), Robert Hewison (1987) and Kevin Walsh (1992) mounted a series of arguments that linked the developments in museums and museum-like sites to broader processes of de-industrialization, the advent of a service economy and new modes of social management associated with the rise of the New Right. All of which, as many analysts in this period attested, were attendant on the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist regimes of capital accumulation.\(^{33}\)

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32 Ritzer’s sociology of the rationality governing contemporary social practices makes it into very few of the bibliographies of heritage and museum critics. One exception is Sharon Macdonald (1998:135) who makes passing reference to Ritzer’s thesis in her analysis of an exhibition on food held at the National Science Museum, London.

33 For these critics, in the context of Britain’s long-term economic and political decline, immersion in the fabricated past of the ‘heritage industry’ served to deflect attention from a dismal present and an unpromising future. A process famously and sardonically exemplified by redundant British collieries being given second lives as tourist attractions where former miners are employed to impersonate their Victorian working class forebears and demonstrate obsolete skills as a leisure spectacle.
critique of instrumental rationality was influential via these critics debt to the Frankfurt School’s Culture Industry critique. Foremost, as his book’s title alludes, Hewison’s (1987) *The Heritage Industry* inaugurated ‘the heritage debate’ in the UK. In his account this industry reduces history and other cultural forms into a homogenous commodity form. It dispiritingly establishes another sphere of unfreedom whose management by administrators and marketers comes to ‘manipulate us’, curtailing the capacity for self-realisation. ‘At best,’ Hewison writes, ‘the heritage industry only draws a screen between ourselves and our true past .... Hypnotised by images of the past, we risk losing all capacity for creative change’ (ibid.:10).

While Hewison has not been without his critics, others have expanded on his account.34 The most extended is that of Walsh (1992), who returned to the Frankfurt School and to Weber with renewed enthusiasm. For Walsh recent decades have been characterised ‘by increasing purposive-rationalization and institutionalization of the ways in which the past has been represented to the public’ (ibid.:148). This has been part and parcel of the ‘de-differentiation and the homogenisation of culture’ which he polemically, and perhaps ironically, designates ‘the Disneyfication of the free world’ (ibid.:62, 64). Ironic, because as Walsh contends, such processes, as they apply to museums and heritage sites in particular do not offer a world of freedom, rather, echoing Ritzer, he asserts that they are ultimately dehumanizing, since they ‘rarely respond to the needs of the visitor’ (ibid.:62). Though its technicism and economism the ‘Heritage [industry] in many of its forms is responsible for the destruction of a sense of place’ (ibid.:145). For critics of the heritage industry, this industry helps make space uniform despite, paradoxically, having a mandate to differentiate place to attract capital. Mirroring the indignation of the Researcher in *Symme’s Hole* at the obliteration of his milk-bar under the weight of the golden-arches, critics like Hewison and Walsh lament the loss of a sense of the past and of place that the heritage industry negates with its homogenizing serial ‘monotony’. For these critics the instrumental rationality of the

Heritage Industry effaces the historical and the local, imposing a heritage without history, a nostalgia without memory, an identity without place.

The heritage industry, for it critics constitutes a hyper-space that solicits an aesthetic experience for its consumers that accords with what Fredric Jameson (1984) has termed the ‘hysterical sublime.’ Jameson’s ‘hyper-space’ (1984:80-84) is concerned to analyse the disorientation and dislocation that characterises the ‘newer cultural experiences’ associated with ‘late capitalism’. For Jameson, as for Harvey, epochal shifts in capitalism have led to a profound mutation in spatial arrangements that have generated an unmappable ‘postmodern hyper-space’ (ibid.:80-84). The significance and originality of this mutation in space is that it succeeds ‘in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world’ (1984:83). For Jameson the ‘hysterical sublime’ reflects ‘the new intensities’ associated with ‘a new depthlessness’ and ‘a weakening of historicity’ that conditioned such space. In Jameson’s account this is solicited, for instance, by exhilaration in the face of the pure shining surfaces of the commodity, an ungrounded enthusiasm for the de-realization of the body in the art of Andy Warhol, and bewilderment in the unnavigable space of buildings like John Portman’s Bonaventure Hotel (opened 1977) in Los Angeles. Indeed, architecture has become pivotal for realising the ‘new intensities’ associated with this spatial mutation. The Bonaventure Hotel – whose aesthetic populism, ambiguous mirrored facade, disembodied ‘people movers’ (a term lifted from Disney for escalators and elevators), and disorientating lobby – created for Jameson a ‘bewildering immersion’ that he has read as exemplary of ‘hyper-space.’

35 Ritzer has hitched his thesis to this formulation contending that his dehumanizing ‘McDonaldized world is [similarly] disorienting and difficult to map’ (1996:159).

36 Meg Armstrong (1993) deploys Jameson’s notion of the ‘hysterical sublime’ to explore the experiences of modernity associated with international expositions and world fairs of the late nineteenth century. Although she does not couch her paper as a critique of Jameson’s formulation of the sublime, its status as an original perception mode of the postmodern is increasingly questionable when, as she shows, it can so readily be used to explain experiences at the height of, in Jameson’s terms, classical capitalism rather then late capitalism.
Te Papa and the Heritage Industry Critique

The concerns of the heritage industry critics have resonated with some of those analysts focussed on developments in Wellington’s Lambton Harbour precinct in the 1990s. For example, in his concern to locate Te Papa in a ‘landscape of conspicuous consumption’, Stephen Page identifies this museum as the local manifestation of a more global trend in which there has been a transformation in cultural policy broadly attendant on the economic, cultural and political shifts associated with ‘the change from Fordism to Post-Fordism.’ (1998:281; also see Niven, 1998). As he characterises it, this change is one in which ‘government policy, especially in leisure provision, has responded to the changing regime of capital accumulation with an emphasis on an economic rationale for tourism and leisure policy’ (1998:281). Similarly, the cultural policy analyst, Michael Volkerling, has viewed Te Papa as a ‘key institution’ for ‘New Zealand cultural policy’ marked by the ‘transition from Fordist to Post-Fordist forms of economic and social organization’ (1995:5, 4: 1994). For him, it exemplifies the ‘fondness for spectacle’ shared by New Right regimes in periods of economic austerity. Both Page and Volkerling are weary of the homogenizing effects on a sense of place and a sense of past that this commodification of ‘the national popular’ entails. For Page the marketing requirements of promoting and selling the nation’s heritage threaten the achievement of ‘a meaningful and authentic representation of the past’ (1998:288). For Volkerling, Te Papa exemplifies the specularisation of ‘the national popular’ fostered ‘by New Zealand’s post-Fordist state’ and deploys ‘an ideological sanction of the methodological individualism which underpins its economic strategies’ (1995:13). While, neither Page nor Volkerling declare outright, a la Walsh, that Te Papa and the recursive waterfront leisure destination of which it is the centre-piece, is the material manifestation of Weber’s dehumanising ‘iron cage’, their concern with an historical ‘authenticity’ compromised by the logic of capital, and a national popular corrupted by the rationality of the market suggests at least minimally that they have concerns that Te Papa’s embrace of instrumental reason like other institutions of the heritage industry will not ‘respond to the needs of the
visitor'— if those needs are ones that concern the cultivation of place and past (Walsh, 1992:64).

If we believe these critics it seems that Te Papa, like the heritage industry more generally, is located in flows of global capital that are corrosive to the cultivation of a sense of the past and place. Following the dramatic de-regulation of the national economy post-1984, it is tempting to read the unmappability of Te Papa’s ‘total space’ as experienced by some of its visitors metaphorically against the experience of individuals now unmoored in the flows of a global economy. Counter to its mandate to designate ‘Our Place in the World’, the museum seems more effective in capturing the experience of individuals adrift, as one pundit put, ‘in Nowhere Ocean’ bounded by ‘America’, ‘Australia’, ‘Asia’ and ‘Britain’ (Marshall, 1998; see also White, 1986). Given that Te Papa conspires against the individual subject gaining cognitive purchase on its ‘space’ through its ambiguous architectonics and indeterminate pedestrian flows, it, perhaps like the Bonventure Hotel, stands as a ‘symbol and analogue of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects’ (Jameson, 1984:84). The experience of a bewildering immersion shared by many who entered its space confirms, for writers like Page and Volkerling, that Te Papa itself stands as an analogue for the cultural experience of those caught in the flow of a dramatically globalising economy. Ironically, it seems that the Museum, while designed to cultivate a sense of national identity in the face of dramatic globalisation, comes instead to supply an analogue for the sense of displacement and disorientation that, for writers like Jameson (1984) and David Harvey (1990) are symptomatic of global transformations in the organisation of capital. Te Papa appears to rest on a contradiction. While deploying the instrumental rationality of the Disney-McDonalds template to deliver ‘the quintessentially kiwi’,

the Museum generates an aesthetic experience of displacement and disorientation that mirrors the individual subject's experience of dislocation in the external world.

**Museums as Facilitators of Cognitive Maps**

Heritage industry critics have proposed formulations that seek to remedy what they take as the negative consequences of that industry. In analyzing the experiences of disorientation and dislocation that are associated with the new spatio-temporal arrangements of contemporary capitalism, the tropes of the museum and the map emerge as redemptive figures. They appear weakly, in Harvey's suggestion that aspects of the museum movement have historically attempted to guard against the corrosive effects of time-space compression, and more strongly, in Jameson's advocacy of a new social cartography of the conditions in which individuals find themselves and to which they are subjected. Our incapacity to adequately locate ourselves in hyper-space can be ameliorated through 'cognitive mapping', which, he famously argued, is in the final instance to be a reinvigorated Marxist analysis of 'the social and global totality' that conditions that space (Jameson, 1988:353).

Given the redemptive possibilities of the museum and the map signalled by Harvey and Jameson, it is not surprising that heritage industry critics might bring these two formulations together programmatically. This is precisely the political trajectory of Kevin Walsh's work (1992, see especially, chapters 7 and 8).

Like Harvey, Walsh shares the notion that while the 'modern' museum movement attempted to arrest the corrosive effects of time-space compression and preserve 'a sense of place'; its 'post-modern' variant, exemplified by the 'heritage industry' is now part and parcel of this corrosive process.\(^{38}\) However, in the contemporary moment Walsh suggests that the museum's historical association with difference and place needs to be effectively restored so that it might 'facilitate the

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\(^{38}\) One might wish to question the historical plausibility of this formulation, in as much as the museum movement was as committed to modernization as it was to romanticism in the nineteenth century, just as it has been to cultural de-differentiation on the one hand, and cultural diversity on the other, in the late twentieth. And, of course, Walsh's proposal that contemporary museums serve as facilitators for the cultivation of a sense of place furthers this dialectical movement.
skills' by which individuals and communities can secure a 'sense of place' amid accelerating global flows. He writes: 'Despite obvious criticisms of the museum as a constituent element in the institutional rationalization of society, museums may be considered as the obvious facilitators of the skills, which allow people to read places' (ibid.:159). Walsh legitimises the vitality of this project by asserting: ‘Developing a sense of place is crucial if people are to flourish and enjoy living in a world which becomes more and more complex’ (ibid.:150). Walsh is quite specific as to how this 'conceptual framework which may permit the enhancement of a sense of place' is to be facilitated museologically (ibid.:148-9).³⁹ To overcome the 'dehumanization' to which the synchronous representations of the instrumentally rational museum are party, Walsh reaches for Jameson's formulation. 'The key to locating ourselves in time and space', he contends is 'the production of mental or “cognitive” maps'” (ibid.:150). Museums, it seems, ought to pursue this radical pedagogy, empowering people with the competency to map their present.

However, in the flux of the 'deterritorialization of the socius', Walsh's programme of 'cognitive mapping' seems to be merely a rephrasing of 'the idea of the museum' that coheres with its long engagement, as Harvey has already forewarned, in the simultaneous counter movement of the capitalist machine that 'reterritorializes' capitalist social relations. Here, then, Walsh's programme remains locked into the dynamic that generates the institutional form that he rails against. The radical critic starts to look like the liberal reformer of the museum, 'tinkering' with present arrangements so as to 'enhance' a sense of place so people can 'flourish' (Walsh, 1992:150).

Leaving aside for the moment the limitations of museum criticism (see Coda), how might the aesthetics of the Te Papa experience associated with the ‘re­territorialization of the socius’ be drawn? If the hysterical sublime, associated with the heritage industry, is the aesthetic experience associated with capital’s deterritorializing flows, what might be the aesthetics associated with capital’s

³⁹ Walsh's evocation of a purposive-rational heritage world follows in the wake of Weber's 'disenchantment of the world.' Huyssen (1995:chapter 1) advocates a programme for museums to be sites for the re-enchantment of the world.
simultaneous counter movement, its reterritorialization; that is, not the aesthetics of hyper-space (the hysterical sublime), but the aesthetics of *this place* (of the museum as cognitive map).

*‘How to be Nowhere’: Narrating Nation, Antipodean Aesthetics*

Under conditions of modernity perhaps the central concept for linking individuals and communities to territorially bounded histories and historically inscribed territories has been the ‘idea of the nation.’ As Benedict Anderson (1991), Ernest Gellner (1997), and Nicos Poulantzas (1980) among others have argued, it is with modernity that this idea proves indispensable for establishing and linking ‘a sense of the past’ to ‘a sense of place’. This ‘idea of nation’ captures the ambiguity of (post)modern representation, split as it is between ‘unity’ – the threshold of modernity for any given society is marked by the advent of the nation-state – and ‘difference’ – each nation-state necessarily has to differentiate itself from others through a process of ‘the invention of tradition’ (cf., Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983). The condition of settler modernity presents a particularly curious cultural predicament for advancing the ‘idea of nation’: settler nations are at once dominating and dominated, superordinate and subordinated, imperialising and imperialised. As places forever caught between two First Worlds, the originating world of Europe as Imperial centre and the First World of the aboriginal peoples, settler cultures are sites of a double inscription: places that are colonised at the same time as they are colonising (Lawson, 1992:157). While the centres of these rather different First Worlds may have been transformed in their geo-political locations and cultural power – here I have in mind the ascendancy of US rather than Anglo cultural dominance on the one hand and the insurgence of urban indigenous anti-colonial activism, rather than tribally based guerrilla warfare on the other – settler cultures remain indefinitely caught in the pincer grip of this coloniser/colonised

40 How to be Nowhere is the title of Wedde’s (1995) anthology of cultural criticism. The title of course is an allusion to Samuel Butler’s (1872) Erewhon early antipodean reversal by which his writing was designated. As his title ambiguously suggests Wedde (1995) writes something of a cultural guide or map to an antipodean present.
dialectic.  This is not to suggest that the settler nation is merely caught between the rock of an older ‘cultural cringe’ and the hard place of a more recent ‘liberal guilt.’ Rather, it is to suggest that the ambiguities of unity and difference that gather around the ‘idea of nation’ shade into particular identifiable patterns in conditions of settler modernity. Meaghan Morris gathers together these contradictions and complexities in her cogent description of ‘Dominion subjects’: ‘Dubiously postcolonial, prematurely postmodern, constitutively multicultural but still predominantly white, we oscillate historically between identities as coloniser and colonised’ (1992:471).

In terms of the narration of nation in the cultural production of settler-spaces this oscillation in relation to two First Worlds has generated identifiable patterns of experience. It might be claimed that contending with this dyad – worrying at it, theorising it, celebrating it, ignoring it, laughing at it – shapes the distinctiveness of an antipodean ‘invention of tradition’: for example, the national canons of film and literature and large tracts of the popular culture of settler nation-spaces like A/NZ and Australia have long been littered with haunted dwellings, overwhelming landscapes, and macabre events rumoured and real. It has become something of a critical cliché to read these texts as symptomatic of the repressed violence and moral illegitimacy of the settler-nation and its history. This gloominess has been undercut – perhaps nervously, though not necessarily so – by an equally pervasive irreverent sense of humour. Cultural analysts have been predisposed to read these affects, and their effects – the gloom and the humour – through aesthetic categories. Though

41 It is precisely this predicament marking settler cultures’ precarious postmodernity that has led Lawrence Grossberg to announce that they – well Australia – is the place to read cultural studies on ‘the puff’ (cited in Miller, 1994:1). Similarly, Alan Lawson has suggested that ‘settler cultures … might prove to be the most intensely interesting sites of colonialism to theorise’ (1992:158).

42 Symmes Hole thus articulates an identifiably antipodean genre of national narration in which the trauma of contemporary settler subject formation is split between, on the one hand, the uncanny of colonial contact, exemplified by the spectres of Heberley’s world, and on the other, a contemporary neo-colonialism simply designated ‘McDonalds’. This ‘double inscription’ of the settler subject as both colonising and colonised, no doubt conditions in part the Researcher’s hallucinatory disorientation and his paranoid present. In the novel the advent of McDonalds in downtown Wellington signals the triumph of a homogenizing American imperialism that destroys (the possibility of) antipodean culture and identity. physically and metaphorically this is captured by McDonalds displacement of the Researcher’s milk-bar.

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prefaced or post-scripted with appellations that signal the categories’ translation into the context of settler modernity, these aesthetic formulations are grounded more or less in the Romantic Tradition that, of course, has been central to the cultural analysis of the experience of modernity (Berman, 1983). Terms associated with the Romantic philosophy and literature of the late 18th century, or continental philosophy of the early 20th century, or New York’s avant-garde of the early 1960s, have seemed, for various critics, indispensable for diagnosing the experiences both mirrored and solicited by the cultural production of settler modernity. ‘The New Zealand Sublime’ (Lamb, 1990; 1991), ‘Aotearoa Gothic’ (Schafer, 1998: chapter 6), ‘Uncanny Australia’ (Gelder and Jacobs, 1998), and ‘Antipodean Camp’ (Perry, n.d; Perry, 1998: chapter 1; 1994:93-95; 1990:92) are formulations that have all sought leverage on the patterns of experience expressed in settler narration of nation.43

I deploy the formulations of Nick Perry’s ‘Antipodean Camp’ and Jonathan Lamb’s ‘The New Zealand Sublime’ to analyse an aesthetics associated with the Te Papa experience, which is generated out of this counter movement associated with the idea of the nation.

The Angel and The Whale

Frivolous pleasure in artifice and exaggeration or overwhelming awe in the face of things barely perceptible to comprehension, the camp and the sublime would appear to be poles apart as aesthetic sensibilities. Indeed, Susan Sontag was to write in the 1960s: ‘The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious’ (1966:290). While, Melville’s friend, George Adler, wrote in 1851: ‘The comic is the mortal enemy of the sublime’ (cited in Gretchko, 1991:309). But perhaps we do live in strange ‘New Times’. In formulating his notion of the ‘hysterical sublime’, to contend with the ‘newer cultural experiences’ of late capitalism, Jameson linked the two formulations together:

43 See also Morris’s (1998) essay on the sublime in the Australian context.
It has proved fruitful to think of such experience in terms of what Susan Sontag once, in an influential statement, isolated as ‘camp’. I propose a somewhat different cross-light on it, drawing on the equally fashionable current theme of the ‘sublime’ … indeed, one might well want to yoke the two notions together in the form of something like a camp or ‘hysterical sublime’. (1984:77)

However, for those writing not from America of the 1980s, but from Aotearoa in the 1990s, the utility of these terms is in the study of a local cultural predicament, not in the scrutiny of a global cultural logic. Antipodean theorists of the sublime and the camp have disengaged from Jameson’s formulations; Perry implicitly by – I suspect tactically – ignoring the cultural dominant that Jameson’s theory has become, Lamb explicitly by writing against Jameson.

Antipodean Camp

Perry (n.d) begins his essay, Antipodean Camp, with the most famous and ethereal allegory on the experience of modernity, Walter Benjamin’s Angel.44 For Benjamin, Paul Klee’s drawing Angelus Novus portrayed ‘the angel of history’. As Benjamin famously wrote: ‘The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress’ (1973:249). Subsequently, Adorno was to interpret Klee’s drawing as ‘the angel of the machine … whose enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it’ (1977:194-5; cited in Perry, n.d:n.p). Perry offers another reading of this angelic allegory of the experience of modernity whose sensibility shades not into a Germanic melancholy but toward an Antipodean camp. ‘Antipodean permutations on the angel of history allegory’, Perry contends, are distinctive because cultural production in this corner of the world ‘is not seen as shaped and limited by the restraining giveness of the ruins, but as derived from the prospects

44 A version of this essay is published in Perry (1998:Chapter 1).
that such debris opens up for future scavenging and bricolage’ (n.d:n.p). This pre-condition for the experience of antipodean modernity pushes cultural sensibilities toward the camp. ‘The Antipodean versions of camp’, Perry writes, work ‘to call up nationalist sentiments through cultural images that are constructed in accordance with bricoleur tactics, placed in quotation marks by the signalling of their own fabrication and asserted through self mockery’ (n.d:n.p).

If Benjamin’s ‘Angel of History’ might be cast as witness to the deterritorializing storm of progress, Perry would seem to associate the antipodean permutation of this allegory with its counter-movement. Here, the figure of the angel provides an allegory for practices forged in the ‘reterritorisation of the socius’. That is, by scavenging from modernity’s ruins the ‘shreds and patches’ (Gellner, 1983:56) that come to serve as the sign around which national communion comes to be imagined (Anderson, 1991).

In illustrating his proposition Perry turns to public pageantry. Tony Bennett (1995: chapter 8) reads Expo 88 as a cultural technology designed to educate Brisbanites into an expanded and more ‘sophisticated’ mode of consumerist conduct so as to bring ‘the backwoods into the future’. However, there are other critical lessons that might be learnt here. Staged in conjunction with the bicentennial celebrations of Australia’s European settlement, technological advancement – the Machine and Progress – were the over-arching theme of the Expo. However, this serious developmentalism and its instrumental rationality were regularly ‘dethroned’ by a cultural sensibility that resisted being ‘brought under the sovereignty of reason’ (Sontag, 1966: 276). Perry views the opening of this Expo as an exemplary moment of ‘Antipodean camp’. No doubt hysterical, probably not sublime, here’s how he reports the scene:

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45 This is suggested too, by the title of Chris Healy’s From the Ruin’s of Colonialism, where he offers his own antipodean permutation on the angel allegory (see 1997:6).

46 While, Perry focuses on contemporary antipodean culture, the practices of bricolage in seeking to cultivate a sense of a Pacific identity among Europeans has a longer history, as Vanessa Smith (1998) suggests in her analysis of beachcomber as bricoleur in nineteenth century literary culture.
the Queen of England had sailed up one side of the Brisbane river in her Royal Barge, whilst a submarine of the Australian Navy, painted bright pink and complete with a perspex deck and seventeen dancing girls, had sailed down the other. Meanwhile, the contingent of local wharfies who had earlier bared their buttocks as the Royal barge had sailed past, returned to their more traditional watersiding pursuits (n.d: n.p.).

This coupling – the theatrically cheeky display of republicanism that nevertheless confirms traditional gender relations and the ‘strangely equivocal and indeterminate … phallic androgyn’ of the decorated submarine bedecked with dancing girls – ‘wavers between the securely colonial and the eclectically postmodern, a masquerade of/on the patriarchal’ (n.d:n.p.). In identifying such characteristics of the antipodean camp Perry isolates a particular cultural sensibility which, in contending with two First Worlds, ‘walk[s] a line between camp as constitutive (of frivolity) and camp as camouflage (for seriousness)” (n.d: n.p.). He contends:

Viewed historically, antipodean camp is explicable as a ‘post-colonial’ aesthetic for the beneficiaries of colonialism. In its classic form it signals the attempt to out flank the cultural categories and control of metropolitan powers without, however, directly confronting either the historical conditions of its own possibility or the counternarratives which the historical pattern continues to generate. Hence its appeal to those ‘dominion subjects’ whom Meaghan Morris pithily describes. (n.d: n.p.).

47 With events of this order regularly punctuating their cultural landscape Perry writes: ‘One begins to understand why Australian cultural critics were so quick off the mark (cf. Frankovits 1984; Gross et al. 1986) in the formation of an English-speaking constituency for Baudrillard’s work” (n.d:n.p.). Simon During (1985) supplied a supplement to this reading. This ready adoption he attributes to the lack of a postcolonial politics in Australia over this time, which he contrasts with the lack of appeal of such theorists in A/NZ over the same period – a period in which the country was in the throws of an insurgent anti-colonial activism on the part of Maori. New Zealand, on his account, had an endemic resistive rhetoric and logic, Australia had to import its in the form of French post-structuralism.
What is distinctive for Perry in the generation of an Antipodean camp sensibility is the sheer matter-of-fact knowingness with which the fabricated nature of national identity is approached. Te Papa can be cited as an example: it positively revels in its own artifice. As their titles suggest, the exhibitions devoted to the culture of the settler heirs flaunt an ironic camp sensibility whose fabrications are explicit exercises in both putting on and pointing up the manufactured-ness of national culture and identity. These include the ironic distancing of *Exhibiting Ourselves*, the irreverent bricolage of *Parade* and the nostalgic montage of *Golden Days*.

Curated by historian Jock Phillips, *Exhibiting Ourselves*, provides a genealogy for Te Papa’s commitment to these practices of putting on and pointing up national constructions. While, Phillips contends *Exhibiting Ourselves*, ‘is about the Disneylands of our past’ (1997:116), this observation is not to establish Te Papa as heir to the theme park and the charge of McDisneyization which has seen others declare that the museum is the ‘cultural equivalent to [the] fast-food outlet’.48 Rather the intention of the exhibition ‘focuses upon the history of the idea of national identity, and it suggests that national identity is … a construction’ (ibid.:115). The interpretative device for exploring the constructions of national identity is the recreation of A/NZ’s displays at four international exhibitions – the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, the 1906 Christchurch International Exhibition, the 1940 Centennial Exhibition in Wellington and the 1992 Seville Exposition. Phillips writes, *Exhibiting Ourselves*:

*[makes it] obvious how much projections of New Zealand identity were constructions – the visitor walks into constructed architectural spaces. Those constructions were clearly puffery and propaganda to sell goods and attract immigrants and foreign investment. Identity, it is implied is a self-serving projection, which is captured by certain groups at certain times for particular ends .... [The 1940 exhibition, for example] proclaimed New Zealand as an economically progressive welfare state*.

48 This statement belongs to Arts aficionado, Hamish Keith, (2000:A19).
because the Labour government wished to announce its success in pulling New Zealand out of the depression. In 1992 New Zealand projected itself as a go-getting nation of entrepreneurs living in a green and beautiful land because some of the major investors in Expo wished to sell their wine and apples to European markets. (ibid.:116)

Here, then, *Exhibiting Ourselves* invites scepticism of the national narratives into whose service the idea of Te Papa has been put; cf., for example, Bolger’s ‘symbol of the economic recovery’, or, Shipley’s ‘unique mosaic’. But Phillips perhaps overlays the critical impulse of the content of his exhibition, for while it points up the fabricated nature of national identity, it continues to hail ‘us’ in national terms. That is, in this exhibition of exhibitions, the national ‘our’ invoked by its title is self-consciously solicited and ironically deployed as the display actively seeks to demonstrate that national identity is a cultural artifice historically contingent on social, political and economic expediencies. This second order display thus at once invokes a national ‘we’ all the while, ideally, distancing the viewer from historical and contemporary displays of the national Self. That is, its historical narrative encourages an ironic distancing with regard to the public production of national culture and identity, which proceeds through strategies that ‘de-throne the serious’ through a ‘self-mockery’ that, nevertheless, asserts the national sign. This might look like a subversive gesture in the context of an institution apparently given-over precisely to the task of national identity formation, but this dual operation of putting on while pointing up the fabrications of culture and identity is the mode of operation of the museum. An irreverent ‘knowingness’ about their fabrications seems to be the pervasive sensibility informing Te Papa’s other exhibitions on the culture of the settler heirs.

Housed in a gaudy shopping-mall-like environment, *Parade* is a cultural history exhibition on the artistic, design and media production of A/NZ. Curated by Wedde (1998:26) the self-described ‘bricoleur, plagiarist and eclectic’, this exhibition revels in juxtaposition the canonic and the mundane. *Parade* walks the
line between an aesthetic that is constitutive of frivolity and one that is camouflage for seriousness. It exercises an antipodean camp, that at once ‘dethrones the serious’ with an irreverence toward the national canon, in a gesture that has long been constitutive of the A/NZ’s national popular, much to the contestation of art critics (see Chapter 6). Simultaneously, it serves as camouflage for an intellectual commitment to cultural narratives that can hold conversations between, high modernism and mass culture, between McCahon and Kelvinators and the introduction of Television in New Zealand. As Wedde writes, arguing for the poignancy of this particular display, while, ‘some people go on believing that what programmed McCahon was in some way more responsible or meaningful or serious within the culture, than what programs television … other people believe that what programs television is meaningful but that whatever programmed McCahon was a kind of hoax … called modern art’ (1996:1). Such antinomies, Wedde argues, have historically denied what he claims McCahon longed for, – the mass audience that television attracted. An aesthetics of antipodean camp draws the audience and writes the commentary.

Publicity for film-maker Steve La Hood’s, *Golden Days*, states:

Golden Days is one of the best loved exhibitions at Te Papa. It’s a speeded-up collage of memories and events, glorious achievements, dark days, and finest hours that reaches from Jack Lovelock’s gold medal at the 1936 Berlin Olympics to Ches and Dale singing about ‘finest chedder – made bedda!’ … It switches in a second from a Billy T James sketch to a flotilla of anti-nuke protesters trying to stop a nuclear submarine. Golden Days is a glorious junk shop of culture’s defining moments, pungent, tantalising, and as fleeting as the memory of a dream. (Thompson and Labrum, n.d:n.p)

While for some, these images rush forward as coherently as ‘Aunt Daisy on Ecstasy’ (McLean, EP, 29 July, 1998), La Hood understood his project as a
rhetoricalization of the nation’s narration. He sought to help New Zealanders ‘feel their history rather than intellectualize about it’ (La Hood cited in Robinson, 1998:58-59). Here, then, Te Papa’s practices of antipodean camp – of putting on, while pointing up the fabrication of nation – slides toward the rhetoricalization of history that Lamb associates with the New Zealand Sublime.

The New Zealand Sublime

Like Perry, Lamb also turns to public pageantry but takes a different perspective on the modes of cultural sensibility generated by settler modernity. Nevertheless, his aesthetics are concerned with the same counter-movement that ‘reterritorises the socius’ around the national sign. His essay, ‘A Sublime Moment off Poverty Bay’, starts with a description of the historical pageant opening the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, which was part of the sesquicentennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. As he describes proceedings:

[I]t aimed to deliver New Zealand history as a powerful blend of mythic and documentary modes of narrative. So the spiritual and geographical points of origin of Maori – the creation story of Rangi and Papa and the oral traditions of the journeys from Hawaiki – were shown as continuous with the European voyages of discovery and settlement beginning with Cook’s arrival in Poverty Bay in 1769 aboard the Endeavour. (1991:97)

No doubt this event could be read in Perry’s terms as an ironic fabrication of nationality that uses strategies of the antipodean camp that walk a line between camp as frivolity (entertaining spectacle) and a camouflage for seriousness (reconciliation), processes later exemplified at the opening ceremony of Sydney’s Olympic Games, 2000. Lamb pursues a different line. For him this event achieved ‘the confluence of the two distinct cultural traditions that now constitutes the national memory and a common future’ (ibid.). Lamb observes, however, that as spectacle the pageant’s ‘colour, movement, and astonishing speed of
transformation' put aside an important post-enlightenment question: ‘what is at
stake in putting together a narrative of supposedly “real” or “true” events, especially
if imagination is being used to supplement the traditions or the facts that have
disappeared from the record’ (ibid.). Some might have answered this question with
the help of Jameson, reading this spectacle and its lack of historicity as ‘pastiche’.
Lamb addresses the question otherwise, reading the pageant as ‘an event of an
event, bristling with intensity and the kind of expectation that Lyotard claims for the
sublime’ (1990:671). In so mobilising the notion of the sublime in the context of
A/NZ, Lamb turns away from the ‘hysterical sublime’ and toward Jameson’s
intellectual opponent on questions of ‘the postmodern’ – Jean-Francois Lyotard
(1988). In preferring this formulation, Lamb writes: ‘Unlike Jameson, who takes the
sublime to be a desertation of politics for the sake of the frissons of postmodern art,
Lyotard understands it to be the most serious engagement with injustice we are
capable of making’ (1990:666 italics in original).

Lyotard is indebted to Kant, who reformulates the sublime away from a
Burkean focus on Nature, ‘Man’s’ other, and addresses it to the question of the
limits of representation itself. Lyotard’s concern is with the incommensurability
between competing narratives around questions of injustice. He posits the term the
différend to signal the point when the investigation into an injustice leaves the
victims without an idiom of complaint that their opponents would recognize as
legitimate: the différend, then, comes into play when ‘conflict … cannot be
equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One
side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy’ (Lyotard, 1988:xi).49
The différend thus represents the unrepresentable – an abyss when ‘neither words
nor rules operate to arrive at a cognitive judgement’ (Lamb, 1990:666). So rather
than the sublime signalling a new exhilaration in the face of depthless-ness and the
waning of historicity as Jameson figures it, Lyotard invokes the non-rationalist
principles embodied in the Kantian sublime to make a serious engagement with
incommensurability.

49 See Bill Readings (1992) essay on the différend and Australian Aboriginality.
It is this latter notion of the sublime that Lamb contends 'keeps cropping up in New Zealand narrative' (1991:111).\footnote{For a critique of Lamb’s and During’s formulations as ‘the postmodernisation of Maori culture’ which is irrelevant to the realpolitik of land claims and inequalities in health, education and housing, see Steven Webster (1998: chapter 8). Also see Anne Maxwell (1994) who offers a more sympathetic but not unrelated critique.} For him an effect of narrating New Zealand powerfully leads to a rhetoricalization of that history where ‘the rules of evidence’ that secure the post enlightenment rationality to the truth become unmoored. In large measure this sublime emerges from the rhetorical demand to narrate a national history across the incommensurabilities of two intellectual and cultural traditions in which there are no ready languages or laws for that exchange; that is, there is no shared ground for establishing the rules of evidence or judgment. This, Lamb contends, has led to a crisis in the historical narration of the country which the irruption of New Zealand Sublime signals and whose subversive potential he wishes to cultivate. In the time in which Lamb writes, this crisis is contingent on an ‘internal colonialism’\footnote{The term is Michael Hechter’s (1975).} bought to the fore publicly by the sesquicentennial of the Treaty of Waitangi on the one hand, and, on the other, the ‘unfinished business’ of the country’s economic restructuring according to the rationalist principles of global capital (see Chapter 4). It is Lamb’s position that only by adhering to the non-rationalist principles embodied in the sublime can historians and other cultural producers of New Zealand’s narration generate an alternative to the depthless modes of history Jameson terms pastiche and which solicit ‘the hysterical sublime.’

Lamb finds Wedde to be a deft exponent of the New Zealand Sublime. Raging against the rationalising juggernaut of greasy capitalism that links Enlightenment whaling with Ritzer’s McDonaldization, Symmes Hole’s Researcher articulates a counter narrative. ‘History!’ the Researcher retorts ‘the Enlightenment looking for innocence; microbes looking for hosts; Imperialism looking for territory, industry looking for raw materials’ (Wedde, 1986:155; cited in Lamb, 1990:673). As Lamb reads it, the Researcher’s historiographic re-creation of ‘the facts’ behind Melville’s fiction, Moby Dick, generates a presence that refuses these machinations.
of Progress. Here, the representation of the representation of the white whale takes on a sublime effect:

When Moby Dick is not looking for minions of the Enlightenment to destroy, he moves in the euphotic twilight of a different time, well beyond ‘the selected necessities of “recorded fact”.’ Sustained by a vast lungful of inspiration, the white whale moves like a submarine différénd, scarred and wronged but powerfully imminent: ‘There he swims, below the surface of your “present”. He’s the fate that holds its breath. He’s what the people who’ve got it sense, but never see.’ (Wedde, 1986:170; Lamb, 1990:673)

**Signs of a Nation**

Adjacent to Te Papa’s main public circulation spaces and under a high vaulted ceiling the zone of *Signs of a Nation* mediates between the Pakeha and Maori sections of the building. A ‘liminal space between two worlds’ (French, 1998:70), this is for its architect, Pete Bossley (1998:64) ‘a powerful architectural space’. The centrepiece of this ‘cathedral like space’ is a huge suspended glass relief, which is composed of copies of fragments of the Treaty. As its designer explains: ‘The front layer contains all the signatures of the Waitangi document, while the rear layer represents, in moulded and coloured surfaces, the parchment as ravaged by ill treatment and hungry rats’ (ibid.:67). It is, then, a massive montage of facsimiles of fragments, of the now venerated, once neglected document salvaged from

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52 Here, there are curious resonances with Melville’s admiring search for ‘men who dive’ (cited in Wedde, 1986:238) and the despairing self-description Foucault gives as he marks his methodological transition to ‘effective history’. Parodying himself as an intellectual giant Foucault writes: ‘For my part, it has struck me that I might have seemed a bit like a whale that leaps to the surface of the water disturbing it momentarily with a tiny jet of spray and lets it be believed, or pretends to believe, or wants to believe, or himself does in fact indeed believe that down in the depths where no one sees him any more, he follows a more profound, coherent and reasoned trajectory’ (1980:79).

53 Two large kahikatea veneered panels carrying the full text of the Treaty – one a Maori version, the other in English – flank this ‘cathedral like space’. The Maori translation is from the Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act of 1985, The English is from the Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act of 1975.
colonialism's ruins. As information on a discrete plinth explains: 'This giant Treaty is a replica of the one signed at Waitangi. Its battered condition is typical of the neglect the Treaty suffered. Today, however, the Treaty of Waitangi is increasingly seen as the founding document of modern New Zealand.' In overall intention, this exhibition, its designer states, is to demonstrate that the Treaty is 'historical, monumental, awe inspiring, troublesome ... [and] above all, relevant' (ibid.). Put succinctly, this 'monumental treatment' of the Treaty is intended to 'convey a sense of wonder' (ibid.:67.).

Reading this exhibition Paul Walker and Justine Clarke have commented:

[T]his object is not about legibility. It does not render the signatures, or the document, in any kind of readable manner. Instead these different kinds of marks index the performative aspect of the treaty. The layer of signatures refers to the event of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, 'encrusted', as James Belich writes 'with myth and meaning, controversy and sanctity'. This is a scene which has been described to the point that is now 'the central tableau in the collective memory'. The second layer recalls the disregard in which the treaty was held for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries .... This enormous laminated facsimile is semitransparent, semiliquid, its ground indeterminate. It shimmers as the light plays across it, glancing reflections blurring our vision. It entails perceptual ambiguities that allude, or seem to allude, to the ambiguities that abound in the current deployment of the treaty – political, economic and cultural. It reminds us that there is no definitive reading of the Treaty ... but rather that the treaty is a contested site of negotiation. This object also suggests that the treaty is a screen onto which interpretations are projected, and that it is constructed through their interpretations. (Belich, 1996:193; Walker and Clark, 2004:172)
Despite ‘all these invitations to interpretation’ however, Walker and Clark conclude that the Treaty remains presented ‘as a singularity’ (ibid.:173). This is a singularity that accords less with ‘the historical facts’ behind the Treaty’s signing or its subsequent abrogation, or with ‘the authenticity’ of ‘the real’ documents of the Treaty, but rather more with present-day imperatives for the Treaty as the originary myth of the modern bicultural nation. It seems that in Te Papa’s myth, the multiplicities, the indeterminacies, the ambiguities of the Treaty’s history – alluded to by the play of light on its dappled surface – evaporate into an aesthetic experience of awe and wonder.54

For Walker and Clarke the wonder of myth gives way to the depthless-ness of distraction. ‘In the space of Jameson’s paradigmatic Bonaventure or the reality of an interior like Te Papa’s,’ they write, ‘everyone is distracted, no one is looking’ (2004:169-70). Rather, following Jameson, the museum visitors figure as living their lives in a kind of public spectacle, as a ‘hypercrowd’ (ibid.:169) whose exhilaration conditions ‘the hysterical sublime’. Located at ‘the clamorous crossroads of the building’, Te Papa’s Treaty presentation ‘tends towards [distraction]…. All is informational in Signs of a Nation, a plethora of possible interpretations’ (ibid.: 170). Signs of a Nation, then, is no facilitator of cognitive maps to the present. Here, in the moment in which Te Papa seems to participate in the business of ‘the invention of tradition’, in presentation of difference, Walker and Clarke find it enmeshed in a global cultural logic that ‘hails’ the distracted subject of postmodernity. By thus locating Te Papa in the ‘determinantalization of the socius’ they share a good deal in common with the heritage industry critics.

Lamb’s account of the New Zealand Sublime might make one disinclined to read Signs of a Nation as an exercise in the aestheticization of politics with its associated ‘weakening of historicity’ as Walker and Clark’s position would suggest. In the context of ‘new national museums’ in conditions of settler colonialism, Nicholas Thomas has asked: ‘Is it possible to exhibit incommensurability?’ ([1998]

54 Writing of Myth’s ‘privation of History’, Roland Barthes argues, ‘history evaporates …. all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object.’ (1973:165).
Te Papa's partial answer to this question has been a certain rhetoricalization of the nation's history that shares a lot with Lamb's New Zealand Sublime. Lamb suggests that narratives marked by the New Zealand Sublime are perhaps 'the most appropriate form of national history' (1990:671). Arguably, *Signs of a Nation*, effects this rhetoricalization and its aesthetics are an appropriate response to the historical conditions and contemporary saliency of the Treaty for the bi-cultural nation. The translational failure that marks the founding text for this mode of nationhood, problematically and enduringly, disrupts attempts to formalise relations between Pakeha and Maori. Here, then, as much as the Treaty is central to the 'postcolonial nation', it remains testimony to the incommensurability across the colonial divide. In a large and largely empty space, polysemic in its surfaces, illegible in its inscription, the representation of the representation of the Treaty in *Signs of a Nation* can be read as a suspended différend, which marks the historical incommensurability – the abyss where 'neither words nor rules operate to arrive at a cognitive judgement'—that must be negotiated in modes of rhetoricalize history that seek a postcolonial justice in the present (Lamb, 1990:666).

**Our (dis)Place(ment)**

For writers like Jameson and Harvey the present entails a profound loss and that loss is historical understanding. For Jameson this is a lamentable 'waning of historicity'. For Harvey this concerns a time-space compression to such a degree that 'time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is' (1990:240). Conditioned, at least in part, by the global processes that generate this pervasive presentism it is unsurprising that critics have observed that Te Papa has dispensed with a 'historical orientation' and has become present focussed (Kirsenblatt-Gimblett, 1998:4). While this orientation engenders cultural experiences that accord with the hysterical sublime and its sense of displacement, disorientation and distraction, the museum does capture other aesthetic experiences, which, while equally presentist, are concerned to recognize the particular contingencies of an antipodean modernity. These offer none of the surety of 'the cognitive maps' that
Jameson (1988) deems necessary to understand the external world, and that Walsh (1992) wishes museums would provide. They do however acknowledge and engage with the predicaments of this place. Like Wedde’s imperial McDonalds and local Milkbar, the hysterical sublime and an antipodean aesthetics are but different sides of the same greasy coin. They present different aesthetics that correspond to the simultaneous double movement of capital that at once deterritorializes and reterritorializes the socius. The first movement is associated with the aesthetics of displacement, exemplified by the hysterical sublime. The second, with the aesthetics of place signalled differently by the antipodean camp and the New Zealand sublime. As a tourist and leisure destination that owes much to a global ‘architecture of consumption’ (malls, theme-parks, hotels) and a space dedicated to the signature of the local, Te Papa is simultaneously, to stretch Wedde’s reading, both McDonalds and the Milkbar. In this, it is an articulation of the cultural predicament that characterises settler culture – doubly inscribed as colonised and colonized.

55 See John Hannigan (1998)
Chapter 6

POPULAR/AESTHETICS:
‘the politics of the invisible’ - ‘art’ and ‘the everyday’

Introduction

In this chapter I examine shifts in the discursive articulation of cultural objects in exhibitionary contexts. I am particularly interested in those objects whose discursive frames have oscillated between that of an aesthetic radical decontextualisation and that of a historically or ethnographically rich contextualisation. However, within these broad parameters this chapter focuses on the juxtaposition between the ‘aesthetic’ experience and a specific, but increasingly significant, mode of ‘historical’ contextualisation – that of ‘the everyday.’ In the company of Bourdieu and his critics I analyse these discursive frames, the aesthetic and the everyday, as cultural ‘invisibles’. These make their second order of representation, ‘Art’ or ‘everyday experience’, visible to some while excluding others from such (in)sight. With the aid of these Bourdieuan observations I turn to Parade, one of Te Papa’s more controversial exhibitions, which ran from 1998 to 2001. This exhibition was ostensibly an art show in that many of the cultural objects that it included would, in a more orthodox exhibition, have been framed within an aesthetic discourse. Yet, the privileged curatorial frame was not the aesthetic but rather that of the everyday. This shift in discursive framing solicited a public controversy over the apparent cultural loss that it entailed, that of the sanctity of Art. In this chapter I reflect on the losses as well as the gains implicit in this shift.
'Art' and 'the everyday'

In exploring the educative function of exhibitions, advocate of the New Museology, Peter Vergo (1989), establishes a spectrum from aesthetic to contextual exhibitions. As he put it, in aesthetic exhibitions the object itself is paramount: "'Understanding' is essentially a process of private communion between ourselves and the work of art; we are supposed merely to 'experience'" (1989:47). ‘Contextual’ exhibitions on the other hand, justify an object’s presence not as one of contemplation, but ‘by its importance as a token of a particular age, a particular culture, a particular political or social system, as being representative of certain ideas or beliefs’ (ibid.:). Vergo firmly comes down on the side of the ‘contextual’ exhibition. The ‘aesthetic view’, he argues, is both ‘arrogant and uncompromising’ because it makes ‘no concessions to visitors from other social and cultural backgrounds’ (ibid.:49). In addition, it ‘assumes that our visual perception is a somehow coherent, even objective process, as if all that is necessary is to “see properly”, without taking any account of how complicated and problematic a process “seeing” is’ (ibid.:49). Here, Vergo rehearses the now familiar dichotomising of exhibiting strategies – that between aesthetic ‘decontextualisation’ on the one hand, and, social, historical, or cultural ‘contextualisation’ on the other. And, he expresses the widely shared view that contextualising devices increase an object’s accessibility.

In problematizing precisely this process of ‘seeing properly’ Bourdieu and Darbel’s ([1966] 1990) classic, *The Love of Art*, supplies the sociology for Vergo’s contention. In this text they make a series of arguments about the social function of Kantian judgements of taste under conditions of bourgeois capitalism. As Bourdieu and Darbel argue, it is not the intention of the sociologist to refute Kant’s ‘pure aesthetic’ – that ‘the beautiful is that which pleases without concept’ – but to define both the social conditions that make this experience possible and the subjects for whom it is possible (art lovers or ‘people of taste’). By so doing the limits within which this sensibility exists can be socially established (1990:109). As the site where the ‘aesthetic disposition becomes an institution’ it is the art museum that Bourdieu and his colleagues subject to an intensive social scientific investigation.
They dispute that there is a universal and undifferentiated audience for public art galleries. Rather they argue that far from offering to ‘all the pure possibility of taking advantage of the works on display in museums, it remains the case that only some have the real possibility of doing so’ (1990:134). This is so because of the uneven distribution of ‘artistic competency’. ‘Considered as symbolic goods’, Bourdieu and Darbel argue, ‘works of art only exist for those who have the means of appropriating them, that is, of deciphering them’ (ibid.:39).

In the societies of Western Europe that The Love of Art analysed over the mid 1960s, this competency is uneven in its distribution because of different levels of educational attainment and familial socialisation to the ‘aesthetic experience’. This argument is developed out of an extensive statistical analysis that identified who precisely it is that visits art museums and measured the museum-goers’ degree of artistic competency. Their findings established that the art gallery’s public is differentiated along class lines, or, more accurately, along lines of levels of educational attainment and cultural aspiration rather than actually achieved social position. In this way art galleries reproduce social distinctions between those with ‘artistic capital’ and those without. In so doing they cultivate a feeling of cultural ownership and belonging among the social elite while they make working class people feel inferior and excluded.

In a subsequent essay, ‘The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic’, Bourdieu (1987) provides a brief history of this capacity to appropriate a work of art in a specifically aesthetic way – as a signifier meaning nothing other than itself (1990:40). Central to this aesthetic structure of vision, the ‘pure gaze’, Bourdieu argues, is the organisation of the categories that govern how works of art are named and labelled. That is, how the works of art come to be contextualised or ‘seen’ as ‘art’. To comprehend the historical constitution of the ‘pure gaze’ it is necessary to explore two aspects of its dialectic. Namely, to map the emergence of those spaces and institutions in which works of art are so assembled, arranged, and classified as to be rendered visible as ‘art’, and to chart those forces which produce spectators
capable of recognising and appreciating and so of appropriating those cultural objects as 'art'. Bourdieu writes:

Given that the work of art exists as (namely as a symbolic object endowed with meaning and value) only if it is apprehended by spectators possessing the disposition and the aesthetic competence which are tacitly required, one could then say that it is the aesthete's eye which constitutes the work of art as a work of art. But, one must also remember immediately that this is possible only to the extent that the aesthete himself is the product of long exposure to art works. (1987:202; Bennett, 1995:163-4)

It is aesthetic competence – in this case a distinctive language of art – that mediates the relation between the aesthete and the work of art. Through its categories – of art’s autonomy, of creativity, of the irreducible individuality of the artist etc. – the ‘pure gaze’ provides a means whereby the work on display can be construed and experienced as the manifestation of a higher order reality ('art') of which it is but the material expression. This mediation organises a set of relations between "the visible (the works of art on display) and the invisible ('art') such that the former is perceived and utilised as a route to communion with the latter" (Bennett, 1995:164). Yet, because of the unequal distribution of this aesthetic competency, the code for reading the relations between the visible and an invisible plays a decisive role in structuring distinctions between those ‘who can and those [who] cannot see’ (Bourdieu and Darbel 1990:53; Bennett, 1995:164). Or, more accurately, as Tony Bennett puts it, ‘between those who can only see what is visibly on display and those who are additionally able to see the invisible realities ('art') which the theory [the ‘pure gaze’] posits as being accessible via the objects exhibited’ (1995:164).

Lacking the necessary aesthetic code to successfully appropriate the work of art as a work of art, members of the dominated classes tend to substitute other
codes. In so doing, Bourdieu argues, they apply to exhibited works of art 'the perceptual schemas of their own ethos, the very ones which structure their everyday perception of everyday existence' (1990:44). This position leads Bourdieu to the observation that working class museum visitors are more likely to be interested in 'minor' works, such as furniture, ceramics, or folk or historical objects, than aesthetic works. This is so, he contends, because the codes necessary to appropriate them are more widely distributed than that of the aesthetic gaze. This position finds support in the observations made of visitors' behaviour at the Lille Museum. Reflecting on the scene as they move from an art display to a history exhibition Bourdieu writes:

The behaviour of the visitors differs so greatly that the observer, forced initially to a spontaneous sociology, attributes the differences to a difference in the social origin of the public (an interpretation contradicted by the statistical analysis), differences which in fact stem primarily from the social meanings of the [art] museum and of the [history] exhibition which introduces, exceptionally, the atmosphere of the department store, the poor man's museum, and not without arousing a certain amount of indignation amongst the most conservative of visitors to traditional museums. The total attitude change evident amongst visitors can be reduced to the following oppositions, which are those which distinguish the universe of the sacred from the universe of the profane: untouchable – touchable; noise – contemplative silence; swift and haphazard exploration – slow and orderly procession; involved appreciation of venal works – pure appreciation of 'priceless' works. (1990:50-1)

The Politics of the Invisible

The division between the codes of 'art' and 'the everyday' that Bourdieu identifies here, returns us to Vergo's split between aesthetic and contextualising modes of
display. If Bourdieu supplies a sociology for a discriminating ‘aesthetic’ competency, he also complicates Vergo’s split between contextualisation and decontextualisation. Vergo’s division glosses a basic structure shared by all exhibitions – aesthetic or contextual. This concerns a structure of representation that Tony Bennett has problematised as ‘the politics of the invisible’ (1995: chapter 6). In an argument indebted to Bourdieu’s work on the ‘pure gaze’, Bennett contends that the dialectical relation that establishes an aesthetic code as that which mediates between the aesthete and the work of art has its analogies in the exhibitions of other museum genres. It similarly functions to mediate between that which is visible – the tangible material on display – and that which is invisible – a second or higher order of reality. So, for example, in the modern history museum, Bennett notes, ‘objects are typically displayed with a view to rendering present and visible that which is absent and invisible: the past history of a particular people, nation, region, or social group’ (ibid.: 166). In this they comprise a domain of the visible, which derives its significance from the ‘invisibles’ it constructs and this forms the way the museum mediates these ‘invisibles’ to the spectator (ibid.: 165).

The significance of Bennett’s observation is for the types of political intervention that might take place in the space of the museum to make it more adequately representative and more accessible. Any advocacy of a shift in exhibiting strategies, from the aesthetic to the contextual, or for that matter any other strategy that seeks to address inadequacies in representation and participation, necessarily entails the construction of new mediating relations between the visible and the invisible. As Bennett states with regard to ‘interventions into the space of the art museum’:

[T]hose which seek to take issue with the exclusions and marginalisations which the space constructs, will need, in constructing another invisible in the place of ‘art’, to give careful consideration to the discursive forms and pedagogic props and devices that might be used to mediate those invisibles in such a way, to recall Bourdieu and Darbel, as
to be able, indeed, to ‘give “the eye” to those who cannot “see.”’

( Ibid.: 172)

Parade: Popular/Aesthetics

Parade’s curators found themselves in this situation of having to construct an invisible other than ‘art’ to overcome the patterns of exclusion and marginalisation associated with established patterns of art museum visitation. This saw them deploy ‘discursive forms and pedagogic props’ quite distinct from ‘art’ and ‘the white cube’ of the art museum. Three elements in the policy environment were seminal for shaping the contours of the new invisible that Parade adopted.

Firstly, Te Papa has been committed to changing the profile of visitation in A/NZ. In an overview of the numerous surveys conducted on museum visitation patterns in the years prior to its opening Mark Lindsay described local museum and gallery visitor profiles that echo those of Bourdieu’s results:

The typical New Zealand museum visitor is: well educated, well paid, and employed in professional or managerial work, or a student, and pakeha. Those least likely to visit the museum, or those who visit infrequently are: Maori, or other ethnic minorities, blue collar, domestic, manual, clerical and sales workers, and the unemployed, with a family income of less than $30,000 pa or aged over 60. (1994: 30-31)

Committed by legislative decree to the ‘broadest audience’, Te Papa has had to radically change this profile of museum visitation so as to more accurately reflect that of the country’s demographics.¹ In this context an art show would have to be

¹ As the document that established the concept for Te Papa declared: ‘The new Museum will further the cultural interests and aspirations of all the people of New Zealand. It will equally acknowledge the contributions that all our people … make to the development of the nation’ (AC, 1989:n.p.). In 1994 the government committed fiscally to a museum model which, as Te Papa’s CEO Cheryl Sotheran glossed it, ‘required … expansion into a wider, more dynamic vision that offered engagement, exploration and entertainment for a broad New Zealand audience’ (2000:A19).
broadly representative of the country’s cultural achievement and appeal to a diverse, and largely non-gallery going public.

The second element shaping Parade’s new interpretative frame concerned the unification of its collections. In the 1992 Act that established the Museum of New Zealand, its antecedents the National Museum (largely an ethnographic and natural history museum) and the National Art Gallery were amalgamated into a single institution and their collections unified.2 This facilitated the new institution’s decision to dismantle the traditional disciplinary boundaries that shaped its antecedents and was crucial for its embrace of cross-disciplinary interpretative programmes. In turn, this promoted exhibitions that ‘draw on a range of collections from the visual arts and material culture to natural environment collections’ (Griffin et al., 2000:26).3

The third element has been in an effort to develop ‘more holistic exhibitions about New Zealand and its place in the Pacific and the wider world’ (ibid.). That is, narrating nation has been a privileged interpretative frame coordinating exhibitions programmes across the institution.

How did this policy environment of accessibility, inter-disciplinarity, and nationality, shape the new invisible by which Parade might ‘give “the eye” to those who cannot “see”’? The preliminary answer here is ambiguous. On the one hand,

2 Architecturally this unified collections policy has generated a space that the Museum’s architects described as ‘very much a hybrid’, which they claim, is an unprecedented integration of both a museum and an art gallery (Bossley and Mercep, 1992:40).

3 There are very few exhibition zones in the Museum that have not deployed works of art in this thematic and narrativised manner. This has seen works of art from the former National Art Collection dispersed across the Museum’s exhibition zones. So, for example, in the natural history zone Mountains to Sea, suspended among the foliage of simulated native trees, you can find Brett Graham’s Te Paraka (1997): a massive wooden disc carved with a curvi-linear design evoking ‘the whirlpool of Tangaroa’s energy’. Tangaroa is a Maori god of the sea and the originator of the art of carving. And in Passports, the social history exhibition on immigration, around the corner past computer interactives on nineteenth century sea-travel you can find William Allsworth’s The Emigrants (1844); an oil painting depicting the arrival of wealthy migrants to New Zealand’s shores. Or, for one last example, in Mana Pasifika, an exhibition on Pacific cultures and A/NZ’s Pacific diaspora, near a display entitled ‘Instruments of Change’ on the introduction of the guitar to the Pacific is Michel Tuffery’s Pisupo lua afe; a sculpture made out of tins of canned beef (a popular foodstuff in the contemporary Pacific). It is in the shape of a bull and is a clever comment on colonialism.
Parade mediated its relations between its displays and the spectator in the discourse of ‘New Zealand’s Cultural History’, which posits the cultural objects as ‘national patrimony’ and the viewer as ‘citizen.’ On the other hand, in its deployment of an ‘aesthetic populism’ – figured by its interlocutors as a ‘supermarket aesthetic’ – Parade mediated relations between object and subject as that between commodity and consumer. This hardly exhausts the possibilities since the primary narrative coordinating the show retains, at least in part, the ‘aesthetic gaze’. This is so since the show quite literally asks ‘is it art?’ – the question being written on the wall of the exhibition a number of times. However, with the addition of the line ‘You Decide’, it defers to the codes of everyday experience. In fact, the popular nationalism and aesthetic populism that the exhibition embraces are but variations on the use of everyday codes. These become the new invisible mediating the show’s cultural objects. Before formalising this observation a brief demonstration of how each of these narratives is deployed in Parade is useful.

**Popular Nationalism**

Parade is organised not by the conventions of an art historical narrative or the minimalist aesthetic of ‘the white cube,’ but rather by an object dense cultural history approach. Pursuing the opportunities that the unified collection afforded, this approach was in part achieved through the historical ‘contextualisation’ of art works with other cultural objects that more traditionally would be classified as craft, commercial design, popular, folk or ethnographic objects. This approach shares in Bourdieu’s (1990:56) observation that ‘minor’ works have greater popular reception because the competency required to appropriate these objects – ‘historical culture’ – is deemed to have a more common distribution. But conceptual accessibility was only one concern. Committed in principle to representing ‘the totality of New Zealand’s culture’ the unified collections facilitated a broadly representative and ‘democratic’ selection of cultural objects that included those of Pakeha and Maori, men and women, high and popular culture. Narratively, these cultural objects were organised in a loose chronology that expounded a “‘soft” cultural nationalism’ (Bell
and McLennan, 1995) – beginning with the display of pre-contact Maori stone carving and finishing with a display of late 1980s early 1990s works of art. If the visitor entered between the Perspex tubes containing the pre-history Maori taonga the journey through Parade would unfold, firstly, with a section on Enlightenment Europe, which includes material from Cook’s ‘voyages of discovery’, the pre-history, if you will, of Pakeha settlement. Next, an area devoted to Victorian early settler domesticity, which includes craftwork and representational illustrations. Opposite is Whakaoratia – a display on late nineteenth century syncretic material culture that includes scrim-shaw by Maori sailors and a video presentation on the religious architecture of the Ratana Church. Proceeding on from this is a section on colonial government, including Frederick Goldies’ now canonic portraits of elderly Maori which were gifted to Lady Ranfurly on completion of her husband's term as Governor (1897-1904), and craftsman Anton Seuffert’s marquetry bureau made from indigenous timbers, the inlays depicting native flora and fauna. From here the visitor can step into a zone devoted to the British Arts and Crafts movement and its antipodean followers. This is followed by a section on American and European influences on post WWII New Zealand culture – which includes material on the introduction of television to New Zealand and the now notorious hanging of Colin McCahon’s Northland Panels next to the re-creation of a 1950’s department store display of a shear-shape fridge. This space leads into a high modernist zone that includes sculpture by Chris Booth and the paintings of Max Gimblett, opposite which are the costumes of the internationally acclaimed New Zealand pop group of the 1970s and 1980s, Split Enz. In a stand-alone space, Kiwi Magicians, there is an exhibition on the yacht design of Bruce Farr that carried New Zealand to the America’s Cup victory in 1995. In this, then, Parade, weaves a diverse array of

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4 Despite one critic’s contention that, because it adheres to the ‘conventional march of progress’, Parade is ‘laboured and conservative’ it is nowhere as aggressively and progressively linear as this, or as my description, might suggest (Kent, 1998: 85). The planned addition of a case at the entrance to Parade to accompany the Pre-European taonga representing contemporary taonga with an example of craft jewellery would have emphasised the cyclical condition of cultural processes that the show’s curators sought, and undermined the ‘progressive’ stone age to the digital age narrative that can be read in Parade.
material culture into a narrative on the various historical forces shaping the country’s cultural production.

**Aesthetic Populism**

If this material was coordinated because of its possibilities to be articulated in a discourse of ‘New Zealandness’, it also sought to solicit a particular orientation to the objects on display that was not simply to be a source of national pride or nostalgia. It sought to empower aesthetic judgements. Here the show adopted an architecture and design that sought to overcome the ‘threshold fear’ induced by ‘the white cube’. *Parade* drew heavily on the design rhetoric and spatial logic of shopping malls. As in many other highly urbanised countries, shopping malls are New Zealanders’ most popular leisure activity (Lindsay, 1994:49). It is perhaps no surprise then that an institution charged with being for ‘all New Zealanders’ should turn to the rhetoric and logic of shopping. The wide legibility of the mall and its demotic qualities suggested itself as the model for *Parade*. A number of architectural and design devices foster this shop-like ambience. Each of the temporal segments of the exhibition sought through its design to evoke an ambience that was historically congruent with the objects displayed. So, for example, dark rich-coloured walls and panelling gesture to the salons of late eighteenth century Europe; the clutter of the craft-work and cabinetry of European settlers suggest the colonial homestead; rough sawn, white-washed wooden boards form an octagonal room evoking the interior of Rua’s church, while the Arts and Crafts section looks to create the ambience of an Edwardian shop front, the exhibit on American influences, a 1950s department store display, and the segment on abstract art, ironically, the 1980s ‘white cube’ gallery. Capturing this narrative and aesthetic approach one of *Parade*’s curators has described it rather fittingly as ‘a mall with chapters’ (Wedde, 1998:26). The intention of this approach as another of its curators has put it: we ‘wanted people to feel that they were never going through the

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5 New Zealand is the fourth most urbanised country in the world – following Singapore, Israel and Britain – with 85.4 per cent of its population living within town or city limits (Statistics New Zealand, 2000).
threshold of an art gallery.' Rather, Parade's design was to encourage browsing and entering into shop-like spaces. This design, then, was developed to create an environment in which 'the average visitor' was made to feel welcome and secure, comfortable and confident while providing 'access to a world [of art] possibly considered difficult' (Wedde cited in Webster, 1998:30-1).

There was another related aspect motivating this design choice. Part of invoking an environment in which it was deemed most would feel comfortable browsing objects was to create a space in which most would feel free to pass aesthetic judgements on those objects. That is, it actively cultivated the critical habits of shopping. Here Parade seems to share in Bourdieu's observation that 'the department store is "the poor man's art gallery"' [sic] because it 'presents objects that are familiar ... but more especially because there, people feel free to judge in the name of the legitimate arbitrariness of taste and colours' (1980:238). Like the shopper, Parade's visitors were encouraged to exercise their 'consumer sovereignty.' In this space of visual consumption the customer is always right – 'Is it Art? You Decide'.

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6 The gendered dimension of these spaces is important to note. The late nineteenth century department store provided one of the first urban public spaces in which 'respectable women' could enjoy the amenities of urban sociability unchaperoned by men. The department store provided a space in which middle class women could enjoy the scopic pleasures of the male flaneur in a 'safe' and 'sanitized' environment without fearing that their sensibilities might be assaulted or their conduct misinterpreted (See Leach 1984; Walkowitz, 1992:48; Bennett 1995:30; Friedberg, 1993:35-7). Meaghan Morris has noted that contemporary shopping centres are one of the few public spaces in which women appear publicly as mothers (1998:chapter 2).

7 Retailing research in the United States has persuasively shown that strong prominent and primary colours tend to be used for low income and down market commercial design while neutral and diluted colours are used for high income and 'up-market enterprises' (see Barr and Broudy, 1985:66). This 'super-market aesthetic' has been defended by the Museum in the following terms: Te Papa is 'not a place beautifully articulated for the contemplation of art ... but an institution driven by a powerful, democratic notion of explaining New Zealand' (anon., cited in Griffin et al., 2000:30).

8 Much of this is signalled in Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the Beaubourg, in which he argues that the museum, in drawing in the masses, is complicit in 'a supermarketing of culture which operates at the same level as the supermarketing of merchandise' (1982:9).
The Everyday

In many ways, then, Parade shares in Vergo’s ‘new museology’ and its commitment to ‘contextualising’ modes of display as a means to increase accessibility. However, Parade has not abandoned an ‘aesthetic’ discourse altogether. Rather, it is precisely this discourse that co-ordinates the entire space and establishes the show’s primary narrative – although, admittedly, not in the orthodox manner of ‘the aesthetic museum’ (Duncan, 1995). Throughout the exhibition there is a concerted effort to surrender the museum’s traditional aesthetic authority and devolve questions of aesthetic judgement to visitors. Two statements repeated on the walls throughout the various temporal zones foster this devolution. These allow the exhibition to state – borrowing, it seems, Raymond Williams’ maxim – culture is ordinary – ‘What you like depends on who you are’, while posing a question of cultural value – ‘Is it Art? You decide.’ These statements establish the discursive co-ordinates for the show. This intention to ‘encourage visitors to feel their own opinions are valued’ is further facilitated by four Opinion Poles strategically placed around the exhibition (CDP, 1996: n.p.). Physically, these Opinion Poles are posts, equipped with rotating text panels and capped with twin hands (red for thumbs-down, blue for thumbs-up), which include a range of opinions – from the ‘expert’ to the ‘vox pop’ – on a work of art exhibited in close proximity. So for example, on the Ranfurly Goldies, one quote expounds the deep spiritual significance of the paintings for Maori whose ancestors are portrayed with photographic-like realism, while another, from the former director of the National Art Gallery, Luit Beiringa, declares the paintings imperialistic and of little artistic merit. Or, to take one other

9 This approach broadly corresponds with officially sanctioned definition of culture, which not only follow Raymond Williams’ maxim but repeats his by-line ‘culture is a whole way of life.’ (Cf., for example, Williams 1964:chapter 2). In a recent survey, for example, conducted by the former Ministry of Cultural Affairs, ‘How Important is Culture? New Zealanders’ views’, the cultural was cast in the following terms: ‘The definition of culture used during the survey was designed to be easily understood ... Culture and cultural activities are about our way of life and are a combination of our past and present as reflected in museums and libraries, on marae and in films, activities such as dance, classical and pop music, theatre, books, magazines, films, paintings, pottery and ... crafts and hobbies’ (1997:4 italics added).

10 Popular opinions were draw from quotes taken from visitor focus groups held during the preparation of Parade (CDP., 1996: n.p.).
example, near Max Gimblett’s *Pearl of the Pacific 2* (1984) there is a quote from Gimblett himself: ‘For an artist building an abstract language demands a lifetime of commitment to a vision. Since the same commitment is required to appreciate the work, it is not surprising that abstract art is not easily understood by the public.’ An observation confirmed on another panel. Aidan Smith, a Wellington secondary school student declares the painting ‘Boring – looks like a 5 minute rush job’.

**Giving “the eye” to those who cannot “see”*/’Is it Art? You Decide’*

In many ways the exhibitionary strategies that *Parade* deployed accord with broader trends in contemporary museology. As Mike Featherstone observes, contemporary museums are developing:

> [a] more playful orientation for much broader based crowds whose mass media influenced perceptions are at home with the abandonment of symbolic hierarchies and a more playful approach to montage exhibits that offer experiences organized in terms of equality of a plurality of styles. (1990:102)

Underpinning Featherstone’s observations are transformations in the social organization of culture that have made the easy distinction between high and low cultural forms – between Kant’s ‘pure taste’ and ‘barbarous taste’ – impossible to maintain with anything like the epistemological certainty that organises the analyses of both Bourdieu and Darbel’s *The Love of Art* (1990) and Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984), the text that synthesised much of the cultural research that he and his colleagues conducted over the 1960s and early 1970s. The conditions for this high/low distinction are that the sphere of high cultural production maintains its autonomy from the market; in this, the self-understanding of modern art is involved in a constant struggle to maintain its distinction from its mass-cultural other. But, as commentators on ‘the postmodern’ have observed, at least since the 1960s there has been an enduring effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life, the
collapse of the distinction between high art and popular culture, and a general stylistic promiscuity and playful mixing of cultural codes in an ‘aesthetic populism’ (Jameson, 1984:54-5).\footnote{11 John Frow has usefully mapped the forces driving this transformation in the social organisation of culture which render untenable in the current epoch any categorical distinction between high and low culture (1995:23-4). He establishes the following axes: Firstly, high culture is fully absorbed within commodity production. High cultural works are produced in the same serial forms as low culture, the paperback, the compact disc, the video, film, radio and television. This means that the relation to the market can therefore not be used as a general principle of differentiation between high and low cultural products. Neither is it any longer possible to employ the traditional Kantian derived opposition between the disinterested, organic, original, autonomous work of art and the interested, mechanical, formulaic and commercial mass-cultural text, oppositions that organised much of the modernist denouncement of the ‘culture industry’ from Leavis and the New Criticism to Adorno and the Frankfurt School (See Jameson, 1984:53). In the parlance of the advertising executive, the audience for high cultural goods is now one ‘niche’ market among others with specialist and marginal or minority interests. Secondly, there has been a transformation in the relations of cultural authority between the high cultural and the mass media. The former has come to occupy this more specialised (market) position – closely associated with the upper echelons of the education system – and the latter has come to play an increasingly dominant role in the transmission of cultural values. This forecloses the possibility of any clear-cut distinction that seeks to map high cultural values as those of the dominant class and as those of hegemonic influence. Thirdly, and connectedly, there has been the development of new mass audiences for cultural products that cut across social stratifications, fostering inclusive, rather than exclusive, audiences. A development famously sign-posted in Benjamin’s 1936 essay that analysed the ‘work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’, in which he argued that the effect of serialised production on the ‘auratic’ qualities of the work of art was not without democratising possibilities (Benjamin, 1973). This project which was interestingly pursued by André Malraux in his photographic project of French cultural patrimony published in the 1950s as the Musée Imaginaire, translated as the ‘museum without walls’ (1967; see also Krauss, 1996; Roberts, 1988).}

Historically, as the site where the ‘aesthetic disposition becomes an institution’ (Bourdieu 1984:30) the art museum has hardly been immune from these transformations. In terms of the museum, the effacement of the high and the popular has been driven by a number of pressures. Firstly, there have been reactions to the institutionalisation of modernism in the museum which runs from the Dada, avant-garde, and surrealist movements, to the postmodern art of the 1960s and the 1980s polemics from the ‘museum’s ruins’ by cultural critics like Douglas Crimp (1985). These anti-museum positions in their various guises have sought to bring art to the street and thus rescue it from the deadening embrace of the museum and make it politically relevant. However, as critics of Crimp’s work observed, as ‘art’ has become an increasingly self-referential system it is not at all clear that the ‘contemporary art object’ has a meaningful context beyond the museum’s walls (see Negrin, 1993; Roberts, 1988). In this sense this trajectory represents an ironic
failure. Secondly, as numerous commentators have noted, museums are now part of the culture industry, and as such they partake in mass mediated consumer spectacles—exemplified by the rise, since the 1960s, of the ‘Blockbuster’ show. Over the eighties and nineties this trajectory has grown apace as museums ‘repositioned’ themselves in relation to new leisure and tourist markets. Reflecting on these two trajectories Néstor Garcia Canclini has observed: ‘Today we should recognize that the alliances, whether involuntary or deliberate, of museums with mass media and tourism have been more effective for cultural diffusion than artists’ attempts to take art out into the street’ (1995:116). *Parade*’s populist bricolage is very much of this moment and certainly aims at this mode of diffusion.

Contemporary exhibitions like *Parade*, then, are less the restricted space for the educated connoisseur and more sites for spectacle and sensation, illusion and montage, ‘where one has an experience, rather than where knowledge of the cannon and established symbolic hierarchies are inculcated’ (Featherstone, 1990:70). Here the question arises: how does everyday ‘experience’ operate in the space of the contemporary museum and structure ‘the museum experience’? (Falk and Dierking 1992). That is, what is at work when Te Papa’s interlocutors assert that ‘we touch peoples’ experience’? (Gorbey, taped interview, May 1999).  

12 This quest for a mass audience is at least in part the result of the ‘rolling back of the state’ pursued by an ‘advanced liberal’ agenda which has shrunk subsidies for public culture. For a number of commentators on the contemporary museum scene, this drive for an expanded audience – as they join the cohorts of the entertainment industry – has seen museums increasingly evacuate the space of public instruction. Deploying the language that has marked the American Culture Wars this has been cast as symptomatic of a general ‘dumbing down’ (cf., Museum Journal, July 1989; Dalrymple, 1999). For others this consumerist orientation is to be welcomed since it has a democratising thrust that opens museums up to increasingly larger segments of their constituencies. And it also demands that museums know much more about their actual and potential audiences, which fosters increasingly sophisticated visitor research (cf., for example, Hooper-Greenhill, 1988; 1992). See also Bill Readings (1996) and Andrew Ross (1998).

13 Similarly Mike Archer, director of the Australian Museum has suggested museums produce “personal memories through intense, experiential “edutainment”” (2000:38). The Australian Museum’s own foray into this terrain of “experiential “edutainment”” is an off-site development – the Alcheringa Project. As Archer describes it: the project ‘will focus its three main components on “edutainment” experiences related to the origins of, changes in, current threats to and futures for Australia’s natural environments. The first of these components is Australia’s Lost Worlds – vast, realistically reconstructed ancient spaces where the visitor can participate in the grandeur as well as the danger of Australia’s past 200 million years. This will be accompanied by exhibitions offering experiential visits to alternative futures. The second component covers the present-day environment and the third comprises an Institute for the Future.’ More fantastically Archer proposes the ‘creation
In *The Love of Art* and related essays Bourdieu argues that it is the ‘invisible’ – the aesthetic code – that mediates between the work of art and the aesthete, rendering cultural objects eligible as works of art and a spectator as a subject capable of an ‘aesthetic’ experience. Bennett is no doubt right to signal that Bourdieu’s conception of the artistic field as one that organises a relationship between that which is ‘visible’ – the work of art – and that which is ‘invisible’ – art – as a structure that has its analogies in all museum exhibitions regardless of the genre. However, in contemporary exhibitions, exemplified by *Parade*, the ‘invisibles’ that mediate the museum’s relation between that which is on display and the visitor are increasingly not those of ‘art’, or, for that matter, the second order of reality of other traditional disciplines that Bennett has posited in the realm of the ‘invisible’. Rather than the tangible material on display being figured as a fragment that represents some greater cultural, social or natural totality, the new ‘invisible’ is increasingly the individual’s ‘experience’.

MacDonald and Silverstone are instructive on this point. They argue that the new museum visitor, posited as an active consumer, is assumed to bring to the texts and objects of consumption in the space of the museum ‘their own socially defined experiences and interests which provide both the context of, and the control for, the meanings which emerge and become significant in the interaction between body and text’ (1990:187). In this way exhibited material is rendered comprehensible and meaningful, less by being mediated by its relations to some invisible totality of which it is but the visible fragment, and more by the individual visitor’s ‘experiential reality’. As interlocutors for the *Canadian Museum of Civilisation* put it: the task is to create links between ‘the dry facts of history and the living of “emotionariums.”’ To ‘expunge pent-up emotions’ caused by ‘more stressful lives’ with ‘less natural places in which to “cleanse” the mind’, ‘emotionariums’ could ‘offer interactive exhibitions that tap into and fully exercise emotions, providing in the process the healing pleasures of catharsis. You could, for example, plug yourself into the emotions felt by an Australian sugar glider mother and her young being hunted by a cat or the emotions of the most uplifting moment in the life of another human being from a different culture’ (2000:38–39).

14 Hamish Keith, architect of New Zealand’s cultural policy HOT Nation (an Antipodean inversion of Blair’s Cool Britannia) notes: ‘The strange paradox of a museum is that it must deliver an intensely personal experience in a very public place’ (NZH Jan 31, 2000 A:19).
experiences of our visitors’ (CMC, 1998:n.p.). Characterising the shift in cultural authority of which this gesture is symptomatic, MacDonald and Silverstone write: there is a ‘displacement of attention and concern away from curatorial achievement – the authority and the coherence of the collection – to the visitor’s experience – the authority and coherence of the person transforms the context of representation and interpretation’ (1990:187).¹⁵ That is, the privileged mediating invisible has become one grounded explicitly in the individual and social biography of the visitor. Hence the importance of cultivating in the museum the everyday codes of appropriation, which, in the case of Parade take the form of the habits imbued by shopping or popular and ‘banal nationalism’ (Billig, 1995). This explicitly fore-grounds ‘experience’ in terms of the visitor’s social and individual biography – ‘what you like depends on who you are’; ‘Is it Art? You decide’.

It is perhaps a moot point as to how this new mediating ‘invisible’ that privileges the (already) experience(d) ‘gives “the eye” to those who do not “see”’. On one level perhaps the political importance of contextualising devices, as Bourdieu notes, lies not necessarily in their effectiveness in facilitating comprehension but rather in their ‘symbolic function’ (1990:53). He writes:

arrows, notices, guidebooks, guides or receptionists would not really make up for a lack of education, but they would proclaim, simply by existing, the right to be uninformed, the right to be there and uninformed, and the right of uninformed people to be there. (ibid.: 49)

And, as Parade demonstrates, this right looks to have been won. However, on another level, the discursive forms and pedagogic props that deploy this new invisible of everyday codes arise from a transformation in the social organisation of culture that has shifted the modes of cultural authority in which Bourdieu’s utterance make sense. This is, in part, signaled by how far removed his list of

¹⁵ In part this signals the widely commented-upon shift in the contemporary museum’s target of knowledge – which is increasingly less the objects in the collection and more its actual and potential visitors – who are exhaustively counted and interviewed.
contextualising contrivances are from those deployed in Parade. Here, the museum’s transformation from an elitist bastion of high culture to the museum as mass medium and site of spectacular mise-en-scène has had, as Huyssen notes, a ‘profound impact on the politics of exhibiting and viewing’ (1995:14). Under these conditions one might question the possibility, if not desirability, of ‘giv[ing] “the eye” to those who do not “see”’ (Bourdieu and Darbel 1990:53). It is useful to turn to Parade’s reception to expand on the politics of the invisible.

‘Thumbs down’: the critical reception

Writing on the development of design museums Helen Rees notes:

The popular view that ‘culture’ is separate from daily life shapes our preconceptions of what museums are all about. As a result the public and professional reaction to the intrusion of the commonplace in the temple of the Muses is likely to be mixed, if not confused. (1994:155)

So they have been with regard to Parade. Mediating artistic and cultural production through everyday codes has, to say the least, had a mixed reception. Parade’s refusal to adjudicate on questions of taste, thus forfeiting the long tradition of the museum’s commitment to the cultivation of public taste, has provoked an outcry from aesthetes. Much of this debate has focussed on the ways in which Parade, through its design aesthetic and curatorial agenda, has sought to challenge judgements of taste in the ‘class’ terms that once sanctioned the authority of the traditional art gallery. This design and curatorial agenda of course is in an effort to overcome the long observed elitist and exclusionary effects of ‘aesthetic’ and ‘art historical’ modes of display. On some levels Parade’s approach can be read as an institutional reply to Bourdieu’s social critique of the art gallery. If this appears a little fanciful then it is useful to indicate that something of Bourdieu’s analysis resonates, although in different registers, in both curatorial intent and critical commentary. Parade’s curator, Ian Wedde has stated: what ‘attracted me to the
project was my impatience with the dire conservatism of most culture in New Zealand ... [that] repeated patterns of caste in institutional culture ... [and] the laminations of taste as signifiers of class’ (1998:26). In this he shared in the new institution’s ‘far-reaching commitment to the delamination of caste and taste in the museum’ (ibid.:26). Arch critic, Dennis Dutton, senior lecturer in the philosophy of art at the University of Canterbury, sardonically cast this project of ‘pulling apart caste and taste’ as ‘the new museum’s ideology of mediocrity’ where ‘judgments of aesthetic taste [are seen to] merely support elitist class distinctions’ and so ‘have no place’ in the new institution (NZH., May 21 1998:A15). While Dutton clearly is no fan of the museum, nor it appears of the Frenchman’s analysis, there does, in Wedde’s comments, seem to be something of the spirit of Bourdieu’s social critique. Here, then, is the irony that while Parade is in many ways symptomatic of the social transformation in the organization of culture that had for many critics rendered much of the analysis in The Love of Art obsolete, the logic coordinating Bourdieu’s critique remains resonant with that coordinating Parade and its critical reception.

Predictably enough, critics have lambasted Parade’s framing devices as incorporating ‘a tabloid redneck response’ to art which ‘grant the public its long-held and strongly asserted right not to know much but to say what it likes.’ For Australian critic, Virginia Fraser, Parade is a ‘perverse invitation to judge’ the

16 On Parade’s narrative approach Dutton has simply stated: ‘The museum has no concern to give art space to breathe, letting it speak for itself’ (NZH., May 21 1998:A15). For a public response to Dutton’s criticisms see the comments of Paul Brewer, Te Papa’s communications director, in The Australian (12 June, 1998).

17 Cf., for example, Frow, 1995; Fyfe, 1996; Merriman, 1989; Huyssen, 1995. At one level these criticisms of Bourdieu could be attributed to the ‘time-lag’ in his reception by an Anglophone audience. Although Distinction appeared in English translation in 1984 and The Love of Art in 1990, the period of the research covered is the mid sixties and early 1970s (Hebdige, 1995:92). In this, it might be contended that criticisms of this order are merely noting subsequent transformations in the cultural field. But at another level they clearly signal the deeper theoretical problems with Bourdieu’s work. These lie with the rigidity with which Bourdieu opposes two formally and functionally autonomous aesthetic universes – the pure aesthetic and the vulgar aesthetic – that ultimately corresponded to structurally inscribed class positions. As Gordon Fyfe notes, Bourdieu has ‘responded to the essence of art by replacing it with the essentialism of class’ (1996:207). Bourdieu’s work has been subject to sustained, often not unsympathetic, criticism that it amounts to a sophisticated but ultimately economistic analysis of culture.

18 This is a composite quote taken from Anne Miles (cited in McNaught, 1999:19) and Jenny Harper (Evening Post, 27 March 1998).
'aesthetic merits' of works of art 'in the kangaroo court of public opinion' (1998:16). Other critics of Parade continue this theme that its devices are an unwanted distraction that detract from, if not curtail the possibility of, the connoisseur's task of serious contemplation. Rather than constituting works of art as works of art by employing an appropriately aesthetic context, it has degraded them to mere signifiers of 'national identity.' Head of Art History at Victoria University Wellington and former Director of the National Art Gallery, Jenny Harper, articulates this position:

The majority of the displays in the new museum are exclusively New Zealand focused and its art collections have been removed from their aesthetic and art historical contexts and represented largely for the information they convey about questions of our identity. In Te Papa the visitor is discouraged from pondering the beauty of objects made as evidence of human creativity, and encouraged instead to view them as illustrations of a nationalist agenda. Art has become a cultural 'sign' in the Museum of New Zealand. (Evening Post, 27 Mar. 1998)

This is an opinion that is shared by many other art professionals in New Zealand. For example, Robert Leonard, Director of Art Space in Auckland, contends: 'Te Papa ... essentially reinscribe[s] our art as parochial social history, just part of the fabric of our unique “material culture.” Art ... [is] swallowed up by master narratives as works are reduced to artifacts or social history ciphers' (n.d:n.p; also see Leonard, 1998). Others, while not categorically rejecting an integrated collections approach, were nevertheless unsettled by what they found in Parade and also regarded it as necessarily entailing some loss for the aesthete and art object. William McAloon, former curator at Auckland Art Gallery, for one did not quibble with 'the theory' behind the display, stating that there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the idea of integrating the various disciplines of history, natural history and art. Nevertheless, he added the caveat: 'It's just that art is unruly, contrary and unsettling and it doesn't lend itself to the particular narratives of our culture that Te

To get some leverage on this debate it is useful to return to Bourdieu’s analysis. He assumes a rather monolithic politics of the museum space – that of the cultural domination of the subordinate classes. Or, more accurately, it is a politics that cultivates the cultural authority and social legitimacy of a particular class-fraction – the dominated fraction of the dominant class; i.e., those that are high in cultural capital and low in economic capital.20 In Distinction Bourdieu (1984) explores the organisation of culture under conditions where artist and intellectual commodity enclaves have been increasingly de-monopolised by the social elite. With this movement Bourdieu associated the rise of a new class fraction, ‘the new cultural intermediaries,’ that includes those workers in all occupations involving presentation, representation, and the supply of ‘symbolic’ goods and services. Unlike an older class fraction, such as that associated with the art museum that has the express interest of cultivating and preserving the ‘sanctity’ of artistic capital as a mark of social distinction, the new cultural intermediaries’ have apparently contradictory interests. Their habitus, dispositions and lifestyle preferences are such that they identify with artists and intellectuals, yet, as Featherstone puts it: ‘they have the apparent contradictory interests of sustaining the prestige and cultural capital of these enclaves while at the same time popularizing and making them more accessible to wider audiences’ (1990:19).

19 Arguments of this type were also rehearsed in the Australian reviews of Parade, see for example Fraser (1998) and Kent (1998).

20 As Frow and others have argued, Bourdieu assumes too close an alliance between those rich in cultural capital and those rich in economic capital and proceeds as if there is a ready transferability between the two forms. The evidence, as Frow marshals it up, is that this is plainly not the case. But my problem in contending with the politics of the Museum is not just with the struggle between classes and class fractions but also intra class fraction rivalries and their influence on the Museum. This can be cast as a struggle between those whose cultural authority is invested in the museum as bastion of high culture and those whose authority lies with the museum as mass medium. Or, to invoke Raymond Williams, between those whose interests lie with a residual cultural form, the museum as institution of high culture, and those whose interests lie with an emergent cultural form, the museum as mass medium – or, as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has coined it, the post-museum. This term was used by Hooper-Greenhill in her paper Communication and Communities: New paradigms for museums: How should museums be reshaping themselves? presented at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 29 April, 1999.
In many ways the struggles that constitute the politics of Parade’s new invisible can be cast in these terms. The demise of curatorial authority and the rise of consumer autonomy, in a space that was formerly the domain of judgements of taste, are aspects in this process of the de-monopolisation of the cultural sphere. The struggle over the National Art Collections and their representation by groups that structurally share the same class position captures the contradictory position of the new cultural intermediaries that contest the terrain of the contemporary museum – that of being caught between the need to preserve the social distinctions cultivated by that institution central to the artistic field, the art museum, and the demand to build more inclusive audiences via the techniques of mass mediation. Gordon Fyfe has argued: ‘The agency of the museum arises in connection with its organizing [of] some identities whilst disorganising others’ (1996:211). One such moment in this exercise of agency is the shift in privilege from the authority of the collections to the authority of experience – signalled by Parade’s advocacy of ‘the mall’ over ‘the white cube’. Te Papa’s relinquishing of the cultural authority of the aesthete and its legitimating institution, the art gallery, has certainly been construed by some as an effort to ‘disorganise’ such an aesthetic identity while organising another, in this case the curatorial popular. Harper for example argues: ‘A superficially “feel-good” but ultimately debilitating sense of the anti-intellectual and the anti-elite pervades Te Papa art displays’ (1999:10). Similarly, arts writer for Auckland’s Metro, Simon Rees, contends: ‘While it’s true that New Zealand doesn’t possess a consolidating and nurturing attitude towards its artists, Parade doesn’t get in the way; instead it

21 In many ways this public debate over the triumph of ‘cultural history’ over ‘aesthetic’ display is part of a broader professional struggle over the control of the National Art Collection and its public articulation. For a number of those outside the Museum, Parade is seen as symptomatic of the decline of art curatorship in the national institution and signals the lack of art historical commitment and expertise, not to mention a ratings driven cultural populism. In fact, there have been a number of moves – rhetorical and actual – to ‘rescue’ the collection from Te Papa’s clutches and restore the cultural authority of the art curator. For example, Harper, in association with Wellington philanthropist Denis Adam and celebrated local architect Ian Athfield, unveiled a proposal to re-establish the national gallery which was considered by Government. The Adam Foundation commissioned Athfield to examine two options. One was to reorganise the interior of Te Papa to incorporate a stand-alone national art gallery. The other was to use an adjacent structure – the Odlins Building. For commentaries see Espiner (Sunday Star Times, 2 July, 2000) and Rudman (New Zealand Herald, 7 July, 2000).

No longer able to appeal to the legitimacy of aesthete taste to cultivate an aesthetic identity and authority, those with investments in the artistic have been forced to construct other arguments to justify their inclusion in the Museum. Drawing on the Museum's own rhetoric of democratic representation and cultural inclusivity, Harper, for example, has sought to generate an image of an artistic community that is constructed along minoritarian lines. And in so doing she makes an implicit appeal to the category of 'experience,' arguing for the importance of the Museum to touch the individual and cultural biographies of the country's aesthetes. She that states there are 'many artists and individuals committed to and convinced by the importance of art ... who seek in their national institution some sign that their stories, in all their uniqueness, are also being told' (Evening Post, 27 Mar. 1998). In this way artists and an art audience have been figured as a minority with a claim for adequate representation against the Museum. Here, the agency of Te Papa has perhaps successfully re-organised the aesthete – no longer in a position of cultural leadership and authority, but rather one niche market among many others whose interests the Museum must represent given that they are an element of, but by no means the central, to the 'totality of New Zealand's culture.' It is in precisely these terms, and not in terms of an older discourse on the 'sanctity' of art, that the Museum acknowledges that it has a responsibility to meet the demands, and connect with the 'experiences', of this particular constituency.22

Postcolonial Primitivism: on the Sacred and the Profane

In the controversy over the treatment of the former National Art Collection this high/popular split has come to be marked by ethnicity. Critics of Parade have lamented the loss of the 'aesthetic' code of appropriation as a loss of the 'sacred' of European material culture within the museum-space. Here they have compared the

profanity of ‘the mall with chapters’ unfavourably with ‘the spirituality’ invested in *Mana Whenua* – the zone given over to the exhibition of Maori material culture. Harper for one argued: ‘pakeha art is not shown as sympathetically as the maori treasures .... The museum too often becomes puerile in its effort to be populist’ (1999:10). Similarly, McAloon has stated: ‘There’s a desire to give authority and validity to Maori art and culture which is commendable ... Why haven’t they been driven by the same desire in relation to Pakeha culture?’ (cited in McNaught, 1999:19). Kent has read this difference in treatment ‘between the profane status of art at Te Papa’ and ‘sacred Maori taonga’ as betraying ‘a sense of confusion as to the museum’s custodial role’ (1998:85). She continues: Te Papa’s ‘highly sophisticated and successful presentation of the Maori perspective [sic] stands in contrast to its shaky, unclear presentation of Pakeha culture’ (ibid.). Criticisms of this order identify a set of reversals in curatorial strategy: cultural objects once displayed in an ethnographic mode are now displayed aesthetically and the once aesthetic are subject to an ethnographic treatment. So while *Mana Whenua* relied on the aesthetic de-contextualisation made famous by *Te Maori* (1984), in *Parade* cultural objects previously subjected to the formalist aesthetic of the white cube are contextualised in displays that rely on an anthropological definition of culture ‘as a whole way of life.’

The issue, as I see it, is that exhibiting strategies that emphasise the ‘auratic’ via modes of aesthetic ‘decontextualisation’ intersect differentially with the...
biographies of the cultural objects on display. So, on the one hand, with regard to taonga this approach has been tremendously important in cultivating a wide respect and admiration for Maori cultural achievement among the dominant culture – in part because it establishes the prestige of high culture for work that was once considered by this group as folkloristic and ethnographic. On the other hand, it is not the case that the same aestheticising strategies would generate any new interest – respect or otherwise – in pakeha high cultural achievement. Rather it would merely cultivate the discriminating ‘charismatic ideology’ of the work of art that confirms the taste of the already ‘chosen.’ Here, then, the inversion of exhibiting strategies of Pakeha and Maori cultural objects has been pivotal in expanding audiences for the cultural developments of both communities.

In serving as a point of comparison to the treatment of Pakeha cultural objects, none of Parade’s critics objected to the mode used to display Taonga. Rather, they deployed it to identify the ways the ‘invisible’ frames of the aesthetic and the everyday, the sacred and the profane, were marked by ethnicity in Te Papa, and questioned this asymmetry. In doing so they observed a process in which elements of Maori cultural practice are becoming increasingly A/NZ’s high culture. This elevation is so for many complicated political, historical and cultural reasons, not least of which is the perceived vacuum in Pakeha culture – a mere ‘paucity of cultural commodities’ – around the figure of the transcendental. Aspects of Maori culture, which can still be positioned at a distance from the market, fulfil a compensatory role in the national culture, investing it with the spirituality felt to be vitally lacking in the culture of the dominant community. In this process the familiar contours of a discourse of primitivism performs a slippage across these binaries of Maoriness/Pakeha-ness, Art/popular, sacred/profane. None of the critics of Parade explicitly identify the discourse that they build their critique on as primitivism, however, it does signal a problematic aspect of Te Papa’s commitment to

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25 For a critique of Te Papa from a tribal perspective see Paul Tapsell (1998).
biculturalism. By organising their criticisms in terms of this enduring set of binaries these critics perpetuate the pervasiveness of this discourse.

The ease with which Parade could be recruited to the binaries of its critic’s discourse perhaps signals a more dramatic failure of the exhibition than the predictable critical responses that the show solicited. This is so because the new mediating invisible of ‘the everyday’ was scripted into the exhibition in ways that could, and I think ought, to have worked against any simple inversion of cultural hierarchies of high and popular and ethnic essentialism of Maori-ness and Pakeha-ness. However, as its critical response demonstrated it appeared to be locked into these oppositions. It is difficult to apportion blame here. Arguably, in their polemic to preserve the distinction of their cultural capital Parade’s critics were particularly ungenerous in their reading of the exhibition and ignored much of its complexity. On the other hand, as iconoclastic as it was perhaps Parade simply wasn’t bold enough in its articulation of a narrative counter to the orthodoxy that preserves such oppositions.

From the critics response to Parade it would seem that Te Papa embraced a cultural apartheid that accords with Claudia Bell’s observations on the museum scene before Te Papa opened. She writes: ‘Most museologists do not seem to have found a way of displaying contemporary Maori culture, or its relationship with Pakeha culture’ (1996:68). However, this impression is the result of a selective focus on the part of the critics and not of curatorial intent. It is remarkable that, despite the fashion-ability of the concept of hybridity in critical discourse, none of Parade’s critics in the national press, semi-popular art magazines or critical journals mentioned cultural material in Parade that was produced in the contact zones of A/NZ’s colonialism. And, there were a great many such cultural objects: To cite but a few examples, from the problematic orientalism of Fredrick Goldie’s turn of the century painting of elderly Maori to the commissioned work by Maureen Lander, String Games, which is an exploration of the 1920s ethnographic films of

26 I have developed this argument at length (Dibley, 1997a; 1997b).
27 For other critical accounts not already cited see Brown, (2002); Goldman, (2003); Williams, (2001).
James MacDonald on Maori children playing string games and the surrealist interest in the same. Or from the syncretic architecture of the turn of the century Maori Christianity to the appropriation of the koru as the logo for New Zealand's first shopping centre built in the 1960s. Here, then, *Parade's* new mediating invisible of the everyday sought to bring the visitor into contact with cultural objects that, individually or in the associations between them, weren't already reducible to the oppositions European or Maori, sacred or profane, high or popular.

It seems that critics, in the interests of a polemic against *Parade*, suppressed this complexity. However, it is interesting that no one outside the institution came to *Parade's* defence, partial or otherwise. That is, even if critical of the show's execution, why did no one supply a reading of the show in terms sympathetic to the 'theory' – 'the every day' – motivating its production? In the show it is, of course, vernacular material culture that necessarily is the main bearer of the exhibition's intellectual work, since it is these objects that establish the discursive co-ordinates that allow the exhibition to state at once that 'culture is ordinary' – 'What you like depends on who you are' – while posing a question of cultural value, 'Is it Art?'

However, the intellectual modes that might open up the possibility for thinking seriously about the everyday – like cultural history and cultural studies – do not have a strong currency in public cultural debate in A/NZ. Compared to the

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28 In this context it is important to mention *Culture Shocks: the future of culture*: an International Symposium held at Te Papa in July of 1998, which was billed as an inaugural moment for Cultural Studies in New Zealand. Leading proponents were to attend. Stuart Hall and James Clifford were advertised as plenary speakers in preliminary promotions. But both were early withdrawals, followed by Jonathan Friedman and Tricia Rose. Still, its billing as an International Symposium was maintained by the presence of Andrew Ross, Meaghan Morris, Douglas Rushoff, Marian Pastor Roces, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. Despite the designated focus of the conference to be 'on the themes, trajectories and tensions in the exploration of the future of culture and its impact on the role of museums and universities' (cited in Green, 1998:5) and the fact that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was commissioned (by Te Papa and the Museums Director's Federation of Aotearoa) to produce, and deliver, a paper on this topic. Tara Brabazon noted in a review of the conference:

[Those 'big names' who did arrive were relegated to minor players in the main game of Te Papa publicity. Cliff Whiting [Kumatau, Te Papa] described the value of the museum's marae, Donna Awatere Huata [ACT member] described the value of whakapapa, and Anne Salmond [member of the Board of Trustees] described the value of bicultural-inspired creolisaion. Excessive and bland narration, when matched with a simplistic rendering of cultural value, made for opaque and politically ambiguous sessions. Strange combinations of national and international sessions produced celebratory and hollow pronouncements of the conference's importance. (1999:83)
intellectual investment in the National Canon, thinking seriously about A/NZ popular culture has very few students. In this sense no one critically engaged with Parade in its own ‘disciplinary’ horizon – which as its curators continually pointed out was never art history, but rather was always cultural history. This was a loss. Heated polemic about the treatment of the art historical cannon foreclosed on a potentially much more interesting discussion about A/NZ’s cultural production and consumption, the wider discourses that articulate it and the modes by which it might be adequately represented. However, perhaps Parade was simply not bold enough and remained too close to the orthodox narratives of the Aesthetic which made it recruitable and ultimately reducible to the polemics of the critics.

In the event the aesthetes won. Parade closed in 2001 and traditional gallery space replaced it. Aesthete critics of Te Papa found a powerful ally in the then recently elected Labour Prime Minister, Helen Clark. In the months before her victory she opined Te Papa was too much of a museum and not enough of a gallery. She continued: ‘The museum tends to judge itself on numbers through the door. It’s populist in its approach. I’m not sure it needs that criteria for success’ (cited in Catheral, 1999a). Ultimately, as minister with the portfolio of Culture and Heritage, she commissioned a report on Te Papa’s performance whose terms of reference included an assessment of ‘whether the national art collection is being presented to the public in the most effective way’ (Griffin, et al. 2000:5). On this issue the Report was largely in accordance with the criticisms made by art professionals of Parade.

Brabazon goes on to comment that Culture Shocks and the conference that followed at Victoria University Wellington – Pacific Spaces/Global Marketplaces: Cultural Studies in Pacific Context – ‘were ideal venues to question the role and place of Cultural Studies in New Zealand’s Future’ (ibid:84). Yet – and even given there were at the later workshops on ‘developing Cultural Studies in New Zealand’ – this conversation never got off the ground. Rather, Brabazon argues that the ‘speakers and participants were lacking a literacy in the field, leading to naïve autobiographical descriptions of New Zealand that have minimal impact and relevance’ (1999:85). This lack she puts down to the fact that New Zealand missed much of the ‘academic tourism’ of British Cultural Studies scholars that so dramatically shaped the contemporary intellectual terrain of Australia. Alex Calder (2004) writes a more subtle and less condescending account of Cultural Studies in A/NZ and a more positive account of Cultural Shocks.

29 This report was conducted by the former director of the Australian Museum, Des Griffin, the director of the Auckland Art Gallery and formally of the Queensland Art Gallery, Chris Saines and the director of the Auckland Museum and Institute, Rodney Wilson.
Coda
THE MUSEUM’S REDEMPTION:

contact zones, government and the limits of reform

Introduction

Despite a history deeply implicated in an imperial, bourgeois and phallocentric social order, the museum is an institutional form that can be redeemed from this legacy of racism, classism and sexism. Or so it would seem from reading the now burgeoning critical scholarship on museums. Here almost all the museum’s analysts argue that, in some way or another, that institution can be reformed so that it can overcome the exclusions of the past and realise its true democratic vocation. Seduced by the institution’s rhetoric, these analysts produce redemptive narratives that mimic the reformist logic of the museum’s own political rationality. Defending this contention this chapter proceeds, firstly, by demonstrating the persistence of the redemptive narrative that characterises museum scholarship; secondly, by focusing on two sophisticated variations on this narrative; and finally, by discussing the theoretical and political limits to the museum’s redemption.

Narratives of Redemption

As ‘certifiers of taste and definers of culture’, museums are ‘intimately involved in the task of defining identities and setting up schemes that classify and relate cultural identities’ (1992:31). However, as Ivan Karp, the co-editor of the influential double volume of essays on ‘the poetics and politics of museum display’ continues, this

1 A version of this chapter is forthcoming (see Dibley, 2005)
‘need not be the fate of museums’ (ibid.). Rather, he imagines an alternative future for museums, one that ‘involves questioning their own claims about identity and engaging in serious and systematic dialogue with other points of view’ (ibid.). Through this project Karp hopes the museum will come ‘to act as an agent of redemption in society’ (Kinard cited in Karp, ibid.:24).

This vision of institutional reflexivity and inter-communal dialogue resonates throughout the critical literature. With these strategies critics have demanded that museum live up to its democratic rhetoric and overcome its monologism. For example: feminist critics argue that museums need to be ‘corrected’ for the masculinist basis of their collections and displays that have rendered its representations inadequate (Porter 1988, 1996; Ross 1998). Advocates of popular culture argue against the cultural elitism of museums and for the institutions’ need to focus on, not only the material culture and social history of ‘the everyday,’ but also to include the collecting habits of ‘the people’, thus making museums more representative of, and relevant to, their constituencies (Moore, 1997; Samuel, 1994; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Multiculturalists argue against the Euro/Anglo-centrism that marks museums and the national canons that they establish, and, argue for the museums’ requirement to recognise and embrace the diasporic condition of art and culture forged in the processes of travel and exchange which are central to the experiences of immigration and exile, slavery and colonialism. Thus museums are to be more reflective of, and responsive to, the ethnic diversity that characterises post-imperial countries and their former colonial outposts (Appiah, 1991; Brah and Coombes, 1998; Canclini, 1995; Coombes, 1994; Hall, 2000). Fourth Worldists argue that the material culture of indigenous peoples must be (re)articulated in terms that accord with the knowledge systems in which these cultural objects have circulated and in which they continue to circulate, and, in so doing, recognise the legitimacy of indigenous priorities in a realm in which they have been previously ignored (Edwards and Stewart, 1978; Tapsell, 1998; Simpson, 1996). This ‘insurgence of subjugated knowledges’ around the scene of the museum

2 See Karp and Lavine (1991); Karp et al. (1992).
has generated political programmes that share Karp’s vision. Claims against the museum, whether made in the name of women, the popular, the immigrant or the indigene, participate in his demand that museums be reformed and made more reflexive in their institutional practices and more dialogic in their exchanges with the communities that form their constituencies. Confronted with the demands of minorities and the marginalised, alternative futures for museums are projected that are designed to redeem the museum form from its legacy of exclusionary practices.

The important victories conceded by museums to those with claims of their prior exclusion are not to be disparaged. However, the idea – of overcoming the cultural authority of museums through the establishment of dialogue with communities of difference and the introduction of reflexive practices – is insufficiently acute to the ways in which prior techniques subjectivised those that are now the loci of resistance to, and reform by, museological operations. Such inattention has trapped critics in a liberal conceit which posits the museum as a progressive ‘democratic’ forum. A necessary step in fostering a critical position beyond this logic is to challenge the theory and politics of those programmes committed to this pervasive narrative of redemption.

Two Museum Apologists

James Clifford and Tony Bennett are among the most accomplished analysts of the museum. Despite rather different orientations to museums’ history, theory and politics, both articulate sophisticated versions of this redemptive narrative.

‘Museums as Contact Zones’ continues Clifford’s enduring concern to relativising and pluralising museums and museum-like activities (1997; also see 1988). In this essay he sketches a history of the museum indebted to Mary Louise Pratt’s (1992) conceptualisation of the arenas of inter-cultural exchange as ‘contact zones’. Juxtaposed against the term ‘colonial frontier’, which ‘is grounded within a

3 Clifford (2004) and Bennett’s (2004) recent formulations became available after this chapter was composed and they are not integrated into its arguments.
European expansionist perspective (the frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe), the concept of the 'contact zone', for Pratt, 'is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjuncture, and whose trajectories now intersect' (1992:6-7; Clifford, 1997:192). Analyzing museums from this perspective Clifford argues that 'their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull' (ibid.:193). Developing this position he proposes a historical distinction between the museum as 'collection' and as 'contact zone.' In the context of nineteenth century colonialism the 'museum-as-collection' functions more like Pratt's frontier: it structures the itineraries of objects as a movement from the colonial periphery – 'sites of discovery' – to the metropolitan centre – 'points of gathering' (ibid.) The ethnographic object functions as a medium for inter-cultural exchange characterised by relations of 'uneven reciprocity' across that frontier in which the agency of the collected was obscured and rendered largely silent. By contrast, for the contemporary 'museum-as-contact zone' this object is now repositioned as the site of an ongoing process of the negotiation of meaning and value. This insurgence of subjugated voices around the scene of the contemporary museum thus disrupts the universalist claims of the museum as frontier and collection. The cultural object now becomes the site for dialogue ideally structured as non-hierarchical and democratic relations of reciprocity between those with allegiance to different imagined communities.

Qualifying this historical distinction Clifford contends that despite their pretensions to universalism, earlier museums also operated as 'contact zones', albeit one of extremely asymmetrical relations of power. Like others who argue for the radically polysemic condition of objects entangled in colonial exchange (for example, Thomas, 1991), Clifford argues that the complexity of inter-cultural relations that occurred within these contact zones can only begin to be understood when the agency of the colonised is restored to that historical scene, however difficult that might be given the limitations of the archive (Clifford, 1997:198).
While historians of colonial collecting and imperial spectacles are no doubt right to emphasize ‘coercion, exploitation, and miscomprehension’, this does not ‘exhaust the complexities of travel and encounter’ (ibid.:200). ‘The crucial issue of power’, Clifford continues, ‘often appears differently at different levels of interaction, and it cannot simply be read off from ascribed geopolitical locations’ (ibid.). Rather, it is necessary to understand something of the intentionality of the colonised to comprehend the complexities of these ‘contact zones.’ It is similar for today’s ‘sites of ethnomimesis’ (see Cantwell, 1993), where frequently performances of culture and tradition are located in complex relations of empowerment and exploitation. ‘It is important to recognize this complexity’, Clifford contends, for ‘what exceeds the apparatus of coercion and stereotype in contact relations may perhaps be reclaimed for current practices in movements to expand and democratize what can happen in museums and related sites of ethnomimesis’ (Clifford, 1997:200).

Establishing the agency of the colonised in a way that, while being attentive to structuring conditions, does not simply read off these positions from their structural location is hardly objectionable. Clifford’s position accords with broader developments in cultural anthropology, cross-cultural history, and cultural studies and has made his formulations attractive to others contending with contemporary museums’ approaches to the material culture of the diasporic and the indigene (for example, Curthoys, 1998; Jolly, 2001). However, insofar as his formulations articulate a narrative of museological redemption, caution is required in their evaluation. Acknowledging ‘the reformist tenor’ of his argument, Clifford states that his account ‘is both descriptive and prescriptive’ (1997:204, 213). Descriptive, in that the ‘museum-as-contact zone’ maps the historical modalities of power relations in sites of collection and cultural performance that highlight the inadequacies of portraying museums as universal and mono-vocal (ibid.:213). Rather, a ‘contact perspective views all culture-collecting strategies as responses to particular histories

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4 This, of course, is not to ignore complex and protracted debates over how such relations are to be adequately theorised particularly between Marxist orientated theses on globalization (Dirlik 1994; 1999; Ahmad, 1992) and post-structuralist approaches to colonialism (Hall, 1996; Prakash 1996).
of dominance, hierarchy, resistance, and mobilization' (ibid.). Prescriptive, in that from this historical description emerges a political programme; Clifford’s account argues for a democratic politics that would challenge the hierarchical valuing of different places of crossing. It argues for a decentralization and the circulation of collections in a multiplex public sphere, an expansion of the range of things that can happen in museums and museum-like settings. (ibid.:214)

With a mandate that is no longer found in the authority invested in them as agents of erudite, universal knowledge, museums, in Clifford’s (ibid.:214) self-ascribed ‘utopian’ programme, are to be co-ordinated by a context contingent but principled reciprocity between the diverse voices and values that constitute a ‘culturally complex civil society’ forged in the aftermath of colonialism (ibid.:210).

Both the descriptive and prescriptive dimensions of Clifford’s argument are complicit in a narrative of redemption. In its descriptive phase it is redemptive in the sense that his narrative seeks to ‘salvage’ from the history of museums a discourse of ‘reciprocity’.5 This historical discourse becomes the precursor to ideal(ised) relations of democratic, nonhierarchical exchange that are to govern contemporary museums as contact zones. For instance, to ‘suggest ways ... borders can be more democratically negotiated’ Clifford uses various historical examples to emphasise that those involved in the spectacularisation of their identities for ‘white’ audiences had ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyed themselves’ (ibid.:204, 196, 199). In this, the pleasure of the colonised is posited as something that exceeds ‘the apparatus of coercion’ that can be ‘reclaimed for current practices in movements to expand and democratize’ museums (ibid.:200). This redemptive reading of the archive exercises a questionable conflation of pleasure and democracy. Similarly, Clifford’s prescriptions are redemptive. Here his ideal(ised) description of reciprocity establishes a social horizon that provides the ethical dynamic and political direction

that conditions his project of relativising and pluralising what can happen in museums and museum-like locations. In this sense Clifford’s programme seeks to redeem museums from a history of exploitation by establishing a genealogy of exchange that provides a precursor for contemporary (ideal) relations of democratic reciprocity, which is then advanced as the path for the contemporary museum’s political salvation. The consequences of this I examine later, meanwhile, Clifford’s formulations can be useful juxtaposed to those of Bennett’s.

Bennett’s important theoretical essay, ‘The Political Rationality of the Museum’ is reprinted in *The Birth of the Museum* (1995: chapter 3). Foucault supplies the analytical coordinates for Bennett’s essay, which are drawn in the main from *Discipline and Punish* (1991). Foucault’s influential analysis of the operations of disciplinary power focuses on how particular strategies, technologies and techniques generate specific political rationalities, which come to constitute distinct modalities of power. Rather than representing instances in the exercise of a general form of power, these modalities generated their own particular fields of political relations. Foucault demonstrated that these political fields are generated by disjunctures between, on the one hand, the rhetorics that governed apparent social or ethical aims of a particular apparatus, and, on the other, the political logics that shaped the actual operation of that apparatus. For Foucault these disjunctures generate an insatiable discourse of reform because reformists misrecognised the nature of their target. For example, since its emergence as a distinct institutional form, the prison has been subject to enduring calls for reform so that it might meet its rehabilitative rhetoric. But no matter how ineffective these reforms have proven, the prison’s actual viability is rarely questioned. This is so because the political logic of the prison is located elsewhere – not in its capacity to actually reform behaviour, but in its ability to separate a manageable criminal sub-class from the population.

Deploying this methodological insight Bennett observes that the institution of the museum too is ‘constantly subject to demands for reform’ (1995:90). While its particular contours have been variegated, contingent on time, place and
constituencies, this museological discourse of reform, he contends, 'has remained identifiably the same over the last century' (ibid.). Bennett locates this continuity in the discourse's adherence to two democratic principles that belong to the modern museum as it emerged over the nineteenth century. The first, the principle of public rights, sustains 'the demand that museums should be equally open and accessible to all' (ibid.). The second, the principle of representational adequacy, sustains 'the demand that museums should adequately represent the cultures and values of different sections of the public' (ibid.). 'While it might be tempting to see these as alien demands imposed on museums by their external political environments', for Bennett, they 'flow out of, are generated by and only make sense in relations to the internal dynamics of the museum form' (ibid.).6 This is so because the demands for reform are contingent on disjunctures between the rhetoric that governs the stated aims of the museum as laid out in these principles and the actual modes of the museum's operation embodied in the specific political rationality of that institutional form.

For Bennett the demand for public rights is generated and maintained by the dissonance between the democratic rhetoric that conceives of museums as sites for popular education, and on the other hand, their actual use as devices for managing the conduct of populations. Thus, there is a contradiction between a democratic rhetoric that demands that museums address their audiences as an undifferentiated public consisting of free and formal equals, while, in its operations as a reformatory of public manners it must foster social technologies that regulate or exclude 'unruly' behaviours associated with popular assembly (ibid.:90, 95, 99).7 Similarly, demands for representational adequacy are generated and maintained by the museum's ambition to 'tell the story of Man' on the basis of a general human universality. This creates a space of representation that, at least in principle, has been democratized in that the occupancy of the position of Man – based on 'his' universality – is openly

6 Andrew Ross makes a similar point in his discussion of statistical reasoning in the cultural realm (1998:122-3).
7 It is important to emphasize here, as Bennett does, that the museum was one technology among others, parks, sanitation, savings, education, social security, and so forth, that formed a grid that in their respective civilising missions target 'the rowdy'.
and freely available to all. But it also creates an insatiable politics in which any museum display can always be held accountable for representational inadequacies on the grounds of any particular social exclusion – be it gendered, classed, racial or some other pattern of marginalisation – and thus in need of supplementation (ibid.: 91, 97). By considering ‘the “politics of truth” peculiar to the museum’ Bennett seeks to develop ‘a more focused form of politics’ (ibid.). To this end the ‘political-discursive space of the museum’ – conditioned, as it is, on two specific contradictions of rhetoric and rationality distinct to that form – needs to be ‘dismantled’ (ibid.:102). Bennett advocates ‘a conception of museum politics’ that relates to these disjunctures ‘self-consciously’ and so establishes ‘a new set of relations between the museum, its exhibits and its public which would allow it to function more adequately as an instrument for the self-display of democratic and pluralist societies’ (ibid.). These ‘new relations’ Bennett advances are based on revising the two principles of public rights and representation.

The first reviews the politics generated by the principle of representational adequacy. Rather than holding the museum accountable to its universalism, the political task is to dislodge the discursive conditions that facilitate this rhetoric. Dismantling this ‘monologic discourse dominated by the authoritative cultural voice of the museum’, Bennett argues, requires repositioning the curator, less as scholarly expert who disseminates erudite knowledge, more as cultural technician who facilitates inter-communal exchange (1995:103-104). To realise this ‘more fully dialogic’ space a new principle needs to be generated and generalised; one that allows ‘the museum to function as a site for the enunciation of plural and differentiated statements’ thus enabling its operation as a forum for public debate (ibid.). The second part to these ‘new relations’ reviews the contradiction motivating demands based on the principle of public rights. Bennett acknowledges that the politics that grow out of this contradiction in the contemporary museum scene are ‘complex and contradictory’ (ibid.:104). Managing issues of culture and heritage less through public subsidy and more through market relations, treasury,

8 In this case Bennett’s particular target is a Gramscian cultural studies (see also 1995:chapter 2; 1998: chapter 3).
ministries of culture, city administrations and other ‘centres of calculation’ (Latour, 1987) has placed increasing fiscal demands on museums. Under these pressures Bennett contends that ‘there is enough evidence to suggest that the mechanisms of differentiation which characterized the nineteenth-century museum are being slammed into reverse’ (1995:104). The current rush by museums to adopt the technologies and techniques of the leisure industry sees them ‘imitate rather than distinguish themselves from places of popular assembly’ (ibid.). Though supporting this ‘democratizing ethos’, Bennett is less optimistic than others that this orientation to the market will open up museums as more egalitarian spaces (for example, Huyssen 1995: chapter 1; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). For him, ‘those demands brought to bear on the museum on the basis of public rights principles need to be rethought as pertaining to the right to make active use of museum resources rather than an entitlement to be either entertained or instructed’ (ibid.).

This revised set of principles enacts a narrative of museological redemption. With a more fine tuned understanding of the discursive dynamics of museum politics, Bennett remains committed to the principles of adequate representation and public participation. However, this comes with the twist that for these principles to be realised they necessarily have to be conceived in terms of the activity, rather than the passivity, of those subject to museological processes. So while his politics are slightly modified, Bennett still calls the museum to task for its inability to realise its democratic rhetoric. He does not so much dismantle the political-discursive space of the museum but rather redeems it with fresh calls for it to better realise its democratic potential. Paradoxically Bennett has mis-recognized his target, for he believes the museum’s own rhetoric, much like the penal reformer who has faith in rehabilitation. The irony here is that despite dissecting the discursive dynamics of reformism with his Foucaultian ‘tool box’, Bennett ultimately succumbs to the liberal political rationality of the museum. Unlike Foucault, whose politics would not have aligned him with the prison, or the relations of governmentality he subsequently analysed, Bennett, like museum reformers before him, commits himself politically to that institution and its processes of subjectivation.
Reciprocity or Governmentality

Despite different historical and theoretical coordinates, Clifford and Bennetts' political programmes are sympathetic. Clifford's advocacy of democratic relations of 'reciprocity' as those that ought to guide contemporary museums can be read as an attempt to articulate 'the new principle' that Bennett sees as necessary for museums to operate as 'instruments' for the self-display of democratic and pluralist societies' (ibid.:102). Clifford writes: 'By thinking of their work as contact work - decentred and traversed by cultural and political negotiations that are out of any imagined community's control - museums may begin to grapple with the real difficulties of dialogues, alliance, inequality, and translation' (1997:213). Clifford envisions a museum politics that is not simply about holding the museum to task for its representational inadequacies. Rather, it is a politics that pluralises and relativises museum activities with a particular eye on, as Bennett writes, 'their consequences for the relations ... between museum exhibits, their organizers and the museum visitor' (1995:102). Similarly, Clifford is in accord with the revisions that Bennett derived from the demands based on the principle of public rights. Clifford's notion of reciprocity, as an actively negotiated exchange across cultural borders, by its very nature refuses the passivity that, for Bennett, is inherent in the right to be entertained or instructed. 'Museums as contact zones' is posited as a programme that is opposed to any monologic, didactic regime. Clifford articulates a new principle of public rights, one formulated on the principle of reciprocity.

Despite my contention that their programmes share a good deal in common, Bennett has registered his departures from Clifford (see 1998:203-6, 210-13). Unsurprisingly, the point of difference is epistemological - are museological processes best conceived as relations of reciprocity or as those of governmentality? Advancing the case for the latter Bennett criticises Clifford as part of an argument against a 'bottom-up' versus 'top-down' polarity that for him falsely organises the co-ordinates for what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' cultural policy. This polarity is organised in terms of the 'advocacy of a community perspective' whose 'bottom-up' politics are fashioned in opposition to, and whose ethos is more desirable than
the 'top-down' approach that co-ordinates these initiatives of 'the state' (Bennett, 1998: chapter 8). For Bennett, Clifford's formulation exemplifies a community perspective which posits false antinomies between 'the state' and 'the community' that fail to theorise the ways the two are necessarily mutually constitutive. Clifford is led 'astray' when he proposes that 'museums as contact zones' come to 'understand themselves ... [as] interacting with specific communities across ... borders, rather than just educating or edifying a public' (Clifford, 1997:204; in Bennett, 1998:205). When 'community' enters the formulation 'it brings in its tow the familiar opposition between, in this case, the lateral forms of cross-cultural mediation which characterise the museum-as-contact zone and the vertical 'top-down' forms of communication implied by the notion of educating or edifying a public' (ibid.). Corroborating, to a degree, my observation that there is a certain sympathy in their programmes, Bennett states: 'It is here [at the point at which 'community' is introduced] – not in the program that he proposes ... but in the manner in which he represents that program – that Clifford is led somewhat astray by the rhetorical force of the terms he uses' (ibid.). The rhetoric of 'community' misrepresents the actual mode of the programme's functioning because Clifford misrecognises the operations of culture and power. Bennett argues: Clifford's 'program is just as dependent on vertical forms of communication as those it seeks to displace, just as the 'top-down' activities of government are equally necessary to the process of involving communities in the forms of dialogue he envisages' (ibid.).

Advancing this analysis Bennett makes a two-fold argument: Firstly, he complicates Clifford's historical narrative by supplementing it with a third term. The nineteenth century 'museum-as-collection', Bennett contends, not only structured the trajectory of the object and its meaning from a peripheral 'site of discovery' to metropolitan 'sites of gathering', but, as 'a site of dispatch', it also worked the interior frontiers of class and ethnicity. Examining the American Museum of Natural History's education programme over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Bennett demonstrates how it was inscribed in this other 'set of frontier relations' – as 'a site of dispatch' (ibid.:205). Through a system of
administrative and logistical technologies the museum targeted and sought to integrate New York’s immigrant, and particularly child immigrant population into the body politic. This was achieved via a fleet of lorries armed with selections of specially packaged Nature dispatched to public schools. Successive annual reports rendered the penetration of such civilising Nature into the city’s slums statistically and cartographically visible (ibid.: 206). From this example Bennett deduces four aspects of museum debate and practice that illustrate their thoroughly governmentised relations over this period: Firstly, the museum object was discursively reconstituted, not as an aesthetic or charismatic object to support elite forms of sociability, but as a component of civilising programmes directed towards the population. Secondly, the museum now functioned less as a place of representation and more as a space of social management insofar as regimes of discipline were introduced to order visitors as much as objects. Thirdly, great stress was placed on the visual, with the eye emerging as the privileged and only means of instruction.9 Fourthly, drawing on Michel de Certeau’s (1988) famous discussion of the ways in which ethnography translates speech into writing and, in so doing, produces history, Bennett makes an analogous argument for the movement of the ethnographic object. On entering the museum ‘it, too, has been a journey into the realm of writing where ... sight has priority over sound and where, accordingly, meaning is constructed independently of presence and voice just as it has also involved a journey into histoire as the objects of others have typically been cast in the role of modernity’s artefactual prehistory’ (1998: 210). For Bennett, the ‘perspective of museum-as-contact zone is at odds with these earlier understandings of the museum’s function in virtually all respects’ (ibid.:212). Indeed, as ‘sites of dispatch’ designed to penetrate ‘internal frontiers’ and bring the museum’s ‘civilising processes’ to its ‘cultural hinterlands’, Bennett contends that the relationships fashioned across these frontiers were no more relations of equal exchange than those associated with the external frontiers of colonialism. On this point he declares ‘it necessary to part company with Clifford’ because ‘they were

9 See Prakash (1992) on colonial museums in India on this point.
not relations of exchange at all, but relations of government in which objects were enlisted for reforming programs which, in varying ways, aimed to imbue target populations with specific civic attributes’ (ibid.:210).

The second line of Bennett’s argument is to implicate Clifford’s proposal itself in the logic of culture’s governmentality. While Bennett contends that there can be little doubt that Clifford’s programme for greater discursive reciprocity as museums negotiate the borderlands of contemporary public culture is a rather different programme to that of targeting the New York immigrant, it is, he argues, ‘still a program of the same type’ (ibid.:212). As Bennett elaborates, Clifford’s ‘is a move, ultimately, in the same space as a part of the same set of relations of government and culture’ (ibid.). Implicitly acknowledging the ‘reformist tenor’ of Clifford’s position, Bennett asks a string of rhetorical questions:

For what is the perspective of the museums-as-contact zones if not a proposal that, by tinkering with a range of practical arrangements, the inherited form of the museum might be refunctioned in a manner calculated to bring about a redirection – indeed, reversal – of its reforming potential in accordance with a multicultural civics premised on a need for greater cross-cultural understanding and tolerance? What does this view of museums amount to if not a new discursive strategy for enlisting objects in the service of government as part of programs of civic management aimed at promoting respect for, and tolerance of, cultural diversity? And, although the curator’s role may be different, is this still not one performed in the service of government through the deployment of specific forms of expertise? And is it not also true that the communities that the museum is to involve in dialogue are often the artefacts of its own activities rather than autochthonous entities which come knocking at the museum’s door seeking rights of equal expression and representation? … Are museums not still concerned to beam their improving messages of cultural tolerance and diversity as
deeply into civil society as they can reach in order to carry that message to those whom the museum can only hope to address as citizens, publics and audiences? (ibid.: 212-13)

Clifford’s proposal is not only recruitable to the logic of culture’s government, but is in fact its articulation. Assuming that Bennett is correct here, and I think he is, what are the prospects for museum criticism? On Bennett’s reckoning there seems to be no ‘outside’ to an insatiable discourse of reform that will hold the museum accountable for its inability to reach a forever-receding horizon of the truly democratic. For Bennett this is no bad thing and he commits himself to this process. The implication is that all we can now expect from the museum’s critics is an apologist’s discourse that seeks to redeem that institution for its admirable, but frequently hijacked, quest for the plurally democratic. But do critics have to resign themselves to the position of being the museum’s apologist and accept, explicitly or not, this narrative of redemption?

**The Limits of Redemption**

Clifford’s appeal to democracy as a discursive force that might redeem the museum by facilitating relations of nonhierarchal reciprocity has historical and theoretical limitations. I advance three arguments to demonstrate this. Firstly: Historically, there exists a complex entanglement of the processes of democracy and colonialism around the scene of the museum that must, at least, qualify Clifford’s proposal. As postcolonial scholars and critics of imperialism and third-world nationalism have shown, enlightenment idea(l)s of freedom and equality are paradoxical in their application and ambiguous in their effects – given to some, denied to others.10 Democracy and its handmaiden, colonialism, are thus two intimately and problematically entwined processes of modernity. As a central institution of modernity the museum’s history is marked by these processes that secure a sphere of freedom and equality conditioned on their repression elsewhere. To take some of

10 For example, Chakrabarty, (2002, 2000); Prakash (1999).
Bennett’s inaugural moments: the formation of the Louvre was pre-conditioned, of course, on the democratic mantra of liberty, equality and fraternity, while its collections were greatly enhanced by French imperial expansion across Europe (Sherman, 1989); Similarly, the 1851 Great Exhibition celebrated the emancipation of workers from their Dickensian predicament through the progress of British industrial capitalism that was ultimately dependent on the exploitation of colonial raw materials and labour-power (Averbach, 1999);11 More recently, struggles to assert indigenous priorities over, what in Australia is termed, secret-sacred material were (and still are) regularly frustrated by some museums’ appeals to civilisational values of objectivity and universalism which argue that the removal of such material from the circuits of the museum world is undemocratic and/or against the universal values of science.12 Any formulation of museums as sites of exchange, as relations of reciprocity, has to be informed by a history of museums that is attentive to the entanglement of the projects of democracy and those of colonialism. My point is that the democratic ethos, with which Clifford seduces his readers, has a long history in museums that has not always been easily separated from that institution’s involvement in colonialism. This is a history that complicates the story that Clifford tells. And it is one that signals the attendant dangers in reformist programmes that risk complicity with and continuation of the very processes that they wish to amend.

My second argument concerns the ethos of ‘reciprocity’ and issues of temporality. In Clifford’s account “Museums” increasingly work the borderlands between different worlds, histories, and cosmologies’ (1997:212). Patrolling Clifford’s borderlands and mediating exchanges between these disjunctive temporalities is an unsung hero: the egalitarian subject. The possibility of relations of democratic and non-hierarchical reciprocity is conditioned on the existence of this subject position and on its mutual recognition and ready availability to those engaged in museological exchange. Without it, it is difficult to imagine how such

11 Of course, as Marx’s observations on this exhibition made clear this was a rhetorical illusion ‘at home’ too. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue, May-October 1850, see http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/11/01.htm.
12 See, for example, the British Museum’s position on repatriation.
relations of reciprocity might proceed. This subject position is a profoundly modern one governed by the 'homogenous, empty time' that co-ordinates modernity's key institutions, the state and the market. In Clifford's account – and contrary to his repeated stress on the specificity of the local, the democratic and the non-hierarchical – relations of reciprocity between different histories and cosmologies are necessarily mediated in this universal, secular time. It is under the guise of this hegemonic figure of the egalitarian subject that contemporary museums-as-contact zones make their bid for the 'hearts and minds' of (post)colonial subjects. Given this privileging of secular time that conditions the possibility of the egalitarian subject, relations of reciprocity look more like those in which the marginal and dispossessed are to be reconciled to the historical structures of their marginalisation and dispossession. That is, through the museum as a device of secular temporality, non-modern subjects – or, those who live at least part of their lives in different worlds, histories and cosmologies – are to be reconciled to the 'project of modernity'. My point is that the temporal location of the egalitarian subject is a political category that not all have equivalent access to. The heirs of the colonised and those of the colonisers occupy it in asymmetrical ways in the wake of the ambivalent triumph of modernity. At this level Clifford's contribution looks continuous with the ambiguous historical entanglement of the democratic and the (neo)colonial around the scene of the museum. Here the conception of 'museums-as-contact zones' loses its critical purchase. It seems less concerned with the decolonisation of museological processes and rather more concerned to redeem such processes through relations of reciprocity. Here, I think, Clifford is exposed to the criticisms that have been made of postcolonial theorists' compromise with liberal capitalism.

This leads me to my third argument. Clifford aligns his 'contact perspective' with Shotat and Sham's (1994:46-9) 'poly-centric multiculturalism' to differentiate it from 'liberal pluralism' (see 1997:214; 362). Yet it is not clear that his position is all that distinct from this liberal project. If I am right and the egalitarian subject is the necessary pre-condition for Clifford's ideal(ised) relations of reciprocity, then, for him to successfully differentiate his position from the liberal pluralist, Clifford
would have to demonstrate how this subject position might operate in ways that are
distinct from the analogous subject of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’, the consumer-citizen
that animates programmes of liberal pluralism. This is particularly pressing in
conditions supervised by ‘advanced liberal’ modes of government in which the
operations of ‘freedom’ and ‘choice’ are becoming increasingly pivotal mechanisms
for strategies of social management (see Rose, 1996; 1999).

In an age of the global diffusion of market relations, racism and colonialism
are increasingly recognised as bad for business. Under these conditions official
multiculturalist agendas have increasingly positioned ‘ethnicity’ as a ‘lifestyle’
choice elected from a range of market options, and the discourse of ‘tolerance’ has
come to be cast in terms of the sanctity of the ‘freedom to choose’ where
majoritarian others are obligated to be ‘tolerant’ of minority ‘lifestyle’ preferences
(see Hage, 1998). Clifford, of course, is very much alive to the complexities of
culture, difference and identity in ways that preclude their reduction to market
relations, he is, nevertheless, wary of the contemporary museum’s complicity in
these relations. Evoking David Harvey (1989), Clifford writes: ‘The “flexible
accumulation” of traditions, identities, arts, and styles associated with contemporary
capitalist expansion supports the proliferation of museums in what might cynically
be called a global department store of cultures’ (1997: 215). Ironically, this is an
argument that echoes trenchant Marxist critics of postcolonial theory (Dirlik, 1994;
1999; Ahmad, 1995). For example, Dirlik (1994) has extended the postulations of
Harvey (1989) and Fredric Jameson (1984) concerning the relations between the
cultural condition of postmodernism and transformations in capital to the
postcolonial scene.¹³ Dirlik (1999) argues that analysts of colonial discourse, in that
they adhere to post-structuralist epistemologies that shun the foundational position
of the theoretical abstraction capital, are ‘culturalists’ who serve ultimately as the

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¹³ This extension is notwithstanding Meaghan Morris’s (1992) powerful critique of Harvey. Part of her criticism is levelled at
his exclusion of postcolonial, as well as feminist thinkers from his narrative and its implications for his exposition; an
exclusion that, on Morris’s account, precludes its extension to the postcolonial condition. Rather, for Morris, it ultimately
entails its rejection. For two important essays that come to the defence of the postcolonial project in the wake of Dirlik’s attack
see Hall (1996) and Prakash (1996).
ideological apologists for ‘global capitalism.’ Despite their radical edge, as sophisticated theorists of global capital’s ‘ideology’ of multiculturalism, post-colonial theorists on the hybrid and diasporic conditions of culture supply the alibi for the ‘flexible culture’ required for ‘flexible regimes of accumulation.’ While not wishing to align myself with the rigid economism that mark both Dirlik’s and Harvey’s analyses (see Hall, 1996: 258; Morris, 1992), I do wish to acknowledge what others more sympathetic to the post-colonial project have recognised in the wake of this criticism. There is a significant gap in theorising whereby questions of colonialism and political economy have been all but ignored (Hall, 1996; Prakash, 1996; Young, 1995). Clifford also acknowledges this when he establishes the complicity of museums in a regime of flexible culture and capital accumulation in the form of a global ‘heritage industry’ that trades in cultural diversity. However, despite this acknowledgement, the conception of ‘museums as contact zones’ – despite the driving metaphor of exchange – is not particularly well placed to supply critical leverage on this ‘global department store of cultures’ (Clifford, 1997:215). Once the dynamics of capital are allowed to enter the analytical field it is difficult to sustain the possibility of the symmetrical relations of reciprocity between egalitarian subjects that would ideally condition contemporary museums as contact zones. Here I am not sure how successfully Clifford’s redemptive celebration of multiplicity in museums can be disentangled from the global multicultural emporium that proliferates under a regime of ‘flexible accumulation’. The problem, in ways analogous to Dirlik’s criticisms of postcolonial theorists, is that Clifford’s formulation in failing to supply critical leverage on such relations, comes to look like a sophisticated theorisation of liberal pluralism.

To conclude these criticisms: Perhaps Clifford’s affiliations lie with another of Pratt’s concepts. Following her formulation of ‘contact zones’, which she uses to inform her analysis of the writing of travel and exploration she introduces a second term – ‘anti-conquest’. Pratt uses this to ‘refer to the strategies of representation whereby bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as

they assert European hegemony’ (1992:7). She continues: ‘The main protagonist of
the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the “seeing-man,” as an admittedly
unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse –
he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess’ (ibid.). While not mapping
explicitly on to these terms, Clifford’s evocation of ‘museums as contact zones’
follows, in some ways, the strategies of ‘anti-conquest’. Despite Clifford’s
investment in the rhetoric of listening and conversation over that of vision, he shares
something in common with Pratt’s figure. The collection and assembly of stories of
the colonised’s (sometimes joyful) agency as evidence to continue the redemptive
story of the museum might well be construed as the passive possessions of the
‘seeing-man.’ Here, the celebration of the hybrid present is offered as the happy
ending to a tragic history that posits a new museological space – a space from which
a future-becoming-present innocence can be secured in the knowledge of full and
just reciprocity. Yet, given the enduring asymmetrical ways in which the egalitarian
subject position of such reciprocity can be occupied by those positioned differently
to the processes of colonialism and global capital, it is a celebratory innocence that
looks to reconcile the marginal and dispossessed to the structures of their
marginalisation and dispossession. Clifford’s narrative of museological redemption
it seems is complicit in the hegemony of that form – the museum – and the
continuation of the historical processes that will secure its global future.

If Clifford is the liberal pluralist, Bennett is the high modernist. For
everything, in his discussion of the modern museum as a space of representation in
which the position of Man, via claims to its universality was in principle ‘openly
and freely equally available to all’, Bennett argues, that in practice, this space ‘was
hijacked by all sorts of particular social ideologies’ (1995:97). This notion of
hijacking has the implication that the classist, racist and sexist histories of the
museum are aberrations from its true democratic vocation. This analysis, despite
Bennett’s Foucaultian allegiance, writes the history of museum reformism as a
progressive struggle toward this democratic ideal – in this case, a forum of

15 See Bernard Smith’s ([1969] 1985) prescient evocation of this in European Vision in the South Pacific.
egalitarian dialogic exchange. Ironically, then, Bennett appears as a high modernist, advancing toward – as Habermas might have put it – the promise of the ‘ideal speech situation’ of modernity’s yet to be completed project.

Bennett’s commitment to this project of modernity raises other issues. Despite criticisms leveled at Clifford for his complicity in the disabling antinomies of top-down versus bottom-up modes of cultural analysis, Bennett’s position is inscribed in another equally problematic set of spatial relations – those of centre/periphery. Ironically, these are precisely the relations that Clifford seeks to displace via his adoption of the concept of ‘contact zones’. This spatial relation plays out in two related ways in Bennett’s argument. Firstly, the empirical scope of Bennett’s work privileges metropolitan institutions. This has not gone unremarked. In his review of The Birth of the Museum, John MacKenzie has noted that ‘there is far too much metropolitan focus: the vast majority of nineteenth-century museums were founded in provincial cities and towns’ (1997:66) and I might add the colonies (see Prölser 1996). When Bennett does turn his attention to more provincial, and as it happens more contemporary localities, the specificity of locality seems to matter little for the overall analysis. As Chris Healy wonders in his review of Bennett’s book: ‘Is Expo ‘88 just like any other “European” empirical instance [as Bennett postulates] or does it suggest a need to consider the vernacular?’ (1996:189).16 Secondly, Bennett’s indebtedness to relations of centre and periphery are not limited to his Euro-American centricism. They also structure his analysis of the relations between museums and their constituencies. His formulation of the museum is always one of ‘the museum-as-frontier’. Whether civilising New York’s immigrant slum dwellers in the early twentieth century or beaming its message of ‘tolerance’ as deeply as possible into its ‘cultural hinterland’ in the later part of that century, the museum remains a ‘frontier’ circumscribed in relations of centre and periphery. Not, of course, that this presents any threat to the integrity of Bennett’s epistemology, for the museum as relations of government requires frontiers to differentiate populations – the respectable from the rowdy, the tolerant from the intolerant –

16 It should be noted that Bennett does raise this very issue, but pushes it to one side (see 1995:212).
which also establish the contours for a gradient of improvement or 'civilising'. The problem is that Bennett does not acknowledge the analytical limits that the Euro-American centricism of his examples and their conceptions as frontiers imposes on the scope of his analysis. This is particularly evident in his treatment of Clifford's material. While I do not accord with the politics that he derives from his analysis, I do readily concede that Bennett's is a powerful description of the operations of majoritarian and metropolitan museums and their critics. But, while these are the almost exclusive focus of Bennett's intellectual energies, for Clifford they are only one part of a broader conception of what constitutes museums and museum-like activities. And while he quite convincingly recruits Clifford's programme itself to culture's governmentality, I am not sure that Bennett's governmental logic could be applied with as much conviction to some of the more hybrid museum scenes that interest Clifford and whose allegiances lie as much with 'non-modern' practices of accumulation and spectacle as with any reforming liberal pedagogy. Bennett, however, does not submit his argument to this test. These 'minor' events simply disappear from his analytical vista.

The institutional form of the museum and the discourse of its apologists needs to be 'provincialized'. In his well-known programmatic paper, Dipesh Chakrabarty has called for 'the project of provincializing "Europe"' (1992:351). He argues that to write histories with archives outside Europe is necessarily to be in an asymmetrical relation with 'Europe' because only it is knowable in the abstract, as a theoretical entity. The problem with Bennett's narrative, in as much as it contains the vestiges of high modernism, is that is an apology for this universalising project of 'Europe' rather than a criticism of it. The museum in his account is only analysable via a theoretical abstraction, the museum form, the contours of which are established from the archives of exemplary metropolitan moments – the formation of the Louvre, the emergence of the British Museum, the advent of the Great Exhibition, the development of the American Museum of Natural History and so on. In this sense it is only the metro-Euro-American institutions that can (or need to) be known theoretically, institutions in more peripheral locations simply being
derivative empirical examples that play-out an apparently universal theoretical logic. At one level the problem here is that the answer to the analysis of any particular ‘peripheral’ museological moment is always known in advance of the actual analysis. At another it repeats the Eurocentric logic of orthodox social sciences and the humanities that postcolonial critics like Chakrabarty argue needs to be disrupted.

The irony here is that Bennett’s analysis has rubbed up against arguably some of the best intellectual tools available for the ‘radical philosophical critique and transcendence of liberalism’ that Chakrabarty sees as necessary to ‘provincialize “Europe”’ (1992:351). These, of course, are those Foucault developed in his thematic of governmentality. Bennett is no doubt right to locate the emergence of the modern museum and its liberal reformist political field in terms of this operation of governmentality. He impressively mobilises archives from the nineteenth century and the more recent past to demonstrate the participation of the museum form in such operations of power. My question is, why, having so convincingly demonstrated the political operations of the museum, does he then commit himself to its perpetuation by advocating a discourse of reform?

It is useful to recall how Foucault positioned himself politically in relation to the field of governmentality. With its ‘inevitable effects as both individualisation and totalisation’, in ‘Omnes et Singulatim’ he declared ‘Liberation can only come from attacking, not just one of these two effects, but political rationality’s very roots’ (1981:254). Similarly, in ‘The Subject and Power’ Foucault writes:

maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political ‘double bind,’ which is the simultaneous

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17 This is to pass-over the question of Foucault’s Eurocentrism too quickly. Although his work has proved very enabling for students of colonialism, decisively marking colonial discourse analysis’ inaugural text (Said, 1978) it was never a central theme of Foucault’s work. The implications of these issues are interestingly canvassed by, among others, Ann Stolar (1995).

18 This is notwithstanding Bennett’s contention that his Foucault of governmentality is not ‘the Foucault much loved by libertarian thinkers’ (1998:61).
individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try and liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (1982:216)

Following on from this admirable theoretical-political project it is difficult not to read the ‘reformist tenor’ of both Clifford and Bennett’s respective projects as ones that return ‘us’ to this ‘double bind’. For my part, I find it difficult to imagine how such ‘tinkering’ with existing arrangements might accord with the more radical political and theoretical project that Foucault proposes here. It certainly does not look to me to be committed to promoting new forms of subjectivities capable of moving beyond or refusing current regimes of governmentality. Here, then, I expose Clifford as ‘the seeing man’ whose ‘anti-conquest’ appeals to ‘equal reciprocity’ can only return the marginalised and colonised to relations of ‘hegemony’. While not cast in these terms, this is what Bennett demonstrates when he recruits Clifford’s programme to relations of culture’s governmentality. In Bennett’s case, despite his Foucaultian vocabulary, he appears much closer politically to the nineteenth century ‘liberal reformers’ who occupy much of his intellectual activity (see for example, 1998: chapters 4, 5 and 6). In this sense he posits a genealogy for his intellectual activity and policy activism that is more indebted politically to the ‘reformist science’ of E. B. Tylor than to the ‘effective history’ of Nietzsche. The prospect for an effective museum history is not located in a celebration of its newly acquired inter-culturalism, nor in a nostalgic return to its liberal reformism, but in the analysis of the individuating and totalising operations of culture’s governmentality. Not, however, so that its rhetorics might be better realised, but so that its subjectifying mechanisms can be refused. That is, ‘the cultural’ is one of the axes along which, as Foucault suggested, ‘we might refuse what we are’. And museums–
dedicated to subjectifying regimes of totalisation and individualisation – are, I think, one of the sites for this refusal.

It is necessary to think outside this field of liberal governmentality in which the museum is embedded and which has mired its critics. In pursuing this line I return to Foucault’s politics and ethics for guidance. Inescapably bound to identity formation and thus to the subjectising regimes of individualisation and totalisation – of individuals and populations, of citizens and nations, of ethnicity and communities, and thus the normative exercise of culture’s power, museums continually seek to answer the question, ‘who are we?’ thus defining the parameters of their constituency’s identity. Finding the museum’s answer to this question, always inadequate in relation to some pattern of exclusion or another, the museum’s analysts become complicit in an ensuing discourse of reform. As I see it this line of criticism must be abandoned. Rather, the analyst’s task is to think how culture’s normativity and the museum’s operations of subjectification, of individualisation and totalisation, might be refused and productively resisted and made other than itself. That is, rather than cooperating in ‘better’ answering the museum’s question ‘who are we?’ the task needs to become that, as Foucault framed it, of ‘refusing what we are’.

It has become the orthodoxy of Foucaultian scholarship on the museum to compare it to the prison. This has proved a fruitful contrast. However, the concerns in the later period of Foucault’s work provide another point of comparison. In suggesting that museum critics have something to learn from Foucault’s gay S/M bathhouses of San Francisco and New York of the late seventies, I argue for an aesthetico-ethical sensibility that is profoundly other to that of the liberal space of the museum and its apologists. For Foucault such spaces and the cultural forms that developed around them were the site of ethical and political reflections around questions of pleasure, the body and the arts of existence, that linked up with his philosophical interests in the ethics of the Ancient Greeks, and his more general ethical concern with ‘refusing what we are’ or ‘the art of not being one’s self’. If it seems a perverse line to draw between the Bathhouse, the institution of a
marginalised and minority interest and subjugated knowledge, and the Museum, the institution of the majority and officially sanctioned interest and erudite knowledge, it is one that I take seriously. While it might be unexpected, Foucault has already suggested that the Bathhouse might have lessons for non-gay identified culture (see Halperin, 1995:100). The politico-ethical formulation of ‘not being one’s self’ provides, I think, a vital tactic for refusing the museum’s answer to ‘who we are’.

With this injunction in mind I return to Te Papa. In A/NZ the rhetoric of tolerance and the management of diversity are orchestrated in the discourse and practice of biculturalism, and undoubtedly the largest monument to this is Te Papa. The museological commitment to biculturalism is at once to redeem the institution from its complicity with colonialism and to reconcile a nation forged in the violence of colonisation. That is, Te Papa proclaims itself an institution of ‘the break,’ to borrow an Althusserian term, ushering a new post-colonial ‘epoch’ for both the museum and the nation that it seemingly, and ideally, images. Yet as a narration of nation, biculturalism is a mode of ‘textual and social affiliation’ that inescapably repeats the violence of colonial management agendas in its very effort to reach beyond them (Bhabha, 1991:292). This is so in that it posits and re-institutes individuals and populations that exist in themselves only in relations of colonial governmentality – Maori and Pakeha. That is, the museum is complicit in constituting and constructing two modes of subjectivity that can have no meaning and no future outside colonialism. As critical post-colonial thinkers since Frantz Fanon have taught us, the complexity of the scene of colonialism prevents any decisive ethical, political, or epistemological break with the relations of domination that condition the possibility of a post-colonial future. Yet, as Albert Memmi has argued, the ruins of colonialism will only decompose if, and when, we acknowledge the reciprocal behaviour of the two colonial partners. The colonial condition, he writes, ‘chained the coloniser and the colonised into an implacable dependence, moulded their respective characters and dictated their conduct’ (1968:45 cited in Gandhi, 1998:11). The official nationalism articulated in Te Papa’s biculturalism limits the country’s post-colonial future to a profound, and disabling, dyadic
The colonial strategies of individualisation and totalisation embraced by Te Papa that stratify persons and populations as bearers of particular nationalised ethnicities, and that govern 'our' conduct of (in)tolerance (see Hage, 1994; 1998), is one axis along which the tactics of refusal that Foucault advocates as 'refusing what we are' might, indeed must, be entered into. To this end it is necessary to refuse this discourse of (in)tolerance, biculturalism. I contend that the critical task now is the refusal of the museum's pursuit of 'who we are'. To this end I conclude with the call to forget Te Papa.

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19 Tipene O'Reagen, chairman of the southern Ngai Tahu tribe writes: 'it is only pakeha and the Crown identifying as all as Maori which makes us Maori' (1995:155).
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