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**Between the Muses and the Mausoleum:
Museums, Modernism, and Modernity**

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**Between the Muses and the Mausoleum:
Museums, Modernism, and Modernity**

by

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Dissertation

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For my parents

Robert Norman Schwartz and Irene Villaseñor Schwartz

and my director

Alan Friedman

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**Between the Muses and the Mausoleum:
Museums, Modernism, and Modernity**

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For both modernists and the museum establishment the museum functioned as a privileged site for the articulation of modernity. At one extreme, those like the futurist F. T. Marinetti, who experienced modernity as a rupture with the past—completed by a gesture of total forgetting—condemned the museum as a mausoleum devoid of contemporary relevance and called for its destruction. At the other extreme, those like the Director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, who located modernity in “an ordered progress based upon tradition” – facilitated by an act of selective remembering – defended the museum as a temple of the muses vital to the “soul” of the “nation” and promoted the spread of the “modern” exhibition gallery. While they differed in their methods, opponents and proponents of the museum shared a common goal, constructing modernity, and a common seat or scene, the (ruins of the) museum. If modernity was in part both product and prize of the battle over the museum, then the strategies modernists pursued in the course of this battle were crucial to the rise of modernism.

The first two chapters of this dissertation analyze the critical and creative work of Ruskin, Marinetti, de Quincy, Nietzsche, Valéry, Adorno, Benjamin, Borges, and the first and second avant-gardes to reveal the range of strategies they used to construct modernity

through, within, or against the museum. Modernism could not have arisen without these strategies. The next two chapters look at how Henry James, William Morris, and Virginia Woolf challenged the British Museum's ability to fulfill its stated aim of "help[ing] the nation to save its soul." Chapters five and six analyze James Joyce's intervention in the discourses of Irish cultural and political nationalism in his satire of monuments' and museums' power as an instrument of cultural politics and identity-formation in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Mining the intersections of museum, composition, and media studies, the final chapter proposes a paradigm for teaching multiliteracies through the museum.

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Introduction

In a lecture delivered at Oxford in 1927, Sir Frederic Kenyon, Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum, argued that one of the museum's main functions in national life was to stimulate people's sense of historical continuity. He explained:

A society which has no past is lacking in stability. . . . On the other hand, the consciousness of a great past, the examples of great men, the warnings and encouragements derived from past history, have a steadying influence in times of stress. Not merely the political, but also the intellectual and artistic, history of a nation gain in stability and solidity if the achievements of the past are constantly before its eyes and in its mind. It is for this reason that persons of a revolutionary tendency, whether in politics or in art, so often decry the monuments of the past. Not very long ago, . . . a gentleman of foreign extraction earned temporary notoriety by advocating the destruction of all picture-galleries and museums, and I believe of all books also, in order that the unfettered mind of man might make a fresh start. . . . There is a tendency, in times of upheaval, to break loose from tradition; whereas salvation is to be found in adherence to tradition. Not in a

blind adherence, nor in a denial of progress, but in an ordered progress based upon tradition.¹

The “gentleman of foreign extraction” was F. T. Marinetti, who in the “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909) called for the destruction of Italy’s museums, libraries, and academies on the grounds that those “cemeteries of empty exertion” buried the creative possibilities of the present under the sepulchral monuments of the past.² Marinetti’s attack on these institutions formed part of a broad avant-garde critique of the culture of connoisseurship and collecting sustained by the country estate and the bourgeois interior, professors, cicerones, and antiquaries, as well as the emerging discipline of archaeology.³ Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists tended to collapse these targets into a single, monolithic antiquarianism, which they identified with a hypertrophy of the historical sense and the mummification of life and culture. The museum epitomized this antiquarianism. They considered the institution a remnant of an earlier age, one standing on the edge of modernization or even outside it, irrelevant to the sensibility shaped by contemporary contexts. Marinetti’s proposal to raze the museum functioned, then, as a strategy for countering the museum’s vision of history as radical continuity with one based on radical discontinuity. Similarly, his aim in idealizing the factory—dedicated to the production of new objects rather than the preservation of old

¹ “Museums and National Life,” *The Romanes Lecture Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre 12 May, 1926*, 5-32 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 23-24.

² *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971), 43.

³ Jeffrey Schnapp, Michael Shanks, and Matthew Tiewes, “Archaeology, Modernism, Modernity,” editors’ introduction to “Archaeologies of the Modern,” a special issue of *Modernism/Modernity* 11.1 (2004): 3.

ones—was to install the future in place of the past. By these means Marinetti sought to usher in the unhistorical, forward-looking conditions he believed necessary for the creation of new art. But more broadly, he intended his assault on the museum to make the world, or at least Europe, safe for modernity—a modernity he defined in opposition to the museum.

It would be tempting to take the pairing of Kenyon and Marinetti as emblematic of the binary parameters governing museum discourse in the modern period: modernity versus museum, avant-garde versus tradition, democracy versus elitism, life versus art. It would be tempting but also erroneous, for in spite—or rather because—of his appeals to tradition, heritage, and canon, Kenyon, no less than Marinetti, claimed the mantle of modernity in his defense of the museum. Kenyon’s lecture identified the spread of museums since the eighteenth century as a “modern” development, arising from such causes as revolutionary confiscation (in France and Russia), natural formation (in Italy), planned accumulation (in Germany), systematic excavation, and (in England) the “national habit[s]” of traveling and collecting. Additional socioeconomic factors included the growth of the nation-state, the expansion of empire, the advances in science, the spread of elementary education, and the consequent formation of a general public. The late nineteenth-century recognition of museums as an instrument of recreation and education is “still more modern.”⁴

⁴ “Museums and National Life,” 7.

Indeed, the “new museum idea” that public collections exist to serve the general public and not just students and scholars⁵ fueled attempts on both sides of the Atlantic to transform museums from “cemetery[ies] of bric-a-brac” into “nurseries of living thought.”⁶ Curators sought by scientific means to transform museums into “powerful educational agencies, in which by object lessons the most important truths of science [and art] were capable of being pleasantly imparted to the multitudes.” Early museums were criticized for their jumbled character. Lord Balcarras, trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, wrote, “The modern museum of art differs essentially from its earlier prototypes. The aimless collection of curiosities and bric-à-brac, brought together without method or system, was the feature of certain famous collections in by-gone days.” For the modern museum to be of educational value, “Acquisitions must be added to their proper sections; random purchase of ‘curios’ must be avoided. Attention must be given to the proper display and cataloguing of the exhibits, to their housing and preservation, to the lighting, comfort and ventilation of the galleries.”⁷ Museum educators were also keen to embrace the latest technologies of looking, including photography, the skiascope,⁸ and “were it in

⁵ Henry William Flower, *Essays on Museums and Other Subjects Connected With Natural History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1898), 37.

⁶ G. Brown Goode, *The Museums of the Future* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 427.

⁷ “Museums of Science” and “Museums of Art,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), 19:66, 60.

⁸ Developed by Benjamin Ives Gilman of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the skiascope was a portable rectangular box open at two ends and shaped to fit over the eyes of the museum patron. It was intended to cut down glare from poor lighting and to isolate a particular object from its surroundings (Stephen D. Arata, “Object Lessons: Reading the Museum in *The Golden Bowl*,” in *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure*, ed. Alison Booth, 199-229 [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993], 206-07).

any way feasible,” as one professor said, the “kinematograph.”⁹ Such enthusiasm for visual aids to learning paralleled a growing recognition of the museum as the foremost site for the transmission of knowledge by visual (and tactile) means. In an 1891 report entitled *The Museums of the Future*, G. Browne Goode, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, wrote:

In this busy, critical, and skeptical age, each man is seeking to know all things, and life is too short for many words. The eye is used more and more, the ear less and less, and in the use of the eye, descriptive writing is set aside for pictures, and pictures in their turn are replaced by actual objects. . . . Amid such tendencies, the museum, it would seem, should find a congenial place, for it is the most powerful and useful auxiliary of all systems of teaching by means of object lessons.¹⁰

The identification of the museum with object-based pedagogy, and the era with a turn to the visual (and tactile), was common among the pioneering professionals who sought to modernize and popularize the museum as an instrument of education.¹¹ In 1904, David Murray wrote in one of the earliest museum histories, “Blackboard illustrations . . . are all

⁹ Henry Browne, *Our Renaissance: Essays on the Reform and Revival of Classical Studies* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917), 34.

¹⁰ (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 427.

¹¹ This museological awareness of the growing importance of the visual anticipates by a century W. J. T. Mitchell’s finding that our era is marked by “the pictorial turn” (*Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], 11-24). The two diagnoses identify the same general phenomenon but on the basis of different evidence. Whereas Mitchell focuses on images and attributes the epistemological trend to the postwar spread of electronic technology that greatly facilitates the production, reproduction, and transmission of images, early museologists emphasized the object as well as the image and connected the trend to developments in archaeology, museology, and the technology of mechanical reproduction.

excellent in their way, but, as a rule, a lesson from the object itself is superior to one from a picture of the object.”¹² In 1917, John Cotton Dana, Founding Director of the Newark Museum, called for the establishment in every community of an “institution of visual instruction.”¹³ In 1930, Kenyon wrote that objects in a museum “are at once the material and the illustrations of written history, and to a generation becoming daily more dependent on the picture than on the written word their importance is increasing.”¹⁴

Thus, while modernization rendered the past preserved in the museum increasingly remote, the museum itself was the product of scientific and technological innovation, the industrialization of production, and rapid urbanization. These socioeconomic processes made the museum possible, even necessary, in a second sense as well. For they accelerated the rate of change and obsolescence, which consequently destined a greater number of artifacts for preservation. In fact, as a scientific laboratory, representational technology, pedagogical aid, as well as a tool of social reform, cultural politics, and nationalist and imperialist ideologies, the museum was not just an effect but also a cause of modernization.

Modern in having originated in recent times, the museum was modern in the further sense that it was rooted in Renaissance Europe’s consciousness of its debt to antiquity. Hence the museum’s special claim to relevance, according to Kenyon: “in the welter of unsettlement caused by the war, when standards seemed to be overturned,” the museum

¹² *Museums: Their History and Their Use* (London: Routledge/Thoemes Press), 260.

¹³ *The New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press), 15.

¹⁴ *Libraries and Museums* (London: E. Benn), 70.

righted those standards by connecting the past with a present that was modern to the precise extent that it recognized its ties to tradition. As a solution to the burden of the past, Marinetti advocated the destruction of the museum. For Kenyon, conversely, the problem was “a tendency . . . to break loose from tradition; whereas salvation is to be found in adherence to tradition.” Kenyon’s goal—to persuade his audience of the museum’s importance to national life, heightened by the postwar upheaval—makes his defense of the museum a compellingly modern one. He is keenly aware of the timeliness of his message. “The exhibition galleries of museums are the means of bringing to bear on us the influence of a great reservoir of mental and spiritual power. What is this power, and what is its value? It is only within our own generation that the question has become important. I venture to think it is now not merely important but urgent.”¹⁵ Thus Kenyon aimed to apply the museum’s power to the task of reanimating culture. More broadly, he endeavored with his defense of the museum to make the world, or at least England, safe for modernity—a modernity he identified with the museum.

For both modernists and the museum establishment the museum functioned, then, as a privileged site for the articulation of modernity. At one extreme, those like the futurist Marinetti, who experienced modernity as a rupture with the past—completed by a gesture of total forgetting—condemned the museum as a mausoleum devoid of contemporary relevance and called for its destruction. At the other extreme, those like the Director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, who located modernity in “an

¹⁵ “Museums and National Life,” 24, 18.

ordered progress based upon tradition”—facilitated by an act of selective remembering—defended the museum as a temple of the muses vital to the “soul” of the “nation” and promoted the spread of the “modern” exhibition gallery. While they differed in their methods, opponents and proponents of the museum shared a common goal, constructing modernity, and a common seat or scene, the (ruins of the) museum. The museum served as a principal location for this discursive activity because so much of modernity was bundled up with it: not just the relationship between tradition and the present but also the mode of the production and communication of knowledge, the constitution of the category of art, the democratization of culture, and the formation of social, cultural, and political identities. If modernity was in part both product and prize of the battle over the museum, then the strategies modernists pursued in the course of this battle were crucial to the rise of modernism. These strategies range from the refractory object (Virginia Woolf) to the private collection (Walter Benjamin), from the conceptual museum (the avant-garde) to the counter-museum (Jorge Luis Borges), from the scavenger-redeemer (James Joyce) to the anthologist-curator (Ezra Pound).

This cultural study of the museum challenges certain long-standing notions of the museum and its relationship to modernism, modernization, and modernity. According to an intellectual tradition that runs from Quatremère de Quincy, the eighteenth-century French cultural eminence who first lamented the museum’s divorce of art from life, through Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Valéry, the first and second avant-gardes, Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and poststructuralist critics like Eugenio Donato and Douglas Crimp,

the museum runs counter to the principles of modernity.¹⁶ A more complex view of the museum, grounded in the professional literature of the day, restores its close involvement in the socioeconomic processes of modernization, as well as its centrality to the construction of distinctly modern identities. Analysis of both canonical and marginal texts in the context of contemporary museum discourse further reveals a modernism characterized as much by a profound engagement with the museum's function in society as by the aesthetic features commonly associated with the movement.

Recent museum studies have heeded Andreas Huyssen's call to "rethink . . . the museum beyond the binary parameters of avant-garde versus tradition, museum versus modernity (or postmodernity)."¹⁷ Literary critics have contributed to this new crop of writing. Michael North's *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (1985), for example, takes aim at the myth that monuments and modern art, and therefore modernity in general, are opposed to each other, arguing that public monuments served twentieth-century poets like Yeats and Pound as a "powerfully ambiguous model, fascinating and repellent at the same time."¹⁸ In *Poetry in the Museums of Modernism*

¹⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Pub., 1957); Paul Valéry, "The Problem of Museums," *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry* v. 12, ed. Jackson Mathews (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956-75), 202-10; Theodor W. Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 175-85; Eugenio Donato, "The Museum's Furnace: Notes towards a Contextual Reading of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*," *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1979), 213-238; Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). For a brief discussion of the tradition of anti-museum critique, see Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8-12.

¹⁷ *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), 18. See, for example, Witcomb; and James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

(2002), Catherine Paul demonstrates the cultural relationships between museum exhibition and the poetic production of Yeats, Pound, Moore, and Stein. Her approach is to concentrate on these poets' experiences with museums as places, drawing equally on the biographical and historical records of particular museums.¹⁹

This dissertation makes a similar contribution to the ongoing reevaluation of monument and museum discourse within modernism by pursuing the following questions. How does the analysis of museum discourse in transnational modernism enhance our understanding of transnational modernism? How does the analysis of museum discourse in British modernism improve our understanding of British modernism? How does the analysis of Joyce's museum discourse increase our understanding of his particular modernism? How do these analyses augment our understanding of the museum itself and of modernity?

To answer these questions, I examine museum-related modernist texts in the context of contemporary museum discourse. This methodology involves several steps. First, I unpack the concepts, values, and beliefs bundled up with contemporary museum discourse. Second, I read through modernist texts on the museum to a broader statement about these concepts, values, and beliefs. Third, I read through modernist statements about these concepts, values, and beliefs to a larger statement about modernity. This approach assumes that the contents of the discursive bundle form the very stuff of

¹⁹ (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

modernity, meaning the social experience of a qualitative change in historical time. Indeed, Kenyon's example bears out this assumption. His discourse is full of such ideas and ideals as "national life," historical "continuity," social, cultural, and political "stability," "progress," "tradition," even "salvation," and it is precisely these ideas and ideals that comprised his attitude toward his turbulent age. In fact, we can infer the following axiom: turn-of-the-century attitudes toward the museum always express an experience of modernity, ranging from a radical denial of the past to an equally radical affirmation of it. While many of the museum's discursive contents come under critique by modernism, museums were too varied in scope, method, and purpose, their bundles too mixed with positive intensities and contemporary concerns, and modernist attitudes toward modernity too ambivalent and complex to be reduced to Marinetti's view of museums as antithetical to the principles of modernity.

The first two chapters explore museum discourse in transnational modernism. Chapter 1, "Constructing (Post)Modernity on (the Ruins of) the Museum," analyzes the critical and creative work of Ruskin, Marinetti, de Quincy, Nietzsche, Valéry, Adorno, Benjamin, and the first and second avant-gardes to reveal the range of strategies they used to construct modernity through, within, or against the museum. Modernism, I argue, could not have arisen without these strategies. Chapter 2, "'Out of Time': Museum Discourse in Borges' Oeuvre," examines the "Museo" that appears in the literary magazines *Destiempo* (1936-37) (*Out of Time*) and *Los anales de Buenos Aires* (*The Annals of Buenos Aires*), as well as the collection of poems and short prose pieces *El hacedor* (1960) (retitled *Dreamtigers* in the English translation). Resembling an

eighteenth-century *Wundercammer*, or cabinet of oddities, more than a modern museum, the “Museo” critiques the latter’s epistemological claims to origin, authenticity, and presence. It further exposes the futility of the modern dream of totality, whether expressed in the desire to gather all the world’s things, or all the world’s knowledge, into one place, or in the project of a total history. The modern museum and the modern episteme are not Borges’ only targets. The opposite of a historicist collection, the “Museo” also ironizes a literary strategy common to the modernists Joyce, Pound, and T. S. Eliot, namely, the simultaneous presentation of characteristics of different epochs. Finally, with its anomalous combinations and heterogeneous enumerations, the “Museo” illustrates Borges’ principle that “no hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural” (there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and conjectural).²⁰ Yet, while the “Museo”’s disordered display of rarities and curiosities fails to give a total representation of human reality and history, it nonetheless succeeds in transcending, or appearing to transcend, temporality in two ways. First, it renders objects atemporal by detaching them from their original contexts. Second, forming a disparate catalogue as a whole, it insinuates eternity.

Both Chapter 3, “‘To help the nation to save its soul’: Museum Purposes in Henry James and William Morris,” and Chapter 4, “Not So ‘Solid Objects’: Museum Artifacts and Human Character in *Jacob’s Room*,” focus on museum discourse in British modernism. Together, they test the British Museum’s fulfillment of its avowed

²⁰ *Obras Completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1996), 2:86.

mission—“To help the nation to save its soul”—against the literary evidence left by James, Morris, and Woolf. In James’s social realist novel *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), Hyacinth is torn between a desire to overthrow the political system and a growing attachment to the cultural achievements it makes possible. Hyacinth’s dilemma emblemizes the museum’s tension between the competing demands of art and life, the elite and the general public, a tension documented in the professional museum literature of the day. William Morris’ writings on the union of art and life under socialism and their separation under capitalism provide a subtextual foil for James’s elitist attitude toward the museum as reflected in Hyacinth’s own attitude. While Hyacinth takes his life, Jacob, the protagonist of *Jacob’s Room* (1922), dies at war. In Woolf’s experimental novel the British Museum, through its claims of Britain’s continuity with imperial Rome, transforms individuals such as Jacob into ideological subjects and inspires them to uphold “the standards of their loyal service”—including military service—to the empire.

The next two chapters center on museum discourse in Joyce. Chapter 5, “‘Penetrators are permitted into the museomound free’: The Poetics and Politics of the Museum in *Ulysses*,” analyzes this novel’s representation of the Dublin Museum of Science and Art in relation to the discourses of Irish cultural and political nationalism. As a result of these discourses, the museum’s power as an instrument of cultural politics and identity-formation grew in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Joyce satirizes this power. The satire appears most clearly in Mulligan’s and Bloom’s rhetoric on the museum, which often entangles the Irish myths of a Golden Age of cultural achievement and political and ethnic unity, a decadence that set in as a result of the

English invasions, and the possibility of a resurgent Ireland based on a return to the values of the past, as revealed in the country's archaeology and antiquities. According to Mulligan, for example, the Greek and Greco-Roman casts displayed at the museum's entrance can reverse the "fallingoff in the calibre of the race" (14:1250-56) by easing the condition of pregnant women.

Chapter 6, "'In greater support of his word': Monument and Museum Discourse in *Finnegans Wake*," examines the "Museyroom"'s identification with the Wellington Monument and their key evidentiary role in HCE's self-defense against the Cad in I.ii and the gossip accounts of the event given in I.iii. A brief survey of nineteenth-century literature on Ireland's "ruined shrines" reveals an analogy between, on the one hand, HCE's repeated appeals to the Monument/Museyroom in "support of his word" (36:7-8) and witnesses' "ventriloquent" (56:5-6) testimony concerning the HCE-Cad encounter in Phoenix Park and, on the other hand, Irish nationalist enlistments of archaeology, museums, and monuments in the service of historical and political claims. The Monument/Museyroom's contested privileging as a bearer of historical meaning—as both a "sign of our ruru redemption" (36:23-24) and proof of HCE's guilt—is rooted, this chapter argues, in the power of archaeological remains and monuments as instruments of Irish nationalism and British imperialism.

The final chapter mines the intersections of museum and composition studies and focuses on the postmodern museum and the "new" museology that undergirds it. The transformation of the temple of the muses into a palace of the people and the shift from an emphasis on education to one on learning, experience, and meaning-making are

largely the products of the modernist critique of the museum's social exclusions and claims to objective knowledge that the previous six chapters delineate. "Teaching Multiliteracies Through the Museum" contends that the museum—with its multiple means of communication, more or less hidden ideological stances, and reciprocal interpretive activity—is an excellent location for teaching students to understand multimodal ways of meaning-making in their technological, social, and institutional contexts. This museum-based pedagogy advocates three activities, the first consisting of diverse instruction in the classroom, ranging from rhetoric to museology, from basic reading and writing skills to new and emerging media. The second activity occurs both in and out of the museum and involves drawing students' attention to the rhetorical nature of museum exhibits: the ways in which the museum makes arguments through and about the objects it displays. Instructors teach students to analyze exhibits through the prism of traditional rhetorical categories: organization, purpose, medium, exhibitor, audience, context. In the third activity, students examine a local museum exhibit of their choice; argue the need to redesign it to better represent both the subject matter and the community's needs; and realize their proposal in virtual form using multimedia technology. In acting on the assumption that the museum makes arguments through and about the objects it displays, students build on the insight of the modernists, who first exposed the museum as a complexly rhetorical space.

PART I: MUSEUM DISCOURSE
IN TRANSNATIONAL MODERNISM

Chapter 1: Constructing (Post)Modernity on (the Ruins of) the Museum

In a 1910 speech to the Lyceum Club of London, F. T. Marinetti heaped scorn on England's "traditionalism and its medieval trappings," its custom of "carefully preserv[ing] every least remnant of the past," its antiquarian passion for his native land: "you crisscross Italy only to meticulously sniff out the traces of our oppressive past, and you are happy, insanely happy, if you have the good fortune to carry home some miserable stone on which our ancestors have trodden." He then challenged his audience, "When will you disembarass yourselves of the lymphatic ideology of that deplorable Ruskin . . . ? With his morbid dream of primitive rustic life, with his nostalgia for Homeric cheeses and legendary wool-winders, with his hatred for the machine, steam, and electricity" ²¹

The author of *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) was a natural target for the Italian futurist, who with his speech sought to convert England to his sanguinary ideology and thus to precipitate it out of the Victorian era and into the Machine Age. Indeed, Marinetti's view of John Ruskin as England's premier *passéist* was justified.²² In *The*

²¹ *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 60, 64.

²² But only arguably, for such a view disregards the Victorian sage's robust modernism, evident in the following statements. "The best art either represents the facts of its own day, or, if facts of the past, expresses them with accessories of the time in which the work was done. All good art, representing past

Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) he argued for the preservation of historical buildings on the grounds that architecture best recorded the life of a nation and thus formed a generation's most precious inheritance. His beliefs inspired the foundation of English and foreign societies for architectural preservation.²³ His conviction that those alive today are stewards, rather than owners, of works of art fueled the museum movement at home and abroad.²⁴ He was one of the nation's foremost champions of the museum, writing extensively on its social, moral, educational, and aesthetic aims as well as on the proper provision and arrangement of museums and art galleries. In these writings he distinguished between national collections, which served as storehouses for research by the specialist or advanced student, and local museums, whose purpose was to teach the general public.²⁵ The local or popular museum was not to be confused with a place of rest, a place of amusement, or a school of elementary education. Rather, the museum

events, is therefore full of the most frank anachronism, and always *ought* to be. No painter has any business to be an antiquarian. We do not want his impressions or suppositions respecting things that are past. We want his clear assertions respecting things present" (*The Stones of Venice* [New York: The Kelmscott Society Publishers, 1900], 199). "I do not ask you nor wish you to build a new Pisa . . . We don't want either the life or the decorations of the thirteenth century back again" ("Modern Manufacture and Design," a lecture delivered on March 1, 1859 at the Mechanics' Institute at Bradford, reprinted in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, eds. Heather Henderson and William Sharpe [New York: Longman, 2003], 2B:1487).

²³ For example, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, established in London by William Morris in 1877.

²⁴ George P. Landow, *John Ruskin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); adapted for the Victorian Web in May and June 2000; available from <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/pm/intro.html>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2006.

²⁵ *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903-12), 17:240, 19:219.

was a “house of the Muses”²⁶ for intelligent study.²⁷ As he wrote in “A Museum or Picture Gallery: Its Functions and Formation” (1880), “The right function of every museum, to simple persons, is the manifestation to them of what is lovely in the life of Nature, and heroic in the life of men.” The first principle of exhibitions was “to give example of perfect order and perfect elegance . . . to the disorderly and rude populace.” Objects should be few in number, and only good works of art and healthy natural specimens should be selected. Collections must be permanently arranged, with objects clearly displayed and adequately labeled—“nothing crowded, nothing unnecessary, nothing puzzling.”²⁸ Evils to be avoided were “superabundance” and “disorder.”²⁹ In 1876 he founded an educational museum at Sheffield for the working men of St. George’s Guild, a utopia conceived and partly realized by Ruskin.³⁰ In his efforts to rationalize, democratize, and popularize the museum, he stands as one of institution’s chief modernizers.

Yet Ruskin should not be mistaken for a champion of the social, political, and economic processes of modernization. On the contrary, his museum enterprise formed part of a broader campaign to reverse the decline in art and taste, symptomatic of a general cultural crisis, rooted in the Renaissance requirement of perfection and

²⁶ 34: 251.

²⁷ 34:259.

²⁸ Ibid., 34:251, 247.

²⁹ Ibid., 26:203-04.

³⁰ See Ibid., vol. 30.

exacerbated by his country's industrialization. With their mechanical mode of production and division of labor, factories made men into tools and turned out standardized goods devoid of invention. For people to regain their sense of beauty and comprehension of art, they must surround themselves with beautiful things. For workers to produce beautiful things, they must live in an unsullied landscape and have the leisure to admire it, while manufacturers must encourage the demand for the products of craftsmanship.³¹ Ruskin eventually came to believe that only great political changes could usher in the necessary conditions for the creation and enjoyment of art.³² The museum served Ruskin as an implement of both artistic revival and political reform, for in exhibiting beautiful things the museum also illustrated the principles of labor that made them possible. The museum's ultimate purpose was to restore the unity of art and life he saw embodied in the medieval craftsman. To the factory, then, Ruskin opposed the museum as an antidote.

The reverse was true in the case of Marinetti, who shared with Ruskin both the problem of how to make art under conditions of modernization and the assumption that the museum stood opposed, though as an obstacle to, not a bulwark against, this socioeconomic process. But the futurist condemned the museum since, unlike his *bête noire*, he regarded this process as favorable to the creation of new art. Industrialization led not to the deadening of the worker's soul and the proliferation of ugly manufactures but to the production of streamlined mechanisms that extended man's dominion over time and space. The users of planes, trains, and automobiles were not the slaves of machines

³¹ "The Nature of Gothic," *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2.

³² See *The Works of John Ruskin*, 30:70.

but their proud masters, the makers not mindless drudges but ardent lovers who were happy each morning to “check meticulously the perfect working of their factories.”³³ Far from barbarizing the age’s aesthetic sensibility, mass-produced products—especially those that were motor-driven, such as trams and steamers—enriched the world with the new beauty of speed and movement. The artist who could capture this new beauty was nearer the engineer than the craftsman. Believing the times were evil, then, Ruskin looked to an idealized Middle Ages for inspiration and to the museum as an instrument for reversing cultural decay. In contrast, Marinetti believed that cultural forms were out of joint with the times, which he considered auspicious for the creation of new art. The museum was the source and site of this dislocation, for it preserved the products of the past as models for production in the present. But these models grew obsolete at such a rapid pace that futurism had to train its eyes on the factory just to stay abreast of technological advances.³⁴ Thus futurism demanded the museum’s destruction.

The movement anathematized the museum not just because it posed an obstacle to modernization and thus to the creation of new art, but also because it raised a barrier between art and life in whose union the futurists located their hopes for modernity. Like Ruskin, Marinetti believed that the split between art and life lay at the center of the social problem facing his times. But whereas Ruskin blamed the discontentment of the worker on the political economy and prescribed semi-feudal socialism as the cure, Marinetti

³³ *Marinetti*, 92. The modern laborer was as idealized by Marinetti as his medieval counterpart was by Ruskin.

³⁴ Put another way, so swiftly did the present hurtle into the past that the movement had to pin its sights on the future just to stay *à la page* with the times. Such is the meaning of “futurism.”

pointed the finger at *passéisme* and advocated futurist art as the panacea to the “problem of collective human happiness.” Ruskin sought to solve the social problem politically, with the assistance of art; Marinetti, artistically, with the help of industrialism and fascism. In “Beyond Communism” (1920) the Italian predicted that artists would harness the growth of mechanized production to bring about “that maximum of salary and that minimum of manual labor which, without lessening production, will be able to give every intelligent person the freedom to think, create, and enjoy the arts.” While Marinetti’s view of technology’s role in realizing this utopia continued the nineteenth century’s faith in progress, the task he assigned to art is entirely avant-garde. “In every city will be built a Palace or House of Genius for Free Exhibitions of the Creative Intellect,” he declared.”³⁵ For a month paintings, sculptures, architectural drawings, machine designs, even inventor’s plans would be shown,³⁶ music played, poems, prose works, and scientific writings read, expounded, and declaimed, as in a futurist *soirée*. In an 1867 lecture Ruskin expressed a similar wish “that there were already, as one day there must be, a large educational museum in every district of London freely open every day, and well lighted and warmed at night, with all furniture of comfort, and full aids for the use of their contents by all classes.”³⁷ In its use of a building to exhibit objects, Marinetti’s “palace” resembles Ruskin’s museum. But unlike an art history museum, it was intended

³⁵ *Marinetti*, 156, 155, 156. The “Palace of Genius” recalls London’s Crystal Palace, site of the Great Exhibition of 1851, despised by Ruskin for its apotheosis of mass production and presumably admired by Marinetti for the same reason.

³⁶ Marinetti’s inclusion of designs and plans in the category of art furthers Ruskin’s collapse of the distinction between fine and decorative arts.

³⁷ *The Works of John Ruskin*, 19:219.

to show the productions of the present rather than the past, and unlike a museum of modern art, it offered temporary exhibitions rather than preservation and education. Nor did it share Ruskin's aim of stimulating the audience's sense of beauty as a means of encouraging the improvement of the landscape and the production of handcrafted things. It sought to bridge the gap between art and life not by mediating between the two but by transforming life into a work of art. The exhibition hall was populist in the extreme, attempting to bring new art directly to all people, and without the museum's exclusionary admission fees and conservative principles of acquisition. Unabashedly utopian, it aspired to transform every individual into an artist, to propagate "a race almost entirely composed of artists." To this end, it formed part of a vast artistic program for aestheticizing everyday life that included cinema theaters, reading rooms, free books and magazines, even a futurist "aero-theater." More ambitious than Ruskin's museum movement, Marinetti's program also went "beyond" the communist revolution. To communism, internationalism, egalitarianism, and revolutionism, he opposed fascism, patriotism, anarchic individualism, and futurism. In the wake of this social transformation accomplished by art, not workers but artists, "the vast proletariat of gifted men," would govern. Thus would futurism, Marinetti argued, "solve the problem of well-being in the only way it can be solved: spiritually."³⁸

Marinetti shared with Ruskin, then, the view that the museum was antithetical to modernity. Judging modernity in negative terms, the latter championed the museum. In

³⁸ *Marinetti*, 156, 154, 156.

contrast, the former believed that a new age was beginning (“the age of the machine”), that man himself was somehow new (a proto-cyborg he dubbed “multiplied man”), and that anything was possible (even a futurist revolution that would bring artists to power and art to the people). The museum, as a “cemetery” of the past and an instrument of its continuity into the future, obstructed Marinetti’s attempt to transform the present. He, therefore, advocated its demolition.

Marinetti’s criticism of the museum—that it saps the life of both objects and culture and impedes artistic creation and social change—belongs to an anti-museum discourse that goes back to Quatremère de Quincy, the leading art theorist of the era of the French Revolution. According to Daniel Sherman, de Quincy was the first to articulate the idea that objects in a museum no longer have a vital relationship to the public and are thus in the process of dying. In his writings de Quincy expressed his opposition to the victorious French army’s removal of artworks from Italy to France and to the public collections founded during the Revolution. He held that only in its original context could a work of art serve the educative purposes that advocates of museums attributed to them. Transferred to an artificial collection, Greek and Roman antiquities and church-based religious art lost their connections to the local emotions, memories, uses, and traditions that alone give them meaning. He thus recommended preserving art on location: Rome itself, he said, was a museum.³⁹ The notion that museums drain the life of objects continued in a tradition that encompasses nineteenth-century thinkers such

³⁹ Daniel J. Sherman, “Quatremère/Benjamin/Marx: Art Museums, Aura, and Commodity Fetishism,” *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, eds. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 123-143.

as Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul Valéry, Marxist theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, and artists from the first and second avant-gardes. It remains current today in the critiques of figures like Peter Bürger, Douglas Crimp, Jean Baudrillard, and Rosalind Krauss.⁴⁰

In *The Use and Abuse of History* (1874), Nietzsche identifies the museum as both symptom and underlying cause of the historical illness he diagnoses in nineteenth-century German and, more broadly, European culture. The conquests of the historical movement, he argues, have resulted in an excess of history, which is inimical to nations and individuals alike. History must serve life; otherwise, both life and history suffer. A historical phenomenon or artifact, reduced to an item of knowledge and robbed of its veil of mystery, loses its power to inspire and ultimately renders one stupid. The museum-goer's experience bears witness to this: "We moderns also run through art galleries and hear concerts in the same way as the young man runs through history." As a result, modern men and women "gradually los[e] all feelings of strangeness and astonishment," and are finally "pleased at anything." The degeneration of conservatism and reverence for the past into the attachment of equal importance to everything is best expressed in "the horrid spectacle . . . of the mad collector raking over all the dust heaps of the past." The antiquarian resembles a "gravedigger." The modern educational method, which gives priority to knowledge of culture, in the form of historical knowledge, over immediate contact with life, "is the same mad method that carries our young artists off to

⁴⁰ For a brief discussion of the tradition of anti-museum critique, see Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8-12.

picture galleries instead of the studio of a master” The museum and its metonymies thus served Nietzsche as key metaphors for the historical culture that marked his age. Yet, while he identified the museum with the modern period, he considered it radically antagonistic to modernity understood as “the spirit of a new time.” If it was to issue in something vital and original, the “modern consciousness” must make museum culture feed life instead of knowledge for its own sake.⁴¹

The notion that museums kill objects is echoed in Valéry’s brief essay, “The Problem of Museums” (1931), which recounts his experiences at the Louvre. Just as Marinetti decried the museum’s “sinister promiscuity” of mutually exclusive objects, Valéry criticizes their “cold confusion” and “organized disorder,” asserting “*That picture . . . KILLS all the others around it.*” Exhibition principles alone are not responsible for the museum’s mortuary effect on objects. As de Quincy first argued, the underlying fault lies with the removal of painting and sculpture from their original, architectural context, which gave them their true meaning. But the larger problem for Valéry resides in the museum’s accumulation of excessive and therefore “unusable” “capital,” the result of legacies and donations, market demands for art’s supply, and changing tastes that resurrect neglected works. The inassimilable mass of cultural riches constitutes, in fact, the predicament of “modern man,” whose response is to grow “superficial” or “erudite,” void of a direct feeling for art. This criticism closely follows in language and substance that of Nietzsche, who argued that the disconnect between modern man’s knowledge of

⁴¹ *The Use and Abuse of History*, 45, 20, 51, 67, 50.

the past and his cultural activity in the present rendered him both learned and hollow. A leading exponent of art for art's sake, Valéry mourns the loss of art's autonomy, the consequence of the museum's transformation of it into history and subordination of it to public purposes. He concludes his protest against the museum's "barbar[ism]" not by advocating its abolition, as Marinetti did, or the preservation of art *in situ*, as de Quincy did, but by "stagger[ing]" out of the Louvre.⁴² Rather than renouncing culture, he gives it up for lost. The next two essays in *Degas Manet Morisot* show that the contemplation of art as an end in itself was once possible in the museum. In "The Fabre Museum," he writes that he learned his first love of painting there. "Notes on Some Paintings" reproduces observations at the museum in Montpellier written forty years before.⁴³

In "Valéry Proust Museum" (1955), Adorno analyzes Valéry's and Marcel Proust's opposite but complementary experiences at the Louvre to produce a Marxist critique of the museum, which he takes as a metaphor "for the anarchical production of commodities in fully developed bourgeois society." Museums pose a dilemma, he argues. On the one hand, the museum's removal of artworks from their context and the market's transformation of them into commodities drain them of life. On the other hand, were it not for museums, those who do not possess a private collection would have no access to art. Valéry's response to this problem, Adorno argues, is that of the cultural conservative, who laments the reification of the pure work of art in the museum, the loss of art's original *raison d'être* as a pure thing in itself. His condemnation of the

⁴² *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, 12:204, 205.

⁴³ See *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, 12:207-15.

museum's accumulation of an unusable excess of capital lacks a critique of political economy. Proust, in contrast, defends the museum by privileging the observing subject over the immanent object. Since for him "works of art are part of the life of the person who observes them," "it is only the death of the work of art," its removal to the museum from its original context, "which brings it to life." Adorno looks forward to a "situation in which art, having completed its estrangement from human ends, returns . . . to life." He concludes, "The only relation to art that can be sanctioned in a reality that stands under the constant threat of catastrophe is one that treats works of art with the same deadly seriousness that characterizes the world today." He identifies this relation with the purposeful looking of visitors prepared for their visit to the museum. "Some museums are helpful in this respect," he notes, citing the increased coherence of their displays.⁴⁴

Benjamin, Adorno's colleague and contemporary, wrote on museums only a handful of times. But, as Crimp has shown, his analysis of the activity of collecting contains an implicit materialist critique of museums.⁴⁵ In "Unpacking My Library" (1931), "Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian" (1937), and several files or "convolutes" contained in *The Arcades Project*, the mass of essays, drafts, reflections, and citations that he worked on for the last thirteen years of his life, Benjamin argued for a certain "uselessness" of collected objects. A passage from Convolute H elaborates, albeit negatively, the revolutionary implications of this uselessness: "The *positive*

⁴⁴ In *Prisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 177, 181, 182, 185.

⁴⁵ *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 200-35.

countertype of the collector—who at the same time represents his fulfillment insofar as he realizes the liberation of things from the bondage of utility—should be described according to these words of Marx: “Private property has made us so stupid and inert that an object becomes *ours* only if we own it, that is, if it exists for us as capital, or if it is *used* by us.” By rendering objects useless, the “true” collector, as opposed to the traditional one, defies capitalism’s insistence that objects function as commodities or serve some useful purpose. The true collector is thus in a position to unpack the latent historical meanings in objects:

What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is this “completeness”? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object’s mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection. And for the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch, the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes. . . . Everything remembered, everything thought, everything conscious becomes socle, frame, pedestal, seal of his possession. . . . Collecting is a form of practical memory, and of all the profane manifestations of “nearness” it is the most binding. Thus, in a certain sense, the smallest act of political reflection makes for an epoch in the antiques business. We construct here an alarm clock that rouses the kitsch of the previous century to “assembly.”

“Here” refers to Benjamin’s own historical materialist project, in which he sought to evoke the history of nineteenth-century Paris in order to reveal the origins of modernity and thus awaken his age from its ideological dream. He found the data for his history and the *Ur*-phenomena of modernity in the arcades, the paradigmatic economic and technological creation of the nineteenth century, its various forms and mutations such as the museum, the domestic interior, and the world exhibition, and associated activities such as gambling and collecting. If in his essay on Edward Fuchs he linked the task of the historical materialist to collecting, in *The Arcades Project* Benjamin employed the methods of the rag-picker, who sifts through refuse and relies on chance, and of the collector, who selects and arranges his antiquities according to what he perceives as their “secret affinities.” Removed from their original, functional contexts, arranged according to the principle of montage, and displayed with little commentary, the remains salvaged by Benjamin come together in his text to form a “magic encyclopedia” of the epoch. In their organized disorder they communicate the history not just of their production but also of their transmission, including previous owners, price of purchase, current value, “all knowledge of the landscape, the industry . . . Everything remembered, everything thought, everything conscious.”⁴⁶ This account of the “fate” of urban detritus, comprising its life and “afterlife,” uncovers modernity’s “unconscious,” which he locates in the alienation, reification, and commodity fetishism of capitalism.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ In “Unpacking My Library” Benjamin called this total history an object’s “fate,” which included the period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership, and, most importantly, the moment of acquisition.

⁴⁷ (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 209, 204-05, 460.

The illusory autonomy of commodities is best expressed in traditional history, which detaches objects from their processes of production, assumes an equivalence between the lifespan of objects and that of their maker's intentions, presumes an understanding of history without reference to the present, and treats history as an inevitable succession of earlier forms leading up to later ones. The result is a representation of history that resembles an "inventory" of the products of art and science, divorced from the social and political relations within which they were produced and transmitted. These objects appear as "spoils" in a triumphal procession from the past down to the present. Yet these spoils

owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.

Benjamin's critique extends to the traditional museum, which emblemizes historical naturalism just as the collection epitomizes historical materialism. For the museum depicts objects as the creations of "great men," "cultural treasures," a nation's or humanity's heritage, or evidence of civilizational progress or decline.⁴⁸ It reinforces these myths of continuity through its method of continuous exposition. This approach ignores the human agents and historical circumstances responsible for the objects'

⁴⁸ "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, 253-64 (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 256.

survival, as well as the historical reference point essential to their historical understanding. Objects in the museum consequently assume an aura, appearing as timeless, autonomous, and transcendental. Like conventional history, the museum “may augment the weight of the treasure accumulating on the back of humanity, but it does not provide the strength to shake off this burden so as to take control of it.” Benjamin, in contrast, provides that strength through his critique of political economy, which Adorno argued was missing from Valéry, who similarly identified the museum with modernity’s burden of riches. “Historicism presents an eternal image of the past, whereas historical materialism presents a given experience with the past” according to the political urgency of the present. Rather than recording the past “as it really was,” this method “is directed toward a consciousness of the present which shatters the continuum of history.”⁴⁹

The uselessness of the collection for capitalism thus translates into a revolutionary usefulness. Elucidating the “total event” of a collection’s material encounters with history divests objects of the human characteristics for which they are fetishized and returns them to the human agents who made them and continue to remake their meaning. The collection thus forms a counter-museum in the same way that historical materialism’s biography of the object poses a corrective to the museography characteristic of traditional history. The metaphor of “biography” suggests the continuing life of the object, and indeed Benjamin sought to reanimate urban detritus by changing people’s relationship to objects. Ultimately, he sought to reactivate collective

⁴⁹ “Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian,” in *Selected Writings*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings 261-302 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 268, 262.

consciousness so that it may escape and transcend reification. The “profane” owner treats objects like commodities to exploit for their use or exchange value. The museum likewise kills objects—again the recurrent criticism—by severing their relationship to the human labor that produced and transmitted them and thus clearing the way for their investment with magical properties, such as culture, learning, beauty, truth. Whereas the museum isolates objects from their relations of production and transmission, the collection restores objects to the contexts that give them meaning. But the museum dilemma resurfaces. On the one hand “public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections”; on the other hand, “the objects get their due only in the latter.”⁵⁰ Benjamin’s response was clear: to combat the death of objects in the museum, he advocated their “rebirth” in the private collection. Yet the private collector, he thought, was a species fast approaching extinction. Also a cultural hallmark of the nineteenth century, only the museum seemed destined for survival into the twentieth. Benjamin’s achievement lies in recuperating the outmoded figure of the collector for the purposes of historical materialism, a method of doing history that resembles urban archaeology in its attention to mankind’s debris. His modernity consists, then, of a reassessment and remodeling of the collective’s

⁵⁰ “Unpacking My Library,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, 59-67 (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 67.

relationship to objects on that of the collector, who does not emphasize objects' utilitarian or commodity value but studies and loves them as the scene of their "fate."⁵¹

Just as Benjamin found critical power in urban detritus, so many avant-garde artists and writers found creative as well as epistemic value in it. In fact, Benjamin's arcades project was inspired by André Breton's *Nadja* and Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris*, where the Surrealists enjoy chance encounters in Paris flea markets with *objets trouvés* and *objets sauvages*.⁵² Stripped of their functional context, these African or Oceanian sculptures achieved their "true freedom," as Benjamin would say, in the avant-garde studio.⁵³ This was a key site of what James Clifford calls ethnographic surrealism, an approach to knowledge that "attacks the familiar, provoking the irruption of otherness." In contrast, anthropological humanism "begins with the different and renders it—through naming, classifying, describing, interpreting—comprehensible."⁵⁴ This difference in ways of knowing also distinguishes the avant-garde studio from the museum, which domesticates objects through scientific arrangement. With its display of mystery-laden articles, the avant-garde studio thus formed a kind of counter-museum just as the collection does. Likewise, Surrealist excursions to the Marché aux Puces posed an

⁵¹ One can also speak of his modernism: his historiographic use of montage to "assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. . . . to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event" (2002: 461).

⁵² See especially *Convolute N*.

⁵³ "Unpacking My Library," 64.

⁵⁴ *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 121, 145.

alternative to the traditional museum visit.⁵⁵ While the Surrealists used cast-off items as passports to a marvelous realm of alternative logic,⁵⁶ many Dadaists made art out of junk. Kurt Schwitters, for example, rescued tram tickets and dishcloths from garbage dumps and nailed or pasted them into collages. Marcel Duchamp transformed perfume bottles, bottle racks, and other found or store-bought items into “ready-made” anti-art, by altering, assembling, or leaving them as they were.

Duchamp’s ready-mades challenged certain aesthetic conventions enforced by the museum: art must be beautiful and uplifting, original and authentic, hand-made by the artist. His submission of a urinal (*Fountain* by R. Mutt) to the 1917 New York Armory Show further exposed the art gallery and, by extension, the museum as the frames that constitute art as “art”—frames so powerful that they can transfigure the commonplace. In his published dialogues Duchamp continued to demystify art by reflecting on the institutions that preside over its lifespan. “I think a picture dies after a few years like the man who painted it,” he said.⁵⁷ The picture then enters the museum, where for the

⁵⁵ Another alternative is limned in a prospectus for a mock guided tour of the Église St. Julien le Pauvre, conducted by the Paris Dadaists (many of them future Surrealists) on April 14, 1921: “The Dadaists, passing through Paris and wanting to remedy the incompetence of suspect guides and cicerones, have decided to undertake a series of visits to selected places, particular to those that do not really have reason to exist” (*Excursions & visites Dada: 1ère visite, Eglise Saint Julien le Pauvre* [Paris, 1921]; available from http://sdr.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/Excursions_and_visites_Dada/index.htm; Internet; accessed 22 February 2006. A visit was planned to the Louvre.

⁵⁶ It is on this point that Benjamin differentiates his project from that of the Surrealists: “whereas Aragon persists within the realm of dream, here the concern is to find the constellation of awakening” (2002: 458). Benjamin frequently used “constellation” as a metaphor to mean the theoretical juncture at “which precisely this fragment of the past finds itself with precisely this present” (1996: 262) under the pressure of political events.

⁵⁷ This was a common idea among the avant-garde. Toward the end of the 1909 “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti predicts the obsolescence of his contemporaries’ art. In “Vital English Art.

“defrocked” it becomes art history. Yet the religious remain faithful that it is living art, for so the museum encourages viewers to regard it, even if the object was never intended as art. “African wooden spoons were nothing at the time when they were made, they were simply functional; later they became beautiful things, ‘works of art,’”⁵⁸ Art is thus the product of the viewer’s gaze, as directed by the museum, as well as the creation of the artist. From the start, the museum’s principles of acquisition depend on momentary taste. “[T]his momentary taste disappears, and, despite everything, certain things still remain.” These things enjoy a posthumous existence in the museum thanks to the efforts of privileged classes. Art dealers are also responsible for artworks’ survival, for as museum advisers they literally run the show: “A project has to attain a certain monetary value for them [museums] to decide to do something.”⁵⁹ Like Benjamin, then, Duchamp draws attention to the social agents, commercial interests, and institutional authority that enable not just art’s transmission but also its very definition. Yet unlike Marinetti, he does not conclude his anti-museum discourse with a call for the museum’s destruction. On the contrary, in the 1920s he worked with the Société Anonyme to establish in New York an institution for collecting and presenting modern art. In the 1950s he promoted the

Futurist Manifesto,” Marinetti and his English disciple, C. R. W. Nevinson, declare that “A masterpiece must disappear with its author” (*The Observer*, 15 June 1914).

⁵⁸ James Clifford has analyzed the museum’s role in the “art-culture system” through which in the last century tribal artifacts and cultural practices have attained authenticity in the West. See “On Collecting Art and Culture,” *The Predicament of Culture*, 215-52.

⁵⁹ Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 67, 70, 71, 98.

Philadelphia Museum of Art as the destination for both the society's collection and the majority of his oeuvre.

In *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925), Le Corbusier similarly debunks the museum's popular image as a temple containing sacred objects. Not only are the museum's contents not eternal but the museum itself is a "recent invention." The museum is "bad" because it collects objects that, coming from churches, palaces, and country houses, are supposed to be rare and precious, but they are often in bad taste. The museum then compels the public's admiration for these objects. A "true" decorative arts museum, on the other hand, would, like Pompeii, "present a complete picture after the passage of time." As well as including everything, it would display labels explaining that, at the time a given object was made, "what was done best was not yet what was most highly prized." The labels would also identify an object's original function. The museum would thus combat the public's tendency to harbor "a religious respect for objects that are ill-made and offensive." By "tell[ing] the whole story," such a museum would allow the public to accept or reject the museum's contents as examples of beauty. Short of this, museums should engrave on their pediments the warning, "Within will be found the most partial, the least convincing documentation of past ages; remember this and be on your guard!" "Naked," that is, modern "man," stripped of his superstitious regard for the museum did not need this admonition. "He does not worship fetishes. He is not a collector. He is not the keeper of a museum." Yet Le Corbusier was not wholly

opposed to museums. He considered them to be “a means of instruction for the most intelligent,” where the “elements of judgment” may be learned.⁶⁰

In fact, the Swiss architect designed some nine museums and exhibition halls from the late 1920s to the mid-1960s, many of them variations on a square spiral of unlimited extension. The first of these, the World Museum, was conceived in 1929 as part of the Mundaneum, a world scientific, educational, and documentary center first envisioned by the Belgian philosopher Paul Otlet. At the service of various international associations, it was proposed for establishment at Geneva to complete the institution of the League of Nations. Le Corbusier envisioned the World Museum (the project was never completed) as a stepped pyramid with a spiral, triple-naved interior. A tunnel and ramp took visitors to the highest level of the building, where they began the long journey of descent from the origins of history to the contemporary age. Pioneering in its architecture, the World Museum nonetheless participates in two nineteenth-century traditions. The pathway’s continuity mimics the historicist construction of the past as a series of steps leading up (or down) to the present.⁶¹ Le Corbusier’s design—which eventually expanded into one for a new world city—expresses “that dream of the enlightened bourgeoisie—the construction of a place that would gather” the world’s memory. As Giuliano Gresleri points out, that world was “still completely ‘western’ and

⁶⁰ “Other Icons: The Museums,” trans. James I. Dunnett (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987, 15-23 [First published in Le Corbusier, *L’Art décorative d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Editions Crès, 1925).], in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 205-07, 208, 205-07.

⁶¹ See Giuliano Gresleri, “The Mundaneum Plan,” *In the Footsteps of Le Corbusier*, eds. Carlo Palazzolo and Riccardo Vio (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 93-114; and *Le Corbusier 1910-1965*, eds. W. Boesiger and H. Girsberger (Zurich: Artemis, 1967), 234-89.

. . . governed the rest of humanity through brutal mechanisms of colonial exploitation.”⁶²

Yet this aspiration to totality can be considered progressive in its resemblance to Le Corbusier’s ideal museum whose comprehensiveness, by desacralizing its contents, permits their criticism.

While Le Corbusier pursued innovations in museum architecture, other avant-garde artists turned their attention to designing exhibition spaces fit for modern viewing. Believing that the display of modern art required a visual backdrop rather than blank walls, El Lissitzky constructed two “demonstration rooms” featuring a system of moving scenes. “The result was an optical dynamic with shifting visual axes . . . where every movement of the spectator caused an impression of constant wall changes, activating both spectator and space.” The *Cabinet of the Abstract* (1926) and *Room of Constructivist Art* (1927-28) actively engaged the viewer in the process of looking at art.⁶³ They also solved the crowding of artworks common to the traditional museum, which resulted in their mortal competition for the viewer’s gaze: “In my room the objects should not all suddenly attack the viewer. If on previous occasions in his march in front of the picture-walls, he was lulled by the painting into a certain passivity, now our design should make the man active.”⁶⁴ Following the Revolution, other Russian left artists such as Aleksandr Rodchenko and Vasily Kandinsky envisioned an active role for themselves in managing and organizing museums. They recommended changing the principle of

⁶² “The Mundaneum Plan,” 97.

⁶³ Magdalena Dabrowski, “El Lissitzky,” in McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 46.

⁶⁴ Qtd. in Dabrowski, “El Lissitzky,” 46.

exhibition from the economic utilization of the walls to effective viewing, and the criterion of acquisition from chronology to artistic innovation. The focus on technical advances would replace the idea of eternal beauty with that of art's mortality, which in passing away smooths [sic] and opens up the way to new conquests."⁶⁵ As well as stimulating artists to create new works, the museum would benefit the public's understanding of artistic craft. Together, Rodchenko's and Kandinsky's writings form an avant-garde museology whose ultimate goal was to transform the museum from an "archive" or "treasury"⁶⁶ of historical items into a "maker of culture" that displayed "*living works*."⁶⁷

The museum was, then, as much a muse as an object of critique for the avant-garde, some of whom created their own museum-like pieces. Between 1936 and 1941, Duchamp, for example, created 320 copies of *Boîte-en-valise*, a covered cardboard box (sometimes in a leather case) containing miniature replicas, photographs, and color reproductions of his works. Equipped with folding panels, these "portable museums" substitute their own display venue for that of the museum. The many reproductions mock the singularity of the traditional work of art, a characteristic enshrined by the

⁶⁵ "Thesis of Rodchenko's Report on 'Museum of Artistic Culture,'" in Selim Omarovich Khan-Magomedov, *Rodchenko: The Complete Work*, trans. Huw Evans (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), in McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 202.

⁶⁶ Kandinsky, "The Museum of the Culture of Painting," in Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, eds., *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, trans. Peter Vergo, vol. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 437-44, in McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 203.

⁶⁷ Rodchenko, "Thesis," 202. For more on Russian avant-garde museology, see "Futurist Museology," Maria Gough, *Modernism/Modernity*, 10.2 (2003) 327-48; and Boris Groys, "The Struggle Against the Museum," *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, eds. Daniel J. Sherman and Irist Rogoff, 144-62.

museum.⁶⁸ Like his Paris counterparts, the American Surrealist Joseph Cornell rifled through second-hand stalls for objects whose enchanting qualities brought them to life in his imagination. In his 1946 exhibition, *Romantic Museum: Portraits of Women*, chance encounters with photographs of dancers led to a historiographic pursuit of their life stories worthy of Benjamin, yet he focused on a person rather than an epoch and was driven by eros rather than revolutionary zeal. He collected real and imaginary souvenirs of the dancers, divas, and movie stars with whom he had fallen in love. He then arranged the ephemera in boxes to form miniature museums. Whereas the museum collects objects in order to preserve them, Cornell employed his strategy “not in order to hold on to these evanescent women but, instead, to let them go.”⁶⁹ The use of the museum as a format extended to the neo-avant-garde art of the 1960s and 1970s. The cheapness, mass-producibility, and portability of the “miniature Fluxus museums” allowed the Fluxus collective to anthologize their creative output while circumventing traditional modes of distribution and exhibition. Claes Oldenburg’s *Mickey Mouse Museum* evolved over a dozen years into a self-contained, free-standing “museum of popular objects,” 385 to be exact. Manifesting itself in various guises and locations, Marcel Broodthaers’ *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* [*Museum of Modern Art, Department of*

⁶⁸ See Jean Clair, *Marcel Duchamp Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1977), in A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 76.

⁶⁹ Jodi Hauptman, “Joseph Cornell,” in McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 59.

Eagles] parodied the museum's aesthetic canons, modes of classifying and exhibiting, symbolism of governmental authority, and commercialization of art.⁷⁰

Creating one's own museum was not the only strategy employed by the neo-avant-garde to protest what they perceived as the institution's inherent conservatism and resistance to change. Sherry Levine's photographic appropriations of masterpieces deprive them of their aura and disrupt the notion of an original, authentic work of art. Altogether incompatible with the physical space of the museum, Christo's vast public installations substitute an ephemeral gesture for the enduring work of art and reach mass audiences on grounds more profane than sacred. One unrealized project called for packaging the Museum of Modern Art in 70,000 square feet of heavy-gauge canvas tarpaulin, bound with thousands of feet of nylon rope. By reversing the relationship between container and contents, the work draws attention to the otherwise invisible physical apparatus of art's reception.⁷¹ Earthworks, Body Art, and Performance Art designate a further variety of practices that disrupt the traditional category of the work of art and elude the art gallery and museum as the institutionalized sites for displaying and preserving art.

The most sustained institutional critique comes from Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke, whose art and writings attack the museum as an instrument of bourgeois ideology. In a series of essays, Buren argued that the museum obscures the material conditions of art's production, distribution, and reception—indeed, its very categorization

⁷⁰ McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 82-83, 70-75, 62-64.

⁷¹ McShine, *The Museum as Muse*, 140-41, 124-27.

as art—resulting in the illusion of art’s self-sufficiency and timelessness. Artists’ failure to perceive how the museum “frames” art’s aesthetic and social meaning demonstrates that the twentieth century has yet to break with the idealism (comparable to Art for Art’s sake) of the nineteenth-century. Necessary to effect a rupture with modern art “is the *analysis of formal and cultural limits* (and not one *or* the other) within which art exists and struggles. . . . Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way to *camouflage* them, and although it is too early—the conditions are not met—to blow them up, the time has come to *unveil* them”⁷² The French artist’s preferred method of unveiling these limits has been to indicate the indispensability to a work of the place in which it is shown. He exemplified this approach in his 1998 installation in the Museum of Modern Art, where he removed permanent paintings from their gallery room, reinstalled them in a specially built replica of their original room, and replaced them in the gallery with his signature vertical stripes. Haacke has similarly sought to reveal the material circumstances of art’s transmission and reception. In 1974 he wrote, “In order to gain some insight into the forces that elevate certain products to the level of ‘works of art’ it is helpful—among other investigations—to look into the economic and political underpinnings of the institutions, individuals and groups who share in the control of cultural power.”⁷³ His *Manet-Projekt ’74* and *Seurat’s “Les Poseuses” (small version), 1888-1975* demonstrate this strategy. In both works the German artist hung panels

⁷² Qtd. in Hans Haacke, *Framing and Being Frame: 7 Works 1970-75* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 72.

⁷³ “All the Art That’s Fit to Show,” in Bronson and Gale, *Museums by Artists*, 151.

presenting the social and economic position of the persons who had owned the paintings over the years and the prices paid for them.⁷⁴ The works trace the objects' fate, that is, the history of the material processes that enable their continued existence.

The critique of the museum (as well as its use as a format) is thus central to the first and second avant-gardes. Bürger's influential *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1974) helps to explain this centrality. According to Bürger, nineteenth-century Aestheticism, in which art's independence from society becomes art's content, made evident the institutional status of art in bourgeois society. The avant-garde of the 1920s protested "art as an institution," that is, the traditional way in which art was produced, disseminated, and received, as well as the concept of art's autonomy. Their goal was to reintegrate art and life. But the avant-garde ultimately failed to destroy the institution of art and return it to a social purpose. For the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s and the museum jointly institutionalized the avant-garde *as* art, the one by copying the avant-garde, the other by co-opting it. Bürger uses as his example Duchamp's ready-mades, which as mass-produced objects turn against the individual as the subject of art's creation: "Once the bottle drier has been accepted as an object that deserves a place in a museum, the provocation no longer provokes; it turns into its opposite," an autonomous work among others. The neo-avant-garde further negates their precursors' intentions by repeating their gestures. "Since now the protest of the historical avant-garde against art as institution is accepted as *art* the gesture of protest of the neo-avant-garde becomes

⁷⁴ See Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed*, 69-112.

inauthentic.”⁷⁵ The museum’s influence on how art is produced, disseminated, and received thus explains its prominence as a target (and medium) of avant-garde art. The avant-garde protested the institution of art by attacking (and transforming) art’s principal institution using a variety of strategies ranging from the articulation of a new museology to advocacy of the museum’s destruction. Ultimately, Bürger’s argument that the museum drains art of its character of protest constitutes a variation on the idea that the museum kills objects.

In *On the Museum’s Ruins* (1993) Douglas Crimp continues the avant-garde critique of the museum as antithetical to modernity. But he disagrees with Bürger in his assessment of the post-war avant-garde, arguing that the challenge to the institution of art is more explicit in the work of Broodthaers, Haacke, or Lawler, for example, than in the practices of Dada and Surrealism that Bürger cites. He contends that revealing the institutionalization of art amounts to a social practice with real consequences. In fact, he defines postmodernism in terms of the politicized practices of the post-war avant-garde:

“Employing various strategies, these artists have worked to reveal the social and material conditions of art’s production and reception—those conditions that it has been the museum’s function to dissemble. . . . In short, ‘my’ postmodernism subjected the reigning idealism of mainstream modernism to a materialist critique

⁷⁵ Trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 53. In *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (1965), Hans Richter, an original Zurich Dadaist, reaches a similarly pessimistic conclusion: “The neo-Dadaists are trying to restore to the anti-fetish the attributes of ‘art.’” But he does not implicate the museum as a co-cause of the institutionalization of anti-art. In fact, he criticizes the museum not for resisting change but precisely for changing from a temple of “contemplation” (where “the Gods spoke”) into a place of “entertainment” (New York: Abrams, 208-10). This position reveals the predominance in him of the artistic over the anti-artistic tendency, which together form the central tension within Dada, as he sees it.

and thereby showed the museum—founded on the presuppositions of idealism—to be an outmoded institution, no longer having an easy relationship to innovative contemporary art.”⁷⁶

For Crimp, then, postmodernist artists waged and won the battle against the museum, which now lies in ruins, along with the modernism founded upon it. The idea that the museum provided the condition for modernism’s emergence is common among art historians. In a 1962 essay, Michel Foucault, for example, locates the origins of modernism in the museum, arguing that Manet “erect[ed]” his art “within the archive” of the museum, producing works “in a self-conscious relationship to earlier paintings.”⁷⁷ In *Inside the White Cube* (1986), Brian O’Doherty correlates the history of modernism with changes in gallery space and finds that “In a peculiar reversal, the object introduced into the gallery ‘frames’ the gallery and its laws.”⁷⁸ In “Epilogue: The Dead-Letter Office,” an essay collected in *Museums in Crisis* (1972), edited by O’Doherty, Hugh Kenner maintains that “The history of twentieth-century art may someday appear to have been simply a death struggle with the museum. In that struggle, art being unkillable, the museum was foredoomed. Now, the temples of art history having themselves been relegated to history . . . , we may expect art to find more interesting things to do.”⁷⁹ These

⁷⁶ (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 286.

⁷⁷ “Fantasia of the Library,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁷⁸ (Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986), 15. Buren looked forward to an art history that would consider the architecture within which a work resides as an integral part of the work. Brian O’Doherty’s book takes up this challenge as well as Buren’s metaphor for the museum.

⁷⁹ 161-74 (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 161.

pieces and even their titles—“ruins,” “dead-letter,” “crisis”—proclaim that the museum is past its prime; one recent book of museum criticism baldly declares, *The End(s) of the Museum* (1996).⁸⁰ Andreas Huyssen counters this argument by pointing to the ways in which museums have changed. For him, the anti-museum critique “does not seem to be quite pertinent any longer for the current museum scene which has buried the museum as temple for the muses in order to resurrect it as a hybrid space somewhere between public fair and department store.”⁸¹ From the ruins of the museum, then, arises what Eileen Hooper-Greenhill calls the “post-museum.”⁸² But is it compatible with postmodernist art, despite what Crimp and Kenner claim? In *After the End of Art* (1997), by which he means the end of “the exclusivity of pure painting as the vehicle of art history”—the dominant modernist narrative associated with Clement Greenburg—Arthur Danto resoundingly answers yes.⁸³ Buren’s 2005 art exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum, *The Eye of the Storm*, in which his two massive, site-specific walls totally occupied the museum space, provides an even stronger answer.

Chapter 2: “Out of Time”: Museum Discourse in Borges’ Oeuvre

⁸⁰ (Barcelona: Fundació Antonio Tàpies, 1996), introd. Thomas Keenan.

⁸¹ *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London: Routledge, 1995), 15.

⁸² *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁸³ (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

In 1936-37, Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares edited with Manuel Peyrou the magazine *Destiempo* (*Out of Time*)⁸⁴ (six pages, three numbers), in which a series of rare and curious literary fragments appeared without attribution under the title of “Museo” (“Museum”). Ten years later, when Borges was director of the magazine *Los anales de Buenos Aires* (*The Annals of Buenos Aires*), both writers again published “Museo.” The third number bore no name; the following eight numbers carried the signature of B. Lynch Davis.⁸⁵ The precursor to “Museo” is “Etcétera,” the miscellany of fragments that concludes Borges’ first collection of stories, *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935). “Museo” reappears as the final section of Borges’ *El hacedor* (1960) (retitled *Dreamtigers* in the English translation), a collection of poems and short prose pieces. The various museums share many of the same fragments.

Casares’ comments on *Destiempo* illuminate the metaphor of the printed museum: “The title indicated our desire to escape the superstitions of the time. We objected especially to the tendency of some critics to overlook the intrinsic qualities of some works and to waste time on their folkloric, telluric aspects, or on those that had to do with literary history or the statistical and sociological disciplines.”⁸⁶ Indeed, the museum renders objects atemporal by detaching them from their original contexts. Apparently

⁸⁴ This and all other translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁵ The pseudonym takes the “B” from their surnames, the “Lynch” from an ancestor of Bioy’s, the “Davis” from a relative of Borges. Sara Luisa del Carril and Mercedes Rubio de Zocchi have brought the “Museo” pieces together with other early collaborations between Borges and Casares into one volume: del Carril and de Zocchi, eds., *Museo: Textos Inéditos* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2002).

⁸⁶ Qtd. in Emir Rodríguez Monegal, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), 291.

transcendental, museum objects form the perfect analogues for the literary works valued by Borges and Casares for their formal aspects alone. But while the museum deprives objects of their historical existence, it also historicizes objects by exhibiting them according to such historiographic principles as style and chronological markers. The museum is thus, paradoxically, both historical and ahistorical, its objects separated from history yet standing for it. This temporal disjunction transforms the objects into monuments whose peculiar anachronism is explained by Didier Maleuvre: “the monument . . . is synchronous neither with the past” it commemorates “nor with the present in which it demonstrates.”⁸⁷ In monumentalizing objects, then, the museum situates them “out of time,” that is, in the absence of time.

But the museum also locates objects “out of time” in the sense of the co-presence, or simultaneity, of all times. Hence the avant-garde’s charge that the museum exerts an “eternity-effect” on objects by “artificially” keeping them alive beyond their span of functional use or social relevance.⁸⁸ Further rendering the museum redolent of eternity is its heterotopian character, as defined by Michel Foucault in “Texts/Contexts: Of Other Spaces”:

The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its

⁸⁷ *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 56-60.

⁸⁸ For more on the avant-garde’s opposition to the museum’s tendency to eternalize objects, see Chapter 1 above.

ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to Western culture of the nineteenth century.

Though Foucault does not cite it as an example, the museum also functions as a heterotopia that “is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.”⁸⁹ Foucault thus identifies the museum with the enclosure of all times (as well as all places). The museum is further linked to totality in Eugenio Donato’s poststructuralist essay on Flaubert’s last novel, “The Museum’s Furnace: Notes toward a Contextual Reading of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*.” Donato compares the museum to the encyclopedia, understanding it as a totalizing system of knowledge based on the classical episteme of *taxinomia*, or Order, as defined by Foucault in *The Order of Things*.⁹⁰ Janell Watson rightly criticizes Donato for misapprehending Foucault, arguing that the museum belongs instead to the modern episteme of History.⁹¹ But she is wrong to absolve the museum of all traces of the naïve faith in order, totality, and transparent meaning with which such critics as Donato (incorrectly, in her view) associate the museum. For in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault clearly identifies

⁸⁹ The museum’s emphasis on ordered display identifies it with the “heterotopia . . . of compensation,” whose role “is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (In *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, 371-79 [Ashgate: Vermont, 2004], 377, 376, 378).

⁹⁰ In *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué Harari, 213-38 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979).

⁹¹ *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 84-90.

modern history—and by extension its institutional expression, the modern museum—with the theme and the possibility of a total history. “The project of a total history,” he writes, “is one that seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle—material or spiritual—of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion.”⁹² Thus, whereas totality within the classical episteme refers to a unified corpus of learning, within the modern episteme it signifies a unity of thought or a structure of knowledge. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill demonstrates this meaning of totality (a story, a theme, a history, organic relationships) in relation to the modern museum’s display arrangements: “In the laying out of paintings by geographical and historical divisions into ‘schools’ of artists, a ‘picture-book’ of art history is presented. The relationships of the paintings depend on the country of origin.”⁹³

The modern museum’s totalizing tendency is further illustrated in Richard Owen’s 1862 treatise on “The Extent and Aims of a National Museum of Natural History.” Owen turns to John Milton in order to liken London’s Natural History Museum, of which he was director, to “the Paradise in which Adam”

Beheld each bird and beast

Approaching two and two . . .

He named them as they passed and understood

Their nature; with such knowledge God endued

⁹² Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 9.

⁹³ *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 198, 187-88.

His sudden apprehension.⁹⁴

As Barbara Black has shown, “Victorian science, boasting its epistemological triumph over the immensity of the world, makes all the world . . . a collection of museum labels or exotica familiarized.”⁹⁵ Implicit in the metaphor of the world museum is the assumption that the world can be (selectively) collected, classified, ordered, and displayed and, vice versa, that any museum object can be treated as an object of the world.⁹⁶ Le Corbusier’s 1925 fantasy of a “second Pompeian museum, of the modern epoch,”⁹⁷ expressed in the Mundaneum Plan he and Paul Otlet conceived in 1929,⁹⁸ offers a variation on the metaphor; so, too, does André Malraux’ notion of an “imaginary museum” or a “museum without walls.” The latter is the title of the 1967 English translation of *Le Musée*

⁹⁴ (London: Saunders, Otley, 1862), 2.

⁹⁵ *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 16.

⁹⁶ The metaphor of the world museum obviously bears much in common with the metaphor of the Book of Nature, which Borges adapted throughout his oeuvre in the form of the Library-Encyclopedia. For centuries *museo* itself was a synonym for *biblioteca* (library); e.g., Gracián, *El Discreto*, xviii; *El Criticón*, segunda parte: crisis iv. A comprehensive investigation of museum discourse within Borges’ oeuvre (which falls beyond the scope of the present chapter) would differentiate his use of the two metaphors for the universe. Such a task would not limit itself to the distinction, noted above, between their respective epistemes, but would involve addressing such topics as the temporal dimension of reading words versus the spatial dimension of seeing objects (a theme dealt with in “El aleph”), as well as the contrast between the library’s and the museum’s degrees of accessibility.

⁹⁷ “Other Icons: The Museums,” trans. James I. Dunnett (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987, 15-23 [First published in Le Corbusier, *L’Art décorative d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Editions Crès, 1925).] Qtd. in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine, 205-08 (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 206.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 1; Giuliano Gresleri, “The Mundaneum Plan,” *In the Footsteps of Le Corbusier*, eds. Carlo Palazzolo and Riccardo Vio (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 93-114; and *Le Corbusier 1910-1965*, eds. W. Boesiger and H. Girsberger (Zurich: Artemis, 1967), 234-89.

imaginaire, the first of the three volumes that form *Les Voix du Silence* (1951).⁹⁹ In *Museum Without Walls*, Malraux argues that the museum's estrangement of artworks from their original functions results in their ceasing to have any function other than that of being a work of art. As a consequence of the artworks' aestheticization as well as the advances in art history, the museum's "assemblage of so many masterpieces conjures up in the mind's eye *all* of the world's masterpieces." The post-World War II emergence of color reproduction technologies enabled the realization of this "imaginary museum."¹⁰⁰

Thus while Donato errs in locating the modern museum in classical Order, he correctly identifies the institution's ideology with a faith in its capacity to give, by the ordered display of selected artifacts, a total representation of human reality and history.¹⁰¹ To fulfill the claim to totality, the museum must homogenize its diverse artifacts through classification and organization. Otherwise, it risks collapsing into "a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects . . . incapable of substituting themselves either metonymically for the original objects or metaphorically for their representations."¹⁰² As late as 1911, W. J. Holland, Director of the Carnegie Institute and President of the

⁹⁹ *Les Voix du silence* represents an expansion and revision of *La Psychologie de l'art*, which appeared between 1947 and 1950.

¹⁰⁰ Trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price, (New York: Doubleday), 9-12. The searchable databases featured in many Web museums, made possible by the emergence of digital technology, renew in our day the hope for a total museum.

¹⁰¹ This is not to claim that all modern museums possessed a will to order, to totality, and to transparent meaning. As Watson points out, *pace* Donato, the museum is a social institution imbued with local and historical particularity, not a universal abstract concept. However, Borges' treatment of the museum as a metaphor—for the attempt at total representation no less—together with the museological evidence adduced, justifies the general identification of the modern museum with a totalizing tendency.

¹⁰² Donato, "The Museum's Furnace," 221-22, 223.

American Association of Museums, wrote, “The ideal museum should cover the whole field of human knowledge. It should teach the truth of all the sciences, including anthropology, the science which deals with man and all his works in every age. All the sciences and all the arts are correlated.” Early museums were criticized at the turn of the century for their jumbled character. Lord Balcarres, trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, wrote, “The modern museum of art differs essentially from its earlier prototypes. The aimless collection of curiosities and bric-à-brac, brought together without method or system, was the feature of certain famous collections in by-gone days.” The success of the modern museum depends on the order in which the objects are displayed: “To be of teaching value, museum arrangement and classification must be carefully studied. . . . Attention must be given to the proper display and cataloguing of the exhibits. . . . Great progress has been made in the classification of objects.”¹⁰³ The ordered display of objects ensures the transparency of their meaning. As Hooper-Greenhill has shown, objects in the modern museum “were seen as sources of knowledge, as parts of the real world that had fixed and finite meanings that could be both discovered, once and for all, and then taught through being put on show.”¹⁰⁴

On first inspection, the various “Museos” appear to be organized along rational lines. *Destiempo* and *Los anales de Buenos Aires* arrange their fragments in a column, centered and set off from one another spatially or typographically (through the use of

¹⁰³ “Museums of Science” and “Museums of Art,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), 19:64-65, 60; qtd. in Donato, “The Museum’s Furnace,” 221-222.

¹⁰⁴ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.

large dots). In *El hacedor*, the fragments appear one to a page. All bear captions identifying their source authors and texts. The “Museos” subsequent to *Destiempo* also have headings. All fragments are distinguished from their captions and headings by font, font style, and size.

Yet redundancy mars the “Museos” classification: fragments similar in subject matter bear the same or similar headings. The headings are consistently ironic. The absence of context obscures the fragments’ meaning. Quotations are nested, rendering their origins unclear. For example, Harris’ text is listed as the source of a quotation by Shaw, whom the heading designates as the speaker yet who in the quotation claims to be no one. Montaigne is quoted quoting Caesar.¹⁰⁵ The source texts, scantily cited, are equally vague. Original languages are lost in translation.

Arbitrary in its selection, classification, and exhibition, the “Museo” collapses into a “heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects.” The museum’s use as a metaphor for chaotic enumeration in Borges’ 1939 essay, “La biblioteca total,” supports this view.¹⁰⁶ Borges also identifies the museum with anomalous combination in a 1939 book review, in which he calls a history of Chinese literature a “museo” of “mutaciones” and “mezclas heterogéneas” (“museum of heterogeneous mutations and mixtures”).¹⁰⁷ A 1932 reference to a catalogue of abnormal amalgamations as a “vano museo teratológico” (“vain teratological museum”) underscores the museum’s monstrous character for

¹⁰⁵ *Los anales de Buenos Aires* 1.10 (1946): 60, 61.

¹⁰⁶ *Sur* 59.

¹⁰⁷ *OC*, 4:431.

Borges.¹⁰⁸ Resembling, then, an eighteenth-century *Wundercammer*, or cabinet of oddities, more than a modern museum, the “Museo” critiques the latter’s epistemological claims to origin, authenticity, and presence. It further exposes the futility of the modern dream of totality, whether expressed in the desire to gather all the world’s things, or all the world’s knowledge, into one place, or in the project of a total history. The modern museum and the modern episteme are not Borges’ only targets. The opposite of a historicist collection, the “Museo” also ironizes a literary strategy common to the modernists James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, namely, the simultaneous presentation of characteristics of different epochs. In “Nota sobre Walt Whitman” (“Note on Walt Whitman”), Borges links this strategy of anachronism to the goal of “forja[ndo] una apariencia de eternidad” (“forg[ing] an appearance of eternity”) and to the tradition of the absolute book.¹⁰⁹ Finally, with its strange combinations and indiscriminate enumerations, the “Museo” illustrates Borges’ principle that

no hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural. La razón es muy simple: no sabemos qué cosa es el universo. . . . Cabe ir más lejos; cabe sospechar que no hay universo en el sentido orgánico, unificador, que tiene esa ambiciosa palabra. Si lo hay, falta conjeturar su propósito; falta conjeturar las palabras, las definiciones, las etimologías, las sinonimias, del secreto diccionario de Dios.

¹⁰⁸ *OC*, 1:283.

¹⁰⁹ *OC*, 1:249.

(There is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and conjectural. The reason is very simple: we do not know what thing is the universe. . . . We can go further; we can suspect that there is no universe in the organic, unifying sense that that ambitious word has. If there is, we have yet to conjecture the purpose; we have yet to conjecture the words, the definitions, the etymologies, the synonyms, the secret dictionary of God.)¹¹⁰

Yet, while the “Museo”’s disordered display of rarities and curiosities fails to give a total representation of human reality and history, it nonetheless succeeds in transcending, or appearing to transcend, temporality. In “Historia de la eternidad” (“History of Eternity”), Borges shows how heterogeneous enumerations can insinuate eternity.¹¹¹ The “Museo” as a whole forms a disparate catalogue. In the same essay he directly links the museum to the eternal (and the teratological) saying of Plotinus’ inventory of Platonic archetypes: “algo de museo presiento en él: quieto, monstruoso y clasificado . . .” (“I sense something of the museum in it: calm, monstrous and classified.”)¹¹² The “Museo” further intimates eternity at the level of the individual fragment. One fragment, for example, features a random inventory:

DÍSTICO

El caballo, el desierto, la noche me conocen,

¹¹⁰ OC, 2:86.

¹¹¹ For a classic essay on Borges’ heteroclite enumerations, see Sylvia Molloy, *Las letras de Borges y otros ensayos* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 1999), 165-87.

¹¹² OC, 1:355.

El huésped y la espada, el papel y la pluma.

Del *Diván* de Almotanabí (siglo X)

(DISTICH

The horse, the desert, the night know me,

The guest and the sword, the paper and the pen.

From the *Diván* of Almotanabí [tenth century])¹¹³

In another fragment, a Mexican poet apostrophizes his nation:

Inaccessible al deshonor, floreces.

Ramón López Velarde: *La Suave Patria*

(Inaccessible to dishonor, you flower.

Ramón López Velarde: *The Sweet Land*)¹¹⁴

A museum object, lifted out of the hurly-burly of history and encased within a vitrine, is similarly preserved from the ravages of time—although it is arguable whether it therefore comes into its own or “gets its due,” as Walter Benjamin would both say and strongly dispute.¹¹⁵ Here is a third fragment:

PONCHO Y FACÓN

Ya conocían los romanos el combatir a capa y espada. César lo dice: *Sinistras agis involvunt, gladiosque dstringunt* (Se envuelven con la capa el brazo izquierdo y sacan la espada).

¹¹³ *Los anales de Buenos Aires* 1.6 (1946): 50.

¹¹⁴ *Destiempo* 1.3 (1937): 6.

¹¹⁵ For Benjamin’s views on the museum’s treatment of objects, see Chapter 1.

Montaigne: *Essais*, I, 49.

(PONCHO AND FACÓN)

The Romans were already familiar with combating with cloak and sword. Caesar says it: *Sinistras agis involvunt, gladiosque dstringunt* [They wrap their left arms with the cloak and take out the sword].)¹¹⁶

The differences between the cloak and sword, and the poncho and *facón*, are less apparent than their essential unity.¹¹⁷ The archetypal flavor of the objects recalls the Platonic thesis articulated by Borges in “Historia de la eternidad”: “Los individuos y las cosas existen en cuanto participan de la especie que los incluye, que es su realidad permanente.” (“Individuals and things exist insofar as they participate in the species that includes them, that is their permanent reality.”)¹¹⁸ The fragment associates the museum with a Platonist belief in the reality of universal forms, one of two ideas of eternity explored by Borges in his essay. While museums of natural science, for example, intend their specimens to represent the species, they regard the species not as a reality but as a convention of classification. Still, their emphasis on the general identity of the specimens over their particular traits inclines those museums toward eternity. Similarly, a history

¹¹⁶ *Los anales de Buenos Aires* 1.10 (1946): 61.

¹¹⁷ A *facón* is a large, rectangular, pointed knife traditional to the Argentine, Bolivian and Uruguayan countryside.

¹¹⁸ *Obras Completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1996), 1:356; hereafter referred to as *OC*.

museum's display of a sword from a famous battle often represents, if not all swords from all battles, then all the swords used in that particular battle.¹¹⁹

Compared with their sparse appearance in the rest of his oeuvre, both metaphorical and literal museums abound in Borges' *El libro de arena* (1975) (*The Book of Sand*), appearing in five of the collection's thirteen stories. In "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado," the museum is associated with history: a future society, desirous of oblivion, dispenses with libraries and museums. The museum is again linked to temporal succession as well as heterogeneous collections in "Avelino Arredondo," whose title character, trying to suspend time, renounces reading newspapers, "esos museos de

¹¹⁹ The metaphor of the printed museum has a history that goes back to post-Revolutionary France, when the first public museums were founded. According to Chantal George, "Between 1806 and 1914, more than seventy newspapers, journals, and albums carried the word *musée* (museum) in their titles." The metaphor both presents and exploits "an image of the museum as an encyclopedic institution devoted to the education of all." ("The Museum as Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century France," in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J Sherman and Irit Rogof, 113-122 [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994], 113). The metaphor of the printed museum was not limited to France but also appeared in South America. In the nineteenth century three Argentine periodicals (excluding those affiliated with actual museums) bore the word *museo* in their titles. For example, *El museo americano, libro de todo el mundo* (*The American Museum, Book of All the World*) was published in Buenos Aires in 1835-36. The preface to the first issue—whose heading, "A todo el mundo" ("To all the world"), aspires to a universal audience—boasts a classification of the universe random enough to be worthy of Borges:

Queremos que en él se hallen materias de todos los precios, de todos los gustos: cosas antiguas y modernas, animadas é inanimadas, monumentales, naturales, civilizadas, salvajes, pertenecientes á la tierra, al mar, al cielo, á todos los tiempos, procedentes de todos los paises, del Indostan y de China, así como de la Irlanda, del Perú, de Buenos-Ayres, de Roma ó de Paris. (We want there to be found in it (the periodical) materials of all prices, of all tastes: things antique and modern, animate and inanimate, monumental, natural, civilized, savage, pertaining to the earth, to the sea, to the sky, to all times, issuing from all countries, from Hindustan and China, as well as from Ireland, from Peru, from Buenos-Ayres, from Rome or from Paris.) (October 1835)

The selection and presentation of the contents within is no less arbitrary than the catalogue mentioned in the preface. For example, one issue features "Buéyes salvajes en la Maremma (Italia)," "Idea familiar del sistema solar," "Buque de vapor," and "Jesuitas" (Savage bullocks in Maremma [Italy], Familiar idea of the solar system, Steamboat, and Jesuits). The periodical folded after a year because of financial reasons, but also, tellingly, "por haber . . . recibido varias observaciones y reclamaciones sobre la eleccion y distribucion de las materias" (for having received various observations and remonstrations over the choice and distribution of materials).

minucias efímeras” (“those museums of ephemeral minutiae”).¹²⁰ In contrast, the museum suggests totality in “El libro de arena.” The title story mentions as a possible destination for the title book—a tome with no beginning and no end to its pages—the British Museum, which, while not infinite, houses a nearly incalculable number of items.¹²¹ “Ulrica” connects the museum to eternity. The title character is admitted entrance after hours to the York Minster museum when the staff discovers that she is Norwegian and thus a descendant of the Vikings whose swords are on display. Yet, to be Norwegian, she and the narrator agree, is “un acto de fe” (“an act of faith”), requiring belief in the reality of an abstract concept.¹²² The staff’s credence thus associates the museum with philosophical realism. The institution’s Platonist tenor is confirmed by Ulrica’s statement that she was moved more by the paltry swords she saw in York Minster than by the great ships in the Oslo museum.¹²³ Whereas the ships back home are, for Ulrica, perfunctory and thus moribund symbols of the nation, the Viking swords she

¹²⁰ OC, 3:63. The prologue to *El otro, el mismo* (1964) (The Other, the Same) similarly emphasizes the museum’s historical aspect by comparing the work of Gongora, with its linguistic experimentation, to “un espécimen de museo, un juego destinado a la discusión de los historiadores de la literatura” (a kind of museum, a game destined for the discussion of literary historians) (OC, 2: 235)

¹²¹ The inclusion of an infinite book in a story named after the book, and the story’s inclusion in a book named after the story, sets up a *regressus ad infinitum* similar to the one in “El aleph,” in which the narrator, peering into the Aleph, a heterotopia that contains all places, “vi el Aleph . . . vi en el Aleph la tierra, y en la tierra otra vez el Aleph y en el Aleph la tierra . . .” (saw the Aleph . . . saw in the Aleph the earth, and on the earth again the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth) (OC 625).

¹²² OC, 3:19.

¹²³ Swords are one of Borges’ favorite examples of an archetype. See “Fragmento” (OC, 2:282) and “Espadas” (OC, 2:461).

encounters abroad, free of conventional duties, paradoxically come alive to betoken the reality of the convention that is Norway.¹²⁴

The British Museum also appears in “El congreso,” a longish story about an attempt to form a World Congress that would represent all people of all nations. The attempt is led by the Uruguayan don Alejandro Glencoe, who forms his plan after being denied a congressional seat following the 1897 Congress of Uruguay. Preliminary reunions occur at a café in Buenos Aires; the inauguration is slated to take place at Glencoe’s ranch in Uruguay. The story is narrated by Alejandro Ferri, a native of Santa Fe province who moves to the Argentine capital, where he joins the planning committee. Eventually, Ferri is sent to London to register the congress’s existence and to find a *lingua franca* suitable for the delegates’ use. He takes lodging near the British Museum, in whose library he examines Esperanto and Volapük, the arguments for and against resuscitating Latin, and the analytical language of John Wilkins.¹²⁵ Under the vast dome of the Reading Room, he meets the woman who will become his lover, Beatriz Frost. This encounter represents a culmination of metaphors for eternity: the world congress, the universal language, sexual congress (serial throughout humanity), the ideal Beatrice (recurrent in literature), the library, the museum, the world city.

¹²⁴ A sword similarly revives—and thus triumphs over time—for Borges in “A una espada en York Minster” (To a Sword in York Minster) (*OC*, 2:283), a sonnet to an ancient Danish sword he saw in the museum’s Viking Yorkshire room (“Autobiographical Essay,” *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970]).

¹²⁵ The story is full of such autobiographical references.

Borges was likely familiar with Henry James's statement in *English Hours* (1905) that London "is the biggest aggregation of human life, the most complete compendium of the world. The human race is better represented there than anywhere else."¹²⁶ In *The City in History* (1961), an exploration of the development of urban civilizations, the historian of science and technology Lewis Mumford quotes and extends James's description to the metropolis in general, adding that, "at least in token quantities all races and cultures can be found here, along with their languages, their customs, their costumes, their typical cuisines: here the representatives of mankind first met face to face on neutral ground." The "most typical institution of the metropolis" is the museum. While Mumford acknowledges the random acquisitiveness, over-expansion, and disorganization that often characterize the museum, he insists that "in its rational form the museum serves . . . as a method of getting access, through selected specimens and samples, to a world whose immensity and complexity would otherwise be far beyond human power to grasp." The big city itself functions as a museum. It is capable of making available the whole of human history "not merely through its own records and monuments, but"—here the role of imperialism is elided—"through distant areas that its great resources make it possible to draw upon." The key to total representation is rational form, which in the museum means the classification and arrangement of objects; in the city, the digestion and selection of cultural materials. The city itself performs these operations, "Until it becomes too cluttered and disorganized."¹²⁷ According to Mumford, then, barring

¹²⁶ Qtd. in Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 561.

¹²⁷ 561, 562.

curatorial chaos and urban sprawl, the museum and the museum-city resemble models of order, totality, and transparent meaning.

Borges is not so confident. Ferri calls London a “laberinto” (“labyrinth”), and access to the British Museum yields him little more than a handful of international auxiliary languages, none of which proves suitable and on one of which he writes a skeptical report. The reason for the congress’s failure is anticipated in one delegate’s observation that planning a perfectly representative assembly is like fixing the exact number of the Platonic archetypes.

Sugirió que, sin ir más lejos, don Alejandro Glencoe podía representar a los hacendados, pero también a los orientales y también a los grandes precursores y también a los hombres de barba roja y a los que están sentados en un sillón. Nora Erfjord era noruega. ¿Representaría a las secretarias, a las noruegas o simplemente a todas las mujeres hermosas? ¿Bastaba un ingeniero para representar a todos los ingenieros, incluso los de Nuevo Zelandia? (He suggested, without going further, that don Alejandro Glencoe could represent landowners, but also Orientals¹²⁸ and also great forbears and also men with red beards and those seated in an armchair. Nora Erfjord was Norwegian. Would she represent secretaries, Norwegians, or simply all beautiful women? Did one engineer suffice to represent all engineers, including those from New Zealand?)

¹²⁸ Citizens of Uruguay, then known as the *Banda Oriental*, or “Eastern Area,” referring to the area east of the Río de la Plata.

Such confusion, redundancy, and omissions recall the classificatory disorder of the Chinese encyclopedia famously described in Borges' pseudo-essay, "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" ("The Analytical Language of John Wilkins"). The project falls apart shortly after Ferri's return home from London in 1903. The president reveals his reasons for putting an end to the venture: "La empresa que hemos acometido es tan vasta que abarca—ahora lo sé—el mundo entero. . . . El Congreso del Mundo comenzó con el primer instante del mundo y proseguirá cuando seamos polvo. No hay un lugar en que no esté" ("The business that we have undertaken is so vast that it encompasses—now I know it—the entire world. . . . The World Congress began with the first instant of the world and will continue until we become dust. There is no place in which it is not.")¹²⁹ If the universe resembles a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere,¹³⁰ then Ferri's centripetal movement from Argentine province to Argentine capital to European capital is as futile as the World Congress.¹³¹ Equally implausible are the claims to total representation common to both the universal survey museum and the world city, given the ineffaceable heterogeneity of their collections.

Borges further ironizes the pacifist, internationalist ideas current at the turn of the twentieth century, which informed the creation of Esperanto and Volapük as well as Le Corbusier and Otlet's Mundaneum Plan. Such ideas also inform Mumford's theory of the

¹²⁹ *OC*, 3:29, 24, 31.

¹³⁰ See Borges' "La esfera de Pascal," *OC*, 2:14-16.

¹³¹ One entailment of this eccentricity is that Argentina's peripheral status with regard to the world's capitals makes it no less viable as a cultural center. For a similar conclusion arrived at by a different route, see Borges' "El escritor argentino y la tradición," *OC*, 1:267-74.

world city, whose cultural function, he argued, consists in “bringing all the tribes and nations of mankind into a common sphere of co-operation and interplay.”¹³² To the extent that it existed, harmonious global intercourse was interrupted by the world wars. Fittingly, two of the ex-delegates in “El congreso” die in 1914, one of them as an infantry soldier in an Irish regiment. In associating the museum with Glencoe’s universal enterprise, Borges underscores the museum’s role in encouraging the archetypal thinking central to both nationalism and internationalism. By framing the World Congress (1900-04) with the failure of nationalism (the Congress of Uruguay)¹³³ and that of internationalism (the Great War), Borges demonstrates the limitations of each. Nationalism, a faith in the reality of the nation, leads to war; internationalism, an extension of this faith, fails to avert it.

¹³² *The City in History*, 561.

¹³³ While the 1897 Congress of Uruguay was a success in that the nation’s warring parties, the Blancos and the Colorados, agreed to a peaceful division of power, it was a failure for Glencoe, whose bitterness over being denied a congressional seat led him to found the World Congress.

PART II: MUSEUM DISCOURSE

IN BRITISH MODERNISM

Chapter 3: “To help the nation to save its soul”:

Museum Purposes in Henry James and William Morris

In his 1927 lecture at Oxford, Sir Frederic Kenyon countered F. T. Marinetti's calls for the destruction of museums by arguing that “in times of upheaval . . . salvation is to be found in adherence to tradition” rather than in “break[ing] loose from” it. Kenyon explained the museum's role in stimulating a sense of tradition:

A visit to a museum will not by itself quench a revolution. It would have been useless to invite the *pétroleuses* of the Commune to an official lecture in the Egyptian Gallery at the Louvre; but if they had been brought up to respect the past, there might have been a revolution without *pétroleuses*. Every form of instruction or experience which teaches men to link their lives with the past makes for stability and ordered progress. Hence the value of history and hence also the value of those institutions which teach history informally and without tears.

This is perhaps the clearest statement of the British Museum's political function in early twentieth-century museum discourse. Not merely a pedagogical instrument, the museum acts as an ideological state apparatus that encourages museum-goers to identify with the displayed “examples of great men” and “monuments of the past,” and by extension the

political order therein symbolized.¹³⁴ Indeed, much of the “new museology” of the past several decades has revealed the museum as a site for the reflection or reinforcement of existing power relations. In their textualist analysis of the universal survey museum, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach argue that the installation, layout of rooms, and sequence of collections create “an experience that resembles traditional religious experiences. By performing the ritual of walking through the museum, the visitor is prompted to enact and thereby to internalize the values and beliefs written into the architectural script.” These values and beliefs “equate state authority with the idea of civilization.”¹³⁵ In their sociological analysis of the class-based foundations of taste, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel argue that the museum’s “true” purpose is “to reinforce among some people the feeling of belonging and among others the feeling of exclusion.”¹³⁶ Other critics, using the work of Michel Foucault to analyze the museum as a discursive space, associate the institution with mechanisms of social control.¹³⁷ Just as Kenyon’s defense of the museum implies a reactionary position, so the cultural

¹³⁴ “Museums and National Life,” *The Romanes Lecture Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre 12 May, 1926*, 5-32 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 24-25, 23-24. I borrow the notion of ideological state apparatuses from Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation,” *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

¹³⁵ “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3.4 (December 1980): 450-51.

¹³⁶ With Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 112.

¹³⁷ See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). Recent critics such as Andrea Witcomb have argued that the problem with these approaches is that they tend to assume that museums are sites for the unproblematic reflection or operation of dominant ideological interests (*Re-imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* [New York: Routledge, 2003], 8-18).

destruction he combats amounts to a revolutionary act, whether carried out by the “gay incendiaries with charred fingers” exhorted by Marinetti or the *communardes* accused of torching the French capital during the *semaine sanglante* in 1871.¹³⁸ The political nature of cultural destruction is confirmed in Antonio Gramsci’s brief article “Marinetti the Revolutionary” (1916), in which the Italian theorist and political activist identifies the futurist anti-museum discourse and discourse of aesthetic rupture with the Marxist task of destroying “spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions” to make way for the creation of a new, proletarian civilization.¹³⁹

It would be tempting to take Kenyon’s quarrel with communards and futurists as emblematic of the binary parameters governing museum discourse in the modern period: modernity versus museum, avant-garde versus tradition, democracy versus elitism, life versus art. It would be tempting but also erroneous, for Kenyon’s justification of the museum, while redolent of conservative politics, is ultimately based on the liberal notion that museums exist for the people. “Museums,” he says, “have ceased to be merely the arsenals of students engaged in research; they are beginning to offer themselves to the public as a means of recreation and an instrument of education.”¹⁴⁰ This shift in the museum’s mission dates from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when British museum professionals first developed what Sir William Henry Flower championed in

¹³⁸ *Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 43.

¹³⁹ Reprinted in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. Vassiliki Kolcotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou, 214-15 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 215.

¹⁴⁰ “Museums and National Life,” 12.

1893 as “the new museum idea.”¹⁴¹ At the same time, the antithetical character of Kenyon’s remarks reflects the basic challenge that the modern museum has confronted in various forms since its origins in the eighteenth century and continues to reckon with today: how to reconcile art (or artifact or specimen) with life, the “palace of the muses” with the masses. It is this predicament that British museums had to solve if they were to achieve what Kenyon defined as their “ultimate purpose”: “to help the nation to save its soul.”¹⁴²

This was a tall order, and it is the aim of this chapter to test British museums’ effectiveness in filling it around the turn of the twentieth century against the literary evidence left by Henry James, William Morris, and Virginia Woolf. In James’s social realist novel, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), repeated visits to the British Museum not only dissuade the novel’s hero, or anti-hero, from becoming a *petroleur*, they also quench his revolutionary fervor. Yet the museum does not quite help him to save his soul. Torn between a desire to overthrow the political system and a growing attachment to the cultural achievements it makes possible, Hyacinth Robinson takes his life at the end of the novel. This chapter argues that Hyacinth’s dilemma is the museum’s dilemma, that his conflict emblemizes the museum’s tension between the competing demands of art and life, the elite and the general public. The museum’s attempts to satisfy the two and transform itself from a mausoleum into an instrument vital to the public and relevant to the age, as documented in the museum literature of the day, provide the context for my

¹⁴¹ *Essays on Museums and Other Subjects Connected with Natural History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1898), 13.

¹⁴² “Museums and National Life,” 25.

analysis. Another point of reference comes from James's contemporary, William Morris, whose writings on the union of art and life under socialism and their separation under capitalism provide a subtextual foil for James's elitist attitude toward the museum, reflected in Hyacinth's own attitude.

The novel takes its title from the character of Christina Light, the *mademoiselle fatale* of *Roderick Hudson* (1876), who was married off by her mother at the end of that novel to the Italian Prince Casamassima. She reappears some ten years later, estranged from the Prince, living in London and taking an interest in radical politics and the destitute poor. There she meets Hyacinth, who, like Christina, has a vexed relationship with the idea of aristocracy. True to the naturalism that informs the work, his divided loyalties to the abolition of privileges and the preservation of culture derive from his mixed heredity. He is the illegitimate offspring of an English peer and the French seamstress who killed him following his denial of paternity. Hyacinth's maternal grandfather was a Republican clockmaker who died on a barricade during the siege of the Paris Commune. Another communard figures in the novel: Hyacinth's co-worker Eustache Poupin, who came to England after the insurrection to escape government reprisals. Motivated by a class resentment bred by his sense of disinheritance, Hyacinth pledges his life to the revolutionary cause and its underground leader, Diedrich Hoffendahl.

Hyacinth's problem develops when his deepening exposure to the monuments of civilization leads to a decline in his support for the cause. From birth he has largely been denied access to culture. He gains admission to the British Museum and the National

Gallery, but “the absence of any direct contact with a library” checks his reading opportunities.¹⁴³ Since he is free to make use of the Reading Room at the British Museum—it is there that he discovers the truth of his mother’s *crime passionel* in contemporary newspaper accounts—the mention of restricted contact with a library points to the broader limitations on proletarian access to culture. The novel draws attention to these limitations yet also suggests that they are in the process of being lifted, as indeed they were at the time the novel is set (1881).¹⁴⁴ The British Public Libraries Act had been passed in 1850, empowering municipal authorities to provide for the accommodation and maintenance of a museum and/or library. But it was not until the 1870s, after the passage of the Education Act, that municipalities began to levy ratepayers for rate-supported libraries. By 1886, as many as 125 local authorities had begun the process of library provision.¹⁴⁵ After years of debate, the British Museum, long closed on the only day that the working class was free to visit it, opened on Sunday afternoons in 1896. The admission fee for the Burlington House exhibition is affordable, and Hyacinth pays his shilling to see it. Also within his means is the price of renting lawn chairs in Kensington Gardens, and Hyacinth and his childhood friend Millicent “take possession” of a couple of them. James’s choice of words suggests that, however

¹⁴³ (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 1:101.

¹⁴⁴ Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Conquest of London, 1870-1881* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962), 186.

¹⁴⁵ Glenda Northey, “Tarred with the Same Brush? A Review of Library Development in Britain, and its Subsequent Adaptation in America, Australia and New Zealand”; available from <http://www.ak.planet.gen.nz/~gregu/Thesis/chapter1.htm>; Internet; accessed 25 February 2006.

unequal the distribution of wealth and privilege in society, the lower classes are still allotted—and so ought to be content with—opportunities for culture and leisure.¹⁴⁶

These two “scenes of access,” as I call them, occur toward the end of the second volume, as if confirming the appropriateness of the transfer in Hyacinth’s allegiances that has already taken place. This shift begins when, through an introduction to the princess at the theater, Hyacinth comes into contact with a world of culture whose existence he had barely suspected. On a visit to the princess’ country house, where he tastes the refinements of “high civilisation,” he begins to pity the rich who will suffer their great loss under socialism. The final change in his sympathies occurs during his travel to the continent. In Paris, rather than calling on the communard veterans to whom Poupin had given him written introductions, he immerses himself in the city’s cultural and historical attractions. He “roam[s] through all the museums” and, in another scene of access, takes “the same satisfaction in the Louvre as if he had been invited there.” What strikes him most in Paris is “not the idea of how the society that surrounded him should be destroyed” but “the sense of the wonderful precious things it had produced, of the fabric of beauty and power it had raised.” From Venice Hyacinth writes to the princess that he feels that the world is “less of a ‘bloody sell’ and life more of a lark” thanks to “the splendid accumulations of the happier few, to which doubtless the miserable many have also in their degree contributed.” The enthronement of socialism, he now perceives, would result in the destruction of art. Hoffendahl, he tells her,

¹⁴⁶ 2:335.

wouldn't have the least feeling for this incomparable abominable old Venice. He would cut up the ceilings of the Veronese into strips, so that everyone might have a little piece. I don't want every one to have a little piece of anything and I've a great horror of that kind of invidious jealousy which is at the bottom of the idea of a redistribution.¹⁴⁷

This vision of cultural vandalism in times of insurrection has a historical basis. French revolutionaries destroyed religious and secular monuments and works of art, seeing in them the embodiments of the *ancien régime* they sought to overthrow. The 1848 Revolution led to a mob attempt to burn down the Louvre. "We shall never get rid of kings until we pull down the palaces," they cried.¹⁴⁸ Press reports and political bulletins following the siege of the Commune of 1871 alleged the existence of some 8,000 *petroleuses* supposed to have set fire to the city's monuments and buildings. Although these allegations have largely been exposed as myths, the communards did set fire to the Tuileries Palace, the city hall, and the palace of justice. The British Museum had also been threatened by revolutionary vandalism. In April 1848, the announcement of an imminent Chartist demonstration in nearby Russell Square led to fears that a mob would torch the museum. In response, barricades were erected in front of the museum, stones were taken up to the roof to be thrown down on the heads of any attackers, some three hundred special constables including museum officials were recruited for defense,

¹⁴⁷ 2:123, 125, 145-46.

¹⁴⁸ Linda Nochlin, "Museums and Radicals: A History of Emergencies," in *Museums in Crisis*, ed. Brian O'Doherty, 7-42 (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 14.

and provisions for a three-day siege were laid in. But the assembly proved non-violent and the day ended peacefully.¹⁴⁹ Contrary to these attempts to destroy the monuments of the past, another strain of radicalism, also dating from the French Revolution, sought to disseminate them to the public by means of the museum. According to this school of thought, the museum is an instrument of democracy rather than a temple of elitism. Edifying the public was the aim of the foundation of the Musée des Monuments Français in 1795 and the Musée National, or Louvre, in 1793. Linda Nochlin has shown how, “through the alchemy of the museum,” this former palace of the kings, together with confiscated royal collections and ecclesiastical property, was “transformed into the National Heritage, the most precious possession of the people.” The notion that museums belonged to the people took sufficient root in France to persuade radicals to organize protection for public monuments and artworks during the insurrections of 1848 and 1871.¹⁵⁰

Hyacinth’s prediction of the postrevolutionary fate of existing art thus has its basis in both traditions of radicalism: cultural destruction (“He would cut up the ceilings of the Veronese into strips”) and cultural dissemination (“so that everyone might have a little piece”). That he opposes the spread as well as the demolition of culture suggests that he favors its monopoly by the elite, those whose high birth endows them with refined

¹⁴⁹ Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), 167-71. Marinetti’s calls to “set fire to the library shelves” and “turn aside the canals to flood the museums” appropriates the traditional rhetoric of cultural vandalism for artistic, rather than political, revolutionary ends (*Marinetti*, ed. R. W. Flint, 43). Whereas for radicals the museum’s destruction would bring about egalitarianism, for futurists it would pave the way for art’s renewal. For Hyacinth, of course, it would lead to the end of “high civilisation” as he has come to know it.

¹⁵⁰ “Museums and Radicals,” 15.

taste. Hyacinth belongs to this privileged class by virtue of his aristocratic pedigree. In contrast to him stands Millicent Henning, whose expression of admiration for cheap manufactures while strolling the shop-lined streets prompts Hyacinth to assure his childhood friend that she has “the worst taste of any girl in the place.” Low-born, she is debarred from entering into the mysteries of art appreciation. When Hyacinth occasionally points out a commodity that he condescends to like, and she asks him “to be so good as to explain to her in what its superiority consisted,” he replies that it is “no use attempting to tell her; she wouldn’t understand and had better to continue to admire the insipid productions of an age that had lost the sense of fineness.”¹⁵¹ Presumably, the article is unique and handcrafted as opposed to machine-made and mass-produced. Hyacinth’s training as a bookbinder helps him to distinguish the two, as do his repeated visits to museums. But it is his noble lineage that he implicitly credits for his discriminating sensibility. Hyacinth thus locates the difference between his possession of culture and Millicent’s cultural dispossession—which results from a difference in education—in a difference in nature. For Hyacinth, then, art and the general public are fundamentally irreconcilable, for only those of gentle birth are equipped to understand, and therefore should have access to, art. Such is his conviction that, in discussing with Lady Aurora the question of opening the museums on Sunday, Hyacinth remarks on “the danger of too much coddling legislation on behalf of the working classes.”¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ 1:166-167.

¹⁵² 2:355.

Hyacinth believes that socialism would not only disable the enjoyment of art—through its destruction or dissemination—but also remove the conditions necessary for the creation of art, which he identifies with England’s class system. In broader historical terms, he sees that “The monuments and treasures of art, the great palaces and properties, the conquests of learning and taste, the general fabric of civilisation as we know it, [are] based . . . upon all the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past.”¹⁵³ Hyacinth’s admission of the inequities and iniquities that permit the production, transmission, and reception of cultural treasures resembles the seventh of Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History: “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.” Benjamin here critiques the representation of history as a “triumphal procession” of “spoils,” or “cultural treasures,” from the past down to the present. The problem, he argues, is that these cultural treasures “owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries.”¹⁵⁴ Haycinth thus demonstrates a historical materialist’s awareness of the human agents and historical circumstances responsible for the life and afterlife of objects. This awareness generally escapes the museum establishment; Kenyon, for example, speaks of “the examples of great men” and “the achievements of the past” in the heroic manner of historical naturalism. Hyacinth’s

¹⁵³ 2:145.

¹⁵⁴ *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, 253-64 (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 256.

own experience shows that the reception of art depends on the blood, sweat, and tears of others, since it was his foster mother's life savings, left to him upon her death, that enabled him to travel to the continent and savor its cultural offerings.

Somewhat contradictorily, Hyacinth's materialist insight coexists with his idealist belief, implicit in his interactions with Millicent, in a culture given at birth rather than acquired through education. Bourdieu and Darbel argue that

The sanctification of culture and art . . . fulfils a vital function by contributing to the consecration of the social order. So that cultured people can believe in barbarism and persuade the barbarians of their own barbarity, it is necessary . . . for them to succeed in hiding both from themselves and from others the social conditions which make possible . . . culture as a second nature, in which society locates human excellence, and which is experienced as a privilege of birth . . . Finally, for the ideological circle to be complete, it is sufficient that they derive the justification for their monopoly of the instruments of appropriation of cultural goods from an essentialist representation of the division of their society into barbarians and civilized people.¹⁵⁵

Hyacinth certainly conceals the material conditions that allow him to cultivate his nature, and presumably he supports exclusive museum hours on the basis of an essentialist distinction between those equipped by birth to appreciate art and those not so equipped. But, *pace* Bourdieu and Darbel, he does not value culture and art as instruments for perpetuating the social inequalities that are in fact responsible for his possession of

¹⁵⁵ With Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art*, 111-12.

culture. Rather, he values them because he feels that they make the world “less of a ‘bloody sell’ and life more of a lark.” Whereas for Bourdieu and Darbel the love of art is a covert means for maintaining the social order, for Haycynth the social order, which he begins by rejecting and ends by tolerating, is a necessary means for making art available in the first place. So much does he cherish high civilization that Hyacinth grows convinced that it justifies the Benjaminian barbarism that sustains it. He expresses this view most starkly in the following dialogue. Upon learning that the princess has rid herself of her possessions (her evolution toward radicalism provides an ironic foil to Hyacinth’s turn away from it), Lady Aurora, another aristocrat who renounces her privileges, though in a more quiet and sincere manner, asks her:

“But don’t you think we ought to make the world more beautiful?”

. . .

“The world will be beautiful enough when it becomes good enough,” the princess resumed. “Is there anything so ugly as unjust distinctions, as the privileges of the few contrasted with the degradation of the many? When we want to beautify we must begin at the right end.”

. . .

“I think there can’t be too many pictures and statues and works of art,” Hyacinth broke out. “The more the better, whether people are hungry or not. In the way of ameliorating influences are not those the most definite?”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ 2:145, 169-70.

The princess' statements reflect the radical view that artistic treasures run counter to democratic ideals. Her abandonment of her possessions suggests a form of cultural destruction. Her claim that the leveling of class distinctions will translate into aesthetic gains lacks conviction. Hyacinth's remarks express the elitist view that art takes precedence over democratic concerns. His implication that art, when exhibited, functions as a tool of social improvement—a thesis central to contemporary museum discourse—amounts to little more than an ironic reply to the princess' argument. Yet despite their differences, Hyacinth and the princess share the assumption that, however much the one may be made to serve the other, art and life are largely independent, if not incompatible.

To combat this view was the life's mission of the artist and socialist William Morris, whose figure looms large in the novel, especially amid this talk of making the world both better and more beautiful. Such rhetoric recalls Morris' instigation of a Ruskinian revival of the decorative arts tradition to combat the ugliness of the Industrial Age, as well as his political efforts to raise the condition of the working class. Hyacinth's belief in the separation of art from politics links him to the early Morris, the pre-Raphaelite aesthete. His work in bookbinding and his belief that it is "quite one of the fine arts" recall Morris' devotion to the crafts and his attempts to elevate them to the level of fine art.¹⁵⁷ The princess' renunciation of her privileges and her commitment to class struggle connect her to the later Morris, the revolutionary socialist. But Morris differs from these two characters in uniting his political and artistic concerns. For Morris, art was life, and

¹⁵⁷ 1:167.

socialism was essential to both. His conversion to socialism can be charted through a series of lectures on art, beginning with “The Lesser Arts” (1877) and culminating in “Art and Plutocracy” (1883). In the first of these lectures, Morris expresses both his fear that the decorative arts will die and his hope that they will revive and, reviving, effect a reconciliation of art with life. These two were sundered, he argues, at the onset of the Industrial Age, when standardized, mechanized production sent the tradition of beautiful yet functional works of art into decay. For the decorative arts to regain popularity, and for man to recapture his sense of beauty, a new order founded on equality for all and freedom from toil must succeed the present one based on profit and privilege. Only then can art recover (from the Middle Ages) its true character as man’s expression of joy in his labor. Socialism, Morris grew convinced, bore the promise of this new order.

But until socialism triumphed, the study of art history would remain necessary to the restoration of artistic sensibility. It is here that the wealth of London’s museums assumes importance for Morris. In spite of the city’s unattractiveness, “London,” he says, “is good for this, that it is well off for museums.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, as Barbara Black reminds us, museum-building was the Victorian Age’s “great enterprise,” realized in the opening of the South Kensington Museum in 1852, the National Portrait Gallery in 1859, the Natural History Museum in 1881, and the Tate Gallery in 1897.¹⁵⁹ Recognition of the museum’s value as a tool for promoting the culture of the masses led the British Parliament to pass a series of statutes, beginning with the Museums Act of 1845,

¹⁵⁸ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1882), 21.

¹⁵⁹ *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 4.

providing for the foundation and maintenance of local museums. The idea that the aim of public collections was not just the advancement but also the diffusion of knowledge gained ground in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, triggering a shift in museological emphasis from acquisition and preservation to organization and development. In 1889, the Museums Association was founded in England for the purpose of determining the best methods for arranging museums with a view to instruction. Curators sought by scientific means to transform museums into “powerful educational agencies, in which by object lessons the most important truths of science [and art] were capable of being pleasantly imparted to the multitudes.” Early museums were criticized for their jumbled character. Lord Balcarras, trustee of the National Portrait Gallery, wrote, “The modern museum of art differs essentially from its earlier prototypes. The aimless collection of curiosities and bric-à-brac, brought together without method or system, was the feature of certain famous collections in by-gone days.” For the modern museum to be of didactic value, “Acquisitions must be added to their proper sections; random purchase of ‘curios’ must be avoided. Attention must be given to the proper display and cataloguing of the exhibits, to their housing and preservation, to the lighting, comfort and ventilation of the galleries.”¹⁶⁰

To heal the breach between art and industry, so lamented by Morris, was the goal of the South Kensington Museum, created as an outgrowth of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Buoyed by the exhibition’s success, the Royal Commission responsible for its

¹⁶⁰ “Museums of Science” and “Museums of Art,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), 19:66, 60.

organization embarked on a large-scale plan “to increase the means of industrial education and extend the influence of science and art upon productive industry.”¹⁶¹ The result was South Kensington (renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899), a complex of museums, colleges, and institutions devoted to useful learning. The Museum of Ornamental Art, in particular, targeted the manufacturing population with a view to improving the quality of England’s industrial products. More broadly, the museum sought to reconcile art with life by training the general public’s sense of beauty and introducing art into the domestic sphere, as can be seen in this passage from an 1865 London handbook:

To the art-student or art-workman this museum is a great boon Nor can there be any doubt that, since its establishment, our trades and manufactures have shown a marked improvement in purity of design and novelty of decoration. It also cultivates the taste of the public, inasmuch as its visitors are daily learning, and communicating to others, the simple lessons that there is truth and holiness in art . . . and that a home is all the happier for being brightened and enriched by a few artistic objects.¹⁶²

Morris recognized the educational value of such museums as South Kensington and, unlike Hyacinth, championed their role in the dissemination of culture. For Morris,

¹⁶¹ Bruce Robertson, “The South Kensington Museum in Context: An Alternative History,” *Museum and Society*, 1-14, 2.1 (March 2004): 1.

¹⁶² *Cruchley's London in 1865: A Handbook for Strangers*, 1865; available from <http://www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/southkensingtonmuseum.htm>; Internet; accessed 23 February 2006.

museums and other public recreation sites such as galleries and gardens helped to bridge the gap between the classes and thus aided the socialist cause.¹⁶³ Whereas Hyacinth presumably opposes opening museums on Sundays, Morris “heartily wish[es]” that museums “were to be got at . . . on the only day on which an ordinarily busy man, one of the taxpayers who support them, can as a rule see them quietly.”¹⁶⁴

Yet Morris’ attitude toward museums was mixed. He believed that his age’s enthusiasm for museum-building and arts education indicated a profound disconnect between art and life. According to him, the lack of quality works in their own time leads artists to the museum to study the examples of past art. The general public goes to the museum to learn about art and feed on beauty, which can no longer be found in their cities, homes, and places of work. The reasons for this situation are political and economic, and until socialism does away with the current system, museums will be needed. But the job they do in the meantime is inadequate and possibly injurious. For a museum truly to have educational value, he argued, it must combine traditional art instruction with political consciousness-raising. He elaborated his ideas for activist museum theory and practice in “At a Picture Show” (1884), a lecture delivered at the opening of an Ancoats Recreation Committee art exhibition in Manchester. He began by uncovering the hidden message he sees addressed in the exhibition to its working-class audience:

¹⁶³ See “Art, Wealth, and Riches,” a lecture delivered to the Manchester Societies in 1883; available from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1883/riches.htm>; Internet; accessed 23 February 2006.

¹⁶⁴ *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 21.

My contented friends, here are works of art done by famous and clever men, some dead, some living; you, as long as you are workmen, cannot rightly understand them, but this and this is what men privileged to know all about it say about them, and you had better take it for granted; come as often as you can or please to see them, but I don't know what good it will do except exciting a little vague wonder in you as you look at them, and therefore I hope a little pleasure. You are told they are beautiful, from which *you* may deduce the fact that you have nothing to do with beauty elsewhere either in your workshops or your homes, for you are workmen, and it is of the nature of workmen to be unrefined and careless of beauty: look and wonder and go your ways with my blessing.

To this discourse he opposes a very different one, organized around the specific intention of changing the working men's condition. Such is his preferred invitation to the audience:

My friends, my discontented friends, we may say, here you have before you the famous works of men the greater part of them dead by now and living under different conditions of life to ours: you and your fathers and your fathers' fathers have been so oppressed by the folly rather than the malice of man that you cannot fully enter into their spirit, but we who for no merits of our own have been privileged to refinement and knowledge can tell you this about them, that they are the work of men who were not fine gentlemen but workmen like yourselves: the instincts that enabled them to produce these works are latent in your hands and minds if only you had the opportunity to develop them . . . Come here often if

you please, especially on Sundays when your bodies are rested and your minds with them, and let the sight of these wonders stimulate you to trying to win a worthy life for yourselves and your fellows, a life of men and not of ‘operatives.’

Thus Morris advocates a greater self-awareness on the part of exhibitions. Exhibitors should make clear that the difference between their knowledge of art and the audience’s ignorance of it results from class distinctions. They should point out that a difference in political conditions is responsible for the superiority of the art of the past over that produced and producible in the present. Finally, they should seek in their exhibitions to kindle in the audience a desire for change, one that would lead to a revival of the arts and of the working man’s role in their production. These changes would counter what Morris identifies as the museum’s prevailing ideology, what may be called the “museum effect,” whereby museums raise to the status of wonderful rarities articles that were actually ordinary at the time of their creation—and can be ordinary again, provided the necessary transformation in material conditions that are by nature contingent and not enduring. Left as they are, exhibitions as well as public libraries and museums risk becoming “substitutes” for real change, “dangerous snares” to political liberals and middle-class philanthropists, who could come to believe that such ameliorating influences on the masses rendered socialist revolution unnecessary.¹⁶⁵ Hyacinth, on the contrary, locates the danger of museums (and of the legislation encouraging their spread) precisely in their potential to precipitate substantial change, which he considers anathema to art, through

¹⁶⁵ Available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/pic_show.htm; Internet; accessed 23 February 2006.

their democratization of culture. A further problem besets museums in Morris' view. Until the curse of labor is removed, he fears that "the practice of the arts must be mainly kept in the hands of a few highly cultivated men, who can go often to beautiful places, whose education enables them, in the contemplation of the past glories of the world, to shut out from their view the every-day squalors that the most of men move in." But the prospect of an art reserved for the happy few so appalls him that he prefers a form of cultural destruction not unlike that abhorred by Hyacinth: "No, rather than art should live this poor thin life among a few exceptional men, despising those beneath them for an ignorance for which they themselves are responsible, for a brutality that they will not struggle with,—rather than this, I would that the world should indeed sweep away all art for awhile." Yet he has faith that a "wip[ing]" of the cultural "slate" will be unnecessary.¹⁶⁶ For he envisions a time when the enshrinement of socialism will usher in the conditions necessary for the rebirth of popular art. In this scenario, the museum, as a mediator between art and life, would become all but superfluous.

So it does in *News from Nowhere* (1890), Morris' utopian romance set in the twenty-second century, long after a violent revolution has led to the abolition of centralized government, class distinctions, commerce, money, and private property. In the new, socialist society, where every man and woman has become a creative craftsman for whom work is pleasure, cities, dwellings, clothes, and other useful articles are fashioned so beautifully that museums, art galleries, and even the fine arts are rendered

¹⁶⁶ *Hopes and Fears for Art*, 34, 35, 12.

nearly irrelevant. Looking at the National Gallery, Dick, a member of the new society, expresses puzzlement as to what the name originally meant. He tells William Guest, the embedded narrator who wakes up in the London of the future, “[A]nyhow, nowadays wherever there is a place where pictures are kept as curiosities permanently it is called a National Gallery, perhaps after this one.”¹⁶⁷ From the exhibition of works of art to the preservation of curiosities, the National Gallery’s function has shifted with the onset of the new order. This shift amounts, in fact, to a devolution, since it reverses the turn-of-the-twentieth-century transformation of the “old kind of museum store-house” into the “new kind of museum workshop.”¹⁶⁸ Art exhibitions are no longer needed to furnish examples of beauty in a society where the products of labor are themselves works of art. While the artworks of the past gather dust within the galleries’ walls, the decorative arts of the present flourish in the fields, streets, and homes. The artistic quality of everyday objects has deprived art of its autonomous status, and the sense of beauty, now universal, needs no cultivation among the masses. Morris thus envisions a time when his contemporaries’ innovations in the field of museology, together with the museum as an instrument of popular education, would become obsolete. Yet the gallery has not entirely turned back into a graveyard of lifeless objects or a cabinet of wonders, removed from contemporary contexts. “There are a good many of them up and down the country,” Dick

¹⁶⁷ Ed. Krishnan Kumar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47.

¹⁶⁸ John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum* (Woodstock, Vermont: The Elm Tree Press, 1917), 15.

tells William.¹⁶⁹ Knowledge of past arts and principles of design no doubt inform the new craftsmanship.

But the broader reason for the maintenance of art galleries can be seen in relation to the fate of museums, which likewise dot the country. Thus Dick suggests to William that he donate his Victorian coins to “some scantily-furnished museum.” The British Museum still stands, and Old Hammond, Dick’s father, makes his quarters there while keeping alive society’s memory. But the museum’s purpose, like that of the gallery, has changed. It no longer stabilizes society by familiarizing it with its roots in the past, as Kenyon charged the museum with doing. Rather, the monuments of culture function as foils to the superior achievements of the present. This contrast is illustrated by the British Museum’s architecture. This “ugly, old building” is left intact because, as Dick explains, “It is not a bad thing to have some record of what our forefathers thought a handsome building.”¹⁷⁰ The museum building has become a museum piece, preserved to document the aesthetic notions of the past and to embody history as a living part of the present. More importantly, the museum’s architecture functions as an index of the inferior health—moral and political—of the society that constructed it. From a testament to continuity, the British Museum, like the National Gallery, has become a witness to rupture. Contrary to Hyacinth’s predictions, then, revolution, as Morris imagines it, results not in the destruction of past culture nor in its dissemination by means of museums, but rather in its antiquation. Far from removing the conditions for the

¹⁶⁹ 47.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 12, 53-54.

production, transmission, and reception of art, socialism provides the soil in which art flourishes. In 1867, Ruskin envisioned a time not too far off when there would be “a large educational museum in every district of London freely open every day, and well lighted and warmed at night, with all furniture of comfort, and full aids for the use of their contents by all classes.”¹⁷¹ In his description of a future society, Morris anticipates the end of the museum as Ruskin and his fellow Victorians had come to know it.

Kenyon concluded his lecture at Oxford by saying, in language reminiscent of Morris, “It is for us to see that England . . . keeps pace in its spiritual life with its material development and its imperial achievement, and that the pressure of industrial conditions is not allowed to crush the soul.” The museum, he argued, helps the nation to achieve these aims by stimulating man’s sense of beauty, of curiosity, and of the past. Such a belief in the museum’s spiritual utility, its ability to serve as a bulwark in times of upheaval, was the mark of the museum’s modernity. Morris similarly regarded his own era as a time of artistic as well as political crisis, and like Kenyon he viewed the museum as a means of salvation. But whereas Kenyon viewed the museum as uniquely qualified to promote “an ordered progress based upon tradition,” for Morris the museum could at best contribute to the reunion of art and life and quicken a revolutionary consciousness.¹⁷² It was socialism that eventually would rescue both art and man’s soul. In a future free of class conflict and the art-life divide, the museum, Morris thought, would itself become a

¹⁷¹ *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longman’s Green, and Co., 1907), 19:219.

¹⁷² “Museums and National Life,” 32, 24.

museum piece. As Dick tells the narrator in *News from Nowhere*, “it is mostly in periods of turmoil and strife and confusion that people care much about history; and you know . . . we are not like that now.”¹⁷³

For Morris, the museum at its worst delayed the inevitable revolution. For Kenyon, the museum at its best could not stave off revolution but did have the power to repel would-be *petroleurs*. The museum, in fact, performs both functions in *Princess Casamassima*, where the monuments of culture win Hyacinth’s sympathies away from the revolutionary movement and the incendiary zeal he imputes to it. Yet the museum’s spiritual value does not prove as great as that with which Kenyon credits it. Near the end of the novel, Hyacinth receives orders from Hoffendahl to assassinate the Duke. On the one hand he wishes to preserve art, which he considers essential to making life worth living, from the flames or partition to which he believes his comrades would consign it. On the other hand he remains opposed to the political order under which he and his class are destined to toil. However much it “help[s]” him “to save” his “soul” by stimulating his sense of beauty, the museum does nothing to save his body by ameliorating social conditions. What Benjamin said of conventional history may be extended to the museum: it “may augment the weight of the treasure accumulating on the back of humanity, but it does not provide the strength to shake off this burden so as to take control of it.”¹⁷⁴ Caught in the contradiction between art and democracy, Hyacinth ends his life. The museum thus emerges in James’s novel as a temple for the elites, bound by

¹⁷³ 33.

¹⁷⁴ “Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian,” *Selected Writings*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 261-302 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996), 268.

tradition, inherently conservative, and resistant to change. Nonetheless, although it is not yet a place of amusement and learning for the mass of people, as the museum establishment desired it to be, nor an occasion for revolutionary critique as Morris and Benjamin envisioned it, the very fact that the museum forms the arena for debating vital social and political issues demonstrates its modernity, that is, its urgent relevance to the times.

Chapter 4: Not So “Solid Objects”:

Museum Artifacts and Human Character in *Jacob’s Room*

The concluding lines of Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* (1922) are enigmatic. Betty Flanders, mother of Jacob, who has just died in the Great War, inspects her son’s London room and asks his university friend, “‘What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?’ She held out a pair of Jacob’s old shoes.”¹⁷⁵

If the shoes had been ancient Greek and Roman sculpture; pottery; ancient glass, faience, stone, marble, and fabrics; metal work; casts and reproductions; models; numismatic specimens; or Romano-British antiquities, Henry Browne, Professor of Greek at University College, Dublin, would have answered: in collaboration with the local museum, arrange these eight classes of materials in a circulating exhibit for use in teaching the Classics to British students. Thus he recommends in *Our Renaissance: Essays on the Reform and Revival of Classical Studies* (1917), where he demonstrates that a movement is underway in Britain to democratize and revitalize classical studies. Far from “antiquated” and elitist, this form of education, he argues, is essential to “the citizens of a modern state.” His defense of classical studies occurs in the context of the British educational reform kindled by the rise of the sciences and fueled by the onset of the war. The forces behind the revival of classical studies were twofold: the ongoing digestion of the previous century’s archaeological discoveries and the growing

¹⁷⁵ (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), 176.

recognition since the 1840s of the museum's educational value. The method he proposes to extend this value is innovative: bring the local museum's resources into the classroom through traveling exhibits so that students can achieve direct contact with ancient life. University, primary, and secondary school students are not the only audiences for Browne's classicizing agenda. Through the spread of classical displays in municipal museums, the general public could also encounter the material remains of "Minoan and Greek culture—above all, [of] that Roman empire from which our forefathers started to build the culture of our own imperial race."¹⁷⁶ The ultimate purpose of acquiring knowledge of the Greco-Roman past, stated negatively by Browne, anticipates Sir Frederic Kenyon's claim that the museum's main function is "to help the nation to save its soul."¹⁷⁷ Without such knowledge, Browne declares, "the very soul of humanity would be wounded and enfeebled, and . . . not merely in their academic life but in their social and civic relationships, men would be poorer and the standards of their loyal service would be lowered through daring to despise the record of the past."¹⁷⁸

Emily Dalgarno has argued that in *Jacob's Room* "British education leads to the death of young men" like Jacob Flanders.¹⁷⁹ She analyzes Jacob's reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* and his relationships with men and women in the context of contemporary British attitudes toward gender and beauty as formed through the university system's

¹⁷⁶ (New York: Longmans, Green & Co.), 24, 229-30.

¹⁷⁷ "Museums and National Life," *The Romanes Lecture Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre 12 May, 1926*, 5-32 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 25.

¹⁷⁸ 3.

¹⁷⁹ *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57.

interpretation of Greek texts. I agree with Dalgarno that British education plays a determining role in Jacob's patriotic death on the battlefield. But I will focus on the educational institution of the museum, examining British attitudes toward tradition and its transmission and taking as my context the discursive intersection of classical studies with museology. I argue that in Woolf's novel the British Museum subordinates textual and material artifacts within metanarratives of nationhood, empire, progress, humanity, or tradition. The museum functions as an ideological state apparatus that displays the "record of the past" as both a model and mirror of conduct in the present. It thus motivates men like Jacob to uphold "the standards of their loyal service"—including military service—to these mythic metanarratives. The museum further transforms individuals like Jacob into subjects through material rituals as precise as those of any "factory," as Woolf calls the museum in *A Room of One's Own* (1929).¹⁸⁰

From the moment Mrs. Flanders takes her sons to play in the ruins of a Roman camp in Cornwall until his visit to the Acropolis near the end of his life, Jacob's life unfolds across the museal landscape of the Roman empire.¹⁸¹ By "museal," I mean that the relationship between Jacob's life—and more broadly the British empire—and imperial Rome is consistently mediated by the museum. In Chapter 2, for example, while her children explore the hilltop ruins around her, Mrs. Flanders enjoys a view of the bustling city below. "But," we are told

¹⁸⁰ (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company), 26. I borrow the notion of ideological state apparatuses from Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

¹⁸¹ Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf*, 56.

there was a time when none of this had any existence (thought the young man leaning against the railings). Fix your eyes upon the lady's skirt; the grey one will do—above the pink silk stockings. It changes; drapes her ankles—the nineties; then it amplifies—the seventies; now it's burnished red and stretched above a crinoline—the sixties; a tiny black foot wearing a white cotton stocking peeps out. Still sitting there? Yes—she's still on the pier. The silk now is sprigged with roses, but somehow one no longer sees so clearly. There's no pier beneath us. The heavy chariot may swing along the turnpike road, but there's no pier for it to stop at, and how grey and turbulent the sea is in the seventeenth century!

The Roman camp affords Jacob (“the young man”) a vantage point (“fix your eyes upon the lady's skirt”) from which to strip imaginatively layer after historical layer of the urban scene, from the 1890s back to the seventeenth century. The camp itself constitutes an archaeological stratum. Yet it is the museum that best provides access to the imperial age of Rome. “Let's to the museum,” the passage continues. “Cannon-balls; arrow-heads; Roman glass and a forceps green with verdigris.” Apprehension of this historical period depends not on the visual imagination but on direct perception of the antiquities displayed in the municipal museum, a “thing to see in Scarborough.”¹⁸² “There was a time when none” of the actual scene “had any existence”: the present did not always exist. When searching for traces of any but the most recent history, “somehow one no longer sees clearly”; the pier is gone, and the sea turns turbulent: the recent past has ceased to exist. But should one desire to gaze on the remote past, one has only to visit

¹⁸² 16-17.

the local museum, for imperial Rome has (as if) always existed. So the artifacts prove, the passage implies.

The correlation in this passage between material evidence and historical relevance, between visualization and epistemology, was common in contemporary museum discourse. Indeed, on both sides of the Atlantic, museums led all institutions in stressing the learning benefits of visual (and tactile) instruction. In an 1891 report entitled *The Museums of the Future*, G. Browne Goode, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, wrote:

In this busy, critical, and skeptical age, each man is seeking to know all things, and life is too short for many words. The eye is used more and more, the ear less and less, and in the use of the eye, descriptive writing is set aside for pictures, and pictures in their turn are replaced by actual objects. . . . Amid such tendencies, the museum, it would seem, should find a congenial place, for it is the most powerful and useful auxiliary of all systems of teaching by means of object lessons.¹⁸³

The identification of the museum with object-based pedagogy, and the era with a turn to the visual, was common among the pioneering professionals who sought to modernize and popularize the museum as an instrument of education.¹⁸⁴ In 1904, David Murray

¹⁸³ (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 427.

¹⁸⁴ This museological awareness of the growing importance of the visual anticipates by a century W. J. T. Mitchell's finding that our era is marked by "the pictorial turn" (*Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], 11-24). The two diagnoses consider the same general phenomenon but look at different evidence. Whereas Mitchell focuses on images and points to the postwar spread of electronic technology that greatly facilitates their production, reproduction, and transmission of images, early museologists emphasize the object as well as the image and attribute the epistemological trend to developments in archaeology, museology, and the technology of mechanical reproduction.

wrote in one of the earliest museum histories, “Blackboard illustrations . . . are all excellent in their way, but, as a rule, a lesson from the object itself is superior to one from a picture of the object.”¹⁸⁵ In 1917, John Cotton Dana, Founding Director of the Newark Museum, called for the establishment in every community of an “institution of visual instruction.”¹⁸⁶ In 1930, Kenyon wrote that objects in a museum “are at once the material and the illustrations of written history, and to a generation becoming daily more dependent on the picture than on the written word their importance is increasing.”¹⁸⁷ For Browne, eye-teaching by means of traveling exhibits was “vital to the healthful development of Classical teaching on modern, efficient, and democratic lines.”¹⁸⁸ This form of visual instruction was possible thanks to recent developments in archaeology and technology. The eighteenth century knew the Classics only as literature. In contrast, the excavations of the nineteenth century allowed the twentieth century to experience the ancient world as a material and not just textual phenomenon. Where original artifacts were unavailable, technology enabled reproductions on a large scale: photographs, whether large or of the popular postcard size,¹⁸⁹ lantern slides, casts, electrotypes, seal-

¹⁸⁵ *Museums: Their History and Their Use* (London: Routledge/Thoemes Press), 260.

¹⁸⁶ *The New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press), 15.

¹⁸⁷ *Libraries and Museums* (London: E. Benn), 70.

¹⁸⁸ *Our Renaissance*, 184.

¹⁸⁹ It is noteworthy that Jacob possesses “photographs from the Greeks” (37).

impressions.¹⁹⁰ Browne's object-based pedagogy assumed that students' visual and tactile encounters with scientifically arranged artifacts by themselves result in learning, and that what is learned is the transcendent truth of history. As Browne puts it, "We shall bring them immediately into the atmosphere of reality and we shall make an impression upon their mind by bringing before them real and tangible evidence of the true facts of ancient life."¹⁹¹

Yet the artifacts and the facts they supposedly reveal were pressed by Browne into the service of a higher historical law. Sometimes they objectify the human spirit; at other times they evidence a hereditary link between the Roman and the British empire that serves to justify the latter on the grounds that the former "civilized Europe and contributed to the progress of the human race."¹⁹² Browne not only saw the present reflected in the past, and vice versa, but on these twin bases also constructed a vision of the future. Just as "by the might of their hands"—Browne's metanarrative, centered on civilization, elides the barbarism that the war scenes in Woolf's narrative will restore—"the Romans built up a large and lasting Empire," so imperial Britain, he implied, will endure. Browne's vision of the future thus assumes a continuity between a glorious past and a present that is modern precisely insofar as it recognizes its ties to tradition. The substantiation of this tradition depends on the material (and textual) remains of the past

¹⁹⁰ Frederic Kenyon, Preface, *Our Renaissance: Essays on the Reform and Revival of Classical Studies*, Henry Browne, v-xii (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917), vii, x.

¹⁹¹ *Our Renaissance*, 32. For more on the modern museum's "transmission" approach to education, see Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1-23.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 33, 6.

and therefore on the museum, which preserves, interprets, and exhibits these remains. The museum is further essential to the future of the British empire in that it both stimulates in young men a sense of tradition and teaches them by example how best to perpetuate it.

Woolf explores this logic in Chapter 9 of *Jacob's Room* when she sets in the Reading Room scenes of Jacob's education in tradition.¹⁹³ What brings Jacob to read Marlowe in the British Museum? "Youth, youth—something savage—something pedantic. For example, there is Mr. Masfield, there is Mr. Bennett. Stuff them into the flame of Marlowe and burn them to cinders. . . Don't palter with the second rate. . . The flesh and blood of the future depends entirely upon six young men."¹⁹⁴ This being the case, it is fitting that Jacob spends so much time in the museum where, with respect to tradition, he learns the processes of selection (omitting the minor, Edwardian authors) and acquisition (reading Marlowe). For the museum practices a like combination of the "savage" and the "pedantic," a comparable symbolic violence—analogueous to the physical violence of war—in its carving of tradition along racial and national lines. Browne, for instance, laments the dearth of Greek and Roman antiquities in municipal museums, where "China and Japan, Mexico and Peru, every form of savage culture, possibly Egypt, Persia, India, Burmah, or Turkey, you may expect to find more or less represented."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ While she focuses on the textual, Woolf also defines tradition in the material terms of "pictures, architecture," "pots and statues, great bulls and little jewels" (107-08).

¹⁹⁴ 105-06.

¹⁹⁵ *Our Renaissance*, 229.

Kenyon, who wrote the preface to Browne's book, lodges a similar complaint against those "guides in taste" who "have urged us to seek inspiration from the untutored products of Central Africa rather than from Greece or Italy."¹⁹⁶ The museum also teaches Jacob how to preserve tradition (as when he transcribes Marlowe). Not only Jacob's education in tradition but also his formation as a subject are museological in nature. For practicing the processes of selection, acquisition, and preservation promoted by the museum constitutes Jacob in the image of tradition. So thoroughly is he identified with the institution that he is twice compared to a statue; one female admirer even goes to the British Museum to "reinforce her vision" of him.¹⁹⁷

Woolf uses the metaphor of a "great brain" to refer to tradition. The problem, which stems largely from the museum's deadening effect on objects, is that it is severed from the body, from life, and from contemporary contexts. In imagery that foreshadows Jacob's death, the "enormous mind" is said to have "crossed the river of death this way and that incessantly, seeking some landing, now wrapping the body well for its long sleep; now laying a penny piece on the eyes; now turning the toes scrupulously to the East." Just as the mind, "sheeted with [the] stone" of the museum's architecture, is "safe" from the rain, so Jacob, reading *Phaedrus* at home "not a quarter mile" from the British Museum, is shielded by his museum education from the issues of class and gender playing out in the street below: "Plato continues his dialogue . . . in spite of the woman in the mews behind Great Ormond Street who has come home drunk and cries all night

¹⁹⁶ "Museums and National Life," 24.

¹⁹⁷ 80, 145, 170.

long, ‘Let me in! Let me in!’” Meanwhile, back in the museum, the Elgin Marbles “lie, all night long.”¹⁹⁸

Jacob’s detachment from social concerns is characterized in terms of blindness. “The *Phaedrus* is very difficult. And so, when at length one reads straight ahead, . . . becoming (so it seems) momentarily part of this rolling, imperturbable energy, which has driven darkness before it since Plato walked the Acropolis, it is impossible to see to the fire.” Seeing is possible only when Jacob, whom Fanny considers “eyeless,” is done reading. “Then, getting up, he parted the curtains, and saw, with astonishing clearness,” the drama of race and nation (an argument between Jews and a foreign woman) enacted outside his window. Indeed, the museum’s conditioning of sight is questioned throughout the novel.¹⁹⁹ According to the museum’s object-based pedagogy and historiography, the museum renders history knowable by making visible the great works created by great men. Yet this approach assumes a progress-centered vision of history that excludes from view both barbaric practices and such social factors as race, class, and gender. This vision is expressed equally in the pedimental sculpture of the British Museum, entitled *The Progress of Civilization*, and in the novel’s description of Jacob “falling into step, marching on, becoming . . . part of this” triumphalist pageant that begins with Plato. The blinkered quality of this march is further evident when the painter Cruttendon—who displays a similar insensitivity to, even contempt of, everyday life and

¹⁹⁸ 108.

¹⁹⁹ The value of sight as a means of knowing the modern self is equally questioned. After a passage on the impossibility of an objective interpretation of human character, the narrator concludes, “Such is the manner of our seeing” (71).

its marginalized actors—while seated at a café in Paris, says to his friend Jacob, “‘Look at that woman’s hat,’ When one walks down that street opposite the British Museum—what’s it called?—that’s what I mean. It’s all like that. Those fat women—and the man standing in the middle of the road as if he were going to have a fit.”²⁰⁰

The woman in the street who cries “Let me in! Let me in!” and whom Jacob ignores, recalls the fictional Oxbridge library’s denial of entrance to the female narrator of *A Room With a View*.²⁰¹ While Woolf’s essay addresses the omission of women generally from the canon and official histories, *Jacob’s Room* focuses on the museum’s exclusion of women in both symbolic and material terms. Florinda’s “dream[y]” remark to Jacob, “I think there are lovely things in the British Museum, don’t you? Lots of lovely things,” suggests that the museum is for her less an accessible reality than an object of fantasy. Fanny Elmer’s patronizing of that popular alternative, Madame Tussaud’s, similarly underscores the British Museum’s gender bias.²⁰² The novel reflects this bias in the absence of female representation both in and on the museum. In 1907 the names of nineteen male British writers were painted on the panels above the cornice of the Round Reading Room.²⁰³ In Chapter 9 Miss Julia Hedge, “the feminist,” notices Macaulay’s name while waiting for her books. “And she read them all round the dome—the names of great men which remind us—‘Oh damn,’ said Julia Hedge, ‘why didn’t they

²⁰⁰ 170, 108-09, 128.

²⁰¹ 7-8.

²⁰² 79, 113.

²⁰³ J. Mordaunt Crook, *The British Museum* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 190.

leave room for an Eliot or a Brontë?”²⁰⁴ That the phrase “the names of great men which remind us” comes as if by reflex to Julia’s mind while in the museum is telling. Interrupted by Julia’s question, the platitude could have been completed by John Ruskin, who in 1859 argued for the inclusion of portrait sculpture in the Oxford Museum on the grounds that it would

remind the youth of England of what had been exemplary in his life, or useful in his labours, and might be regarded with no empty reverence, no fruitless pensiveness, but with the emulative, eager, unstinted passionateness of honour, which youth pays to the dead leaders of the cause it loves, or discoverers of the light by which it lives.²⁰⁵

For Ruskin, to offer examples of heroic men was the purpose not only of inspirational sculpture (a tradition in museum decoration) but more broadly of museums themselves. As he wrote in “A Museum or Picture Gallery: Its Functions and Formation” (1880), “The right function of every museum, to simple persons, is the manifestation to them of what is lovely in the life of Nature, and heroic in the life of men.”²⁰⁶ Woolf questions the museum’s heroic view of history both in the title of Jacob’s essay, “Does History Consist of the Biographies of Great Men?”, and her inclusion in her biography of Jacob, himself a would-be great man, of references to marginalized social groups.

²⁰⁴ 102-03.

²⁰⁵ John Ruskin and Henry W. Acland, *The Oxford Museum* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996), 79-81; reprint of the 1893 edition (London: George Allen), from the original edition, 1859, with additions in 1893.

²⁰⁶ *The Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903-12), 34:250.

Ruskin's definition of the museum's purpose rests on a belief in the institution as a tool of social reform. This belief was common in the Victorian age. Proposing the National Gallery to Parliament in 1856, Lord Palmerston, for example, suggested that, through the presentation of those who were worthy of our admiration, "a mental exertion, noble actions and a good conduct would be encouraged" in the public through the "visible and tangible shape of portraits."²⁰⁷ Although the museum increasingly gave priority to popular education, officials continued to stress the institution's social function into the twentieth century. Kenyon, for instance, argued that the museum's aim in displaying the "examples of great men" was to stimulate the sense of historical continuity and thus to promote social and political stability in the "upheaval" of the postwar period.²⁰⁸ More broadly, the museum served an ideological function, that of transforming individuals into subjects through the process of interpellation. Louis Althusser's concept allows us to uncover the following scene implicit in Browne's writings: the museum's display of Roman artifacts visually and verbally hails the public as the descendants of an ancient imperial race; acknowledging the truth of this address, the public responds by rendering "loyal service" to the empire. That audiences are constituted by the museum as (free) subjects in order that they shall render such service freely is evident in Browne's justification of his recommendation to include Romano-British antiquities in traveling

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, "The Re-birth of the Museum," Papers Delivered to the Nordic Museums Leadership Programme, organised by Museumshøjskolen, the Danish Museums Training Institute, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 11th and 12th, 2001; available from <http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/study/paper1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2006. For more on the museum as a tool of social reform, see Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 167-190.

²⁰⁸ "Museums and National Life," 23, 24.

exhibits. “[P]atriotism,” he argues, “is worth the attention of the educator, and . . . love of our native land goes hand in hand with some intelligent knowledge of its past. . . [U]pon the whole no epoch of our history is more suitable for museum illustration than the long period of Roman rule.”²⁰⁹ By illustrating the period of Roman rule, the museum aimed in this time of war to recruit visitors as patriots willing to do the work necessary to extend the period of British rule. In the case of Jacob, this work is military. He sees himself not only in the Roman conquerors but also in the cultural giants (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Marlowe, Shakespeare) represented in the museum through their masterpieces (e.g., *Phaedrus*) and their names painted on stone (e.g., Macaulay), as well as on the university campus through the names of villas (e.g., “Waverley”) and the “names upon gates.”²¹⁰ He further recognizes himself as heir to the civilizations embodied in the monuments he visits on his travels (e.g., Versailles, the Coliseum, the Parthenon, the Temple of Victory, the Erechtheum, the Acropolis). Formed in the image of Western tradition, visible in its artifacts, he submits to its implicit, demands, which include the command to defend the tradition.

Jacob is not the only soldier to accept freely his subjection to the ruling ideology. “With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together.” The British Museum guards likewise perform their duty unquestioningly. “The night-watchmen, flashing their lanterns over

²⁰⁹ *Our Renaissance*, 241.

²¹⁰ 31.

the backs of Plato and Shakespeare, saw that on the twenty-second of February neither flame, rat, nor burglar was going to violate these treasures.” The ironic tone of the passage suggests that these treasures no more belong to the working class than they belong to women, notwithstanding the museum’s claims that they are the patrimony of the nation. The guards and soldiers are matched in obedience by the employees of banks, laboratories, chancellories, and houses of business, “men as smoothly sculptured as the impassive policeman at Ludgate Circus. . . . When his right arm rises, all the force in his veins flows straight from shoulder to finger-tips; not an ounce is diverted into sudden impulses, sentimental regrets, wire-drawn distinctions. The buses punctually stop.”²¹¹ All these automata do the work of empire, and it is no coincidence that Woolf’s depiction of their habitual functioning—culminating in the puppet-like figure of the policeman—so closely resembles Althusser’s theoretical scene of interpellation, in which the police hail, “Hey, you there!” For these parallel passages underscore the material existence of ideology through their portrayal of workers engaged in everyday practices governed by precise rituals defined by their respective institutions and state apparatuses. In the words of Althusser, the subjects “‘work all by themselves,’ i.e. by ideology.”²¹² In *A Room of One’s Own* Woolf again emphasizes the mechanical nature of ideology in describing the British Museum as “another department of the factory” that is London: “The swing-doors swung open; and there one stood under the vast dome One went to the counter; one

²¹¹ 155, 108, 155.

²¹² “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation,” *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174, 181.

took a slip of paper; one opened a volume of the catalogue.”²¹³ The ritual continues in *Jacob’s Room*: one requested books and waited for their retrieval, like Julia; one read and transcribed books, like Jacob; one returned one’s books, like Jacob; one (perhaps) took a last look at the Elgin Marbles, like Miss Marchmont; at closing time, one gathered with the others in the hall to receive one’s umbrella.²¹⁴

The British Museum is thus represented throughout the novel as both an apparatus that enrolls individuals in material ritual practices and an instrument that drafts objects into the service of a higher law. In contrast, the final scene depicts Jacob’s room as a sort of counter-museum in its exhibition of a pair of old shoes that, in refusing to signify, resist the demands of empire to substantiate a metanarrative of history. Whereas the museum detaches artifacts from their original contexts and arranges them scientifically, Jacob “left everything just as it was.” At the same time, his room resembles the British Museum in its being removed from social life and contemporary contexts. Just as in Chapter 9 the museum and Jacob’s room appear literally and figuratively sealed off from the social issues of the day, so the final scene sharply juxtaposes the room’s inside and outside in terms of tradition and modernity. The second paragraph details the eighteenth-century architecture and decoration of the Bloomsbury building and room and twice remarks their “distinction” from the vulgar. The ninth paragraph, roughly equal in length to the second, describes the scene through the window: the latest forms of transportation (vans, omnibuses, engines), the hustle and bustle of modern life. As in a mausoleum,

²¹³ 26.

²¹⁴ 105-07.

“Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker arm-chair creaks, though no one sits there.” This vacant scene has its counterpart in Chapter 3, which contains the two sentences verbatim and likewise surveys Jacob’s possessions in his absence. The miniature flags, society cards, notes and pipes, and library books (written by and about great men) resemble necrotic, tradition-laden objects in a museum. In particular, the “Greek dictionary with the petals of poppies pressed to silk between the pages” seems the perfect metaphor for a vitrine behind which is a relic crushed even as it is preserved.²¹⁵

In contrast, Jacob’s old shoes in the final scene are personal, free of the freight of great men, not part of any collection. Holding them aloft, Mrs. Flanders asks, ““What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?”” Their recalcitrance to having anything *done* with them recalls Walter Benjamin’s idea that objects in a private collection resist the demands of capital to function as commodities or serve a useful purpose.²¹⁶ Free from utility, however, the shoes hardly come alive as story-telling tokens of the human agents and historical circumstances responsible for their continued existence. Rather, their refusal of meaning underscores the modern individual’s unknowable self. This theme resounds throughout *Jacob’s Room* as the solidity of nineteenth-century character, undermined by the loss of certitude in tradition, gives way to greater contingency and subjectivity. As the narrator states, “a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of

²¹⁵ 37.

²¹⁶ *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 209.

our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown.”²¹⁷ In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924) Woolf famously argued that the conventions of realism no longer suffice to represent human character. Thus she employs modernist techniques to delineate Jacob, whom we see in contradictory fragments, refracted through a stream of consciousness that courses through the novel’s many characters. Or, rather, we do *not* see him, for his subject position is as empty as his room: the war has carried him off bodily. All we see are the things he has left. But Woolf breaks with the realist practice of representing characters through their possessions. Unlike his fictional forbears, Jacob is no “solid object,” Woolf’s metaphor for the self-possession of Victorian patriarchs and metonym for their identification with things.²¹⁸ He is called solid repeatedly and thus identified with the “stone [that] lies solid over the British Museum” and with certain social conventions termed “solid, immovable, and grotesque.”²¹⁹ But museum and convention alike are no longer solid in the upheaval of the postwar period, and Jacob’s shoes reveal nothing about him except his absence.²²⁰

Shoes are not so refractory to meaning in Woolf’s second novel, *Night and Day* (1919), where the Victorian world of the Hilbery home is stuffed with things, particularly

²¹⁷ 70.

²¹⁸ See Woolf’s 1909 sketch of “Cambridge,” where she calls Sir George Darwin, Charles’ son and a family friend, a “solid object, filling his place in the world” (*Carlyle’s House and Other Sketches*, ed. David Bradshaw, 6-9 (London: Hesperus, 2003), 7.

²¹⁹ 71, 145, 108, 138.

²²⁰ Woolf’s roughly contemporary story, “Solid Objects” (1920), addresses many of these themes. It depicts a patriarchal “solid object” disintegrating in proportion as he becomes absorbed in his private collection. Comprised of urban refuse, his collection appears distinctly modern in contrast to the typical Victorian collection of *bibelots* or museum collection of cultural treasures.

the inherited things of tradition. “What! His very own slippers!” exclaims an American visitor to the room where the personal effects of the great poet Richard Alardyce are preserved and displayed by his dutiful descendants. The room’s comparison to a “chapel in a cathedral, or a grotto in a cave” and finally to a “religious temple . . . crowded with relics” links it to the museum, which is often described in the same terms.²²¹ While the scene satirizes the cult of the past fed by the museum and the mortuary effect it has on objects, the slippers are not so dead that they cannot elicit a felt response from the visitor. Charlotte Brontë’s shoes also exhibit animation in “Haworth, November, 1904,” Woolf’s account of her literary pilgrimage to the home and country of the Brontë sisters. Although she likens the Brontë Museum to a “mausoleum,” she acknowledges the resonance of some of the collection’s objects:

[T]he most touching case—so touching that one hardly feels reverent in one’s gaze—is that which contains the little personal relics, the dresses and shoes of the dead woman. The natural fate of such things is to die before the body that wore them, and because these, trifling and transient though they are, have survived, Charlotte Bronte the woman comes to life, and one forgets the chiefly memorable fact that she was a great writer. Her shoes and her thin muslin dress have outlived her.²²²

The personal connection that Woolf makes with Charlotte’s shoes resembles (and probably provides the basis for) the American visitor’s experience with the poet’s

²²¹ (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), 335, 7.

²²² In *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie, 1:5-9 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986), 7.

slippers. Together, these incidents demonstrate how objects can recall or illustrate character and, more broadly, how museums can relate to the present. But objects institutionally kept alive and subordinated to nationalist or imperialist purposes can also end in death, as the cultural treasures in the British Museum attest in *Jacob's Room*. Ultimately, Jacob's old shoes, left mute and dangling, suggest a refusal of this kind of posthumous career offered to objects by the museum.

PART III: MUSEUM DISCOURSE

IN JAMES JOYCE

Chapter 5: “Penetrators are permitted into the museomound free”:

The Poetics and Politics of the Museum in *Ulysses*

This chapter analyzes James Joyce’s representation in *Ulysses* of the Dublin Museum of Science and Art in relation to the discourses of Irish cultural and political nationalism. As a result of these discourses, the museum’s power as an instrument of cultural politics and identity-formation grew in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. Joyce satirizes this power. The satire appears most clearly in Mulligan’s and Bloom’s rhetoric on the museum, which often entangles the Irish myths of a Golden Age of cultural achievement and political and ethnic unity, a decadence that set in as a result of the English invasions, and the possibility of a resurgent Ireland based on a return to the values of the past, as revealed in the country’s archaeology and antiquities. Sorting out these entanglements will prepare the way for a more comprehensive study in Chapter 6 of nationalism’s involvements with archaeology and the museum as figured in the Museyroom in *Finnegans Wake*.

With plaster-casts of famous classical statues on display in the entrance rotunda, the Dublin Museum of Science and Art emerges in *Ulysses* as the most powerful promoter of the Greek ideal of rounded beauty. “Beauty: it curves: curves are beauty,” Bloom thinks while lunching at Davy Byrne’s pub in “Lestrygonians.” “Shapely

goddesses, Venus, Juno: curves the world admires.”²²³ Bloom closely links the museum with this model of shapely comeliness. Although the building’s design is only faintly neoclassical, he automatically identifies its architectural curves with the Greek aesthetic. “His eyes beating looked steadfastly at cream curves of stone. Sir Thomas Deane was the Greek architecture.”²²⁴ Further illustrating the reach of this definition of beauty, Bloom admires the curves depicted in the *Bath of the Nymph*,²²⁵ those described in *Sweets of Sin*,²²⁶ and those captured (or not) in the photograph of his wife.²²⁷ Molly herself views her breasts in classical museum terms: “theyre supposed to represent beauty placed up there like those statues in the museum.”²²⁸ In fact, the museum has so popularized the voluptuous ideal that a market for breast enhancement has sprung up. On the pages of *Photo bits* appear “Unsolicited testimonials for Professor Waldmann’s wonderful chest exuber. My bust developed four inches in three weeks, reports Mrs Gus Rublin with photo.”²²⁹

The museum further reveals its universalizing tendency in serving as the site where Bloom consummates the Greek ideal of beauty through a cosmic fusion of body

²²³ Ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Random House, 1986), 8:920-21.

²²⁴ 8:1180-81.

²²⁵ 15:3267.

²²⁶ 10:612.

²²⁷ 16:1430, 1448.

²²⁸ 18:540-41.

²²⁹ 15:3257-59.

and city. “Just at the gate. My heart!” Bloom thinks as he approaches the museum on his way to determine whether the cast of the Venus of Praxiteles has an anus. His admiration of the “Greek” architecture’s “cream curves of stone”²³⁰ reveals that he is still on Kildare Street, just past the quadrangle, flanked by the National Library on his left and the National Museum on his right. The cream curves of stone consequently refer not to the *kallipyge*²³¹ of the Venus he came to see, but rather to the “beautiful buttocks” formed by the twin rotundas of these matching buildings. Bloom thus inserts himself into an architectural “mesial groove” between the rounded buildings, penetrating, in effect, the anus of the Leinster House. He will soon repeat the act on a visual level with Venus inside the museum and, more or less, at the end of the day, on a corporal level with Molly. These micro-macrocosmic analogies form one of the many strands in the web of correspondences that reveal the Dublin of the novel to be a living creature.²³² More than to satisfy his curiosity about the naturalism of Greek sculpture, then, Bloom goes to the museum to achieve a sacred union with the earth-mother, Gea-Tellus, in both her architectural and sculptural embodiments. This reading explains why Bloom’s consciousness pairs the library with the museum when he first considers going to see the statues: “Can see them *library museum* standing in the round hall, naked goddesses.”²³³

²³⁰ 8:1180.

²³¹ 9:616.

²³² The “gigantic” method used in *Ulysses* to depict Dublin as a living organism is also evident in *Finnegans Wake* in the bio-topographical images of old Finn MacCool lying in death along the river Liffey, HCE the publican sprawling over “Howth Castle and Environs,” ALP’s dissolution into the river Liffey, Shem and Shaun’s respective transformations into tree and stone, etc.

²³³ 8:921-22; italics mine.

Before Bloom can see goddesses' curves inside the museum, he can see them outside, in the gluteal symmetry of the buildings.²³⁴

Bloom's thoughts run to the same idea of symmetry when, in "Eumaeus," he shares with Stephen his observations on the "Grecian statues" he saw that day: "Marble could give the original, shoulders, back, all the symmetry, all the rest."²³⁵ The "symmetry," we now understand, is gluteal, and refers as much to architecture as to sculpture. The subsequent eruption into Bloom's consciousness of the obscene joke—"Yes, puritanisme, it does though Saint Joseph's sovereign thievery alors (Bandez!) Figne toi trop"²³⁶—containing a veiled reference to sodomy,²³⁷ thus makes sense in the context of Bloom's continuing preoccupation with matters gluteal. This context further reveals a pun in "holy place";²³⁸ thus called in "Ithaca," the museum and library also constitute a "hole-y place." The same analogy may help to explain one of Bloom's memories of his daughter's adolescence: "On the duke's lawn, entreated by an English visitor, she declined to permit him to make and take away her photographic image

²³⁴ Credit for this reading belongs to John Gordon, whose observation of the gluteal character of the matching rotundas initiated a fruitful thread of discussion on the Ulysses-Yahoo listserv ("Re: [Joyce-Ulysses] That Cheese Sandwich: Info & Queries" 15 Jan 2003. Online posting. Joyce-Ulysses. 25 July 2003 <Joyce-Ulysses@yahoogroups.com>). Aida Yared ("[Joyce-Ulysses] Rotundas" 16 Jan 2003. 25 July 2003) and Riverend Sterling ("Re: [Joyce-Ulysses] venus nicebuns" 15 Jan 2003. 25 July 2003) contributed important elaborations on Gordon's insight.

²³⁵ 16:1451-52.

²³⁶ 16:1452-54.

²³⁷ Don Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 556.

²³⁸ 17:2048.

(objection not stated).”²³⁹ Bloom may recall this particular incident because the location of the duke’s lawn in front of Leinster House, resonating so richly with his museum fantasy, suggests to him a possible reason for Milly’s objection to the Englishman’s request—prudery. Finally, the line in *Finnegans Wake*, “Penetrators are permitted into the museomound (museum, mound) free,” besides glancing at the phallic Wellington Monument that doubles as the site of the “Willingdone Museyroom” in the *Wake*, likely contains a thinly veiled reference to Bloom’s mode of accessing the museum.²⁴⁰

As the key exponent and chief setting of a Greek ideal of beauty, the museum additionally serves as a staging ground for Buck Mulligan’s proposed hellenization of Irish culture. In contrast to Bloom, Mulligan visits the museum to “hail the foamborn Aphrodite,” to whom, he recommends, “every day” the Irish “must do homage.”²⁴¹ In “Scylla and Charybdis” Mulligan interprets Bloom’s museum behavior as a fresh success in the war to liberate Ireland from its prudish and repressive Hebraism. Since the Jew has become “Greekier than the Greeks,” Mulligan is able to declare to his library audience that “Jehovah, collector of prepuces, is no more.”²⁴² Mulligan’s reference to Bloom’s “pale Galilean eyes” places Bloom’s cultural allegiance in a context appropriate to the Hellenist’s own concerns.²⁴³ The allusion comes from Swinburne’s “Hymn to Proserpine” (1866), a dramatic monologue presenting the experience of a fourth-century

²³⁹ 17:874-76.

²⁴⁰ (Penguin: New York, 1976), 8:5.

²⁴¹ 9:610-11.

²⁴² 9:609.

²⁴³ 9:615.

Roman losing his gods as Christianity becomes the new state religion. Bloom's embrace of the sensual-aesthetic culture of the pagan Greeks in his museum-going and -gazing portends, in Mulligan's view, a reversal of events from late antiquity at a time of similar transition and upheaval. The museum thus emerges in *Ulysses* as the battleground where it will be decided whether Ireland concedes to Hebraism what Swinburne's speaker says to Christ—"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean"—or, as Mulligan urges, the nation heeds Matthew Arnold's call in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) for an increased "spontaneity of consciousness" in the quest for a "total perfection" of culture.²⁴⁴

Elaborating his Hellenism into a veritable program, Mulligan, in the following satiric passage in "Oxen of the Sun," offers his idea of a world made perfect by the contemplation of beauty.

Kalipedia, he prophesied, would soon be generally adopted and all the graces of life, genuinely good music, agreeable literature, light philosophy, instructive pictures, plastercast reproductions of the classical statues such as Venus and Apollo, artistic coloured photographs of prize babies, all these little attentions would enable ladies who were in a particular condition to pass the intervening months in a most enjoyable manner.²⁴⁵

Mulligan here satirically portrays Hellenism as a sort of "kalipedia lite," redolent of prim and proper Victorianism and concerned more with the encephalon than with the transformation of Irish culture. The "artistic coloured photographs of prize babies" recall

²⁴⁴ "Hebraism and Hellenism," in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²⁴⁵ 14:1251-56.

the “Bonny Baby” competitions held in early twentieth-century Irish periodicals such as *The Lady of the House*, a women’s magazine published in Dublin until 1920 that featured the names, addresses, and photos of the contestants.²⁴⁶ The “instructive pictures” point beyond the Irish art and Old Masters paintings hanging in the National Gallery toward a moralism and didacticism absent from Mulligan’s customary sensual prescriptions, and characteristic, rather, of the nineteenth-century belief that art’s mission lay in social reform. The “plastercast reproductions of the classical statues” are just that: imitations of an antiquated aesthetic. Thus Mulligan’s definition of kalipedia has less to do with the Hellenistic impulse “to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty,” than with Arnold’s classical emphasis on restraint, poise and taste (Arnold 130). Ironically, Mulligan advocates precisely the Philistinism in art of which he and his fellow turn-of-the-century aesthetes accused Arnold. Yet not all in this passage is satire.

In addition to reasserting its centrality to Mulligan’s cultural agenda (however mocked), the museum emerges as a key to the biological regeneration of the Irish race. Presumably, the “graces of life” enshrined by Mulligan would not only ease the condition of expectant women, but also reverse the “fallingoff in the calibre of the race.”²⁴⁷ While this hope may seem exaggerated, expectations that the Dublin Museum of Science and Art, abode of one of these graces, could participate in the regeneration of the Irish race were not uncommon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In so far as it

²⁴⁶ Sara Smyth, “Re: Joyce and photography”; e-mail to the author; 20 July 2003.

²⁴⁷ 14:1250.

displayed the material remains of the past and provided a concrete analogue for claims of an Irish “Golden Age,” the museum was considered by Irish nationalists vital to the renewal of the Irish race after centuries of “degeneration” following the English invasions. In an 1885 address to the Cork Young Ireland Society, for example, William O’Brien, editor of *United Ireland*, pointed to the archaeological restoration of Early Christian architecture to argue that “There is here no taint of intellectual or physical degeneracy. The same faith that once inhabited the ruined shrines is rebuilding them.” To the extent that the Dublin Museum collected and exhibited “Celtic” relics, it deserved partial credit for “giving Celtic genius once more a home and a throne in the bosom of a disenthralled and *regenerated* Irish nation.”²⁴⁸

The National Gallery of Art, seat of another of Mulligan’s “graces” (“instructive pictures”), was also considered integral to the restoration of the Irish nation. In 1843 Young Irelander Thomas Davis published a two-piece article in the *Nation* (of which he was editor) encouraging the creation of a national art and a national gallery in which to house it. A national art, he wrote, was “essential to our civilization and renown,” while the collection of Irish art, education of students, and rewarding of artists would “facilitate the creation of some great spirit,” namely a nationalist one. The close links between cultural and political nationalism were already evident to Daniel O’Connell’s Repeal Association, which offered prizes for Irish historical paintings and sculptures. Davis, too, recognized the “instructive” value of historical subjects in art. Seeking to promote painting in a genre underrepresented in Ireland, he had written earlier that year an article

²⁴⁸ *Irish Ideas* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893), 10, 12; italics mine.

on “Hints for Irish Historical Painting” in which, significantly, he defined the essence of national art as the representation of historical subjects native to Ireland. In the second of his two-part article promoting the creation of a national art, he also voiced support for a Dublin society whose goal was to collect and exhibit casts of “all the greatest works of Greece, Egypt, Etruria, ancient Rome and Europe in the middle ages.”²⁴⁹ While the National Gallery of Ireland was founded in 1854, the Greek and Greco-Roman casts Davis called for eventually entered the museum, where for Bloom and Mulligan they serve a different purpose. For Davis, classical casts contributed to the education of Irish artists and the establishment of a national art; for Mulligan, they function as an instrument for the Hellenization rather than the nationalization of Ireland, while for Bloom, they embody a well-rounded ideal expressed equally by the female body and by architectural curves. In so far as classical casts and historical paintings furthered cultural revivalism and political independence, the National Gallery, like the National Museum, indeed served to reverse the “fallingoff in the calibre of the race.”

The museum’s significance as a space where national identities are constructed and political agendas are enacted is further underlined in “Circe,” when Bloom’s demagoguery is satirized. As a stumping Bloom explains to the crowd his plans for “social regeneration,” the museum keeper appears, dragging a lorry loaded with “the shaking statues of Venus Callipyge, Venus Pandemos, Venus Metempsychosis, and plaster figures, also naked, representing the new nine muses, Commerce, Operative

²⁴⁹ *Essays of Thomas Davis*, ed. D. J. O’Donoghue (New York: Lemma Publishing Corporation, 1974).

Music, Amor, Publicity, Manufacture, Liberty of Speech, Plural Voting, Gastronomy, Private Hygiene, Seaside Concert Entertainments, Painless Obstetrics and Astronomy for the People.”²⁵⁰ The three Venuses are distinctly Bloomian: the first is the goddess of “beautiful buttocks,” the second, “of all people” and eventually of sensual lust and prostitution, the third, an invention worthy of Bloom.²⁵¹ Together they mark a vulgar turn toward the sensual of the intellectual virtues of Hellenism admired by Arnold and enshrined in the museum’s entrance exhibit. The new nine muses, on the other hand, represent a populist pantheon (their number actually increased to fourteen), a roll call of Bloom’s pet causes proffered as a scheme for “social regeneration.” As a pantheon they inversely mirror Mulligan’s graces of life, while their revitalizing value echoes both this Hellenist’s and Irish nationalist rhetoric. Bloom’s muses, a parody of their Greek prototypes, are appropriately bound for the museum, etymologically but also politically the “seat of the muses.” As the place where new muses or goddesses are erected and old goddesses torn down, the museum legitimizes the values and goals the state deems desirable and encourages their acceptance in society. This satirical *mise-en-scène* manifests the political entanglements typical of all museums, their unavoidable reflection of and exertions in the politics of their time.

More specifically, the passage encapsulates the history of the National Museum of Ireland. A brief sketch of this museum’s roots in the rising museum culture of nineteenth-century Dublin should restore to the telescoped, lorry-driven scene-shift in

²⁵⁰ (15:1702-10).

²⁵¹ Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, 444.

“Circe” some of the social and political complexities involved in such a transformation of the museum. In the early nineteenth century the Trinity College Museum and the Royal Dublin Society collection still bore the miscellaneous shape of the eighteenth-century cabinets of oddities maintained by gentlemen members of these Anglo-Irish societies for their private satisfaction. Toward the middle of the century Dublin museums began to assume a more public role, their collections built up through city-wide subscriptions and made available for general viewing. Collections took on a specialized, scientific character and, in the case of antiquities, came to be associated with a national identity. This last change reflected an increased interest in the Irish “national past,” an idea popularized by the cultural revivalism of the 1830s and 1840s and politicized in the writings of Young Irelanders such as Davis.²⁵²

Meanwhile, the British government began to formulate clear goals for its expanding museum enterprise. The Department of Science and Art in South Kensington, London, and the museums it administered throughout the realm espoused a three-fold purpose. The first was “to disseminate knowledge about manufactures, aesthetics and culture,” the second, to “‘naturalise’ state intervention as an ideal governing tool,” and the third, “to produce a sense of national identity.”²⁵³ In 1864 and 1868, the British government inquired into the efficiency of science and art institutions in Dublin and concluded that science and art instruction could best be advanced by a centralized British administration rather than by private Dublin societies. The Commissioners therefore

²⁵² Elizabeth Croke, *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum in Ireland. An Expression of National Life* (Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2000), 114.

²⁵³ Qtd. in Croke, *Politics*, 105.

recommended that a new institution, the Museum of Science and Art, be established in Dublin as a branch of the South Kensington establishment. The museum would be a merger of the collections of the Natural History Museum, the Royal Dublin Society library, the Geological Survey, the Royal College of Science and the Royal Irish Academy. This arrangement went against the Academy's wishes for the creation of a separate museum devoted to Irish archaeology; as the Academy anticipated, when the new building of the Dublin Museum of Science and Art opened in 1890 its erstwhile collection of Irish antiquities was given a secondary importance. According to Elizabeth Crooke,

The conflict between the interests of the British industrial ethos and the desire in Ireland to create a museum of Irish archaeology is a demonstration of a clash of interests triggered by competing definitions of the purpose of a public museum in Dublin. The move of the Irish antiquities collection of the Academy into the Science and Art Museum was, symbolically, one of placing the control of the material remains of the Irish past in the hands of a London department.²⁵⁴

In a reversal of symbolism Dubliners began calling it the "National Museum," while Londoners continued to speak of the "Dublin Museum of Science and Art." Bloom's reference to it as the "National Museum"—and he is the only character in *Ulysses* to do so—marks him therefore as a Dubliner who regards the museum as an important national institution.²⁵⁵ To the extent that he identifies the museum with the nation, Bloom reveals

²⁵⁴ Crooke, *Politics*, 114.

²⁵⁵ 16:1451.

a dose of nationalism in his otherwise socialist and internationalist sympathies.

In keeping with the museum's primary public function of industrial education, the acquisition and display policies, exhibition catalogues, and public lectures favored the Art and Industrial Division over the Antiquities Division. This priority upset both national and nationalist feelings. Kalipedia ruled in so far as casts of Greek and Greco-Roman sculptures dominated the entrance rotunda, while the Irish archaeological collection was exhibited on the floor above. Gradually, though, the museum's identity shifted from an imperial to a national one, mirroring the wider struggle for Irish self-determination. In 1899, its management passed to the Dublin-based Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. In 1908, under the directorship of George Noble, Count Plunkett, the museum was renamed the "National Museum of Science and Art, Dublin." A new layout gave the Celtic antiquities collection greater prominence. Upon the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the museum became known as the "National Museum of Ireland."²⁵⁶ In 1928, a committee appointed by the Department of Education redefined the museum's main purpose: "[to] accumulate, preserve, study and display such objects as may serve to increase and diffuse the knowledge of Irish civilization, of the natural history of Ireland and of the relations of Ireland in these respects with other countries."²⁵⁷ The casts of Greek and Greco-Roman sculpture were removed from the museum, and the Irish archaeological collection was given pride of

²⁵⁶ Crooke, *Politics*, 141.

²⁵⁷ Qtd. in Crooke, 144.

place on the first floor. Joyce's brief, comical description of the "The keeper of the Kildare street museum" "dragging a lorry on which [. . . were] the shaking statues of several naked goddesses" thus emblemizes the historical transformations of the National Museum of Ireland.

The contrast between the "shaking statues" and the "plaster figures" mentioned in the passage from "Circe" points up a significant contemporary *idée reçue* about the museum. Bloom speaks of the museum goddesses as "statues" rather than as "plaster-casts," suggesting that he mistakes the reproductions for the original marble works. In "Eumaeus" he again refers to the "Grecian statues" he saw earlier that day, while contrasting, in conversation with Stephen, the mimetic virtues of marble and photography. "Marble could give the original [likeness], shoulders, back, all the symmetry, all the rest [. . .] Whereas no photo could because it simply wasn't art in a word."²⁵⁸ Bloom implies that sculpture can give the original likeness because the products of this handmade process are themselves original, that is, unique; in contrast, photography involves mechanical reproduction and turns out identical copies. Since art by definition yields originals, photography is not art; and since only art gives the "original" likeness, Molly's photograph—the initial topic of their conversation—can "do justice" neither to "her figure" nor to her "stage presence."²⁵⁹ Bloom's confusion of plaster-casts with marbles and his use of these reproductions as evidence of the mimetic and artistic superiority of marble sculpture over photography brim, therefore, with irony.

²⁵⁸ 16:1451-55.

²⁵⁹ 16:1445, 1459-60.

More broadly, his assumptions show him to be in thrall to the traditional, nineteenth-century view of the museum as the site of authenticity and originality. His definition of art, his “developmental” conception of art and of the “female form in general,” and his belief that the “Grecian statues” are perfectly developed as works of art” were all learned in the museum, which possesses the discursive power to constitute both the nature and the history of art.²⁶⁰

Yet contradictions in Bloom’s views of art surface throughout the text. The scene in which Bloom shows Stephen a photograph of Molly has this description: “Her (the lady’s) eyes, dark, large, looked at Stephen, about to smile about something to be admired, Lafayette of Westmoreland street, Dublin’s premier photographic artist, being responsible for the esthetic execution.”²⁶¹ As the syntax is Bloom’s, so may be the characterization of the photographer as an artist. Possibly Bloom in private considers photography an art but in conversation adopts an exclusive definition of art to impress the poet Stephen. Deepening the contradiction is the absence of any mention of photography when, in “Lotus-Eaters,” Bloom thinks, “Those old popes keen on music, on art and statues and pictures of all kinds.”²⁶² On one hand, Bloom omits photography from the list of “arts” admired by the popes. On the other hand, he would not necessarily know what Mr. Cunningham remembers reading about in *Dubliners*’ “Grace”: that the future Pope Leo III wrote a poem in Latin on photography. Adding to these ambiguities are

²⁶⁰ 16:1449-51.

²⁶¹ 16:1433-36.

²⁶² 5:404-05.

Bloom's multiple relations to photography: his father's cousin owned a daguerrotype atelier;²⁶³ his daughter has a "hereditary taste" for and occupation in photography;²⁶⁴ Bloom looks forward to engaging in the "intellectual pursuit" of "snapshot photography."²⁶⁵ While his views on art are largely a product of the museum, Bloom nonetheless embraces a popular art, and possibly a definition of art, excluded by the museum.

Just as he enters the museum but does not get much farther than the rotunda, Bloom is figuratively both inside and outside the museum. As a photographer and canvasser, he operates in the space between high and low art; his is the "modern art of advertisement."²⁶⁶ His liminal status with respect to the museum is best expressed in his brief role in "Circe" as a plasterer for Derwan's. This ironic representation of Bloom as a modern Praxiteles, together with his quasi-artistic practices of photography and advertisement, vex the museum's definition of art. The museum's boundaries come under further assault in Bloom's response to the Venus statue, which, like Lynch's in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, brims with indecent desire.²⁶⁷ Bloom's reverence

²⁶³ 17:1876-77.

²⁶⁴ 8:174.

²⁶⁵ 17:1588-89.

²⁶⁶ 17:58.

²⁶⁷ Bloom's desirous attitude toward (reproductions of) Greek statuary is also evident in his finding "desirable" (though not in the sexual sense) the statue of Narcissus on his table at home. This detail appears in the context of a passage in "Ithaca" (17:2028-2034) that, together with Bloom's desire for the Venus of Praxiteles, recalls Stephen's theory, expressed in *Portrait*, that only "pornographic," "improper" art excites the "kinetic" emotion of desire, which, he argues, "urges us to possess, to go to something" (Ed. Seamus Deane [New York: Penguin, 1992], 222). Bloom's "desire" for the statue of Narcissus is contrasted in "Ithaca" with the "inertia" induced in him by the anticipation of human warmth and the coolness of linen. Do the latter, therefore, induce the static emotion, which, Stephen says, is proper to

for the female *derrière* distinguishes his reception of the piece from Lynch's crude signature on the statue's backside, which suggests a contraction of two of Marcel Duchamp's anti-art gestures: his defacement of a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* (*L.H.O.O.Q.* [1919]) and his signature on a urinal (*Fountain* by R. Mutt [1917]). But their behavior is alike in breaching the institutional distance between the museum and the public. By the avant-garde means of autography and the gaze, respectively, Lynch and Bloom restore to the past-obsessed, "cemeterial" museum a vital, if vulgar, connection with the present. The image in "Circe" of Bloom attempting the virtue of the Nymph who, "*with a cry flees from him unveiled, her plaster cast cracking, a cloud of stench escaping from the cracks,*" comically emblemizes contemporary attempts by the museum to bridge the divide between art and life by opening the "temple of the muses" to the masses.²⁶⁸ Like Venus in the National Museum (as I will henceforth refer to it), the Nymph is made of plaster and like the museum's claims of authenticity and originality, she is bound to crack.

The National Museum's implicit comparison with the World's Fair Waxwork Exhibition in "Eumaeus" further diminishes the institution's aura. It is no "coincidence" that Bloom mentions to Stephen his visit to the museum just moments after discussing

dramatic art, while the statue of Narcissus stimulates the opposite? Or is Bloom's simply not a "normal nature," as Stephen says of Lynch? The absurdity of these questions casts an ironic light on Stephen's youthful aesthetic theory. More importantly, they support the argument I make in this paragraph that desire is an essential component of Bloom's aesthetic response, and that such desire transgresses the framing conditions for art's perception as established by the museum.

²⁶⁸ 15:3469-70.

“those waxworks in Henry street.”²⁶⁹ The Aztecs “sitting bowlegged” and “being adored as gods” that Bloom sees at the waxwork exhibition²⁷⁰ resemble the Buddha “lying on his side in the [entrance hall of the] museum” that he recalls earlier.²⁷¹ The popular arts museum, which historically featured variety acts, ballad singers, and ventriloquists along with its collection of wax figures,²⁷² underscores by contrast the National Museum’s character as a preserve of the elite. Yet their association in Bloom’s mind and the symmetry of their contents undercut the distinction between high and low art and underline the educational value of the popular museum, as exemplified by the wax exhibit on the Aztecs. That the wax exhibit and the “art” of advertisement together stimulate Bloom’s imagination of an “improved scheme of kindergarten” reinforces the quasi-artistic status and pedagogical potential of the waxworks.

The waxwork exhibition further connects with the traditional museum on the topic of invention. While the waxworks’ financial success leads Bloom in “Ithaca” to ponder such “inventions” as “miniature mechanical orreries, arithmetical gelatine lozenges, geometrical to correspond with zoological biscuits,”²⁷³ inventions of another kind prompt him in “Eumaeus” to think of the wax museum. Questioning the veracity of the sailor’s tales about the tattoo on his chest, Bloom says to Stephen, “Mind you, I’m not

²⁶⁹ 16:890, 851.

²⁷⁰ 16:851-57.

²⁷¹ 5:328.

²⁷² Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, 545.

²⁷³ 17:573-75.

saying that it's all a pure invention . . . Analogous scenes are occasionally, if not often, met with. Giants, though that is rather a far cry, you see once in a way, Marcella the midget queen. In those waxworks in Henry street I myself saw some Aztecs.”²⁷⁴ The repeated characterization of the sailor as an “exhibitor” of “scenes,”²⁷⁵ coupled with Bloom’s associational link—“scenes,” “giants,” “waxworks” and, elsewhere, waxworks and museum—suggest the National Museum’s relationship to the invention and exhibition of scenes. On what basis may the “scenes” “exhibited” in the National Museum in 1904 be “analogous” to the yarn spun by the sailor while displaying the tattoo on his chest? What measure of truth might prevent these “stories”²⁷⁶ from being “pure invention”? Were “giants” met with in the museum even as they were encountered at the World’s Fair Waxwork Exhibition? What other “scenes” might have been constructed alongside the image of the “giant”?

While the National Museum did not “invent” a “giant” out of thin air, it did participate in and profit from the discursive construction of a giant, namely, the one described in “Cyclops” as “seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower[,] . . . a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freelyfreckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero.”²⁷⁷ The description of the

²⁷⁴ 16:848-51.

²⁷⁵ 16:475, 677.

²⁷⁶ 16:821.

²⁷⁷ 12:151-55.

hero parodies the late-nineteenth-century revivalist reworking of Irish legend in such texts as Lady Augusta Gregory's *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904). Similarly, the mention of the round tower targets the earlier, nationalist transformation of archaeological remains into political symbols. For round towers formed as much an object of cultural revivalist—and cultural nationalist—attention as the legendary giants of the Fianna. The subject of great controversy in the nineteenth century concerning their origins and use, round towers were finally demonstrated in 1845 by the archaeologist George Petrie to have been built in the ninth through twelfth centuries as belfries and places of refuge for monastic communities during Viking raids. This peculiarly Irish architecture functioned as a *lieu de mémoire*, embodying the past and marking its continuity with the present.²⁷⁸ Reproduced amid romantic nationalist iconography on the frontispieces of popular volumes on Irish history, round towers became toward the middle of the nineteenth century the most popular symbol of the Irish nation.²⁷⁹ Such was their nationalist appeal that a replica was chosen as the form for the O'Connell Monument in Glasnevin cemetery.

This discursive kind of invention, involving the transformation of antiquities into nationalist symbols, is best witnessed in another “scene” in “Cyclops.” Similar in its parody to the one above, the scene centers on a journalistic description of a medieval

²⁷⁸ For a fuller discussion of the nineteenth-century debate over the origins and use of round towers, see Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 108-140.

²⁷⁹ Crooke, *Politics*, 42-44.

tapestry,²⁸⁰ that is, a “muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth” featuring “*scenes* [. . .] showing our ancient duns and raths and cromlechs and grianauins and seats of learning and maledictive stones.”²⁸¹ Following a comparison of the tapestry with an illuminated manuscript is a catalogue of notable (and some not so notable) topographical features and archaeological relics in Ireland: “Glendalough, the lovely lakes of Killarney, the ruins of Conmacnois, Cong Abbey . . . the cross at Monasterboice . . . all these moving *scenes* are still there for us today rendered more beautiful still by the waters of sorrow which have passed over them and by the rich incrustations of time.”²⁸² The movement from tapestry to illuminated manuscript to archaeological landscape implies that the last is as much a product of “artistic fantasy” as the others.²⁸³ The landscape’s characterization in terms of scenes reinforces its constructed (“rendered,” “incrusted”) nature. To speak of the landscape, then, is to speak of an image, one made both “beautiful” and possible by centuries (“time”) of suffering (“sorrow”) at the hands of the English.²⁸⁴

Such inventions must be understood in relation to the contemporary English

²⁸⁰ Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, 361.

²⁸¹ 12:1447-48; italics mine.

²⁸² 12:1461-64; italics mine.

²⁸³ 12:1450.

²⁸⁴ The parodic passage in *Ulysses* immediately follows Bloom’s famous definition of a nation as “the same people living in the same place” (12:2), for the catalogue of places offers an important commentary on a nation’s sense of “place.” “Place” here is less a monolithic, undifferentiated geographical zone than a group of locales and landscape features—Glendalough, Killarney, Clonmacnois, duns, raths, cromlechs—invested with pathos over time, represented as scenes in art (as in tapestries and illuminated manuscripts), and constructed through discourse into the “place” of the nation. Joyce’s repeated emphasis on “scenes” in both the *Wake* and *Ulysses* amid discussions of history and the nation underscores the importance of the spectacle (and its mechanical reproduction) in the discursive construction of Ireland in terms of its archaeological landscape.

denial of Irish historical achievements and the racist stereotyping of the Irish in such newspapers as the *Standard* and the *Morning Post*. In his 1904 lecture, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages,” Joyce refuted the English image of the Irish as “unbalanced, helpless idiots.”²⁸⁵ In the same lecture he made use of a nationalist invention to represent his country to his Triestine audience. Following Charles Vallancey, an eighteenth-century antiquary who argued that the ancient Celts reached the British Isles by Carthaginian trade routes, Joyce identified Gaelic with the language of the Phoenicians.²⁸⁶ Although the Phoenician model of Irish origins was largely discredited by the first third of the nineteenth century, it continued to gain acceptance among Irish nationalists because of its anti-English subtext, which presupposed an ancient Irish civilization destroyed by Viking and English invasions.²⁸⁷ This invention and those parodied in “Cyclops” are thus understandable, even justifiable, as counters to English myths about the Irish, Joyce seems to imply. As Bloom says in defense of the yarn-spinning sailor, “when all was said and done the lies a fellow told about himself couldn’t probably hold a candle to the wholesale whoppers other fellows coined about him.”²⁸⁸

Don Gifford has suggested that the catalogue of popular tourist attractions in “Cyclops” parodies the language of nineteenth-century guidebooks. While many

²⁸⁵ *Critical Writings*, eds. Richard Ellmann and Ellsworth Mason (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 171. For an excellent discussion of English-Irish racial discourse in relation to the “Irish Question” and issues of Empire and Home Rule, see Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15-57.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁸⁷ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 71-74.

²⁸⁸ 16:845-47.

guidebooks certainly displayed its romantic inflection,²⁸⁹ ultimately the passage parodies the Irish nationalist rhetoric that fed into guidebook fustian. Such rhetoric sought to manipulate native empathy with the archaeological landscape in the service of an idea of the Irish nation as a continuous historical entity. O'Brien, for example, lecturing in 1892 before the Cork National Society, declared that

Every Irishman of finely-strung nature loves to piece together the stones of the cloisters of Cong, where the last High King of Ireland found a more durable than earthly kingdom. Our pulses quicken as we trace amidst the vestiges of the old town wall of Limeric the breach where King William's Brandenburg Regiment was blown into the air, and where Robert Dwyer Joyce's Blacksmith might have wielded his hammer. We follow Dr. Petrie's footsteps reverently among the mounds on Tara Hill, while he proves to us where stood the Mead-circling Hall, once glittering with the revelry of kings, and where the Chamber of Sunshine from whose windows of bright glass Grainne's soft eyes first lighted on her young Munster hero as he gained the goal from all the men of Leinster on the grassy plain. A broken column, a place-name, a mere mound glorified with the dust of heroes, may enable us to live over again the feasts, the royal jousts, the romances which lit up the land a thousand years ago.²⁹⁰

Time and sorrow have rendered more beautiful these features of the Irish landscape.

More broadly, they have imbued the archaeological remains with an imaginative potential

²⁸⁹ See, for example, Martin Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland. Literary Travellers, Rural Landscapes, Cultural Relations* (Brookfield: Ashgate 1999).

²⁹⁰ *Irish Ideas*, 49.

that O'Brien releases in his transformation of them into material evidence recording amid triumphs and defeats alike the continuous existence of a nation. It was this kind of nationalist rhetoric that fueled the formation of the National Museum and its eventual exhibition of a "Golden Age" of Irish antiquities. Thus, while the museum did not directly fabricate Finn MacCool, it did evolve from and build upon the invention of a different kind of giant, namely, the storied archaeological remains that, in O'Brien's revealing simile, lie "like wounded *giants* through the land to mark where the fight [with the British invaders] had raged the fiercest."²⁹¹

These "wounded giants" recall Finn's topographical representation in the *Wake*, where the discursive relations between archaeology and cultural and political nationalism converge in Joyce's complex treatment of museums and monuments, the historical, political, and epistemological exigencies of which are best staged in the Museyroom.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 4; italics mine.

Chapter 6: “In greater support of his word”:

Monument and Museum Discourse in *Finnegans Wake*²⁹²

The ruins of the Forum failed to move Joyce during his stay in Rome in 1906-07. Disappointed by what he saw as their irrelevance to historical understanding and their transformation into spectacle, he wrote his brother Stanislaus, “Rome reminds me of a man who lives by exhibiting to travelers his grandmother’s corpse” (*Letters*, II, 165). In his 1885 Presidential Address to the Cork Young Ireland Society, William O’Brien used a similar mortuary metaphor to compare the regenerate Irish favorably with the “degenerate” Romans:

The creatures who dwell around the ruins of the Coliseum still call themselves Romans, and masquerade in the grave-clothes of their august ancestors; but nobody expects new Ciceros to arise among the degenerate chatterers of the Corso. . . . The Irish race of to-day, on the contrary, take up their mission just where English aggression cut it short seven centuries ago, and leap to their feet as buoyantly as though the whole hideous tragedy of the intervening ages were but the nightmare of an uneasy sleeper.²⁹³

Also heirs of an ancient civilization, the Irish differ from the Romans in having achieved a “second youth” through a return to the values of the “Golden Age.” This rebirth is

²⁹² This chapter represents an expanded version of a forthcoming article by the same name in the *James Joyce Quarterly*.

²⁹³ William O’Brien, *Irish Ideas* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1893), 9-10.

evident not just in the intense Irish effort to win Home Rule but also in the contrast between the nation's repair of its "ruined shrines" and Rome's neglect of its decaying monuments.²⁹⁴ O'Brien's regard for archaeological restoration as evidence of a cultural and political revival typifies Irish patriotic attitudes at a time when the museum's rising cultural consecration made the Dublin Museum of Science and Art a crucial stage on which nationalists sought to represent their vision of a historically continuous Irish nation. The museum's importance for supplying the often lamented lack of Irish historiography and fostering a sense of national heritage and belonging can be witnessed in the repeated calls of nationalists like Thomas Davis for the preservation of the nation's archaeology and antiquities and the establishment of museums in which to exhibit them.²⁹⁵

What value for the representation of history does the museum assume in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*? Critics have tended to confine their studies of the Museyroom to the celebrated passage in I.i (8:9 - 10:23), in which the archetypal family drama is represented in military-historical terms.²⁹⁶ I would like to focus more broadly on the Museyroom's identification with the Wellington Monument and their key evidentiary

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 10. Whereas in *Ulysses* Stephen struggles to escape from the nightmare of history, in O'Brien's blithe assessment Ireland has already awoken from it. Joyce parodies the image of the Irish race "buoyantly" "leap[ing] to their feet" in the scene in the *Wake* where the deceased Finnegan revives at the taste of whiskey (24:14-16).

²⁹⁵ See, for example, Thomas Davis, "Historical Monuments of Ireland," "Irish Antiquities and Irish Savages," "Old Ireland," *Essays of Thomas Davis*, ed. D. J. O'Donoghue, 116-18, 167-72, 197-201 (New York: Lemma Publishing Corporation, 1974).

²⁹⁶ (New York: Viking Press, 1976). See Vincent Cheng, "The General and the Sepoy," in *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (New York: Cambridge, 1995), 278-88.

role in HCE's self-defense against the Cad in I.ii and the gossip accounts of the event given in I.iii. A brief survey of nineteenth-century literature on Ireland's "ruined shrines" will reveal an analogy between, on the one hand, HCE's repeated appeals to the Monument/Museyroom in "greater support of his word" (36:7-8) and witnesses' "ventriloquent" (56:5-6) testimony concerning the HCE-Cad encounter in Phoenix Park and, on the other hand, Irish nationalist enlistments of archaeology, museums, and monuments in the service of historical and political claims. The Monument/Museyroom's contested privileging as a bearer of historical meaning—as both a "sign of our ruru redemption" (36:23-24) and proof of HCE's guilt—is rooted, I argue, in the power of archaeological remains and monuments as instruments of Irish nationalism and British imperialism.

O'Brien was able to claim a link between cultural regeneration and the restoration of Ireland's ruined shrines because their power to represent the imagined community had been established half a century before, thanks largely to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (1824-41). Begun as a map-making and gazetteering project led by a British officer named Thomas Larcom, the Ordnance Survey soon expanded under the care of the Irish archaeologist George Petrie into a comprehensive study of the physical landscape that combined scientific methodology with the inventorizing of original place names and the description of architectural remains. As a result, the entire geography of Ireland was transformed into a vast *lieu de mémoire*, a place pregnant with a past that could be

delivered through the careful study of archaeology and toponymy.²⁹⁷ This privileging of the monument as a bearer of historical meaning is exemplified in Davis' "Historical Monuments of Ireland" (1843), one of the many articles on Irish history and literature he wrote for the *Nation*. Davis asks, "Does not a man, by examining a few castles and arms, know more of the peaceful and warrior life of the dead nobles and gentry of our island than from a library of books?"²⁹⁸ The museum acquired a new importance for historical understanding in the wake of this shift. One of the first to appreciate the museum's historiographic value, Davis championed the Royal Irish Academy's work in collecting and elucidating the nation's antiquities and called for greater efforts to preserve them. The grounds for his proposal were clear. "The state of civilization," he claimed, "among our Scotie or Milesian, or Norman, or Danish sires, is better seen from the Museum of the Irish Academy, and from a few raths, keeps, and old coast towns, than from all the prints and historical novels we have."²⁹⁹

Ideologically, under the monument and the place name lay a Gaelic substratum of Irish culture that provided proof of an ancient nation and a great civilization.³⁰⁰ Thus, around the second quarter of the nineteenth century Irish public figures began to manipulate archaeology for various political ends. Elizabeth Croke has shown how ancient sites and artifacts were employed "to create a sense of the nation being natural

²⁹⁷ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 102-03.

²⁹⁸ Davis, "Historical Monuments of Ireland," 117.

²⁹⁹ Davis, 118.

³⁰⁰ Leerssen, 102-03.

and predetermined and also to provide material legitimisation for the myths of the nation.” The ruins at Newgrange and Tara and relics like the Tara brooch and the Ardagh chalice became tangible evidence of a Golden Age of cultural achievement and political and ethnic unity, a decadence that set in as a result of the English invasions, and the possibility of a resurgent Irish present based on a return to the values of the past. In orations, writings, and book illustrations, archaeology and antiquities served to demonstrate historical claims and validate political ideals. In effect, Crooke argues, “archaeological sites and landscapes became the ‘poetic space’ of the nation and artifacts the material evidence of a political concept.”³⁰¹

The gathering of Daniel O’Connell’s Repeal Association on the Hill of Tara in 1843 exemplifies the use of a historic locality as a political symbol. Before a crowd of 500,000 people, O’Connell called on the legendary royal seat of ancient Ireland to bear witness to a glorious past and the possibility of an independent future. He declared, “History may be tarnished by exaggeration, but the fact is that we are at Tara of the Kings (cheers). We are on the spot where the monarchs of Ireland were elected and where the chieftains of Ireland bound themselves by the sacred pledge of honour and the tie of religion to stand by their native land against the Dane, or any other stranger (cheers).”³⁰² The implication was clear. The same “pledge of honor” binding the Irish in the past bound the audience in the present to fight against union with the imperial British

³⁰¹ *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum in Ireland. An Expression of National Life* (Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2000), 32.

³⁰² Daniel O’Connell, cited in the *Nation*, 19 August 1843, 706 (cited in Crooke 35).

“stranger.” Significantly, it is the audience’s feelings and imagination, their “historical recollections” of the site, and not any visible archaeological remains (none were extant), that are called on to testify to Ireland’s glorious past.³⁰³ The same is true of the monster meeting held at the Rath of Mullaghmast later that year:

At Mullaghmast (and I have chosen this for this obvious reason), we are on the precise spot where English treachery—aye, and false Irish treachery, too—consummated a massacre that has never been imitated. . . . I thought this a fit and becoming spot to celebrate, in the open day, our unanimity [both Protestant and Catholic] in declaring our determination not to be misled by any treachery.³⁰⁴

Mullahgmast was the site of the infamous massacre in 1577 by English troops of some 400 Irish, led there under the pretense of peaceful negotiations. O’Connell uses the site as an occasion for calling for the correction of historical sins, for setting in motion a repetition of history but with the difference that, this time around, Irish Catholics and Protestants would unite under the banner of the Repeal Association and their claims would meet with compensation rather than treachery. By appealing to the precedent of betrayal, O’Connell doubles the moral imperative of his cause and focuses the crowd on the debt England owes Ireland.

Tara and Mullaghmast were but two of thirty historical sites where vast crowds assembled to declare their loyalty to O’Connell and the cause of independence. A third

³⁰³ Crooke, *Politics*, 37.

³⁰⁴ Daniel O’Connell, “Ireland Worth Dying For,” *World’s Best Orations*, ed. David J. Brewer (Chicago: Ferd P. Kaiser Publishing, Co., 1923), 239-40.

site was Newgrange, and the tumulus located there served nationalists as evidence of Ireland's "old nationality" and cultural achievements. In an article published in the *Nation* in 1844, titled "Irish Antiquities and Irish Savages," Davis alerts the public to plans for a road to run through the "Temple of Grange" and calls for the creation of an Antiquarian Society to preserve the nation's archaeological remains. Speaking of the tumulus, he argues, "It is a thing to be proud of, as a proof of Ireland's antiquity, to be guarded as an illustration of her early creed and arts. It is one of a thousand muniments of our old nationality, which a national government would keep safe."³⁰⁵ Significantly, Davis enlists the improper management of the remains as grounds for establishing a native and independent government. Just as foreign invasions triggered a decline in Ireland's "early creed and arts," so British rule in Ireland, he implies, accelerates the decay of the national heritage.

Artifacts, too, provided ballast for historical and political arguments. The Cross of Cong, a large, twelfth-century processional cross, was cited by O'Brien in an 1893 essay titled "The Irish Age of Gold" as proof of a "body corporate worthy of being called an Irish nation."³⁰⁶ The testimonial power of Ireland's ruins—its shrines, castles, towers, and wells—is expressed in O'Brien's characterization of them as "the most eloquent schoolmasters, the most stupendous memorials of a history and a race that were destined not to die."³⁰⁷ The "voice of Ireland's past," he claimed, continues to speak through these

³⁰⁵ Davis, "Irish Antiquities and Irish Savages," 167; sic.

³⁰⁶ O'Brien, 139, 146.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 4.

ruins of “memories of wrongs unavenged, and of a strife unfinished, and of a hope which only brightened in suffering, and which no human weapon could subdue.”³⁰⁸ Like his fellow nationalists, O’Brien ascribed to archaeological sites the capacity to link the past with the present and to speak about the continuing presence of the past. As he put it, the nation’s ruins have “survive[d] to *tell the tale* after ten centuries of unceasing battle for the bare life.”³⁰⁹

Just as O’Brien charged archaeology with revealing history, so ancient tumuli are called on to divulge the past in the *Wake*. “Tal the tem of the tumulum” (56:34; Jonathan Swift’s *Tale of the Tub*, tell, time, tomb, tumulus)—echoing O’Brien’s discourse, this appeal is made in I.iii amid the rumors concerning HCE’s alleged crime in Phoenix Park. One of the first to tell the story of HCE’s encounter with the Cad is the “porty” (51:23) who, while smoking a pipe and using empty beer bottles for target practice, speaks of “the One,” “the Compassionate,” and calls up before his audience “the now to ushere mythical habiliments of Our Farfar and Arthor of our doyne” (52:13-17; Our Father, King Arthur, Arthur Wellesley, author of our days, Boyne). The porty begins to sketch “the touching seene” (52:31 - 53:6) of HCE’s encounter with the Cad, but the scene gives way to a digression in which a jaunting-car driver known as the “jehu” offers his own version of the incident (about which more below). The gossiping resumes on the part of the “Archicadenus” (arch, Cad, “decanus,” Latin, dean [Swift], “cadena,” Spanish, chain, us),

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 4.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 9; italics mine.

who asks his audience to

imagine themselves in their bosom's inmost core, as *pro tem locums*, timesported across the yawning (abyss), as once they were seasiders [Scandinavian invaders, like HCE], listening to the cockshyshooter's [the porty's] evensong evocation of the doomed but always ventriloquent Agitator [O'Connell], . . . his [O'Connell's] manslayer's gunwielder protended towards that overgrown leadpencil [popular name for Wellington Monument] which was soon, monumentally at least, to rise as Molyvdokondylon [lead pencil] to, to be, to be his mausoleum . . . while olover his exculpatory features. (56:2-15)

The Archicadenus' description of the "ventriloquent Agitator" pointing his gun at the "overgrown leadpencil" is clearly another version of the paternal conflict retold throughout the book. Over twenty contradictory accounts of the confrontation between HCE and the Cad are offered in this chapter alone. The multiply framed stories and confusion of storytellers are typical of the instability of discourse and identity throughout the *Wake*.

But the series of speakers extending through time and space and culminating in the "imagin[ation]" of an "evocation" of the "always ventriloquent" O'Connell gesturing toward the Monument/Museyroom also suggests a parody of Irish attempts to speak for or "ventriloquize" the mute sites of prehistory—which, *pace* O'Brien, do not speak on their own³¹⁰—despite an ever-receding point of view. Like the porty, who attempts to

³¹⁰ Hence the irony of this line concerning the Mamafesta from I.v: "Here let a few artifacts fend in their own favour" (110:01).

recapture the “*now to usher* [us here, usher, Uther] mythical” “Arthur of our doyne” by appealing to monuments local in time and space (e.g., the Wellington Obelisk and the statue near Dublin that Major Doyne erected to the horse he rode at Waterloo), activists such as O’Connell, Davis, and O’Brien often “held the place for a time” (Roland McHugh’s translation of “*pro tem locums*”)³¹¹ in their efforts to tell the tale of the tomb or tumulus (“Tal the tem of the tumulum”); that is, the nation’s history ciphered in the archaeological landscape. They used ancient ruins as stepping-stones across temporal distance in pursuit of historical truth. Through their manipulation of archaeological sites and artifacts, they enabled their audiences to “timesport acorss [time, transport, across, a course] the yawning (abyss)” of history and experience a shared identity with the ancient Irish chieftains and artisans they often invoked in their speeches and writing. Recalling the almost religious character of patriotic reverence for historic localities like Tara and Mullaghmast, O’Connell is portrayed in the same passage as a Muslim fanatic (“Saint Muezzin,” “ghazi”) rallying his fellow believers in defense of “holy places.” These “faithful toucher[s] of the ground” (56:8-11) may be identified with the crowds O’Connell drew to such hallowed sites of Irish history as Tara and Mullaghmast. Such allusions to the political appropriation of archaeology, coupled with O’Connell’s characterization as “ventriloquent,” together issuing from a succession of mediated stories about HCE’s encounter with the Cad, imply an analogy between the rumor-mongers reconstructing a past event in Phoenix Park and those who gave voice, and

³¹¹ Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1991), 56.

political thrust, to the silent history embodied in the ruins of the Irish landscape.

The party's description of the "touching seene" in the park supports this analogy. The scene, we are told, "scenes" (53:1; seems) "like a landscape from Wildu Picturescu or some seem on some dimb Arras, dumb as Mum's mutyness, this mimage of the seventyseventh kusun of kristansen is odable to os across the wineless Ere no oedor nor mere eerie nor liss potent of suggestion than in the tales of the tingmount" (52:36-53:6). The "seene" parodies Stephen's vision, in Ch. IV of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, of Dublin at the time of the Danish invasions. Besides emphasizing the sensual evocation of the scene ("seene," seen; "odable," audible; "oedor," odor; "eerie," ear-y), the parody significantly substitutes "patient of subjection" with "potent of suggestion." The arras "scene" is indeed highly suggestive and in this respect recalls the journalistic description of the arras parodied in the "Cyclops" chapter of *Ulysses*. This "ancient Irish facecloth" features "*scenes* . . . showing our ancient duns and raths and cromlechs and grianauins and seats of learning and maledictive stones" (*U* 12:1447-48; italics mine). Following a comparison of the tapestry with an illuminated manuscript is a catalogue of notable (and some not so notable) landscapes and archaeological relics in Ireland: "Glendalough, the lovely lakes of Killarney, the ruins of Conmacnois, Cong Abbey . . . the cross at Monasterboice . . . all these moving *scenes* are still there for us today rendered more beautiful still by the waters of sorrow which have passed over them and by the rich incrustations of time" (12:1461-64; italics mine). The movement from tapestry to illuminated manuscript to archaeological landscape implies that the last is as much a product of "artistic fantasy" (12:1450) as the others. The landscape's

characterization in terms of scenes reinforces its constructed (“rendered,” “incrusted”) nature. To speak of the landscape, then, is to speak of an image, one made both “beautiful” and possible by centuries (“time”) of suffering (“sorrow”) at the hands of the English. All these scenes—the ones appearing on the tapestry, manuscript, and landscape in “Cyclops,” the “scene” of ancient Dublin in Stephen’s vision, itself mediated by a “scene from some vague arras” (*P* 167), and the “touching scene” sketched by the party—reveal a romantic inflection typical of the discourse used by Irish public figures to “ventriloquize” the nation’s mute remains in their efforts to tell the “tale of the tingmount” (thingmote). The party’s recollection of the Phoenix Park event in terms of scenes thus parodies the topographic rhetoric of Irish historiography and the manipulation of Irish empathy with the land for political ends.³¹² Precisely because the past events in Phoenix Park are “dimb” (dim, dumb), the party is able to witness to them in the same way that Irish nationalists gave voice to ancient ruins, which, like the ventriloquist’s dummy, are “dumb,” “Mum,” and “muty.” The party’s “mimage” (mime, image) of history, or miming of the past through images of historical places, demonstrates the power of the monument and monumentalized spectacle to validate political and historical

³¹² It is important to note that the parodic passage in *Ulysses* immediately follows Bloom’s famous definition of a nation as “the same people living in the same place” (12:2), for the catalogue of places offers an important commentary on a nation’s sense of “place.” “Place” here is less a monolithic, undifferentiated geographical zone than a group of locales and landscape features—Glendalough, Killarney, Clonmacnois, duns, raths, cromlechs—invested with pathos over time, represented as scenes in art (as in tapestries and illuminated manuscripts), and constructed through discourse into the “place” of the nation. Joyce’s repeated emphasis on “scenes” in both the *Wake* and *Ulysses* amid discussions of history and the nation underscores the importance of the spectacle (and its mechanical reproduction) in the discursive construction of Ireland in terms of its archaeological landscape.

claims.³¹³

Just as public figures drafted historical memories attached to archaeology and artifacts in defense of their political ideals, so HCE points to the Wellington Monument to substantiate his claim of innocence before the Cad in Phoenix Park. He performs this gesture in two of the fuller accounts of the event offered by witnesses in I.iii (including that of the Archicadenus quoted above), as well as in the first version presented in I.ii. In this earlier passage we are told that

In greater support of his word . . . the flaxen Gygas . . . pointed at an angle of thirty-two degrees towards his duc de Fer's overgrown milestone as fellow to his gage and after a rendypresent pause averred with solemn emotion's fire: Shsh shake, co-comeraid! Me only, them five ones, he is equal combat. I have won straight. Hence my nonation wide hotel and creamery establishments which for the honours of our mewmew mutual daughters, credit me, I am woowoo willing to take my stand, sir, upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption, . . . and to make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon the Open

³¹³ The transformation of Rome into spectacle by means of mechanical reproduction contributed to Joyce's early impression of the lifelessness of material remains and their irrelevance to the present. He wrote his brother toward the beginning of his stay in Rome in 1906, "The neighbourhood of the Colisseum (sic) is like an old cemetery with broken columns of temples and slabs. You know the Colisseum from pictures" (*Letters*, II, 145). In addition to repeating the mortuary metaphor, the letter quoted at the start of this essay echoes Joyce's disappointment over the mediation of history through spectacle: "Yesterday I went to see the Forum. I sat down on a stone bench overlooking the ruins. It was hot and sunny. Carriages full of tourists, postcard sellers, medal sellers, photograph sellers. I was so moved that I almost fell asleep and had to rise brusquely" (*Letters*, II, 165). That Kate the tour guide sells "war souvenir postcards" (27:32) in the *Wake* implicates the Museyroom in the same kind of deadening, mediated relationship to the past that Joyce attributed to Rome's archaeological "open-air" museum. A similar kind of transformation into spectacle is evident, we have seen, in the reproduction of archaeological imagery in nineteenth-century Irish book illustrations.

Bible and before the Great Taskmaster's (I lift my hat!) . . . and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and Mrs Michan of High Church of England . . . that there is not one tittle of truth, allow me to tell you, in that purest of fibfib fabrications. (36:7-34)

How does the Wellington Monument provide "greater support" for HCE's "word," serve as "fellow to his gage" (pledge, token), and function as a sign of "our" "redemption"? Completed in 1861, the obelisk was raised in Phoenix Park to commemorate the victories of the great British general Arthur Wellesley, the "Iron Duke" of Wellington. Four bronze plaques cast from cannons captured at Waterloo ring the base of the obelisk. Three of the plaques offer pictorial representations of "Civil and Religious Liberty," "Waterloo," and the "Indian Wars." The fourth bears an inscription reading, "Asia and Europe, saved by thee, proclaim / Invincible in war thy deathless name, / Now round thy brow the civic oak we twine / That every earthly glory may be thine." The monument operates as a symbol, and index, of redemption in the sense of deliverance from an enemy, whether Napoleon or rebellious colonial subjects in India. Redemption of the British empire, that is, for the Dublin monument also stands for the domination of an Ireland still resentful of and actively opposed to its union with England, enacted nineteen years before the monument's erection. Thus only from an imperial standpoint can the obelisk serve as a witness "stand" for HCE and provide legitimization for his claims, "Me only, them five ones, he is equal combat. I have won straight." Recalling the Museyroom exhibit on the confrontation between Wellington and the three colonial subjects, the "dooley," the "hinnessy," and the "hinndoo Shimar Shin," and their allies,

the two “jinnies” (*FW* 8-10), HCE’s claims, in this context, are equally those of empire. The context is reinforced by the invocation of the “Open Bible,” the “Great Taskmaster’s,” the “Bishop,” “Mrs Michan” (St. Michan’s Church, Dublin, Church of Ireland),³¹⁴ the “Deity Itself,” and the “High Church of England,” all of them signifiers, like the Wellington Monument, of British authority. HCE’s attempt to transform the monument with its limited, imperial symbolism into an emblem of universal redemption accords with the monument’s graven, totalizing claims (“Asia and Europe, saved by thee”) and his own pressing, exculpatory needs. The materiality of the monument further complements HCE’s aim by rendering present (“rendypresent”) or making manifest his innocence to the Cad, who has merely asked him for the time.³¹⁵

In a similar version of events offered by the jehu in I.iii (53:7-55:2), HCE calls the “univalse” to “witness” that his “guesthouse and cowhaendel credits will immediately stand ohoh open as straight as that neighbouring monument’s fabrication before the hygienic gllll . . . lobe before the Great Schoolmaster’s” (54:27-55:1). While declaring his oath, HCE lifts his signature hat (as he did in I.ii) and gestures with it in the direction of the monument. Again he appeals to the monument’s “universal” symbolism, its capacity to memorialize his virtue, or “witness” to his innocence before a global

³¹⁴ McHugh, 36.

³¹⁵ HCE’s repeated gestures toward the monument must also be understood in relation to Giambattista Vico’s theory of a mute language expressed in hieroglyphic characters corresponding to the first, religious stage of history (*The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, eds. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch [London: Cornell University Press, 1984], ¶ 431, ¶ 929, ¶ 933). In this context the monument functions as a physical object naturally related by its phallic shape to the idea of authority (and thus of blamelessness) that the inarticulate (because stuttering, because guilty) HCE wishes to signify by means of gesture. The notion that the obelisk bears a natural connection to the idea of theocratic rule clearly parallels the modern assumption that archaeological remains embody history. HCE’s attempt to harness the obelisk in defense of his claims likewise mirrors the efforts of Irish public figures to deploy them for political ends.

audience, even before God. But however “straight” the obelisk may be, HCE’s business practices (“Kuhhandel,” German, shady business;³¹⁶ cf. “hotel and creamery establishments” [36:22; HCE]) are surely crooked, and his assertion of virtue as “fabricat[ed]” as the monument’s imperial claims. In a third retelling of the incident (quoted above), HCE is represented in the guise of O’Connell aiming a gun at the monument. On the one hand, O’Connell’s “exculpatory features” suggest that his gesture forms an appeal to the monument as evidence in his defense against the charge of killing (as in reality he did) John D’Esterre. His appeal thus resonates with the rhetorical strategies he employed at such historically significant sites as Tara and Mullaghmast, which likewise embody the past. The ultimate proof for O’Connell’s claim of innocence, the monument functions as the terminal “speaker” in the procession of “ventriloquent” witnesses who resume each other’s testimony to no avail.

On the other hand, O’Connell’s menacing gesture toward the monument recalls the “hindoo” Shimar Shin’s explosive campaign against the mounted figure of Willingdone (10:10-22), whose white horse Copenagen (“Cokenhape”) is linked to equestrian statues symbolizing imperial, Protestant, English rule. As Adeline Glasheen has noted (citing John Thomas Gilbert’s *History of Dublin*, III, 40-56), the statue of King William III on College Green shared a fate similar to that of Willingdone’s equestrian figure at the end of the Museyroom exhibit:

In Dublin (before the Free State) the Ulstermen’s brazen calf was a lead

³¹⁶ McHugh, 54.

equestrian statue of King Billy on College Green which, on Williamite holy days, was painted white (a white horse in a fanlight is still a sign of Protestant sympathies) and decorated with orange lilies . . . and green and white ribbons ‘symbolically placed beneath its uplifted foot.’ Catholics retorted by vandalizing the statue, tarring, etc., and in 1836 succeeded in blowing the figure of the king off the horse.³¹⁷

In his analysis of the colonial subtext of the Museyroom passage in *I.i*, Vincent Cheng argues that “the ‘hinndoo’ sepoy blowing up Willingdone’s big white horse is but another version of Irish Catholic Hennesseys and Dooleys tarring, defacing, and then (1836) blowing up King Billy’s white horse on Dublin’s College Green.”³¹⁸ But violence was not the only response by Irish patriots to imperial statues. Recognizing their ideological potential, nationalists raised their own monuments to commemorate fallen heroes and quicken national consciousness. The importance of public monuments in nineteenth-century Ireland is reflected in the Archicadenus’ comment that the “overgrown leadpencil . . . was soon, monumentally at least, to rise as Molyvdokondylon [lead pencil] to, to be, to be his [HCE/O’Connell’s] mausoleum.” Frustrated in his attempts to repeal the Act of Union (figuratively, to fell the “overgrown leadpencil”), O’Connell died in Genoa in 1847, a “doomed” man on his way to seek spiritual solace in Rome. Yet with his fall there arose the 160-foot-tall O’Connell Round Tower in Glasnevin cemetery, beneath

³¹⁷ Adaline Glasheen, *Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 309.

³¹⁸ Cheng, 287.

which his remains were laid. Modeled on the ecclesiastical architecture most symbolic of nationalist Ireland, the monument was intended by its planners to represent the nation's continuity with the Early Christian Period, regarded as a Golden Age of cultural achievement prior to the arrival of the English.³¹⁹ The monument's relationship in this passage to that emblem of empire, the Wellington Obelisk, in addition to typifying the Vichian symmetries in the *Wake*, thus evokes the kind of political contestation in which such monuments were enrolled in nineteenth-century Ireland.

The case of the Ennis Monument to O'Connell further illustrates the ideological value of memorial structures. A nationalist desire to counter the imperial symbolism of the Wellington Obelisk (205 feet) and the Nelson Pillar (136 feet) motivated the 1862 erection of this monument in the county of Clare. When funds for the projected 67-foot column surmounted by a 9-foot statue proved insufficient, a committee of dedicated Claremen issued an appeal for funds in which, after citing the Greek custom of raising monuments to fallen heroes to serve as an example to future generations, they declaimed: "But why allude to distant lands or to Grecian story, whilst here in our green isle yon towering columns that o'erlook our capital, raised to the victors of Trafalgar and Waterloo by the friends of British rule, proclaim our fallen state and teach us how to honor the mighty dead."³²⁰ By linking visible testaments of British imperial victories with Irish colonial defeats, the passage supports the *Wake*'s suggestion that Wellington's

³¹⁹ Crooke, 87-90.

³²⁰ Rev. John Canon O'Hanlon, *Report of the O'Connell Monument Committee* (Dublin: J. Duffy and Co., 1888) xi.

“overgrown leadpencil” implies O’Connell’s “mausoleum” and, in effect, his failure to achieve the repeal of the Union. The appeal also makes clear the Claremen’s discovery that monuments could serve as a powerful stage on which to continue O’Connell’s struggle against British oppression. For the Ennis Monument would not only “record that mighty event” in 1828 when O’Connell gained Emancipation for Ireland; nor would it simply inspire in future generations the leader’s patriotism and virtues. More broadly, by fulfilling “the first duty of a nation,” “to honor the memory of its great men,”³²¹ the monument would resurrect Ireland’s “fallen state” in the same way that, for O’Brien, archaeological restoration fostered the nation’s political and cultural revival.

Monuments in nineteenth-century Ireland possessed, then, an ideological value for nationalists comparable to that of archaeology and artifacts. Like Tara and Mullaghmast, the O’Connell monuments in Ennis and Glasnevin Cemetery became sites of pilgrimage that stood for the nation, both its political ideal of independence and the continuous historical nature that nourished this ideal. Yet the symbolic efficacy of monuments was rivaled by the contingency of their meanings. The Wellington Monument, for example, represented deliverance for the imperialists and bondage for the nationalists. Indeed, in the case of archaeology, the gap between the material signs and their fading historical referents made possible the discursive appropriation of ancient monuments by public figures like Davis and O’Brien. As the ruins at Tara and Mullaghmast deteriorated over time and their relationship to the past weakened, the

³²¹ Ibid., xii.

semiotic nature of these archaeological signs shifted from the indexical to the symbolic, from the existential to the conventional, with the result that they lent themselves more easily to political manipulation.

This context of embattled meaning enables us to understand why, for HCE's fellow citizens in I.iii, the monument fails to "support" "his word." Although the rumors they spread about him do not "warrant our certitude," "Nevertheless," we are told, "Madam's Toshowus [to show us, Tussaud] waxes largely more lifeliked . . . and our notional gullery [national gallery] is now completely complacent, an exegious monument, aerily perennious" (57:19-22). Just as Irish monuments and museums lent themselves to varying political aims and claims, so the "Willingdone" wax museum ("Madam's Toshowus waxes") and the Wellington Monument, while cited by HCE in defense of his innocence, have apparently been drafted by the public into service against him. As evidence, the wax museum and monument refute his claim that he has "won straight" in his struggle with the "hinndoo" Shimar Shin; as memorials, they represent his tyranny in the same way that the King Billy statue symbolized oppression for Catholic Ireland. The point is not that the Monument/Museyroom substantiates a particular interpretation of the "unfacts," nor that it is used to hoist HCE upon his own petard, but that it is accorded throughout the text the status of historical witness, called upon equally by HCE in his stuttering self-defense before the Cad as by his peers in their witch-hunt against him. The testimonial power of the Monument/Museyroom, however disputed, is rooted, I have been arguing, in Irish nationalist discourse and British imperial symbolism. The Monument/Museyroom, like ancient Irish ruins, derives its evidentiary value from its

supposed embodiment of history and its capacity to stir up collective memories of the past. The persuasiveness of its historical tale (concerning HCE, Ireland, or the world), like that told by Madame Tussaud's wax figures, stems additionally from the "life-like," iconic representations it "shows us."

The "complacency" with which HCE's peers greet the Monument/Museyroom's "life-liked" quality recalls O'Brien's blithe view of the restoration of Ireland's ruined shrines as a sign of the nation's cultural and political revival. Such a valorization of the capacity of a monument or museum to represent history and ensure its continuity with the present typifies the kind of Irish nationalist appeal to the past that Joyce, in a lecture he gave in April 1907, just one month after returning to Trieste from Rome, argued was invalid. "Ancient Ireland is dead . . . and on its gravestone has been placed the seal," Joyce declared to his audience, echoing the mortuary metaphor he applied to the Forum in the letter quoted at the start of this chapter.³²² The Monument/Museyroom threatens to collapse into the same "corpse"-like condition, identified as it is with a "tip" (8:8), or rubbish heap, as well as O'Connell's Glasnevin tomb. In fact, a parallel can be drawn between the Roman who "lives by exhibiting to travelers his grandmother's corpse" and Kate the Museyroom tour guide. Yet Joyce's declaration to his Triestine audience amounts less to a denial of the past's insistence in the nation's present than to an impatience with the obsession with the past typical of the late nineteenth-century Irish literary and cultural renaissance. Thus, while the Museyroom may amount to a

³²² James Joyce, "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages," in *Critical Writings*, eds. Richard Ellmann and Ellsworth Mason (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 173.

“mewseyruin,” as Joyce called it in his first draft of the *Wake*,³²³ it also helps to fertilize the Vichian renewal of history by preserving the debris of the past.³²⁴ A powerful instrument of the past’s survival in the present, it too survives, through its transformation from elevated structure to midden heap and back again. This participation in the regenerative process—distinct from monuments’ and museums’ usefulness in romantic attempts to locate Irish identity in the past and provide a glorious antecedent for repetition in the future—bears analogy with the work of memory in the continuous renegotiation of the present’s relationship to the past. As such, the recycling of/in the Monument/Museyroom, together with its testimonial value to both HCE and his peers, demonstrate its crucial role in the dialectic between forgetting and remembering that unfolds throughout the *Wake*.³²⁵

³²³ David Hayman, ed., *A First-Draft Version of Finnegans Wake* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 52.

³²⁴ The Museyroom’s role in paving the way for a *ricorso* in the *Wake* is demonstrated by the Museyroom motif’s recurrence between scenes of burial and scenes of recovery. The initial Museyroom passage (8:9-10:23), for example, follows the wake/burial scene involving HCE and his wife “Anny Ruiny” (6:13-8:8) and precedes the appearance of the “gnarlybird” (an avatar of ALP; 10:34) on the battlefield (for the dump is also the site of the Battle of the Boyne/Waterloo/Clontarf), collecting into her “nabsack” “all spoiled goods” (10:25-12:17), including the Letter that will exonerate HCE of his crimes and thus ensure a “truce for happiest childher everwere” (a happy nest for her, the children, and HCE; 11:15-16; italics mine). Similarly, the burial scene on pages 76:10-79:27, in which HCE/Finn is laid to rest in a “watery grave” (78:19), segues into a “nekropolitan” (80:1) passage (79:28-80:20) (for the dump/battlefield is also a graveyard) that conflates the concealment of the Letter with the hiding of manuscripts from the Vikings. This crucial safekeeping of the peace-bringing Letter is credited to Kate, who, true to her office of museum-keeper, “pulls a lane picture for us, in a dreariodreama setting, glowing and very vidual, of old dumplan as she nosed it” (79:28-30). To preserve fragments of the past is precisely one of the museum’s functions, so it is no coincidence that Kate’s safeguarding of the Letter and recovery of the Lane picture appear in a chapter (I.iv) modeled on the recourse of human institutions that nations experience in their retraversal of the three stages of Vichian history.

³²⁵ My assessment of the Monument/Museyroom’s memorial function benefits from Nicholas Andrew Miller’s distinction between memory, defined as “a process of continuous renegotiation of selfhood in relation to the past,” and history, which lays claim to “a comprehensive and final knowledge of the past or its preservation” (*Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* [New York: Cambridge University Press,

While a positive understanding of the Monument/Museyroom's memorial function in Joyce's novel is thus possible, the memory-work performed by the Monument/Museyroom has its limitations (its capacity to objectify history is disputed; the history it supposedly objectifies is under contention; this contention engulfs the site in violence and ends in HCE's conviction) and these limitations are surpassed, as it were, by ALP's Letter, that "first babe of reconciliation" (80:17) that eventually vindicates her husband. For the authority to represent history is ultimately conceded to the Letter rather than to the Monument/Museyroom. The Letter, not its vertical counterpart, emerges in the *Wake* as the true "sign of our ruru redemption" and the chief bearer of historical meaning, however unstable. This priority of the verbal over the monumental is reinforced in the ironic description quoted above of the Monument/Museyroom as an "exegious monument, aerily perennious" (from Horace's *Odes* III.30.1: "Exegi monumentum aere perennius," My work is done, the memorial more enduring than

2002], 8). The problem with monuments, he argues, is that while in practice they can be a space for the ongoing activity of memory-work, as sites for the reading of history they risk posing an "objectified version of history for which the physicality of the memorial itself stands." The result is often a "distancing [of] present rememberers from the past in which such objects accrue their historical meaning." I agree that by engraving the past in stone, memorial sites threaten to "en-grave" it, rendering viewers passive before the "historical Real" (especially museums that rely on an aesthetics of "you are there" illusion) and thus burying opportunities for the continuation of memory-work in the present (24, 25). HCE and his fellow citizens, I have been arguing, appeal to the Monument/Museyroom's historiographic certainty precisely in order to "lay to rest" further inquiry into Phoenix Park history. Yet the multiple appeals and conflicting claims by various parties demonstrate how the Monument/Museyroom, far from interring the past and extinguishing memory, kindles both in the same way that Irish memorial sites in the nineteenth century provoked continuing, and competing, interpretations of the past. My discussion of the Monument/Museyroom's mortuary associations touches on a second paradox identified by Miller at the heart of memorial sites. If by recovering the past, monuments and museums "re-cover" it, then by impeding memory's engagement with history, they reconfirm it as a recurrent nightmare (26). Viewed in this light, the "hinndoo" Shimar Shin's demolition of the Monument/Museyroom in an attempt to bury the imperial past only ensures the structure's phoenix-like restoration in the future. Another book of Joyce criticism that bears on the subject is Thomas C. Hofheinz, *Joyce and the Invention of Irish History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter three (69-105) of which analyzes the *Wake* in the context of Irish topological history.

brass³²⁶). In *The Great Code*, Northrop Frye observes that “the supremacy of the verbal over the monumental has something about it of the supremacy of life over death.”³²⁷ The contrast between the Letter’s fragile survival and redemptive force and the monument’s physical destruction and eroding authority “demonstrates,” as Michael North says in a very different context, “this supremacy while standing Horace’s boast on its head, suggesting that the text might serve the monument as a model of immortality.”³²⁸ By implying a parallel between the privileging of the Monument/Museyroom as a bearer of historical truth and the tradition of a monument’s capacity to emblemize immortality, Joyce points up the naïveté of modern faith in the power of monuments and museums to demonstrate and commemorate historical truth.

³²⁶ McHugh, 57.

³²⁷ (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 200.

³²⁸ *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

PART IV: MUSEUM DISCOURSE
IN POSTMODERNISM

Chapter 7: Teaching Multiliteracies through the Museum

In this busy, critical, and skeptical age, each man is seeking to know all things, and life is too short for many words. The eye is used more and more, the ear less and less, and in the use of the eye, descriptive writing is set aside for pictures, and pictures in their turn are replaced by actual objects. . . . Amid such tendencies, the museum, it would seem, should find a congenial place, for it is the most powerful and useful auxiliary of all systems of teaching by means of object lessons.

—G. Browne Goode, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, 1891

Taken from a report entitled *The Museums of the Future*, this passage reminds us that the museum was and continues to be one of the foremost sites for the transmission of knowledge by visual (and tactile) means.³²⁹ The identification of the museum with object-based pedagogy, and the era with a turn to the visual (and tactile), was common among the pioneering professionals who sought to modernize and popularize the museum as an instrument of education. In 1904, David Murray wrote in one of the earliest museum histories, “Blackboard illustrations . . . are all excellent in their way, but, as a rule, a lesson from the object itself is superior to one from a picture of the object.”³³⁰ In

³²⁹ (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 427.

³³⁰ *Museums: Their History and Their Use* (London: Routledge/Thoemes Press), 260.

1917, John Cotton Dana, Founding Director of the Newark Museum, called for the establishment in every community of an “institution of visual instruction.”³³¹ In 1930, Frederic Kenyon wrote that objects in a museum “are at once the material and the illustrations of written history, and to a generation becoming daily more dependent on the picture than on the written word their importance is increasing.”³³² Such museological awareness of the growing importance of the visual anticipates by a century W. J. T. Mitchell’s announcement that our era is marked by “the pictorial turn.”³³³ It also prefigures the recent expansion of our concept of writing to include visual as well as verbal texts. In fact, by classifying objects as texts—texts that “speak to the eyes”³³⁴—these early statements of museum theory broaden our notion of visual language, which rhetoric and composition textbooks tend to define only in terms of words, images, and other graphics.³³⁵ Without going so far as to advocate self-expression by means of

³³¹ *The New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press, 1917), 15.

³³² *Libraries and Museums* (London: E. Benn), 70.

³³³ *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11-24. The two diagnoses identify the same general phenomenon but on the basis of different evidence. Whereas Mitchell focuses on images and attributes the epistemological trend to the postwar spread of electronic technology that greatly facilitates the production, reproduction, and transmission of images, early museologists emphasized the object as well as the image and connected the trend to developments in archaeology, museology, and the technology of mechanical reproduction.

³³⁴ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 14.

³³⁵ See, for example, Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, Cynthia Selfe, *Picturing Texts* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 14.

things, as the professors of Laputa's school of languages do in *Gulliver's Travels*, these educators understood that visual meaning-making is both image- and object-based.³³⁶

Classical museum scholarship grasped, then, the expressive and pedagogical power of objects on display. But recent museum studies have challenged the traditional view of communication and education inside the museum. Objects do not speak by themselves, critics argue. Rather, exhibitors press them into speech through interpretive frameworks that "act to place objects within contexts of discourse that shape meaning."³³⁷ These frameworks are embodied in the exhibition apparatus, which consists of the accompanying texts, imagery, audio, and video, their installation (sequence, height, light, combinations) alongside the objects, the layout and design of the rooms, and the overall architecture of the museum. Objects do not present a series of "lessons," either. Instead, they interact with the exhibition apparatus to produce a "narrative" that unfolds within a broader social and institutional as well as discursive context. Other critics have exposed the collaborative nature of meaning-making in the museum. Whereas museum educators once defined museum education in terms of the linear transmission of neutral,

³³⁶ Of course, an object can also be an image (in the sense of a representation of another object), just as an image can also be an object (in the sense of a material thing that can be seen and touched). The point is that an object is a visual medium equally capable as an image of expressing a point of view. To avoid confusion, I am tempted to use the term *artifacts* to denote the contents of any museum's collection, but museologists' common use of *objects* as a general term leads me to prefer it instead. The term objects should henceforth be understood to mean the contents of any museum's collection. When referring specifically to such non-imagistic, three-dimensional objects as fossils or shields, I will use the term (*three-dimensional*) *objects*.

³³⁷ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation*, 9.

information-based knowledge,³³⁸ today they see it as an “activity that involves a constant negotiation between the stories given by museums and those brought by visitors.”³³⁹ Still other critics have drawn attention to the impact of emerging technology on the museum’s interpretation of objects to visitors. They argue that the entry of new media into museums (electronic imaging applications, wired and wireless networks, audio wands, tablets, PDAs) and of museums into new media (CD-ROMs, videodiscs, the Web), by spreading digital representations, has challenged the primacy of the object.³⁴⁰ In short, if the “old” museology defined the museum as an educational space, the “new” museology shows that it is also a complexly rhetorical one.

Since the New London Group’s call in 1996 for a pedagogy of “multiliteracies,” rhetoric and composition instructors have become aware of the need to incorporate multiple modes of communication into their pedagogy.³⁴¹ Since the “social turn” in the early 1990s, the importance of examining writing and texts as cultural phenomena has also gained general recognition.³⁴² As a result of these parallel developments, the conversation has moved from theoretical and curricular commitments to questions of

³³⁸ Ibid., xi.

³³⁹ Lisa C. Roberts, *From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 14.

³⁴⁰ See Katherine Jones-Garmil, *The Wired Museum: Emerging Technology and Changing Paradigms* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1997); and Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz, *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998).

³⁴¹ See “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,” *Harvard Educational Review* 66 (1996): 60-92.

³⁴² See Beth Daniell, “Narratives of Literacy: Connecting Composition to Culture,” *College Composition and Communication* 50.3 (Feb. 1999): 393-410.

feasibility. Instructors today face the challenge of integrating multiliteracies and social perspectives into an individual course or specific course activity. I contend that the museum—with its multiple means of communication, more or less hidden ideological stances, and reciprocal interpretive activity—is an excellent location for teaching students to understand multimodal ways of meaning-making in their technological, social, and institutional contexts. Museum-based pedagogy, as I envision it, does not posit yet another specialized form of literacy—“museum literacy”—that we must teach. Rather, it uses the museum as a means to teach five literacies that are already, or are fast becoming, central to our curriculum: verbal, visual, technological, critical, and social.

Toward that end, this pedagogy advocates three activities. The first consists of diverse instruction in the classroom, ranging from rhetoric to museology, from basic reading and writing skills to new and emerging media. The second activity occurs both in and out of the museum and involves drawing students’ attention to the rhetorical nature of museum exhibits—the ways in which their multimedial, multimodal texts communicate meaning, and powerful interests influence, and social agents negotiate, that meaning. Instructors teach students to analyze exhibits through the prism of traditional rhetorical categories: organization, purpose, medium, exhibitor, audience, context. In the third activity, students examine a local museum exhibit of their choice; argue the need to redesign it to better represent both the subject matter and the community’s needs; and realize their proposal in virtual form using multimedia technology. This museum-based approach to teaching multiliteracies is integrated, situated, and substantive. It is integrated, in that it combines rather than isolates instruction in these literacies

throughout the course or course activity. It is situated, for it locates these skills within the specific rhetorical and, therefore, social and material context of the museum. It is substantive, since it calls for the production as well as examination of multimodal forms of communication.

Museum-based pedagogy treats the museum as a means for teaching multiliteracies. Because these multiliteracies translate into competence at understanding communication in the museum, the pedagogy risks being confused with the teaching of museum literacy as an end in itself. Museum-based pedagogy does result in a kind of museum competence, but this is not its primary purpose. The goal of the following section is to distinguish this competence from the kinds of museum literacy that other pedagogies aim to produce. The next section elaborates on the museum's verbal, visual, technological, social, and ideological character and outlines strategies for teaching each of the five literacies through the museum. In the final section I demonstrate these strategies by drawing on my experiences in teaching units on museum rhetoric in two recent sophomore writing courses.

Museum Literacy vs. Museum-based Competence

In 1996 a college instructor began a discussion thread on museum literacy in an online forum dedicated to scholarly discussion of state and local history and museums:

As part of my freshman writing/American Studies course focus on place and region this coming year, I will be asking my students to visit at least one local museum. Part of the problem with going to museums, even for myself, is that I

suspect the vast majority of people don't know how to visit a museum. I admit that I often find myself wandering aimlessly, looking at things, but it's all very piecemeal and, at worst, shallow. I would really like to talk with my students about active engagement with the museum(s) they visit. Can anyone suggest resources that explain what I would call museum literacy or, more colloquially, "how to visit a museum"?³⁴³

A book entitled *How to Visit a Museum* (1985), by distinguished art photographer David Finn,³⁴⁴ can actually be found in the shops of many major museums in the English-speaking world. But its rhetoric of private meditation, communion, and enlightenment leaves it vulnerable to criticism that it divorces museum objects from their contexts of production and exhibition.³⁴⁵ Redolent of Finn's rhetoric, the instructor's tentative description also suggests a form of museum literacy defined by Carol Stapp as "competence in reading objects" and "drawing upon the museum's holdings and services purposely and independently." In a 1984 article in the *Journal of Museum Education*, Stapp argues that accessibility has been a goal since the beginnings of the modern museum, and that "systematic museum efforts to foster full and genuine public access"

³⁴³ Thomas K. Dean, "Museum Literacy," Humanities and Social Sciences Online, H-Net; available from <http://www.h-net.org/~local/archives/threads/literacy.html>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2005.

³⁴⁴ (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.).

³⁴⁵ See, for example, Donald Preziosi, "Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Framing of Modernity," *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 71-84.

must continue if visitors are to achieve full literacy.³⁴⁶ The recent shift from object- to visitor-centered approaches to layout and design and the rising demand for museum educators demonstrate that her call for the institution to promote literacy is indeed being heeded.³⁴⁷

But fresh developments in museum studies have made necessary a reexamination of Stapp's notion of museum literacy. For Stapp, the museum is an educational institution that makes knowledge more or less available to the visitor through the ordered display of objects and the accompanying educational apparatus. While the museum's primary mission continues to be that of educating the visitor, the information transmitted by the museum has come to be regarded as an interested and mediated narrative. A change in the meaning of education has accompanied this shift. As museum educator Lisa Roberts explains, "It may be that the term 'education' has become too restrictive and misleading for the museum setting. In fact, there has been a conscious shift toward the use of language like 'learning' (emphasizing the learner over the teacher), 'experience' (emphasizing the open-endedness of the outcome), and 'meaning-making' (emphasizing the act of interpretation)."³⁴⁸ Stapp's notion of the museum as an institution that delivers information leaves little room for the visitor's participation in the negotiation of meaning. Her claims that visual literacy combined with competence in tapping the museum's

³⁴⁶ "Defining Museum Literacy," *Patterns in Practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education*, 112-17 (Washington, D.C.: Museum Education Roundtable, 1992): 112, 115.

³⁴⁷ Roberts, *From Knowledge to Narrative*, 1-14.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

resources imply “genuine and full visitor access to the museum,” and that such access leads to “empower[ment],” miss the importance of social, critical, and technological factors and assume a view of literacy as a gate-keeping skill set.³⁴⁹

Museum-based pedagogy differs from museum education in that its primary goal is the teaching of multiliteracies—verbal, visual, technological, social, and critical—not museum literacy. These multiliteracies do amount to a competence at accessing the museum’s cultural and intellectual resources. But this competence is better understood as the ability to analyze the museum’s means of persuasion, the ways in which the museum makes arguments through and about the objects it displays. It rests on the premise that the selection, classification, and exhibition of objects are rhetorical acts. It “actively engage[s]” students not just with the museum’s contents but also with its immediate and broader contexts. In contrast to a gate-keeping skill set, it highlights the roles of race, class, and gender in determining students’ own social success. Museum-based competence is less concerned with “what to look for” in a museum (as Finn titles his first chapter and the instructor suggests) or how to look for it (as Stapp emphasizes) than with how such looking is constructed. It recognizes that the museum is a site of composition in a double sense: objects in an exhibit are composed in the form of a narrative about the world from which they are collected; by analyzing the exhibit’s rhetorical strategies,

³⁴⁹ Stapp, “Defining Museum Literacy,” 112. Anne Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola object to the metaphorical use of “literacy” on the grounds that the term conveys a “basic, neutral, context-less set of skills whose acquisition will bring the bearer economic and social goods and privileges.” This notion of literacy as a gate-keeping skill set ignores such determining factors as race, class, and gender in social, political, and economic improvement. The distinction between literate and illiterate serves to mask other crucial differences that separate the elite from the downtrodden (“Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?” *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*, eds. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe, 349-368 [Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999], 352).

students can dis-compose the narrative and then recompose it in the light of their own discourses and desires. It assumes that museums constitute “texts” whose meanings can be “read” and held up to scrutiny. But it also takes into account museums’ distinctive features, which Sharon MacDonald identifies as “their authoritative and legitimizing status, their roles as symbols of community, their ‘sitedness,’ the centrality of material culture, the durability and solidity of objects, the non-verbal nature of so many of their messages, and the fact that audiences literally enter and move with them.”³⁵⁰ Thus, rather than remaining objectified in the book, museum-based competence is rooted in forms of thinking and communicating—aural, visual, verbal, spatial, dialogic—appropriate to the sophisticated technology of representation that is the postmodern museum.³⁵¹

Verbal literacy

Mieke Bal’s narratological analysis of a Berlin museum’s exhibit of *David and Bathsheba* demonstrates how the verbal aspect of a display frames the visual experience. The caption to the painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder reads, “According to the biblical story, King David looks down upon Bathsheba, the wife of the soldier Uriah, while she is taking a bath. . . . This entanglement of a powerful man in guilt through the seduction of a woman counts as one of ‘women’s guiles.’ They show that even powerful men, heroes

³⁵⁰ Introduction, *Theorizing Museums*, eds. Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe, 1-18 (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 5.

³⁵¹ Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola argue that the use of “literacy” as a metaphor to express our relationships with and within new media constrains our sense of self and the world, our forms of analysis, and our belief in the authority of certain kinds of knowledge. This paper answers their call for an investigation of the kinds of literacy rooted in forms of thinking and communicating appropriate to new technology (“Blinded by the Letter”).

and wise men, are subject to the power of women.” The second part of the caption interprets the story as an example of “women’s guiles”—a misogynistic interpretation common in Cranach’s time and unsubstantiated by the biblical record. The problem, Bal argues, is that the caption neither historicizes this interpretation nor clarifies its relation to Cranach’s work. Most unsettlingly, it employs a present verbal tense. “Thus the text not only suggests a political and ideological interpretation that one may want to question, but it universalizes it as the sole possible, eternally valid one, based on the self-evidence of ‘women’s guiles.’” This caption is not inevitable, and Bal contrasts it with the caption to another *Bathsheba* in the museum, this one painted by Sebastiano Ricci: “At the edge of a spring of a Renaissance villa sits Bathsheba . . . A woman (on the left) holds the letter from King David . . . David invites her to his house and makes her his lover. He sends her husband to the battlefield, where he dies (2 Sam. 11).” According to Bal, “Through the simple use of a pointer (the caption), one is led to look at the picture. In reading the descriptive words, one is enticed to check their referential adequacy in the image. One is also made aware of the anachronistic setting, which . . . emphasizes the representational, hence fictional, status of what you see.”³⁵²

Even a plain caption, one that merely identifies an artwork’s title, maker, date, and medium, supplies thematic, biographical, historical, and technological contexts in which to understand the work. Captions are not the only verbal texts that mediate the museum’s interpretation of objects to visitors. A brochure directs what visitors see by

³⁵² “On Grouping: The Caravaggio Corner,” *Looking in: The Art of Viewing*, intro. Norman Bryson, 161-90 (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), 168, 169, 170.

providing a floor plan or list of exhibits, suggesting an itinerary, or identifying the most important objects in a collection. Wall text in an art museum affects how visitors understand what they see by explaining, for example, the period style to which the works belong. A catalogue presents an argument about the meaning of an exhibit as a whole. Verbal communication in the museum can be oral as well as graphic. An audio loop offers information to the ear while allowing the visitor simultaneously to absorb data through the eye. This device can be especially effective in a history museum, where, for example, the oral performance of a diary entry facilitates the visitor's immersion in a period setting. Audio and live tours also allow dual-channel processing, with the difference that the visitor can control the flow of information or ask the docent questions.

Thus teaching verbal literacy through the museum means drawing students' attention to the verbal rhetoric of museum displays. This pedagogy analyzes how words interact with objects and their installation to form persuasive arguments. It focuses on the claims that verbal texts make and how they are supported. It looks at the agency of exhibitors (curators, educators, and administrators) in producing the exhibit's meaning. It ponders their goal in mounting the exhibit. It considers the audience's role in shaping the exhibit's meaning: who the audience is, what it is assumed to know or believe, whether or not it is encouraged to interact with the exhibit and, more broadly, to collaborate in making its meaning. It examines the exhibit's social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. It asks students to locate other verbal texts that deal with the exhibit's subject and to reflect on how the texts' arguments differ from those made in the exhibit.

Visual Literacy

In their anthropological analysis of the Universal Survey Museum, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach argue that the installation, layout of rooms, and sequence of collections create “an experience that resembles traditional religious experiences. By performing the ritual of walking through the museum, the visitor is prompted to enact and thereby to internalize the values and beliefs written into the architectural script.” These values and beliefs “equate state authority with the idea of civilization.”³⁵³ Donna Haraway has also looked at how visual elements communicate meaning inside the museum. Her study of the American Museum of Natural History combines a textualist approach with an investigation of the museum’s social, historical, and institutional contexts. She argues that behind the mounted animals, bronze sculptures, and photographs in the Akeley African Hall—intended by their maker to provide the visitor with an experience of “nature at its moment of highest perfection”—lies a history of racism, sexism, and classism in early twentieth-century America.³⁵⁴ In a narratological analysis of the same museum, Bal claims that the monumentality of its architecture and scope “suggests the primary meaning of the museum inherited from *its* history: comprehensive collecting as an activity within colonialism.”³⁵⁵

³⁵³ “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3.4 (December 1980): 450-51.

³⁵⁴ “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936,” *Social Text*, 20-64, 11 (Winter 1984-1985): 21.

³⁵⁵ “On Show: Inside the Ethnographic Museum, *Looking in: The Art of Viewing*, introd. Norman Bryson, 117-60 (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), 121.

Teaching visual literacy through the museum thus means stressing the importance of the material context in determining an object's meaning: display technology (such as walls, vitrines, dioramas, taxidermy, photography, and video), installation (sequence, height, light, combinations), layout and design, overall architecture. This pedagogy analyzes how objects interact with their physical setting to form persuasive arguments that are primarily visual. It examines these arguments' style, for example, the grandeur of a museum's classical architecture. It looks at their organization and considers whether the pathway through the exhibit is linear or multiple, whether the collection is spread over many rooms or confined to one, whether the objects on display are crowded or spaced, enclosed (by a vitrine) or exposed, arranged according to a discernible or an indiscernible criterion. It asks if the museum draws attention to, or away from, the mediating role of the exhibition apparatus.

Technological literacy

Since the mid-1990s, the Web has become the museum's primary means of delivering information and databasing collections. Hundreds of museums have established a presence on the Web, offering resources ranging from basic information regarding museum hours and special exhibits to interactive learning games, virtual reality tours, and searchable imagebases. In his introduction to *The Wired Museum: Emerging Technology and Changing Paradigms* (1997), Maxwell Anderson welcomes the benefits of online access to a museum's holdings, citing the provision of varying levels of interpretive material, the ability to magnify and manipulate high-resolution images, and

the decentralization of expertise. Online access allows the public to prepare for their visit to the physical site by first encountering images and materials on the Web. As he puts it, “The visit to a museum would be the culmination of a learning process and the point of departure for real enrichment.”³⁵⁶

Contrary to fears that simulacra cheapen the originals, Anderson argues that digital encounters stimulate curiosity about the “real” objects and “cannot provide the *visceral thrill* of being in the presence of the original.”³⁵⁷ Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz, editors of *The Virtual and The Real: Media in the Museum* (1998), a collection of essays that examines the role of high technology in the museum’s mediation of objects to visitors, agree. They stress the dual need to subordinate media to the particular goals of an exhibit and to integrate technology “seamlessly” into the overall layout and design. Paradoxically, they argue, new media facilitates, rather than obstructs, the direct encounter between visitors and objects.³⁵⁸ But, while the invisibility of technology is essential to the visitor’s direct experience of the object, its visibility is necessary to understanding the ways that technology shapes the museum’s interpretation. Thomas

³⁵⁶ Ed. Katherine Jones-Garmil, 1-32 (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1997), 18. With ARTscape (<http://www.pem.org/artscape>), the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts reverses this privileging of onsite over online museum visits. Onsite visitors bookmark objects with an audio wand, dock the wand in a kiosk at the end of their visit, then retrieve the breadcrumbs of their visit online, either at the museum or at home. The ARTscape online collection allows them to retrace their steps in the museum, share their visit with others, or find new connections to related objects in the ARTscape online collection (Brad Johnson, “Beyond On-line Collections: Putting Objects to Work,” *Museums and the Web* 2004; available from <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2004/papers/johnson/johnson.html>; Internet; accessed 26 March 2006).

³⁵⁷ Introduction, 22.

³⁵⁸ (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998).

herself acknowledges this shaping power—“We change the way that audiences read an image when we crop it, when we render it to a generic aspect ratio or a constant luminance”—although she does not recognize the existence of a tension.³⁵⁹

Another technological development with important consequences for meaning-making is the museum’s recent adaptation of mobile, wireless technology within an onsite touring context. Like Web technologies, audio wands, tablets, and PDAs offer visitors greater access to the intellectual and cultural resources of the museum. Museum educators cite two other benefits. Mobile, wireless technologies engage visitors with interactive learning that promotes careful looking and critical thinking. They have the potential to enhance visitor communication with the museum and dialogue with other visitors.³⁶⁰

By its earliest and most basic definition, technological literacy means possessing a working knowledge of computer programs such as word-processing applications, Web site-building tools, and graphic illustration software. Teaching technological literacy through the museum, however, strives to advance students beyond knowledge of software applications. This pedagogy reveals the ways that technology increasingly mediates the museum’s interpretation of objects to visitors. It asks how technology facilitates, alters, challenges, or redefines visitors’ encounter with the museum object. It locates

³⁵⁹ “Mediated Realities: A Media Perspective,” *The Virtual and the Real: Media in the Museum*, eds. Selma Thomas and Ann Mintz, 1-17 (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998), 17.

³⁶⁰ Anne Manning and Glenda Sims, “The Blanton iTour—An Interactive Handheld Museum Guide Experiment,” *Museums and the Web 2004*; available from <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2004/papers/manning/manning.html>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2005.

technology on the spectrum between hypermediacy and transparency, that is, between the multiplication of media and the erasure of all traces of mediation.³⁶¹ It considers whether new media such as virtual reality tours and interactive learning games offer users a more immersive experience, in which they “act within a world and experience it from the inside,” or a more interactive experience, in which they “choose a world, more or less blindly, out of many alternatives,” whose interest “lies in the multiplicity of paths, not in any particular development.”³⁶² It looks at how technology affects the user’s relationship to fellow museum-goers. It examines whether the technology draws attention to, or away from, the museum object.³⁶³

Social Literacy

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has shown that the modern museum understood learning in the museum as the “authoritative linear communication” of objective, information-based knowledge to the visitor. In contrast, the “post-museum,” as she calls the model that has emerged in the past several decades, “position[s] the visitor/learner as both active and politicized in the construction of their own relevant viewpoints.”³⁶⁴ Thus museum

³⁶¹ For more on what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call “the double logic of remediation,” see *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

³⁶² Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 20.

³⁶³ For a compositionist’s perspective on the functional, critical, and rhetorical dimensions of computer literacy, see Stuart Selber, *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

³⁶⁴ *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, xi.

educators today view meaning not as resident in the object, transmissible directly from exhibitors to visitors, but as the product of “a constant negotiation between the stories given by museums and those brought by visitors.”³⁶⁵ Yet the visitors’ role in the construction of meaning is not always acknowledged by critics like Bal. According to MacDonald, semiotic analyses of museum exhibits tend to assume that museums’ textual meanings are fixed. “In many cases the analyst’s ‘reading’ is not acknowledged as a particular and positioned act of interpretation . . . but is presented as consonant with both the motives of exhibitors and the messages picked up by visitors. . . . It supposes both too clear-cut a conscious manipulation by those involved in creating exhibits and too passive and unitary a public.” A social perspective on meaning-making in the museum must, therefore, take into account the analyst’s own discourses and desires, visitors’ interpretive agency, and, ideally, what Macdonald calls the “often competing agendas involved in exhibition-making, the ‘messiness’ of the process itself.”³⁶⁶ Interactions among visitors, a key element of the museum-going experience, also form an important ingredient of the interpretive process.

Teaching social literacy through the museum thus means calling students’ attention to the collaborative nature of meaning-making in the museum. This pedagogy looks at the exhibitors’ agency in producing the exhibit’s meaning. It ponders their goal in mounting the exhibit. It encourages students to contact the exhibitors in order to discuss the exhibition-making process. It considers the audience’s role in shaping the

³⁶⁵ *From Knowledge to Narrative*, 14.

³⁶⁶ Introduction, 5.

exhibit's meaning: who the audience is, what it is assumed to know or believe, and whether or not it is encouraged to interact with the exhibit and, more broadly, to collaborate in making its meaning. It poses questions about museum-goers: Are they alone or in groups? If they are in groups, are they talking? If so, what are they talking about? It examines the exhibit's social, cultural, political, and historical contexts. It considers whether the museum offers a tour, whether it is self-guided (audio) or led by docents, and whether it (or the exhibit itself) represents multiple viewpoints.

Critical Literacy

The new museology has revealed the museum to be an ideologically active space, one that often reflects and reinforces existing power relations. In their influential analysis of the class-based foundations of taste, French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel argued that far from democratizing culture, the museum's "real function" "is to reinforce among some people the feeling of belonging and among others the feeling of exclusion."³⁶⁷ Other critics have associated the museum with racism and sexism as well as classism,³⁶⁸ with imperialism and colonialism,³⁶⁹ and with mechanisms of social control.³⁷⁰ These ideological critiques usually pursue one of two approaches. The first,

³⁶⁷ With Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 112.

³⁶⁸ See Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text* 11 (Winter 1984-1985): 20-64,

³⁶⁹ See Bal, "On Show: Inside the Ethnographic Museum."

³⁷⁰ See Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

drawing on semiotics, sees the museum as a text.³⁷¹ It analyzes the classifications, analogies, and juxtapositions of museum displays in order to reveal the cultural assumptions and political motivations that they may contain. The second approach, inspired by Foucault, views the museum as a discursive space.³⁷² It studies the museum in its social and institutional contexts. Critics have faulted these approaches for assuming that museums are sites for the unproblematic reflection or operation of dominant ideological interests.³⁷³ But most agree that museums should lay bare the interests and assumptions governing their mediation of objects to visitors. The more visitors become aware of the constructed nature of museum exhibits, they argue, the more actively they will use the museum's interpretation to fashion their own.

Teaching critical literacy through the museum thus means helping students to recognize and consider ideological stances and power structures implicit in museum displays. It examines the concerns of all stakeholders in the museum exhibit, including exhibitors, corporate sponsors, the board of trustees, city officials, the makers of the objects on display, the social groups represented in the display, museum patrons, and local communities. It calls for students to acknowledge their analysis of an exhibit as a particular and positioned act of interpretation. It encourages students to share the results of their investigation with museum officials.

³⁷¹ See Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum"; and Bal, "On Grouping."

³⁷² See Sherman and Rogoff, *Museum Culture*; and Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

³⁷³ See Macdonald, Introduction; and Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-26.

From Theory to Pedagogy

This section demonstrates museum-based pedagogy by drawing on my experiences in teaching units on museum rhetoric in two recent undergraduate courses. Both course units assumed that the discovery and employment of the museum's means of persuasion develop competence at analyzing and using forms of communication common to other spaces and texts. As a class we sought to answer the following questions: What do museums say? How do they say it? What do they not say? Why does it matter?

The Fall 2002 unit's museum-based pedagogy proceeded through three stages. The first centered on reading key statements of museum theory.³⁷⁴ Discussion of the poetics and politics of museum display resonated with and enriched the knowledge of rhetoric and composition that students had acquired in previous units. Students had little difficulty making connections between, for example, the ordering of objects and the canon of arrangement; the museum's authority to produce knowledge and a speaker's credibility on a given subject; visitor-centered approaches to layout and design and the audience's role in determining the words and subject matter of a text; calls for curators to expose the social and material conditions of exhibits and students' need to contextualize their writing and the concerns of all stakeholders interested in their argument.

³⁷⁴ Required and suggested readings included the following essays from *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991): Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp, "Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism," (1-10); Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" (25-32); and "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," Susan Vogel (191-204).

The unit continued with a brief rhetorical analysis of a local museum of the student's choice. The essay assignment required students to describe the site and its setting (media, installation, layout and design, architecture, sources of funding, purpose of exhibit, intended audiences); justify the need for an analysis of the museum by making a claim about its significance; analyze the museum's rhetorical strategies, such as its goal, main points or claims, use of supporting evidence and data, spatial arrangements, appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos; and evaluate how well these strategies work for persuading audiences.

The last stage of the unit focused on a group multimedia project consisting of an essay and a MOO (multi-user domain, object-oriented) space. The MOO is a computer program that allows people from all over the world to connect via the Internet to a shared world of rooms and other objects, and to interact with each other and this world in real time. We used an enCore MOO, hosted by the Computer Writing and Research Lab. Unlike most MOOs, which only offer a text-based experience, the enCore MOO featured an interface that combines both images and text. The MOO is not the only software program that lends itself to museum (re)design projects. Web site-building applications like Macromedia Dreamweaver can also serve the purpose. In fact, enCore MOO's iconic window differs little from a standard webpage and allows users to build Web rooms with HTML. But MOOs do have several affordances not available on conventional Web sites. They offer users the sensation of moving through space. Whereas Web sites are a collection of pages featuring information organized by a Web designer according to topics and subject headings, MOOs are a collection of rooms and

other objects created by users and forming a virtual world. enCore MOO rooms and other objects bear second-person descriptions addressed to users, who navigate by clicking on the arrow keys or giving instructions in the textual window like “up,” “down,” “left,” “right.” The feeling of “being there” is enhanced by the presence of other people in the MOO with whom users can talk and even record their conversations. More than any other feature, this textual dimension equips the MOO for museum (re)design projects, as students can assume the roles of different stakeholders and debate the merits of the virtual museum while “onsite.”³⁷⁵

The group multimedia project required students to recreate or redesign exhibits from the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in the MOO. Groups recreating exhibits wrote evaluative essays arguing that the museum exhibits offer a fair and balanced representation of a particular cluster of issues and events. Groups redesigning exhibits wrote proposal essays arguing that the museum should rearrange its exhibits to represent the same issues and events more evenly.³⁷⁶ All groups wrote essays on what

³⁷⁵ Because the MOO offers a textual environment and facilitates student role-playing, instructors often concentrate on the MOO’s usefulness in constructing a virtual setting suitable to teaching composition and considering the multiple sides of a debate from a variety of subject positions. But enCore MOO’s visual orientation toward objects and spatial orientation toward rooms also lend the program to student analysis of museum rhetoric through the creation and organization of virtual objects in a MOO space analogous to an exhibit space. For more on the use and administration of the MOO as a virtual education community, see Cynthia Haynes and Jan Rune Holmevik, eds., *High Wired: On the Design, Use, and Theory of Educational MOOs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); and Jan Rune Holmevik and Cynthia Haynes, *MOOniversity: A Student's Guide to Online Learning Environments* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).

³⁷⁶ The idea of critiquing the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum came from a magazine article in which a University of Texas student expressed her skepticism as to whose story was being told in the exhibits (Sylvia Herrera, “Whose Story,” *The Penguin Handbook*, Pearson Longman; available from http://wps.ablongman.com/long_faigley_penguinhb_1/0,7325,506863-,00.html; Internet; accessed 4 March 2004).

they constructed in the MOO. The goal of the project was twofold: to reveal how both historical events and the museum's representation of those events lend themselves to multiple interpretations and to expose the museum's means of persuasion. The first goal was accomplished by adopting the position of devil's advocate in an essay; the second by adapting the museum's representational practices to the MOO.

Two groups dealt with the first floor of the museum, paying close attention to the exhibit, "Westward Expansion," and within it the installations, "Comanche Tipi Theater," "Agents Among the Indians," "Broken Promises," and "The Treaty of Medicine Lodge, 1867." Group 1, assuming the role of defender of the museum, argued in an essay that the exhibit satisfactorily represents Indian and settler perspectives on these issues and events. Group 2 conversely argued that the exhibit does not adequately reflect multiple perspectives on its subject. Groups 3 and 4 focused on the second floor of the museum, particularly the exhibits "Building the Lone Star Identity" and "A Separate Identity." Group 3 argued that the exhibits represent the Mexican point of view on the Texas Revolution of 1836. Group 4 argued, on the contrary, that the exhibits do not fully take into account the facts that Texas belonged to Mexico and that the rebels were Mexican citizens. Groups 5 and 6 examined the third-floor exhibit, "Creating Opportunity," and debated whether it sufficiently represented the post-bellum denial of opportunity to African-Americans. All groups supported their argument with a detailed analysis of the exhibits, their multiple media, and their modes of installation. Critics of the museum additionally proposed to redesign the exhibits and described in detail the form and content that these new exhibits should take. Both groups addressed the other's arguments

in their essays. Defenders of the museum recreated in the MOO the exhibits they evaluated in their essays. Critics of the museum designed in the MOO the exhibits they proposed in their essays. Each group constructed about ten MOO rooms and, within these rooms, as many objects as they found necessary to persuade their audience. Each room and object bore a description mimicking captions and wall text.

A lone student, Chief Curator, wrote and carried out a proposal to redesign the museum's architecture with greater self-consciousness about the institution's rhetorical goals. In his essay he argued that because the museum does not provide visitors with the proposals and guidelines that informed its creation, "visitors have no idea what assumptions were made when planning out the museum." The "conceal[ment]" of these assumptions makes it easier for visitors to "believe" the museum's "particular version of history." He also faulted the institution for failing to offer visitors resources for further study. "Visitors are only shown what the curator chooses, presenting each exhibit as the 'end all be all' representation of history." In building the alternative MOOseum, the student curator reduced the number of floors from three to two and located on the first floor an Archive containing the original student proposals for creating the alternative MOOseum as well as links to research materials on the state's history. These changes, he argued, encouraged visitors to continue their historical interest in Texas and furnished them with a "look into the motivations and goals of the creators of the [alternative] museum." According to the curator's plan, three escalators lead up to three different exhibits on the second floor. After arriving on the second floor, visitors follow a walled path shaped like a horse shoe through the corresponding exhibit. One wall shows one

point of view on the featured historical era (for example, the settlers' perspective on "Westward Expansion"). The other wall focuses on the opposing party's viewpoint (for example, the Indians'). In the words of the curator, "As with every story, there are two sides, and so it will be for every main section." Once visitors reach the end of the horse shoe they ride an escalator back down to the archives, where they are free to pursue further study or consult the founding documents. Visitors can repeat this process for all three exhibits.

The MOO exhibit on "Creating Opportunity" offers a good example of how students filled in what they considered to be gaps in the museum's representation of the issue. According to Group 6, while the museum exhibit mentions Black Codes, it "does not go into detail" about how they denied freed slaves "job opportunities and many civil rights." Nor does the exhibit refer to the Codes by their popular name, Jim Crow laws—a verbal decision that could keep some visitors from fully appreciating the injustice of the Codes. The students, therefore, proposed and implemented the addition of a wall text providing greater information on Jim Crow laws and an image illustrating the discrimination faced by African Americans under these laws (see Figure 1). The students also found problems with the museum's installation on "Cotton," which "shows African Americans working in the cotton fields" but fails to depict "how Jim Crow laws kept them from owning land and working for themselves." In response, they built an installation in the MOO on "How Opportunities Were Created" (see Figure 2). The aim was to "represent . . . how African and Anglo American lives differed" during this time.

The Spring 2003 course unit on museum rhetoric progressed through the same three

stages but featured a different multimedia group project. Groups of students proposed in an essay the establishment of a museum of their choice and then created the museum in the MOO. The goal of the “MOOseum District” project was to reveal the rhetorical nature of museums by making the kinds of decisions that museum founders and professionals make. The essay required students to justify the construction of their museum by arguing that it satisfies a local or national need; describe their museum’s site and setting and identify its rhetorical strategies (as in the rhetorical analysis assignment discussed above); and anticipate possible rebuttals from specific communities.

One group of students created the Texas Hispanic Culture MOOseum, arguing that although “Hispanic culture is the cornerstone of much of Texas’ development and promises to change the course of its future, . . . this part of society is all too often ignored by other cultures and misunderstood by many within the culture.” Their MOOseum featured exhibits on “Texas as a Part of Mexico,” the “War of Independence,” “Post-War Effects on Hispanics,” “Hispanic Art,” and “Hispanic Culture,” a brochure (their essay) in which the students laid out their rationale for founding the museum and designing the exhibits, and a computer station where visitors were encouraged to explore different perspectives on the subject. The “Hispanic Culture” exhibit included an installation on “Hispanic Customs” explaining the nature of such typical celebrations as the Cinco de Mayo, the *quinceañera*, and the Día de los Muertos (see Figure 3). The students designed the exhibit to combat the “stereotypes” they argued were responsible for the “glass ceiling” faced by many Hispanics. According to the group, displaying the

“unique” “wisdom” and beauty” of Hispanic culture will “educate” Hispanics and non-Hispanics alike and “open” them to another set of practices and beliefs.

In a 2002 article in *College Composition and Communication*, Diana George showed how assignments asking for visual analysis, long a part of writing instruction in this country, have tended to underestimate the force of visual rhetoric.³⁷⁷ Assignments calling for museum analysis have historically been rare in composition pedagogy, but the increasing emphasis on multiliteracies makes museum-based pedagogy more relevant than ever. Indeed, recent rhetoric and composition textbooks are beginning to use the museum as a site for teaching visual literacy. For example, *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition* (2004) contains an activity that asks students to assemble a photography exhibit (either on a webpage or poster boards) to express a visual argument about a social issue.³⁷⁸ The online support tool for *Picturing Texts* (2004), the first writing textbook that teaches how to compose visual texts as well as how to read them,³⁷⁹ features an assignment that asks students to analyze a museum Web site using rhetorical concepts presented in the book.³⁸⁰ The first assignment acknowledges the persuasive character of museum exhibits but does not call

³⁷⁷ “From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing,” 54:1 (September 2002): 11-37.

³⁷⁸ Anne Frances Wysocki, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc, (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press), 94-100.

³⁷⁹ Lester Faigley, Diana George, Anna Palchik, and Cynthia Selfe (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), xii-xiii.

³⁸⁰ “Questions for Analysis”; available from <http://www.picturingtexts.com/chapters/ch1/welcome.asp>; Internet; accessed 24 March 2006.

students' attention to the larger rhetorical fabric of the institution. Nor does it involve an onsite visit to one. The second assignment requires a visit but to a virtual rather than physical museum. Thus, while rhetoric and composition textbooks demonstrate growing awareness of the power of the museum's visual rhetoric, they have yet to grasp the museum's usefulness as a site for teaching multiliteracies. Such recognition will come only when rhetoric and composition studies learns to appreciate the rhetorical value inherent in the ordered display of (three-dimensional) objects.

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Trying to connect to
 www.cwrl.utexas.edu on port 9999
 *** Connected ***
 You view The Silver Sea MOO...

Obvious exits: [A sunny flagstone path] to Public Pool,
 [wrought-iron gates] to Fount of Knowledge, [laurel-lined path] to The River Alph,
 [busy_street] to The Springs, [imposing stone steps] to The Reservoir,
 [question_mark] to Well of Information
 Last connected Tue Mar 29 15:45:23 2005 CST from
 dhcp-128-83-211-43.cwrl.utexas.edu
 ATTENTION: There are new news items to read! Type 'news' for a summary.
 ##\$#mcp version: 2.1 to: 2.1

☒ normal
☐ say
☐ emote

Examples of Jim Crow Laws

Jim Crow Laws were laws used to suppress African-Americans after they were granted their freedom through the Emancipation Proclamation. They imposed severe restrictions on freed slaves such as prohibiting their right to vote, forbidding them to sit on juries, limiting their right to testify against white men, carrying weapons in public places, and working certain occupations. Below are some examples of Jim Crow laws in Texas:

Railroads: The conductor of each passenger train is authorized and required to assign each passenger to the car or the division of the car, when it is divided by a partition, designated for the race to which such passenger belongs.

Figure 1

about
 help
 xpress
 look
 who
 search
 my stuff
 options
 mail
 objects
 program
 wizard
 quit

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Last connected Tue Mar 29 14:50:03 2005 CST from dhcp-128-83-209-236.en.utexas.edu
ATTENTION: There are new news items to read! Type 'news' for a summary.
##\$#mcp version: 2.1 to: 2.1

☒ normal
☐ say
☐ emote

How Opportunity Was Created

Cotton farming was a large part of Texas's income. Sharecropping was used to produce the cotton. Through this system, Anglo-Americans prospered while the African-Americans did most of the work. African-Americans were unable to buy land because of lack of money and discrimination through the Jim Crow Laws. This forced them to be sharecroppers. By the end of the cotton season, sharecroppers were usually in debt due to unfair splitting of the crop.

Figure 2

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Trying to connect to
www.cwrl.utexas.edu on port 9999
*** Connected ***
You view The Silver Sea MOO...

Obvious exits: [A sunny flagstone path] to Public Pool, [wrought-iron gates] to Fount of Knowledge, [laurel-lined path] to The River Alph, [busy_street] to The Springs, [imposing stone steps] to The Reservoir, [question_mark] to Well of Information
Last connected Tue Mar 29 14:50:03 2005 CST from dhcp-128-83-209-236.en.utexas.edu
ATTENTION: There are new news items to read! Type 'news' for a summary.
#\$#mcp version: 2.1 to: 2.1

☒ normal
 ☐ say
 ☐ emote

Hispanic Customs

Certain Holidays are part of Hispanic Culture. Cinco de Mayo is the celebration of Mexico's Independence from French Intervention in Mexico in 1862. This holiday is celebrated on May 5. The dancers above are part of a celebration or "fiesta."

When girls turn fifteen they have a birthday party called a quinceanera. The Hispanic society sees this party as the time when a girl becomes a woman. At the quinceanera there could also be dancers like these.

The holiday El Dia de los Muertes, or Day of the Dead, involves bringing food to the graveyard and placing the food on the graves. This holiday is similar to Halloween, and is celebrated on November 2.

Figure 3

Conclusion

In his exegesis of ALP's Letter in *Finnegans Wake*, Professor Jones says, "Here let a few artifacts [facts] fend in their own favour" (110:1).³⁸¹ The pun suggests an equivalence between "artifacts" and "facts," as if artifacts could unequivocally attest to facts, "fend" for themselves, speak on their own. The professor continues his parodic interpretation of the cryptic text (a metaphor for the *Wake* itself) in typically opaque fashion; the facts he pretends to reveal hardly emerge from his welter of verbiage. In fact, the facts he proclaims are as contradictory as his language is polysemic. This fruitless appeal to supposedly transparent evidence recalls HCE's equally futile recruitment of the Monument/Museyroom in "greater support of his word" (36:7-8), a recruitment in turn analogous to contested nineteenth-century Irish nationalist enlistments of archaeological zones and artifacts in the service of historical and political claims. HCE's self-defense against the Cad fails because the evidence he cites is not self-evident *as* evidence. Contrary to HCE's presumption, the Monument/Museyroom does not offer an objectified version of his history for which the physicality of the artifact itself stands. Instead, the Monument/Museyroom's message is vigorously debated by HCE's fellow citizens, who, hoisting HCE upon his own petard, use his chosen evidence to convict him. The monumental being no more diaphanous than the verbal, the artifact is as much an "unfact" (57:16) as a "fact."

³⁸¹ New York: Penguin, 1976.

That objects do not speak by themselves; that, rather, they are made to speak by social agents (such as HCE) who use them to substantiate their claims (“fend in their own favour”); and that the relationship between objects and their messages is a slippery one is the triple insight of modernists such as James Joyce. This insight paved the way for the “new” museology and, more broadly, for what I call the postmodern turn to the object. This liberation of objects from the onus of having to signify, to function as commodities, or to serve some useful purpose represents a rupture with modernity’s understanding of the monument as a document. In *The Oriental Renaissance*, Raymond Schwab traces the moment when artifacts were first treated as records. According to Schwab, archaeology’s advent at the turn of the nineteenth century enhanced the authority and efficacy of history by supplying a new kind of evidence. As a result of excavation and decoding, missions and museums, material artifacts came alive and began to speak of the past in which they originated. This newfound eloquence transformed monuments into historical data on a par with documents, “which ceased to reign solely and absolutely.” Material artifacts were used to verify written documents. “The object was matched against the text, the inscription against the narrative, and the writ of the king against the king’s legend.”³⁸²

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault identifies a second change in the object’s status with the disciplinary transformation of history in terms of archaeology, which he links to a broader transition from the modern to the postmodern episteme.

³⁸² Trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (NY: Columbia University Press, 1984), 388-89.

According to this mutation, material artifacts no longer achieve meaning through the decipherment of their message. As he puts it in the introduction:

To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to “memorize” the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. . . . There was a time when archaeology . . . aspired to the condition of history, and attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument.³⁸³

In the modern episteme (about which Schwab is writing), archaeology turned mute, opaque monuments into fluent, transparent documents. In the postmodern episteme (within and about which Foucault is writing), history converts written documents into monuments. But these monuments are no more the silent artifacts of the premodern episteme than they are the speaking artifacts of the modern one. Rather, they represent “discourse in its own volume”: opaque, non-allegorical, and non-referential.³⁸⁴ These monuments derive their meaning not from any hidden messages but from their underlying habits of thought. Foucault’s own archaeology provides an account of these discursive monuments in their positivity and the epistemological assumptions that give them their

³⁸³ Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 7.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 138-39.

unity. In breaking with history, then, Foucault repudiates the notion of the object as referential evidence. In embracing archaeology, he endorses a description of the object in its own terms, apart from any historical message.

These two changes in the character of the object (from opacity to transparency, from transparency to positivity) parallel the emergence of museology (late eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries) and its transformation into the “new” museology of recent decades. At the turn of the twentieth century, the museum led institutions in stressing the learning benefits of visual (and tactile) instruction. The identification of the museum with object-based pedagogy, and the era with a turn to the visual (and tactile), was common among the pioneering museum professionals who sought to modernize and popularize the institution as an instrument of education. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill argues that the communication and learning theory of the modern museum positions “the visitor/learner as passive,” understands “knowledge to be objective and information-based,” and sees “authoritative linear communication” as one of its main purposes. In contrast, the “post-museum” “position[s] the visitor/learner as both active and politicized in the construction of their own relevant viewpoints.”³⁸⁵ Lisa Roberts characterizes the paradigm shift in museology as one from knowledge to narrative. Instead of passively receiving the information transmitted by the museum, visitors now use the museum’s interpretation to fashion their own.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), xi.

³⁸⁶ *From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

Visitors' agency in making and remaking a museum object's meaning represents a liberation of the object from its service to such grand schemes or metanarratives as the ones imposed on Greek and Roman artifacts in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. Manifest in history and philosophy (Foucault, Walter Benjamin, who found a revolutionary usefulness in objects' uselessness for capitalism) and museology (classic and "new"), the postmodern turn to the object is also evident in art history: the historical and neo-avant gardes dissolved the artwork's museum-enforced aura and made it more responsive to social life. It is similarly apparent in anthropology: in his introduction to *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986), Arjun Appadurai analyzes the circulation of commodities in social life to understand how commodities acquire value. His methodological attention to the things themselves continues Benjamin's approach to tracing the afterlife of objects.³⁸⁷ It is likewise visible in English studies: the Modern Language Association's 2006 convention features a panel entitled "Do Objects Die?" In the words of its organizer, the panel "addresses areas of research relating to what happens to objects in literary or philosophical reflections—topics that may take us out of our habitual thinking about objects, their movement, appearance, disappearance, life or death."³⁸⁸ Finally, the postmodern turn to the object is discernible in composition studies' growing awareness of the museum's usefulness as a site for teaching multiliteracies. The idea that the museum makes arguments through and about

³⁸⁷ "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

³⁸⁸ Lydia Liu, "Re: MLA"; e-mail to the author; 1 March 2006.

the objects it displays owes largely to the modernists, who, as this study has shown, first exposed the museum as a complexly rhetorical space.

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