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WORLD FAIRS AND VICTORIAN YEARNING

CHEKUBIM A. QUIZON

In 1886, the "Colonial and Indian Exhibition" opened in London at a time when world's fairs such as these, though relatively new, were increasingly familiar spectacles and national events for the metropolitan British public. The first ever international exposition, now better known as The Great Exposition, was also held in London thirty-five years earlier in 1851, an interval roughly spanning a generation.

Between 1851 and 1886 however, a slew of international fairs were held in England and its territories alone, a phenomenon that scholars have repeatedly linked to the social and political exigencies of colonialism, of the building of empire. International exhibitions or expositions were intimately allied with the building of cities, and nations as "global powers." It also directly participated in latter nineteenth century Europe's taxonomic and epistemological passions, especially in the way the unitary idea of "modern knowledge" as embodiment of science, civilization, art and progress came to be organized. It was around this time that sociology, natural history and other forms of knowledge in the social sciences were beginning as distinct disciplines.

Robert Rydell cites a sampling of diverse scholarly interest in fairs as sites and opportunities of cultural construction, from the essays of Walter Benjamin and Umberto Eco that take apart the fairs as capitalist cultural metonyms, to the levelling investigations of Neil Harris and others that open up the representations within fairs to various dialectic discourses such as elite vis á vis popular/mass culture, as political role-playing and symbol-construction, or as (spectacular) arenas of class

struggle itself (Rydell 1989:191).²

There also exists a peculiar context, conveniently called a "culture" that subtends and pervades our own understanding of these fairs. "Victorian culture" as a meaningful body of texts and images, of ideologies invented and reformed, as a name for a historical period marked by both peculiar and spectacular struggles. We can chose to underscore its results—as Carol Breckenridge does when she posits the idea of an "imagined" global "Victorian ecumene" (Breckenridge 1989:196)—or that which can schematically be called its moments of negotiation, where relationships, roles and relevance itself are subject to the contradictory claims of a society subjected to unfamiliar forms of profound socio-economic stress and regeneration.

Britain under the reign of Queen Victoria has been "culturally" typified in terms of conflicting yearnings: a Ruskinian nostalgia for a past Medieval "purity," and a classic capitalist envisioning of a future progressing through technology and trade; a pervasive compulsion to uplift and to moralize, and a parallel fascination for the unnamable desires that the same claim to morality necessarily excludes. This characterization of the culture as some sort of internal conflict or subtext has been opened and reexamined in many ways. Interestingly, cracks in the discourse previously seen as seamless have been dramatically opened up by a search for that which is not said; the search for patterns of Victorian exclusion as a diagnostic and analytical tool. In one sense this is about modes of "othering"; at the same time, it is a form of writing the "self" in an overlay of cultures, what

James Clifford describes as a "form of personal collection and self-fashioning" (Clifford 1988:9).

If we look at Victorian Britain as it yearns for something else, a self that is in a sense larger than itself, an "Empire," a new overlay of conflicts emerge. The Empire, and the history of British colonization itself, was invented, reinvented and represented to Britons largely as a task, the "work of Empire."

This kind of representation is part of what this essay will examine in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. The newer conflicts that are overlaid through colonization tend to revolve around a fulcrum of geometrically multiplying confrontations with difference. As the empire is made to expand, the lands, peoples and cultures of "the faraway" grow stranger and stranger for the citizens of a benignly parochial pre-imperial England (Breckenridge 1989:197). It is a confrontation of difference that is both similar and dissimilar to the patterns that occur within the nation itself, especially concerning the encoding of gender roles. The dissimilarities, however, have a peculiar charge: the social distances *constructed* between gender and class among the Victorians, for instance, become strangely attenuated in the colonial encounter by the *predetermined* cultural distances inserted by language, geographical origin and most especially, race.

The rigor of predetermination sags, however, as the interaction continues. Despite a self-conscious, vigilant "othering," such as that which characterized British colonial modes as opposed to the French or American, for instance, cultural interaction proves porous (Benedict 1984:45-46). It would be excessive and misleading to ask who is colonizing whom for the power relationships in the "work of Empire" are most certainly unequally circumscribed. At the same time however, the schematic depiction of the "other/othered" as emasculated object tends to exclude the possibility and necessity of struggle on one hand and on the other, the colonial and bourgeois imperative to constantly "rewrite" itself as it sees fit.

I will examine colonial exhibitions' display of colonized peoples in terms of a representation of Victorian yearnings, especially as what Burton

Benedict describes as "idealized, hoped-for relationships" (Benedict 1983). I will then look at some problems and contradictions that arise in the exhibition's representational code when it literally positions and activates colonized people—as imperial object-type and colonial subject-emblem—forever "working."

"THE COLONIAL AND INDIAN EXHIBITION OF 1886 EXHIBITED PEOPLE"³

Burton Benedict (1983) in *The anthropology of world's fairs* discusses Britain, the inventor of the first Great Exposition, and how it depicted itself as Colonizer. While the large colonial section inside the Crystal Palace in 1851 consisted mostly of objects—"products of empire" as well as "trophies of traditional arms from conquered countries and symbols of conquered royalty" (Benedict 1983:46)—the 1886 exhibition included the unprecedented display of people in Britain.

Before the exhibition of colonized people was first then the display of the "captured" or tributary objects. The "magical showcase of objects" in the Crystal Palace operated as signs or emblems, "where India, as well as other cultures, was represented through her things" (Breckenridge 1989:202). This "noble" display of India through carefully chosen artifacts of splendor quickly put together by the British East India Company, were easily incorporated into the actual space of Queen Victoria's public and private rituals of monarchy that took place at her every appearance at the Exhibition: "the lands of the Orient [through her treasures] were appropriated by the Crown to construct its own high rituals of monarchy. They were lined up to offer the Queen...a continuous gaze on objects of what were to become her distant and cultural others. These were parts, even if only potentially and metaphorically, of her royal 'household'..." (Breckenridge 1989:203).

There is however a literally corporeal difference between the display of "representative objects" and the display of "representative people." While it is true that there exists a history and a universality in the emblematic use of "people as technicians," "people as craftsmen," "people as trophies," "people as freaks" (Benedict 1983:43-

45), I suggest that the use of actual people in British colonial displays was also a self-conscious acting-out of a Victorian mode of what can be paradoxically described as "honesty," in the American colonial displays of about the same time (e.g. the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893), the display of colonized people was also embedded within a claim to truth, but it was more heavily informed by "scientific truth." Consequently, the use of real people as "representatives" can be described, in contrast, not as a moral honesty but as a scientific i.e. ethnological "authenticity" (See Stocking 1987).

A closer look at the British colonial exhibitions will reveal that unlike their American counterparts who were preoccupied with a Social Darwinist search for origins and racial upliftment, the "sacred space" that the Victorians reserved for the "Native" lay in the unique salvation brought about by [a surrender to] the Empire's work. By stepping into the place allotted to each and every Royal subject, they become part of a moral inevitability, an almost culturally teleological process, where the British Crown brings some sort of *pax Anglicum ad infinitum*, forever growing through earnest collective industry (See Mackenzie 1887:1-4). This vision, like all imperialist-expansionist discourses, is profoundly self-serving in terms of practice, and self-comforting in terms of national idiom.

The exhibition of people in 1886 took place at a particular moment in England's empire-building. It was "one in a considerable series of purely colonial exhibitions. Approximately thirty-six such expositions were held between 1875 and 1931, sixteen by the U.K. and its possessions, eleven by France and its possessions, three by Belgium, and two each by Holland, Portugal and Germany" (Benedict 1983:46). The exhibition comes at a point relatively late in the history of British colonial initiatives, especially in India, but at the same time forms part of a politically vigilant shoring up of public opinion in the face of anti-British uprisings in the Empire overseas.

Interestingly, John M. Mackenzie (1984) and Vladimir Steffel (1990) set up the exhibition, hereafter called the 1886 Colonial, not only as part of a chain of events of imperial self-ascription but as a curious point of climax and origin: it is "the

first devoted solely to imperial themes" and anticipated the suffusing "imperial ethos" of the numerous exhibitions during the succeeding Edwardian era (Steffel 1990:95; Mackenzie 1984:97).⁴

When Victoria opened the 1886 Exhibition, "God Save the Queen" was sung first in English and the second verse in a Sanskrit translation by F. Max Muller. Honored artists of emporium, Lord Tennyson and Sir Arthur Sullivan collaborated on a commemorative imperial ode written by the former and set to music by the latter, wherein the images of the Empire are whipped into a unitary, emblematic, and peculiarly masculinized whole:

Sons, be welded each and all
 Into one imperial whole,
 One with Britain heart and soul!
 One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!
 Britons hold your own!

A special Native Compound was constructed outside the exhibition buildings in the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens in South Kensington "to house 'Hindus, Muhammadens [sic], Buddhists, Red Indians from British Guiana, Cypriotes, Malays, Kaffirs and Bushmen from the Cape and the inhabitants of Perak and Hong Kong. Their Queen Empress has taken a deep interest in their welfare and parties of them have on two occasions visited Her Majesty—once at Windsor and once at Osborne" (Reminiscences 1886 quoted in Benedict 1983:46).⁵

There were a total of ninety-seven of these "Natives" with their names and ages recorded.⁶ In the exhibition itself, they were displayed in colonially ascribed sections—India, British Malaya, Cyprus, et al.—which included themselves performing various tasks. "The Indian section included artisans: silversmiths, carpet weavers, trinket makers. Cape Kaffirs were shown washing diamonds—an example of the use of 'natives' to perform industrial tasks" (Benedict 1983:46).

The 1886 Colonial can be viewed as an interesting experiment: breaking away from previous exhibitions it employed no scheme of classification. It also made a beguilingly complex appeal not only to vicarious exoticism but to

gustatory immersion: a "colonial marketplace" that sold exotic fruits, vegetables and meats shipped frozen, dining halls and stalls that served colonial cuisine, beverages, wines and spirits. In an immediate sense, these displays were meant to demonstrate the feasibility of real markets, of shipping produce and frozen meat for British consumption. In the virtual (as opposed to the phenomenological "actual") space of the exhibition however, it was an "atmosphere"—described in some accounts as fairylike—that was generated to help create public support for colonialism (Steffel 1990:95-6).

The plea for support seems two-fold: on the formal level of serious state discourse, it clearly sought to demonstrate the "notion of Empire as an interlocking economic unit" (Mackenzie 1984:107), that colonies were not "liabilities" to Britain, hence the emphasis on the colonies' and Dominions' culture, economy and socio-political life. The resultant action was not just trade but emigration, an appeal towards building a life in "the colonies" that would later feed into colonial bourgeois "collecting lifestyles" (Breckenridge 1989) as well as late Victorian appetites for a topicality of an exciting, dangerous and sometimes heroized "faraway."⁷

Benedict sums up the imperial discourse as a spectacle:

"The aim of the 1886 Exhibition was to educate the British public about their empire. A sense of pride and achievement persisted throughout all British colonial displays. Britain deserved her Empire. She was an enlightened ruler and the empire was hers by right. At the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924, a great pageant of empire was put on with words by Kipling and music by Elgar. It was called the Bridge of Empire and took three days to perform. Each episode (and they involved fifteen thousand players) was conceived of as a block of stone building the bridge. The episodes mingled domestic history with colonial exploits. The concluding episode shows the bridge's completion...heralded by the crashing of music, the ringing of bells and the singing of cheers [as] two floods of humanity [British and colonial] pass and re-pass on the bridge" (1983:47)

Despite the orgy of royal emblems and the poetic ecstasies of submission to the purifying bludgeonings of "flag, fleet and Throne," it is surprising that the hyperboles translated pragmatically into "trade, not acculturation." Benedict observes that peoples of the colonies "were neither expected nor encouraged to become Britons" (1983:47), an observation largely based on the derisive press that Gold Coast natives on display at the British Empire Exhibition received for wearing "flagrantly civilized attire": grey flannel trousers, gold-rimmed spectacles, standard boots and an army pattern moustache.

Indeed, the derision is apparent in newspaper commentaries of this type, but underlying the issue is an expectation of the aforementioned cultural "honesty"—or authenticity, if that is preferable. Victorian naivete suspects dishonesty when Natives "appear" in "civilized clothing." It is an expression of hieratic ideals of order, in this instance cultural order, as articulated through the metaphor of race. There emerged what has been referred to as an "Asian" iconography of the colonized produced by a "well-established imperial culture" (Barrell 1991), an imaging of colonial indigenes in their honest and proper social place. This iconography is violated by such modes of dress, even such a patently military one that is probably an indirect result of the massive recruitment of "honest," or "authentic" "native" men into Her Majesty's colonial armed service.

Considering where the imperial ethos of turn-of-the-century exhibitions eventually led to, the 1886 Colonial seems a gesture of hesitation by an already hardheaded imperialism. The imperial content of exhibitions became progressively more explicit and substantive between 1851 and 1886; however the sociology of executing and exhibiting this expansionist sentiment—something that Victoria herself internalized despite a genteel philosophy upholding charitable work—was an expositional project that was itself susceptible to destabilization.

The execution of the 1886 Colonial had a pervasive morality subtending it that fluctuated somewhere between ideals of fairness and rhetorical effectivity. Steffel lays out what amounts to a conscientious gameplan:

Only colonial indigenes or businessmen were allowed to exhibit. Space was allocated on the basis of relative importance of colonies, and each colony determined what and how it would display. India received the largest interior floor space (about 26 percent), followed by Canada (22 percent), and Australasia, five colonies in Australia and one in New Zealand (25 percent)... Each colony exhibited its exports, heritage and history, political and social life, geography, and ethnography... Many colonies had ethnographic exhibits that emphasized natives in their natural environment or working at indigenous crafts. (1990:95-6)

Displays of native peoples in colonial exhibitions around this time were heavily informed by the French precedents, in this case what the Prince of Wales saw in Paris in 1858, which may partially account for what in hindsight I consider gaps between its texts of "high colonialism" (as seen for instance in the ubiquitous and cheap "printed ephemera" of pamphlets and penny-guides, or in even in Tennyson's opening Ode) the and its relatively benign representational modes of what can usefully termed "expatriate/tourist imperialism."

Unlike the objects and trophies in 1851, people on display can be made to visit monarchs, act out parts in a mega-pageant, or be seen doing "honest/authentic" Native tasks. The work itself is turned into what Barthes calls "an eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures" which he roots to a compulsion to universalize, to erase work's "historification" as part of a search for a postulated common origin, an immobile "Adamism" (Barthes 1957:102). Work—in this case indigenous, Native labor—is unified into an honest, authentic and aestheticized whole, a continuous and implicitly teleological human ancestry.

It is perhaps in this sense that the divergent implications between the display of colonial people and colonial object-artifact becomes most acute. Work, people and things have unequal inevitabilities, especially in relation to labor's profit factor: Colonies are not burdens, the people can and do work, and their work produces "manufactures": goods, objects, things.

If there are observable national patterns in modes of colonial displays of people, such as the

American program of racial emplacement with white men ultimately as "civilisers" (Rydell 1984), or of the French expositions' meticulously authentic-looking and deliberately less regulated European and non-European intermingling in the colonial villages⁸, British exhibitions "tended to show colonial products and the use of native labor to obtain these products, while stressing the symbols of empire... To sum up, the typical British exhibit showed a pile of raw material with a native working on it; the typical French exhibit a temple with dancers; and the typical American exhibit a school house with Native Americans being taught by whites" (Benedict 1983:51).

WHY DISPLAY PEOPLE? PEOPLE & OBJECTS AS ARGUMENTS FOR THE "HONEST/AUTHENTIC" OTHER

Breckenridge (1989) in "The aesthetics and politics of colonial collecting" extensively traces the paths taken by the British who took part in the social, political and aesthetic network that arose around the collection of "objects" from India. She underscores the role played by what she considers the notably growing institutions of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the exhibition and the museum. She traces the various histories of objects, not merely in terms of generalized provenance, but also from a broadly functionalist perspective: on the starting end, the value of collected objects are rooted both to early eighteenth century entertainment "panoramas" in Leicester Square, and to the older format of the "wonder cabinets" or "cabinets of curiosities" as sites of what can be described as existential transfixation. On the resultant end, she shows the "feeding" of various collections, private and Royal, into exhibitions, museums, and other institutions of organization and control.

James Clifford (1988) in another article called "On collecting art and culture" traces this migration of collected objects within a semiotic format illustrated as a square that he adapts from Greimas. This square is a schematic illustration of relationships in what he calls "the art-culture system, a machine for making authenticity" where objects tend to migrate from regions of lesser value to that of greater value; the object itself does not change in any physical way but the adjustments in how it is valued occurs as a result of historical changes in the disciplines and institutions

concerning art and ethnology. Thus, what was once a primitive artifact can acquire increased cultural value by undergoing a conceptual transformation into an object of "fine art" (1988:222-226). The bone of contention is authenticity, and this authenticity is both aesthetic and cultural: the truth of art as a condition of genius *sui generis*, the truth of the artifact as a condition of an exotic culture's purity.

Using "honesty" as a cultural code, it may be argued that Victorian valuation of the colonial object/artifact is based on a mode of ritual ownership: a piece of cultural truthfulness, like a piece of the True Cross. However it must be associated with a culture that is *not* Britain itself but one *belonging* to Britain. From a relic of possessed truthfulness, the meanings associated with Empire is learned and relearned as metonyms for raw material, overseas trade, triumphs in colonial rivalry.

After the Crystal Palace exhibition, there was a surge in collecting, notably of Indian objects "which inaugurated a new era in which collecting, like culture itself, became institutionalized and internationalized" (Breckenridge 1989:207). Private collecting intimately linked up with "colonial lifestyles," the institutionalization of collecting linked up with the orderliness of all knowledge and the empire itself. The Victorian ecumene operated as globally spreading aura, built with the acquisition or displacement of objects from the faraway colonized realm, and their positioning within the domain of the British city-centers. This global aura therefore is also manifested in the creation of an absence elsewhere: "things," "stuff" that represent cultures, places, entire realms, have been taken away from their communities or origin. They signal a displacement in the periphery and movement towards the colonial center.

Interestingly enough, physical displacement even of the the most treasured objects in a community, may not always constitute a permanent loss. In certain cases, their actual removal from a culture that feels the loss is followed by the creation of a satisfactory and equally physical substitute; this phenomenon has been documented in the case of the loss and culturally acceptable "replacement" of Hindu icons in certain religious communities in India

(Davis 1990). Thus, the image of a total global aura is truly an *imagined* ecumene; the suggestion of a universalizing presence of colonial culture conceals the non-uniformity, the barefaced variety among the colonized peoples that live within all that which is called "Empire."

Even more disconcerting is the metonymic use of people in colonial representations of culture. It is one thing to display the Throne of Travancore at the Crystal Palace Exhibition upon which Prince Albert was made to sit; it is another thing altogether to display the king and all the people of the Indian state directly represented by that royal emblem. How can we understand the exhibition of people in relation to the art-culture system already discussed above that exhibits, acquires, values and revalues objects? We have seen that indeed, people are conceived of and presented as "objects," as emblematic friezes of present and future imperial greatness. Their "objectness" however is like the global aura, fragile and schematic because as humans they are not only acted upon, seen or displayed, but reckon as well. The subject as object is an hermeneutical dilemma. Granted, the "life" of an object is not completely static, since all things carry with them material "encrustations" or evidences of conceptual syncretisms. This claim is practically the cornerstone of archaeology, parts of art history and more recently, material culture studies. The "life" of people however, whether in a micro or macro sense, is by comparison an arena of almost unlimited possibilities. The much-criticized Gold Coast native with the army-pattern moustache was not a "dishonest" representation of what men in that country, as army recruits, did to their facial hair in 1924. At the same time, it is difficult to claim if it is "honest" even in a qualified and compromised Victorian sense of Gold Coast lifeways. The search for cultural "truth" is a problematic condition since the goal is imaginary. At the same time, imagination makes narrative possible, and in this way, the will to "authenticity" in the Victorian displays of colonial people is satisfied.

The plotting of Victorian novels have often been remarked upon as tending to an excessive abundance of simultaneous narratives; the paintings of the time have an equally curious epic tendency to narrate, allegorize, preach and monumentalize a maze of melodramatic sentiment.

These discourses inform the colonial displays of people in 1886, but in a peculiar way: the sentimentality consists primarily of the Britons' (not the native's) ecstatic embrace of the symbols of the Crown; the heroism of the "native," however lies not in symbolic *feeling* but in pragmatic action. If the main labor of Britain and Britons was to be great, then the work of greatness was the cultivation of a faith as nationalistic idiom; the work of the colonized, depicted much like the Victorian painters' "navy" as iconographic "type," is the processing of raw material.

The "Building of Empire" was the master narrative that shaped and informed the colonial displays of people; sheer will and labor made conquest and colonialism possible. The main point was "Greatness," one that was unlike America's paradigm of greatness as fruit of labor. Greatness and Empire were rightly so already England's and work was but a means of being a moral, virtuous "master." The work of empire is difficult but noble, dirty but genteel, brutal but inevitable: it is a task constructed as masculine, as heroic and in this heroism, England redeems "herself."

The problems in equating the phenomenological attitudes towards exotic things with that towards exotic people, even within the context of severely skewed power relations, have been discussed in the preceding sections. Furthermore, it was suggested that "the other" may be better understood not a passive recipient as of action but as actor-participant in the playing out of the dialectic of power relations and symbolic action, of political theatre, real and ideal (Cohen 1974; Stoler 1989).

Marianna Torgovnick writes:

Western discourse on the primitive has often been considered a rhetoric of control and domination—it purpose to justify to men the ways of the West with regard to territories we arrogantly call non-Western and more particularly, with regard to the "lowest" category of the non-Western, the primitive. But this emphasis on *control over others*, while accurate to a point, remains incomplete. That a rhetoric of control and domination exists in Western discourse on the primitive is beyond question. And it exists in at least two senses: control and domination of primitives (and those

thought of as like primitives) abroad; and a parallel control of the lower classes, minorities, and women at home, who are linked, via a network of tropes, to the primitive. (1990:192)

Considering that workers and women were two of the sectors in greatest flux in Victorian England, a sector then emerging would have been the colonized. As the racially distinct British citizens/immigrants that they are in this century, the rhetoric of their representation to the British public of a hundred-odd years ago would constitute a region of "new writing" where roles are ascribed and inscribed on a metaphorical *tabula rasa*. Like women and workers, they were put in a "proper place" but unlike them, their place was by comparison newly made.

It would be interesting to search for a schematic point in the historical writing of the eighteenth century where the colonized racial and/or cultural "other" exists as some sort of pre-emergent Victorian social being. Clean slates however, are also largely imaginary; it is a crucial paradigm in the colonization process to assume that the conquered have no "real" and/or "heroic" history.

India, of course, presented a problem in this endeavor, for the necessity of glossing over pre-existing civilization was made impossible by its ethnolinguistic, political and aesthetic complexity. In 1851, the pageantry of royal emblems from the Indian subcontinent came close to overrunning Victoria's own; curatorial politics saved the Crown by placing the exotic objects of sheer pageantry in their archetypal proper place: rendered "tributary," their splendor became hospitable ground for political re-contextualization.

By 1886 was an "India" no longer newly inscribed having been revealed in thirty-five years since Prince Albert sat on the Throne of Travancore⁹ in the Crystal Palace exhibition. "India" was represented by its small businessmen and artisans, by the practice of separate, quaint, and marketable crafts.

In thinking about the exhibition of colonized people as a mode of symbolic action, other issues arise. What for instance is the relationship of the

charged admixture of Work-Empire-Race to some dominant Victorian concerns that seem to go the opposite direction? The place occupied by the Carlylian Mammonist-Industrialist and his monumental nation-building idiom seems clear. But what of nostos? Does the nostalgia for the Middle Ages in any way resonate with Rousseau's depiction of the beautiful savage? What is its relation not only to the various depictions of "Nature" yearned for by Ruskin, Carlyle or Smith, but perhaps also to the idea of "colonization" itself?

It seems that these bourgeois meditations and insertions of nature as the root of all history did not explicitly come into play in the 1886 Colonial. The social discourses more readily invoked were imperial trade and the newly institutionalized "natural sciences." The consolidation of the former can be traced through the Imperial Institute whose founding was facilitated by part of the 1886 Colonial's profits and the development of the latter through strategic accretions: various museums, growth in public and private collections, professionalization and systematization of research such as the participation of scholarly societies in the exhibition's popular lecture series on colonial history, geography, cultural life and related themes (Steffel 1990:96n).

The show of "natives at labor," aestheticized and textualized, was honorific, a conferment of a politically auspicious moral valuation. Like the work of the later Imperial Institute, the display of labor was meant to "strengthen bonds of union between

all classes and races in Our Dominions and promote a feeling of mutual goodwill, of a common citizenship."¹⁰

The show of labor is foremost, a spectacle, an immediate sight, a manipulation of exotic shock value that once "socially processed" (Thompson 1979) can be put at a crescendo or descendo. Henceforth, it is a potent melding of sight and words, a manipulation of cognition. The representational mode of displaying people-as-cultural-metonyms in 1886 was new and preformed. Later, as in the 1924 exhibition at Wembley, the constructed, equally potent visual iconography is consolidated with the texts of empire which in both elite and mass culture experience are already well-written. Mackenzie writes that the 1886 Colonial "marks the beginning of the popular exhibitions at which vast quantities of ephemera were produced at low cost for wide circulation. The educative and propagandist message could now be taken home" (Mackenzie 1984:102).

The display of colonial peoples in 1886 was then an early attempt at writing-in the non-white native type, the construction of a proper place for an emergent social being. The "faraway" is to be made understandable through its people's usefulness, *homoeconomicus* as universalized moral prototype, for the very rationale created to explain this unequal and unavoidable confrontation between races called colonization, is the necessity of destiny, of moral Empire.

NOTES

- 1 This essay is a direct result of an interdisciplinary graduate seminar in Art History and English on the topic of Victorian representations of work and labor conducted by Dr. Adrienne Munich at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. The input from that class in framing many of the issues discussed in this paper are gratefully acknowledged.
- 2 See Rydell (1989:192n) for complete citations of the works of Walter Benjamin, Umberto Eco, Neil Harris as well as Rosalind H. Williams, Burton Benedict, John M. Mackenzie, David M. Potter, Warren I. Susman, Alan Trachtenberg and William A. Williams.
- 3 Benedict (1983:46). 4. J.M. Mackenzie (1984:97) characterizes the 1880s as a "the decade of the new aggressive imperialism." Steffel (1990:95) points to the self-appointed role of the prince of Wales (the future Edward VII) as patron for the Colonial and Indian exhibition "during a period of great colonial rivalry [as] he realized the importance of British colonies and was struck by attractiveness of their exhibits at the Paris 1878 exposition."
- 4 Eighty seven acres in South Kensington, developed for the establishment of various teaching institutions, and art and science centers, were purchased with the profits from the 1851 Great Exhibition. The Natural Science Museum, the Victoria and Albert and the British Museum are parts of this Crystal Palace legacy.
- 5 Benedict (Ibid.) lists the "national" breakdown as cited in the appendix to *Reminiscences* (1886): 45 Indians, 1 Burmese, 10 Senegalese, 10 British Guiana Red Indians, 5 Cypriots, 5 Cape Malays, 9 South African Kaffirs, 4 Malays and 8 Hong Kong Chinese.
- 6 J.M. Mackenzie traces the "imperial ethos" after the 1890s as it is expressed in the entertainment endeavors of "exhibition entrepreneur" Imre Kiralfy (1984:102+). This involved "historic spectacles," faux cities such as the Cairo Street which later became a standard exposition feature in both Europe and North America and other forms of commercial informational/educational nuancing of "propaganda and Empire."
- 7 It is important to note that these late 19th century fairs in Paris "were largely devoted to persuading the [predominantly skeptical French] public that it was a good idea to have colonies" (Benedict 1983:48). The other side of the carefully handled ethnological displays in these fairs were the infamous military initiatives in the pacification of Algeria and other French territories in Northern Africa.
- 8 In Breckenridge (1989:203-4) citing Tobin Sparling (1982:35): "One room featured the ivory throne of the Raja of Ravancore, a present to the Queen notably used by Prince Albert, who was seated on it for the spectacular closing ceremonies of the Crystal Palace. The elaborately carved throne was upholstered in green velvet and embroidered with gold. Critics agreed that the examples of state furniture exhibited by European craftsmen compared unfavorably with the Indian throne, which exhibited greater control and coherence in both decoration and design."
- 9 Charter of Incorporation 1888 quoted in Mackenzie (1984:125).

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