

THE DEATH OF THE MUSEUM AND THE EMANCIPATION OF CULTURES

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This paper is about museums, the future in which they may find themselves, and about the dilemma confronted when they try to influence change. The vision is on one horn of the dilemma and reality is on the other. Idealism confronts pragmatism. The Muse meets Realpolitik. When the actions of intervention in change are creative they lean towards the vision and risk is increased. The risk diminishes as decisions move towards practical politics, but the prospect of positive change shrinks accordingly. What to do? Perhaps, in museums as in politics, the escape from this dilemma is to be found in the middle ground -- in the art of the possible. I must find an answer; I have to make choices, for a changing world cannot be ignored.

In my vision of the future of museums I see the dilemma placing them nowhere other than where they have always been. Museums are found somewhere between being a mechanism for social stability, preserving the *status quo*, indoctrinating and propagating the faith, on the one hand, and on the other being the means to cultural integrity and an autonomous sense of identity and of place for those struggling to find their way in the maze of being. The former is authoritarian, from the top down. The latter may be individualistic or communitarian, but is from the bottom up. Either can be accommodated in a liberal democracy, but there are choices to be made. Where I am headed in my remarks today is towards the making of those choices for the museums of tomorrow.

Now, I do know that it is the clever fools who predict the future, and bigger fools who believe them, but there is some virtue in speculation. If nothing else, efforts to see the shapes of tomorrow inspire the consideration and exploration of ideas that might otherwise lie fallow. For those of us who believe in "the centrality of the [museum] institution" and its importance to "an understanding of our culture that is itself a prerequisite to changing it," prophetic musings are an obligation.¹ To make predictions that are useful, however, is more easily said than done.

In order to address the problem I am going to put before you five distinct but related ideas. The first is the concept of an abstract museum idea expressed as an archetype. The second is the liberal movement in the international museum community

during the decades when South Africa was in many ways isolated. Third, and following from the second, is the idea of the museum as "The Window on the World". The fourth is the prediction that in countries around the world cultural diversity will continue to increase dramatically. And finally we will look at Samuel Huntington's thesis that the civilisations of tomorrow's world will be cultural, not economic or political alliances.² All of these are examined in terms of the form and function of future museums.

THE MUSEUM AS AN ABSTRACT IDEA

In order to speculate on tomorrow's museums it is first necessary to move away from the particulars of the familiar museum we know - the kinds of museums, art galleries, historic sites and houses, that we have in Canada and that you have in South Africa - the modern European/American model of a museum. We must move to the abstract, to a notion of the museum idea that will free us to think outside of the boundaries of our conventions. The museum is, after all, a persistent and pervasive idea that has been manifesting itself in different cultures at different times and in different guise for thousands of years.³ It would be most arrogant, surely, to assume that Western civilisation's dated and culturally specific museum ideas either could or should become universal tomorrow; to assume that for tomorrow's Canada or India, Chile or South Africa, an 18th century European expression of an idea was the only answer.

Once we set the provisional two or three-hundred-year-old European model aside, as a fascinating artifact of its time and place in history, we are then left looking for a notional museum idea; for a social construct that we can use as a tool in understanding the essence of the museum phenomenon. A year ago, for the purposes of another exercise, I tried to identify a possible recurring motif or archetype of museum-like phenomena occurring in different societies in different time periods.⁴ The cluster of criteria I eventually brought together as a putative museum archetype is problematic. It may be seen as too descriptive and an inadequate social construct, but to paraphrase, it is a poor thing but mine own, and I will use it here today.

MAKING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Given this notion of the museum idea to work with, another requirement for forming a prophecy is the assumptions about the future in which such an idea might germinate. The future museum will obviously be shaped by myriad factors, economic and political, societal and cultural, and as a social invention the museum cannot be separated from the complex totality of its environment. However, that implies a call for a comprehensive prediction of tomorrow's world which is too daunting a task for this presentation or this speaker. I must be selective, and make assumptions about one or two salient characteristics of a possible tomorrow which would be significant in the museum's reincarnation and useful for our purposes here.

For this discussion I have arbitrarily chosen two changes predicted in the foreseeable future of our world which could shape tomorrow's museum phenomena either for better or for worse. The first is without precedent and the second is both in conflict with contemporary Western mythology, and, it would appear, is conflicted by the other. As I mentioned, the first is the unprecedented mobility of world populations which is producing ever increasing cultural diversity everywhere.⁵ The second is the realignment of societies and the consolidation of civilisations by cultural affinity, by the bonds of language, religion, race and ethnic tradition, replacing the politico-economic cartography of the past.⁶ Given my notional museum idea, the archetype, and taking these predicted changes as eventualities, I will attempt to describe the critical options for future museums.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHETYPE

Now, about the archetype. It is hardly novel to broaden the view of the museum beyond the modern European model which came out of The Enlightenment as reason and science replaced religious mysticism and superstition. Many authors have argued the modern museum as a replacement for the cathedral, as a shift from the worship of God to the worship of Man. Historians conventionally cite Ptolemy's *mouseion* at Alexandria as the first museum, or trace beginnings to other classical traditions such as the *thesaurus* at the temple for storing gifts to the gods. The *Wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities of the 16th and 17th centuries is often cited as the modern museum's precursor.⁷ All of this falls, of course, within the history and tradition of Western civilisation.

The museum tradition in non-European civilisations has been less noted, and authors such as Germain Bazin are to be thanked for bringing to our attention the museums and art galleries in China and

Japan as early as the 2nd century BC, and the early museum-like collections, hoards and treasures which can be readily identified in the Indian and the Arab worlds.⁸ Anthropologists, however, seem to have forgotten to identify as museum-like the traditions in tribal societies which could be seen as analogous. An attempt was made to see if there were characteristics common to all of the above.

Beginning with an inventory of the characteristics of the modern European museum, the list became less complex as earlier periods were examined and then as non-European and tribal societies were studied. Commonalities became fewer but more pervasive. What survived is represented as the common characteristics of museums and museum-like phenomena wherever they could be found.

THE RECURRING MOTIF OR ARCHETYPE

The museum, according to these archetypal criteria, is an institution whose value to society is as a mechanism for maintaining cultural integrity, or as some would say, social stability, or the *status quo*. (I use these terms almost as synonyms, except that *status quo* and social stability both have pejorative connotations as regressive and unchanging, whereas cultural integrity has high, moral overtones. I use them accordingly.) The museum is created by and is governed, directly or indirectly, by the source of legitimacy in that society - by those who have won the right to rule. By "society" here we could mean a nation or a small town, a club or group of some kind, but we would still find the principle of being created by and for the appropriate powers-that-be for the maintenance of the relevant cultural integrity.

Museums also seem to need a special kind of site or location, some place that implies the authority of the founders and the special - even sacred - nature of the institution. The chosen site and any structures built upon it are symbolic of the power of its proprietors. At the site of museums are found collections, and that is complicated.

Museum collections are symbolic of the society's belief system, or its mythology as I prefer to call it. We tend to think of museums having collections of things - works of art, artifacts, specimens - but in some cultures that which is most valued, and which embodies the mythology, is text or song, dance or ritual, and not primarily or even necessarily tangible objects. Our idea of museum collections must be opened wider. Some collections may be ephemeral, to be presented and then gone, as in song or dance, but these may be repeatable. Other collections may have a permanence, as in objects or texts, and can be stored and retrieved again and again. And the component parts of these

collections are not necessarily static or stable in meaning or importance. As a society's view of the world changes, as the mythology is transformed, so collections and their parts are transformed through their interpretation. What is a symbol of virtue one day may become a symbol of evil in another. Museums have what we might call ideological flexibility, which is an oxymoron to ponder.

Museums, then, are mechanisms for maintaining cultural integrity, created and governed by those in authority. They are given a special place where they present collections symbolic of the society's myths. These collections can be in any of many media, can be ephemeral or quasi-permanent, and their meanings can be altered to accommodate a changing world view. This is the resource but what activates the mechanism?

To put the museum to work those in authority - the proprietors - appoint agents to protect, present and interpret the collections. These may be priests or teachers, story-tellers or troubadours, curators or keepers, but their job will be to present and interpret the symbolic meanings of the collections as *truth*. Sometimes the truth will be shared with all members of a society, and at other times the truth will be shared only with an elite or a chosen few. The established and prevailing view of the world, the mythology, will be reinforced in the society, cultural integrity will be preserved, and the legitimacy of those who rule will be further entrenched.

THE PUTATIVE MUSEUM ARCHETYPE⁹

1. The museum is an institution whose value to society is as a mechanism for maintaining cultural integrity.
2. Proprietary rights and control over the museum will be claimed by the source of legitimacy in that society, that is by those who have won the right to rule.
3. The proprietor will consecrate a site or sites for the museum, making it symbolic of authority and significant in its society.
4. The museum will have collections in any of many media, either ephemeral and repeatable or permanent and recoverable, which are symbolic of its society's myths.
5. The symbolic meanings of collection materials can be altered to accommodate changes in the dominant mythology.
6. The proprietor will appoint agents to protect, present and interpret the collections.
7. The agents will present and interpret the symbolic meanings of the collections as truth, to some or all members of the society.

When Professor Jean Trudel, a museologist at l'Université de Montréal, read this description of the essential museum he wrote, "I can't think of a more accurate archetype It clarified many of my intuitions, but left me a little bit depressed."¹⁰ Why was he depressed?

This archetype, or description of the museum's essence, is drawn from all of its incarnations, and is distilled from what are seen to be the realities. It does not infuse the ideals of the late twentieth century museum movement which are liberal, democratic, and humanist. But it is museum ideals, not realities, which have drawn many to museum work, never suspecting that they would later be described as agents of The Establishment, maintaining the *status quo* through indoctrination. I too find it depressing, but having tested the criteria of the archetype against museums I know, I find it plausible.

THE MUSEUM AS A RADICAL INSTITUTION

When considering the implications of these criteria, attention should be given first to what I have called proprietorship. It is important not to infer that all museums are said to be owned and controlled as part of a sinister plot by a monstrous establishment, a fearsome power-elite that eats idealists and radicals. It would be more reasonable to infer an argument that those in authority in any community, very large or very small, are likely to create and support that which furthers their agendas. They are not likely to either begin or sustain an unmanageable revolution. Questioning, debate and opposition are something else again.

There have been and are museums either created or turned to challenge prevailing ideas of cultural integrity, majority views, The Establishment, society's prejudices and misconceptions, and to endorse unpopular and even the most heretical, blasphemous and seditious views. Cultists, racists, fascists, anti-Semites and anarchists have established museums of one sort or another. On a more positive note, minority ethnic groups have created their own museums and often radical programs, sometimes defying the established assimilationist doctrines of the state. In the United States, African-American and Hispanic-American museums present their unique perspectives. In Canada, First Nations museums and cultural centers and a variety of ethnic museums speak with autonomy. Then there are private, corporate-sponsored museums preaching sermons on consumerism, entrepreneurship and product virtue. There have been privately owned museums devoted to very idiosyncratic views of the world, autistic views of history, eccentric and

sometimes bizarre collecting passions.

It might be argued that museums of the natural sciences presenting Darwinian theory once challenged society, (and in some communities might still do so), or that museums of contemporary art constantly challenge our ways of seeing the world and ourselves. Science centres challenge us with facts and information, dispelling superstition, folk-knowledge and ignorance. Women's museums challenge centuries of patriarchy. History museums set the record straight to rid us of ethnic, racial and chauvinistic falsehoods.

Some of us have worked through a career in museums proudly believing that we wrested the institution from its masters while turning it to serve our own radical agendas. We saw ourselves as activists. *What we must realise now, painful though it may be, is that we were tacitly permitted to protest and rebel.* Unless we were censored and fired, or convicted of crimes and jailed, our most radical adventures in dissent came within the comfortable limits of acceptable questioning, debate and opposition inherent in the political agendas we challenged.

The record of censorship and outright suppression, with or without a public outcry, shows that museum enterprises in dissent do not survive unless their time has come for at least begrudging political and public tolerance. Society sets very strict limits on the deviant behaviour of its public institutions. Such a view is realistic, and not cynical, even if it is depressing for those of us who thought we had outwitted the system. Now it is paramount that we always clearly identify a museum's proprietors and carefully monitor their autocracy in determining the permissible limits of the interpretation of the collections.

THE MUSEUM AS EDUCATOR

A second criterion to examine carefully is the educational function of the museum implied by the word "interpret". Whether one looks at churches and temples, tribal rituals, cabinets of curiosity, spoils of war, song and story cycles or the Louvre and the Prado as examples of museum phenomena, the educational intent is apparent. It may range from the private pleasures of enlightenment for an elite group to what we would call mass propaganda, the socialisation of the young or rites of passage, the uplifting of the working classes to bourgeois values, or from an extension of the classroom curriculum to experiences in self-discovery, but it is still education, preparation for the work of life. Invariably it has been designed to transfer to the members of society, and especially the young, the beliefs and values inherent in the endorsed and dominant mythology of estab-

lished authority, the proprietors.

The museum then, like other institutions we have created for both formal and informal education, is assigned to assist in fulfilling the agendas of those in power, whether in a small group or a nation state. This is done through the effective communication of established values, which will, in turn, maintain cultural integrity. And as established values or the mythology changes, so too will the directions of education and museum interpretation.

Education is, at its foundation, socialisation or "acquiring the necessary values and behaviour modifications for the stability of the social group of which one is a member."¹¹ The museum has often been called "The Peoples University". Its exhibits and exhibitions might be called its authorised textbooks, and we too easily forget that in spite of the odd flurry of curatorial rebellion, museums offer an approved curriculum. The line between socialisation and indoctrination is a fine one.

USING THE ARCHETYPE AS A TOOL

When we take the criterion for proprietorship, for ownership and control, and the criterion for interpretation as education built on socialisation, and add to that the five other criteria, we have an archetype that can be used to analyse museums and museum-like phenomena. The museums of Nazi Germany, as instruments of propaganda; the great encyclopaedic museums of the colonial powers, which portrayed the cultures of the world in the shadow of the Mother Country's superiority; the great, greedy, acquisitive museums of North America buying up the trappings of elite Old World culture for the would-be aristocracy of the new land, all of these become understandable, inevitable, rational, when viewed in terms of our archetypal criteria.

I will take as an example for examination in more detail the contemporary form of some museums and art galleries in North America where the mythology is changing with the shift to the ideologies of the political right. Government funds are cut back. Museums are told to find support in the corporate sector; to strive to be economically self-sufficient in the competitive free market. The corporate sponsors become the new proprietors. The museums become market-driven, bottom-line organisations. Gift and souvenir boutiques, restaurants and coffee shops, charges for admission and for all services, exhibition halls to rent for weddings and receptions, even collections being sold to offset deficits, become strategies for survival.

The critics say that the museum now competes for the public's recreation and entertainment dollars,

not their minds. They sell products, not ideas. The museum as shopping mall and fun fair, vacuous but seductive, is regrettably they say, the temple of our times and values, but is no longer a museum.

But is this picture of a museum in a neo-conservative, corporatist society anything other than a reflection of the changed mythology? Has a change from government support with tax dollars to corporate support meant any real change in the proprietor's agendas, except perhaps a change from the principles to the products? An examination of this strange new American museum aberration will show that it meets the criteria of the archetype. It is but one more variation on the motif. The marketers and managers may have replaced the curators as the doyens of the museum, but these museums-cum-shopping mall are surely reinforcing the values of our time. They are helping to maintain the cultural integrity of the consumer society.

I chose to use this contemporary North American example for an application of the archetypal criteria to an unconventional museum model because it illustrates so well how changes in the political and economic environment impact on the museum's form without changing its function. To test the criteria against the Gothic cathedral or the cabinet of curiosities, against tribal traditions of the keeping place, the Judaic tradition of text alone as the collection, or the Maori tradition of *taonga*, is easily done, but is perhaps less pertinent to us here. From your own experiences and observations, when traveling or in your home country, you can probably find other, equally good examples of the museum's form as a reflection of dominant and changeable ideologies. Now I will give you an example of a non-museum adopting the museum function.

Two years ago, in New Zealand, I gave my museum studies students an assignment to identify museum-like phenomena in their communities that were not generally considered to be museums. Jackie-Ann Leota, a Samoan student, came back a week later reporting that she had, in fact, found the museum in her urban, Samoan community in the city of Wellington. It was the Methodist Church.

In this devoutly Christian, Methodist community, the church was the focal point of Samoan life. It was the meeting place, where the language was kept alive, the place where traditional song and dance were performed and preserved, the keeping place for the community's cultural treasures brought from the island. The pastor was the community leader. Christian teaching and respect for traditional Samoan culture went hand-in-hand. It was the treasure house, the school, the stage, and the sacred place where

Samoan culture, now interwoven with its long-standing Christian, Methodist tradition, lived in downtown Wellington. It was the museum.

The church has held this impoverished, urban, migrant Pacific Island community together in the face of racial discrimination and deprivation of opportunity and has maintained cultural integrity in the best sense of that term. It is but one of many examples, however, of organised religion being central to the development of the mythology. In this case it is a benign blessing. In some other cases I would say it has been malignant, where dogma has overridden even the most fundamental tenets of democracy and humanitarianism.

I have spent so much of my time with you on the idea of a museum archetype because it is critical to our ability to consider the future museum in the context of predictions for change. We must be open to the museum idea being expressed in new, unfamiliar and unexpected configurations.

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT 1945 - 1985

When considering change and the museum, both today and in the future of South Africa, we should also examine the developments within the international museum movement during the long period when this country was so isolated from the mainstream.

In the period 1945 to somewhere in the 1980s, there was a liberal, ethical movement in the international museum world. The democratisation of museums and intellectual access were addressed. The sins of imperialism and colonialism were "put on the stand", so to speak, as the "crimes" of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, the immoral "theft" of heritage and the case for its repatriation, were nudged towards resolution. There was zero tolerance of racial or ethnic discrimination. Issues of gender and sexuality, were confronted. Although it was always contentious the arguments for cultural relativity were pressed.

Under attack was Eurocentrism, universalism, discrimination and patriarchy. Humanist ethics, but in no sense an atheist or anti-religious position, were at the forefront. The traditional museum as a "Window on the World", where all peoples, all faiths, all cultures, where nature and art, science and natural wisdom, were all to be seen through the same pane, was rejected. The ethical movement was at times just a minority voice and at others a force that moved legislators to action and international councils to decision, but the liberal, ethical movement was so strong as to indelibly mark the period.

In the last ten years, the movement has lost ground. It is seen, not without reason, as akin to the political left, in opposition to the now dominant right. Further, the Euro-American corporatist players in the global market must see their culture - Western Civilisation - in universalist terms. Where once the Christian mission was to create a global village of believers, the multi-national corporations and global marketers must now have a mission to create a global village of consumers. In addition, the West feels threatened by non-European forces and, for comfort, must believe in the eventual dominance and universalism of the Western mythology. To those ends, I suggest, we are being asked once more to gather in front of the Window on the World so that we may all be shown, and will all share, a reality with the same skewed perspective.

There are many powerful advocates of the belief that American-style democracy and Christian values, if not Christianity itself, will eventually cover the face of the Earth; that there will be an international or global culture, modern, and Euro-American. Such a vision of tomorrow can be no better served than by a return to the museum as the tightly-framed, single-paned, sharply-focused Window on the World with its unique and singular perspective. That this could happen, that the museum would fall back on the tricks, illusions and lies of its imperialist and colonialist past in the name of a new, economic colonialism, does not take into account, however, the significance of cultural diversity - of the world's peoples on the move.

FROM CULTURAL DIVERSITY TO CULTURAL PLURALISM

We have taken the unprecedented mobility of world populations and dramatically increasing cultural diversity in many once homogeneous societies, as a significant factor in the shape of the future world. For clarification it should be noted that "cultural diversity" means groups of many different cultural traditions being in one nation, region or society. Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, describes a society within which diverse cultural groups co-operatively share in the society. Diversity is a condition; pluralism is a social objective.

In South Africa, of course, there has, historically, been no homogeneous society. Cultural diversity has been a reality of both indigenous peoples and the settler populations. Similarly in Canada, the First Nations, or aboriginal peoples, within which there is linguistic and cultural diversity, then the French and after that the English, held economic and political dominance. Today the other European, Asian, Indian,

Arab Muslim, Caribbean and African minorities sum to a diversity which puts in question any expectations of an enduring cultural hegemony. In both countries, an effective cultural pluralism remains a social goal.

Multiculturalism, a term used elsewhere but particularly in Canada, describes a political policy in which groups of different cultural tradition are encouraged to retain those traditions in a nation that styles itself as a "cultural mosaic", as opposed to a "melting pot" as in the 19th and early 20th century American model. It has been criticised as a form of visible minority management rather than a liberating doctrine, while others attack multiculturalism as an obstruction to the building of a national identity. I take the optimistic position that increased diversity in our society should and will lead to pluralism, and that through cultural pluralism we will find strength in our diversity. This has been the contention of Canadian governments since the 1960s, and would seem to be central to President Nelson Mandela's proclamation of "The Rainbow Society".

The opposing political philosophy is that diversity must be homogenised through assimilationist policies and other incentives to protect the national culture. And to be sure, where there appears to be no "national culture" already in place to be protected, a nationalist mythology will be quickly invented. In the United States, some parts of Canada, in the United Kingdom and Western Europe, there have been calls for tight immigration controls and assimilationist policies in the recent decades of escalating diversity.

I will not digress here to defend or document the facts of dramatically increased cultural diversity worldwide for there is an abundant literature on the subject.¹² Perhaps it will suffice to note that the previous great migration of modern times was the 55 million Europeans migrating overseas between 1821 and 1924. That is 55 million in a century. "In 1990 legal international migrants numbered about 100 million, refugees about 19 million, and illegal immigrants probably at least 10 million more."¹³ That is 129 million in one year. Canadians need not look far afield to the growing Muslim population in Western Europe or the post-colonial non-white populations in the United Kingdom for confirmation of changing demographics, for the increase in the last twenty years in the Asian and Indian populations in most major Canadian cities is evidence familiar to most. In South Africa the cultural diversity may be less a function of recent than of historic migrations, and there may be no dramatic escalation in diversity today, but that does not change the demographic and therefore political reality.

For the Western, industrialised nations of

Europe and North America, Stanley Hoffman says, "... Westerners increasingly fear that they are now being invaded not by armies and tanks but by migrants who speak other languages, worship other gods, belong to other cultures, and, they fear, will take their jobs, occupy their land, live off the welfare system, and threaten their way of life." These phobias, rooted in relative demographic decline, Hoffman observes, "are based on genuine cultural clashes and worries about national identity."¹⁴

I will not try to create a parallel to Hoffman's remarks for South Africa. I must assume that any basis for distrust and fear, threats to a way of life and concerns about a national identity is imbedded in a history that you know well, and in recent dramatic changes in political power, that I only read about. I must leave it to you to put these issues of diversity, pluralism and nationalism in the South African context.

The problem, globally, is that cultural diversity and nationalist sentiments, including such extreme ideas as racial and cultural purity, are on a collision course. In respect of Europe and North America, I agree with Myron Weiner's observation that, "If there is a 'law' in migration it is that a migration flow, once begun, induces its own flow."¹⁵ I doubt that tough immigration policies, assimilationist programs or crack-downs on illegal immigrants will stem the flow. The nations of the West, in Europe, North America and "Down Under" will not be alone in experiencing gross cultural diversity, but in all nations once believed to be more or less culturally homogeneous, there will be emotional devastation and a perception of loss not only of predominance but also of pre-eminence. In countries like South Africa, where the diversity is not new but the balance of power has changed, can the emotional devastation of a displaced mythology be less? I suggest that in Europe, in North America or *wherever the chemistry of cultural diversity remains problematic*, there is the risk of a new and extreme racism and totalitarian nationalism. A fostered cultural pluralism I see as both morally sound and the wisest, perhaps the only course to take if we are to avoid the collision and a new fascism for a new millennium.

The effect of this dichotomous crisis on museums and museum-like institutions will be profound. There will be an undeniable moral imperative to take constructive action. But in what direction? As mentioned earlier and to reiterate, the old, European/American museum model, which suited the political ideologies of the time, was imperialist. Museums were called a "Window on the World" and the story of other civilisations and other cultures were presented around

the high altar of the Mother Country's or dominant majority's icons of power, symbols of superiority and tokens of patronage. The museums we knew, (and they are still with us), told the stories of the "Other" with impunity. The great encyclopaedic museums of Europe and America gathered up, by means fair and foul, the cultural treasures of the Other - not just tribal goods from colonies but also the riches of older civilisations. The museum became our modern equivalent of the ancient victory parade, displaying the spoils of war and conquest, humiliating the defeated with a show of the captured warrior-slaves. Museums now displayed the booty of conquest - armed, colonial or economic - and by cultural appropriation, held in bondage the souls of the subordinated cultures.

I have said that this "Window on the World" philosophy was rejected by the liberal, humanist museum movement but is now returning along with shifts to the right in political ideologies. This is not inconsequential. Obviously in a culturally diverse society desiring constructive pluralism, the destructive hegemony implicit in the "Window on the World" would be intolerable. Museums, as all our social institutions, must urgently engage in reformations enabling positive interventions.

SOLUTIONS TO PLURALISM AND THE MUSEUM

The proposed reformation of the "Window on the World" in North America, United Kingdom and some European museums has been policies of consultation, accommodation and participation. This has meant a readiness to involve, to some degree, the owners of the culture to be represented by the museum. Such participation by an outside cultural group in their representation within an alien cultural institution, where they are neither the proprietors nor the on-going agents of interpretation, is hollow. Rarely, if ever, has a museum actually transferred the power, the money and other resources, and the collections to an external group so that they could create their own manifestation of the museum idea and tell their own story, most importantly for their own cultural determination. An invitation to my house to put on some beads and feathers and to perform your tribal dances for my friends is not an invitation to cultural equity or autonomy, and it's not a solution.

It is not, however, necessary to devise a solution without precedent. In cities in Canada, where minority populations are establishing themselves in the spirit of cultural pluralism, we see a solution in practice. In my city, the large and growing Chinese community has built a centrally located and

handsome cultural centre. The local traditional museum neither had exhibits devoted to Chinese culture nor programs for Chinese-speaking visitors. At the Chinese Cultural Centre there are language classes, music, theatre, exhibitions and ceremonies. The entire community is welcomed. It is a museum-like institution meeting our archetypal criteria. The Vietnamese Buddhist Culture Centre, the Bat Nha Pagoda, has been opened in another neighbourhood. In yet another part of the city an architecturally distinguished Orthodox church has recently "put on exhibition" its rich collection of sacred icons, set in a great, newly-carved reredos. We see the museum idea returned to a venerable tradition. Other ethnic minorities in the city are establishing their own "museums" and like the Chinese, Vietnamese and Orthodox communities, they are using their own cultural models, and without reference to the traditional museums and art galleries in the region. There are twenty-two minority cultural centres at various stages of development in the city.

In the culturally pluralistic society we must endorse and facilitate such decentralisation of cultural story-telling from the obsolete "Window on the World" to autonomous centres within cultural communities. We then will each tell our own stories and conduct our own searches for a sense of identity and place, for cultural integrity. In the spirit of pluralism, we will share our stories, our world views or mythologies, our hopes and our fears, with our neighbours.

I have heard many objections to such developments - duplication of effort, increased cost, unhealthy competition, immigrants retaining old loyalties but developing none to Canada, and always the cry that decentralisation will split the community, or the nation, not hold it together. In part this may be no more than classic resistance to change. In part it may be simply that those who have enjoyed the privileges of a dominant majority, are reluctant to share those benefits. It may come from the deeper fear that Western Civilisation is threatened by the rise of non-European and non-Christian cultures.

I have yet to hear an objection that effectively counters Lester B. Pearson's warning in 1955 that the world was entering "... an age when different civilisations will have to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each others' history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each other's lives. The alternative, in this overcrowded little world," he said, "is misunderstanding, tension, clash, and catastrophe."¹⁶

In summary, I am saying that the culturally pluralistic society will produce a full spectrum of new

manifestations of the museum idea, by various names and often in forms that reflect the individual culture's museum-like traditions. The old museums with their imperial omniscience, where they survive, will be no more than artifacts of a world view left behind. As we each learn to remember, preserve and honour our own culture, and to share its riches with others, we will finally close the shutters on the Window on the World. The museum, the kind of museum that you and I have known all our lives, will be dead. All of our cultural birthrights will be emancipated from long-endured bondage.

CIVILISATIONS OF CULTURAL KINSHIP AND HUNTINGTON'S "REMAKING OF WORLD ORDER"

If only it were that simple. The museum is dead, long live the museum. Unfortunately it becomes complicated when we examine our second arbitrary choice of assumptions about the future. That was "the realignment of societies and the consolidation of civilisations by cultural affinity, replacing the politico-economic cartography of the past." For this I offer as a reference Huntington's 1996 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. This book is acclaimed, damned and controversial for Huntington discusses the very plausible decline of Western civilisation which is most unpalatable to those who believe that American-style democracy and values will eventually cover the Earth. I will not attempt to offer a précis of the book, but here is an encapsulating quotation presented on the book-jacket:

"Spurred by modernisation, global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart. Alignments defined by ideology and super-power relations are giving way to alignments defined by culture and civilisation. Cultural communities are replacing Cold War blocs, and the fault lines between civilisations are becoming the central lines of conflict in global politics."

Huntington posits six and possibly seven contemporary or near future world civilisations: the Sinic or Chinese civilisation including kin-cultures in South-east Asia; Japanese civilisation as distinct unto itself; Hindu civilisation in the Subcontinent; Islamic civilisation, in the Arabian peninsula and spreading across North Africa, into the Iberian peninsula and east into Central Asia; Western civilisation being Europe, North America and settler countries such as New Zealand and Australia; Latin American civilisation probably distinct, "and African civilisation, if not

now, later". Huntington sees cultural affinity as the basis of all major alliances in the future, with "fault lines" being drawn by religion and to a lesser degree, language and tradition.

Of Africa he writes, "Throughout Africa tribal identities are pervasive and intense, but Africans are also increasingly developing a sense of African identity, and conceivably sub-Saharan Africa could cohere into a distinct civilisation, with South Africa possibly being its core state."¹⁷

All this lumping together, these grand coalitions, imply dominant or core states, hierarchy, cultural conformity and centralisation, in contrast to the migration phenomena which meant a decentralisation from home countries and cultural diversity virtually everywhere. Within these new, culturally defined civilisations, would there be tolerance for diversity and for cultural pluralism? Surely the strength of a new, culturally-defined civilisation would be deemed to be dependent, in part at least, on a shared, supranational mythology. Should this be the shape of things to come, where an umbrella religion, language and cultural tradition separates "us" from "them", what of our somewhat idealistic vision of co-operation and harmony among many culturally distinct groups in one pluralistic society?

There are indications that the historic populations in Western nations are afraid of and will oppose increased cultural diversity and pluralism. Western nations will club together. Non-Western nations will join together with kin-culture nations. Concurrently, cultural diversity, not just in the West but around the world, will continue to increase dramatically. I have said I believe it to be unstoppable. In this new world, can a true cultural pluralism meet the need to maintain autonomous cultural integrity for the many, and at the same time, meet the political need for a shared national, supranational or civilisational mythology?¹⁸

MUSEUMS AND MAKING CHOICES

Consider the choices. The decentralisation of the museum proprietorship among distinct cultural groups, like the decentralisation of education which might well be concurrent, brings with it a risk, in this case the risk of fractionating and possibly Balkanising the nation. It also carries the potential of unified strength through autonomous cultural integrities combined with a shared loyalty to the land and to the destiny of the nation, as in The Rainbow Society here, as in the always unstated Peaceable Kingdom dream of Canada. As American President Jimmy Carter said, "We are of course a nation of differences.

Those differences don't make us weak. They're the source of our strength."¹⁹

The other choice is the centralisation of the museum function; an approved curriculum and a return to the Window on the World to accommodate a national or supranational mythology; a move towards indoctrination as socialisation and away from cultural self-determination; a drive to assimilation rather than diversity. All of these are ingredients in the classical political recipe for social order. This alternative is practical politics. It is a plan that can be made to work, *one way or another*. The gains are a clearly defined and disciplined society with a purity of values and the strength of infallible dogma. The losses are in human dignity and in the loss of the spiritual strength possessed only by those who are free to discover and embrace their own gods.

Obviously if I had chosen other predicted changes for discussion today, they would raise other questions, but they would be no less inscrutable or demanding. My argument is that we must examine all of the more plausible of the changes being predicted for the decades ahead. We must have tools - such as the criteria of a supposed archetype - to create projected models of the future museum in the context of those changes. And we must use the insights we thus gain to make choices, choose sides if you wish, so that our intellects, our creative energies and most important of all, our hearts, can be turned to what we believe to be the course of action in the interests of humankind.

This is the dilemma wherein The Muse meets Realpolitik. All of the important museological questions today, anticipating tomorrow, are of this awesome order. They are grand questions that ask if the museum idea, manifested in new ways, can be meaningfully "in the service of society", as the world faces its most uncertain future. It is a future where racial, ethnic and religious divisions threaten all societies and all civilisations. It is a future where a readiness to share the riches of our distinct cultures promises new understanding, trust and the potentials for peace. At no time before has there been a greater challenge for museums and those who work in them. It is a challenge for all of us who believe in the power of cultural knowledge; who believe in the power of knowledge and respect for the cultural integrity of others; for all of us who believe in the power of that knowledge to transcend hatred and distrust, while building an enduring strength in the glorious variety of our cultural distinctions.

NOTES

1. Daniel J Sherman & Irit Rogoff. (Eds.) Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis. In: *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles, Media & Society* vol.6, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis) 1994, p.XIX.
2. See Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (Simon & Schuster, New York) 1996.
3. There is an important literature of criticism and analysis of the modern, European/American museum, some of which approaches the museum phenomenon as being unique to the Modern Period. Some such as Donald Crump, in *On the Museum's Ruins*, take the Marxist position that there are no precedents and that the museum "emerged with the development of modern bourgeois society" (p. 223). Regardless, criticism and analysis of the modern museum and its many parts and pieces is as valid as the investigation of Christianity through the study of the design and building of Chartres cathedral. I suggest that the study of Chartres might reveal something about Christianity in France in the 13th century, but little about the nature of Christianity or the nature of religion, and that the valuable studies of the European museum may tell us much about our modern age but little about the museum idea *per se*.
4. A lengthy paper titled "The Goldfish Bowl" was written in the spring of 1996, first as a source document for a hypothetical course in the study of the history of the museum idea and then as the basis for a session at the Canadian Museum Association 1996 meetings in Vancouver. The paper was distributed at the CMA meeting, but is unpublished as of February, 1997.
5. See, for example, Myron Weiner, *Global Migration Crisis*, (Harper Collins, New York) 1995, pp.21-28. See also discussion in *The Clash of Civilizations*, chapter 8.
6. From among the current generous offerings of predictions for the future I have chosen Huntington's thesis in *The Clash of Civilizations*. I find his arguments compelling and observation of the worldwide news reports over the last half of 1996 and the beginning of 1997 confirm, in my opinion, much that he has said. His arguments in the final chapters for assimilationist strategies and immigration control in the USA I find defensive.
7. See Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, eds., *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford) 1985, and also Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful Science: Enlightenment, Entertainment and the Eclipse of Education*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London) 1994, especially parts four and five.
8. See Germain Bazin, *The Museum Age*, (Universe Books, New York) 1997.
9. From "The Goldfish Bowl". Note that in (I) 'social stability' has been replaced by the now preferred 'cultural integrity'.
10. Personal communication: Trudel to Cameron, October 1996.
11. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1993.
12. For example, see *The Expansion of Internationalist Society*, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, etc. (Oxford University Press, Oxford) 1984, and the contribution of Ronald Dore, "Unity and Diversity in Contemporary World Culture."
13. *The Clash of Civilizations*, pp.198-199.

14. Stanley Hoffman, "The Case for Leadership", *Foreign Policy*, 81 (Winter 1990-91) p.30, quoted in *The Clash of Civilizations*.
15. Myron Weiner, *Global Migration Crisis*, (Harper Collins, New York) 1995, pp.21-28, quoted in *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.199
16. Lester B Pearson, *Democracy in World Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton) 1955, pp.83-84. The Rt. Hon. Lester Pearson was Canada's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1948), President UN General Assembly (1952), proposed UN peacekeeping force (1956), Nobel Peace prize (1957), Prime Minister of Canada (1963-68).
17. *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 47.
18. For other viewpoints on the new capitalism versus cultural integrity, see *Jihad vs MacWorld*, and *The End of History* (full citations not submitted).
19. Pres. Jimmy (James Earl Jr.) Carter, in a speech at the Al Smith Dinner, New York City, October 21, 1976.

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THEORY INTO PRACTICE, PRACTICE INTO THEORY

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At the 51st SAMA Conference held in Pietermaritzburg in 1987 a declaration of South African Museums was made. It was related to the theme of the conference *Museums in a Changing and Divided Society*, and was no doubt stimulated and precipitated by the presence and words of Dr John Kinard of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, Washington DC. It reads as follows:

1. That South African museums in their various programmes purposefully direct their efforts to promote the dissemination of information to and enjoyment of museums by all South Africans.
2. That South African museums actively assist all our various communities better to understand the circumstances of both their separate and common history so as to give them a clearer view of their present relationships and thereby how they can be more harmoniously involved one with the other in the future.
3. That South African museums sincerely strive to be seen to belong to all South Africans

irrespective of colour, creed or gender.

4. That all South Africans be encouraged to express openly their views as to how the country's museums may better serve the interests of all in South Africa.

In a paper addressed to SAMA two years later, Christopher Till asked whether South African museums had "come any further down the road in addressing the declaration". At the 1991 conference I asked colleagues to assess what progress their institutions had made and what steps they were taking in an effort to put into effect the ideals expressed in the 1987 declaration. In the same year the Board of Trustees of the South African National Gallery (SANG) accepted a draft policy manual - for the first time in the history of the institution - which included a Mission Statement and a clear set of objectives. In 1992 I delivered a paper entitled *Restoring our Otherness - reflections on the meaning of Euro-centrism and its effects on South African culture*