

**Nuclear Reactions:
The (Re)Presentation of Hiroshima
at the National Air and Space Museum**

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This study reconsiders the significance of the 1995 controversy at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. that arose over the abrupt cancellation of the heavily criticized exhibition, "The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Origins of the Cold War." While this episode, which also has come to be known as "the Enola Gay controversy" because of the central position of that single historic B-29 bomber in the exhibition's displays, can be understood as a crass case of plain old political censorship, I want to reevaluate it as one more sign of a far more volatile ideological crisis in the United States, which are known now as "the culture wars" (Bolton, 1992).

Happening amidst the fiftieth anniversary year of World War II's end, the patriotic uproar over the exhibit's alleged "political correctness" caused great consternation on both sides of the Pacific, but my discussion looks beyond and behind the international affair to ask how Hiroshima was put on, and off, as a historical display at the Air and Space Museum.¹ The contestedness of this single exhibition reveals many strange rituals of political identification and ideological purification for cultural objects and political subjects in which the social dynamics of finding attachment/detachment,

¹ In this regard, for example, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich declared, "Political correctness may be O.K. in some faculty lounge, but the Smithsonian is a treasure that belongs to the American people and it should not become a plaything for left-wing ideologies" (cited in Goldberger, 1996: Section 2, 26).

objectivity/subjectivity, association/disassociation, or significance/insignificance in historical narrative all played out their influences through a museum display.

To situate this controversy over the Enola Gay, I argue that we might see this event as one more manifestation of the recent right-wing Kulturkampf in the United States. Eager to counterattack any and all forms of resistance to its conservative and nationalistic (re)imagination of America's exceptional moral mission and uncontested global power after the USSR's defeat in the Cold War, even the meaning of historical artifacts and events, like the Enola Gay, the Little Boy A-bomb, or Hiroshima, must be reaffirmed as products of "strategic necessity," "good decision-making" or "world class engineering." Because their dark magic as nuclear credibility indicators for the Cold War-era deterrence system of thermonuclear MAD(ness) is no longer essential, other more balanced historical assessments which would attempt to recall their Cold War-era significance, are censored as politically incorrect or ideologically perverted. After World War II, America's nuclear monopoly was meant to keep the USSR in line. Unfortunately Stalin breached the monopoly in 1949 and Breshnev brought the USSR up to nuclear parity with US by the early 1970s. The balance of terror lasted nearly three generations until the Soviet Union simply collapsed in 1991. Fifty years after Pearl Harbor, then, America's superpower once again has become essentially a monopoly. While some might question the conditions of such superpower, the cultural right as

well as the 70-somethings of the World War II generation coaligned to use the Enola Gay during 1995 as a sign of celebration, victory, and deliverance from totalitarianism.

Recognizing this division is quite important. The Manhattan Project, B-29s, Hiroshima, and World War II Axis surrenders are one constellation of particular geopolitical icons, but they have a very specific ideological content for most people over 50. Moreover, a peculiar state formation--American superpower in World War II's Grand Alliance of United Nations as well as the victorious Cold War protagonist over the now vanquished USSR--has had a vested interest in associating these symbols in particular ideological contexts that attained stable canonical forms in many social/political/moral/economic/cultural networks from 1945 to 1995. Because this official ideological frame organized political debate and social alliances for nearly fifty years, publicly-funded national museums, like the National Air and Space Museum, have always played a significant role in the "history-making process" by associating heroic human beings (Americans at work in Manhattan Project labs or at war in the U.S. Army Air Force) and nonhuman objects (B-29 aircraft or atomic bombs) in spectacularized historical performances of American power at the Museum during the Cold War. By memorializing various important linkages between war, technical innovation, peace, and organizational development in the technoscience practices of flight, the Air and Space Museum implicitly has always served on many levels as a high-visibility memorial to the fight that was

World War II.

However, the surviving fly-boys of World War II have imagined that the Enola Gay should serve as a unique memorial to that war and America's triumphant superpower in 1945 and 1995: a purpose which the Museum's curators openly acknowledged as legitimate (Harwit, 1996: 409-426). Yet, in an effort to give some balance to a fiftieth anniversary celebration of that power's costs and benefits, the curators also wanted to append some memoranda of liabilities (the Cold War, nuclear terror, atomic tests, nuclear fuel cycle dangers, Japanese bomb victims, etc.) to the memorial, which clearly expressed another set of cultural associations with the Enola Gay for many people under the age of 50. From these efforts to be objective, a firestorm erupted, mostly over the nature of these ideological associations or their ability to shape political subjectivity in America after the Cold War.

Museums are one site where discursive terms of nationality, ideology and morality can be manufactured as well as purified for any community's political subjects by learned discourses intent upon separating "fact" from "fiction." Thus, factuality and fictiveness often become the objects of pitched battles as history gets made, particularly if, as was the case with the Enola Gay, many of the original "history makers" are still around to help refine and/or define what is fact and what is fiction. The display of artifacts, the discourse of historical authenticity, and the disposition of individual agency all must

come together in history museums to show how "this presentness" followed from "that pastness." Here is where conflict can strike. The 1990s "as a presentness" were made possible by events in the 1940s "as a pastness," but who will be allowed now to remember then, and for whom, and in what fashion? These are unstable isotopes, and a critical mass of ideological contradictions chained inseparably to American superpower rapidly initiated many nuclear reactions to displaying the Enola Gay at the Air and Space Museum.

Museums play a vital role in these identity-generating and history-purifying projects by stabilizing continuously the metaphysical divisions between viewing subjects and objects on view, a constant natural world and a fixed social world with a predictable set of interests, the necessities of the political present and the contingencies of the historical past, and the identity of internal communities and the otherness of external groups. They are, in a sense, "soci(o)ontology" generators for the human subjects who accept these regimes for accumulating and interpreting historical objects (Agger, 1989). To discover the permissible political possibilities of "who, whom" in these equations of intergenerational translation and ideological purification, one can re-read the politics of complex cultural contradictions behind their implementation in museum practices. Therefore, any museum's displays of meaningful divisions between the natural and social worlds have a distinctly politicized character as founding writs of our reality. Indeed, relations of

power and powerlessness in the world at large script such soci(o)ntologies unfolding at the core of museum exhibits.

In this study, then, I perform three tasks: First, I will explore why historical displays can affect political identity by indicating how historic objects are used in museum performances to guide individuals and groups in the United States through political discourses of self-recognition and self-activity. This task allows me, second, to provide an interpretive overview of the National Air and Space museum exhibition under examination here as it was to have appeared and as it actually exists. And, third, I will consider why this museum exhibit drew such intense protests from the cultural and political right, suggesting that the banned exhibit violated existing norms of governmentality working through registers of "entertainmentality," which increasingly denominate the operations of all cultural institutions as well as mediate many institutionalized disciplines of political subjectivity in the United States during the 1990s.

I. Museum Exhibitions as Powerplays

Museum exhibitions are constructed out of specific discourses and practices rooted in objective detachment, passive gazing and dispassionate consideration. Objects are disembedded from their organic social contexts and subjects are kept back from social sites or origins as they visit/view these objectified museumic representations inside of a museum's halls. As Foucault suggests, the positioning of power is a complex set of

simultaneous equations that must interoperate closely and correctly through many cultural discourses and technical disciplines in order to be effective (1979). Such indirect systems of legislation operationalize themselves by identifying nodes of knowledge, regimes of rules, and spaces of subjectivity underpinning our soci(o)ntologies; hence, their indirection orders social and personal behavior from below by steering inclinations tacitly or implicitly, making it often far more powerful than the direct legislation of sovereign agencies attempting to impose order from above by coercive acts (Foucault, 1980a). Many social formations are involved in these processes, and it is quite apparent that cultural institutions, like science and history museums, are important centers of such activity.

As Weber suggests with regard to any act of explanatory interpretation, thematizing an interpretive center always is a contingent and contestable particularization of reality. For various museum practices, whether it is a thematization for art, culture, history, nature, or society, this move represents selecting "a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process," and then transforming it into "a segment on which human beings confer meaning and significance" (1949: 81). While all human beings are "endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberative attitude towards the world and to lend it significance," the power/knowledge practices of each museum, as Weber observes about cultural interpretation in general, are such that "all knowledge of cultural reality" as each museum's

exhibitions represent it "is always knowledge from particular points of view" (Weber, 1949: 81). Particularizing these points of view with the inert facticity of artifacts and narrative texts in some actual display provides the curators of museums with their special powers to confer meaning and significance. With this rarely contested authority, however, there can be issues of impurity or purity about which conflicts may arise, and these battles are becoming far more common in the United States after the collapse of the USSR.

Plainly, museums serve as one salient particularization of the historical a priori underpinning the metaphysics embedded in our existing cultural understandings.² By shaping the historical exhibition-as-a-world separate and apart from the social external reality beyond its walls, the museum contributes to casting the world-as-a-exhibition in its renderings of history. In detaching itself from what is represented as materialized external reality, it animates political subjects with an objective detachment toward their collective life that parallel their practices as viewers/visitors at the museum. Museums divide political subjects from material objects as they separate their collections from the greater material sphere out which each collected object

² Foucault argues all "frameworks of thought" correlate with the historical a priori which "delimits in the totality of experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in that field, provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things recognized to be true" (1970: 158).

is selected. And, once divided, they can try to purify human subjects' understanding of these material objects with their highly particularized cultural representations of that outside world as if it was some domain of universality also resting at ease inside of an exhibition.

In these ritual acts of separation (here is the active object-ness of external reality as standing as relics, there is the passive subject-ness of visitors inside our walls inspecting objects), and modes of mediation (here are detached forms of objective awareness in museum viewing, there are attached practices of subjective activity in nonmuseum doing), museum visitors and curators coproduce the exhibition-as-a-world with the world-as-an-exhibition. Although few have regarded museums as politically volatile concerns, they clearly are important political structures for at least three reasons. First, science and history museums are integrally involved in creating/concentrating/compounding many domains of knowing into compact nodes of specific knowledge. Such artistic and historic knowledge often is represented as being cumulative, totalistic, or conclusive, but it, of course, is not. New knowledges are always developing in society, and diverse cultural interpretations of the same bodies of knowledge are constantly seeking ratification by such institutions. Second, both science and history museums are effectively embedded in establishing certain rules for stabilizing regimes of artistic and historic interpretation. The social ontologies of the what, where, when,

who and how constituting "Nature" and "Culture," which are needed to build stabilized regimes of interpretative rules, often find their most legitimate and accessible material articulation in museum settings. Indeed, the archival preservation of technological objects, accumulative ordering of historic artifacts, and authoritative regime of scientific discourse in museums all offer enduring opportunities to express and stabilize these everyday ontologies. And, third, both script on-going scientific and historic shows of force that project fresh patterns of subjectivity in which individuals and collectivities are expected to affirm themselves as individual or collective subjects with particular identities and peculiar values. Knowledge and power compound each other's effects at these cultural sites by granting access to the sights of knowing recognition as well as giving out the cues of powerful guidance required for the enculturation of acculturated subjects.

Across these three planes of implementation--nodes of knowledge, regimes of rules, spaces of subjectivity--power effectuates its operations a regime of governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Yet, these domains also open zones for contestation. The knowledge that frames these nodes of knowing can be challenged in terms of its material connections, political development or intellectual derivations by pointing to other possible linkages.

The regimes of discursive interpretation needed to define these knowledge domains, in turn, might then be questioned, refunctioned or overturned as each context and its contexts are

identified. And, the scripts of subjectivity that these rule regimes and knowledge nodes elaborate also can be recast to steer the play of discursive power toward unanticipated or unintended outcomes.³

Still, one must be extremely cautious about becoming coopted by any museum's powerplay. In criticizing how power may work, one must not simply critique one set of political engagements by established social formations in order to substitute his or her own apparently different ends to the service of these same means.

All too often, the means for always being in control of the powerplay simply erase the substantive agendas of any alternative set of critical ends, and the would-be cultural revolutionary becomes, in effect, merely a new political establishmentarian. Nonetheless, here are some of the political dynamics in play at any museum exhibition. Technoscientific and historic artifacts are positioned in specific performances, whose aesthetic impact may, in turn, mobilize both individual and collective subjects to repattern their behaviors to conform to the models and norms associated by the exhibition with the artifacts on display (Sherman and Rogoff, 1994).

³ In this regard, as Foucault maintains, "there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association" (Foucault, 1980b: 95).

Conventional constructions of the museum have cast it as a guardian of authentic historical relics where historical authenticity is affirmed by direct, objectified presentations of the things by-and-for-themselves. Museums allegedly provide specially sanctified sites to separate people from the things put out on exhibit as historically authentic relics. Reality becomes reified in relics, and relishing historic reality in/as relics assumes a detachment of the things from the people viewing them as well as a separation of the things on display from the external historic realities they re-present as museumic presentations. In effect, such separation practices purify the past, distancing it from both the present-day realities outside the museum's walls and the present-day populations now living beyond the space and time of this reified past of relics. These displays of interpretive authority, however, are already always shows of force that articulate plays of political power in their material presentations of "art" or "history" for the museum.

II. Collision at "The Crossroads"

The ferocious political combat over depicting America's past at the National Air and Space Museum can be chalked up, in part, to the prestige of the venue itself. As a major institution receiving public monies to display cultural truths in the nation's capital city, this museum might be expected to appear "objective" or "nonpartisan," because it is at these places that America, in some sense, tells its stories to itself in the broadest possible terms (Hogan, 1996: 200-231). Hence, in an

August 1994 Washington Post op-ed piece, The National Air and Space Museum's Director, Martin Harwit, argued: "This is our responsibility, as a national museum in a democracy predicated on an informed citizenry. We have found no way to exhibit the Enola Gay and satisfy everyone. But a comprehensive and thoughtful discussion can help us learn from history. And this is what we aim to offer our visitors" (cited in Nobile, 1995: xxxiii). Yet, it was precisely such rhetorical assumptions about objectivity or partisanship that the authors of "The Crossroads" script ended up contesting. If the terms of "how" we learn from history and "what" history we actually learn, conflict, then the museum performance must justify why it varies from what visitors expect.

As it was constructed by national media and the Smithsonian Institution from "The Crossroads" script, "The Last Act" exhibition, which was what the show came to be labelled after the media controversy, from revised plans circulating publicly, had fairly complex origins, because it was designed with the negative reactions to "The West as America" show at the National Museum of American Art during 1991 very much in mind, (Harwit, 1996: 50-65). To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan by the United States in 1945, the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum drew up plans in 1993 and 1994 to stage a major display around a thorough renovation of the Enola Gay, which was the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the Little Boy U-238 fission bomb on Hiroshima. It sought to defuse

public criticism by circulating the show's script among all possibly interested groups as a strategy to vet the exhibit; indeed, it already had disassociated the Enola Gay from another exhibit on strategic bombing planned during the late 1980s (Harwit, 1996: 50-65). Yet, when the authors shipped their proposed script out to historians, military experts, and World War II servicemen, intense protests began almost immediately. Most importantly, the Air Force Association (an organization for retired and active personnel of the U.S. Air Force) and the American Legion (a national veteran's association) quickly mounted a massive lobbying offensive against the exhibition in the media and Congress to pressure the Smithsonian into excising its allegedly "revisionist" representations of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the 1945 commemoration.

As originally conceived, the exhibition went well beyond already ideologically stabilized renditions of the Manhattan Project's technological heroics to ask why the bombs were dropped, who had been harmed when they exploded, and what has been influence of nuclear weaponry in the post-1945 world. As the newly inaugurated Secretary of the Smithsonian, I. Michael Heyman, claimed at his investiture in September 1994, this approach was legitimate. A former chancellor of the University of California, he asserted "The Smithsonian could have avoided controversy by ignoring the anniversary, simply displaying the Enola Gay without comment, setting forth only the justification for the use of atomic weapons without either reporting the

contrary arguments or indicating the impact of the bombs on the ground. My view is that the Smithsonian has a broader role than simply displaying items in the so-called nation's attic or eschewing important topics because of the political difficulties created by an exhibition" (cited in Nobile, 1995: xliii).

Consequently, the original script from "The Crossroads" exhibit was to have examined much of the post-1945 infighting over whether or not Washington should have dropped the bombs, the cultural significance of seeing all of those burnt bodies of women and children from the blast zones in Japan, and the discursive elaboration of the nuclear mythos from the Cold War era that first arose out of the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima (Alperovitz, 1995). These historically-valid associations, however, were impure ideological translations, which threatened existing forms of political detachment from nuclear war. Veteran's groups claimed these displays were both "too soft" on Japanese aggression in World War II and "too hard" on American servicemen who sacrificed their lives to defeat Imperial Japan. Responding to such protests, the Smithsonian removed material that some historians considered to be central for understanding what happened when and why. Other historians then denounced the revised script as a "historical cleansing" that substituted patriotic propaganda for careful commentary. After nine major rewrites, and in the face of threatened funding reductions, the Smithsonian simply threw in the towel during January 1995 (Nobile, 1995: xiii-xcvii).

Rather than staging a major display about Hiroshima and atomic weapons, the National Air and Space Museum did exactly what Heyman promised it would not do a few months earlier. That is, it merely brought out pieces of the B-29 airplane itself, displaying a large section of the Enola Gay fuselage with bland news release copy about Hiroshima along with a celebratory short film about this B-29 and its crew to mark this major anniversary in world, American and Japanese history. Even this was seen as blasphemous by many. The surviving members of the 509th Composite Group, which was the unit formed in September 1944 to deliver America's atomic bombs, had been angry for years that the Enola Gay was not already fully restored. Its pilot, Colonel Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. described this display "without wings, engines and propellers, landing gear and tail assembly" as a "package of insults" which accentuates "the aura of evil in which the airplane is being cast" (1994: 28).

The Enola Gay has had a checkered history after having been handpicked by Col. Tibbets off of the Martin Aircraft factory line in Omaha, Nebraska in May 1945. On August 6, 1945, Tibbets flew this B-29 over Hiroshima, dropping the first atomic bomb on the city. During the summer of 1946, the Enola Gay was retired from active service. It was put into storage at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona until put back into operational condition and flown to Chicago where it was deeded into the Smithsonian's inventory during 1948, although it sat out in the open on a parking apron at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland

from 1953 until 1960 when it was disassembled and moved to Silver Hill, Maryland. In 1984, the Enola Gay began a thorough mechanical renovation; after a million dollars and nearly eleven years of work, one engine and the forward section of the fuselage were ready for display in June 1995 (Garvey, 1995: 48). This somewhat ignominious treatment of the airplane over the past five decades perhaps reflected the division within the American public over its ultimate historical importance and cultural meanings. Is it the penultimate artifact of American victory in World War II or the first dark signifier of the Cold War's atomic stalemate? For those born after 1945, many of whom ironically could be born only because of Hiroshima, since their fathers might otherwise have been cut down on the beach invading Japan, the Enola Gay represented not deliverance from war but delivery to a world of mutually assured thermonuclear destruction. The Enola Gay is--like so many other sites in the 1990s--an ideological flashback to the 1960s rather than the 1940s, reflecting an on-going generational struggle for power and identity (Luke, 1984: 49-67).

As Air and Space Museum Director, Martin Harwit suggested, "the commemoration the Museum has planned is designed largely for the benefit of those generations of Americans too young to remember how the war ended. It is they who will have the most to gain from the lessons to be learned" (The Washington Post, September 26, 1994: A 11). Particular political subjects, or young Americans too new to remember the 1940s or even the 1960s,

would have much to gain or lose as political agents from the lessons to be museum-learned, not book-learned/school-learned/film-learned, from the curators of "The Crossroads." In many ways, the exhibition was simply designed to showcase a collage of diverse perspectives on the atomic bombings, leaving it up to the viewer/visitor to conclude what the key messages were in its complex arrays of information.

Radical differences in historical perspective, such as those ignited by "The Last Act" controversy, typically are not taken as honest disagreements over either the raw facts or those various sets of individual and group assumptions that often let the same facts speak differently to assorted sets of listeners. As one negative analysis noted, the American veterans claimed the exhibition "turned history upside down, casting Japan as a victim rather than the aggressor, and implying American servicemen were little more than war criminals. Moreover, Enola Gay was presented as an impure hybrid, symbolizing nuclear terror rather than as a machine that brought a rapid end to an agonizing war. The veterans said the display failed to reflect the sentiments and realities that existing in 1945, but instead promoted the antinuclear leanings of the museum's curators 50 years later" (Garvey, 1995: 49). As The Washington Post neatly concluded, "what's taking place is a tug-of-war for the perceptions of future generations between those whose political sensibilities remain anchored in the anti-government, anti-war sentiments of the Vietnam era and those whose perspectives include allowances

for other times and all other circumstances" (September 26, 1994: A 10). Once again, it was "the 1960s generation," refusing to grow up or make sensitive allowances for other times and circumstances. As Major General Chuck Sweeney--the only man to fly on both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki missions--observed about the planned exhibit, "I don't need some '60s-type professor poisoning the minds of our kids about how terrible America was" (Webb, 1995: 5). Yet, ironically, an attempt to make allowances for other times and circumstances, including those of the Japanese victims and non-Japanese on-lookers at Hiroshima or Nagasaki, is precisely what was in play in "The Final Act" exhibition.

Instead of "The Last Act" being the product of 40-something American New Left longmarchers through the institutions, refusing to countenance the times and circumstances of 70-something ex-G.I.s, it actually was planned carefully by two foreign immigrants to America. Martin Harwit, the Air and Space Museum director, was born in Prague during 1931, raised in Istanbul, and educated at Oberlin and MIT after coming to the US in 1946. His appraisal of nuclear weapons was cultivated at the Pacific atoll H-Bomb test sites in the 1950s when he served as a physicist for the U.S. Army to assess thermonuclear weapon effects. As the Smithsonian's project manager, Tom Crouch, noted, the Enola Gay exhibit "was really Harwit's baby," because "he had seen himself what nuclear weapons can do and felt strongly about their danger" (Washington Post, September, 26, 1994: A 10). Harwit's other

key aide, Michael Neufeld, is a Canadian citizen born during 1951. Educated at the University of Calgary in the 1970s, which The Washington Post took special pains to note was located in Canada, or that country where young Americans fled "to escape the Vietnam War," he is a historian, specializing in German aerospace technologies of the Nazi era.

Even so, Harwit's and Neufeld's script shipwrecked on the reefs of the Smithsonian's higher managerial and outside advisory boards at the very beginning of its voyage through a public review process. In July 1993, Smithsonian Secretary Adams protested mightily against the preliminary plans, asserting there was a lack of "what will be perceived by some as balance" in what "should be an exhibit commemorating the end of World War II....I continue to be uneasy that later sections of the planning document treat fully the horrors of the bombing...but do not present in adequate depth...the horrors experienced by the Americans during the island invasions culminating with Okinawa" (Washington Post, September 26, 1994: A 10). However, it was former Congressman and Smithsonian regent, Barber Conable, who put the sharpest point on the disagreement's general outlines at this juncture. An ex-Marine slated to hit the beach in Japan until the Hiroshima bomb fell on Honshu and the Nagasaki explosion visited Kyushu before him, he saw the curators' allowances for views from other (non-American) times and circumstances in these terms: "I think it would be a big mistake to take that approach...Do you want...an exhibition intended to

make veterans feel good, or do you want an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don't think we can do both?"

(Washington Post, September 26, 1994: A 10).

Here is the conflict in nuce. The curators obviously wanted visitors to think about the consequences of bombing Japan with atomic weapons and their ties to the Cold War, but in 1995 (during the fiftieth anniversary of World War II's end) museum directors and regents also wanted veterans to feel good. The parameters for shaping political subjectivity were at odds: inducing perhaps guilty introspection or entertaining a strong national pride. Variances in the nodes of knowledge to be accessed in program scripts, divisions over the disciplinary codes acceptable for interpreting the objects on display, and conflicts over the spaces of representing the complexities of 1945 doomed the exhibit to banality. As Regent Conable sagely warned, the vantage points of retired American servicemen who had been close to contemplating Japanese beachheads from an LCI under heavy fire in March 1946 cannot mix with those of one-time Japanese bomb victims who had been flopping around in raingutters near ground zero at Hiroshima to cool their radiation burns during August 1945. In this environment, the veterans prevailed, particularly once the surviving Enola Gay crew members weighed in. Now 80 years old, but still "hale and hearty" Col. Tibbets asserted that Harwit's and Neufeld's interpretations were little more than "a package of insults" in which "Enola Gay has been

miscast, and a group of valiant Americans have had their role in history treated shamefully." As another WWII B-29 crewman noted, "There is no need to glorify it, but there's no need to denigrate it, either" (Garvey, 1995: 49).

As The Wall Street Journal put it, the Smithsonian Institution is, "the American museum whose business it is to tell the nation's story," and in the case of "The Last Act" exhibition (as well as the earlier "The West as America" show) there is a sense that the Smithsonian "now is in the hands of academics unable to view American history as anything other than a woeful catalogue of crimes and aggressions against the helpless peoples of the earth" (Washington Post, September 26, 1994: A 10). The distinct possibility that this could be part of the nation's story or that the story is, at least, contradictory, contestable, or conflicted was a possibility that seemed utterly out of the question. Yet, what is in dispute here?

Script assertions in "The Crossroads" text, such as the following are what the American Legion, protested. Are they distorted or decontextualized? "For most Americans, this...[WWII] was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism" (Washington Post, September 26, 1994: A 10). For most Americans, WWII was a brutal war of vengeance to deliver retribution for Pearl Harbor, Bataan and Corregidor. John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, and Ronald Reagan attest to this truth over and over again in old war movies on American Movie Classics

or Turner Network Television every week. And, from the Tokugawa shogunate's designation of Nagasaki as Japan's only open port in 1639 to Fat Man's fall from another B-29, Bock's Car, over Nagasaki in 1945, Japan's rulers did see themselves defending their unique culture against Western imperialism, first, by closing the country to outsiders, and then later (thanks to Commodore Matthew Perry's entreaties at Edo in 1854) by emulating Western-style imperialist methods against non-Western (China, Korea, Russia) foes and sites and then later on Western (British, French, Dutch, American colonies) foes and sites. Japan under imperial war governments was not a helpless Third World victim, but plainly the West also had been an aggressor (Hogan, 1996: 116-142; Linenthal and Engelhardt, 1996: 63-96). Two wrongs do not make a right, but do two rights necessarily make a wrong?

In a less anti-intellectual time or in a more intellectual culture, such complexities in Japanese and American memories of WWII might be appreciated, even though they might not make us "feel good." Because American GIs were almost totally ignorant about Japan and its history in 1941-1945, and little has been learned by them or their children during the Cold War, these facts are seen as "revisionist, unbalanced and offensive," as Senator Kassenbaum (R-Kansas) dictated in her condemnatory Senate resolution against "The Last Act" exhibition (Washington Post, January 31, 1995: A 12). And, because Japanese subjects were essentially ignorant about how America had been attacked by the Imperial war machine during 1941-1945, the apparent operational

necessity for staging atomic bombing strikes as a contextually-warranted strategy concocted by balanced democratic decision-makers could not be appreciated as a blow of righteous retribution. Yet, in sacrificing the possibilities of seeing how such contradictions always coexist uneasily in the specific context of struggle to stage another sort of truly revisionist, unbalanced, offensive "feel good" commemoration of World War II at the Smithsonian, another vital opportunity for cultivating the faculties of such historical/moral reasoning has been lost.

The line taken by the American Legion ultimately set the tempo for the whole affair inasmuch as William M. Detweiler, the Legion's national commander, concluded that the National Air and Space Museum was badly damaged by "its own mismanagement and zeal for revisionist history" (Washington Post, January 31, 1995: A 12). After going through a line-by-line rewrite of the exhibit's 500-page script, spending nearly \$300,000 to revise the display, and managing a firestorm of protest that led to 82 members of Congress demanding the removal of the Air and Space Museum's Director, Martin Harwit and the exhibition's curator, Michael Neufeld, the Smithsonian Institution's Secretary I. Michael Heyman cancelled the planned exhibition on January 30, 1995. Heyman thought it premature to dismiss Harwit in the midst of such a passionate public protest, but promised to "look with great care at the management of (the) Air and Space (Museum) in an organized way" (Washington Post, January 31, 1995: A 12). Sensing how volatile these museumological escapades of rhetorical

re-examination were becoming, both houses of Congress planned separate hearings on the Enola Gay exhibition. Newly appointed Smithsonian regent, Senator Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi), promised to recommend to the Senate Rules Committee, now chaired strangely enough by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, that the Senate would consider "how the Smithsonian will be managed in the future and what standards will be developed for interpretive exhibits" (Washington Post, January 31, 1995: A 12).

Acts of direct legislation from the halls of Congress, then, promised to recenter the actions of indirect legislation propounded by the Smithsonian Institution in its exhibition halls. Congress, of course, rarely does anything quickly or right, but in this case it moved with great dispatch far to the right by promising to investigate the ties behind art, history and subjectivity in Congressional hearings. In the meantime, Smithsonian Secretary Heyman promised to stage the sort of exhibition that he thought Congress would be comfortable having all Americans visit. That is, "the new exhibition should be a much simpler one, essentially a display, permitting the Enola Gay and its crew to speak for themselves...with labels that don't get into the wisdom, necessity and morality of using atomic weapons" (Washington Post, January 31, 1995: A 12). Finally, in complete frustration, Harwit resigned during May 1995, leaving the Museum's now heavily bowdlerized exhibition to simply celebrate the Enola Gay as an airplane (Garvey, 1995: 49).

Even though Smithsonian Secretary I. Michael Heyman canceled

Harwit's and Neufeld's exhibition, parts and pieces of "The Last Act" were displayed in Washington during the fiftieth anniversary summer of WWII's end. They appeared, however, at two different venues. At the Air and Space Museum, a massive propeller and engine, the vertical tail-fin, and two-thirds of the Enola Gay fuselage, which displayed the cockpit, bombardier's station, and bomb bay, opened for an indefinite run during late June (Washington Post Weekend, July 14, 1995: 30). With a maximum daily capacity of 3,000 visitors, a timed-ticket system rations access to the display, which really revolves around a sixteen-minute film featuring the crew and their memories of the mission. Beyond the basic "who, what, where, when, why" of the aircraft, its crew, and the Hiroshima bombing, the exhibition's wall captions say very little other than acknowledging the obvious: "Something more than an airplane," the Enola Gay now fifty years later "seems almost larger than life; as much an icon, now, as an airplane. After all this time, it still evokes intense emotions from gratitude to grief, its polished surface reflecting the myriad feelings and meanings and memories we bring before it."

Aptly reflecting the divisions in the nation over the exhibition, American University hosted a second, very low-profile display of artifacts and images from Hiroshima and Nagasaki that Harwit had planned to integrate into the Air and Space Museum show. Entitled "Constructing a Peaceful World: Beyond Hiroshima and Nagasaki," this show ran from July 9 through July 27, 1995 at the University's Butler Pavilion (Washington Post, July 9, 1995:

B 2). Nearly twenty percent of this exhibit's materials were to have completed the Enola Gay display, ranging from photographs of the blast damage at ground zero to a charred school lunchbox filled with the ashes of peas and rice left behind as its owner was burned to death by the blast. Facts, figures, and faces that are ignored at the Air and Space Museum were, however, named at the American University exhibit. Indeed, this was its most telling difference from the Air and Space Museum show. The Hiroshima lunchbox's owner is named: Shigeru Orimen, a middle school student. And, the fact that it was his mother who found his unidentifiable body and the lunchbox also is recorded. Like the pieces and parts of the Enola Gay, these efforts to put another face on Hiroshima's inhabitants also tell a story from August 6, 1945 about other hybridizing associations of humans and machines. Unlike glorious war stories from the Enola Gay's crew, these exhibits, as the American University administrator overseeing the show noted, presented "something people just don't want to think about" (Washington Post, July 9, 1995: B 2). And, while attendance was capped at 3,000 a day for the Enola Gay display, visitors to the American University exhibition suggested a much more difficult subject matter with attendance there hitting only 80 to 100 a day over its three week run.

Here is where Harwit's and Neufeld's project violated all of the rules for the Museum's discursive powerplay. In posing a moral conflict at the center of the Manhattan Project, and in exposing political contradictions in a liberal democratic state

choosing to conduct nuclear warfare against civilian targets in a fascist empire, the original Enola Gay script remembered World War II in Strangelovian Cold War terms, associated Tibbets' 509th Composite Group with thousands of charred corpses in Hiroshima instead of millions of cheering citizens on V-J day, connected FDR's atomic bomb project with Hitler's atomic bomb project, and unified the Enola Gay with the start of a thermonuclearized cold war with the USSR instead of the end of conventionalized hot war with the Axis. The Cold War linkages between good humans (America's heroic B-29 flyers) with bad nonhumans (Japan's defeated militarists) shifted their ideological polarities to-and-fro, collectivizing good nonhumans (A-bomb artifacts) with bad humans (Hiroshima's and Nagasaki's dead women and children).

New attachments of an unstable evil character from the 1960s displaced that old detachment of Americans in their objective sense of national superpower from the 1940s safe and secure from atomic bombs in the 1990s.

This web of reflexive associations were taken as impure intergenerational mistranslations, particularly when those aviators, who are now old veterans, sought a memorial to their acts rather than ambivalent post-Cold War introspection. Rather than simply presenting historic objects as authentic relics of the glorious past, which would respect the detachment of the visitors from the material as well as the separation of museum representations from external realities, "The Last Act" narrative openly crossed the road of apparent objectivity with its abstract

universal point of view to follow its own concretely subjective path of antinuclear remembrance. The canonical collectivization of the Enola Gay with V-J Day parades, postwar prosperity, American superpower was recoded in highly contradictory terms, confusing the Enola Gay with blast effects at Hiroshima's hypocenter, postwar radiation deaths, fifty years of nuclear proliferation. Furthermore, fifty years after the defeat of Nazi Germany and five years after the collapse of the USSR's empire in Eastern Europe, it is no longer as clear if this was all worth it. In the 1990s, America's military superpower is almost irrelevant; hence, the need felt by World War II veterans to memorialize America's once-vaunted military prowess taps into deeper fears about collective identity and purpose for the United States in the future.

The narratives guiding "The Last Act" exhibition imploded the objectivity of modern museum operations, because Harwit's and Neufeld's text pointed out how, unlike Chernobyl in the 1980s, Hiroshima in 1945 is not everywhere. Instead of being out there in some stabilized material reality to be remembered, separate from us and today by being firmly fixed in the past (World War II) and elsewhere (Imperial Japan), the Enola Gay exhibition attached Hiroshima directly to bubbling anxieties from the present or uneasily repressed fears experienced here and now. And, it did so in terms whose significance conveyed how this atomic bombing created a global nuclear contract whose underlying premise remains simple: nuclear war is only twenty minutes of

any ICBM's flight away. The Enola Gay ended the war for G.I.s in the Pacific theater of operations--the fact that most 70-somethings want to be memorialized. Yet, it also transformed today's global theater of transnational pacific relations into an unending skit of strategic deterrence stuck in a daily recreation of that first B-29 atomic mission with each operational flight of SAC's B-52, B-2, and B-1B bombers today--the fiction of credible nuclear threat that many others would recognize as topping the memoranda of liabilities still with us from the Manhattan Project today.

III. Art and Political Subjectivity

Creating citizens is an always highly contested process of institutionally-organized rituals of politically correct impersonation. Each nation must develop a set of narratives for the political personality that imperfectly embodies the values and practices of its nationhood. Over the course of history, artworks have provided valuable sites for representing many ideals of such individual and collective subjectivity. Putting such systems of acculturation out at public museum sites may push and pull individual members of their audiences to impersonate the values assigned to their images. It is an uneven, disjunctive, noncontinuous process, but nationalistic representations of Col. Tibbets's 509th Composite Group and the Enola Gay can be mobilized at museums to help Americans im-personate "Americanizing" roles and behaviors by formatting this act or that belief around those news reel clips or these front page news

photos. Much of this happens so unconsciously and continuously that these performances often are ignored until, of course, some history exhibition repositions the circuits of im-personation in a critical fashion. Asking if such a persona should exist, or if the regime should continue reproducing such a nation of these personalities is dangerous, because any critical reinterpretation credibly can now suggest that America did not, and still does not, happen the way pictures suggest.

From the perspective of realist state power, then, the state should be able to in-state its myths or re-state its agendas at cultural venues, like the Smithsonian Institution, if nowhere else, for all persons living within its jurisdiction to access the proper codes for interpreting their own im-personations of American citizenship. Not tolerating Hiroshima at the end of World War II, as "The Final Act" was pictured as America's truly most lasting action, represented major breaches in the nation's state security, raising the spectre of anti-Americanism and anti-nuclearism disinstating this regime's circuits for generating its current political subjectivity. "The West as America" show in 1991 never made it out West to contaminate America's heartlands in St. Louis and Denver, and "The Crossroads" show was never performed, even in Washington, DC, as it had been planned (Truettner, 1991). As it happened, "the West" of brave cowboys and hardy pioneers "as America" gained reauthorization from the cultural right's campaigns in 1991, allowing the Enola Gay's dismembered fuselage in 1995 to stand starkly as a penultimate

totem of American superpower: the key signifier of the first and second to-the-last delivery of a strategic nuclear weapon in wartime, which continues to sustain today's fragile nuclear peace. The world cannot fear America as a superpower unless this lesson is irrefutably repeated everywhere all the time.

If we can take "ethno" as denoting culture in some cohesive sense and "graphy" as standing for scripting some legible code, then technoscience or history museum exhibitions are ultimately "ethnographic" exercises. Within their various chambers of display, each exhibit attempts to write out its standard accounts of official culture for their audiences. And, these lessons might be seen working on at least two different levels of performance as "ethnopictive" spectacles and "ethnodictive" maneuvers.

First, they obviously engage in exercises of "ethnopiction." By associating certain visual images, symbolic codes, or iconic signs together as a cohesive system of meaningful imagining, art shows create symbolic pictorial resources for de-picting social individuality and political community. If you cannot imagine what it is to be an American in the 1990s, then look back at images of America from the 1890s or 1940s to gain guidance. In a world of geopolitical ambiguity after the Cold War, there is a moral clarity to be found in newsphoto images of Col. Tibbets waving bravely from the Enola Gay cockpit on take-off for Hiroshima. Which pictures are mobilized, how they are displayed, where they are situated, and why they are chosen all constitute a

persuasive rhetorical scene for governmentalizing maneuvers, especially at those sites where "the nation tells its story."

Second, these ethnopictive displays gain complementarily from texts of "ethnodiction." Particular ideological frames, cultural values or discursive assumptions circulating through governmentalizing discipline can be deployed to dictate authoritatively the shape and substance of the cultural matter put on display. Showing Hiroshima's rubble in a museum displays as evidence of America's racist genocidal darkside instead of its purified superpower, which the Smithsonian show did presume to do, is a discursive countermove against the American state's ordinary normalizing impulses. The cultural right's protests indicate how much museums do count. A powerful curatorial vision, when coupled with a well-scripted performance at an elegantly crafted exhibit, can act as an ethnographic force that rewrites lessons either for or against the incumbent regime. And, when individual viewers and exhibition audiences encounter the ethnopictive displays and ethnodictive discourses of any specific art exhibition, episodes of conflict over civic impersonation may well, or not so well, unfold at the show site.⁴

⁴ By examining these practices of ethnopiction/ethnodiction, as Foucault suggests, one can attempt "to define the way in which individuals or groups represent words to themselves, utilize their forms and meanings, compose real discourse, reveal and conceal in it what they are thinking or saying, perhaps unknown to themselves, more or less than they wish, but in any case leave a mass of verbal traces of those thoughts, which must be deciphered and restored as far as possible to their representative vivacity" (1980a:

The standard account of America's superpower appended to Cold War ideology defined Americans as humans, Japanese and later Soviet citizens as nonhumans in clear, consistent ethnopictions that resurface in old World War II movies and Japan bashing rhetoric everyday. Within the Cold War canon, the properties of Imperial Japan were those of a predatory feudal empire whose relations to America were sinister, untrustworthy, and antidemocratic. Hence, all of Imperial Japan's subjects could be rightly depicted ethnopictively as worthy targets for American air power. Harwit's and Neufeld's ethnodictive reinterpretation of these canonical readings proposed a series of radical amendments to these ethnodictive constructions of American superpower. Furthermore, this also move consciously moved against the objective detachment of museums to shake the subjective attachments of its visitors. Unmasking even abstract detached objectivity as a concretely attached subjectivity, "The Crossroads" narrative of the Enola Gay looked up and ahead at the Enola Gay from ground zero, seeing the ambiguities of nuclear cold war in the mushroom cloud over the blast's hypocenter. Such tactics directly challenged existing practices and discourses which always have looked down and back from the Enola Gay to defeated Japan, seeking the certainty of World War II's end beyond the radioactive dust raised by Little Boy over Hiroshima. For Harwit and his team, the otherness of Japan, the

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contingencies of Truman's decision, the predictable calculus behind American interests, and the ambivalent objects of their subjective accounts could not be translated in purified terms. And, for Air Force Association and the American Legion, the identity of American war dead, the necessities of the Manhattan Project, the naturalized forces of war, and the subjective need to "Remember Pearl Harbor!" simply could not be tainted by purposive mistranslation. After all, Japan has not fully confronted its apparently more serious war guilt, so why should the United States accept any even less deserved sense of guilt over its World War II-era actions (Linenthal and Engelhardt, 1996: 63-96). In this face-off, Harwit's and Neufeld's moves were failed amendments, and they had to be obliterated.

To those who would have visited "The Crossroads" exhibit, the American Legion is correct, They immediately would have sensed the counter-ethnographic intentions--revisionist and affirmative, critical and commemorative, resistant and submissive--of the exhibition's curatorial authorities. Their dissonant combination of traditional ethnographic displays with radical ethnographic discourses during the golden anniversary of America's superpower, however, derailed their plans for rewriting this troubling chapter in the stories of American political subjectivity at one museum. Even now, after the end of the Cold War, the United States still serves as a collective ensemble of political personas for those intent upon seeing themselves and their fellow countrymen/women as victorious colonizers, making

the world safe for truth, democracy and the American way. Thus, to begin the week leading into the fiftieth anniversary of World War II's end, former U.S. Secretary of the Navy James Webb did a cover story interview in Parade Magazine (the biggest U.S. Sunday newspaper supplement) with Maj. General Chuck Sweeney. Their discussions entirely brushed over the Japanese A-bombing victims, concluding with Sweeney's succinct final assessment of the Enola Gay and Bock's Car missions: "We saved thousands of lives, we shortened the war, and we obviated an invasion" (Webb, 1995: 4).

IV. "At the Museum," or "That's Entertainment"?

History exhibitions can formalize norms of how to see without being seen inasmuch as the curators as unseen seers fuse vision with authority in the organization of their exhibitional spaces, the enscription of textual interpretations, or the coordination of aesthetic performances. Museum exhibitions become a culture writing formations, using their acts and artifacts to wright conventional understandings that are made manifest or left latent in any visitor's/viewer's personal encounters with their norms as all visitors/viewers learn how they must act or should regard their artifacts. Historical displays, then, often do operate as powerplays in which plays for power circulate in and around the movement of viewers through their curated spaces. Seeing historical objects, witnessing historic performances, encountering history interpretations are all behaviors that might variously rearrange people in relation to certain political values associated with particular cultural

things. As the means of helping them more easily become impersonations of the ideal person for their nations, technoscience and history museums also can be recast as exercises in governmentality by which disciplinary discourses, the order of things, or specific intellectuals infiltrate the consciousness and behavior of museum visitors to advance governmental agendas.

On contemporary cultural mediascapes, however, the ethnographic agendas of governmentality often compound themselves with informational systems of entertainment.

This link is becoming very significant inasmuch as art exhibits and history displays are being redefined to fit into the larger orbits of the entertainment industry. Like many terms, "entertainment" as a word carries a potent charge of its current semantic deployments from its early linguistic origins. From its late Latin intertenerere to its Middle English entertene or old French entretener roots, one sees that "to entertain" means "to hold" or "to keep among." Thus, the word already has powerful carceral implications or suggestive containment aspects as it indicates that "entertainments" are arrangements to keep one occupied, to engage one in a specified manner, or to maintain one as such. To speak of entertainment, one already moves rhetorically into spaces of an entertainmentality, which keeps us held mutually among ourselves in prespecified manners. An entertainment industry is in business to keep its charges occupied, to hold them together, to engage their time and attention as a means of dealing with maintaining their

containment. Of course, at the same time, one can admit to the other semantic charges in the term: it also will be an agreeable engagement, an amusing occupation or some interesting diversion that helps to constitute the entertainment. Even so, entertainmentality creates and maintains an occupation, which like all occupations is designed to hold its charges in peculiar mutual containments to keep them both together and apart.⁵

The most preferred outcome from visiting the Enola Gay exhibition at the Air and Space Museum now is a reconfirmation of "patriotic orthodoxy" (Linenthal and Engelhardt, 1996: 97-114). And, the "history wars" of the 1990s, like the culture wars, are being fought over these terms of political subjectivity to determine what is patriotic or who defines orthodoxy. Even with highly entertaining "infotainment" at any museum, however, one must deal with the issues raised by these ideological struggles at the Smithsonian. What happens when a popular instance of entertainmentality comes off like a polemical tract or grad school seminar? The big problem for museums is simple: getting visitors to think beyond the diverting occupations of entertainmentality more often than not induces rage, rather than cultivating reasoned reflection, as the unwillingness to see

⁵ The museum, then, constructs a concrete rhetoric out of its built environments. The preoccupations of its entertainmentalities are a limited engagement "which shows how man, in his being, can be concerned with the things he knows, and know the things that, in positivity, determine his mode of being" (Foucault, 1970: 353).

Shigeru Orimen's lunchbox alongside Col. Tibbets''s airplane in the same building during 1995 suggests.

Even more ironically, these outside ideological interventions into what ordinarily are neglected realms of curatorial discretion at the Smithsonian Institution by right-minded guardians of American culture in the U.S. Congress are sharply at odds with the avowed libertarian or populist loyalties of the neo-liberal Republican majorities now ruling on Capitol Hill. Of course, one explanation is that these culturally conservative Republicans now do, in fact, rule on Capitol Hill precisely because they have exploited the free-floating anxiety and anger associated with America's post-Cold War imperial irrelevance at public events like the Enola Gay Smithsonian exhibition. Another explanation, however, is that their actual behavior in these episodes belies a true power agenda behind their professed beliefs of promoting personal self-reliance, individual choice or civic awareness.

If these articles of faith were, in fact, true to the precepts of the classical liberalism underpinning so much of contemporary American conservatism, then the contemporary right-wing should accede to the libertarian wisdom so succinctly stated by John Stuart Mill in his On Liberty. That is, to test the truth or falsity of any argumentative expression of opinion, it is best to allow it to circulate freely and as broadly as possible. Whether it is "The West as America" in 1991 or "The Last Act" display in 1995, all opinions about their accuracy or

inaccuracy, justness or unjustness, balance or bias will vary widely, and it is a great evil to silence the expression of these opinions. "If the opinion is right," as Mill contends, "they [here the viewers/visitors of museums] are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error" (Mill, 1965: 269). All citizens have judgment granted to them so that they might use it, but the cultural right does presume an infallibility by presuming that citizens will use their judgment erroneously.

In squelching "The Crossroads" exhibit before it even opened, the cultural right tells everyone they ought not, and indeed cannot, use their personal judgment at all. The cultural conservatives presume the museums' publics will misuse their personal judgment. However, this maneuver compromises the truths upon which the cultural right allegedly would rest American political subjectivity. Again, as Mill claims, "there is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right" (Mill, 1965: 271).

Such highly-centered notions of real civic agency, however, are not what conservative cultural warriors truly accept as either final principles or desirable results. In the face of an ideological crisis in which all the stable rules for forming American political subjects are fragmenting in impure mistranslations of existing patriotic orthodoxies, the cultural right suppresses whatever libertarian commitments they may have had to let error meet truth or allow political subjects to exchange error for truth in collisions of concepts. Instead, to shield the detachment of passive Cold War American citizens from the attachments of active post-Cold War New World Order denizens, they baldly assert fixed truths for the explicit purpose of not permitting their refutation. And, in the process, they seek to occupy even these minor corridors and capillaries of disciplinary power in history museums as important highways and by-ways where some political subjects will travel from lesser to greater sophistication.

These are the only "information superhighways" that now exist, and the cultural right wants to control all of the traffic that plies their routes--even if displacing Hiroshima from the exhibition to highlight the Enola Gay on display causes an international incident (Harwit, 1996: 361-371). Mill's approach to intellectual freedom must be violated in quashing any diversity of opinion about America's history by labelling all nay-sayers as subversive countercultural dissidents. For Mill, "only through a diversity of opinion is there, in the existing

state of human intellect, a chance of fair play to all sides of the truth. When there are persons to be found, who form an exception to the apparent unanimity on any subject, even if the world is in the right, it is always probable not the dissentients have something worth hearing to say for themselves, and the truth would lose something by their silence" (Mill, 1965: 297-298). By dominating the nodes of knowledge, writing the rules of recognition, and shaping the spaces of action used for scripting our political culture, the cultural right has squelched the pedagogical possibilities for promoting popular intellectual liberation, choosing instead to seize sites where they can "tell the nation's story" such that the rough contours of injustices with all their nuance, contradictions, complexity, cross-purposes or ambiguity are washed away in the rush to affirm an older, much more ideological vision of truth, justice, and the American way.

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