"THE FIRST EMPEROR: CHINA'S TERRACOTTA ARMY" AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis describes the “First Emperor” exhibition as a rhetorical artifact that functions as a vector of shifting identities in the contemporary context of a global political economy that involves Britain, China, and the U.S. I describe how the exhibition’s content represents and communicates competing dominant narratives about the positions of Britain, China, and the U.S. within the global political economy that are expressed in terms of finance, culture, corporatization, and government. These dominant narratives work to reassert the colonial politics of Britain and the U.S. and, alternately, to assert the new identity of modern China as a world leader in terms of global trade in both manufactured and cultural products. I identify the visiting audience for the exhibition as an implied public of “global citizens,” which replace the conventional implied public that is hailed at museum exhibitions. The identity of the global citizen is more closely aligned with that of the corporate sponsor of the exhibition, Morgan Stanley, than with conventional domestic national identity. “The First Emperor” marks the beginnings of a new era of exhibition and display that has emerged in the contemporary context of globalization. In this context the conventions of exhibition and display of non-western peoples and cultures by western museums and curators is revised at the same time as it is informed by the genealogy of colonial politics. Finally, I describe the acts of protest and resistance that took place at the “First Emperor” exhibition and the privatization of the public sphere, in which the protests took place, as facilitated by the exhibition’s corporate sponsor, Morgan Stanley. As in the exhibition content itself, the ostensibly counter-hegemonic protests that took place at “The First Emperor” were multivalent in that they served to reinforce Eurocentric and Sinophobic dominant narratives at the same time as they employed strategies of counter-hegemonic resistance in order to communicate these narratives to the public audience.
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INTRODUCTION

The museum exhibition “The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” is shown in Britain and the US in the political and economic context of globalization in which China is a major world power in terms of production and commerce at the same time as British and American empires have collapsed or are precariously established. The temporal and political context in which an exhibition takes place significantly affects the type of exhibition that is staged (Dubin 157). I argue that the museum exhibition “The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” is indicative of complex negotiations of power dynamics and relationships that are centered around the commercial and political connections between China, Britain, and the US that occur on three levels. Framed by the contemporary context of globalization, the exhibition shows how conflicting governmental interests are at work in this new and shifting environment. Different rhetorical strategies are used in the exhibition that work alternatively to reassert the colonial politics of Britain and the U.S. in relation to China and to assert the dominant position of China in the world political economy. These politics are communicated to new global public or citizenry who are hailed as the visitors to the exhibition. The space and content of “The First Emperor” is also used by the main corporate sponsor of the event, Morgan Stanley, so that it is indicative of the privatization of the public sphere and the rise of corporate over national governmental power. Finally, the exhibition is subject to attempts at the remaking of its space and content by members of the public who made anti-Chinese government protests at the exhibition.

Hardt and Negri’s definition of globalization as a new world order and form of sovereignty that governs global economic and cultural exchanges provides the theoretical framework for this argument (xi). According to this definition, globalization functions as a
substitute for and reconfiguration of imperialism (Hardt and Negri 116-119; Hartnett and Stengrim). In this new global system, transnational corporations continue colonialism (Miyoshi 749). This system rose after World War II and the period of decolonization that followed it (Miyoshi 728-729). As the former European empires disintegrated and colonized nations became independent, economic organizations and free trade policies, dominated by the U.S., were put into place (Miyoshi 734). Multinational and transnational corporations became prominent in the U.S., Europe, and East Asia during the 1970s and 1980s (Miyoshi 737-738). I follow Masao Miyoshi and Ann McClintock by arguing that recent scholarly emphasis on postcolonialism rhetorically cloaks colonialism in nostalgia as a thing of the past, at the same time as it disguises strong new forms of imperialism that are put into effect by transnational corporations and globalization (Miyoshi 750-751, McClintock 13).

This analysis of the “First Emperor” exhibition contributes to the emerging field of scholarship that considers how globalization affects museums and exhibitions (Karp et al 2006, Message 2006, Ramírez 1996, Rowan and Baram 2004, Yúdice 2003). When globalization became the focus of extensive scholarship in the 1990s, museums and exhibitions were rarely considered as part of this analysis (Karp and Kratz xvi). The majority of the extant museological scholarship focuses on the exhibition of colonized peoples, primarily in the era of nineteenth century imperialism, or on the postcolonial exhibition of ethnographic artifacts. “The First Emperor” exhibition is informed by and draws on such historical precedents of exhibition and display as they have been established through European colonial and imperial projects. At the same time, colonial and postcolonial exhibitionism is displaced by the fact that China is not a postcolonial nation and has a unique place in the postcolonial literature, which has recently

As part of the seminal scholarship on globalization and museology, Mari Carmen Ramírez has argued that neoliberalism has accorded an important, if not yet fully recognized, function to the visual arts (30). Ramírez states that this new function has in turn created a complex space for the production and distribution of the arts. This “new domain” is similar to the “smooth space” or “non-place” of Empire identified by Hardt and Negri as being central to globalization (Ramírez 30; Hardt and Negri 190). Ramírez defines this new space of exhibition as no longer confined to within the boundaries of the nation-state. Instead, flows of artists, exhibitions, curators, and private sponsorships move in and out of a nation’s borders. This flexible space is governed by the promotional and financial interests of the neoliberal private sector as the new patrons of the arts instead of national governments. The intercultural and international exchanges that happen within this space are not simply an “imperialist plot” to appropriate and co-opt non-Western or minority group art, but show the self-promotion of the economic interests of those groups, who are active and involved agents in the formation of such exhibitions (Ramírez 30). As a key player in recent global political economies, China’s loan of the largest group of artifacts ever to leave Xian for a tour of Britain and the U.S. shows the nation’s active participation in the export and promotion of its cultural, as well as manufactured, products.

“The First Emperor” exhibition was shown at the British Museum, London, from 2007-2008, after which it went on tour to the U.S., where it was shown at four different museum locations over a program that continues through 2010. The exhibition will then travel to Canada, where it will be shown at various locations through 2012. The focal point of the
exhibition and the discourses that surround it are the pieces displayed from the “terracotta army,” the estimated 7,000 terracotta warrior figures that have been excavated from the tomb complex of the “First Emperor” of China, Qin Shihuangdi, at Xian, China (Portal 167, 15). The “First Emperor” exhibition displays 13 of the terracotta warrior figures along with over 100 other artifacts from the tomb at Xian and other sites in China, comprising the largest group of artifacts ever to be loaned abroad from Xian (Portal 10). The political implications of this ceding of extremely valuable, iconic objects for display in a particular host nation, in this case both Britain and the U.S., represents the importance that is imbued in diplomatic relationships between the nations involved (Luke 107). The cultural diplomacy that takes place at the venue of the exhibition overlies wider agendas of international relations, for example in terms of commerce and political economy, between China, Britain, and the U.S. (Luke 107).

Although my analysis here focuses on the exhibition as it was shown at the British Museum in 2007-2008, the exhibition is always informed by the transatlantic context that links Britain and the U.S. Historically, this transatlantic complex has served as a matrix for the circulation of coerced and free trade and labor, unprecedented demographic migrations of peoples, ideas, and material culture, and the construction of imagined communities and their imperial ideologies, from the early colonial period through to the present (Curtin, Gilroy, Pagden). The “First Emperor” exhibition is part of this matrix as it continues to function under current conditions of globalization, which involve continued transatlantic flows of trade and labor and a significant political alliance between the U.S. and British governments that has been in effect since the WWII era. The narratives that the “First Emperor” exhibition curators have constructed and disseminated along its transatlantic route are informed by this background and context. The exhibition’s first U.S. location, at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, maintained the
same curatorial framework as at the British Museum. At the three later locations in the U.S., the same group of artifacts was represented in a different curatorial framework.

This analysis of the exhibition as it was staged at the British Museum (2007-2008) began with my experience of working at the British Museum in connection with the exhibition. I was hired to work at the museum bookstore, which during the time of the exhibition became a souvenir store primarily dedicated to the “First Emperor” exhibition. An international crew of workers was hired especially for the duration of the exhibition to deal with the 850,000 visitors to the “First Emperor,” an audience which was comprised of people from various different countries as well as celebrities, politicians, and royalty. As demand to visit the exhibition grew during the eight-month period over which it was shown, the museum introduced extended hours and eventually 24-hour access to the exhibition after the first four months. Visitors to the “First Emperor” had to leave the exhibition via the book/souvenir store, so that the bookstore became a critical part of their experience of the exhibition. The work I did at the store also gave me access to information about how the economics of that particular exhibition’s business functioned. Profit from souvenir sales generated by “The First Emperor” ranged between £11,000 and £25,000 per day. Many of the products that were on sale at the gift store were imported from China, including replica terracotta warriors and more controversial items such as paper “ghost money” or “hell money,” designed for use in Buddhist rituals.

At its opening location at the British Museum, London, “The First Emperor” received over 850,000 visitors and became the exhibition with the largest attendance since the Tutankhamun blockbuster in 1972 (Kilfoyle 13). The exhibition’s organizers participated in the current trends for traveling exhibitions and loaned collections that are outsourced nationally and internationally, and for the corporate sponsorship of museum exhibitions and other cultural
events, making the exhibition a leading competitor in the rise of blockbuster exhibitions in the
global market place. Blockbuster exhibitions first became popular in the late 1970s with the
“Treasures of Tutankhamun” exhibition in the U.S. (Karp and Kratz 12). Blockbusters typically
travel internationally to different museum locations, as is the case with “The First Emperor”.
Their international rotation also typically elides “developing” nations, since from the organizer’s
point of view “developing nations” lack the finance and infrastructure to support such large-scale
exhibitions (Karp and Kratz 12). Morgan Stanley’s corporate sponsorship of the exhibition at
the British Museum and the High Museum, Atlanta, together with the sponsorship of other
transnational corporations such as UPS (United Parcel Service) at the other museum locations
showing the exhibition, is similarly part of recent trends towards the commodification of history
and culture (Lipovetsky 57-59). The corporate sponsorship of the exhibition attaches this
cultural commoditization to globalization and the rise of the transnational corporation in the
exhibition’s contemporary context (Miyoshi 749).

The “First Emperor” exhibition figures as a hybrid pole that marks the shift in historical
context between the two most recent phases of colonialism and imperialism. The first of these
phases was at its peak during the nineteenth century and is familiar for its exhibitions and
displays of non-western peoples at museums, world’s fairs, and freak shows in the western
world. On the other side of the shift is the current context, in which postcolonial traveling
exhibits move across the world backed by corporate sponsorship and driven by motives of global
cultural capital. The globalizing processes that shape museum theory and practice today have
deep historical roots and often revise and reconfigure previous colonial constellations (Szwaja
and Ybarra-Frausto xii, Pagden 6, Tomlins 220). My analysis of “The First Emperor” recognizes
this genealogy of the conventions of exhibition and display and shows in what ways the
genealogy is modified as it is shaped by new forces of globalization, particularly by the emergence of modern China in a global political economy that has previously been dominated by Western Europe and the U.S., both in practice and discourse.

Developments in the world capitalist political economy have engendered an emergent and significant cultural interaction between Britain, China, and the U.S., which breaks from familiar, and often Sinophobic, historical configurations of this relationship. Cultural interaction between China and the US has been revived as a result of post-Mao changes in Chinese economic and foreign policy dating from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, which have inserted China into the world capitalist political economy and established international relations between China, the U.S., and Britain (Schiller 411).

Predating this new period of economic and cultural exchange and interaction, nineteenth and early twentieth century relationships between China and the U.S. were typified by often Sinophobic histories and discourses ranging from Chinese indentured labor in the US, to specifically anti-Chinese racist immigration policies (Ngai 203), to the Cold War freeze on relations with communist China (Schiller 411, Lee 1999, Eng 2001, Marchetti 1993, Almaguer 160, Ngai 169). Mae Ngai has shown that the 60-year long policy of Chinese exclusion from the US, during which time (1882-1943) Chinese were the only national group to be specifically excluded from immigration to the US, was influential in the marginalization of Chinese Americans in mainstream U.S. society until the mid twentieth century (Ngai 18, 169, 202-203). The distinct exclusion of Chinese people from the U.S. between 1882 and 1943, when China became a U.S. ally during World War II (Ngai 169), was preceded by a policy of the importation of Chinese indentured labor in the 1860s as attached to U.S. nation-building projects (Ngai 18, Almaguer 154-155) and followed by continued antipathy toward Chinese immigration to the
U.S. in immigration policy with the imposition of further restrictions on Chinese entry into the U.S. after 1943 (Ngai 203).

Britain’s historical relationship with China is dominated by the record of Britain’s eighteenth and nineteenth century projects to establish an import monopoly on opium into China (Chung 144; Fay 52-55; Ko 5). The British East India Company established a false dependency demand in China that was reliant on massive addiction to opium, an aggressive agenda that damaged both public health and the national economy in China (Ko 5). China’s consistent resistance to Britain’s attempts to penetrate the Chinese market culminated in the First Opium War and the subsequent signing of the Nanking, or Nanjing, Treaty of 1842, the terms of which ceded Hong Kong to Britain (Ko 6). Britain maintained colonial Hong Kong until 1997, when its “lease” to Britain expired and the territory was relinquished to China (Ko 6). The historical context of British and U.S. political stances towards China have influenced the cultural production of racist and Sinophobic images and discourses in their representation of Chinese men and women as threats to both white sexual purity and labor employment (Almaguer 158-161).

“The First Emperor” exhibition is located at a critical point in the genealogy of exhibition and display. At this point, the exhibition of colonial possessions and their contents under nineteenth century imperialism shifts to a postcolonial situation, where globalization has succeeded empire as the organizing ideological force (Hardt and Negri xi, xv). As Ono and Jiao have recently noted, “A discursive power struggle exists between a time-worn image of China as a museum-piece – an ancient civilization and Cold War enemy – and a China under authoritarian rule but quickly becoming a modern, quasi-capitalist powerhouse with tremendous economic
action, a massive population, and a future that threatens aging and slow-to-change western-style superpowers” (406).

In terms of cultural production and performance, the growing popularity of tourism, student exchanges, exhibitions of Chinese antiquities and art, and tattoos in the form of Chinese characters indicate the various levels of interaction between Britain, the U.S., and China (Schiller 411-412). The boom in China’s “popularity” that is signified by these displays and performances is further characterized by its sometimes unequal terms of exchange, where the U.S. benefits disproportionately to China in the relationship (Schiller 411). This is a frequent characteristic of international exchanges under globalization, which shows that global processes develop unequally in relation to different parts of the world and are not always unilaterally beneficiary (Flusty 28, Hardt and Negri 116-119, Szwaja and Ybarra-Frausto xii). Further study of the changing relationships between Britain, the U.S., and China, and the particular forms in which these relationships are embodied, is called for (Schiller 411, 412, 414). My analysis of “The First Emperor” reveals the exhibition as a site in which conflicting claims for equality are countered by reassertions of inequality made by China, Britain, and the U.S. as political actors who have interests at stake in the exhibition’s content and message to a large visiting public.

This analysis begins with a close-reading of “The First Emperor” exhibition at the British Museum and the discourses that it offers to a new global public. I argue that, in the current context of globalization, the implied public that the museum exhibition addresses is a new global citizenry that is defined by its purchasing power as cultural tourists in the global political economy (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 101). In Chapter One I follow Dickinson, Ott and Aoki, Carole Blair, and Neil Michel and use a rhetorical-critical approach to analyze the “First Emperor” exhibition and the content that it communicates to its implied global public.
Dickinson, Ott and Aoki have analyzed the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, as a site where Anglo-American identity is constructed against Native American identity by calling on collective memory and mythologies. Carole Blair and Neil Michel’s work has set precedents for the study of material rhetoric as it is constructed at public memorials, such as the Mount Rushmore memorial, as sites that function similarly to museums and exhibitions. My analysis in Chapter One considers factors such as the use of exhibition space and its rhetorical implications, and the narratives that are constructed by the type and arrangement of objects within this space. These readings of the exhibition draw on both personal experience and other documentation, including the exhibition catalog.

Chapter Two locates the “First Emperor” exhibition in the context of wider narratives and histories of exhibition and display. The literature review in Chapter Two establishes theories of museology, exhibition and display that inform the politics of the “First Emperor” exhibition. Through these theoretical and historical frameworks, I establish the genealogy of “The First Emperor” as it is informed by exhibitionary practices that were established and developed over the long history of European colonialism and imperialism. Here I follow Anthony Pagden’s identification of two “imperial phases” in world history (2). The first imperial phase runs from Columbus’ “discovery” of the New World in 1492 until the 1830s and centers on European colonization of the Americas (Pagden 2). In tandem with Columbus starting this imperial phase, Barbara Thompson argues that the long history of the exhibition and display of non-white and non-western bodies and cultural artifacts began with the first European encounters with indigenous people in the fifteenth century (27). In 1493 Columbus brought several Arawak people back from the Americas to show at Queen Isabella’s court, where one of them remained on display for two years until dying from disease (Thompson 46, note 2). In Pagden’s second
imperial phase, European non-settler colonization of Africa and Asia in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries followed the precedent set by the first imperial phase in the Americas (6).

I argue that the conventions of the exhibition and display of indigenous people and their cultures that flourished during Pagden’s two imperial phases extend into a third imperial phase, the current age in which globalization is Empire (Hardt and Negri). This phase is characterized by its unconventional remakings of standards for exhibition and display that had previously been established and adhered to. Postcolonial acts of resistance and reconfiguration have influenced and revised the way in which museum exhibitions are organized, curated, and received. The numerous protests that have been carried out by various Native American groups and tribes since the 1980s have pressured museums to respond to the concerns of previously marginalized publics, redefining the way that museum exhibitions represent content about Native Americans (Cooper 174). Movements for the repatriation of remains, both locally and globally, have altered museum collections and opened new debates about authenticity and cultural ownership. In the third imperial phase live people are no longer exhibited unless this happens as an act of resistant reappropriation.

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez Peña demonstrated this with their performance “The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians visit the West”. This multimedia performance was shown in 1992-1994 at various museums and other public sites (Fusco and Gomez Peña). Fusco and Gomez Peña’s performances addressed the conventions of the exhibition and display of native peoples which are attached to discovery and conquest by posing as “undiscovered Amerindians” in a cage at the various museum or other public sites at the time of the Columbus Quincentennial in 1992 (Fusco and Gomez Peña). As “The First Emperor” exhibition shows, in the third imperial phase of globalization representations of Chinese bodies
(the terracotta army), non-living Chinese bodies (Body Worlds), and cultural artifacts produced by Chinese labor replace the exhibition of live bodies.

Contextualizing the exhibition as part of a broader archive of modes of exhibition and display serves two purposes: first, to open and diversify the cultural meanings and applications of the “First Emperor” exhibition by correlating the museum venue of the “First Emperor” exhibition with other venues such as the anthropological exhibit, the zoo, the university, the World’s Fair, the freak show, and popular film; and secondly, to identify the historical contextual differences between previous exhibitions, which were primarily informed by colonial or imperial ideologies and practices, as opposed to the “First Emperor” exhibition, which is informed by globalization and the transnational relationship between Britain, the US, and China in this context.

Chapter Three examines protests that took place at the “First Emperor” exhibition in order to document the several acts of protest that took place during the time the exhibition was on show at the British Museum, how they were carried out, and how they were received. Several incidents occurred during the staging of the exhibition at the British Museum in which the tight security and surveillance surrounding the terracotta warriors was breached and the exhibition was remade by private individuals or groups as a forum for protest and resistance, recreating the exhibition space as a public sphere in which alternative narratives could be displayed. Issues connected to global relations with China but not directly connected to the exhibition itself were raised through these protests, such as air pollution in China and Chinese relations with Tibet. These discourses encompassed the themes of globalization and/as empire which were incorporated in “The First Emperor” and redirected them into narratives and meanings other than those which were intended or dominant at the official exhibition.
Outside of the documented incidents of protest at the British Museum, German art student Pablo Wendel infiltrated the site of the terracotta army at Xian in 2006, prior to the opening of the “First Emperor” exhibition, by disguising himself as a terracotta soldier and posing in the excavated pit in between other soldiers, for which he was forcibly removed by Chinese police. Controversy ensued over Wendel’s cultural insensitivity and disrespect for the tomb site. This prior incident informs a frame of reference in which the exhibition is situated and is generative of cross-cultural misinterpretations and misrepresentations, trespasses and transgressions, and the policing and infiltration of national-cultural boundaries and borders – informing and narrating an ongoing debate about the possibilities and presumptions of intercultural relations between China and the western world.

Along with the history of exhibition and display of indigenous people and their artifacts that has been attached to colonization projects since their inception and through the three imperial phases (Thompson 46 note 2), resistance to exhibition and display has always been practiced by its subjects. In their study of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Parezo and Fowler show how various American and non-American Native peoples reinvented the conventions of anthropological display under which they were being shown by staging various overt and covert acts of resistance and reformation such as defying rules, making political speeches, staging passive protests by refusing to act according to expectations, controlling economic transactions in which they were involved, and using the space of the Exposition to communicate to their white American audience about their indigenous cultures and political issues with which they were concerned, such as Native American treaty rights (Parezo and Fowler 268, 116, 119).
At the “First Emperor” exhibition, resistance and alternative meaning-making have been adapted and used by the exhibition’s western audiences and construed as part of a wider context of anti-globalization protest, such as that of the World Social Forum and other contemporary movements. Acts of resistance to traditional, eurocentric conventions of exhibition and display, such as the work of artists Hans Haacke, Fred Wilson, and Banksy; together with recent revisional work being done by curators, museum staff, and members of the public in reassessing and reconfiguring deeply molded conventions of exhibition and display (Karp and Lavine) contextualize resistant meaning-making and alternative uses of the “First Emperor” exhibition. The protests that were made at “The First Emperor” draw on previously established archives of counter-hegemonic modes of resistance and contemporary anti-globalization resistance. At the same time the protests, made by British nationals, served to reproduce dominant and historical anti-Chinese discourses and thus to support eurocentric hegemony.

The “First Emperor” exhibition revives traditional and well-known past historical exhibitions of colonial or imperial display, such as World’s Fairs and the use of Native peoples as living exhibits in museums and at other venues. At the same time, the exhibition is emblematic of a new phase in the inter-cultural relationship between America and China in which old discourses are rehearsed and reconfigured according to contextual shifts. In this way “The First Emperor” demonstrates a historical shift from colonialism and imperialism to globalization. Globalization, privatization, and transnational corporatization inform the dominant narratives that are set out at the exhibition and the related discourses of culture and education, effectively leading to the commoditization of these parts of the public sphere.

Locating and describing these discourses as they are at work in “The First Emperor” shows how the motives and movements of global capital touches and remakes history, culture, identity, and
education. While “The First Emperor” conforms to conventions of exhibition and display which are ethnocentric and in need of revision (Karp and Lavine), the exhibition space is reappropriated and remade into an opening for the creation of resistance and alternative meaning-making in the public sphere by members of the public, although these independent meanings are ethnocentrically produced and so remain problematic. Through analysis of these complex narratives, I explore the multiple discourses which are at work in “The First Emperor” exhibition, a tendered artifact which has become global in its scope and affects.
CHAPTER I – A VISIT TO THE “FIRST EMPEROR” EXHIBITION

The Visitor’s Experience – A New Global Public of Tomb Raiders

After long waits and the uncertainty of even being able to obtain a ticket, the privileged global citizens who are visitors to “The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” exhibition enter into the converted space of the Reading Room at the heart of the British Museum. The process of entry into the exhibition is rigorous, with tight security checks following the queues for tickets. Visitors move from the bright and bustling space of the Great Court, under its newly converted glass roof, into the confined and dimly lit exhibition space that has been especially constructed to house the exhibition inside the Reading Room. As they enter the exhibition interior, visitors are immediately confronted with the larger-than-life terracotta figure of a kneeling archer, one of the thirteen selected members of the famous “terracotta army” that have been removed from their guard of the tomb of the “First Emperor” at Xian in China to temporarily go on show to audiences in London. The kneeling archer serves as a guide and a narrative frame to the exhibition’s content that visitors are witness to, as he appears, in different forms, at the beginning and the end of the visitor’s journey through the exhibition space.

After facing off with the original kneeling archer, visitors move through artificial tunnels that are constructed by the preliminary exhibits. Visitors see weapons, gold and jade, weights and measures, and building materials from the Qin dynasty. Behind the excavated artifacts in their display cases, visitors see cinematic reenactments of military conquest and visuals of the excavated pits at the tomb complex in Xian, which are enlarged and projected onto the walls enclosing them. Finally, visitors emerge from their temporary role play as tomb raiders or excavation workers and enter the main display area, where they see the terracotta warrior figures, a horse-drawn chariot, and terracotta entertainers. Visitors witness the terracotta army marching
across the axis of the Reading Room, cutting across the space at the same time as warriors and visitors find themselves marked out under the Reading Room’s iconic domed roof. The lights go up and cast dramatic shadows across the aesthetically pleasing terracotta figures, which stand larger than the average visitor and in proximity so close that it was breeched twice by members of the visiting public so that it became physical contact between the two.

Having seen the terracotta warriors and their attending terracotta figures, visitors see concluding exhibits about the excavation progress at the site in Xian and again meet the kneeling archer, this time in reconstructed and repainted form. Safe in the knowledge that the terracotta army can be tamed, understood, excavated, and remade by the disciplines of modern technology, visitors exit the Reading Room into the bright lights of the souvenir store, where they are immediately confronted yet again with rows of terracotta warriors, this time replicas that are on sale as souvenirs of their visit.

Between 246 and 210 BCE, the tomb complex of the “First Emperor” of China, Emperor Qin Shihuangdi, was built in Xian, China (Portal 131). The imperial burial mound is surrounded by an estimated 7,000 terracotta warrior figures (Portal 167, 15), life-size representations of soldiers and military officials which are known as the terracotta army. Different burial pits surrounding the tomb contain terracotta figures in the form of performers and acrobats as well as other artifacts designed to protect and entertain the Emperor in the afterlife. Since the accidental discovery of the terracotta warriors in 1974, the site at Xian has been claimed as one of the most important archaeological finds of the twentieth century and is described in some of the exhibition’s promotional materials as “the eighth wonder of the world” (Portal 15). The tomb site was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987 (Sian, “Mausoleum”). Parts of the tomb complex, which surround the imperial burial mound at its center, have been
excavated, exposing pits containing hundreds of rows of terracotta warrior figures to public view (Portal 15). Many of the publicity images for the “First Emperor” exhibition showed photographs of the excavated pits at Xian, documenting the impressive scale of the terracotta army as it appears to visitors to the original site in Xian, China. The export of these iconic images and the selected terracotta figures and other artifacts from China to Britain and the U.S. serves as an important carrier of Chinese identity and historical proof for China’s leading position in both past and present forms of empire. In compliance with the directions set out by Chinese archaeological authorities at Xian, the majority of the tomb complex, including the Emperor’s burial chamber at its center, has not been excavated and remains undisturbed underground.

The Most Significant Exhibition since Tutankhamun

“The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” displays the largest collection of artifacts from Xian ever to be shown abroad. The exhibition contains 134 artifacts (originals and replicas), of which 17 artifacts on display are original terracotta figures from the tomb at Xian1. Most of the displayed figures belong to the “terracotta army,” while the others represent performers, constructed in order to entertain the emperor in the afterlife. The rest of the exhibition artifacts are objects contemporary to the Qin Dynasty which have been excavated from the tomb at Xian and from other sites in China, such as money/coins, roof tiles, and ritual objects. Some of the artifacts in the exhibition are part of the British Museum’s permanent collection (James “Can a museum explain imperialism?” 1108).

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1 All information regarding the contents of the “First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” exhibition is taken from the exhibition catalog, edited by Jane Portal and originally published by the British Museum Press in 2007. This was the exhibition catalog for the British Museum and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, stagings of the exhibition, which employed the same curatorial framework.
Following Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, Carole Blair and Neil Michel, and Jason Black, I analyze the museum exhibition “The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” using a rhetorical-critical approach. This scholarship has recognized that public museums, memorials, and other historical sites play a crucial role in the construction and maintenance of national mythologies, histories, identities, and collective memories; and that such appeals to collective memories and identities are rhetorical in nature, on both a symbolic and a material level (Dickinson, Ott and Aoki “Spaces” 29). Communications scholars have shown that discourses of national identity and history are rhetorically constructed via the establishment of a collective memory, often in order to appropriate such histories for a specific purpose or interest (Browne 464, Bruner 10, Hasian and Frank 97-99). Carole Blair has argued for scholarly engagement with material rhetoric, as well as the rhetoric of oral and textual discourses, in her analyses of public memorial sites (Blair 16-17). Museums engage their visitors and make rhetorical choices on a symbolic level, through conventions of collection, exhibition and display; and on a material level, by locating visitor’s bodies in particular spaces and in relation to particular material constructions, such as an exhibition space or a memorial park (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki “Spaces” 29, Black 200-201).

I supplement this approach by drawing on scholarship from the field of museology done by Tony Bennett, Carol Duncan, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, considering the constructed relationships between the objects on display in a museum or exhibition, the frameworks in which the objects are placed by the museum or exhibition, and the role of the audience that visits the exhibition. This analysis of the “First Emperor” exhibition uses the exhibition catalog and a floor plan of the exhibition from the British Museum records to describe the contents and layout of the exhibition. At its first location in the U.S., the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia,
the exhibition was presented in association with the British Museum and with the support of corporate sponsor Morgan Stanley. At its later U.S. locations, the same group of artifacts was exhibited within a different curatorial framework. This analysis specifically focuses on the exhibition at the British Museum, London, as a cultural product that I read in the transatlantic context of globalization, preceded by historical relations between Britain and the US that have engaged and created imperial contexts since the early colonial period (Curtin ix, Tomlins 220).

**Spatial Rhetorics of Diminution and Confinement in the Reading Room**

Spatial rhetoric is integral to the staging of “The First Emperor” exhibition at the British Museum. Dickinson, Ott and Aoki state that “Museums engage visitors not only on a symbolic level through the practices of collection, exhibition and display, but also on a material level by locating visitors’ bodies in particular spaces” (Spaces of Remembering” 29). In the new context of globalization, in which China dominates, former colonial powers Britain and the U.S. use the “First Emperor” exhibition to rehearse and reassert historically colonial conventions of exhibition and display in an effort to retain their own positions of power, both within the exhibition and without. Familiar colonizing strategies that were developed under nineteenth and pre-nineteenth century imperialisms, in particular techniques of archaeological extraction, fragmentation, and reduction, are applied to the Chinese artifacts on display in the Reading Room by their British curators (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3, Portal 10). These rhetorical strategies work to scale-down the terracotta army, as representative of Chinese identity past and present, and establish British and U.S. control over the Chinese artifacts on display and, by extension, over China as the nation-state that they represent.

“The First Emperor” exhibition took place in the Reading Room at the heart of the British Museum.
Fig. 1 Floor plan of the exhibition in the British Museum Reading Room. Courtesy of Neil Casey, the British Museum.
The Reading Room’s circular space and domed roof distinguish it from all other display areas in the museum. This was the first time that an exhibition had been staged in this space. The domed space of the reading room was constructed in the mid nineteenth century as a ticketed-entrance library and renovated in 2000 in order to open its services to the public. In 2007 the books and other informational materials were moved and the reading room space was remade as an exhibition space in which major temporary exhibitions were staged, beginning with “The First Emperor” (“Reading Room”). The way in which the new exhibition space was constructed inside the Reading Room significantly reduced the available 440 square feet of space (“Reading Room”). Temporary walls were constructed within the actual walls and a platform floor was built above the Reading Room desks, which elevated visitors above them. These methods of construction create a temporary and artificial confinement of visitors within the exhibition space. Both the visitors and the terracotta warriors are temporarily confined inside the
restricted area of the exhibition space, creating an enclosed sphere or stage on which their identities are constructed and contested.

After reconstruction, the Reading Room exhibition area appears much smaller than the space dedicated to the exhibition of the Parthenon/Elgin Marbles within the museum or the space of the O2 Arena in London which was concurrently used to stage the “Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs” exhibition (James 199). In terms of spatial rhetoric, these exhibitions display the amount of space that has historically been conquered by colonialism. This use of space in exhibitions about previously colonized nations and continents rehearses and reinforce the past spatial dimensions of the British Empire. Spatially large exhibitions, such as the halls displaying the Parthenon sculptures as the “Elgin Marbles,” reconstitute a revisionist history in which British Empire remains dominant even after its historical collapse (Fowler 229).

Showing the “First Emperor” exhibition inside the Reading Room of the British Museum has parallels with the National Museum of the American Indian being located at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.; and with the location of the Plains Indian Museum at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Spaces” 28; Griffin 1-3). In all of these cases a rhetoric of control and containment is at work in the spatial configuration of these sub-museums or exhibitions within the larger entity of the Institution, the Center, or the National Museum. Locating exhibitions about “postcolonial” ethnic minority groups, such as Native Americans, in separate and decentered parts of a national museum serves to ethnocentrize Whiteness (European-American culture and dominant historical narratives), rhetorically naturalizing Whiteness as the dominant mode of interpretation and marginalizing the historiographies of non-white ethnic groups or other marginalized peoples such as women, children, and disabled people. At the same time marginalized groups are co-opted and
assimilated into the dominant narrative of the institution or national museum as a metonymical representation of the national and/or colonial nation-state (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, “Memory” 96-97).

Similarly, the location of the “First Emperor” exhibition in the British Museum Reading Room serves two rhetorical purposes. Firstly, the exhibition is located in the heart of the museum and, temporarily, is a main focus of the museum as a whole. Secondly, the subjects of the exhibition – China, its Empire, and the Terracotta Army - are scaled down in order to fit into the relatively small exhibition space of the Reading Room. While extraction, reduction, and scaling down are logistically necessary parts of making an exhibition, such practices and their implications are still worthy of analysis (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3). The conjunction between the centralizing and mainstreaming and the compressing and confining of the “First Emperor” exhibition by locating it in the Reading Room signifies the paradox of representing Chinese Empire as both a key component of contemporary globalization and a threat to Western global hegemony which is rhetorically counteracted by its reduction in the exhibition.

The British Museum and the later U.S. locations where the “First Emperor” was staged physically reduce China’s Terracotta Army and the threat of Chinese Empire, represented by the First Emperor, by fragmenting the army and scaling it down and into the compact space of the Reading Room or the US exhibition spaces. The exhibition space used at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta for the “First Emperor” exhibition was even smaller than that provided by the British Museum’s Reading Room (Sun 1). The British Museum press release for “The First Emperor” details the “Exhibition structure and design” as created to “capture the power […] of the objects on display” (“Press release: The First Emperor”). This is also a gendered process, as
the established symbol of masculine power, the army and, by extension, the empire, is emasculated and made effeminate by its fragmentation, objectification and diminution.

The British Museum and subsequent curators of the “First Emperor” counteract the imposing size of both the individual warrior figures and of the original terracotta army at Xian, which is estimated to contain 7000 terracotta warriors (Portal 167, 15), by the fragmentation and reduction of the terracotta army for the purposes of the exhibition. The logistics of moving the artifacts from China to Britain and then the U.S. necessarily involves the fragmentation and physical breakdown of the army as a whole. Negotiating the staging of the exhibition mirrors negotiations of identity and power positions between China, Britain, and the U.S. in the contemporary global political economy. As the curators of the exhibition, Britain and the U.S. fragment and transport desirable artifacts from archaeological sites around China, which rhetorically translates as a reassertion of their historically colonial politics and practices. China maintains its own interests in having these artifacts shown on a global platform, which conveys a positive image of China and its good diplomatic relationships with Britain and the U.S. (Ramírez 30). All three parties have high stakes in their representation through the public venue of the exhibition.

**Postcolonialism Reconfigured - The Rise of China and its Implied Global Public**

Considering the premise of China’s domineering position as a key player in new as well as ancient empires, British and/or U.S. anxieties about the reconfiguration of this attainment come to work in the space of the “First Emperor” exhibition. For Britain and the U.S., the rise of China threatens extant grand narratives about Western superiority (Ono and Jiao 409). Industrialized, “developed” nations such as Britain and the U.S. are increasingly dependent on Chinese production as labor and manufacturing jobs are outsourced from Europe and the U.S. to
China and other cheap labor markets (Ono and Jiao 408). This radical new imbalance in global power informs the ways in which real and sculpted bodies are represented in the exhibition as well as which spaces these bodies are moved to and located in. Familiar tropes pertaining to the exhibition and display of colonized peoples in the colonial and imperial eras, such as containment, taming and familiarizing of foreign content/discontent (Ott 19), collection, mastery of/over, fragmentation, reduction, archaeology, excavation, exhumation, and dissection again find employment in the ways in which the exhibition is staged and curated. The display of the terracotta warriors and other excavated artifacts from Xian metonymically invokes archaeological control over a body of land, remembering colonial and imperial practices such as the archaeological invasion and collection of the contents of ancient Egyptian tombs and so reviving the archaeological dissection of a dead empire or civilization, in this case the Qin dynasty. Archaeology rhetorically functions to cultivate the political and cultural control of former colonial powers, particularly Britain with its rich tradition of the archaeological conquest and display of Egypt, over China.

**Entrance to the exhibition**

Entrance to the exhibition fostered exclusivity by operating on a timed ticketing system, so that visitors had to enter the exhibition at the specific entry time indicated on the ticket. This measure of timed efficiency was imposed in order to manage the movement of the 850,000 visitors through the exhibition. Entrance to the exhibition was controlled by its pricing (tickets cost £10 - £12, approximately $15 - $18), the timed ticketing system, and the extra security measures in place at the exhibition. The entrance to the Reading Room resembled an airport security checkpoint where bags were searched. Extra security personnel were employed in the
surveillance of the exhibition entrance and interior. Large bags were not allowed to be brought into the exhibition and telephones had to be switched off.

While such measures became standard practice at large public places such as the British Museum after the 7/7/2005 bombings in London, the extra security and the semblance of a checkpoint at the entrance to the “First Emperor” exhibition reinforced a reconfiguration of the museum’s surveillance and disciplining of its visiting public in a post-9/11 context. The exhibition was officially opened on 9/11/2007, commemorating the alliance of the Blair and Bush administrations in the “war on terror” against a different eastern power. Drawing on hyperbolic discourses about threats from the East that followed 9/11, media discourses that surrounded “The First Emperor” often framed the exhibition of the terracotta army with narratives about invasion and threat to its host locations (BBC, Clunas). The use of these discourses works to compact historical, Sinophobic characterizations of China as the bringer of the “yellow peril” and later as Communist enemy (Ono and Jiao 407). As Muslim extremist/Middle Eastern terrorism replaced Communism as the U.S.’ public enemy, both of these encounters overlapped at “The First Emperor”. Tony Bennett has identified the set of cultural technologies that were concerned with organizing a voluntarily self-monitoring public in the nineteenth century museum (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 84). At the entrance to the “First Emperor” exhibition, the public is explicitly monitored by outsourced security forces. This corporate policing of the national museum as a purported public sphere shows the similar monitoring and control of that space.

After passing through the security check, visitors entered the exhibition down a darkened, enclosed passage leading into the Reading Room itself. The process of entering the exhibition moves the visitor’s bodies through material boundaries that are policed by security personnel and
an airport-type security checkpoint. These security and surveillance technologies appear to legitimate the transgression of visitors into the tomb of the First Emperor, represented by the exhibition in the Reading Room. Entry into the exhibition/tomb is simulated by the entryway between the security check and the interior of the Reading Room via a darkened, enclosed, tunnel-like passageway, simulating the tunnels into the Egyptian pyramids.

The passageway walls showed a series of images of major world historical sites, such as the Egyptian and Mayan Pyramids, Stonehenge, the Colosseum, and the Parthenon (Clunas). The sequence of images in the entryway serves to fit the tomb of the First Emperor into a teleological metanarrative of Western archaeology by documenting the excavation of the Egyptian pyramids and the removal of parts of the Greek Parthenon, with the Emperor’s tomb set up as the next subject of excavation and documentation. The historical cultures that produced these sites are all contained and represented at the British Museum, with the Parthenon sculptures being the most contested example (Clunas; “Statements: Parthenon sculptures”). Britain’s Hadrian’s Wall was also included in this series, scaled up to fit as a metaphor for the Great Wall of China, built during the reign of the First Emperor (Clunas; Portal 53). Showing Hadrian’s Wall introduces the themes of national and imperial boundaries, recalling that Hadrian had the wall built in order to delineate the borders of the Roman Empire, in much the same way as Emperor Qin Shihuangdi had the Great Wall of China built (Portal 18). The comparison implies that Hadrian’s Wall is as impressive a feat as China’s Great Wall, which invites audiences to infer that anything that China has achieved, the West has rivaled, in an attempt to restore a false equality or Western cultural superiority over Chinese accomplishments. Similarities between the Qin Empire and the Roman Empire, particularly under Hadrian, were emphasized by the “Hadrian: Empire and Conflict” exhibition being the second major temporary
exhibition to be held in the Reading Room, following the “First Emperor”. This synthesis and periodization of a historiography of major world empires implicitly formulates globalization as Empire (Hardt and Negri xii) in the contemporary moment, as well as China’s position in this context.

Preliminary Exhibits – Negotiations of Meaning Inside the Tomb of the First Emperor

The exhibition space acts like a tomb. Dim lighting is broken only by the illuminated display cases filled with artifacts and models. The exhibition space is clearly enclosed by the dimly visible, vaulted ceiling of the Reading Room dome, which appears monumental and cathedralesque. The tomb at Xian as a space of interment and burial is overwritten by such monumental Western-style architecture. The western Museum and its forms of interment, as a national depository for material culture, memorialism, and western histories of the display of incarcerated or otherwise disciplined subject-bodies are superimposed onto the trope of the tomb at Xian (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 57; Duncan 85-88). The tomb becomes reproducible (Anderson 182) and is reconfigured in order to fit into Western conventions of interment at the Museum. Audiovisual technologies literally reproduce the tomb at Xian inside the exhibition space, as images of the excavated pits at Xian are projected onto the walls of the Reading Room in the main display area. At the same time as interment and burial are disturbed by the archaeological excavation of tomb sites like Xian and the Egyptian pyramids, a new “tomb” is made for the excavated artifacts at the Museum and under its patronage.

The first part of the exhibition space is used to instruct visitors’ bodies in the colonial practice of the entrance and exploration of the tomb of the First Emperor. Inside the Reading Room, visitors must negotiate their way through a series of preliminary exhibits, which display related artifacts and replicas from Xian and other sites in China, before emerging into the main
display area where the terracotta figures are on show as the focal point of the exhibition. In order to reach the main display area and see what they came to see, visitors must work their way through the maze-like floor plan that is described by the preliminary exhibits. At this point the exhibition space is divided up, maze-like, by temporary walls and banners with labeling information. Visitors move through these artificial, dimly lit passages as if on an underground exploration. Obscure lighting is punctuated at intervals by illuminated display cases showing artifacts related to the Qin dynasty, which appear as clues to encourage visitors’ movement along the hunt for the buried treasure at the heart of the tomb. The route constructed by artificial walls, banners, and display cases effectively walls visitors in. As they move through the maze-like preliminary sections, visitors run into dead ends and turn corners until they emerge into the open space of the main display area. Visitors’ movement is restricted and controlled by rope barriers, artificial walls and columns. After these unresolved negotiations of direction, visitors are relieved by coming out into the relatively open space of the main display area, where the terracotta warriors are on display.

The preliminary exhibits describe how the Qin Empire emerged through three phases: militarism, material culture (architecture), and administration. The establishment of Empire through these three phases culminates at the focal point of the exhibition, with the display of the terracotta army figures as major discoveries from the tomb at Xian representing the legacy of the Qin Empire. The militaristic theme that the exhibition opens with is emphasized throughout the exhibition (James “Can a museum” 1108). The period of military conquest that led to the establishment of the Qin Empire is the theme of the first section of the exhibition. The First Emperor unified China into a single empire for the first time by taking over disparate states, territories, or kingdoms by military conquest (Loewe 61-63; Yates 31). The Chinese Empire that
the First Emperor established would last until the beginning of the twentieth century, covering most of the area that is now the nation-state of China (Loewe 63, Yates 31).

For the military exhibits, weapons and other artifacts are displayed against a backdrop of cinematically projected images showing reenactments of military conflicts and the deployment of Qin’s troops. From their entrance into the exhibition, visitors are immediately put into head-on conflict with the subject matter, which is initially presented as a dangerous threat. Weapons and violence inside the exhibition space are presented directly after visitors have themselves passed through a rigorous security check, so that threat is formulated as being both inside and outside the frame of reference. The incorporation of China into the neoliberal world political economy is similarly, from a Western perspective, an approaching threat to established power hierarchies and a force that is already apparent within them (Schiller 412, Ono and Jiao 407-8).

Militarism and the international deployment of troops, symbolically represented and disseminated by the dominant trope of militarism via the emphasis on the terracotta army in the exhibition, is contextualized by post-9/11 and post 7/7 U.S. and British anti-terrorism foreign policies, the effects of which are embodied in the heightened security at the museum and the exhibition. Similarly, the globalized military-industrial complex, headed by the U.S., moves the bodies of American citizen-soldiers from their newly (post 9/11) significant “homeland” to foreign locations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, the military aspect of which is bound up with the stakes that U.S. corporations have in supporting these troops and establishing industries and businesses abroad, effectively creating new forms of empire (Hartnett and Stengrim 213- 214).

The British Museum’s recent projects at Iraqi historical sites have been made possible by the military actions of British and U.S. coalitional forces in the Gulf War conflicts. As part of its
“glocal” projects, the British Museum is involved in various archaeological, conservation, and curatorial projects in Iraq since the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by US forces.

In the summer of 2008, as the “First Emperor” exhibition transitioned from the British Museum to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the British Museum engaged in a joint project with the Multinational Division of the British Army to assess damage done to archaeological sites in southern Iraq as a result of the Second Gulf War (“Iraq Project”; see Figure 3). In this way the terracotta bodies from Xian are incorporated into a revisionist American history that desires to work for new forms of U.S. empire, which are achieved by globalization and militarism. The terracotta soldiers on display in the exhibition perform the cultural work of globalization as Americanization as representations of Chinese citizen-soldiers appear to defect from China to the U.S.

The second section of preliminary exhibits, labeled “Palaces” on the exhibition floor plan, focuses on the grandeur of imperial architecture, with the implicit theme of construction and manufacture. This area displays contemporary models and reconstructions alongside fragments of excavated originals, such as tiles, fittings, and building materials that were used in the construction of Qin imperial palaces. A long, rectangular shaped modern replica model showing the production of the terracotta warriors is situated as a freestanding piece at the center
or focal point of this sub-section of the exhibition, in contrast to the other parts of the preliminary
sub-sections, which form the walls, divisions, or corners of the winding path that visitors move
through in this part of the exhibition. The model shows how Chinese workers would have
manufactured the terracotta figures by working along a kind of prototypical assembly or
production line. In its representation of Chinese manual labor, the model rehearses the
emigration/immigration of Chinese to the US in wider narratives of US history. Material labor
and production are represented as cultural labor and production. In these comparative and
related histories, Chinese bodies have been employed in the construction and performance of
American projects such as the building of the Pacific/Transcontinental Railroad in the nineteenth
century as a form of temporary, contracted or immigrant-based labor which was inclined to
exploit and capitalize on the bodies it employed.

This modern representation of a Chinese labor force mass producing artifacts is
emphasized by its spatial placement in this way so that it is the focus of visitor’s attention, taking
precedence over the original excavated artifacts that are displayed to its sides. Because the
model is freestanding visitors are encouraged to move around the space that is made all around
its perimeter, circling it and centralizing it. This movement and directing of both the bodies and
the gaze of visitors in this part of the exhibition prefigures the way that visitors are encouraged to
behave in the main display area showing the terracotta warriors, which is spatially arranged in
the same way on a larger scale (Duncan 2, 12). Manufacture, physical labor, and the history of
Chinese bodies employed in these processes are the focus of this sub-section of the exhibition,
which, according to its grand narrative, is representing cultural developments in the Qin Empire
through its architecture. Culture is replaced by production and materiality.
The final phase of preliminary displays before visitors arrive in the main display area describes Qin imperial administration. The First Emperor administered a unifying government in his empire by introducing the standardization of weights and measures, the writing system, and coinage, examples of which are displayed here (Kern 105, Wang 80). New forms of centralized government, taxation, and laws were also introduced for the first time by the First Emperor (Loewe 70-75). The introduction of imperial efficiency, order and regulation, knowledge and power, is displayed in sets of material truths such as standardized weights and measures. These exhibits provide the first extant examples of systems of imperial efficiency that have become standard parts of imperial or colonial rule in later historical contexts, such as the colonization of the Americas and nineteenth and twentieth century European colonialism (Tomlins 220). The genealogy of Empire starts here, from the First Emperor to contemporary globalization.

The Main Display Area – Face to Face with the Terracotta Army

The exhibition contains a total of 13 terracotta army figures, including the eight warriors in the main display area. Most of the warrior figures are armored. The different positions of command or function which each figure has within the terracotta army are signified by the armor and other dress, hairstyle and accoutrements of each individual figure. Although the exhibition and its catalog advertise the terracotta warriors as being life-size figures, they are larger than average. The standing figures measure between 6’0” and 6’5” and weigh between 397 lbs and 410lbs.

The globe-like, spherical shape of the exhibition space is similarly reinforced by the suspended circular installation piece that is clearly visible above the central display of the warriors, repeating the circumference of the domed roof and circling the warriors (see fig 1). In
the main display area, eight terracotta warriors and four horses were arranged in front of a raised dais displaying a horse-drawn chariot. This linear, processional arrangement recalls the original arrangement of the warriors in rows in the tomb pits at Xian, a recollection that is reinforced by the AV projections on the walls behind the display showing the warriors in the excavated pits at Xian (see fig 3). The warriors marching across the diameter of the Reading Room perform a march of history and progress across the spherical, globe-like exhibition space.

The circular installation establishes a theoretical and symbolic frame of reference for visitors and is part of the interpretative strategy of the exhibition, offering overarching explanations and context to the artifacts on display and the visitors beneath it (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 21). The metanarrative embodied in the circular installation describes tropes of unison, universalism, and the harmonious encompassment of the globe as a whole entity. The installation looms above visitors’ heads as they view the main display of the terracotta army and situates their bodies within this schema of totalizing universalism as the new global citizenry that are the implied public of the exhibition (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 101). Synecdochically representing the British Museum, this central part of the exhibition invokes the national museum as the cultural representative of a nation united, under universal values (Duncan 47). The central display piece creates an axis across these globe-like, circular or semi-spherical shapes.

Like the series of photographs of world history sites at the entrance to the exhibition, the procession of the warriors across the exhibition space serves to circumscribe the tomb at Xian and its contents into an overarching metanarrative of universal world history. Extending the aphorism that the sun never sets on the British Empire into the current context of globalization, disparate world cultures and histories are unified and brought under the banner of the collections
of the British Museum. Because world histories are brought together under the British Museum’s claims to universalism (“Statements: Parthenon Sculptures”), in the “First Emperor” exhibition they overwrite conventions of the museum’s didactic monologue with its intended citizenry (Bennett *Pasts Beyond* 14; Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 101) and the nineteenth century conception of the national museum as a depository for national material culture and collective identity (Duncan 8) with the new project of universal citizenship under the conditions of globalization (Hardt and Negri 34).

Along with the decline of the nation state (Hardt and Negri xi; Miyoshi 732) and the traditional museum as its cultural representative, postmodern processes of globalization work to deconstruct identity and history (Hardt and Negri xiv, 34). At the same time as diplomatic relationships transpire between China, Britain, and the U.S. at the exhibition venue, a deconstruction takes place of the theoretical and identificatory barriers that are imposed between the bodies of the exhibition’s visitors and the bodies of the terracotta warriors that are on display. Temporal and historical difference is deconstructed by the exhibition purportedly pertaining to “China’s past, present and future,” as Morgan Stanley’s website summary of the exhibition claims. Differences of identity are deconstructed by the deflection of Chinese identity that is signified by the terracotta warriors into the metanarrative of global citizenship, in which all visitors to the exhibition are implied. The “smooth space” that Hardt and Negri identify as being characteristic of Empire dissolves materializes at the exhibition as it dissolves barriers of time, space, and identity in order to create a lack of resistance and friction between the interests and identities which are otherwise vying with each other inside the space of the exhibition, achieving a semblance of harmony and a peaceful new world order (Hardt and Negri 190)
Similarly, the British Museum has recently glocalized its image as a good citizen in the global community by framing itself via its website from the “Museum in London” to the “Museum in the World”. By the various international exchanges and other projects in which the British Museum is involved in abroad, the institution establishes itself as an ambassador for democracy, culture, and civilization to the rest of the world as well as in London as metropole. The British Museum often invokes the argument that it displays collections such as the Parthenon marbles in a setting in which they are accessible to the whole world, arguing that

Here they are seen by a world audience of five million visitors a year and are actively studied and researched to promote worldwide understanding of ancient Greek culture [...] The Museum is a unique resource for the world: the breadth and depth of its collection allows the world public to re-examine cultural identities and explore the complex network of interconnected world cultures [...] the sculptures are part of everyone’s shared heritage and transcend cultural boundaries. The Trustees remain convinced that the current division allows different and complementary stories to be told about the surviving sculptures, highlighting their significance for world culture and affirming the universal legacy of Ancient Greece (“Statements: Parthenon Sculptures”).

Under “the current division,” parts of the Parthenon sculptures are divided between Athens and London, with some pieces in other European museums including the Louvre. Since the 1980s frequent requests from the Greek government to have the statues repatriated have been rebuffed by the British Museum. The British Museum’s argument assumes a “world public” that is able to similarly transcend cultural and material boundaries in order to be able to physically travel to and visit the British Museum in London. As British Museum Director Neil MacGregor has stated, the British Museum aims to be “the private collection of every citizen in the world,”
so that the new global citizenry privatizes on an individual as well as a corporate basis (Appleyard 1). The “citizen in the world,” implying an attained legal status and eliding illegal aliens and immigrants, is privileged over the broader rhetoric of the “citizen of the world”. This logic presumes British primacy as the legitimate custodian of world treasures and invites visitors to see British primacy over other nations and their artifacts.

In corroboration with the British Museum’s policies of not returning the Parthenon sculptures and other non-British artifacts that were acquired during British imperial reign, the excision and removal of the terracotta figures and other artifacts from Xian, China to Britain and later the US enacts a reversal of the repatriation of remains of ethnic minority bodies to their intended burial places. “The First Emperor” exhibition in effect invites a symbolic, rhetorical reversal or countering of the repatriation of remains of bodies which work to undo the legacies of fragmentation and genocide engendered by colonialist histories by the return of remains for appropriate burial or the return of artifacts to their place of origin. The British Museum’s negotiation of the loan and extended travel of the Xian artifacts from east to west supports its edicts ordering the retention of “acquired” artifacts like the Parthenon sculptures in the West as the rhetorical center of universalism.

At the same time, the main display represents the march of the terracotta army across the globe from China to Britain and the USA, signified by the long, diametrical path of the main display area from one side of the reading room circumference to the other. The deployment of the terracotta army signifies the mobilization of national identity in this way, with the terracotta warriors reenacting the conventional deployment of national military forces in order to defend national borders or expand them by the violent conquest of foreign lands. The emphasis on militarism in the exhibition (James “Can a museum explain imperialism?” 1108), with its central
focus on the terracotta army although both the tomb at Xian and the exhibition contain non-
military artifacts, repeats the tropes of national security that are raised at the exhibition’s security check and by the image of Hadrian’s Wall at the entrance. The citizen-soldier, represented by the terracotta warrior figures, is similarly mobilized as a carrier of national identity and good citizenship. The warriors and the chariot and horses all face west and are arranged so as to appear as if moving in that direction. In the same way, the “First Emperor” exhibition moves westward over its three year course, from China to Britain and then the USA.

In contrast to the rest of the exhibition space, the main exhibit employs floor lighting to highlight the terracotta warriors and other original figures that are on display. Bright white light illuminates the figures from below, creating an ethereal and religious atmosphere. The lighting also facilitated the aestheticization of the terracotta figures, causing shadows and light effects on the three-dimensional figures, offset by the light against the dark background of the exhibition space. The lighting technology aids the reproducibility (Anderson 182) of the terracotta army by creating aesthetically attractive photo opportunities that were reproduced in the exhibition catalog and became a widely recognizable emblem of the exhibition by being reproduced in advertising and news media both in London and globally.

This is exemplified by the poster campaign for the exhibition, showing a dramatically shadowed portrait shot of a bearded general terracotta figure, against a black background (see Figure 4; Portal 30-31). The aesthetics of the representation of the terracotta warriors cast the excavated artifacts as artworks. Because they are contextualized by their display in the British Museum, and later in the High Museum of Art Atlanta, they are exhibited and understood as “universal” works of art (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 25).
In addition to aiding the aesthetic reproducibility of the displayed figures, the use of dramatic lighting in the main display area focuses the visitor experience there as a space of enlightenment, following the dimly lit, tunnel-like arrangement of the first parts of the exhibition that lead up to this central revelation. The luminescence of the terracotta figures from below signals the ascension of the terracotta army as national representatives of China. Emerging from darkness into light, visitors behold the terracotta figures in the main display space. In contrast to the “tunnels,” walled in by smaller exhibits, walls, and informational banners, that visitors have had to navigate in the first part of the exhibition, the main display area is open and light. The theme of ascension or resurrection, as a cultural precedent for the material renewal of China as empire in the contemporary context, is reinforced by the pottery coffin displayed in case 18, adjacent to and bordering the main display area (see fig 5). The terracotta army ascends between
the coffin and the Reading Room dome. Visitors have arrived at a central truth and reality, the center of knowledge and power, the rise of China in the contemporary global political economy.

Visitors emerge from the first parts of the exhibition into the main display area so that they come directly face to face with the terracotta warrior figures, which are arranged in marching formation so that they appear as if they are approaching the audience. After coming into direct confrontation with the warriors, the walkways all around the central display area (see fig 5: A and B) permit visitors to circulate and view the warriors from all angles. Visitors’ direction of movement is the least prescribed in this part of the exhibition, allowing and encouraging visitors to circle the warriors. Pathways are implicitly prescribed for visitors to follow and visitors’ attention summoned to focus on the particular place of the main display area by the way that it is materially constructed (Blair 48). The clear, open route around the main display area, the low (below knee level) barriers between the terracotta figures and visitors, and the floor lighting that is specific to the main display site all construct this effect. Combined with the illumination of the floor lighting and the dim apparition of the Reading Room dome overhead, the visitors circling the warriors in the main display area appear as a ritualistic construct (Duncan 1-2, 12). The ritualistic quality of the display serves to induct exhibition visitors into prescribed behaviors that are appropriate for the atmosphere of reverence that has been created (Duncan 12). The layout of the main display area effectively draws on tropes that are familiar to western audiences educated in a Christian paradigm, such as the cathedralesque Reading Room dome, the central aisle, and the viewing of memorial statues, and teaches China and the Chinese as the object of the quasi-religious reverence.

The reverent viewing of the terracotta warriors in the main display area, constructed to be the central focus of the visitors’ experience at the exhibition, is juxtaposed with the display of
other excavated figures from the tomb pits at Xian that are not part of the terracotta army (see Figure 1: C and Case 21). At the back of the procession of the warrior figures, terracotta figures representing an acrobat and a strongman are displayed in the same sub-section as two unarmored officials (see Figure 1: C and fig 3).

Fig. 5 The latter part of main display area, with entertainers and unarmored generals in the background and images of the excavated pits at Xian projected onto the walls. Barco, http://www.barco.com/projection_systems/images/BR1-L.jpg.

Adjacent to this display, another display area shows bronze birds and terracotta musician figures. These figures were made in order to entertain the Emperor in the afterlife. Recreating scenes from imperial court life, one of the excavated pits at Xian contains musicians who played to tame birds that “danced” to the music in performances for the emperor (Qingbo 201). Two musicians and three birds were displayed in the “First Emperor” exhibition, in proximity to the main display area. In this enclave within the exhibition (Case 21), the bronze birds and terracotta musicians perform for exhibition visitors as audience. The performance of the tamed bronze
birds rehearses the taming of unfamiliar, foreign exhibition content or collections and their assimilation into world order (Ott 19).

These bathetic displays, after the climax of seeing the terracotta warriors in the main display space, assuage the militaristic emphasis of the exhibition and particularly the impact of the terracotta army on visitors. The entertainer figures and two unarmored figures bring up the rear of the procession of terracotta warriors. The choice to position these pacific figures in the same, central arrangement of both the main display area and the exhibition breaks up the march of progress, the grand narrative of the resurrection of China as the First Empire, and the emphasis on militarism that visitors have been inducted into. The army officials in this part of the exhibition are unarmored and the acrobat and strongman are almost naked, wearing only loincloths. The unarmed exposure of these bodies rhetorically softens the implied threat of the terracotta army, emphasizes culture over militarism and administration, and creates a space of leisure and recuperation within which visitors can recover from their confrontation with the terracotta army. Next to the symbolic threat of invasion by China as a global domineer represented in the exhibition by the terracotta army, are the leisure and entertainment possibilities such as tourism, multicultural performances and festivities that are increasingly important in the contemporary heritage industry and become part of the Western audience’s relationship with China and other nations under globalization and travel and tourism under these conditions (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 7-11, 132).

The final sub-section of the exhibition describes the preservation and reconstruction of the terracotta army. By showing broken terracotta figures next to reconstructed replica warriors, this final part of the exhibition prepares visitors for their exit from the Reading Room directly into the museum book and souvenir store, where they are immediately faced with rows of replica
warriors for sale (see fig 4). The exhibition has led visitors through cyclical phases, beginning with exhibits about the establishment of the Qin empire and ending with exhibits about the reconstruction of excavated artifacts using contemporary technologies. This chronological and cyclical order mimics the rise and fall of empire over time, a process that is repeated over time by the rise and fall of different empires. According to the cycle of imperial phases, early modern colonization of the Americas has its roots in enlightenment thinking about Roman and Greek empire (Pagden 11), nineteenth century European imperialism in Africa and Asia has its roots in the European colonization of the Americas (Tomlins 220), and contemporary globalization as Empire draws on and reconfigures nineteenth century imperialism (Hardt and Negri xiv, 146, 191). The genealogy of imperialism has followed a geographical and discursive path from east to west, from Europe to America, and now from China to America (Hardt and Negri xv). In the same way, the final displays in the exhibition invite the visitor to recognize and participate in the rise, fall, and rise of China as they show the reconstruction of the showcased Chinese material culture. In tandem with the rise of China in the global marketplace that similarly informs the reverent showing of Chinese artifacts in the exhibition, visitors are then urged to reassert themselves as global consumers, as a prerequisite of global citizenry that is governed by advanced capitalism, by purchasing replica terracotta warriors in the souvenir store (see Figure 6).

However, the final display area at the exhibition, next to the exit, signifies the reconstruction of Chinese empire, long after the fall of the Qin Empire that the exhibition is ostensibly describing. Contemporary technologies make possible the reconstruction of the terracotta warriors in the guise of their former glory. When they were originally made, the terracotta figures were painted using mineral color pigments. Based on chemical analyses of
Fig. 6 Replica warriors on sale in the museum store, the first display that visitors encounter when they exit the exhibition. Photograph by Graham Turner, “Art and Design Blog: Archive: 28 April-4 May 2008,” The Guardian, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/artblog/2008/apr/28/week.

Traces of pigment on the excavated warriors and in the ground surrounding them in the tomb pits, replicas were made to show the warriors as they would have originally appeared, with brightly painted and patterned armor (Portal 173). The last display case that visitors see before leaving the exhibition (see Figure 1: Case 27) displays a reconstructed kneeling archer. The to scale reconstructed model of the kneeling archer shows the figure whole and undamaged, in contrast to the case of broken figures that is adjacent to it (Case 23 on the floor plan, Fig. 1). As the last display case in the exhibition, the painted archer mirrors the original kneeling archer that visitors were confronted with as they entered the exhibition. Over the course of the exhibition, the archer, metonymically representing the terracotta army that in turn acts as a representative of the Chinese nation-state or empire, is excavated, resurrected, and renewed. Again, the threatening ubiquity of the archer is rhetorically palliated by the purchasing power that visitors ultimately have over him by their ability to buy replica archers and other terracotta figures in the souvenir
store as soon as they exit the exhibition. The “kneeling archer” figure was one of the most popular replica figures sold.

The replica figure is vividly painted in red, green, blue, and black, in contrast to the dimmed monotones and darkness and light shadowing that prevails through the rest of the exhibition. According to this final impression of the exhibition, Chinese history and culture has been reconstructed in Technicolor. In the same way that the replica of the kneeling archer segues visitors into the souvenir store as they exit the exhibition, it connects the excavated artifacts in the exhibition to other reconstructions of Chinese history, such as the blockbuster movie The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor that was released at the same time as the exhibition opened at the High Museum of Art in summer 2008 and based on the story of the First Emperor and his tomb; and other popular movies that introduced American and European audiences to Chinese dynastic history, such as Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2003) and Zhang Yimou’s Hero (2002) (Schiller 412). At the same time as these popular films work to introduce Western audiences to Chinese culture and history (Schiller 412), they set up China as the focus of the Western gaze, a practice that is rehearsed in the “First Emperor” exhibition. In the next chapter, I outline how “The First Emperor” fits into and revises colonial and postcolonial conventions of the exhibition and display of non-Western peoples, which have often objectified and spectacularized non-Western bodies under a Western gaze.
CHAPTER II – LOCATING “THE FIRST EMPEROR” IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EXHIBITION AND DISPLAY

“The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” exhibition takes place at the end of the long nineteenth century and pre-nineteenth century tradition of the exhibition and display of non-Western peoples and their material cultures. This period of the exhibition and display of non-Western peoples is followed by a shift toward “postcolonial” exhibitions that became popular in the 1980s and 1990s, such as ethnographic exhibitions about indigenous peoples staged at both Western and non-Western style museums and similar heritage centers. Exhibitions about national minorities in a postcolonial context, such as exhibitions about Native Americans or Latino/as in the USA, have become familiar since the 1980s (Ramírez 32).

While parts of China have historically been colonized by Japan, contemporary China is not perceived as a postcolonial nation and occupies a unique place in the literature that has recently come to be the focus of new scholarly inquiry (Liu and Goodnight, Ono and Jiao, Schiller). Through globalization as a frame of reference, this scholarship particularly examines the relationship between China and the US in the new global order. As a result of recent developments, China has “a new visibility […] in the world of global communication” (Liu and Goodnight 416). Since the late 1970s, state liberalization combined with economic growth and expansion into international markets have led to China attaining its current status as a leader among the rapidly developing Asian nations, and, more recently, to its rivaling and surpassing Western superpowers, particularly Britain and the US, in terms of global trade (Liu and Goodnight 416, 418; LA Times). By representing China and the Chinese, “The First Emperor” exhibits a contemporarily dominant national-ethnic group as its subject as opposed to a minoritized group, as seen in similar exhibitions since the 1980s.
Visiting Bodies and Visitor’s Bodies - British Reception of the “First Emperor” Exhibition

International news sources such as BBC News reference the “First Emperor” exhibition and so identify it as an event of international and popular significance. BBC News articles about the exhibition show discrepancies about the number of terracotta warriors in Xian and at the British Museum exhibition (www.news.bbc.co.uk). In August 2007 a BBC News article entitled “China’s Terracotta Army on the move” (mis)informs readers that “The Terracotta Army is 8,000 strong” and that “Each statue is unique and was individually crafted”. In this way the terracotta army is misrepresented, fluctuated and recreated to fit into a narrative of sensation, hugeness and grotesquerie. The misrepresentation also recreates the warriors, and by extension the exhibition, as unique phenomena so that it belies the fact that the warriors were mass produced by forced labor (Portal 133). Mass production and the exploitation of a cheap labor force are rehearsed in the context of the British Museum exhibition shop, where replicas of the terracotta warriors made in Xian were imported and sold during the staging of the exhibition. Similarly, in July 2006 the BBC reported that “Terracotta army could invade UK” (news.bbc.co.uk) so that the symbolic threat of invasion by a larger force, China, is in the news.

The selection of thirteen terracotta warriors for display in the exhibition, out of the thousands at Xian, effectively reverses the tropes of hugeness and grotesquerie that have been used to promote, popularly communicate and represent the exhibition. The sensation of hugeness that promotes the exhibition is scaled-down and anxiously contained and compartmentalized by the way in which the exhibition is fitted into the compact exhibition space of the British Museum Reading Room, as described in Chapter One. As in the context of the BBC News, the terracotta army is misrepresented, fluctuated and recreated to serve the purpose of the narratives or contexts in which it is being employed.
In a context of the collision of cultures and economic gain produced from this collision, the British Museum and major U.S. museums engage in the exchange of museum artifacts between nations. In this rhetoric of reciprocity, multicultural exchange, interaction and collaboration, BBC News reported that the British Museum has exported “An exhibition of Assyrian artifacts” and ‘A Treasure of the World’s Cultures’ exhibition” for display in Shanghai and Taipei in 2003 and 2006. In this way the British Museum authorizes its commodification and export of non-British cultures under its patronage at the same time as it appropriates the Chinese artifacts in the “First Emperor” exhibition and then relays them to the US under its patronage. Similarly, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts has engendered an “exchange-partnership” with the Foundation for Fine Arts in Nagoya, Japan through which the BMFA received a fee of $40 million from the Foundation for its participation (Kotler and Kotler 206). In this way multicultural exchange becomes a lucrative multinational business transaction. When such transactions are part of the system of globalization and the political economies which it entails, they are prone to being similarly characterized by being unequal and disproportionately beneficial or one-sided, typically with Global North nations benefiting disproportionately more than Global South nations that are involved in the exchange (Schiller 411). At the same time, nations like China that are developing and expanding in the current global economy insert themselves into global flows of capital, goods, and culture in order to further their own political and economic interests (Ramírez 30). Located in this context of international exchange, the making of the “First Emperor” exhibition represents complex negotiations between Britain, the US, China, and the transnational corporation Morgan Stanley as the exhibition’s main corporate sponsor.
China, Postcolonialism, Neocolonialism, and Global Domination

“The First Emperor: China’s Terracotta Army” exhibits a contemporarily dominant national/ethnic group as its subject as opposed to a minority group, as is often the case with ethnographic exhibitions. China is the most populated country in the world, the fourth largest country in the world in terms of area, and an economic leader that is outranking Britain/Europe and the US in terms of global trade. In 2008, China led trade over the US with a trade surplus of $167,673.2 million (U.S. Census Bureau). Although statistics for 2010 report that China’s trade surplus has recently decreased, China continues to maintain a global trade surplus over Britain and the U.S. and to be a world leader in economic growth (Leung, Yanping, and Hamlin).

Contemporary with the staging of the “First Emperor” exhibition in Britain and the US, China established a global trade surplus with the biggest trade gap being between China and the US (Los Angeles Times). China is contextualized as a new world economic power whose economic standing has implications for Britain/Europe and the US in terms of the global free trade market. The British Museum press release for “The First Emperor” states that, in this context, the exhibition “will give the visitor a chance to understand China’s past, its present and possible futures” (“Press Release: The First Emperor”). The politics of showing the “The First Emperor” exhibition in Britain and the US exemplifies British and US anxieties about China and political-commercial relationships between Britain, the US and China in this context, along with British and US reassertions of their power to display.

In his analysis of the late 1980s exhibition “Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture, 1185-1868” at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., Timothy Luke argues that the exhibition was emblematic of the state of “cultural diplomacy” and international relations between the US and Japan at that time (Luke 107). As at “The First Emperor,” Luke sees
“Japan: The Shaping of…” as being informed by the contemporary political-economic context in the late 1980s, which saw Japan surpass the US in terms of automobile output and technological innovation and production and the Tokyo stock market coming to rival Wall Street (Luke 108). Luke argues that the rise of “Japan’s technoeconomic empire” (109) is reflected in the prestige and scale of the “Japan” exhibition, at the same time as the exhibition content represented feudal Japan as quaint, preindustrial, premodern, and therefore non-threatening to its Western competitors (Luke 110-111). Similar tropes are at work in the “First Emperor” exhibition, although in this case recognition of prestige and scale are reversed to show a counteractive downsizing of China via the exhibition’s fragmented and reduced representation of the terracotta army.

A March 2008 review of “The First Emperor” at the British Museum-host compares the exhibition to the concurrently staged “Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs” at the O2 Arena in London and posits anxieties about the scaling-down of Xian’s terracotta army to fit the small exhibition-space of the British Museum’s Reading Room (James). The pushing of the terracotta army into the Reading Room is compared with the larger, and more appropriate, space of the O2 Arena that was used to stage the Tutankhamun exhibition (James “Tutankhamun and the terracotta army” 200-201). This comparison infers that, in Britain, the glorification of the Western archeology of a dead civilization is granted spatial-ideological precedence over the recognition of an emerging non-Western power. Comparable exhibitions, such as “Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs,” and their display at different locations, in the case of “Tutankhamun” the O2 Arena in London, are attached to a different set of rhetorical tropes. The 3760 square foot exhibition space provided by the O2 Arena is associated with the rhetoric of commemoration and celebration as the former Millennium Dome.
The logistics of assembling selected terracotta warriors inside the British Museum Reading Room for the “First Emperor” exhibition literally and rhetorically functions to reduce, contain and represent foreign cultural history and identity (Cochran 38, Lidchi 94-95). By their incorporation into the British Museum, foreign cultural history and identity are branded by the authoritative patronage of the British Museum (Rentschler and Hede 151, 158). The Museum incorporates these foreign bodies as prostheses to its whole and assimilates them into itself as a civilizing project. As branded artifacts, these procured objects of foreign cultural history and identity can be replicated and reproduced as souvenirs and merchandise. Benedict Anderson and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett have shown how ethnographic objects are “made,” or manufactured as such, by their extraction and insertion into the context of the museum exhibition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3), and made reproducible, for example in the format of postcards (Anderson 182). In terms of the “First Emperor” exhibition, the terracotta warriors were made literal replicas and were sold in the museum stores during the exhibition.

**Literature Review**

Rentschler and Hede’s *Museum Marketing: Competing in the Global Marketplace* and Kotler and Kotler’s *Museum Strategy and Marketing* explain the relationship between museums as competitive businesses, their visitors/customers, and the corporate sponsors that support exhibitions at museums. Similarly, Tony Bennett connects the museum to the department store and the arcade, showing the institution of the museum in relation to a range of other disciplines and interests, including the rise of modern commercial enterprises (*Birth of Museum* 19, “Exhibitionary Complex” 81). The museum as commercial enterprise is reflected in current trends showing the popularity of blockbuster exhibitions, traveling exhibitions and loaned
collections/exhibitions, and the outsourcing of such exhibitions to commercial corporations which become cultural curators in place of the traditional museum or gallery.

Comparative case studies of recent ethnographic exhibitions show that the exhibition content is ideologically and literally shaped by museum exhibition organizers and curators, partially in the desire to satiate the expectations of their visitors (Griffin 5-6; Fienup-Riordan 353). As at “The First Emperor” exhibition, the arrangement and display of such implications of power sets up a binary system of “us” (a dialog between the museum and its implied audience or public, the visitors) and “them” (the foreign subjects being represented in the exhibition) (Bennett, “Exhibitionary Complex” 101; Dubin 3). As in a commercial relationship, the buyers, or acquirers, of artifacts that are displayed in museums and exhibitions maintain economic, cultural, and often class and race-related privilege and power over the cultural laborers and producers with whom they are engaged in a trade relationship. These unequal power hierarchies and the dynamics between them show the transference or reflection of displays of power between systems of economic or commercial capital and systems of cultural capital.

Such systems, which are reliant on an unequal power hierarchy that is organized along racial and ethnic lines with Europeans in control and non-Europeans as an enslaved labor force, have formed the basis of global political economies since the early modern period. Philip Curtin has shown how these global systems were developed during the colonization of the Americas and contributed to the rise and sustenance of European-dominated global political economies (Curtin 1990). This “plantation complex” was controlled politically from Europe and was labor-powered by enslaved Africans, some enslaved Native Americans, white indentured labor, and, in the mid to late 19th century by Indian and Chinese coerced or indentured labor (Curtin ix). These highly capitalized enterprises of cultural and/or commercial production that rely on the cultural
or manual labor of typically non-white workers have been typified from early American colonial systems, as in Curtin’s “plantation complex,” through to contemporary arrangements under globalization. Such systems or complexes are deep and powerful ideological and practical paradigms, which have structured and helped to sustain Anglo-American cultural and commercial economies from the foundations of U.S. history until the present.

Curtin’s plantation complex as a commercial enterprise based on the transatlantic circulation of goods and enslaved labor undergoes a historical shift from the early modern colonial period to the rise of Tony Bennett’s “exhibitionary complex” in the nineteenth century. In Bennett’s exhibitionary complex the circulation of commercially produced goods from colony to European metropole becomes the importation of cultural production from colony to metropole and the subsequent display of these ethnographic objects in the museum. At the “First Emperor” exhibition both the commodification of commercial labor and the commodification and commercialization of culture (Lipovetsky 57-59) are evident in the sale of imported replica warriors from China and other Chinese imported goods sold as souvenirs.

There is a broad and flourishing field of scholarship in museum studies related to reassessments of the museum and museum exhibitions in light of postmodern and postcolonial theory and developments (Anderson, Benedict, Bennett, Dubin, Duncan, Fowler, Hooper-Greenhill, Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne; Karp and Lavine, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Kreps, Lidchi, Luke, Macdonald, Message). This literature documents the birth of the museum (Bennett) as an archive of national history and identity through the representation of material culture (Duncan). The museum is identified as having two historical phases, its birth in the eighteenth century in the form of the “cabinet of curiosities” as private collections which were displayed to the ruling and social elite; and the “opening” of the museum as a public institution.
in the nineteenth century. In both phases of its development, the museum and its exhibitions and displays represented the colonial holdings of the metropolitan nation-state by shows of artifacts and people from its colonial possessions in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Ethnographic exhibitions employed (and continue to employ) techniques such as fragmentation, reduction, arrangement of objects and labeling (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Lidchi, Bennett) to arrange the ethnographic artifacts that the museum acquired in order to establish narratives that legitimized European imperialism (Fowler). In the recent scholarship, or the new museology (Jenkins 113), scholars since the 1980s and 90s have focused on the reassessment of museum collections and exhibitions in light of postcolonial developments, such as the many recent cases of indigenous groups calling for the repatriation of remains that have previously been held at European and US museums. As a result of this scholarship and such postcolonial social movements, museums are subject to criticism and recognition of the need for reevaluation of their institutional role. The politics of representation and exhibition are deconstructed from a postcolonial standpoint that identifies these practices as inherently problematic and in need of revision (Karp and Lavine, Hall). This literature identifies problems with the politics of representing minority groups such as indigenous people.

Important related work has also been done using a rhetorical-critical approach to analyze the politics of representation as they figure into public memorials as spaces of collective memory or historical sites, as similar to museums and museum exhibitions (Jason Black, Carole Blair and Neil Michel, Dickinson, Ott and Aoki). Such a rhetorical-critical methodology, which I employ in this analysis of the “First Emperor” exhibition, is particularly useful in its facilitation of the unveiling and demonstration of the rhetorical strategies, devices, and techniques that are employed at museum exhibitions. Such rhetorical strategies, devices, and techniques are
consciously employed by exhibition designers and curators in order to construct their desired narratives and their effects on visitors, which work to persuade and convince visitors as to the particular desired narrative and its material “veracity”. A rhetorical-critical analysis enables the exhibition in question to be revealed as a politically valorized, rhetorical artifact, as opposed to an apolitical representation of truth or facts (Haacke 95).

Recent scholarship shows that, following a focus on visual rhetoric at museum exhibitions in the 1980s, studies of material rhetoric and how it works at museum exhibitions are increasingly important. Carole Blair and Neil Michel’s work analyzes public memorials in the US as rhetorical artifacts. Blair argues that rhetoric takes material forms as well as its central or traditional forms of written and spoken discourse (16-17). Blair and Michel employ case studies of public memorial sites to demonstrate the materiality of rhetoric (Blair 17), arguing that the “recalcitrant ‘presentness’” of such memorials establishes the assiduous materiality of the rhetorical messages that the memorials communicate. This is a communication which, due to its material presence, cannot be silenced like oral speech (Blair 17). Blair’s identification of the material forms of rhetoric overlaps with the material culture of the “First Emperor” exhibition to show that the exhibition is a vehicle for rhetorical discourses. According to Blair, the public memorial site as rhetorical text acts on the people who are its audience, whether as individual bodies or as communities (30, 46). Rhetoric’s materiality constructs communal spaces at public memorial sites and prescribes the movements, attention, and responses of their audiences in similar ways to how Carol Duncan describes the museum acting on the individual and communal bodies of its audience as a “civilizing ritual” (Blair 48, Duncan 1-2). The memorial site seeks a certain rhetorical response from its visitors (Blair and Michel 158), in the form of a consensual and collective understanding of the past as a vehicle of national history and identity (Blair and
Michel 159). Rhetorical choices are made in creating such public monuments (Blair and Michel 158). In this way the memorial site conditions the consensus of its collective audience (Blair and Michel 171).

Dickinson, Ott and Aoki employ a rhetorical-critical methodology to analyze the Plains Indian Museum as a component of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Wyoming. Through this analysis Dickinson, Ott and Aoki argue that the rhetorical emplacement of exhibitions of Native American identity and culture within a larger, subsuming and consuming representation of white/European-American identity, history and culture rehearses a rhetoric of appropriation of the colonized part to the colonizing whole in a way which aligns the Buffalo Bill Historical Center with the British Museum (“Memory and Myth” 87, 96-97, 102; “Spaces of Remembering” 29, 42). Dickinson, Ott and Aoki call for increased rhetorical and critical-cultural analysis of “the experiential landscapes in which all discourses occur” (“Spaces” 42), such as analysis of the rhetorical strategies and devices that exhibition organizers and curators employ in the design of museum exhibitions (“Spaces” 29). Their work follows Carol Duncan’s assertion that both the objects on display and the architectural/constructed space in which they are displayed should be analyzed together as parts of a larger, whole “dramatic field” in which the discourses and “civilizing rituals” of the museum take place (Duncan 1, 12, 21). Such rhetorical-critical analyses, which focus particularly on material rhetoric at museum exhibitions, are useful in demonstrating the three-dimensional effects of material rhetoric as it works to convince and persuade visitors on physical and material as well as a visual and discursive levels. By recognizing how material rhetoric at museum exhibitions influences visitors in these various ways, the full extent of how power is enacted on to visitors’ bodies at exhibitions is demonstrated.
In her analysis of constitutive rhetoric, Morus identifies “cultural pedagogy” or “intellectual authority” as a masking device for rhetorical discourse that “re-educate[s] an audience through constitutive discourses” (Morus 142) by appealing to a cultural and/or historical framework of reference (Morus 146, 156, 157). In this way a cultural or intellectual figure or institution, such as the museum, uses its perceived voice of authority to rhetorically dictate its desired narrative to its audience. At “The First Emperor” exhibition, constitutive rhetoric is used like Blair and Michel’s idea of the collective consensus to hail the Western (British and American) audiences to which it is being shown at the same time as it references similar but oppositional frames of reference to represent the “foreign bodies” of China’s terracotta army. Constitutive rhetoric is connected to notions of citizenry and constituencies which are integral to the discourses at work at “The First Emperor” (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 101; Duncan 8-9). Rosenzweig and Thelen’s study of popular uses of history in American life supports Morus’ theory by showing that the public perceives museums as the most trustworthy source of information about the past; and as a more trustworthy source of historical information than, for example, high school or college teachers (Rosenzweig and Thelen 21).

Like Blair and Michel and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Jason Black addresses memory-related cultural sites such as memorials, monuments, museums, performative historical events and festivals (Black 200). Black similarly argues that “Such sites of community simultaneously condense, reflect, and challenge the ways that public memories inform a culture’s histories and identities” (200). In his analysis of the rhetorical construction of “American” and “Native American” identities at the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park (Alabama), Black identifies both dominant and resistant discourses being represented in the construction of these identities, leading to reconfigurations of the traditional, colonizing, and disciplining binary identity
constructions of “us” (white/western) versus “them” (non-white/non-western) which are apparent at conventional museums, exhibitions, and similar cultural sites. Because the museum functions as the archive of national identity, history and culture through material culture, it is a primary site for recognition claims and the affirmation of identities (Duncan 8, Jenkins 107).

In related interdisciplinary fields, the museum and museum exhibitions as a site of analysis is expanded to encompass multiple, parallel interpretative paradigms ranging from the freak show (Garland-Thomson) to the World’s Fair (Benedict, Bennett, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Parezo and Fowler) and similar sites of cultural production and consumption (Bennett, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). This scholarship displaces the museum onto the site of World’s Fairs and other venues, such as the freak show, as comparable spaces for the exhibition of non-Western peoples, a process involving the manipulation of this representation by the Western peoples which constructed and managed these displays. Benedict goes on to state that multinational corporations have replaced colonizing nation-states as sponsors of World’s Fairs in postcolonial times (9), identifying the historical shift from colonization under the sponsorship of the nation-state to globalization under the sponsorship of the transnational corporation (Miyoshi 749).

**Terracotta Bodies, Excavated Bodies, and Surgical Bodies**

At the British Museum stores, replication and commodification was extended into simulation as the shops reproduced simulated replicas of the “Emperor Qin,” a figure who is not represented as part of the terracotta army at Xian and who has not been excavated from his tomb. This simulation and reproducibility of the terracotta warriors and the simulacrum of the “Emperor Qin” demonstrates Western political-cultural disbelief in the sacredness of the site of the tomb at Xian (Anderson 182). Appropriation, logoization and branding profane the sacredness (Anderson 182), at the local level, of the tomb at Xian, which prevents the excavation
of Emperor Qin and the unveiling of his image. Managing the perpetual availability of these simulated images makes the tomb at Xian and its real or imagined contents available for surveillance and infinite replication (Anderson 185). The desire for surveillance is similarly connected to the governing discourse of the museum, with its imperatives to panoptically discipline both its visiting public and its contents through the practices of seeing and being seen at the museum (Bennett, “Exhibitionary Complex” 84, 87, 91). Techniques of surveillance, simulation, branding, and profanity de-contextualize the artifacts from Xian and insert them into everyday domestic (read: Western capitalist) contexts, such as the store, so that they are familiarized and tamed (Anderson 185, 183). This appropriating process diminishes the binary between “us” (domestic=Western) and “them” (foreign=ancient Chinese) which is set up inside the exhibition, closing dialog down into a monolog and allowing the ethnocentric society to watch over itself, self-monitoring and self-observing in its own panoptical civilizing project (Bennett, “Exhibitionary Complex” 91).

Wu Yongqi, Director of the Museum of the Terracotta Army at Xian states in “The First Emperor” exhibition catalog that “We should not […] excavate the mausoleum indiscriminately, especially the emperor’s tomb. We should respect our ancestors and our cultural heritage, and any measures we take should not damage the physical remains of either relics or sites” (Portal 157). The policy of Chinese archaeologists at Xian is to not physically excavate the tomb but to eventually employ technological and scientific conservation methods to research into its possible contents, without physical disruption (Portal 157).

The speculation of the gendered Chinese/Asian body of land, its desired excavation, fragmentation and reassembly is a clinical and gendered process of the speculum which renders bodily fragmentation and objectification as well as a rehearsal of the British, European and
European-American speculation of land for empire. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the exhibition of fragments (“in context displays,” as opposed to “in situ displays”) creates abstract and artificial contextualizations of their archive that are surgical in nature (3, 18). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett recognizes the physicality, as well as the materiality, of the operations of what she terms “the ethnographic surgeon” as practicing “cognitive excision” (28). In this way ethnographic objects are “made,” and not “found” or “discovered,” through processes of extraction, detachment, and contextualization in the new and different context of the museum exhibition (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3). Objects are displayed that were never meant to be displayed (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3), such as the terracotta army and other artifacts from the tomb at Xian at the “First Emperor” exhibition. Rhetorical choices are made as to where the cuts are made in sectioning off where an “ethnographic object” begins and ends, editing what is represented as the object’s archive or historiography (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 18).

**Repatriated Bodies**

Such processes of fragmentation, reduction, and speculation/the intrusive speculum are gendered and sexualized. For example, the exhibition of Sara Baartman, between 1810 and 1974 (as a living and then a dead body on display) shows intersections of race and gender in colonial conventions of exhibition and display. In 1810 Sara Baartman, a young Khoisan woman from the eastern cape of South Africa, was brought to London by an English ship’s surgeon (Thompson 28). Sara Baartman was publicly exhibited at various sideshow attractions throughout England until 1814, when she was sold to a circus in France where, due to increased protests against the use of humans as living exhibits, she became an object of study for anatomists and naturalists (Thompson 28). At the sideshow and as a “scientific” specimen, Sara Baartman was exhibited as an example of racialized and sexualized aberration with the display of
her body focusing on her breasts, buttocks, and genitalia (Thompson 28). After Sara Baartman died in 1816 her body was dissected and her brains, skeleton, genitals, and a mold of her body were put on public display at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris, where they remained until 1974 (Thompson 29). The fragmentation of Sara Baartman’s body and fetishized reduction to her sexual organs, which were the focus of the display or her living and dead body, reduced Sara Baartman, and rhetorically by association, her ethnic identity and personage, to a collection of sexual parts, inferring the sexual acquirement and availability of the black female body by the implied white male audience (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 101; Hall 266). At “The First Emperor,” the fragmentation, reduction, and exhibition of the terracotta army is a similarly gendered process that serves to effeminate the army by employing such speculative conventions of display.

In 1994 President Nelson Mandela demanded the repatriation of Sara Baartman’s remains to South Africa, which the French government eventually complied with eight years later in 2002 (Thompson 29). The repatriation of remains and other previously held indigenous artifacts which were garnered as part of colonization and imperialism points to the renegotiation of authority between museums and the indigenous peoples who have successfully repatriated remains from them, with the museum ceding its power to indigenous peoples via the repatriation of remains (Jenkins 105).

Similarly, Native American peoples have been displayed as living exhibits in the US and abroad, such as Algonquian and Inuit peoples who were captured and brought to England for display in the late sixteenth century, pictorial representations of whom were shown in another temporary exhibition at the British Museum prior to the opening of the “First Emperor.” In summer 2007, directly preceding the opening of “The First Emperor” exhibition in September
2007, the British Museum staged the exhibition “A New World: England’s first view of America”. The exhibition rhetorically and ethnocentrically framed its representation of sixteenth century European colonization of the Americas as “an age of voyage and discovery for Europeans” (“Press release: A New World”). Like “The First Emperor” exhibition, “A New World” went on tour to several different US museums after its staging at the British Museum. Like the “First Emperor” exhibition, “A New World” avoids the display of real bodies by instead showing artistic representations of them. The exhibition goes on to recount how the Inuit people that are represented in the drawings on display were taken to England and exhibited to the Elizabethan audience, as a result of which they died of disease. In this historical context, the English colonialist venture to America “to find minerals and other valuable commodities” (“Press release: A New World”) on the pretext of trade becomes attached to the exhibition of native people as living artifacts, representations of foreign culture and identity, and exported commodifications of this culture and identity. This historical tradition has been rehearsed in the twentieth century by the exhibition of Ota Benga, a native person of Congo, at the Bronx Zoo, New York in 1906 (Bradford and Blume 181, 258) and facilitated by international trade routes as conduits for the postbellum transportation of non-white peoples, like Sara Baartman and Ota Benga, from the Global South to the Global North as the cultural center of political economies of exhibition.

Bodily Labor and Working Bodies

“The First Emperor” exhibition similarly rehearses this European-American tradition of paralleling museum exhibition of foreign culture and identity with and as attached to transnational mercantilism in a speciously reciprocal and beneficial relationship. World’s Fairs, as spaces for the exhibition of Western manipulation and representation of their colonial nations,
have extended from the era of nineteenth century empire into the contemporary context of globalization and in corollary multinational corporations, like Morgan Stanley, have replaced colonialist nation-states as sponsors of contemporary World’s Fairs (Benedict 9). As a compartmentalized space of the representation and exhibition of foreign culture and identity that is partially sponsored by multinational corporations, World’s Fairs parallel “The First Emperor” exhibition. The museum exhibition becomes the fair as a trope that induces trade and commerce as well as the potential for grotesquerie and sensation (Bakhtin 303), as publicized by the BBC News reports about the exhibition. The museum-exhibition as the fair creates a site in which the (mis)representation, fluctuation and recreation of identity, via the terracotta warriors, can be exercised. The European-American tradition of presenting living exhibits at museums and at World’s Fairs is reconstituted by the exhibition of the “life-size” (Portal 9) warriors.

Like the “ongoing collaboration” (“Terracotta army could invade UK”) between China and Britain that is enacted by “The First Emperor” exhibition, global historical precedents in the previous context of nineteenth century empire posit the rhetoric of trade, contact and exchange from a point of British, European or European-American instigation in which an artificial dependence on foreign commodities or products is introduced into markets which were previously closed, isolated from colonization and foreign trade interests and autonomously sustaining so that commercial trade is insinuated into everyday life and becomes artificially pathological to the effected community (Barr; Chung 144: Fay xii, 52-55). In this way nineteenth century imperial precedents of a rhetoric of trade show the Anglo/European-American introduction of alcohol to Native Americans as part of the narrative of market hunting and the fur trade in the early American republic (Barr) paralleling and contemporaneous to the British East India Company’s importation monopoly on opium into China (Chung 144; Fay 52-55). Later
nineteenth century narratives of global trade as attached to the objectification, manipulation and (mis)use of Chinese bodies in the US are enacted by “the coolie trade” (Almaguer 154), the indentured labor of Chinese bodies as constitutive of the colonial expansion of the US, and the gendered trade of Chinese prostitutes in the US (Almaguer 160, 174-178). Contemporary with “The First Emperor” exhibition-tour, the “Our Body: The Universe Within” exhibition in the US, like some parts of the “Body Worlds” traveling exhibitions, reenacts the objectification, manipulation and (mis)use of Chinese bodies to cater to American cultural projects (Greenwald 97, Fienup-Riordan 353, Griffin 5-6, “News, Media & FAQs”). Unlike “Our Body” and “Body Worlds,” “The First Emperor” circumvents the exhibition of live or real Chinese bodies by displacing them onto the “life size” terracotta warriors (Portal 9).

The nineteenth century imperial entry of the British into Chinese trade markets by their creation of a monopoly on the opium trade is subverted by the twenty first century arrangement of global trade relations between China, Britain/Europe and the US. In this context, Britain/Europe and the US are implicated in the rise of China’s global trade surplus as they provide markets and demand for cheap imported Chinese manufactured products. Britain and the US are the stimuli for China’s global trade surplus at the same time as their national economies decline due to the global outsourcing of jobs to cheap labor markets, such as China and India. As Britain, the US and China are interrelated in trade negotiations in this way, the “First Emperor” exhibition functions as a forum for the politics of representation and display as an arena in which displays of power, status, and material worth and accession are translated from economic/financial production and capital into cultural production and capital.

China’s status of power in the context of economic globalization complicates the representation of China and the Chinese in “The First Emperor” exhibition. This representation
is polyvalent and diverges from the typical rhetoric of the European/-American staging of foreign culture and identity in museum exhibitions as established in the imperial display of colonial conquests and possessions. In this established rhetoric of the exhibition of foreign culture and identity the capture and conquest of a native people is literalized and ameliorated or made palliative by being attached to a rhetoric of cultural education.

**Real Live Bodies and their Real or Implied Extinction**

The exhibition of John White’s Inuit, Ishi, and Ota Benga demonstrate the practice of this rhetoric. Ishi was a Yahi Native American who was staged as a live exhibit at the Anthropology Museum of the University of California in San Francisco from 1911-1916 (Kroeber and Kroeber, Starn). Tropes of “the first,” as in the “First Emperor” exhibition, or “the last,” as in the display of Ishi “the last Yahi” at the Anthropology Museum at the University of California San Francisco, inscribe either primordialism or extinction onto their subject-bodies. In each case the subject being represented is isolated and differentiated from a central narrative of common humanity and democracy and marked as a primitive and non-viable exception.

Primordialism and primitivism is invoked by “the first” and showed to be non-viable as a result of social Darwinism and similar narratives of evolution and racism (read: genocide) by “the last”. Western triumphalism over the bodies of “the last” Yahi and “the first” Emperor Qin Shihuangdi is shown by the arrangement of these bodies into “in context” displays (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 3, 21) showing progressive, teleological narratives of human evolution in which Anglo-American mastery over indigenous peoples by surviving them is honored (Bennett *Pasts Beyond Memory* 65-66, Parezo and Fowler 27, 168). The history of Ishi and other Native peoples shows that foreign (European) disease is often significantly attached to their biographies as it has historically caused the deaths of millions of colonized peoples in the US, including the deaths of
many of the indigenous people who were captured and displayed as live exhibits during the two imperial phases, such as Sara Baartman (Thompson 29, 46 note 2; Pagden 2, 6).

In events that are similar to Sara Baartman’s biography, when Ishi died of tuberculosis in 1916, his brain was separated from the rest of his dead body during an autopsy which was performed on him at the University of California medical school. While the rest of his body was cremated and placed in a Californian cemetery, Ishi’s brain was surreptitiously sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. by the anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber, who had worked with Ishi during his time as living exhibit at the University of California’s Anthropology Museum. Ishi’s brain was cataloged to the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian and remained as part of its collection until 1999, when the brain was eventually repatriated to Californian Native American tribes who were found to be most closely affiliated with Ishi’s now extinct Yahi tribe, as a result of actions taken by these Native American groups (Speaker 73, 84).

The exhibition of Ota Benga at the anthropology exhibits at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904, at the Academy of Science in Davenport, Iowa (Bradford and Blume 121), and at the Bronx Zoological Gardens in a cage next to the apes in 1906 was in each case intended to support and legitimize dialectics of racist social Darwinism and evolutionary “science,” as was also the case with the postmortem dissection and display of parts of Sara Baartman’s body (Bennett, Pasts Beyond Memory 62). Similarly, a “life cast” of Ota Benga was made and displayed as part of the collection of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (Bradford and Blume, final plate, opposite p. 139, unnumbered page/plate).

The critical move from the exhibition of living bodies to the exhibition of representations of bodies is continued in the display of the terracotta warriors and other figures at the “First
Emperor” exhibition. The exhibition of representations of the non-white or non-western human body (Thompson 29) aestheticizes at the same time as it objectifies and dehumanizes, providing a “legitimate” and permanent focus for the gaze of Western audiences as well as possibilities for reproduction, ownership, and consumption of the image (Anderson 182; Thompson 29). By using this strategy, criticisms of the display of real or living bodies are avoided.

The exhibition of a foreign people serves to assuage the threat they pose to the project of colonization by employing a rhetoric of objectification which implies that that people are now extinct or are becoming extinct so that they need to be preserved in this way. By their objectification and exhibition, and in the contemporary context of their commodification and being sold off and sold out as commodities such as souvenirs and replicas, the exhibited people are effectively contained and co-opted by their exhibitors. The exhibition of representations of Chinese bodies in “The First Emperor” exhibition, together with the exhibition of other Chinese artifacts, by the British and Americans similarly exemplifies British and American political and economic anxieties about China as a competitive and superior world power and Anglo-American need to contain and control this power. In this case the exercise and display of comparative power is shown in the space of the museum exhibition.
CHAPTER III – POLITICAL SUBTEXTS DOMINANT AND RESISTANT AT THE EXHIBITION

Museum exhibitions are inherently political spaces (Karp and Wilson 260). Museums and their exhibitions, like “The First Emperor,” do not simply represent historical “facts” in a neutral space and format (Haacke “Caught” 95). The material on display is strategically represented, as my rhetorical close analysis has shown, according to and in order to encode the interests, beliefs and politics of the exhibition’s presenters in their particular historical context (Vogel 201, Haacke “Caught” 95). In this way museum exhibitions express both cultural mythologies and political power (Luke 1).

At the same time as museum exhibitions engender and disseminate hegemonic grand narratives by employing the various rhetorical strategies of representation and display that I discussed in Chapter Two, resistant and/or marginalized meanings also regain space at venues such as “The First Emperor” (Black 201-202, 207, 215). As Ivan Karp states, “Museums become sites where one not only asserts things but where there is also the possibility of questioning those very assumptions” (Karp and Wilson 267). As a result of shifts in the museological scholarship since the 1980s and 1990s, the exhibitionary practices of museums have been challenged and new claims have been made for how marginalized groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, want to be represented in the museum as representative of national cultural identity (Dubin 3-4, Karp 16). Changes in the conventions of exhibition and display have also been pushed through as a result of public protests and activism, such as protests against the contents of particular exhibitions resulting in a formal response from the host museum (Cooper 174) and requests for the repatriation of remains and other artifacts made by various groups. In the 1990s, museums and exhibitions were forums for numerous public controversies...
and debates about how history was and should be represented (Karp and Kratz 12, Dubin 4).
Such debates indicate the pertinent space that museums and their exhibitions provide as forums where public culture is contested, debated, and formed (Karp and Kratz 13). The British Museum is currently subject to various claims being made for the repatriation of remains and other objects, many of which are ongoing points of controversy and areas of contention for the museum’s public relations efforts.

Similarly, Hardt and Negri locate potential resistance to globalization as Empire in the power of the mass movements of the “multitude” as a grassroots struggle from the bottom up based on the precedents of working class movements such as the Industrial Workers of the World/Wobblies in the early twentieth century (393-413). In the same way that my analysis in Chapter Two showed how the “First Emperor” exhibition is informed by comparative historical precedents of the conventions of exhibition and display through the early modern and modern colonial periods, so is this history always paralleled by a counter history of resistance to these dominant conventions. Over the history of exhibition and display, the forms that this resistance takes have similarly changed and shifted according to context, for example from resistance taking the form of the embodied resistance of people who were put on display as live exhibits, to protests made by members of the public in response to the conventions of representation and exhibition in the era following the decline of living exhibits.

Parezo and Fowler have documented the various forms of resistance taken by American and non-American native peoples who were displayed as living exhibits at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (World’s Fair) of 1904. The exposition was used as a political forum by Osage Native Americans who made political speeches at the fair in expression of their sovereignty and in an attempt to influence government policy (Parezo and Fowler 119). Richard
Davis, the leader of Southern Cheyenne families who came to the fair as part of its anthropological exhibits, saw fairs as a means to educate whites about Cheyenne culture, and as an economic opportunity to sell goods that they had produced (Parezo and Fowler 116).

Throughout the duration of their exhibition at the fair, American and non-American native peoples recreated the public sphere of the Exposition as a space for their protest and resistance by defying rules, making speeches, staging passive protests (refusing to act in certain preordained ways), and controlling economic actions in which they were involved (Parezo and Fowler 268).

Protest by members of the public against the conventions of exhibition and display began with public critiques of the use of living exhibits that date back to the early nineteenth century (Thompson 28). A key stage in the genealogy of effective protest and resistance to such conventions took place in 1906 when a group of African American clergymen protested against the display of Ota Benga, a Congolese man who had been exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition as a “pygmy” (Parezo and Fowler 203-204; Bradford and Blume 95, 104-106), and subsequently at the Bronx Zoological Gardens in New York (Bradford and Blume 183). After his exhibition at the World’s Fair in St Louis in 1904, Ota Benga was temporarily kept at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and then transferred to the Bronx Zoo in September 1906 (Bradford and Blume 162, 164, 168-169). At the zoo, Ota Benga was displayed in a cage next to apes, drawing on contemporary theories of social Darwinism, racist evolutionism, and the “missing link” that had been popularized by P.T. Barnum’s long running exhibition of the same name (Bradford and Blume 178, 183). Opening three months after the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in 1860 and running until the early twentieth century, P.T. Barnum’s “What Is It?” exhibit asked its white, middle class New York
audience to speculate as to the identity of the “nondescript” on display, who was in fact William Henry Johnson, a mentally disabled African-American man (Cook 140-142). In this case the absence of labeling the (living) museum exhibit, who was called a “nondescript,” facilitated public discussions about the dehumanization of African Americans through the “scientific” language of evolution (Cook 140, 148-149). The protests of African American clergymen against the display of Ota Benga in the zoo led to his removal from public display a week into the show (Bradford and Blume 183). As Ota Benga remained confined at the zoo, although not on display, for several weeks following the protests, he continued to resist his confinement by creating noisy disturbances, undressing in public, and attacking guards who tried to force him to dress (Bradford and Blume 187). In 1916 Ota Benga committed suicide, which was arguably motivated by the post-traumatic stress of being incarcerated and publicly displayed in this manner (Bradford and Blume 218).

At “The First Emperor” exhibition, major shifts in historical context that have taken place since the nineteenth and early twentieth century mean that the display of living exhibits and protests against this practice have been replaced by protest against new and different forms of display, such as the display of human remains and sacred objects. In the postcolonial era and the context of globalization, new issues have arisen as effects of the neocolonial structures that have developed in this context. The politics of the “First Emperor” exhibition and the protests that took place against them document the formations of these new superstructures and the resistance that takes place from within and against these frameworks.

**Political Dimensions of the Exhibition**

In situations where an exhibition is part of an international or intercultural exchange or loan project, as in the case of “The First Emperor,” it is emblematic of international relations and
cultural diplomacy between the two or more nations that are involved (Luke 107). Loaning very valuable, iconic artifacts from one nation to another, in this case from China to Britain and the US, signifies the value placed on diplomatic relationships between the nations involved (Luke 107). The “First Emperor” exhibition was the result of two years of negotiation between Britain and China (Embassy). In early 2009, after the exhibition had left Britain for the U.S., the British government published “The UK and China: A Framework for Engagement” document, anticipating the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to the UK (Brown 12). Chinese reports about the exhibition explain that it is perceived to play a positive role in international relations between China and the nations in which the exhibition has been shown (Zhenxing). Exhibitions of artifacts from Xian, like “The First Emperor,” have been shown in numerous European and South Asian countries since the 1990s (Zhenxing). The various exhibitions, including “The First Emperor,” function as a vehicle for Chinese diplomatic relations with the exhibitions’ host nations, with the aim of improving relations between China and other nations and communicating Chinese culture to a world audience (Zhenxing).

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown exemplified this form of cultural diplomacy through the “First Emperor” exhibition as a venue for economic and political trade relations with China by his role in the opening of the exhibition at the British Museum. The opening ceremony for the exhibition took place on 11 September 2007, two days before the exhibition opened to the public, commemorating the most significant date in recent U.S. history. The point of transition when the exhibition moved from the British Museum to the Bowers Museum in California, its first US destination, was also strategically timed to coincide with the opening of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown addressed the significance of the exhibition as a “cultural Olympic Games” at the opening ceremony for the
“First Emperor” (Embassy). Both the Olympics and the museum exhibition functioned as safely neutralized, rhetorically naturalized and ostensibly apolitical forums for the peaceful meeting of different cultures and societies. The opening of both the exhibition and the Games in summer 2008 was reinforced by the opening of the blockbuster movie “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor” which was released at the same time and bases its story on the discovery of the tomb of the First Emperor and the threat posed to its Western protagonists by the rediscovered terracotta army. Like the “First Emperor” exhibition, the plot of “The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor” mediates between the portrayal of China as a rising superpower and British or U.S. imperialist control over China through the discipline of archaeology.

Fig. 7 Gordon Brown gives a speech to open the “First Emperor” exhibition at the British Museum, 9/11/2007. Andrew Parsons, Associated Press.

The private opening ceremony for “The First Emperor” was attended by government officials representing China and Britain. The focal point of this official and unofficial meeting between British and Chinese government representatives was a speech given by Prime Minister
Gordon Brown against a backdrop of an enlarged photographic image of a terracotta warrior figure (see fig 1). Presided over by this iconic image, the prime minister spoke about the importance of the exhibition as a signifier of the increasingly close and cooperative relationship between Britain and China (Embassy). Brown stated that

“This exhibition signals that the relationship between China and the UK is getting better and better, now is the most important time ever for the two countries to enhance understanding and cooperation, whether in development problems and climate change or international trade issues. To celebrate the fruitful cooperation of the two countries in the aspects of culture, society and politics, I am very happy to declare the formal opening of this exhibition” (Embassy).

In this way the “First Emperor” exhibition functions as a contemporary world’s fair exposition of the culture, commodities, and commerce of Britain and China. When the exhibition subsequently moved to the US, the implicit trade agreement expanded symbolically. Negotiating the terms of the exhibition encodes negotiation of non-cultural issues such as climate change and international trade, as referenced by Brown in his speech. As it moves from Britain to the US, the exhibition functions synecdochically as a carrier of these political agendas. The rhetorical naturalization of the venue of the museum exhibition as an apolitical body allows it to pass over national borders and naturalize itself into the cultural discourses of its host nation-states.

Protests at the “First Emperor” exhibition

During the time that the “First Emperor” exhibition was staged at the British Museum in 2007-2008, two protests were staged in counter to the exhibition’s dominant narrative about the position of China in the contemporary global political economy. Both of the protests addressed
issues that were raised by Gordon Brown in his opening speech, climate change and international relations between the West and China.

The first of the protests happened in October 2007. A British protestors put air pollution masks on the faces of two of the warrior figures in the exhibition with the words “CO2” written on them in marker pen.

Fig. 8 The first protest at the exhibition. “Terracotta eco-warrior: protestor breaches security to put masks on 2,200-year-old statues,” Mail Online, 15 October 2007.
This was a protest against the high levels of air pollution in China, a by-product of China’s industrialization and high production rates in the context of their global trade boom (Mail Online). China and the U.S. have both contributed substantially to global warming via their expansive modern urbanization and industrialization (Liu and Goodnight 417). In 2003, China overtook the U.S. as the premier contributor to global warming as a result of GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions (Liu and Goodnight 417). The protest highlighted climate change, one of the political subtexts that Gordon Brown had referenced in his speech opening the exhibition, temporarily making this subtext or citation a dominant narrative at the exhibition.

Martin Wyness, aged 49 from Herefordshire, England, jumped over the barriers separating the terracotta warriors from visitors in the main display area and put masks onto the terracotta figures. He was removed from the exhibition after other visitors alerted security guards and “banned for life” from the British Museum (Mail Online). Security at the exhibition was heightened as a result of the incident (Mail Online).

The second protest at the exhibition took place in March 2008, when placards displaying the slogans “China - Stop killing Tibetans” and “Boycott the Chinese Olympics” were hung around the necks of warrior figures at the exhibition by a group of protestors (Times Online). Visitors to the exhibition reportedly applauded as Martin Wyness, the same man who had staged the “eco-protest” five months earlier, and Mark Trepte, 47, both from Hereford, England, put placards on the statues with the pro-Tibetan and anti-Chinese slogans printed on them (Times Online). Despite being banned from the British Museum on account of his first act of protest against Chinese air pollution, Martin Wyness did enter the museum, got past security, and entered the off-limits area of the main display space to hang the placards around the warriors’
necks (see fig 3) (“Tibet Protests hits warrior show”). No damage was caused to the terracotta figures by either of the two protests, although this was certainly a concern.

Fig. 9 The second protest at the exhibition. Associated Press.

In a related incident that took place in 2006 in Xian, China, German art student Pablo Wendel disguised himself as a terracotta warrior, using makeup and costume, and successfully infiltrated the ranks of the terracotta army by posing in between the terracotta warriors in one of the excavated pits that are open for public viewing at the tomb complex (see fig 4). As Martin Wyness would do a year later at the “First Emperor” exhibition in London, Wendel jumped over the barriers in place between visitors and the display of terracotta warriors in the excavation pit and inserted himself in between the figures (“New recruit joins terracotta army”). In a reversal of conventional colonial and archeological narratives, Wendel was soon discovered by Chinese authorities and removed from the pit.
Responses to a video posted on YouTube showing Wendel’s infiltration of the terracotta army vary between criticisms of his actions as racist and disrespectful to Chinese culture to defenses of such criticisms explaining that Wendel’s performance was made in homage to the terracotta army (YouTube). As in the two protest incidents at the British Museum, the terracotta figures were not damaged, and although Wendel was not formally charged or arrested, he was “seriously criticized” for his actions (“New recruit”).

On being discovered by security guards, Wendel remained in character and refused to leave the excavation pit site. Wendel used public protest tactics usually associated with street protests by playing dead and refusing to move out of position so that he had to be physically carried out of the area by a group of police.
Although Wendel’s transgression into the display space of the terracotta army is framed as performance art, the tactics that Wendel employed, such as transgressing disciplinary barriers and refusing removal, align his performance with the protest as interpretative paradigm, so that it can be analyzed as related to the two protests that took place at the “First Emperor” exhibition in London.

**Counter-Hegemonic and Hegemonic Protest and (Non-)Resistance**

This set of protests revises the archive of protest and resistance against dominant meanings and ideologies that have been conventionally represented by museums and similar sites. The protests at “The First Emperor” employ the techniques and strategies of counter-
hegemonic activism. However, this is done in order to reproduce dominant eurocentric and anti-Chinese narratives. At the same time, the protests are made against the rising dominance of China in the global political economy, which constitutes a major part of the dominant narrative conveyed by the “First Emperor” exhibition. The complex negotiations of identity, power dynamics, and hierarchical positioning that vie for space within the exhibition’s official content are similarly evident in the protests that took place at “The First Emperor”. These protests destabilize and revise the conventions of dominance and resistance that are common to counter-hegemony.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, protest and resistance to the conventions of exhibition and display, as discussed in Chapter Two, have been staged in counter to mainstream museum exhibitions, sometimes using the medium of performance art as Pablo Wendel did at Xian. Resistance to the imperial conventions of exhibition and display typically takes the form of counter-hegemonic protests. For example, in response to the 1992 Quincentennary of Columbus’ “discovery” of America, artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña staged the performance “The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians” at several museums, art galleries, and other locations in the US and Europe over a two year period (Fusco and Gomez-Peña). This performance art project and multi-media installation involved Fusco and Gomez-Peña using dress and makeup to pose as “undiscovered” indigenous peoples from a fictional island in the Gulf of Mexico, who were on display in a large cage at various museum and other sites (Fusco and Gomez-Peña). The performances were intended to critique interpretations and representations of the “discovery” of America in conjunction with the quincentennary of Columbus’ voyage to America in 1492. When performances began, some
visitors reacted to the artists as captive living exhibits, posing next to them in the cage to have their photograph taken and feeding the artists through the cage bars (Fusco and Gomez-Peña).

In a similar act of resistance to the 1992 quincentenary, Native American activist and one of the founding leaders of the American Indian Movement (AIM), Vernon Bellecourt, threw a pint of his own blood onto the sail of a replica of the ship that Columbus sailed to America and threw a replica figure of Columbus overboard at a preview and press conference for the “First Encounters” exhibition at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St Paul (Cooper 115, Dubin 156). Bellecourt’s protest became an act of resistance that effectively changed the content and of the “First Encounters” exhibition and the way in which it was curated. Dan Swan, the director of the Science Museum’s Native American collections program and exhibitions, decided to support Bellecourt’s actions and permanently incorporated the bloodstained sails into the exhibition in order to represent Native views on the subject matter (Cooper 115). A year later in 1993, the Science Museum hosted a conference on issues of the representation of Native American cultures in non-Native museums (Cooper 116).

The incorporation of unintended or revised artifacts into conventional exhibitions and displays is a mode of resistance that is an effect of protests to exhibitions such as Bellecourt’s.

In 2005, the British Museum was subject to an unintended acquisition from popular graffiti artist Banksy, whose work has critiqued collections management and acquisitions practices at major art galleries and museums in Britain and the US (Kennedy). Self-proclaimed British “art terrorist” Banksy entered the British Museum in May 2005, dressed up in disguise. Banksy eluded British Museum security to hang a replica artifact and label in the “Roman Britain” section of the museum (Dickens 471). The concrete artifact, drawn on with an image of a person pushing a shopping cart in the “cave art” style, was placed together with a replica label copy
identifying the exhibit as “Wall Art” from East London by the artist Banksymus Maximus, describing a satirical explanation of the wall art tradition, and legitimizing itself with a museum collections index number. The infiltrated piece remained on display for a few days, after which it was loaned to Banksy by the British Museum for an external exhibition. The British Museum assimilated the piece into its permanent collection in agreement with Banksy (“Cave art hoax”).

Similarly, the legitimization of such radical reconfigurations of museum collections management, acquisitions and curatorial practices was the subject of Native and African American artist Fred Wilson’s “Mining the Museum” exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore in 1992. This installation and curatorial project involved Wilson’s manipulation of how artifacts in the museum’s permanent collections were displayed or not displayed. Wilson altered the arrangement of artifacts in existing displays and brought other artifacts out of storage, putting them on display in order to represent previously marginalized historical narratives, such as the histories of African American freedmen and slaves (Karp and Wilson 258). In one such exhibit, Wilson took slave shackles that had previously been kept in storage at the museum and incorporated them into an existing display case labeled “Metalwork 1793-1880” (Karp and Wilson 254-259).

While they used similar techniques of public protest and the desire for a reconfiguration of the space of museum exhibition displays, the protests that were staged at the “First Emperor” exhibition and by Pablo Wendel at Xian enforce meanings that are contradictory to these resistance movements as they actually reinforce dominant ideologies that encourage anti-Chinese public consensus. Both of the protests at the “First Emperor” exhibition and Pablo Wendel’s unauthorized performance art at Xian created the potential for damage to be caused to the terracotta artifacts and involved the transgression of a member of the public into the off-limits,
sacred space of either the main display area in the museum exhibition or the excavated pits at Xian. Wendel’s act has been interpreted by popular audiences as either disrespectful to Chinese culture or in homage to it (YouTube). The protests at the “First Emperor” exhibition were blatantly anti-Chinese government, using the ancient artifacts from China’s “First Empire” as an ahistoricized, synchronic vehicle for protests against contemporary Chinese policies.

Anne McClintock identifies this melding of the ancient past with the present at venues such as the museum as the spatialization of time into panoptical time and anachronistic space (37, 40). In panoptical time, an image of global history is consumed at a glance, as for example in a diorama (McClintock 37). Anachronistic space uses archaic, pre-modern images to show what is historically new about industrial modernity and its commodities (McClintock 40). This concept was used to identify colonized peoples as prehistoric, atavistic, and anomalous with modernity, for example at world’s fairs such as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 (McClintock 40). Representations of spatialized time in these ways are tied to the advancement of commercial capitalism and consumerism, with both commodity consumerism and the national museum rising in the eighteenth century. At the “First Emperor” exhibition, the two protests that were staged ostensibly in counter to the dominant display similarly amalgamated the representation of ancient, pre-modern China with critiques of China in the advanced capitalism of a globalized world economy. Visitors to the exhibition at the times when the two protests were staged were confronted with a (re)vision of the exhibition’s representation of Chinese history that used the past to critique present conditions. At the same time, protestor Martin Wyness’ criticism of China’s industrialization and the resultant air pollution elides the historical and continuing environmental consequences of Western European and North American industrialization since the 1800s.
The two protests at the “First Emperor” exhibition concurred with the dominant narrative expressed by the British Museum’s exhibition that Western audiences are anxious about the entry of China into the global political economy in terms of colonial reconfigurations (Tibet), cultural production (the Olympics, and the terracotta army), and industrial production (causing air pollution). The concurrence between the museum’s message and the protestors’ messages means that there is no resistance in the acts of protest that were carried out at the exhibition, on the part of its British organizers and protestors. This flattening of resistance reflects and takes the form of a similar affect when the commercialization of the public sphere as it potentially exists at the public museum blurs the limens between public and private spheres, in turn indicating the privatization of the public sphere as an affect of globalization (Habermas The Structural Transformation 181).

**Morgan Stanley and the Role of Corporate Sponsorship**

Tony Bennett has shown that, historically, the museum as a public institution emerged along with the formation of the bourgeois public sphere as identified by Habermas (Bennett Birth of the Museum 25). Habermas defines the public sphere as a space for assembly, debate, critique, and commentary that mediates between the separate spheres of governmental and State regulation and the private sphere (Bennett 25, Habermas “Public Sphere” 95). The public sphere is the domain of social life in which public opinion could be formed when private persons came together in public without coercion, in free assembly and with freedom of expression (Habermas “The Public Sphere” 92). The public sphere developed as a part of bourgeois citizenship in the eighteenth century and was bound up with the rise of a market economy and the idea of public opinion that gave rise to such enterprises of public assembly such as the coffee house and the museum (Bennett 25, Habermas “Public Sphere” 93). It is important to note that Habermas’
concept of the public sphere and those who participated in it is limited by class, race and gender. Habermas’ definition of the public sphere is based on eighteenth century bourgeois European society, which limits its potential applicability to circumstances of globalization that transcend this place, ethnic, and class-specificity Karp and Kratz xvii).

Habermas identifies the commercialization of the public sphere in the context of advanced capitalism, for example through the development of advertising and public relations as examples of the privatization of publicity (Habermas *Structural Transformation* 181, 185, 193). Giving the example of advertising in newspapers, Habermas shows how the commercialization of the press as a medium of the public sphere levels the threshold between the circulation of newspapers as a commodity and the exchange of communications between members of the public as a medium of the public sphere, so that public and private overlap and become blurred (*Structural Transformation* 181). Following Tony Bennett and applying Habermas’ theorization of the public sphere to the museum, under the conditions of advanced capitalism as it exists in contemporary globalization, I argue that the museum as public sphere is commercialized and partially, or in some cases wholly, privatized by corporate sponsorship, such as the transnational corporation Morgan Stanley’s sponsorship of the “First Emperor” exhibition at the British Museum and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The privatization of the “First Emperor” exhibition through corporate sponsorship indicates larger trends towards the privatization of education and the commodification of culture in the context of globalization (Smith; Tomasevski 2-3, 5). The rhetoric that makes the corporate sponsor of the exhibition naturalized as a benign patron manipulates public opinion within the domain of the public sphere, turning it in favor of the corporate sponsor on account of the representation of its support of the arts and culture (“Caught” 100).
During the staging of “The First Emperor” at the British Museum the exhibition received over 850,000 visitors including 11,000 students on school group visits (“London exhibition archive”). School visits to the exhibition were supplemented by “An accompanying education program for UK schools […] developed in partnership with Morgan Stanley” (“Press Release: The First Emperor”). In the working out of a reciprocally beneficial relationship between Morgan Stanley as a transnational corporation and the nations it operates in “Morgan Stanley supports an extensive program of cultural and educational projects, believing firmly in the benefits these bring to the communities in which the Firm operates” (“Press Release: The First Emperor”). In this way education and support as a rhetoric of returning to the international community are imbued with the transnational financial and marketing returns of Morgan Stanley (Kotler and Kotler 302-303). In the same way that previous phases of European colonialism and imperialism have been rationalized by their justification as educating and civilizing projects, in the contemporary context of globalization corporate sponsors of the arts, culture, and education are naturalized as rational actors by their assumption of such benevolently paternalistic roles.

Kotler and Kotler delineate the relationships between the museum and its corporate sponsor(s) (Kotler and Kotler 53, 302-305). In her explication of corporate arts funding, AT&T Senior VP of Public Relations Marilyn Laurie shows that corporate sponsorships, as opposed to donations or contributions, focus on marketing and sales (69). Through sponsoring arts events such as museum exhibitions, corporations benefit through heavy exposure of their logo, use of the venue for customer entertainment, and increased advertisement of themselves as sponsors (Laurie 70), all of which were seen in Morgan Stanley’s sponsorship of “The First Emperor”. Corporate sponsorship leads to increased media coverage, increased sales, and improved customer relations, as well as serving as evidence for the sponsor’s good corporate citizenship
(Laurie 70). In this case, Morgan Stanley’s engaging in discourses of citizenship expand to its formulation of itself as a “Global Citizen”. According to the “Global Citizen” section of their website, Morgan Stanley identifies sponsorships, including sponsorship of “The First Emperor,” as part of its mission to “Support[ing] Our Global Community” through responsibility and improving the quality of life of “communities around the world”.

In the same way the British Museum has recently used its self-fashioned status as a civic stage for presenting its acquisitions to the world as its universal audience and pronouncing judgment on the destination and legal status of its acquisitions. In order to ameliorate its controversial position in the numerous claims for repatriation of remains and other objects that it is currently subject to, the British Museum locates itself as “The Museum in the World” and formulates itself as a globally accredited institution that has assumed the power to assemble and teach to the citizens of the world. The museum is a showcase again (Bennett “Exhibitionary Complex” 81, 90). Timothy Luke has argued that such assumption and naturalization of good corporate or “good aesthetic citizenship” by means of corporate self-promotion via museum exhibition sponsorship acts as a rhetorical masking device that cloaks both the hosting museum and its corporate sponsor in an aura of good aesthetics and taste, making itself attractive to the viewing public (Luke 163). This device draws on the established prestige of the hosting institution, in this case the British Museum, and the prestige of the museum’s and the corporation’s international connections, for empirical verification.

“The First Emperor” exhibition at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, was presented in association with the British Museum with support from Morgan Stanley, the main sponsor of the exhibition at the British Museum. Morgan Stanley, “the preeminent financial advisor to companies, governments and investors from around the world” according to its website
homepage, and headquartered in the USA, acts a recondite pedagogue at the exhibitions, whose “sponsorship will also support the British Museum’s education program which, through extensive teaching program [sic] for UK schools and adult learning, will provide a generation with a unique opportunity to gain a greater understanding of China’s past, present and future” (“Sponsorships”). The museum, as it was formerly attached to the nation-state as educator, culture-producer and curator of the national archive, is partially bought out by global corporate sponsors, such as Morgan Stanley, in the shift to globalization. The role of the national museum as it developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in correlation with the rise of consumerism, commerce, and industrialization, is now subject to a transnational corporate takeover. As the power of the nation-state declines with the rise of globalization and the increasing power of transnational corporations (Miyoshi 743), the role of the corporate sponsor, in this case Morgan Stanley, influences the contents and framing of museum collections, loans, and exchanges, making the national depository of material culture transnational (Duncan 8).

**Critiques of Corporate Sponsorship at Museum Exhibitions**

In 1988, a museum exhibition held in conjunction with the Winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada, became the site of resistance to corporate sponsorship of museum exhibitions. This exhibition, “The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples,” took place under similar conditions to the context of the “First Emperor” exhibition ten years later. In his formal opening speech for the exhibition, Prime Minister Gordon Brown referred to “The First Emperor” as “a cultural Olympic Games” (Embassy). Both “The Spirit Sings” and “The First Emperor” strategically coincided with the hosting of an Olympic Games as a site of cultural and political diplomacy in a rhetorically neutralized and apolitical venue.
“The Spirit Sings,” which showcased artifacts from the Canadian First Nations, was protested against by the Lubicon Lake Band of Cree of Peace River (Northern Alberta). The corporate sponsor of the exhibition, Shell Oil Canada Ltd, was drilling for oil on land that was claimed by the Band (Cooper 21-22; Lidchi “The Poetics” 202-3). The Lubicon Band contacted domestic and foreign institutions that had been engaged to loan artifacts to the exhibition, asking them not to do so. Some of the foreign institutions that were contacted in this way decided not to loan artifacts to the exhibition. Some of these institutions withdrew their loans in support of the Lubicon’s protest and some in order to protect their artifacts from potential damage that could be caused in the event of protests at the exhibition. In addition to this formal request to withhold loans, the museum was picketed by protestors, creating a visible counter-presence at the exhibition (Cooper 21-22, 24). These protests drew worldwide media attention and led to the creation of a task force that produced a report addressing issues such as cooperation, curatorial responsibilities, and the negotiation of different interests between Canadian First Nations and non-indigenous museum professionals (Cooper 27-28). The Lubicon Band’s resistance to the corporate sponsorship of the “Sprit Sings” exhibition and the practical changes that consequently resulted have been identified as a pivotal point in Canadian museology (Cooper 27-28).

Where as at “The First Emperor” dominant and resistant historical and counter-historical narratives have been flattened and homogenized by a lack of resistant meaning-making from within the potential of the public sphere and boundaries between nation-state and private interest are eroded by the corporate sponsorship of the exhibition, artist Hans Haacke’s installation MetroMobiltan (1985) re-maps the sphere of public relations that now exists at the museum exhibition, plotting negotiations and complexes from the micro-level (the visitor) to the macro-level (the context of international political economies). Since the late 1960s, Haacke has worked
to acknowledge the political implications of art and museum exhibitions. By the mid 1980s, Haacke’s work moved to an explicit critique of corporate sponsorship of the arts. Haacke defines corporate sponsorship as a practice where “In exchange for money, companies who needed to polish their image began to attach their logo to prestigious art events. They often spent as much or more on advertising their association with the event they were sponsoring than on the event itself” (“Caught” 99). Haacke’s most well known work of critique against the corporate sponsorship of arts and museum exhibitions is his MetroMobiltan.

This installation uses a banner for the “Treasures of Ancient Nigeria” exhibition that was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1980, and was sponsored by oil corporation Mobil (since merged with Exxon/Esso in 1999) (Grasskamp et al 13). The banner prominently displays Mobil’s corporate logo and acknowledges the corporation’s support of the exhibition, as was seen in banners and other promotional materials for the “First Emperor” and Morgan Stanley. Haacke surrounds the exhibition banner with two similarly logo-ized banners created in the same style so as to be visually assimilated into the display and read as part of the exhibition’s legitimate or authoritative texts and labeling. These banners display quotes from Mobil defending the company’s economic and political involvement in apartheid South Africa. Through these quotes Haacke publicized Mobil’s sales to apartheid regime police and military. Haacke reproduced Mobil’s quotes from the corporation’s official response to a shareholder resolution proposed by church groups in 1981, which called for the prohibition of sales to South African police and military under the apartheid regime (Grasskamp et al 13). The protest of religious groups to the implementation of racist policies remembers the key protests of African American clergymen against the display of Ota Benga in the Bronx Zoo almost a century earlier.
This initial grassroots protest against Mobil’s activities in apartheid South Africa was followed by large-scale boycotts and divestments of Mobil shares in the US by pension funds, universities, and other institutions (Grasskamp et al 13). At this point in the early 1980s, Mobil was one of the largest US investors in apartheid South Africa and held various lucrative interests there (Grasskamp et al 13). Mobil eventually withdrew from South Africa in 1989. The corporation also held assets in Nigeria at the time of its sponsorship of the “Treasures of Ancient Nigeria” exhibition (Grasskamp et al 13).

Haacke connected the exposition of Mobil’s activities in apartheid South Africa and its corporate sponsorship of the “Treasures” exhibition at the Metropolitan by assembling the triptych of banners underneath a classical-style entablature inscribed with the quote “Many public relations opportunities are available through the sponsorship of programs, special exhibitions and services. These can provide a creative and cost-effective answer to a specific marketing objective, particularly where international, governmental or consumer relations may be a fundamental concern,” cited from a leaflet published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Business Behind Art Knows the Art of Good Business* (Grasskamp et al 13). By assembling the three elements of the installation together as a single, coherent text to be read by its viewing public, Haacke explicitly shows the interconnected negotiations that are made between corporation, museum, economic and political interests, and public relations mediation in a corporate sponsorship project.

**Implications and sub-texts of/about corporate sponsorship at “The First Emperor”**

Morgan Stanley’s sponsorship of the exhibition at the British Museum and the High Museum Atlanta (2007-2009) happened to occur during the stock market crash of October 2008 that almost bankrupted the company and several other major US-based corporations. The
duration of the exhibition in London and the US corresponds with the financial crisis in the US that began in 2007 and continues through 2010. The timeline of the exhibition from 2007-2010 further corresponds with a series of ownership developments that were negotiated between Morgan Stanley and several major Chinese financial institutions over the same time period, so that, over the course of the “First Emperor” exhibition, business relationships between Morgan Stanley and China are at stake. The positioning of the transnational corporation and Chinese national corporations are negotiated both inside and outside the exhibition.

In September 2008, The Financial Times reported that Morgan Stanley was in talks with China Investment Corp (CIC) in order to sell almost half of their company stakes to the Chinese counterpart. CIC is a state-owned corporation that was established in 2007 and quickly became an icon for China’s financial power in foreign acquisitions (AFP, “MS in talks”), based on the corporation’s investments made using China's huge foreign exchange reserves. CIC invested five billion dollars in Morgan Stanley in late 2007 (AFP, “MS strikes deal”). Morgan Stanley also entered into talks with Chinese bank CITIC to be bought out by them following the bankruptcy of Merrill Lynch in 2008 (AFP, “MS in talks”). As the “First Emperor” exhibition came to a close in the US in 2010, Morgan Stanley sold its stake in China International Capital Corp (CICC), a joint venture project that Morgan Stanley had entered into together with China Construction Bank Corporation in 1995. Selling their stake gave Morgan Stanley a windfall profit (AFP, “MS strikes deal”). At the same time, Morgan Stanley had retained its market position as one of the only companies that had survived the 2008 financial crisis without going into bankruptcy.

Under the auspices of globalization as a substitute for imperialism, Britain and the USA continue to engender cultural imperialism through the rhetorically naturalized and positively
moralized venue of the museum exhibition, as exemplified by the “First Emperor” exhibition. At the same time the identity of Morgan Stanley, as the exhibition’s corporate sponsor, is asserted and naturalized as a good corporate, global citizen. The self-proclaimed transnational, or glocal, institutions of the British Museum and its corporate sponsor, Morgan Stanley, confront and confirm the communal identity of the new global citizenry that is the implied public of the exhibition. In the wider context of globalization, this hierarchy and the dynamics within it shows how British and/or U.S.-based centers of power communicate with an implied Global Northern or Western public. In this way the communication between museum, sponsor, and visitors is a closed circuit that lacks effective counter-hegemonic resistance, as the protests that took place at the exhibition demonstrated.
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS

In the context of globalization and the alleged “Americanization” of world cultures, “The First Emperor” exhibition is positioned at the crux of discourses about cultural collision, exchange, and multiculturalism. Amongst these key debates are calls for the repatriation of remains of ethnographic objects as well as ongoing arguments for land rights and sovereignty, for example the claims made by Native Americans, Maoris, and various ethnic minority indigenous peoples all over the world. Existing and ongoing debates that are the legacies of previous colonial and imperial projects continue to be relevant and important, and results such as the formal repatriation of remains from museums have only recently, in the 1990s, begun to be achieved. The connections and consequences of interactions between the museum, as the traditional depository for national identity, culture, and history (Duncan 8), and larger processes of globalization in which the museum is now implicated and embroiled should be recognized and brought to the attention of further scholarship. Such global processes, including the repatriation of museums’ colonial possessions/collections and the international loaning of objects to museums around the world, are indicative of how national and post-national identity and culture are formed and represented.

Informed by this political context, how history, culture, and identity are represented at the museum exhibition contests the limens of universalism as it is portrayed by the “non-place” of Empire (Hardt and Negri 190), in which a new global citizenry is forged where transnational corporations such as Morgan Stanley are legitimized and naturalized as “global citizens”. Hardt and Negri have identified that the project of “universal citizenship,” which dissolves nation-based identity and history, is one of the tenets of globalization as Empire (34). The museum as
depository of national material culture (Duncan 8) is radically altered by these new fashionings of citizenry and seminal definitions of “us” against “them”.

Syncretism and hybridity are the by-products of the inter-cultural exchange that happens with globalization. The effects of forms of inter-cultural production and exchange that occur under globalization, of which the “First Emperor” exhibition is exemplary, create new and different key debates that contest cultural ownership rights and license where the boundaries of culture have been blurred. The response to such cases varies from criticism of outside use of traditional cultural forms in non-traditional ways to endorsement of this creativity, as the responses to German art student Pablo Wendel’s performance art and illegal entry of the tomb pits at Xian demonstrate.

In other cases, a complicated argument is negotiated between ownership of archaeological sites, which is rhetorically used to foster nationalism and claims to land rights based on ethnic or racial descent; and other claims for the repatriation of remains, which are similarly based on genealogies of ownership rights. Both arguments are often embroiled with larger claims for sovereignty, such as land rights for indigenous peoples. Contemporary nationalists have argued for genealogically-based ownership of or relation to archaeological sites on contested territory in order to establish modern nation-statehood (Baram and Rowan 3). For example, twentieth century nation-states have employed archaeological, heritage, or other historical sites in order to foster claims for national identity (Baram and Rowan 3). Such nationalist claims often simultaneously work to obscure other ethnic or minoritized histories that exist within the particular nation-state’s boundaries (Baram and Rowan 3). Rights of access to archaeological sites and of ownership and license to represent archaeological or other cultural artifacts are negotiated between essentialist clauses of authenticity, necessary anti-colonial
claims made by indigenous peoples, and new creations of hybridity that emerge at grassroots and at macro-levels in the context of globalization, such as Pablo Wendel’s claims to accessing the pits at Xian, the “First Emperor” exhibition at the British Museum, and the protests that took place there.

Summary

This thesis has described the “First Emperor” exhibition as a rhetorical artifact that functions as a vector of national and post-national identities in the contemporary context of a global political economy that involves Britain, China, and the U.S. I have described how the exhibition’s content represents and communicates competing dominant narratives about the positions of Britain, China, and the U.S. within the global political economy that are expressed in terms of finance, culture, corporatization, and government. These dominant narratives work to reassert the colonial politics of Britain and the U.S. and, alternately, to assert the new identity of modern China as a world leader in terms of global trade in both manufactured and cultural products. I have identified the visiting audience for the exhibition as an implied public of “global citizens,” which replaces the conventional implied public that is hailed at museum exhibitions. The identity of the global citizen is more closely aligned with that of the corporate sponsor of the exhibition, Morgan Stanley, than with the conventional domestic national identity purported by the British Museum. In Chapter Two I described how the “First Emperor” exhibition is located at the end of a long history of conventions of colonial and post-colonial exhibition and display. “The First Emperor” marks the beginnings of a new era of exhibition and display that has emerged in the contemporary context of globalization. In this context the conventions of exhibition and display of non-western peoples and cultures by western museums and curators is revised at the same time as it is informed by the genealogy of colonial politics.
Finally, I described the acts of protest and resistance that took place at the “First Emperor” exhibition and the privatization of the public sphere, in which the protests took place, as facilitated by the exhibition’s corporate sponsor, Morgan Stanley. As in the exhibition content itself, the ostensibly counter-hegemonic protests that took place at “The First Emperor” were multivalent in that they served to reinforce Eurocentric and Sinophobic dominant narratives at the same time as they employed strategies of counter-hegemonic resistance in order to communicate these narratives to the public audience.

Implications

At the same time as the new global citizenry that is the implied public of the “First Emperor” exhibition is forged, “illegal alien” labor forces within the US and Western Europe who are moved by the forces and processes of globalization are denied citizenship rights. As Chapter Three demonstrated, the “false” protests that took place at the “First Emperor” exhibition, together with Pablo Wendel’s performance at the excavation pits in Xian, were hegemonic as opposed to counter-hegemonic. Such non-resistant protests reinforce the meaning of the “First Emperor” exhibition as a resultant artifact of the privatized public sphere. In this context, any overlap or friction between hegemonic superstructures and the mass public to whom their grand narratives are communicated is effectively eliminated. In this “smooth space” that is created by globalization as Empire, the potential for relevant and necessary protests against the unequal conditions created by globalizing processes, where inequality is created according to nation, class, gender, and race or ethnicity, is similarly smoothed over and elided (Hardt and Negri 190).

At the venue of the museum exhibition, constructions of inequality are represented through the conventions of exhibition and display, relying on the colonial configurations and
power hierarchies to express the new power hierarchies that are emergent under the conditions of contemporary globalization. The new holders of power are represented at the museum exhibition, in this case corporate sponsor Morgan Stanley and China as a dominant force in the global political economy. At the other end of the new power hierarchy that is created by globalizing forces and processes, the representation of alternate or counter-histories, such as the identities and histories of newly marginalized groups in “developing nations,” illegal aliens, outsourced factory labor, and migrant workers, is elided at museum exhibitions such as “The First Emperor”. The lack of representation of these groups, whose labor drives the global complexes of the current world economy, signifies the structural and intellectual violence that elides these groups from the history of the contemporary moment. This indicates the danger that these histories will not become part of the collective memory of our global world as we move through and past this moment.

The potential space for counter-hegemonic resistance was seemingly collapsed and misused at the “First Emperor” exhibition by the type of protests that were made there. Despite the encouragement of reverence for and recognition of China’s now dominant position in the global political economy that was represented in the exhibition’s content, the protests that took place at the exhibition demonstrated a return to conventional Sinophobic discourse that comes from a eurocentric perspective. Between these two extremes, of China as world leader and China as denigrated opposition, “The First Emperor” exhibition comprises vying claims and discourses that shift between these poles. The new global identities that are in formation at the “First Emperor” exhibition are continuously negotiated and remain malleable, attached to and shaped by wider economic as well as cultural forces, such as global consumer demand and the economic status of China in comparison to its British and U.S. counterparts.
Throughout this analysis, there is a sustained critique of universalist social and cultural projects, such as the British Museum’s claims for itself as an accessible platform for the free display of the world’s common universal heritage. Such cultural and historical universalism ties into both Morgan Stanley’s naturalization of itself as a transnational corporation as a “global citizen” and the Hardt and Negri’s idea of the universal citizenship that is facilitated by Empire. The British Museum’s claims to universalism have been used by the museum’s board to prevent the repatriation of artifacts, sacred objects, and bodily remains. However, the notion of a common human heritage, which is the basis of the universalist arguments made by the British Museum in the several controversial repatriation cases in which it is involved, can alternatively be used to challenge racialist and essentialist claims for ownership of historical artifacts and sites that are often used to further exclusionary and nationalist agendas (Baram and Rowan 20). Such claims have been used to support ethnic conflicts in the 1990s and 2000s (Baram and Rowan 20), so that their dissipation and replacement with the coalitional politics of common humanity is potentially useful.

The tomb complex of the First Emperor in Xian is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site along similar lines of reasoning that claim access to sites of importance for presumed common world heritage. German art student Pablo Wendel took advantage of the accessibility of the tomb site, presuming an inherent right of access to the site as a “global citizen” studying in China. In a similar way, the “First Emperor” exhibition invites its visitors, the implied new global public, to exercise their presumed right of access to the tomb of the First Emperor as it is recreated inside the British Museum’s Reading Room, so that the museum assumes a franchise of the tomb at Xian. Both the exhibition and the wider cultural debates that surround it delineate and protest who gets access to Xian and the terracotta army and in what
way. In this negotiation of identity verification and the granting or denial of access, authenticity and national identity are key factors. At the same time, globalizing processes reduce and dissolve these vectors so that they become fluid and sometimes unascertainable. In this context, the “us” and the “them” that are conventionally represented and viewed at museum exhibitions up to and including “The First Emperor” are both reinforced and blurred.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study has been limited to analysis of the “First Emperor” exhibition as it was shown at the British Museum in 2007-2008. The exhibition continues to be shown at different museum locations across the U.S. and Canada, indicating directions for future research into how the exhibition is represented in different curatorial formats at the different museums and the potential for comparative studies of the exhibition in Britain and the U.S. Unfortunately I was unable to visit the exhibition at its U.S. locations, which compels such a comparative analysis for future research. This research has also been limited by the difficulty I have experienced in locating Chinese sources and scholarship about the exhibition as it travels through Britain and the U.S. The sources I have been able to access were limited, suggesting that a further comparative analysis between the exhibition that toured Britain and the U.S. and the representation of the terracotta army at the archaeological site in Xian and its significance as a designated world heritage site would be useful.

I follow Karp and Kratz in their call for sustained further research into the effects of globalization on museums and museum exhibitions and on the visiting publics to such exhibitions. In tandem with the rise of transnational corporations and increasing skepticism of the meta-narrative of the nation-state, exhibitions and museums as their containing institutions are changing in order to accommodate an increasingly fractured public. The museum as the
repository of national identity, as described by Carol Duncan, is necessarily reconfigured as
globalizing processes act on the decline of the nation state, the rise of the transnational
corporation, and the new global citizenry that is the implied public of museum exhibitions in the
era of globalization (Duncan 1995). As the museum and its exhibitions change in these ways,
ongoing analysis into emergent forms of museum exhibitions, as I have conducted in the case of
the “First Emperor” exhibition, is called for.
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