

**Imperialist Interpretive Repertoires:
Cultural Investments and Self-preservation**

by

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B F A , Emily Carr College of Art and Design and Open Learning University, 1991

P D P P , University of Victoria, 1992

B A , University of Victoria, 1994

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard


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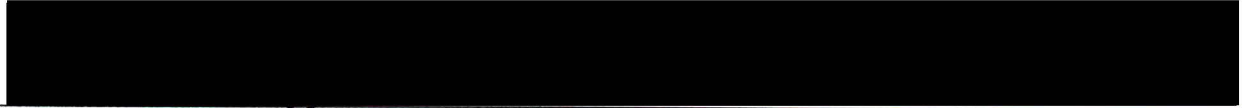
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ABSTRACT

An imperialist interpretive repertoire translates other cultures in derogatory terms with the purpose to preserve the imperialist's power. Journalists, museum advertisers, and movie makers use tropes of violence and invasion to describe the Mongolian subject in the 1995 exhibit "Empires Beyond the Great Wall: the Heritage of Genghis Khan" at Royal British Columbia Museum and in the movie *The Shadow*. Although these media have different forms of production and requirement, they all share an imperialist interpretive repertoire that creates orientalist presentations. These presentations have double standards that exaggerate the barbarism of Mongolian colonization and promote the civilizing agency of European colonization. The ideology and language available to naturalize and rationalise the biased power structure within these presentations encompass political and economic endorsements that control what we learn about other cultures and how these cultures are perceived and treated.

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Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to this thesis. My thanks go first to my graduate committee, Luke Carson, Jamie A. Dopp, and Lianne M. McLarty, for their valuable comments and support. I am also grateful to Chuenyan Lai, Janet Bavelas, and Steven Scobie for their advice.

My thanks also go to the Royal British Columbia Museum for the free pass to “Empires Beyond the Great Wall: the Heritage of Genghis Khan,” the journalism on the exhibit, and my personal interview with Lynn Phillips.

I also want to thank the Graduate Student Society and the Faculty of Graduate Studies for the travel grant to the show “Golden Mountain” in Vancouver.

Finally, my thanks go to my mother, Mei Ying Wong, for the translation of the Chinese Newsletters, and my partner, Fabian Wolk, whose excellent computer skills reduced techno-stress, and whose caring disposition offered a positive writing environment.

Introduction

Language is the armoury of the human mind, and at once
contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its
future conquests.

--Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Imperialism, in its many colonial and orientalist manifestations, perpetuates stereotypes of other cultures. These stereotypes are powerful identity tools that preserve the artificial differences between the imperialist and the other. In this thesis, I will study the derogatory language used to represent Genghis Khan and the Mongolian culture, and how this language belongs to an imperialist interpretative repertoire that fixates the Mongolian culture and history with stereotypes and fantasies. I will look at this subject by examining the newspaper reports on the exhibit "Empires Beyond the Great Wall: the Heritage of Genghis Khan" ("Empires") at the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM),¹ RBCM's representation of other cultures, and the movie *The Shadow*. Although these examples are in different media, they present the Mongolian subject from a shared imperialist perspective.

Interpretive repertoires, according to Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (who coined the term),

can be seen as the building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena. Any particular repertoire is constituted out of a restricted range of terms used in a specific stylistic and grammatical fashion. Commonly these terms are derived from one or more key metaphors and the presence of a repertoire will often be signalled by certain tropes or figures of speech.²

An imperialist interpretive repertoire paints the West in a superior light, awarding it the legitimacy to power at the expense of others' fabricated inferiority. The common "tropes" and "figures of speech" used to talk about other cultures emphasize other cultures' "intrinsic"

¹The show ran from 31 March to 10 September, 1995.

²Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, "Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires," *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods*, ed. Charles Antaki (London: Sage, 1988) 172.

differences and deviation from the western norm

In chapter one, we will look at the imperialist interpretive repertoire that journalists use to promote “Empires.” The repertoire describes the Mongolian culture and history with tropes of violence and conquest that subsume all Mongolians under the sensationalised history of Genghis Khan. Journalists also apply the conquest trope to present RBCM and Adam Kessler (the curator of “Empires”) as powerful colonial figures. In this way, the invasion trope not only emphasizes the primitive and predatorial aspects of the Mongolian culture, but celebrates the power of the imperial subjects.

This chapter will also examine how the invasion trope emphasizes the foreignness of minorities. We will look at an article that relates Chinese-Canadians to Genghis Khan in the context that they are invaders. In the article, the invasion trope intensifies the undesirability of Chinese-Canadian culture by portraying the Chinese-Canadians as intruders and violators of locals’ rights. The trope not only portrays Chinese-Canadians as permanent outsiders in Canada, it also stimulates cultural paranoia and selectively and systematically offers different standards of representations to white and non-white Canadians.

In chapter two, we will see that the tropes of conquest, invasion, and violence are also used in RBCM’s promotional literatures for “Empires.” Although the history of Genghis Khan is only a minor part in the exhibit, RBCM promotes Genghis Khan’s violent history to attract an audience. We will examine RBCM’s mission and market to understand why it uses fictive presentations of Genghis Khan and Mongolian history in its promotional literatures, and how its concentration on Genghis Khan’s warring history offers a selective perspective on the origins of Mongolian empires and the history that came after. Furthermore, we will study how RBCM presents Genghis Khan as the all-encompassing generic Mongolian, and what kind of ideological implication this entails.

The chapter will also look at how RBCM homogenizes three distinct cultures when it promotes “Empires” as the key event in the celebration of Chinese-Canadians in BC. We will examine in what ways Inner Mongolian artifacts and culture are related to Chinese-Canadians’ experiences in British Columbia (BC), and how knowledgeable is RBCM on the subjects it proposes to represent. In its promotional literature, RBCM does not make a

distinction between Inner Mongolian and China-Chinese cultures, and between these cultures and the culture of Chinese-Canadians in BC (note that even Chinese-Canadians have different cultures depending on which country they come from, their religion, their degree of assimilation, etc.) This lack of acknowledgement undermines RBCM's credibility and seems to suggest that RBCM treats all Asians as a monolithic other

In chapter three, we will continue to examine RBCM's interpretive powers by looking at its special publication *Ring of Time*³ In the book, European colonizations and invasions in Canada are presented as explorations. Tropes of violence and invasion are not used to describe their arrival, thus naturalizing the European colonization through the reconstruction of history. The publication shows that RBCM's interpretations of other cultures and of itself depend on a double standard, these interpretations are imperialist distortions that uphold the Europeans' historical claim to BC without questioning their right to do so

Also in this chapter, we will learn that RBCM's imperialist interpretive repertoire extends to the curatorial and archaeological translations of other cultures, shaping the way we understand other cultures. For example, the common belief that Mongolians and First Nations Peoples are undeveloped is staged in RBCM's display. In *Ring of Time*, RBCM's staff tries to communicate the anthropologists' discovery of First Nations Peoples' development by structuring the display so that visitors, too, will share the anthropologists' vision. This controlled setup shows that RBCM assumes that the anthropologists' experiences and perspectives are universally shared and relevant. Furthermore, it assumes that every visitor comes from the same cultural background, with the same ethnocentric misconception of the culture on display. Incidentally, the discoveries of First Nations Peoples' or Mongolians' development reveal the imperialist's ethnocentric preconception and misconception of these cultures, and how their limited views and previous lack of interest and financial investments delayed their discoveries.

In chapter four, we will continue to study the double standard in representations and

³Peter Corley-Smith, *The Ring of Time* (Victoria: Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data, 1985)

binary constructions between the imperialist and the other in the movie *The Shadow*. The chapter will show that the western film industry can also be a powerful tool for the promotion of imperialism. In *The Shadow*, characters are orchestrated to express and uphold American imperialism. Tropes of violence, barbarism, and expansionism promote the stereotype of Mongolians as primitive while tropes of justice and morality establish the Americans as civilised. Although the movie emphasizes the contrast between the primitive Mongolians and the civilised Americans, their differences are imperial constructions that reveal and endorse the values of the West.

One of the many binary conflicts that we will look at involves the split between “colonial” Mongolians and “postcolonial” Americans. The movie implies that America has transcended the colonial stage and has moved into a “postcolonial” era free of colonizing desires, but the imperialistic image of America as the world-police contradicts this construction. We will study the differences, or similarities, between the terms “postcolonial,” “colonial,” and what Anne McClintock calls “imperialism-without-colonies”⁴--namely, American colonialism without the actual physical colonization of territory and people.⁵ The issue of “imperialism-without-colonies” is pertinent to the thesis in the sense that colonialism takes many forms. Imperialist ideas and values can be transmitted through a

⁴Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-colonialism’,” *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 296.

⁵The word “colonialism” traditionally refers to an imperialist’s geographical domination/colonization of another country. Newer terms like “postcolonialism” and “neocolonialism” have prefixes indicating the chronological progression of colonialism. Although these newer terms refer more to the economic and political control/domination of other countries without the necessary geographical conquest (McClintock’s “imperialism-without-colonies”), I do not distinguish between these three definitions in my thesis, for the reason that the imperialist ideologies behind colonialism still exist in all three stages. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that “postcolonial” is often used as an antithetical term to indicate an ideological opposition to “colonial.” Therefore, as a terminology to show ideological differences, I recognize its significance, but as a term to indicate the end of colonialism, I see it as a contradiction to the multi-faceted forms of colonialism we have today. This issue will be further discussed in chapter four.

movie, news articles, or a museum show, colonizing us on an ideological level without leaving any trace of physical conquest.

Besides showing the various guises of imperialism and colonialism, chapter four will study the effects of orientalism. The stereotypical binary conflicts in the movie are orientalist constructions that offer limited concepts of what the East and the West represent in their biased power relationship. These various binary constructions will be deconstructed to show the imperialist's and orientalist's power of manipulation and interpretation of the other. This deconstruction will also show that the construction of the other, inevitably, reflects the orientalist's ideological investments and desires.

In the conclusion, we will continue to look at this reflection between the orientalist and the other by examining the relationship between western academicians and the subject of their study. In our examination of the Northwest Coast art, we will see that the orientalist academicians need to hold onto a fixed idea of the subject they study in order to maintain their power of interpretation. Often these academicians have invested their time, energy, and reputation on the subject. Hence their desire to see the subject static and true to their vested definitions. The subject, or the other, in this case, is discouraged from evolving, trapped as it is by the orientalists' interpretations and desires. It is caught in a paradoxical situation where, on the one hand, it is criticized for its backwardness, but on the other hand, it is expected to maintain its primitivity to prove its authenticity. In this final chapter, we will study the ideological implications behind this paradox and what Edward Said calls the "flexible *positional* superiority" of the orientalist. In *Orientalism*, Said says that this form of superiority "puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationship with the Orient without ever losing him the upper hand."⁶ This "upper hand" position, as we will see, puts the other in a perpetually inferior role.

With this thesis, I hope to show how an imperialist interpretive repertoire conceives a limited culturally-biased language for the understanding and translation of other cultures, and how it may justify racism and violent acts toward other cultures based on its derogatory

⁶Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) 7

interpretation of others. Our understanding of other cultures is largely culturally determined. This does not mean that we should abandon talking about other cultures. Instead, we must question the kind of ideology we may consciously or unconsciously support when using a certain type of language. Like any other language, an imperialist interpretive repertoire is not a stable library of meanings and ideas. Its evolution runs parallel to societal change, and it forms an integral part of our language, ranging from academia to entertainment. Said says that “each age and society re-creates its ‘Others.’ Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of ‘other’ is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a context involving individuals and institutions in all societies.”⁷ Nevertheless, even though the other’s and the imperialist’s identity may alter through time and context, the underlying imperial ideology, power structure, and values in an imperialist interpretive repertoire are unchanging.

⁷Said 332

Chapter One. Journalistic Fantasies

The journalistic writings on the show “Empires” are heavily marked by an imperialist interpretive repertoire. These writings use tropes of violence and invasion to describe Genghis Khan and contemporary Mongolians as though violence and expansionism are intrinsic characteristics in Mongolian history and culture. The reductive orientalist identification stretches a short history of Genghis Khan’s conquest to cover many centuries of Mongolian culture and people. It is akin to what Said calls the orientalist’s “power of generalization,” where the orientalist “convert[s] instances of a civilization into ideal bearers of its values, ideas, and positions.”¹ Because of such a “conversion,” Mongolians and their culture are trapped in the stereotypical image of Genghis Khan, seemingly rigid, perpetually violent and colonialist.

In the following sections, we will look at how journalists use the invasion trope to sensationalise the history of Genghis Khan, and how the trope is also used to describe RBCM and the curator Adam Kessler. Nonetheless, the conquest trope offers a different effect on a western subject, legitimating its imperial and colonial power rather than debasing it and rendering it barbarous (which is the case with the Mongolians and other minority cultures). This double standard in application shows the way an imperialist interpretive repertoire appoints different values and standards of judgement to other cultures. However, its application is not always a conscious one, and the journalistic writings we examine are produced by non-specialists, who perhaps repeat what they receive from press releases. Therefore, our study of these writings will focus on how pervasive an imperialist interpretive repertoire is, what stylistic approaches it encompasses, and how its perpetuation (conscious or unconscious) rationalizes and naturalizes racially biased opinions of other cultures.

The Merchant of Empires and Indiana Jones

Before we look at how journalists use a formulaic interpretative repertoire to describe the Mongolian culture and Genghis Khan, we will examine how the same violent and

¹Said, *Orientalism* 252

conquest tropes are used on two western subjects: RBCM and Kessler. Although the Victoria entertainment paper "Selling Empires" portrays Genghis Khan as a powerful conqueror, its title reveals that RBCM holds the ultimate power as the merchant of "Empires" and the conqueror of "tourist hordes"². In the scenario, RBCM is like an imperial power with the right to gain from and to sell its colony (Mongolia). The presentation not only objectifies the Mongolian culture and heritage into merchandise, it also establishes the traditional colonial power structure between the West and East. Furthermore, it undermines RBCM's educative role and transforms it into a capitalistic imperial market that masters goods and buyers alike. Similarly, in a *Sunday Oregonian* article, the title "Exhibit plunders Genghis Khan's empire"³ implies that RBCM ravages instead of diplomatically negotiates for the show. Why do these presentations amplify RBCM's imperial power? Are they meant to amuse, or are they meant to show that the imperial power they speak of is still alive? After all, a discourse of empires has to exist to contextualize the colonial and imperial metaphors, condoning and naturalizing the imperial ideology in these presentations.

In the presentations of Kessler as the Indiana Jones of museums,⁴ the imperial context of Indiana Jones makes Kessler a colonial fantasy hero. According to film critics Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, the Indiana Jones movies "reproduce the colonialist topos by which Western 'knowledge' of ancient civilizations 'rescues' the past from oblivion"⁵. Indiana Jones, therefore, symbolises a kind of western leadership as archaeologist and custodian of world treasures. This symbolism is evident in "Selling Empires'" account of Kessler's adventures. For example, Kessler is glorified as the "rebel among archaeologists," who "takes his career cues from the swashbuckling adventures of Indiana Jones." He "brave[s] sand storms, flash floods . . . and Chinese government bureaucrats" to bring "a handful of

²Gordaneer, Alisa, "Selling Empires," *Monday Magazine* 19 - 25 Jan. 1995: 1.

³"Exhibit plunders Genghis Khan's empire." *Sunday Oregonian* 9 Apr. 1995: n. pag.

⁴The association originated from Los Angeles.

⁵Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (London: Routledge, 1994) 151.

[Chinese] precious 'first category' cultural treasures out into the world."⁶

In this presentation, Kessler is like Indiana Jones, the very personification of imperial wisdom and political power over other cultures. He "brave[s]" foreign elements for the benefit of "the world." Ironically, the "world," in this case, includes only selective countries that have the power to sell and represent those outside the "world" category. China belongs to the latter category, and its "bureaucrats"-- a term with negative connotations--are projected as part of the foreign obstacles that Kessler has to conquer in order to have the artifacts. In this scenario, China is politically insignificant and its governing bodies are uncooperative and seemingly ignorant of their artifacts' educative value to the world.

The devaluation of China and the exaggeration of western heroism is also emphasized in the following excerpt from the *London Free Press*:

At times, like the fictional Indiana Jones, [Kessler] must have wished he was carrying a whip when he was negotiating with [ten] Inner Mongolian institutions as well as the Chinese ministry of culture for permission to show the artifacts.⁷

In the excerpt, the Mongolian and Chinese officials are portrayed as troublesome people in need of discipline. The suggestions of Kessler subduing these officials with a whip empowers Kessler and demeans the officials in a binary construct of power. For example, their relationship can be seen as one between tamer and beast, master and slave, and civilized and primitive.⁸ These juxtapositions position the western hero above the eastern subjects as the rightful owner of power and dominance. As a metaphoric conqueror, Indiana Jones/Kessler is revered, because he is portrayed as superior and wise, and his actions are performed for the greater benefit of the world. The image of the whip-brandishing Kessler is ironic in the sense that he is supposed to acquire "permission" from the Chinese and Mongolian officials. Instead of presenting Kessler in a humble role, the journalist makes him

⁶Gordaneer, "Selling" 1.

⁷Eldrid Retief and Ursula Retief, "Mongol treasures coming to Victoria," *London Free Press* 4 Feb. 199: n. pag.

⁸These juxtapositions will also be explored in chapter three and four.

authoritative and unyielding, thus revealing the values installed in these characters and their relationship.

The value-laden relationship between Kessler and the officials is also evident in "Selling Empires" when Kessler is reported to have outsmarted the Chinese and Mongolian officials by bringing out more artifacts than he was allowed:

Kessler, who speaks Mandarin fluently but doesn't take 'no' for an answer, found loop-holes in the rules that allowed no more than 100 objects to be included in any one out-of-country show. By counting sets of objects as one artifact, he managed to put together a show of about 200 pieces.⁹

The excerpt seems to say that although Kessler speaks Mandarin, he is not one of them (Chinese). He will not be rejected and he will not abide to their rules because he is intrinsically wiser than they are. For example, he cleverly interprets the contract in a way that favours him. These presentations show that even though Kessler is on foreign turf, he wins with the intrinsic physical (whipping scenario) and mental (bending of the rules) superiority of his race.

Like the stereotype and hype surrounding the sensational life of Genghis Khan, Kessler's association with Indiana Jones is also marketable and exciting. Furthermore, it panders to fans of Indiana Jones. Although the association is seemingly exciting, it entertains the dominant imperial perspective inherent in Indiana Jones movies. The representations, however, are journalistic manipulations. Kessler is uncomfortable with it--in particular with the "Raiders of the lost ark" image. He says that "it is not a question of raiding other cultures and stealing their cultural heritage, transplanting it to other museums."¹⁰ Kessler also says that all the artifacts in "Empires" are borrowed with the blessing of the Mongolian and Chinese governments.¹¹ Even though he admits that "like any Westerner, [he] was unprepared for the obstacles [he] had to hurdle," he promotes respect and patience when

⁹Gordaneer, "Selling" 1

¹⁰Damian Inwood, "He's a Khan-do kind of curator," *Vancouver Province* 2 Apr. 1995: F4

¹¹Brown n. pag.

dealing with people from other cultures¹² Despite what Kessler believes, journalists have painted an aggressive whip-brandishing image of him, thus promoting an ethnocentric and imperialistic image that emulates the stories of Indiana Jones.

Nonetheless, this image offers an exciting edge to “Empires.” Visitors seem to expect Kessler to present the Mongolian artifacts with exciting anecdotes.¹³ According to museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,

neither the modest specimens nor the dry facts are expected to interest the listener. Rather, it is the ethnographer’s own expenditure of time and effort--his or her expertise--that creates value. This effect is achieved rhetorically, for the more unprepossessing the evidence, the more impressive the ethnographic description.¹⁴

The excerpt shows how much interpretive power Kessler has as the curator of the show. However, not only do his interpretations of the artifacts interest people, his private life, too, becomes an extension of the exhibit’s translation. In other words, Kessler’s Indiana Jones persona becomes part of the show, as the voice that “textualize[s] objects”¹⁵--not only on the level of academic textualization, but also on the level of fantasies and mythmaking. Although Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s point perhaps gives visitors not enough credit for experiencing an exhibit on different levels, her point is important in showing how curators’ personalities may inscribe the exhibit. In the case of “Empires,” Kessler’s association with Indiana Jones may offer an imperial perspective to the reading of “Empires” and the relationship between Kessler and the eastern subject.

Like the colonial image of RBCM, the heroic image of Kessler shows that tropes of conquest and invasion promote the western subjects’ political and economic power over

¹²Suzanne Muchnic, “Out of Inner Mongolia,” *Los Angeles Times* 15 Mar. 1994: F8.

¹³In chapter two we will see how some people are disappointed that Kessler did not offer Indiana Jones type stories in his book or his museum presentation.

¹⁴Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Objects of Ethnography” *Exhibiting Cultures*. Eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) 396.

¹⁵Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 395.

“Empires” and the eastern subjects. Therefore, even though Kessler is not portrayed as a conqueror, his association with Indiana Jones and what he symbolises make him an indirect candidate.

Genghis Khan, The Perpetual Conqueror, and Other Foreign Invaders

The representation of Genghis Khan as a violent conqueror is not surprising. After all, he is internationally renowned for his conquests. Nonetheless, the obsessive promotion of his violent conquest overpowers other aspects of Mongolian history and culture.¹⁶ The idea that all Mongolians are like Genghis Khan not only reduces Mongolians to a predictable monolith, but also erases Mongolians' post-Genghis Khan history. This erasure has its purpose: the fact that Mongolians are victims of Chinese xenophobia and Russian political control contradicts the popular image of the Mongolians as predators. Thus ahistoricised and fixated in the specific violent aspect of Genghis Khan's history, Mongolians achieve a reputation for barbarism and national chauvinism. This reputation is a stereotype with cultural currency in the West.

In this section we will see how the manipulations of journalists transform Genghis Khan into a perpetual conqueror. The stereotype attracts audiences through sensationalism and violent fabrications. According to “Selling Empires,” the history of Genghis Khan, with its “great warriors, vast empires, vicious battles with lots of blood and horses,” is “the stuff of action films, the fodder for blockbuster novels and the fuel for a marketer's daydream.”¹⁷ The article compares Genghis Khan with Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Hollywood action actor, for they are both highly marketable in their action packed history/movies.¹⁸ In this parallel,

¹⁶For information on the history of Eurasian nomads of China's northern frontiers from 475 B.C. to 1947, look at David Chuenyan Lai's *Land of Genghis Khan*. Western Geographical Series, Vol 30 (Victoria: UVIC, 1995). To study Genghis Khan's creative impact on Eurasia and Russia (a view that is neglected by RBCM's exhibition and advertising), look at N. S. Trubetzkoy's *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991).

¹⁷Gordaneer, “Selling” 1.

¹⁸We will look at the function of this comparison further in chapter two.

the differences between a theatre and a museum, or an actor and a historical figure, are undermined. The article decontextualizes Genghis Khan and transforms him into a popular icon of our time.

In another article, "The Inner Game of Khan," Genghis Khan is seen as a reintegrating role model:

Now we are backed against the *fin de siècle* and looking for a new model, someone nimbly responsive to change, wired to the global pulse points, ambitious, smart as a whip, nasty as he gotta be and driven by a Koreshian sense of destiny. For a good candidate look no farther than the [RBCM] in Victoria, which is hosting its biggest-ever travelling exhibit, ["Empires"].¹⁹

This excerpt shows that Genghis Khan is a "new model," because he is expansionistic and aware of his desire for territorial invasions ("wired to the global pulse points, ambitious"). Furthermore, he is lawless and fatalistic like David Koresh²⁰ ("nasty" and "driven by a Koreshian sense of destiny"). The article suggests that Genghis Khan's revitalized fame and his compatibility with our time is the result of shared global affluence and destructive attitude. This assumption decontextualizes Genghis Khan's history and trivializes it in its comparison to Koresh. The association, no doubt, heightens the violence and adds insanity (for those who believe that Koresh is insane) to the already exaggerated, destructive history of Genghis Khan. Although bleak in its view of what appeals to our age, the excerpt, like "Selling Empires," promotes the idea that violence and annihilation are exciting and marketable. Therefore, the violent trope not only fabricates and demeans the subject, but also entertains.

The trope's multiple usage is also evident in other literature promoting "Empires." The following examples show that the Mongolian subject is never present in the orientalist presentations, but constantly deferred by popular stereotypes and tropes. In the following cases, journalists name "Empires" as Genghis Khan's new vehicle to a western conquest:

¹⁹Bruce Grierson, "The Inner Game of Khan," *Western Living* Apr. 1995: 7.

²⁰David Koresh was the leader of a religious group who committed suicide with his followers during a confrontation with the police in Waco, 1994.

West Coast Entertainment announces that “Genghis Khan invades the RBCM”,²¹ and the *International Guide Victoria* claims that “last seen moving northward, in an attempt to expand his influence, ‘universal ruler of the Mongol chieftains, Genghis Khan[,] was indeed seen infiltrating the [RBCM].”²² These articles describe Genghis Khan and the exhibit as conquerors with words suggesting colonial expansion on a “universal” level, while the audience are presented as “slaves.” The *International Guide* also portrays Victoria as a victim to Genghis Khan’s new conquest “[’Empires’] will lay a six month siege upon Victoria . . . as part of its last acquisition on this North American tour. Other ‘casualties’ have included Los Angeles, Nashville, and New York.”²³ Words such as “siege,” “acquisition,” and “casualties” set up the tropes of violence and conquest, which, presumably, aim to amuse and attract readers’ attention by invoking the popular Mongolian stereotype.

Sunday Oregonian also tries to stimulate readers by inventing violent stories about Genghis Khan. For example, it incredibly credits Genghis Khan with “inven[ting] polo while whacking around his enemies’ decapitated heads on horseback for sport.”²⁴ The violence invoked by the depiction of playing polo with decapitated heads exaggerates the barbarianism of Genghis Khan. “Selling Empires,” too, transforms the exhibit, museum, and its audience to a stereotypical scenario of Mongolian colonialism.

In the past year, *Khan* has travelled to Los Angeles, New York City and Nashville. Victoria, the exhibit’s last stop, stands to reap the contemporary treasures of American tourist dollars and greater international recognition.²⁵

The excerpt creates a parallel between ancient Mongolian invasions to “Empires,” and ancient Mongolian pillages to the show’s financial success. In this presentation, and the

²¹*Westcoast Entertainment* Cover 24 Feb - 9 Mar 1995 1

²²*International Guide Victoria* (Victoria n. p., 1995) 8.

²³*International Guide Victoria* 9.

²⁴*Sunday Oregonian* n. pag.

²⁵Gordaneer, “Selling” 1.

following, Genghis Khan and the exhibit are portrayed as metaphoric conquerors. “in his old age, Genghis Khan has earned respite. Instead of having to ride across the vast Mongolian Steppes to conquer thousands of people, he need[s] only wait at the museum for the hordes to come to him.”²⁶ These excerpts show “Empires” as a foreign intrusion, waiting to benefit from its new conquest. However, do these presentations merely create a sensationalistic violent image of the Mongolians, or does the violent trope have another function? In other words, is the invasion trope also used as an expression of territorial defensiveness toward the foreign show?

The tropes of violence and invasion create an imperialistic contrast between the barbaric Mongolians and the civilized westerners. They also offer an immediate and superficial understanding of Mongolian culture through readily available stereotypes, and entertain an audience by exploiting the violent history of Genghis Khan and Mongolians. They also provoke and reflect some locals’ un/conscious fear of foreigners by painting foreigners’ arrivals and the presence of minorities with threat of conquest. Imperialism, after all, involves territorial ownership and cultural superiority. Any attempt to destabilize an imperialist’s territorial power is met with opposition. Therefore, the tropes of violence and conquest can function to intensify the locals’ territorial right against outsiders, and create paranoia and defensiveness toward outsiders.

In “Selling Empires,” for example, the exhibit is presented as an intrusion upon British Columbians’ territory, the RBCM.²⁷ It asks, “how appropriate is it [for the show to be] shown on the other side of the world,” especially in “a museum dedicated to the history of [BC]?” This question emphasizes the difference between Mongolian and Canadian cultures by pointing out the geographical and physical distance between Mongolia and Canada. In addition, it reminds us that the RBCM has a distinctly BC-oriented mandate. Since the show is foreign and “unnatural” within RBCM, the article names the exhibit an “invasion.” The article not only shows the disparity between the show and its proposed

²⁶Gordaneer, “Selling” 12.

²⁷RBCM’s national and provincial roles are discussed in chapter three.

Chinese-Canadian celebration (which we will discuss in chapter two), it also shows its exclusionary attitude towards a foreign show

The article insinuates that the exhibit will disappoint the “hordes of tourists [who] swarm through the museum's carved wooden doors every summer, eager to learn about the province's natural and cultural history ” Like the rhetorical question above, this statement seems to have a double intention Besides reminding locals that RBCM may disappoint the tourists with the exhibit, it also suggests that British Columbians will lose their “natural and cultural history”--as though the RBCM has betrayed British Columbians by consenting to the Mongolian “invasion ” To embellish the tropes of invasion and violence further, the article makes the First Nations Peoples the victims of a Mongolian infringement “an invasion of Mongolian artifacts into the realm of tide pools and totem poles seems incongruous with the museum's mandate ”²⁸ Here, the museum space is seen as a contested ground between the First Nations Peoples and the Mongolians The Mongolians are portrayed as the invaders of First Nations Peoples' territory On the other hand, the history of European colonizers (in BC) and their artifacts occupy the museum unchallenged, claiming an insider's territorial right (we will discuss this further in chapter three) The article shows that foreignness and invasion have become synonymous, and that the invasion trope has moved beyond the specific Mongolian context and into the foreigner and native discourse.²⁹

The synonymy between foreignness and invasion is also evident in the way Chinese-Canadians are presented as foreign invaders in the article “Asian Treasures ” The article talks about the various BC venues that entertain the Chinese-Canadian year of celebration.³⁰ Besides RBCM, the Canadian Craft Museum honours the event by having a Chinese-

²⁸Gordaneer, “Selling” 10.

²⁹Although the article presents the show as an intrusion, it also embraces it for the reasons that it will bring financial gain to BC, and its novelty will offer excitement This love/hate reaction to the show seems to mirror the dual sentiments some Canadians have for immigrants: they desire immigrants' financial contribution to the country, but resent their economic power and territorial gain

³⁰This celebration originated from RBCM. The issues surrounding this event will be discussed in chapter two

Canadian calligraphy show. The article recognizes that eleven of the thirteen artists are Canadians, working with "Canadian themes"³¹ The guest curator Yim Tse says that the show is not about "Chinese-Canadian culture. We are Canadians, . . . [and the show] represents part of the greater Canadian culture."³² Despite the artists' dominant Canadian citizenships and investments in Canadian culture, the article's reaction to Tse's comment is, "and so, the great Genghis Khan's legacy finds new and happier conquests, seven centuries after his death, in Canada." This comment contradicts what Tse strives to express (namely that Chinese-Canadian culture is not a distinct subculture, but an integral part of Canadian culture) by reminding Chinese-Canadians that they are invaders like Genghis Khan. This comment not only erases the birthright of many Chinese-born Canadians, it also replaces Chinese-Canadians' often tumultuous struggle in Canada with images of opportunistic foreign conquests.³³ Finally, the article says that Canada is a "new and happier conquest"³⁴ for the Chinese. One wonders if Canada can be a "happier" place for Chinese-Canadians if other Canadians continually see them as foreign invaders.

The fabricated link between Chinese-Canadians living in Canada and Genghis Khan's conquests shows the synonym between invasion and foreignness, and perhaps the underlying intolerance and rejection of Canada's multi-cultural makeup. The article shows that Mongolians and Chinese (no matter where they come from) are homogenized as one unified group of foreigners. Furthermore, it challenges Chinese-Canadians' claim to citizenship and territorial right in Canada.³⁵

³¹Chris Wood, "Asian Treasures," *Maclean's* 24 April 1995: 58.

³²For the sake of clarity and fluency, I will refer to Canadians of Chinese ancestry as Chinese-Canadians.

³³For information on Chinese-Canadian history in BC, look at David Chuenyan Lai's *The Forbidden City within Victoria* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1991) and Paul Yee's *Saltwater City* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1988).

³⁴Wood: 59.

³⁵We have to take into account that RBCM promotes "Empires" as the central celebration of Chinese-Canadians. Perhaps this connection of the Mongolian show to

None of the articles that we have examined discusses Genghis Khan and the Mongolians in their historical and cultural context. Their stories of Genghis Khan and Mongolian culture are orientalist fantasies, and the Chinese-Canadians are simply subsumed in these inventions. Said says that an orientalist style of writing

brings Asia tantalizingly close to the West, but only for a brief moment. We are left at the end with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating 'us' from an Orient destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West.³⁶

However, the problem is not that the Orient, or in this case, Mongolia, is forever foreign to us, but that it is *known* to us through orientalists' derogatory fabrications. Popularising the tropes of violence as a way to express the Mongolian subject, the orientalists display their power to generate constructed ideas and images of the East as normative. Said says that the power of an orientalist's fabrication

is not only the power to symbolize such enormous generalities as Asia, the Orient, or the Arabs, it is also a form of displacement and incorporation by which one voice becomes a whole history, and--for the white Westerners, as reader or writer--the only kind of Orient it is possible to know.³⁷

Although there is no "true" representation of the Mongolians, the representation of Mongolians, shaped by an imperialist interpretive repertoire, is, inevitably, biased. It dangerously creates false images that could inspire racism or hatred toward a race "known" to be violent, barbarous, and expansionistic. Other ethnic groups that are subsumed in the Mongolian category (as with the Chinese-Canadians) may also be affected by this stereotype. The implication of these misrepresentations may be greater than just a bad reputation for these people, it may affect their political status and rights in Canada.

Chinese-Canadians has inspired the article to link the two cultures uncritically. RBCM's cultural mix-up will be discussed in chapter two.

³⁶Said, *Orientalism* 244.

³⁷Said, *Orientalism* 243.

Chapter Two: Museum Marketing

The process of cuts in direct public funding forces many museums to market themselves for income generating purposes. They also find themselves competing with other entertainment industries that are more skilled and better equipped to entice the public. To stay competitive and financially lucrative, museums have to pay more attention to marketing. RBCM, for one, aggressively markets “Empires” to fulfil its financial goals. This marketing strategy involves attracting visitors through the manipulation of Genghis Khan’s and Mongolians’ history and culture. An imperialist/orientalist interpretive repertoire is, therefore, present in RBCM’s advertising of “Empires.” As a result of its marketing ploy, RBCM not only misrepresents the Mongolian culture, it also defeats its own mission of educating and offering historically informed cultural representation.

Before we look at the cultural blunders created through RBCM’s imperialist marketing strategies, we need to understand RBCM’s mission and designs for “Empires.” The “Official Program” to “Empires” promotes RBCM as a “thoroughly modern museum” that “has achieved worldwide accolades for its work in the areas of research, education, exhibits, and activities.” Its continued dedication toward “building an impressive international reputation”¹ means a change in the museum’s role. According to the program, the past twenty five years have seen drastic changes to “the role of museums within communities.” Museums “can no longer stand aloof as dusty repositories for communal wealth and knowledge. The [RBCM] is taking a more responsive role toward the natural and human history of the surrounding region. [t]he result is hands-on opportunities for people of all ages.”² Besides “learning through first-hand experience, increased accessibility and activities that reflect people’s interests are all key aspects of the RBCM’s approach.”³ RBCM’s mission partly resembles what Andy Leon Harney calls the “traditional mission.”

¹RBCM, “Thoroughly modern Museum,” *The Dragon Uncoils: RBCM Official Program* (n.p.: n.p., 1995) 10.

²RBCM, “Thoroughly” 12.

³RBCM, “Thoroughly” 15.

He says that a “museum’s essence is in collecting and preserving our cultural heritage and educating the public” However, “the traditional mission has been joined by a more immediate goal economic survival”⁴

This “economic” agenda is evident in RBCM’s designs for “Empires” Lynn Phillips, the manager of the marketing department, says that the immediate reason for having “Empires” is to secure financial stability during the museum’s renovation period The construction may discourage attendance at the museum, and since the museum pays the staff’s salary from the sales of admission fees, a low attendance may cause some financial problems Hence the value of a unique exhibit like “Empires”⁵ Bill Barkley, the executive director at the RBCM, also says that

an international exhibition of this scale and importance is an incredibly lucrative opportunity for the entire city We’ve had a very successful response from the business communities, in terms of sponsorship, joint promotional ventures and advertising support This is the first time that the [RBCM] has held a large, temporary, travelling exhibit Seeking sponsorship support and reaching out for other business partnerships are part of the museum’s new directive⁶

Barkley’s comment reiterates the point made previously concerning the emergence of a new economic agenda to the museums’ traditional mission However, since one of RBCM’s more “traditional” missions is to “[reaffirm] its relevance and importance within today’s community,”⁷ RBCM proposes a second goal for “Empires.”

This goal is to celebrate and acknowledge Chinese-Canadians’ historical and current contributions to BC “Empires” is the focal attraction of the event, among other happenings such as a series of shows on the Knowledge Network, school writing and art contests, a

⁴Andy Leon Harney, “Money changers in the temple: Museums and the financial mission,” *Museum Management*, ed. Kevin Moore (New York: Routledge, 1994) 132

⁵Lynn Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995

⁶RBCM, “Thoroughly” 8

⁷RBCM, “Thoroughly” 15

Dragon boat race, and a travelling weekend show case called "On Golden Mountain."⁸ Barkley says that the reason for this celebration is so that RBCM may be more culturally representative of BC. The museum has in the past "focused on white and aboriginal history." Since "many British Columbians have an Asian heritage," the show "will build some bridges to parts of the BC community the museum hasn't traditionally focused on."⁹

Yet "Empires" is a Mongolian show that has no direct connection to Chinese-Canadians in BC. RBCM's attempt to connect Mongolian culture and history to Chinese-Canadians obliterates the differences between them.¹⁰ The constructed similarity between these cultures reflects RBCM's orientalist rendering and subsumption of other cultures. Other similar problems also surface when the museum uses stirring but inaccurate information to attract admission sales and business collaborations, promotes Genghis Khan as the exhibit's focus, and decontextualizes the funerary Death Mask through its reconstruction and commercialization. These cultural blunders resulted because RBCM presents other cultures in its own terms and for its own benefit. According to Ames, "reconstruction involves repowering the object, investing it with the authority and privilege of those currently possessing it, who then impose upon it (and upon those whom it represents) their own histories."¹¹ In "Empires," RBCM imposes its imperial history of "western power over eastern colonies" on the Mongolian subject, making the Mongolian subject its possession to recreate and to use. In the following discussion, we will examine these problems by looking at the literature that RBCM offers to the visitors.

⁸Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995.

⁹"Genghis rides again. A world-class Mongolian exhibit opens in BC." *Alberta Report* 24 Apr. 1995.

¹⁰This issue will be elaborated in the latter part of this chapter.

¹¹Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992) 144.

The All-Encompassing Genghis Khan

By concentrating on Genghis Khan as the attraction of “Empires,” RBCM creates two deceptions: first, the audience expects the show to be about Genghis Khan, and second, the focus on Genghis Khan makes him the dominant point of reference, or key to Mongolian history, culture, and its people. However, before we look at RBCM’s treatment of Genghis Khan, let us look at what “Selling Empires” has to say about RBCM’s marketing strategies:

Put [Genghis Khan's] name on a twelve by thirty foot banner on the side of museum, and you've got instant draw. It's like giving Arnold Schwarzenegger top billing in a movie full of unknown actors. a smart business move.¹²

“Selling Empires” praises RBCM for recognizing Genghis Khan’s high retail value, and offers a comparison between Genghis Khan and Schwarzenegger to exemplify Genghis Khan’s marketability. For example, Genghis Khan, like Schwarzenegger, represents action heroes with the power to entertain an audience with stories of adventures. Even though Genghis Khan is a historical figure, the article established that Genghis Khan’s historical life is equivalent to Schwarzenegger’s action-packed fantasies. Furthermore, the comparison adapted Genghis Khan to the western viewers and, perhaps, made him seemingly more exciting and culturally relevant when associated with Schwarzenegger.

Although RBCM was not responsible for the Schwarzenegger comparison, I begin this section with “Selling Empires” to show how the article sympathises with RBCM’s marketing strategy because it, too, uses a “hard sell” approach. According to museologist Kevin Moore, a “hard sell” technique involves the marketing of exhibits as “blockbusters.”¹³ “Selling Empires,” for example, uses the “hard sell” approach by talking about “Empires” in movie terms. The article shows that museums and the entertainment industry are merging in their marketing techniques. In the following excerpt, the museum becomes a metaphoric movie theatre, that plays an

¹²Gordaneer, “Selling” 8.

¹³Kevin Moore, Introduction, *Museum Management*, ed. Kevin Moore (New York: Routledge, 1994) 12.

epic film, encompassing centuries of heroic acts and historical turmoil. The star, of course, is Genghis Khan. The director--the man whose vision and determination brought it all together--is Adam Kessler, a curator with the Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County.

Over all, the article examines and evaluates Genghis Khan's life from a Hollywood angle because it believes that "North Americans love celebrity, and the more colourful the character the better."¹⁴

The "hard sell" technique, obviously, promises fantasies. For example, although RBCM can market "Empires" by highlighting the show's unique Inner Mongolian origin, the newly uncovered artifacts, and the museum's special privilege as the only museum to host the show in Canada, it chooses to focus mainly on Genghis Khan's history. It promotes Genghis Khan as the star to its blockbuster by exaggerating his role in the show, and by putting his name in the title.¹⁵ This placement is strategic. According to an article in *Los Angeles Times*, "the show actually covers 3,500 years of history--most of them before Genghis' reign--but the American appetite for celebrities, violence, and precious objects make the title irresistible." Therefore, few people "would question the marketing wisdom of attaching [Genghis Khan's] moniker to a landmark exhibition."¹⁶

Although the marketing gimmick is effective in attracting visitors with sensational news and emphasis on Genghis Khan, it disappoints visitors who expect the show to be about Genghis Khan. Phillips says that Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History received many complaints about the deceptive title "Genghis Khan: Treasures from Inner Mongolia." Aware of this problem, RBCM changed the title to "Empires Beyond the Great Wall: the Heritage of Genghis Khan."¹⁷ Nevertheless, Genghis Khan's name still appears

¹⁴Note that although the "star" is Genghis Khan, the person who makes the show a success is Kessler (for the reasons that we have explored in chapter one)

¹⁵The other American museums (New York, Nashville, and Los Angeles) also placed Genghis Khan's name in the titles of their shows.

¹⁶Muchnic F1

¹⁷Phillips, personal interview, 12 September 1995.

in the sub-title “Selling Empires” believes that the title is “slightly deceptive,”¹⁸ because Genghis Khan plays a minor role in the exhibit. Nonetheless, the article uses Genghis Khan as a lure throughout its review of the show, revealing that it is easier to promote the show by highlighting what is popular and well-circulated to the public than educating, or informing, the public of what is unknown.

Besides the title, the RBCM’s accompanying souvenir/background package to “Empires” also has a strong emphasis on Genghis Khan.¹⁹ No doubt, many journalists who review this package before proceeding with their writings will end up repeating the misleading information. The package is generated from RBCM’s media relation department (which also supplied me with many of the articles I mentioned in this thesis), offering an introduction to “Empires” from the typical perspective that most articles practise--namely, looking at Mongolian culture and history from the standpoint of Genghis Khan’s history.

In the package, information on Mongolian history seems contradictory. For example, on the reverse side of a colour print, the introduction reads

Before the reign of Genghis Khan, before the opulence of the court of Kubilai Khan, a succession of Mongol empires created a rich legacy of art and culture on the grassy plains of northern China. Now, for the first time in the West, [“Empires”] brings treasures and ancient artifacts from Inner Mongolia to the [RBCM].²⁰

This excerpt shows that the artifacts come from Mongol empires established before Genghis Khan’s reign. Typically, the excerpt uses Genghis Khan to frame the historical time-line, but

¹⁸Gordaneer, “Selling” 8. Other examples of visitors’ disappointment will be available at the end of this chapter.

¹⁹The package holds a RBCM pin, a pamphlet on the artifacts of the show, a five page “Quick Facts About The Exhibit,” a collection of five American articles on the exhibit (in America), four colour prints of artifacts with some historical background printed on the reverse sides, a three page “Backgrounder” with information about the exhibit, and a pair of chopsticks.

²⁰RBCM, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, *Empires Beyond the Great Wall* (n.p. : n.p., 1995). The information is from the colour print of the gold-gilded bronze funerary mask.

it informs visitors that the show is about the “heritage” of Genghis Khan. The “Backgrounder,” on the other hand, erases pre-Genghis Khan empires, and the exhibit becomes a show on Genghis Khan’s empire.

the Empires exhibit showcases the art and culture of the Mongolian Empire--the largest empire in human history. The Mongolian Empire was created through the brilliant, but ruthless exploits of Genghis Khan. The exhibit illustrates the way in which Khan’s exploits lead to the creation of a sophisticated civilization spanning the entire Asian continent, in which art and culture flourished.²¹

In this excerpt, the history of Mongol empires begins with Genghis Khan’s rule, and the show is about the civilization that comes after his “exploits.” This promotion of the show, through the blatant fabrication and exaggeration of Genghis Khan, makes one wonder why RBCM bothers to change the original title of the show if the rest of its advertisements continue to emphasize his prominence in the show.

In another passage from the “Backgrounder,” RBCM fails to differentiate between contemporary and ancient Mongolians. It says that “the modern-day image of the Mongols is one of superb horsemen and fierce warriors, and Khan is remembered as a brutal but brilliant military strategist.”²² This comment can be read in two ways because the word “Mongols” is non-specific, without a time frame. First, if we assume that the “Mongols” are contemporary Mongols, then the comment collapses centuries of Mongolian history by creating a parallel between contemporary Mongols and Genghis Khan. Contemporary Mongols are perceived as “superb horsemen and fierce warriors,” reminiscent of the “brutal but brilliant” Khan. This description traps contemporary Mongols in the image of Genghis Khan, timelessly amusing in their old, barbaric ways, ancient in their lack of development, and hopelessly dead as the subject of evolving people and culture. Metaphorically, contemporary Mongolians are like artifacts, static and obsolete, but interesting in a western museum. On the other hand, if the “Mongols” are from the past, then the writer should have

²¹RBCM, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, “Backgrounder,” *Empires Beyond the Great Wall* visitor package (Victoria: RBCM, 1995) 1.

²²RBCM, “Backgrounder” 2.

used a less homogenizing term than “Mongols” to describe Mongols in Genghis Khan’s time. A time frame would indicate the kind of Mongols the writer is talking about, thus not assuming that all Mongols are undifferentiated and unchanging.

The misunderstanding of Mongolians, as discussed in chapter one, is largely influenced by the promotions of violence in Mongolian culture, and it is also evident in RBCM’s advertising. One of the five American articles in the package, for example, says that “the Mongols were a barbaric people who swept out of the unknown reaches of the Asian steppe, a warmongering race whose only talents were for rape, murder and pillage.” However, according to the article, although “the Mongols were indeed good at all [these destructive acts],” new archaeological discoveries in Inner Mongolia prove that Genghis Khan was a “supreme military strategist and talented politician, as adept at forging alliances and gathering intelligence as he was at wreaking terror and havoc.” Furthermore, the “Mongol civilization he ruled had a rich cultural and artistic heritage that went back at least 6,000 years.”²³ These comments show that archaeologists find signs of intelligence in Mongolian culture an issue. However, these signs are only interesting and unique because violence has played a central role in the understanding of the Mongolian civilization.²⁴ Mongolians’ appreciation for finer things, therefore, is an unusual element.

Other examples of new discovery can be found in the “Backgrounder.”

While Khan’s conquests were bloodthirsty and terrifying, they also led to the creation of an empire that spanned Asia and much of Europe. The ensuing period of peace and stability allowed art and culture to flourish and the exhibit is evidence

²³Michael E. Lemonick, “The Khan Collection,” *Time* 26 Sept. 1994: 66.

²⁴It is important to note that what is considered beautiful derives from a western standard of aesthetic, one that judges if the artifacts are sufficiently beautiful or worthy of museum representation. In “Selling Empires,” Barkley compares Mongolian artifacts to objects bought in “Birks” (Gordaneer, “Selling” 10), and Laird Taylor (the owner of “Peoples of Mongolia Now” at “Empires”) says that “the level of artistic creativity in Mongolia is equal to that of any other former socialist country in Europe” (Gordaneer, “Beyond the Great Wall, then and now,” *Monday Magazine* 30 Mar - 5 Apr, 1995: 1). These comments show that Mongolian art is judged from a western perspective.

that the Mongols prized beauty and form.²⁵

Also,

Best remembered for his own brutality and brilliant military strategies, Genghis Khan was heir to a tradition of ruthless conquest and cultural splendour only beginning to be understood. Recent archaeological discoveries along China's northern frontier reveal the Mongols to be a people who prized beauty and form as much as strength and mobility.²⁶

In these examples, the writers never question why it takes archaeologists so long to discover the different aspects of Mongolian culture, or why in the first place there is any doubt concerning their intelligence and taste for beauty. Ironically, the aesthetic taste of European colonizers, who destroyed many significant cultural sites and artworks of the people they conquered, is never questioned. The ironic difference between the way we perceive the Mongolians and the European colonizers stems from the fact that Europeans have established themselves as the signifier of civilization, and civilization entails aesthetic refinement. Nevertheless, the above excerpts show that "recent archaeological discoveries" reveal more about the archaeologists' limited perception of Mongolians than about the Mongolian culture or nature.

Like the articles we studied in chapter one, RBCM uses Genghis Khan as a marketing device to stimulate interest and investment. In the visitor package, three out of four colour prints introduce the show with the history of Genghis Khan's conquests. Similarly, four out of five articles from America do the same. Overall, the history of Genghis Khan dominates the visitor package, showing that RBCM's marketing ploy is similar to, if not directly responsible for, the media's misleading promotions. RBCM's marketing technique perpetuates Genghis Khan as the all-encompassing Mongolian figure, whose history subsumes centuries of history and cultural evolutions before and after his reign. His sensationalised life, too, is used as the blueprint for all Mongolians, colouring the way we see the future generations of Mongolians. The danger in this is that our judgement of them

²⁵RBCM, "Backgrounder" 2.

²⁶The excerpt is taken from RBCM's colour print of a Qidan Apsaras gold statue.

as “barbaric,” “fierce,” and expansionistic, affects the way we think of ourselves in contrast to them, and the way they are treated politically in the world.

The All-Encompassing Mongolia

RBCM makes the Chinese population a target in its marketing strategy when it declares 1995 the year of Chinese-Canadian celebration. Like the “hard sell” approach, however, target marketing has its problems. According to museologist Fiona Combe McLean, targeting a certain public sector can create disappointment, because the target group’s

needs and wants may be determined to a certain extent, and reflected in the display and interpretation of the collection. However, in stressing a relationship between the collection and the public, the museum is prey to raising expectations and to disappointing in reality. This can only be avoided if the museum has a sense of the visitor’s and the potential visitor’s expectations and what would meet them.²⁷

Has RBCM shaped “Empires” to fit the Chinese-Canadian context? In its attempt to tailor “Empires” toward Chinese-Canadians, RBCM fails to address a few crucial issues that would have revealed the contrived connection between “Empires” and Chinese-Canadians. For example, it neither explains the connection between the Mongolians and Chinese-Canadians, nor elaborates on the link between the Mongolians and China-Chinese. Adam Kessler, the curator, connects Mongolians with Chinese by claiming that Chinese civilization has roots in southeastern Inner Mongolia.²⁸ Are we to assume that the show is a celebration of Chinese-Canadians’ ancestry? According to David Chuenyan Lai, geography professor at the University of Victoria, Mongolians and Chinese are “[two] distinct civilizations.” Historically, the Chinese (Han people) referred to the Mongolians as “barbarians,”²⁹ and they

²⁷Fiona Combe McLean, “Marketing in museums: a contextual analysis,” *Museum Management*, ed. Kevin Moore (New York: Routledge, 1994) 239

²⁸Brown n pag

²⁹Lai, *Land 7*

built the Great Wall to keep out them out³⁰ Nevertheless, even if an ancient link exists between Mongolians and Chinese, Chinese xenophobia and Mongolians' ethnic status in China do not celebrate their connection, but accentuate their differences. Therefore, when RBCM presents the connection between Mongolians and Chinese as an undebatable fact, it ignores the historical, social, and political differences between them.

Barkley (RBCM's executive director) problematizes the ancestral explanation when he says that the show addresses British Columbians with an "Asian heritage"³¹ "An Asian heritage" involves more than one culture and race. His comment broadens the scope of RBCM's marketing target group, thus increasing the disparity between the show and the cultures it means to address. Furthermore, it homogenizes different cultural groups. Just as RBCM develops Genghis Khan to encompass Mongolian history, culture, and people, it also develops Mongolian culture to cover Mongolians, China-Chinese, Chinese-Canadians, and other Asiatic groups. By subsuming different minority groups under a general, all-encompassing category, RBCM shows its imperialist neglect toward the specificities of other cultures in its attempt to address too many target groups. Furthermore, its attempt to address the Chinese-Canadians through "Empires" is a missed target that lacks "reference" to the society it addresses. Unfortunately, the less knowledgeable the audience is about Mongolian history, or aware of the limitation of representation, the more likely they will be to accept the museum's interpretation of Mongolian culture and history as fact. Other cultures subsumed in the "Mongolian category," too, will be misunderstood. If, according to McLean, the success and importance of the collection depend on the value the public gives it, how do the visitors value an exhibit that is misleading in its promises and representations of other cultures?

Before we move onto the next section, it is important to note that other events during the year offer more direct and diverse perspectives to Chinese-Canadian culture. For example, the "Golden Mountain" show (September 30 to October 1, 1995) in Richmond

³⁰Lai, *Land* 14.

³¹*Alberta Report* n. pag

presents information on the Richmond Chinese community and the history of Chinese-Canadians in BC. Although the show offers a dominantly idealistic view of Chinese immigrants and their “Canadian dream,” it deals directly with the Chinese-Canadian subject. The Richmond Chinese community and various Chinese associations offer the dominant displays, performances, and workshops. Although RBCM contributes financially by producing the show and offering its modest collection of Chinese immigrant artifacts, its effort is limited. For example, in contrast to the extensive advertising of “Empires,” the “Golden Mountain” is not adequately advertised. I had to call five different sources to get the address to the show. These sources include the RBCM, Victoria Tourism, Vancouver Tourism, and (information line), and the Richmond Chinese Cultural Centre (these sources are placed in order of my search). RBCM claims that the information is misplaced from the renovation and relocation of its offices. One assumes that RBCM would have the information ready, or advertise adequately so that people in Victoria have access to the show.

RBCM’s advertising for “Golden Mountain” fails to attract people outside the Chinese-community, thus undermining its goal to “honour the contributions of the Chinese Canadians and make the general public more aware of the art, culture, history and contributions of Chinese-Canadians in [BC].”³² The dominant Chinese audience at “Golden Mountain” seems to imply that either the “general public” are uninterested or they are not informed of the event. Presumably, the show is advertised locally, targeting mostly the Chinese community. The ironic outcome is “Golden Mountain” becomes a show that offers Chinese people the opportunity to celebrate their own history and presence in Canada. On the other hand, “Empires,” which does not deal directly with the Chinese-Canadian theme, draws an international crowd from its extensive and aggressive advertising campaign. The different treatment of both shows seems to imply that the Chinese-Canadian celebration is used to spice up “Empires” without RBCM’s intention to dedicate itself thoroughly to the

³²This quote is taken from the pamphlet *Golden Mountain: A Chinese-Canadian Celebration*, produced by RBCM in cooperation with the Chinese Cultural Centre (Richmond Office), the Richmond Museum, and the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Human Rights. Other contributors include the Richmond Chinese Community Society, Richmond Library, Cultural Centre, Art Gallery and Art Centre.

theme. The responsibility of implementing the celebration is relegated to the Chinese community.

Why is there limited investment in the “Golden Mountain?” My final example perhaps offers an explanation. When asked to describe the “Golden Mountain,” Phillips (RBCM’s advertising manager) said that it would be like a “carnival” and a “flea market.”³³ Phillips’ choice of words shows a reductive and dismissive attitude toward the show. The show’s important cultural impact is not acknowledged. The word “flea market” denigrates the show by associating Chinese-Canadian culture with the sales of second-hand goods, and one wonders if the second-hand value of the Chinese-Canadian culture indicates its worth in an Occidental market. The word “carnival,” on the other hand, emphasizes the bizarre and out-of-ordinary quality of Chinese-Canadian culture. Phillips’ comment not only devalues the Chinese celebration, it also shows a limited understanding of the show, its purpose and significance. Phillips’ attitude seems to match RBCM’s general lack of interest in the show. Perhaps this lack resulted from the preconceived negligible value of the show and the way Chinese-Canadian culture is perceived and measured in BC.

The Commercialization of The Death Mask

According to the “Backgrounder,” “the Death Mask is a signature piece from [Empires],” presumably chosen because it “is representative of the stunning beauty and craftsmanship of the exhibit’s [two hundred] artifacts.” However, I would like to entertain two other reasons. First, the Death Mask, with its implication of destruction, complements the dominant tropes of violence and marketing strategies used on the Mongolian culture and history. Second, according to “Selling Empire,” Genghis Khan’s “big name” is not enough to attract a crowd, “there has to be glamour, history, expensive *objets d’art*. After all, who wants to spend a sunny afternoon looking at a bunch of old pots?”³⁴ The shiny gilded Death

³³Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995.

³⁴Gordaneer, “Selling” 9. In this formula, artifacts are devalued as old and insignificant unless they are expensive. This reductive and elitist formula (big name + expensive artifacts = successful exhibit) portrays the audience and the museum as

Mask, as a result, advertises the amount of wealth in the exhibit. However, these readings add to the decontextualized reading that RBCM offers: they undermine the mask's historical and cultural meanings by highlighting its formal attribute (beauty) and commercial/marketing significance.

According to the "Backgrounder," the Death Mask in the show is eight hundred years old, found on a body wrapped in gold and silver wire mesh.

There is still some uncertainty about the purpose of the death masks, but they may have been placed over the face of deceased in the belief they would preserve facial features for eternity. Alternatively, they may have been employed to aid the deceased in travelling from the world of the living to the world of the dead.³⁵

The information does not adequately contextualize the mask. Unearthed and displayed in a glass box, the Death Mask loses its initial symbolic role and purpose. Ironically, a fundamental aspect of museum practices involves the excavation of burial sites and the removal of objects from their origin. Therefore, to criticize the displacement of the Death Mask is equivalent to questioning museums' collecting system, and calling them sacrilegious and unethical. Nevertheless, RBCM has taken the displacement of the death mask further by mass producing the image as merchandise and food.

RBCM's collaboration with the Empress Hotel and Huddassah-wizzo Jewish group, for example, transforms the image of the Death Mask into a chocolate sculpture. According to Phillips, the idea for the chocolate sculpture originated from the Huddassah-wizo Jewish group. The group holds an annual chocolate sundae event at the Empress Hotel. In 1995, it wants to associate itself with the exhibit and to link their culture with the museum and the "Chinese year of celebration."³⁶ Why does Huddassah-wizo wish to associate themselves with a Mongolian exhibit, or to link themselves to the Chinese celebration? Perhaps they

materialistic and superficial, making one wonder if only cultures with famous personalities and "expensive *objets d'art*" are worthy of museums' representation and the public's acknowledgement.

³⁵RBCM, "Backgrounder" 1.

³⁶Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995.

hope to support the Chinese celebration, but the dominant trend seems to convey that the business opportunity is too tempting--after all, many local businesses like Roger's Chocolates and Murchies join in the business venture by marketing the "Empires" chocolates and tea.

Having undergone various entrepreneurs' creative manipulations, the Death Mask metamorphoses from a culturally and historically significant funerary mask to a western commercial gimmick. The mask's decontextualization and commercial transformation show how RBCM turns "Empires," thus the Mongolian artifacts, culture, history, and people, into commodities. The destruction of the Mongolian subject through commodification is also evident in the consumption of the Death Mask chocolates. These chocolates are made in the image of the Death Mask--an image that (mass produced and commercialized) no longer holds any historical or social context. Their lack of signification, perhaps, explains why it is possible for people to eat chocolate Death Masks without finding them unappetising or sacrilegious--after all, under RBCM's manipulation, the image of the Death Mask represents nothing but beauty.

In addition to the literal and symbolic devouring of Mongolian history and culture through the consumption of the Death Mask, the purpose and symbolism surrounding the chopsticks (in the visitor package) are further indications of cultural consumption as annihilation. According to Phillips, the chopstick is a "promotional piece" that allows the RBCM to give something affordable to the visitors: it is like "a piece of culture to give away." Phillips' comment refers to a "piece" of Mongolian culture as a "flavour,"³⁷ as though the whole experience of going to the exhibit is a metaphoric culinary experience. The Mongolian display, then, is like food, offering a piece ("flavour") of itself through the chopsticks. This configuration reduces Mongolian culture to a culinary entertainment that offers immediate gratification by tasting and owning a piece of it in the form of a pair of chopsticks. Furthermore, Phillips says that the chopsticks come with instructions, and

³⁷Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995.

visiting students, in particular, enjoy learning how to use them³⁸ Phillips' overall reductionist approach to the Mongolian culture makes one imagine the culture to be highly accessible, and as easy to understand and master as learning to use a pair of chopsticks³⁹

The commercialization of the Death Mask and the objectification of Mongolian culture show that RBCM has turned "Empires" into a consumerist entertainment, where a culture can be experienced through its objectification and consumption. The experience of a culture, therefore, becomes a kind of ownership, experienced from the museum's and the visitors' point of view. This ownership reflects an imperialist/colonialist power over its colonized subject, and it is, perhaps, best expressed by the title "Selling Empires." The title of the article implies that the museum is the merchant of the exhibit, thus framing their relationship within a business and colonial setup that glorifies the colonizer's (as represented by RBCM) power to possess and to use the products of its colonies (Inner Mongolia and China). Although the article creates this power structure, it reflects RBCM's power to reconstruct the Death Mask and to offer the Mongolian culture as though it owns it. In "Empires," the Mongolian subject is used as a commercial and marketing ploy, whereby it loses its symbolic role when consumed, worn (as jewellery), and circulated as symbols of beauty and as material goods. Unfortunately, the power to reconstruct the other entails the power to consume and to destroy it.

Museum or Entertainment Business

The Mongolian culture, thus controlled and shaped by the RBCM, and described by Phillips, has market and entertainment values. The article in the *Business Examiner*, "Genghis Khan beckons," for example, promotes "Empires" as an invitation to "business opportunities." In the article, the show and Genghis Khan's name are equivalent to a successful business investment, because the exhibit "represents a unique and powerful

³⁸Phillips, personal interview, 12 Sept. 1995.

³⁹Steven Scobie pointed out that the chopstick is often seen as the stereotypical emblem of Chinese culture, along with the clichés and jokes on westerners' struggle with the foreign cutlery.

sponsorship opportunity for business wanting to reach the estimated three-quarter million visitors who will see the exhibition”⁴⁰ Obviously, many businesses are attracted to the show’s selling power, but how many of them are interested in the Mongolian display or the Chinese year of celebration?

Although RBCM has successfully attracted many business opportunists and visitors, it also risks tarnishing its own reputation. According to Moore, “a museum’s integrity may be eroded by advertising that hypes an exhibition so much that disappointment is almost inevitable, or by advertising, not reviewed by a subject matter expert, that gives inaccurate information, or even a message contrary to that which the exhibition it supports intends to convey.”⁴¹ RBCM’s integrity is challenged by the marketing failures that Moore mentions. For example, RBCM inflates the exhibit with sensationalistic and deceptive advertising, it fails to revise and edit the contradictory historical information (in the visitor’s package and other advertising), and it uncritically constructs a connection between different cultures

According to McLean, “the contents of museums, by virtue of being there, should to a large degree speak for themselves” Therefore, “marketing is dependent on the collection which is available to it. It cannot create fantasy”⁴² However, RBCM seems to believe that it has to sensationalise the show by highlighting Genghis Khan’s role more than it deserves. Does this reveal RBCM’s attitude toward the content of the exhibit--namely, that the show is not exciting and marketable on its own? Does it show that RBCM believes that visitors want an exhibit that is more enticing than the collection promises? Nevertheless, RBCM’s attitude toward its collections and visitors is seemingly market-driven. According to museologist Peter J. Ames,

a market-driven museum will focus most sharply on what its contemporary market wants and, to a lesser extent, what that market, as opposed to education experts, thinks it needs. From a market point of view, the more the merrier, from a mission

⁴⁰“Genghis Khan Beckons,” *Business Examiner* Jan. 1995: A3

⁴¹Moore 17.

⁴²McLean 242.

perspective, when an audience becomes a crowd, educational potential declines.⁴³

RBCM is becoming more of a market-driven museum that tries to give what its “contemporary market” wants. However, as mentioned above, it fails to satisfy the market by promising more than it can deliver. The article “Genghis Khan(t)” shows how a visitor is disappointed with RBCM’s market-driven approach. It complains that the museum draws too many people to make the experience educational and enjoyable.

after my 40-minutes of jostling elbow-to-elbow with 400 other onlookers, straining to decipher the tomes of incomprehensible curatorial notes spread on the walls, I left with the distinct feeling that the exhibit was nothing more than a line-up for the Gift Shop.

According to the excerpt, besides the “incomprehensible curatorial notes,” the crowded space makes the experience an unpleasant struggle. The author is also disappointed because Phillips says that the exhibit will be “bigger [than] the Commonwealth Games.” To this he says,

What a rip. To think Tourism Victoria spent their entire marketing budget on this money grab by the museum. If I were a tourist from San Francisco, up to see the Genghis Khan, I’d be mad as hell. The only thing bigger than the Commonwealth Games is the size of the shovel the museum used to pile the promotions.⁴⁴

The author sounds upset at having been cheated and deprived of an enjoyable experience. What he experienced is a money making venture that leaves him dissatisfied.

Another article, “Indiana Jones-type excitement it’s not just doses of facts,” shows another form of disappointment with the hype surrounding the show. In the article, Robert Amos reviews two books that are published for “Empires.” *Empires Beyond the Great Wall* by Adam T. Kessler and *Land of Genghis Khan: The Rise*

⁴³Peter J. Ames, “A challenge to modern museum management: meshing mission and market,” *Museum Management*, ed. Kevin Moore (New York: Routledge, 1994) 16

⁴⁴Stephen White, “Genghis Khan(t),” *Oak Bay Star* 20 Apr. 1995. N. pag.

and Fall of Nation-States in China's Northern Frontiers by David Chuenyan Lai⁴⁵ Amos, who represents the entertainment-seeking target group, believes that the books do not live up to the sensational advertising on the show. For example, Amos calls Kessler's book "unpromising material," because "the press release promises Indiana Jones-type excitement and hoards of golden treasure." It fails to offer any "stirring descriptions [or] anecdotes accompanied by photographs of the region." In fact, it

provides bracing doses of historical fact alternating with flat descriptions of the curious artifacts. . . . A certain historical density is to be expected--Kessler has to unscramble a galaxy of nomadic tribes constantly on the move, who left little 'material culture' and no written history. Yet recounting this endless political flux, a series of unfamiliar names ranging across unknown territories, makes for dry reading.

In other words, the book is unappealing because it is too historical and academic for audiences who are psyched up to expect Hollywood fantasy. According to the article, "most people who pay \$32.95 for this attractive volume will leave it on the coffee table unread." Likewise, Lai's book, *The Land of Genghis Khan*, also meets with the same fate. Amos deems the book "unreadable" because of its dense prose. The article concludes that "University students may be assigned this book, but no one will ever read it with delight."⁴⁶

Both books, as a result, are guilty of being too dry and academic for the public. Amos' criticism shows how hard it is for museum to satisfy a wide range of audiences. According to Canadian ethnologist Dr. Marie-Françoise Guédon, one writes differently for an exhibit and for an academic crowd. She says that when writing for the audience of an exhibit,

instead of writing for other specialists, one writes 'for the public.' According to most guidelines, the public's intellectual level oscillates between ten and twelve years of age. So 'Use

⁴⁵I consider these books to be part of RBCM's marketing ploy, because they promote the collection (Kessler's) and history (Lai's) of "Empires." Furthermore, they are distributed beyond the museum.

⁴⁶Robert Amos, "Indiana Jones-type excitement it's not just doses of facts," *Times Colonist* 26 Mar. 1995. N. pag.

simple words, . . . 'Use short sentences ' (Do not play with abstract concepts) Everything one wants to convey has to be presented in statements, no question marks, no nuances . . . these are apt to confuse the visitor.

Guédon adds that "one must streamline one's production so that it can be swallowed 'on the go.' . . . The public does not want to be taught, so one has to be catchy, emphasize the spectacular."⁴⁷ These points discourage one to believe that museums have any educational value--at least not at a level that exceeds "ten and twelve years of age." However, they clarify why Kessler's book fails to attract readers. Instead of offering spectacular details of Indiana-Jones type adventures and discoveries that are "catchy" and, no doubt, easy to consume, Kessler's book is educational, dry, and historical. Nevertheless, what does this say about the people who go to the museum? Do they really look for what is easy to "swallow on the go"? Do they seek entertainment more than intellectually stimulating and challenging experience? If the answer is yes, then, do we need a museum?

According to Emma Bunker, a research consultant with the Denver Art Museum's Asian Art Department, "the catalogue [written by Kessler] was not adequately edited and juried . . . [T]here are spelling mistakes and inaccuracies . . . The end result is that the catalogue, for scholars, has problems."⁴⁸ Bunker seems to expect the readers of Kessler's book to be more academic. Therefore, the book's mistakes prove dissatisfactory for academicians. Kessler's book seems to be rejected by both laymen/women and academics. One wonders if Kessler can ever please any group of audiences, or if the museum can ever find a balance between its role as an entertainer or an educator. Perhaps there is no answer to these questions, because everyone expects different things from a museum, and every visitor has different levels of education and experiences. However, McLean offers a suggestion as to how museums may decrease their chance of disappointing: "the problem for the museum profession is not how to enhance the experience of the public, but how to

⁴⁷Guédon is quoted from Michael M. Ames' *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* 33.

⁴⁸Quote from Alisa Gordaneer's "Song of Dissent," *Monday Magazine* 2-8 Mar 1995: 13.

ascertain what that experience is ”⁴⁹

Unfortunately, RBCM does not seem to know what kind of experience “Empires” should offer. It forces the show to provide too many varying experiences for different target groups. Throughout this chapter, I have taken up the argument that museums have to market themselves to stay financially stable and competitive in a consumer society. In Moore’s words, museums have to market themselves as “sources of entertaining education ”⁵⁰ Although this view is widely accepted,⁵¹ McLean questions the validity of using the word “competition” to describe the reason for museum marketing. She asks “with what are museums competing? Do museums regard their public in terms of popularity?”⁵² She believes that marketing is necessary to maintain museums, but “there is a fatal flaw in commercialization of museums. Unlike some other leisure organizations, museums are not self-supporting. They are charitable institutions, and as such are not profit-making. Except in rare circumstances, they are incapable of making a profit ”⁵³ In other words, since museums are “not operating on equal terms with commercial organization, they should market themselves differently ”⁵⁴ McLean’s opinion is appealing because it offers a common sense approach to differentiating museums from commercial enterprises. Furthermore, she reminds us that historically museums

were not originally established to make money, nor is their current *raison d’être* income generation. That can be left to commercial leisure organizations, or until the spectre of privatization becomes a reality. ‘Value’ in museums is the

⁴⁹McLean 239

⁵⁰Ames 12

⁵¹See also Andy Leon Harney’s “Money changers in the temple: Museums and the financial mission” and Alf Hatton’s “Current issues in museum training in the United Kingdom,” *Museum Management*, ed. Kevin Moore (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁵²McLean 233

⁵³McLean 243

⁵⁴McLean 244

value of the collection, manifested in its value to the public in terms of their experience. Value is not financially driven in museums but experience-driven.⁵⁵

Although the “value” and “raison d’être” of museums are different from commercial organizations, many museums believe that financial stability depends on using good marketing mechanisms. Despite what McLean says, many museums see themselves in “competition” with other commercial ventures, and they will adjust themselves to stay competitive.

However, this adjustment must keep the museum’s mission and market in balance. After all, “blockbusters” may attract visitors, but they do not guarantee their return. Besides, histories and cultures should not depend on invention and exaggeration to appeal; they are interesting on their own terms. If museums need to fabricate history and culture to attract visitors, they will probably do better by reinventing themselves into a different type of organization.

⁵⁵McLean 243

Chapter Three: Invested Illusions

In chapter two we studied how an imperialist interpretive repertoire orchestrates the RBCM's presentation of Mongolian culture and history in the promotional literature for "Empires." This chapter will look at RBCM's Special Publication, *Ring of Time*, to see how an imperialist interpretive repertoire paints the European imperialists in a positive light, thus rationalizing their colonization as human progress. Initially, I intended to approach the subject by examining the way RBCM portrays this period in its permanent exhibit. Unfortunately, a fire in the museum forced RBCM to close from February 5 to April 30, 1996. This chapter, therefore, approaches the subject by studying the *Ring of Time*. The book offers an insight to the beginning and making of RBCM, explaining how the permanent collection came about and how it is displayed. This includes the ideological and technical approach to exhibiting the history of European settlers in BC. The book offers a study of the socio-political framework that continues to shape RBCM's imperialist interpretive repertoires. Therefore, even though it was published in 1985, its content is still relevant today in the way RBCM interprets the history of First Nations Peoples and Mongolians from an imperialist perspective. This is not to deny that some changes have been made, but the underlying governing ideology is still predominantly imperialistic.¹

In *Ring of Time*, the writer Peter Corley-Smith does not describe the Europeans' infringement of First Nations Peoples' right and territory as acts of imperialism and colonialism. Evidently, tropes of expansionism, violence, and invasion, which are commonly used to describe the Mongolians, are non-existent in a repertoire aimed at promoting the Europeans as peaceful explorers. In this chapter, we will study how RBCM's interpretations of other cultures and itself reveal a double standard in representations, and how these representations uphold certain values and concepts of reality. In Helen Coxall's

¹For more information on the relationship between the First Nations Peoples and RBCM on an exhibiting level, look at Ames' *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (chapter 6-8) and James Clifford's "Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections," *Exhibiting Cultures* (212-254). Clifford's essay offers an analysis of the First Nations Peoples display as discussed in the *Ring of Time*.

examination of museums' texts and their meanings, she says that "our choice of language reflects current socio-political perspective as well as our own way of seeing"² She believes that writers should choose "evaluative words to qualify meanings" and to be careful of what they leave out in their writing. After all, "such choices have caused the writer unconsciously to create rather than to relate history"³ In the *Ring of Time*, Corley-Smith assumes that his readers and the museum visitors are white people, and he tells the history of BC from a white perspective. His choice of perspective and audience, no doubt, reveal the "current socio-political perspective" of the museum and the dominant racial makeup of the funding and governing bodies. According to Corley-Smith, *Ring of Time* "is intended to provide the reader with an insight into the 'personality' of the [RBCM]"⁴ This "personality" as we will see is imperialist, and its self-preservation techniques include the selective look at history and the confirmation of white hegemony.

The Reason for a Museum

Why are museums established? In the *Ring of Time*, we learn that besides RBCM's mission toward education and research, it is also originated for national and provincial investments. Corley-Smith introduces the beginning of RBCM by quoting a document sent to the Queen's representative in 1886, petitioning the need for a provincial museum. First, the letter states the museum's mission toward preservation and the public's education:

It has long been felt desirable that a Provincial Museum should be established in order to preserve specimens of the natural products and Indian Antiquities and Manufactures of the Province and to classify and exhibit the same for the information of the public

The letter also says that "if a centre for investigation be afforded, the interests of that science will be advanced, and the attention and cooperation of naturalists of other countries will be

²Helen Coxall, "How Language means: an alternative view of museums text," *Museum Languages*, ed. Gaynor Kavanagh (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991) 88

³Coxall 89

⁴Corley-Smith 3

gained.” Besides the desire for increased international recognition, the following appeals also suggest national interest

It is a source of general regret that objects connected with the ethnology of the country are being yearly taken away in great numbers to the enrichment of other museums and private collections while no adequate means are provided for their retention in the province. Limited as such articles are in quantity their loss is frequently irreparable, and, when once removed from the locality of their production, their scientific value and utility to the country are greatly lessened.

The letter shows an urgency to keep the country’s ethnological resources within the province because the articles’ values decrease when removed from their origin. Ironically, the very act of displaying any articles in a museum entails the articles’ decontextualization (removal from their origin). Therefore, the point made is perhaps just as concerned with keeping the articles for the country’s own benefit as saving them from losing their meaningful “locality” or “scientific value.”

The writer also emphasizes the need for preservation by creating a scenario of national loss and exigency. He says that resources are “yearly taken away in great numbers to the enrichment of other museums and private collection.” Maximizers such as “yearly” and “great numbers” exaggerate without giving any exact calculation, thus building a sense of urgency through the lack of definitive information. For example, we do not know how long has “yearly” been (could be the last three or last twenty years), and how much is involved in the vague quantifier, “in great numbers” (what a person considers as “great numbers” could mean little for another). The word “enrichment,” too, has a similar function in the sense that we do not know what kinds of “enrichment” these private collectors and museums are enjoying, but we do know that the word implies something beneficial to others but impoverishing for BC.

The reason for maintaining one’s resources within the country shows a nationalistic concern, as though the loss of one’s property is equivalent to the loss of one’s identity and political and economic power. In “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” Carol Duncan says that

the French Revolution created the first truly modern art museum when it designated the Louvre Palace a national museum Already, public art museums were regarded as evidence of political virtue, indicative of a government that provided the right things for its people By the middle of the nineteenth century, almost every Western nation would boast a national museum or art gallery.⁵

Duncan uses art museums as her subject, but the issues she raises apply to all museums in the sense that the specificities of the collection is unimportant, but what the museum as an institute signifies is. Museums are symbols of national identity, pride and advancement in the West. Duncan says that non-western countries have also adopted this value. As a result, “Western-style art museums are now deployed as a means of signalling to the West that one is a reliable political ally, imbued with proper respect for and adherence to Western symbols and values.”⁶ With “Empires,” we can see the political and economic powers the North American museums have. As the negotiator for North America, Kessler represents the legitimizing power of the West. He “persuade[s] top officials that the show [will] not only help other countries understand Chinese history a little better, but [may] also encourage economic partnerships.”⁷ Kessler uses international recognition and economical partnership as incentives to the collaboration.

The power the West has in offering these possibilities, however, does not end there, for the museums also have the power of interpretation. According to Duncan, “there has been much concern with how Western museums represent other cultures--how museum displays of ‘primitive,’ Third World, or non-Western art often misrepresent or even invent foreign cultures for what are ultimately political purposes.”⁸ In the case of “Empires” and *Ring of Time*, the power structure between the displayer and the displayed is evident in the

⁵Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed Kevin Moore (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) 88

⁶Duncan 88-89

⁷Gordaneer, “Selling” 1

⁸Duncan 89

imperialist translations of these cultures, and how these cultures are used to advance their own political and financial interest⁹

Nevertheless, RBCM, like China, also has a political and economic agenda. For example, as mentioned in the last chapter, RBCM hopes to increase its international reputation and its revenues. By showing “Empires,” RBCM proves to the world that it is worthy of international recognition and investments because it is the only Canadian museum entertaining the show, and it is one among three other North American museums with the privilege. Therefore, if RBCM was never considered on the same level as the American museums, it is now. As a result, besides legitimizing China as a worthy “ally,” and promising it possible economic partnership, RBCM also establishes an international recognition for itself.

Although the letter to the Queen’s representative shows that museums protect the country’s resources, achieve international recognition through research, and educate the public, it also reveals that museums are established to answer nationalistic concerns. With this in mind, and with the idea that museums symbolize their countries’ political and financial positions in the world, we must ask how museums maintain their function and symbolism, and how they present themselves and other cultures for these purposes. In the following sections, we will see how RBCM achieves these goals by creating history for self-preservation and promotion.

Whose Illusion of Reality?

The chapter “Ring of Time” begins with the section “The Illusion of Reality.” This section praises RBCM’s curators and designers for creating displays where “visitors could no longer distinguish between illusion and reality.”¹⁰ Although the museum sees this as a compliment to its power of interpretation and display arrangement, I believe the lack of

⁹Although we must note that to be displayed in a museum does not mean to have less power than the displayer. However, in cases where the displayed has less political and economic power than the displayer, it is more susceptible to the displayer’s manipulation.

¹⁰Corley-Smith 9.

distinction between “illusion” and “reality” can be a cause for worry. If we simply accept the “illusion” offered by the museum as “reality,” we never question the museum’s interpretation of history and cultures. Although “reality” may not be representable, we should be aware of the values and ideologies invested in every interpretation and illusion. According to Ames, historically “the museum is where you go to compare your own private perceptions of reality with what [is] the accepted and approved, and therefore ‘objective’ view of reality, enshrined within the museum.” However, the museum is not an objective interpreter

the public--or more correctly, the educated classes--came to believe that they had the right to expect that the collections would present and interpret the world in some way consistent with the values they held to be good, with the collective representations they held to be appropriate, and with the view of social reality they held to be true.¹¹

Besides the “educated classes,” the dominant political and economic classes are governing and funding sources that shape the museum’s values, interpretations of collections, and policies. During an interview for “Empires,” Kessler gave an example of how western fascination for Genghis Khan's unknown burial site and the predicted wealth buried in his grave affects excavation interest, financial investments, and what we know of the Mongolian Culture. According to Kessler, the idea of buried treasures “does not fit with [Genghis Khan’s] character or what we know of him historically On the other hand, there are cities in Inner Mongolia that . . . are above ground, . . . from the time of Genghis Khan, . . . where major excavations have not taken place.” Kessler believes that even though it is likely that “one could uncover knowledge about Genghis Khan” in these cities, they are “never given priority because they're not sensational enough.”¹² Therefore, despite what we could find out about Genghis Khan and Mongolian history and culture, specific interest and investment in the sensationalised aspects of Genghis Khan’s life affect what we know. In other words, the financial and ideological investments of museums and funding bodies control what we

¹¹Ames 21

¹²Janelle Dwyer, "Kessler Interview," *The Dragon Uncoils: RBCM Official Program* (Victoria: n.p., 1995) 23.

understand of Contemporary Mongolian culture through their style of collection, interpretation, and display.

Similarly, in *Ring of Time*, the museum's investment in upholding white hegemony seems to shape how it relates history and who it caters to. In *Ring of Time*, Corley-Smith narrates from a white perspective, relating history as it affects the white people. This not only reinforces the dominance of white people, but also the marginality of the First Nations Peoples. For example, he introduces the First Nations Peoples as white peoples' historical reference points. He says the curator "pegged the beginning [of modern history] to the fur trade and exploration era of the 1740s--approximately the time of the first contact between white men and native peoples"¹³ In this sentence, Corley-Smith does not acknowledge First Nations Peoples as active subjects, but as a reference point for white men's initial experience of BC. The selective perspective, no doubt, reveals who is in control of the historical translation, and the perspective's limitation is evident in the sections on First Nations Peoples' pre-white-men history. The first section is called "The 12,000-Year Gap and First Peoples Story." Corley-Smith explains that the title expresses the "gap in our knowledge that occurred between the end of the last ice age and the arrival of the white man." The collective pronoun "our" does not include the First Nations Peoples, unless it assumes that all First Nations Peoples are ignorant of their history before the arrival of the white men. Furthermore, the title and section collapse two distinct categories, the last ice age and the history of First Nations Peoples, into one because they are unknown to the white people.

The next section, "12, 000 Years of Nothing--But Bits of Stone and Bone,"¹⁴ too, seems to emphasize the lack of knowledge on First Nations Peoples' pre-white-men history. I propose two possible readings to this title. The first interprets the title as a value judgement on the objects and history discussed and displayed under the title. The second interprets the title as indicative of the difficulties the museum's staff experienced when transforming the period of "nothing" into something worthy of the museum. First, a title usually functions to

¹³Corley-Smith 14.

¹⁴Corley-Smith 30.

prepare readers to expect what is to come in the section “12,000 Years of Nothing--But Bits of Stone and Bone” seems to signal the readers to expect the display as only a collection of insignificant “stones” and “bones.” Although archaeologists usually see “stones” and “bones” as important indicators of our past and origin, these items are presented particularly unimportant when introduced as “nothing.” Besides the word “nothing,” words like “bits” also have minimizing effect. The word “but,” too, intensifies the “nothingness” of these articles.

Corley-Smith’s choice of words shows his evaluative tone toward these articles. Ironically, as one reads what Corley-Smith includes under this section, the title sounds increasingly demeaning to the articles and the 12,000-years of history. For example, the items in the display include a simulated “archaeological dig, . . . a large selection of Indian artifacts, . . . illustrations of how stone artifacts were created, . . . [and] a replica of an interior Salish winter house.”¹⁵ This collection does not sound like “nothing,” unless we are expected to see it as initially insignificant without the artful manipulation of the museum’s staff. This brings us to the second reading.

The second reading proposes that we read the title as a description of what the museum’s staff has to deal with when representing this period. According to Corley-Smith, the staff faces many limitations considering “the only human history to survive from that era had done so in the form of artifacts collected by archaeologists.” He mentions that “one group [of archaeologists] maintained that any interpretation of social life deriving from artifacts was little more than speculation, the other felt that displaying artifacts without attempting to assess their significance was an exercise in futility.” This “impasse,” however,

was resolved, in part, by the designer and his staff, whose sense of theatre compelled some element of interpretation. The solution was to display the artifacts, giving as much interpretation as was compatible with scientific objectivity, and to dramatize the display by setting up an actual section of an archaeological dig.¹⁶

¹⁵Corley-Smith 31.

¹⁶Corley-Smith 30.

I am not in a position to judge if this approach offers the best interpretation, but this excerpt shows how much power the museum crew has over the interpretation of the artifacts and history. Furthermore, although I propose this reading to counter the first, the artifacts, ironically, remain as “nothing,” subsumed by the attention granted to the museum’s crew. After all, their “sense of theatre” is the genius behind the transformation of “nothing” into something worthy of display.

The titles that we have studied perhaps not only reveal the lack of knowledge concerning First Nations Peoples’ pre-white-men history, but the lack of interest to gauge this “gap.” In contrast to this lack, the sections on European arrivals and settlements celebrate the overflow of resources. Titles like “Unlimited Richness: A Matter of Choice” and “Answers, Answers, Answers” speak of excess. Obviously, these sections are well informed and endowed since the museum is initially funded and created by white people during the colonial period. Nevertheless, one assumes that if First Nations Peoples were more actively involved in the making of RBCM, the “gap” would not be as wide, and their objects in the display would not be translated as “nothing.”¹⁷

According to Ames, museum anthropologists “help to manufacture the objects they study.” They “have always been in the business of reconstructing by means of their own theoretical categories the social constructions of those they study.”¹⁸ Like the anthropologists and curators, Corley-Smith has the power to reconstruct history. He positions the museum’s staff as outsiders to First Nations Peoples, and relates history to a white audience. His choice of audiences not only shapes the way he approaches history, it also creates a racial link among the white museum’s staff, the white ancestors, and the white audiences-- a link that not only emphasizes their shared values and concept of reality, but also the power that comes with their race. For example, when he talks about white ancestors’ sense of superiority, he follows this subject with the speculation that contemporary museum visitors,

¹⁷Ames claims that RBCM’s exhibition involves First Nations Peoples’ participation (67-68), but *Ring of Time* does not reveal this collaboration in its description of RBCM’s setup or its interpretation of First Nations Peoples’ history and culture.

¹⁸Ames 69

too, may have such an attitude.

At the end of the eighteenth century, . . . white men enjoyed a secure sense of their own superiority. The belief that western civilization stood at the apex of human achievement led them to regard North American Indian culture with something not far removed from contempt . . . Yet here, abruptly, in front of the Salish weaving display, visitors, who still harbour some remnants of this false sense of superiority, come face-to-face with a highly developed technical and artistic accomplishment¹⁹

This speculation assumes that the visitors are all white, and that they feel superior like their ancestors. In the beginning of the excerpt, Corley-Smith seems to say that white ancestors felt superior to First Nations Peoples because they did not understand First Nations Peoples, but if that is the case, the excerpt implies that contemporary white people still feel superior today because they are ignorant of First Nations Peoples' culture. This suggests that the gap (of knowledge) between white people and First Nations Peoples' pre-white-men history extends to the present. Corley-Smith's opinion seems to show that RBCM has a limited conception of what visitors understand and feel about First Nations Peoples' culture.

Corley-Smith not only assumes that his (RBCM's) perspective on First Nations Peoples' history and culture is socially and culturally relevant to all its audience, he also mystifies First Nations Peoples' cultures with his interpretation. He says that "the recordings of the songs are played and the masks, glowing eerily in the dim light of the cave, gaze out from its walls. It is a scary experience for nearly all children--and for many adults as well."²⁰ One wonders why is the display "eery" or "scary"--does it reflect an intrinsic characteristic of the culture, or does it reveal the curator's opinion and interpretation of the culture? What kind of children or adults is Corley-Smith talking about? Are we to assume that First Nations Peoples, too, will also be afraid of their own cultural artifacts? Corley-Smith does not clarify what frightens him, thus imposing a reading on the display that could affect the way visitors view the display and the represented culture.

¹⁹Corley-Smith 34.

²⁰Corley-Smith 46.

On the other hand, in his account of how a visitor would experience the actual display in RBCM, James Clifford explains why he found certain aspects of the show “haunting.” The way he contextualizes the “haunting” element offers us a better understanding of his fear. He says that “the visitor walks through a passageway where the walls are covered with large, haunting Native American faces and where a recorded voice details that drastic population decline, cultural crisis, and subsequent struggle simply to survive.”²¹ In Clifford’s description, one could assume that he finds the photos “haunting” because they are accompanied by recorded details of destruction and struggles. Therefore, the display is presumably set up for the viewers to connect the faces with the recorded history of disasters, thus finding them “haunting.” Although Clifford also imposes his experience on “the visitor,” he, nevertheless, gives us a context to understand his sentiment.

Curatorial manipulation and interpretation of the articles, no doubt, affected Corley-Smith’s interpretation of the mask and Clifford’s experience of the “haunting” photos. However, Corley-Smith’s unexplained and essentialist opinion about the mask may reveal a stereotypical image he has of First Nations Peoples’ culture and articles. In another section, he describes totem poles in a similar fashion: “totem poles, by virtue of sheer size, and by the seemingly grotesque imagery of the carvings, have always caught the attention of white people.”²² Corley-Smith’s comment does not acknowledge that other ethnic groups like the First Nations Peoples could be part of the museum’s experience and setup. Furthermore, he does not explain why white people are drawn to the totem poles’ “grotesque” imagery. Corley-Smith’s descriptions of the scary mask and grotesque totem poles seem to sensationalise and mystify First Nations Peoples’ culture through his interpretations of these objects.

Is Corley-Smith’s interpretation shaped by the same phenomena that rendered the Mongolians barbaric conquerors? According to Coxall,

²¹James Clifford, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections,” *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Kevin Moore (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991) 216.

²²Corley-Smith 67.

the issue of evaluative judgement has implications about the responsibility museums have to their public. After all, a museum is not just an information link with these objects and the world. The preferred 'truth' of the objects in a collection is constructed by an exhibition team's selection of objects. . . . [Therefore,] the display and interpretation of collections not only educates and fascinates, but influences and, in some cases, reinforces current stereotypical attitudes.²³

What kind of "preferred 'truth'" are we looking at when First Nations Peoples and Mongolians are presented as mysterious savages? Is the "preferred 'truth'" more inclined to portray these cultures in a way that "reinforces current stereotypical attitudes"? Evidently, western scholars and viewers are amazed to discover that their limited conception of these cultures are faulty. In the *Ring of Time*, First Nations Peoples' skills and cultural development are seen as unexpected phenomena. "as more and more examples of this technical mastery are revealed, this sense of changing perception grows, there is an increasing awareness of a culture that was at once vigorous and surprisingly sophisticated."²⁴ Nevertheless, white people's sense of surprise only shows that they expect little from these cultures.

Unfortunately, these western discoveries are based on the ethnocentric evaluation of these cultures. Western anthropologists judge the validity of First Nations Peoples' culture based on its technical advancement. This validation, nonetheless, is still upheld by the museum as it sets up the display to show that First Nations Peoples are not inferior because they are technically and aesthetically developed. The element of surprise in the anthropologists' discoveries are built into the exhibits, shaping our process of understanding with the way the anthropologists first experienced these cultures. In the First Nations Peoples' display, visitors are meant to realize that First Nations Peoples are actually technically and aesthetically skilled. In "Empires," the precious gold and beautiful objects are meant to create a spectacle out of Mongolians' unexpected aestheticism. These exhibits'

²³Coxall 93

²⁴Corley-Smith 34.

designs do not acknowledge that the viewers may not sympathise or connect with the anthropologists' experiences because they come from different cultural, educational, and socio-political backgrounds. In addition, the museum ironically contradicts the logic behind white peoples' assumed superiority over these cultures by revealing the surprising development of these cultures.

Naturalised Provider: neither an Invader nor a Colonizer

Throughout the *Ring of Time*, we see the museum's power of interpretation in the way Corley-Smith indirectly legitimizes European colonization through his sympathetic presentation of European imperialism. Unlike the Mongolians, whose conquests and invasions are constantly emphasized and placed in the spotlight, European invasions and colonizations are not mentioned. We can see that "history is used as a political source whereby national identities are constructed and forms of power and privilege justified and celebrated"²⁵ The issue I want to address in this section is not that Corley-Smith fails to call imperialism or colonialism by their names (though his lack of acknowledgement denies the existence of European invasion and colonization), but that the museums' underlying imperialist ideology inscribes the presentation he offers. Furthermore, this imperialist investment (in glossing over the violence and abuse of power involved in the European colonization) is unique in its intention to naturalize European (white) power then and now.

Corley-Smith rationalizes European colonization by presenting BC as an "orphan" during the last half of the eighteenth century. He says that the European explorers "felt that they ought to adopt it but nobody wanted to pay for its upkeep"²⁶ This presentation puts the explorers in paternalistic positions with the power to adopt or to pay for child support, thus nullifying the already existing parent, the First Nations Peoples (if we maintain the argument that people parent their land). Furthermore, by calling BC an "orphan," Corley-Smith

²⁵Robert Lumley, Introduction, *The Museum Time-Machine*, ed. Robert Lumley (New York: Routledge, 1990) 2

²⁶Corley-Smith 11-12

assumes that the original “parents” abandoned BC, thus conveniently sanctioning BC’s colonization and adoption. Not surprisingly in this section, he mentions neither the “parents” of BC nor the First Nations Peoples, as though the history of BC started with the European arrival. Nevertheless, by presenting BC as unpossessed by any parent, Corley-Smith justifies Europe’s adoption--in other words, the colonization of BC and its inhabitants as a paternalistic act without malice.

The adoption entails the subjugation of the original “parents,” the First Nations Peoples, into the role of adopted children. As adopted children, the First Nations Peoples were subjected to European laws. According to the Europeans, First Nations Peoples were in a “sort of child-like state of arrested development”²⁷ This description not only adds to the children/parent metaphor, it also shows the reason why Europeans believe that their own advancement gives them the license to control the First Nations Peoples. Nevertheless, even though Corley-Smith establishes that the white men’s arrival offered “enticing manufactured goods-- . . . knives and beads, . . . nails and axes and guns” to the First Nations Peoples, it also brought destruction. In the section entitled “And Then Came the White Man,” he says

for the Indians, the first contacts did not seem ominous. They did not understand how significant the seemingly simple ceremonies of the white men were, in fact, these ceremonies represented a conversion of the Indians into subjects of King George III--with the eventual implication of conversion to Christianity, a religion which turned out to be in conflict with their own.²⁸

The excerpt approaches the subject of imperialism and colonization from an indirect and non-committed way. It says that the First Nations Peoples “did not understand” the white men’s “ceremonies,” but how is ignorance meant to be understood in this context? Does the First Nations Peoples’ ignorance have any significant impact on the chance that they would or would not be subjugated? Furthermore, one wonders if Corley-Smith could have been more specific as to what these “ceremonies” were, or what kind of ideology was behind them. Even though Corley-Smith attempts to show the victimization of First Nations

²⁷Corley-Smith 33.

²⁸Corley-Smith 40.

Peoples, his presentation is limited and superficial. He fails to address First Nations Peoples' subjugation in context with imperialism, and what has become of the "ceremonies." One wonders if the "ceremonies" belong to an isolated past, or have they metamorphosized into different forms of government that still exist to control the First Nations Peoples.

The negative European impact, according to Corley-Smith, seems to come down to misplaced good intentions. For example, he says that the missionaries banned the potlatch because they "saw in this ceremony some elements of idolatry, worse still, their deeply instilled Puritan ethic was affronted."²⁹ Nonetheless, even though the ban almost destroyed First Nations Peoples' culture, Corley-Smith maintains that the action of the missionaries were "well-meant." In Corley-Smith's presentation, he shows that the contact between the white men and the First Nations Peoples is "a disturbing litany, portrayed in this instance without bitterness but with a good deal of sadness."³⁰ This sentence is paradoxical in the sense that the museum cannot present the history with "bitterness" if it adopts a white perspective. Corley-Smith's overall tone seems to imply that the Europeans had no bad designs on the First Nations Peoples. Unfortunately, their "well-meant" laws were destructive, but the past is the past, they can only look back at it with "sadness" now. However, is the imperial ideology behind the European domination a historical phenomenon, or does it still exist on different levels and guises, museologically and textually governing our perception? After all, as Lianne McLarty suggest, isolating oppression to the past is a way to deny its existence in the present.³¹

Corley-Smith never names the underlying ideology and practice behind the white men's destructive acts, nor does he acknowledge that these ideologies and events have present and future implications on the First Nations Peoples. His writing style, nevertheless, shows that imperialism still exists to shape history and our concept of others. Evidently, in the *Ring of Time* we do not see the same tropes of violence and conquest used on the

²⁹Corley-Smith 43

³⁰Corley-Smith 40

³¹Private conversation.

European “explorers” as we do with the Mongolians. The double standard reveals that colonization is viewed differently depending on the racial makeup of the colonizer and the colonized. In *Ring of Time*, we see that the history between the First Nations Peoples and the European settlers involves a different set of vocabulary that promotes, at its worst, a “sad” (not antagonizing) history between the cultures. Therefore, as much as the violent trope works as an imperialist tool to reduce the Mongolians to barbarians, the positive presentation of European arrivals also works as an imperialist strategy to make colonization look “well-meant.”

Chapter Four: Uncanny Resemblance

... the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.

Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'"

Throughout this thesis, we argued that the Mongolian stereotype has “cultural currency” in the West, conjuring up certain images, values, and emotions. In “Selling Empires,” we learn that the history of Genghis Khan inspires images of “great warriors, vast empires, vicious battles with lots of blood and horses.” The writer believes that these are “the stuff of action films, the fodder for blockbuster novels and the fuel for a marketer’s daydream.”¹ In Hollywood, film-makers use the Mongolian stereotype to spice up movies with violence, barbarism, and mysticism. In this chapter, we will look at the latest version of this stereotype in the 1994 film, *The Shadow* (Russell Mulcahy, 1994).² *The Shadow* is based on a popular comic that relates the story of an American crime-fighting hero who subdues his enemies in order to maintain world harmony. In *Comics as Culture*, Thomas M. Inge says that in the super hero fantasy worlds, “both might and right are on the side of morality,”³ and morality is located in America and its citizens. He believes that comic art in America has always had a political nature, working as “propaganda, in advertising, for the

¹Gordaneer, “Selling” 1

²*The Shadow* is based on the pulp fiction and successful radio show called “The Living Shadow.” It was created by Walter Brown Gibson in 1931. In 1940, Street and Smith produced the first *Shadow* comics (“Shadow, The.” *The World Encyclopaedia of Comics* 1976). By the late Forties, the villain Shiwan Khan, the Shadow’s nemesis in the movie, was created (“Shadow, The,” Topps Trading Cards, [n.p. Advance Magazine Publishers, 1994] L5). The movie has changed some characters, and it is the movie’s version that I will examine.

³Thomas M. Inge, *Comics as Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990)

dissemination of information "⁴ Similarly, Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter believe that many comics perpetuate racial stereotypes, which act "socially as a stimulus to xenophobia "⁵ Throughout *The Shadow*, the two different kinds of imperialist repertoires that we have studied are evident in the series of stereotypes that exonerate the Americans and debase the Mongolians. These repertoires reveal the movie's underlying American imperialism working within the conflicts between good and evil, West and East. However, despite the constructed differences between the Americans and the Mongolians in the movie, the American hero, the Shadow, and his Mongolian enemy, Shiwan, share an uncanny⁶ resemblance. Their similarities reveal that Shiwan is a part of the Shadow's psyche through a process of projection. Cranston has created Shiwan as his antithesis by projecting his own evil desires on Shiwan. These desires include colonizing appetite, lust, and national chauvinism that Cranston suppresses within himself, thinking that he has grown beyond these primitive drives. Therefore, with this binary split of values, Cranston embodies goodness while Shiwan represents evil. Inevitably, the process of projection and forging of the other shows that Shiwan is suspiciously similar to Cranston. After all, Cranston's imperialist and orientalist construction of Shiwan is a reflection of himself.

Throughout the movie, movie-goers are expected to participate in the imperialist interpretive repertoire in order to sustain the exaggerated contrast between the West and the East. Like the press (chapter one), *The Shadow* proves that the invasion theme makes a popular trope for the representation of Mongolian culture. The movie presents a scenario of Mongolian conquest, which threatens the autonomy and power of America. On a metaphorical level, one can read that America's fear of losing authority and territory inspires

⁴Inge xviii

⁵Bernard Berelson and Patricia Salter, "Majority and Minority Americans: An Analysis of Magazine Fiction," *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 10 (1946): 179. Although comics could perpetuate racial stereotypes, they also reflect and confirm what is out there.

⁶I am using the word "uncanny" with specific references to Sigmund Freud's usage of the word--the fact that it is charged with duplicity and similarity at the same time. This duality of the "uncanny" will be elaborated in the later part of this chapter.

it to create an interpretive repertoire that paints the other as an intruding foreigner. Just as the invasion theme works as a way of projecting the other as a demonic outsider, the Hollywood super hero formula is a kind of imperialist's trope used to propagate nationalistic pride through the "goodness" and glorification of the super hero. On the one hand, a possessive nationalistic attitude towards one's territory is established through the super hero's fight against a foreign intrusion (which ultimately is "bad" because of the intruder's otherness/ethnicity). On the other hand, the nationalistic and superior identification with the super hero fosters a kind of group dynamic and bonding at the expense of the diminished other. Before examining the film, I want to propose that we analyse the fictive characters as constructions. Because

the issue . . . is less one of fidelity to a preexisting truth or reality than one of a specific orchestration of ideological discourses and communitarian perspectives. While on one level film is mimesis, representation, it is also utterance, an act of contextualized interlocation between socially situated producers and receivers.

As a result, "it is not enough to say that art is constructed. We have to ask: Constructed for whom? And in conjunction with which ideologies and discourses?"⁷

The Plot

The Shadow begins on an Opium field in Tibet, where Lamont Cranston, an American, rules as a vicious colonizer under the name of Ying Kung. One night a monk forces Ying Kung to redeem himself by saving others from crimes. After seven years of training and reformation, the Monk sends Cranston to New York, his "homeland," to undergo the process of redemption. In New York, Cranston is a debonair aristocrat who turns into the Shadow when he fights crime. The Shadow deals with petty crimes until he meets his archenemy, Shiwan Khan, the "last descendent of Genghis Khan."⁸ Shiwan arrives in New York determined to destroy it, and to conquer the world, thus fulfilling his ancestor's

⁷Shohat and Stam 180.

⁸Quotes from the movie are taken from my personal transcript.

ambition. He offers the Shadow a partnership in his plan, but he is rejected and destroyed

Antithesis: a Construction of Self and Other

The film establishes Shiwan and Cranston as opposites by giving them different attributes. Their relationship is a series of binary oppositions: before/after, primitive/civilised, colonialism/postcolonialism. Although these paradigms can be deconstructed to reveal their contradiction and ideological investments (which I will do in the following sections), the film's ending confirms that "good" (as represented by Cranston and America) and "evil" (as represented by Shiwan, Mongolia and Tibet) are always distinguishable. The construction of self and other through contrived antithesis reveals that the making of an American hero depends on the degradation of an other.

First, the film creates Shiwan as the opposite of Cranston by portraying him as a primitive man. In New York, Shiwan looks archaic with his traditional Mongolian attires. His fashion makes him stand out against New York's 1930s architectures and costumes, and it also makes him look exotically authentic as a man from the past. This exoticism, no doubt, reflects a stereotype of the easterner as a traditionalist. Therefore, the East is an ancient place that is unevolving and forever primitive. We see this stereotype in the contrast between New York's metropolitan set to Tibet's ancient looking land. Although the film promotes the contrast between Tibet (the East) and New York (the West), primitive Shiwan and metropolitan Cranston, Shiwan is not primitive in the sense that he comes from the past. For example, Shiwan tells Cranston that he has studied his raids with admiration, thus making Cranston his contemporary, if not his ancestor. Nevertheless, Shiwan's fashion is perhaps not an indication of chronological time but of human mental evolution. For example, the movie juxtaposes his colonizing drive with Cranston's supposedly surmounted colonizing desire and newly attained peace-keeping role. If we assume that in the film both America and Cranston stand for "postcoloniality," Shiwan, then, represents the backward colonizing era. In my present argument, the "post" in the "postcolonial" indicates the chronological progression from colonial--in other words, it signifies anti-colonialism. The movie seems to promote that colonialism is a "primitive" drive that Americans have surmounted. This

chapter, however, will show that “postcolonialism” does not mean the end of colonialism, in fact, the film offers a stark example of American imperialism and colonialism.

The ideology behind the binary conflict of primitive versus civilised can be further understood by looking at Sigmund Freud's essay, "Totem and Taboo " Freud says that the aborigines of Australia are the primitive prototypes of civilized people.

There are men still living who, as we believe, stand very near to primitive man, far nearer than we do, and whom we therefore regard as his direct heirs and representatives. Such is our view of those whom we describe as savages or half-savages, and their mental life must have a peculiar interest for us if we are right in seeing in it a well-preserved picture of an early stage of our own development.⁹

This passage exposes Freud's ethnocentric and imperialistic view of Australian aborigines, a view that is also evident in *The Shadow*. For example, the movie portrays Shiwan as “progressing” toward western values and taste when he shows interest in Cranston's fancy tie and American Bourbon. His interest emphasizes his lack, and his fascination for and willingness to adopt the seductive and glamorous material life of the western metropolis. Cranston, on the other hand, does not reciprocate this interest for him, Shiwan is a "barbarian,"¹⁰ who only offers him the agony of remembrance, the memory of his evil past. Shiwan loses his subjectivity when viewed as the mirror-image of Cranston's past. In other words, Shiwan is significant to Cranston not because of who he is, but because of what he represents in relation to Cranston.

Although Shiwan is psychically and mentally powerful, he is presented as mentally and morally inferior to Cranston. His "mental life" is judged and evaluated within the moral parameter set up by the American super-hero formula. As most American moviegoers know, no matter how ingenious the villains are, they never defeat the ethical super-heroes. In Cynthia J. Fuchs' essay, "The Buddy Politics," she mentions that Hollywood male heroes are

⁹Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey. Vol. 13 (London: The Hogarth Press and The Psychoanalysis Society, 1961) 1.

¹⁰Personal transcript

always endowed with "moralized muscle[s]," which help them crush their enemies in a "mascu[line] ethical spectacle"¹¹ In *The Shadow*, the struggle between Shiwan and Cranston is just such a masculine "ethical spectacle." Cranston has to fight against Shiwan's persuasion and invitation to rule the world with evil. His battle with Shiwan is not only physical, but ethical, too. Furthermore, Cranston's struggle for autonomy (not to be controlled by Shiwan's evil plan and physical and psychic powers) makes it a masculine war for power and determination. Since Cranston embodies both "moralized muscles" and mind, he wins at the end. His victory also shows that humans do not regress but progress toward western standard and values.

In the film, Shiwan is set up to lose. He never achieves any subjectivity in his position as the objectified other, pitted against the "good" American hero. Like the Australian aborigines in Freud's essay, Shiwan is presented as a prototype, analogous to an artifact in a museum. Not surprisingly, he first appears in the New York Museum of Natural History.¹² The museum is like a metaphoric theatre that represents and stages Shiwan as a frightening phenomenon from the past. In the museum, the museum director is puzzled by the mysterious arrival of a Tibetan sarcophagus, and when he translates the Latin inscription on the sarcophagus, he is shocked that it belongs to Genghis Khan, "the man who almost conquered the globe eight centuries ago"¹³ The allusion to the infamous conqueror prepares the stage for Shiwan: the history of Genghis Khan already inscribes him before he appears. Predictably, when he emerges from the sarcophagus, he kills the museum guard. Shiwan's warrior-like attire and violent action live up to the stereotype of Genghis Khan as the bloodthirsty conqueror. His arrival and violent behaviour in the museum of "Natural History" confirms that he is the primitive human prototype--one that embodies the past

¹¹Cynthia J. Fuchs, "The Buddy Politic," *Screening The Male*, eds. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1994) 206.

¹²As we have studied in the last chapter, the museum is a further sign of New York's international status and development.

¹³Personal transcript

through his barbaric desires and behaviours ¹⁴

On another level, the binary conflict between primitive and civilised mirrors the struggle between the id and the ego, or child and man. This conflict, as we have studied between the Europeans (parents) and the First Nation Peoples (infants), positions the westerner as an experienced and wise person (adult) in contrast to the unsocialised and ignorant other (child). According to Freud,

the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions ¹⁵

The struggle between id and ego is first evident in Cranston's own process of development. For example, Ying Kung (Cranston's evil past and youthful other) embodies the id: he lives a life of pleasure and destruction. Ying Kung's transformation to Cranston shows that his "ego" has successfully "[brought] the influence of the external world to bear upon the id". In the movie, this process begins with his abduction: he is brought to the Monk against his will, physically leaving his world of pleasure to the external world of "reason" (as represented by the Monk). The Monk symbolises the "reality principle" established by the

¹⁴The film's denigrating presentation of Mongolians and Tibetans reflects its orientalist perception and construction of these cultures. First, it is Eurocentric to think that Latin would be found on Genghis Khan's sarcophagus. Second, why would the sarcophagus come from Tibet, instead of Mongolia? Are these countries homogenised as one? The name of Shiwan's palace, *Monolith*, seems to imply that the film treats the Tibetans and Mongolians as a monolithic "Other." Furthermore, all the Mongolian and Tibetan actors (some of them are white people in disguise), like Ying Kung, spoke gibberish--except when Cranston, played by Alec Baldwin, spoke poor Mandarin in the Chinese Restaurant (we must give him credit for trying). The representation of Mongolians and Tibetans reveals a typical Orientalist attitude towards the specificities of the cultures in question. (My analysis of the languages have been confirmed by Chuenyan Lai.)

¹⁵Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey. Vol 19 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institution of Psycho-analysis, 1961) 25.

movie--this being that evil (id) and good (ego) dwell in every human, and one can suppress one's evil in order for good to rule. However, the movie portrays the East as the home of the id (where violence and "immoral" pleasure dominate reason), and the West as the home of the ego (where good, as represented by Cranston, is often destroying and subduing evil).¹⁶ Therefore, transcendence as it is set up seems more feasible for westerners because of they have the advantage of belonging to the realm of goodness (ego).

Although the Monk lives in the East and symbolises the ego (or the super ego), he is helpless against the pervasive evil of the East, as represented by Shiwan. His relationship with Cranston and Shiwan offers a study of male struggle within a family of men. The monk is like a symbolic father-figure. Cranston and Shiwan, the monk's students, are symbolic brothers, struggling for the phallic power of the father. Pobar (the knife) represents this phallic power, which can only be willed into action if the owner is in control of his emotions and mental faculties. When Shiwan kills the monk, he symbolically kills the father and usurps his power as he possesses the knife. Throughout the movie, Cranston tries to control Pobar. Although he achieves it in the final showdown, he shows his full autonomy and authority by using a shard of glass as his weapon. As a result, he dissociates himself from the monk and Shiwan by refusing to legitimise their symbol of phallic power, thus showing his departure from their values and standards and his ability to attain phallic power on his own. Shiwan, on the other hand, is fated to lose. When he murders his symbolic father, he fails to overcome the "most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id," which in other words is the Oedipal complex.¹⁷ Since the ego ideal is the "heir of the Oedipus Complex"¹⁸ and the symbolic site of moral faculty, Shiwan can never move to

¹⁶The movie introduces New York as the "most wretched lair of Villainy." However, through Cranston's peace-keeping mission, "goodness" reigns, delivering the city of "blindness" (as demonstrated by New York people's inability to see Shiwan's hotel Monolith) to sight (Shiwan's destruction clears the city's unconsciousness).

¹⁷Although the Oedipal complex always involves a love object such as the mother, in the movie, the mother figure is absent, replaced by the challenge and desire to achieve one's autonomy among other male members.

¹⁸Freud, "The Ego" 36

this stage. Shiwan is the ultimate personification of the id because he cannot transcend his primitivity (id), thus he makes the perfect foil for Cranston. However, the constructed differences between the characters are unstable. For example, the Shadow seems to enjoy terrifying Duke and his men on the bridge (first scene in New York), laughing at their helplessness and terror. Therefore, even though the Shadow represents high moral standard, his violence and arrogance seem to imply that he still relishes violence and intimidation.

Another example of the weak distinction between the two characters is evident in their first encounter in Cranston's hidden office. Before we deconstruct the differences between Cranston and Shiwan, we will look at the duplicity within Cranston's office which, interestingly, looks like a museum with his past glories and colonized artifacts on display. One wonders if Cranston is truly in search of redemption, or does he surround himself with Eastern artifacts to enshrine his past or other half.

Souvenirs: An Extension of Oneself

Cranston's office is where he receives information from his agents. Therefore, it is like a pseudo "police-station." On its walls are Eastern artifacts that make the office look like a museum. In Susan M. Pearce's essay "Collecting Reconsidered," she says that

souvenirs are moving and significant to each of us as individuals . . . [They] are intrinsic parts of a past experience, but because they, like the human actors in the experience, possess the survival power of materiality not shared by words, actions, sights and the other elements of experience, they alone have the power to carry the past into the present.

Cranston needs his souvenirs as reminder of a past that he can never experience again. They symbolize the "words, actions, sights and other elements of [his] experience" in Tibet that he cannot repeat in order to redeem himself. Nevertheless, why does he need these souvenirs to "carry the past into the present" if he hopes to transcend it? According to Pearce, the "tone" of souvenirs is "intimate and bittersweet, with roots in nostalgic longing for a past

which is seen as better and fuller than the difficult present”¹⁹ Do his souvenirs prove that his recollection of Tibet is “bittersweet” and his life as Ying Kung is “better and fuller” than the “difficult present?”

Although Cranston seems to enjoy his new life as a savvy metropolitan with an active dating life, he often looks gloomy, as though burdened by his present life. After all, now that he has progressed into the “ego” stage, he has to be responsible and in control of his instincts, like an adult who has to be realistic and reasonable. Unlike his youthful past, he cannot act on impulse. Furthermore, his experience with the Monk has led him to see his past with guilt. For example, waking from his second nightmare, Cranston said to Margo “do you have any idea what it is like to have done things that you can never forgive yourself for?” Although Margo tries to comfort him by saying “whoever you were, whatever you did, it is in the past,” Cranston tells her that his past will always haunt him.²⁰ Cranston’s guilt is a form of “self-judgement” that reflects the teachings of the Monk. According to Freud,

as a child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and others in authority, their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship. The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt.²¹

With the sense of guilt and responsibility, Cranston’s new life is not as carefree as his past-- he has to uphold moral standards that he never had to think of as Ying Kung.

Why, then, does he keep these souvenirs if his past is a nightmare? Pearce says that

¹⁹Susan M. Pearce, “Collecting Reconsidered,” *Museum Languages*, ed. Gaynor Kavanagh (London: Leicester University Press, 1991) 140. It is interesting that Pearce gives human quality to souvenirs, referring to “their tone” and their ability to boast about the past. This personification of souvenirs, I believe, adds to her argument that souvenirs are an extension of the collector’s identity. This point will be elaborated.

²⁰Personal transcript. Margo’s comforting words have the redeeming quality of a Victorian angle of the house. Even though she sees the horrible past of Cranston through his eyes (the windows to the soul), she still forgives him and tries to coax him out of his misery.

²¹Freud, “The Ego” 37.

“as the original experience becomes increasingly distant, . . . contact with it can only be satisfied by building up a myth of contact and presence” Souvenirs are also symbols of “lost youth”²² Therefore, the exhibited souvenirs “serve to authenticate the narrative in which [he] talks about the event” Although Cranston does not share these souvenirs with others, he keeps them as a self-confirmation of his “super hero” paradigm. In other words, by having the souvenirs, Cranston reminds himself that he is supposed to transcend the experience that these souvenirs symbolise (perhaps the bars between the souvenirs and himself are safeguards against closer contact). Here, the souvenirs help to create the set for the “myth” he has for himself. In Pearce’s words, souvenirs

are an important part of our attempt to make sense of our personal histories, happy or unhappy, to create an essential personal and social self centred in its own unique life story, and to impose this vision on an alien world. They relate to the construction of a romantically integrated personal self, in which the objects are subordinated into a secondary role.²³

Therefore, the souvenirs in Cranston’s office work as a form of doubling, an extension of his character, that remind him of his past evil conquests and his new dedication to world peace. This doubling, however, shows that Cranston projects a certain kind of value onto the souvenirs, just as he imposes his evil past onto Shiwan. By doing so, he dissociates himself from his evil past, thinking that he has released himself.

The Beast Within

The dualism within the office reveals the duplicity within Cranston. His past still exists within the confined, barred space of his office, which symbolically represents his suppressed past and evil. Its underground location, too, confirms this symbolism. However, can Cranston escape his evil tendencies by allocating them to his jail-like office, his unconsciousness, his souvenirs, or his enemy, Shiwan? According to the monk who forces Cranston to redeem himself, Cranston's evilness is inbred.

²²Pearce 140

²³Pearce 141

for as long as you can remember, you have struggled against your own black heart, and always lost. You watched your spirit, your very face changes as the beast crosses itself within you. You are in great pain aren't you? You know what evil lurks in the heart of men, for you have seen that evil in your own heart²⁴

This passage shows that Cranston has always "struggled" against his own evil, unable to contain his violent behaviour before his meeting with the monk. In Tibet, his "black heart" rules as Ying Kung, the barbaric ruler who looks like a beast with long unkempt hair and dark red finger nails. His court is like a brothel with women strewn on the floor, smoking opium at leisure. From the abundance of opium in the poppy-field outside his palace to the interior of his palace of pleasure and death, Ying Kung is the stereotypical primitive ruler who has no sexual or moral inhibitions. Ying Kung's first command is a double murder that involves his enemy and his own loyal subject. These executions reveal two important aspects of Ying Kung: he is cold-blooded and deceptively duplicitous.

First, his attitude toward his enemies is merciless, echoing the horrors of western colonization in the East. In *Discourse of Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire quotes Carl Siger's *Essai sur la colonisation* to show how colonized lands and people act as outlets of violence for the colonizers, and how these acts of violence would not have been tolerated in the metropolitan countries from which the colonizers have come. Siger also mentions that the colonies "serve as a safety valve for modern society." In *The Shadow*, Tibet and its people are victims of Ying Kung's colonizing violence. Once he has unleashed his violent desires, he returns to New York to protect New Yorkers from crimes and violence. One is left to wonder why he does not redeem himself in the place where he has done the most harm. However, as mentioned before, Tibetans are set up to be the recipients of violence, and their country (the home of id) is made the space/valve for immorality and colonization--two elements that are not tolerated in New York.

The film promotes the notion that Cranston (and western modern societies generally) has surmounted his primitive instincts, and has moved into a "postcolonial" stage of life

²⁴Personal transcript

where colonization is unacceptable. However, one must remember the "boomerang effect" that Césaire mentions as the result of colonization, which scarred Cranston for life. In describing the "boomerang effect," Césaire says that colonizers "[get] into the habit of seeing the [colonized] as *an animal* . . . in order to ease . . . [their] conscience." This dehumanization, in turn, "objectively . . . transform[s] [them] into . . . animal[s]." ²⁵ Ying Kung is the "animal" hidden and suppressed within Cranston. They are two parts of the same person, but to become a civilized person, Cranston projects all of his badness onto Ying Kung, his double.

Ying Kung's dual murder exposes Cranston's/Ying Kung's deceptive doubleness. When Ying Kung kills his own soldier, he shows his insincerity and two-facedness: he tells the old soldier that he is like a "wonderful friend" and a "father" to him, but he turns around and orders the man's execution. ²⁶ This betrayal forewarns the audience of his duplicity. Shiwan is aware of this duplicity when he tells Cranston that they are both "barbarian[s]"

I know that inside you beats a heart of darkness. You dip
into it every time you put on that hat and cloak. Join me.
You are Ying Kung, the butcher of Lassa, you and only
you deserves to be by my side . . . Your mouth still wa-
ters in real power. I am offering you a chance to take it
back.

Shiwan knows that Cranston awakens his "heart of darkness" when he changes into the Shadow. According to Barbara G. Walker, the traditional symbol for the immortal soul or ghost is the shadow. The immortal soul is

some sentient part of a human being that continues to exist after
the human being dies. The term *soul* without any qualification,
however, is a true symbol, in that it stands for the totality of an

²⁵Aimé Césaire, "From Discourse of Colonialism," *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) 177.

²⁶His murder of a father-like character is further proof that Ying Kung/Cranston is not afraid of destroying the father figure to achieve his goals and autonomy. However, when faced with a "true" father figure (the Monk), who represents reason and wisdom, Cranston's ego takes over.

individual's thoughts, feelings, memories, attitudes, affections, hopes, fears--the whole personality, immortal or not . . . The ancients envisioned composite souls with various parts located in the blood, or the heart, or the liver, or the secret name, or even in external things such as the shadow and the reflection ²⁷

Ying Kung/Cranston goes through a metaphoric death when the monk forces him to redeem his sins. Ying Kung becomes the ghost that haunts Cranston as his shadow. He stands for Cranston's suppressed "feelings, memories, attitudes, affections, hopes, fears--the whole personality," that is, his violent and savage tendencies. It is interesting that when Cranston turns into the crime-fighting hero, he is named after his evil as though acknowledging that certain aspects of his past are alive in the present--namely, the violence and the power over others. As the above passage shows, the composite form of a person can be personified by a "secret name." However, the "Shadow" is not just a name. As Shiwan says, Cranston is in touch with his darker side every time he puts on his disguise.

The only difference between the Shadow and Shiwan is that the movie's moral standard and values give the former the license to be violent, because his violence has virtuous and moral ends. The double standard, no doubt, reflects what we have examined in RBCM's differing presentations of European and Mongolian colonizers. The imperialist's colonizations and violent practices are seen as civilising agents (or in the movie as the temporary wild nature of a youthful man, whose untamed nature will soon be curbed by the innate wisdom and goodness that comes with his race), whereas the Mongolian colonizations are seen as barbarous violation of human rights. This double standard of representation shows the imperialist's power to validate their actions by reconstructing value and belief systems to suit themselves.

The Shadow's Uncanny Other

Doubleness as a ghost, soul, or shadow, is also examined in Freud's essay, "The 'Uncanny'" (TU). In his essay, Freud refers to Otto Rank's study of the double as an

²⁷Barbara G. Walker, "Soul," *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols & Sacred Objects* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988) 274-5.

"insurance against destruction of the ego." Rank says that humans' fear of dying makes them construct doubles for themselves to ensure that their ego will live on. An example of a double would be the "immortal soul," which Rank believes is the first double to have existed. As I have established earlier, Cranston's immortal soul is his shadow, Ying Kung, which acts here as an insurance against the destruction of his ego. This doubling, however, as Freud points out, is the result of "unbounded self-love" and "narcissism,"²⁸ which we have already witnessed in Cranston when he sees Shiwan as his preserved image of the past. This narcissism is also evident in his hidden office, where he exhibits his eastern trophies as constant reminders of his past conquests, fixed in display to ensure that his ego will live on.

Besides Rank's interpretation of the double, Freud develops the phenomenon of the double to show that what is uncanny involves the resurfacing of repressed/hidden feelings or attitudes in a person. Here, the double embodies the long enslaved, or surmounted primitive part of a person's past. This is why "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."²⁹ To prove his point, Freud begins with the linguistic usage of the word. The word "heimlich"³⁰ and its opposite, "unheimlich," turn out to mean the same thing. Freud suggests that "'unheimlich' is in some way or other a subspecies of heimlich."³¹ An example of their similarity is when heimlich is used to express something that is hidden. "Unheimlich," too, means something hidden, but also something brought into the light. The relationship between a person and his/her double is ambiguous, mirroring the indistinct differences between the words "unheimlich" and "heimlich." Therefore, as *The Shadow* sets up Shiwan and Ying Kung as the doubles subjugated to Cranston, I wonder if the power structure between their relationships is less

²⁸Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'," *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey. Vol 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) 235.

²⁹Freud, "The Uncanny" 220.

³⁰The German word "unheimlich" is translated into English as "uncanny," literally meaning "unhomely." The English term is not an exact equivalent to the German word.

³¹Freud, "The Uncanny" 226.

hierarchical than it first appears.

Cranston's and Shiwan's shared identity is shown in Cranston's first nightmare,³² which exposes the destabilizing power structure between them. In the nightmare, Cranston dreams that he is sleeping in his room. A man's voice, calling out to him, awakens him. He leaves his room and walks to the guest room where Margo Lane lies asleep. As he enters the guest room, he feels irritated by a strange sensation on his face. He starts to touch his skin, pulling and scratching at it until his skin falls apart. He walks toward a mirror and realizes that Shiwan exists underneath his skin. Margo Lane wakes up screaming at the sight of Shiwan/Cranston. At this point, Cranston wakes up. His worst nightmare has surfaced. He is no longer in control of himself, his body is taken over by his uncanny double/his past. Shiwan is "unheimlich" because he is "strange" and "foreign" within Cranston's body, and Shiwan embodies all the primitive instincts that Cranston believes he had overcome. Finding Shiwan surfacing from beneath his skin makes Cranston fear that his identity and power are only skin deep--perhaps Shiwan was right to tell him that Cranston is only Ying Kung's "temporary version."³³

Cranston's fear of losing his autonomy and control over his suppressed primitive urges is also a fear of the "compulsion to repeat"³⁴ For Cranston, to allow Shiwan to reign within is to regress into a barbarian. For example, in the nightmare, Cranston is no longer in control of his sexual desires. Led by Shiwan, he walks to Margo Lane's room. His physical displacement reveals that he is regressing to his animalistic sexual instincts--instead of respecting Margo's privacy, he invades her room. The "compulsion to repeat" is also dramatically staged in the Chinatown scene, where Cranston mirrors Shiwan's actions and thoughts, thus revealing that his regression has destroyed the distinction between the

³²This dream offers an interesting look at homoeroticism, homophobia, and love triangle, as these issues are examined in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

³³Personal transcript

³⁴Freud, "The Uncanny" 238.

primitive and the civilised man. Before we examine the scene, here is what Freud has to say about the double. It

appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relationship is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another--by what we should call telepathy--, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. . . . [T]here is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing--the repetition of the same features or character-trait for vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations.³⁵

Although Shiwan and Cranston do not look physically alike, they do mirror each other in many ways. In the Chinatown scene, for example, Shiwan is dressed in a suit with the same tie that Cranston wore on their first meeting, and his hair is short and sleek like Cranston's. Sitting across from each other, they look like mirror images of each other. The contrast between an archaic man and a metropolitan one is blurred. In this scene, Cranston continually fails to subdue Shiwan because he allows his id to take over. Before the shooting incident, Shiwan tells Cranston that he has killed the Monk. To provoke Cranston to react emotionally, he asked, "when will you learn to listen to your instincts?" Cranston, without hesitation, replies, "instincts, I will show you my instinct." Cranston tries to kill Shiwan with Pobar, but he fails to control the knife. Shiwan retorts, "[you did not] master the Pobar--[do] you still expect it to answer to brute force?"³⁶ This scene shows that Cranston has regressed to the id stage by acting impulsively, and in order for him to win, he has to transcend and not regress into this inferior stage.

Evidently, Cranston's degeneration makes him identical to Shiwan. For example, after his futile attempt to kill Shiwan with Pobar, Cranston draws out his gun. Shiwan, too, did the same (the first and only time Shiwan uses a gun--perhaps to show his further

³⁵Freud, "The Uncanny" 234.

³⁶It also shows that Shiwan has the mental power to control Pobar. However, since he is immoral, his mental power does not signify the controlling powers of the ego.

assimilation to a western lifestyle)³⁷ They mirror each other in the way they draw their guns and fire at each other. The close-up image of their identical bullets clashing and melting into one reveals the blurring of their identities. Both men fail to destroy each other, because they fight and think the same way--they share, reflecting the passage above, a telepathic "knowledge, feelings and experience in common"³⁸

Cranston's "compulsion to repeat" has made him indistinguishable from his enemy. To save himself from regressing any further, he has to destroy the other. However, he has to first make sure that his ego is in control. In the final showdown, Cranston, as the Shadow, confronts Shiwan in a chamber of mirrors. This scene is carried out in the hotel *Monolith*, a name that suggests that only one victor will achieve absolute autonomy. In the room of mirrors, doubles are everywhere, defusing their identities into a wall of simulacra. However, the Shadow uses his mental power to shatter all the mirrors in order to destroy the illusion of multiples, thus anonymity. With all the mirrors destroyed, the Shadow sees Shiwan and, with his psychic powers, directs a shard of glass into his enemy's head. The showdown suggests that only the moral and mentally strong (ethical) will win. Again Cranston transcends the evil side. Trapped in a straight-jacket, Shiwan is metaphorically castrated through a lobotomy which robs him of his psychic and mental powers. He is no longer a threat to Cranston, confined in an asylum where the laughter of doctors and inmates drowns

³⁷Interestingly, Shiwan's weapon includes the Atomic bomb. Ironically, in the movie, the Atomic bomb is inspired and forced into existence by Shiwan's colonizing desire, as though to say that evil (from the East) forces American scientists to assemble the deadly bomb. Does this construction reflect the notion that the Americans had to drop the Atomic bomb on Japan, because Japan was destructive and colonialistic during the Second World War? The Atomic bomb in this setup not only implies that the bomb was forcibly used to secure the world from other's evil, it also flexes Americans' political and technological muscles in relation to the East.

³⁸This telepathic communication is also shared between Margo and Cranston, showing that Margo, too, is a double of Cranston. She is the female half of Cranston that complements him without destroying his autonomy. Shiwan, on the other hand, is missing his other half. Although he looks for the other half in Cranston, their homoerotic union would threaten Cranston's sense of autonomy. Furthermore, their union is set up as a failure, or impossibility, in the heterosexual and moralistic story-line.

his voice as he tries to identify himself. In the asylum, he is subjugated by another set of laws—the laws of madness. He has no identity except for the one his inmates and doctor imposed on him. Suspended in a world without stable rationale, Shiwan's words are translated into madness. Ironically, the press referred to Shiwan as a "madman"³⁹ at his height of conquest. Now, at his powerless state, he is also considered insane. Therefore, outside or inside the asylum, Shiwan is doomed to be a mad man, because he is constructed to represent the ultimate antithesis of the American hero, the foreigner whose language and appearance speak a different truth.

"Imperialism-without-colonies"

By the end of the film, Cranston has gone through a series of uncanny experiences. Nevertheless, what makes these experiences uncanny is not only the resurfacing of his suppressed primitive instincts, but the way he translates Shiwan into something uncanny. According to Jentsch (quoted in Freud's essay), to find something uncanny, one must "*translat[e]* oneself . . . into that state of feeling"⁴⁰. Besides translating Shiwan into a primitive and evil man, Cranston has also made Shiwan a threatening foreigner. In the film, Shiwan purchases the hotel *Monolith* when its "developer went bankrupt and committed suicide." As a Far-Eastern investor, Shiwan owns a piece of New York's property. His financial power competes and threatens the natives' livelihood. Furthermore, his ability to "hypnotiz[e] the entire city"⁴¹ to keep his identity and plan hidden reveals his power over the helpless innocent natives. Cranston's fear of Shiwan, inevitably, is affected by his patriotism: he does not want his country to lose its political and economic power in the world. In the movie, Shiwan plans to destroy New York before he takes over the world. This plan seems to imply that the destruction of New York will disable the world. New York, in this case, sounds like the centre of the world. Therefore, in order to maintain New York's (therefore,

³⁹Personal transcript

⁴⁰Freud, "The Uncanny" 220

⁴¹Personal transcript.

America's) political centrality, Cranston has to destroy Shiwan before he destabilizes this arrangement

American Imperialism, as mentioned before, is evident throughout *The Shadow*. The binary split constructed around “Shiwan-the-colonial-man” versus “Cranston-the-postcolonial-man” insinuates that “modern” Western societies have reached an era free of colonialism. However, according to Anne McClintock, colonialism still exists in diverse disguises. If we continue to believe in the binary split between colonial and postcolonial, as set up by the film, we will be insensitive to the “continuities in international imbalances in *imperial power*”⁴² Furthermore, to present Tibet as a primitive place, because it is trapped in “colonialism,” is to assume that all cultures

share only a chronological, prepositional relation to a Euro-centred epoch that is over (post-), or not yet begun (pre-). In other words, the world's multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time⁴³

McClintock also says that

[s]ince the 1940s, the United States' imperialism-without-colonies has taken a number of distinct forms (military, political, economic and cultural), some concealed, some half-concealed. The power of US finance capital and huge multi-nationals to direct the flows of capital, commodities, armaments and media information around the world can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime. It is precisely the greater subtlety, innovation and variety of these forms of imperialism that makes the historical rupture implied by the term 'post-colonial' especially unwarranted⁴⁴

In the film, although Cranston is no longer a colonizer in Tibet, he is no doubt practising American "imperialism-without-colonies." His role as the world-saviour, for example, mirrors the American military role as the “world-police.” To maintain such power, America has to maintain a stable balance of power. In the movie, Shiwan threatens this power as the

⁴²McClintock 295

⁴³McClintock 293

⁴⁴McClintock 296

investing foreigner and colonizer

Although the movie may be seen as a parody (as suggested by Steven Scobie), its dominant American imperialism and theory of heroism and ethic do not deviate from the comics. According to J. A. Cuddon, a parody consists of a “subtle balance between close resemblance to the ‘original’ and a deliberate distortion of its principal characteristics.”⁴⁵ Although the characters in *The Shadow* are altered,⁴⁶ they do not change in their symbolic function. They represent certain values that are upheld in both the movie and the comics. Furthermore, the hierarchical power paradigm between America and “inferior” countries persists. For example, the battle of stereotypes still results in a stereotypical end that confirms American superiority. In the Chinatown scene, Shiwan criticizes the Americans as “arrogant.” He says to Cranston, “you think your meaningless decadent country is the new cradle of civilization.”⁴⁷ Shiwan’s criticism has no force when his western attire and weapon contradict that western “decadent” life style is “meaningless.” Furthermore, hoping to conquer the world through destroying New York, Shiwan (thus the movie) acknowledges that America is the “cradle of civilization.”

Finally, if “media information” can be a form of “imperialism-without-colonies,” movies, too, can have colonizing powers. After all,

[t]he display of people is a display of power It is a symbolic performance demonstrating power relationships, but these relationships are not necessarily real. They may be idealized from the point of view of the exhibitors. They may be highly deceptive and represent a kind of symbolic wishful thinking.⁴⁸

In *The Shadow*, the “modernity,” “moral advancement,” and “postcolonial order” that the

⁴⁵J. A. Cuddon, “Parody,” *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 682.

⁴⁶Look at Maxwell Grant’s (the pen name of Walter B. Gibson) “The Shadow” in *The Great Detectives*, ed. Otto Penzler (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978) 206-216.

⁴⁷Personal transcript.

⁴⁸Burton Benedict is quoted from Michael M. Ames’ *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*, 54.

Shadow claims to enjoy in America are only imperialistic constructions/wish fulfilments that pit the diminished “Other,” Shiwan and the Far East, against the glorification of America and its hero. In this case, perhaps, what is uncanny for some audiences will be the unveiling of American imperialism and colonialism within the film.

Conclusion

In *The Forbidden City within Victoria*, Lai talks about how untruthful journalism on Chinatown could create myths about the Chinese community. The example he gives is both humorous and poignant. He quotes an article by freelance writer Maureen O’Dea:

Animal rights activists are expressing outrage after October shoppers reported boxes of Manchurian miniature water buffalo horns for sale in Chinatown. Most biologists believe the Manchurian water buffalo to be extinct . . . [N]atural history researcher Sandy Hull . . . plans to be in town Friday to launch a fullscale investigation into the sources of the horns and the slaughter of the Manchurian miniature water buffalo . . . Hull admits to being baffled about the source of horns found in Chinatown. His researchers have not ruled out the possibility that a Manchurian immigrant family with a tradition of planning ahead brought a few buffalo with them in the nineteenth century and have been breeding them in secret ever since.¹

The article was printed with a photograph of the miniature horn, which turned out to be “a photograph of *Ling Jiao*, the fruit of *Ling* (*Trapa bicornis*)”² Like the buffalo horns, all the characters in the article are fictional. O’Dea says that the article was intended to make fun of people who believe in everything they see in the newspaper. Lai finds the article “amusing” but he believes that the many calls he received (after the article was printed) prove that “some people always believe whatever nonsense the papers print.” Lai says that “another writer may consult [O’Dea’s] article and repeat what she has written. If her tale, like other invented stories about Chinatown, were passed from one writer to another, it might eventually become another Chinatown myth.” What kind of myth would this be if we are talking about Chinese smuggling buffalo (presumably extinct) into Canada, secretly breeding them, and slaughtering them for their own consumption?

The article’s humour is achieved at the expense of the Chinese community and those

¹The article was printed in *The Victoria Star* in October 1988. The quote is taken from Lai’s *The Forbidden City within Victoria* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1991) 162.

²Lai, *The Forbidden* 162.

who believe in O’Dea’s printed information. The repertoire O’Dea uses is similar to the one journalists use on the Mongolian culture. It sensationalises the foreignness of Chinese culture and creates fantasy based on this foreignness. The language we have studied throughout the thesis has shown that ideas of “barbarism,” “immorality,” and “lack of development” are readily relegated to the personalities and cultures of outsiders and minorities. O’Dea’s orchestration of stereotypes shows the pervasiveness of an imperial tradition and discourse that systemically devalues other cultures by rationalizing and naturalizing their primitivity. The orchestration not only preserves the asymmetrical power relations between the imperialist and the other, it also has the power to destroy the other’s culture.

In the museum context, the interpretive powers of anthropologists and curators can destroy other cultures through their reinvention. For example, Ames says that museum anthropologists have helped “the revival” of Northwest Coast Indian art, but they have also “participated in its genesis and in governing [its] direction.”³ Their participation recreates Northwest Coast Indian art with the “*redefinition* of its meaning or aesthetic quality, from a ‘primitive’ or curio art to a ‘fine’ or ‘high’ art comparable to the arts of Western civilization.” Of course, this redefinition is constructed based on western taste and values. Ames offers an example of the “redefinition” of Northwest Coast art by talking about Bill Holm’s codification of Northwest Coast Indian design. Holm, who works for the University of Washington and Thomas Burke Museum, is considered a “leading analyst of Northwest Coast design.” In his effort to revitalise Northwest Coast art, he “produced what has become the standard text studied by anthropologists and Indian carvers.” He also “taught himself how to produce Northwest Coast art, then he taught others, including Indian carvers.”⁴ The codifications also “provide the primary criteria according to which [a] Northwest Coast artist is judged.”⁵ Holm has made Northwest Coast art a reflection of himself. He projects his own idea on Northwest Coast art, standardizes his version through publication, trains himself

³Ames 60

⁴Ames 61

⁵Ames 62

to produce “Northwest Coast art,” and teaches Northwest Coast Indians to emulate him. Like the uncanny resemblance we see between the characters Cranston (the orientalist) and Shiwan (the orientalist’s creation), the distinction between Holm and the “Northwest Coast art” he invented is unclear.

Holm’s case is ironic in the sense that in his hope to revive Northwest Coast art, he creates it. Nevertheless, what license does he have to impose his opinion on another culture? When talking about the “dislocation” of curators and anthropologists in the museum, Pearce explains how museum tradition trains curators and anthropologists to promote Western values and knowledge:

we inherit a share in the received knowledge and wisdom of the Western tradition, linked with a particular obligation to try to pass this onto others. On the other hand, we are aware that this knowledge, wisdom and tradition can have no intrinsic or absolute value, either moral or intellectual, that it is merely a product of specific social relationships, and therefore has no claim to any special position.⁶

The “specific social relationships” that Pearce mentions refer to the imperial setup between the West and the other (this could be the visitors or the culture on display) within the museum context. Since museums believe that western values and wisdom are desirable, they assume the “particular obligation” of enlightening others. Therefore, by inheriting the parental and pedagogical licence to educate others, museums disseminate their knowledge and values on the visitors and the subjects they study. The parent and teacher role (in its various metaphorical forms) is evident in the binary constructions that we have studied in the imperialist interpretive repertoires. In chapter three we saw the fabricated relationship between the adoptive parent (European explorers) and orphans (First Nations Peoples and BC), in chapter four we saw the oppositions between the id/child and the ego/adult, the primitive and the civilised, and the colonial barbarians and the postcolonial metropolitan enacted between Shiwan (Mongolia and Tibet) and Cranston (America). The ideological implications of this in a museum setting encompass the promotion of Western values and

⁶Pearce 150.

the establishment of the biased power structure between the imperialist and the other.

Inevitably, the imperial binary construction functions to maintain the status quo between the imperialist and the other beyond the museum context. For example, although the other is criticized for his/her lack of development, he/she is not given the opportunity to excel, because surmounting his or her inferior role means the destabilization of the imperialist power. In the following excerpt, Ames is talking about artistic transcendence. I suggest that we apply his idea to political and economic transcendence:

evolution of form and style, like freedom from cultural embeddedness, is a privilege reserved for White art. Although all art traditions originate in socio-cultural situations, and are culturally embedded, all have the potential to spring loose. We encourage transcendence in Western or 'white' art but seem less willing to grant it to other art traditions.⁷

In addition to his point, I believe that evolution in politics and economics is also reserved for white people. The inability for non-white art to transcend its "cultural embeddedness," or the cultural category that the West has allotted to it, is similar to non-white people's inability to transcend their "outsider" status without being seen as a threat to the existing status quo. Non-white people, in this case, are caught in a paradox: on the one hand, they are criticized for their lack of progress (as when European arrivals believed that First Nation Peoples were "savages" because they were undeveloped), on the other hand, they are expected to maintain their authenticity and primitivity (as with Northwest Coast Indian art).

According to Ames, "[w]estern artists today, whether they are considered great or not, begin by reaching for autonomy from their social and political contexts."⁸ Native art, on the

⁷Ames 73

⁸Ames 72. Jamie Dopp mentioned that he could think of many writers for whom this comment is not true. I agree with him. Many artists choose to work consciously from a socio-political context--eg., feminist and conceptual artists, etc. On the other hand, some artists may try to achieve artistic autonomy, but their social and political contexts do not allow them to transcend these categories--eg., female modernist writers and painters who wished to be recognized as "artists" were usually addressed as "women artists." This labelling marks their gender and their otherness from the generic term "artist."

contrary, cannot achieve this autonomy. In fact, “when particular Native social conditions cease to exist, the art associated must die as well since it is not imagined to have any legitimate autonomy of its own.” In addition, Ames says that “more than one museum and gallery official has suggested that the only good Northwest Coast Indian art is dead Indian art.”⁹ The museum’s desire to see Northwest Coast art as static and authentic is to expect the culture to resist growth. Why should both art and culture remain authentic, without the freedom to evolve? Who decides what is authentic, and for whom should they remain static?

I believe the need to authenticate Northwest Coast art is an investment in what white academicians have already established as Northwest Coast art. Furthermore, when non-white art or cultural minorities remain within their assigned categories, they remain marginalized and controllable through imperialist definitions. Another example of this orientalist investment can be found in Barry Till’s account on the people in Bhutan.¹⁰ Till is the curator of the Victoria Art Gallery. He believes Mongolians and other Tibetans should look to their neighbouring country Bhutan as an example of authenticity. Bhutan has maintained its ethnicity, uncontrolled or affected by any form of communism (Chinese or Russian). Till rejoices at the fact that under Bhutan law, Bhutan people have to wear their traditional costumes to preserve their culture. Till’s photos of Bhutan people show a tourist’s view of an idyllic “authentic” town (similar to Taylor’s photos of contemporary Mongolians). These photos are permanent proofs of his visit and experience. Since Bhutan laws enforced that culture and people have to remain “original,” Till does not have to worry that his experience and documentation of Bhutan will one day be invalid. Bhutan’s authenticity is contrived because it is achieved through the implementation of arrested development. To appreciate the restricted growth of Bhutan, Till and Bhutan’s officials have to believe that culture is a

Nevertheless, the difficulty of achieving autonomy is, undeniably, difficult for artists with ethnic backgrounds for the reason addressed by Ames.

⁹Ames 73.

¹⁰Barry Till, “Lamaism in Mongolia and Tibet,” *Beyond the Great Wall: Mongolian Culture, Heritage and Development*. Lecture series in University of Victoria. 9 Mar 1995.

stable product that does not evolve. Nevertheless, why is this form of enslaved culture charming? Does Till see in Bhutan's arrested culture a reassurance of what he knows and will accept of the Bhutan people and culture, or is there in general more to gain from knowing that certain cultures are unchanging and predictable?

In the imperialist interpretive repertoires that we have looked at, the power dynamic between the imperialist and the other is fixated within a binary construction of values and fabrications. The power structure only works if both parties follow their designated roles. As mentioned above, just as transcendence is seen as the property of white westerners, expansionism, too, is only for whites--and is an expression of their development. In *Ring of Time*, we learn that RBCM portrays the European colonizers as explorers and pioneers. On the other hand, as we have discussed in the presentations of Mongolians, there is no filtered vision of Mongolian colonizations--in contrast, hyperbole is used to exaggerate the violence in Mongolian expansionism. A more recent case shows that Chinese-Canadians are portrayed as invaders (à la Genghis Khan) in their own country. The expansionism of assumed outsiders is threatening because the expansion is not only geographical, but it also includes economic and political dimensions. Chinese-Canadians are seen as a threat because they demand to have social, economic, and political significance. The demand to transcend their "outsider" role and to have privilege traditionally practised only by White people breaks down the binary constructions that have been established to distinguish the insiders from the outsiders, the imperialist from the other, the host from the visitor.

The imperialist presentations that we have looked at throughout this thesis are a class of phenomena that, although coming in different forms (movie, literature, advertisements, etc.), are closely related. They share an imperialist ideology that persistently glorifies the imperialist, and maintains the imperialist's power through the naturalization and institutionalization of racially biased language and racist attitudes.

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Title of Thesis

Imperialist Interpretive Repertoires. Cultural Investments and Self-preservation

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May 10, 1996