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**THE COMMUNICATIVE ETHOS:
FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO FUNCTIONALISM -
SHIFTING DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN MUSEOLOGY**

by

MARINA KATERI BRZESKI, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

School of Journalism and Communication

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
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**THE COMMUNICATIVE ETHOS:
FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO FUNCTIONALISM -
SHIFTING DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN MUSEOLOGY**

submitted by Marina Brzeski, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

June 30, 1994

ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the rhetoric behind museological practices from the early nineteenth century to the present and suggests that the museum's communicative ethos has undergone a shift from placing the onus of communication on classification to conceptualizing the communication flow in a more functionalist manner. It is proposed that this shift is further precipitated by external political factors. As such, a relationship between the museum and the social environment is identified, whereby changes in the communication infrastructure of the latter invokes changes in the museum's communicative ethos. The aim of this thesis involves understanding these complex communicative relations in order to gain a better understanding of what is currently identified as the "museum crisis."

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Certain events during the last decade of museum history in Canada have shaken the hitherto stable foundations of museum practice, turning the comparatively comfortable climate of Canada's museum institutions into a turmoil of political activism. Part of this activism has included a critical questioning of traditional museum practices.

The events in question involve a number of demonstrations and boycotts by cultural groups concerning their portrayal in museum exhibits. One such event, which caused the most controversy in Canada included the Lubicon Lake First Nation's boycott of the Glenbow Museum's exhibition "The Spirit Sings" during the 1988 Calgary Olympics. This event distinguishes itself from others in terms of the scope of international attention it drew to sensitive political and ethical issues regarding the presentation in First Nations¹ art. Other larger demonstrations revolved around the World Exposition in Seville, Spain, entitled "The Age of Discovery," marking the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Americas. These took the form of widespread protests throughout the Americas colouring the year 1992

¹The term First Nations Peoples will be used consistently throughout this paper. It is used in the Report of the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government which means a group of people with a common language, culture and a history who identify with each other as belonging to a common political entity. It does not have separatist connotations. (Muse, 1988; 2)

as a year of identity politics for aboriginal peoples.²

Although the themes of these exhibits varied from one to another, what they shared in common were criticisms by certain members of the public, attacking the exhibits as ideologically continuing the colonial period. It was argued that these exhibits glamorized and romanticized the 'past' while ignoring the contemporary struggles of First Nations Peoples, reflecting a misunderstanding of Native cultures. With respect to the World Exposition marking Columbus' voyage to the Americas, for instance, it was argued that the long history of cultures which existed prior to Columbus' arrival was ignored and the celebrations were misappropriately entitled 'the Age of Discovery', implying the Native Peoples' 'non-existence' prior to that time. Critiques of "The Spirit Sings" exhibition in Calgary during the 1986 Winter Olympics similarly made reference to colonialism³, suggesting that the public viewer would not understand contemporary Native culture through a display of early contact period material comprising of objects dating from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries that had been collected by European explorers and missionaries. In essence, it was argued that these exhibits unproblematicized contemporary native struggles by not representing nor respecting current political issues.

The politicization of history, which the discourse of these protests

²The terms 'Native,' 'aboriginal' and 'indigenous' will be used interchangeably to refer to Canada's original inhabitants of Indian, Inuit and Metis ancestry.

³'Colonialism' is defined as a practice of a powerful peoples in extending control over weaker peoples or areas. As such, European conquest of Native land resulted in a power dynamic which identified the colonizers as Early European settlers and the colonized as the aboriginal peoples.

communicated, challenges the foundational meta-historical narratives of traditional museological practices. The sheer immensity of these events - in terms of the widespread protests which resounded throughout the Americas (with regard to the Columbus celebrations) and in terms of the scope of international support for the Lubicon boycott, coupled with international media attention, mark this as a period of crisis for museum institutions. On a political level, this crisis is reflected in the tense relationship between First Nations Peoples and the Canadian Museums Association (C.M.A.). On an ideological level, this crisis reveals itself through the disjuncture between traditional museological practices which assume objective empiricism in the representation of cultures and the more ontological Native approaches which present their cultures from personal and political stances. Responses to both levels of the crisis have taken the form of political discussions between First Nations Peoples and the Canadian Museums Association on the one hand, and contemporary exhibits which present a Native perspective, on the other hand.

1. Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA)

The impact that these demonstrations exerted on the museums community was significant. The power of public opinion was especially felt in the aftermath of the 1988 boycott of "The Spirit Sings," which initiated a major re-evaluation of museum institutions in Canada. This took the form of national discussions bringing Aboriginal Peoples and museums together. The Assembly of First Nations along with the

Canadian Museums Association joined forces to organize the conference "Preserving our Heritage: A Working Conference for Museums and First Peoples" held at Carleton University in the Fall of 1988. As well, the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples entitled "Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples" was established. (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992) The focus of the conference and the task force concerned the fair representation of Aboriginal history and culture which, as the Labicon Cree and their supporters argued, had been subject to serious neglect. It was felt that aboriginal peoples should control their own cultures and, as such, bring their own perspectives to the museum. It was claimed by the co-chairs of the Task Force that the consequences of representational modes of public exhibits that did not derive from a native perspective were:

Public exhibitions which support the stereotype of vanished or vanishing Indians undermin(ing) the efforts of First Peoples who are working to establish their identities as separate and vital contemporary cultures.
(Hill & Nicks, 1992; 81)

The mission of the Task Force thus set out "to develop an ethical framework and strategies by which aboriginal peoples and cultural institutions can work together to represent Aboriginal history and culture." (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples: 1992; 1) Recommendations suggested possible solutions to the tension that had developed between First Nations Peoples and the museums community. These essentially advocated an equal partnership involving "mutual appreciation of the

conceptual knowledge and approaches characteristic of First Peoples, and the empirical knowledge and approaches of academically-trained workers." (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992; 7) The distinction between these two parties is further referred to in one of the major principles that was established, whereby it was acknowledged that "First Peoples have different histories and cultures and cannot be expected to have all the same needs and interests with regard to museums." (Hill & Nicks, 1992; 42) In recognizing 'difference' with respect to the issue of "interpretation", it was suggested that contemporary circumstances of First Peoples should also be represented. (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples: 1992; 4)

Other issues raised included improved access to information relating to aboriginal collections and the repatriation of artifacts in museum collections. While the Task Force acknowledged the importance of cultural objects to the institutions that care for them for the purposes of educating the public about the cultural contributions made by First Peoples, it also emphasized the importance of these objects to the particular communities. This was expressed in the urging that

museums should consider supporting the requests by Aboriginal communities and Community-based Aboriginal museums for the transfer of title of sacred and ceremonial objects and of other objects that have ongoing historical, traditional or cultural importance to an aboriginal community or culture.

(Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992; 4)

In recognizing the "traditional authority or individual ownership systems of the originating culture," (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1992; 8) the Task Force eased some of the tensions which had developed around the issue of

repatriation, an issue which has received considerable attention internationally as native-run museums and community cultural centres claim the rights of ownership to objects that had been taken from them during the colonial period and had found their way into national museums across the world.

In sum, what had been revealed through these discussions includes: firstly, the significance of cultural objects to the ongoing cultural development of aboriginal peoples and thus the importance of recognizing the original owners of these objects; and secondly, the difference of Native interpretations and perspectives from those of "academically trained workers," and the importance that museums be equally open to these. In retrospect, the function of the museum had been reassessed. Museums were identified as having the potential to engage with living cultures and not just with objects, and they were furthermore encouraged to "become forums for discussions of relevant contemporary issues." (Task Force on Museums and First Peoples: 1992; 4)

As a result, issues of cultural representation in the museum; the repatriation of objects; the relationship between the museum and the community; indeed the social purpose of the museum, are all characteristic of the current discussions museum professionals are engaging in.

II. Contemporary Exhibits

Since the events of 1988, there have been a number of exhibits in national museums that have offered a Native point of view, two of which addressed directly the

issues of native cultural identity within the institutional context of the museum. These include "Land, Spirit, Power", an exhibition that was held at the National Gallery of Canada in 1992 and "Indigena", an exhibition that was held at the Museum of Civilization during the same year. Both these exhibits responded to the discussions around the question of cultural identity from the specific perspective of First Nations artists. Of significance was the year 1992 in which these exhibits were organized which coincided with the quinqucentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas. As such, themes of these displays included a critical questioning of the implication of the last 500 years for indigenous peoples.

"Indigena," for instance, raised the following themes:

- Aboriginal values and philosophies within their own framework, without the need for validation from Canadians or European ancestry;
- personal and cultural histories of five hundred years of colonization;
- academic critique of Euro-North American values, theories and practices, and,
- recognition that 1992 is not only an arbitrary date in history, but also a point of departure for the future.

(McMaster: 1992; 15)

"Land, Spirit, Power" responded to questions of cultural identity through works of art and literature that "have taken the form of a critical and theoretical discourse that contests and attempts to broaden the traditionally accepted parameters of art, while giving expression to cultural difference." (Thomson: 1992; 7) Through the voice of the native artists, a personal and political history was communicated that was distinct

from other Canadians' histories. Such a rewriting of history altered the signification of 1492 from a year of "discovery" of the Americas, to a year of "encounter" between two cultures - an "encounter" which began the history of colonization. Thus, the native version of history as communicated through these exhibits carried a subtext that colonization began in 1492.

From an ideological standpoint, Robert Houle further suggests that "Land, Spirit, Power" equally challenged 1492 as the year of a historical/philosophical demarcation by bringing forth Native artists' perspectives as "spiritual children of the ancient ones." (Houle: 1992; 53) What Houle is emphasizing in this argument is that there is a distinctiveness in Native artists' identities which can be found in the continuous history of their cultures which predates the last 500 years.

McMaster equally dismisses the idea of 1492 as marking a discontinuity in Native thought when he describes 1492 from an indigenous perspective in the following: "indigenous time... will mark this year (1492) as any other since time immemorial, giving thanks to the Creator in various festivals celebrating humankind's survival." (McMaster: 1992; 11) As such, the displays are not only critiques of master narratives but are assertions of the artists' voices as distinct from those which identify themselves under such Western canons as modern, avant-garde, postmodern, etc.

In retrospect, the museums opened a space for native artists to challenge the colonial discourse of the 1492 celebrations by undermining "the authority of the signs that constitute its knowledge, and reassert(ing) the authority of the signs of their own rightful knowledge." (Nemiroff, 1992; 80)

III. A Shift In Museological Practices

Having thus outlined some of the significant events during the last decade in Canadian museum history which indicate that museums are undergoing certain changes, how can we begin to understand the specific historical stage in which they occurred? Diana Nemiroff suggests that the museum crisis and resultant shift in ideological perspectives was precipitated by a conjuncture of various circumstances. She identifies these to include the rise in native activism which helped politicize the native artist, and the shift from modernism to postmodernism. While the former brought questions of identity, both individual and collective, to the fore, the latter emphasized pluralism and questions of difference and weakened the "ethnocentrism of the art establishment" through the breaking down of institutional canons. (Nemiroff: 1992; 35-36) In attempting to shed light on the very complex nature of this turn of events in Canadian museum history, Nemiroff thus points to broader political and ideological issues which have been largely developed outside the museum establishment, either through political activism, academic writing or art expression. This calls for certain clarifications with respect to the relationship between the museum and its social environment. While the catalysts have been identified as coming from the social environment, how do they impact on the internal structure of the museum and what are the determining factors for the timing of this impact? In

order to understand the full implications of the last decade in Canadian museum history, these questions need to be addressed. As such, one must examine the relationship between the museum's internal functions and the outside macro-economic and political environment. While the endeavour may appear ambitious with respect to the multiplicity of factors that will be needed to be taken into consideration, it could provide a starting point for reaching a broader understanding of the complexities in the representation of cultural identities in Canada.

This thesis attempts to make sense of this problematic from a communications⁴ approach and examines the relationship between the museum and its social environment as a form of dialectic. I am not suggesting that the museum be considered an autonomous system, but rather as a communicative medium whose discursive practices⁵ oscillate with the macro-economic and political discourse⁶ of the social environment. The latter discourse is further seen as impacting change on the internal communicative process of the museum. Change is primarily identified on the

⁴'Communication' is identified as a social network consisting of a multiplicity of discourses interacting with one another, ultimately shaping a predominant knowledge regime. Museum practices are seen as discursive, and thus are recognized as one of these interacting discourses contributing to the dominant knowledge regime.

⁵Discursive practices arise in the context of specific and variable, social conditions whose characteristics are themselves the legacy of prior historical practices and conditions. (Blundell, 1989: 25)

⁶'Discourse' is defined as regulated/institutionalized systems of statements through which knowledge is produced. It is related to particular social and economic relations which legitimate practices or techniques that reproduce its intellectual and material conditions. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Foucault, 1974 in Shelton: 1992; 209)

level of the form which the communicative process takes.⁷ As such, changes in the environment's communicative ethos are seen as impacting a shift in the form of the museum's internal communicative process, ultimately changing the content of its messages and the way in which the subject⁸ is framed. Thus, varying to the degree to which the discourses of the museum and the environment are synchronous or not, the museum will hold an autonomous or de-autonomous field of observation. While a period of crisis is the condition of the latter, a shift indicates an emerging counter-discourse⁹ gaining autonomy. This sets the premise for the general argument this thesis will undertake, namely, that a dialectic relationship exists between the museum and its social environment whereby changes in the communicative infrastructure of the latter will invoke changes in the museum's communicative ethos. In tracing the rhetoric behind museological practices from the early nineteenth century to the present, a more specific argument will be entertained, namely, that the museum's communicative ethos has undergone a shift from placing the onus of communication on classification to conceptualizing the communication flow in a more functionalist manner. In retrospect, changes are identified on various communicative levels: on the

⁷This approach is consistent with theories that have been influenced by formalism and structuralism which stipulate that beyond the ideology of content lies the ideology of form. (Durkheim; Levi-Strauss etc.)

⁸I am borrowing an Althusserian understanding of the notion of 'subject', summarized by Mumby as "the process by which individuals are interpellated, or addressed, by various discursive-political practices and thus ideologically inserted into social formations in certain ways." (Dennis Mumby in George Levine: 1992; 101)

⁹By 'counter-discourse' I am referring to a discourse which is oppositional to the dominant discourse.

macro-political and economic level, where the political discourse on Native self-determination is influencing changes in the social environment's communicative ethos; on a micro-level internal to the museum, where the discourse of postmodernism and political discourse communicated through Native art is impacting on the museum's communicative ethos; and on an intermediate level which represents the relation between both the macro and micro levels. As such, the flow of information involves internal communicative relations among the various departments within the museum and external communicative relations between the museum institution and the political, economic and technical environment.

Before an explanation of this hypothesis can be undertaken, however, a brief history of the museum as well as an explanation of how I will conceptualize the 'museum' must be accomplished in order to situate my analysis and to demonstrate the methodology that I will be assuming.

IV. Brief History of the Museum

The concept of museums, as representational institutions of the modern, democratic state, developed during the period of the French Revolution. This is a relevant departure point for the purposes of this thesis since the Louvre directors set the precedent for practices that came to characterize art museums everywhere. This has been a consistent argument made by a number of scholars. (Bazin; 1969, Hooper-

Greenhill; 1992, Duncan; 1990) According to Carol Duncan:

The French Revolution created the first truly modern art museum when it designated the Louvre Palace as a national museum. The transformation of the old Royal Palace into the museum of the French Republic was high on the agenda of the French Revolutionary government.

(Carol Duncan, 1990; 88)

Significant in this historical period was the beginning of a new conception of the 'past' as a different realm. Endowed with unique histories and personalities, this new past "came to be cherished as a heritage that validated and exalted the present."

(Lowenthal: 1985; xvi) As such, with the transfer of private collections belonging to the monarchy, the Church and the aristocracy to the Louvre, collections were redefined as 'heritage.' Arrangements of displays were organized in line with a new sense of national pride and history which secured its heritage against despoliation and decay.

(Lowenthal, 1985; xvi) A new discourse of nationalism resulted, initially coupled with the rapid spread of the museum institution to the countries under French jurisdiction from 1793 to 1814, and then spreading to museums across Europe during the course of the nineteenth century and further marking the development of museological practices throughout the rest of the world, including Canada.

In Canada, the earliest phase of museum history is recorded in European and British museum collections that were formed by explorers and early administrators of the colonies of New France and, later, British North America. (Teather, 1992; 22)

This is a significant starting point for an analysis of Canadian museum history as early explorers cast Native peoples as uncivilized savages, influencing the manner in which

museum institutions communicated Native identity to their European audiences.

Collections assembled by early explorers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which found their way into European *Kunstkammer* and later, into ethnographic museums, were clearly displayed as 'other' than European. Initially placed under such identifying captions as "rareties," "curiosities," "Indian cabinet," these objects stood for exotic places in general. Collectors hardly discriminated between materials from America or Asia. Objects were instead classified by material and regarded as distinct from European collections. "The most common reaction was a gasping speechlessness in front of works that defied the accustomed categories of classification and appreciation." (Impey & MacGregor, 1993; 4) Since they were different from European perceptions of 'art', these collections were later housed in ethnographic museums or placed in separate exhibition halls. For instance, the Sir Ashton Lever Museum became the major recipient of Captain James Cook's materials, and some of John Tradescant's collection can be found in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. In their new locale, they began to represent "samples of the whole body of the material possessions of a population." (Impey & MacGregor, 1993; 6) As such, the objects were intended to represent 'other' cultures and were accompanied with writings and illustrations of those peoples' ways of life. (Impey & MacGregor, 1993; 6) This is also reflected in their presentations at the great international exhibits. In the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851, for instance, the exhibits from 'other' cultures presented "accurate indices of the limit of which civilization had attained in them respectively." (Usher: 1971; 38 in Impey & MacGregor, 1993; 6)

Therefore, during this period which was marked with a fascination with progress in industry and technology, these collections furthermore communicated representations of the Native North American as ethnological specimen. Through the work of anthropologists, classificatory terms were further established which helped museums institute formal taxonomic systems as a means to organize their accumulated collections. Consequences of the anthropologist's bias are still being dealt with today.¹⁰

Within Canadian boundaries, museums were very much in line with the European discourse of the eighteen hundreds and nineteen hundreds as European methods and practices were said to have set the standards for early nineteenth century museums in Canada. According to Susan Sheets-Pyenson,

Using European methods and practices as their standards, these men (museum curators) believed that a proper museum had to include objects of universal value as well as materials of local interest alone... Their museums' reputations, they felt, depended on the number of specimens amassed, with considerable cachet attached to the acquisition of exotic foreign materials.

(1988; 16 in Dickenson, 1992; 57)

The events which precipitated the development of Canada's national museums and galleries were in line with European ideals of the temple of arts. In an attempt to create the aura of a Canadian royalty, the Governors General established the Royal

¹⁰Native peoples today are still correcting earlier mistakes in nomenclature. For instance, the Fort Rupert tribe, once labelled as the Kwakiutl is now given the new term Kwa Kwa Ka'wakw devised by the Indians of the related communities. The new term translates as "those who speak Kwak'wala." (Peter Macnair in Joanne MacDonald, 1993; 43)

Canadian Academy in 1880 which was said to have influenced museum development. Patrons of the Academy organized an exhibition of academicians which was initially housed in the Clarendon Hotel in Ottawa and moved to its permanent residence at the Victoria Memorial Building in 1911. (Dickenson, 1992; 58) When it sought to develop a context for its 'diploma pictures,' it looked to Europe for its acquisitions, finding in the art of Britain, France and Italy its cultural roots. (Nemiroff: 1992; 18)

It was not until the official establishment of the National Gallery, by an Act of Parliament in 1913, that a strong national program was put in place. (Dickenson, 1992; 58) By this time, ideas were being defined about the national institution as collections were specifically amassed to reflect the nation. This national program included "travelling exhibitions, lectures, publications, experimental educational programs (financed in cooperation with the Carnegie Foundation), and the printing of reproductions of Canadian Art." (Dickenson, 1992; 58) By 1927, Native Canadians were included in this programme through the "Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern" which juxtaposed West Coast Art with the works of mainly European-trained painters and sculptors so as to "analyze their relationships to one another, if such exist, and particularly to enable this primitive and interesting art to take a definite place as one of the most valuable of Canada's artistic productions." (Brown (then Gallery director), letter to J.Gibbon, 10 Oct. 1927 in Nemiroff: 1992; 20)

From this brief overview of the history of Canadian museology, three points need to be emphasized. The European influence on the development of Canadian

museums was significant in terms of the influence it exerted on how Native cultures were initially identified and communicated through displays in European museums and international exhibitions. The national programme of Canadian museums arose out of two contradictory functions - that of the elite temple of the arts, and that of a utilitarian instrument for democratic education¹¹. The national museum had a dynamic character which was identified through the museum's attempt to represent a Canadian culture which always kept the museum's function in line with the complex turns the cultural politics in Canada. Therefore, the museum as a democratic institution of the government has an ambiguous character from the start. What I wish to emphasize here is the dynamic character of the museum and suggest that examining the museum as a medium of communications can provide a fruitful analysis of the history of museological practices.

V. Museums as Media

The purpose of the museum is a question which is consistently addressed during the numerous conferences coordinated by organizations such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the International Council of Museums (ICOM); the Canadian Museums Association (CMA); and the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM). Together, museum professionals

¹¹This is defined by Nochlin as a phenomenon that is indicative of museum development in general. (Nochlin: 1972; 8 in Hooper-Greenhill: 1992; 171)

attempt to provide a shared definition of the museum that would echo the more recent discourse of the economic and political environment. This process serves as a reminder of the role museums should play in the community. Certain official documents provide a blueprint for the characterization of the museum. An often quoted definition of the museum is one that was put forth by UNESCO in 1974 which identifies the museum as:

A non-profit, permanent establishment, except from federal and provincial income tax, open to the public at regular hours, and administered in the public interest, for the purpose of collecting and preserving, studying, interpreting, assembling and exhibiting to the public for its instruction and enjoyment, objects, and specimens of educational and cultural value, including artistic, scientific (whether animate or inanimate), historic and technological material.

(in Challenges and Choices: 1988; 27)

Consistent with this broad definition, the Canadian Museums' Association includes a wide exhibitionary complex under the umbrella of the 'museum.' This includes galleries, community museums, forts, natural parks, historic sites, exhibitionary centres, planetariums, aquariums/zoos, botanical gardens, nature parks, etc. (CMA: February 1986).

With regard to how museums relate to their publics and communities, there is far greater ambivalence as to their role. Museums are often sought as great repositories of knowledge providing a safe environment for the maintenance of an archival 'past.' (Cannizzo, 1987) They are seen as a holding place for a material memory of a common heritage, established for the service of the public good. Does this mean that museums should be a sort of open school, a social meeting place, a

teaching machine? Should they inform, educate or entertain, or all of the former?

Finding an accurate definition of the museum which would clarify their specific relationship to their communities is a complex task to undertake, for reasons that can only be explained by the museum's inherent connection with its proprietor. From the private hands of the royalty and bourgeoisie of the Renaissance and Baroque period, to the hands of the state for the 'public good' after the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century, both private collections and museums have always functioned in relation to the ambitions of the person or persons who 'own' it. In the former case, a private owner's collection ultimately reflected the identity, status, power and knowledge of that person. In the latter case, the public museum's collection ultimately reflects the identity of its public. In fulfilling its responsibility to the public, the museum is made susceptible to the socialization process which occurs outside its protective walls. As Tomislav Sola suggests, this is "why the mission of the museum in history is parallel to socio-economic and cultural history." (Sola, 1984) This not only provides an explanation for the dynamic character of the museum, but also suggests that the definition of museums can be articulated within specific cultural and ideological circumstances. Thus, the character of the museum will equally vary according to countries' political structures.

Thus seeing the museum as a repository is inappropriate, as it gives the impression of a burial place - a warehouse where things are laid to rest and meaning

ceases just as the body's breathing capacity expires, arresting the process of life.¹² Instead, museums have a more dynamic character that is sensitive to changes in the larger social, economic, political and technical environment. Far from simply providing a storage space where time freezes, museums engage in a more complex process of communication. The museum researches, collects, classifies, stores, and displays objects. This involves a process of unpackaging and repackaging of information and communicating it to a public. This may involve chronological ordering; thematic displays; a juxtapositioning of historical narratives, etc. The process is furthermore rendered more complicated through the multiplicity of meanings that may derive from presentation techniques. Any form of information can become a museum object, from labels to sign posts to audio-visual materials. These are all assigned meanings which ultimately reflect personal and social values. In the end, the museum establishes certain symbolic forms of human social interaction and engages people in a socializing process. As stated by Sola, "A museum is not an aim in itself, it is a means; neither collecting objects nor the objects themselves can be an aim, all that it is, is just a means. A means to what? Communication." (Sola, 1984) As such, the museum can be understood as a medium of communication.

This process of communication cannot be explained through an all encompassing theory of communications as communicative practice is variable and

¹²The metaphor of death was addressed by Adorno in "Valery Proust Museum," in which he states: "The German word museal (museumlike) has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying..." (in Crimp, 1983; 43)

susceptible to change along with changes in social, political and technological structures. Differences in meaning, intent, methods within and across cultures inhibit the possibility of achieving a mutual purpose/meaning of what constitutes the museum. However, identifying where the onus of meaning lies within museum practice could provide a more constructive starting point for an analysis of its representational practices.

This thesis takes a Foucauldian method of analysis as a basis to demonstrate how the centrality on taxonomy came to constitute the social communicative ethos during what Foucault refers to as the 'modern episteme.'¹³ An elaboration of this concept will be developed so as to demonstrate how knowledge is ideological and how a textual format used to establish truths about objects rendered this knowledge positional and enabled it to transcend issues of race and culture. The latter is significant in defining the communicative ethos during the modern episteme, since an ordering of culture superimposed an order of things and, as a result, placed the Native 'other' at the beginning of a continuum evolving from primitive to modern. As such,

¹³Foucault's modern 'episteme' coincides with the period of the French Revolution during which a new rationality emerges along with the implementation of a new theory of government. The concept of the 'episteme' itself marks a period during which various forms of intellectual activity correspond. In The Archaeology of Knowledge, Foucault defines it as "something like a world-view" that is in constant oscillation as a series of articulations and shifts. Within this set of relations, knowledge is produced. (1974: 191-192)

Foucault's method is useful in revealing how subjectivity¹⁴ is produced via the discursive practices of certain power-knowledge regimes. Various museological practices will be analyzed, such as classification and display, and their underlying discourses revealed, in order to test the congruity between the social environment's communicative ethos and that of the museum.

Chapter Two presents a case for congruity between the social environment's communicative ethos and the museum's communicative ethos. This is demonstrated through the analysis of two distinct museological practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, represented by the influences of Pitt Rivers and Franz Boas, which, it is suggested, consisted of a communicative ethos that centred meaning around classification. As such, these practices are defined as falling within the parameters of Foucault's modern episteme. Chapter Three presents a case for discongruity between the social environment's communicative ethos and the museum's communicative ethos and describes the onset of a period of crisis for museums. The representational practices (such as those used in "The Spirit Sings") which are identified as being representative of the modern episteme by their focus of meaning on classification, are seen as no longer being capable of defending the museum's

¹⁴A Foucauldian analysis focuses on the ways in which communication practices create 'objective' conditions for the construction of the identities of social actors. Such a position does not conceive of subjectivity as a pure "effect" of discourse, but rather argues for a complex, contradictory, shifting relationship among discursive practices, subjectivity and power. (Dennis Mumby, 1992; 99)

communicative ethos from external political forces. This is further developed in Chapter Four which identifies these political forces as a counter-discourse which is challenging the dominant power/knowledge regime through such issues as native self-determination. Current literature in museology is reviewed in order to identify resonances of this changing political climate. The implications of a suggested shift in museum theory from a focus on objects and collections to 'information,' and a concomitant shift from classification to 'information flow' as providing the onus of meaning, are analyzed. Two case studies are presented in order to illustrate 'new' museology in practice and to question the possibility of recreating the museum institution on a native theory of politics. An afterword briefly summarizes the findings and suggests avenues where further research can be undertaken.

CHAPTER TWO: MODERNISM/NATIONALISM/PRIMITIVISM

Foucault's method of inquiry is applied to the museum in order to show how subjectivity is produced via the discursive practices of the modern episteme. In alignment with Foucault's approach, it will be suggested that the modern knowledge/power regime was only effectively legitimated through a rational science consisting of a taxonomic system which established a systematic ordering of things. Therefore systems of nomenclature will be viewed as central to meaning production in museology during this time. Extending from Foucault, and adopting an argument made by Tony Bennett (1988), it will be suggested that these systems equally imposed an order of culture. Therefore, taxonomic systems developed with response to two factors: The problem of order, which characterized the obsessive scientific urge to explain all natural phenomena; and the problem of culture, which characterized the struggle of newly founded nations to impose a civic identity on its subjects. As such, it will be suggested that these systems imposed an identity on the subject based in a discourse of nationalism, primitivism and modernity. This will be demonstrated in the latter part of the chapter which provides an analysis of two distinct museum practices during the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; one influenced by Pitt Rivers and the other influenced by Franz Boas.¹ This chapter will therefore identify the

¹While there are a significant number of academicians, anthropologists and museologists who have influenced museum practice during this period, and, admittedly, a similar argument could have been made with a discussion of any of these,

social environment's communicative ethos as being structured around classification, and will demonstrate how discursive practices in museology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflected a similar structuring of knowledge. This, in turn will reveal how an understanding of native identities was communicated in the museum so as to guide the discussion on contemporary critiques of traditional museological practices which will be carried out in the subsequent chapters.

Part 1: Systems of Taxonomy: The Communication Infrastructure During the Modern Episteme.

Foucault suggests that the practice of classification underlay the very formulation of the power/knowledge regime during the modern episteme. (1966; ch.3-6) In this respect, he treats classification as one of those technologies of power under which 'bodies' were subsumed. While the modern episteme was not unique in structuring a knowledge based around classification, it is distinguished from the preceding classical episteme in the manner in which that knowledge was organized. A description of the organizing principles of the latter episteme will be presented so as to reveal the points of disjuncture between the two regimes.

Foucault's 'classical episteme' coincides roughly with the seventeenth century, during which theory and nature; being and knowing, become two parts of the world

the influences of Pitt Rivers and Franz Boas have been specifically chosen because they represent two extreme forms of ethnographic displays which divided professionals in the museum field during the early twentieth century. Furthermore, despite the differences, both can be identified under a communicative ethos which centers around classification.

which could be known through objective analysis. (Foucault, 1970) The classificatory table emerged as a basic structure of knowledge which organized 'things' according to their visible difference. Cataloguing, indexing, filing, and classifying were exemplary techniques of ordering knowledge around the new concept of 'truth' that could be learned from an objective/scientific gaze. (Foucault, 1970; ch.5) Thus a new language was constructed to provide an adequate representation of nature.

While the new science during the classical episteme created universal and uniform schemes of similarities and differences in its attempt to project a faithful image of the world, (Coleman, 1983; 53) the modern episteme is characterized by a new way of assembling knowledge around organic structures. As Foucault states: "The general area of knowledge was ... an area made up of organic structures, that is, of internal relations between elements whose totality forms a function." (Foucault, 1970; 218)

A structuring along the principles of analogy and succession characterized the method in which collections were arranged in museums during this period. Paintings in galleries and museums were hung together such that the functional relation between them constituted a 'history of art'. For instance, after the renovations of the Musée Central des Arts in 1796, paintings were rehung by 'schools' which represented the painters' country of origin. (Bazin, 1967 in Hooper-Greenville, 1992; 172) The dissemination of knowledge involved the revelation of deeper, more fundamental relationships.

This technique of ordering in the museum is further described by Eileen

Hooper-Greenhill as a disciplinary technique which served the state in its management of 'populations.' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992) As collections changed hands from the royalty to the state, they became "symbols of statehood that served the function to educate, enculture, and inform the docile bodies through the dominant discourse." (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; 182) In this regard, the museum, as a state apparatus, served the function of transforming the population into a useful resource of the state.

Hooper-Greenhill describes the techniques used for such a transformation as connected with classification. Surveying, classifying, controlling time, space, bodies and things were all techniques of control which established strict regimes of advantage and disadvantage based on visibility. Choosing the museum as her object of study, Hooper-Greenhill thus demonstrates how the classificatory table became both a technique of power and a procedure of knowledge in museological practices during the turn of the eighteenth century. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; 170) However, far from suggesting that a permanent taxonomic system was instituted which would ensure the maintenance of a regime of power, Hooper-Greenhill emphasizes its malleable character which induces it to accommodate the shifting power dynamics of the social and political environments. The impossibility of maintaining a permanent representational system is defined by Foucault as a central problematic depictive of the modern episteme.

I. A Problem of Order

Foucault claims that the classificatory table emerged in response to the problem of order - a problem which is largely symptomatic of the unending pursuit of science to complete the representation of nature. He describes this inability as deriving from the limitations of the rational discourse which forces it to make certain assumptions about nature.

According to Foucault, a requirement of devising systems of classification that would function simultaneously as interpretations of causal relationships and as identification keys is the consideration of nature to be truly continuous. He states: "...this continuum, which appears therefore at the very basis of nomination, in the opening left between description and arrangement, is presupposed well before language, as its condition." (Foucault, 1970; 159) Thus the scientific pursuit to complete a representation of nature involves filling certain gaps with a play of the imagination. Identifying the haphazardness of the rational discourse in this way, Foucault proceeds to deconstruct certain of its legitimating concepts.

Foucault treats concepts such as 'truth' and 'reason' as being relative to historical, social and cultural contexts. Truths, according to Foucault, are seen as effects of the way particular discourses shape the organization of knowledge and therefore power. Foucault thus holds that "any system of thought (such as writing), is a creation, a fiction in the broad sense of the term " (Foucault, 1970; 159) The sustenance of such a fiction is what Donato and Crimp refer to as "The Museum Project."

II. The Museum Project

Donato and Crimp identify what Foucault describes the 'scientific pursuit to represent nature' as "the museum project." As such, the museum was emblematic of a space in which a perfect microcosm of the world could potentially be represented. Museum professionals became the scientists who searched for the perfect representational system through various taxonomic pursuits.

The overwhelming task this involved is demonstrative of the administrative work the Louvre had to undertake in order to organize the collections it received from royalty, churches and conquered territories shortly after the 1789 revolution. According to Bazin, these activities consisted of "requisition; selection; distribution; installation; removal; reinstallation; classification; restoration; inventories; exhibitions; catalogues; for thousands upon thousands of works." (Bazin, 1959; 52 in Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; 179) The sheer density of works that were circulated certainly called for a systematic arrangement. The museum is thus described as an institution contingent upon a system of classification, without which it would be a "bric-a-brac." As Donato states:

Museums are taken to exist only inasmuch as they can erase the heterogeneity of the objects displayed in their cases, and it is only the hypothesis of the possibility of homogenizing the diversity of various artifacts which makes them possible in the first place.
(Donato, 1979; 221).

The mode of structuring knowledge, then, introduced with it a kind of arbitrariness that was practised by curators. It is argued that when objects are spatially

and temporally detached from their original function, they signify only by arbitrary and derived associations. (Donato, 1979; 223) This is addressed by Greenblatt and Edward Said as a condition of representation.

Greenblatt argues that "the principal faculty in generating these representations is not reason but imagination." (Greenblatt: 1991; 12-13) Not only are representations relational and historically contingent, but they also involve pure fantasy on the part of the perceiving subject. This suggests a close relationship between 'objective science' and the literary imagination, as Said indicates:

The text of a linguistic or an anatomical work bears the same general relation to nature (or actuality) that a museum case exhibiting a specimen mammal or organ does. What is given on the page and in the museum case is a truncated exaggeration...whose purpose is to exhibit a relationship between the science (or scientist) and the object, not one between the object and nature.

(Said, 1978; 142)

Donato argues along similar lines when he describes the inevitable failure of the "museum-project" as attempting to understand the objects in the collection in relation to the spectator rather than in relation to the objects themselves. "Meaning," he states, "is the result of metonymic or metaphoric displacements, is anthropomorphic and anthropocentric, and it is because of its anthropocentrism that it is necessarily doomed to failure. (Donato, 1979; 225)

Foucault sees the latter as a condition of discursive practices. He states that "any system of thought (such as writing), is a creation, a fiction in the broad sense of the term, and that it is tied to discourses (ie. clusters of assumptions and meanings)

that interact in the world with other meanings embedded in other discourses, the one perhaps dominant for a time but always changing." (Foucault: 1974; 178) In such a way, Foucault identifies systems of organizing knowledge as dynamic. This parallels with his characterization of the episteme as being in constant oscillation in a series of articulations and shifts. (Foucault, 1974; 191-192) The power/knowledge regime is therefore subject to a set of relations (political, economic, social or cultural) that are constantly in flux. Therefore a Foucauldian method of inquiry would take into account shifts within, as well as discontinuities from, the episteme. An analysis of two systems of classification will be pursued in the latter part of this chapter in order to demonstrate how these represented fluctuations of discursive practices within the modern episteme. However, let us first complete a characterization of the modern episteme by turning to the mildly alternative Foucauldian method of analysis proposed by Tony Bennett.

III. A Problem of Culture

Tony Bennett also identifies the exhibitionary complex² as a response to the problem of order, but one which worked in seeking to transform that problem into one

²Bennett expands the subject of his study from museums to the exhibitionary complex which includes history and natural science museum, dioramas and panoramas, national and later international exhibitions, and arcades and department stores. He considers this complex as undifferentiable on the basis that it is shaped by the same discursive formations of the 'past', 'evolution', 'aesthetics', and 'man.' (Bennett: 1988; 74)

of culture. Although he admits to a power that is made "manifest... by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order," Bennett sees power operating in the museum through the representation of otherness rather than through disciplinary effects. He identifies nation-building as impacting a shift in the rhetoric of progress from "the relations between stages of production to the relations between races and nations by superimposing the associations of the former on to the latter." (Bennett, 1988; 95) As a result,

a progressivist taxonomy for the classification of goods and manufacturing processes was laminated on to a crudely racist teleological conception of the relations between peoples and races which culminated in the achievements of the metropolitan powers, invariably most impressively displayed in the pavilions of the host country.
(Bennett, 1988; 95)

As such, Bennett can be compared with Hooper-Greenhill in making a closer connection between shifting museum practices and the articulations of power coming from the state. However, his approach contrasts with Hooper-Greenhill's in that he does not consider the museum as a disciplinary institution, but rather as a exhibitionary complex. He explains his position by forging a synthesis between Foucault and Gramsci's perspectives on the state and incorporates Gramsci's distinction between the coercive apparatuses of the state and those engaged in the organization of consent. His analysis therefore includes a dialectic between the state and its people where the latter are not characterized as docile bodies, but as individuals which are considered both objects as well as subjects of knowledge.

(Bennett, 1988; 76) As such, Bennet sees these classificatory technologies operating in the museum as providing an opportunity for people to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge." (Bennett, 1988; 76)

IV. Synthesis

In attempting to forge a synthesis among Hooper-Greenhill, Donato, Crimp, and Bennet's work, one can make the following summaries: the early phase of museum history is characterized by the centrality of taxonomic systems; these scientific taxonomies are largely derivative of a fiction based on such concepts of 'truth' and 'reason' and have an anthropomorphic character which confines them within a problematic of representation. While Hooper-Greenhill demonstrates how the museum operated as a disciplinary technology which served to manage populations, Tony Bennett argues that the museum operated as an institution of exhibition which opened its doors to the public, in turn opening the possibilities for 'bodies' to become subjects of knowledge. Bennett further suggests that we identify the taxonomic systems which underlay the very formulation of the modern episteme as responses not only to the problem of order, but also to the problem of culture. With respect to the sustenance of the 'museum-project', Donato and Crimp suggest the inability of a philosophy based on the pursuit of representing nature to maintain itself. Donato further suggests that this is due to the project's anthropocentrism. Extending on this point, one can argue that the production of legitimating discourses are constantly changing as they are subject to their dynamic political, economic, and

technical environments. As such, an analysis of the museum would require an examination of its discursive practices as shifting articulations within a particular episteme.

Having thus presented the ambit of a method of inquiry, let us now turn towards an analysis of two systems of classifying ethnological collections during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to illustrate the taxonomic irregularities which conditioned a particular knowledge during this period.

Part 2: From Pitt-Rivers to Boas - shifting discursive practices in museology.

The following outlines two museological practices in classifying collections which were implemented in various museums during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, respectively. The first is the typological system introduced by Pitt Rivers and the second is the contextual system introduced by Franz Boas. Both exerted a strong influence on Western museological practices.

V. Pitt Rivers

Pitt Rivers was an influential figure in the history of museums for his introduction of an evolutionary principle of classification by artifact type. His typological scheme disconnected artifacts from their cultures and placed them in a universal sequence of progress from simple to complex. First applied to his own private collection of "human technology" which he began amassing in 1851, this system came to represent a blueprint for mid-nineteenth century principles of

organizing museum collections. (Chapman, 1985) In Britain, the system was first popularized when it was applied to the South Kensington Museum's collection. During this period, Pitt Rivers was directly involved with the museum to which he donated a large part of his collection. In 1882, Pitt Rivers moved his collection to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University under the condition that its current arrangement would be maintained. (Chapman, 1985; 35) In 1883, Pitt Rivers established his own museum at Farnham which was to continue its organizational tradition which had caused disaccord among museum professionals. (Chapman, 1985; 38) On a more international scope, Pitt Rivers was able to influence museum practices in Europe and North America through his involvement with various ethnological institutes. One of his more celebrated accomplishments arrived when the Smithsonian Institution decided to adopt a similar organization system when it established its National Museum (Chapman, 1985; 35) The spread of the Pitt Rivers taxonomic system in the West is significant as it involved a racist political ideology which shaped the entire context of the museum visit.

Pitt Rivers' system of taxonomies related to theoretical debates on the subject of Mankind's evolution that were indicative of the period in question. Darwinian principles which suggested an evolutionist law of nature as determining the cause of things, showed a significant influence over Pitt Rivers' classification system, as did the various scientific studies performed on the subject of craniology. At the heart of these intellectual discussions was a scientific pursuit to explain the existence of racial differences (Chapman, 1985; 21). In engaging in these debates through his exhibits,

Pitt Rivers turned the museum site into a testing ground for mid-nineteenth century scientific thought. In this way, museums were seen to operate as an extension of the academic institution. This is demonstrated in the way in which Pitt Rivers arranged his collection.

Briefly, Pitt Rivers's classification system is based on two organising principles: One based on "the connection of forms," the other is based on functional affinities. (Pitt Rivers, 1874a; 294 and 1858; 455 in Chapman, 1985; 18) The first type would include a collection of boomerangs and throwing sticks arranged to show "slow gradations" from straight to curved shapes (Pitt Rivers, 1883a in Chapman, 1985; 18). The second type involved more general comparative considerations. These included, for instance, a series of "primitive locks and keys" organized by function and use and arranged in a chain of progress. (Chapman, 1985; 18)³ Typological characteristics were thus superimposed on a temporal sequence 'to demonstrate the principles of continuity in nature. However, it will be suggested that the gradation of type was made not according to a chronological sequence, but to an evolutionary sequence which placed many contemporary cultures such as those of the Esquimo and the Australian aboriginal at the early stages of human development, in comparison with the European cultures. This is demonstrated in Pitt Rivers' arrangement of his skull collection.

³It is significant to point out that the way in which collections were classified was directly communicated to the museum visitor as they represented the same organizing principles of the museum display. As such, one can say that there was a convergence between the functions of classification and of exhibition in the museum during this period.

Pitt Rivers began to add skulls to his collection and "attempted to establish a series of representative types. (Chapman, 1985; 27-28) He compared Irish skulls with those of the Australian aborigines and higher primates - viewing the Irish 'race' as occupying a low point in a hypothetical developmental hierarchy (Pitt Rivers, 1874b in Chapman, 1985; 28) He furthermore saw the modern Eskimos as the "best representatives of primeval man." (Chapman, 1985; 29) He made these conclusions on the basis of scientific studies which 'discovered' that the ancient races represented in Irish archaeological sites were identical to present-day Eskimos (Pitt Rivers, 1866 and 1867a in Chapman, 1985; 27).

Foucault associates such 'discoveries' with the new techniques of power which emerged with a new way of administering time. (Foucault, 1979; 160-161) Notions of the progress of societies and the genesis of the individual created a new evolutive time which was measured in terms of progress. (Foucault, 1979; 160-161) As such, Pitt River's "evolutive historicity" (adopting Foucault's term), is bound up with a mode of functioning power. This is illustrated in the manner in which River's displays engaged the participation of the visitor.

For instance, the exhibitionary format which Pitt Rivers considered ideal to the museum was a collection organized as a "giant anthropological rotunda." This consisted of concentric circles which illustrate the major phases of evolutionary development ranging from the Palaeolithic period to the Middle Ages progressing from the inner circle to the outer circle. The order of this progression was made because "the increased number of forms would require a larger area"... (Chapman, 1985; 41)

This style of presentation was said to have been peculiarly adapted for "the exhibition of the expanding varieties of an evolutionary arrangement" (Pitt Rivers, 1888; 828 in Chapman, 1985; 39) The performative regime of the museum engaged the visitor in such a way that he/she would be capable of reconstructing the history of any object. As such, the visitor engages in the disciplinary techniques of the self as he/she is confined within the communicative regime of the museum. As such, the visitor participates in a discourse of primitivism which is communicated in Pitt Rivers' displays through their method of comparison of races by artifacts.

Boomerangs and throwing sticks would serve the role of words; given their more substantial character, they were in fact truer tests of race. On such a basis, the whole history of the world could be reconstructed.
(Chapman, 1985; 22)

Although Pitt Rivers saw this issue of race in scientific terms rather than political or economic ones, his arrangements perpetuated a racialist political ideology which placed European nations as more advanced than indigenous. In the process, a new system of 'value' was put in place which evaluated objects according to the degree to which they were able to "testify to the concrete reality of an earlier stage of human Culture, a common past confirming Europe's triumphant present." (James Clifford, 1992; 150)

While the Pitt Rivers' system of taxonomy left a significant influence during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not by any means the only system of classification used at this time. A geographical system was also developed

which illustrated comparisons among different nations. But it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that Pitt Rivers' system was directly challenged by Franz Boas with an alternative principle of museum arrangement extending on the idea of the geographical system and adding a contextual element to the display.

VI. Franz Boas

Franz Boas was the curator of the Anthropology Department at the American Museum of Natural History from 1895 to 1905, during which he transformed the museum from its racist-evolutionist practices into a relativistic, cultural-specific science. (Jonaitis, 1992; 28) Under the Boasian system, discursive practices took on a more interpretive form. The typological relationship among objects in the collection were given a context which emphasized the idea that cultures were relative. A distinct shift in the museological discourse can be traced from evolutionism to relativism. According to Boas,

the main object of ethnological collections should be the dissemination of the fact that civilization is not something absolute, but that it is relative, and that our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes."

(Boas, 1887b; 66 in Tivy, 1993; 10)

Thus a shift occurred from artifact-based utilitarianism proposed by the Pitt-Rivers model, to a contextual, relative, psychological stance. Rather than focusing on the artifact and its classification, a new paradigm was developed which introduced a more

interpretive method through the form of written text such as labels and additional written material provided to the public. (Jacknis, 1985; 103) Photographs, murals, maps and written texts furthermore recreated the physical and social environments in which the objects in the collections were used. As such, a shift can be said to have taken place from a focus on form and function to meaning.

Boas' system did not replace the Pitt Rivers system entirely, however. According to museum practitioners at the time, the main focus of the museum should primarily be the artifact and its classification. (Tivy, 1993; 10) It was found that "these new paradigms were difficult to explore and express in the museum environment," as they did not derive from the collections and classification systems in place. (Tivy, 1993; 10) This is not to say that the Boasian system did not have an anchoring system of classification. Quite the contrary. Collections under the curatorship of Boas were arranged in synchronous ethnographic presents representing "authentic" contexts. (Clifford, 1990; 150) They were organized along a unifying principle of cultural holism.⁴ (Jacknis, 1985; 79) This is exemplified in Boas' geographical system of arrangements and in his use of the 'life group.'⁵

A geographical system of arrangement was employed in the Hall of Northwest Coast Indians in the National Museum. The museum space was divided into several

⁴ However, Boas did not refer to these arrangements as classification, but as a grouping only "according to ethnic similarities". (Tivy, 1993; 10)

⁵This form of display had already been adopted in European museums during the 1840's and 1850's and had been shown in Paris World's Fair of 1878. (Jacknis, 1985; 81)

halls which were devoted to contiguous regions: the Eskimos next to the Northwest Coast, Siberia adjacent to the Eskimo, etc. (Jacknis, 1985; 92) Within the hall of the Northwest Coast, tribal series were presented in cases which were juxtaposed in an orderly fashion from north to south: "first the Tlingit, then Tsimshian, Haida, Bella Coola, Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Coast Salish..." (Jacknis, 1985; 93) Such a display illustrated the geographical demarcations of the cultural area. Within this geographical system, two styles of presentation were used: One which displayed the general collection of specimens of various specified areas in order to "illustrate the culture of the people as a whole," (Jacknis, 1985; 93) and one which presented a tribal arrangement of objects, models, and props in a glass case in order to provide scenic representations of Native culture. The latter presentational style was referred to as the 'life group.'

The 'life group' displays were miniature or life-size models of either villages or scenes that captured a viewpoint of the ethnographer. Contained in glass boxes were mannequins adorned with traditional native dress, accompanied with ornaments and tools, engaging in some form of activity. The extent to which these scenes were choreographed is demonstrated by Jacknis in the following passage:

In order to stylize the figure Boas recommended three methods: figures should be shown in a moment of rest, not at the height of action; skin colour and texture should be an approximation only; and the hair should be represented by paint or modelling, not by actual hair.

(Jacknis, 1985; 102)

These models were used to demonstrate special topics such as the different stitches

used in basketry, or the iconography of Northwest Coast designs. (Jacknis, 1985; 95)

One such tribal arrangement included a model of a shaman's grave, showing the corner posts and the shaman himself lying down, with nose-ornament and other objects in the grave. (Jonaitis, 1992; 36) Another demonstrated the use of the cedar-bark in the following depiction: "A woman is seen making a cedar-bark mat, rocking her infant, which is bedded in cedar-bark, the cradle being moved by means of a cedar-bark rope attached to her toe" (Boas, 1900; 3-4 in Jacknis, 1985; 100) Thus, in engaging in the museum's performative practices, the visitor became a witness of the soon-to-become extinct traditional cultures that were presented, frozen in time, in glass cases. In such a way, Boas' system can be said to have 'museumified' anthropological fieldwork.

In turning the museum piece from an artifact to a Native culture through the fuller recontextualization of the object, ethnographic museums emphasized the 'frozen image' of the Natives. This practice of arrangement reinforced "a mythic notion of a never-changing group of Indians" (Jonaitis, 1992; 46) This not only resulted in a neglect of the native contemporary culture but it also suggested that this culture had no history. By including members of the culture in a glass case along with the objects, an impression that these cultures were removed or detached from the museum visitor's environment was made. The so-called 'objective point of view' is described by Said as 'the transformation of the human into the specimen.' (Said, 1978) As such, native peoples were 'preserved' in a mythic unchanging time period. Such an approach is demonstrative of the beliefs shared by certain anthropologists that the

tribes of the NorthWest Coast were beginning to become extinct.

In essence, the challenge for the collector and ethnographer was to 'rescue' the real thing. (Clifford, 1990; 150) This focus on capturing the 'authenticity' of the object was legitimated through the scientific discourse, and further gave credence to anthropological fieldwork. The fact that art and artifact, original and replicas were often mixed together suggests that it was not the authenticity of the object that was desired, but rather the representation of the object constructed for the confirmation of 'Culture,' and legitimated in the name of science. As Guy Brett states: "When we thought we were looking at other cultures we were really looking at the West's version of them, not the self-representation of those peoples themselves." (Guy Brett, 1991; 114) Within this perspective, one's position is always a product of the historical process. Thus 'primitivism' is seen as an ideological construct situated oppositional to a mythic modernism that is progressive, universal and homogeneous. (Susan Hiller, 1991; 87) This demonstrates how the discursive practices of museums are clearly those of a dominant culture that has "taken a smaller one and presented it in a context in which that culture is now validated by the dominant one, whose values that informed the domination itself are thus reinforced. (Jonaitis, 1992; 51)

In this respect a similarity can be drawn between Pitt Rivers' taxonomic system and Franz Boas' system of arrangement. While the former focused representational practices on the idea of 'origin' and the latter on the idea of 'authenticity,' both approaches shared a similar dependency on classification and shared similar results in perpetuating the idea of a linear progression from the primitive to the modern. As

such, both demonstrated a response to the problem of order as well as a response to the problem of culture.

In the Pitt Rivers system of nomenclature the collection replaces the origin with classification, whereas in the Boasian system the collection replaces authenticity with a presentational arrangement. This is a process which is explained by Stewart as "making temporality a spatial and material phenomenon." (Stewart, 1984; 151) Both systems demonstrate how the collection's existence is dependent upon principles of organization and categorization. Both Pitt Rivers' and Franz Boas' museological practices converted time into spatial arrangements. Although each differed in their arrangements - the former superimposes an evolutionary framework onto temporal space and the latter an ethnographic illustration onto a presentational space - both depended on particular forms of classification. While the former decontextualizes original social and cultural milieus in order to recontextualize them into a universal sequence of progress, the latter decontextualizes the same milieus in order to recontextualize them into an ethnographic 'snapshot.' This process ultimately does not take into account the object's appropriation and dehistoricizes it.

This process of contextualizing and decontextualizing is further elaborated by Jonaitis. In decontextualizing an object such as a totem pole from an environment and recontextualizing it within a display in a glass box in a museum "creates an illusory representation of the world formed by objects now "standing for" abstract concepts, such as a "dance mask" of a particular ethnic group." In this process, an air of authenticity is created enhancing the scientific validity of the collection. (Jonaitis,

1992; 39) The function of the collection is thus not the restoration of context of origin, nor of authenticity, but rather, the creation of a new context, a context standing in a metaphorical rather than a contiguous relation to the world of everyday life. (Stewart, 1984; 151) These representational practices are furthermore problematized with the manner in which they presupposed an order of culture.

Nineteenth and twentieth century museum practices perpetuated a discursive framework, consisting of representational practices; taxonomic systems; and performative practices, which placed subjectivities within a range from primitive to modern. As such these practices can be described as being disciplinary. The manner in which they framed the subject was effected in their underlying assumption that humanity works as a totality. According to Susan Hiller, "the concept of 'primitive' in European thought begins with an interest in discovering the origins of human society." (Hiller, 1991; 87) This is closely connected to Pitt Rivers' evolutionary models of social development which positions the West at the most advanced instance. To conform to this model, distant societies are imagined as 'static', a condition which was perpetuated in Boas' displays.⁶ Thus both Pitt Rivers and Boas's museum practices encouraged the perception of the Native 'other' as in the early stages of human development. (Hiller, 1991; 87)

⁶Referring to museums and object subjectivity, Jonaitis points out that "traditional" Native art is an invented notion by ethnographers and collectors who stated what traditional was pure, pristine, "before white contact." (1992)

VII. Chapter Summary

It has been demonstrated how the taxonomic systems which were proposed by Pitt Rivers during the mid nineteenth century and Franz Boas during the early twentieth century, were distinct from one another, yet shared a common colonial discourse which was emblematic of a structure of knowing during what Foucault calls the modern episteme. Both shared a common response to the problem of order and culture, and contributed to the discourse of modernism and primitivism which positioned the native subject in the beginning of a continuum from 'primitive' to 'modern'. No discrepancies between the communicative ethos of the social environment and that of the museum institution were revealed. Instead the communicative process in the museum complemented the racist politics of the period in question. While the Pitt Rivers system and Boasian system varied in their performative practices, they shared a consistent form of communication which concentrated on classification. Thus far, the evidence suggests that a focus of meaning on classification is the determining factor for a communicative ethos under the modern episteme. This argument will be further developed in the following chapter which provides an overview of the controversy surrounding the exhibition "The Spirit Sings."

CHAPTER THREE: THE SPIRIT SINGS: MARKING A PERIOD OF CRISIS

The exhibition entitled "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" presented at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary during the Winter 1988 Olympics, shared similar museological techniques as those that have been described in the previous chapter. Placing a focus on objects and the collection as well as organizing techniques which contextualize the display in a historic framework, "The Spirit Sings" equally reflected a communicative ethos as that described under a modern episteme.

The focus placed on the objects of the collection is reflected in the massive undertaking which this project consisted of, which included considerable research to find the "important" collections of Canadian Indian and Inuit material scattered in museums and private collections around the world. This involved travels to more than twenty countries, and visits to almost 150 museums and private collectors. A resulting 665 loans from about 90 lenders had been negotiated. (The Spirit Sings, 1988; 7) According to then director of the Glenbow Museum, Duncan Cameron, this exhibit was "one of the most complex museum projects in memory." (The Spirit Sings, 1988; 7) It undoubtedly also became one of the most controversial museum projects in memory, in Canada.

This chapter continues an argument begun in the first chapter which discussed "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" as marking a period

of crisis in Canadian museum history. It furthermore attempts to explain this period as the consequence of an incongruity between the social environment's communicative ethos and the museum's. The first part of this chapter provides a detailed account of the controversy surrounding the exhibit. The second part of this chapter identifies the catalysts as being the larger macro-political and economic factors which forced the politicization of the museum, rendering the context of museum culture vulnerable to change. The crisis which museums are currently facing is identified as the product of this incongruous relationship between the museum's internal communicative ethos and the larger political discourse.

"The Spirit Sings" had a powerful impact on the history of museums in Canada. This event distinguishes itself from those mentioned earlier in that it became the central podium for all critical issues that had been brewing over the last few decades in the history of museology and in the history of Native politics. As a single event, it drew the harshest criticisms ever to be recorded in the history of museums in Canada. As described by Blundell and Grant, it

succeeded in dividing anthropologists, museums and native peoples over such issues as sponsorship, repatriation of artifacts, use of sacred objects in exhibits, the political (or non-political) nature of museums and the question of the appropriate presentation of native peoples and native history by museums.

(Blundell & Grant, 1989; 12)

The controversy surrounding this exhibit not only raised questions about the representation of Native peoples in the museum space, but also revealed the deeper power dynamics that structure a certain way of 'knowing' in the museum indicative of

the modern episteme. The sheer magnitude of the debate which followed; the full scope of issues that it raised; its international impact; and the media attention it received mark it as a pivotal point in the history of museums in Canada. The museum was forced into political introspection, the consequences of which were unprecedented in Canada. The result was a challenge to the fundamental communicative premises of an institution rooted in colonial practice.

Part I. "The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples"

"The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples" was an exhibition organized as part of the Olympics Arts Festival in 1988. It was organized by the Ethnology Department of the Glenbow Museum and included a curatorial committee consisting of seven people representing various academic institutions and museums across Canada who were said to have "brought to the project a variety of academic backgrounds including art history, anthropology, philosophy and Canadian Studies." (Harrison, 1988) Together, the group aimed at reassembling early contact period material from Canada's native populations to give some insight into the philosophies and worldviews of these peoples. (Harrison, 1987; 12) This involved the assembling of a collection consisting of over six hundred and fifty Native objects drawn from nineteen institutions in North America and Europe, almost all of which were collected from the indigenous peoples of Canada during the years of first contact with Europeans (1650-1930). (Harrison, 1988)

With the intent of educating the Canadian population about the Native heritage

of this country, the exhibit was organized along three themes: 1) to present the richness, diversity and complexity of Canada's Native cultures as they were witnessed at the time of contact; 2) to explore the common threads that link these cultures together to create a distinctive world-view; 3) to emphasize the adaptability and resilience of these cultures in the face of the dominant influences of European cultures. (Harrison, 1988) This was accomplished in the form of a rewritten historical context and various live performance such as dance, story-telling, fashion shows, readings, in which a number of native peoples from western Canada participated. (Harrison, 1988)

The source of the resulting controversy can be found in the organizers' choice of sponsorship which conflicted with the interests of the Lubicon Cree of Northern Alberta. In early April, 1986, the organizers of the exhibit accepted a grant from Shell Oil in order to meet their budget of 2.6\$ M. This stirred much disagreement among the Cree and their supporters, since Shell had been involved with them in a forty-nine year-long land dispute, which as yet had not been resolved. Furthermore, both the Federal and the Provincial governments, which were also stakeholders in the land issue, contributed to the investment needed for the completion of the exhibit. The Lubicon Lake Cree expressed their discontent over this issue by announcing a boycott of the 1988 Winter Olympics in mid-April 1986. While their initial aim involved drawing attention to the land dispute, their criticisms turned towards the Glenbow museum over the issue of sponsorship. Consequently, the museum served as a site for a political demonstration and, with the growing involvement of parties supporting the

Cree, both on a national and international level, and with the media attention it received, the Glenbow museum became a symbol for many of the cultural biases found in Western cultural institutions.

The Lubicon Cree made a conscious effort to gain as much support for the boycott through various correspondences and trips to Europe. "In the end twelve institutions out of the 110 approached by the Glenbow supported the boycott and did not, therefore, lend to the Spirit Sings." (Harrison, 1988) The boycott was furthermore supported by organizations such as the World Council of Churches, the European Parliament, some national and regional native political bodies, the executive of the Canadian Ethnology Society and some members of the academic community. (Harrison, 1988) What drew more attention to this issue, however, was the role the media played among these different parties.

According to Julia Harrison, one of the curators of the exhibit, none of the organizations which supported the boycott contacted the Glenbow directly "to verify the statements made by the Lubicon concerning the nature and purpose of the exhibition." (Harrison, 1988; 6) Organizers of the exhibit further attempted but failed to meet with local band councils. (Harrison, 1988; 7) Instead, the entire campaign directed against the exhibit was conducted through the media. (Harrison, 1988; 6) As a result a dialogue between proponents and opponents of the boycott was staged, with the former comprising the Lubicon Cree and their supporters and the latter comprising the Federal government, the Alberta government, the oil industry, the Glenbow museum and the Olympics. This shaped the flavour of the debate which resounded

throughout Europe and North America. In identifying the greater attention the media gave to the demonstration outside the Glenbow museum on the day of the opening, Harrison suggests that the media sided with the Lubicon boycott. (Harrison, 1988; 8) She sees further consequences of the media hype in the way in which misleading judgments of the exhibit were made, and in the manner in which the discussion began to include people that had little knowledge of the exhibit itself. For example, she claims that while the Canadian Ethnology Society (CESCE) executive passed a motion in support for the Lubicon, the only two published references to the CESCE motion refer to it as a motion of the society as a whole rather than a reflection of the opinion of the executive alone (not of the membership).¹ Harrison furthermore argues that many criticisms of the exhibit were made by peoples who had not seen the exhibit. (Harrison, 1988; 8) Thus it can be seen how the primary issue of a land claim grew to include a broader debate involving a multiplicity of voices and opinions. The discourse that focused on the controversial boycott of the Calgary Olympics by the Cree took various complex turns. Initial criticisms were clearly contextualized as a contemporary political issue of land claims and grew to include the issue of the politicization of the museum via sponsorship. The content of the exhibit itself was put to question in the historical contextualization of the collection and on its choice of an ethnographic display. Other issues which developed included the repossessing of cultural heritage by the First Nations; the unhealthy colonial relationship between

¹Harrison makes reference to H. Warner's "Look What They've Done to My Song" in Canadian Art, Spring 1988. and E. Kirzner's "Lubicon Olympic land stand NOW." December 1987. (1988; 8)

First Nations and museums with anthropological and ethnological collections; the politics surrounding the acceptance of contemporary Native art in terms of aesthetic judgments rather than ethnographic values (Muse: 1988) and traditional museological practices such as collecting and classification. To this day, "The Spirit Sings" is often referred to as the symbol of the underlying biases of traditional museological practices.

One of the museum practices which came under close scrutiny included the exhibit's representational practices which categorized materials within stages of cultural development, alternative ways of life, or economic vs. artistic life. (Blundell & Grant, 1989) These were argued to have contributed to the silencing of the contemporary Native voice and framing the Native culture as a traditional one from the 'past.'

For instance, First Nations Peoples expressed concern over the mood of the exhibit which seemed to 'celebrate the past' while remaining silent about the present. (Stainforth, 1990; 129) In effect, the exhibit unproblematicized contemporary native struggles by not representing nor respecting the current political issues. Native artist Joanne Cardinal-Schubert called the exhibit:

...so offensive: It shows 300-year-old stuff which only serves to reinforce the lack of attention paid to the contemporary problems of tribes such as the Lubicon. Not only that, but the work itself, all taken from the Indian, is removed from its life involvement.

(in Muse: 1988)

The chief of the Lubicon Cree, Bernard Ominayak, stated that "there's a great

difference between the past and the present." (last issue, Alberta, Autumn 1987)

According to the interviewer, Ominayak did not feel that the public viewer would get an insight into contemporary Indian culture through the historical artifacts. (last issue, Alberta, Autumn 1987) Blundell addresses this as a problem of signification in the following:

Decontextualization and dehistoricizing conventions are in place when representations of First Peoples occur in contexts that lack concrete lived-in historical referents, including contexts where images are accompanied by "understated captions."

(Blundell, 1993; 17)

These critiques were addressed by the curators through forms of public address in which they explained their own inevitable cultural biases and the inevitable biases inherent in the context of museum culture. According to the co-ordinating curator, Julia Harrison, the curators expressed awareness of the fact that this exhibition represented "ideas and interpretations offered by the learned outsider".

Critical to the collective approach was the awareness that the material presented in the exhibition and in the essays is not definitive but only one set of interpretations. It intends to initiate a dialogue with those interested in the subject, most particularly Canada's native peoples themselves.

(Julia Harrison, 1987; 11 in Stainforth, 1990; 126)

Thus it had been acknowledged that the curators' subjectivities were constructs of a particular way of knowing, which, it is further suggested in another article by the same curator, is equally shaped by the culture of the museum. In "'The Spirit Sings' and the future of anthropology," Julia Harrison responds to the criticisms by the CESCE Executive by suggesting that they responded "ethnocentrically and with cultural

parochialism" - making judgments about an exhibit without sufficiently understanding the culture of museums. She states: "When viewed from within the museum community every action that Glenbow took made sense. This is not to suggest that every move was the correct one but it was rational in terms of the culture of museums." (1988; 9) Such a response suggests a fundamental distinction between articulations within the confines of a museum context and articulations outside.

Within the museum context, the curators maintained a distinction between culture and politics, attributing the former to the museum character and insisting on an autonomous status with respect to the latter. According to Harrison, "Glenbow undertook to be socially responsible rather than to be politically active" (Harrison, 1988; 8) She goes on to state:

While it may be legitimate to mount political action round any activity undertaken by a public institution, it would destroy the legitimacy of those institutions if they were forced to espouse the political causes of one pressure group after another. Museums...are expected by their constitutions to remain non-partisan.

(Harrison, 1988; 8)

With this position, they would not and could not engage in a political dialogue. As for the museum's affiliation with Shell Oil, the curators maintained that this was a decision made strictly for financial reasons and had absolutely no bearing as to the content of the exhibit. (Harrison, 1988; 8)

Part II. Discussion: Objective vs. Political Approaches

The contradiction which underlies the museum crisis is that between the perspective which believes museums can claim immunity from the political implications and that which believes it cannot. Is the museum's social responsibility one of political action, or is it one of maintaining an impartial objective stance which, while with the intention of erasing bias, would result in a distancing from social realities?² These two diametrically opposed positions can be illustrated in the contrasting two developments in cartography: Ancient Chinese and Western European.

Early Chinese cartographers utilized five compass points in order to draw their maps. These included the four cardinal points familiar to all map readers and one other, which "revealed the geographic position of the observer, and so declared to all who gazed at the map the biases and the perspectives that might not otherwise be apparent in the finished product." (Head, May 1994; 11) Clearly, the notion of perspective and subjectivity was readily acknowledged. In contrast, fifteenth century European cartographers ignored the last point and, as a consequence, assumed an objectivity which Ivan Head describes as "illusory and which encourages the vulnerability of the unknown and the unexpected." (Head, May 1994; 12) Taking these two distinct positions, let us now examine the museum using the metaphor of the map.

²Julia Harrison states that "if museums are to continue making a valid contribution to society they must remain objective. (in "The Spirit Sings opens as scheduled despite controversy," February 1988; 1-2 in Lee-Ann Martin in Mandate Study, 1994; 34)

I. Museums as Maps

Museums, like maps, exist in order to orient their users: to indicate where one has been, where they can go, and how that travel may best be accomplished. In the map, the unknown loses its threat of confusion. These museological maps define and negotiate spatial and temporal distances, constructing boundaries between the place where one is and is not.

(McLoughlin, 1993; 370)

Like maps, museums provide the visitor a journey through histories that are fixed in space and time. As the visitor moves from one exhibit room to another, he/she learns the history of a culture. In The Spirit Sings exhibit, for example, the journey begins at the Atlantic Coast and proceeds through the Northern Woodlands, the Northern Plains, the Western Sub-Arctic, the Arctic and ends at the North West Coast. Within a few hours, the visitor travels across Canada without having to leave the museum site. At each destination, the material evidence of a cultural grouping are displayed with accompanying ethnographic text describing these cultures with the intent of 'educating' the visitor. Consequently, these displays cultivate one and the same time, "both a sense of the availability and the containability of those societies represented." (Coombes, 1991; 192) Within each respective displays, a similarity of culture is communicated. All differences are effaced in the name of what is identified as shared. "Difference becomes domesticated." (McLoughlin, 1993; 377)

The texts accompanying the display, furthermore provide selected directional points along a temporal trajectory beseeching the visitor to explore the cultures' histories. Reference to the point of perspective is entirely omitted. This is

exemplified in the absence of the curators' names in the labels which accompany the objects on display. Through an ethnographic model³ of display, these exhibits assume an authorial voice when they 'teach' the visitor about the culture on display.

'Knowledge' of the worldviews of Canada's native population is disseminated through information in the form of text; photos of documentary material of various kinds; sound tapes of native music; and video-film that served as an introduction to the exhibition. (Harrison in Stainforth, 1990; 117) The procedure taken in reintegrating these objects into their traditional contexts involves early recorded accounts by Europeans, ultimately representing their perspective.

...through the spirit and aesthetic that emanate from the objects, we can gain some understanding of the objects and of the people who made them. This insight, integrated with the European voices who commented upon them, provide a basis for greater understanding of the cultures of Canada's native people at the time of contact with Europeans.

(The Spirit Sings, 1988; 13)

Documentation of the collection is drawn from a wide range of sources including records of employees of the Hudson's Bay Company in the mid-nineteenth century; documents of individual explorers who were contracted by European museums during the late nineteenth century; and scientific reports drawn by national expedition teams such as the Danish Fifth Thule Expedition which set out for a "scientific exploration of the peoples and regions of the Central Canadian Arctic" in

³The curators of the exhibit had a choice between two models for their display: the aesthetic model and the ethnographic model. While the former, which is used mostly in art galleries, maximizes the use of sight in interpretation, the latter maximizes the use of text.

1921. (The Spirit Sings, 1988; 14-15) These enabled the curators to label and contextualize the objects in the collection and successfully accomplish their educative role.

The selection of the museum's function as 'educator' inadvertently encompasses a requirement for classification. This is revealed in the following examination of how 'education' became enforced as a component of the museum's purpose during the early twentieth century.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the public's regard of ethnographic collections in British museums as amusing 'curiosities' hindered the museums' educational goals. The solution to this problem, as advised by an influential body of the League of Empire, was the "orderly arrangement and transformation of mere curios into objects of scientific interest by appropriate classification." (Museums Journal, Sept. 1904 in Coombes, 1991; 192) The taxonomic systems that were put in place, however, carried certain racist ideological underpinnings, as discussed in the previous chapter. Similar consequences, in terms of ideological bias, can be revealed in contemporary museological practices which focus meaning on classification. This has been addressed by Archuleta and Harrison, who discuss the impact that exclusion from early twentieth century taxonomic systems has on cultural identity.

The issue of exclusion through systematic categorization is addressed by Margaret ... as having affected the exhibition history of Native American fine art within museums. It is argued that since paintings were first viewed as

ethnographic records during the early 1900s by anthropologists and provided evidence for anthropological research, it is not surprising to find Native works in ethnological displays rather than in art displays in museums. The acceptable Native art forms according to these anthropological records were pottery, textiles, basketry etc. (Archuleta, 1994; 20) These were furthermore classified according to anthropological regional areas. As such, an entire history of Native artists went unnoticed and, instead, Native art forms represented anthropologists' perspectives of Native culture. This silencing of histories is illustrated on a more specific level with the exclusion of the 'Metis' as a classificatory label.

In an article about the exhibition "Metis" which was mounted at the Glenbow in 1985, Julia Harrison suggests that classification systems which developed in nineteenth century anthropology and flourished under the colonial framework, had an adverse impact on cultural identity. She points to the ideological biases of the taxonomic systems as not taking into consideration geographic dislocation nor the dynamic nature of culture. (Harrison in Muse; vol.4, no.4; 1987; 46) The results of these biases can be found in the scarcity of museum's collections of Metis objects. Since the Metis did not fit into the categories which were created by anthropologists during the nineteenth century, they were excluded from museum collections and exhibitions.⁴ Instead, Metis cultural objects were misattributed to categories of

⁴Their representational exclusion is not only symptomatic in the museum but also in politics. The government has largely ignored the 'Metis' in its census taking. It is only in the 1981 census, after several decades, that the Metis are included as a category of ethnic identification. (Frideres, 1988; 295)

'Indian' or 'French'. (Harrison in Muse; vol.4, no.4; 1987; 47) This neglect, on the part of museum curators, of taking into account political movements of a culture when classifying objects contributes to the silencing of a cultural identity.

This can be further seen as resulting from an assumed fixity of territorial demarcations in classificatory techniques. In continuing topological tradition of early twentieth century anthropologists, contemporary methods reproduce these assumptions. Contemporary methods of classifying ethnological collections identify the geographical location the object was found in; the culture to which it belongs (identified through common linguistic patterns) and a number corresponding to the sequence of the collection. For instance 7 B 20 indicates that the object comes from the Northwest Coast (indicated by the number seven); it is a Haida object (indicated by the B); and it is the twentieth object catalogued. 7 X 417 indicates once again the Northwest Coast; undocumented (indicated by the X); four hundred and seventeenth object catalogued. (West Mattie, 1993) Such a system of nomenclature unproblematicizes the division of space and the concomitant understanding of cultural difference. In a recent article, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta address geographical territoriality in their argument that assumptions are made about the unanimity of space, place and culture and the treatment of cultural difference as taking place within a locality. They state that "the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power." (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; 8)

Thus, both temporal and spatial directives, which are offered in displays such as The Spirit Sings, contribute to the idea of the museum as being culturally

autonomous from its external political environment. This is indicated in the omission of a cardinal point, both in classification techniques and display, which would situate perspective. Furthermore, the display communicates a regime of sovereignty by insisting on a commonality of culture. The subdivision according to tribe and geography gives the cultures a status of homogeneity as part of a singular Canadian cultural map. As a consequence the displays deny the legitimacy of the subjective voice. (McLoughlin, 1993; 377) Furthermore, they engage the visitor in performative practices which contribute to a consolidation of the sovereign voice and silences subjectivity through the means of the 'educator' function of the ethnographic model. Subjectivities in this sense are bounded by the institutional framework which defines them as undifferentiated 'bodies.'

II. Conclusion

The silences in the narratives developed around the cultural objects of the collection are only revealed when a broader political context is provided. It is then noticeable that the cultural objects within their narratives are "not asked to speak of the disruption and extinction, the change or the loss, that was evident on their return." (McLoughlin, 1993, 365) It is only then that an epistemological bias is revealed. Thus, in re-presenting a collection of Native objects which had been amassed and classified during the colonial period, the Glenbow museum opened itself to scrutiny by a contemporary discourse, which by then was able to address and demonstrate the

exhibit's ideological bias. What has been suggested in this last section is that classification no longer served the purpose for preserving the legitimacy of ideology. This further suggests that changes are occurring in the social communicative ethos - a subject which will be further developed in the following chapter.

III. Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates how the politicization of the exhibit "The Spirit Sings" reveals a disconnectedness between museum culture and the current political environment. As such, the event underscores a period of crisis in Canadian museum history. Museums are now faced with the task of realigning their practices with the needs of their communities. The tensions which result from the frictions between inside and outside forces are identified by Duncan F. Cameron as resulting from the museum's need for power (which he identifies as the acceptance and authority to name objects and collections by label and context) conflicting with its proclaimed commitment to ethical humanitarianism. (Cameron, 1992; 9) What such an analysis of The Spirit Sings suggests, then, is that the moral crisis which museums are facing is the result of the no longer defensible ethos, based on classification, which underlay the foundations of the historic European museum model. (Cameron, 1992; 9) This position is further developed in the following chapter which traces the changes in the social environment's communicative ethos and examines the outcome of museum practices which place a focus of meaning on 'information' rather than on the object or classification.

CHAPTER FOUR

MUSEUMS' PRACTICES IN TRANSITION: FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO FUNCTIONALISM

While certain museum curators assert the necessity of an objective approach by insisting on the "freedom of all museums to maintain intellectual honesty, scientific and historical integrity and academic freedom" (John McNeill, 1990 in Martin, 1994; 35), the events surrounding The Spirit Sings indicate that these approaches ultimately conflict with the interests of the communities which the museums represent. As such, museums are torn between their moral obligation to the community which they represent and the museums' ideological foundation within the modern episteme. By asking museums to refuse to loan artifacts for The Spirit Sings, the Lubicon provided an opportunity for many institutions to reassess sensitive ethical and political issues they seldom had opportunities to address before. (Martin, 1994; 34) These issues, as outlined in the previous chapter, not only include the problem of perspective, but more importantly, the issues which pertain to certain ways of knowing which structure the form of communication in the museum. Neglected in The Spirit Sings was the acknowledgement of the cultural ownership of the objects which would identify these objects as part of a history which is distinct from Western European history, and which predates the period of colonial contact. It had been suggested in the previous chapter that the written texts upon which most information about such collections are

based, are laden with the philosophies of European explorers and anthropologists. What if one's history predates modernity? Are modern institutions, which are based on a Western European model, able to represent cultures whose philosophies and world views have developed along a different historical trajectory? If not, is it possible in the context of late modernity, to recreate a panoply of institutions on a theory of politics which calls for collective rather than individual rights and which identifies these 'rights' from a more ontological approach? In a paper presented during the 1994 Commonwealth Conference "Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies," Michael Ames argues that there are fundamental concepts of equality that need to be taken into consideration in Canada. "We are not only dealing with equal rights of the individual, but also with equality in community - not only with representation by population but also with equality of cultures." (Ames; May 1994) The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian justice system are based on "universal" principles rather than cultural beliefs. (Barnaby, 1992; 39) Therefore, when the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples calls for "creating partnerships," and identifies an equal partnership as involving the "mutual appreciation of the conceptual knowledge and approaches characteristic of First Peoples, and the empirical knowledge and approaches of academically-trained workers," (1992; 7) it must acknowledge this fundamental difference.¹

This chapter attempts to reveal the communicative conditions which

¹This has been addressed by Tom Hill and Deborah Doxtator during the 1994 Commonwealth Conference "Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies."

precipitated this debate by tracing the development of Native political organizations and identifying certain political concepts which they have introduced into the social environment's communicative ethos. Resonances of these concepts are revealed in a literature review of 'new museology' theory. The communicative underpinnings of the latter theory are recognized as taking shape around a more functional understanding of communications which is based on a concept of 'information'. A critique is developed using examples of 'new museology' which are drawn from two native-run NorthWest Coast museums. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: Firstly, to identify the Lubicon's grievances within the macro-political discourse in order to attempt and explanation for the timing of the museum crisis; and secondly, to entertain the possibility for the existence of counter-institutions/ non-colonial institutions during the period of late modernity.

Part 1: Developments of a Discursive Formation

By freezing a people in time, their own history of ... transformations and the true nature of their contemporary lives are ignored...such time-distancing conceptualisations...served the purposes of colonising societies who have required new economic or geographic space to occupy. People who already occupied that space belonged to a distant time, the argument then goes, and it was distance which must be inevitably overcome by the forces of progress. Furthermore, some argue that these conceptualisations have served to mask the realities of cultural processes by which Westerners exploit and oppress other peoples.

(Caulfield, 1969 in Blundell, 1989; 27)

The above addresses anthropological representational practices which ahistoricized and

romanticized native cultures into a mythical past. According to Valda Blundell, these self-criticisms of anthropology first appeared in a volume entitled Reinventing Anthropology in 1969. (Blundell, 1989; 27) While these critiqued an earlier generation of disciplinary practitioners in the field of anthropology, they could equally have been directed to the museological practices described in the previous chapter. These commentaries were further in line with general contestations of colonialism and Eurocentrism which have developed since the 1950s. (Clifford, 1990; 155) Thus the beginnings of a discourse critical to the claims of legitimacy via scientific objectivism can be traced to this period in the United States. In Canada, as it will be demonstrated, below, a critical discourse did not gain ground until the 1970's. Reasons for this seemingly sudden upsurge of criticism can be explained by examining Canada's political climate which, by the 1980s, had consolidated representative Native voices through various political organizations.

The historical development of Native political organizations can be traced from the establishment of the North American Indian Brotherhood in 1944 which enabled the first ever national congregation of Native peoples to meet as a political unit. (McMaster, 1994; 8) A number of significant organizational changes took place in the following three decades which enabled stronger representative voices for Native peoples in Canadian politics. In 1954, the North American Indian Brotherhood dissolves to become the National Indian Council (NIC) which in 1961 becomes the representative voice for both status and non-status Indians. In 1968, the NIC splits into the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) representing status Indians and the

Canadian Metis Society representing non-status Indians. The latter becomes known as the Native Council of Canada in 1970. (Frideres, 1988; 270-271) By the 1970's a strong native organizational structure is developed, the result of which is reflected in the successful demise of the 1969 federal White Paper which proposed a policy based upon an ideology of assimilation.² As such, these organizations came to be recognized as important instruments of social change. This is not to suggest that the development of these organizations effectively created a singular forum for all Native grievances. On the contrary, these organizations have not always received the support from their representative peoples. For instance, one of the reasons for establishing the Affiliation of First Nations (AFN) in 1981 has been a response to the loss of faith in the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB). It was felt that after the 1970's period of development, the NIB became removed from 'Native grass roots' and no longer responded to the peoples it represented. (Frideres, 1990; 4) As such, there was a call for the organization's decentralization. By the mid-1980's Native organizations are described as "disorganized, demoralized and without effective leadership." (Frideres, 1988; 271) ³ Nonetheless, further political events during this last decade have given these organizations a more supported directive towards amending present policy guidelines. According to Jhappan, the most significant of these were The Meech Lake Accord and the Oka Crisis. As such, Canadian Indians became to be featured as

²Protests to the White Paper are reflected in Harold Cardinal's document entitled "Unjust Society," also known as the Red Paper (1970).

³A further indication of the multifaceted and complex structure of Native politics lies in the individual ways in which each Native group is negotiating land claims.

"potent forces capable of inducing changes in government policies." (Jhappan, 1990; 19)

The implications of these developments on the social environment's communicative ethos can be elaborated through a discussion of Foucault's concept of 'counter-power.'

An emerging counter-power

If one wants...to struggle against disciplines and disciplinary power, it is not toward the ancient right of sovereignty, one should turn, but toward the possibility of a new form of right, one which must indeed be antidisciplinary, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty.

(Foucault, 1980; 108)

Foucault generally envisions change in power and knowledge as cyclical, in that a counterpower operates on the same level as the power it fights, and is then transformed into a power which produces a new counterpower. (Habermas: 1987; 281) As such, Foucault provides little possibility for challenging the disciplinary effects of a given knowledge/power regime. Instead, he sees discursive practices as becoming subsumed within it. However, the above passage suggests that certain conditions permit change to occur at the level of the episteme. While it is not in the purview of this thesis to undertake a discussion of the possibilities of an epistemic shift, it will be

suggested that current political discursive formations⁴ in Canada are challenging the European-Western concept of sovereignty. Of significance is the manner in which this challenge posits itself in relation to the sovereign power. This 'counterpower' is not occurring on the horizon of the sovereign power, as a Foucauldian diagnosis would suggest, but is challenging the very context of that power. The counterpower in question involves the political discourse on Native self-government.⁵

The wish for self-government and self-determination represent a means and not an end in itself.⁶ As such, it speaks within the purview of Western European styles of governing only to the extent necessary that will allow it to

⁴A discursive formation is defined neither in terms of a particular object, nor a style, nor a play of permanent concepts nor by the persistence of a thematic, but must be grasped in the form of a system of regular dispersion of statements. (Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge, in Gordon: 1980; 63)

⁵Although the First Nations do not have a single national position on self-government, there are major themes in First Nation political thought which distinguishes it from the 'modern' power complex.

⁶It is significant to note that of the 594 Indian bands, only 9 have moved to self-government legislation; the 8 bands of the Cree secured their self-governing scheme pursuant to their comprehensive land claim, and the Sechelt band in B.C. opted for a municipal style of self-government. (Peters, 1989; Taylor & Paget, 1989 in Weaver, 1990; 13) The remaining bands are subject to a self-administration programme subject to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). Nonetheless, the claim to tribal sovereignty is regularly asserted by Native leaders in Canada. This has been made explicit in numerous written representations by the Affiliation of First Nations; the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians; National Indian Brotherhood; Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. (Boldt and Long, 1992; 204) Thus, although the essential ideas are few in number, it is suggested that they have far-reaching consequences for the relationship between the Canadian State and the First Nations.

gain autonomy from these institutional frameworks. This will then allow for the establishment of a form of governing that is in line with its own cultural traditions. As Boldt and Long state:

Indians in Canada are opting for sovereignty because they view it as the most promising doctrine for protecting their ancestral heritage from encroachment by external influences and powers. They want sovereignty not to justify indigenous coercive authority within their communities but, rather, to exclude the sovereign authority of the Canadian government.
(1992; 198)

Boldt and Long further distinguish tribal traditions of Canada's Natives from European-Western political ideologies through tracing the historical development of the latter and pointing towards fundamental inconsistencies with respect to the traditions of the former. For instance, the following distinctions between the European-Western political ideologies and Native traditions are made: the concept of the state as a ruling entity vs. the concept of nationhood as the directly spoken will of the community; the process of governing by territoriality vs. a process of collective rule as the basis of nationhood which transcends issues of territoriality; and the treatment of individual rights as protected by the constitution vs. the understanding of community with a founding prescription of egalitarianism. (Boldt & Long, 1992; 192-200) As such, native approaches can be revealed as distinct from the dominant knowledge/power complex. While the impact that native discourses exert on policy are, as of yet, mostly felt on a conceptual level, they

are nonetheless setting new standards for analyzing the relationship between the State and First Nations. Weaver describes their impact as influencing a paradigm shift from the old ways of conceptualizing First Nations issues (an exemplar of which includes the assimilationist policy of the White Paper (1969)) to the new ways (depictive of the ideas presented in the Penner Report on Indian self-government (1993)). (Weaver, 1990; 10)

In terms of the overall ethos of the two paradigms, the old paradigm is characterized by a preoccupation with law, formality, and control over First Nation Peoples. The new paradigm is more concerned with justice, adaptation, and workable inter-cultural relations. And it conceptualizes relations between the state and First Nations as going beyond "lawful obligation" to incorporate the historical and moral obligations in an attempt to put increasingly hostile and unproductive state aboriginal relations onto a new and useful footing.

(Weaver, 1990; 15)

Having thus outlined the discursive stirrings within the social environment's communicative ethos, one can begin assessing their association with the museum's communicative ethos. To what extent are contemporary museum practices reflecting Native discursive formations? Are new theories in museology proposing ways museums can fulfil their moral obligations to their communities, including native communities and native approaches?

Part 11: From Epistemology to Functionalism

A new body of literature under the title of 'new museology' focuses on the crisis of the museum. First coined in Peter Vergo's edited book of the same title, the term is defined "as a state of widespread dissatisfaction with 'old' museology, both within and outside the museum profession ... what is wrong with the 'old' museology is that it is too much about museum methods and too little about the purposes of museum." (Peter Vergo: 1989; 3) While those who have written under the title have largely published from Britain, parallel concepts can be uncovered in publications from the United States, particularly since the time of the Smithsonian conference which has precipitated the publication of two collections of essays - Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display (1991) and Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture (1992). In "The Informed Muse: The Implications of 'The New Museology' for Museum Practice," Deirdre Stam further applies the label to those writers whose ideas seem consonant with those who have published under the 'new museology' title. Among them she includes Michael Ames; George MacDonald; and Stephen Alsford, all of whom have published in Canada.

Briefly, based on the rhetoric of structuralism and post-structuralism, concepts of 'old museology' such as 'value', 'meaning,' 'authenticity,' 'control,' 'interpretation,' are revealed as holding Western ideological biases. In contrast 'New museologists' acknowledge museums as having political

agendas. Certain of the common traits can be found in the attention given to the relationships of the museum to its social, economic and political environment as part of an analysis of meaning (Stam, 1993; 268); the focus on 'information-based concerns; and the emphasis on a group identity of museum constituents. 'Information' is no longer categorized within autonomous departments of the museum, nor is it divided by discipline. Instead, records from different functional areas are conceptually related.

Conservation records interact with curatorial files; classification schemes of registrar relate to exhibition patterns; library and archival resources affect interpretation... and administration information relates to the larger social community surrounding the museum.

(Stam, 1993; 271)

This concept of 'information' is understood in its broadest sense where the processing of knowledge becomes central. Therefore, new museologists are shifting the orientation of meaning away from the object towards information, or as some have interpreted it, "towards the relationship of people to objects." (Kavanaugh, 1990) Methods of classification are identified as Anglo-American systems that are biased toward a 'theology of use,' and ignore the values and/or the original complex from which the objects were taken. (Shelton and Taborsky; in 277) There is furthermore no concept of 'power' associated with 'information,' denying the potential for epistemology. Communication is considered "neutral" - "that it is just a matter of taking information from over

here, putting it on a physical channel in some way, and conveying it over there." (Estelle Jussim in *ibid*; 273) Silverstone identifies this conceptual change as being symptomatic of a crisis period for museums. He identifies the latter as arising from the following dilemmas:

between information and entertainment (a dilemma about function); between orality and literacy (a dilemma about mediation); between fact and fantasy (a dilemma about content); between a perception of the audience as active or passive (a dilemma about potential effectiveness); between myth and mimesis (a dilemma about narrative); between objectivity and ideology (a dilemma about the act of representation); between commerce and public service (a dilemma about responsibility and role).

(Silverstone, 1988; 232)

As a result, "there can be no real question as to where the discursive power lies." (Silverstone, 1988; 232)

A new communication model for museums, reflecting this functional understanding of information, is described by Hooper-Greenhill through the following diagram:

Significant in the interpretation of this model is that it takes into account the concept of 'pertinence' - a concept borrowed from Mounin, which

can cover the point of view, the approach, the set of questions, or the general theoretical outlook that guides either observation or expression of communication systems. (Mounin, 1985; xvi in Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; 58)⁷

In this model, the individual concepts of 'communicator' and 'receiver' are replaced by a 'team of communicators' and 'active meaning-makers,' where the former can include "the interests of the curator, the designer, the conservator, the audience," and the latter include "an interpreter with previous knowledge, attitudes and values." (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; 59) The "media" comprise of "the building, the people, the exhibitions, the objects, the cafe, the toilets etc." (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; 59) Meaning is emphasized as deriving from an overall experience and is identified as variable. The rapport between the communicators and the interpreters may be multiple, varied and conflictual. The middle ground is further defined as being in constant flux as each new interpreter brings a new interpretation to "both the intended communication and the potential indices." (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991; 59) The information flow through this communication model can thus be described as complex, double-sided, interwoven without a locatable source of power.

⁷This concept of 'pertinence' is not far removed from the ancient Chinese cartographer's fifth cardinal point.

I. 'New Museology' in Practice

Certain elements of 'new museology' theory can be found in the practices of two NorthWest Coast museums: the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Center on Quadra Island; and the U'Mista Cultural Center in Alert Bay. What distinguishes these museums are their close ties with their respective communities and the significance which the objects in their collection represent to the peoples of the community. As such, the museums' function and a number of their practices, such as display techniques, classification and storage will be discussed.

Both the Kwagiulth Museum and the U'Mista Cultural Center hold strong ties with their respective communities. This relationship is emphasized in video recordings, presented as part of the museum display, which describe the museum's role in the community. The involvement of numerous individuals from the community who have contributed to the development of the museum identity are emphasized in these short documentaries, through voice overs and direct address. The stress on the museum's function as service-provider to the community is indicated in the recognition of the community as being their only intended audience as well as their managers. (Randal MacNair, May 1994) The "team of communicators" and the "active meaning makers" makers, in Hooper-Greenhill's model of communication, are thus identified as the same. Therefore, displays are organized in such a way that they communicate messages that will be understood by the native

community, irrespective of the more limited knowledge of their culture by outside visitors. Furthermore, it is the community which decides what objects are suitable for the museum's collection and how these objects will be preserved. For instance, when a family memorabilia is donated by an individual, that individual can decide where and how this object will be cared for, irrespective of modern techniques used for storage or methods to maximize the efficiency of space, as perceived by other museum workers. (Randall MacNair, May 1994) This approach is consistent with the idea that museums are shifting their role from guardians of public trust to caretakers or bailees of other's property. Their new responsibility would consist of "holding for care the possessions of others by agreement." (Cameron, 1992; 9) Rather than finding rewards in possessing collections ... object centred activities - of simply being curator: "the humble caretaker of the material evidence of people and their environment on behalf of humankind." (Cameron, 1992; 9)

While both the Kwagiulth Museum's and the U'Mista Cultural Center's main goal is not unlike any other museums - to preserve cultural heritage by preserving artifacts⁸, the significance of these objects are drawn from more than their mere display in window cases. The potlatch collections of both museums are arranged in the order in which they appear during the ceremony. In the U'Mista Cultural Center, the collection is furthermore presented in a

⁸In this respect, Native peoples have adopted the Western idea that tradition and heritage are manifest in material objects. (Dominguez, 1987; 550 in Mauze, 1992; 27)

long house and the objects are not separated from the visitor with glass cases. There are no labels to these objects, nor can they be located by function. Instead, texts accompanying the collection provide oral testimonies and historical archives written from the personal accounts of the early owners of these pieces. As such, these display functions communicate information that is more personal rather than objective, and more related to the personal histories of individuals within the community. This focus on locality is equally emphasized in the museum's cataloguing practices.

The U'Mista Cultural Centre presently holds records of its collection in a database that is linked with the Royal British Museum in Victoria. (Randall MacNair, May 1994) Future developments will involve linking native-run museums and cultural centres across the NorthWest Coast with a single database, such that access to this information can be provided for educational purposes. This development on a local level is partly the result of dissatisfaction with the services provided by The Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN)⁹, as the community did not feel that such a national service would contribute to their particular needs. (Randall MacNair, May 1994) Most complaints are directed to the antiquated computer system

⁹Canada's National Inventory Program called The Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) was established in 1972 in order to create a data bank of all the public museum collections in Canada and provide access to it through a computerized national network.

which CHIN uses, making research a burdensome process; the belief that CHIN ultimately controls the flow of information; and the misattribution of certain of the categories it lists. (Randall MacNair, May 1994) Local developments are further identified with respect to the issues of repatriation which both centres were involved with.

Both exhibition sites hold potlatch collections that had been repatriated from the National Museum of Man (now the National Museum of Civilization) in 1973 and the Royal Ontario Museum in 1987. The history of these collections dates back to the confiscation by the Canadian government of the ceremonial objects, following the illegal¹⁰ celebration of Dan Cranmer's (then chief) great potlatch of 1921. (Mauze, 1992; 27) A total of about five-hundred pieces (masks, whistles, rattles, etc.) were subsequently confiscated. Some thirty-two pieces were sold and the rest was shipped to the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa (the later National Museum of Man). (Mauze, 1992; 27) With the successful repatriation of these collections, "master narratives of cultural disappearance and salvage could be replaced by stories of revival, remembrance and struggle." (Clifford, 1991; 214)

Having thus described certain practices and functions of both the Kwagiulth Museum and the U'Mista Cultural Centre, one can derive certain characterizations in line with the functionalism implied in 'new' museology.

¹⁰Article 14 of the Indian Act, known as the Potlatch Law (1884), set forth that any person having participated in a potlatch was guilty of misdemeanour and subject of two to six months in jail. (Mauze, 1992; 27)

Firstly, the communities are portrayed as 'strong,' through the acknowledgement of moral and legal rights of the community with the subsequent demise of larger, more centralized institutional power and through the communities' involvement with the management of the museums.

Secondly, the museum is identified as 'weak,' by its consideration as a caring storage provider for the possessions of the community's cultural heritage.

These characterizations are fitting with the basic premises of functionalism which include the consideration of the human subject as free and autonomous and the treatment of the media as an institution of diffusion. (Attallah, 1991; 51) However, while 'information' is identified as neutral in theories of 'new' museology, critiques of functionalism suggest that this is deceptive since the theory of functionalism rests on an epistemological 'armature' which constitutes what we could call a spontaneous ideology of North America.

(Attallah, 1991; 57) While the approaches of new practices no longer consider the power by manipulation of the media, but the autonomy of the nationality and liberty of individuals, (Attallah, 1991; 60) an ideological power is nonetheless identifiable.

Or, ce savoir réel et efficace est aussi un savoir idéologique. Ce savoir, ces stratégies sont visiblement le résultat d'intérêts sociaux particuliers réperables. Ce savoir est produit à partir d'un certain point de vue afin de soutenir et de servir ce point de vue. Pourtant, il n'est ni faux ni erroné, il est simplement intéressé. Ce savoir renvoie donc à deux choses: a) au réel, au concret, à l'empirique, et b) aux intérêts sociaux, à l'imaginaire social, aux besoins du pouvoir.

(Attallah, 1991; 64)

As such, the practices which the native-run museums exemplify can be seen as closely related to the larger native political agendas defined earlier as 'counter-discourses.'

Native Americans having realized their political and cultural situation have claimed their right to self-determination. Next to the implementation of treaty rights, the settlement of land claims, and the control over the exploitation of natural resources on the reserves, the restitution of Native American cultural heritage is becoming a major issue. Parallel to the awakening of Native people's political awareness a change of attitude has taken place within the dominant society.

(Mauze, 1992; 27)

II. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, it has been suggested that certain museums are changing their focus from the object and the collection to 'information.' The museums' underlying communicative ethos is thus identified as functionalist, in that museums are seen as institutions of diffusion and the communities are regarded as autonomous. While such communicative theories take a more ontological approach to the issues of cultural identity, they are nonetheless ideological. This is revealed when certain parallels are made with current political themes of self-government which are challenging the social environment's communicative ethos.

AFTERWORD

The changes in the communicative rhetoric of museum practices, as revealed in this thesis, are perhaps indicating a period of growth rather than a period of regression for museums. Now that museum professionals are shifting their focus from methods to a questioning of purpose, they are able to address the constraints imposed by the colonial legacy of museum institutions. This provides a useful starting point for entertaining the possibilities for implementing non-colonial institutional frameworks. As such, museums serve useful podiums for discussing the complex issues of cultural representation. This can result in achieving a better understanding of collective identities - issues which will undoubtedly become increasingly pertinent to the maintenance of political harmony within the multi-cultural mosaic of Canada.

Limitations

It has been felt that in order to provide a constructive analysis of the state of museum practice in Canada, it was necessary to look beyond the internal functionings of museums. As such, the subject matter presented in this thesis has been multi-faceted and has neglected to acknowledge traditional boundaries among the disciplines of art history, museology, anthropology, sociology, political science and communications. Although broad in its ambit, it was nonetheless felt that in focusing

on particular exemplars of museum practice (such as the practices of Pitt Rivers, Franz Boas); museum exhibitions (such as The Spirit Sings, Indigena, and Land, Spirit, Power) and contemporary exhibition sites (such as the Kwagiulth Museum and the U'Mista Cultural Center), evidence could be found identifying the general dynamics of the museum's communicative ethos. Nonetheless, due to the limited purview of this thesis and the broad argument it set forth to entertain, this thesis was unable to tackle certain issues with the desired level of comprehensiveness. As such, it is important to acknowledge these limitations and propose directions for future research.

Directions For Future Research

During the course of researching for this thesis, a number of resources, which would have provided further answers to the pertinent questions which are related to this thesis, was found to be lacking. For instance, little has been written about how Natives were initially defined in taxonomies that were developed during the early twentieth century. This is an area worthy of pursuing considering the consequences of exclusion or misattribution that were discussed in Chapter Three with respect to the Metis. Other research areas which, it is felt necessitate development, include the issues of collective vs. individual identities within the scope of Canadian politics. The events such as those which revolved around The Spirit Sings, suggest a misunderstanding of the notion of 'community' in Canada. Writings, particularly from Native perspectives, would significantly contribute in clarifying certain misunderstandings. Such approaches would shed further light into the philosophical

premises of modernity. Another area of study, which was somewhat side-stepped in this thesis, includes how the debates of postmodernism contributed to the development and acceptance of indigenous knowledges. On a more technical angle, future developments in classification procedures (information networks, databases) need to be addressed from a more critical angle. The sources that are available are mostly textbookish accounts of how these technologies operate, or descriptions of technological development, within the industry which are written with undercurrent idealist themes of progress and access. Critical analyses of classification are furthermore lacking in the evidence they draw from actual classification techniques. Given the methodical process with which these are implemented, questions such as those relating to perspective (or a fifth cardinal point), need to be addressed.

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