

19 AUG 1985

- Arts + Ideas
- Black Visual Arts
P. Vir

ARTS COUNCIL

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The Arts Council of Great Britain
Registered Charity no. 212210

8 August 1985

Parminder Vir
Head of the GLC Race Equality Unit
County Hall
LONDON
SE1 7PB

Praggett
Please set up
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Friday 11th
5pm

Dear Parminder Vir

First of all, congratulations on your marriage!

You may not remember me as we have met only a couple of times, in Nottingham at the 'Black Artists - White Institutions' seminar three years ago and, also a long time ago, in a caff in Drummond Street, but, anyway, I'm taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of the final draft of an 'ethnic' discussion paper I have written in the hope that you can find time to glance through it or pass it on to one of your colleagues. I am very aware of the enormous extent of my ignorance in many of the areas that have had to be included if the paper is to do its job anything like adequately and would therefore very much welcome your comments and criticisms, especially, at this stage, on matters of fact.

The paper has its particular art-form bias/starting-off point because it was written for internal use in the first instance - a joint meeting of officers from the Regional Arts Associations and our own officers with 'ethnic' responsibilities - at the behest of the Deputy Secretary-General and from my essentially 'white' visual arts professional perspective within the still essentially unchanged 'white' structure here. The decision to publish came later - to make the contents more widely available to try to help a little further with the consciousness-raising among whites in particular that still seems to be necessary before anything can change other than superficially.

The various shorthand ethnic minority labels such as 'ethnic', 'black', 'Black', even the particularly absurd 'black and ethnic' used by the GLC (sorry!) and Camden, etc., have proved invaluable, it seems to me, in identifying certain previously virtually invisible areas within the arts in England and, indeed, globally, but there has always been rather too much of the segregationist 'Gentlemen v. Players' approach on the part of white users of these labels and consequently there is now considerable concern that the aforesaid 'colour' categories have become institutionalized as separatist in spirit and counterproductive generally.

With all this in mind and starting from my own working context of one of the major national arts promoting and funding institutions, I thought it appropriate to attempt the widest possible national overview, with basic terms of reference the need for a fresh look at what are variously labelled 'the arts' in the world today in relation to each and every person in the country and in the context of the Arts Council's brief as set out in the objects in our Charter.

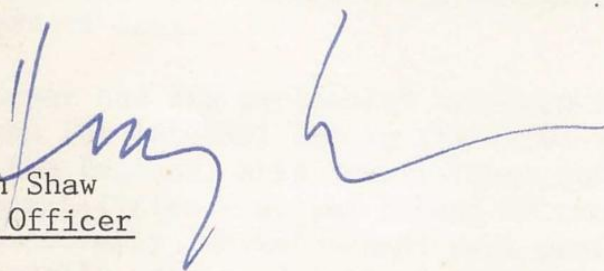
BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
GLC
1981-1986
Working for London
archive.parmindervir.com

The purpose of the paper is thus to provide a framework to help us determine through discussion exactly why as well as how we should improve on our current interpretation of these objects to bring our practice more nearly into line with today's needs, so as the better to fulfil our obligations 'to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts' and 'to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Great Britain'.

The paper itself has been kept short deliberately - and consequently covers only the very basic 'gut' issues - in the hope that it will therefore stand a greater chance of being read in its entirety by as many busy white arts administrators as we can reach (because they are the people who currently have almost all the control and whose 'hearts and minds' we must reach and win over in any reasonably realistic scenario).

But the footnotes are another matter as they are addressed primarily to a somewhat different - though I hope overlapping - constituency and are therefore quite extensive, so as to serve as a comprehensive aide-memoire or compendium of facts, salient quotations from activists' statements, and so on intended to be of as much use as possible to the people most involved in the ongoing battle to democratize the arts (all of them) as well as to encourage and sustain (pluralist) excellence (at all levels).

With best regards



Hugh Shaw
Art Officer

P.S. May I please have a copy of your report Mainstream Arts Institutions and their Challenge to Racism?

Enc

FINAL DRAFT

Some footnotes still to complete.

THE ARTS TODAY: SOME BASIC ISSUES CONCERNING QUALITY AND EQUALITY

A discussion paper by Hugh Shaw, Visual Arts Officer

Title also to be in all the main
'black' English languages, plus
one or two other 'white'
languages: Arabic, Bengali,
Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi,
Punjabi, Swahili, Urdu, Greek,
Spanish, Turkish, etc.

ACGB 1985

A. 'ONLY CONNECT'

THE VISUAL ARTS VIS-À-VIS THE OTHER ART FORMS IN ENGLAND TODAY: A PLEA FOR REINTEGRATION, WITHIN A PLURALIST WORLD PERSPECTIVE

Ethnic majority culture

1. Almost all visual art recognized by the established 'art world' in this country today is made by people trained as specialists in isolation from the community at large. The finished products, especially those at what is usually regarded as the upper end of the scale of importance, then need the services of experienced middle-people to get them exposure in the appropriate private and public consumer markets. The more individualistic and ego-based this art the more 'uncompromising' and therefore 'pure' it is considered to be and the experts responsible for distributing it have no compunction in using hard-sell techniques to get it placed before a passive public wherever they can manage to do so, including in schools and even the streets, without consulting the public (only their cultural minders) - presumably in the belief that getting used to something new is the same as coming to value it. As we have today, by and large, a geriatric avant-garde art with what Timothy Hyman has called its 'all-too-safe "provocations"' (1), no real celebration, let alone mind-stretching, seems to result from these considerable logistical efforts. It is a world of marketable self-expression all closely linked with the arid world of the sale room - which is probably where what Octavio Paz calls 'idolatry for the object' (2) reaches its apotheosis. A 'cultural' aspect of capitalism grown to what Lord Clark termed 'its present monstrous proportions'. (3)
2. Occasionally an isolated original visual work of considerable merit emerges which really is fit for public contemplation and celebration (like, in the past, say, a new building by Hawksmoor or the latest painting by Cimabue or film by Ozu), a recent example being the vast and expensive yet refined and subtle work by Christo entitled 'Running Fence'. The realization of this ephemeral (it existed for only two weeks) masterpiece, which Marina Vaizey has described as 'the most ambitious piece of public art this century' (4), involved what the artist calls 'teasing the system' and intentionally and constructively provoking the involvement of the public (there is an excellent film about the whole process in the Arts Council Film and Video Library (5)).
3. You will no doubt remember that a few months ago the Prince of Wales had this to say about the category of visual art producer who directly affects our whole environment more than any other:

For far too long, it seems to me, some planners and architects have consistently ignored the feelings and wishes of the mass of ordinary people in this country. Perhaps it is hardly surprising, as architects tend to have been trained to design buildings from scratch - to tear down and rebuild. ...

To be concerned about the way people live, about the environment they inhabit and the kind of community that is created by that.

environment, should surely be one of the prime requirements of a really good architect. It has been most encouraging to see the development of community architecture as a natural reaction to the policy of decamping people to new towns and overspill estates, where the extended family patterns of support were destroyed and the community life was lost.

Now, moreover, we are seeing the gradual expansion of housing cooperatives ... where the tenants are able to work with an architect of their own who listens to their comments and their ideas, and tries to design the kind of environment they want rather than the kind which tends to be imposed upon them without any degree of choice. (6)

Different ethnic traditions come together in England

4. The reappearance in our streets of the Christian festival of Carnival, after a long, hard struggle for acceptance and recognition, is another firm indication from the 'unqualified' public that we do not want merely to be passive audience fodder for the professional but, on occasion, to initiate and participate creatively in the arts in ways that show little patience with the 'recognized' boundaries between specialist artistic 'disciplines'. Carnival would be unthinkable without the splendours of the mas'(querade) costumes, but art and dance and music are inseparably united in practice, as are also important elements of African and European traditions. (7) It might be appropriate to note here that so all-pervasive are the arts in some of the world's most sophisticated cultures that there are no words for art or artist in their languages, let alone for this or that artistic discipline or 'specialism'. 'Art is not regarded as a separate activity but something for everyone, in which everyone can join.' The Balinese, for example, are reported to say:

We do not have any art, we do everything as well as possible; we do all things properly. (8)

5. Again, increasing numbers of young black English visual artists are insisting that while they accept to a degree the received European visual arts 'package' (painting on rectangular flat surfaces which are then put in frames and hung on walls to be viewed passively in silent, guarded rooms in buildings that were once the palaces of the rich, or modelled on these, and so on), they are looking for a visual aesthetic which is exclusive to them, 'in the same way as our musicians have invented many musical forms which are totally "Black"', as Keith Piper puts it. He goes on to say that blacks must work things out independently, because,

... by virtue of imperialism, Europeans exercised, and continue to exercise as their automatic birthright, the power to judge and define everything that existed elsewhere on the globe relative to their own value system. (9)

6. Similarly, a growing number of young black English writers, film-makers and videoists are working to create their own expressive forms to

relate their experiences of this land of their birth as a multiracial, multicultural society. (10)

Some effects of Eurocentric monoculturalism and 'master-race economics'

7. Following a visit to Australia, the young white English painter, James Faure Walker, drew some conclusions of relevance here:

The habitual way of thinking about art in the West is still dominated by the idea of the West's centrality, as if the truths of experience it reveals - or whatever else the heavy-breathing metaphysics comes up with - pouring over the Renaissance, Cubism or Expressionism - are of universal application, and other peoples and other cultures only exist as ghostly ciphers, symbols of the exotic, the primitive, the weird. Our art tells us about the real, theirs deals with the unreal, the mythical, the merely decorative.

In Australia this conception is most directly put to the test by the presence of aboriginal art. It's surprising how little aboriginal art is on display in the museums, but there's little from Asia, Indonesia, New Guinea and so forth either despite their proximity. Students make expeditions to the outback and build collaged reliquaries, or devise rituals where they identify with aboriginal dream-time; and it's understandable, considering their entire culture has been imported in the last two hundred years, that they should fend for some other kind of connection with the past. But again it was entirely a visual experience that jolted my preconceptions (I had been a little put off by some of the attitudinizing about the aborigines) when I saw some of the bark paintings collected by Tony Tuckson, the painter, when he had been a curator in Sydney. The finesse of the dotting technique was amazing: the ebb and flow along the pathways of the designs, the bending symmetry, the way information was condensed in diagrams, the methods of drawing fish, it was all contained in perpetual optical motion. It was ironic that such sophisticated works of art could sometimes be considered anthropological specimens, whereas the smudgy European attempts to invent an abstract language from zero have huge concrete museums built around them with idyllic fountains filling the air with intellectual ozone. But it's not that simple; for a start the aborigines aren't always keen on exhibiting. (11)

8. Some of the Arts Council's most distinguished white advisors still seem unable to free themselves of the received static, centralist and hierarchical European viewpoint concerning the arts of other cultures. For example, one ex-Council member and ex-Art Panel chair is on record as 'expressing the view that the Council had a duty even at this late stage to assist the British in "confronting the primitive"'. (12) In this instance, the cultures which were thought of as being in this category are those of Africa and Oceania.

9. I have in front of me now a copy of a world-famous book on art written by a very distinguished former chair of the Arts Council and

published by the BBC in which he does not give any space to the art of quite a large part of Keith Piper's 'elsewhere on the globe' - not the art of India or China or Africa, to mention the most obvious - although the book is entitled Civilization (13), as was the even better-known series of television films which preceded it and which also focused exclusively on western art. Similarly, a Dictionary of Modern Culture published last year omits any mention of key people such as Kwame Nkrumah and Chinua Achebe and generally 'supports the assumption that three-quarters of the world has little impact on modern culture'. (14) Underlying commonplace manifestations of unconscious condescension and extreme bias such as these is the unstated assumption that the received European culture is the pinnacle of human achievement and represents the only conceivable goal for all. 'Whites rule. OK?' And if the definition of the acceptable were narrowed further to include works by white Britons only, our 'national heritage' would shrink considerably. When William Waldegrave was asked not long ago in the House of Commons what percentage of artistic objects held in British national collections have their provenance in other countries, he answered that

It would not be possible to assemble this information without disproportionate cost. But the proportion is undoubtedly a large one, and many of the objects in question are important parts of the national heritage. ...

... if anyone went into the National Gallery, he would have to reach room 34 before finding any British school works of art. (15)

10. Yet neither the National Gallery nor the Tate Gallery (our National Gallery of Modern Art, among other things) has purchased even one old or new work of art originating in the 'black' countries of the world - which, of course, means the greater part of the world. Present projections indicate that two of these countries alone, China and India, will between them account for half of the world's population in the very near future. These happen also to be the two oldest and, I would submit, most mature and distinguished civilizations on earth. But what regular access to all their ranges of magnificent art forms do we have in this country? What consideration do we actually give to the fact that the English of Indian sub-continent ancestry are the largest group among the most recent settlers here, the 'visible' minorities?

A picture-postcard existence for some

11. In certain circumstances, the Eurocentric viewpoint leads to what may be termed the art exhibition as Roman Triumph. Our own 'In the Image of Man' (Hayward Gallery, 1982) is a case in point. Melvyn Bragg unintentionally identified the Roman-Triumph-cum-picture-postcard aspect of this exhibition very well - and so did we, for we reproduced his comment in a press release - when he wrote: '... the mystery of India has been well caught and brought to London in beguiling captivity'. (16)

12. Philip Rawson, on the other hand, shrewdly suspected that the exhibition

... was based on the premise that the public needed to 'know

about' Indian art, rather than to discover how to respond to it ... (because) the scholars and officials who now staff the art system in India are naturally bred up in a conservative archaeological and verbal-conceptual tradition.

... (These) art-officials wish to repudiate claims that Indian art has any special spiritual and emotive status; to reject the old image of India as guru to the world, with all that that implies of reactionary attitudes and even fraud; and to defuse certain kinds of enthusiasm for Indian art which flourished in the West in the 'sixties and early 'seventies. They probably feel that image and enthusiasm as burdens, and hindrances to the modernization of India; for they may imply a responsibility to acknowledge traditions from the past which many modern Indians reject. ... A purge is clearly in progress. All that stuff is not being allowed to embarrass the jetting politician and the sceptical journalist. If it is cut out of the living body of society, it may then be submitted to the academic killing bottle; after which it can be treated as a specimen. ... It can be known about, but its meaning cannot be acknowledged. (17)

13. Gita Mehta puts the same point a little differently and more generally when she says that '... nothing is so damaging to India as the patronization of master-race economics'. (18) And, to place the matter in historical perspective, we should recall that more than a century ago Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were already drawing attention to the often unpredictable and sometimes socially highly damaging effects of certain new and powerful economic forces originating in Europe and North America when they wrote that

Modern bourgeois society ..., a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. (19)

14. These same forces today seem inexorably to be moving the 'cockpit of the world' from the Atlantic to the Pacific. 'For years now there has been a perceptible shift in the United States away from its historic attachment to Europe into a much closer relationship with the nations of the Pacific basin.' In 1982/83, for the first time in history, overall US trade with Pacific nations exceeded that with Atlantic nations, registering a record \$121 200 000 000. (20) The Americans are now saying that their future lies in Asia, but it remains to be seen to what extent this will affect the relationships between cultures internationally, if at all. As the Chinese and the Japanese greatly value their own traditional cultures, both strongly visual in orientation and with the Chinese considering calligraphy to be the most important of all the arts, we may expect to see a lot more of the 'real thing' - and a lot less of the not-so-real (the Chinese for a start are much less amenable than, say, Indians usually politely pretend to be to the imposition of the Eurocentric world-view - not so long ago they sent Joseph Losey packing when he asked permission to use the Forbidden City in Beijing as the setting for a film of Giacomo Puccini's 'Turandot', having read a translation of the libretto and decided that it was a caricature of themselves. (21))

The nuisances (and other aspects) of Empire

15. Rudyard Kipling recorded the widespread view of his time that the White Man's Burden was a bit of a, well, burden, with all that business of 'savage wars of peace' and so on, when he addressed the following lines to white parents:

Go bind your sons to exile
 To serve your captives' need:
 To wait in heavy harness
 On fluttered folk and wild -
 Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
 Half devil and half child. (22)

16. But the effect on the latter of being thus 'looked after' (with Europe's economic gain obviously uppermost in the minds of the former), naturally, was often devastating. As Elie Noujain puts it,

A colonized country does not merely experience a dislocated economy; its people, collectively, experience an acutely dislocated identity. (23)

17. And the ending of colonial occupation does not automatically end the problems of 'not belonging' either. The Jamaican playwright, Trevor Rhone, comments that

When you need to compete and to survive on another person's terms - whether it's Britain, France, Germany or North America - it's always likely that you tend to bend away from yourself in order to survive. (24)

18. Frantz Fanon also puts the cultural implications painfully clearly:

Every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality - finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (25)

19. And Gabriel García Márquez has this to say:

The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own ... serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary. (26)

20. While E.P. Thompson sums up our own particular situation in a nutshell:

Britain ... the last colony of the British Empire. (27)

Racism

21. Lord Scarman has again drawn attention to the white racism endemic in England today:

Black Britons are suffering a discrimination and racial disadvantage deriving partly from a deep unconscious prejudice in the rest of the community, which we have not yet exposed and killed. I think this is true of almost everybody. (28)

22. Stuart Hall suggests that this

... development of an indigenous British racism in the post-war period begins with the profound historical forgetfulness - what I want to call the loss of historical memory, a kind of historical amnesia, a decisive mental repression - which has overtaken the British people about race and Empire since the 1950s. (29)

23. Ahmet Sheikh, a member of African Dawn, reminds us again of the historical origins of the racism we are beset with today and suggests that this racism is manifesting institutionally in the ways the arts-funding bodies structure their assessment (i.e., control) procedures:

Racism in British body politics is deep-seated. It is embedded, like fossils, in the collective memory of this society. Its history lies in the economic subjugation of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, little attention is being paid to the new and pervasive racism in the arts; which gives itself the right to name, define and codify Third World art forms. Is it because of the illusory neutrality or 'universality' of art? If so, to what extent do we Third World artistes enrich the cultural life of humanity? What does an oppressor culture have in common with that of the oppressed? Why does white supremacy disguise itself as universal scholarship instead of its old sordid manifestations first rooted in the scriptures and then in 'science'? What of the apparent contradiction within the British corporate state as regards art; a contradiction between the ruthless economic, political and social oppression of Third World people and the 'benevolent' policy of international cultural cross-fertilization? To unravel this web, an understanding of the function of ideology is of paramount importance. (30)

24. Meanwhile, cultural intimidation continues around the world, as often as not in collusion with the intimidated for reasons which might be described as unequal self-interest:

Seoul: The Government yesterday banned restaurants from serving traditional soup made from dog and snake meat in order to improve the country's image for the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics being held here. A government statement said 'The ban, which had already been enforced in Seoul, would now take effect throughout the country'.

... The ban has caused a lively debate in Seoul newspapers, with readers' letters complaining that local habits formed over

In other words, the art of India is not about self-expression, it is about meditation. To split the audience from the performer would be the death of Indian culture because Indian culture is defined by the conviction that there is a power in sounds, times, places, seasons which, if properly acknowledged, can lead to a perception of the divine.

this is a meta physics focus on traditional not the constant. Indras quest who is culture art

Underlying the serious art forms of India is the attempt to educate an audience to this perception, and as such our arts demand a response from the audience different from that in the West: not a standing ovation, but reflection on the extent to which the performer leads the observer towards greater self-knowledge. And, of course, the essence of Indian religious insight is the belief that the Self, the Atman, is god. (38)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi argued that

It is vitally important to stop the westernization of the world; or at least to encourage people to look at what is happening. (39)

33. The Mahatma deeply loved the classical devotional music of his country (virtually all Indian classical music is devotional, although some is more explicitly and intensely so). Nevertheless, he refused to narrow his cultural inheritance and declared:

I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. (40)

34. How different from the nervously defensive, insular attitude of Margaret Thatcher, who is on record as saying in a television interview:

People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture. (41)

35. Ken Livingstone, on the other hand, has more of a Gandhian approach:

The prevailing idea twenty years ago when the first black children started coming to school was that they should accept white middle-class values and cultural attitudes. That is a nonsense. Now we are turning the education system round so that it accepts and welcomes the range of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. (42)

36. Someone else who welcomed the rich diversity of the world's arts is Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet, painter, composer, radical educationalist and Nobel prize-winner. Here he speaks of the musics of India and Europe:

For us, music has above all a transcendental significance. It disengages the spiritual from the happenings of life; it sings of the relationships of the human soul with the soul of things beyond. The world by day is like European music; a flowing concourse of vast harmony, composed of concord and discord and

And me really, it is a wider kind of culture. It is what is doing who is doing to what

many disconnected fragments. And the night world is our Indian music; one pure, deep and tender raga. They both stir us, yet the two are contradictory in spirit. But that cannot be helped. At the very root nature is divided into two, day and night, unity and variety, finite and infinite. We men of India live in the realm of night; we are overpowered by the sense of the One and Infinite. Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of everyday human joys and sorrows, and takes us to that lonely region of renunciation which lies at the root of the universe, while European music leads us a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy. (43)

37. Others also have no fear of comparisons and the coming together of cultures. Christopher Okigbo writes:

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I think that all we hear nowadays of men-of-two-worlds is a lot of nonsense. I belong, integrally, to my own society, just as, I believe, I belong also integrally to other societies than my own. The truth is that the modern African is no longer a product of an entirely indigenous culture. The modern sensibility, which the modern African poet is trying to express, is by its very nature complex; and it has complex values, some of which are indigenous, some exotic, some traditional, some modern. Some of these values are Christian, some non-Christian, and I think that anybody who thinks it is possible to express consistently only one line of values, indigenous or exotic, is probably being artificial. (44)

Defining 'art'

38. Joseph Campbell tells a story about a Western philosopher who visited a Japanese Shinto monastery, did homage to its beauty, and then said that he did not understand the theology. The head monk told him, 'We have no theology. We dance.' In retelling this story, Rasa Gustaitis comments: '... if a process is fully attended to, the boundaries between life and art become hard to distinguish'. (45) Anyone who has had the privilege of observing a master of taijiquan in contemplative, thoughtless movement or saw the deeply affecting series of masked meditation dances performed by monks of the Kagyu order of Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism from the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim last summer, in versions intended to be seen in public (as a means of helping both the dancers and the onlookers towards awakening and enlightenment), will have had some direct experience of what is meant here. (46)

39. At paragraph 23 above, Ahmet Sheikh is quoted on the question of who controls the definitions used to identify 'art' for purposes of promoting international cultural cross-fertilization. During the London MAAS AGM last year, Kwesi Owusu, another member of African Dawn and currently chair of London MAAS, pointed out that liberal multiculturalism devalues black art and culture, which is looked upon as exotic, and suggested that this is in actuality a subtle way of replacing openly racist ideas. Racism, he emphasized, still prevails in institutions which have not been restructured. When artists go to funding bodies they are made to fit those bodies' present structures. One of the characteristics of African arts is the unity of art forms.

But the funding bodies are structured according to European arts practices, so when you go to any panel of an arts funding body you have to perform a perverse striptease, where you drop certain forms that do not fit the requirements of a particular panel and so on. The arts are also stripped of their normal social commentary. (47)

40. Elsewhere, Zareer Masani reminds us that 'In India, art is not an event or an object but a participatory ritual inseparable from social and religious functions'. (48) No way can this unity be fully understood from outside the given culture. Mark Twain seems to have got it about right when he remarked that

A foreigner can photograph the exteriors of a nation, but I think that it is as far as he can get. No foreigner can report its interior, its soul, its life, its speech, its thought. (49)

A still deeper unity (beyond all form?)

41. Perhaps the heading here should have been just 'freedom' or 'love', because I want to quote this old Hassidic saying to round off with:

If I am I because you are you
 And if you are you because
 I am I
 Then I am not I
 And you are not you. (50)

*Part of
 Arts
 thought
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B. 'BREAKING THAT BONDAGE, PLOTTING THAT COURSE'

SUGGESTED AREAS FOR DISCUSSION, WITH A VIEW TO FORMULATING PROPOSALS FOR ACTION IN STRUCTURAL (AS OPPOSED TO SOLELY PIECEMEAL 'RESPONSIVE') TERMS

Basic practical implication of paper

42. There would not appear to be any significant solely visual aspect of the arts of the non-western cultures which could be discussed intelligibly in isolation from the aural, kinetic and other aspects. What can be seen to happen when we try to focus only on the material objects generated by a particular 'other' culture is that contact is lost with the 'heart' of what is being expressed and we end up with nothing more than an exotic veneer.

43. It would also seem to be self-evident that evaluation of the art forms of any specific culture can be carried out properly and fully only from within that culture, i.e., by people actually involved in all aspects of the culture - and certainly not by people from outside who 'drop in' as art-consuming assessors. (51)

44. It then follows that if the English arts-funding bodies, structured as they are to meet the needs of the already-well-established arts, are also to provide appropriate support for the sophisticated and complex arts of our newly-indigenous minority cultures (52), some rigorous internal attitudinal and organizational restructuring is necessary. In other words, the arts-funding bodies should reflect fully in their everyday working practices the principle that the arts of the world's major cultures must all be made as accessible as is practically possible - and on their own terms, i.e., without being subjected to comparative discrimination on artistic or any other grounds, because there is no way different cultures can be compared objectively and evaluated/assessed relative to one another at institutional level. (53)

Huge 'colour' gap in current national provision

45. Habituals of the Royal Opera House, the English National Opera, the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Hayward Gallery, the National Theatre, the Royal Festival Hall, the Barbican Arts Centre, the National Film Theatre and all the other publicly-funded national flagships custom-built for the white arts can take it for granted that they will be provided with regular access to the very best, measured against the highest national and international standards - sometimes, it would seem, regardless of cost in terms of subsidy. (54) And for many years the Arts Council has been associated very visibly with such ongoing promotions - just so long as the art forms involved were/are white-originated. In the case of music, this routine high-profile association in support of the white international best dates back at least to 1947, when the Council accepted 'without limitation' the Music Panel's unanimous resolution to the effect that

... the Council should not oppose the engagement of foreign

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musicians in this country, and that in appropriate special cases of unusual interest ... it should itself help to arrange opportunities for them to appear. (55)

46. It is apparent, however, that this admirable only-the-best-will-do principle has not been applied with equal vigour where any of the non-white musics is concerned (56) and the Council is thus only on the rarest of occasions - if at all - seen to be associated with a black musical event of major international significance. People interested only in the white-originated arts have little or no reason to notice this discrimination heavily in their favour, but for people involved in the black-originated arts it is only too obvious that the Arts Council of Great Britain is virtually never seen to be directly encouraging the promotion of the international best of any of the performing arts of the black cultures presented as their artistes and regular audiences would wish them to be - which would seem to be out of line with our chartered objects requiring us to develop and improve the knowledge and understanding of the arts and to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout the country. (57)

A culturally and racially divisive arrangement ('institutional racism')

47. Instead, the Visiting Arts Unit of Great Britain, a small, independent organization consisting of just three paid staff (all white) located in an office tucked inside the British (not Arts) Council and with very little in the way of funds (58) has the virtually exclusive and therefore enormous official responsibility of dealing with the vast range of arts originating beyond our shores which are not, so far, very accessible to us at their highest international levels (59), despite the requirements of the Arts Council's Charter and the Council's 1982 directive calling for 'affirmative action' in support of the 'ethnic' arts and despite the fact that access to the very best - as measured in terms of the highest international standards - of quite a large proportion of this range of arts is clearly of particularly direct concern to certain of our ethnic minority communities - an important aspect of the broader issue of the general need for more adequate access to the world's arts. (60)

48. Indeed, it is not solely the ethnic minorities who are disadvantaged by the lack of proper official recognition of and therefore at least implied official respect for the arts of other cultures and the consequent very inadequate funding of this sector. For instance, in an article in The Guardian, Michael Billington, the paper's white drama critic, pointed out that mainstream drama suffers because

Without regular exposure to alien styles, our theatre is endangered by a suffocating smugness and a rooted belief that naturalism is the only style. (61)

49. Sir Peter Hall responded to the article with a letter in which he said that

(The National Theatre has) tried and failed for years to get funding for world theatre seasons The British theatre is too

parochial, is too cut off. And Peter Daubeny's (world theatre seasons ... did have an enormous influence on the future of British drama. (62)

50. Soon afterwards, Sir Mervyn Brown added his view that

It is also important that audiences in this country should be given standards of comparison against which to measure the unquestioned achievements of our national and regional companies. (63)

Storytelling around the world

51. Although the white-originated naturalistic or exclusively literary style of theatre, visually low-key and without music or dance elements, has been widely taken up around the world (as, of course, has also the equally 'low-key', often climatically impractical and uncomfortable but power-prestigious formal western dress), it would seem to be quite dully restrictive to most other cultures, which are clearly capable of providing more delight and deep relevance - as well, of course, as inventing the highly complex and sophisticated technical means needed to give the finest artistic form to the celebration of the wonder and mystery of life - in the magnificent artistry of their own received dramatic storytelling traditions than the 'pure' white naturalistic style can usually achieve alone. These traditions range from the highly refined austerity and 'minimalism' of Japanese noh (although admittedly lavishly costumed) or Pakistani qawwalis (sung by maybe ten men accompanied by just a single drum and presented in the relatively informal and warm-spirited mehfil style (64)) to the rich complexities of the highly-stylized, unmatchably exhilarating pyrotechnics of Keralan kathakali or Beijing grand 'opera'. And, as already observed, certain of these profoundly expressive and moving art forms originating elsewhere in the world constitute the primary or secondary artistic heritages of large numbers of people newly settled in England. (65)

Building an appropriate pluralist infrastructure

52. The arts of all cultures can be seen to be constructed out of or to make use of various material elements, each of these elements, in turn, depending on specialist skill or skills - many of them, of course, visually orientated - for its realization, and to have their own bodies of evolving theory plus often unique means of transmitting both skills and theory from one generation to the next. (66) The appropriate means of acquiring such skills and theory and transmitting them and also the best ways of co-ordinating at regional, national and international levels the necessary registers of practitioners of these skills, directories of venues suitable for each of the different types of art relatively new to this country and the different types of audience, including participating and contributing 'audiences', existing and potential distribution networks of various kinds, publishing and publicizing facilities, appropriate mailing lists to back up and broaden the highly efficient traditional word-of-mouth systems, anti-clash diaries (67), specialist resource and research centres, and so on will no doubt be considered in the papers on training needs and on central

services requirements, so I shall not refer further here to these practical aspects of our subject, except to say that I hope that in due course we shall have an opportunity to discuss them in the context of this more general paper and, if possible, in relation to what is being done and what still needs to be done in the field of formal education (68) as well as to what is happening in television and radio, in the unsubsidized popular arts and in the crafts.

Strengthening support from the mainstream media

53. Regular access to the very best of the performing and other arts of all the major cultures at both national and regional levels should lead to better - or, at the very least, more regular - reviewing in the national and regional presses, which in turn might well lead to wider interest and so on in an expanding progression of pluralist integration, bringing in the multiplier effect. Should the ACGB and/or the RAAs provide bursaries for mainstream critics to enable them to give time to the serious study of the arts of other cultures (69) or provide pump-priming funds for trial columns or, if all else fails, 'advertising features' on the 'minority' or 'other' cultures in mainstream papers and magazines? Do the minority presses also need help in this sector?

Objective that takes account of the needs of each and every one of us

54. The shared overall long-term objective of the RAAs and the ACGB must surely be to ensure that access is provided on a regular and strictly egalitarian basis to the very best of the historical and especially the current (70) achievements of all the world's heritage art forms, including the newly-evolved and cross-cultural forms as well as the so-called 'pure' or 'traditional' forms. (71) This, in effect, is a redefinition of 'the arts' in terms appropriate to the England of today and every bit as much in the interests of the ethnic majority as of the ethnic minorities in this country. Only when the widely-held belief that white western culture is the norm, is the culture and that the other cultures are peripheral, non-essential, exotic, or 'primitive' and out-of-date has given way to an equally widespread appreciation of the major contributions these latter cultures have made, are making and will undoubtedly continue to make to the enrichment of our lives shall we be able to consider the Council's directive that we are to take affirmative action in support of their arts to have been fully realized.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Artscribe, no. 44, December 1983, p.67.

Frank McEwen was no more enthusiastic when he wrote some years ago, from Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), of the '... reflection of a reflection with which we are so familiar in recent Western art ... the negative insecurity of Trivialism'. ('The Workshop School', Contemporary African Art, London, Studio International, 1969, p.16.)

Today, Paul Overy reminds us that 'The move towards the hermetic and the private in early twentieth-century modernism was an understandable reaction against the empty rhetorical gestures of late nineteenth-century public and official art. Yet within a few decades, painting and sculpture had become self-referential and self-indulgent, addressed only to an audience of fellow artists, critics and cognoscenti. Inevitably and rightly there have been repeated demands for arts to be made accessible. ... Yet so much of what has been put forward as public art over the past decade has been bland, banal or bombastic. Committee art, which aims to please, offends no one and says nothing.

'The other tendency, particularly in mural painting in the inner cities - imitating American practice - has been towards the hectoring and the brutal. People just don't know how to react to public murals, particularly outdoors. Faced with an apparently numb audience, artists resort to violent techniques and brutal imagery, which makes many murals the visual equivalent of a mugging. ...

He goes on to suggest that '... there can be no real "mass" audience for art, only diverse smaller interest groups who can be persuaded to take an active part in the process'. ('Art Made Public', New Society, 3 January 1985, p.16.)

- 2 Marcel Duchamp or the Castle of Purity, London, Cape Goliard Press, 1970, p.

The context of the phrase quoted is: '... the affected piety of modern times which surrounds painting and often prevents us from seeing it, is nothing other than idolatry for the object, adoration of a magic object which we can touch and which, like other objects, can be bought and sold. It is the elevation of the object in a civilization dedicated to producing and consuming objects'.

- 3 Civilization. A Personal View, London, BBC and John Murray, 1969, p.78.

For an interesting study of the effects of the pressures of today's art market on art, see Robert Hughes, 'On Art and Money' (the text of the first Harold Rosenberg Memorial Lecture, delivered at the University of Chicago), New York Review of Books, 6 December 1984, pp.20 - 7, reprinted in Art Monthly, December 1984/January 1985, pp.6 - 12. Here is a sample comment from it of relevance in the present context: '... what the masterpiece, laden with fetishistic value, has lost today is a certain freedom of access - a buoyancy, an availability to the eye and to the mind. It has been invested with a spurious authority, like the façade of a bank'.

- 4 'The Fencing Master', Sunday Times, 19 September 1978, p. .

This work cost something over \$2.25m.

- 5 'Running Fence', directed by Albert and David Maysles with Charlotte Zwerin, USA, 1977, colour, 58 minutes.

- 6 'Give Us Design with Feeling', The Times, 31 May 1984, p.16.

Extracts from a speech delivered at the RIBA the previous evening.

- 7 Although the inspirational model was and still is the famous Port of Spain Carnival, which takes place in the period just before Lent ending on the stroke of midnight on Shrove Tuesday, the London Carnivals are now firmly linked in with the official late summer holiday here in England.

Differing cultural traditions have of course been coming together in England (and just about everywhere else) for a very long time. Last year, we celebrated at the Hayward Gallery, in art-exhibition form, the visual art outcome of one initially violent and bloody instance of this ('1066: English Romanesque Art'). In more recent historical times there have been many gentler invasions relevant to our present discussion which originated in Africa or the African diaspora, for example, rather than in continental Europe, and arrived here in the visual and musical rather than military forms of carved sculpture, jazz and rock-'n'-roll - and, in the last decade or so, directly in the persons of visiting - and sometimes settling - African musicians, performing in both the classical and popular modes.

Charles Gillett has documented the combination of circumstances which began the international spread of a fusion of black rhythm and blues and white country song structure packaged in record form and 'hidden' under the new label of 'rock-'n'-roll' - the form in which it came into the hands of John Lennon, before he and his fellow Beatles, in turn, passed it on, similarly packaged, to a vast, literally world-wide and of course largely new audience for this black-plus-white-originated popular music:

'Alan Freed was a disc jockey on an evening quality music programme in Cleveland, Ohio, when he was invited, sometime in 1952, to visit a downtown record store by the owner, Leo Mintz. Mintz was intrigued by the musical taste of some of the white adolescents who bought records at his store, and Freed was amazed by it. He watched the excited reaction of the youths who danced energetically as they listened to music that Freed had previously considered alien to their culture - rhythm and blues. He recalled (in the British New Musical Express, 23 September 1956): "I heard the tenor saxophones of Red Prysock and Big Al Sears. I heard the blues-singing, piano-playing Ivory Joe Hunter. I wondered. I wondered for about a week. Then I went to the station manager and talked him into permitting me to follow my classical programme with a rock 'n' roll party".

'At Mintz's suggestion, Freed introduced a euphemism for rhythm and blues by calling his show "Moondog's Rock 'n' Roll Party", which started in June 1951'. (The Sound of the City. The Rise of Rock and Roll, London, Souvenir Press, 1970, revised edition 1983, p.13).

There are actually a number of other less-widely-known-about festivals which make integral use of the 'new' arts now well-rooted in England, including Diwali, the Dussehra, ^{or} the Durga Puja, the Id ul Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, and the Dragon, Lion and Unicorn Dances, with which the lunar New Year is celebrated - the last, incidentally, demonstrating one rather public way of putting pressure on commercial concerns to 'sponsor' the arts!

Europe has long been much indebted to the 'black' peoples of the world - mathematics, astronomy, Christianity, gunpowder, paper and printing are among the more obvious inventions, discoveries and holistic perceptions essential to 'our' way of life which originated beyond the frontiers of the white world - and there is much more that could greatly extend this indebtedness to be had for the asking but that most of us in the west are not even conscious of as yet, our 'blindness' perhaps being best 'explained' by the following story:

'... when Columbus landed at Tierra del Fuego ... the natives who knew no other form of water transport outside of canoes, simply did not see his ships anchored out in the bay despite their bulk and the fact that they were silhouetted against the skyline. It was not until the Shaman of the tribe had given it some thought and decided that these strangers must have arrived in something, that it finally became possible for them to see the ships which even then had to be pointed out to them. Of course, we in our intellectual pride with all of our twentieth-century know-how, cannot conceive of this happening to us, but it does, and all the time'. (David Tansley, Omens of Awareness, Sudbury, , 1977, p.68.)

Looking to the inner more than the outer significance of the west's increasing awareness of the considerable differences of consciousness found in hitherto 'far away' cultures, C.G. Jung suggests a quiet optimism that we westerners may be going beyond mere 'exotic' fashions and distractions when he wrote that: 'It seems quite true that the East is at bottom of the

spiritual changes we are passing through today. Only this East is not a Tibetan monastery full of mahatmas but, in a sense, lies within us'. (Original source untraced - the quotation as reproduced here having been taken from a leaflet that gave no details of its own origin either.)

- 8 John Lane, The Death and Resurrection of the Arts, London, Green Alliance, 1982, pp.7-9.

The author also quotes some interesting remarks by Margaret Mead concerning participation in the making of art:

'The Balinese may comment with amusement but without surprise if the leading metallophone player in a noted orchestra is so small that he has to have a stool in order to reach the keys: the same mild amusement may be expressed if someone takes up a different art after his hands have a tremor of age to confuse their precision. But it is a continuum within which the distinction between the most gifted and the least gifted is muted by the fact that everyone participates, the distinction between child and adult - as performer, as actor, as musician - is lost, except in those cases where the distinction is ritual as where a special dance requires a little girl who has not yet reached puberty.

'Nor is there any gap between rehearsal and performance. From the moment an orchestra begins to practice an old piece of music, there is a ring of spectators, aspiring players, substitute players, small boys and old men, all equally engrossed in the ever fresh creation of a new way of playing an old piece of music'.

John Lane adds the comment: 'A further significant variation from our own tradition is that once a composition has served its purpose it is invariably discarded - a sign of musical self-confidence on the part of these richly creative people that seems to be lacking in the more self-conscious West'.

Elsewhere, Chinua Achebe has pointed out that the Igbo's Mbari ritual is also an expression of a 'people's belief in the indivisibility of art and society'. Guy Brett and John Mapondera elaborate: 'In Mbari, the Igbo people of the Owerri district of Nigeria, represent every aspect of their life: their gods, cosmology, sacred beliefs, birth and death, and new realities in everyday life. The process by which the Mbari (ritual) houses are planned, by which the sculptors and painters and their helpers are chosen, by which they work together in seclusion often for several years, by which the houses are completed and fêted and then left to fall to pieces - all this is an indivisible part of Mbari ...' (from a 1980 working outline for an as yet unrealized major exhibition of contemporary African art).

- 9 'To My Black Brothers and Sisters' and 'To Our White Comrades, Friends and Enemies', Past-Imperfect, Future-Tense, catalogue of the artist's first one-person exhibition, London, Black-Art Gallery, 7 June - 22 July 1984.

The foreword to the catalogue explains that 'As usual, music accompanies the visual images, as our art is not to be separated and compartmentalized to suit European traditions'.

- 10 It is important to remember that this is no 'either/or' situation. There are no fixed and immutable factors linking people belonging to a particular race to a particular culture and there are indeed many English blacks in all age groups who are rooted in the white-originated mainstream culture, so that their minority skin colours are about as culturally significant as is, say, minority red hair or minority blue eyes.

Here is an extract from an interview in which C.L.R. James makes some characteristically direct and forceful comments of particular relevance at this point:

Third World Book Review (Kofi Buenor Hadjor): 'Some Caribbean intellectuals of your generation could be accused of excessive veneration for Western culture and of implicitly downgrading the African and New World roots of their own languages and culture ...'

C.L.R. James: 'I do not know what are the African roots of the language and

culture of Caribbean intellectuals. I am not aware of the African roots of my use of the language and culture. I pay a lot of respect to Africa. I have been there many times. I have spoken to many Africans. I have read their literature. But we of the Caribbean have not got an African past. We are black in skin, but the African civilization is not ours. The basis of our civilization in the Caribbean is an adaptation of Western civilization.'

Review: 'But should Shakespeare and Rembrandt and Beethoven matter to Caribbean people?'

James: 'The Caribbean people are people, and Shakespeare, Rembrandt and Beethoven should matter to all people who are living in the world today, and who are able by means of their language or by their means of information and communication to understand or get some insight into what Shakespeare, and Beethoven mean. I don't like that question at all.'

Review: 'How do you view Edward Kamau Brathwaite's emphasis on a return to non-European roots?'

James: 'I confess I am not impelled to speak on that - I believe there is something very wrong in your question. "Brathwaite's emphasis on a return to non-European roots" - the phrase is misleading. How am I to return to non-European roots? Well, if it means that Caribbean writers today should be aware that there are emphases in their writing that we owe to non-European, non-Shakespearian roots, and the past in music which is not Beethoven, that I agree. But I don't like them posed there in the way they have been posed - either-or. I don't think so. I think both of them. And fundamentally we are a people whose literacy and aesthetic past is rooted in Western European civilization'. ('An Audience with C.L.R. James', Third World Book Review, vol.1, no.2, 1984, p.6.)

Eddie Chambers records how at The First National Black Art Convention, which he and Keith Piper organized in Wolverhampton in 1981, a symposium on 'What is Black Art?' '... was characterized by the head-on collision of diametrically opposing points of view that emerged during the course of the day. There were those artists who, though Black, saw no real need to connect the production of their work to the political realities of their skin colour. In short, these artists stood for aesthetic individualism. Challenging this were those artists who produced work directly related to the fact that they were part of an oppressed race. Briefly, this group created art because they were Black, and not despite being Black.

'Thus emerged two seemingly irreconcilable viewpoints, each being argued as passionately as the other. From this point in time, the production and exhibition of visual art by Black people has been overshadowed by this argument. In fact, every seminar and forum on the subject of art by Black artists has since been dogged by a marked inability to reach any common consensus of opinion as to what constitutes Black art, and who makes it'. ('On Black Art', Artists Newsletter, February 1985, p.15.)

The Race Relations Act (1976) outlaws discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin and of course this covers employment in the arts; yet this legal requirement is all too visibly evaded in the mainstream performing arts, as the following extracts from a letter from a group of Afro-Asian members of Equity, written in response to a review of a production of 'The Relapse' by Sir John Vanbrugh, reminds us. Milton Shulman is quoted as criticizing the casting of two black actresses in this seventeenth-century play on the grounds that blacks should not play 'roles in English classics that were never designed for them' and the letter goes on to say that his 'job as a newspaper theatre critic of course entitles him to praise or condemn a play and/or its artists' labours, and his opinions might be accepted as fair comment. It is not fair comment when he advocates that artists' horizons should be restricted, because of their race. The theatre is about the suspension of disbelief. It is the artists' skill and quality of performance upon which a judgment should be made regardless of race or ethnic origin'. (Standard, 10 November 1980, p.)

Even with parts written specifically for and played by blacks it is not necessarily all plain sailing - at least not when non-blacks have the final say. Karim Alrawi informs us that 'In the filming of the Jewel in the

Crown" for television, an Indian actor, born and bred in India, was made to black up for his role as a servant. His degree of non-whiteness had to be emphasized and the stereotype reinforced. There has also been some argument recently over the casting for a series for BBC Birmingham. It was decided not to use the pool of Indian actors available unless their origins matched exactly those of the characters in the plays. A Bengali could only be allowed to perform the part of a Bengali, a Punjabi that of a Punjabi, etc. It is clear that what is at question is the ability of black people to act. By all means let them provide a little ethnic colour but don't expect them to act'. ('Blacking Up', City Limits, 1 July 1983, p.5.)

- 11 'Australia', Artscribe, no. 44, December 1983, p.38.

In the same article, the author refers to something else very pertinent to the present discussion when he writes of the Australian art world that: 'Instead of one hierarchy there are several. By comparison our thinking in this country, for all the dutiful talk of the regions, tends to fall into the pattern of an all-important centre and irrelevant periphery. Only in London does recognition count, the centre of power and influence and international connections, from where informed opinion radiates out to the edges, and from those edges the ambitious try and edge their way back towards the light'.

Elsewhere, Kurt Biedenkopf reminds us that the Federal Republic of Germany is also culturally decentralized and that '... we have a competitive situation among various state capitals who each claim to be the most cultural one: to have the best theatres, the best museums, and so on. As a result, there is a widespread distribution of museums, orchestras, theatres - all kinds of arts activities throughout the nation'. ('Voices from West Germany', Culture and the State, London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1984, p.19.)

In his preface to The Glory of the Garden. The Development of the Arts in England (London, AOCB, 1984), Sir William Rees-Mogg reminds us that Maynard Keynes' 'second aim of making London "a great artistic metropolis" has been achieved to a degree even beyond what he envisaged' forty years ago; but Sir William also draws attention to Lord Keynes' first priority when the Arts Council was set up, which was 'to decentralize and disperse the dramatic and musical and artistic life of this country, to build up provincial centres and to promote corporate life in these matters in every town and county'. That this first goal has not yet been adequately realized is the central issue the document itself addresses, in order to prepare the way for the further effort now needed to bring the 'regional' and the 'national' and the 'international' into harmonious and complementary relationship.

In the broadcast from which the above quotation is taken, Lord Keynes went on to say: 'How satisfactory it would be if different parts of this country would again walk their several ways as they once did and learn to develop something different from their neighbours and characteristic of themselves'. (Listener, 12 July 1945.) We are in an excellent position today to extend that concept far beyond even Lord Keynes' far-sighted vision in terms of the cultural diversity and richness of experience distilled into the artistic traditions of the substantial numbers of 'black' people now settled in various regions of the country.

Is it not now also the appropriate time to begin to develop Maynard Keynes' 'great artistic metropolis' concept in the direction of several great artistic cosmopolis, providing centres of regional, national and international excellence both in London (currently a great artistic metropolis but a long way from being more than a mediocre artistic cosmopolis) and around the country? Would that not provide an important means of making 'the arts' - meaning the global arts and not just that small percentage of them which make up the arts of the white race or derivations of these - accessible to the people of this country in the form of a basic nationwide international arts support structure that could make visits by, say, large-scale overseas-originated productions, coming from far-away and far-from-rich Third World countries in particular, potentially more nearly economically viable and therefore more likely to actually happen? West Germany might provide the structural model.

- 12 Minutes of a special meeting of members of the Arts Council's Exhibitions Sub-Committee, 29 May 1980, p.2.
- 13 The author, of course, was Kenneth Clark. The book is now also published as a Pelican (1982), with the title unchanged. It would not be true to say that India, for example, is given no mention whatsoever. There is indeed a single reference (p.33) to Indian civilization: '... in the late sixth century BC, when there was ... in India a spiritual enlightenment that has perhaps never been equalled'. This makes all the more extraordinary the Eurocentric self-indulgence of the title, which must anyway surely make the publication highly vulnerable under the Trade Descriptions Act (1976), although, in fairness to the author, it must be added that well into the foreword (pp.14-5) he does 'confess that the title has worried me. It would have been easy in the eighteenth century: Speculations on the Nature of Civilization as illustrated by the Changing Phases of Civilized Life in Western Europe from the Dark Ages to the Present Day. Unfortunately, this is no longer practicable'. One wonders why it should be impracticable today - as a subtitle, at least.
- 14 Edited by Justin Wintle, London, Ark/Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, and noticed in City Limits, 4 May 1984.

In their current catalogue, the publishers advertise the book as follows: 'With over three hundred entries from over two hundred contributors, this is the most comprehensive and informative survey of twentieth-century ideas ever published. You will refer to this dictionary time and time again, not only for information and facts, but for stimulation and enjoyment. From Freud to R.D. Laing, from Proust to Garcia Marquez, from Picasso to Warhol, from Chaplin to Godard, from Debussy to Stockhausen, from Shaw to Pinter, from Wittgenstein to Popper, from Durkheim to McLuhan, from Yeats to Ginsberg, from Wells to Castaneda'. Non-blacks to a man (sic).

Over the years, Rasheed Araeen has been carrying out a determined campaign to help achieve the proper representation of black/Third World interests in England that is their due but which is still denied them in any real and significant 'structural' sense (the occasional sentimental neo-colonialist 'support' which is really outside the system being ultimately unacceptable as anything more than an unsatisfactory stopgap) (see also under footnote 21). In a recent letter to the press on the subject, he quotes the following extract from Norbert Lynton's 1962 essay on the Pakistani artist Iqbal Jafree (sometimes transliterated Geoffrey), who was then living in England (and who is represented in the Arts Council Collection):

'A few years ago there appeared a handsome internationally published volume entitled Art Since 1945. It is significant that this book, purporting to present "art today", ranged geographically from Poland and Yugoslavia westwards to the United States and simply omitted everything east of Belgrade and west of Seattle. To ignore the Oriental contribution to modern art is such an act of ingratitude to a group of civilizations from which many of the concerns and attitudes of modern art derives that one is justified in interpreting it also as a defensive act against developments that, if seen, would tend to outshine whole selections of Western artistic achievements ...' (Black Representation, Art Monthly, February 1985, p.27.)

- 15 Hansard, 13 February 1984, cols.17-8.
- 16 Punch, 21 April 1982, , quoted in an Arts Council press release on the exhibition, 5 May 1982.

This exhibition was a part of a Festival of India which took place here over a period of several months in 1981-2. Zareer Masani was among the many who strongly criticized the way the festival was organized and he identified a very basic cause for concern when he wrote that, 'Ultimately, the main weakness of the festival is its assumption that cultural prejudice is simply a question of ignorance. What that fails to recognize is the existence of an ideology of discrimination which can consume and patronize the exotic without questioning its own superiority. In such a context, mere celebrations of ethnicity may actually prove counter-productive'. ('The Juggernaut', New Statesman, 23 April 1982, p. .)

Elsewhere, he commented that, 'For many British Asians, the most alarming feature of the festival is its essentially colonial definition of "Indianness" as exotic, nostalgic and foreign and, by implication, its reinforcement of the image of British Asians as aliens. At a time when the Asian community feels most under siege from the escalation of racial attacks and from racist nationality and immigration laws, the festival is seen to be playing into the hands of Britain's white establishment and dividing Indians from other British Asians and from the wider, black experience of British racism.

'As Jatinder Verma of Tara Arts, a radical, Asian theatre group, points out, the festival evades the political realities of British imperialism and racism and the culture of resistance to them. In so doing, it enables the British Government to blame local Asians for "swamping" Britain with an alien culture while presiding over the largest ever celebration of visiting Indian ethnicity. The political message is clear: India is fun, so long as it's only passing through'. ('Whose Festival Is It Anyway?', City Limits, 19 March 1982, p.38.)

A number of white-made films about India have also been widely criticized for related reasons. For example, after a visit to the cinema to see 'Heat and Dust', Urvashi Butalia records: '... why, asked my friends, hadn't I liked the film. As I struggled to find an adequate response the question was answered, rather fortuitously for me, by someone at the next table. "All this talk about imperialism," said a voice, "the British weren't so bad after all". And there, of course, was my objection. It wasn't a film about India at all. What it was was a film that glorified, beautified and made romantic the Raj. And that kind of thing makes me very angry indeed'. ('The Raj Rage', City Limits, 29 April 1983, p.82.)

- 17 'Indian Art in London and Oxford', Art Monthly, September 1982, pp.3-4.
- 18 'Anarchy that Works', Sunday Times Magazine, 21 March 1982, p.41.
- 19 Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, London, 1848, quoted from the English edition of 1888, as reprinted, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1983, p.21.

Well over a century later, Marshall Berman notes that 'At the climax of Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, written in 1904, the whole "mighty cosmos of the modern economic order" is seen as "an iron cage". This inexorable order, capitalistic, legalistic and bureaucratic, "determines the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism ... with irresistible force". It is bound to "determine man's fate until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt out". Now, Marx and Nietzsche - and Tocqueville and Carlyle and Mill and Kierkegaard and all the other great nineteenth-century critics - also understood the ways in which modern technology and social organization determined man's fate. But they all believed that modern individuals had the capacity both to understand this fate and, once they understood it, to fight it. Hence, even in the midst of a wretched present, they could imagine an open future.

'Twentieth-century critics of modernity almost entirely lack this empathy with, and faith in, their fellow modern men and women. To Weber, his contemporaries are nothing but "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; and this nullity is caught in the delusion that it has achieved a level of development never before attained by mankind". Thus, not only is modern society a cage, but all the people in it are shaped by its bars; we are beings without spirit, without heart, without sexual or personal identity ("this nullity ... caught in the delusion that it has achieved ...") - we might almost say without being. Here, just as in futurist and techno-pastoral forms of modernism, modern man as a subject - as a living being, capable of response, judgment and action in and on the world - has disappeared. Ironically, twentieth-century critics of "the iron cage" adopt the perspective of the cage's keepers; since those inside are devoid of inner freedom or dignity, the cage is not a prison; it merely furnishes a race of nullities with the emptiness they crave and need'. (All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity, London, Verso Editions, 1983, p.27-8.)

- 20 Gene H. Hogberg, 'The "New China" Reaches Out', Pasadena, Plain Truth, April 1984, pp.41-2.

It should be noted too that the USSR is gradually moving its developmental resources from west to east, i.e., into Asia.

- 21 Evening Standard, 26 September 1980, p.16.

One wonders how the Chinese participating in the twenty-third Olympiad and the many Americans of Chinese ancestry in California reacted to the decision of the Royal Opera House to stage the first performance of a new production of 'Turandot' in Los Angeles, as a part of Britain's contribution to the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival. This prestigious event took place in the presence of HRH The Princess Anne and the cast was led by Gwyneth Jones and Placido Domingo in the parts of Princess Turandot and Calaf. The reader will no doubt recall that other Chinese characters in the opera have the highly imaginative and witty names of Ping, Pang and Pong.

Marina Vaizey has reminded us that 'The purpose (underlying everything the British Council does) is cultural diplomacy and not arts patronage' ('Four Per Cent of the British Council', Performance, August/September 1982, p.54) and the Council's sponsorship of this particular event must therefore be assumed to have had the estimable primary aim of promoting 'an enduring understanding and appreciation of Britain in other countries', as Sir John Burgh puts it, quoting from the official statement explaining the basic policy of the Council ('Fifty Years On - The British Council Still Winning Friends', British Travel News, Summer 1984, p.33); but did not the Museum of Modern Art in New York long ago set a better standard of sensitivity to harmful racist nuances in the arts - which of course do not go unnoticed by minority racial groups, even when they may not appear to others to have noticed because they make no complaint, having concluded that voicing their objections would result only in further humiliation - when it withdrew (not suppressed, but withdrew from exhibition) for several years David Griffith's 'Birth of a Nation', because this film cruelly stereotypes and caricatures blacks but not whites? The crucial period of basic racial adjustment in the US apparently having now passed, the film is again being screened regularly as the artistic masterpiece it undoubtedly is.

The Olympic Games themselves cannot be said to be 'international' in any truly culturally reciprocal sense while they continue to be an exclusively white-orientated affair insofar as no black sports are ever included. There has never been any representation of wushu, for example, or of the closely comparable martial arts of Japan, South East Asia and India, now immensely popular forms of competitive sport throughout the world - although obviously not with white 'international' sports officialdom.

Rasheed Araeen draws attention to the similar 'dominance of Western art in the world today' and asks:

'Is Western art really international (in its spirit and expression) or only an instrument of propaganda? Is the internationalism of Western art (and culture) at this juncture in history beneficial to all mankind? If the purpose of internationalism is to bring different peoples nearer to each other and create a better understanding between them, why should it be monopolized by the West? Why aren't the people in/of the Third World playing any significant role in the development of so-called international art?

'The question here is not really "of the lack of thought given to the position of the Third World artist in western discussions of art" (emphasis added), as Caroline Tisdall has put it (Guardian, 26 April 1975), but of the exclusion of Third World people from the contemporary developments, controlled and dominated by the West. The Third World artist is not seeking a position in Western art but his rightful place in the contemporary world which is being denied to him. If Western art was confined to its own national boundaries or within the Western world and it made no claims to the supremacy in the world, it would have not bothered us at all. Since Western art is pretending to be international, spreading its vicious tentacles all over the world, it is extremely necessary to question its real content and the motives behind its international expansion. ...

'The myth of the internationalism of Western art must now be exploded. The fact is that there does not yet exist an art which truly reflects the international spirit of Man and Woman today. Western art only reflects the particularity of the West and has little to do with the actual reality of the world. It can therefore be said that WESTERN ART IS NOT INTERNATIONAL; IT IS MERELY TRANSATLANTIC ART. IT ONLY REFLECTS THE TRANSATLANTIC CULTURE OF EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. The present "internationalism" of Western art is no more than a function of Western politico-economic power and its imposition of its values on other people. Therefore, in an international context, it would be more appropriate to call it IMPERIALIST ART. ...

'Britain is still an imperialist power (in the neo-colonial sense) whose values are promoted abroad as part of its international cultural propaganda. Its promotional pattern is still based on cultural purism and exclusiveness. Its products are promoted abroad in such a way that it does not contradict the traditional British (English, to be more precise) image. The British image abroad, even today, consists of a white society in which there is a small black immigrant population "serving its white masters": and its creative activity must therefore be an activity which embodies white values created and defended by white artists. One only has to look into the common pattern of British art criticism which seldom fails to point out the Englishness of British art. And since Englishness is only identifiable with white people (ask Powell why!), the English chauvinistic art promotion pattern ignores the art activity of black people in the country, or it relegates it to ethnic pigeon-holes'. ('Preliminary Notes for a Black Manifesto', Black Phoenix, no.1, Winter 1978, pp.6, 7, 9 and 10, reprinted in Rasheed Araeen, Making Myself Visible, London, Kala Press, 1984, p. .)

Again on the subject of sport, this time in a national context, Darcus Howe makes an interesting comment on how a newly introduced cultural attitude has contributed positively to English football. He suggests that: 'The way the game is played cannot be separated from the way people live from day to day.

'Working life today is dominated by the plan. So many articles must be produced in such and such a time. Each worker's task is clearly defined. Individual skill, creativity, adventure and style are gone. The plan is safe, it guarantees production. It is this discipline that has formed and shaped a whole generation of the working class, penetrating and corrupting every area of political life. It would be a miracle if football were to escape.

'The black community is not so affected, at least not yet. We have broken with our roots in our countries of origin without quite establishing a new way of life in Britain. We are between what we have left behind and a new tradition, and therefore all our capacities are mobilized for action. In such circumstances all is fluid, adventurous, spontaneous, creative. That for me explains the new approach to the game which black players represent.

'There is one danger to be guarded against: that the present crop of managers, rather than seek to nurture these qualities, will ruin them by imposing the decaying and monotonous formations which bore us from Saturday to Saturday'. ('Football Notes', Race Today Review, vol.14, no.5, 1983, p. .)

Then again, David Lacey writes of what was for him '... the most significant moment of 1984 for English football': 'On the stroke of half-time Hateley controlled the ball neatly in midfield before finding Barnes on the left. The young Watford player embarked on a typically audacious run and, with the jaws of even England's severest critics slackening in disbelief, beat man after man before calmly steering England's first goal past Roberto Costa.

'In that instant, as the sporting Brazilian crowd rose to their feet to applaud this outstanding piece of individual play, the England side was reborn'. ('The Day the Worm Turned', Guardian, 29 December 1984, p. .)

As football fans will know, John Barnes is black.

22 'The White Man's Burden' (1899), Rudyard Kipling's Verse. Definitive Edition, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1940, pp.323-4.

- 23 "'Echoes" - Northern Ireland and the Critical Text', Block, no. 3, 1980, p.6.
- 24 Ferdi Dennis, 'No Shamin'', City Limits, 23 March 1984, p.16.

Here is another extract from the interview:

'Rhone studied drama in Britain during the 'sixties. He worked for two years as an actor. But dissatisfied with the roles offered him, he returned to Jamaica. "I thought I was playing parts that were negative", he says. "The roles were invariably written by white people. It was their way of showing how they thought black people behave, live their lives. It was so far from the truth, far from reality. It was boring. They were never roles that looked at the creative and positive lives of black people, their dreams, real hopes, frustrations and dilemmas. They were illusions, fantasies, and not good fantasies"'.

Colin Shearman, considering the problems facing black plays and players today, writes: '... most black people still see the theatre as an alien tradition while many white audiences, in what is probably an oblique form of racism, assume the plays will be amateurishly acted or will display concerns far too insular to bother with.

'Quite what to do about this long-running problem remains a contentious issue. Smaller politically-based outfits prefer to plug away at their local communities but more ambitious characters, like Alby James (the new artistic director of Temba Theatre Company), feel that if they're ever to make major West End venues at all then their best bet is to opt for a more mainstream audience now.

'This is probably the most popular view since Alby, who came up through provincial university and assistant directorship at the Royal Court and RSC, is typical of a new generation of British-born black people who are beginning to make their mark in the theatre and are sick to death of being - for the most part - shut away on the fringe.

'"In any case plays cannot be sustained by black audiences long enough to pay their way. We have no choice but to consider whether the content of each particular production will appeal to a wider audience", he says. This is certainly the attitude behind the second Black Theatre Season which opened at the Arts Theatre last night with Temba's revival of Tunde Ikoli's "Scrape Off The Black". All three plays have partly been chosen for their accessibility to a white audience but also as a skillful marketing device which hopes at one fell swoop to entice black people into the building, convince their white counterparts that the work is interesting and of an excellent standard and to prove to West End promoters that black plays can fill a conventional theatre in central London. ...

'... but Farrukh Dhondy, co-founder with H.O. Nazareth of the Asian Co-operative Theatre, ... is much more sceptical. ... The prolific Dhondy, who also writes the TV sit-com "No Problem!" and is C4's commissioning editor for multi-cultural programmes, believes that talk of the West End is wildly optimistic - in terms of the style of writing and acting available - and that white audiences should, in any case, be treated cautiously'. ('Stage Stuck', Guardian, 11 January 1985.)

Playwright Karim Alrawi draws attention to a further problem in that '... plays or short stories written by authors of Afro-Asian origins in English are often pigeonholed by critics and reviewers as being about people "trapped between two cultures". Not only is this statement semantic nonsense, it often ignores the much wider issues dealt with in these works. It presupposes that no cultural synthesis is possible, only a choice. It is a denial of the fact that "culture" is a dialectical entity that suffers contradictions, tensions and change.

'It is as Edward Said has argued in his book on Orientalism, than an artificial boundary, an intellectual frontier line, has been created dividing East from West - or, if you prefer, Europe from Africa and Asia. Characteristic features and degrees of inferiority have subsequently been projected, ascribed and willed on the non-European - a doctrine that has

meant that the European has become almost totally ethnocentric. It is this ethnocentricity in particular which has led to the instituting of the label "Ethnic Art". ('Blacking Up', City Limits, 1 July 1983, p.5.)

- 25 Black Skin, White Masks, New York, 1967, p.18, quoted by Ariel Dorfman, The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes do to Our Minds, London, Pantheon, 1983, p.47.
- 26 Writers and Readers New Book List, London, Writers and Readers, Autumn 1983, p.2.
- 27 Salman Rushdie, 'The New Empire within Britain', New Society, 9 December 1982, p.417.

In this essay (the text of a broadcast in the Channel 4 'Opinions' programme), Salman Rushdie writes:

'The British authorities, being no longer capable of exporting governments, have chosen instead to import a new empire, a new community of subject peoples of whom they can think, and with whom they can deal, in very much the same way as their predecessors thought of and dealt with (the peoples) who made up ... the white man's burden.

'If you want to understand British racism - and, without understanding, no improvement is possible - it is impossible even to begin to grasp the nature of the beast unless you accept its historical roots; unless you see that four hundred years of conquest and looting, centuries of being told that you are superior to the fuzzy-wuzzies and the wogs, leave their stain on you all; that such a stain seeps into every part of your culture, your language and your daily life; and that nothing much has been done to wash it out.

...

'One of the key concepts of imperialism was that military superiority implied cultural superiority. This enabled the British to condescend to and repress cultures far older than their own; and it still does. For the citizens of the new, imported empire, for the colonized Asians and blacks of Britain, the police force represents that colonizing army, those regiments of occupation and control. ...

'Every major institution is permeated by racial prejudice to some degree. The unwillingness of the white majority to recognize this is the main reason why it can remain the case. ...

'And until you, the whites, see that the issue isn't integration, or harmony, or multi-culturalism, or immigration - but simply the business of facing up to and eradicating the prejudices within almost all of you - the citizens of your new, and last, empire will be obliged to struggle against you. We are required to embark, you might say, on a new freedom movement.'

In tackling this very basic problem in part by a hard look at past events, nothing is to be gained (other than a degree of emotional - and probably racist - confusion) by identifying with a particular historical 'side' or race. Savagery was certainly not (and indeed is not today) the sole prerogative of any one race, nor was it (nor is it) practiced solely against those of other races. Here is an example from the first Elizabethan age that happened in my own nearby country (which appears 'white' to the eye, but was (is?) clearly actually 'black' in today's terminology (acknowledged, for instance, in the title of Richard Ned Lebow's book, White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy, Philadelphia, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976)):

'When the Irish in Munster resisted colonization, they were met by total war. Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the military governor of Munster and half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh stated: "I slew all those from time to time that did belong to, feed, accompany or maintain any outlaws or traitors; and after my first summoning of a castle or fort, if they would not presently yield it, I would not take it afterwards of their gift, but won it perforce - how many lives soever it cost; putting man, woman and child to the sword." (John Ranelagh, Ireland, London, Collins, 1981, p.86.)

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'The pamphleteer Thomas Churchyard, who accompanied Gilbert to Munster, justified the killing of non-combatants on the grounds that they provided food for the rebels, "so that the killing of them by the sword was the way to kill the men of war by famine." Churchyard gave a vivid description of Gilbert's methods: "... that the heads of all those (of what sort soever they were) which were killed in the day, should be cut off from their bodies and brought to the place where he encamped at night, and should there be laid on the ground by each side of the way leading into his own tent so that none could come into his tent for any cause but commonly he must pass through a lane of heads which he used ad terrorem, the dead feeling nothing the more pains thereby; and yet did it bring great terror to the people when they saw the heads of their dead fathers, brothers, children, kinsfolk and friends, lie on the ground before their faces, as they came to speak with the said colonel". (Nicholas P. Canny, The Ideology of English Colonization from Ireland to America, William and Mary Quarterly, vol.30, 1973, p.582.)' (Gill Biggs et al, Nothing but the Same Old Story. The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism, London, Information on Ireland, 1984, pp.15-5.)

At the same time, it is only fair to recognize that some white-originated good has sometimes come about, even in the midst of our often violent abuses of each other within and across racial divisions over the centuries.

Thomas Sowell has, of course, to acknowledge that 'Not all parts of the colonized world were primitive, nor did the coming of Western civilization always represent progress in all aspects of life. But,' he continues, 'by and large European colonialism brought to the Third World what Roman imperialism had brought to Britain in the first century AD: (i) a reduction or cessation of internal fighting that had plagued these regions for centuries, holding back economic and social progress; (ii) a unified system of law as a framework for stable expectations and the security and individual planning that law makes possible; (iii) features of a more advanced system of technology and organization; and (iv) contact with a wider world, enabling creative potential to emerge from the restrictions of insularity. Nowhere did these benefits exist unalloyed. Everywhere they were mixed with the arrogance, insensitivity and often brutality that have marked conquerors of virtually every race and culture.

'The net balance of European impact on the Third World may never be totalled in all its psychic, cultural, social and political dimensions. The record of oppression is long and often ghastly - both before and after the imperialists came. European oppression was by no means unique in kind or degree, and the spread of this particular oppression cannot be assumed to be a net increase of oppression in the world.'

The author then goes on to question the 'enduring and fervent belief in imperialism as the cause of Third World poverty', but his acute insights and perceptions in this area are not of direct relevance here. (The Economics and Politics of Race: An International Perspective, New York, William Morrow and Co. Inc., 1983, excerpts from which were published in Dialogue, no. 65, Washington DC, US Information Agency, 1984, pp.26-32.)

28 'Anglo-Saxon Attitudes', shown on BBC1, 5 September 1982.

At a meeting at Truro City Hall a few days before the European elections last year, some members of the British Nationalist Party in the audience addressed Edward Heath as a 'fellow white man' and asked him if EEC money would not be better spent on sterilizing the Third World. (Stephen Pile, 'Ted's Travels - by way of the Fudge Factory', Sunday Times, 27 May 1984, p. .)

More than a century ago, Lord Palmerston, one of Edward Heath's predecessors as Prime Minister, found himself presented with a somewhat similar proposal for even more immediately drastic action - the proposer on that occasion being The Times. That august newspaper urged him to order the British army to 'exterminate every Moosoolman and Hindu in India to teach them a lesson'. (Robert Govender, 'What the Papers Say', Westindian World, 15 February 1984, p.13.) While in 1912, on the other side of the Atlantic, President William H. Taft declared: "The day is not far distant when three Stars and Stripes at equidistant points will mark out our territory: one at the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal, and the third at the South Pole. The whole

hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally.' (Duncan Campbell, 'Mike, Bill and Friends', City Limits, 30 November 1984, p.9.) And, again in our own day, Ronald Reagan, returning from his first visit to the United States' 'backyard', otherwise known as 'South America', indicated that attitudes in high places may be improving a little by announcing: 'Well, I learned a lot. ... You'd be surprised. They're all individual countries'. (Robert G. Kaiser, 'Your Host of Hosts', New York Review of Books, 28 June 1984, p.38.)

'I like it when we down street and nobody see. No one turn head, or notice us. I like that.' This is the comment of an English child of Chinese ancestry, recorded in a report, Chinese Children, by Ann Garvey and Brian Jackson (London, National Educational Research and Development Trust, 1975, quoted here from an offprint from Education and Community Relations, 1974, London, Commission for Racial Equality, 1980).

But all too often white English people do see. do turn their heads, do notice - and make stupid, ignorant, offensive remarks. From Washington DC, Jeremy Campbell writes:

'Patricia Knight, a 22-year-old American, bright, charming and university-educated, went to England for a holiday this summer and had an experience she will not forget in a hurry. Sitting on a London bus bound for one of the more salubrious suburbs, she became aware that another passenger, a white man, was staring at her disapprovingly. "You must be lost", the man said in a loud, clear voice. There was an awkward pause. "You must be lost because people who have just got off the boat don't live where you are going".

'Ms Knight tells this story to impress on her American friends that Britain, racially, is in the Dark Ages, as insensitive as the US was before the civil rights upheavals of the 1960s. Perhaps more so.

'She is not the only one. Randall Robinson, a 40-year-old black lawyer, a Harvard graduate, ... who grew up in the American South under the most blatant forms of segregation, thinks British attitudes to blacks are reminiscent of that place and time, displaying a kind of immaturity, and illiteracy, as if the lessons of the last thirty years had not been learned. "The US is far from perfect in this matter", Mr Robinson said. "But at least (white) Americans have acquired some sensitivity in their approach to blacks. They discipline themselves not to make offensive comments. If they feel hostile it's usually implied rather than expressed. "In England, white people are incredibly offensive without thinking. ..."

'US tour promoters try to tempt blacks into taking a London vacation, but do not often succeed. Yvette Chauvet, a Washington travel agent, said: "They don't go. Since 'Roots' was on television they travel to West Africa, but are not well received there. Africans don't regard them as blacks, but as rich Americans, and rich Americans they don't care for".

'Patricia Knight may return for another visit, but with a new wariness, conscious that things have changed. "The English stiff upper lip is beginning to quiver", she says'. ('London - Last Outpost of the Deep South ...', Standard, 12 August 1981.)

29 Ahmet Sheikh, '"Ethnic Arts" or White Power of Definition', Artrage, no. 5, Autumn 1983, p.2.

The 1954 Cabinet papers, recently made public, reveal that the Cabinet of that time seriously considered the possibility of restricting black entry into the Civil Service. The Government was also actively seeking ways of reducing the numbers of immigrants, in what would appear to have been a tacit acceptance that the basis of the matter was racial. Gwilym Lloyd George, the Home Secretary, suggested that the first step should be the establishment of a committee 'to enquire into the position of coloured people in Great Britain'. In response to this, Lord Swinton, the Commonwealth Secretary, wrote: 'I appreciate the force of the contention that if we are to legislate for restrictions on the entry of British subjects ... the legislation should be non-discriminatory. This will not, however, conceal the fact that the problem is that of coloured immigrants.

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from colonial territories'. (David Rose, 'Moves to Stem Entry of Blacks', Guardian, 2 January 1985, p. .)

The still widespread, crude, white British ethnocentrism does not of course go unnoticed either among black Britons or around the black world. Alejandro del Rosario, writing from the Embassy of the Philippines in response to a recent allegation of such behaviour in an especially sensitive context, has this to say: 'I can believe that Mr Alan Clark made that disparaging racial remark about black Britons "as denizens of Bongo Bongo land" (Guardian, 7 February 1985). The man is totally tactless. In an interview with The House Magazine (16 March 1984) Mr Clark said: "I was brought up behind the green baize door. This was de rigueur among the upper classes while they could still afford English servants - I don't think anyone would subject their children to the company of Filipinos."

'The élite are presumed to be born with the proverbial silver spoon in the mouth. With élitist Alan Clark, a foot seems more the case. Mr Clark may have had the circumstances of being raised in such a privileged environment of eight servants and exposure to the best minds at Eton, but unfortunately the good life did very little in making him less of a bigot. His ugly utterances against black Britons and Filipinos are unforgivable and unbecoming of an official in the Department of Employment for race relations'. ('Unspeakably Upper Class', Guardian, 8 February 1985, p. .)

With attitudes like these at the top, among white opinion-formers and decision-makers, apparently virtually unchanged today, it is not altogether surprising that official 'law and order' bodies such as the police have in their ranks white officers - even white officers with special responsibilities in the race relations area - who talk of 'nig-nogs' or that white racist thugs beating up black people on the streets, not just in quiet areas late at night but also in busy main streets in central London in broad daylight, feel protected by a tacitly approving white 'climate of opinion', seemingly fostered from above. (The cartoon is from the Sunday Times, 27 May 1984, p. .)



Some of my best friends are nig-nogs

Mee-Yan Cheung Judge, director of the Camden Chinese Community Centre, provides a specific example of high level failure to come to grips with present day reality. 'The Home Office recently started an investigation into the so called "problems" of the Chinese community', she explains, 'but that's the wrong way round to look at things. The Home Office doesn't really accept that Britain is a multi-ethnic country.'

'Recent statistics show that there are 132 different nations in the world and 92 of them are multi-ethnic. No-one is "foreign" in the same way anymore'. ('Not Just Take-Aways and Dragons', Camden Magazine, February 1985, p.13).

Anthony Shang is also critical of aspects of official 'ethnic' policies. He writes: 'Demographic changes have increased the visibility of Chinese in the wider society, both in schools and on housing estates. Moreover, the resettlement in Britain of 16 000 refugees from Vietnam, most of them ethnic Chinese, has in some areas made the Chinese prime targets for racial harassment. And those ethnic cousins from Vietnam are perhaps the most disadvantaged, disillusioned and vulnerable of the Chinese living in Britain. The policy of dispersing refugees in small numbers to different parts of the country has left them isolated and has inhibited the development of community and commercial initiatives. ...'

But there are positive developments to note as well: 'Recently a number of Chinese groups set up by second and third generation Chinese in Britain have demonstrated that socio-economic improvements can be obtained by exercising citizenship rights effectively. In Liverpool, the Merseyside Chinese Youth Association managed in one year to achieve what the long-established traditional associations failed to do in over a century, in convincing the

local authorities to fund the Chinese New Year celebrations. ...

'The challenge ahead for the community is somehow to raise the poor self-image of Chinese youth. Despite the number of successful Chinese in the professions - particularly in medicine, accountancy and law - there are very few Chinese in the "image-making" industry, namely the media, arts and creative fields. The dominant image of Chinese is therefore projected through white stereotypes with their caricatures of goon-like chefs, cretinous waiters or inscrutable Fu Manchu-like gangsters. Ultimately, the real measure of opportunities available to the Chinese community must depend on whether the young generation can break out of the constraints imposed by these images'. ('Chinese Doldrums', Inside Asia, no.1, November/December 1984, p.42.)

It is therefore of especial importance that we all take particular care for a period of time to avoid restrictive stereotyped imagery in this and similar areas and that we draw attention to lapses. For example, although three years ago the Arts Council made public its intention to take affirmative action in support of the art forms of the English ethnic minority communities, only recently we were responsible for an only too typical instance of ethnic majority insensitivity in so far as the poster for one of our directly-promoted concerts shows a caricature of a Chinese male with a queue, i.e., a braid of hair worn hanging at the back of the head. The queue was enforced on the ethnic Chinese by the Manchus, who conquered China in the seventeenth century and established a foreign imperial dynasty which lasted until it was overthrown in 1912, so, naturally, this hair style symbolizes cultural humiliation for the Chinese. However, in this instance it is particularly encouraging in respect of what might be termed inter-cultural dialogue that the Chinese community in Liverpool was prepared to risk collective loss of face (something no one likes to happen, but particularly humiliating, traditionally, to Chinese people) by complaining directly and openly about the image on the poster. Moreover, the protest was successful and the poster withdrawn - but only in Liverpool.



- 30 'Ethnic Arts' or White Power of Definition', Artrage, no. 5, Autumn 1983, p.2.
- 31 'Dog Soup Banned from Korean Table', Guardian, 12 April 1984, p.7.

On a visit to England, Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture and Science in the Government of Greece, had this to say about cultural imperialism:

'... I think of our work and of our problems - the grave problems faced by all of us and particularly the smaller countries. How before the onslaught of modern technologies, film, television, the satellites, all the media whose tremendous power of production is tightly held by a monopolistic few - how to preserve our national cultures and identities? Certainly if we are not open to all cultures, we ossify and shrink into ourselves. That goes without saying but we have cause to worry. Let me be clear. Let me not be misunderstood. For instance, we were sensitive to and welcomed that splendid eruption of the young music of the 'sixties, the phenomenon of the Beatles, that collective expression that contained at the same time adhesion and subversion, whose voices were given to romance, whose instrumentation to anti-romance; homage and impertinence and protest, all, projected with young and wonderful enthusiasm. We found it eminently right that their songs be heard and sung the world over. But when our blue-jeaned youth dance to rock-and-roll, when they park their Harley Davidson motorcycles before the theatre playing "Tootsie", and they refresh themselves with Pepsi-Cola while waiting for their friends to finish eating their Big Macs, I must wonder what links our youth retain with Greek identity. How to compete with these

production Goliaths when our resources are so limited? Thousands of American films have been distributed all over Greece. Let me tell you the number of Greek films that received wide distribution in the United States. The number is two.

Your situation is different. The English and the Americans have a common language - well, approximately. But even if for two years running, your films lifted the Oscars from the Yankees, check and find out how many English films receive significant distribution in the United States. In all, in poetry, in music, in the plastic arts, we must strive to obtain a better balance. That which has made the riches of the world is the diversity and multiplicity of all cultures. These riches must not be throttled in their own countries by the weight of monopoly product and they must find outlets everywhere. We cannot mince words, our problem is with the monopolies that have created cultural industries - it is a battle that must be faced. We must think it out, create a study and a strategy'. ('Culture and Democracy', the Herbert Read Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 22 May 1983, and published in Art Monthly, July/August 1983, pp.)

See also Donald Horne, The Great Museum. The Re-Presentation of History (London, Pluto Press, 1984) on the enormous significance of tourism as a reinforcing agent of dubious public 'culture'.

Referring to what he calls the 'tourist bubble', the author draws our attention to the fact that 'In that air-conditioned dreamland the only "people" the tourists meet are waiters, door attendants, maids, guides, shop assistants; the only observation of lifestyles is of staged folk dances and musicians in national entertainment dress; and the only wandering around may be in an hotel's shopping complexes, buying "souvenirs" which are reminders not even of what has been seen, but of the idea of the souvenir itself. For those who lack the money to buy a boastful imprisonment in the tourist bubble, or for those who have the knack of finding their own paths even from a luxury hotel, wandering around can allow a creative playfulness. Perhaps the wanderer may, in this state, imagine what it might be like to be someone else, or how things might seem to other people - or, possibly, come across some more formal tourist monument that arouses enough curiosity to provoke future reading. There are opportunities, as wide as human imagination, for those "discoveries" which break through the grid of stereotypes that reduces tourism merely to scoring oneself, as in an elementary school examination, for skill in recognizing, and therefore accepting, predetermined categories. Instead, sightseeing can provide some of the delights of the artistic or creatively intellectual experience: it is possible to believe that one has overcome conventional reality and can make up a hypothetical reality for oneself, to see how it goes.

'But the tourism of the ceremonial agenda and the tourism of the ceremonial visit to the museum are tourisms of acquisition. Except for accidents of personal disposition, this can be a tourism drained of cultural meanings, apart from the meanings of acquisition itself. It is no accident that shopping can be one of the delights of tourism. A tourist "buys a tour". A tourist photographs tourist objects and appropriates them. A tourist buys souvenirs as another proof of appropriation. The very carrying out of a tourist itinerary - of "doing Rome" - is a form of appropriation. The museums themselves are institutions of acquisition. As Roland Barthes says in his essay "The Plates of the Encyclopédie": "Inventory is never a neutral idea; to catalogue is not merely to ascertain ... but also to appropriate." Like an encyclopedia, a museum can be "a huge ledger of ownership", fragmenting the world into finite objects that are controlled, because of their very discontinuity, by humans. A Soviet or a United States Space Museum is a declaration of human ownership of existence.

'What can be most intellectually debilitating in a museum is the senseless reverence given to objects merely because of their authenticity...

'It is with art objects that the greatest problem arises, because actually to see them can provide an experience not obtainable in books. However, as Malraux says in Le Musée Imaginaire, the reverse is also true: a whole dimension of intellectuality can be given by collections of photographs in art books that is not available in the originals - because only a photograph

the originals together, and because photographic presentation can give art objects greater meaning in reproduction than in the original. Cheap leaflets, cassettes and guided tours are not enough: we need more museums to emulate the boldness of the Groeningemuseum, Brugge, which has put up on its walls expository material, including reproductions.

'... We have to learn to be as sceptical about the "reconstructions" of tourism as we can learn to be sceptical about the "reconstructions" of history'. (pp.248-51.)

Interaction between cultures is, of course, both natural and inevitable - and can be creative and celebratory when it is a sharing - or even 'stealing' - between equals. Here is an example:

Interviewing David Byrne of the Talking Heads, Saskia Baron asked him how he felt about criticism the band had received in 1981 regarding their 'appropriation' of African music.

'That criticism was kind of silly, because I advertise that I am appropriating these things, and then the end result doesn't sound at all like the original. I hope it's more of an inspiration of sensibility and approach which invigorates my music. It doesn't mean I'm going to write hi-life music or whatever ...

'And the other response would be that it doesn't matter. The more various cultures borrow or steal, the better. It's wonderful that things get hybridized. Africans do it all the time, incorporating Cuban rhythms and reggae, which are basically African rhythms once removed, and they take it back and think they've discovered something new. Why should we then tiptoe so carefully about it?' ('David Byrne', City Limits, 30 November 1984, p.79.)

- 32 Lysandros Pitharas, 'A Minor Form of Intimidation?', City Limits, 3 August 1984, p.8.

New York Police Assistant Superintendent Hank De Geneste, advisor on race relations to the American National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, visited London last year to exchange ideas on policing ethnic minority areas. At a press conference held during his visit, he reported that twenty per cent of the US police force are from the ethnic minority groups - Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Asian - and he stressed that 'if the police do not address the needs of a particular community then they will not be successful in their policing'. His advice to blacks was: 'If you want to change any system to address your needs you have to penetrate the system and work within it'. (John Henry, 'Where the Met is going Wrong - By Top US Cop', Westindian World, 14 November 1984, p. .)

- 33 Guardian, 28 November 1983, p.14.

No doubt the cartoonist intended to make fun of commonplace inconsistencies in 'cultural' attitudes, but any use of the term 'Paki-bashing' in a jokey or light-hearted context surely tends to give it a certain spurious legitimacy and apparent harmlessness.

Here is just one example of the reality: 'Mr Ganga Dharan, a 58-year-old man, ... was jumped on by two white youths and savagely beaten. As a result of the attack his jaw was fractured, both his arms were broken at the wrist (his left arm required an operation), his right ear required several stitches, his forehead was profusely swollen and blood clotted, both his knees were bruised, areas of his chest were bruised as a result of kicks and most of his teeth were kicked out ...'.

After quoting the above instance, Mike Coren observes that 'The number and intensity of individual attacks is quite appalling'. ('Living under Siege', London, New Statesman, 2 November 1984, p.13.)

In the letter the cartoon accompanied, Gerard Lemos writes: 'Without doubt we Asians want to live among people who speak our languages, with shops where we can buy our food and places in which we can worship. We have those needs in common with everyone else in Britain. ...

'... Integration with the Asian community, so far as most whites are concerned, goes no further than a takeaway tandoori after the pubs close. ...

'If public authorities continue to define their services by the patterns of life of the white majority that, de facto, is racial discrimination. ...'

Gerard Lemos also mentions that he had been 'Paki-bashed'. The police told him that this was 'common assault' and consequently they were unable to take any action. He quotes Roy Hattersley's remark that 'in a civilized society the different racial groups are not obliterated by whatever tribe is the numerically superior'. ('Endpiece', Guardian, 19 November 1983, p. .)

- 34 Idries Shah, A Veiled Gazelle. 'Seeing How to See', London, Octagon Press, 1978, p.35.
- 35 Sunday Times, , quoted in an Arts Council press release on 'The Image of Man', 5 May 1982.
- 36 In reviewing this exhibition, Sasthi Brata writes: 'On my second visit ... I began to get a curious feeling of alienation ...

'To grasp a wholly alien conception of "life" or "the Universe" requires not only an effort in linguistic and cultural translation, it may demand the understanding and acceptance of totally different sets of parameters. And to put five hundred pieces of painting and sculpture (however exquisite and ostensibly representative each individual exhibit may be) under one roof may be proclaiming an attitude and a perception which is precisely antithetic to the ethos of the culture those exhibits seek to portray.

'The very idea of an exhibition is a totally Western and un-Indian one An exhibition, any exhibition, anywhere in the world, which seeks to depict the totality of Indian culture is bound to be a partial fraud because each exhibit, snatched from its natural environment, becomes "a tinkling cymbal", drained of the euphony and potency of its associated myths. ...

'... the attempt at rendering the ethos of Indian culture within an occidental framework may negate essential elements of that very thing which is being projected. ... Facts, dates, even truth (of the legal and Western variety) are of little or no significance in the "Universe" which this exhibition seeks to portray.

'The repeated dissolution and reaffirmation of "form", the melting away of images and their relocation in a different guise, which so baffles the Western mind, in the manifold manifestation of deities, is a normal humdrum idea for the average Indian. Yet, paradoxically, the display of a stone phallus within a glass case would be wholly incomprehensible to the same person, who would find nothing remarkable in a god assuming several forms simultaneously and commuting large distances in time and space.

'There are other hurdles which this exhibition does not even attempt to cross. The word "religious" is always implicitly used as a contrapuntal foil to "secular" in Western discourse. In India, a similar use would be tediously tautological, since absolutely nothing is not "religious". Yet again, to describe "the amorous adventures" of Krishna, as both the audio-guide and the catalogue do, is to put a Western inflection where none exists in the original context. The Lord Krishna is expected to flirt with and seduce the Gopis; if he were to do anything else in their company, that would be unnatural. When he goes about his natural business, he is not being "amorous" in the way that word conjures up visions in the occidental mind of forbidden fruits and naughty deeds. He is just being himself.

'The organizers appear to have adopted a deliberately coy attitude in the sexual sphere, as I think there is only one exhibit ("Celestial Marriage") which shows a woman holding a man's penis. Though, admittedly, it is difficult to imagine what alternatives could be devised to show the power pervasiveness of the lingam and the yoni (the prick and the cunt) cults in India.

'When I recollect scenes of numerous marriageable virgins, anointing clay

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phallic figures under instruction from priests during Shiva puja, it is only with the hindsight of the Western "perception" that I realize that the girls were being trained to handle a penis with proper expertise and thus qualify themselves as desirable brides.

'Yet there were no sniggers among the observers when the pujas were performed either at the temple or in private houses. And it is wholly unlikely that either the instructors or their pupils considered the ceremonies to be lewd or lascivious. One has only to think of the possible News of the World headlines, if similar rituals were conducted in Roedean or at a Catholic convent, to discern the gulf between the two societies. ...

'... the Indian "perception of the Universe" does not lend itself to historic and analytic representation. It is primarily an "experience" for which there is no cultural or linguistic equivalent in the Western world'. ('The Indian Experience', London, Literary Review, May 1982, pp.31-2.)

Some two decades ago, Private Eye published the following item, presumably intended to be titilating and/or to indicate how incomprehensible are the ways of peoples living beyond the English Channel:

'The young ladies of Islamia College, Karachi, have been much embarrassed in the last few months by the presence of a naked man, aged twenty, who has taken to roaming around the Regal Bus Stop. Another naked man, this one aged some thirty-five years, has been roaming the Victoria Road in which the Regal is located. But above all Saddar Road is crowded with nude roamers, for here, in addition to four or five naked men, two women - one no more than nineteen - constantly roam nude.

'"Karachi must have at least a hundred nude roamers", said the Chief of Police. "In a city of some half-a-million souls, this strikes me as a reasonable figure. Let them roam where they will"'. (8 December 1967, p. .)

Everyone familiar with the Indian sub-continent will know that naked people are a commonplace everywhere, not only in the streets but using the public facilities, e.g., the trains, which the clothed, but not the naked, are required to pay to use. The totally naked are not 'streakers' defying convention and 'doing their own thing', as they would be here in England, but respected members of society going about their normal business. It is interesting to note that Indians are otherwise rather prim about complete nakedness in life and also that they consider the depiction of obviously sexually-oriented nudity in western classical art - and indeed, the 'reveal-just-about-everything' body-stockings worn by classical western dancers today which pay the merest lip service to modesty - lewd and obscene, with no redeeming features, however dressed-up in high-minded 'allegory' or 'symbolism' they may be.

37 An Exhibition of Music and Dance in Indian Art, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Festival Society and the Royal Scottish Museum, 1963, first page (unnumbered) of 'Guide to the Exhibition', or, alternatively, a very slightly different translation in V.K. Narayana Menon, The Indian Experience, Media Transasia Thailand Ltd, 1982, reprinted as 'Carnatic and Hindustani: Two Phases of the Music of India', Nadopasana One. An Approach to Indian Art and Criticism, edited by Muthusamy Varadarajan (on behalf of Nadabrahman), London, Editions Poetry London, 1983, p.43.

Walter Pater's comment regarding the absolute supremacy of music is well-known (was he aware, one wonders, of the place of music in the Hindu artistic continuum?). And Lord Ronaldshay had this to say of the inner relationship between music and painting: '(The) practice of weaving music and painting into a single composite whole provides us with a striking example of the intention claimed by the Indian for Indian art, namely, that of giving expression to the idea which lies behind the appearance of things - of making manifest the abstract; for it is, surely, ideas only and not objects, such as persons or things, that lend themselves to reproduction in two such different forms of artistic expression as music and painting'. (The Heart of Aryavarta, London, 1925, quoted by Ethel Rosenthal, The Story of Indian Music and Its Instruments, London, 1928, reprinted New Delhi, 1980, p.14.)

38 'Anarchy that Works', Sunday Times Magazine, 21 March 1982, p.36.

This article seems to me to be so illuminating about how art is understood and how it actually functions in the Indian sub-continent that I would like to quote further from it here:

'One of the great sitar maestros of India has described how as a young student he was taught by his guru to play the bhairav, the morning raga. The word raga loosely translated means mood, and the raga bhairav is a musical meditation played from the time before dawn to the time when the sun is fully risen.

'There are various interpretations of its origin. Mythology says the raga originated with the god Shiva when he broke his millenia of penances and recreated the world. A Hindu interpretation believes the bhairav is a musical version of one of the most powerful Hindu invocations - the Gayatri mantra - which seeks guidance from darkness to enlightenment. The non-Hindu interpretation views the raga as an expression of faith, celebrating the rebirth of each day as a rebirth of the spirit.

'The musician who plays it has to be conversant with the various aspirations it contains, because the actual raga is only a scale. A musician's performance of the morning raga - which would span at least a couple of hours - would be entirely improvisation, and his excellence defined by what he could do with a mere scale, a handful of notes.

'The sitar player's account of how he was taught to play this handful of notes is an illustration of how the Indian artist sees his art. He describes how he and his fellow pupils, all of them in their early teens and living with their guru, their teacher, would rise at 03 30 in the morning. By 04 30 they would be expected to be in their places in the courtyard of the guru's house.

'The guru would be waiting for them, sitting cross-legged on a takht, a broad muslin-covered mattress. On one side of the guru's takht would be a bronze oil-lamp which provided the only light in the otherwise dark courtyard. The pupils would sit before him on white sheets spread over the flagstones of the courtyard, their sitars balanced on their left shoulders, eager to prove themselves prodigies. The guru would ask the pupils, one by one, to play the first note of the raga. The pupils, believing this to be some kind of warming-up exercise happily complied. Then the guru would make them play the same note again.

'For three hours, every morning for a month, the guru would allow his students to play that one note only, teaching them to contain the entire raga in a single sound. Each month the guru allowed the students to add another note to their morning repertoire, until they understood that the guru was teaching them not music but how to meditate. It was eight months before the pupils were allowed to play the entire scale, and two years before the guru permitted the sitar maestro - his most gifted pupil - to perform the raga with his own variations and improvisations.

'In his account of that first performance the sitar maestro records that those punishing hours of stilling his own mind, of being forced to hear each note of the scale as if it were a primal sound, of having to concentrate on the transition from darkness to light day after day through the seasons of two whole years, had given him an understanding which was beyond himself or his talents. When he finally played the raga it was as though each note carried in it a musical constellation which he could reveal to the listener, a religious awareness he could teach his audience.

'Perhaps this is why the great Indian musicians are called Ustad or Pandit. The words mean teacher, and the aim of those musicians is not merely aesthetics but education and inspiration. The same purpose moved those who carved the stone sculptures, built the great temples or cast the bronzes in India's cultural past. The measure of their excellence is the fact that centuries later their art is still venerated in worship, not isolated by admiration.

'It is devoutly to be hoped that Indian culture continues to have a life

outside the limited world of museums and recording studios. If not, India is in trouble. ...

The author later looks at another area of relevance to our present study:

'While despising the philistine in us, I still find a fecundity in Indian decay that suggests the possibility of coming attractions. We smell more of the compost heap than of the graveyard, and our variations on traditional themes shows a real ingenuity in keeping the catalogues of anthropologists forever obsolescent.

'An anthropologist friend recently described to me a mass engagement ceremony he had attended in the desert area of Western India between the boys and girls of two nomadic tribes. About fifty boys were being affianced to fifty girls, the idea being that when the children reached maturity they would not have to race around the desert looking for suitable mates since they would, as a result of the engagement ceremony, be assured of a future domestic life. Naturally the ceremony required a great deal of personal ornamentation, and as the engagements took place at night, ornaments that glittered and shone were on display.

'In deference to the festivity of the occasion the parents wore the traditional jewellery which my friend had come to see, including globes of silver fastened to the head with thick, intricately-carved silver chains. But the children were clearly impatient with things that merely glistened. Where their fathers wore silver globes, the sons wore light-bulbs on their heads like the small bulbs hung on Christmas trees, wired to batteries attached to their belts. The girls were thrilled. The desert shone with lights of many colours. And my friend, the ethnic expert from the big city, realized how patronizing his own attitude was. Until that night he had thought of them not as people but as hangers for tribal artefacts.

'Today it is as well to remember that people are individuals as well as anthropological and economic statistics. The world has lived so long under the yoke of Malthusian projections that Indian humanity itself has become a dirty word, meaning only population explosions; and nothing is so damaging to India as the patronization of master-race economics with its real fear of the poor and therefore its unspoken but unmistakable view of the poor as sub-humans who must be forced to accommodate the logic of economics.'

But patronizing attitudes towards the arts of other cultures is one thing; deliberately setting out to destroy the culture of a people quite another. The most remarkable depiction of this process I know of is achieved more by the use of visual images than through words in The War of Pacification on the Amazon, a film directed by Yves Billon (France, 1976, 90 minutes).

An impressive artist's film that should not be overlooked in the context of examining current destructive white ethnocentric attitudes is Peter Kubelka's Unsere Afrikareise (Austria, 1961-6, 12 minutes).

39 Source untraced.

There is also the well-known, humorous but nevertheless seriously intended, answer to the western reporter who asked: 'Mr Gandhi, what do you think of western civilization?' Mahatma Gandhi: 'I think it would be a good idea!'

40 Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi' (1948), Bhavan's Journal, vol.30, no.5, Bombay, 1 October 1983, p.15.

41 'World in Action', ITV, 30 January 1978, quoted in Daily Mail, 31 January 1978, p.1.

In the past, 'English people commonly ascribed their supposed superiority to their "blood" or ancestry. Daniel Defoe lampooned this notion in his poem 'A True-born Englishman', which was published in 1701, and proved very popular, quickly running through numerous editions. Defoe wrote the poem in defence of King William of Orange, who was being criticized because he was Dutch. The preface began: "The intent of the satyr is pointed at the vanity of those who talk of their antiquity, and value themselves upon their pedigree, their ancient families, and being True Born whereas 'tis 1986

impossible we should be True Born; and if we could, should have lost by the bargain."

'In the poem, Defoe enquired into "old Britannia's youthful days", listing the diverse peoples who had settled in England:

"The Romans first with Julius Caesar came,
Including all the Nations of that Name,
Gauls, Greeks, and Lombards; and by Computation,
Auxiliaries or Slaves of ev'ry Nation.
With Hengist, Saxons; Danes with Sueno came,
In search of Plunder, not in search of Fame.
Scots, Picts and Irish from th'Hibernian Shore:
And Conqu'ring William brought the Normans o're.

"All these their Barb'rous Offspring left behind,
The Dregs of Armies, they of all Mankind;
Blended with Britains who before were here,
Of whom the Welsh ha'blest the Character.
From this Amphibious Ill-born Mob began
That vain ill-natur'd thing, an Englishman".

(Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975.)

'English vanity and arrogance grew as England fought off the competition from other European countries and became the world's leading trading nation, going on to industrialize rapidly. The key to England's prosperity was the trade with the colonies, and in particular the trade in African slaves.

'Initially, agricultural labour in the Caribbean was supplied by transported Europeans: deportees, convicts and indentured labourers were brought from Ireland, Scotland and England itself. But by the end of the seventeenth century the system of white labour was breaking down. The whites were generally freed after three to ten years, and given plots of land, but as the plantations swallowed up the available land, the "poor whites" were left destitute. Increasingly the planters turned to a new source of labour - slaves from Africa, who remained slaves for life. (See Eric Williams, From Columbus to Castro, London, André Deutsch, 1970; Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, London, André Deutsch, 1964; Roots of Racism and Patterns of Racism, London, Institute of Race Relations, 1982.)

'In the eighteenth century, the development of the plantations in the Caribbean and America prompted a huge growth in the slave trade, with some 60 000 Africans being carried across the Atlantic each year. England became the main European slaving nation, deriving enormous profits from the "triangular trade": manufactured goods were taken to Africa and exchanged for captured Africans, who were taken to the West Indies and exchanged for food and raw materials.

'The slaves, unlike slaves in earlier types of societies, had no rights at all and were treated as commodities. ... Olaudah Equiano, who was kidnapped from his home in Nigeria at the age of eleven and transported to the West Indies, and eventually became a leader of Britain's black community, recalled the terrible "middle passage" from Africa to the Caribbean: "I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to hear, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me. ...

"I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. ...

"This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying rendered the whole scene of horror almost inconceivable". (Quoted in The British Empire, vol.1, London, Orbis, 1979, pp. 98-9; see also Peter Fryer, Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain, London, Pluto Press, 1984, pp. 102-12.)

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'The Europeans justified their barbarous behaviour by turning logic on its head, arguing that they were "civilized" while the Africans were "savages". Early European visitors had been awed by the magnificence of the great African civilizations. When the Dutch visited the West African city of Benin at the start of the eighteenth century they recorded: "The town seems to be very great. When you enter into it, you go into a great broad street, not paved, which seems to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes street in Amsterdam. ...

"The king's palace is a collection of buildings which occupy as much space as the town of Harlem. ... There are numerous apartments for the Prince's ministers and fine galleries, most of which are as big as those on the Exchange at Amsterdam. They are supported by wooden pillars encased with copper, where their victories are depicted, and which are carefully kept very clean.

"The town is composed of thirty main streets, very straight and 120 feet wide, apart from an infinity of small intersecting streets. The houses are close to one another, arranged in good order. These people ... wash and scrub their houses so well that they are polished and shining like a looking-glass." (Source not given.) (Gill Biggs et al, Nothing but the Same Old Story. The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism, London, Information on Ireland, 1984, pp.40-2.)

The great civilizations of Asia, on the other hand, have been more fortunate in that they are still fundamentally intact, both as regards their ancient monuments and in their living practices, although they are also changing rapidly in what would seem to be no more than superficial ways - seemingly positive and useful ways in terms of intercultural dialogue, globally, if, for the time being, almost certainly outweighed in favour of the relatively new and relatively primitive culture of Europeans and those of European descent. The large numbers of Chinese and other Asians who were taken across the Pacific to the Americas in past centuries were not technically slaves, like their African counterparts, but clearly there was little advantage in this distinction in practice. Anthony Shang explains that 'Plantation owners contracted British merchants to procure "coolies". They, in turn, hired Chinese "brokers" (labour contractors) to recruit "coolies". Most of those recruited were prisoners captured in clan fights, victims of kidnapping, and persons with gambling debts. The "coolie" trade was as cruel as the earlier slave trade. The mortality rate was high on the packed ships'. (The Chinese in Britain, London, Batsford, 1984, p.6.)

For further reading, see David Brion Davis, Slavery and Human Progress, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.

For any whites - or blacks, for that matter - seriously interested in working out a practical way to return the world to some dreamed of state of racial and/or cultural 'purity', Ngata te Korou provides some basic facts that would need to be taken into consideration:

'My people are showing great interest in reports from England of the immigration debate at present taking place. Many of them react sympathetically to the determination of Mrs Thatcher not to let her own tribe lose its cultural values in a tidal wave of immigrants, although they seem surprised that the British should feel that less than five per cent of the population is a cause for concern.

'Perhaps it would comfort the British to know that we Maoris have managed to keep our language and some of our traditions alive in spite of being overwhelmed ten to one by British immigrants over the last 150 years - and in spite of a determined attack upon our culture by the immigrant majority which lasted for over a century.

'We also notice that elements of British political life wish to send back the immigrants from Asia and the Caribbean. This has given great heart to our own radical young. They claim that, thanks to the British passion for fair play, we can now expect concern for the cultural threat posed by immigrants to Britain to be matched by an equal concern for the threat posed by British immigrants to other cultures, such as our own.

'Should any future Conservative, Powellite, or National Front government succeed in repatriating immigrants, we will hope to return your emigrants to take up the vacancies. It so happens that we have almost exactly the same number of "cultural aliens" as Britain has "coloured immigrants" - about two million whites of predominantly British extraction. There seems to be no reason why the indigenous populations of other old Commonwealth countries should not expect likewise.

'This would mean that for every West Indian or Indian deported, we could send you, on a fair statistical basis, as replacements, one "pakeha" New Zealander, four Australians, four Canadians, half a South African white, part of a white Rhodesian, and no fewer than 50 American WASPs. It would take some time for you to absorb the extra 200 million people involved, but there is no reason why, if phased over a decent period (say a century) and with sensible birth control measures being taken, England should not be the exclusive home of those who speak English and live in the English manner.

'Others among us would prefer more moderate solutions to our immigrant problem - which is the problem of your emigrants. Such people would wish us to absorb what is good in other cultures, while preserving the good in our own. They say that the world is now too small for anyone to claim rights of ethnic homelands, as Hitler did. This, you must agree, shows great tolerance from those whose parents and grandparents were tricked by treaties, robbed by land grabs, ravaged by wars fought for even more land then evicted from what was left as a punishment for resisting the attacks, their children forced into schools in which their own language and cultural values were proscribed. In spite of that our moderates still dream of a world where any man can live wherever he likes.

'Our radicals on the other hand say that this is ridiculous and sentimental, and that we should accept that racism exists everywhere, and that everyone should go back to his own ancestral homeland as soon as possible.

'They too have a dream, a dream of the forest returning to cover the land which has been almost ruined by intensive and destructive methods of pastoral farming, a dream of the return to a proper balance with nature. Perhaps the day may come again when we can dig kumara, and harvest the fruits of forests, rivers, and the sea. They dream of the warm comradeship of family group and sub-tribe: of telling of ancient stories around the cooking fires, as the long Pacific waves thunder up on empty beaches. And never a single greedy, grasping, calculating, tricky white face to be seen anywhere.

'They are depending upon the success of Britain's ultra Right wing'. ('Keep Britain for the British. Only 200m to Absorb', Sunday Times, 19 March 1978, p. .)

- 42 'The Livingstone Race Remedy', Ken Livingstone interviewed by Arjum Wajid, The Voice, 28 August 1982, p.7.

What seems to be essential to the egalitarian, pluralist approach is that 'We must so modify elementary and secondary education that it prepares all our young people for life in the multicultural, multiracial world in which we now live. ... If the non-Western materials appear to be "additional" to the main content of the regular curriculum, this may further confirm children in their belief that any culture other than their own is somehow peripheral to true civilization, doing things in strange and backwards ways. Nothing could be worse than to underline the natural human assumption that anything different from one's own norms is for that very reason exotic or even "barbaric". (Edwin O. Reischauer, in his introduction to China: A Resource and Curriculum Guide, edited by Arlene Posner and Arne J. de Keijzer, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, p. .)

- 43 Emmons E. White, Appreciating India's Music, Boston, Crescendo Publishing Company, 1971, p.21.

See also Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's helpful introductory essay on 'Indian Music' in his book The Dance of Shiva (reprinted without acknowledgement to earlier edition(s), New Delhi, Sagar Publications, 1982, pp.87-99.

In a booklet published by the Arts Council to accompany the series of dance and music recitals relating to the museum exhibitions forming part of the Festival of India (1981-2), V.K. Narayana Menon gently reminds us that the music of India has a three-thousand-year-old recorded history. 'There is a popular misconception', he continues, 'that this three-thousand-year-old tradition represents an unchanging way of life and thought. This is not true. It really represents three millennia of struggle and growth during which dynasties rose and fell; religious faiths were accepted, absorbed and set aside; various schools of philosophic thought provided intellectual speculation of the highest sophistication; architecture and sculpture, music and the dance flourished in abundant measure. There have been, and there still are, islands of orthodoxy and primitive narrow concepts; and there have been periods of war and pestilence, despair alternating with triumph. But through it all runs a thread of continuity with a recognizable identity.

...
 'This music represents a great aural tradition, not an oral tradition as ethno-musicologists would call it. Music is an aural experience, not a shape on paper. At a time when Europe was groping for some means of putting down music on paper, and struggling with rudimentary attempts at harmony, India already had a sizeable library of treatises on music - on theory, practice, instruments, aesthetics, and, of course, on teaching and learning.

...
 'The gurus were aware of the fact that teaching in its widest sense implies not merely the transference of facts, techniques, the examples set by the teacher, but creating in the mind of the shishya the fullest awareness of the subject taught. Music has to be taught not only in its historical perspective and in the perspective of the other arts, but in terms of life itself. The musician's art was never thought of as a social accomplishment. ... Music was considered a yantra, an apparatus of worship'. ('The Guru-Shishya Relationship in the Learning of Music in India', Guru-Shishya Parampara: The Master-Disciple Tradition in Classical Indian Dance and Music, London, ACGB, 1982, pp.16-7 and 19.)

Regarding the experiential aspect, we should take account of Leela Floyd's warning that '... it needs to be pointed out that most of the music used in "multi-cultural" television programmes is not traditional or ethnic in a strict sense. ... There is clearly little understanding of what the musics of other cultures actually sound like. There is also a resistance against crossing the barrier of unfamiliarity which one encounters when hearing genuinely different music for the first time. A television producer was recently quoted as saying that the authentic Afghani music suggested by an ethno-musicologist for his film on Afghanistan could not be used because it sounded "too ethnic"! Such reactions are unfortunately not uncommon and they reveal yet another aspect of intolerance towards other cultures.' ('Ethnic Music and Media Education', Artrage, no.3/4, Summer 1983, p.39.)

44 Dennis Duerden, 'African Art Today', Contemporary African Art, London, Studio International, 1969, p.15.

REWRITE

It is of course always important to note both forced changes (which are therefore likely to be reversed in due course) and organic evolution within a culture. But if anyone wants to show solidarity and respect interculturally it is probably best not to try to be too subtle - and thus to avoid the risk of causing confusion rather than bringing about mutual ease. George Melly records an instance of what can go wrong if one aims for too much 'authenticity' in such circumstances in anthropological (and therefore usually at least just that little bit out-of-date) terms in recalling '... a film showing a group of politically-conscious Black American jazz musicians who visited Ghana dressed in "ethnic" robes and were received with rather chilly incomprehension, whereas Louis Armstrong, sweating it out in a dinner jacket, was given a rapturous welcome'. ('The Stamp-Cutter of Zaire', Quarto, March 1981, p. .)

But the expression of informed and sensitive respect across cultural boundaries certainly is important in helping to achieve the firm international basis essential for the establishment of a genuinely pluralist cultural structure worldwide. The establishing of such an internationally-orientated structure nationally within England, for example,

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would therefore, in effect, help both the English public as a whole directly in terms of the objects of the Arts Council's Charter and the peoples of other countries indirectly, especially in the Third World - thus possibly even providing modest support to the British Council in its role of making direct provision for the needs of other countries, especially the poorer ones, in such a way as to reflect well on this country.

Michael Manley describes the needs of the newly independent countries very graphically when he says that: 'Post-colonial societies must accomplish two things if they are to re-establish self-confidence and re-embark upon the process of self-discovery that is expressed by the evolution of a people's culture. They must rediscover the validity of their own culture at the moment of the colonial intervention and retrace the steps that had led through history to that point. And they must establish within a frame of reality the culture which colonialism imposed upon them so that this may loom neither larger nor smaller than it deserves and suffer from none of the distortions which can result from the ambivalence of a ruler-subject situation'. (The Politics of Change, London, , .)

- 45 Turning On, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p.285.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy informs us that:

'The master musicians of India are always represented as the pupils of a god, or as visiting the heaven-world to learn there the music of the spheres - that is to say, their knowledge springs from a source far within the surface of the empirical activity of the waking consciousness. In this connection it is explained why it is that human art must be studied, and may not be identified with the imitation of our everyday behaviour. When Shiva expounds the technique of the drama to Bharata - the famous author of the Natya Shastra - he declares that human art must be subject to law, because in man the inner and outer life are still in conflict. Man has not yet found Himself, but all his activity proceeds from a laborious working of the mind, and all his virtue is self-conscious. What we call our life is uncoordinated, and far from the harmony of art, which rises above good and evil.

'It is otherwise with the gods, whose every gesture immediately reflects the affections of the inner life. Art is an imitation of that perfect spontaneity - the identity of intuition and expression in those who are of the kingdom of heaven, which is within us. Thus it is that art is nearer to life than any fact can be; and Mr (W.B.) Yeats has reason when he says that Indian music, though its theory is elaborate and its technique so difficult, is not an art, but life itself'. (The Dance of Shiva, reprinted without acknowledgment to earlier edition(s), New Delhi, Sagar Publications, 1982, pp.97-8.)

- 46 London, Commonwealth Institute, 14 - 26 May 1984.

- 47 'MAAS National Conference', Artrage, no. 6, Spring 1984, p.29.

Tania Rose also notes that, 'Since the arts are never likely to be financially self-supporting, the character of the artistic life of the country is, inevitably, largely determined by the attitudes and expectations of funding bodies; in other words by the opinions of those who run them. So-called ethnic arts and artists, late-comers to the public-funding arena, are more vulnerable than other contestants to the vicissitudes of opinion. ...

'Speaking to a conference in the series "Arts Education in a Multi-Cultural Society" (jointly sponsored by the AQGB, the CRE and the Gulbenkian Foundation), David Wainwright, the Ethnic Music Adviser to the City of Manchester Education Authority, said: "... the dominant attitude in this country towards ethnic minority arts may be described as 'cultural imperialism': the belief not that 'our culture is best' but that 'ours is the only culture'". Moreover, in "our" culture the arts traditionally stand apart, practiced by the few for the few. This view of the arts is particularly inappropriate when applied to the arts of many non-European cultures'. (Notes for a Discussion on Some Implications of Cultural Pluralism in Britain, London, 1981, p. .)

An actual example of the type of problem that has to be resolved when non-white arts applications are received by non-black funding bodies may make the inadequacies of the present structuring of the latter clearer:

Not long ago, the Arts Council received an inquiry concerning the possibility of funding being made available to help meet the costs of producing an anthology of poetry by Urdu poets working in England. It was hoped that the Council would at least help with the cost of rendering the poems in Nastali'q calligraphy, so that they could be published in a form more appropriate than would be provided by standard printing type, calligraphy being an important Islamic art form.

How were we to deal with this application administratively?

Our Literature Department has the sole responsibility for considering poetry applications, but is not prepared to consider applications involving languages other than established standard English (the Welsh Arts Council deal with applications involving the Welsh language).

Our Art Department considers all applications to do with the fine arts, but calligraphy is categorized as a craft (in European practice) and funding it is therefore currently the exclusive responsibility of the Crafts Council. The Crafts Council, however, is prepared to look at calligraphy applications only if they are for one-off original work, thus excluding original work carried out specifically for reproduction in the more widely accessible form of printed books.

The basic problem here is that the present white arts-orientated institutional and inter-institutional structuring cannot in practice deal with most applications coming from the ethnic minority communities in anything like a straightforward, routine way.

48 'The Juggernaut', New Statesman, 23 April 1982, p.19.

49 V.K. Subramanian, 'Indian Art through the Ages', Bhavan's Journal, vol. 30, no. 1, Bombay, 1 August 1983, p.99.

But sometimes foreigners can be quite perceptive. Here is V.K. Narayana Menon's account of one of them: '... A French visitor to India said: "(India) arouses in me, in a quite metaphysical manner, a profound current of religiosity. The manner in which these people embody their myths, their rites, their religion in dance, music, rhythm, colours, perfume, and involve their body in it, in a kind of solemn and vigorous exuberance, gives me the idea of a sort of mutual dialectical exaltation between matter and mind. Here, the body is lived intellectually, and the spirit physically".

'An ancient tradition like this', the author continues, 'creates a sense of spiritual and physical well-being. It constitutes a renewal of the past in the present, a way of recalling the origins - whether mythical or historical - of the community of man. Current studies, as Professor Kwabena N'ketia has pointed out, have demonstrated that a careful analysis of sound ... can reveal cultural patterns, social values, national identities. Music, particularly the highly developed systems of ancient civilizations, has interdisciplinary values built into it. Included in inter-disciplinary emanations are "creative expressions in such movement, sound, in verbal and visual media identified with individuals, social groups and communities sharing common beliefs and common values".

'The early concepts of music gave it a special, a unique character, and a power greater than we credit it with today. In Greek, mousike, was used for all the arts of the Nine Muses. Musical education, for the Greeks, included a study of mathematics and of astronomy, of literature, and of the other arts. Music was valued as an important element in the formation of character. Relatively little attention was paid to such things as aesthetics. Our own concept of music was not dissimilar'. (The Indian Experience, Media Transasia Thailand Ltd, 1982, reprinted as 'The Music of India. Carnatic and Hindustani: Two Phases of the Music of India', Nadopasana One. An Approach to Indian Art and Criticism, edited by Muthusamy Varadarajan (on behalf of Nadabrahman), London, Editions Poetry London, 1983, pp.42-3.)

50 Source untraced.

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52 Tania Rose has drawn attention to '... the damaging effect of the label "ethnic minority art". Although it served its purpose as a term of convenience in the process of trying to make the establishment focus on what we were talking about, it is now becoming both counterproductive and harmful to the development of artists themselves.' ('The Redundant Label', London, Arts Alert, May 1981, p. .)

Naseem Khan, whose report, The Arts Britain Ignores. The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain (London, Community Relations Commission (since superseded by the Commission for Racial Equality), 1976), played a major role in raising consciousness generally about the heritage arts of the newly-settled communities in Britain, also now warns that 'by making a special case of ethnic arts, the GLC in particular has paradoxically succeeded in painting them into a corner where they have only each other to contend with for grants that, by the basic laws of life, are never large enough. It is not a healthy situation. The bureaucratic separation of arts and ethnic arts means, in addition, that there is less cross-fertilization or education of the mainstream. It was significant at the recent public meetings for a national arts lobby, for instance, that there were speakers on all sorts of art forms - and one for the ethnic arts. ... the position of an adjunct in arts funding is neither comfortable nor desirable; a special case under one administration can all too easily become an unspecial one under another. If there is moreover little informed support for them in the mainstream, then it is even easier. ...

'What I suspect it comes down to is access to power. Where in the arts funding structures are the black arts and leisure directors? Only one black regional arts officer is employed in a general arts area (as opposed to "ethnic arts") in the country at large. Where are the theatre managers and publishers, producers, entrepreneurs that enabled, for instance, Jewish immigrants to find their way into the mainstream entertainment industry? Without that sort of infrastructure, it is unrealistic to expect ethnic arts to flower.' ('Inside Out', New Statesman, 19 October 1984, p. .)

The recommendations in Naseem Khan's 1976 report (see above for full reference) addressed specifically to the Arts Council are as follows:

- (a) Co-opt members of ethnic minority communities both as voluntary advisers on committees to ensure knowledge of, and informed assessment of, ethnic minority cultural activities in the fields of music, literature, art, drama, dance, community arts and young peoples theatre, and as a general steering committee to give expert advice to ensure that applications are correctly directed to the most relevant departments;
- (b) Develop, through its Touring Department, in conjunction with regional arts associations, a tour circuit of less formal venues for dance and theatrical events likely to be relevant to ethnic minority communities as well as the host-community;
- (c) Fund theatre work for children in languages other than English;
- (d) Sponsor, in conjunction with the British Council and any other interested bodies, the visits here of foreign ensembles who could both broaden the general knowledge of different traditions and encourage work in this country from a similar background to develop;
- (e) Support, through its Community Arts Committee, the placing of artists from foreign ensembles with local groups working in a similar tradition for workshops or courses;
- (f) Support, through its Community Arts Committee, events such as steel band music festivals and young Asian music, song and dance festivals;

- (g) Fund the establishment and running of a black theatre company and training school that would: i) provide experience and opportunities at present lacking for black professional actors, ii) train interested young people with either amateur or professional aims, iii) run short courses for people working with community groups and needing more technical expertise or artistic stimulation, iv) tour to schools, civic theatres, arts centres and community venues;
- (h) Fund the establishment and running of a black dance company and training school broadly working towards the lines of the Greater London Arts Association's feasibility study of such a scheme;
- (i) Directly promote events like touring exhibitions that show the contribution to be made by artists working in Britain in different traditions;
- (j) Sponsor and fund poetry and literature workshops and the small presses to print it;
- (k) Encourage, through its Literature Department, the translation of poetry and prose written in languages other than English by members of British minority communities;
- (l) Fund the establishment, through Housing the Arts and as a second-stage development, of a central institute of Indian classical music and dance that would: i) train students, ii) serve as a source of teachers for schools, youth clubs, etc., iii) provide a base for visiting musicians to give recitals and/or workshops, iv) provide continuity and a standard of performance and instruction;
- (m) Fund the establishment, through Housing the Arts and as a second-stage development, of a central folk arts institute and regional ethnic arts centres that would provide a focus for initially Asian folk arts but ultimately all British ethnic minority folk arts.

53 It should also be noted that the arts-funding bodies presently seem to be overattentive to - even structured on - what are more properly scholarly or curatorial concerns of (artistically non-functional) classification. This results in rather rigid 'conservationalist' attitudes towards the 'product' surely more appropriate to museums, which have the overriding functions of preserving and classifying objects for easy retrieval and study, or to academic institutions, where, again, study and research rather than the promotion of artistic creativity and accessibility are the main aims, than to bodies charged primarily with the job of promoting and encouraging and, where necessary, financially supporting activities more directly essential to the development of and the provision of access to the living arts. Before an artistic activity can be 'recognized' by the Arts Council for funding purposes it has to be given a predetermined departmental/'art form' label - is it 'literature' or 'song' or 'poetry' or 'art' or 'dance' or 'photography' or - the latest absurdities (but nevertheless probably tentative probes in the right direction) - 'combined arts' (do not almost all the arts, such as Indonesian puppetry or Chinese or Italian opera or French or Russian ballet or Indian or Japanese dance-drama or Ghanaian or Zimbabwean or South African (Azanian) storytelling or blues or calypsonians or rock songs or Trinidadian or Swiss or English carnivals or pageants, already belong in this category?) or 'ethnic' (a shorthand term that tends to be defined by what it is not because there is no positive 'space' for it in the existing structure)? Only when a particular 'art form' department has 'won' the competition for possession of a particular 'problem' application do we ask: Is this art and, if so, how well does it work? But by then, as Kwesi Owusu has pointed out (see paragraph 39 above), the substance may have been butchered out of all recognition to make it fit an already existing category conceived for quite other purposes. (68)

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55 The Arts Council of Great Britain. Third Annual Report 1947 - 48, London, ACGB, 1948, p.19.

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57 The chartered objects, in their entirety, read:

- (a) To develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts;
- (b) To increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Great Britain; and
- (c) To co-operate with government departments, local authorities and other bodies to achieve these objects.

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60 Artistes such as Yoko Watanabe, Kiri te Kanawa, Jessye Norman, Seiji Ozawa and Zubin Mehta usually make well-publicized visits to this country, staying a few days and flying off again, in order to perform white-originated classical music, perhaps Italian or German grand opera, but if other 'black' artistes of comparable stature visit England equally briefly to perform non-white-originated classical music, maybe in the largely extemporized Hindustani or Carnatic or African classical modes (to mention only a very few of the vast range of possibilities), they would most likely come in, hardly noticed, through the back door, as it were - under the auspices of the VAU. This, one assumes, was not the original intention, but it is what is seen to happen - the primary heritage arts of the most recent English settlers treated at best as second-class and at worst as alien, whereas Russian opera or American ballet goes straight into the Royal Opera House or the Coliseum, accompanied by fanfares and the imprimatur of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

61 'A Staging Post for All the World', Guardian, 17 September 1984, p.11.

62 'The first thing the National Theatre director would do if sitting in the critic's chair', Guardian, 27 September 1984, p.14.

63 'Overseas yardstick that will help our theatre to grow', Guardian, 6 October 1984, p.14.

Sir Mervyn was, at that time, chair of the VAU.

64 The established western way of listening to classical music - where the musicians and the audience are strictly segregated, the latter at some distance from the artistes and occupying fixed seating, numbered and set out in military formal formation in straight, parallel rows, and with the proceedings following a predetermined programme controlled with factory-production-line precision, ending abruptly at a predetermined time - is not the only and certainly not the best way to listen to various other classical musics. Skilled artistes can of course perform adequately however adverse the conditions, but if they are to give of their very best - and especially where they are extemporizing rather than simply reproducing a pre-existing score (as is usual in the western mode) - the careful planning of a sensitive and responsive ambience can be particularly important. This is usually entirely overlooked by white promoters and administrators who apparently assume without pausing to think the matter through that the 'advanced' west has established how to do everything in the best way possible without the need to consult others who may do things differently with different goals in mind.

The roughly parallel arts of the various major world cultures cannot come together in England on anything like equal terms while this sort of unintended - and for the most part unnoticed - practical discrimination or avoidable 'handicapping' continues.

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66 One possibility that might be really interesting and useful aesthetically and socially would be to encourage the bringing together from the outset of

a project different artistic and other skills - the skills of, say, sculptors and dancer-choreographers and engineers and Daoist fengshui experts and actual construction workers on the design of perhaps a new underground rail-system which eventually would be used every day by hundreds of thousands of people, so that 'taking part' in the system could be a daily physical and aesthetic - and, perhaps, even spiritual - delight, comparable to some extent to the past publicly-shared everyday secular as well as strictly religious usages of Europe's often marvellously beautiful cathedrals (where the mason-artists made their contributions alongside the engineer-architects), rather than the usual, logistically poor, visually crude and insensitive public sector disasters we are so familiar with today, where artists are employed (if employed at all) only after the basic work has been done and the most they can contribute is literally to 'cover up' the built-in unsightliness and lack of form. Public transport systems and other public works could thus begin to move towards something much more like a real 'people's art', appropriate in a democracy, along the more socially integrated lines so impressively pioneered by Christo, for example, in relation to his own work (see paragraph 2 above).

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