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Officially Autonomous: Anglophone Literary Cultures and the State since 1945

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Abstract

Officially autonomous: Anglophone literary cultures and the state since 1945

This thesis examines the role of the modern democratic state as a sponsor of literature in the English-speaking world between 1945 and 2000. Working with, and modifying, Bourdieu's conception of the literary field, it considers the often paradoxical consequences of the state's shift from censor to guarantor in this period. Granting 'official autonomy' in this way had numerous unexpected and often fraught effects on the writers, readers and institutions that shaped the literary field. To keep this large subject firmly based on available historical evidence, this thesis considers a series of distinct 'moments' of state intervention through detailed case studies of three specific institutions: the international Congress for Cultural Freedom (1960-1968), the Arts Council of Great Britain (1960-1990), and the private examination boards that implemented the National Curriculum in the UK (1989-2000). In each case, it shows how these different but related moments, and the larger diachronic narrative of which they form a part, take place against a backdrop of interlinking historical and socio-political transformations, including the Cold War, decolonisation and multiculturalism.

Drawing on evidence in literary and other public archives, the thesis not only brings into view questions about the public status of literature in recent history, it shows how an understanding of the state's role enables us to think differently about the cultural consequences of modern democratic liberalism. The methodological emphasis it places on institutions challenges critical and popular orthodoxies, associated chiefly with the liberal tradition, which conventionally set the overbearingly powerful and monolithic state against the inescapably vulnerable but also courageous individual. The alternative picture that emerges reveals a world in which the actions of various individuals can be

understood partly via the institutional roles they perform, and institutions operate as sites that negotiate competing ideas of literature and literariness, and implement state power in variegated, diffuse and contested ways. Each of the case studies provides a different, though comparable, perspective on this larger picture. As such, the thesis opens up a nuanced way of analysing the interventions of writers, critics and reading communities, while also offering a differentiated approach to understanding the state and its evolution.

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List of Abbreviations

ATCAL	Association for the Teaching of Caribbean, African, Asian and Associated Literatures
AWS	African Writers Series
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
CCF	Congress for Cultural Freedom
CEMA	Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts
Crossings	The Crossings Project, Devon Curriculum Services
ERA	<i>Education Reform Act</i> 1988
<i>Glory</i>	<i>The Glory of the Garden</i> , Arts Council of Great Britain, 1984
IACF	International Association for Cultural Freedom
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NEAB	Northern Examinations and Assessment Board
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WATE	We Are The English

List of Illustrations

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Introduction

Officially autonomous? Anglophone literary cultures and the state since 1945

Prologue

This thesis is about the complex relationship between the state and culture, specifically literary culture, in the period after 1945 in the anglophone world. Typically this relationship is construed in terms that emphasise the power of the state to act on, and often thwart, the individual. This is perhaps most famously figured in the watching eyes of Big Brother in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1948). Early in the novel, we encounter the following characteristic scene:

For some reason the telescreen in the living-room was in an unusual position. Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where it could command the whole room, it was in the longer alcove in which Winston was now sitting, and which, when the flats had been built, had probably been intended to hold bookshelves. By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so far as sight went. He could be heard, of course, but so long as he stayed in his present position he could not be seen. It was partly the unusual geography of the room that had suggested to him the thing that he was now about to do.

But it had also been suggested by the book that he had just taken out of the drawer.¹

Orwell's surveillant third person narrative voice underscores the futility of Winston's attempt to exist 'outside' the 'range' of the telescreen, the technological embodiment of the state in the private space of its citizens. The state here is not only supervisory (on the verge of an omniscient 'command' of 'the whole room'), but actively impinges on the very 'thing' Winston is about to do, which is to write. Despite his strategic position

¹ Orwell 1972, 8–9. All future references are to this edition and these pages. Others appear parenthetically in the text.

beneath the telescreen, the sudden switch to ‘strident military music’ enacts an odd power of disremembering on Winston, who finds himself not only ‘to have lost the power of expressing himself’ but ‘what it was that he had originally intended to say’ at all. In Orwell’s vision, the possibility of literature as a special space of freedom from the state—signified by the receding alcove destined to hold bookshelves, and the ‘suggest[ion]’ of the ‘peculiarly beautiful’ notebook quietly removed from a drawer—is literally unthinkable. ‘Small clumsy letters’ meet the courage and imagination required for the ‘decisive act’ of writing, as the state (a ‘monstrous machine running without oil’) overshadows the ‘smallish, frail figure’ of a man tormented by the erratic itching of a varicose ulcer above the right ankle (10, 13, 5). Restaging the historical conditions in which literature acquired autonomy from state control through the liberalisation of the book trade, state over-determination of literary production and consumption is monitored by Big Brother’s disapproval of ‘dealing on the free market’. The ‘smooth creamy paper’ of Winston’s notebook—unmanufactured at least ‘forty years past’—belongs, crucially to an earlier era of cultural freedoms.

Orwell’s paranoid scene reflects classic anxieties about the state’s relationship to literature as an ‘alcove’ of supposedly pure freedom. For Orwell, writing in the political context of the mid-1940s, the commitment to ‘keep the spirit of liberalism alive’ was among the most pressing of a writer’s political obligations (1970a, 463). As he made clear in the 1946 essay ‘Some Thoughts on the Common Toad’, the state had no business interfering in his appreciation of the ‘unofficial’ natural world it deemed ‘politically reprehensible’; in this case, his desire to meditate on ‘the spawning of the toads’ (Orwell 1970b, 74; 73). In his view, ‘the earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it’ (Orwell 1970b, 175).

This thesis troubles this view of the state, contending that even in Orwell's time things were not so simple. The conspicuously negative relationship between the literary world and the state as 'the coldest of all cold monsters' mythologised in texts from Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), was also underpinned by a strong record of repression through the law and the courts, from the Victorian high moralism of the 1857 Obscene Publications Act to the curtailing of modernist literary freedoms.² Yet this does not preclude a more progressive dimension to its activities, especially in the years following the Second World War. That the state has also acted positively is evident not only in the private assistance available to writers through the Royal Literary Fund since the 1790s, but in the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, a statute passed by Parliament to protect literature.³ These complexities emerged in Orwell's own time and are especially evident in an institution with which he was directly involved: the BBC.

Founded in 1922, the BBC is exemplary of how the British state has acted as a guardian of literature and culture, and more particularly, how state planning effectively underwrote the development of 'a culture for democracy' (see LeMahieu 1988). Converted from a private company to a public service corporation commissioned by Royal Charter in 1927, the BBC was granted a monopoly over the supply of broadcasting media in which the "tithes" of license fee holders provided much-needed insulation from standardisation in the market for cultural production. The *Manchester Guardian* noted, for instance, that the 'only alternative to granting privileges [...] to private firms is that the State should do the work itself' (*The Manchester Guardian* 1922). Rationalised as the principal means of resisting the chaotic new commercialism of wireless culture as seen across the Atlantic, this structural intervention in an otherwise unfettered marketplace also benefitted the

² Friedrich Nietzsche quoted in Paulin 1992, 1.

³ I use the term 'positive' in the sense of positive over 'negative' liberties; the freedom to fulfil potential, as opposed to freedom from external restraint.

public image of critical disinterestedness the BBC sought to project. For the towering pedagogue John Reith, first Director-General, the prospect of putting path-breaking technologies to use for populist entertainments was unsatisfactory. Privileging elite ‘minorities’ as ‘very important sections of the community’ (Reith 1924, 151), Reith’s vision for the BBC constituted an Arnoldian mode of thinking that elevated free access above free choice and universalised all ‘that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement’ over the ‘faction[s]’ of class distinction (quoted in LeMahieu 1988, 146). The ideal for ‘culture’ as a means of self-development laid out by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) half a century prior resonated strongly with the BBC as it developed under Reith: ‘culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes [...] [i]t seeks to do away with the classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere’, where people ‘may use ideas [...] freely, [...] and not [be] bound by them’ (Arnold 1970a, 226). Worked out in the context of the BBC, a ‘commercial culture’, to use D.L. LeMahieu’s helpful shorthand, was pitted against a select if not also influential group of ‘cultivated elites’ (1988, 3).

Yet even in Arnold’s day there were visions of the state that were different. As a school inspector and educational bureaucrat, Arnold’s vision for the state as a ‘best self’ exceeded Orwell’s ideal of the ethical self of the writer ‘that stands aside’ (Orwell 1970a, 470). ‘[C]ulture suggests the idea of *the State*’, Arnold observed: ‘We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves, culture suggests one to us in our *best self*’ (1970a, 247). Arnold was hardly unaware of the widespread suspicions with which the state, given its ‘natural instinct of despotism’ (1970b, 99), was held in popular perception, and yet in his view it was the only authority capable of acting against the prevailing climate of ‘jealous classes, checks, and a deadlock’ (1970a, 247). His avowal of the state as a collective best self drew on a larger anti-liberal critique of individual freedom as the self-

interested pursuit of material gain. More particularly, it also depended on a view of culture as Hellenism over Hebraism, of ‘*spontaneity of consciousness*’ rather than ‘*strictness of conscience*’ (Arnold 1970a, 276). Though critiqued for his seeming authoritarianism, this call for the state to enable freedom of thought, creativity and intellect represented a considerable challenge to the orthodoxies of British liberalism as it stood at the time.⁴ Participating in the ‘ongoing and complex reconsideration of classical Liberalism in the late nineteenth century’, Arnold’s arguments perhaps even prefigured the social-democratic consensus, in which the transformed relationship between the state vis-à-vis its citizens conceded one of the central tenets of classical liberal thought—the limited role for the state in the lives of individuals—for the wider social goal of the public good (LeMahieu 1988, 138).

Recalling Arnold’s mid-Victorian arguments, this thesis challenges the deep-seated perception laid out by Orwell of the state as a wholly ‘negative’ force. Picking up on the specific historical moment of the post-war social democratic consensus—also to some extent, Orwell’s moment—in which the modern state increased its ‘positive’ involvement in the cultural field, it offers an account of the condition of ‘official autonomy’ that has effected and affected literary culture in the English-speaking world since the Second World War.⁵ In addressing how it was that the modern democratic state intervened to protect literature’s autonomy, and in what forms, it also necessarily asks what this has meant for public culture more generally as it too has changed. If the ostensibly egalitarian arrangement upholding the BBC belied fierce contestation over precisely whose

⁴ Edward Said deemed the alliance invoked by Arnold as ‘no accident’, but the material realisation of the ‘triumphant culture’ (1991, 10). Michael Gardiner has underscored how Arnold’s ‘disciplined aesthetic’—formal analysis—sited English Literature as a surrogate constitution for purposes of public order (2013, 54).

⁵ By ‘modern state’, I refer chiefly to the liberal or social democracies as they have evolved in parts of Euro-America in the mid-twentieth century, rather than authoritarian states. Characterised by relative legitimacy, monopoly over the means of violence, and an appeal to the civic community of the nation, the modern state mixes ‘representative democratic institutions [...] with certain civil liberties arranged within broadly privately-owned market economies’ (Pierson 1996, 59).

‘interests’ were being served, the changing ethnic and cultural composition of many modern democracies in the West following decolonisation also tested what this ‘public’ (or ‘publics’) might be, and who set the terms. The two coordinating poles of the thesis are, therefore, the modern state as a sponsor of literature, and the contested notion of the public it represents. This thesis considers how the state came to figure as a guardian of literature, and how literature came to occupy a public role in parts of the English-speaking world in the mid- to late-twentieth century, a period characterized by the postwar ‘settlement’, the end of Empire, the Cold War and state-instituted policies of multiculturalism. Situated within fields of twentieth century literary history, postcolonial literary scholarship, and the history of books and other media, this thesis seeks to contribute to the wider currents of debate about the socio-political conditions of literary production by examining the peculiarly ‘positive’ role the modern state has played in relation to literature, a topic that has received relatively little scholarly attention.

The enlarged set of responsibilities taken on by the welfare state (associated with reforms such as the budget of Sir Kingsley Wood in 1941, the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services in 1942, the 1944 Butler Act and 1944 Employment Policy White Paper) placed social interventionism firmly on the agenda of mainstream British politics, and bore out in the policies of successive governments until the mid-1970s.

Though the exact terms and extent of a post-war ‘consensus’ are the subject of historiographical debate, there is nonetheless widespread recognition that it was ended by Margaret Thatcher’s assumption of the role of Prime Minister in the 1979 General Election. The ‘clear break’ to the ‘discernible and significant continuit[y]’ of public policy bridging World War II and mid-1970s is exemplified for consensus historians such as Dennis Kavanagh and Peter Morris by the monetarist economic policies of Thatcherism

and the progressive unravelling of the state's interventionist role in the social lives of its citizens (1989, 14).

That the years of social democratic consensus also map on to Britain's retreat from the imperial stage and diminishing status as geopolitical power transferred to the US (as the Suez crisis in 1956 made clear all too publicly) has raised historical questions about how we relate decolonisation at the end of Empire to the apparent insularity (or 'melancholia') of 'English' metropolitan culture (see Gilroy 2005). What Randall Stevenson describes as an atmosphere of expectation about the 'continuing retreat from existing frontiers, rather than [...] experience of new ones' (2004, 13), and Joshua Esty (2004) has identified as the 'anthropological' turn in late modernism as it came to terms with its newly 'minor' status, Ashley Dawson has reframed in terms of the 'institutionalization of culture' in Britain (2013, 12). The 'halting establishment of the welfare state' in culture through the BBC, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the National Theatre represented, in his view, a 'pulling against' the otherwise 'centrifugal trends' in British public culture (Dawson 2013, 12). Dawson's revision of the 'minimal impact thesis' in cultural historiography of the post-war period usefully links the effects of welfare statism with the disaggregation of Empire at decolonisation (Ward 2001, 3).⁶ For Dawson, debates about what precisely a public culture should be at this stage in British cultural development—including how to 'preserve autonomy from the state' and 'remain responsive to the diverse constituencies that constituted Britishness'—were intimately bound up within the move toward centralization and national consolidation at the level of its cultural bodies (2013, 12). Indeed, the introduction of late and ex-colonial citizens from the Caribbean, South Asia and parts of sub-Saharan Africa into Britain—not least as a crucial part of the workforce—that discernably altered the demographic of many areas of Britain not only involved a shift from imperial hierarchy to multicultural

⁶ According to this idea, the welfare state was deployed to explain the relative ease with which the British public accepted the loss of Empire. Clearly, however, the two sets of circumstances are not so neatly and discursively divisible.

relativism. It also brought the notion of what ‘public’ was being served, and who decided, under greater scrutiny. This interior story relates also to the world history of the period: neither the history of the Cold War as it played out in both politics and culture, nor the varieties of state-backed multiculturalism that took root across liberal democracies in the West in the late twentieth century can be disassociated from the shaping of anglophone literary cultures between 1945 and 2000.

Method

Dawson’s assertion that ‘[l]iterature, after all, is not produced in a vacuum’ but is located instead between the conditions of the ‘mutating literary marketplace’ and those ‘public and private institutions established to support creativity’ finds its model (2013, 11), as does this thesis, in the deliberate engagement with institutions represented by the recent *Oxford English Literary History Series*. The following statement of intent included in Jonathan Bate’s General Editor’s Preface is a cue for the particular kind of literary historical work attempted in both.

Our primary aim is to explore the diverse purposes of literary activity and the varied mental worlds of writers and readers in the past. Particular attention is given to the institutions in which literary acts take place (educated communities, publishing networks, and so forth), the forms in which literary works are presented (traditions, genres, structural conventions), and the relationship between literature and broader historical continuities and transformations. (Bate 2004, viii)

The sensitivity Bate applies to institutions as sites of mediation and domains in which ‘literary acts take place’ emanates from a much longer line of criticism related to institutions of art. The institutional approach to aesthetics outlined by George Dickie (1974) and Arthur C. Danto (1999) since the late 1960s with a focus on the visual arts, in

which *avant-garde* Dadaism and Michel Duchamp are exemplars of the process by which the status of ‘art’ is conferred, has been enhanced by the ‘new institutionalism’ emerging in the political sciences in the 1980s (see March and Olsen 1984; 1989). Usefully though, Bate’s statement reminds us of the need for further enquiry to take in both demonstrably ‘literary’ institutions (publishers, agents, reviewers, prizes) *and* the ‘non literary’ bodies that have variously interacted with literature or ideas of literariness itself (the state or the market, national or supranational). Contextualising the state at the level of the institutions that act on its behalf may involve government departments, bodies in receipt of public funds, or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations acting at ‘arm’s length’, and offers a compelling way of conducting historical work that takes in the nature and extent of the literary field’s entanglement with the modern democratic state, from resource extraction and creation (VAT, the National Lottery) to the growth and retraction of government spending.

Though part of a longer tradition, the mode of institutional analysis I undertake in this thesis departs from the model established by Dickie and Danto in one main sense. Instead of approaching the institution of art, or the ‘artworld’ (a ‘bundle of systems’ that ‘furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of the status on objects within its domain’) as something isolated from others that also might also have a bearing on how a work of art is instituted (Dickie 1974, 33), this thesis demonstrates the complex intersections that have occurred within and between institutions in and outside of the literary world. This is not least because the modern state as it has evolved in Britain and perhaps also the United States is itself historically contingent, tending toward compartmentalisation and internal inconsistency rather than centralisation (as in France, for example). Such intersectionality is best illustrated in chapter two, which documents in part relations between the Arts Council and the Commission for Racial Equality as two

semi-autonomous state institutions operating at the peak of Margaret Thatcher's attempt to govern in the devolved state in the late 1980s.

The question of institutions takes us directly to the second larger context for this thesis: the surprising lack of emphasis on institutions in postcolonial literary scholarship and its dominant modes of analysis. Introducing *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Edward Said parodied the pervasive view of 'textuality' in the literary theory and criticism practised in the American academy in the 1970s and early 1980s. The literary text, he observed, was 'considered to take place, yes, but by the same token it does not take place anywhere or anytime in particular' (Said 1991, 4). It was 'produced, but by no one and at no time'. For Said the tendency in literary theory to (as he saw it) isolate texts from 'the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work', could be remedied by a more worldly form of analysis (Said 1991, 35). This would recognise how the literary text held 'ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in the circumstance, time, place, and society'. '[I]n short', he concluded, texts were 'in the world, and hence worldly'. He continued

My contention is that worldliness does not come and go; nor is it here and there in the apologetic and soupy way by which we often designate history, a euphemism in such cases for the impossibly vague notion that all things take place in time. [...] Whether a text is preserved or put aside for a period, whether it is on a library shelf or not, whether it is considered dangerous or not: these matters have to do with a text's being in the world, which is a more complicated matter than the private process of reading. (Said 1991, 35)

The Saidian notion of worldliness as seeking to 'affirm' the connection 'between texts and the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events' (even as it was attentive to the questions of power and resistance vital to a postcolonial critique) allows us to draw a link with the methods, questions, and practices grouped under the history of

the book (Said 1991, 5). Reflecting on Said's proposal for a 'secular' criticism that 'object[s]' to 'critical self-absorption' two years later in the 1985 Panizzi Lectures, D.F. McKenzie mapped out the possibilities for a method of bibliographical inquiry that would likewise bring human agency and complex social interrelationships to the fore of the study of texts (1999, 28).

By admitting history, we make [hermetic bibliography] secular. The two positions are not entirely opposed, for books themselves are the middle ground. [...] In the ubiquity and variety of its evidence, bibliography as a sociology of texts has an unrivalled power to resurrect authors in their own time, and their readers at any time. [...] One of its greatest strengths is the access it gives to social motives: by dealing with the facts of transmission and the material evidence of reception, it can make discoveries as distinct from inventing meanings. (McKenzie 1999, 29)

By aligning Said's postcolonial concerns with the techniques McKenzie's 'sociology of texts' offers for unearthing 'material evidence' of the text as it had circulated in the public sphere, we draw closer to a worldly mode of book historical criticism in which not only the 'book' itself but perhaps even the space in which it moves can act as the 'middle ground'.⁷ With its traditional strengths in close textual reading rather than material or sociological questions of the book, postcolonial literary scholarship can benefit from empirical analyses which bring rich seams of archival evidence and documentation to bear on both familiar and less familiar writers, texts, and contexts. The worldly study of institutions within postcolonial studies would make it possible to expand the existing critical emphases that cover, for instance, interpretative strategies designed to excavate repression and resistance textually, or apply the theoretical concepts of a select group of eminent practitioners. Valuable as these well-established approaches are, a worldly and empirically "thick" understanding of specific literary and non-literary institutions as they

⁷ This may involve asking how literary works take on new forms and meanings through the institutions that authorise or enable them, as McKenzie demonstrates in the case of Congreve (see van der Vlies 2004; van der Vlies 2007); through transnational processes of cultural translation (see Hofmeyr 2004); as writers engage self-consciously with their own position in the literary marketplace (Brouillette 2007); or as interpretive communities negotiate different privileged modes of reading (see Sandwith 2014).

have interacted with and mediated literature may add a fresh dimension to their place in the postcolonial world.

The considerable advances made in this direction by a small number of scholars further underscores the timeliness of research into the state's 'positive' role. Heeding Bate's call, Peter J. Kalliney's *Commonwealth of letters: British literary culture and the emergence of postcolonial aesthetics* (2013) places mid-century cultural institutions as central to the construction of postcolonial aesthetics during late modernism. Documenting how the principle of autonomy motivated the numerous cross-racial professional relations, collaborations, and competitions conducted through the BBC's *Third Programme* and metropolitan publishers such as Faber, Kalliney's work followed on from Lawrence Rainey's revisionist account of the 'intervient institutions' mediating modernism in the public sphere (1998, 4). Despite the impressive headway made on the manifold ways in which the market has acted on the creation, circulation and reception of literature—for instance, the detailed studies on the book trade and developments in global literary publishing by Claire Squires (2007), Sarah Brouillette (2007), John Thompson (2010) and Chin-Tao Wu (2002)—comparatively little has been done to address the question of the state in positive forms that differ from explicit or implicit censorship. The centrifugal categories contained in Robert Darnton's communications circuit (specifically, 'Political and Legal Sanctions' and 'Economic and Social Conjecture') fail to accommodate the subtleties of the state's role, even as his recent comparative history of censorship recognises 'the problem of the state' in 'the shaping of literature itself as a force at work throughout the social order' (2014, 20; see 1982). As Brouillette has recently argued, bringing the study of institutions to postcolonial studies addresses this 'absence of reference to [...] local and international government' in existing models of book history, including the associated risk of naturalising a model of the book trade unencumbered by state

regulation (2014, 37). Further still, Peter D. McDonald has pointed out how in the context of modern Western democracies this would need to incorporate ‘the historical connections between the emergence of a relatively autonomous “Republic of Letters” and general democratic values’, including the ‘ways in which states have expressed a particular interest in literature as a mode of public discourse’ (2006, 225).

It is this lack of an adequate critical framework to account for the ‘positive’ dimension of the state’s activities in recent history—a condition summed up in the phrase, ‘officially autonomous’, something that falls somewhere between direct patronage and a heavily mediated economic or symbolic support—that prompts us to turn to the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, notably his concept of the literary ‘field’. Before proceeding however, it is important to emphasise that in advocating study of the state’s ‘positive’ role I do not intend to revise the historical record of its excesses through monopolising the means of violence. To do so would miss the central point: the deciding role the state has played in shaping literary culture and the space in which it exists. Similarly, that both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ kinds of activity ran parallel via different transnational agencies also highlights the paradoxical role of the modern state in this period, and its internal inconsistency. Finally, though the focus on the modern state is in some cases national—for instance in chapters 2 and 3—this does not preclude a more transnational dimension to its activities, as chapter 1 advances.

In one of the most sophisticated theoretical lenses through which to view the economic, social, and political conditions under which ‘universal art’ is produced and naturalised, the creation of literary value, and the competing operations of different agents within a particular social world, Bourdieu posits the literary field as a ‘world apart, subject to its own laws’ (1996, 48). Summarised briefly, the literary field refers principally to the historic point in the second half of the nineteenth century at which the literary world in

France attained a sufficiently high degree of autonomy for literary activity to become independent from external constraints, thus claiming the ‘right to define for itself the principles of its legitimacy’ (Bourdieu 1996, 61). Populated by agents competing for dominant positions in the field (mediated through the quantity and distribution of economic or symbolic capital), the field of cultural production is relatively autonomous to the extent that the principle of external hierarchisation (measured according to commercial success or social recognition) is subordinate to the principle of internal hierarchisation (the ‘specific consecration’ from artists and peers who ‘make no concessions’ to the demands of a ‘general public’) (Bourdieu 1996, 217). As Bourdieu explains in the following passage from *The Rules of Art* (1992), the ‘producer of the *value of the work of art* is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief’, which produces ‘belief in the creative power of the artist’ (1996, 229).

Given that the work of art does not exist as a symbolic object endowed with value unless it is known and recognized – that is to say, socially instituted as a work of art by spectators endowed with the aesthetic disposition and competence necessary to know it and recognize it as such – the science of works takes as object not only the material production of the work but also the production of the value of the work or, what amounts to the same thing, of the belief in the value of the work. (Bourdieu 1996, 229)

An analysis of the field of cultural production at a given point must ‘take into account not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.), but also the ensemble of agents and institutions which participate in the production of the value of the work’ by producing belief in its ‘distinctive value’. An analysis of the British literary field in the latter half of the twentieth century would, for instance, naturally recognise how the Arts Council of Great Britain has operated as one of the premier distributors of the ‘consecration’ Bourdieu describes. Whether the fate of Fiona Pitt-Kethley, a feminist poet with a heightened awareness of the (economic and symbolic) value of the capital bestowed upon writers through its bursaries, falls on the side of the

‘provisional failure of the “cursed artist”’ or is simply the ‘naked failure of the unsuccessful’, is discussed in greater detail in chapter two (Bourdieu 1996, 219). Yet what makes the question of the state’s involvement in underwriting literary autonomy particularly significant theoretically is the fact that it is not dealt with in any substantive way in Bourdieu’s model. For though he recognises forms of government as agents or authorities (alongside ‘critics, art historians, publishers, gallery directors, dealers, museum curators, patrons, collectors, members of instances of consecration’) that participate in ‘matters of art’ and act on the field through consecration or regulation, the role of the state in somehow structuring the literary field to restrain the effects of the market or politics warrants further analysis than Bourdieu himself provides (Bourdieu 1996, 229).

Extending the time frame of Bourdieu’s original project to the period following the Second World War in France, Gisèle Sapiro has demonstrated how literary activity—positioned between the ‘ideological’ constraints of ‘authoritarian socio-political configurations’ and the mercantile limitations of ‘ultra-liberal configurations’ of the book market—has benefitted from the intervention of the modern French state (2003, 461). The state, she argues, ‘progressively became committed to helping literary activities preserve a certain degree of autonomy from the market’ (Sapiro 2003, 441). While the liberalisation of the book market in the nineteenth century aided the French literary field to become autonomous from state supervision, Sapiro’s work identifies how, ironically, the state also became ‘an instrument for saving the rights and freedom of creation from the merciless sanction of the market and the risks of the cultural producers of being exploited’ (2003, 457).



Figure 1. Front cover of *Poetry Review*

This thesis addresses how the state was implicated in the construction, shaping, and debating of anglophone literary cultures between 1945 and 2000, is guided by her example, and the urging that ‘the consequences of these different socio-economic and political configurations [...] deserve to be investigated thoroughly’ (Sapiro 2003, 461). Yet while the protections offered by the French state to writers at risk of market ‘exploitation’ are for Sapiro exemplified by author’s right and the sponsorship of writers, in the British national context the clearest example of the state’s ‘positive’ involvement has been in the official protection granted to poetry, a literary form with high symbolic capital, and low commercial audience.⁸ As the image featured on the cover of a 1992 issue of *Poetry Review* of an Arts Council crane propping up ‘subsidised press house’ (see figure 1) explicitly suggests, the British state’s consistent advocacy of poetry’s high cultural value has brought with it longstanding issues of financial dependency.

Coterminous with the conceptual, temporal, geographic and linguistic widening of Bourdieu’s theoretical frame—evident in the essays collected in the *Paragraph* special issue on ‘Bourdieu and the Literary Field’ in 2012, for instance—an application of Bourdieu’s concept of the field that extends to the state’s ‘positive’ underwriting of literary and cultural autonomy would involve examining the predicament in which state intervention is rationalised on the basis of providing for cultural or literary ‘goods’ otherwise unforthcoming from the market, even as it is forced to justify this appeal to as broad a public as possible.

Though the question of the state exists somewhat in the wings of Bourdieu’s theory, the underlying paradox whereby creators look to the state as guardian of their autonomy is made explicit by the overtly political posture Bourdieu adopts in the postscript of *The Rules of Art*. In ‘For a Corporatism of the Universal’, he calls for an even greater role for the state against the ‘merciless sanctions’ and ‘risk[s]’ of the market: the

⁸ State support for author’s right and the subsidy of literature at the point of production do carry across to the British context though. Both have been policies of the Arts Council of Great Britain since the 1960s, for instance.

mobilization of a ‘veritable *Internationale of intellectuals*’ to defend ‘the autonomy of the universes of cultural production’ from the ‘increasingly greater interpenetration between the world of art, and the world of money’ (Bourdieu 1996, 344). The complexities and even ironies of Bourdieu’s adoption of a normative position by channelling his knowledge of the field to devise a ‘*realistic programme for the collective action of individuals*’ were not lost on him (1996, 339 italics original). In the published transcript of his conversation with the German visual artist Hans Haacke, *Libre-Echange* (1994)—published and subsequently translated thanks to the French Ministry of Culture—Bourdieu insisted that increased state intervention for autonomous culture ‘must work simultaneously’ with a general wariness about literature’s status as an ‘object of dependency’. ‘[W]ithout scruples or a guilty conscience’ intellectuals ought to increase the state’s role as guardian whilst maintaining ‘vigilance’ over its ‘influence’ (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 72).⁹

[T]he exceptions to the law of the market made possible by the action of the state, which alone is in a position to assure the existence of a culture without a market. We cannot leave cultural production to the risks of the marketplace or the whims of a wealthy patron. (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 69)

Bourdieu’s argument for the state is rehearsed implicitly and explicitly across the different chapters that follow. Es’kia Mphahlele’s pragmatic defence of the African literary initiatives covertly funded by the CIA through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, for example, struck a similar note to Bourdieu’s support for statism ‘without scruples or a guilty conscience’ (Mphahlele 1967). ‘Yes the CIA stinks’, he wrote, ‘[b]ut it is dishonest to pretend that the value of what has been thus achieved is morally tainted’. Yet the ‘antinomy’ of a state-sponsored literary culture also presents unanswered questions (Bourdieu and Haacke 1995, 71). John Speller speculates that persuading the

⁹ Brouillette’s claim that Anglo-American anti-statism in UNESCO protected a favourable global imbalance in the distribution of media resources illustrates Bourdieu’s point (2014). ‘It is only by reinforcing [...] state assistance [...] that we can practically escape the alternative of statism and liberalism in which the ideologues of liberalism want to enclose us’ (1995, 73).

state to voluntarily ‘relinquish control’ or distribute public funds toward ‘minority – and elite – interests, such as avant-garde literature’ may reasonably be thought of as just as difficult as ‘convinc[ing] the commercial pole of literary production to hand back market share to independent bookshops and publishers’ (2011, 181). Likewise, Bourdieu’s response to the problem of elitism—defending the exclusive conditions of restricted art on the basis that it be disseminated democratically to as wide a public as possible—was not dissimilar to the stance adopted by the Arts Council at its liberal peak in the mid-1960s in justifying public expenditure on elite cultural interests.

The prospect of apparently ‘externalising’ modes of literary analysis, typically associated with Bourdieu, generates certain anxieties within literary studies about the neglect of the ‘internal’ qualities of the text. This thesis aims to meet this challenge in two main ways. Firstly, it applies strategies of close reading both ‘externally’ and ‘internally’ to documents from the archive as well as conspicuously ‘literary’ texts and their uses, for instance, Rudyard Kipling’s poem ‘The Glory of the Garden’ in the context of Arts Council policy. Secondly, where possible it pays attention to the performative meaning of the term ‘institutions’, in the sense of ‘instituting’ something. This secondary connotation not only reminds us of the ways in which literary texts are inducted into a certain order or way of behaving privately and publicly, but also how writing—itself a certain kind of act—may cause the text to evade, exceed, or somehow turn back on the institutions on which it nonetheless depends. The potential for acts of writing to exceed their institutional context through bypassing the terms of their protectors and promoters is displayed most clearly in Daljit Nagra’s poem ‘Kabba Questions the Ontology of Representation... the Catch 22 for “Black” Writers’ discussed in chapter 3. Stepping back to reflect critically on the conditions of his production, circulation and dissemination as a poet within the regimes of educational anthologies and the categories of literature and identity they

institute, Nagra's poem demonstrates the demands literary texts place upon us to move beyond straightforward formulations of the 'internal' and 'external' as critical readers (see Gilmour 2014).

In seeking to address how literary cultures in English were shaped in the post-war world, this thesis asks who or what shaped them, and examines the institutional forms of state protection, support or sponsorship given to the literary field. It deliberately emphasises collective institutional agency thereby avoiding generalising references to 'the state' as a homogeneous, consistent or internally coherent entity on the one hand, and too great a focus on individuals as divorced from the larger forces that enable literature to exist on the other. This thesis unpicks the binary notion of 'monolithic state' versus 'individual artist' in critical discourse, as pointed out by the editors of the 2008 Special Issue of *Contemporary Literature* on 'Contemporary Literature and the State' (Hart and Hansen 2008, 494). It does not do this as they do, by treating the state as a literary theme or an analytical 'container' through which texts might be read, but goes beyond these approaches to ask what the re-configured relationship between literature and the post-war state means, and has meant, for the literary field in its very structure.

The institutional analysis of the state's positive involvement in the literary field performed here is principally concerned with the financial, material and human resources that make literary sponsorship materially possible, and the ideas or perceptions of literature and literariness—what literature is, and what it can do—instrumental in guiding it. It does this by ascertaining how state-backed institutions have understood and interpreted literature (for instance as a means of intellectual resistance, a 'canon' of texts, or a form of public discourse) and how they have rationalised or conceived of a role for themselves in relation to it. It takes a view of the literary world as a significant element of the political public sphere, as outlined by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural*

Transformation of the Public Sphere (1989). Equally, in the attention it pays to the crises, complications, and contestations that have occurred as the state engages with the literary field and an increasingly diverse ‘public’ or ‘publics’, it builds on Pascale Casanova’s critical discussion of literary purity and the ‘peaceful internationalism’ that supposedly characterizes cultural relations abroad in the world of letters (2004, 43). Indeed, the case studies in this thesis actually show how the agency of state-backed institutions was equally authorizing and concessionary, as bound toward bureaucratic compromise as to unequivocal ideological commitment, and continually negotiating the unlikely, ironic or fraught consequences for writers, readers, and the institution of literature itself.

Archives

In tracing the pursuit of autonomy via the state this method requires us to look to the archive to determine the inner workings of specific institutions. Though critics such as Dawson voice a similar perspective on the complex interrelationships between writers, the market and state institutions in *The Routledge Concise History of Twentieth-Century British Literature* (2013), his conclusions do not evolve from first hand archival research. Despite its otherwise sensitive use of literary archives, the public archive is also unrepresented in Kalliney’s study (2013). Archival labour is, then, a direct effect of this method of the institutional analysis of literature and one of the main sources of its originality.¹⁰ It has necessitated close work in three main archives: the papers of the International Association for Cultural Freedom at the Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, the records of the Arts Council of Great Britain at the Victoria and Albert

¹⁰ James Smith’s 2012 monograph on MI5 surveillance of British writers also attests to the archival work to be done as previously restricted files are released annually into the public domain (see Smith 2012).

Museum's Blythe House in Kensington and the headquarters of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance at the University of Surrey. To illustrate what this has entailed—namely the extent to which sources of public record exist beyond the ostensibly available archive, and the degree to which attempts to open up the official archive within literary studies involves anomalies as well as opportunities—I offer two brief examples, the first from chapter 2 on the Arts Council and the second from chapter 3 on GCSE English in the National Curriculum.

I was prompted to visit the Arts Council archive by a passing reference in the 1989/1990 Annual Report to the legal challenge one writer mounted against the Literature Department. It soon became clear that the task of locating evidence related to these events would be more of a challenge than the 'public' nature of the official archive seemed to suggest. I had to navigate a vast catalogue in which the relevant files, when found buried in a seemingly bottomless list of 'Miscellaneous' items, were restricted under the Data Protection Act. I was then redirected to the particular court in question: Westminster County Court, now Central London County Court, which reported that all records from 1989 no longer existed, and even to the legal practitioners involved (both unable or unwilling to recall the particularities of the case). Here the archival trace forked into two directions: the private papers of the relatively obscure prosecuting writer at Pennsylvania State University Library, and the opportunity to appeal the decision to restrict the papers under Data Protection legislation. The success of both courses (the Arts Council files were released to me following an internal review into the interpretation of the Data Protection guidelines), generated a generous supply of committee minutes, court documents, legal correspondence and expert testimonies (including those by prominent figures in the British literary world of the 1980s), making it possible to tell the story of *Fiona Pitt-Kethley vs. the Arts Council of Great Britain* (1989), a test case of the

1976 Race Relations Act, for the first time.¹¹ For though Bruce King's book in the *Oxford English Literary History* series covers these transformations in Arts Council policy (specifically the strategic decision to appoint 'experts' Alastair Niven and David Dabydeen) it stops short of what these appointments gave rise to in terms of a positive action policy favouring ethnic minority writers (see King 2004, 13:126). The discussion of the Pitt-Kethley case contained in Phillipa Ireland's unpublished doctoral thesis does not benefit from the full extent of the material now available through appeal (2010, 131–140). This new evidence makes it possible to situate this otherwise eccentric narrative alongside the wider conflicts surrounding the state's attempt to sponsor the category of black British writing emerging in the late 1980s. As Lawrence Rainey makes clear, stories from the archive '*are* analysis – by other means' (1998, 9).

The markedly different response I received to an earlier online Freedom of Information request querying the larger policy behind the case (in this instance, a two-year quota for the sponsorship of African, Asian and Caribbean writers) also lent insight into the contestations that might lie behind the official response. The Arts Council's reply, which claimed that it had 'never advocated' a proportional representation approach (attempts to do so would have 'breached [...] equality legislation' as well as the principle of funding on the basis of 'artistic merit') gestured to the kinds of amnesia that circulate in public and other institutions.¹² It also illustrated how Freedom of Information, while a remarkable facility for researchers in the UK, might also stage the limitations of transparency and public accountability.

The process of uncovering the practices of present day examination boards

¹¹ This archival narrative illustrates the salience of Achille Mbembe's description of the state archive as the 'withdrawal into secrecy or "closing"', but also puts pressure on his claim that the trace 'ceases to belong to its author, in order to become the property of society at large' where 'anyone can claim access to its content' (2002, 20).

¹² 'We have never advocated that a percentage of funding be allocated to black or minority ethnic artists or arts. Apart from anything else this would have probably breached the equality legislation that was in place at that time. We also hold the view that funding of the arts should be done on artistic merit and not on a proportional representation basis. The Arts Council's real body of work on diversity and equality began in 2004' (Arts Council England and Rogers 2013).

responding to curricular change, which goes to the heart of chapter 3 on GCSE English, also presented its challenges. Compared to the vast supply of papers available through the Department for Education's holdings at the National Archives at Kew, the extremely restricted 'archive' at AQA raised larger ethical questions about the archival status of private companies heavily dependent on the national education system. Informal educational networks were particularly vital in offering insight into the literary and pedagogical outlook of examination boards, given the absence of available written records on how the examination board went about judging materials for its popular school anthologies, and the notoriously diffuse and ephemeral nature of educational materials located in school English cupboards rather than copyright libraries. These networks included the existing Chief Examiner for AQA Tony Childs, former English adviser for Devon Curriculum Services Martin Phillips, and the good luck of chancing upon poets Simon Armitage and Daljit Nagra, both anthologised under current GCSE specifications.

Structure

The thesis comprises three chapter-length case studies, each of which takes as its focus a state-backed institution as it operated in the English-language literary field between 1945 and 2000. In order of discussion these are the international Congress for Cultural Freedom (1960-1968), the Arts Council of Great Britain (1960-1990), and the private examination boards which implemented the National Curriculum in the UK (1989-2000). Addressing the historical phenomena of the state's intervention selectively and illustratively rather than comprehensively, to keep this large subject firmly based on available historical evidence and to make it manageable as a doctoral project, these case

studies capture a series of demonstrative ‘moments’ in the recent history of a state-sponsored literature and literary culture in English. They focus on the ironies, complexities, and subversions as state institutions interact with the literary world, and as literary works circulate, are mediated and received in the public sphere. In addition to the chosen method of analysis and approach, the particular choices behind these case studies also constitute a point of originality.

The subject of chapter 1, the literary activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s, capitalizes on the increasing critical awareness about the CCF’s role in shaping world literatures and literary cultures during the Cold War. Responding in part to what Orwell described in 1948 as the ‘prevailing intellectual atmosphere’ to ‘keep the spirit of liberalism alive’ (1970a, 463), it presents the CCF as a voluntary cultural organisation committed to exporting a Euro-American model of liberalism to the ‘underdeveloped world’, and parts of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa especially. The CCF’s desire to develop sophisticated literary and intellectual cultures capable of resisting global communism meant that it became, with the aid of funds covertly furnished from the American state via the C.I.A., one of the most significant supporters of anglophone African writing at the time of independence. The choice to begin with the CCF in answering the question of the state’s role with regard to autonomous literary culture rests on three premises. Firstly by foregrounding the transnational, rather than purely national, dimension to the state’s activities in the period, it represents a deliberate attempt to emphasise how the state’s involvement is a much larger phenomenon than just the British welfare state, and one in which the state did not always act within its own borders. It highlights the paradoxes of the liberal state, therefore: the vision for intellectual, artistic and literary cultures *outside* the state became, however disputably, nonetheless entangled with it. Secondly, it seeks to emphasise how

the decolonising moment that followed the end of the Second World War was also one intimately overlaid by the Cold War, and to place the two in conjunction with one another as contemporaneous forces in the creation, circulation, and reception of literary writing in the 1960s and beyond as critics such as Andrew N. Rubin have also done (2012).¹³ Finally, it serves a structural goal. By first examining the ways in which the post-war liberal Euro-American vision translated (or failed to translate) abroad, specifically in Africa, the following two chapters can better address what happened when that vision of ‘Africa’ (or the ‘world’) came to Britain, creating a multicultural society.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how the vision of cultural sponsorship envisaged by the CCF as located outside the state was consonant with the invention of the Arts Council *within* the welfare state in Britain. An unorthodox choice compared to the BBC perhaps, the Arts Council embodied the paradox of a state-supported cultural body at its most acute. Funded directly through taxation (rather than state-sanctioned monopoly) and yet acting at ‘arm’s length’ from government, the difficulty of the Arts Council’s position as both deeply dependent and officially independent bore out in its literature policies. Thanks to an elite coterie of leftist, late modernist intellectuals (some, like Stephen Spender concurrently affiliated with the CCF via its influential literary monthly *Encounter*) the state’s belated interest in protecting poetry was extended toward literature more generally, and yet its dual mandate to offer “the best to the most” came under increasing pressure as Britain’s increased ethnic diversity gave rise to fierce cultural politics. Focusing on a series of fraught events in the late 1980s, the chapter tracks how literary culture came to be viewed as a desirable form of a multicultural public culture, against a backdrop of the unravelling of the postwar consensus, in which the neoliberal guardians of the Arts Council disavowed state responsibilities to literature. Using newly available

¹³ Though the Cold War is underplayed as a factor in postcolonial literary scholarship on the whole, recent works by Andrew N. Rubin and a forthcoming article by Peter J. Kalliney on African literary modernism in the Cold War suggest this is changing.

materials from the archive, it documents what happened as the interests of a metropolitan literary elite met with those of black writers against this backdrop, and how the remarkably narrow definition of cultural diversity promoted by the state was contested by a highly vocal ‘English’ minority.

Chapter 3 tracks the issue of state-instituted multiculturalism and the associated problem of an invisible ‘English’ identity as it bore on the debates around national education in the adjoining period in Britain. It analyses how the idea for a common curriculum to reflect a stable national identity was disrupted by the relativistic belief that literature from ‘other cultures’ could increase understanding of ‘English’ culture, in which reading was conceived of as a means of entering the worlds of cultural ‘others’. At the moment when English in the National Curriculum came to be deployed as a discourse on citizenship and identity, the curriculum was also institutionalised by private examination boards such as the Northern Examination and Assessment Board in their market-leading *Anthology* (1996; 1998), which privileged specific ways of reading ‘literary’ and ‘cultural’ texts at GCSE. The chapter argues that these underlying ideas of literature, ways of reading, and models of culture require careful re-evaluation.

This thesis deliberately resists offering a total picture of the state’s role with regards to literature in the period since 1945, including that of the state in a specific national context.¹⁴ The case study approach it adopts does, however, attempt to better enable the comparison and contrast of different institutional contexts within a broad postwar historical period in the English-speaking world. Though set against different historical transformations (or in the case of chapters 2 and 3, the distinct contexts of cultural policy

¹⁴ Thoroughgoing literary histories of this kind include the contributions to the *Oxford English Literary History* Series by Bruce King (2004) and Randall Stevenson (2004). Janet Minihan discusses the longer history of the British state as a patron of culture in *The nationalization of culture: The development of state subsidies to the arts in Great Britain* (1977).

and national education within a similar historical moment), the three case studies are held together by a single governing idea: that of the liberal democratic state as a paradoxical guarantor of autonomous literary culture. Though distinct, each chapter bears out unique implications of the transformed relationship between the state and the literary field that include both trends (such as the recurring presence of poetry as a ‘restricted’ form) and sometimes surprising departures. The three institutions chosen here—a voluntary cultural organisation ‘tainted’ by state-funding, an official organ of governmental aid to the arts, and the private examination boards dependent on the national education system—begin the larger diachronic project of addressing the evolving relationship between the state and the literary world. They make a tentative start on what a comparative account of the state’s positive involvement in the anglophone world might look like in geographically and institutionally differentiated contexts.¹⁵ In doing so, they offer the possibility of changing how we think about literature as an essentially contestable category, which shaped, and was shaped by, the ongoing complexities of the state’s involvement in the public sphere in the period of decolonisation after the Second World War.

¹⁵ For the corresponding perspective, see Darnton’s recent attempt at a comparative ‘ethnographic’ history of censorship covering Bourbon France, 19th Century British India, and the German Democratic Republic (2014).

Chapter One

The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the African ‘Republic of Letters’

On the 26th June 1950 an assembly of writers and intellectuals gathered in West Berlin to proclaim the freedom of culture and thought from Soviet totalitarianism. The organisation inaugurated at the Berlin meeting, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), would rapidly become one of the leading sponsors of literature and culture across the post-war world of the 1950s and 1960s. The CCF articulated its ideal of ‘cultural freedom’ both in classically liberal and vehemently anti-communist terms, and it was this outlook that prefaced the quasi-independent literary and cultural journals it financed across the globe. In the first issue of *Quest* for instance, the house journal of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom edited by the poet Nissim Ezekiel, the journal introduced its Indian readers to the ‘world-wide non-party organisation’ with the following notice.

THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM
104, Boulevard Haussmann, Paris 8, France. [...]

QUEST is sponsored by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (Army and Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1), which is affiliated to the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The Congress is a world-wide non-party organisation of thinkers, writers, artists, philosophers and scientists. Its purpose is the defence of intellectual liberties against all encroachments on the creative and critical spirit of man. It was formed in June 1950 in Berlin. Considering moral neutrality in the face of the totalitarian threat to be a betrayal of mankind, the Congress opposes “thought control” wherever it appears, whether concealed or active. [...] The Congress is an unofficial, voluntary association of free men bound together by their devotion to the cause of freedom. The Congress now publishes seven periodicals in different parts of the world. (*Quest: A Bi-Monthly of Arts and Ideas* 1955)

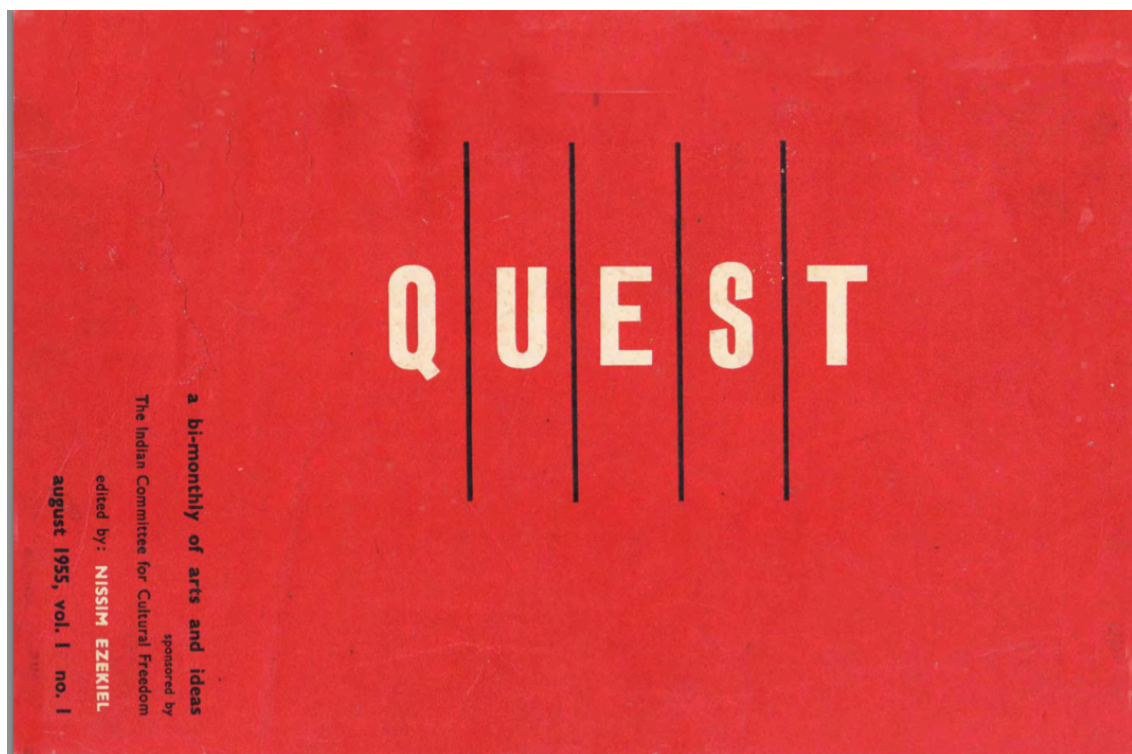


Figure 2. Front cover of the first issue of Quest: A bi-monthly of arts and ideas.



Figure 3. Jayaprakash Narayan at the first Asian Conference on Cultural Freedom in Bombay, March 1951.

The notice printed in the inside cover of *Quest* in Bombay captured especially clearly the overarching interests, founding structures, and underlying preoccupations of the CCF as it existed in the mid-1950s. For instance, beneath the CCF's projected vision as an 'unofficial' and 'voluntary' 'association of free men' in resistance to the 'thought control' of officialdom, lay deeper anxieties about the ambivalence of non-aligned states such as India. While it privileged the medium of print, and periodical culture specifically, as an ideal mode for the collaboration and diffusion of ideas around the world, the notice also raised larger questions about the peculiar structure of the organisation. That an anti-statist, anti-communist body such as the CCF should be headquartered in central Paris just over from the Left Bank and in a country committed to a strong state presence in the cultural field following the Second World War was curious.¹⁶ At the same time, the CCF's location on Boulevard Haussmann, named after the prefect of the Seine responsible for the renovation of central Paris' public spaces, referenced the seemingly open and expansive nature of the CCF's liberal humanist vision for culture. Even so, the Indian Committee's offices on 'Mahatma Gandhi Road' also raised questions about the precise relationship between this new global alliance for the 'defence of intellectual liberties' and anti-colonial resistance more generally.¹⁷

The story of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a leading organisation in the cultural cold war, is relatively well known. Less interested in modernist ideas of artistic autonomy than by the communist hold among leftist intellectuals, the CCF sought to unite intellectuals and writers into a fellowship of liberal humanism under its banner of 'cultural freedom'. By the end of the 1950s the CCF had national affiliates in countries across the world, and its subsidy linked some of the most influential sites of literary-

¹⁶ André Malraux led France's first culture ministry in 1959.

¹⁷ Though the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom was led by Indian Independence activists such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani and K.M. Munshi, neutralist Jawaharlal Nehru was famously distrustful.

cultural production: *Encounter* (1953-1990) in Britain, *Preuves* (1951-1969) in France, *Forum* (est. 1953) in Germany, *Cuadernos* (est. 1953) aimed at Latin America, *Quadrant* (1956-) in Australia, *Quest* (1955-1976) in India.¹⁸ The twist in the story is equally well known. In February 1967 the Californian magazine *Ramparts* and *The New York Times* reported that C.I.A. funds had been channelled to a number of supposedly independent bodies including the CCF and National Student Association through a series of private American trusts, notably the New York-based Farfield Foundation. The case of the CCF has become exemplary therefore of how the C.I.A. implicated itself into the field of culture in the 1950s and 1960s that also included abstract expressionism in the visual arts and the American Society for African Culture. As Frances Stonor Saunders recounts in her widely read account *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (1999) the CCF was none other than the work of the ‘incipient’ United States Central Intelligence Agency and a strategic tool in its ‘mission’ to ‘nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism toward a view more accommodating of “the American way”’ (Stonor Saunders 1999, 2; 1). Peter Coleman’s earlier, well-timed account of the CCF in 1989 framed the unanswered questions around the C.I.A. in more benign terms. As ‘America’s principal attempt to win over the world’s intellectuals to the liberal democratic cause’, the ‘cloak-and-dagger questions of who paid whom, how, and for what’ mattered less than honouring those who fought in this ‘necessary’ ‘war of ideas’ (Coleman 1989, xi; xiii).

Though the official archive has continued to evade scholars on the extent to which key twentieth century writers and intellectuals were conscious of their co-option by the C.I.A., we can draw some conclusions about the likely rationale behind its involvement with the Congress. Though Stonor Saunders’ speculations can seem overly deterministic (the appeal of ‘inoculat[ing]’ intellectual circles against ‘the contagion of Communism’

¹⁸ By the late 1950s the CCF had national affiliates in Australasia, countries in Latin America, Japan, Iceland, continental Europe, India and Pakistan.

while also ‘eas[ing] the passage’ of American foreign policy abroad), Hugh Wilford has argued that the U.S. regarded itself as somewhat lacking in the ‘equally important theater’ of ‘the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism for the “hearts and minds” of nonaligned peoples around the world’, even though it maintained the economic and military upper hand (Saunders 1999, 2; Wilford 2008, 5). Indeed, given that the CCF was established under the steam of disillusioned former communists and on a voluntary basis in order to satisfy its liberal principles, the Congress represented an ideal ‘front’ to bolster. It was at once totally committed to reaching cultural and intellectual elites, and rivaled the propaganda machines of the Soviet Cominform and Britain’s Information Research Department while remaining decentralized and ostensibly separate.

Important as this known story is, the purpose of revisiting the CCF here is somewhat different, though its central irony is worth restating. Exemplary of a particular kind of post-war Euro-American liberal vision that sought to globalize itself to the world, the CCF depended heavily on the most clandestine and shrouded subdivision of the US government in order to achieve its vision of a cultural sphere free of obligations. Situated as it was in the specific contexts of decolonisation and the Cold War, the CCF’s lofty set of ideas about freedom, about itself, and about the ‘world’, were transformed via these institutional entanglements from abstracted political vision into a form of *realpolitik*.

While the CCF’s cultural project cannot be extricated from the Cold War rivalries that gave rise to its initial formation and subsequent appropriation, it is important to clarify the specific role of culture within it as an institution entangled with the modern state. Rather than offer a picture of the purely instrumental use of culture, as the affiliation with the C.I.A. might cause us to expect, this chapter’s revision of existing accounts of

the CCF—designed, in part, at sharpening our attention to the goals and interests peculiar to the institution in its own right—provides evidence of the concern to promote culture as a transcendent sphere. Stepping back, then, there is a clear difference between the direction and handling of culture administered in bureaus of state propaganda, and the embrace and export of works perceived as emblematic of the idea of ‘cultural freedom’ by state-backed mediators such as the CCF, a discourse bound up with the advancement of liberal capitalism. This distinction in the handling of culture by the state is partly structural; as Andrew N. Rubin notes, the strategies of a new generation of cultural mediators like the CCF, the Ford Foundation, or the British Council overlapped (and at times co-operated or even conflicted with) official propaganda in saturating a global public space through the ‘transatlantization’ of works, the making of world literary careers, and the sponsorship of apparently autonomous cultural products (Rubin 2007, 20).

While this chapter does not deal in detail with individual writers—preferring instead to take a broad view of the modes of thought and counter-thought in play in the African program—it documents how the extent to which culture acted as a law unto itself was hotly debated by the African literary milieus interacting with the CCF in the 1960s. The difficulties tied to supporting apparently autonomous works (rather than a controlled programme of cultural propaganda) is also analysed in the final section of the chapter, which considers the wrangling over the diffusion of subsidised African periodicals across the continent, and their critical afterlives during, and beyond, the Cold War.

Entering the sub-Saharan African cultural field in the year that sixteen independent African states gained membership to the United Nations, the CCF’s African programme underwrote a critical stage in the development of anglophone literary cultures. It helped

build not only the reputations of individual writers, but also a relatively autonomous culture of print. Yet while some attention has been paid to the periodicals themselves, the question of how the CCF's vision was mediated in the African context has been less considered (see, for instance, Benson 1986).¹⁹ Director of the African programme Ezekiel (later Es'kia) Mphahlele provided judicious oversight of CCF finance as it circulated in Africa in the early 1960s and furnished an institutional context for the debates, networks, and modes of writing and criticism that would dominate African literary discourse in the second half of the twentieth century.²⁰ Mphahlele's constant negotiation of the CCF's universalist ideals as it sought to spread Enlightenment thinking in Africa by building a republic of letters constituted a key source of internal critique. Questioning the basic premises of the CCF's engagement in Africa even as he put its resources to good use, Mphahlele raised questions that will play out in later chapters of this thesis.

The shadowy presence of the C.I.A. in all of this not only raises the question of what it meant to speak of autonomous African literary cultures, it also highlights the paradox of the modern state's role at this stage in the post-war world. As we will see in chapter two, the CCF's compromised attempt to protect culture from political instrumentalism ran in ironic continuity with the much more explicit step toward a state-sponsored literary culture in welfare-state Britain. For though the CCF's sources of funding necessarily raised questions about the organization's narrower political aims in the Cold War, its avowed anti-statism also revealed the limits of liberal thinking, and the ironies and complexities of institutional sponsorship in practice.

¹⁹ See also an article by Peter J. Kalliney forthcoming in *Modern Fiction Studies*.

²⁰ Mphahlele adopted the Africanised name Es'kia upon returning to South Africa in 1977. I use this later designation when referring to his name in full from now on.

To understand how the Congress conceived of its role and purpose in Africa, we first need to consider the origins of the CCF and the specific forms of political thought that shaped it as an institution in the Cold War.

Culture outside the state: the CCF and *Encounter*

The CCF was comprised chiefly of leftist intellectuals, many of whom had left the Communist Party either out of disillusionment or following first-hand experience of its repressions. Though its capacious banner of ‘cultural freedom’ would cover a wide-range of seminars, festivals, concerts, conferences and publications over its two decades, the CCF of the 1950s identified itself almost exclusively by what it was not. The Berlin gathering was itself designed to offer something of a counter to the Soviet-backed World Peace Congresses of the late 1940s. In particular, the April 1949 gathering held at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York to object to US ‘warmongering’ had public cultural figures such as Arthur Miller, Charlie Chaplain and Paul Robeson in conspicuous attendance. Yet in positioning itself as outside the state, the CCF held up the principle of voluntary association as being in direct contrast to the expansive and insidious influence of the Soviet state over the lives of individual citizens. The manifesto prepared at the Berlin meeting, for instance, rallied to defend the autonomy of the public sphere at the height of Cold War rivalry and challenge the climate of neutralism prevailing in Europe. Drafted by Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian-born former political prisoner and author of the novel *Darkness at Noon* (1940), the manifesto combined classical liberal declarations on the ‘self-evident’ and ‘inalienable’ right to intellectual freedom with a more carefully tailored anti-communism (in Coleman 1989, 249–251). Defining freedom as ‘the toleration of divergent opinions’, it held this as in direct contradiction to the (Soviet)

totalitarian state both in ‘theory’ and in ‘practice’. Indeed the terminology of the state it used was decidedly vague, though used almost exclusively with reference to the Soviet state. Exerting an overbearing role in the public sphere and cultural life, the ‘state’, the manifesto declared, ‘forced [citizens] to conform in all his thoughts and actions to a prescribed pattern’, disrupting individual freedoms and the ‘fundamental aspirations’ of society as a whole. In particular, it held political neutralism (or ‘indifference’) as tantamount to accord as ‘a betrayal of mankind’.

The journal *Encounter* represented the high point at which the CCF’s vision was put into practice in the Euro-American world of letters. It also highlighted the intellectual and institutional networks through which the CCF assumed a role as one of the leading patrons of mid-century British literary culture. Established in 1953, *Encounter* appeared on the scene amid widespread denigrations of the state of British literature and literary culture at mid-century. The dearth of literary periodicals at this early stage in the 1950s—after the disappearance of Cyril Connolly’s *Horizon* in 1949 and before the arrival of the *London Magazine* in 1954—was a significant factor in its success. Appearing at this crucial moment and with strong financial backing from the CCF in Paris and the influential British Society for Cultural Freedom, *Encounter* was set to become one of the leading literary journals of the twentieth century.

Described by CCF director Michael Josselson as its ‘greatest asset’, *Encounter* sought to pose an alternative to the Left-leaning neutralism of Kingsley Martin’s *The New Statesman and Nation* (Coleman 1989, 59). Edited by the New York journalist Irving Kristol and the British writer Stephen Spender, *Encounter* represented a new intervention in the Cold War “fog” of Western intellectual culture. Spender was a clear choice for the role of one half of *Encounter*’s Anglo-American editorial alliance. Hailing from an eminent

English Liberal family, Spender's metropolitan literary credentials were matched perhaps only by his political ubiquity.

While at Oxford Spender became connected to an influential literary network that comprised of T.S. Eliot's *Criterion*, W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood, Cecil Day-Lewis and John Lehmann of the periodicals *New Writing* and *The London Magazine*. Like many late modernists on the British literary left, Spender embraced radical politics in the 1930s. Galvanized by the outbreak of civil war in Spain, he visited in support of the Republican cause under the aegis of the British Communist Party in 1937, and his *Forward from Liberalism* appeared with Victor Gollancz that year, selling 42,000 copies as a favourite of the Left Book Club. Yet though Spender was by this stage beginning to critique Communist Party excesses such as the Moscow trials, it did not stop the British intelligence services from labelling the Auden group of writers communists 'of a highly idealistic and literary brand'.²¹ Indeed, the 'literary complexion' of the British Society for Cultural Freedom, which connected Bloomsbury intellectuals such as Spender and Cecil Day Lewis with publishers Fredric Warburg and the controller of the BBC's Third Programme Harman Grisewood, would also be key to bringing the sponsorship of literature inside the realm of the state, as we will see in chapter two (Wilford 2013, 196). While MI5 monitored Spender's contributions to *The Daily Worker*, by the 1940s the discrepancy between his intellectual ideals and the realities of Soviet excesses had altered his commitments considerably. Indeed, that Spender moved from being an object of official suspicion to finding a place in the British government's wartime propaganda departments was indicative, as James Smith has noted, of how he put these 'literary skills' to work in negotiating a place in the establishment that would benefit his own post-war career and reception (Smith 2012, 56).

²¹ An MI5 report from 1938 noted that 'like his close associates Stephen Spender and W.H. Auden, [Day-Lewis] is an intellectual communist, but of the three he is definitely the most convinced and practical Party man, the others, as you know, being communists of a highly idealistic and literary brand' (quoted in Smith 2012, 32).

Though Spender's modified commitments created no small amount of discomfort given the public position he had carved out for himself, his tendency to elide the cultural and the political in his writings was characteristic. In a 1948 article for *The New York Times* entitled 'We Can Win the Battle for the Mind of Europe', for instance, Spender viewed the 'Mind of Europe' and its freedoms as a site of cultural, rather than political or economic contestation (Spender 1948). Indeed, what was of primary importance was cultural, intellectual and spiritual freedom from state control. The perceived ideological choice between the Soviet Union and the United States, he suggested, turned on their respective commitment to, and capacity to enhance what he called the 'life of the spirit'. Yet at the same time, Spender's capacious conception of 'cultural freedom', which he construed as the right to 'invent philosophies', 'write poems', 'believe in God', and follow any destiny 'not belong[ing] to the state', clearly had a political dimension. Reflecting his position as a cultural diplomat for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Spender recommended the transfer of American intellectuals to eastern bloc universities to teach Hemingway, Faulkner and Steinbeck. Such positive displays of internationalism would 'reaffirm the idea of the West' as 'civilization', since only the intellectual and cultural wealth of the West could 'satisfy' the 'real needs' of Europe in his view. Spender's public break with communism was only made certain by his contribution to the post-communist confessional *The God that Failed* (1950) alongside Koestler, André Gide and Richard Wright. Mediating his entry into the liberal anti-communist mainstream of the CCF, Spender claimed that

[t]o destroy the freedom of art is really a kind of madness like destroying the freedom of the individual to have ears to hear sounds to which his mind is sensitive, and to replace them with microphones which are tuned in to hear only what the State directives wish him to hear, which are the sounds relayed by the State amplifiers. (Spender 1950)

Positing the artist as ‘the most highly developed individual consciousness in a society’, Spender saw them exist against a backdrop of ‘official information’ and ‘dogmatic crowing’ by Marxist literary critics (1950, 267).

In spite of the CCF’s principled attempt to avoid an overbearing role as a sponsor, the reality of total distance was not so easy. The CCF had originally envisaged *Encounter* as a Paris-based journal targeting neutralism on the continent and with a distribution in the non-aligned states. Thanks to the strength of the British lobby though, the British Society for Cultural Freedom succeeded in securing a magazine rooted in London with a remit as literary as it was political. The CCF Executive relented, though with the warning that the proposed publication deliberately avoid ‘Anglo-American provincialism’ (Josselson quoted in Coleman 1989, 61). Indeed, what was most important to the CCF was the diffusion of its liberal principles and values into contested cultural ground.

Its opening editorial, titled ‘After the Apocalypse’ sought to enact a deliberate break with the past, even as it emphasised its continuity within a longer tradition of the history of ideas. *Encounter* would seek to ‘promote no “line”’, Kristol declared, but give priority to ‘opinions [the editors] will not hesitate to express’ (Kristol 1953, 1). Indeed, as he saw it, only the universality of liberty and culture was capable of bringing ‘individuals of the most diverse views’ together.

What caused them to come together? Two things: a love of liberty and a respect for that part of human endeavour that goes by the name of culture. It is natural, therefore, that ENCOUNTER should try to represent both this community and this diversity; that it should regard literature and the arts as being values in themselves, in need of no ulterior justification; that it should be an international magazine [...]; that it should aim, not at the slurring over of differences of opinion, but rather at the uninhibited exploration of them. (Kristol 1953, 1)

In practice, *Encounter* steered a middle course between the literary and the consciously political. The first issue contained an assortment of high literary contribution, cultural

commentary and political debate produced by British, European and American mid-century elites. Overtly 'literary' pieces such as Virginia Woolf's posthumous diary entries and verse from the Auden circle were balanced out by pieces of a more broadly cultural nature, in this case an article on music in the Soviet Union by CCF Secretary-General and musicologist Nicholas Nabokov (also cousin of Vladimir), followed by book reviews by Albert Camus. To this *Encounter* added the most contentious political issues of the day: Leslie Fielder's notorious article 'Postscript to the Rosenberg case'. *Encounter* was off to a spirited, if not deliberately provocative, start. A cautious print run of 10,000 copies sold out immediately, and by its 100th issue sales approached three times as many. Unaware of how funds from both the C.I.A. and the British Information Research Department (a subsidiary of the Foreign Office founded in 1948 devoted to overseas propaganda) were supporting *Encounter* via the British Society for Cultural Freedom, the Special Branch struggled to place the politics of the magazine. Regarding *Encounter* 'politically non-committal', it concluded that the CCF was not 'at the moment' 'communist dominated' (quoted in Smith 2012, 74).

Though *Encounter* was the CCF's greatest achievement in many respects, to really get at what was behind the CCF as a Euro-American vision we need to understand the particular ways of thinking that shaped it at key stages of its development. Two of its leading figures, the French political philosopher Raymond Aron and the Chicago sociologist Edward Shils were critical in taking the manifesto's generalised claims much further.

A former classmate of Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir at the École Normale Supérieure and a founding member of *Les Temps Modernes*, Raymond Aron came to stand outside the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of France after the war. In *L'opium Des*

Intellectuals (1955; trans. 1957) Aron redeployed the familiar Marxian formulation as the basis of his critique of continental intellectuals for wilfully excusing communist atrocities on the basis of political commitment. Denouncing the ‘myths’ of the radical Left, Aron reserved his ultimate criticism not for the ‘pure Stalinists or the true believers’, but for the ‘progressive’ who, though sensible of Soviet tyrannies, remained ‘irreducibly hostile to the West’ (Aron 2001, xxi; 332). Though somewhat professionally marginalised in France, Aron continued to contribute to the French debate through the CCF journal *Preuves* during the 1950s and 1960s, and served on the CCF’s Executive Committee. His affiliation with a more Atlanticist position was reflected in professorships held at Harvard and the University of Chicago, home of the Committee of Social Thought and the ‘End of Ideology’ school.

Shils’ principal contention meanwhile, was to observe the tendency among Western intellectuals to attack the social order on whom ‘it conferred such benefits’ (Shils 1972a, vii).²² In his view the intellectuals were rightful guardians of the state and the only possible defenders of the autonomy of the public sphere (a ‘free intellectual life’) from political interference (Shils 1990, 59). Yet the ‘revulsion’ among intellectual elites of contemporary society had, in his view, directly contributed to the collapse of democracy and the rise of fascism in Europe.²³ His vision of a liberal public sphere, laid out subsequently in the essays published in *The Intellectuals and the Powers* (1972), was central in shaping the outlook of the CCF. According to Shils, cultural production, the Universities, the press and the book trade constituted a ‘constellation of symbols’ of liberal modernity. In the conception of cultural community he outlined—akin to T.S. Eliot’s re-statement of *gemeinschaft* in *Notes Toward the Definition of a Culture* (1948)—imaginative literature was central to the formation of universal intellectual fellowship as the primary means of inspiring and affirming the ‘devotion to truth’ (Shils 1961a, 2). Given their efficacy in

²² Shils was editor of the CCF science journal *Minerva* and a regular contributor to *Encounter*.

²³ Both Shils and Aron used the case of Weimar-era Germany as evidence of this.

diffusing ideas across time and space, magazines thus held an intellectual and symbolic significance for the Congress. Indeed, from Shils' perspective the CCF's commitment to universal liberal values under attack marked it out as the modern manifestation of an earlier moment. Looking back on the CCF at the very end of the Cold War in the final issue of *Encounter* in 1990, Shils located it as a direct descendent of 'the circle which produced the *Encyclopédie*', the 'Philosophical Radicals' and Jules Romains' idea of *les homes de bonne volonté* (Shils 1990, 56). It would be precisely this way of thinking about itself that would come under pressure as the CCF made efforts to globalize its model to the world.

The move into Africa: globalising sponsorship to the world

While the CCF's first decade was dominated by its vehement anti-communism, underlying beliefs about the universal relevance of its project of 'cultural freedom' would motivate the CCF to extend into new regions. In a document to the Executive Committee in 1961, Edward Shils counselled the CCF of the urgent need to export its 'anti-ideological, anti-utopian, humanitarian liberalism' to new contexts and constituents (Shils 1961a, 4).²⁴ Developments in the cultural climate of the Cold War made new demands on liberalism. The CCF, he argued, needed to go beyond staunch anti-communism into something 'more differentiated', 'positive' and 'universal' in outlook. '[T]ime had overhauled its themes' he explained, urging the Congress to 'enlarge its repertoire' and 'find new themes' in order to avoid declining into a forum of merely 'parochial interests'. The new 'interests' of the 1960s as he saw it, were those previously neglected by the existing CCF elite. In this new order, women, younger intellectuals, and

²⁴ All quotations to this document are from an undated handwritten draft produced between late 1960 and early 1961 (see Shils 1961b).

above all the ‘fortification of liberal tendencies’ in Africa and Asia took priority. Of course, there had been attempts to resist an overly narrow interpretation of things from the very start. Amending Koestler’s original 1950 manifesto, Oxford academics Hugh Trevor-Roper and A.J. Ayer made steps to ensure it featured the acquisition of ‘new freedoms’ alongside the ‘defence of existing freedoms’ as ‘parts of the same struggle’ (quoted in Coleman 1989, 251). Such interventions prefigured the conscious effort to reach out to a much wider set of constituents as it entered the 1960s.

Though the CCF had been active in the Indian subcontinent and in South-East Asia since the 1950s, Shils’ document marked a change in policy that went beyond the purely geographical. Shaped by the 1955 Milan conference on the theme of ‘The Future of Freedom’, the CCF of the 1960s rebranded itself from a pure defender of culture, to an enabling force in the cultural development of the so-called ‘underdeveloped world’. Summing up this new outlook, Shils concluded that the CCF was not ‘concerned only with the protection of cultural or intellectual freedom from unjust restrictions’ but with the ‘enhancement of intellectual and artistic creativity’ and the ‘improvement of the quality of intellectual and artistic consumption’.

Shils’ larger ideal for universal intellectual fellowship reflected this revised orientation, and its deliberately more inclusive ‘positive idiom’ (Shils 1961a, 4). The main task of the CCF as he saw it was to work toward the creation of a ‘network of creative intellectuals of world-wide scope’ that welcomed the ‘liberal spirited’ from the decolonized African and Asian states, and even intellectuals from Communist countries (on the proviso that they adhered to the rules of a ‘free and creative community’) (Shils 1964). He envisaged that this global fellowship would ‘foster the creative powers’ among isolated individuals to bring about ‘fruitful interaction with their own societies’ (Shils 1964). It would keep intellectual and creative standards high, and ultimately ‘enrich’ the sympathies of the collective ‘imagination’.

Yet though Shils urged the CCF to adapt, there were clear limits to what this inclusivity could actually mean. For one thing, the CCF's transcendent values ('respect for universal standards of truth' and a 'universal appreciation of the creativity of the individual mind') meant it was ill equipped to deal properly with the tensions between the universal and the particular (Shils 1964). Indeed, though the Berlin manifesto declared that 'no race, nation, class or religion' had a monopoly on freedom, the CCF's overwhelmingly Euro-American constituency suggested otherwise. More pressing though, were the sanctions this universal liberal vision permitted, or did not permit, to expressions of national, cultural or racial difference. In his 1967 essay 'Color, the Universal Intellectual and the Afro-Asian Intellectual' Shils claimed that race not only created feelings of marginality among non-white intellectuals, but existed as an undue and 'primordial' 'foci of identification'. Race threatened the unity of universal community, constituted a 'revolt' against liberal modernity as he saw it, and compromised the autonomy of culture (Shils 1972b, 480).

Despite the fundamental problem of racial particularity in Shils' vision for a globalized liberalism, the lack of CCF representation in sub-Saharan Africa meant that the idea of an African programme received hearty approval. In particular Shils was emphatic that literary and cultural activities offered a unique gathering point for future elites and needed strong support. In East Africa, for instance, Shils noted that 'a tiny intellectual class' was 'just beginning', though individuals were too dispersed to sustain one another and would be 'happy to be in contact with each other, on almost any sort of subject' (Shils 1961b). Yet the CCF's own principle of anti-indoctrination presented something of an obstacle for its progression. Conscious of the pitfalls of entering the post-colonial African cultural field as neo-colonial foreign stooges, the CCF depended on the

legitimacy of relatively independent individuals through whom it could support worthwhile cultural ventures at a respectable distance.

The CCF was, of course, not an isolated initiative as it entered the African cultural field in 1960. Ventures in the sphere of publishing, for instance, manifested comparable energies to the CCF and harmonised in some respects with its ambition to create a republic or category of African letters. Former colonial publishers such as Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Longman and Heinemann made considerable efforts to consolidate and reinvent their position in the African market by creating literary imprints that responded to (and arguably fuelled), the demand for original ‘African’ writing. In particular, the Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS) capitalised on the growing movement for such writing in the syllabus in African universities. The paperback series—which would move from high sales among government-funded schools on the African continent, to US and UK school markets following the global oil crisis of the late 1970s—undoubtedly shaped a category of modern African writing.²⁵ Yet when it came to the CCF’s own involvement much was dependent on the specific ‘agents’ in the sub-Saharan African cultural field translating its vision of cultural freedom.

Agents of cultural freedom in Africa

In 1960 the CCF recruited Mercer Cook as head of its African programme. An African-American scholar of the Romance languages, Cook headed up the Africa Bureau from Congo-Brazzaville.²⁶ As director he pioneered an adult education programme at the

²⁵ The significance of the AWS has been discussed at length by numerous commentators and need not be recounted here (see Currey 2008; Bejjit 2009; Low 2002; Maja-pearce 1992; Kalliney 2013, 178–217).

²⁶ In this chapter I focus predominantly on CCF efforts in West, East and South Africa. Little, if much at all, took place under the CCF in central and equatorial Africa.

recently formed Institut d'Etudes Congolaises, and represented the CCF's early interest in intervening in French-speaking Africa. His term as director was brief. Not only would the CCF rapidly disentangle itself from the Institute as the crisis in Congo-Léopoldville intensified, but in 1961 the Kennedy administration appointed Cook ambassador to Niger as one of the first African-American diplomats. Nonetheless, for the CCF Cook's 'model project' extolled the virtues of, and appetite for adult education (Cook 1961b). Reporting back to Paris Cook recounted how his chauffeur was 'running off one of my extracts from an African novel - and reading the stuff avidly as the pages rolled off the mimeograph machine' (Cook 1961a).

Cook's cautious approach to cultural organizing, which evaluated each new venture 'in accordance with certain definite principles', contrasted significantly with Ulli Beier, the other key figure to influence the CCF in Africa at this early stage (Cook 1961b). The CCF's involvement with Beier could hardly be avoided. Characterised by John Thompson of the Farfield Foundation as a 'border operator' on the 'cultural smuggling ring' between *avant garde* Europe and 'traditional' Africa, Beier was one of the leading agents operating in the anglophone African cultural field of the late 1950s and 1960s (quoted in Benson 1983, 441). With the German Africanist Janheinz Jahn, the Jewish German expatriate Beier was the driving force behind both *Black Orpheus*, the magazine of African art and culture founded in Nigeria in 1957, and the Mbari franchise of cultural centres. Formed as the 'Ibadan Writers Group' by Beier, the Nigerian Wole Soyinka and the exiled South African Mphahlele, Mbari evolved to comprise a cultural club, exhibition space, library, and publishing house. The survival of both Mbari and *Black Orpheus* was no doubt connected to Beier's capacity to mediate the interests of potential funders both in West Africa and abroad. *Black Orpheus* for instance was for many years part-funded by the Ministry of Education of the Western regional government of Nigeria, supplemented with grants from the Farfield Foundation and assistance from

Longmans. Indeed, Beier's plea to CCF director Michael Josselson on the eve of imminent government cuts appealed to the CCF's own goals in Africa.²⁷

Perhaps we were luckier than some [...]. We have stimulated some good writing and created some interest in African writing abroad. [...] And yet I feel very reluctant to give up this thing. [...] The political climate in many African countries today does not encourage free cultural activity and it is for this reason that many writers all over Africa look primarily to us. I am convinced that we have a further contribution to make. (Beier 1961a)

Though Beier's credentials marked him out as a worthy candidate for representing the CCF's interests in Africa, it was Es'kia Mphahlele who emerged as the ideal man to carry out the CCF's liberal vision.

Es'kia Mphahlele: 'Our man in Africa'?

Receiving news of Cook's diplomatic transfer, Beier was quick to identify who he saw as the natural successor to the CCF's African programme. Writing to Michael Josselson in Paris that June, he noted 'I imagine that you are looking for a replacement and I hasten to propose Ezekiel MPAALELE [*sic*]' (Beier 1961b). In his view, Mphahlele was perfectly placed.

I feel he would be ideal because he is:

- 1) a writer of considerable reputation
- 2) an AFRICAN who has [an] intimate knowledge of two key countries in Africa.
- 3) already connected with a Congress scheme (Ibadan Club) and with Black Orpheus
- 4) Highly esteemed in Nigeria and S. Africa (as I found on this recent trip) and also by Congress people who met him.

²⁷ Josselson spoke of his high hopes for Mbari as '*the African center of writers and artists*' (Josselson 1961b)

It is further worth while to remember that you will not get another African equally qualified – every Nigerian of comparably experience and calibre would be a minister of state or something like that. It is only the fact that Mphahlele is an exile that makes him available for this post. If you think this is a good idea please cable Mphahlele at once [...] I know that with Zeke Mphahlele in the post we could do great things in Nigeria. (Beier 1961b)

Though Beier's recommendation was telling of his own aspirations for increased CCF investment in Nigerian cultural activities, his letter also articulated to the CCF the clear benefits of having Mphahlele in the role. As the author of the autobiographical *Down Second Avenue* (1959) and *The African Image* (1962), both published by Faber, Mphahlele's standing as a world-renowned African writer was augmented by his status as a champion of civic cultural freedoms. Mphahlele was not only a writer in exile from his native South Africa, he commanded considerable authority following his public opposition to the anachronistic 'Bantu' educational policies of the apartheid regime. By 1966 he would appear as a listed person, preventing him from having his work appear either in print or in public quotation. Not only this, but the opportunity to implement its mode of sponsorship through an experienced and authoritative black African cultural practitioner like Mphahlele (rather than a European or even an African-American) was ideal for the CCF. Among other things it demonstrated their amenability to outworking their ideals across racial particularity.

Likewise, from Mphahlele's perspective the CCF role was also a valuable opportunity to shape the African cultural scene in a much more focused way than his wearying work as an 'extra-mural donkey' in Nigeria currently permitted (1963g). As Beier was at pains to point out, his position as an intellectual outside the state and in exile made him unusually available. However, that Beier drew on Mphahlele's status as 'African' was jarring. Though Beier used the term to mark him out as an ideal candidate—his 'local' credentials appealed to the CCF, given its uneasiness over a perceived neo-colonial dimension to its activities—Mphahlele's position was in

productive tension with Beier's vague but discursively powerful label. Indeed, Mphahlele would repeatedly cast off simplistic ideas about the 'African' creative impulse, defending the singularity of African cultural pursuits against pan-Africanist generalization, and their diversity against *negritude* essentialism. Despite Mphahlele's initial reticence—something that Josselson and John Hunt attributed to existing plans for a lecture tour in the U.S.—the prospect of the job eventually won out, and he responded by visiting the CCF for talks in Paris.²⁸

In some respects there was considerable compatibility between the CCF and Mphahlele on the value and significance of culture. In his speech at the historic Congress of the People at Kliptown, Soweto in June 1955, Mphahlele wielded humanistic values by insisting that 'when we are talking of culture' we talk of 'human dignity and human feelings' (Karis and Gerhart 2013, 3:321). Introducing the Freedom Charter's statements on culture (titled 'The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened!') he concluded by declaring his hopes for a culture 'that will so much unify us' that there might be 'no distinction' but 'nationalism in a democratic form'. It was thus not surprising that Mphahlele's conception of what the CCF's role in Africa ought to be was deeply influenced by this humanistic outlook. He insisted that a program of well-distributed cultural sponsorship could catch the 'stream of African life' and help build a 'living culture' from the bottom up (CCF 1964, 7; Mphahlele 1962a, 20). It was also reflected in his self-styled 'empirical approach' to cultural development (Mphahlele 1963d). As one of his first tasks in office Mphahlele conducted a four-month survey of the cultural landscape of cities from Salisbury to Nairobi, Nyasaland, Yaoundé, Accra and Dakar to assess the opportunities for CCF sponsorship among the 'culture conscious' already

²⁸ 'Obviously, a job in Paris in charge of all African affairs— and these would include his native South Africa – and also leave him time for writing, should be quite attractive. After all, he could always go some other time to the States' (Josselson 1961a). Hunt was a member of the Executive Committee who would go on to have responsibility over the Africa programme.

active locally (Mphahlele 1962j). Committed to putting CCF subsidy to the best possible use and making it go as far as possible he concluded in a letter to Cook that ‘Congress will have to tighten its belt for a vigorous take-off to meet the needs of Africa!’ (Mphahlele 1962j). Mphahlele’s focus on the local and national context was also deliberately set against what he saw as the ideological character of the *negritude* movement as fostered by the Paris-based *Présence Africaine*.²⁹ That *Présence Africaine* was troublesome for Mphahlele was due less to its links to ideas of political commitment – as preoccupied the CCF – than its wholly positive promotion of ‘that French-speaking thing called *negritude*’, ‘whose shrine and priests are based in the offices of Presence Africaine in Paris’ (Mphahlele 1961a).

At the same time Mphahlele’s position was a complex one. Doubly subscribed to both an African intellectual elite and the CCF’s predominantly Euro-American liberal mission, his critical and creative output over these years captured the complexities of his position as a privileged voice on matters of African culture. On the one hand, his notorious short story ‘Mrs Plum’—written while in Paris with the CCF—summed up Mphahlele’s broader suspicion of liberal intellectualism, acquired through hard experience in South Africa. The opening words of the narrative, told from the perspective of the black domestic worker Karabo, captured the sharp ironies of the South African liberal predicament as he saw it: ‘My madam’s name was Mrs Plum. She loved dogs and Africans and said that everyone must follow the law even if it hurt. These were three big things in Madam’s life’ (Mphahlele 2006a, 125).

²⁹ Founded by the Senegalese intellectual Alioune Diop in 1947, *Présence Africaine* facilitated African cultural, literary and philosophical production. The name, as Ruth Bush has pointed out, ‘speaks to the concern with inserting an African subjectivity as a contribution to post-war ethnographic discourse in France [...]’. That Africans could contribute to a new post-war humanism by asserting their subjective in political and cultural domains’ (Bush 2013, 106; see Mudimbé 1992).

To John Hunt.

From E. Mphahlele

AFRICA MEMO 4.

8 Juillet 1962

1

PUBLICATIONSMbari publications.

I am sure you have by now seen the numbers already out in the Paris office. Mbari has just brought out a masterpiece which is "A walk in the night" by Alex La Guma, the Cape Town coloured writer who could not attend Makerere because he was refused a ^{post office} visa. Everyone is talking about it in Ibadan and Lagos and the ^{subject} of enthusiastic comment at Makerere. It is now on the way to Paris. We thought a great deal about the publication and now that Merrill Foundation has given us a good sum we must settle the distribution question. Robert Armstrong of Northwestern University Press who was at Makerere undertook to buy from Mbari 500 copies of each number to dispose of in the U.S. We considered the possibility of a Mbari bookshop such as the one run by the Institut Politique Congolais in Leopoldville. Mbari bookshop would concentrate on selling works by Africans. There are a few Nigerians who are prepared to sink money into the project. Meantime we consider the immediate need is for a circulation manager to be employed by Mbari to see that the publications are sent out, to pay authors, to advertise in the press. Otherwise we shall be landed with stocks that cannot be sold. If and when the bookshop came about, this man could be absorbed by it. When I get back to Ibadan at the end of July, Ulli ^{will} ~~would~~ have ready for me estimates for maintaining a circulation manager.

Black Orpheus

Ulli, Wole and I have been editing this literary journal, paid for by the Ministry of Education, Western Region Government. We have had ten numbers and number 11 is in galley. Now the Ministry has suddenly decided to stop paying for the journal. I am sending you a set to show you the kind of thing it is. There is nothing like it in Africa. We ~~now~~ would like to continue doing it and Ulli and Wole and I want to continue editing it. We wonder if Mbari publications could not absorb it as a regular quarterly? The circulation manager could also look after its distribution and subscriptions. If we want to encourage writing in Africa and make it worthwhile, the Africans must have a platform, and I am thinking of a triangular tie-up between BLACK ORPHEUS (West), TRANSITION (East) and a South African literary journal, for exchange of materials and sharing short stories and poems.

.../..

Figure 4. One of eighteen detailed memoranda from Mphahlele to John Hunt in Paris 1962. Note the description of a 'triangular tie-up' of periodicals in the final three lines.

At the same time, his short story from an earlier period of writing in the 1940s 'Man Must Live' reflected Mphahlele's attentiveness to both the vulnerability and the resilience of the human spirit.

Yes, man must live. Zungu had nursed this philosophy of life since he left the village in Zululand. Let men accuse, deride and ridicule you in your actions; let them complain that you don't respect or fear them; let them say you don't earn your living honestly; but they too, sooner or later, will come down to the hard, cold and indisputable fact that man must live. (Mphahlele 2006b, 18)

This outlook explained in part his pragmatic approach to the opportunity to distribute the CCF's financial provision in Africa. Combining a transcendent notion of culture with 'man's' human needs, Mphahlele envisaged cultural activity as a 'meeting point' between 'the extra-physical thing' and the 'basic thing' (CCF 1964, 4). In his view the work needed in Africa was 'of a constructive nature', it needed 'building right from the base' and as such he welcomed CCF resource (Mphahlele 1962a, 20).

Yet while Mphahlele was an ideal choice in some respects, examined more closely the subtleties of his position constituted a rival conception of culture to that of the CCF.

Mphahlele's rival conception of culture

Reviewing the fourth issue of *Black Orpheus* in *Encounter* in 1959, the English novelist Colin MacInnes lamented the general lack of interest in Britain at the new writing emerging from West Africa. The writers featured in *Black Orpheus* were 'bursting with futurity and force' and were as yet unnoticed (MacInnes 1959, 78). They had neither assimilated into the mainstream literary culture MacInnes claimed (looking to the Francophone Africans in Paris), nor entered British institutions like the BBC as their

counterparts from the Caribbean colonies had done. With the exception of Amos Tutuola (whom ‘we already know [...] perhaps too well’), ‘astute old England’ received ‘only a miserable trickle of artistic information’ about the nascent literary scene in West Africa. *Black Orpheus* was to be especially welcomed in the face of such scarcity. It was no mere ‘parish magazine’ he noted, but fully represented those ‘for whom the conception of Negritude [...] is a reality’.

MacInnes’ tendency to align the coming political independence of British West Africa with expectations for a genuine literary movement would be vigorously disputed. Writing in *Encounter* soon after, the white South African novelist Dan Jacobson refused to believe that literature was somehow beholden to larger political forces. From his perspective the ‘expectation that a politically emerging Africa should promptly produce a literature to match’ linked nationalist expectations with literary ones in the most dangerous way (Jacobson 1959, 69).

But what makes people think that they are entitled to ask so soon and so easily of Africa that it produce nothing less than a literature. Before making their demands, shouldn’t they ask what Africa is emerging out of, and what it is emerging into, and *then* see how much they may reasonably hope for in the way of literature? (Jacobson 1959, 68)

What was important for Jacobson was that the business of literature was not forced to fulfil political expectations, however well intentioned. Rather than suggest that Independent Africa was somehow incapable of producing a body of literature in its own time, what Jacobson sought to assert in his own roundabout way was what he called ‘the autonomy of literature’ (1959, 69). ‘Politics to-day is an omnivorous activity’ he warned, it would ‘gladly swallow literature whole.’

Jacobson’s supplementary claims about the struggles peculiar to the African writer—his explanation of ‘what Africa is emerging out of’—would trigger further corrective.

The “human reality” of a civilisation is a reality only if there is some continuity to it, only if it is present in the consciousness of the people as [a] force controlling, guiding, and inspiring them. But in most of Africa, what civilisations there might have been had lapsed out of the consciousness of the race. This, I suggest, is what the largest part of Africa is emerging out of [...]. Could there be, for a writer, a more dramatic sign of a willed severance from the past than his adoption of a language other than the one spoken by his people in their own past? (Jacobson 1959, 69)

Receiving his copy of *Encounter* in Nigeria some six months later, Mphahlele wrote in haste to weigh in on the debate and ‘strip’ Jacobson’s account of his ‘sweeping assertions’ (1960, 61). For one thing, he doubted that the world was ‘*seriously* expecting or demanding a spurt of literary activity from the new and emergent Africa’. Instead, the problems facing the African writer laid out so piously by Jacobson were in fact part ‘of a larger human predicament’. The flaws in Jacobson’s argument according to Mphahlele were less to do with the ‘prehistoric tribes’ that attested to the history of an oral literature in Africa, than the distinctly different idea of culture Jacobson was working to. With characteristic frankness Mphahlele conceded that the matter of Africans writing in European languages was ‘simply a position in which we find ourselves’. In any case, English and French had the potential to act as a ‘unifying medium’ for a democratic nationalism, and he claimed that the numbers of Africans writing in their own languages far outnumbered those of the privileged few writing in foreign languages.

For our traditional idea of culture is not a performance for the few who can get into formal dress and afford a ticket to watch it. Culture is part of the very process of living, of a stream of consciousness, in which a whole community takes part. (Mphahlele 1960, 62)

Mphahlele insisted that the operative version of ‘culture’ in African norms did not rely on the supremacy of the individual as in Western thinking. The collective pronoun ‘our’ emphasised the increasingly communitarian aspect to his thinking, even as he was also wary of subordinating culture to purely group (and specifically racial) identifications.

Anticipating the emerging black consciousness, Mphahlele was fully aware of the complexities associated with lending total weight to the notion of 'community'. What his rival conception sought to negotiate, in other words, was the individualist and communitarian dimensions of prevailing notions of culture.

In addressing Jacobson's question of literary autonomy, Mphahlele once again reasserted the human factor. Arguing from the position of 'an African negro' Mphahlele held the moral bankruptcy of the international scene responsible for the threat to the continuing efficacy of culture. Revising Jacobson's references to the hostile treatment of Boris Pasternak in Russia and Melville in America to also include the African-American Paul Robeson, Mphahlele concluded that it was 'disturbing to see how Western culture is continually surrendering intellectual honesty and freedom'.

Not only have Boris Pasternak and Paul Robeson not been allowed to say things that offend authority in their respective countries, but allied countries have felt obliged to discontinue their patronage of these artists. If the autonomy of art means anything at all, it is that art should order our experiences and responses and help resolve conflicts inside ourselves as individuals in such a way that we each bring to our groups a personality that could never justify race, colour, and religious discrimination, intellectual dishonesty, poverty, and inequality of privilege.
(Mphahlele 1960, 63)

His description of art as an emollient for the 'conflicts inside ourselves' clearly spoke the language of a journal like *Encounter*, and yet again Mphahlele insisted on community by referring to 'our groups'. The tricky ground he sought to tread prefigured the very issues that would bear out in the era of multiculturalism to come, especially in the contexts of the Arts Council and the school curriculum in late twentieth century Britain.

Part of what Mphahlele was questioning through the *Encounter* quarrel was what it meant to talk of transcending race and culture from the privileged position of Western liberal

modernity. He speculated for instance that T.S. Eliot's positive appraisal of conflict between cultures as a means of gaining cohesion in 'larger relationships' would have been untenable had Eliot been writing from South Africa, 'where forced ethnic groupings heightens race conflicts and paralyses literary effort in particular and cultural growth in general' (Mphahlele 1960, 63). Likewise, Mphahlele suspected that D.H. Lawrence 'could write as he did about the Indians in Mexico because he was not committed to living with them'. In other words, what was important to Mphahlele was that abstract matters of culture could be worked out in multi-racial, multi-cultural contexts. His unwavering belief that African modernity ought to be fully tangible in, and available through urban industrialized multiracial contexts articulated at this early point in the 1960s reflected his longstanding commitment to forging an oppositional mode of cultural criticism in the early apartheid era. Mphahlele's involvement as fiction editor of *Drum*, the vibrant glossy South African magazine, and in *The Voice* (1949-1952) a cyclostyled community news-sheet based in Orlando a township outside of Johannesburg, had been formative, and he brought this specific experience and history with him to the CCF (see Sandwith 2014, 216–243). Whereas the CCF understood modernity in terms of a gradual adoption of liberal ideas and institutions, Mphahlele queried the relevance of such institutions to the African setting, asking for instance '[w]hat is so inherently African about parliamentary democracy?' (1961a, 50). A vivid depicter of multiracial cosmopolitanism in his own literary writing, Mphahlele was haunted by the apartheid regime's dubious fixation on rural cultures and sought to emphasise that urban life was not 'necessarily un-African' (1962a, 2). What in fact motivated his work for the CCF was the belief that thriving literary-cultural spheres could enable the rediscovery of an African past. Given the larger debate, it was thus with some irony that Jacobson's prediction that the literature 'emerging' from Africa would be characterised by 'more than an ordinary degree of self-

reliance' and a willingness to 'claim his past where he can' fitted Mphahlele's recently published *Down Second Avenue* perfectly (1959, 70-71).

At the same time as Mphahlele promoted the CCF and validated its efforts, his determination to reclaim humanistic values from a purely Western monopoly meant he represented its main source of internal critique. His comments in *Encounter* and negotiations with the CCF over its own approach represented the beginnings of an attempt to think through alternative forms of humanistic thinking that would develop throughout the rest of his career as a writer. Becoming more fully-fledged by the 1970s, Mphahlele's notion of a regenerative *Afrikan* humanism would take in education as well as culture, and offer as an alternative to European individualism a situated approach to universal human feelings in a particular cultural context.

Equipped with a carefully qualified version of its universal outlook, Mphahlele regularly reminded the CCF of its tendency to apply its concepts exclusively on its own terms. The notion of 'cultural freedom', which 'embrace[d] so much' and was used 'no matter what freedom one is talking about', was a case in point (CCF 1964, 117). He argued that ultimately freedom could only be understood 'in context', as 'the principle concern[ing] a community at a particular time in history'. Equally, it only made sense to apply it in relation to the structures, authorities and beliefs already arrived at by the majority. At one level then, Mphahlele's critique came down to a question of power. Behind the closed doors of an Executive Committee meeting in London in 1964, Mphahlele drove home his point about the need to take a situated approach to the leading figures of the Congress (see appendix A). Taking the question of intellectual freedom and the Universities in post-colonial Africa, he began '[n]ow supposing the Congress for Cultural Freedom said "we insist on intellectual freedom"'

it so happens that all the lecturers [...] who come from overseas have been through the Colonial Office in London, through a machinery set up to get people to go and teach in Africa. Now, the University lecturers themselves, African lecturers, all the University students had no say at all in what kind of lecturers they were getting. [...] [T]hey had to accept any lecturers they got, which meant that there was no such thing as intellectual freedom in the way you understand it in a European setting. (CCF 1964, 118)

The choice of example was deliberate on Mphahlele's part: the Executive Committee was in deep discussion about its public response to the expulsion of a handful of American lecturers from a university in Ghana that year. As Mphahlele sought to impress upon them though, there was 'no precedent' for intellectual life in Africa outside of the colonial infrastructure. 'We are talking here at different levels all the time' he concluded: 'what we are trying to do is to apply standards which have not yet been tried in an African context to things that happen in Africa' (CCF 1964, 117). To publicly protest the matter on the grounds of 'intellectual freedom' risked 'sloganizing' without any 'clear idea' of what it meant (CCF 1964, 119). The tendency to 'speak out' in 'a manner of the holier-than-thou attitude' implied the CCF's inability to act on terms other than its own.

Unsurprisingly, Mphahlele's advice that the CCF simply 'allow things to incubate' was received with frustration by those who felt that 'one should not wait too long' (CCF 1964, 120;124).³⁰ For though the organization 'profoundly agree[d]' with Mphahlele's method of basing the African programme 'solidly on local needs and aspirations', the implications of this particularity were less comfortable in practice (Hunt 1962b). For instance his desire not to dissociate geopolitical and ideological matters of the Cold War from the conditions of decolonization was wholly unorthodox. Arguing that the dialogue about communism and anti-communism was as yet only a 'toy in the language of the people', Mphahlele counselled the CCF to 'avoid the categorical' in its decisions on what to subsidise in Africa (CCF 1964, 120). Indeed, Mphahlele had to put his own advice to

³⁰ Hunt argued that waiting for historical change 'doesn't bring much' as the civil rights struggle illustrated in U.S. 'to our shame' (CCF 1964, 124).

good use in responding to the steady stream of requests he received as ‘dispenser of largesse’.³¹ Replying to one anxious university group in Sweden on the matter of publishing creative writing by Africans with communist sympathies, Mphahlele foregrounded the testing, rather than restricting, of political and philosophical ideas. He not only cast doubt on the true nature of these supposed ‘communist connections’, he argued that the value of the literary project was uncompromised so long as the a writer did not ‘put forth a specific propaganda’ (Mphahlele 1961e). Though he was ‘not one myself - I mean communist’ he added, he desired ‘an argument from the other side against which to test my views’. In practice, of course, Mphahlele was as equally disbelieving of externally imposed forms of socialism as he was of liberalism.

Mphahlele negotiated the pressures on his position within the institution and in the cultural field more generally by setting out the ‘invite-only’ policy of intervention. The African program would ‘only operate in countries where we are invited’ and ‘impose[d] no programme or personnel on any group’ (Mphahlele 1963c). This was not only crucial given the CCF’s own principles as an international non-governmental sponsor conscious of criticism over a neo-colonial aspect to its activities. It also offered Mphahlele a useful means of rebutting the regular warnings he received about the dangers of getting too involved with foreign organisations. The funding request from B.S. Kajunjumele, a founder of the Tanzanian trade union movement, for a Swahili literary centre was typical. Seeking to mark his venture out as a ‘cultural society’ independent of ‘political contacts’, he concluded by cautioning Mphahlele directly.

Being my fellow African I must be frank with you. You know most European organisations are really organs for the new forms of colonialism and imperialism that is neo-colonialism. [...] Brother, Africa must remain Africa and not an extension of Europe. (Kajunjumele 1963)

³¹ In 1963 his fellow South African Nimrod Mkele wrote to ‘touch [Mphahlele] for some money’ for a new literary magazine. ‘This is what happens to you Zeke when you come to be the dispenser of largesse. Your friends descend on you like buzzards’ (Mkele 1963).

Mphahlele's curt reiteration of the 'invite only' principle, which outlined that the CCF did not 'represent any government whatever' delivered a somewhat pointed reply to Kajunjumele's 'questions about "imperialism and neo-colonialism"' (1963a).³²

Having established Mphahlele's carefully negotiated relationship to the CCF's ideals and the internal critique he brought to it, we can now turn to what these mediations brokered in the anglophone African cultural field of the 1960s. For all its internal pressures and tensions, the flow of sponsorship from Paris undoubtedly helped galvanise the debates, literary forms and modes of criticism that have preoccupied African literary critical discourse in the second half of the twentieth century.

Creating a space for African literary cultures in English

In the decade or so that the CCF operated in sub-Saharan Africa, it financed cultural centres such as Mbari, sponsored conferences on African literature, culture and education, and subsidized an emergent culture of print through the magazines *Black Orpheus* in Ibadan, *Transition* in Kampala, *The Classic* in Johannesburg, *The New African* in Cape Town and London, and the bulletins *Cultural Events in Africa* and *South Africa: Information and Analysis*.

The Mbari centre was perhaps one of the clearest examples of how the CCF helped create a space for African cultural activities. This was in one sense quite literal. In financing the lease of the first Mbari building in Ibadan, the CCF supported Mbari in its quest to publish African writing it perceived as falling outside of the prevailing

³² Kajunjumele's letter also mentioned how the institute had 'flourished very well' through support from the USSR Academy of Sciences.

commercial and aesthetic categories of the big foreign publishers. Rivalling *Présence Africaine*'s publishing function, Mbari brought out works by African writers in English and in translation from French such as *24 Poems* (1962) by the Madagascan Jean Joseph Rabearivelo. Indeed, Mphahlele and Beier would play into CCF concerns about *Présence Africaine* as a leading cultural force in French-speaking Africa to secure ongoing investment. Writing to Josselson in 1961 for instance, Beier described how *Présence Africaine* was seeking to 'monopolise all cultural activities in the whole of Africa'. '[S]hall we leave the field entirely to Presence Africaine?' (Beier 1961a).³³ At the same time former colonial publishers were also amenable to the kind of new African writing that appeared through Mbari in the early 1960s. OUP's decision to reprint titles such as Soyinka's *Three Plays* (1963) and John Pepper Clark's *Song of a Goat* (1961) in the Three Crown Series signaled the significance of Mbari as an early local mediator of African writing that played a role in widening the categories of overseas publishers (Davis 2013, 115). On the other hand, Mbari's function in this respect went both ways. Mbari was funded by the Fairfield Foundation and the Merrill Foundation in the U.S. to publish Alex La Guma's novella *A Walk in the Night* (1962), which Stefan Heym's GDR-funded Seven Seas Books followed with La Guma's *The Stone Country* (1967) and an early edition of Mphahlele's own *Down Second Avenue* (1962). That CCF networks mediated the distribution for La Guma's writing in the U.S. at the same time as interest in his work burgeoned in the Soviet Union highlighted the contingency with which African literary voices negotiated and acquired recognition through the different ideological, aesthetic and economic concerns of publishers in a geopolitically inflected global marketplace (van

³³ *Présence Africaine*'s goal of relative autonomy was itself dependent on external sources of funding, in particular a substantial early grant from the Dakar-based Grand Conseil de l'A.O.F. for the creation of a publishing house (Bush 2013, 124).

der Vlies 2004, chap. 4).³⁴ La Guma was, of course, not unaware of the attention his writing was receiving overseas, as he observed in a letter to Mphahlele in Paris.

[Richard] Rive, [James] Matthews, [Alf] Wannenburgh and I are being published in the USA soon, a collection entitled 'Quartet'. I have heard "A Walk in the Night" is being translated in the USSR next year. I have also been commissioned by magazines in Germany who want short-stories. Do you think I'm becoming famous? (La Guma 1963)

Yet for all the openings CCF finance created, the policy of local invitation also enacted limits of its own. The failure to replicate the Mbari model in the Nairobi-based Chemchemi centre painfully brought home Mphahlele's status as an outsider to East Africa. The episode highlighted the vulnerability of the CCF model when it came to local reception. Attempts to capitalise on the burgeoning African scene in London (notably through the CCF-backed Transcription Centre) also failed to come to fruition, though this time for reasons internal to the institution.³⁵

Creating a space for African literary cultures (I): the conference of African writers of English expression, 1962

The conference of African Writers of English Expression held at Makerere University College in Kampala from 11-17 June 1962 was among the most distinguished uses of CCF sponsorship in Africa. Indeed, the conference has achieved a myth-like status in recent years. In an essay published in his 2009 collection *The Education of a British Protected Child* for instance, Chinua Achebe looked back on the summer of 1962 as a founding moment in the broader creation of modern African literature in English.

³⁴ The director of Northwestern University Press was introduced to *A Walk in the Night* at the CCF-sponsored Makerere conference and promptly ordered five hundred copies for U.S. distribution.

³⁵ The Transcription Centre recorded broadcasting programmes by African writers and commentators for sale in African countries and the U.S. Run by Dennis Duerden, formerly of the BBC's Hausa Service, the Transcription Centre offices were conveniently located next door to OUP in London (Currey 2008, 17).

In 1962 we saw the gathering together of a remarkable generation of young African men and women who were to create within the next decade a corpus of writing which is today seriously read and critically evaluated in many parts of the world. It was an enormously important moment, and year, in the history of modern African literature. (Achebe 2011, 97)

As the first major assembly of anglophone African writers to take place on the continent, the Makerere conference galvanized literary activity by providing the conditions for face-to-face readings, criticism and debate. Organized by Mbari in conjunction with the Department of Extra-Mural Studies under Gerald Moore and sponsored by the CCF, the conference brought together an impressive range of established and aspiring writers (twenty nine of its forty five attendees), literary critics, magazine editors, and local and overseas publishers operating in the sphere of African literature and culture (see appendix B). A cohort of leading voices from the African diaspora featured within the majority African delegation, including the African Americans J. Saunders Redding and Langston Hughes, the Trinidadian critic Arthur Drayton and Jamaican playwright Barry Reckford. (V.S. Naipaul had also been invited, but the invitation was mislaid). The Francophone writers Paulin Joachim, Bernard Fonlon and Amadou Samb appeared as ‘observers’ on behalf of *Présence Africaine* (Mphahlele 1962b).³⁶ Robie MacCauley of the *Kenyon Review* led a troupe of representatives from foreign publishing houses that also included Robert Armstrong of Northwestern University Press, Andre Deutsch, OUP’s Roger Norrington, and the expatriate Charles Richards on behalf of the East African Literature Bureau. It was this latter group that were duly given the conference floor in responding to the matter of the publishing of writing by Africans.

³⁶ Joachim was editor of the glossy magazine *Bingo* published in Paris and Dakar. Fonlon would subsequently found the bilingual *Abbia: Cameroon Cultural Review*.

Were African writers being considered as black writers for publication? Do publishers have African readers? If not, how can the African writer be sure that he is being read by someone who appreciates his peculiar setting and social milieu, inasmuch as an African reader cannot always project himself successfully into a European setting? Was selection guided by what the publishers considered good for a European audience or by any exotic element in the writing? (Mphahlele 1962c)

‘[L]ined up before the writers and grilled’, Mphahlele recalled how the publishers ‘protested their good faith’ and implored the gathered congregation to trust their expertise in discerning good from bad writing ‘whether it came from an African or not’ (1962f).

The disparity between the English- and French-speaking literary communities in Africa at the time was also duly reflected in the conference. Indeed though Mphahlele defended the governing emphasis on the English language as being for practical reasons, it was also important to him that Makerere take an entirely different tack to literary discussion than he had witnessed at the conferences organized by *Présence Africaine*.³⁷ The discussions at Makerere were to remain ‘concrete’ and steer clear of philosophical over-determination, that is, not to discuss ‘what was, or may be but what is’ (Mphahlele 1962f). This outlook was written in to the conference programme: each day a designated ‘Critics’ time’ on specific authors and texts was followed by smaller working groups in the afternoon. Indeed, the three Francophone observers were subject to a steady flow of provocation from the English-speaking majority including Soyinka’s freewheeling performances of “Senghorian”-style couplets during conference breaks. Mphahlele’s careful steering of conversation from the abstract to the concrete gave way to particularly fervent debate between writers themselves, captured by Lewis Nkosi’s review of the conference for *The Guardian* in London. Describing the hypercritical discourse on display at Makerere, Nkosi remarked upon ‘the lack of humility and caution in addressing criticism to specimens of

³⁷ The Congress of Black Writers and Artists had been convened by *Présence Africaine* in Paris in 1956 and in Rome in 1959.

writing by Africans, most of whom were unhappily present' (Nkosi 1962). '[O]ne remembers with ferocious pleasure an obstinate spirit running through the proceedings, of a harshly self-contemplating irony'. 'If it is true that art suffers from too uncritical an affection' Nkosi concluded, 'then the literary situation [in Africa] is exceedingly hopeful.' The unrelenting head on criticism rehearsed at the conference played out in the pages of the literary magazines active in these years.



Figure 5. From left: Chinua Achebe, Frances Ademola, Theodore Bull, Andre Deutsch, Arthur Drayton, Dennis Duerden, Bernard Fonlon and Bob Leshoi. 'I remember this unlikely collection of open shirts, sandals, goatees, sunglasses, gathered in the dining hall, learning to sing in Zulu the South African worksongs' (Nkosi 1962).



Figure 6. From left: Gabriel Okara, Christopher Okigbo, Segun Olusola, Saunders Redding and Barry Reckford.



Figure 7. From left: Mphahlele's assistant Francois Robinet, Dennis Duerden, Gerald Moore and Langston Hughes.



Figure 8.

True to the self-proclaimed ‘snap-crackle-and-pop’ nature of Johannesburg monthly *The Classic* (H. 1963), a row between Nkosi and Richard Rive over Rive’s *African Songs* (1963) centred on Nkosi’s ‘destructively nihilistic’ mode of criticism, which Rive took to be nothing more than ‘a display of pyrotechnics’ (Rive 1964). The quality of debate in the Kampalan magazine *Transition* also suggested something of a critical afterlife for Makerere. According to one reader it was ‘the least antiseptic of all African publications’ (Lindfors 1966).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (then James Ngũgĩ) was integral both to the making of the myth about the conference as a founding moment for African literature and to its later deconstruction. Recounted by James Currey, Ngũgĩ’s admission into the Heinemann African Writers Series has been held up as evidence of the much broader set of forces

the conference set in motion.

In the very year of the start of the [African Writers] Series, 1962, there was a conference on African writing [...]. Chinua Achebe heard a knock at the door of his guest house in the evening and found a student standing there who offered him the manuscripts of two novels. The name of the Kenyan student was Ngũgĩ [...] *Weep Not, Child* was to be the first new novel for the Series which was also to be published in hardback for the international literary market as well as in paperback. That was the moment of take-off. (Currey 2008, 3)

By the 1980s, Ngũgĩ would contest the historical forces at work at Makerere. In a 1985 essay for the *New Left Review* that would prefigure his arguments in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ emphasized how the exclusion of writing in African languages at the conference was symptomatic of a much larger problem (Ngũgĩ 1985, 110).

The discussions on the novel, the short story, poetry and drama excluded the main body of work in Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba, Arabic, Amharic and other African languages. Yet, no sooner were the introductory preliminaries over than this conference of African Writers of English Expression sat down to the first item on the agenda: *What is African Literature?* The debate which followed was animated: was it literature about Africa or about the African experience? Was it literature written by Africans? What about a non-African who wrote about Africa: did his work qualify as African literature? What about an African who set his work in Greenland: did that qualify as African literature? Or were African languages the criteria? [...] If . . . If . . . If . . . this or that, except the issue: the domination of our languages and cultures by those of Imperialist Europe. (Ngũgĩ 1985, 110)

That Ngũgĩ referred to the absence of Shabaan Robert ‘then the greatest living East African poet’ to support his argument about the forms of ‘domination’ defining African literature at the time was significant (1986, 6). Widely regarded as one of the founding figures of Swahili literature, Robert was indeed exemplary of Makerere’s exclusions. At the same time he was not a straightforward representative of the naturalised vernacular tradition Ngũgĩ sought to set against an imperial dominance.³⁸ Indeed, Robert’s critical role in the standardisation of Swahili in the Roman alphabet was central to his ‘literary

³⁸ Robert’s death at the time of the conference in 1962 did not substantially undermine this point; he was nowhere mentioned in the conference preparations.

mission to rais[e] the status' of the language (Mazrui 2012, 210). The former colonial publishers Oxford University Press and Nelson would be central to conveying his vernacular works to a post-colonial African reading public in the 1970s and 1980s. On a more general note, for all its omissions Makerere also drew in more anomalous figures than this critique might seem to suggest. The Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek's long poem *Song of Lawino* (1966) appeared first in English translation (the original Acholi version followed in 1969) and combined regional vernacular forms with canonical Western intertexts.³⁹ Composed in Uganda and during stints at the Universities of Bristol, Aberystwyth and Oxford, Taban lo Liyong has pointed out that 'had Oxford used *Wer pa Lawino*, or even *Song of Lawino* for judging Okot, he could have passed *summa cum laudè*' (Lo Liyong 1997, 93–94). Yet his presence at Makerere was relatively muted compared to Christopher Okigbo's conspicuous self-identification with a European narrowly modernist tradition, amply illustrated by the latter's staunch refusal to read his 'poetry to non-poets!' (quoted in Nkosi 1962).

Ngũgĩ's interrogation of the imperial legacy that continued to demarcate post-imperial Africa was not entirely removed from the relatively fixed ideas that Mphahlele was trying to negotiate with the CCF. Indeed, the debate about Makerere did not revolve solely around questions of language and empire. It was also partly about the specific institutions operating in postcolonial Africa at this point and the forms of 'domination' (to use Ngũgĩ's words) their sponsorship enacted. The CCF's interest in facilitating a 'small African seminar' on 'the literary man in Black Africa' was one such case (Shils 1961b, 4). In a memorandum to the CCF on its future role in Africa and Asia, Shils predicted that a conference on the predicament facing writers would usefully 'extend [the CCF's] range of interests' in Africa. Among the most pressing issues the conference might address Shils

³⁹ Specifically, the deserted wife's lament monologue and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855).

singled out ‘the problems arising from writing in a foreign language’ versus an ‘unliterary [oral] vernacular’. Shils’ awareness of the language question as one of the main preoccupations of Third World elites was however, not extended to its implications for racially or culturally conscious resistance.

The success of the Makerere conference paved the way for further CCF-sponsored conferences on African literary topics. In 1963 it convened two seminars at the University of Dakar and Fourah Bay College, Freetown to address how literature by Africans could be integrated into the existing university curriculum in francophone and anglophone Africa. The distinctly different approaches taken in the course of the two gatherings would go on to shape the literary, economic and institutional space conferred upon African literature in the African universities into the second half of the twentieth century. For while the French-led Dakar seminar tended to focus on the nature of the African literary contribution to the existing curriculum, the reformist spirit of the Freetown gathering embarked on ‘liberaliz[ing] the study of English literature as a whole’ (Mphahlele 1963f, 17). Dakar, Mphahlele observed in his report for *Transition*, was ‘still very much part of the Sorbonne’.

Creating a space for African literary cultures (II): Building a republic of letters, 1960-1968

Mphahlele’s effort to negotiate skilfully the differences between the CCF’s liberal individualist interpretation of culture and his own communitarian form of humanism were largely successful. The clearest example of what these two competing visions meant in practice arose over the question of a journal for Africa. Indeed by the mid-1960s a new generation of African literary and cultural magazines had been grafted onto the

CCF's relatively prestigious network of print. The entry of *Black Orpheus* in 1961, *Transition* in 1962, and *The New African* and *The Classic* in 1963 would expand the character of the CCF's world of letters considerably.

The case for an African publication was clear. Periodical culture acted as a seedbed for literary and intellectual development through dialogue and exchange. Yet partly due to the lack of existing CCF structures in African countries, and partly to the CCF's own pan-Africanism, the route towards a specific print outlet was not clear cut. Moreover, as Mphahlele would emphasise to the CCF, the infant mortality rate for literary magazines was already high, and magazines in Africa were all the more exposed to the general lack of resources. For Shils though, what was important was that the CCF start something to 'cover' East Africa's 'tiny intellectual class'

East Africa is just beginning to get a tiny intellectual class. It is absolutely essential that something be begun there to cover Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Ethiopia, Somalia – perhaps the Sudan, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia. There are too few people in these places to sustain each other and they would I think be happy to have the opportunity to be in contact with each other, on almost any sort of subject. (Shils 1961b)

Yet Mphahlele insisted that the CCF had a moral obligation to support existing publications in need. Brokering a more collaborative set of arrangements with Rajat Neogy, the Bengali Ugandan editor of the fledgling magazine *Transition*, Mphahlele channelled CCF finance toward supporting *Transition's* lofty goal of establishing an autonomous East African culture. Given the dire situation facing writers and intellectuals in the new states, he argued that it would be wrong for the CCF to allow 'worthy journals to start up and die, as they have done in the past in Africa, for lack of funds' (Mphahlele 1962a, 20). It could not 'support things morally and not financially' (CCF 1964, 8). The quandary, as Mphahlele saw it, was clear: literary magazines 'establish[ed] reading tastes

which have not yet gone in any direction', and yet 'no literary journal [could] venture into the field in Africa without heavy subsidy' (1962h). The question of what kind of publication qualified for its sponsorship, particularly in the African context, was unclear. As a guiding principle the Congress supported journals it considered broadly sympathetic to its liberal outlook and avoided those that exhibited an identifiably communist sentiment. As we shall see though, the application of its criteria was vague and at times, contradictory.

At the heart of the aspiration to build a republic of letters off the back of Congress sponsorship were two competing conceptions. Josselson's vision for a single 'Journal of African Culture'—or an African *Encounter*, I suggest—contrasted both philosophically and practically with Mphahlele's hopes to support a 'triangular tie-up' of relatively autonomous magazines from the different regions.

In a letter to Ulli Beier in 1961, Michael Josselson laid out his plans for a new 'Journal of African Culture', a venture that both the Congress and the Farfield Foundation in New York had 'wanted to start a long time ago' (1961c).

Such a journal would, of course, have to deal with subjects beyond those of art, poetry and literature. General cultural problems, economics, sociology, politics in the widest sense, etc. will have to be added. [...] what we would like to see you edit is a journal which contains some of [David] Kimble's ideas and some of your own *Black Orpheus* type ones. (Josselson 1961c).

With Beier at the helm, Josselson envisaged the journal something along the lines of *Encounter*: containing 'art, poetry and literature' and yet going beyond a narrowly literary approach to deal with 'general cultural problems' and 'politics in the widest sense'. Nonetheless his suggestion that Beier combine 'some of Kimble's ideas' with his own '*Black Orpheus* type ones' was telling. Given that Kimble, a political scientist and

expatriate lecturer at the University of the Gold Coast was also editor of the West African Penguins (1953-1965), Josselson's reference was rich indicator of the parallel enterprises in the field to which the CCF was looking. The West African Penguins was a series of fourteen non-fiction paperbacks that aimed to present topics such as regional governance, politics and anthropology designed for the general reader both in Britain and overseas. The trademark penguin happily situated under a palm tree signalled both this continuity and this new location. Among the West African list were Ronald Wraith's *Local government* (1953, WA 1), Kimble's *The machinery of self-government* (1953, WA 4), *West Africa and the Commonwealth* (1957, WA 7) by Dennis Austin and the somewhat apt *Larger Birds of West Africa* (1958, WA 10).

Josselson's proposed combination of the aesthetic and cultural concerns distinctive to *Black Orpheus* and the political, economic and governmental remit of Kimble's Penguin series underlined the privileged place of an *Encounter*-model in Josselson's thinking about the shape its efforts in fostering liberal intellectual culture in Africa should take. That the CCF was looking to Penguin's African initiatives at that point in both the Cold War and the on-going apartheid struggle was not without its ironies. The more successful Penguin African Library, the successor series to the West African Penguins, arose as Penguin's general editor Tony Godwin commissioned the anti-apartheid activist Ronald Segal to launch a new series designed to capitalize on awakened interest in African topics following the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960. Segal's Penguin African Library (PAL 1962-1975) constituted a curious inversion of Josselson's original ideal for *Encounter*, and the journal for Africa following that. Combining literary and cultural topics with a much more overtly political tone than its provincial predecessor, the Penguin African Library featured figures familiar to the CCF's African work with authors on the radical Left whom the CCF would find perhaps more concerning. Ulli Beier and Gerald Moore's *Modern Poetry from Africa* (1963) appeared

alongside four titles by Ruth First, the anti-apartheid radical, member of the South African Communist Party and editor of the publication *Fighting Talk*.

Kimble's prospective role in the CCF's journal for Africa went unrealised, though the 'ideas' to which Josselson referred perhaps found form in the *Journal of Modern African Studies* he established in 1963 at the University of Dar-es-Salaam. Arguably Kimble's vision for the journal he would go on to edit for thirty-five years harmonised well with Josselson's own hopes. It was to be an Africa-wide journal 'independent of any political viewpoint or ideology' in which theoretical and ideological contributions were 'clearly related to observable realities in Africa' (Clapham 2009, iv). Ultimately, Josselson's vision for an African *Encounter* was shelved. Arguably the demand was met by the flagship news bulletin *South Africa: Information and Analysis*, produced by Mphahlele, and later Lewis Nkosi. Featuring information and analysis 'seen from inside' as well as 'from the world platform of cultural freedom', the *South Africa* bulletin received a wide readership across Congress and anti-apartheid networks more generally (Mphahlele 1962h). Josselson's hopes also found expression in *Transition*, which broadened its original aim to publish creative writing from East Africa, to cover topics in culture, politics and sociology more generally.

Compared to Josselson's vision for a concentrated and centralized journal of ideas, Mphahlele envisaged a much more diffuse arrangement. Working through the publications in the 'three strategic regions of English-speaking Africa' where the CCF worked, this strategy harmonised well with his own more situated outlook (Mphahlele 1963e). On this vision, the relatively autonomous triangulation of magazines—connected through Paris and yet largely independent of their sponsor—would foster a composite African modernity through the creative and critical energies of the different national and regional contexts (see figure 4). Though he sought to keep his distance to satisfy his own

principles, Mphahlele was unsparing on the practical matters of editorial policy a project of this scope would entail. The ‘triangular tie-up’ and ‘exchange of materials and sharing [of] stories and poems’ between magazines in West, East and South Africa (Mphahlele 1962h), required a ‘watertight fraternal agreement’ regarding syndication (1963e). Writing to the four editors Ulli Beier, Rajat Neogy, Nat Nakasa and Neville Rubin in August 1963, Mphahlele proposed a system of permissions for the CCF African journals. Conscious of the ‘great amount of material of common interest’ that would be generated by the magazines, he warned against editors undermining the coalition through ‘help[ing] themselves automatically’ (Mphahlele 1963e).

Black Orpheus and *Transition* were clear choices for the literary outposts of West and East Africa in this conception. The question of the Southern vertex was more problematic however. Indeed, apartheid South Africa challenged the CCF’s anti-statist approach much more generally. Despite its anti-apartheid stance and objection to the quashing of cultural freedoms in South Africa, the CCF was disarmed by the residual anxiety it felt about the appeal of communism among South Africa’s politically committed writers and intellectuals, and its desire not to be seen to work for or against established governments. Unsurprisingly then, the CCF claimed its sponsorship could only assist South African ‘individuals’ in the pursuit of ‘literary and artistic’ rather than political interests, a policy it reflected in financing stints abroad for the writer Richard Rive and composer Todd Matshikiza (Mphahlele 1962i). Under these conditions however, the CCF regarded financially supporting a South African magazine as a genuine possibility inasmuch as it might encourage the country’s beleaguered intellectuals and writers. For Mphahlele meanwhile, there was a strong literary rationale too. In his view writing from South Africa offered something unique to the literature being written in other African countries. Its style and theme he found lacking, for instance, in the ‘steady and non-

committal' literature coming from Nigeria (Mphahlele 1962d, 1). 'Preoccupied with the things that give him physical and emotional pain or pleasure', the South African writer had a style 'uneven in any one work'.

[I]t is at times temperamental, experimental, at times moody, violent; at times jazzy and evokes sensuous images; at times racy and leaning too far forward. There is, on the contrary, a steady and non-committal if self-confident pace in West African writing, which thrives in an atmosphere of freedom: freedom from the daily pressures of South African life. (Mphahlele 1962d, 1)

Above all Mphahlele was insistent that CCF resource be used to widen the space for black creative writing in South Africa. Taking Shils' broad comments on 'the situation of the literary man in Black Africa' to its obvious outcome (1961b, 4), he argued that there was an urgent need for a 'medium of creative expression for the [black] African writer' of merit and the CCF was the obvious source of support (Mphahlele 1961b). For one thing, *Presence Africaine* was 'too preoccupied with anthropological creepy-crawlies' to attend to 'the artist in his present predicament' (Mphahlele 1962e, 27).

The available options for a CCF-sponsored journal in South Africa in the mid-1960s were limited on the one hand by Mphahlele's belief that South Africa could only sustain one English-language literary magazine, and by his unwillingness to 'widen the split' forced upon South African writers by 'tradition' (1961c). Indeed, a multi-racial journal was of particular importance to Mphahlele. Working within these particular restrictions the obvious compromise was for the CCF to fund the new liberal literary magazine in South Africa, *Contrast*. Founded in 1959 as a publication for writing in English and Afrikaans, *Contrast's* position as an 'independent', 'responsible' and 'non-aligned' literary journal in South Africa fitted well with the CCF's broader ideals and the Executive Committee responded enthusiastically (Cope 1980, 1, 4). Looking back from the 1980s,

editor Jack Cope argued that *Contrast* had ‘no policy’ except ‘a policy of freedom’ construed as widely as possible.

[A]n unfettered right to think, create and publish, [...] a stand against imposed or habitual restrictions: against censorship, against colonialism and elitism in the teaching of literature, against racism and for equality between all people, groups, classes and between the sexes; against the constant erosion and debasement of literary standards and of the languages themselves. (Cope 1980, 10)

Positioning both the magazine and himself as editor within the explicit avowal of liberal freedoms, Cope’s statements here were consonant with his conventional characterisation in South African literary history. Yet as new historical evidence unearthed by Corinne Sandwith (2014) reminds us, Cope’s affiliations in the 1960s constituted a significant departure from the preceding decades.⁴⁰ The radical, pre-*Contrast* Cope combined both ‘Romantic and Stalinist influences’ in his literary journalism of the 1950s which appeared regularly in the socialist newspaper the *Cape Guardian* (Sandwith 2014, 207). As editor of *Contrast* in the 1960s though, Cope stressed his commitment to political non-alignment, and emphasised his belief that the work of literature was ‘a tender plant’ (Cope 1961). Though he was grateful to receive financial support from the CCF to help stabilise the magazine’s finances (he observed that ‘a great deal’ could be done to ‘improve the climate in which a developing literature grows, especially in Africa’), he warned that ‘no amount of cultivation’ could ‘make a writer’. In this last sense, Mphahlele’s proposal that *Contrast* ‘enable [...] more space for non-white writing’ was a step too far for Cope (Mphahlele 1961c). Reflecting his own compatibility with the worldview put forward by Shils, he admitted to knowing of no writer prepared to ‘put his race or colour before his ideals as a writer’ (Cope 1961). In his view, the commitment to literature embodied by *Contrast* was such that even the Afrikaner nationalists it published ‘accept[ed] coloured

⁴⁰ The ‘disappearance of the radical Cope in South African literary history is also mirrored in the history of the South African Communist Left, an erasure not only of the official historical record but also, seemingly from memory itself’ (Sandwith 2014, 198; see chap. 5).

writers [...] with complete goodwill'. Ultimately, the financial pressures bearing on the magazine won out. Cope concluded in his correspondence with Mphahlele that *Contrast* did need the money and was, on the whole, 'well placed to stimulate [...] the work of non-white writers on an increasing scale.' Cope's resistance to using *Contrast* as a platform for specific racial identities was telling, and will not be the only time we encounter negotiations of this kind. Small British poetry presses would defend their commitment to literary autonomy in similar terms when facing state policies of multiculturalism, as we will see in chapter 2.

In the end Mphahlele's own evolving ideas were responsible for the decision to back off. Initially *Contrast* had seemed promising on the basis of its continuation of a flawed but broadly inclusive liberal tradition. As he confided to another South African editor at the time, 'even if Contrast is feeble', on the whole it had a 'healthy perspective' (Mphahlele 1961d). However within two years Mphahlele would revise his position. The new literary magazine coming out of Johannesburg *The Classic* showed a much more combative stance. Indeed, Nat Nakasa's *The Classic* deliberately did not separate its literary objective 'to seek African writing of merit' from the social and political conditions of its emergence under the apartheid state (Nakasa 1963, 3). Publishing writing by Casey Motsisi, Can Themba, Mphahlele, Nkosi, Rive and others, the inaugural issue of *The Classic* marked it out as being 'as non-political as the life of a domestic servant, the life of a Dutch Reformed Church predikant or that of an opulent Johannesburg business man' (Nakasa 1963, 4). Just prior to the Makerere conference the Farfield Foundation had offered the Johannesburg writers behind *The Classic* a start-up grant of \$1,200 for a new literary magazine and would also offer a similar grant to *The New African*, a magazine emerging out of Cape Town. Unlike Josselson's views on the need for a broad mixture of literary, cultural and socio-political coverage in CCF journals, for Farfield's John Thompson what was important was that this 'tentative journal' had

the chance to become ‘a genuine literary movement’ and exceed the “polite” literature of ‘eclectic [...] belles-lettres’ (Thompson 1962).⁴¹ Indeed, Farfield’s commitment to the Johannesburg writers was a moral and individualistic one. Helping *The Classic* get off the ground was to support the writers ‘as men’ by offering ‘an honourable project of work to hold against despair’.

Its prickly anti-statist editorials and the initial unevenness of literary material confirmed in Mphahlele’s mind that *The Classic* was a purely literary journal in the best sense. At the same time, Mphahlele was cautious that *The Classic* did not restrict itself to an all-black group. Writing to Thompson, Mphahlele laid out his concerns that *The Classic* did not become unduly beholden to the idea of racial community, despite the obvious political reasons for doing so.

Through the years I have gradually arrived at the conclusion that for a literary journal to survive in South Africa, with its sharply demarcated cultural streams, it needs big money, efficient organization (the banal requirements) but more than anything else, it must be a multi-racial monthly (not necessarily multi-lingual). It has to go out of its way to look for material among black and white. (Mphahlele 1962g)

If *Black Orpheus*, *Transition*, *The Classic*, and *The New African* worked well as a ‘family’ or ‘chain’ of publications, there were certainly other promising avenues of literary production that fell outside its parameters (CCF 1964, 2). Among those the CCF refused to support was the monthly magazine *Spearhead* edited by the South African Indian Frene Ginwala in Tanzania. Indeed though the CCF was happy to support the Bengali Rajat Neogy’s *Transition* and took a measured approach to the fraught question of the Asian presence in East Africa, for John Hunt and Mphahlele the sight of ‘an Indian woman managing a paper single-handed in an African country’ caused some unease (Mphahlele 1963b, 16). They declined Ginwala’s request for a grant for several cultural pages in the

⁴¹ Cope described Thompson as the ‘handsome young American’ ‘fairy “godmother”’ of the 1960s African literary scene (1980, 17).

magazine. Indeed, though Neogy's conspicuousness as Bengali was surpassed by his stance as a self-styled literary 'beatnik', *Transition's* literary commitments also had a bearing on anxieties about its Africanness in an ethnically divided region. Contrary to Stephanie Jones' claim that *Transition* built a creative sensibility around the idea of the outsider (2001, 114), in fact Neogy often elided narrow questions of race in favour of a set of more universal commitments. Questioned about the racial composition of the magazine's contributors and its readers by Dennis Duerden in interviews for the Transcription Centre, Neogy preferred to focus instead on his 'ideal conception' of the magazine. He replied that it 'will have set in time such standards that it would be obvious that the things it stood for were implicit in the material', rather than in the colour of its contributors ("African Intellectualism" 1965). Wading in to waylay Duerden's dogged attempts to make Neogy name individual East African readers, Mphahlele offered a timely anecdote about a Nairobi shopkeeper he had met who was an avid reader of the magazine ("Interview with Rajat Neogy and Ezekiel Mphahlele" 1963). Unsurprisingly given the racial essentialism that lurked beneath Duerden's question Mphahlele did not mention the shopkeeper's name.

The clearest example of the different conceptions of the CCF's work in Africa and what fell outside its 'family' of publications was presented by the radical anti-apartheid publication *Fighting Talk*. Founded as an ex-servicemen's magazine in 1942, *Fighting Talk* became associated with the ANC-led Congress Alliance under the editorship of Ruth First in 1954; it was banned by the apartheid regime in 1963 and ceased publication. On the brink of its demise Mphahlele raised the matter of a possible CCF subsidy for the magazine, given its privileged platform for literary and cultural commentary. Yet though *Fighting Talk* provided an important space for black South African writing—Mphahlele's own work occupied a prime position alongside La Guma, Rive, Gordimer, Dennis

Brutus, Nkosi and others—its politics exceeded the CCF's theoretical willingness to work amid the ambivalence and messiness of the non-aligned world.⁴² The conditions specific to South Africa were 'peculiar' Hunt admitted, but in his view there was no escaping the fact that the 'backbone of F.T. is communist' (Hunt 1963). Given the 'basic principle of the Congress', Hunt explained that the organization was in no position to offer sponsorship: '[t]he experience of working with Communists all over the world is by now too well known [...] for us to repeat the errors that many have made and that most have regretted'.

Among other things what made the CCF's refusal to support a publication such as *Fighting Talk* interesting was that it was thoroughly imbricated, albeit indirectly and unofficially, in Mphahlele's 'cross-continental tie up'. The CCF's deliberate attempt to distance itself from *Fighting Talk* was set against the practical reality with which the other African publications, notably the prized bulletin *South Africa: Information and Analysis* edited by Mphahlele and Nkosi, relied on it for information. That Ruth First was one of Mphahlele's main interlocutors in the process of his deliberations on how best to dispense CCF subsidy to the cultural field lent an even greater irony to the situation. Indeed, in this respect, First undoubtedly contributed to the CCF's African project, and highlighted the practical entanglements of its mission. First's analysis of the candidates contending for Josselson's 'proposed new journal for Africa' was remarkably astute (Mphahlele 1961b). Encouraging Mphahlele to avoid the 'parish pump stuff' represented by Cope's *Contrast*, First reiterated the value of the CCF in supporting a 'non-racial African-slanted literary journal' that 'encourage[d] clear thinking and writing about Africa' and that addressed 'themes of interest and importance to Africans' across both French and English-speaking lines (First 1961). Her main word of caution was for

⁴² Sandwith notes that First devoted 'considerable energy' to 'establishing the magazine as a primary platform for emerging South African writers' (2014, 243). See also Sandwith for a discussion of the close links between the modes of leftist cultural criticism developed in First's *Fighting Talk* and *The Voice*, co-edited by Mphahlele in the 1950s (243-251).

Mphahlele to be mindful of the dangers of ‘backing an unknown horse’, especially one ‘carrying the colours of some dubious stable’. In this case, First was referring the ‘new thing due out soon’ under the steam of the South African Liberal Party *The New African*. Edited by the Neville Rubin, Randolph Vigne, and produced by James Currey, *The New African* sought to occupy the radical end of the liberal spectrum and break what it saw as the ‘Communist monopoly’. As the editors recalled more recently ‘[t]his was the Cold War and we were partisans in it’ (Currey and Vigne 2013, 1).

The competing visions for the CCF’s ‘republic of letters’ in Africa revealed some of the complexities its project of global liberalism involved in an intricate and often fraught context. These entanglements and the CCF’s situatedness were illustrated no more clearly than by the disruption of this burgeoning field in 1967 by allegations that the CCF had used C.I.A. money to finance its work. At this stage it was unclear what was the most likely casualty of the revelations, the CCF’s own ideals or the credibility of what it sponsored.

‘The C.I.A. stinks’

The CCF protested the accusations of foul play for some time before Josselson eventually admitted knowledge of the C.I.A. connection as the organization’s director and chief fundraiser. Throughout this period the CCF foregrounded the centrality of its cause. Emphatic that the ‘non-governmental’ character of the organization had not been undermined, the CCF’s carefully phrased defence in *The New York Times*, claimed that at no point had donors ‘sought to interfere with or shape’ its policies or programs (de Rougemont and Nabokov 1966a). Yet that the CCF’s most prized creation *Encounter* had been moved to Ford Foundation funding as early as 1964 was evidence of the

inevitability of the news breaking and of its significance. Nonetheless Spender and others rallied to declare their editorial independence. Writing in *The New York Times* they reiterated that as editors ‘we are our own masters and are part of nobody’s propaganda’ (Spender, Kristol, and Lasky 1966). To the editors themselves, Hunt maintained that they alone held responsibility for the content of the magazines.

Just as the Ford Foundation has never attempted to interfere with the Congress in any way or to influence its policies or activities, so the Congress has never under any circumstances tried to place conditions on the grants that it makes to independent cultural activities such as THE NEW AFRICAN. To do so would be to betray the very principles for which we stand – free public discussion of the important intellectual issues of our time. (Hunt 1967)

Hunt’s appeal to the allowances permitted to ‘good’ money, in this case the assured philanthropy of the Ford Foundation, indicated the move to reorganize the CCF under the Ford executive Shepherd Stone as the International Association for Cultural Freedom (IACF). The IACF’s attempt to ‘remain true’ to the ‘heritage’ of its predecessor was severely handicapped by its decreased influence on the one hand, and its diminished credibility on the other (Masani 1967). The IACF continued until 1976 and disbanded.

The IACF was not the only vestige of the Congress, though. Committed to the belief that the original project of the Congress would be vindicated in the eyes of history, a group of its founding figures arranged to deposit the CCF’s vast organisational records at the University of Chicago under Edward Shils. Though the archival project had in fact predated the C.I.A. revelations, the incident gave new meaning and urgency to the question of an archival legacy and the open record. In their eyes, ‘an examination of the records of the Congress, its magazines, and its other activities will, we believe, convince the most sceptical that the Congress has had no loyalty except an unswerving commitment to cultural freedom’ (de Rougemont and Nabokov 1966b). Established for

‘future rectification of the historical record’, the archive project was seen as ‘the very least that should be done [...] given the ‘many outstanding men and women from all parts of the world who were publicly associated with the Congress’ (CCF n.d., 2). Its plan to commission a ‘young man [...] already familiar with the work of the CCF’ to undertake an intellectual and oral history of the CCF ultimately found form in Peter Coleman’s *The Liberal Conspiracy* (1989) (CCF n.d., 4). Indeed, Coleman echoed the CCF directly in referring to the ‘idealistic, courageous, and far-sighted men and women’ who fought in this ‘necessary’ ‘war of ideas’ (1989, xi; xiii).

Characteristically, Mphahlele’s response to the C.I.A. revelation was as vehement as it was discriminating. His commitment to the autonomy of the African programme superseded his disdain of the CCF’s underhand dealings with the C.I.A., as he reiterated to readers of *Transition*. Articulating his longstanding commitment to an autonomous field of African letters, he reiterated that he had accepted the role in 1961 on condition of ‘certain basic premises’, including the CCF’s principled non-interventionism (Mphahlele 1967). Defending the moral and intellectual integrity of the African programme to sceptics and faithful alike, Mphahlele explained that the ideal of cultural autonomy to which he was committed protested against any situation that would possibly turn Africa into ‘another theatre of the Cold War’. However, compromised funds did not necessarily mean compromised activity. ‘[Y]es, the CIA stinks’, he wrote, yet ‘it is dishonest to pretend that the value of what has been thus achieved is morally tainted’. Instead he argued instead that the CCF should be judged on the basis of its considerable achievements in Africa. ‘CIA money had ferried us over rough waters’, he added in a later autobiography, ‘I didn’t see anything to weep over. Rich countries must pay up’ (Mphahlele 1984, 91). Indeed, though Mphahlele had left his post as director of the African programme in 1965, relocating to the University of Denver with the help of the

CCF, his relationship with the organization was on-going.⁴³ Serving on the General Assembly throughout the CCF's reorganization, he recognised the role played by the organization in shaping his own trajectory. His gratitude for 'the splendid opportunity' of the Paris job was 'not only for the French' (Mphahlele 1966).

Yet, for all its merits and risks, Mphahlele's position failed to take account of the complexities of institutional sponsorship. Though the African programme had in theory allowed no room for the 'distracting heavy stuff as the CIA was known to take on' (Mphahlele 1967), the modern state's interest in grassroots cultural activity revealed the difficulty of keeping the lines between culture and politics clear. In fact, the affair powerfully demonstrated the deeper problem associated with the CCF's role as a sponsor of autonomous literary cultures. Strongly motivated by the moral requirements governing its intervention, the CCF presumed its own independence to be self-evident. The tension implied by the republic of letters idea, a balance between centralized connection and localised ownership and distinctiveness, reflected this much wider paradox: the necessity of state institutions in upholding the very conditions necessary for a modern literary culture.

Though it would be unrealistic to claim that the little magazines that comprised the CCF's ephemeral republic of African letters were untouched by the disgrace of their sponsor, they nonetheless have had afterlives of their own.⁴⁴

⁴³ The outcome of Mphahlele's Ph.D. in Creative Writing at the University of Denver would be his novel *The Wanderers* (1972).

⁴⁴ Indeed, Rajat Neogy's harassment by the Ugandan authorities that culminated in his imprisonment for sedition was haunted by the spectre of the C.I.A.'s involvement in *Transition*.

The institutional afterlives of print

Black Orpheus stayed in print following the withdrawal of CCF funding in the late 1960s. It appeared on an irregular basis under a Nigerian newspaper group with J.P. Clark and Nnabuenyi Ugonna performing stints as editors. Following a five-year silence in the mid-1970s due, among other factors, to the oil crisis, the magazine reappeared in 1981 as a publication of Lagos University Press on behalf of the University of Lagos English department. An editorial by Theo Vincent, a scholar of the Harlem Renaissance at Lagos, commented that though the magazine had ‘passed through a dark phase’, *Black Orpheus* ‘maintain[ed] its primacy as a reputable journal of creative literature and art criticism’ (Vincent 1981). The magazine continued under Vincent’s editorship before it finally folded in 1993.

The New African was subjected to various forms of official harassment at the hands of the Special Branch in South Africa before it moved production to London in 1964 where it remained until 1968. After fifty-three issues, Rubin and Vigne handed the magazine was over to the Sierra Leonean poet and playwright Mukhtar Mustapha so that it might ‘enter the seventies without looking back to the rise and fall of the sixties’ (Mustapha 1969, 1). Though it failed to produce any further issues, Currey credits *The New African* with introducing South African writing into the Heinemann AWS of which he was editor from 1967. Writing by authors that originally appeared in *The New African* such as Bessie Head and Dennis Brutus gave considerable vitality to the AWS list. These and other episodes of *The New African*’s history, including an obscenity trial in 1964 over Can Themba’s short story ‘The Fugitives’, have been vividly recounted by the editors to coincide with the digitisation of the magazine by Digital Innovation South Africa (Currey and Vigne 2014).

The Classic ran for ten issues, several of which were edited by Nadine Gordimer and others following Nakasa's move to the U.S. on an exit visa, and his death soon after. Though the original ceased publication in 1971, in 1975 Sipho Sepamla the poet and founder of the Federated Union of Black Artists attempted to 'pick up the scattered remains of *The Classic*' (Sepamla 1980, 81). *New Classic* drew on the remains of the Farfield grant to fund its first issue and received a follow on grant from the Chairman's Fund in South Africa. It sought to reframe Nakasa's original commitment 'to manifest [...] the black man's life' in the context of the black consciousness movement of the 1970s. Whereas the original existed in an era of benevolent 'white ladies ready to offer charitable services', Sepamla underlined that *New Classic* operated in 'the age of the black woman whose realities were of another order'. *New Classic* ran for five issues and folded amid rising costs in 1978. It was revived briefly in 1982 as *Classic*.

Transition was by the far the longest running and arguably most successful of the CCF's African magazines. However the shift from its early literary and cultural aspirations to a 'increasingly defensive and shrill political tenor' reflected the powerful forces bearing on the magazine as its Kampala years drew to a close (Jones 2001, 114). In 1968 Neogy's decision to publish two articles criticising the new Ugandan constitution placed *Transition* at the centre of a direct struggle with the Ugandan state under Milton Obote. The *Transition* trial, in which Neogy was named one of Amnesty International's Prisoners of the Year, cemented Neogy's own commitment to the CCF's cause despite the C.I.A. scandal. Writing to Josselson from his prison cell, Neogy reinstated the 'need and urgency of a continuing "liberal conspiracy"' (figure 10).

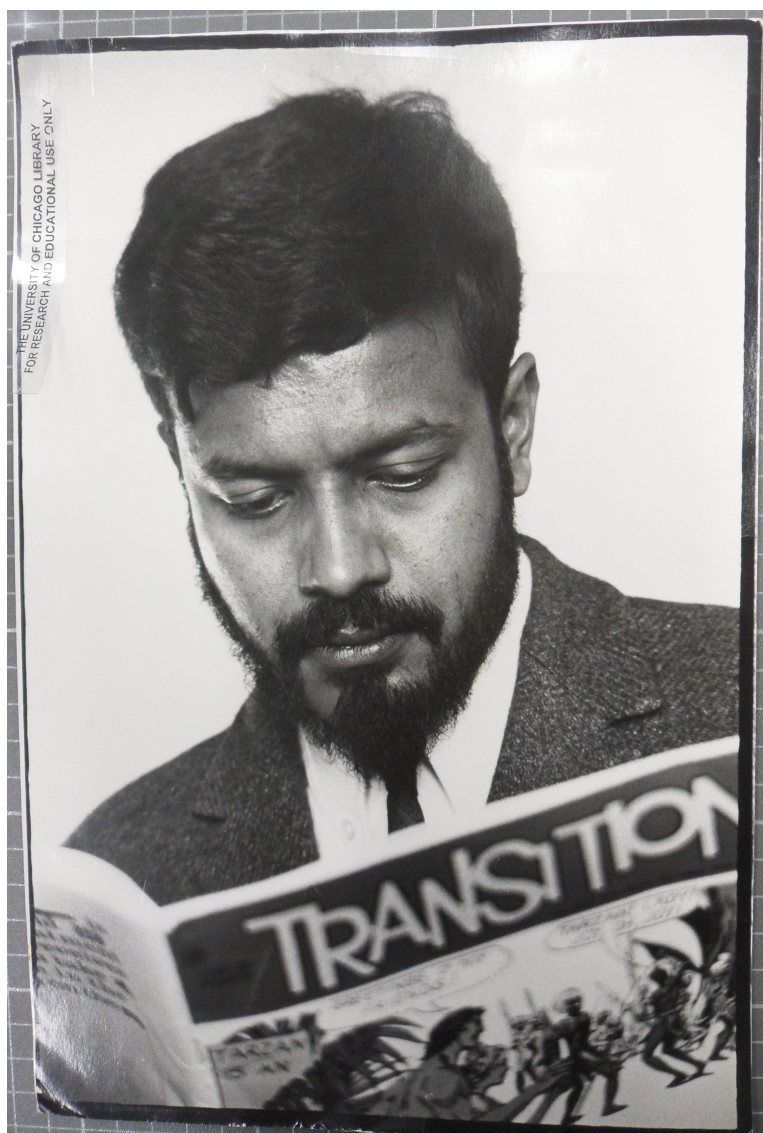


Figure 9. Rajat Neogy reading Transition no. 32 in 1967.

Since being here I have spent a great of time rethinking
 function. I have come to admire + appreciate what
 ed and this is to tell you that it needs to be continued
 vely now, here, where a Cold War exists, between honesty
 only intellectual but individuals freedom is threatened.
 nte on this theme, when I get out - on the need + urgency
 ing "Liberal Conspiracy". We aren't allowed pen or paper
 frequently searched. Tell Shap when I can't contact -
 our files - that the most intensive effort must come
 - they are afraid of international pressure if delicately
 applied. I want to see you soon + talk for a long time. Get well. R.

Figure 10. The original note to Josselson from Neogy in prison in Uganda in 1968.

[S]ince being here I have spent a great deal of time rethinking the entire CCF function. I have come to admire and appreciate what you have achieved, and this is to tell you it must be continued more intensively now here, where a cold war exists between honesty and power - not only intellectual but individual freedom is threatened. I want to write on this theme when I get out - on the need and urgency of a continuing 'liberal conspiracy'. (Neogy 1968)

That the magazine continued at all was due to the heavy involvement of IACF director Shepherd Stone, who enabled the magazine to relocate to Ghana in 1971. With Neogy increasingly fragile after his acquittal, in 1973 Wole Soyinka overhauled the magazine as the short-lived *Ch'indaba*. In 1991 Henry Louis Gates Jr., a former student of Soyinka's at Cambridge, revived the magazine with Kwame Anthony Appiah in an attempt to resuscitate its spirit of cultural autonomy amid the new cosmopolitanisms of the African diaspora in the U.S. Appearing as an official publication of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard University, *Transition* is published by Indiana University Press and describes itself as an 'international review of politics, culture and ethnicity from Beijing to Bujumbura'. In a 1997 retrospective of the original magazine, *Transition* reprinted Neogy's memorable account of the magazine: 'a well-edited magazine should, like sour milk, be capable of perpetuating itself. One issue should have enough germs to be capable of generating another' (Neogy 1966).

The digitisation of the CCF magazines is an increasingly significant factor in their reception by readers and scholars. Though at present only *Transition* and *The New African* are available online as fully searchable digital texts, the entry of the CCF magazines into the digital world raises new questions about their critical afterlives.

Conclusion

In his memoir *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the launch of African literature* (2008), James Currey writes of the ‘Cold War logic’ that informed the CCF as an intervention in the field of African literature. Given that ‘publishing in Russia was backed by the state’, this ‘covert CIA operation’ according to Currey, channelled equivalent subsidy in order to give ‘cultural journals [...] a chance to survive’ (2008, 18). The AWS, though, needed no such support. Willing to ‘exploit [...] the laws of Western capitalism’ the AWS shrewdly negotiated domestic and global marketplaces for its survival. Currey’s brief analysis captured the peculiar position of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the African literary and cultural field of the 1960s. Though it emerged roughly parallel to the AWS, the ideas motivating its activities were markedly different from the prevailing sense of enterprise that propelled most former metropolitan publishers in the era of decolonisation. Yet while the role of foreign publishers as conferrers of literary value has received increased scrutiny in recent years, the ironies and anomalies that characterised the CCF as a covertly state-backed institution operating in the field at this historical juncture have been less well understood.

Driven by a desire to protect the autonomy of culture from communist political instrumentalism, the CCF sought to construct robust literary and cultural spheres. Indeed, the CCF’s tangled connection to the C.I.A.—a body entirely synonymous with ‘bad’ money—has arguably contributed to a critical obscurity regarding the CCF’s actual aims, and what its idealised mode of non-interventionist sponsorship enabled in practice. Partly to remedy this lack, and the misleading assumption that African writers were wittingly co-opted by the C.I.A. through the CCF, this chapter has laid out the internal disputes and negotiations that lie within the ‘known’ story of the CCF. I have argued that the universal liberal vision that the CCF sought to export to Africa was in fact negotiated in subtle and complex ways. Though in many ways Mphahlele was an ideal candidate for

representing the CCF's interests, he was also its main source of internal critique, and continually challenged his colleagues' tendency to define the terms of the organisation's engagement in the African context. His critique plays out and is developed and refined in chapters 2 and 3.

Diverting the CCF's 'categorical' orientation on the communist question, Mphahlele successfully channelled its financial resource into a new generation of literary ventures. The publications, gatherings, debates and forms of writing subsidised by the CCF can only be fully and properly evaluated, I argue, in the light of this institutional context. For though the revelation of the CCF's compromised sources of funding necessarily raises questions about its narrower political aims in the Cold War, the avowed anti-statism embedded in the CCF's ideal of voluntary organisation revealed the limits, ironies and complexities of institutional sponsorship. The desire to export its model of global liberalism into the Third World also prompted questions about who was setting the terms for its internationalist engagement.

The CCF's compromised attempt to sponsor culture outside the state ran parallel to the much more explicit step toward a state-sponsored literary culture in Britain, the subject of the next chapter. Indeed, what ultimately failed for the CCF would in fact work in the context of the British welfare state. Built on the 'good' money of American philanthropy and in the good faith of the post-war social democratic consensus, the Arts Council of Great Britain has also been seen as a model worth globalizing, as the Australian and Indian Arts Councils and even the National Endowment for the Arts in the U.S. will testify.⁴⁵ Arguably however, the continuities run deeper. Tarnished by their public association with the CCF, metropolitan literary elites such as Stephen Spender and Cecil

⁴⁵ Incidentally, OUP editor Rex Collins described Mbari as the 'Ibadan [...] equivalent to the Arts Council' (quoted in Davis 2013, 115)

Day-Lewis would become deeply involved in lobbying for literature to be brought within the realms of the liberal social democratic state.

Chapter two

Literature and cultural diversity in the Arts Council of Great Britain

In 1949 the newly founded Arts Council of Great Britain approached a group of eminent literary figures on behalf of the British government. Their role was to advise on the part poetry should play in the upcoming Festival of Britain. Deliberately restaging the 1851 Great Exhibition, the Festival of Britain was envisaged as a ‘tonic to the nation’ to stir civic pride and exhibit Britain’s post-war recovery to the world.⁴⁶ Yet for all its book displays and references to the democratising power of the English language, literature was oddly absent. The ‘small group of men of letters’ consulted by the Arts Council, including Cecil Day-Lewis, among others, acted swiftly to introduce the much-needed literary element (White 1967, 55). The Festival of Britain poetry competition invited citizens of the Commonwealth and the Republic of Ireland to submit verse written in English on any topic. The competition generated two thousand entries from all over the globe: from a ‘lavishly illustrated’ text ‘impregnated with exotic scents’ submitted by a postman in Ceylon, to the poem from a Pacific island accompanied by a £5 note to defray typing costs (White 1967, 56). The winners—all male, officer class, and from the British Isles—were featured in the Penguin volume *Poems 1951* (1951), a collection of the prize-winning entries for the Festival of Britain competition. For those responsible though, the competition was a timely reminder of the failure of the British state to uphold poetry’s national role. ‘The English’ had ‘contributed more by their poetry than by any other achievement’ to the building of a ‘civilized society’, the critic John Davy Hayward claimed in his Introduction to the volume (1951, 7). Yet in his view the prospects for poetry in Britain were deplorable. After centuries-long official neglect,

⁴⁶ The phrase was Gerald Barry’s, Director-General of the Festival of Britain (quoted in Leventhal 1995, 450).

economic uncertainty and widespread public apathy, a state subsidy for poetry was ‘the only permanent solution’. Indeed, the Festival entries had proved that the creation of ‘admirable poems’ was still possible mid-century, ‘whether on the shores of Asia or on the Edgware Road’ (Hayward 1951, 13). The case for a publicly funded literature would be stated again. Some fifty-five years after this half-hearted attempt at a ‘commonwealth of letters’ (Kalliney 2013), the Arts Council would lead the way in promoting Britain’s ethnic and cultural diversity in recognition of how the world “out there” had become the reality of the nation. In his Foreword to the decibel Penguin prize for short stories by writers of African, Asian and Caribbean origin, Labour Culture Minister David Lammy MP praised the winning entries as ‘stories of modern Britishness’. No one ‘serious in asking who we are in contemporary Britain’ could afford to ignore them (*Volume 1: New Voices from a Diverse Culture* 2006 back cover).

Both instances of literary sponsorship were telling of the changes shaping literature in its relationship to the British state between the 1950s and the new millennium. For one thing, both competitions reflected the dominant modes of thinking prevailing at the time about the identity of the nation. These ranged from the spirit of internationalism that underwrote the first—two years after the London Declaration welcomed Independent India into the Commonwealth of Nations—to the official recognition of the Britain’s internal diversity that stood behind the second.⁴⁷ Indeed, while an elite group of metropolitan literary figures would be drafted in in the 1950s to make a broader case for the state’s role, by 2006 the virtues of representing cultural diversity in literature were taken to be self-evident, though no less contested.

The Arts Council of Great Britain is perhaps the clearest example of how a philosophy for the liberal sponsorship of the arts found a place in the social democratic state

⁴⁷ The Commonwealth had relatively little presence in the Festival of Britain (Littler 2006).

following the Second World War. In direct contrast to the conventional liberal view we saw in the previous chapter on the need for literature to remain outside the state for its own freedom, the creation of a state-funded literature in Britain was brokered on the basis of the Arts Council's capacity to offer "the best to the most". Negotiated on the basis of upholding literary excellence on the one hand and a duty to the public on the other, literature in the Arts Council evolved under an elite group of literary figures including Day-Lewis, Spender and others. It would, however, come under increasing pressure as this 'public' became more ethnically and culturally diverse. The very idea of a state-funded literature would be thrown into a crisis of legitimacy by the mid-1980s, as part of a wider public policy shift and the official embrace of multiculturalism. The deeper matter of precisely whose interests the Arts Council was meant to represent in an era of multicultural democracy, was brought centre stage in 1986 when one English poet called into question the Arts Council's self-appointed role to give 'a helping hand to a new literature [...] produced against overwhelming odds' (D'Aguiar 1989b). To properly understand how the British state's intervention into the realm of culture through the Arts Council was rationalised however, we need to begin with John Maynard Keynes' vision for the state sponsorship of culture at "arm's length".

Maynard Keynes' Arts Council of Great Britain

In May 1936 the literary editor of the BBC weekly *The Listener*, J.R. Ackerley invited the economist John Maynard Keynes to contribute an article on 'the problems in connection with art and the state' in Britain (Ackerley 1936). The piece was for a special issue discussing the different methods of state cultural sponsorship in Europe, and would include contributions from France, the USSR and even an explanation of the 'art

principles of German National Socialism'. Keynes was amenable; in his view—and that of Edward Shils in the context of the Cold War—the 'failure of the nineteenth-century democracies to maintain the [...] dignity of the state' with regards to culture was one of the 'seeds of their decay' (Keynes 1971a). Published in *The Listener* on 26 August 1936, his article 'Art and the State' outlined what he saw as the key responsibilities of the modern democratic state in meeting the cultural needs of the national community. From his perspective modern government operated under the 'Treasury view', a 'perverted theory of the state' characterised by heavy taxation of culture, including that of the BBC (Keynes 1971, 343).⁴⁸ The alternative was clear: a return to the state's 'immemorial function': to foster 'an atmosphere of openhandedness', 'liberality' and 'candour' towards its artists (347; 345). After all, the 'ancient world' had known that 'the public needed circuses as well as bread'. In making this case, Keynes' claims were coterminous with the broader argument for state sponsorship that had been gradually emerging from within his Bloomsbury circle. Clive Bell's *Civilization* (1928), for instance, had famously argued for the state to serve the needs of a leisured elite in order to maintain a culture of 'civilisation'.

Keynes' recalibration of this outlook derived from what he saw as the urgent need to provide national fellowship for the 'common man' (345). Indeed, some degree of official responsibility was necessary to facilitate public 'opportunit[ies] to collect [...] and feel together'. In this respect, he was driven by a more general anxiety about the success of cultural subsidy elsewhere in the world. The state's role as cultural patron overseas constituted 'a source of strength to the authoritarian states' he pointed out, just as its lack weakened their democratic counterparts (347). Yet in speaking of the public function of the arts, it was also revealing that Keynes was referring principally to architecture, visual and performance arts, rather than the 'private and personal' nature of poetry and the

⁴⁸ Of course, the license fee was also one of the BBC's sources of its freedom from the state. References to Keynes' 'Art and the State' appear in parenthesis.

‘literary arts’ (346). In a caveat that would be repeated by the great impresario of the Arts Council Lord Goodman in the 1960s, Keynes noted that it was ‘difficult for the state expressly to encourage the private and personal arts’. ‘[F]ortunately they need it less, since they do not require the framework, the scale or the expense which only the organized community is able to furnish’.

Keynes would write on the topic of the state and culture in *The Listener* again, this time in his role as chief architect of post-war reconstruction and the Chairman of the new Arts Council of Great Britain. In July 1945 he expounded upon his earlier vision by describing the specific form this method of sponsorship would take. The intervening years had featured a significant step forward: the creation of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) in 1939. Established using funds donated by American railway millionaire Edward Harkness and distributed by the Pilgrim Trust, CEMA fulfilled its objective to fund cultural activities of benefit to the beleaguered British public during the war. However it had also become clear, on Keynes’ analysis, that CEMA was ‘providing [in war] what had never existed even in peace’ (1945, 20). The month before the second article in *The Listener*, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced to the House of Commons that the work of CEMA would continue as a permanent organ of the state. The Arts Council of Great Britain, as it became known, would be subject to a Royal Charter to encourage excellence in the fine arts and increase their public accessibility, with an opening budget of £235,000 dispensed by the Treasury.

Characterised by the principle of state sponsorship at “arm’s length”, Keynes’ Arts Council represented an innovation in the cultural field, and one that had also informed the creation of the BBC a decade prior. Financed by an annual grant-in-aid from government, the Arts Council was designed to secure the autonomy of the cultural field

through a system of subsidy described as ‘Government support without Government interference’ (White 1975, 11). Yet the Arts Council’s status as a layer of protection against the commercialism of mass culture or the political instrumentalism of government was also informed by the socio-political conditions of the modern welfare state. Indeed, to the degree that it guaranteed the arts as a public entitlement for all, the Arts Council was the cultural embodiment of the social democratic contract also responsible for the creation of the NHS. In practice of course, this innovation of the principle of relative autonomy was partial at best. The appointment of Arts Council Chairman was subject to government Ministers, and there was no binding commitment as to the amount of financial support the Arts Council could expect each year. Similarly, though the Arts Council was not directly accountable to Parliament, neither was it immune from its scrutiny. The Arts Council could easily get into political trouble, as the Literature department’s decision to fund the *European Gay Review* in the era of Clause 28—Thatcher’s policy banning the discussion of homosexuality in schools — demonstrated. Though Keynes had envisaged the Arts Council to be ‘independent in constitution [and] free from red tape’ (1945, 20), Raymond Williams would testify to the salience of the arm’s length formulation following his term on the Literature panel in the late 1970s. The truth behind the metaphor as he saw it lay in its allusion to the ‘removal of directly traceable [state] control’ (Williams 1979, 159).

Despite the wide reach referenced in its title, Keynes conceptualised the Arts Council as a peculiarly English institution. Superficially, this was manifest in the play on the national character, in which through ‘care’ and ‘good housekeeping’, a little went a long way. More importantly though, the Englishness of the Arts Council had something to do with what the institution symbolised as a carefully negotiated compromise between the commitment to artistic freedoms on the one hand, and the desire to protect these

freedoms on the other. Art, as Keynes saw it, was ‘of its nature, individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented, uncontrolled’, and yet its sponsorship by the state suggested otherwise.

I do not believe it is yet realised what an important thing has happened, state patronage of the arts has crept in. It has happened in a very English, informal, unostentatious way – half-baked if you like. (Keynes 1945, 21)

The ‘task of an official body’ was not to ‘teach’, ‘censor’ or play ‘schoolmaster’ Keynes insisted, deliberately distancing the Arts Council from an earlier era of overbearing Victorianism, but ‘to give courage, confidence and opportunity’ (21). In this respect, Keynes echoed Matthew Arnold’s arguments from the 1860s about the state as the only proper guardian of culture. Linked to this were associated tensions within Keynes’ vision for the Arts Council between the individual and the community, or between unity and diversity. For though conceptions of artistic autonomy traditionally rested on the ‘freedom of the spirit of the individual’—as seen in *Encounter*—the Arts Council was also underpinned by the idea of a wider public. Keynes articulated his conception of democratic community and a democratic national culture in terms of the unity and diversity that would characterise a greater equity between London and the regions.

How satisfactory it would be if different parts of the country would again walk their several ways as they once did and learn to develop something different from their neighbours and characteristic of themselves. Nothing can be more damaging than the excessive prestige of metropolitan standards and fashions. Let every part of Merry England be merry in its own way. (Keynes 1945, 23)

Keynes’ appeal to an era of ‘merrie England’ demonstrated the persistence of anachronistic concepts of English community in the changing landscape of post-war British culture. At the same time though, his avowal of local cultural distinctiveness as a means of challenging metropolitan dominance would endure in the Arts Council, and be

redeployed at later points. Indeed, his exhortation that each ‘walk their several ways’ and ‘learn to develop something different from their neighbours’ would acquire a further nuance in the context of multiculturalism.

Literature and the liberal golden age

The goals of the Arts Council under the post-war social contract were reviewed in significant ways as it came under the guardianship of a cultivated liberal elite. The Arts Council of the 1960s took a broadly Arnoldian interpretation of its public duty to high culture and equality. Under the Chairmen Lord Cottesloe (1960-1965) and in particular Arnold Goodman (1965-1972), elite forms of culture were regarded not only as the ‘privilege [of] a few but the democratic right of the entire community’ (ACGB 1970, 10). This philosophy of cultural entitlement and public accessibility accompanied important technological developments in the British cultural field of the 1950s and 1960s, a period described by Randall Stevenson as a ‘golden age’ for the book trade (2004, 125–161).

If the 1950s had been the era of the ‘gentleman publisher’, that is, publishing as a personal commitment to disseminate works of high aesthetic quality and the building of lists based on individual taste, by the 1960s new cultural freedoms would alter the field dramatically. Of the many changes transforming the market for books and widening the reading public, the most significant factors included the impact of compulsory secondary schooling introduced in 1944, the growth of the universities, and the so-called “paperback revolution”. Indeed, as Stevenson has noted, the ‘liberal atmosphere’ of these years ‘democratiz[ed] the ways writing reached the public and was perceived by it’, resulting in a proliferation of new publishing ventures, paperback production on a mass scale and a renewed openness to the experimental (2004, 141).

To these technological and cultural developments we might also add structural and symbolic changes to cultural policy more generally. In 1965 Jennie Lee Minister for the Arts and widow of Aneurin Bevan published the government White Paper *A Policy for the Arts: The First Steps* (1965). *A Policy for the Arts* marked a significant moment in the state's movement away from its position as a remote and disinterested patron to one where it was much more actively involved. Moreover this arrival at a cultural policy had a particular bearing on literature. Lee paid special attention to assuaging the 'plight of the writer' and conferred responsibility for this on the Arts Council's very latest creation, a department for Literature (ACGB 1965, 39). The recognition of the material needs of writers in *A Policy for the Arts* was itself indebted to a recent report published by the Society of Authors *What are Writers Worth?* (1963). Indeed, Lee's White Paper was a key factor in the expansion of the Arts Council's existing literary subdivision—the Poetry Panel established soon after the Festival of Britain—into one that served literature more generally. Founded in 1966, the Arts Council's Literature department took the material needs of writers as one of its leading priorities. Administered by Eric White (1966-1971) with an influential Advisory Panel chaired by Cecil Day-Lewis, the Literature department devoted over half of its 1968 budget to a programme of 'First Aid for Writers' (see figure 11).

The expansion of the Poetry Panel into a department of Literature, accompanied by a Literary Advisory Panel comprised of literary experts, indicated a larger disparity between the two forms. From the very beginning the Arts Council did not envisage support even for poetry. Instead, for reasons broadly related to Keynes' ideas about the 'public' versus 'private' nature of the literary arts, CEMA weighed in to support visual art, drama and music, including ballet and opera.

First Aid for Writers

The Literature Panel of the Arts Council began its work last January. Its main task is the extending of the help, which for some years poetry has received from the Council, to include other kinds of creative writing—the novel, the short story, biography and autobiography, translation. The Panel is composed of men and women distinguished in the literary world. Most of them are practising writers, a few of them are publishers; so they are all conversant with the writer's problems.

One major difficulty facing the Panel is that writing, in prose or verse, is a one-man job. The other advisory Panels of the Council receive many applications for grants through organizations and groups—repertory theatres, drama and ballet schools, orchestras and musical societies, art galleries, and so on. The Literature Panel, concerned very much with the individual writer, must think out how best the Council may use its money for the benefit of literature, and then *go out and find* the writers most deserving of financial help.

The layman, while he may realize that poets cannot begin to make a living out of their art, often does not know that many serious prose-writers are in almost equal difficulties today: he is apt to judge a writer's income in terms of the best-seller. In fact, a fiction writer is unlikely to make more than £150–£300 on each of his first few books (each book taking a year or more to write); and there are good writers who, after ten or twenty years' work, do not earn above £1,000 a year. If we are prepared to pay more than lip service to the art in which our nation has always excelled, we have to do something about the writer's situation today.

In order to get his serious work written, nearly every writer must take a regular job which will keep him and his family alive, or else do a good deal of literary pot-boiling (television, broadcasting, reviewing, for instance). To my mind, this is wrong. I believe there should be a hard core of whole-time professional writers—men and women who can give their full energy, thought and skill to the practice of their art at the highest creative level of which each is capable. We do not encourage half-time doctors, engineers, architects, managers or foremen. Failing this professional élite, we can at least buy a writer a period of time in which to study and practise his art, undistracted by other commitments. The Poetry Panel, through its scheme of bursaries, had started to do this for poets: now, the Literature Panel plans to extend some such form of subsidy to prose-writers also. The candidates for bursaries will be very carefully sifted (the Panel sets its face against any kind of cliqueishness or log-rolling). A writer will get no preferential consideration because he is young, or old. Candidates must show, by one or two published books, that they have a promise worth encouraging or an achievement from which yet greater achievements may flow.

Figure 11.

The Poetry Panel formed some five years later under Arts Council Executive Committee member Joseph Compton; its founding Advisory Panel comprised of the original ‘small group of men of letters’ consulted in 1949: Day-Lewis, Richard Church, George Rostrevor Hamilton, Christopher Hassall and L.A.G. Strong (White 1967, 55).

Nonetheless, there existed much greater consensus over poetry’s candidacy as a form worthy of state support compared to ‘literature’ more generally construed. That poetry figured as both the precedent for and exception to state funding for literature was perhaps not surprising. Long before Davy Hayward made the case for public backing in 1951, beliefs about poetry’s elevating effects as described by Matthew Arnold in ‘The Study of Poetry’ marked it out for special subsidy.

We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. (Arnold 1889, 2)

Evidence of poetry’s restricted commercial appeal enhanced, rather than diminished the case for special treatment. By contrast, even when Literature was finally instituted as a discrete unit within the Arts Council some two decades after its counterparts, deeper concerns over its legitimacy continued to reverberate.

Stephen Spender was exemplary of the metropolitan literary elites that benefitted from the Arts Council’s support for poetry. One of the earliest beneficiaries of the Poetry Panel was the Apollo Society, formed in 1943 through the efforts of Spender, his wife Natasha and Day-Lewis to promote poetry as spoken art. In 1953—the year *Encounter* was established and the Arts Council’s Poetry Library opened to the public—Spender, T.S. Eliot and Eric White would use Arts Council funds to found the Poetry Book Society. The Poetry Book Society went about its task to ‘propagate the art of poetry’ by

distributing selected works of poetry to subscribers on a quarterly basis, thereby securing a fixed minimum of sales. Though often credited to Eliot, Spender's biographer maintains that this writer's idea for a 'Poetry Book Club' was the 'blueprint for what would become the Poetry Book Society' (Sutherland 2005, 355). Subsidising poetry at the level of distribution, the Arts Council sought to increase exposure to 'the best English poetry' to 'all who wish[ed] to enjoy poetry as a living art', especially those of 'limited leisure' (ACGB 1954, 45).

The Poetry Book Society not only indicated the depth of Spender's involvement with the state through the Arts Council. It also illustrated the forms of internationalism that ran parallel to the CCF, as well as the ways in which the elite world of English letters was engaging with the Commonwealth at this historical moment. In September 1965 the Poetry Book Society sponsored six days of performances as part of the Commonwealth Arts Festival's event 'Verse and Voice' at the Royal Court Theatre. Behind Verse & Voice was Norman "Derry" Jeffares, the leading force behind the rise of Commonwealth literary studies at the University of Leeds. The Poetry Book Society's 'Commonwealth Poetry Today' programme commissioned twenty-five poets including Derek Walcott, Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka and Dom Moraes for works to 'reflect the landscape or way of life' of countries in the Commonwealth (Cleverdon 1965, 11–12). Introduced by Day-Lewis, William Empson and other eminent literary and critical figures, the events illustrated the embedded forms of internationalism that linked the Poetry Book Society, the Arts Council and university English departments at the moment of decolonisation.

Eric White, Secretary and later Chairman of the Poetry Book Society, was also the chief internal advocate for Literature in the Arts Council. White had previously worked as a translator at the League of Nations in the 1930s, before taking up a role as Assistant Secretary of CEMA in the 1940s. White was the individual most responsible for brokering a permanent place for literature in the organisation. He was, for instance, the

main mediator of crucial negotiations with the Publishers Association, in order to assuage industry anxieties about the implications of a government-backed body on publishing. In 1966 he became the Arts Council's first Literature Director, a primarily administrative role not to be confused with Day-Lewis' unpaid ambassadorial work as Chair of the Literature Advisory Panel.⁴⁹ It was during this particular era that the Arts Council's standing as a defender of literature's public good came to the fore. With the leadership of impresario Arnold Goodman the Arts Council demonstrated its principled commitment to the legal, moral and financial interests of literature. Among the various initiatives Goodman's Arts Council supported were the campaigns against theatre censorship and for the reform of the 1959 Obscene Publication Act (via the *avant-garde* publisher John Calder's Defence of Literature and the Arts Society). The Arts Council also asserted the moral rights of the author by lobbying for the introduction of Public Lending Right, a royalty system on public library loans eventually introduced in 1979.

Yet even in the context of these most affirmative gestures literature's position in the Arts Council was far from certain. Echoing Keynes' earlier statements on the difficulty of justifying public funding for the "private" arts, Goodman declared in the 1970 Annual Report that literature—with the exception of poetry—could 'exist pretty well on a commercial footing' (ACGB 1970 9). By contrast, the recognition of poetry 'by a single perceptive mind' amply justified subsidy for 'an activity which can rarely find an adequate public' (ACGB 1970, 7). Goodman's statements were not the only bad news for literature by this point. The golden age for the book trade was brought to a sharp end by the global oil crisis of the early 1970s. Between 1972 and 1980 the price of paper increased by six hundred per cent, while printing costs went up by thirty per cent annually (Stevenson 2004, 145). Additional challenges came from the severe cuts to

⁴⁹ White was also father of Sarah White, wife of John la Rose and co-founder of the independent black publisher New Beacon Books. Though Eric White and La Rose maintained a 'professional distance', La Rose was exposed to the strategies of other small poetry presses at the White family home, attracting interest from Ted Hughes (Bush 2013).

public libraries and the dampening of the export trade following the end of the Traditional Market Agreement, which had awarded British publishers an exclusive monopoly on English-language sales in the Commonwealth. In these conditions Arts Council grants to small poetry presses offered something of a lifeline to poetry in Britain. The trend continued well beyond the economic turmoil of the late 1970s, as the editors of *Poetry Review*, a publication of the Poetry Society, reminded readers in the early 1990s with its cover illustration of the Arts Council crane propping up ‘subsidised press house’ (see figure 1).

Other demands of an equally pressing nature were also bearing on the Arts Council as it entered the 1970s. Pressure to account for the needs of an increasingly diverse public questioned the dominant ways in which it had defined its public duty to make culture available to all during the 1960s. In 1967 the Arts Council’s Second Royal Charter broadened its historic obligations to ‘the fine arts exclusively’ to the ‘the arts’ more generally.

To develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts; increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Great Britain; and to advise and co-operate with Departments of Our Government, local authorities and other bodies on any matters concerned whether directly or indirectly with the foregoing objects. (Quoted in White 1975, 304)

Its move from the Treasury to the Department of Education and Science reflected the increased importance placed on the Arts Council’s more broadly educational role. The Second Charter had, in effect, enacted a move from ‘a relatively enclosed and continuing culture’, to a ‘complex and interacting set of new and old arts, new and old media and institutions, new and older audiences’ (Williams 1979, 164). Critically, this broad shift had a bearing on the definitions of artistic value operative in the Arts Council. The move from a purely aesthetic to a more situated conception of value contrasted with Shils’ own

universal ideals for the CCF, and was reflected in the Arts Council's support for the community arts as a field which privileged the creative expression of groups outside the cultivated elite. Yet the new emphasis on the interests of specific communities in the Arts Council placed its underlying assumptions about the universal value and relevance of high culture under acute pressure. What was remarkable though was the embedded belief in the Arts Council's ability to adapt itself as society changed, which it posited as a natural characteristic of the semi-autonomous mode of its intervention. Though the Arts Council claimed in Annual Reports that its 'method of encouragement of the arts [...] will continue to change as society itself changes, and it is flexible enough to do so', in practice, things were rarely this easy (ACGB 1971, 14). The sociologist Jim McGuigan observed an underlying commitment to perpetuating a 'serious literature' in the Literature Panel of the 1970s, 'produced by professional writers of exceptional talent' (1981, 103).

The Arts Council's confidence in its own flexibility was linked to the associated belief that it was well-equipped to judge what the wider public that fell outside of its existing networks might be and to discern its needs. As Mphahlele had done with the CCF in the 1960s, this would be powerfully called into question in the Arts Council. This time though, the critique would emerge in light of the effects of post-war immigration on the internal composition of Britain itself and would grow stronger in the fraught era of multicultural reform that followed in British public life.

Post-war diaspora cultures and institutional indifference

Speaking at the 2004 memorial lecture for his fellow *New Left Review* colleague Raphael Samuel, Stuart Hall laid out what he regarded as the main moments for 'post-war, post-

colonial, diaspora cultures' in the national cultural life (2006, 2). Though Hall was speaking primarily of the visual arts, the broad shifts he described also mapped on clearly to developments in literature and culture more generally. Reflecting on the historical transformations that followed the Second World War whereby ethnic "outsiders" became key protagonists in the 'island story', Hall described the movements from the liberal assimilation of first generation cosmopolitan migrants that arrived in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, to the official recognition of ethnic and cultural particularity under a wider relativising public policy of multiculturalism. By the mid-1970s though, 'the whole fulcrum of the political world [...] shifted fundamentally' on the question of race (Hall 2006). The politics of cultural difference succeeded anti-colonialism as a point of mobilisation and galvanised communities at the grassroots of society. '[R]ace ha[d] finally "come home" to Britain', Hall concluded: 'it had been fully indigenized' (2006, 16–17). The transformations Hall described serve as a useful backdrop to the Arts Council's own relation, and belated recognition, of 'post-war, post-colonial diaspora cultures'. Late- and ex-colonial artists and intellectuals had, of course, worked within British artistic and cultural institutions for some time, included publicly funded ones such as the BBC. To understand the limits of cultural policy in the face of cultural politics as race progressively 'came home', Naseem Khan's path breaking report *The Arts Britain Ignores: the arts of ethnic minorities in Britain* (1976) is a useful starting point.

This was the first major intervention into the distribution of arts funding among immigrant groups in Britain. Commissioned by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Arts Council and the Community Relations Commission, Khan's report surveyed the creative activities of various cultural 'communities' resident in Britain, and argued on the basis of their potential to enrich the national culture. The category 'ethnic arts' was both broad and selective in its reach: covering the cultural activities of Bangladeshi, Indian,

Pakistani, Chinese, West Indian and African groups, as well as the Cypriot, Ukrainian and Polish ‘contributions’. Exemplary of the ethnic arts as Khan deployed them were Chinese New Year processions, West Indian street carnivals, Urdu poetry, Serbian folk music, and Greek-Cypriot theatre.⁵⁰ The term was used to argue on behalf of a struggling sub-culture treated indifferently by white-dominated liberal arts bodies that operated according to an idea of universal access to arts funding. She argued that this ‘line of “non-discrimination”’ kept creative production at a ‘self-contained amateur level’ and precluded their broader humanising effects (Khan 1976, 5). Indeed, in Khan’s view, one that we will revisit in the following chapter on the curriculum, the creative output of Britain’s immigrant groups had a clear role to play in ‘stretching knowledge and understanding’ and countering harmful racial stereotypes (Khan 1976, 129). The report advocated targeted funding and development opportunities for ethnic minority arts groups and issued lengthy recommendations to the Home Office, the Department for Education, the Arts Council, the BBC and local authorities. Reform was not only ‘socially just’ she insisted, it offered a ‘belated form of respect’ to those who contributed public funds to these bodies (Khan 1976, 133).

Unsurprisingly, Khan’s report met with a mixed response. From the perspective of the anti-racist movement a decade later, the report’s “ethnicisation” of cultural difference irreparably damaged the politics of the issue. The report prompted fierce counter-arguments by radical critics writing in the mid-1980s such as Ambivaler Sivanandan of the Institute of Race Relations, Kwesi Owusu author of *The Struggle for Black Arts in Britain* (1986) and contributors to the journals *Third Text* and *Artrage*. Speaking at an event convened by the Arts Council with the Home Office later that decade the writer James Berry summed up this position: the discourse of ‘ethnic minorities’ was ‘disparaging and separatist’ and worked to classify problem groups in

⁵⁰ Though Khan disowned the term by the late 1980s, she insisted on its necessity at the time.

Britain (quoted in ACGB 1989a, 11). From this perspective, Khan's argument for a 'benevolent [*sic*] multiculturalism' was at one with the establishment view (Araeen 1987, 23).⁵¹ According to the editor of *Third Text* Rasheed Araeen, Khan's report was an 'ameliorative gesture' on behalf of the 'Race Relations Industry', whereby the promise of greater visibility sought to mask ongoing racial discrimination at the hands of the state (1987, 19). The re-evaluation of Khan's report a decade later was inflected by the two main political realities: the sharp retreat from welfare state-era social entitlement and the emergence of 'race' as a 'political colour', and category of resistance (Sivanandan 1986, 77).

Araeen was at the centre of a series of projects designed to challenge the Eurocentric philosophies he regarded as dominating the arts establishment, and preventing the building of a joint modernity. Looking back from the vantage point of the late 1980s, he saw the ethnic determinism of Khan's terminology as symptomatic of a 'new Primitivism' in the British cultural establishment. Far from working in the interests of greater equality, it represented the 'cultural management of the desires, aspirations and demands of black people for equal status' by an institutionally embedded liberal paternalism (Araeen 1987, 23). On this analysis, the new generosity toward the arts of 'Black' peoples was the latest in a long history of attempts to incorporate disruptive elements into the cultural mainstream. The sentiments of his dissent were reflected in the demands for cultural autonomy emanating from the independent black presses established in Britain in the late 1960s. John La Rose's New Beacon Books (closely tied to the Caribbean Artists Movement) and Eric and Jessica Huntley's Bogle L'Overture sought to establish an independent, if not directly oppositional, 'Black' and Third World culture separate from the systems of validation distributed by the cultural establishment. Bogle L'Overture literally inscribed a history of black resistance into its name: an

⁵¹ See Hylton for a detailed discussion of the reception of Khan's report (Hylton 2007, chap. 2)

amalgam of the nineteenth-century Jamaican freedom fighter Paul Bogle and seventeenth-century leader of the Haitian Revolution Toussaint L'Ouverture. New Beacon was similarly committed, and sought to offer 'an independent validation of one's own culture, history, politics' (quoted in R. Harris 2003, 401). Shaped by these broader polarities, the testy relationship between the Arts Council and the realm of black publishing was illustrated most clearly at the moment of the Arts Council's conscious attempt at reform. In response to an Arts Council survey on the needs of black publishers one editor commented 'the Arts Council has never done anything for black people in the past, [...] why should we expect it to change now?' (quoted in Layton 1988).

Though Khan's critics claimed that *The Arts Britain Ignores* was readily taken up by the arts establishment 'and deferred to in all dealings with black artists', the Arts Council was slow to change (Sivanandan 1986, 74). The executive body of the Arts Council agreed as early as 1980 that a 'prima facie case' existed for 'affirmative action in support of Ethnic Arts', yet the archive shows that attempts at implementation by two conscientious staff members in 1982 were stymied (Pulford and Mackintosh 1982, 1). The impression of ineffectual stasis at the Arts Council certainly stood in sharp contrast to the Greater London Council, whose active anti-racist policy was pivotal for the Black Arts Movement in Britain in the early 1980s. To its critics it also indicated a failure to recognise the disaffection behind the racial violence at Brixton, Toxteth, Broadwater Farm and New Cross between 1981 and 1985 and the institutionalised racism in state bodies.⁵² Where the Arts Council equivocated, other bodies stepped in. Formed under the aegis of the 1976 Race Relations Act, the Commission for Racial Equality actively lobbied for reform in the existing system of arts funding.

⁵² In 1985 the Black Arts Movement forced an independent inquiry into racism at the Greater London Arts Association. Chaired by Sivanandan, the inquiry found racism at every level of the institution (GLAA 1986).

What happened next was unexpected. Overhauled by a new generation of neoliberal bureaucrats broadly aligned to the Conservative party, the Arts Council of the late 1980s underwent a radical reorientation on the multicultural question. Driven to protect the national arts culture from divisive racial and class-based politics, these new guardians of the Arts Council took on fresh responsibilities to broaden the existing systems of patronage. At the same time however, this strategic and carefully bounded amenability to the multicultural coincided with the reprise of earlier attitudes on the illegitimacy of a state-funded literature, consistent with the larger Thatcherite political project to apparently reduce the role of the state in the lives of its citizens. Thus in these unusual conditions, those who gave prominence to the multiculturalist recognition of cultural difference simultaneously placed literature under attack.

White men and burdens: Rees-Mogg on Kipling

In March 1984 Chairman of the Arts Council Sir William Rees-Mogg prefaced his introduction to *The Glory of the Garden: The Development of the Arts in England, a Strategy for a Decade* (1984) with words taken from a Rudyard Kipling poem of the same name.

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing: “Oh, how beautiful,” and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives.⁵³

Deploying the poem to frame a new policy of local governance in the Arts Council, Rees-Mogg justified the financial cutbacks required by reiterating his interpretation of the Arts Council’s original mission. Rees-Mogg was characteristic of the neoliberal

⁵³ The text as it appeared in Rees-Mogg’s preface (ACGB 1984, iii).

Conservatives leading cultural bodies such as the Arts Council and the BBC in the 1980s. Doubly committed to Thatcherite monetarism and cultural Keynesianism, in his view radical organisational restructure fell within a strong liberal belief in the arts based on Jefferson, Locke and Keynes. In his view, the ‘arguments for the arts’ were ‘either universal or untrue’. Yet his belief in a national role for the arts ‘as a necessary part of civilised life’ was not incompatible with the need as he saw it to overhaul an over-generous public subsidy. Kipling’s garden thus not only spoke universally ‘for the life of man’, it also offered ‘a fair metaphor to describe the work of the Arts Council; we can dung and we can water but we cannot create a single flower’ (Rees-Mogg 1984, vii). Rees-Mogg claimed that the Arts Council’s principal failure was the disparity it had allowed to grow between London and the regions. ‘[W]e live as two artistic nations – London and everyone else’ (Rees-Mogg 1984, v). Into the breach, *The Glory of the Garden* was designed to address long-standing issues in funding distribution by devolving responsibility from St James Square to the ‘empty beds and neglected shrubberies’ of the provinces.

Rees-Mogg’s attraction to the Kipling poem and the version of the unified nation it represented was less surprising given his background. Born into Somerset gentry in 1928, educated at the elite Charterhouse school before taking up undergraduate studies in history at Oxford, his membership of an establishment patrician class was assured from early on. Following failed attempts to get elected as a Conservative MP, he began a career in journalism at the *Financial Times* in 1952 while writing speeches for the Conservative Prime Minister Anthony Eden and was appointed editor of *The Times* in 1967 as one of the last “gentlemen editors” of Fleet Street. He occupied a number of leading public positions, including on the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Governors board of the BBC.⁵⁴ He took up the role of Arts Council Chairman in 1982 at the invitation of Margaret Thatcher—on the proviso that he could remain Vice-Chair of the BBC—

⁵⁴ Rees-Mogg’s attempts to enact similar reforms at the BBC were hampered by his establishment credentials, displayed most memorably by his decision in 1985 to ban a documentary featuring Martin McGuinness, a leading member of the Provisional IRA.

where he found it to be ‘very much in the tradition [...] established by Arnold Goodman’ (Rees-Mogg 2012, 44). Indeed, Rees-Mogg speculated that Jennie Lee had brokered generous sums to Goodman’s Arts Council from the Labour party on the basis of her status as Aneurin Bevan’s widow. Yet Rees-Mogg lacked the particular belief in the state as the only proper guardian of culture’s autonomy held by both Matthew Arnold and Keynes. In his own view the founding ethos of the Arts Council (‘to give courage, confidence and opportunity’ rather than ‘censor’) would undoubtedly benefit from cutbacks to ‘centralised bureaucracy’ (Rees-Mogg 1984, vi). For him this meant courting ‘complementary’ corporate sponsorship, much to the discomfort of those within the Arts Council from an earlier era (Rees-Mogg 2012, 245).

Ironically given Rees-Mogg’s interests and his choice of epigraph, Literature was the most significant casualty of the financial cuts enacted by new strategy for national cultural development. The *Glory of the Garden* cut the Literature budget by 40% from £898,500 in 1985 to £450,000 in 1986—just 0.5% of the Arts Council’s income that year—and declared ‘subsidy for literature other than poetry’ as ‘highly marginal’.

English Literature is sustained by a large and profitable commercial publishing industry. It is a basic ingredient in the school curriculum. It is available to the public through the public library system. In these circumstances, the impact of the Arts Council’s subsidy for literature other than poetry is highly marginal. (ACGB 1984, 29)

Such declarations were clearly questionable. For one thing, to suppose that commercial publishers and their independent counterparts shared a conception of literary value was naïve at best. The caretaking role assigned to the public library system and to the curriculum in *Glory* was equally misplaced. As the following chapter will show, it was often private examination boards that benefitted commercially from literature’s place as a ‘basic ingredient’ in the curriculum. Not only were the financial returns to authors via the

Public Lending Right minuscule and incremental but neither could it be claimed that either the school curriculum or public libraries had a special allegiance to works of literature that were not commercially viable. That schools, commercial publishers, or libraries might support works of literary merit was entirely incidental. The Arts Council's disowning of its literary responsibilities had a powerful symbolic effect. As a member of the Literary Advisory Panel put it at the time, 'why should educational authorities ... support literature when the Arts Council did not[?]' (ACGB 1986a, 6). The special case for poetry indicated once again how its exceptional status managed to survive otherwise hostile circumstances. The prospects were bleak indeed and Literature 'embattled ... as it never had been before'.

Glory was not devoid of moral responsibility, though. On the contrary, the Kipling poem actually served a much larger function: heralding a new era of multicultural recognition in the Arts Council. The 'requirements of a multicultural society' became one of fourteen new funding criteria, alongside 'employment opportunities extended to members of ethnic minority groups' (ACGB 1984, 6). In this respect then, *Glory* witnessed the Arts Council take on a role as "gardener" of the national culture to powerful effect. For Rees-Mogg the poem laid out an apparently democratic and inclusive idea of a nation state that 'occupieth all who c[a]me'. Indeed, his vision to offset the 'magnificent display at the centre' came alive through the careful tending of 'empty beds and neglected shrubberies' (Rees-Mogg 1984, v). Yet if the candour with which he used poetry to negate all responsibility to literature was striking, Rees-Mogg's belief in his status as a privileged reader (and user) of literature was also evident. Indeed, oversights in his literary judgements precluded the persuasiveness of his case, and demonstrated instead the problems allusion could create for the alluder.

The original meaning of ‘The Glory of the Garden’ was shaped considerably by the context of its original publication: in C.L.R. Fletcher’s controversial *A School History of England* (1911). The poem was the exhortatory finale to a set of twenty-three poems by Kipling that followed Fletcher’s quasi-historical narrative. Banned in several colonial and ex-colonial countries for its revisionist history and racist stereotypes of the Irish and inhabitants of the West Indies, Fletcher’s text also fell afoul of the Board of Education in Britain. Debated in the House of Commons, it was castigated for its ‘low and vulgar tone’ and ‘misunderstanding of Darwin’; the Board of Education concluded that the text was ‘by no means suitable for children in public elementary schools’ (House of Commons 1911). Rees-Mogg’s deployment of Kipling as the poet of ‘The Ballad of East and West’ to inaugurate a new era of multicultural recognition was striking, especially given what the poem’s original meaning did to consolidate ideas of the imperial nation state, replete with ‘statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by’ (Kipling 1930, line 3).

All the same, that the poem was tasked with a national burden distinctly different from Kipling’s own was also deeply ironic. Indeed, it had unforeseen resonances. By privileging the proclaimer the ‘White Man’s burden’ in this way, Rees-Mogg foregrounded the moral and social responsibility that underwrote the multicultural cause. Kipling’s ‘enlightened’, ‘adaptable’, and ‘ever-vigilant’ public official was perhaps not so far from Rees-Mogg’s own belated altruism in bringing multicultural reform to the Arts Council against all expectations (Boehmer 1995, 42). The possibility that ideas of the literary might in fact hinder rather than help his cause—the glory of the garden, after all, ‘abideth not in words’—was as lost on Rees-Mogg as it had been Kipling.

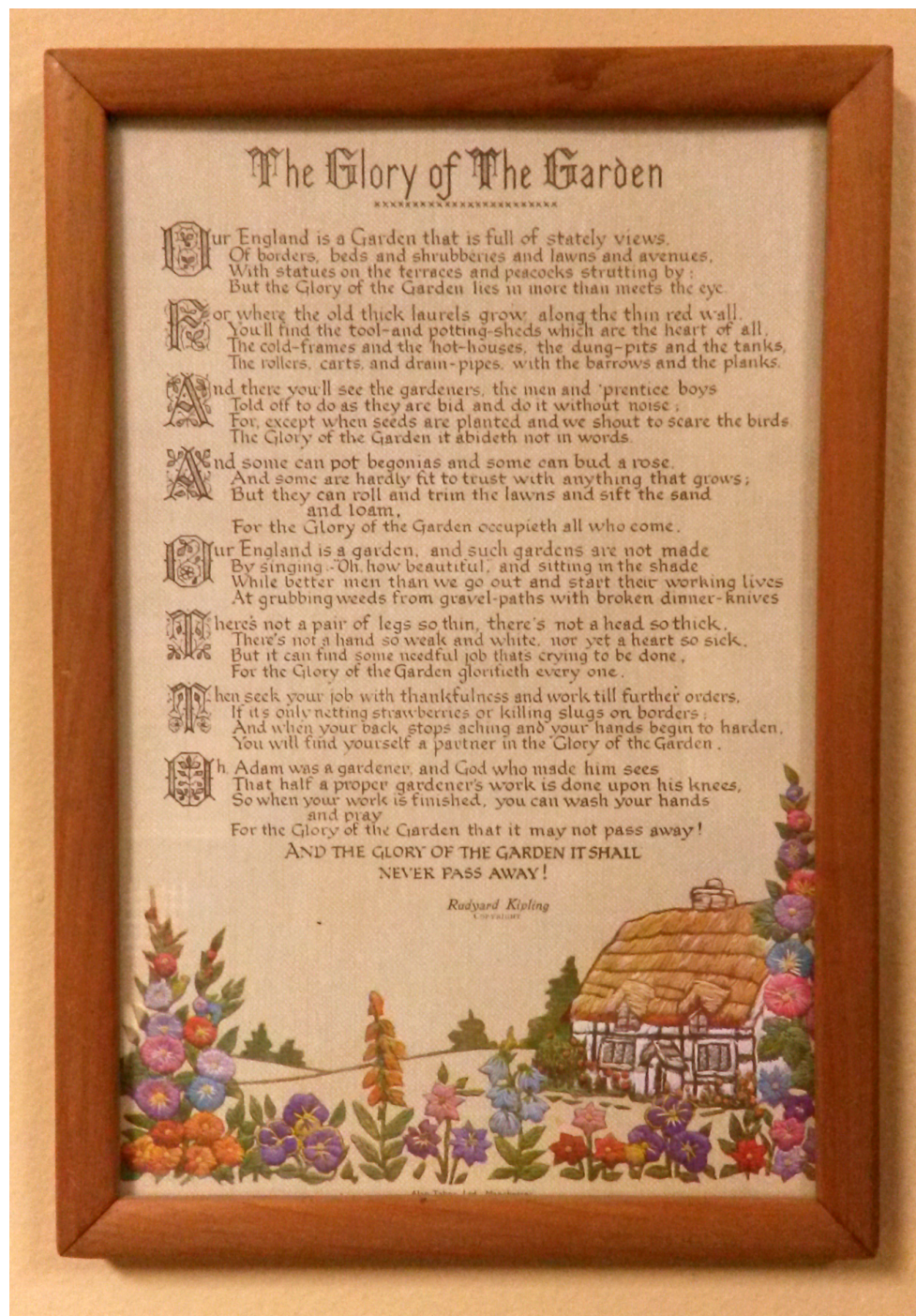


Figure 12. Embroidered version of 'The Glory of the Garden' on display in the Kipling Room at the University of Cape Town. This unattributed piece formed part of an extensive donation of items by Kipling enthusiast John Scott Ivan McGregor, who settled in South Africa in the early 1920s.

In creating a new link in the chain of citation, Rees-Mogg created accidental allusions of its own. Was it possible to hear his wish to see ‘the whole garden in bloom, and all the people walking through it to enjoy the flowers’ without also hearing echoes of Mao’s own declarations to let “a hundred flowers bloom” (Rees-Mogg 1984, vii)?

Guardians of the multicultural

The Glory of the Garden constituted an important, if anomalous, moment in British cultural development in which the Conservatives of the Arts Council became temporary guardians of the multicultural. Neither would it necessarily be the last: as the next chapter discusses, the agenda for a ‘national’ curriculum under the Conservatives would be considerably disrupted by multicultural interests. The Arts Council was praised by the Commission for Racial Equality for its ‘new found recognition’ of the value Britain’s ethnic minorities offered to the nation (Baker 1985, 7). That this explicit avowal of the multicultural had occurred under a Conservative government was not entirely without precedent. Khan, for instance, had noted the Conservative Party’s amenability to her research requests in the mid-1970s (1976, 131). Bruce King has also commented on how the Thatcher campaign slogan ‘Labour says he’s black, Tories say he’s British’, took ‘white middle-class behaviour as the norm’ to ‘transform [...] racial exclusion into social and economic inclusion’ (2004, 13:160). Yet while the decision to include the poem was undoubtedly Rees-Mogg’s ‘signature’, in practice his role was to authorise the reforms of others.

Luke Rittner’s appointment to the role of Secretary-General in 1983 has been read as evidence of the progressive ‘Thatcherising [of] the Arts Council’ in the 1980s (Wu 2002, 65). Yet while Rittner’s credentials seem to confirm this reading—he was founder

of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts and had a profile to encourage corporate sponsorship in the Arts Council—his role in the institution went beyond the purely business-minded or straightforwardly ideological. Indeed, his attempts to introduce a culture of enterprise in the Arts Council ran alongside efforts to implement the new multicultural policies. In 1986 he wrote to each of the Arts Council's beneficiaries, including publishers and literary organizations, to request 'proposals for action plans in the sphere of their own activities' (Rittner 1986). Yet though Rittner lent considerable institutional authority to the implementation of the new policies, the most significant figure in the process of opening out Arts Council sponsorship was Anthony Everitt. Everitt's experience of working in the English regions as a former director of the East Midlands Art Board prepared him well for a role as Deputy Secretary-General post-*Glory*. Indeed he had particular expertise in the realm of multicultural policy. Earlier in the decade Everitt had implemented a multicultural arts strategy in the diverse areas around Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham, taking the proportion of the ethnic minority population in the region as a quota for spending. Arriving at the Arts Council in 1985, Everitt unearthed evidence of earlier attempts at reform in the Arts Council, and with the encouragement of both Rittner and Rees-Mogg, developed a case for 'timely [...] positive action' on a national level (Everitt 1985). He presented his 'Ethnic Arts - Proposals for Development' paper at the December meeting of the Arts Council's executive body.

There was much high quality Asian and Afro-Caribbean art which merited support, and it was clearly not receiving its fair share of public funding. [...] [T]here were signs throughout the country, and particularly in London, that this issue was reaching explosion point, and prudence, if nothing else, suggested that it would be timely for Council to take positive action. (Everitt 1985)

We will revisit Everitt's specific rationale for supporting 'Asian and Afro-Caribbean' artists in further detail later on in the chapter. For now, what was important was that his

own experience in the East Midlands had led him to believe that ‘the artistic richness of a multi-cultural society’ was of just as much benefit to white audiences as it was to those outside the prevailing system of prestige (Everitt 1988).

Repackaging Rees-Mogg’s retrogressive vision of the national culture in *Glory*, Everitt oversaw the Arts Council’s development of a more apologetic tone targeted at specific social and cultural groups. Publicity statements heralding the Arts Council’s change of attitude drew almost verbatim from Everitt’s own proposals. The epigraph to the Arts Council’s new Ethnic Arts Action Plan attributed to Rees-Mogg was exemplary.

It is clear that there are many fine Afro-Caribbean and Asian artists working in this country. They *merit equitable treatment*, and their valuable contribution to the creativity and vitality of the nation’s cultural life is not yet fully exploited. (ACGB 1986b)⁵⁵

Everitt’s Ethnic Arts Action Plan was approved unanimously by the Arts Council and formally instituted in April 1986. It set targets on employment, the reform of Advisory Panels and staff training. Among its most controversial aspects were the requirements that all organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding participate, and the specification that every Arts Council department allocate a minimum of 4% of its budget to ‘the Afro-Caribbean and Asian arts’ by the end of two years (ACGB 1986b, sec. 1). The Action Plan made clear that while *Glory* referred broadly to ‘ethnic minority artists and organizations’, for its purposes those ‘whose origins are non-Western’ took priority, specifically the ‘Afro-Caribbean and Asian Communities’. It promptly established a monitoring committee to oversee the new policy, chaired by one of the newest members to the Arts Council executive, the South African visual artist Gavin Jantjes.

⁵⁵ With the exception of the italicised words, the statement came entirely from Everitt. It was also featured as a quotation in the press release ‘Arts Council Launches Ethnic Minority Arts Action Plan 4% Funding Target Over Two Years’ 5 Feb 1986’.

In addition to the Council-wide monitoring committee, the Action Plan also required departments to recruit experts to ‘aid’ in the ‘process of education’ (ACGB 1986e). In May 1986 the Literature Panel gained two additional members. The recruitment of these individuals added further complication to the question of what it meant for ‘Afro-Caribbean and Asian Communities’ to find themselves ‘partner[s] in the Glory of the Garden’ (Kipling 1930, line 28)

‘Aids in the process of education’: Alastair Niven and David Dabydeen

Literature scholar Alastair Niven and Caribbean writer and academic David Dabydeen were extremely eligible candidates to advise the Arts Council’s Literature department on this new area of concern. Indeed, their involvement would also draw out the more subtle demands being made upon the literary at the time of multiculturalism.

An academic specialising in African and South Asian literature in English, Alastair Niven’s trajectory in the Commonwealth academy reflected developments in English as a discipline more generally. A Commonwealth scholar at the University of Ghana in the late 1960s, Niven completed a PhD at the University of Leeds in 1972 on ‘the relationship between the individual and his community’ under the guidance of Norman Jeffares.⁵⁶ Together with Jeffares he helped establish the study of Commonwealth literature at the University of Stirling in the 1970s, hosting the 1975 Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies conference, prior to roles at the Association of Commonwealth Universities in the mid-1980s. In addition to his academic work on Elechi Amadi, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and others, Niven also

⁵⁶ Niven met Jeffares at the University of Ghana in 1967. According to Niven, Jeffares arrived as an external examiner and duly proclaimed ‘[y]ou must do a Ph.D. and have a lectureship in the School of English!’ (Niven 2005).

had valuable credentials in things that were more broadly cultural. Between 1978 and 1984 he was Director General of the Africa Centre in Covent Garden, established in 1961 as a “shop-window for Africa in London”. The Africa Centre functioned as a vibrant hub for the African diaspora in Britain. It not only served as a prime location for talks, readings and performances by eminent guests and emerging new figures—there was considerable overlap with the CCF networks connected to Dennis Duerden’s Transcription Centre—it also oversaw key moments in the development of African literature in Britain and internationally. The chosen venue for launches of AWS titles and the first Africa Book Fair in 1982, in 1979 the Africa Centre also hosted the inaugural conference of the Association for the Teaching of Caribbean, African, Asian, and Associated Literatures (ATCAL).

Niven was attuned to the new directions in Arts Council thinking. His commitment to a clear set of liberal principles had, in any case, been naturalised by a succession of leading roles in British and Commonwealth cultural institutions. At the same time, his experience at the Africa Centre had made Niven deeply conscious of the complexities involved in representing black interests. Not only did he regard the political neutrality he was required to maintain at the Africa Centre increasingly untenable in light of developments in South Africa, but Niven had also been responsible for chairing the Literature Panel of the Greater London Arts Association amid larger allegations of racism. He expressed this particular self-consciousness at the Arts Council, registering to the Literature Advisory Panel his discomfort at discussing black literary interests in a context in which ‘all Panel members but one was white’ (ACGB 1986d). At the same time, Niven was also aware of the new opportunities presented by his joining the Arts Council at this critical juncture. Niven would also stage his own qualifications as a mediator of residual hostility against the Arts Council in his later guise as Literature director. Attempting to secure John La Rose’s backing for a new Arts Council initiative

in the realm of black publishing, Niven emphasised his vision to see the Arts Council underwrite the development of 'black and multi-cultural writing'.

I came to the Arts Council eighteen months ago partly because I could see an opportunity to rehabilitate literature here—it had been allowed to dwindle almost to the point of disappearance—and partly because I was convinced that the Council could play a unique role in assisting the promotion of black and multi-cultural writing. You must take this on trust, though we have known each other long enough for me to think that as far as my own credentials go you will be prepared to give me the benefit of the doubt. (Niven 1989)

For all of Niven's apparently clear commitments, David Dabydeen's perception of the role he might play on the Literature Advisory Panel as its only non-white member was less certain. A lecturer at the University of Warwick's Centre for Caribbean Studies, Dabydeen had been appointed for the particular purpose of advising the Arts Council on how it might support 'young black writers who wanted to develop a Black British Literature' (ACGB 1986a). Dabydeen was as suitably qualified for this task as he was evasive about some of its assumptions. He was particularly well-placed given the fact that the Arts Council wished such writers to show an 'interest in English Literature as well as the Literature of their own countries of origin'. Works such as *Hogarth's blacks* (1985) and *The Black Presence in English Literature* (1985), and postcolonial "writings back" such as the Commonwealth Poetry Prize-winning *Slave Song* (1984) and the long poem 'Turner', had helped establish his status as one of the leading critical and creative documenters of how the colonial encounter between Britain and the Caribbean shaped language, literature, art, and culture on both sides.

Though conscious of the opportunities presented by the Arts Council's amenability to black British literature, Dabydeen was also troubled by the pressures he saw bearing on literature by the new reforms. In his view, the urgent 2% budget shift for 1986/87 was 'almost impossible' given the financial constraints of the department (ACGB 1986f). More importantly though, Dabydeen was wary of the possible pitfalls such labels

involved. Thus while he corrected the Literature Advisory Panel's outmoded terminology—replacing 'Afro-Caribbean' with 'African, Caribbean and Asian'—like Mphahlele, he was uneasy about working according to the 'categorical' (ACGB 1986f). Among other things, Dabydeen was conscious of the legal difficulties the Arts Council might get itself into over the issue through targeted sponsorship. On a broader note, for Dabydeen the 'art of labelling' was 'fraught with difficulties and dangers'; the label 'British' first required definition before the term 'black' could be applied as an adjective (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe 1988, 10). He balanced a practical concern to strengthen black and Asian publishing with a principled commitment to what he took to be the Arts Council's proper role in upholding a high quality literature. An Honorary Patron of Dangeroo Press, Dabydeen produced a detailed outline of black and Asian publishers in Britain and recommended the Panel express its support by underwriting specific publications, subsidising editorial wages, or encouraging mainstream publishers to 'adopt a small press' (1988). Crucially, he insisted that financial assistance only be given to 'those of sufficient quality to merit the Council's support' (ACGB 1986f). Above all, the Literature Panel 'must encourage excellence'.

It was essential that quality control should be exercised and that the standard of work produced by many of the small black presses was poor. Public money must be spent properly and he had seen a great deal of money wasted by the GLC in support of ethnic arts. (ACGB 1986f)

Not only would it be 'patronising to support bad black writers' he concluded; to 'institute practices which facilitated bad literary expression' also undermined the Arts Council's autonomy.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Dabydeen was also a willing critic of the ways the official discourse on multiculturalism masked deeper issues. In his 1991 essay 'On Cultural Diversity', he described 'cultural diversity' as a 'cosy term, evolved out of blend of European post-colonial guilt and enlightenment, to justify tolerance of our presence in the metropolis' (Dabydeen 1991, 110).

The predicament facing Literature in 1986 was multifaceted and unusual. Having barely withstood *Glory's* attacks on its legitimacy, Literature's new responsibility to help 'develop a body of black British literature' stood starkly against its existing track record (ACGB 1986e). The discrepancy between the strong institutional pressure to act and the financial realities of the department presented urgent difficulties. The fault-lines between the Arts Council's two founding commitments to excellence and public access had never been so clear, indeed by this stage all three of its commitments (aesthetic excellence, public accessibility and inter-governmental co-operation) would be publicly tested.

Winners and losers: the 1986 writers' bursaries

Given the conflicting forces bearing upon the Literature department, the Panel's response was innovative. The principal problem remained how the department could maintain its existing commitments to prestigious literary outlets such as *The London Review of Books* and the Poetry Society while also making clear its positive stance toward black and Asian writing. The most conspicuous gesture of goodwill was a literary prize in celebration, for instance, of the upcoming Caribbean Focus Year convened by the Commonwealth Institute. Yet without the requisite funds, the Panel settled on repurposing its annual writers' bursaries. Not only did the bursaries represent one of the most closed areas of Arts Council sponsorship, their combined value of £15,000 would 'demonstrate dramatically' Literature's will to 'contribute positively' to new policy (ACGB 1985).⁵⁸

Though this was hardly the first time writers' grants had been awarded to those outside Europe—writers including Sam Selvon, Zulfikar Ghose, V.S. Naipaul, Jean Rhys

⁵⁸ It would constitute a 3% budget shift, instead of the requisite 2%.

and Salman Rushdie had received awards since the 1960s—the exclusive targeting of specific cultural identities for sponsorship was the first of its kind in the history of a state-funded literary culture in Britain.⁵⁹ Yet the prospect of using the bursaries to perform the Arts Council’s openness to perceived cultural “outsiders” was not regarded in entirely positive terms. For some it constituted a ‘panic gesture’ that undermined literature’s autonomy from broader social forces. On the other hand, Dabydeen warned of the ‘possibl[ility] that to advertise bursaries for African, Caribbean and Asian writers only was a case of racial discrimination’ (ACGB 1986f), and one that obliged Literature to ‘do even better for the ethnic minorities’ in the years to come (ACGB 1986g). With noted reservations and the promise of a disclaimer explaining the one-off focus that year, Literature advertised the three £5,000 bursaries in the both the ‘ethnic’ and mainstream press.

Dabydeen’s concerns over the questionable merits of an “all black” literary competition were partly confirmed. Judged by Panel members Paul Bailey and Jamie Muir, and *Artrage* editor E.A. Markham in a special expert role, the panel noted that of the thirty five applicants only half were ‘worth taking seriously’ (ACGB 1986c). The rest indicated ‘no literary ability or promise whatsoever’. Of the eight clear contenders—including Hanif Kureishi, Ben Okri and Caryl Phillips—they selected three winners: poet and translator Mahmood Jamal, novelist Balraj Khanna, and Grace Nichols, winner of the 1983 Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Jamal was editor of *The Penguin Book of Modern Urdu Poetry* (1986) and had applied for funds to translate Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Khanna was awarded the bursary for a second Indian Independence novel, and Grace Nichols was regarded as ‘a writer well worthy of a bursary’, though the judging panel were less enthusiastic about her proposal for a Caribbean epic poem (ACGB 1986c). Before the winners were

⁵⁹ An Arts Council bursary had financed Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1983).

announced however, a complaint objecting to the unusual nature of the competition that year disrupted proceedings significantly. Fiona Pitt-Kethley, a white English writer ineligible for a bursary, claimed that the Arts Council had acted unlawfully by using cultural and racial identity as a criterion. The Arts Council's specifications she argued, sounded 'remarkably like racial discrimination' (Pitt-Kethley 1986b).

I have just been stopped from applying for a writer's grant because my skin is the wrong colour. [...] Of course there are plenty of good black British writers, they have always been free to apply for awards in other years, so there is obviously no justifiable reason for this year's different ruling. It seems to me that the Arts Council is breaking the law on employment by advertising in this way. [...] Is there anything that your department can do to get the Arts Council to open their award scheme to all British writers, whatever their colour? (Pitt-Kethley 1986c)

Pitt-Kethley's movement between categories of nationality, cultural identity and race demonstrated her tendency to mistake the specificities of each. At the same time it revealed what she saw as the central issue at hand. Incensed by the official explanation of a last minute decision to prioritise writers from these cultural groups, Pitt-Kethley promptly filed a complaint with the Commission for Racial Equality, urging their scrutiny of 'the discrimination policies in operation at the Arts Council' (1986c). To understand the particular logic driving Pitt-Kethley's critique, and how it related to wider tensions around multicultural policy, we need to situate her more fully in British literary culture of the 1980s.

Fiona Pitt-Kethley and the British literary field

Fiona Pitt-Kethley carved out a provocative and apparently feminist position for herself in literary culture of the 1980s. Well-known as a writer of erotic poetry and prose she made her name with her fifth collection and the first to be published by a major

publisher. *Sky Ray Lolly* (1986) enjoyed moderate commercial success as one of *The Guardian's* feminist books of the year. Pitt-Kethley's self-consciously styled brand of poetry appeared in everything from *Spare Rib* to *The London Review of Books* and earned her the title of 'the Christina Rossetti of blow-jobs and Brewer's droop' (Tonkin 1991). Examined more closely though, her poetry was less concerned with maintaining a feminist identity politics than crafting a deliberately disruptive voice designed to test the limits of bourgeois literary culture. The title poem, 'Sky Ray Lolly' was characteristic. The poem describes a young child rudely appropriating a rocket-shaped ice-lolly ('red, yellow / and green striped, pointed, dripping down between / my legs') much to the discomfort of a passing 'civil servant type' (Pitt-Kethley 1986a). The offending item rapidly confiscated by parents, the poem concludes with the lines 'the world still sees me as a nasty kid / usurping maleness. A foul brat to be / smacked down by figures of authority.' Such sentiments were symptomatic of a wider preoccupation with censorship. For Pitt-Kethley the experience of being 'deprivi[ed] of colour' and 'left with [the] stick', as she put it in 'Sky Ray Lolly', was wide ranging (Pitt-Kethley 1986a). It included the linguistic prohibitions of the BBC's 'De-effer' as described in the poem 'Censorship', and the financial constraints enacted by literary agent fees and VAT in 'The Book Trade' (Pitt-Kethley 2008, 78).

Though Pitt-Kethley was occasionally touted as the voice of female autonomy—as in *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing* (1999)—such judgements tended to overlook the broader difficulties associated with her position (Sage 1999, 150). Her desire to market her literary services in the pages of magazines such as the *LRB* also extended to a willingness to lobby institutions for her share of the privileges. Pitt-Kethley was pragmatically committed to the idea of a free market of competition between authors, publishers and readers. In a piece duly titled 'Gissa Job' by the editor, she insisted that 'advertising seemed to work' for 'whatever a person has to offer' (Pitt-Kethley 1988b).

According to her perspective of the literary field, literary value was reflected in generous sales, critical recognition and commissions. By taking aim at the system of favours and exclusions she saw as prevailing in the male-dominated literary world, her overarching aim was to unveil ‘the beastliness behind the bourgeois’ (Bennett 1986).

Indeed, the Arts Council dispute was one of a series of conflicts between Pitt-Kethley and the British literary establishment. For Pitt-Kethley, the male literary elite she felt dominated the world of English poetry was characterised by the judge of the Gregory awards, the publisher John Fuller, and Secretary-General of the Society of Authors Mark Le Fanu. In 1984 she alleged that Society of Authors had ‘maliciously misinterpreted’ her feminist stance in adjudications for the 1984 Gregory Awards (Pitt-Kethley 1984).

Bloodaxe Books also received a special mention in her self-published collection *London* (1984) for breaking contract, and in 1995 Pitt-Kethley alleged that winner of the 1984 Gregory Award Carol Ann Duffy had plagiarised her poem ‘Evolution’ in the Mrs Darwin poem for *The World’s Wife* (1999) (Pitt-Kethley 1995). What made the incident with the Society of Authors significant though was the way it drew upon Pitt-Kethley’s feelings of exclusion from the male literary elite she saw as presiding over English poetry. With characteristic directness she declared ‘the literary world’s a drinking club for men / and females aren’t invited to that den’ (quoted in Childs 1999, 163). In other words, while Pitt-Kethley was committed to the civic rights of the writer as an individual, she was also willing to act on behalf of women writers ‘in the fight against an unfair system’.

As to my general aims, I would like to see poetry taken seriously as a profession. It certainly isn't in Britain at the moment. I am concerned with improving the rights of writers in general and women writers in particular. I have campaigned extensively against discrimination in poetry publishing and literary awards. (Quoted in “Biographical Note” 2014)

Pitt-Kethley appeared to move between her dual commitments to the professionalised individual writer, and the group identities of ‘women writers’, and later ‘white writers’,

with relative ease. Her allegation emanated from the clash of her own commitment to a process of free competition between individuals—itself resonant of the neoliberal economic culture of the time—and the Arts Council’s commitment to a set of newfound responsibilities. In her view the Arts Council had fundamentally disrupted the process of fair competition by preventing ‘white writers’ from applying for the bursaries (Pitt-Kethley 1989c). If the category women writers was contested, her claim to represent white writers in the Arts Council dispute had risks of its own. With Pitt-Kethley insistent on taking the issue to the courts, the predicament facing literature in the Arts Council was about to become overshadowed by a much trickier set of issues. Indeed, to understand properly what was at stake, we need to revisit the bigger challenge that multiculturalism presented to the liberal democratic state.

Multiculturalism and the problem of equality

The conflict between Pitt-Kethley and the Arts Council mapped onto larger debates about the nature of equality in the multicultural democracies of the West, and one that played out not only in state cultural policy, but also in state education, as we will see in the following chapter. In a very basic sense Pitt-Kethley’s like-for-like conception of equality as the consistent treatment of individuals rejected the Arts Council’s efforts to redistribute opportunities among neglected groups. In this respect, the problems for the Arts Council resonated with the difficulties arising from multiculturalism, both as a normative idea and a public policy, in Western liberal states more generally.

As a set of public policies, multiculturalism sought to address the increasingly multi-ethnic social realities of the West, by cultivating broad heterogeneous national

cultures characterised by recognition rather than assimilation.⁶⁰ The egalitarian embrace of multiculturalism was often rationalised on the basis of how apparently “fair” or consistent treatment between individuals could in fact entrench inequality. To its critics, however, the assumption of a state or local authority responsibility to affirm group identities was deeply problematic. On one level it denoted separate social and cultural enclaves that appeared to bypass a shared national culture. On a more subtle level, it also assigned stability to notions of cultural or ethnic community.

What it meant for the state to be a guardian of equality in culturally diverse societies of the late twentieth century was the topic of fierce philosophical and political debate. In this context one of the strongest counter-arguments came from those who pointed out how multicultural policies actually undermined the system of individual rights on which the liberal democratic state itself rested. Among the most vocal liberal critics of multiculturalism was the political philosopher Brian Barry. From his perspective, the state had no claim on ensuring a fair distribution of results even if it was obliged to ensure that opportunities were fairly distributed across society (Barry 2005, 4). Unevenness in the representation of opportunities, however unfortunate, was the outcome of individual choice and thus legitimate. Indeed, far from assimilating difference, the protection of free choice guaranteed that the same rules applied to all under the law. Yet for Bhikhu Parekh, author of *Rethinking Multiculturalism* (2000), the relationship between culture and equality required a more nuanced approach. Unlike Barry’s liberal individualism, Parekh’s communitarian alternative developed the kind of argument made by Mphahlele in the 1960s. Being ‘at once both natural and cultural’, Parekh maintained that people shared a ‘common human identity but in a culturally mediated manner’ (2000, 239). Since neither took priority over the other, he argued that

⁶⁰ Ali Rattansi has described multiculturalism as the ‘policies by central states and local authorities that have been put in place to manage and govern the new multiethnicity created by non-white immigrant populations after the end of the Second World War’ (Rattansi 2011, 12).

any definition of equality as involving uniform treatment would inevitably result in what he called ‘unfortunate consequences.’

As in these larger debates, so it was for Pitt-Kethley and the Arts Council. Positioned at near-opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum, one asserted the autonomy of the individual in society while the other avowed the rights of groups to receive differentiated treatment. In an article for *The Independent* titled ‘What about the special needs of a poet struggling without funds?’ Pitt-Kethley sought to illustrate the absurdity of ‘Arts Council folly’ on multiculturalism. She cited an Arts Council scheme in which the criterion of ‘the multicultural society’ had perversely shaped a competition for children’s literature (Pitt-Kethley 1989d). ‘Beatrix Potter wouldn’t have stood a chance unless rabbits are an ethnic minority’, she claimed (Pitt-Kethley 1989d); ‘who is to say that the Council won’t limit next year’s grants similarly to a section of the literary community [...] Men, Tories, Mormons’ (Pitt-Kethley 1987a). Pitt-Kethley’s staunch understanding of equality as consistency clearly conflicted with the Arts Council’s avowal of equality of opportunity, and yet that she used a populist critique of multiculturalism was interesting. For all the confusion of her ideals and likely opportunism, Pitt-Kethley’s allegation of discrimination also revealed how the multicultural had become embedded in the Arts Council as a seemingly unquestioned virtue.

The actual allegation itself centred on the breaching of the 1976 Race Relations Act, a key piece of anti-discrimination legislation brought in to address the effects of post-war immigration in Britain. Roy Jenkins’ now famous speech to the National Committee of Commonwealth Immigrants in May 1966 introduced the concept of ‘equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ and began the official shift from assimilation to integration by the state (1967, 267). The 1976 Act was

rooted primarily in this idea of equal opportunities. Designed to extend the existing provisions that prohibited racial discrimination in housing, employment and public services, the Race Relations Act also instituted a new non-departmental government body, the Commission for Racial Equality. More significantly perhaps, the Act established a new precedent whereby public bodies had a duty to promote racial harmony and contribute actively to “good” race relations. The CRE presented citizens with a channel to the courts, the judicial principle enshrined in British common law. By the 1980s though, the idea of equal opportunities had lost much of its political legitimacy. For many on the political right, the CRE directly symbolised state interference.

The Pitt-Kethley complaint was hardly the first point of contact between the CRE and the Arts Council. As a guardian of racial harmony the CRE’s conception of the arts related to their role in improving social relations. Indeed, having long called for the Arts Council to reach out to ethnic minority groups, the CRE registered its ‘enlighten[ed]’ if unexpected policy reversal (Baker 1985, 6). As unlikely as the allegation seemed at the time, the Arts Council had been in clear breach of the law on discriminatory advertising. At the same time the prospect of adjudicating on behalf of a white complainant posed some clear benefits to the CRE, including the chance to act against the prevailing norm. Following a lengthy review process, in May 1987 the CRE grasped hold of the rare opportunity to reinforce its impartiality as an adjudicator of race equality by showing how anti-discrimination law worked both ways. Astonished, the Arts Council, responded by reiterating its view of the allegation as a slur on the efforts it had made in good faith to reform the exclusivity of literary culture. Indeed, the intervening three years had been marked by a strong continuity at the Arts Council. Lord Rees-Mogg’s tenure as Chairman was renewed for a further two years, and in 1988 Niven was appointed to take up the role of Literature Director. The CRE’s decision enacted a rare and anomalous moment in which two of the most liberal organs of the British state were opposed in the courts. As

one reporter put it, it was ‘a clash of liberal giants: the Arts Council against the Commission for Racial Equality’ (Mandrake 1989).

‘A Clash of Liberal Giants’: Helen Fiona Pitt-Kethley vs. Arts Council of Great Britain (1989)

Exactly three years after the Literature Advisory Panel had taken its original decision on the bursaries, *Helen Fiona Pitt-Kethley vs. Arts Council of Great Britain* was convened at Westminster County Court on 21 and 22 September 1989. For the prosecution the merit of the case was its clarity. Thanks to the CRE, Pitt-Kethley was represented in court by Kunan Menon, future Chair of the Employment Tribunal and a barrister well known for his role in bringing the first successful claim under the 1976 Act. According to Menon, there was ‘no doubt’ that the Arts Council had contravened the law by restricting the bursaries to black and Asian writers (Menon 1988). Section 20 of the Race Relations Act stated explicitly that discrimination in the provision of public services on the basis of race was unlawful.

It is unlawful for any person concerned with the provision (for payment or not) of goods, facilities or services to the public or a section of the public to discriminate against a person who seeks to obtain or use those goods, facilities or services [...] by refusing or deliberately omitting to provide him with any of them. (*Race Relations Act 1976 Ch. 74* 1976, sec. 20)

‘Prima facie’ Menon argued, the Arts Council was in clear infringement, however well-intended its efforts may have been (Menon 1988, 2).⁶¹

⁶¹ ‘The Plaintiff’s case is very strong and she should succeed unless the Defendants can convince the Court that they can make out their defence under section 35 of the Act. [...] Going by past experience relating to expert evidence, I am of the view that the Defendants will have a difficult task in convincing the Court [...]. As things stand at the moment, I have no doubt that the Plaintiff will succeed in proving racial discrimination’ (Menon 1988, 4).

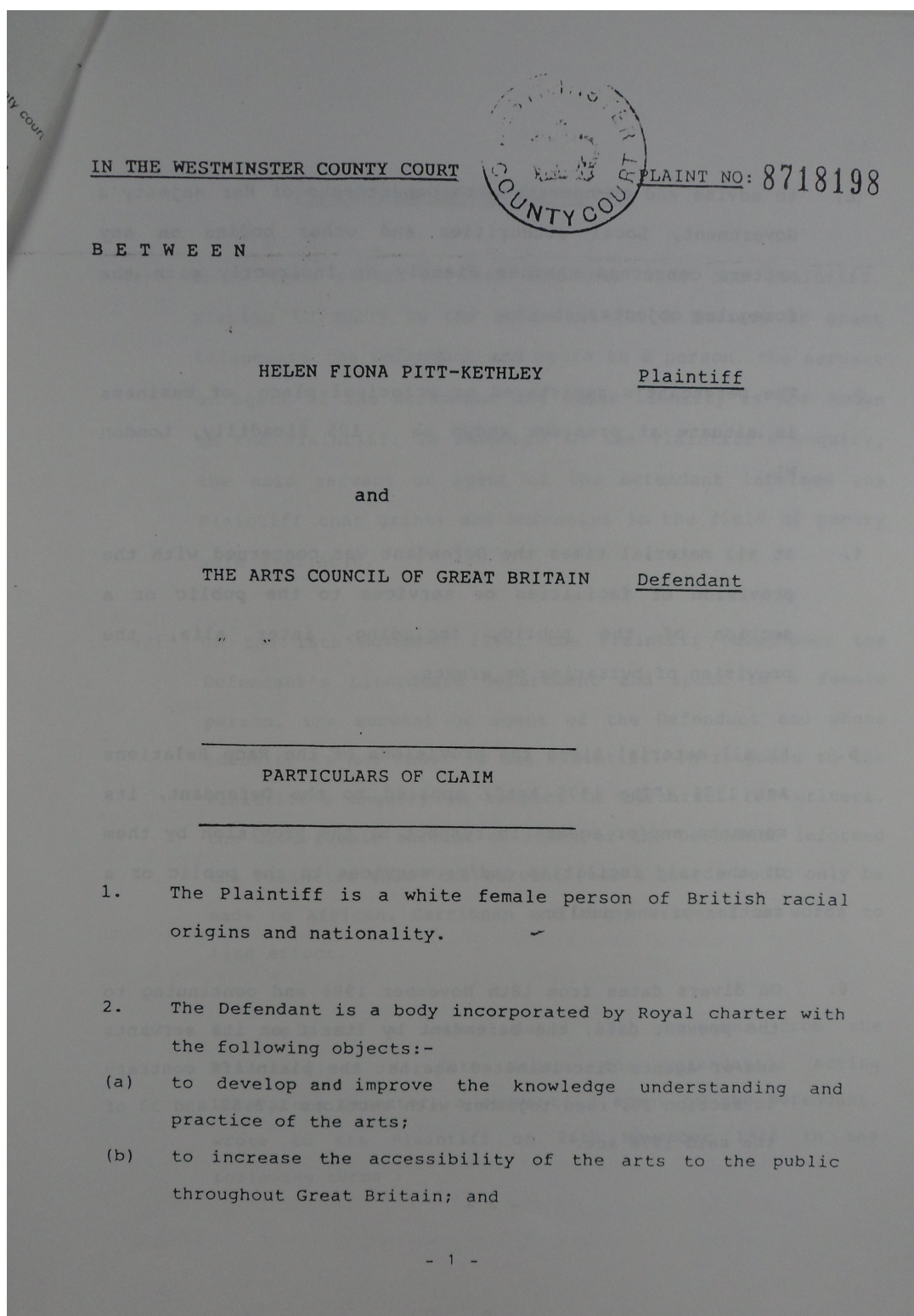


Figure 13. Court particulars.

The defence took a different view. Led by high profile City law firm Bird & Bird and represented by Penny Christie, Harjit Grewal, and Richard Mawrey, the defence objected to Pitt-Kethley's claim of racial discrimination in the sense of victimisation, though they acknowledged that the poet had been indirectly inconvenienced by the Panel's last-minute decision to change the conditions of entry.

It should be pointed out to Ms. Pitt-Kethley that in all the years the Council has been offering grants and bursaries to writers (since the 1960s) it has never, until 1986/87, limited them to applicants who were not of British origin. It is thus a far-fetched assertion on the part of Ms. Pitt-Kethley to say that she has been personally discriminated against on account of her colour, ethnic or national origin. (ACGB 1987)

Furthermore, they claimed that as the bursary publicity had specified 'African, Caribbean or Asian novelists or poets', the claim of racial discrimination was technically misleading. As one internal memo stated more candidly, it 'does not say they need to be black' (ACGB 1989b, see figure 14). Indeed, the allocation that year was consistent with the department's usual focus on a single "area" of literature. Technically Pitt-Kethley had neither submitted an application, nor had she been formally turned away.

Indicating something of the offence Pitt-Kethley had caused to its liberal sensibilities, the defence noted that the Arts Council was 'affronted by the suggestion that they could be guilty of racial discrimination' (Grewal and Bird & Bird 1987). Despite Literature's apparent marginality, the allegations placed at the Arts Council's door went straight to the heart of the institution and rallied the personal involvement of its most senior figures. The allegation questioned the Arts Council's capacity to interpret what "the best for the most" meant in a changing society. In line with this defence, the Office of Arts and Libraries commented that Literature's decision was covered by the 'arm's length' principle, and that the Minister of the Arts wished 'not to interfere' on the matter (Ward 1986). Though they offered a £250 out-of-court settlement, they warned that it

should ‘not be [accepted] on the basis of the Arts Council admitting any error’ (Niven 1988b).

At the same time, Pitt-Kethley’s transcendent belief in the principle of equality under the law did not account for the complexities written into it. As the outcome of a complex set of competing interests, the 1976 Race Relations Act, like the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act on which it was based, contained several exemptions for occasions when discrimination was believed to serve the interests of equality. Section 35, which granted minority racial groups exclusive access to resources or public services in line their ‘special needs’, was a case in point.

Nothing in Parts II to IV shall render unlawful any act done in affording persons of a particular racial group access to facilities or services to meet the special needs of persons of that group in regard to their education, training or welfare, or any ancillary benefits. (*Race Relations Act 1976 Ch. 74, sec. 35*)

Established by the Sex Discrimination Act, the ‘special needs’ defence was originally envisaged as a means of redressing inequity between the sexes due to what it called ‘domestic or family responsibilities’ (*Sex Discrimination Act 1975 Ch. 65, sec. 47*). However in the context of race and culture it was unclear what ‘special needs’ might involve. Though section 35 had been intended as a way to make the law fit for purpose, in practice it made it much more open to challenge.

It soon became clear that section 35 represented a crucial and as yet untested deciding point. Considered in this light, the Arts Council’s decision to distribute the bursaries to racial minorities was not only lawful, it was possibly even encouraged by the law. Indeed, the Arts Council would benefit enormously should the defence prove that it had been working to meet the special needs of black writers and enable the creation of a body of black British literature as a public good. Yet proving that Literature had been acting in the interests of this as yet undefined and open-ended notion of ‘special needs’

was likely to be difficult. Convincing the court that the decision had been taken as an act of goodwill in direct response to the specific difficulties faced by black writers would require a series of compelling and authoritative expert testimonies.

Proving “special needs”

The Arts Council relied on a rich selection of individuals who, through their expert testimonials, attested to the specific disadvantages faced by black writers in the literary field in Britain, and the necessity of structural intervention to create a more level playing field. The diversity of the three individuals called to represent the defence: the novelist and literary critic Margaret Drabble, the writer James Berry, and the publisher Margaret Busby signalled the breadth of interests with a stake in the outcome. Before these three offered their contributions however, the court also heard from individuals from within the Arts Council itself: Anthony Everitt, Alastair Niven, and Pippa Smith.⁶²

Everitt’s testimony established important groundwork in justifying the specific form that Arts Council action had taken. Again, it was important that he made the connection with contexts outside of London in recounting the origins of the Ethnic Arts Action Plan. His first-hand experience of the ethnic diversity of England’s regions highlighted the larger national relevance of the policy, especially given that London was the obvious setting for much of the public discourse on diversity and race conflict. At the same time, the social and economic forces bearing on Britain’s inner cities, and London especially, figured heavily in his justification. He cited the abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986 and the clashes between residential black communities and the police as evidence of growing frustration in the black community toward the

⁶² Head of the Combined Arts department who presented the Literature department with a proposal for a Caribbean poetry prize.

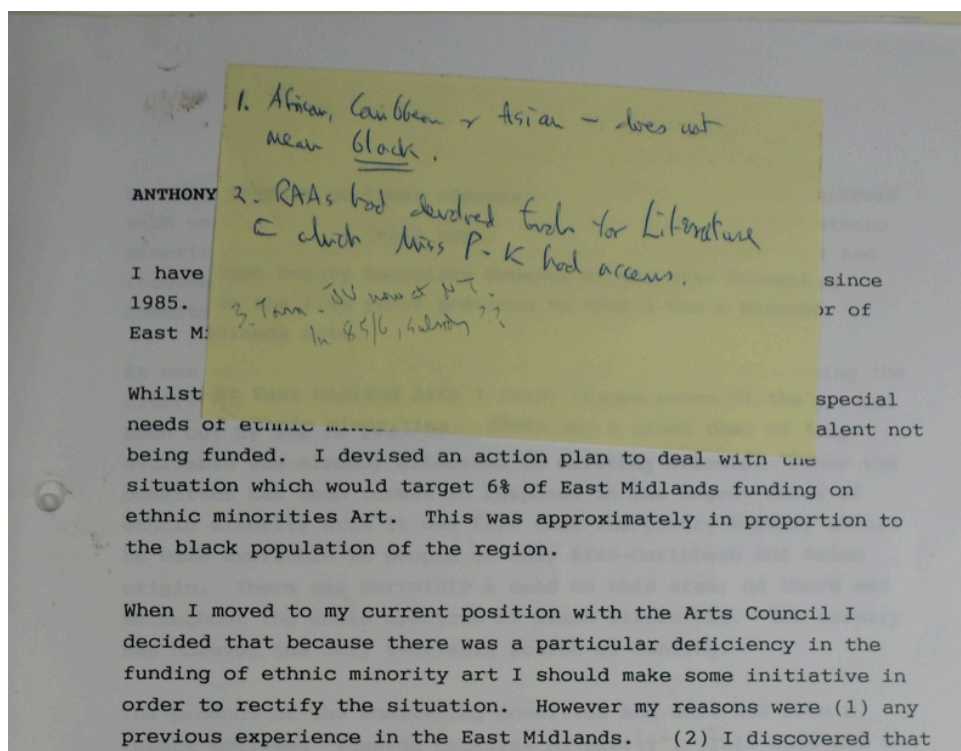


Figure 14. A note appended to Everitt's statement.

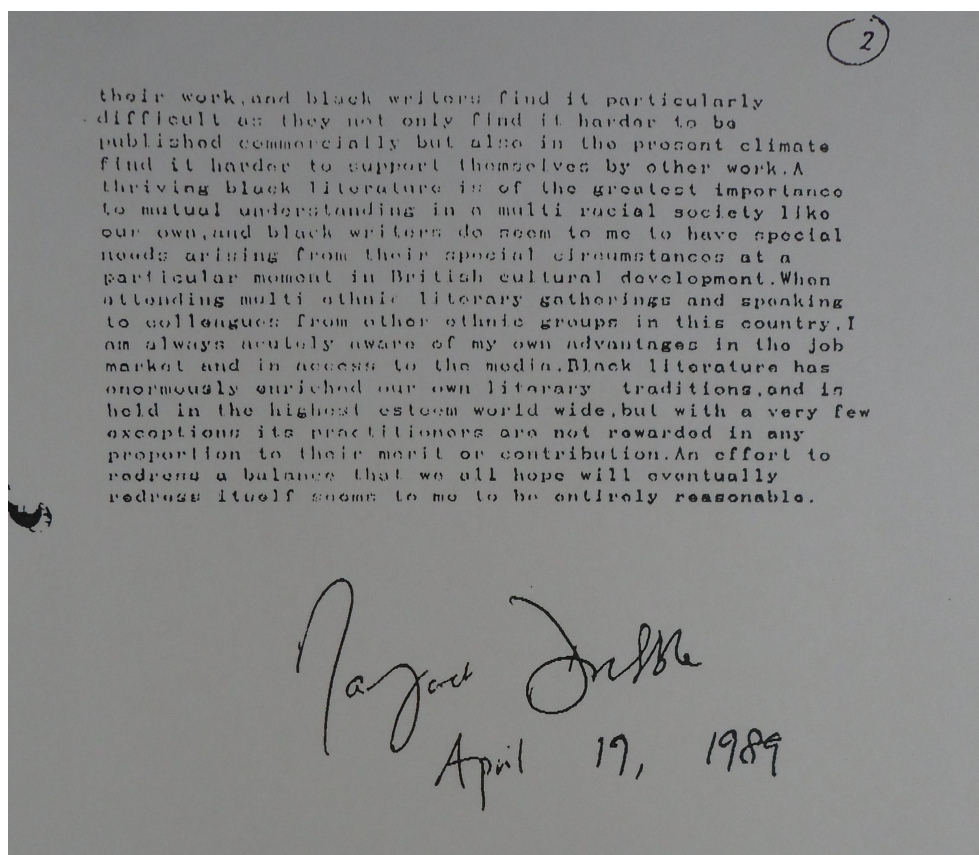


Figure 15. Margaret Drabble's letter in support of the Arts Council was read aloud in absentia.

establishment. Quoting from a leading article in *The Economist*, he declared (not unproblematically) that ‘Britain’s blackspots’ were ‘reaching explosion point’ (“Britain’s blackspots” 1985). Such evidence had presented the Arts Council with a compelling case for development, he told the court; the bursaries not only met a general need, they had also been timely and prudent.

James Berry’s eloquent case for positive action gave the general grounds Everitt had established illumination and force. Berry was a distinctive and experienced commentator, with authority both as a well-regarded poet, a champion of a category of “Westindian-British” literature, and a community activist. Published by OUP, Longmans and New Beacon, Berry was also a children’s writer and a member of the Caribbean Artist Movement. Writing to Berry ahead of the court case, Niven predicted the extent to which the Arts Council made ‘as vigorous a defence as possible’ would be ‘very important to the black community as a whole’ (1988c). Arriving in Britain from Jamaica in 1948, Berry worked as a Post Office telegraphist for twenty-six years before achieving recognition as winner of the 1981 National Poetry Competition. He told the court that the difficulties of ‘mak[ing] an impression on the “old school tie network” that dictated who was published’ were exacerbated by the particular disadvantages associated with being black in contemporary Britain (Berry 1988, 2). Berry’s account of the modern-day struggles of black authors drew on distrust of the literary establishment: mainstream publishers ‘had no empathy with the experiences of a black person’, ‘nor did they feel that a white readership was particularly interested in anything a black person might have to say’ (1988, 2). He also drew on racial disadvantage more generally. Berry claimed that everyday experiences contributed to widespread distrust of the white establishment, and traced the historic racial injustices of slavery forward to the ‘haunting deprivations’ faced

by black children in the British school system (1988, 4).⁶³ He argued that hostility was experienced both ‘openly and secretly’, and made it near impossible for black British citizens to ‘rise up from a demoralised position’ (1988, 6).

As I have always known, the Arts Council came to know, that even when invitations to apply for grants or bursaries were open to them like anyone else[,] black people hardly applied at all. Most black people believed white people would always find a way to conspire, hinder or thwart their possible success. (Berry 1988, 6)

Berry’s articulate defence of positive action rested upon what he described as the setting of fair conditions by granting black people ‘a breathing space, a conscious relaxing of pressures against them’ (1988, 6). In his eyes, targeted opportunities such as the Arts Council bursaries enabled the black writer to build a new canon of black British literature, and thus ‘belong [...] with confidence’ (Berry 1988, 7). He concluded that he would have been greatly aided by an Arts Council grant. His literary success had come late, and after ‘a lifetime of dogged determination’.

Margaret Busby offered an alternative perspective on the ‘special needs’ question as one of the very few black women in the publishing industry in Britain. Busby was co-founder of the independent trade publisher Allison & Busby in 1967 and co-founder of Greater Access to Publishing with Bogle L’Overture’s Jessica Huntley to increase black participation in the industry. Busby was acutely aware of the difficulties of proving special needs; indeed she also resisted Allison & Busby being labelled a “black” publisher. Yet, in her view the principle of “fair” competition simply didn’t apply in an overwhelmingly white industry. Perceptions of publishing as a white middle-class venture played an equally important role to this state of affairs. She added the more complex

⁶³ While working as a poet in residence at a London comprehensive school Berry observed a ‘vastly stocked school library’ with ‘no more than three books which reflected and represented the physical appearance and life experience of the nearly fifty percent black children in the school’. The ‘few books—ragged and dirty from constant use—were always out, away, off the library shelves’ (1988, 4).

unease generated by the author-editor relationship to the obvious dearth of employment opportunities.

A black writer cannot be certain that a white editor really understands the statement he/she is trying to make, or the language in which it is expressed, or that the white editor can relate to or sympathise with the situations referred to. (Busby 1988, 2)

Though black writers were able to apply for existing opportunities in the literary world, Busby underscored the prevalent belief among the black community that Arts Council patronage was aimed chiefly at the white population. The statistics backed this up: of the eighty-eight applicants for an Arts Council bursary in 1984 just four were black. Her testimony concluded by again defending the value of targeted opportunities, this time by emphasising how Arts Council grants counteracted dominant prevailing preconceptions and would provoke a similar openness from mainstream commercial publishers.⁶⁴

Niven developed Busby's points on editorship in his guise as a literature scholar. He added that the 'different style [and] subject matter' of many black writers also contributed to their difficulty in getting published, while the 'extremely bad state' of black publishing houses in Britain did little to remedy the situation (Niven 1988a). The courts did not need to defer to the sitting Literature director for a critic's perspective; Margaret Drabble's contribution drew from her personal experience as editor of the fifth *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985) as evidence of the widespread ignorance among literary critics of the 'rapidly changing and expanding area of Black British Literature' (see figure 15).

⁶⁴ 'I feel that the Arts Council's idea to restrict a year's bursaries in literature to black people is a good one. [...] [Greater Access to Publishing] was started to try to counteract those preconceptions, campaigning not just to make black people think of publishing as an occupation applicable to them but at the same time to make mainstream publishers aware of the need for black employees, which in turn will make easier to approach black writers' (Busby 1988, 3; 1).

[A]s editor of the Oxford Companion, I found great difficulty in doing justice to the rapidly changing and expanding area of Black British Literature (as we decided to describe it) [...]. It was one of the areas for which my coverage was most heavily criticised, and more specialist advice will be sought for the 20C Companion now in preparation. (Drabble 1989, 1)

Though she was perceived as an entirely 'literary' figure, for her the importance of supporting black writing was primarily social:

A thriving black literature is of the greatest importance to mutual understanding in a multi-racial society like our own, and black writers do seem to me to have special needs arising from their special circumstances at a particular moment in British cultural development. (Drabble 1989, 2)

Drabble's claim that black literature deserved support on the basis of a much bigger public aim: 'mutual understanding in a multi-racial society', was consonant with other arguments in favour of promoting writing from so-called 'other cultures' at the time, particularly in the arena of the national education. At the same time, she also drew on earlier concerns that went right back to the origins of the state's intervention over literature in the 1960s. Writers generally were unrewarded 'in any proportion to their merit or contribution' (Drabble 1989, 2). Thus in the specific case of this group of writers, she argued that state action to integrate black British literature 'into the canon (and sales figures) of orthodoxy' was 'entirely reasonable' (Drabble 1989, 1-2).

Pitt-Kethley's response to the testimonials reflected her staunch commitments, as well as her habit of mistaking the issues at hand. Her assumptions about the universalism of individual literary merit, for instance, obscured an understanding of the role that questions of race and culture played in the process.⁶⁵ For her, the notion that both might cause complications in the process of publishing and being published was 'illogical',

⁶⁵ For the broader debate on the implications of multicultural policies for concepts of liberal citizenship see Will Kymlicka (1989, 1995) and for the opposite view with an emphasis on secularism, Tariq Modood (2007).

‘unless we assume that different races think in different ways’ (Pitt-Kethley 1989a).

Instead, she pointed to the success of many non-white writers in Britain as evidence of what she took to be the unwarranted actions of the state. On a deeper level though, her rejection of the Arts Council’s special needs defence rested on a suspicion of the idea of cultural community.

‘Paternalism is subtle apartheid’: Pitt-Kethley on ‘community’

In a letter to her solicitor in 1987 Pitt-Kethley registered her dislike of the discourse of community. ‘I am perturbed by the Arts Council’s persistent use of the word “communities”’ (Pitt-Kethley 1987b). In some respects, her unease was shared with more thoughtful literary sceptics, notably Mphahlele’s hesitations in the context of the emerging Black Consciousness movement, and even Dabydeen’s awareness of the pitfalls of ethnic and racial categories, as we have seen. These viewpoints were a long way off from Pitt-Kethley’s narrow interpretation of individual freedoms. For her, the Arts Council’s ‘vocabulary’ of community suggested a ‘patronizing, paternalistic misunderstanding of British society’ (Pitt-Kethley 1987b). A later poem on the trial articulated this view about the illegitimacy of the Arts Council’s intervention on behalf of selected communities: ‘paternalism is subtle apartheid, Brits are all Brits whether they’re black or white’ (Pitt-Kethley 1993). Indeed, for her it overlooked the fact that “‘Afro-Caribbean or Asian” people’ were ‘British citizens’, and thus ‘naturally’ had equal access to ‘apply for jobs, Arts Council grants etc’ and seek recourse to the law as she (Pitt-Kethley 1987b). In her view, the relevance of race to a discourse of social disadvantage was grossly exaggerated. She took Grace Nichols, the winner of the Arts Council bursary, as a case in point.

[F]ar from being part of the Afro-Caribbean community, [Nichols] lives in an up-market Sussex town (Lewes) which is full of antique shops and cream tea places and is almost entirely populated by white, middle class well-off Conservative voters. (Pitt-Kethley 1987b)

That Pitt-Kethley took Nichols' residency alongside 'white, middle-class well-off Conservative voters' as evidence of her being outside of 'the Afro-Caribbean community' was indicative of her own narrow categorisations.

Without denying racism altogether, Pitt-Kethley did point out that it was frequently misconstrued. For instance, she identified with Berry's experience of attempting to break into a closed literary sphere of the 'old school tie' network that dictated who was published, through her own struggles as a female writer. Applying her own ideas about literary merit to the situation, Berry's accolades were evidence that things were 'not all that difficult' for 'good' black writers (Pitt-Kethley 1989a). That this line of argument might raise questions about the aesthetic quality of her own work passed her by. Likewise, her reading of Margaret Busby's account as a black female publisher involved a similar conflation of the problems of gender and race. 'Ms Busby is probably mistaken in believing that the type of incident she quotes springs from racism. I have suffered exactly the same attitudes. [...] This is sexism not racism' (Pitt-Kethley 1989b).

Her claim that the commercial and critical recognition bestowed upon a number of well-known black and Asian writers at the time proved their merit on their own terms had traction in some respects. Indeed, her document of twenty 'successful authors fitting into the Arts Council's Afro-Caribbean and Asian definition' (figure 16) represented 'a formidable list of successful people who got through without the need for any positive discrimination' (Pitt-Kethley 1988a). The fact that literary prizewinners such as Salman Rushdie or Kazuo Ishiguro were technically eligible for a bursary while she was not, she regarded as deeply unfair given their seeming lack of difficulty in getting published.

Some Successful Authors Fitting into the Arts Council's Afro-Caribbean and Asian Definition

Salman Rushdie - past winner of the Booker Prize
Kazuo Ishiguro - past winner of the Whitbread Prize
Timothy Mo - past Booker nominee. Mo's last novel raised an exceptionally high advance from my own publisher - £50,000.
Edward Kamau Brathwaite - several collections published. He is also very highly-regarded as a performer. He was amongst the few poets selected by the Poetry Society for last year's prestigious Albert Hall recital to launch Poetry Live.
Benjamin Zephaniah - highly-regarded as a performer. He draws large audiences and has frequently appeared on TV.
Linton Kwesi Johnson - another well-known performer with TV appearances to his credit.
Jean Binta Breeze - a good performer and subject of a Channel 4 programme.
AL Hendriks - a respected poet.
John Figueroa - poet, anthologist and lecturer in Third World studies for the Open University.
Fred d'Aguiar - poet and critic. His first collection was brought out by my publisher (Chatto and Windus) when he was only in his mid-twenties - an unusual accolade. He has another collection in the pipeline and has made television appearances.

If you add to these names 2 of the bursary winners - Grace Nichols and Balraj Khanna and also the authors suggested for judges in the Arts Council's document on writers' bursaries, this makes a formidable list of successful people who got through without the need for any positive discrimination. There are probably lots of other names I could think up given more time and research. I'm also including an article by Prabhu S. Gupta. Most of the writers he mentions are not resident in Britain. However, he does make some important points about the very long tradition of the Indian contribution to English writing. I've marked these passages.

Figure 16. Pitt-Kethley's list of 'successful authors fitting into the Arts Council's Afro-Caribbean and Asian definition'.

The announcement of Ishiguro's selection for the Booker prize for *The Remains of the Day* (1989) during the hearing did seem to underscore her point). At the same time though, her strategic deployment of the 'success story' of black literature was dubious at best. Fred D'Aguiar refuted what he saw as Pitt-Kethley's blinkered claims even as he playfully attributed a certain colonial resonance to her dogged individualism. In a piece for *The Independent* the Guyanese poet and critic declared, 'Ms Pith-Helmet must have had her hard hat pulled over her ears and eyes leaving only her mouth operational when she accused the Arts Council of inverted racism' (D'Aguiar 1989b). His spirited defence of the Arts Council turned on its efforts to offer 'a helping hand to a new literature' produced against 'overwhelming odds'.

Two notable and deserving successes cited by her [Berry and himself] in no way disqualify the principle of special needs. If anything, the rarity of such successes (disproportionately few in relation to the number of writers and artists) testifies to the crucial place of Arts Council grants for minorities in British society. (D'Aguiar 1989b)

Among other things, D'Aguiar pointed out the inadequacies of Pitt-Kethley's view of the law as a transcendent adjudicator of justice. It was precisely the judicial system 'which Ms Pith-Helmet invests with so much trust' he claimed, that had betrayed countless numbers of black and Asian people in the courts. The heated debate that took place in the court and in the cultural sphere more widely demonstrated how the thorny issue of multiculturalism was being debated by all kinds of likely, and less likely, voices at this fraught stage in British cultural development. That D'Aguiar was careful not to deploy the terminology of 'Black British' as part of his defence was significant. D'Aguiar would lay out his own exacting analysis of the categories circulating at the time, of which the 'neat term Black British' was exemplary, later that year. In the essay 'Against Black British Literature' he made a case for how such labels, in tying literature to identity and identity to race, threatened the space for the imagination (D'Aguiar 1989a, 106). Recognising that

‘creativity only just allows itself a spatial qualification’, he argued that ‘the whole question of identity is itself an evasion of the issue of imaginative license’ and the attempts being made to ‘restrict its availability or disqualify certain users of it’. With its emphasis on the ‘human qualities’ that exceed all questions of race when it came to literature (1989a, 110), and the passing qualification that even ‘among the English themselves identity is a plural notion’ (107), D’Aguiar’s statements echoed the humanistic orientation crucial to Mphahlele’s position, and raised the apparent expansiveness of English cultural identity that would become important later on in the debate.

His rejoinder to Pitt-Kethley however highlighted the complexities of the state’s involvement in the cultural field at the specific historical juncture of the 1980s. Looking back at this moment more recently, D’Aguiar depicted its singular conditions, and captured the predicament of a state-sponsored literature in an era of multiculturalism.

The 80s was an odd season in that many Black and Asian writers were just beginning to find their feet in the UK by understanding the system of privilege and patronage and learning how to squeeze out a few drops from it for ourselves by making the case for what Walter Rodney dubbed our ‘under-developed’ condition. But understand that term not as having anything do with our artistic sensibilities (those were as sophisticated as anyone’s) but as a description of our material reality as second-class citizens, that is, as something squarely located in our status as excluded from the bounty of funding for the growth of the arts in a Britain stubbornly resistant at the time to cultural changes dubbed by Louise Bennett as ‘colonisation in reverse’. (D’Aguiar 2013)

This wider debate taking place in the cultural and public sphere raised compelling questions about the relatively narrow definitions of diversity at work in the Arts Council’s deliberations. Returning to the court proceedings, Menon was careful to highlight the ambiguities of the official terminology, querying whether white South Africans would have also been eligible for the bursary. Pitt-Kethley was quick to chip in. Rounding on the Arts Council’s plans to sponsor the ‘well-paid field of biography’ in the 1989/90 bursaries, she speculated that ‘a white South African politician or two [...] must

have some memoirs to sell' (Pitt-Kethley 1989d). Pitt-Kethley's interventions demonstrated that while the symbolic value of an Arts Council grant was clear in the literary field, its public value was still being worked out. Probing the limits of the Arts Council's defence under section 35, Menon observed that configuring literary sponsorship as a public good with regards to race relations in Britain was 'stretching the English language a bit'.⁶⁶

Judgement

After two days of evidence and testimony, Judge John Harris made his ruling. He concluded that the Arts Council had been in clear breach of the Race Relations Act by restricting the eligibility of the bursaries to writers from African, Asian and Caribbean groups only (J. Harris 1989).⁶⁷ Though the Arts Council's claim to a positive action motive under section 35 was compelling, it was still problematic. Had the Arts Council stated their intentions in advance by claiming that cultural identity was a genuine occupational requirement for the bursary, and acquired the necessary license to do so, the case need never have come to court. Neither being the case, he noted that Pitt-Kethley's claim was legitimate and ought to be upheld. Nonetheless, Harris acknowledged that the Arts Council had shown in great (indeed, bureaucratic) detail the basis of their actions. They proved that the decision had been taken carefully, in consultation with literary experts, and under a wider policy aimed at affording particular groups greater access to public provision for literature. Given that there had been no evidence of a direct intention to discriminate against white British authors in the course of privileging other groups, Harris concluded that the Arts Council's error was incidental and had been

⁶⁶ 'In my view, it would be stretching the English language a bit to define the bursaries as anything connected to [the] education, training or welfare [...] of those ethnic minority writers' (Menon 1988, 6).

⁶⁷ See appendix D.

committed in good faith. On this interpretation, Pitt-Kethley's loss of opportunity in the form of an Arts Council bursary was essentially valueless; moreover she had failed to procure any witnesses to refute the testimonies of the Arts Council's numerous eloquent defenders. As such Harris ruled in favour of the Arts Council with all costs to be paid by the CRE. Yet Harris also spoke of his regret that the interests of the Arts Council and the CRE had conflicted in this way, especially given the CRE's historic role in encouraging public bodies to broaden their posture toward a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

Yet it was the consequences of the court judgment—particularly with regards to how it was taken by the Arts Council—that was significant. From their perspective Harris' ruling vindicated the Arts Council as a principled guardian of the field of culture and a judicious dispenser of equality of opportunity in the arts. In a statement to the press the Arts Council emphasised its interpretation of the events as a 'major victory of principle'.

The Arts Council defended this claim because it takes the issue of equal opportunity in the arts very seriously. The judgement wholly validates the Arts Council's attempts to encourage cultural diversity. It has validated the Arts Council's approach to deciding where special needs justify special treatment under the Race Relations Act. (ACGB 1989e)

The ruling was doubly important because, as Harris himself pointed out, 'they of all people who dish out money to the Arts are the last to wish to be labelled racist' (1989, 3). The prevailing message coming from the Arts Council entirely passed over its near miss with regards to the law. Instead, it emphasised how its 'democratic' approach to administering its public duty had been affirmed at the very highest level (ACGB 1989e). For instance, speaking to the London-based black newspaper *The Voice*, Everitt noted that it established a new era of Arts Council support: 'provided we can establish special needs [...] we can provide more specifically for black artists' (quoted in Griffiths 1989).

Everitt's use of the plural pronoun indicated how, in its own eyes, the Arts Council had successfully adapted to the demands placed upon it by Britain's new multicultural society. By contrast, the CRE was casualty of the ambiguities of the law. Shortly after the ruling Chair of the CRE Michael Day was summoned to the Arts Council to discuss the 'implications [of the case] for the future' (Rittner 1989).

The successful outcome marked a new phase in the Arts Council's multicultural policies as it entered the 1990s. The Ethnic Arts Unit was reformed with budgets of up to £400,000, almost the entire Literature budget at the time of the original crisis. There was good news for Literature too. Niven negotiated an unprecedented increase of 53% for the department for 1989/1990, with £56,000 especially reserved for 'cultural diversity' projects including translation, support for multicultural publishers, and the promotion of multicultural literature on the school curriculum. It entered the 1990s with active, well-funded support for Black British writers and writing. Niven singled out overseas 'internationalism' and domestic 'multi-culturalism' as priorities shaping the department's core commitment to 'widen awareness of writing and reading as core activities in a civilised society' (ACGB 1990, 17).

Things were less promising for Pitt-Kethley. Though she was keen to contest the court's decision, the CRE was reticent not only for having been sufficiently burnt by the affair, but because of the much bigger fallout from Penguin's decision to publish Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988. From the CRE's perspective, they had fulfilled their duty to 'clarif[y]' the law and see the Race Relations Act 'work both ways' (quoted in Griffiths 1989b). 'Section 35 has been clarified' they commented to the press, 'we lost the case because it is seen to have worked in this instance'. Faced with the prospect of proceeding with neither financial nor symbolic backing, Pitt-Kethley withdrew her appeal amid declarations of her disillusionment with 'British "justice"' (1989e). Feeling herself once again silenced by the bureaucratic male establishment, she turned to literary

channels of recourse ‘sub judice’ (Pitt-Kethley 1989e). Her poem ‘Epistle to Dr Niven, Literature Director’, published in the 1993 collection *Dogs* rounded on Niven as a self-appointed literary arbiter.

Niven, you know I had no chance, bound by
 The Court’s strict etiquette, for a reply.
 The Law was far too formal, not much fun.
 You want a fight, sir? Well I’ll give you one.
 [...] You’ve taken on the task
 Of judging poems. Can you write one? I ask.
 [...] Are you that sort – a cultured bureaucrat?
 Or just a Philistine and Führerpratt?

(Pitt-Kethley 1993, stanza 7)

Pitt-Kethley reiterated her status as a self-styled champion of free speech and a ‘hardworking and productive writer’ censored by the ‘Establishment’ (Pitt-Kethley 1995). The claim underlying these statements, that British publishers lacked the courage to publish her work, was not strictly speaking true. By the mid-1990s Sinclair-Stevenson brought out her *Literary Companions to Sex* (1992) and *Low Life* (1995).

Though the Rushdie affair arguably obscured the conflict between the Arts Council and Pitt-Kethley in literary histories of the period, it also consolidated its significance as an important moment of conflict in a state-supported British literary culture. Among other things, the events surrounding the novel’s publication and global reception staged the conflict between the values of liberal democracy and the reality of a multicultural society. The Arts Council’s readiness to support Rushdie and his publishers in this context was unsurprising, and suggested the tensions in its own institutional position.⁶⁸

Pitt-Kethley was not isolated in her scepticism of the Arts Council’s avowal of multicultural policies however much her lack of personal credibility made for a

⁶⁸ The Annual Report for 1988/89 noted ‘[f]ollowing the Salman Rushdie affair the Arts Council was among the first public bodies unequivocally to defend the right to free expression’ (ACGB 1989c, 16).

convenient diversion. The populist critique also put forward by Conservative party Chairman Norman Tebbit, in which the Arts Council was attacked as elitist, bourgeois and politically biased, was also accompanied by lesser-known voices. John Calder, the fiercely independent publisher of Samuel Beckett and anti-censorship campaigner, was one such critic. A longstanding recipient of Arts Council funding during the liberal golden age, Calder emphasised how the multicultural turn had sacrificed older clients and concerns. Yet Calder preferred to link his dwindling funding to the ‘conflicting interests [of] ethnic minorities in collision’ rather than his own inconsistent business practices, or the most likely culprit, *The Glory of the Garden*.⁶⁹

Calder’s defence of literature’s autonomy was used elsewhere in the literary world. The small poetry presses subsidised by the Arts Council since the 1960s took particular exception to what they regarded as state interference under the banner of multiculturalism. Evaluating the responses of literature clients to an official request that they adopt multicultural policies under the Ethnic Arts Action Plan, the Arts Council noted that while many supported the policy ‘in principle’, they were ‘wary of the Council’s interventionist approach’ and sought to ‘defend their editorial independence’ (ACGB 1986e). Editor of Carcanet Michael Schmidt captured this position most directly in his terse refutation of the apparent suggestion that publishers could ‘invent writers’ (Schmidt 1986). Echoing Jack Cope’s earlier statements on literature as a ‘tender plant’ that ‘no amount of cultivation’ could compel (Cope 1961), Schmidt objected to the ‘development [of] culture into a kind of cultural apartheid’; ‘a sense of separate arts’ (quoted in *Artrage* 1986). In his view the ‘sources of originality’ were not ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’, but came from ‘individual artists’. Paul Jay, editor of Anvil press, extended this line of argument one stage further, rejecting what he perceived as the Arts Council’s attempt to redefine the role of the publisher. Restating his own commitment to

⁶⁹ ‘[D]emocracy has become a sham in every country where there are too many conflicting interests or ethnic minorities in collision. The re-emergence of tribalism in every society makes a mockery of democracy’ (Calder 1998, 16).

literature's eternal truth, Jay defended poetry as 'essential, not expendable' (Jay 1986). His view that a writer's only obligation was 'to refresh and invigorate' the language, not to 'exploit it' by 'cash[ing] in on its more obvious opportunities' made telling assumptions about precisely whose 'language' was in question. This view of language and who it belonged to, would be contested by writers drafted in to represent Britain's 'other cultures' at GCSE, as we will see in the following chapter.

Despite their obvious differences, Pitt-Kethley's unsuccessful claim, Calder's selective version of events, and Schmidt and Jay's anxieties about editorial autonomy all signalled the seismic shift in the Arts Council's understanding of its public duty since the 1960s. Initially conceived as giving belated recognition to the 'ethnic arts' of post-war immigrant groups, the 4% policy sought to reach out to a second generation of these artists and audiences. As the Arts Council entered the 1990s, and looked ahead to the opening up of borders with Europe, the discourse shifted considerably from multiculturalism to one of 'cultural diversity'. With a considerably 'freer hand' on interpreting what this might mean, the idea of the national culture as a set of 'diverse autonomies' became embedded further still in Arts Council thinking.

Towards cultural diversity

Gavin Jantjes was the main proponent behind the entry of 'cultural diversity' in Arts Council discourse. Brought in to oversee the 4% policy in 1986, Jantjes was also the lead author of the evaluation report *Towards Cultural Diversity* (1989). In it he sketched a vision for 'a broad heterogeneous national culture' in which the creative achievements of different groups were 'place[d] alongside one another to construct through their diverse

autonomies a new non-hierarchical superstructure for cultural practice' (Jantjes 1989, 7). He introduced the report in a paper titled 'An Integrated Approach' at an Arts Council and Home Office symposium on diversity in 1989.⁷⁰ Disavowing the category of "ethnic arts" as derogatory, community-based, separatist and marginal, Jantjes' general outlook and focus on integration was clearly shaped by his South African experience, and rejected the belief that national cultures could be 'grown and developed in a vacuum' (1989, 8). Instead he insisted that the 'proximity of cultures and their reciprocity' was 'essential for cultural growth and development'. The idea of cultural diversity he promoted was one in which minority cultures were neither assimilated unthinkingly into the 'prestigious big white elephants' of the creative industries, nor recognised as an appendix to the national culture (Jantjes 1989, 9). Jantjes' conception of cultural diversity echoed instead Mphahlele's vision of a composite African print modernity (or a 'triangular tie-up'), in which artists of all backgrounds were invited to help compose a new modernity. Though explicitly disavowing 'universal solutions', cultural diversity in Jantjes' view inherited principles of 'cultural and personal freedom' he associated with the British intellectual liberal tradition. This integrated cultural ideal required 'integrated financing', with an important role to be played by both the corporate world and the state. His thinking also had a particularly internationalist dimension. Reiterating his ideas three years later at the moment of the 'Facelift of Europe' in 1993 (see Lavrijsen 1993), he observed that 'the word "Europe" [was] being conceptually stretched', and opened up a new space for cultural diversity within a context of 'national interrelationship' (Jantjes 2000, 265).⁷¹ In 1994 he helped found the Arts Council-funded Institute of New International Visual Art. Jantjes deliberately cast this 'new internationalism' as a development intervening between what he saw as an earlier closed, modernist tradition on the one hand, and the looser, intellectualised liberal internationalism of the Commonwealth era on the other. The new

⁷⁰ John Patten MP and Minister of the Arts Richard Luce MP attended the symposium.

⁷¹ 'From ethnic arts to new internationalism' first appeared in an edited collection titled *Cultural Diversity in the Arts: Art, Art Policies and the Facelift of Europe* (1993).

interest in cultural diversity on the supra-national level of the European community offered new opportunities for the arts in Britain, including the ‘development of Council’s initiatives for cultural diversity’ (ACGB 1989d, n.p.). While he was quick to quash the idea that the ‘British example’ could function as a ‘vaulting pole’—he insisted instead that each European nation had to embark on its own ‘generative dialogue’—Jantjes anticipated the leading role Britain would take in the building of a new era of cultural policy in response to the European encounter with cultural difference.⁷² Not only was its creative output strong, but the cities of post-imperial Britain were ‘microcosms of the world [it] had once colonized’ (ACGB 1989d). This new emphasis on placing the national ‘in relationship to the global’ had implications for British cultural policy. In particular, earlier emphases on the ‘Black arts’ would be ‘naturally subsumed by the new position’.

At the same time as Europe presented itself as a new conceptual space and source of supranational funding for the arts, important structural changes also took place within the ‘national’ cultural field in Britain. Prefiguring later political devolution, in 1994 the Arts Council of Great Britain formally divided into separate bodies for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Arts Council England was also announced as distributor of National Lottery funds for the arts. In 1997 New Labour’s replacement of the anachronistic Department for National Heritage with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport appeared to elevate the position of the arts in government significantly, but in practice this did little to stabilise the Arts Council’s tenuous position. Instead it enhanced the existing pressures on the Arts Council to evidence its public impact. Again Literature was not exempt from these broader forces. Under Antonia Byatt the Literature department worked with schools, publishers and libraries to increase its public engagement. In this context the concept of cultural diversity was central to the self-

⁷² ‘British black and multi-cultural achievements will be attractive to European sponsorship’ (ACGB 1989b, n.p.).

conscious refashioning of ‘a modern and progressive’ Arts Council with a broad national relevance. Arts Council England’s ‘manifesto’ for the new millennium embraced what it called ‘the full range and diversity of the culture of this country’ (ACE 2003, 7). Yet with evidence of institutionalized racism reverberating in the public sphere—especially in the lead up to the publication of the MacPherson report in 1999—the idea of cultural diversity also took on the charged language of positive action in order to achieve greater equality of opportunity. This was clearly expressed in statements such as ‘in the past, the Arts Council had many policies and strategies. Now is the time for action’ (ACE 2003, 13).⁷³ To all appearances the Arts Council’s institutional memory of the pitfalls of implementing equality of opportunity had been temporarily, if not entirely, suspended. Yet though embedded as a virtue in the organisation, the idea of cultural diversity was no less provisional and contestable.

What about the (ethnic) English? ‘Penguin Books’ “Ethnic Only” Competition!

In 2005 Penguin Books and Arts Council England teamed up to launch a new literary prize informed by recent findings about the glaring underrepresentation of people from Black, Minority and Ethnic groups in the book trade. Published in *The Bookseller*, Danuta Kean’s Arts Council-funded report *In Full Colour* was the first comprehensive investigation into ethnic diversity in the British publishing industry and prompted a series of remedial measures by the Arts Council and mainstream publishers (Kean 2004; Squires 2012). One such response was *decibel*: Arts Council England’s five-year policy to

⁷³ ‘We can achieve much in cultural diversity through persuasion, illustration and by identifying and sharing good practice. But we also need to take positive action – if we are to share our riches and achieve greater equality of opportunity’ (ACE 2003, 7).

enable African, Caribbean and Asian artists make a “bigger sound”. *decibel* sponsored a British Book Award for ‘culturally diverse achievements’ in literature—winners included Hari Kunzru, Diana Evans and Jackie Kay—and a South Bank Award awarded to Roy Williams, Neil Biswas and in 2008 the poet Daljit Nagra for *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* The *decibel* Penguin prize, which offered previously unpublished writers from African, Asian and Caribbean backgrounds the opportunity of publication by Penguin ran for three years. The prize mediated a complex set of interests and held clear symbolic and commercial payoffs, not least in respect to the under-served markets of ‘niche’ minority readerships, or the obligations on Penguin as an “equal opportunities” employer (see Brouillette 2007; and for a different view McCleery 2013).

decibel was the natural successor of both Jantjes’ *Towards Cultural Diversity* and Everitt’s Ethnic Arts Action Plan in the sense that it prioritised the ‘ethnic diversity resulting from post-war immigration’ (ACE 2005, 2). Yet the continuity did not stop there. In 2007 the Arts Council and Penguin were forced to change the conditions for entry following a warning from the CRE. The criterion ‘all entrants must be residents of the UK from an African, Asian or Caribbean background’ breached section 29 of the 1976 Race Relations Act, a prohibition on advertisements with *the intention* to discriminate according to race, even when granted special dispensation under the law (ACE and Penguin 2005). The categories used by the Arts Council in the 1980s had both expanded and grown more detailed. ‘Asia’ referred in this context to ‘the continent [...] from Turkey in the West to Japan in the East’ (ACE and Penguin 2005). ‘Should the same competition run again’ the CRE warned, ‘it is highly likely the Commission would commence legal proceedings against Penguin Books and the Arts Council’ (quoted in Alberge 2007).

The threat of legal action was sufficient to force a recalibration of the rules governing the prize, yet once again the Arts Council was reluctant to acquiesce. Instead it

maintained that this was ‘an area of the law open to interpretation’ (quoted in Alberge 2007). Nonetheless for the 2007 round the Arts Council and Penguin took a thematic, rather than strictly biographical, approach to the focus that year on ‘stories of immigration’. The competition invited ‘non-fictional personal accounts of the experience of immigration to the UK’ for submission from writers of any background (ACE and Penguin 2007). The turn toward life writing was reflected in the published anthology *From There to Here: 16 True Tales of Immigration to Britain* (2007) (see figures 17 and 18) and in the 2008 publication *The map of me: true tales of mixed-heritage experience*, which invited entries derived from first-hand experience ‘or that of someone you know’ (ACE and Penguin 2008). Remedying its earlier exclusions, the ethnic monitoring section of both subsequent application forms featured ‘White’ as an additional ethnic classification. Though criticism of the *decibel* Penguin prize had proceeded thick and fast from some quarters—notably from the British Asian novelist Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal and parts of the South African press—the CRE’s intervention was hardly an attempt at vindication over past quarrels.⁷⁴ The forces driving its intervention were far more interesting.

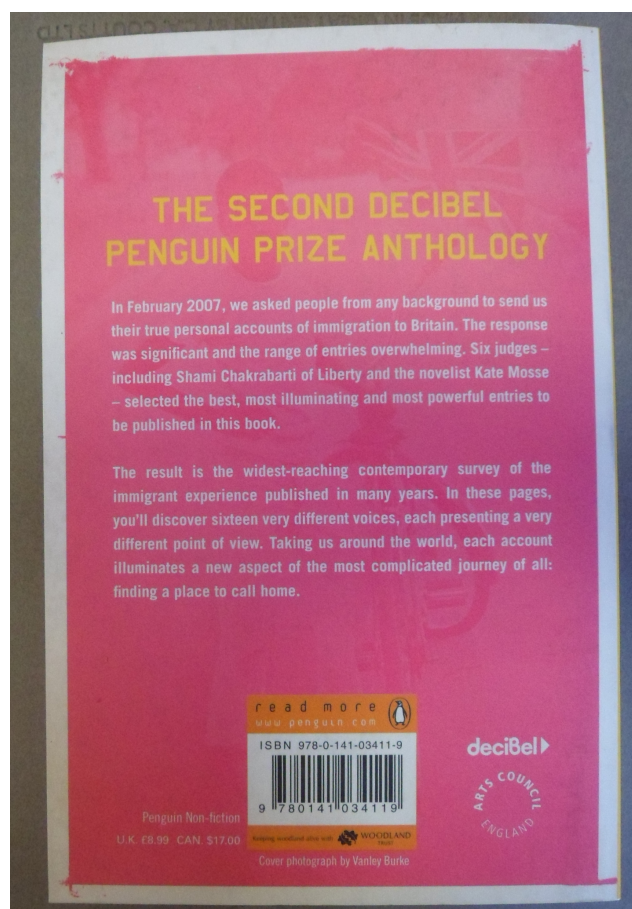
Behind the CRE’s action over the prize were a series of complaints from members of the online network and small-scale retailer of patriotic merchandise We Are The English (WATE). One member of the group expressed their objection to the exclusion of white writers in a literature competition funded by the taxpayer in the following terms.

[C]ross Penguin and Ladybird books off the kids Christmas list! In conjunction with the Arts Council England they are running a competition to discover the next big author. It is open to all authors in England although [...] they *must not be white*. [...] If you are *white*, you are automatically *excluded* from the competition. (WATE 2005 emphasis original)

⁷⁴ Singh Dhaliwal preferred to ‘go toe-to-toe with Whitey’ than seek ‘marginal recognition’ (Singh Dhaliwal 2005). A journalist for the South African *Sunday Times* interrogated the Arts Council’s privileging of minority interests, speculating that the *decibel* prize would be ‘won by an Irish Traveller’. ‘[H]appily, the *Sunday Times* literary awards carry no such baggage’ and were ‘open to South African citizens (Magwood 2007).



Figures 17-18. Front and back covers of the second decibel anthology



Whereas Pitt-Kethley's allegation of discrimination in the provision of public services had left her free to make an individual case against the Arts Council, the claim of discrimination in advertising obliged the CRE to act on behalf of the group. Once again the concept of cultural of 'community' was causing difficulties. What was interesting about this particular disruption though, was that in making their case for an exclusive English community We Are The English effectively appropriated the discourse of multiculturalism.

[T]he black, muslim or any other community would not stand for this and neither should we. The English community MUST take a leaf out of their book and we MUST start to see ourselves, and act, as an individual ethnic group. [...] When things go against us we should respond as others do, and that is, as a community. (WATE 2005)

The group was in effect an outlet for the Steadfast Trust: the UK's 'first and only' registered charity devoted to furthering the 'education, legal rights, welfare and overall interests' of England's indigenous population (Steadfast Trust 2010). The ways of thinking about cultural community behind the campaign to ban the prize are telling, and need careful analysis. For one thing, though the group appeared confident in their capacity to name a definitive Englishness, in practice the version it promoted was considerably more opaque. We Are The English claimed that the creation of 'Engalond, the Land of the Engles' by the migration of a mixed group of Northern Europeans around 450 AD was underwritten by a unified ethnic identity by the 9th century (WATE 2007a). From their perspective their 'true culture' was represented by what they called the 'Anglo-Saxon heritage': a model of Anglo-Saxon democracy that allowed for 'individual freedom within a secure community', and was associated with the political tradition of English radicalism. Englishness, they argued was constituted through a 'common background, language and culture', it was bound up with 'the language they spoke', and

literature it created (WATE 2007b). From their position the English language and its literary ‘masters’ represented a direct line of continuity to the present.

Our ancestors gave their name to this new land, England - the land of the English, and the language they spoke English would over the years evolve into the modern day English that we speak. [...] We have given the English language to the world along with its greatest masters; Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson. (WATE 2007b).

Despite the nod to Old English (‘Englisc’), their decision to take Chaucer as the starting point for the development of an ‘English’ literature—rather than the Beowulf poet, for instance—was indicative of their broad and somewhat inconsistent view of Englishness. For at the same time the slogans the group used to name their idea of Englishness reflected the history of linguistic borrowing and worldly appropriation embedded into the English language. The Steadfast slogan ‘for urum þeode’ (Old English for ‘for our people’) in the Roman alphabet, with the exception of the Anglo-Saxon rune ‘þ’, was a good example. The group’s visual emblems similarly denoted a wider history of appropriation. Steadfast’s white dragon, for instance, was derived from Welsh mythology. Yet though the way the group made reference to English as a ‘world’ language was jarring, it also pointed to something deeper about the inclusiveness of English identity that chimed with a longer imperial history (see Young 2008). Indeed, instead of promoting a ‘Kulturwurst definition’ of English community and culture (‘its contents impervious to contamination’), WATE hinted at a relatively mixed ethnic grouping that worked according to the principle of self-identification (Jantjes 2000, 266). The category of ‘English’ to their mind, covered the interests of ‘all those who would declare their ethnicity as English at the census’ (Steadfast Trust 2010).

Yet it also looked to the state for recognition. Central to the cause of the group was their conviction that the cultural cause of the English, unlike other ethnic groups, would not receive state support.

Our heritage is a rich tapestry to be savoured, admired and protected and yet, due to political correctness, it is a history and culture that is to be denied us. Scottish, Irish, Asian or any other culture you can think of is to be celebrated, but we the English are not afforded the same opportunity to celebrate our identity. (WATE 2007a)

Though the group's appeal to the censure of 'political correctness' was in part anti-multicultural critique it also articulated a multiculturalist paradigm. According to this set of ideas, the anxiety over the *decibel* prize was therefore less about its prevention of fair competition than what it represented about the English as a 'cultureless' group 'left over from the proud ethnic wheat' (WATE 2005).

We feel that now, more than at any other time, English culture and the very idea of being English is under attack. [...] We believe that as an ethnic group we will only survive in multi-cultural Britain if we can begin to think of ourselves as, and act as, a community. (WATE 2007b)

Even as they worked within the terms of cultural community, the group objected to what they perceived as the Arts Council's attempt at 'deculturalisation' (WATE 2007c).

Once again, those contesting the idea of cultural diversity struggled to articulate their cause credibly. At the same time though, their intervention over the *decibel* Penguin prize highlighted the peculiar invisibility of Englishness in the prevailing debate on culture.⁷⁵

Indeed, the group's rallying, if ironic call to ban 'Penguin Books' "Ethnic Only" Competition!' belied larger anxieties. Their bid to reclaim a notion of English cultural community by challenging who counted as 'ethnic' again raised the question of who was setting the terms for cultural recognition. It demonstrated the vulnerability of ideas of multiculturalism by showing how a group as politically and ideologically dubious as We Are The English could work according to the terms of cultural community. That the CRE was, ironically, forced to act on its behalf only underscored this deeper problem.

Exposing the limits of cultural diversity as a dominant mode of thinking by pointing out

⁷⁵ Robert Young locates this within a wider phenomenon. 'English ethnicity? Irish, Welsh, Scottish, yes, but English? People don't regard 'English' as an ethnicity. Why is this the case?' (2008, x).

its failure to account for notions of Englishness, the episode echoed more thoughtful reflections being articulated elsewhere. As Jatinder Verma, the East-African Asian theatre director, and client of Arts Council funding from the 1970s put it, ‘what noise is *decibel* really making?’ (Verma 2003).

Conclusion

The Arts Council of Great Britain offers us the clearest example of the modern state’s ‘positive’ involvement in the British cultural field. As part of the welfare state’s expanded set of responsibilities under the post-war social democratic contract, the Arts Council represented the changing circumstances through which the state intervened in the cultural field to secure the autonomy of the arts as a public good. Yet the governing mandate of the Arts Council to offer the “best to the most” belied a series of more complex issues which would be staged in the creation, the suspension, and the rehabilitation of a state-funded literary culture. The questions of what it might mean to interpret aesthetic excellence and how to identify what the public might need were staged as the Arts Council transitioned from the hands of a mid-century cultivated liberal elite to a generation of neoliberal conservatives participating in the wider public policy shift under Thatcher. Adding an additional complex layer to this situation, the naturalised notion of a democratic ‘public’ inherent to the original vision of the Arts Council came under increasing pressure as the nation itself grew in cultural and ethnic diversity, and Britain’s post-war, post-colonial diasporas entered a second generation of citizenship and contested prevailing notions of the national community. Though the Arts Council’s belated recognition of these group identities began as part of the evolution from the kind of loose, liberal internationalism that had characterised the CCF, by the 1980s the

Conservative neoliberal guardians of the institution unexpectedly sponsored a new era of multiculturalist cultural policy.

Though rarely taken together, the conflicts between liberal individualism and multicultural communitarianism, and the expansion and retraction of state responsibilities—the movement from a social democracy to a neoliberal one—powerfully shaped British literary culture at the historical juncture of the 1980s. The Pitt-Kethley case and the peculiar institutional amnesia that characterised its aftermath demonstrated the relatively narrow definitions of cultural diversity operative within the Arts Council. Stepping back however, these episodes also demonstrated the pressures bearing on an apparently autonomous category of literature at this stage in British cultural development. Under these conditions critiques of multiculturalism and its (sometimes unwitting) endorsement were debated and appropriated by all kinds of more and less likely figures.

These broader changes were, of course, taking place in all kinds of other institutional contexts. Having established some of the different pressures bearing on the literature's position in cultural policy at the time of multiculturalism, the following chapter considers what this meant in the context of national education. As we will see, the relationship between collective and individual identities, and the apparent invisibility of Englishness as a cultural category, had a direct bearing on the creation, evolution and reception of English as a modern subject in the mandatory school curriculum.

Chapter three

GCSE English and the National Curriculum

In ‘Kabba Questions the Ontology of Representation, the Catch 22 for “Black Writers”...’ the poet Daljit Nagra calls attention to the power of the school anthology in structuring beliefs about literature and cultural identity. Kabba, a Punjabi parent, confronts the English teacher responsible for his son’s take-home reading:

Vy giv my boy
dis freebie of a silky blue
 GCSE anthology with its three poets
 from three parts of Briten – yor HBC

of Eaney, Blake,
Clarke, showing us how
 to tink and feel? For Part 2, us
 as a bunch of Gunga Dins ju group, ‘*Poems*

from Udder Cultures
and Traditions’
 (Nagra 2007, lines 1-10)

Though Nagra’s poem has a wider resonance to which we will return later, the specific object of its attention is the English *Anthology* published by the Northern Examination and Assessment Board (NEAB). Originally published in 1996, the NEAB *Anthology* offered the most popular interpretation of the reading categories prescribed by the National Curriculum in GCSE examinations: ‘Poets’ of the English Literary Heritage and ‘Poems from Other Cultures and Traditions’. Commenting on these categories and their inbuilt assumptions from within one of the ‘other cultures’ being opened up, Kabba’s remarks on the politics of cultural representation are at once deliberately absurd and deeply serious. His rejection of being lumped in with the anthology’s “Indian” poems as ‘a bunch of Gunga Dins’ offers a pointed critique of those who set the terms for

normality and “otherness” in the curriculum. ‘Kabba Questions the Ontology of Representation, the Catch 22 for “Black Writers”...’ sets up many of the issues the present chapter will address: from questions of representativeness and the politics of anthologisation, to issues of language and literary form. This final chapter extends the previous chapter’s focus on the conflict between literary and multicultural policies in the Arts Council to the context of national education. It examines how public debates on multiculturalism inflected the vision for a national literary culture put forward by the state in the 1990s. In doing so it thus revisits the central preoccupation of this thesis, which concerns the state’s positive but still questionable relationship to literature. With all that Nagra’s poem raises in mind then, this final chapter tracks how ideas of the multicultural found their way into the English school curriculum, and shaped certain privileged modes of reading.

The responsibilities of school English to an implicit notion of, or identification with, ‘Englishness’ figured strongly in the background in the Conservative idea for a ‘national’ curriculum in the late 1980s. Yet, as this chapter will document, in the process of implementation the ‘national’ unexpectedly came to incorporate what one expert would call ‘the multicultural aspects of literature’. By the 1990s official guidelines would enshrine the requirement that all fourteen to sixteen year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland read literatures representative of the ‘English literary heritage’ and of ‘Other cultures and traditions’. These classifications, which represent the main topic of interest in this chapter, reflect the conflicting forces bearing on English at the time: the pressures of a domestic multiculturalism characterized by numerous clashes on a local level, and the sense of entitlement to a shared national identity offered by retrogressive notions of ‘English’ culture. These dual realities account in part for the compromise that took place over the subject within British national education at the close of the twentieth

century. In this setting both the ambivalence of the multi-‘cultural’ and the apparent capacity of English to facilitate the stability of the national culture would be foregrounded and contested.

The anachronistic call for a ‘traditional’ curriculum based in the literary and cultural heritage of England is not to be confused with the neoliberal multicultural position. Though at times they may appear to be calling for a similar thing, in fact there are two distinct voices within the broad Conservative ideal for a ‘national’ curriculum promoted by the neoliberal state, one less sophisticated, and another more socially progressive though arguably more implicitly aggressive. Whereas reactionary nationalism takes the question of the Englishness of the literary heritage as self-evident, the neoliberal multiculturalists are keen to name the cultural particularity of Englishness, *albeit while setting it within a mosaic of other particularities within a new multicultural Britain*. Yet there is also room within neoliberal multiculturalism for the literary heritage argument, represented in this chapter by the tendency to deploy Matthew Arnold as its representative.

All this raises the question of what we mean by ‘neoliberalism’, and in this respect it is important to distinguish its social form from its economic form. Whereas neoliberal economic policy encourages and incentivises competition based on a belief that progress comes from entrepreneurs having the freedom to invent through the market, the social sense (under which we can group neoliberal multiculturalism) promotes the freedom of individual groups to bring their own traditions. Distinct from the classical liberal tradition, its brand of highly individualistic egalitarianism is influenced by social liberalism and social democracy, and as such accords a more positive role to state institutions *as well as communities*, and is characterised by an interventionist approach. In this important respect then, neoliberalism is distinct from the reactionary desire to

preserve and conserve what it perceives as the essence of the national culture as held by an elite few. In practice of course, neoliberal government has ‘increasingly legitimated its practices and the form of society that they produce in terms of an ideal meritocracy, which valorises a [...] highly unequal set of social relations while claiming to offer individuals from all backgrounds an equal chance to compete’, as those issuing the democratic challenge to neoliberal culture consistently argue (Gilbert 2013, 10). This chapter will document arguments made from within this range of positions, including those of social conservatives such as John Marenbon writing at neoliberal time economically, and of neoliberal multiculturalists such as curriculum chief Nicholas Tate, whose call for a return to the literary heritage comes from positioning Englishness as a minority culture within a pseudo-multiculturalist framework of cultural community and the ‘new empathy for cultures’.

The regulating categories of the ‘literary’ and the ‘cultural’ described in Nagra’s poem came to represent a privileged way of reading at GCSE. Guided by a series of assumptions about literature and culture, the educational policy behind the categories gave rise to a new generation of examination board resources—specifically, free school anthologies—that were consumed and read on a mass scale, and of which the original NEAB *Anthology* remains the most significant. As Nagra’s poem reminds us, the predicament of the anthologised (‘black’) writer, and the singularity of the reading encounter can tell us much about how the categories worked among reading communities in practice and the fraught, unexpected, and ironic moments that might occur. To begin though we need to understand the ways the ‘multicultural’ and the ‘national’ aspects of state education were formally promoted, and the public and historical debates that accompanied them.

Inception: the idea of a National Curriculum

In 1988 Parliament enacted what was the most substantial and wide-ranging reforms to the national education system in generations. The Education Reform Act (ERA) was widely regarded as one of the major achievements of Conservative education policy, and symbolized an important break with the post-war social policy. Transferring new powers to the central state, the ERA established statutory obligations for schools and decreased the powers of local authorities. For many however, the ERA marked a moment of severe assault on an earlier educational culture in Britain and set about building a new one, ‘in which old “social actors” were marginalized and new ones rendered powerful’ (K. Jones 2003, 131).⁷⁶ Perhaps its most important modernization was the introduction of a National Curriculum in maintained schools, a compulsory programme of education for all children between 5 and 16 with standardized assessment and new national examinations regulated by the non-departmental body the School Examinations and Assessment Council.⁷⁷ The National Curriculum ushered in a new era of examination-based competition in education based on individual entitlement, school autonomy and public accountability.

The idea of a curriculum capable of producing assured standards for employers dated back at least to Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan’s ‘Great Debate’ on education in 1976, yet the structural and cultural changes to British schooling enacted in 1988 shifted national education from a welfare-state public good to an increasingly competitive, examinable and qualification-oriented enterprise. Beneath the veneer of modernization there were archaic elements that looked back to this earlier era, and the 1944 Education Act in particular. Under the welfare state the 1944 Act, or Butler Act, set

⁷⁶ Under the ERA schools could opt to be governed centrally instead of locally, and to have the financial control of schools passed from local authorities to parents and governors. It also introduced the publication of school league tables and other changes to privilege parental choice.

⁷⁷ The National Curriculum did not apply to independent schools, nor the academies or free schools to come.

out compulsory free state secondary schooling structured by a three tier system—grammar, secondary modern, technical—determined by the 11-plus examination. The 1988 Act reiterated the official language of 1944 on the purpose of the national education, though it also added a telling revision. Whereas the 1944 Act view of education was to ‘contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of the community’ (*Education Act Ch. 31* 1944, sec. 7), the ERA positioned the new ‘broad and balanced’ National Curriculum as a vehicle for ‘the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils [...] and of society’ (*Education Reform Act Ch. 40* 1988, sec. 1).

The careful shift in emphasis on the benefits of education from the local populace of the ‘community’ to individuals and ‘society’ at large, and introduction of ‘cultural’ development was neither incidental nor neutral. It indicated the wider context for the Reform Act as part of the Conservative project to link centralised state education to a vision of the national culture. Indeed, the new curriculum contained an exceptionally narrow interpretation of the national culture, as the simultaneous institution of mandatory religious education and collective worship of a ‘broadly Christian character’ in the ERA proved (*Education Reform Act Ch. 40* 1988, sec. 84). The broader forces at work in shaping the National Curriculum were also illustrated by the party political intrigues that capitalized on the process of modernization to secure the dissolution of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). As the Education Reform Bill passed through Parliament Conservative MPs Norman Tebbit and Michael Heseltine, both deeply critical of the ILEA’s radical anti-sexist and anti-racist educational policies, tabled a last minute amendment to abolish the ILEA. Its dissolution in 1988 ended 120 years of centrally administered education in London. Clearly the strategic inclusion of ‘culture’ in the ERA was far from a concessionary gesture to those advocating a multicultural approach to the curriculum. Instead, the idea of culture operating in the Act was of entitlement to a

shared national identity that passed over the cultural difference manifest in many classrooms in Britain.

The implication of cultural uniformity in the ERA prompted no small amount of debate and dispute. The very real concern that the new ‘national’ curriculum would unfairly disadvantage ethnic minority pupils was supplemented by fears that the delegation of responsibilities to the central state—and away from expertise on diversity in the local authorities—would lead to even greater inconsistency in school education. Indeed, to fully appreciate the significance of the National Curriculum amid these wider debates and conditions, we need to recognize how neoliberal constructions of the ‘nation’ in educational policy were set against the movement for multicultural education. The diametrical opposition between the ERA and the first government enquiry into the schooling of Britain’s ethnic minority pupils three years prior illuminated the fierce battle over what constituted the national culture.

Multicultural education for all?

While Everitt was taking initial steps to reform the Arts Council in 1985, the Department for Education and Science published *Education for All: the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*. Chaired by Lord Michael Swann, the Swann report as it became known, was the result of an eight-year enquiry, and the most significant state intervention into the debate about race and education to date.⁷⁸ Taking the 1944 Education Act at its word to provide ‘education for all’, the Swann report addressed the inconsistencies in the system for the assimilation of immigrant

⁷⁸ Swann was Vice-Chancellor of Edinburgh University and BBC Chairman ahead of Rees-Mogg’s tenure as Vice-Chairman. The Swann report would arguably be succeeded in this respect by the 1999 MacPherson Report.

children in British schools, and their complex social, political, and educational effects. The origins of the report in the social unrest that surrounded the educational underachievement of West Indian children and the supplementary schools movement indicated some of the wider issues at stake. The grassroots mobilization of large sections of Britain's black community in the late 1970s—galvanized by Bernard Coard's pamphlet *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System* (1971) published by New Beacon Books—had ramifications for race relations more generally. Against this backdrop in 1978 the outgoing Labour government commissioned philanthropist Anthony Rampton to chair an inquiry into the causes of poor school performance among West Indian children. Published in the aftermath of the 1981 Brixton riots and the New Cross fire, Rampton's interim report attributed particular responsibility to low teacher expectations and racial prejudice in the profession for the routine mislabeling of children as 'educationally subnormal'. The findings were deeply unpopular and triggered Rampton's hasty replacement with Lord Swann. Yet on the whole, Swann's committee reiterated these earlier findings: school attainment among West Indian and Bangladeshi children lagged behind their white British counterparts due to a combination of ingrained racial discrimination and social deprivation; the low proportion of ethnic minority teachers, and a legacy of assimilationist policies had created a bleak situation by the 1980s.

The Swann report refocused the public debate from the "special needs" of ethnic minority groups—discussed in the previous chapter, but also evident in local government assimilation widespread since the 1960s—to the egalitarian vision of 'education for all'.⁷⁹ The Swann report emphasised the benefit of a multicultural understanding to all children, carefully distinguishing between the 'educational needs' of particular groups and the larger need for a curriculum that 'reflect[ed] the multi-racial nature of British society'

⁷⁹ Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act granted 'special provision' to local authorities with 'substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth whose language or customs differ from those of the community' (*Local Government Act Ch. 42* 1966, sec. 11).

(DfES 1985, 315). Indeed, it carefully balanced demands for the remedial recognition of cultural difference with a commitment to fostering a common national culture. For instance, to the disappointment of more radical parts of the anti-racist movement, the report rejected outright the option of separate schooling. Instead it advocated an integrated approach to the curriculum that tackled racism by promoting understanding of 'the range of cultures and lifestyles' that constituted modern Britain (DfES 1985, 320).

We believe that education has a central role to play in preparing all pupils for life in today's multi-racial society, by ensuring that the degree of ignorance which still persists about ethnic minority groups is not allowed to remain uncorrected and that all teachers, pupils and thus the future citizens of this society are much more adequately informed about the range of cultures and lifestyles which are now part of this country. (DfES 1985, 320)

The particular emphasis the report placed on a multicultural education that 'corrected' ignorance and 'informed' pupils of 'the range of cultures and lifestyles... now part of this country' would resurface in later arguments specific to the role of literature in the English curriculum. Swann's statements on language in the classroom also enacted a broad compromise that stopped short of relativism by reiterating the centrality of Standard English as a basis for equality. Instead, its 'pluralist perspective' called on schools to cultivate national belonging alongside an increasingly global outlook, and to nurture individual cultural identities 'while learning to respect the identities of other groups as equally valid in their own right' (DfES 1985, 323). Perceptively, the report observed that a multicultural education went beyond the mere transmission of knowledge about other cultures, but required teaching a 'flexibility of mind', in which pupils could 'analyse critically and rationally the nature of British society' (DfES 1985, 324). Any system of education that emphasised 'the ethnic group identity of a child, at the expense of developing both a national identity and indeed an international, global

perspective' could not, in their view, be regarded 'as in any sense multicultural' (DfES 1985, 322).

According to its anti-racist critics, such as the National Association for Multiracial Education and education academic Barry Troyna, the Swann report failed to address 'how to provide antiracist education in multiracist Britain' (quoted in Boseley 1985). This group of critics regarded education on the norms and lifestyles of "other cultures" purely cosmetic compared to the embedded structures of power that perpetuated racial inequality. Indeed, though the Swann report was largely ignored by the authors of the ERA, it made significant headway on the issue in the public debate. It not only helped establish the beginnings of a consensus on the benefits of cultural pluralism in the school curriculum, but it also raised questions about what a multicultural education meant in regions with a low immigrant population. Perturbed at the apparent irrelevance with which diversity initiatives were treated in schools in Devon for instance, the Swann committee took steps to address the lack of multicultural education in England's 'white highlands' (Taylor 1985).⁸⁰

Longstanding efforts to reform the curriculum also stood behind more general policy. Intervenient measures were particularly strong in the world of English education through the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), ILEA, and ATCAL.⁸¹ Founded at Kent University in 1978 and Chaired by David Dabydeen between 1985 and 1987, ATCAL lobbied for an expansion of traditional boundaries of English education in schools and universities, aided by the Arts Council-funded journal *Wasafiri*. Local authorities both within and outside London employed experts to advise on a multicultural approach to teaching English or seconded local English teachers to review new literary materials (for instance, see Walton 1988; Foster 1990). The popularity of

⁸⁰ Swann commissioned a member of the committee to investigate the steps toward multicultural education in these geographical areas (see Verma 1989).

⁸¹ All three were leading publishers of multicultural materials.

junior fiction titles representing the lives of young immigrants also signalled an emergent commercial niche for mainstream publishers. Titles included Jan Needle's *My Mate Shofiq* (1978) brought out by HarperCollins' Lion imprint and Farukh Dhondy's *East End at Your Feet* (1976), published by Macmillan's Topliner series. Though *My Mate Shofiq* caused controversy for its social-realist inclusion of racist language and was banned by some schools, Dhondy praised the novel as 'the first book written in Britain which tackles race and refuses to fall into community relations bathos' (quoted in Moss 1980, 57).

The willingness to broach cultural diversity also varied considerably among examination boards. Originating in the universities in the late nineteenth century, the examination boards stayed relatively autonomous until the Education Reform Act obliged them to merge into five main groups under a state regulator. Though Swann reminded the boards of their responsibility to reflect diversity in syllabi for the educational market, the first guidelines for GCSE English in 1985 fell overwhelmingly on the side of "fair representation". For instance the Joint Board stated that syllabi must be 'free of political, ethnic, gender and other forms of bias' (quoted in Bush 1987, 18). This essentially negative approach would be offset by the more positive recognition of the virtues of diversity in the literature curriculum by the 1990s, as we shall discover. Yet while Department for Education circulars stated that the curriculum should 'reflect the culturally diverse society to which pupils belong and of which they will become adult members' (quoted in King and Reiss 1993, 3), to journals such as *Wasafiri* it was clear that the official guidance was (to echo Naseem Khan) 'conspicuously ignored' (Bush 1987, 18).⁸²

Though the practice of some institutions suggested a general complacency on the issue, it was the clashes at a local level in schools and education authorities that strengthened the case for a standardized, nationalised curriculum.

⁸² Bush identified the Welsh board and Midland Examination Group as the main offenders, but noted the more positive gestures made by the London East Anglia Group.

Breaking the 'liberal consensus': Ray Honeyford and the anti-multicultural

In October 1985 the Bradford head teacher Ray Honeyford arrived at Downing Street to discuss the politicisation of compulsory education with Mrs Thatcher. The presence of some two hundred protestors attested to his contested status as a possible advisor on the future of education. Honeyford was head teacher at Bradford's Drummond Middle School, a predominantly Asian school in dispute with the local education authority over their guidelines on multicultural education. Honeyford claimed that the decision taken by the Bradford authority to end "bussing"—a system for dispersing ethnic minority children to schools across the locality—had increased the Asian population of the school from 50% in 1980 to 92% by 1985. Honeyford's confrontational relationship with the local authorities escalated rapidly as he made his views public in pieces for the *Times Educational Supplement*. In 1984 he made a fervent case against what he called the 'growing bureaucracy of race' in the education system in the right-wing outlet *The Salisbury Review* (Honeyford 1984, 30). Articulating the separatist critique of multiculturalism, Honeyford described how multicultural education policies encouraged ethnic minorities to preserve their traditions, values, and languages while British 'good natured tolerance' and the nation's aspirations for a 'harmonious society' were exploited.

[There are] a growing number of Asians whose aim is to preserve as intact as possible the values and attitudes of the Indian sub continent within a framework of British social and political privilege, i.e. to produce Asian ghettos. [...] An influential group of black intellectuals of aggressive disposition, who know little of the British traditions of understatement, civilised discourse and respect for reason. (Honeyford 1984, 32)

Honeyford's scepticism of the new trend for identity categories—which made it 'perfectly reasonable in law to describe a member of the Church of England or the Labour Party as a member of an ethnic group'—echoed Pitt-Kethley's statements, but was more alarming. His inflammatory denigrations about the 'purdah mentality' of

Muslim families, Pakistan's inability to 'cope with democracy', and the causes of black educational failure in 'West Indian family structure and values' marked him out as an icon of the anti-multicultural (Honeyford 1984, 30-31).

Yet a deeper critique lay behind Honeyford's unreserved attack. Just as Raymond Aron had saved the brunt of his anti-communist critique not for the 'pure Stalinists or the true believers', but for the 'progressive [...] irreducibly hostile to the West' (2001, 332), the real culprits in Honeyford's view were the 'multi racial zealots' advocating 'fashionable' approaches to the curriculum (1984, 30). In his estimation this was typified by relativistic beliefs in the merits of 'creole, pidgin and other non-standard variants' as capable of 'the same power, subtlety and capacity for expressing five shades of meaning, [...] for tolerating uncertainty, ambiguity and irony as standard English' (Honeyford 1984, 30). Quoting from Linton Kwesi Johnson's 1980 poem-record 'Inglan is a Bitch', Honeyford also objected to those teachers that gave Johnson's anti-establishment verse a place next to Shakespeare and Wordsworth in the classroom. In his view an Orwellian 'race speak' had become the dominant 'language of politics' in Britain, in which racism functioned as the 'icon word' of those 'committed to the race game'.⁸³

Picked up by the national press as a figure 'both of hatred and hero-worship', Honeyford's anti-multicultural sentiment and clash with the authorities on a local, devolved level, was taken up by the party political right as the ultimate justification for an autonomous, centrally administered National Curriculum (Childs 2012).⁸⁴ Central government interest in Honeyford's cause demonstrated how hostility to localized multicultural policies would play a crucial role in driving forward a curriculum under the centralized state.

⁸³ The allusion to Orwell was explicit: 'In "Politics and the English Language" George Orwell said, "political language...is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an impression of solidity to pure wind". Race-speak is the language of a politics committed to that sort of deceit' (Honeyford 1984, 31).

⁸⁴ Suspended by Bradford Metropolitan Council, Honeyford was eventually reinstated by the High Court, though he never returned to teaching.



Figure 19. Ray Honeyford outside Drummond Middle School in 1984.

In her speech to the Conservative party conference in 1987 for instance, Thatcher contrasted a vision of apparent return to standardised education of ‘basic’ skills against the extremities and excesses of the multicultural.

Too often, our children don't get the education they need – the education they deserve. And in the inner cities – where youngsters must have a decent education if they are to have a better future – that opportunity is all too often snatched from them by hard left education authorities and extremist teachers. And children who need to be able to count and multiply are learning anti-racist mathematics – whatever that may be. Children who need to be able to express themselves in clear English are being taught political slogans. [...] I believe that government must take the primary responsibility for setting standards for the education of our children. And that's why we are establishing a national curriculum for basic subjects. (Thatcher 1987)

Honeyford's disruption of the so-called ‘liberal consensus view’ on the benefits of a multicultural approach to education also had traction within the debates on English

circulating at the time.⁸⁵ Against more expansive views of the subject, what it was and what it could do, the Cambridge English professor and medieval philosopher John Marenbon issued a fervent defence of English as a clearly delineated subject. Marenbon's pamphlet *English our English: the new orthodoxy examined* (1987) appeared on the eve of the first GCSE examinations. Marenbon, who would oversee the 1992 revision of the English curriculum, argued that child-centred models of education were responsible for what he called the current 'orthodoxy' on English teaching. Published by the Centre for Policy Studies and written at encouragement of its director Shirley Letwin, Marenbon's pamphlet called for a return to the formal teaching of grammar and the cultivation of literary taste through extensive reading of 'the literary heritage of the language' (1987, 18). While he did not explicitly refer to multicultural education, Marenbon was emblematic of a wider critique of progressive education, specifically the ideas laid out in John Dixon's *Growth through English* (1967) and the 1966 Dartmouth Seminar, which emphasised personal growth as the ultimate goal of English teaching. He argued that the 'tenets' of progressive education had become institutionally embedded in the national system, and were wholly responsible for poor standards.

In some respects *English our English* reflected an intellectual heritage in Letwin's attempt to recover a romanticised ideal of Englishness in the novels of Anthony Trollope, and perhaps even aspects of Orwell's own statements on English civilization in his 1941 essay 'England Your England'. At the same time Marenbon rejected the idea that English was responsible for the personal, emotional, social and intellectual development of the child, which he saw as jeopardising the subject as a specific field of knowledge and set of technical practices. Though humanistic aspirations for the subject were noble, he argued that they were fundamentally misplaced, and detrimental to its 'rigour' (Marenbon 1987, 8). In his view the aims of the subject were twofold: 'teaching

⁸⁵ A departmental head remarked to the Swann committee that 'we in the English department, teach a liberal consensus view'. For them this meant consciously teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and the writing of Chinua Achebe (quoted in DfES 1985, 249).

children to write and speak standard English correctly' and 'initiating their acquaintance with the literary heritage of the language' (Marenbon 1987, 18).

As Honeyford had claimed before him, Marenbon argued that Standard English was 'the language at its highest level' and superior to the 'limited range of functions' of creole, or the dialects of those 'unrefined by education' (1987, 22). Though Marenbon's anti-relativism was not surprising, it was interesting that he linked the value of Standard English to 'the resources of the culture' that had 'produced [it]' (1987, 22). The claim that 'Englishmen enjoyed a two-fold literary heritage', one of Greco-Roman 'antiquity' and one of 'their own language' indicated his selective approach to the cultural influences bearing on the language as it evolved (Marenbon 1987, 27). Contrasting with earlier arguments for English as a modern subject from the 1920s, Marenbon claimed that the 'Englishman' would always be 'a stranger to his own culture' without knowledge of the classical origins of the English literary heritage. The 'enemies' of the literary heritage, as he saw them, were on the other hand, much more contemporary. The rise of literary theory treated literature as a 'personal resource' he claimed, while methods of close reading placed literature in the 'laboratory' instead of 'the life of man' (Marenbon 1987, 29). Though Marenbon objected to the dissection of "great" literature, his own use of language was no less dependent on an itemised, empiricist view. Reading, for instance, was the private acquisition of what he called 'a valuable stock of literary examples' (Marenbon 1987, 36). Indeed, his ideal view of English as 'simple and well-defined' emphasised that the literary was not a 'naturally existing category' but the outcome of generations of recognition (Marenbon 1987, 18). In addition to works by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, the Romantics, Austen, Dickens and Eliot, he believed the Authorized Version of the Bible ought to be given a special place in the English curriculum.

In his literary individualism, his authoritarian approach to literary value, and willingness to name what the study of English ought to be, Marenbon established himself as an ideal candidate to maintain the boundaries, content, and goals of the subject against ‘the whims of teachers and local authorities’, and to re-establish its “traditional” role in the nation (1987, 40). Yet to understand what precisely was at stake in the appeal to an earlier golden age of English teaching in the neoliberal climate of the 1980s, including the ambivalent link between the subject and national cultural unity, we need to trace the earlier history and revisit the first government commission on English.

The English Association and *The Teaching of English in England*

‘English, we are convinced, must form the essential basis of a liberal education for all English people’, declared the 1921 report of the Departmental Committee of the Board of Education (DCBE 1921, 19). Chaired by poet Sir Henry Newbolt, this first official inquiry into English education was responsible for securing a leading place for English in the national education.⁸⁶ Yet what makes Newbolt especially significant for our purposes is how the report conceptualized English as an expansive subject and Englishness as an inclusive identity for the goal of facilitating the unity, stability and renewal of the national culture.

Behind the Newbolt report was the English Association, which made up eight out of the committee’s fourteen members, including Newbolt himself. It was founded in 1906 to ‘bring the best attention to the Language and Literature most widely known among men’,

⁸⁶ Newbolt was the first of five major reports on the subject in the twentieth century. It was followed by *Curriculum and examinations in secondary schools* [the Norwood report] (1943), *A Language for Life* [the Bullock report] (1975), *The Teaching of English Language* [Kingman report] (1988), and the National Curriculum English Working Group’s *English for ages 5 to 16* [Cox report] (1989).

and it was supported in this task by the magazine *English* from 1936 (*English* 1936). As Brian Doyle has shown, the English Association was less a pressure-group than an elite ‘class-based mobilization’ of scholars, politicians, administrators and ‘men-of-letters’ (1986, 118). Their efforts to intervene in public policy by lobbying government for a state commission were motivated by a belief in the capacity for English to renew the national culture. Indeed, they believed that ‘the story of the English people’ could inculcate unity across the different classes (Doyle 2003, 206). The English Association’s call for the state to establish the study of English in public elementary schools constituted a significant modernisation of the existing order. Rivaling the classical education available only to the elite, the English education they proposed sought to institute an era of ‘equal intellectual opportunities’ for all citizens, and grant works in English their due cultural authority (DCBE 1921, 26).

We do not believe that those who have not studied the Classics or any foreign literature must necessarily fail to win from their native English a full measure of culture and humane training. To hold such an opinion seems to us to involve an obstinate belittling of our national inheritance. (DCBE 1921, 18)

This quasi-spiritual or idealist view of the ‘unifying tendency’ of English contained a more practical plan for standardising language use across the different groups, and for the widespread teaching of its humanising literature, ideally by a ‘fraternity of itinerant preachers’ (DCBE 1921, 25). In language that echoed Keynes’ vision for the publicly-funded arts, the Newbolt report described how reading the ‘national’, rather than classically imported literature, offered a ‘common meeting ground’ for the public to ‘come into touch with one another’ (DCBE 1921, 22). The humanistic aim for the subject as expansive and boundary crossing was also reflected in George Sampson’s influential text *English for the English: A Chapter on National Education* published the same year. Sampson, who was also a member of the Newbolt committee, observed that ‘the

greatest purpose of education is not to make people *know* something but to make people *be* something' (1921, vi). From this early stage English was tasked with this larger aim. Predicated on the exceeding of formal boundaries, it was at odds with those later arguments favouring a much more bounded version. The weight Newbolt ascribed to English as the 'channel for a formative culture for all English people' was both humanistic and deeply national (DCBE 1921, 12). For instance, the significance of Standard English in the classroom went well beyond its relative merits as a language, to a metonymic account of its status as 'a part of England' itself.

[T]o maltreat it or deliberately to debase it would be seen to be an outrage; to become sensible of its significance and splendour would be to step upon a higher level. In France, we are told, this pride in the national language is strong and universal; [...] Such a feeling for our own native language would be a bond of union between classes, and would beget the right kind of national pride. (DCBE 1921, 22)

Conceptualised as the preferred mode of cultural intervention, English promised both to foster societal relations and—in accordance with the post-WWI nurturing of the individual—enrich the individual human spirit via 'personal records of action and experience' and an 'inner world of human thought and feeling' (DCBE 1921, 8).

At the same time, the thinking behind the study of literature in English was remarkably nebulous. Drawing on a metaphor of Englishness as an organic, mythic force in order to advocate the 'great advantages not to be found elsewhere', Newbolt's vision of English literature derived from its ability to amalgamate innumerable outside influences into the single stabilising flow of English culture.

[I]f we explore the course of English literature, if we consider from what sources its stream has sprung, by what tributaries it has been fed, and with how rich and full a current it has come down to us, we shall see that it has other advantages not to be found elsewhere. There are mingled in it, as only in the greatest of rivers there could be mingled, the fertilizing influences flowing down from many countries and from many ages of history. Yet all these have been subdued to form a stream native to our own soil. The flood of diverse human experience which it brings down to our own life and time is in no sense or degree foreign to us, but has become the native experience of men of our own race and culture. (DCBE 1921, 12)

On this logic, the ‘foreign’ and ‘diverse’ became ‘native’ through the act of reading, and literary representation played out on a platform of universal human ‘experience’.

Sampson’s description of a category of ‘pure literature’ was equally receptive: ‘for school purposes, English literature means anything good to read extant in English [...]. Whether it was originally written in Chinese, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Irish or Welsh’. In his view, ‘there should be no battle’, but ‘one great concord of Humanism’ (Sampson 1921, 92). Far from prescribing a view of exclusive Englishness hostile to outside influences then, the version of English culture it promoted comprised of numerous ‘fertilising influences’. In this sense the report’s statements reflected wider conceptions of Englishness as the outcome of cultural and ethnic ‘mingling’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. More important though, was Matthew Arnold’s belief that ‘cultural fusion’ was only fully possible through literature itself, and the literary world of thought and feeling.⁸⁷ Yet even as the Newbolt report emphasised an expansive and inclusive idea of Englishness available through the subject, it passed over the material processes where by English literature participated in forms of ‘mingling’ and ‘subdu[ing]’ in the world. The limits of the ‘essentialist and narrowly-based cultural history’ held by the English Association were illustrated by the travelling texts of Newbolt’s own imperial verse (Doyle 2003, 51). The exhortation ‘play up! play up! and play the game!’ of his 1897 poem ‘Vitaī Lampada’ reverberated through the educational

⁸⁷ ‘For Arnold, it was only in the realms of English literature that a cultural fusion took place between the Celt and the Saxon; the task of the literary critic was to detect and chart the harmonious literary, strictly textual resolution of this racial dialectic’ (Young 2008, 151).

institutions of Empire as anywhere in England itself (Newbolt 1910, 131).

Implementing the study of English on these terms proved difficult however. Designed to facilitate identification with an abstracted notion of Englishness, attempts to implement the subject on a national level were complicated by beliefs about its unexaminable nature. Indeed, the report's commitment to the subject's 'true instinct for humanism', regarded the 'demand for definite measurable results, especially the passing of examinations' as anathema to its goals (DCBE 1921, 55–56). Tensions on the problem of examining English continued well into the 1940s. Published the year ahead of the Education Act in 1943, the Norwood report also concluded that the values of the subject could not 'be broken down into constituent parts', but 'wait[ed]' 'upon the appreciative powers of the pupil' (DCBE 1943, 93). In other words, the 'natural gifts' of the subject were caught, not taught, and certainly not reflected in national examination.

Brian Cox and the English Working Group

The argument for the National Curriculum articulated in the 1980s transported English to an earlier age of well-bounded rigor characterised by the teaching of grammar, a definitive canon of 'the best that had been thought and said', and systematic examination. Yet if we look back it is clear that this was at odds with the remarkably diffuse thinking through which English came into being. Nonetheless, given the force of the backlash against perceived multicultural separatism and progressive ideas of English as a form of personal growth, it was unsurprising that the Conservative government sought out an individual able to advance the alternative to steer the incoming English curriculum. Brian Cox, a Professor of English Literature who had long opposed the excesses of the so-called orthodoxy on English education, was the ideal candidate. The appointment of Cox

as Chair of the National Curriculum English Working Group in 1988 established the grounds for a restatement of the dominant mode of thinking.

Cox's place on the English Working Group rested on his well-established credentials both as a literary critic and as a leading voice on the national education. In addition to his role as Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Manchester, Cox had also been a significant figure in mid-century English literary culture more generally. A scholarship boy from Lincolnshire, Cox's trajectory was deeply shaped by his time as an undergraduate at Pembroke College, Cambridge in the late 1940s, and as a graduate at the English Faculty at the at the height of F.R. Leavis' influence. In 1959 Cox co-founded the prestigious journal of literary criticism *The Critical Quarterly* with fellow Cambridge student Anthony Dyson. Along with *Encounter*, *Critical Quarterly* was widely regarded as one of the most important outlets of mid-century English letters. It published a range of leading literary and critical voices, including Raymond Williams, Frank Kermode, the Movement poets, Sylvia Plath, R.S. Thomas and fellow Pembroke undergraduates Ted Hughes and Edward (later Kamau) Brathwaite. Though strongly influenced by Leavisite ideas, particularly the belief in the capacity of a canon of 'great literature' to evoke 'faith in human individuality', Cox and Dyson disavowed Leavis' suspicion of the modern and sought to distance themselves from the narrowness of *The Great Tradition* (1948).⁸⁸ Cox himself had struggled under the weight of a thesis on Henry James. Instead, one of *Critical Quarterly's* principal tasks as they saw it was to celebrate the vitality and variety of contemporary poetry.

Despite his markedly literary qualifications as a critic and published poet, it was Cox's interventions over the national education that brought him to a wider public audience, and into political view. In 1969 Cox and Dyson transitioned away from literary criticism to something altogether different: their Black Papers on Education. This series

⁸⁸ In the 10th anniversary of *Critical Quarterly* Cox and Dyson restated its principal commitments: 'Great literature helps to keep alive our most subtle and delicate feelings, our capacity for wonder, and faith in human individuality' (C. B. Cox and Dyson 1968).

of three pamphlets criticising the expansion of the comprehensive system, the lowering of standards through egalitarianism, student participation in the universities and philosophies of free growth, predated Marenbon's own by two decades. Originating in Cox's first-hand experience witnessing student revolt as a visiting lecturer at Berkeley in 1964, the Black Papers took in a range of contributors and interests. In addition to an article by Michael Swann—based on his experience as Vice-Chancellor of Edinburgh University during Gordon Brown's tenure as Rector—the Black Papers sparked furore in the national press through Angus Maude's arguments on the 'Egalitarian Threat' and Kingsley Amis' satirical 'Short Educational Dictionary'. Cox's association with ideological and party-political conservatism was cemented by Labour education minister Edward Short's polemic against the Black Papers as marking 'one of the blackest days for education in the past century' (quoted in MacCabe 2008). Indeed, from the vantage point of the 1980s Cox's appointment to an official position was widely regarded as an anti-progressive, if not surprising, move on the part of the Thatcher government.

When the findings of the English Working Group chaired by Cox were published in May 1989 though, its remarkable balance was received with surprise on all sides. *English for ages 5 to 16* stressed the importance of Standard English even as it valued non-standard forms, and encouraged pupils to experiment with their own creative self-expression, rather than prescribe a list of literary greats. The Cox report attributed equal weight to Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing, and was even explicit that personal growth was a legitimate model for the teaching of English, along with examples of a handful of others. Among its other compromises, negotiations, and fine balances, the Cox report was also surprisingly open to the multicultural. Picking up where Swann left off, Cox laid out a clear case for instituting cultural diversity in and through the English curriculum.

Today, literature in English in the classroom can – and should – be drawn from different countries. All pupils need to be aware of the richness of experience offered by such writing, so that they may be introduced to the ideas and feelings of cultures different from their own. English teachers should seek opportunities to exploit the multicultural aspects of literature. Novels from India or Caribbean poetry might be used for study of differing cultural perspectives, for example. Not only should this lead to a broader awareness of a greater range of human “thought and feeling”, but – through looking at literature from different parts of the world and written from different points of view – pupils should also be in a position to gain a better understanding of the cultural heritage of English literature itself. (DfES 1989, sec. 7.5)

Setting out how the ‘multicultural aspects of literature’ could serve the interests of ‘critical thinking’, the report linked literary reading to ideas of personal, emotional, formal, moral and social growth (1989, sec. 7.4). Indeed, in its suggestion that the inclusion of multicultural texts into the canon might productively stimulate debates about equal opportunities in the public sphere, the report demonstrated similar thinking to that of postcolonial studies as a parallel development in the British academy. The task of transforming English into a well-bounded subject aligned to a strong sense of British culture had appeared to be in safe hands, and yet in practice Cox had opened the door for multicultural literature to enter into the national English curriculum.

Though persuasive, Cox’s statements require careful unpicking. The slippage between different cultures and ‘different countries’, for instance, conflated the differences occurring between nation states with the multi-ethnicity internal to the nation. On the other hand, its references to the ‘richness of experience’ and ‘differing cultural perspectives’ appeared to designate writers as both willing and suitable representatives of the ‘interests’ of their particular ‘groups’.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Cox’s passing reference to ‘novels from India or Caribbean poetry’ signaled the emergence of further subcategories linking specific literary forms to the national. It was unclear, for instance, which ‘India’ was being referred to here: its post-1947 socialist, secular form, or an earlier incarnation, perhaps even one bearing specific linguistic demarcations. The feasibility of

⁸⁹ ‘Pupils should gain increasing understanding that texts may be related to interests of different groups’ (DfES 1989, sec. 7.4)

‘the Caribbean’ as a cohesive national unit was just as questionable. Yet the strongest assumption at work in Cox’s statement was the notion that reading could allow people to acquire the lived experience of others. According to this view, reading enabled one to enter vicariously into the world of another—presumably unlike them—to share in lived experience. The latent idea here of the text as an empty receptacle to be filled with, and transmit, ‘experience’ was deeply contestable. For one thing, it depended on a related idea of literature as a relatively transparent window unobstructed by writing and language. Indeed, we might attribute Cox’s allegiance to the immediacy of experience over the mediating powers of language to the intellectual continuity with Leavis. The most important detail in Cox’s argument for the purposes of the present chapter though, was the concessionary differentiation he made between the ‘literary’ and the ‘cultural’. The spirit of relativity infusing the claim that through literature from different cultures, British pupils would have an increased understanding of the *Englishness* of English literature, was striking. With its roots in J.S. Mill’s statements on the formation of the individual, Cox’s recommendation for a mediated ‘exposure’ to cultural difference through the English curriculum reflected the classic liberal defence of multiculturalism. Consider, for instance, Mill’s reference in *On Liberty* to the need for ‘different experiments of living’ and for ‘the worth of different modes of life’ to be ‘proved practically, when any one thinks fit to try them’ (2008, 63). The implication that writers act as representatives of their national groups however clearly clashed with Mill’s belief that above all ‘individuality should assert itself’.

The report of the English Working Group reflected Cox’s own changing commitments. Indeed, by 1991 he would articulate the urgency with which we must ‘tolerate each other’s way of life’, and—reiterating his Arnoldian formulation—learn to ‘admire, where appropriate, forms of behaviour and feeling and thought very different to our own’ (B.

Cox 1991, 154). On closer inspection though, Cox's stance was less a complete reversal than a manifestation of the tensions within his own self-professedly 'liberal' position. In his memoir Cox confessed his allegiance to the ideal of 'a free spirit', an idea that 'owed much to John Stuart Mill and the liberal middle-class culture of the late nineteenth century' (B. Cox 1992, 104). Locating both himself and *Critical Quarterly* in this 'tradition', Cox singled out its 'anti-dogmatism', 'tolerance' and ability to 'respond sensibly and flexibly to particular moral or social problems' as key qualities for 'our national life'. His sense of his own place in this lineage not only increased consciousness of the 'tensions' (the 'desire to be tolerant, to welcome dissent') in its commitments ('that as many people as possible should be enriched by culture') (B. Cox 1992, 105). It also motivated him to respond to the need for greater inclusivity in education. Writing to Angela Rumbold MP, then Conservative Minister of State for Education, Cox registered the important changes that occurred since the time of the Black Papers and the emerging demands of a multicultural democracy. 'Our best friends' had failed to 'think ahead sufficiently often to recognize that the difficulties of the past ten years are not necessarily the difficulties of the future ten years' (B. Cox 1986).

Cox's openness to the multicultural also had a literary bearing. Further to his early literary criticism—including *The Free Spirit* (1963), his study of liberal humanism in novels by George Eliot, Henry James, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf and Angus Wilson—later interests included African writing, and the literary networks of his career covered acclaimed international writers. Kamau Brathwaite, the Indian English poet Jayanta Mahapatra, and his in-depth involvement with the cosmopolitan publisher Carcanet were all influences.⁹⁰ As Carcanet's Michael Schmidt noted more recently, Cox combined 'complementary conservative and radical impulses' (Schmidt 2008). He resisted the

⁹⁰ Cox was critical in stabilising Carcanet's finances in the 1970s, principally through Arts Council grants. He would chair the North West Arts Board for six years and spend two years as a member of the Arts Council.

‘reductive ideologies of the left’ and the ‘corrosive Gradgrindian, utilitarian conservatism’ of the right.

That the relatively narrow project of a national curriculum had been disrupted by Cox’s own changing outlook meant that once again, the apparently anti-multicultural Conservatives of the state would sponsor multicultural initiatives. Yet there were also important differences with what had gone before. Unlike the Arts Council’s conspicuous avowal of the multicultural under a wider positive action policy, this particular development regarding the National Curriculum was neither expected nor especially welcome. For instance, the terms of reference given to the English Working Group had included that the guidelines ‘draw upon the English literary heritage’ and ‘promote the reading of great literature’ (DfES 1989, 125). The conflict was reflected in the immediate fallout of the report, and included Rumbold’s abortive attempt at removing the multicultural literature requirement pre-publication (B. Cox 1995, 13).⁹¹ Included in the 1989 English Order, the categories of ‘English literary heritage’ and ‘Other Cultures and Traditions’ survived the attempt to produce a slimmed down curriculum in the early 1990s, and appeared in the 1995 National Curriculum guidelines relatively intact. Viewed in positive terms, Cox’s great achievement was to broker a settlement between traditionalists keen to foreground the literary heritage and reformers seeking greater multicultural representation. The compromise was evident in the separate, though linked, categories of the ‘literary’ and the ‘cultural’. Yet the debate on English shifted as the decade developed. The new amenability to cultural pluralism did little to change the pressures on English to facilitate a shared national culture.

⁹¹ In 1991 Multicultural Task Group set up under the National Curriculum Council was disbanded at an early stage of its work (see Tomlinson 1993).

‘Culture is not anarchy’: Matthew Arnold and the guardians of the curriculum

In a 1996 article for *The Times* titled ‘Culture is not anarchy’, curriculum chief Dr Nicholas Tate set out his views on the duties of the national education to ‘culture’ and the development of a ‘civic and national identity’ (1996).⁹² Tate was chair of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which became the Qualifications Curriculum Authority in 1997 and the article was one of a series in which Tate advocated teaching so-called British values in schools. Steeped in heavy allusion to Arnold’s statements from 1869, Tate argued that a misconstrued notion of equality was responsible for the major ‘anarch[ies]’ of the day. These he took to be cultural relativism, critical materialism and the ‘romantic individualism’ of each new generation to ‘create the world afresh’. In Tate’s view the institutionalised recognition of the differences between cultures had ‘weaken[ed] the very concept of value’, and yet into this breach he promised that National Curriculum would institute a ‘common culture’ of the best for the most. Echoing Rees-Mogg’s statements in *Glory*, and the changes in the Arts Council discussed in the previous chapter, Tate claimed that the debate on education had ‘long ceased to be a secret garden’ but ought ‘to involve the whole community’. His appeal to the cultural authority vested in Arnold was characteristic of how the great advocate for the national education was deployed to firm up the neoliberal cause of the national culture, even though on closer inspection Arnold was more cosmopolitan than often presented.

Tate was not alone in deploying Arnold in this way. Writing at the time of the Black Papers, Cox and Dyson observed that while Arnold would have been ‘greatly impress[ed]’ by the amount of government expenditure on education he would have been ‘horrified to discover anarchy subverting the temple of culture itself’ (Dyson 1969). Indeed, Cox and Dyson conceived of their ‘judgment as editors’ in an Arnoldian

⁹² All references to Tate in this section are to this article.

tradition of protecting ‘the supremacy of human reason and great art’, as they explained to their readers (Dyson 1969). Marenbon was also quick to appropriate Arnold’s original title for the last of his Oxford lectures ‘Culture and its Enemies’, in his references to the ‘enemies’ of the literary heritage. In the fraught context of the public debate on education between the 1960s and the millennium, the ‘anarchy’ in question was multifaceted. At different points it was made to mean philosophies of progressive education, poetry by Linton Kwesi Johnson, or the ‘obsession with multi-culturalism’ (Cunningham 2005).

More significant, however, was the question of what constituted a common culture according to Tate. For even as he insisted upon a moral continuity of universal values passed down ‘from the Greeks to the Enlightenment’, Tate also acknowledged that the cultural diversity of contemporary society meant pupils ought also to be aware of ‘the rich heritage of *some* of the other cultures and traditions’ represented in the classroom. His qualification—the curriculum ought to consist of ‘ancient civilisations with rich artistic and literary traditions’ over ‘saris and samosas’—indicated his particular interpretation of cultural pluralism.⁹³ What he described as the ‘new empathy for cultures’ also presented Tate with the opportunity to reassess the particularities of English culture, and reflected the way in which a multiculturalist framework of cultural community would be deployed by different kinds of figures, as seen in chapter 2.⁹⁴ Indeed, Tate warned that the English were ‘not without cultural anguish’ of their own, and situated the ‘continuing melancholy, long, withdrawing roar’ of Christianity and the ‘passing of the England of the meadows, the lanes, the guildhalls’ alongside minority world languages facing extinction. Motivated by anxieties over a fading Englishness on one side and the cultural relativism he held to be anathema on the other, Tate concluded by rallying support for

⁹³ Tate’s trivialising caricature of multiculturalism as ‘saris, steel bands and samosas’ was not lost on those who sought to defend multicultural ideas as a basis for citizenship (see Modood 2010).

⁹⁴ Tate’s vision of the Englishness of English culture was, of course, different to that of *We Are The English*.

his national project by highlighting the lurking threat to culture and the English language from ‘the global communications revolution’.

Tate’s argument in *The Times* not only retraced the case for state intervention to protect culture, albeit in the altered conditions of ‘the new empathy for cultures’ and the ubiquity of globalisation. It also indicated the version of Englishness that would become naturalised in the curriculum. The inclusion of the Greek myths and the Authorised Version of the Bible as evidence of the ‘characteristics that distinguish literature of high quality’ and ‘the significance of texts whose language and ideas have been influential’ in the 1995 and 1999 English orders implied a very specific genealogy of the English literary heritage (DfES 1995, 21). It reflected the fissures in Tate’s vision for a national curriculum with ‘roots in Greece and Rome, in Christianity and in European civilization’. Caught up in a wider conception of Europe, Tate’s Judeo-Christian, Western-European model of English culture acknowledged how literature, language and culture were entangled in the world, even as it set clear boundaries on the extent of this entanglement, and the “other” cultures and countries that fell outside its connectedness.

The complex and many-sided public debate on the English curriculum illustrated the different issues that arose as the state intervened to deliver a standardized curriculum to the nation in 1988. By the mid-1990s the compromise Cox brokered had become institutionally embedded and enshrined in the official guidelines presented to examination boards. Yet precisely what the ‘literary’ and the ‘cultural’ meant at the level of content and as categories of literary reading was unclear. Their interpretation and implementation by examination boards would reveal how these ideas worked amid the pressures of examination and the politics of anthologisation.

Exposition: The NEAB *Anthology*

The spirit of enterprise permeating examination boards at the moment of national curricular change played a formative role in launching the NEAB's exceptionally successful *Anthology*.⁹⁵ The idea for an anthology featuring pre-selected literary materials for the GCSE examinations in English and English Literature was the brainchild of two senior English examiners. As former teachers they rightly calculated the value a free pupil anthology would hold for financially pressed English departments forced by the new curriculum to cater to a larger range of texts. While the venture required substantial investment from the NEAB—the 1996 print run of 300,000 copies worked out at approximately sixty pence per pupil—the board reaped significant benefits from the sales of supplementary materials it published through Heinemann Educational Books (Williams 1996; see Dymoke 2002, 85). Hopes for a 2% gain in the NEAB's already sizable market share of 40% were well exceeded: in 2000 Peter Benton calculated that 66% of all pupils registered on the compulsory English GCSE were on the NEAB syllabus, with the remaining third shared out among the other three examination boards (2000, 88). Benton, a researcher and also co-author of the longstanding poetry anthology *Touchstones*, has noted the particular weight teachers placed on the NEAB *Anthology* in their deliberations over which syllabus to choose. Indeed by the 2000s the NEAB text had inspired a number of copy-cat anthologies, with alternatives produced by competitors London Examinations (Edexcel) and Oxford and Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR).

Though the *Anthology* would be criticised for its monopoly on the English market, its emphasis on contemporary poetry (and to a lesser extent, short stories) was praised for increasing the range of texts studied at GCSE, and for introducing young adult

⁹⁵ The NEAB merged with a series of smaller awarding bodies in 1997 to form the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA). It existed as NEAB/AQA until 2000.

readers to poetry in particular. Its usefulness in addressing cultural difference also proved to be something of a selling point, especially in predominantly white schools where pupils 'lacked "exposure" to the cultures represented in the poems', and in cases where Ofsted had raised multicultural awareness as point for school development (Dymoke 2002, 91). At the same time, there was no getting away from the fact that it represented a relatively narrow and heavily institutionalised canon. As one teacher put it, 'nationally whole generations read the same few poems' (quoted in Benton 2000, 89).

In 1998 the content for the *Anthology* was completely revised amid expectations for greater market growth. Whereas the original 1996 edition had featured poems by William Blake, Gillian Clarke and Seamus Heaney as 'Poets' in the literary heritage, in the 1998 edition Ted Hughes, Carol-Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage appeared as 'Poets of the English Literary Heritage'. The original set of 'Poems from Other Cultures' by Chinua Achebe, Nissim Ezekiel, Alice Walker, Valerie Bloom, Taufiq Rafat, Grace Nichols, Anne Wilkinson, Fred D'Aguiar, Pierre Coupey, and Po Chü-I were similarly overhauled. The 1998 text featured poems by Sujata Bhatt, Tom Leonard, John Agard, Imtiaz Dharker, Kamau Brathwaite, Moniza Alvi, Fiona Farrell, Arun Kolatkar, Grace Nichols and Tatamkhulu Afrika. Though the problem of a relatively fixed narrow canon persisted—the 1998 content applied to five consecutive years of GCSE exams from 2000—the revision was apparently successful in meeting the needs of readers and examiners. Examiners noted in particular the 'marked improvement' in responses to the revised Other Cultures texts in the first year *Anthology* was tested (NEAB and AQA 2000, 4).

While the NEAB's responsiveness to the new requirements to assess the English literary heritage and Other Cultures and Traditions reaped considerable income for the NEAB, the relatively faceless figures behind the *Anthology* were also motivated by a deeper set of

ideas about literature's public value and questions of pedagogy relating to cultural identity.⁹⁶ However the manifestation of these ideas at the level of the text also revealed something about a particular model of culture dominant in the examination board as an institution. The decision to represent the distinction between literary heritage and other cultures as discrete textual categories side by side revealed something of their understanding of the separateness of cultures, for instance. Indeed, arguably the categories also worked to establish a norm against which the "otherness" of 'other cultures' could be measured, as one NEAB resource stated explicitly to readers:

All the poems in the first section of your English *Anthology* are written by poets considered to belong to the English literary tradition. The poems in *this* section stand outside the English literary tradition. They may be written by someone from another culture or the subject matter may be obviously about another culture. It is the *otherness* of these poems that is their distinctive quality. You should approach them in the same way as any other poem, although you should be aware of what they are telling you about other cultures and traditions. (Pilgrim 1997, 130 emphasis original)

Yet in a rare moment of reflection, the creators of the anthology distanced themselves slightly from the categorical impression it implied. The governing 'spirit' of the *Anthology*, they explained to teachers, was to select texts on the basis of 'individual merit and interest', and to present the 'types of literariness, models of sensibility, which have come to dominate the cultural landscape – and others which have challenged or changed it' (Bennett, Buckroyd and Thomas 1996, 95). This notion of canon and anti-canon bore out in the specific ways of reading that occurred as the anthology was rolled out to schools on a mass scale.

⁹⁶ The likely figures behind the *Anthology* project were Tony Childs and Peter Buckroyd, both Chief Examiners for English Literature at AQA, and Jim Taylor, subject officer for English at NEAB/AQA.

Regulating categories: the literary and the cultural

Specific modes of presentation were not the only forces regulating the distinction between the literary and the cultural. Indeed, Cox's vision as it was laid out in 1989 had, by the 1995 guidelines, accrued specific learning objectives that directed specific ways of reading. The English Literary Heritage for example, was designed to expand the moral and emotional understanding of the pupil by casting light on how 'perspectives on society' 'impact[ed]' 'the lives of individuals' (DfE 1995, 19). Applying beliefs about the individualism of the literary to the specific form of poetry, the official policy claimed that 'poetry' was 'the work of individual poets' (DfE 1995, 19). As such it was characterised by a 'range of forms and styles', the 'use of language in imaginative, precise and original ways', and references to 'literary traditions'. By contrast, the purposes of the Other Cultures poems were both representative and group-based: they 'represent[ed]' 'varied perspectives and subject matter', and contained the 'distinctive voices and forms', the 'subject matter and the language' of particular groups (DfE 1995, 19). The distinction between the compulsory English GCSE and the optional English Literature course also enacted particular protocols. Drawing boundaries around the kinds of reading permissible under the examination, the examination board stated the 'crucial differences' between the forms of literary analysis appropriate to each subject. Whereas '[s]tructural, linguistic and presentational devices need to be commented on and evaluated in English', in Literature 'comments on form, structure and language always have to be tied to meanings' (NEAB and AQA 1999c). Given that the examination components on the English Literary Heritage and Other Cultures were regarded as being of sufficient importance to merit a place within compulsory GCSE English, there was little room for more perceptive attempts at literary interpretation.

What it meant to be anthologised as a poet 'in the English literary heritage' was an ambivalent question. For though the article ('the') suggested a singular and authoritative

conception of the literary heritage, the version used in practice was much less stringent. Kabba's parody of the 'HBC / of Eaney, Blake, / Clarke, showing us how / to tink and feel' hinted at how the NEAB's choice of ambassadors for the literary heritage made a somewhat anomalous assemblage. The selection for the 1996 *Anthology* illustrated this in clear ways. Grouped under the naturalised and naturalising heading 'Poets', the NEAB's attempt to name what counted as the English literary heritage was eccentric at best. It also struck an ironic chord. The effort to incorporate Heaney under the banner of Englishness was obviously questionable given his disavowal of similar labels in the *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* some years earlier. His riposte to the editors of the Penguin volume Andrew Motion and Blake Morrison illustrated his own feelings about Britishness as 'common ground'.

Caesar's Britain, its *partes tres*,
 United England, Scotland, Wales,
Britannia in the old tales,
 Is common ground.
Hibernia is where the Gaels
 Made a last stand

And long ago were stood down upon –
 End of simple history lesson.
 As empire rings its curtain down
 This "British" word
 Sticks deep in native and *colon*
 Like Arthur's sword.

(Heaney 1983, stanzas 3–4)

If Heaney's *An Open Letter* revealed the limits of Morrison and Motion's project in 1982, it also illustrated the ongoing nature of the discursive problems attendant on Heaney as a supposed carrier of the "spirit" of contemporary English literature. In a further ironic twist, the same forces sanctioning Heaney as a 'major poet' in the curriculum also included 'Arthur's sword': the Arthurian legend was cited as evidence of literatures 'whose language and ideas have been influential' (DfE 1995, 20).

The decision to drop William Blake, the only conventional ‘heritage’ poet in the *Anthology*, and replace Blake, Heaney and Clarke with Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy and Ted Hughes as ‘Poets in the English Literary Heritage’ signalled the NEAB’s belief in contemporary poetry as the spirit, rather than material embodiment, of the literary heritage. Indeed, in this sense the Englishness of the English literary heritage was as unexamined in 1998 as it was in the 1920s, when Newbolt referred to a ‘rich and full current’ of ‘diverse human experience’ (DCBE 1921, 12). Yet even if the literary was designed to stand in for universal individual experience—in sharp distinction to culturally particular experience—this was complicated by the specific poets and poems selected to represent it. For one thing, the poems selected from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) were relatively ‘local’ in reference to a particular people and place, and resonated with Heaney’s later appeal for the ‘right to diversity *within* the border’ (Heaney 1995, 201).⁹⁷ The NEAB’s relatively loose interpretation of the Englishness of the literary heritage contained other telling selections along these lines. What else but the apparent neutrality and universality of Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘literary’ language distinguished her from the anthology’s other featured Glaswegian poet, Tom Leonard? Grouped under Other Cultures for its use of Scots dialect, Leonard’s poem staged a national politics of language via the received pronunciation of BBC newsreaders. His categorisation in Other Cultures not only raised questions about the place of Scotland on the NEAB’s vision of the nation, it also illustrated what Cox had suggested about featuring ‘under-represented’ voices and ‘authors writing in dialect’ on the basis of a linguistic ‘equal opportunities’ (DfES 1989, sec. 7.4).⁹⁸ Wales, on the other hand, held special exceptions in the National Curriculum on the basis of cultural (though not linguistic) autonomy. In 1995 the Department for Education had noted that ‘in Wales, pupils should be given opportunities to read works by Welsh authors writing in English’ as well as ‘works that

⁹⁷ The poems were ‘Mid-Term Break’, ‘Digging’ and ‘The Early Purges’.

⁹⁸ Scotland was not covered by the National Curriculum. Differences between the two education systems only increased following devolution in 1999.

have a Welsh setting or a special relevance to Wales' (DfE 1995, 20). In this context the anglophone Welsh poet Gillian Clarke worked well in the NEAB's 'HBC' of the "English" literary heritage. Clarke's poems made special reference both to Wales specifically and to larger universal themes.

Other Cultures and Traditions was much more heavily defined by comparison. On one level this worked against the obvious assumptions. The 1995 curriculum guidelines had, after all, provided examination boards with an extensive list of writers it regarded as being in the literary heritage, with no equivalent for Other Cultures. Yet on another level this demonstrated the discursive work of the category itself. Whereas the 'literary' transcended temporal, geographical and socio-political restrictions to exist transcendentally between gifted individuals, the NEAB understood the 'cultural' in decidedly linear terms. On this estimation, culture was 'handed down within a group from one generation to the next' as 'an essential part' of a 'common history and way of life' (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 58). This broadly anthropological approach to culture as the 'ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which underpin a given society' was accompanied by a view of 'tradition' as the representative customs of particular groups as depicted in art and literature, rather than any more abstract sense of creative or intellectual heritage. For the NEAB, 'tradition' meant 'eating a particular kind of food' or 'lighting candles at a particular time of year' (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 58).

Though the writers featured under the 'cultural' category were selected as representatives of the national cultures of other countries, they served aims that were much closer to home. As one NEAB resource stated, while the 'poems in [the Other Cultures] section of the *Anthology* are written by poets from many countries and often reflect the cultures and traditions of those countries', 'there can be several cultures within one larger culture or society; for example, people from many different cultures live in the

United Kingdom' (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 58). Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, larger forces governed selective definitions of 'culture' operative in the institution. It was telling, for instance, that the particular national cultures featured in the 1998 text were former British colonies and members of the Commonwealth: Guyana, Barbados, South Africa, India, Pakistan and New Zealand.

Other Cultures in fact represented a relative manoeuvre between the cultures of the 'world' and those of the post-war post-colonial diasporas Stuart Hall described in multicultural Britain. English examiner Imelda Pilgrim performed one such gesture in a revision exercise designed for *NEAB GCSE English* (1997). The text prepared pupils for the English exam by first introducing them to the concept of 'culture' more generally. Inviting the reader to first read a short non-fictional description of a 'traditional Hindu wedding', it invited students to reflect on how the customs described compared to their own normative expectations of a 'traditional wedding' (Pilgrim 1997, 130 see figure 20). The text then encouraged pupils to discuss in groups whether their received ideas about a 'traditional wedding' would 'mean the same thing' to someone 'from another country'.

Talk about these terms with other people in your class. Do they mean the same things to them? Can you find reasons for any differences you may have? Would you expect someone from another country to have the same ideas as you? If you were to explain these terms to someone from another country what would you say about them? (Pilgrim 1997, 130)

Having established how culture and difference worked in the classroom, Pilgrim proceeded to model the kind of analysis the examination required. Using poems by Grace Nichols, Ian McDonald, Rabindranath Tagore and Langston Hughes, she invited pupils to identify the specific formal, linguistic and thematic characteristics that signified them as 'belong[ing] to another culture' (Pilgrim 1997, 133).

Looking at texts from other cultures and traditions

Looking at texts from other cultures and traditions

First we need to establish what is meant, in this context, by the terms **cultures and traditions**.

Think about the following phrases and what they mean to you:

- youth culture • urban culture
- rural culture • a traditional Christmas
- a traditional wedding • a traditional family

ACTIVITY 1

Talk about these terms with other people in your class.

- Do they mean the same things to them?
- Can you find reasons for any differences you may have?
- Would you expect someone from another country to have the same ideas as you? If not, why not?
- If you were to explain these terms to someone from another country what would you say about them?

ACTIVITY 2

Read the account of a traditional Hindu wedding on the opposite page. In what ways is it similar or different to your ideas of a traditional wedding?

Clearly traditions and customs are a part of the culture in which they arise. Culture refers to the vast range of ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which underpin a given society. The term **traditions** refers more specifically to the customs handed down from one generation to another. Within one broad culture it is possible to have many different cultures and traditions.

All the poems in the first section of your English *Anthology* are written by poets considered to belong to the English literary tradition. The poems in *this* section stand outside this tradition. They may be written by someone from another culture or the subject matter may be obviously about another culture. It is the *otherness* of these poems that is their distinctive quality as a group. You should approach them in the same way as any other poem, although you should be aware of what they are telling you about other cultures and traditions at the same time.

The wedding ceremony usually lasts about an hour, but the celebrations often go on for several days. The wedding takes place either in a temple or the bride's home. The bride wears special eye make-up, and a dye is used to make patterns on her hands and feet. She wears a new red and gold sari, and lots of gold jewellery. Preparing the bride for the ceremony takes several hours. Both the bride and groom wear garlands of flowers.

The first part of the wedding is when the bride's father welcomes the bridegroom. The bridegroom sits under a special canopy, which is a decorated covering. He is given small presents which are symbols of happiness and a good life. Then the bride arrives, usually wearing a veil so that her face cannot be seen. She removes this during the ceremony. The couple sit in front of a special fire. Their right hands are tied together and holy water is sprinkled on them when the bride's father 'gives' her to the bridegroom. There are prayers and offerings of rice.

The most important part of the ceremony is when the bride and groom take seven steps towards the fire. At each step they stop and make promises to each other. While they do this, they are joined by a piece of cloth. It is hung loosely round the bridegroom's neck, and tied to the bride's sari. This is a symbol that they are being joined as husband and wife. Once they have taken the steps together, they are married. There are more prayers and readings, and flower petals are thrown before the guests give their wedding presents. Then everyone shares a meal.



Figure 20. NEAB class exercises for 'Other Cultures'.

Unsurprisingly, this particular variant of close reading passed over the complex historical circumstances bound up in McDonald's Caribbean whiteness, thus complicating precisely which 'other' culture he belonged to. It also failed to register how the translation of Tagore's Bengali school rhyme 'Palm Tree' into English might be in tension with what the poem appeared to say about staying rooted in one's 'earthly corner' (quoted in Pilgrim 1997, 134).

The defining characteristics of Pilgrim's way of reading persisted in examination technique.⁹⁹ Evaluating responses to a question about poems that 'reveal[ed] strong feelings about culture or tradition', the examiners praised those 'systematic and clear candidates who made a list of strong feelings and then linked them to any features of culture or tradition which they could detect in these poems' (NEAB and AQA 1999a).

⁹⁹ See appendix E for the GCSE English examination questions for 1999 and 2000.

These pupils, they noted, ‘tended to do very well’ (NEAB and AQA 1999c, 5). The conception of culture as anthropologically particular, representative, national, and outside of English culture was cemented first by the NEAB’s profitable series of supplementary publications and in the examination itself.

Perhaps the clearest example of the regulation of the ‘literary’ and the ‘cultural’ as categories were the different freedoms and restrictions granted to literary comparison. Osmosis between the two was disallowed at the level of examination, where each group of texts were tested consecutively in thirty-minute essay questions. Yet it also worked at the level of the categories themselves. Whereas the literary ostensibly offered readers a solitary and intimate encounter with the selected oeuvre of a single authorised ‘Poet’, the cultural demanded a more communal approach to reading and analysis: drawing comparisons between poems by different writers of different contexts in the same response. Readers of the Other Cultures texts also had to draw on ‘cultural context’ as part of their response under assessment criteria. In both categories the broader protocols differentiating English from English Literature had a bearing. For instance it explained the efforts to steer candidates toward ‘presentational features’ in order to help ‘liberate’ readers ‘from some of the more difficult minutiae of meaning’ (NEAB and AQA 1999c, 14). These comments by the examiners derived from one particularly exemplary Other Cultures question: ‘choose two poems which look very different on the page. Explain how they are different from each other; why they are different from each other; which you prefer and why’ (NEAB and AQA 1999a). Indeed, examiners noted that candidates had ‘clearly enjoyed’ recounting ‘what they thought was “different” about them’ (NEAB and AQA 1999c, 14).

The restrictions precluding a fuller comparative approach also missed some important opportunities. For one thing, the preoccupation with outward displays of ‘cultural’ custom obscured its performance in more ‘literary’ texts. For though many of

the Other Cultures poems certainly lent themselves to such a reading (consider Kabba's disdain at Taufiq Rafat's 'goat blood-party / barbeque' poem), Heaney's evocative depiction of local customs of bereavement in 'Mid Term Break' offered ample evidence of tradition: the 'snowdrops / And candles', and line of 'old men standing up to shake my hand' (1990, 7, lines 9; 16–17). The same was also true of Simon Armitage's depiction of the ritual burning of fingers as a 'butterfingered way [...] of asking you if you would marry me' (1993, 13, lines 13–14).

Responsive to the new requirements of the National Curriculum, the NEAB had a relatively clear sense of what it felt the two categories ought to deliver. Indeed, though the *Anthology* was not beholden to anachronistic ideas about the 'literary heritage', the category still worked according to ideas of literary individualism whereby 'literary' texts cultivated an autonomous point of view and expanded moral and emotional understanding. The 'cultural' was similarly shaped. Informed by beliefs about the capacity of literature to offer insight into the lives of particular groups, it worked to broaden awareness, evaluate the merits of different cultural values and inculcate a more communal mode of reading. The overarching commitment to the idea that 'many different cultures' could exist 'within one broad culture' still managed to dodge the question of the cultural particularity of Englishness (Pilgrim 1997, 130).

These broad tendencies were further reflected and embedded institutionally in the BBC's popular educational television series *Roots and Water*, originally broadcast on BBC Two in 1999. Commissioned specifically to tie in with the NEAB/AQA specification, this series of short films featured all ten of the Other Cultures poems. With the exception of the notoriously evasive Marathi poet Arun Kolatkar, the films featured each of the NEAB anthologised poets not only reading the poem, but engaged in commentary on its

meaning regarding cultural identity.¹⁰⁰ Accompanied by *Roots & water: Poems from other cultures and traditions* (1999) published by BBC Educational Publishing, *Roots and Water* received the Japan Broadcasting Corporation's prize for programs demonstrating the 'new possibilities in teaching using broadcasting' (NHK 2014). In both the *Anthology* and its institutional afterlife via the BBC films, the category of Other Cultures emerged as a significant object of national study.

Reading regimes

Having examined how the categories worked discursively, we can now turn toward what the specific poems anthologised under the regimes of the 'cultural' offered to readers. The three mini-essays that follow on poems by Sujata Bhatt, Tatamkhulu Afrika and Kamau Brathwaite position the literary text against its institutional "frame" under the National Curriculum. In each case, analysis centers on the kinds of claim the poem makes to cultural identity, from Bhatt's vivid depiction of bilingualism, Afrika's account of what it means to know a place and represent a people, and Brathwaite's view of the continuities and disruptions of Caribbean culture. The close analysis of these three texts here is not to deny the possibilities for a more comprehensive, connected reading across both categories. Indeed, both Seamus Heaney's position on the issue of representativeness and Simon Armitage's resistance to the version of the literary heritage peddled by Michael Gove's Department of Education showed similar issues to be at stake.

¹⁰⁰ Though Kolatkar read his poem 'An Old Woman' on camera, poet and critic Dilip Chitre represented Kolatkar in the commentary section.

If in Michael Gove's master plan English literature is actually a byword for Englishness, I'd prefer poetry to have no part in it [...] My concerns are mainly about labeling poetry as something solid, traditional and worthy, something belonging to the establishment, a yardstick against which most people won't measure up. If, on the other hand, children are allowed to find the poems that fit their voices or appeal to their imaginations and their cultural inclinations, then I'm on board. (Armitage 2012)

The poems discussed here, while selected, demonstrate some of the parameters to what Cox's vision of the literary and the cultural delivered in practice.

'My tongue in English chains': Linguistic mythologies in 'Search for My Tongue'

Sujata Bhatt's vivid depiction of the bilingual predicament made 'Search for My Tongue' one of the anthology's most memorable poems. The version of the poem that appeared in the *Anthology* comes from mid-way through a much longer work, and opens with the following words of direct address:

You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other
the foreign tongue.
You could not use the both together
Even if you thought that way.

(Bhatt 1988, 65, stanza 9)¹⁰¹

The metaphor of English and Gujarati as competing 'tongues' forms the main conceit of the poem, particularly as it was excerpted to appear in the *Anthology*. Here, it describes how 'mother tongue' 'rot[s] and die[s]' in the hostile climate of the 'foreign tongue', 'until

¹⁰¹ The poem as it appears originally in *Brunizem* (1988), and the point at which the text in the *Anthology* begins.

you had to spit it out' (Bhatt 1998, lines 7–14). Indeed, the claim of impossibility of using 'both together / Even if you thought that way' is born out in the text. The poem proceeds for seven lines in Gujarati script (accompanied by a romanised version beneath). The Gujarati section is translated into English in the final stanza, it narrates a dream sequence in which the 'mother tongue' regenerates, overcomes the 'foreign tongue' and flourishes in the speaker's mouth. The *Anthology* version concludes with resolution: '[e]verytime I think I've forgotten, / I think I've lost the mother tongue, / it blossoms out of my mouth' (Bhatt 1998, lines 36–38).

With its performance of the alterity and conflicts between languages, 'Search for My Tongue' was typically read as a narrative of linguistic loss and reclamation, and held up as evidence of what student readers described as the 'importance of language to a culture', and 'the difficulties of being part of two cultures'.¹⁰² Indeed, Bhatt's poem was profiled alongside Tom Leonard's 'Unrelated Incidents' and John Agard's 'Half-Caste' as poems that deployed non-standard forms of English. They were by far the most popular choices for the examination question 'compare the ways in which two poets from this selection explore the idea that your own identity is closely linked with the language you use' (NEAB and AQA 1999b). For its GCSE readers, the poem's depiction of the "native" language pushing the 'foreign' tongue aside was indicative of 'cultural clash', as student commentary on the text described. The poem was a reminder of the dangers of 'forgetting your original language' when 'absorbed in the new culture.' Indeed, though Bhatt's poem was set in the U.S. of the 1970s and derived from experiences living there, the poem was read in direct correspondence with a British multicultural context. One reader even managed to discern the precise moments at which initial 'assimilation' gave way to eventual 'integration' in the poem as the poet found a way to 'mix the two

¹⁰² These phrases appeared as annotations of 'Search for My Tongue' in student copies of the *Anthology*.

cultures'. They observed that 'mournfully', the speaker loses her language, 'angrily', she 'feels forced to use [the] foreign tongue', and 'triumphantly', she is reunited with 'her mother language' in her dreams. NEAB study guides also encouraged pupils to 'write about your experience of moving between two languages' if 'like Sujata Bhatt, [...] have a mother tongue which is not English' (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 61).

The discourse of the 'mother tongue' that governed its GCSE interpretation was problematic though, and should prompt us to pause for consideration. The same study guide explained the mother tongue as the 'native or original language' 'from which another language has developed, as a mother gives birth' (see figure 21). However the idea of the mother tongue reflects a much more complex, and problematic, set of issues, even as it was also embedded in a broader educational discourse on bilingualism from the 1970s. The 1975 Bullock report for instance regularly used the phrase to denote bilingual education ("mother tongue teaching") for pupils from immigrant families, and also in the context of encouraging white British children to 'master' English as '[their] mother tongue' (DfES 1975, sec. 20.17). As Thomas Bonfiglio shows in his account of the mother tongue as a concept, *Mother Tongues and Nations: The Invention of the Native Speaker* (2010), the primacy attributed to the 'mother tongue' over the 'foreign tongue' supported a whole raft of myths about language and the nation. On this analysis the idea of the mother tongue was neither as innocent, nor as recent as it seemed.

Bonfiglio's principal argument was that the valorisation of the native speaker through maternal or organic metaphors was predicated on a broader and more insidious 'ethnolinguistic nationalism' (Bonfiglio 2010). Originating in religious art of the medieval period, the association of the 'first' language with the mother figure established an ontology of language as a private, imitative act of acquisition. This way of thinking about

language was developed further by Dante in his defence of the ‘gift’ of the vernacular over the artificial learning of Latin. Similarly, organic and botanical metaphors of language as plant, tree, fruit or flower, worked to localise language as belonging to, and flourishing exclusively in, the nation. This *lingua flora* Bonfiglio claimed, underpinned the Darwinian discourse of the “birth” and “death” of languages, and the language “trees” of comparative philology (2010, 85). Imported into linguistic discourse, the idea of the mother tongue was always ‘supralinguistic’. It worked to affirm national and local claims of the ownership and governing of languages.

Against this larger background, the bodily and botanic metaphors that lent Bhatt’s poem such force at GCSE were entangled in a powerful set of linguistic mythologies. Indeed, notions of the national borders of languages, and the belief that language, ‘like plants’, ‘died in the wrong environment’, were consistent across the poem’s GCSE reception.¹⁰³ While this reading appeared to fit in well with the NEAB’s efforts to foreground the differences of contemporary multicultural society, arguably the metaphor of the mother tongue obstructed as much as it illuminated.¹⁰⁴ The mock examination question ‘how does the extended metaphor help you to understand the poet’s point of view about her original language, Gujarati [*sic*]’, had ironic undertones given how the metaphor proved something of a stumbling block for some readers (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 61). For example, examiners noted how some candidates fell into difficulty, becoming ‘puzzled about what they took to be a literal portrayal of someone with two tongues’ (NEAB and AQA 2000). Rather than dismiss this highly literal reading for failing to follow the metaphor, these difficulties foregrounded instead its opacity as a way of understanding language and identity.

¹⁰³ Student annotation.

¹⁰⁴ The BBC *Roots and Water* dramatisation of ‘Search for My Tongue’ framed the poem through a cosmopolitan arrangement in which actors of different ages, races, and ethnicities reading the poem line by line against a busy central London backdrop (see Wagner 1999b).



Sujata Bhatt

from Search For My Tongue

- You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
5 and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other,
the foreign tongue.
You could not use them both together
even if you thought that way.
10 And if you lived in a place you had to
speak a foreign tongue,
your mother tongue would rot,
rot and die in your mouth
until you had to spit it out.
15 I thought I spit it out
but overnight while I dream,
મને હનું કે આખી જીભ આખી ભાષા,
(munay hutoo kay aakhee jeebh aakhee bhasha)
મેં થું કી નાખી છે.
20 (may thoonyki nakhi chay)
પરંતુ રાત્રે સ્વપ્નામાં મારી ભાષા પાછી આવે છે.
(parantoo rattray svupnama mari bhasha pachi aavay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ
(foolnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

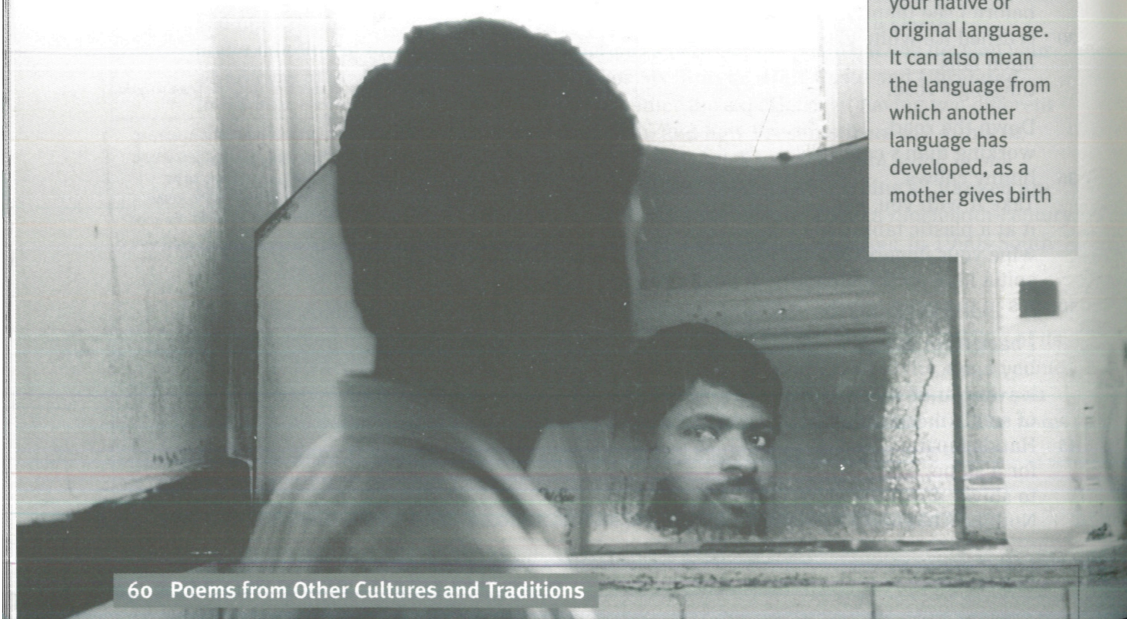
- 25 મોઢામાં ખીલે છે.
(modhama kheelay chay)

ફૂલની જેમ મારી ભાષા મારી જીભ
(fullnee jaim mari bhasha mari jeebh)

- મોઢામાં પાકે છે.
30 (modhama pakay chay)
it grows back, a stump of a shoot
grows longer, grows moist, grows strong
veins,
it ties the other tongue in knots,
35 the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth,
it pushes the other tongue aside.
Everytime I think I've forgotten,
I think I've lost the mother tongue,
it blossoms out of my mouth.

Explanations

mother tongue:
your native or
original language.
It can also mean
the language from
which another
language has
developed, as a
mother gives birth



60 Poems from Other Cultures and Traditions

Figure 21. 'Search for My Tongue' from *Working with the English Anthology 2000/2001* (1998)

Bhatt's depiction of the separateness of languages had a deeper resonance that went beyond its educational context to tie into the fraught question of language in anglophone Indian writing more generally. The struggle it staged between the Indian 'mother tongue' and the 'foreign' English tongue mapped onto a larger set of literary works that foregrounded the alienation of the Indian writer working in English. R. Parthasarathy's poem *Rough Passage* (1977) was exemplary in this respect. Published in OUP's Three Crowns series of Indian poetry alongside Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan, *Rough Passage* declared its linguistic 'homecoming':

My tongue in English chains,
I return, after a generation, to you.
I am at end

of my dravidic tether,
hunger for you unassuaged.
I falter, stumble.

Speak a tired language
wrenched from its sleep in the *Kural*,
teeth, palate, lips still new

to its agglutinative touch.

(Parthasarathy 1977, 49, part III)

For the poet and critic Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Parthasarathy was culpable in perpetuating orthodoxies about the 'chains' of English, and the need to return to definitively "Indian" cultural and linguistic traditions. In his view, the logic of Parthasarathy's appeal to language in relation to an "Indian" 'experience' was troubling.

[T]he quality of his experience as an Indian – whatever that is – and the language which he is fated to express himself do not fit. The problem – alienation – will presumably disappear if the poet removes English and wears his native idiom. (Mehrotra 2012, 180)

The linguistic model behind Parthasarathy's call to his fellow writers to reject the lines of 'foreign poets' and 'scrape the bottom of your past' was distinctly geological (1977, 50), implying clearly stratified "layers" of language (Mehrotra 2012, 164). On this analysis, little seems to distinguish Parthasarathy's tongue-in-English-chains from the image of the mother tongue that 'rot[s] and die[s] in your mouth'. That main formal difference to Bhatt's poem—her incorporation of Gujarati—has been read in terms of a postcolonial linguistic dissidence that also bolsters the ethnolinguistic view: the poet resisting 'the flow of language in English' by performing a 'rootedness [...] to her mother tongue' (Mohanty 2007, 27). That the anglophone Indian poet and critic Niranjana Mohanty preferred organic vocabulary in his appraisal of Bhatt's poem was telling. In his view, the poem illustrated how 'one's mother tongue gets shaped by the water and the air of the particular place' (Mohanty 2007, 27).

Despite these problems in dominant readings of 'Search for My Tongue', the poem contains some more complex features. Indeed, Bhatt's experience of being an Indian ('whatever that is') was set against the linguistic pluralism and subdivisions of the modern Indian state (Mehrotra 2012, 180). She was born six years after the Indian constitution authorized Hindi as the national language, and set 1965 as the official expiry date for certain uses of English. A speaker of Gujarati, Bhatt moved from Ahmedabad in Gujarat to the state Maharashtra, where the official language was Marathi, and again to the U.S. where she learned English, and later returned to study creative writing. Her later career has been based in Germany where she writes and translates between English, German, and Gujarati. Published by Carcanet in the volume *Brunizem* (1988), 'Search for My Tongue' represented Bhatt's self-conscious early attempt at writing in English and

Gujarati simultaneously, a project she attributes to T.S. Eliot's use of Sanskrit in *The Waste Land* and her linguistic demarcations of her own educational experience.¹⁰⁵

The teacher told me you can't use Gujarati in an English poem – only French or Spanish or Italian [...] I just said 'Oh well' and I never tried it again. And then by the time I was twenty-two I had read T S Eliot [...] so I felt, well, I could too. (N. Jones 1999, 13)

For all Eliot's beliefs about the apparent unity of Indic languages, Bhatt's decision to incorporate the Gujarati script was indicative of the conscious craft of her writing in performing forms of cultural identity.

Her account of the specific mode of self-translation enacted in the text is also suggestive of a more complex inter-lingual engagement. Describing her writing process in the BBC's *Roots and Water* film, she emphasised the attempt to develop imagery simultaneously between languages, without repetition or mirroring. 'So in English I have "the bud opens", and in Gujarati I continue with the image and turn it into a flower and a fruit' (quoted in Wagner 1999b). Though clearly untroubled by its implications, her attempt to construct the metaphor of the mother tongue through self-translation made visible the limits and the opportunities of working within the two languages. Whereas 'in English the word "tongue" can mean "language" and the tongue in your mouth', the metaphor broke down in Gujarati. Compelled to use both *jeebh* ('tongue') and *bhasha* ('language') the English kept the metaphor ('the bud opens, the bud opens in my mouth'), while the Gujarati held the tentative, though perhaps less problematic, quality of a simile: 'like a fruit in my language, my tongue, ripens in my mouth' (quoted in N. Jones 1999, 13).

Bhatt's provisional working between English and Gujarati also contrasted with the dominant representation of translation as an unmediated reflection, repetition, or

¹⁰⁵ *Bruniṣem* was a good example of Carcanet's cosmopolitan interests in poetry and translation in the late 1980s. The publisher's blurb to the volume remarked on the 'three very different worlds of Sujata Bhatt's imagination' (Carcanet Press n.d.).

straightforward equivalence between languages (see figure 21). Indeed for the NEAB experts, the ‘section in Gujarati [...] when translated into English, mean[t] much the same’ (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 61). For their purposes what mattered was not the translatability of the ‘foreign’ tongue, but how the script acted as a visual simulation of foreignness, and one that mirrored the alienation of living as a member of another cultural group in Britain. Examiners stated the ‘pleasing understanding’ among candidates of how the poem ‘puts the reader in the poet’s position through its use of Gujarati’ (NEAB and AQA 2000). Its approach to the poem was thus consistent with the aims of the ‘cultural’ category overall: to mediate a positive exposure to difference, including the difference of language and writing systems.

Though ‘Search for My Tongue’ was amenable to expectations of a ‘foreign tongue poem’ its part in the liberal project of identity formation that underwrote the NEAB *Anthology* was full of tension. Overly dependent on the stability of the ‘first’ language, it was also bound up in a discourse that tied language to the nation. At the same time, the interplay between languages in the poem, and the evidence of Bhatt’s own self-conscious craft complicated these clear-cut borders of the foreign and the native.

Mediating *Afrika*: Reading Tatamkhulu Afrika in England’s ‘white highlands’

In 1998 twenty-five schoolteachers from Devon travelled to Cape Town to meet writers, students and teachers and to experience life in the ‘new’ South Africa. The trip was one of several excursions between the English county and the South African coastal metropolis organized by the Crossings Project: ‘A Devon – South Africa Cultural Exchange’ designed to promote cultural diversity (see DCS 2006).¹⁰⁶ Organised by

¹⁰⁶ Hereafter referred to in the abbreviated form.

Devon Curriculum Services, the project linked eighteen English schools to South African partner schools, connecting classrooms through video-link and writing of *Tatamkhulu Afrika*, Peter Clarke, Beverly Naidoo, Ingrid de Kok, Mike Cope, and Abner Nyamende. Committed to pursuing anti-racist initiatives, Crossings also broadcasted poetry readings direct from Robben Island.

The Crossings Project was motivated by longstanding concerns about the apparent mono-culturalism of schools in Devon. The lack of progress in the decade after the Swann report affirmed multicultural education ‘for all’ was a key factor, and one to which the Stephen Lawrence inquiry lent additional charge and poignancy. For many commentators Devon was the archetypal English ‘white highland’ (Taylor 1985), and ‘one of those counties which Swann had in mind’ when it referred to the areas of Britain that were ‘oblivious’ to the ‘changed and changing nature of British society’ (Busby, Pryke, and Taylor 1985, 13). Gajendra Verma’s findings on the failure to implement multicultural education in white rural areas unearthed some particularly alarming views among trainee teachers (Verma 1989). The words of one trainee, quoted in the *Times Educational Supplement*, indicated the pervasiveness of racist perceptions, and the extent and depth of the problem.

When I think of coloured people I think of people who live in their own countries but are ruled by white people because they would not be able to rule their own countries in what is considered a modern civilized manner. (Quoted in Spencer 1989)

Emerging out of this context, Crossings sought to equip schools in addressing racism and challenging ignorance. Sponsored by the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges (a body set up in 1948 under UNESCO and absorbed into the British Council in the 1990s), Crossings was exemplary of the kind of cross-cultural educational work these national and supranational institutions sought to support. It was also indicative of

the relativizing manoeuvre between the ‘world’ and domestic multiculturalism we have already seen. By introducing students to the literature and culture of South Africa during and immediately after apartheid, the Crossings Project sought to transform the provincialism of pupils in Devon into a more worldly appreciation of cultural diversity ‘as an enrichment to all our lives’ (DCS n.d.). Yet whereas Cox envisaged the detour into different cultures as a necessary part of clarifying English cultural identity, the creators of the Crossings Project hoped that an encounter with the apartheid past would shape the ethical commitments of pupils in the present.

The Crossings team stumbled upon the writing of Tatamkhulu Afrika while researching possible directions for the project in Cape Town in 1994. A poem in his third poetry collection *Maqabane* (1994) particularly caught their attention. ‘Nothing’s Changed’ was a vivid account of District Six in the decades after the vibrant multiracial neighborhood was systematically destroyed after being declared whites-only under the Group Areas Act in 1966.

Small round hard stones click
under my heels,
seeding grasses thrust
bearded seeds
into trouser cuffs, cans,
trodden on, crunch
in tall, purple-flowering,
amiable weeds.

District Six.
No board says it is:
but my feet know,
and my hands,
and the skin about my bones,
and the soft labouring of my lungs,
and the hot, white, inwards turning
anger of my eyes.

(Afrika 2003, 36, stanzas 2–3)

Though the ‘signs’ of official zoning are no more, division and inequality continue to delineate the urban environment. In particular, the ‘new, up-market, haute cuisine’ of the ‘whites only inn’ exists in sharp relief to the poor ‘working man’s café’ down the road (lines 22; 24; 34). The action of the poem culminates as the speaker finds himself ‘boy again’ (line 42), and in a moment of rage reaches for ‘a stone, a bomb’ to shatter the window of the white restaurant, concluding with the words: ‘Nothing’s changed’ (lines 46-48).

The subject of District Six exerted a strong appeal to Devon Curriculum Services. From their perspective, the iconic urban space represented a form of cosmopolitan cultural diversity that pre-dated, though it ultimately did not survive, the institutionalised racism of the apartheid state. Indeed, ‘Nothing’s Changed’ affirmed an earlier model of racial and cultural mixing that was emblematic of the racial anxieties that underpinned apartheid, even as it also offered ‘a microcosm of what the modern societies were later to enjoy’ (Johnson 2009). As Martin Phillips, founder of the Crossings Project put it, District Six represented ‘a melting pot of Cape cultures’ instead of the “mosaic” of apartheid separate development (Phillips 1998). Phillips’ remark reflected Mphahlele’s own likely hesitations about too straightforward an application of multiculturalism onto a South African context. As public policy designed to give official encouragement to separate groups, multiculturalism was, at least for some, theoretically resonant with the apartheid project.

‘Nothing’s Changed’ was used widely within the Crossings Project, and its success as a model text for Devon Curriculum Services prompted Phillips to propose that the NEAB include the text in its revised *Anthology* (see Rogers forthcoming). A former Assistant Principal and the English and Digital Media advisor for Devon, Phillips was also responsible for nominating Ingrid de Kok’s poems ‘Our Sharpeville’ and ‘The Archbishop Chairs the First Session’ for inclusion in the 2009 Edexcel specification.

Certified by its credentials in Devon, 'Nothing's Changed' was mediated on to a national platform in Britain and became an object of study for a whole generation of GCSE readers. For Phillips, the poem held clear value within the larger framework of the National Curriculum and deserved widespread study in British schools.

The poems from different cultures section of the AQA anthology were important in providing GCSE students with a wider view of the world. All of them will grow up into a multicultural society. Literary study gives them the opportunity to contemplate aspects of worlds other than their own. 'Tatamkhulu's poem is a very direct comment on racism and the righteous anger it expresses [...] is balanced by a very personal link to a specific place. It provides students with a layered and complex set of ideas on which they can cut their critical teeth while also making them think about the ignominy of apartheid South Africa. That it struck a chord is evidenced by the fact that it was an enduring favourite: whenever focus groups were asked which poems they used most, 'Nothing's Changed' nearly always topped the list. (Phillips 2014)

Phillips' strong sense of the poem's societal and critical value for GCSE readers belied a larger belief in literary reading as 'the opportunity to contemplate aspects of worlds other than their own' that he shared with Cox. That he balanced out this larger aim with the merits of 'Tatamkhulu Afrika's poem as representing 'a very personal link to a specific place' was also interesting. It resonated with the different ways in which 'Nothing's Changed' was read at GCSE, as representative, as historical, and as a window onto human experience.

Within the NEAB *Anthology*, 'Nothing's Changed' was invariably promoted as a 'hymn of protest' about 'the experience of being black and poor in 1990s South Africa' (McNab, Osman, and Pilgrim 1998, 81). 'Nothing's Changed' was certainly amenable to being read as representative of South Africa's black majority, given its recurring plural pronouns and the poet's conspicuously *Afrikan* name. This interpretation bore out relatively well among GCSE readers, who elaborated on the idea of the poem's political representativeness by referring to how its subject matter included 'bad housing and education for blacks', and

came from a historical moment ‘when black people were treated very badly’ and ‘not allowed in the white community’.¹⁰⁷ In practice however, the representativeness both of the text and its author was questionable and fraught with problems, particularly those posed by biography and cultural identity.

Tatamkhulu Afrika was born to Egyptian and Turkish parents in Egypt in 1920 as Mogamed Fu’ad Nasif. As a child he emigrated with his parents to South Africa where he was adopted by an English-speaking family (of ‘1820 Settler stock’) and passed as white under the name John Charlton (quoted in Berold 1992, 36). A volunteer for the South African Union Defence Force during the Second World War, he was interned at Tobruk in the 1940s and Settled in Namibia in the 1950s, where he acquired the Afrikaans name Jouza Joubert. In 1964 he moved to Cape Town, deeply politicized and a Shia convert to Islam known as Ismail Joubert. He sought racial reclassification to remain living in the officially “Coloured” District Six and was reclassified from “White” to “Cape Malay” with the help of the prominent white liberal politician Helen Suzman. In 1966 he founded the Islamic organization Al-Jihaad to oppose the destruction of District Six, and joined the armed anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s as part of the ANC’s Umkhonto we Sizwe. It was while conducting covert military operations that he was given the praise name Tatamkhulu Afrika, Xhosa for ‘old man Africa’ or ‘Grandfather Africa’. Banned and imprisoned in 1987, he began writing under this name. By the time of his death in 2002 Tatamkhulu Afrika was the author of four novels, eight collections of poetry, and the recipient of every major South African literary award.

Though for political reasons Tatamkhulu Afrika was amenable to representing the cause of South Africa’s black majority, attempts to attribute this role to him elided the more complex aspects of his position. For instance, though the opening lines (‘small round hard stones click / under my heels’) established a basis for readerly empathy, what

¹⁰⁷ Student annotations.

it meant for the reader to stand in the poet's shoes was not altogether clear. Indeed, Afrika reinforced the universal, not the biographical nature of the poem, particularly in discussing its ending with three high school pupils from Westerford School in Cape Town in a film for the Crossings Project. Far from denoting his own childhood presence in District Six, the concluding image of violent resistance in which the speaker becomes 'boy again' was intended to signify the 'universal boy [...] angry at what is happening' (quoted in Phillips 1999). Given the overwhelming evidence of his efforts to dodge the racialised certainties of his historical moment, Tatamkhulu Afrika offered readers an ideal opportunity to query the very notion of representativeness. On a different note, we might legitimately query which version of the poet was foregrounded in the *Anthology*. The political 'commitment' of 'Nothing's Changed' was considerably more aligned to the goals of the National Curriculum at the time than the subtle rendering of Islamic belief contained in Afrika's next volume *Flesh and the Flame* (1994), or the frank account of homosexuality in his autobiographical novel *Bitter Eden* (2002). The politics of his inclusion in the syllabus became sharper following 9/11. One provincial newspaper publicly derided NEAB/AQA for giving a platform to an "Islamic terrorist".¹⁰⁸

For some critics though, it was the poem's lack of biographical or socio-historical information in the *Anthology* that was problematic. Pointing to how the Other Cultures poems were 'stripped of history, of specificity', John Yandell argued that their anthologisation flattened the deeper content of the texts as literature written at a particular time and place.

Did it matter that Tatamkhulu Afrika's 'Nothing's Changed' was written in the immediate aftermath of the end of apartheid in South Africa? Or that Achebe's 'Vultures' moves from the lived experience of the Nigerian Civil War to pose a more universal question about the ethical status of "kindred love"? Apparently not. (Yandell 2008, 31)

¹⁰⁸ My thanks to Martin Phillips for relaying this, and other similar anecdotes of Afrika's regional reception in the South West of England.



Figures 22-24. Stills taken from the BBC *Roots and Water* film on 'Nothing's Changed', shot in Cape Town. Broadcast BBC Two 15 January 1999.

Yandell's point about the dangers of reading without history was a serious one. At the same time, the Crossings Project demonstrated how 'Nothing's Changed' was typically figured along historical lines as an archive of experience about apartheid. NEAB resources also cited the social, historical and political circumstances of the poem, albeit in broad and sometimes eccentric terms as 'cultural context'. The most deliberate attempt to link the poem to its post-apartheid historical context though was by the BBC in the *Roots and Water* series. Here, director Clive Wagner and producer Jacqui Doughty cut interview footage with the poet with original footage of the destruction of District Six in the 1960s from the archive (see figures 22-24), thus framing the text as historical artefact (Wagner 1999a).

The tendency to read 'Nothing's Changed' as a window onto human experience was arguably the most compelling indicator of the protocols governing the category of Other Cultures. The following examination question also indicated that it was one bound up with beliefs about the powers of language: 'Choose two poems where you think the writers reveal strong feelings about culture or tradition. Explain [...] how language helps them to do this' (NEAB and AQA 1999a). By framing poetic language as an enabling, perhaps even transparent, means of conveying cultural identity the wording of the question revealed an assumption about reading as simply "transmission" that went back to Cox. Yet the poem's final turn complicated the notion of poetic language as somehow unmediated. Faced with the glass exterior of the restaurant and its flagrant display of white affluence in the face of poverty, the speaker's retreat into an imagined state of boyhood is laden with suggestive meaning. The mark of a 'small mean O / of small mean mouth' on the glass acts a reminder of the possible illusion of immediacy that windows offer (lines 43-44). Moreover, the circular signifier 'O' acts in a performative manner, triggering the affective action in which 'hands burn / for a stone, a bomb, / to shiver down the glass' (lines 45-47). This final moment in the poem both draws attention to,

and enacts violence upon the glass as the symbolic pane of representation and the means through which reality is mediated, and cultural identity supposedly reflected. In its disruption of the myth of linguistic transparency, the text raised important questions about the feasibility of construing 'other cultures' poems as windows onto the experiences of others.

The unlikely journey of 'Nothing's Changed' from Cape Town, Devon and to the NEAB *Anthology* offers a rich context for reappraising the poem and what it was meant to deliver to readers at GCSE. Far from simply reflecting cultural identity, the poem offers a more useful refraction: showing up the pitfalls of conceiving particular texts as windows onto the 'ideas and feelings of cultures' without also accounting for the mediating powers of institutions and language in the process. Furthermore, its status as a text from a different culture tasked with reforming England's 'white highlands' raises linked questions about who possessed "culture" in the first place. The idea that English counties like Devon and Cornwall somehow existed in deficit to culture overlooked an earlier history that was significant. The 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion, in which groups from Cornwall and Devon fought against an imposed of "Englishness", constituted a particularly violent episode in the struggle for a definitive English identity.

'Still tuned to roots and water': Kamau Brathwaite and Caribbean culture

The anthology's most conscious exploration of Caribbean culture and identity was Kamau Brathwaite's poem 'Ogun'. The poem reflected Brathwaite's creative, intellectual and philosophical commitment to continuity in Caribbean culture. The poem narrates the story of Brathwaite's great uncle, a carpenter named Ogun who lived and worked in

St Peter, Barbados. Brathwaite describes Ogun's tumbledown workshop and his work in the 'Cold / world of wood' in his self-consciously experimental style, drawing subtextual links between his ancestor and his Yoruba namesake, the god Ogun (1998, lines 15–16).

The tone of the poem shifts half way as Brathwaite highlights the precariousness of his uncle's craft and livelihood against an emerging capitalist economy.

But he was poor and most days he was hungry.
Imported cabinets with mirrors, formica table

tops, spine-curving chairs made up of tubes, with hollow
steel-like bird bones that sat on rubber ploughs

thin beds, stretched not on boards, but blue high-tensioned cables,
were what the world preferred.

(Brathwaite 1998, lines 21–26)

On Sundays Ogun works at a side project conceived in deliberate resistance to the fashionable, artificial products of the market. As he works Ogun is transported back to the 'creak of forests', 'grey memories', and 'black rigid thunder' (lines 34–35; 38). The creative labour of this 'short-sighted', 'knock-knee'd' carpenter is both beautiful and terrible: a wooden mask of a god, with 'dry shuttered / eyes', 'flat / ruined face' and a 'dry cistern mouth' that cries out of 'lost pain, lost iron' (lines 41–44; 46). From his 'shattered / Sunday shop', Ogun crafts an 'emerging woodwork image of his anger' (lines 40–41; 47).

Brathwaite foregrounds a conception of Caribbean cultural identity firmly rooted in West African culture, spirituality and mythology, and where the poet acts as social critic.

Filmed at the derelict site of Ogun's shop in St Peter's by the BBC (see figures 25–27)

Brathwaite made a bid for cultural continuity.



Figures 25-27. Stills from *Roots and Water*, filmed in St Peters, Barbados. Broadcast BBC Two 22 January 1999.

What we are witnessing here, with all this noise of modernity, is the utter neglect of a culture. [...] That one of the great craftsman of Barbadian culture has died [...] and the environment he created his beauty from [*sic*] had been allowed to become a noisy babel of machinery, is something that as a poet, one has to deplore. (Wagner 1999c)

Ogun's devoted work on the wood represented this particular model of culture, one 'still tuned to roots and water':

With knife and gimlet care he worked away at this on Sundays,

explored its knotted hurts, cutting his way
along its yellow whorls until his hands could feel

how it had swelled and shivered, breathing air,
its weathered green burning to rings of time,

its contoured grain still turned to roots and water.
And as he cut, he heard the creak of forests[.]

(Brathwaite 1998, lines 28–33)

Brathwaite's organic, localising metaphor would be taken up by the BBC in their own attempt to evoke the meaning of the 'cultural'. At the same time though, the contours of Brathwaite's anti-capitalist critique also had some less unexpected continuities.

Denouncing Barbados' capitalist tourist economy as a 'babel of machinery' responsible for the 'neglect of a culture' and its living legacy, Brathwaite's concept of an organic community and living 'nation language' was in some ways consonant with Leavis' own desire for a pre-lapsarian, pre-industrial, village England (Kalliney 2013, 75–115). It is, after all, as Ogun works on the wood—not the formica, steel or rubber of mass production and consumption—that the living world of the Caribbean unfolds. Similarly, Brathwaite's concept of 'nation language', the aesthetic emerging out of the Caribbean Artists Movement that centred on the language, mythology, and music of Africa mediated through the Caribbean, was similarly cast as the language of 'experience'. Against the artificiality of iambic pentameter, Brathwaite proposed the 'rhythm of the

drum’ as constituting the essence of a Caribbean literature, and through which ‘it became possible to write all kinds of poetry opening all kinds of thresholds of new experience’ (quoted in Wagner 1999c).

That Brathwaite worked out this particular vision of Caribbean culture through ‘Ogun’ was all the more significant given the poem’s material history, and specifically what this indicated about the intellectual, creative, and professional continuities between West Indian poets of particular generation and the figures associated with the English literary establishment. Indeed, Brian Cox’s references to a category of ‘Caribbean poetry’ ‘for the study of differing cultural perspectives’ was both challenged and also affirmed by Brathwaite in interesting ways (DfES 1989, sec. 7.5). The first appearance of ‘Ogun’ was not Brathwaite’s 1969 collection *Islands*, as the *Anthology* cited in the acknowledgements, but in Cox’s *Critical Quarterly*. Featured as one of three ‘Gods’ poems in a 1968 issue of the periodical, ‘Ogun’ also reappeared in its 1970 poetry supplement, while Cox was publishing the Black Papers. Anthony Dyson made explicit Brathwaite’s place in the *Critical Quarterly*’s project of unearthing new voices in contemporary poetry. In a 1967 editorial, Dyson pointed toward the recently published *Rights of Passage* as one of the first major signs of an autonomous Caribbean literature in English.

Edward Brathwaite is a West Indian poet of great panache and exuberance. *Rights Of Passage* is the first part of a long poem which will eventually be completed in three volumes. Some sections are lyrical, some satiric, some dramatic; Edward Brathwaite is equally at home with experimental and traditional forms. The particular vitality of *Rights Of Passage* is nearer to the American than to the English tradition, but different from either. It bears out the poet’s belief that the Caribbean literature exists now in its own right. (Dyson 1967)

Brathwaite’s links to the world Cox and Dyson inhabited went back to his time as an undergraduate on a Barbados Island Scholarship with Cox, Dyson and Ted Hughes at Pembroke College, Cambridge. That Brathwaite read history did not prevent him from

self-identifying as ‘a Dr Leavis man’.¹⁰⁹ As Kalliney points out, though Brathwaite did not remain an ‘unconstructed disciple’, ‘striking intellectual affinities’ existed between Leavis’ ideas in *The Great Tradition* and Brathwaite’s own forms of cultural nationalism in crafting an oppositional “little tradition” of Caribbean literature (2013, 77). From the beginning Brathwaite was part of a project of ‘notable divergences’ in contemporary literature, as his contributions to Peter Morris Green’s *Poetry from Cambridge 1947-1950* also demonstrated (Green 1951, 3).

The intellectual and institutional connection that Brathwaite and Cox began at Cambridge and continued through *Critical Quarterly* incorporated productive departures as well as surprising intersections.¹¹⁰ Cox’s measured defence of non-standard Englishes in the charged public debate on what did and did not count as the language and culture of the nation was a case in point. Claiming that ‘the most dynamic English today is often found outside England’ (1995, 12), Cox lobbied for the recognition of ‘West Indian Creole, Black British English and Patois’ as ‘highly complex and rule-governed varieties’ not ‘random and simplified deviations’ (DfES 1989, sec. 4.15). Even while the Cox report upheld Standard English as the only appropriate teaching language, as an individual he encouraged teachers to look to literature by ‘writers in Africa, Australia, Canada, India, the West Indies’ to help pupils ‘understand clearly why contempt for other people’s dialects is wrong’ (1991, 27). Brathwaite, for whom ‘dialect’ originated in ‘the plantation’ and was politically at odds with ‘nation language’ (1984, 13), was well aware of the ‘groan[s]’ of the literary establishment at the growing autonomy of ‘black’ literary and intellectual culture. Writing to Cox ahead of his ascendancy to the platform of national educational, Brathwaite set out his perspective on the situation in his own characteristic way.

¹⁰⁹ Kalliney discusses the following letter from Brathwaite to Henry Swanzy producer of the BBC’s *Caribbean Voices*, in 1953. ‘I am a Dr. Leavis man—for the very good reason that he fell like manna to my search. Because in him I found a road to run my attitude to literature on’ (quoted in Kalliney 2013, 77).

¹¹⁰ On Cox’s collection of poems *Every Common Sight* (1981) Brathwaite noted ‘I perhaps like “Death of a Maiden Aunt” best, because of its continuity all the way back to Cambridge’ (1982).

Good to have had yr last letter of some time ago rejecting the Rene Depestre piece on the ground of non-communication/too much “maroon” from yr point of view not enough “Prospero” & yr problems with the encroaching “buttapan” culture Don’t people like Stuart Hall, Pryce, Chris Searle, Linton Kwesi Johnson talk about these things any more? Do you have no connection with New Beacon, the Race Today Collective, the Black Book Fair...?? Even as I write this I groan/or hear you groan: the enormity of the new ghetto with all its real/apparent arrogance, life/styles that seem to make naught of the thousand years of Caxton, Canterbury, Oxbridge, even Leavis, Scrutiny & the Crit Q...(Brathwaite 1986)

Though the precise context of the letter is unclear—Cox’s rejection of Brathwaite’s review of Rene Depestre’s *A Rainbow for the Christian West* (1975) on intellectual, or editorial grounds—Brathwaite’s deconstruction of Cox’s position on the perceived separatism of black literary culture versus the ‘Prospero’ tradition of English letters was striking. Indeed, his stylistically rich performance of ‘nation language and calibanisms’ offered remarkable insight into the view of the English establishment and its commitments from the perspective of West Indian intellectuals of the 1980s. Yet Brathwaite’s view was, of course, not the only angle on the question of the ‘difference’ of language. Complicating this account of nation language as ‘not English, even as the words, as you hear them, might be English’ (Brathwaite 1984, 13), Mervyn Morris emphasised instead the ‘textured interplay between differing areas of our continuum’ (1999, 14). Taking his cue from a statement by Galahad in Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*, Morris declared ‘each word’ as ‘recognisably English’. Though Morris acknowledged that it was ‘easy to overstate the levels of understanding’ between Standard English and West Indian English, nonetheless ‘is English we speaking’ (1999, 2; 14).

Brathwaite’s role in challenging Cox’s residence in the ‘citadel’ of academic English literary criticism was likely not responsible for the transformation in Cox’s position from marginal defender of English to the proclaimer of the multicultural. Yet at the same time he exemplified the oppositional Caribbean poetics Cox instituted in the curriculum

perfectly. This history of interaction and contestation was, at the very least, an overlooked dimension to the cultural continuity prevailing both in versions of the “English establishment” and Caribbean culture.

You have not read *Contradictory Omens* but you must try *X/Self* when OUP brings it out early next year... Enc is a segment from it/the third book of the second trilogy... the bio/history of where & how we have travelled since Pembroke is something we/you/I shd one ? day perhaps attempt But do/did I find you in a Citadel??? I give thanks that we've been able. even if mainly through CQ, to keep in touch. (Brathwaite 1986)

Conclusion

The recommendations of the MacPherson report, commissioned in response to the murder of the London teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993, were specific and wide ranging. The report concluded, however, with specific recommendations for the reform of state education: chiefly, the ‘amendment of the National Curriculum aimed at valuing cultural diversity and preventing racism, in order better to reflect the needs of a diverse society’ (MacPherson and Home Office 1999, chap. 47. 67). Speaking in 1997 at the end of his career, Es’kia Mphahlele described pupils in the school system as ‘the one constituency which is in a sense regenerative’ (Samin and Mphahlele 1997, 184).

Articulating a vision for instilling *Afrikan* humanistic values in each new generation, he noted that ‘[y]ou have one generation for a number of hours’ each day, ‘if we can [...] inculcate these values’ at school, when ‘they go into the outside world, outside of their environment, they will be equipped to question the assumptions of the colonizing religion’. Though addressing different specific historical and socio-political conditions and the challenges particular to them, both statements granted particular weight to

national education in constructing an equitable democratic community at the level of individual and group identities.

This chapter has traced how state intervention to introduce a ‘national’ curriculum in the UK intersected with longstanding debates on the role of English. Efforts to posit English as means of promoting a national unity that date back to the forging of English as a modern school subject in 1920s were drawn upon in neoliberal attempts to institute the national literary culture through centralised state education. This vision was unexpectedly disrupted by the agenda to bring about the cultural awareness deemed necessary for a tolerant multicultural democracy through the English curriculum. Yet though the relatively progressive attempt at multicultural inclusion seemed feasible at the level of policy, its implementation by the private examinations boards financially dependent on state education established literary categories and specific modes of reading that require careful unpicking.

Stepping back, it seems that much comes down to the ideas of literature and models of culture operative at a given point. More recently, the Department for Education under former Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove issued the mandate that all schools promote ‘British values’, which it defined as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance. To some, such statements threatened to leave the inclusive agenda behind altogether (despite the selective internationalism at work in Gove’s own literary historical categorisations, for instance in ‘poetry since 1789’). Demonstrating how curricula sometimes work ‘less as a receptacle of texts’ than an ‘activity’ involving the acquisition and the exercise of power, Gauri Viswanathan’s study on the origins of the English curriculum in imperial India exemplifies how the ‘literary’ was offered as a universal ‘set of works [...] in an effort to assimilate individuals into a single identity’ (1989, 167). Yet as Viswanathan also reminds

us, granting special visibility to ‘other cultures’ in education is also not without its problems; in her estimation relativist attempts at inclusion were ‘equally complicit’.

The other position, which is more relativistic in intent, claims to broaden the curriculum to include the literature of other cultures. But the relative tolerance of the latter position does not negate the possibility that even the most inclusionary curriculum can itself be part of the process of control. (Viswanathan 1989, 167)

Even so, the thinking behind Cox’s avowal of ‘the multicultural aspects of literature’—a position that influenced the course of English education in the past two decades in the UK in surprising and persistent ways—has resurfaced in recent defences of literary studies as part of the humanities. Daniel R. Schwarz treaded similar conceptual ground to Cox in declaring the responsibilities of literature to citizenship in an age of diversity in the U.S. In his view the literature syllabus constituted ‘astute selections of texts as windows into cultural traditions and values that are [...] essential to living in our world’ (Schwarz 2008, 75). There are, however, more sophisticated angles on the relationships between literature, language and culture than the kind of thinking underpinning Cox’s statement. To conclude, I offer three examples.

In a lecture to the National Association for the Teaching of English in 1993, tellingly titled ‘More heritages in England, Patten and Marenbon, than are dreamt of in your philosophy’, the poet and children’s author Michael Rosen demonstrated how a proper understanding of the internationalism of ‘English literature’ might disrupt narrow and essentialist preoccupations with the national literary heritage. Rosen focused on the obscure literary figure Petrus Alfonsi, or Moishe Sefardi, to illustrate his point. This twelfth century Spaniard and Jewish convert to Christianity—physician to Henry I, and author of the *Disciplina Clericalis*, the influential collection of medieval moral fables that runs through literature in English from Chaucer onward—was evidence of the

internationalism ‘threaded through what we call English literature’ (Rosen 1993, 15). That this text and its author were entirely absent from the modern debate Rosen claimed, was not simply due to a general ignorance, but more importantly because ‘we haven’t asked the questions that would have come up with the *Disciplina Clericalis* as an answer’.

Literature is mongrel, its forms, its tones, its meanings, its contexts being much wider and more complex than what is usually offered up, and more particularly than what [the National Curriculum Council] and [the School Examinations and Assessment Council] have offered us so far. (Rosen 1993, 15)

The ‘including agenda’ represented by institutions like NATE and ATCAL had rightly ‘made no apologies for the idea that we live in communities made up of many cultures that link with places far away from the physical confines of Britain’, and yet, Rosen argued, it also obscured how ‘the very stuff that the right want to claim as English, national and compulsory, is itself a blend of cultures’. Exposing the internationalism of ‘English’ literature through examples like Sefardi, or the origins of the roman alphabet more recently (Rosen 2013), Rosen’s perspective offers, among other things, one possible route out of the protracted invisibility attributed to a globally-entangled English culture.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra’s aforementioned essay ‘The Emperor Has No Clothes’ also offers valuable insights on the relations between languages and how these bear on the work of literature in ‘cycles of give-and-take’ that work across time and space (2012, 177). Confronting Parthasarathy’s demand for an Indian English literature un beholden to ‘foreign poets’ and characterised by the ‘quality’ of national cultural ‘experience’ (180), Mehrotra suggests that a ‘multilingual common factor’ is actually much closer to the Indian ‘experience’ (176). The linguistic relations ‘inlaid’ in a work according to Mehrotra, form a ‘prismatic interlingual space in each poet’ (2012, 170), and are

characterised by the moments of interference, points of pressure and acts of borrowing that construct the distinct idiolect of a writer (see also Attridge 2011).

The questions which should be asked: What is a multilingual sensibility? How do languages tenant it? How does this tenancy register on the poem? [...] The arena is uncharted and all findings are tentative. Perhaps they will always be so. (Mehrotra 2012, 173)

Such questions not only challenge our tendency to read literature in hermetically sealed national terms, they also open up new possibilities for reading and criticism. For instance, one of the poets to capture Mehrotra's vision of multilingual imaginary is Arun Kolatkar, the other 'Indian poet' included in the NEAB *Anthology*. Though Kolatkar's 'Old Woman' poem is apparently not about language at all—certainly compared to the more obvious choices candidates were directed to in the examination—it resonates deeply with Mehrotra's call for 'new metaphors' for language, as 'sources of light', 'lightening conductors', 'geological faults', or 'conjugate mirrors' (2012, 174).¹¹¹ In his inimitable, pared down style, Kolatkar's description of a momentary encounter with a beggar woman culminates at the moment in which 'the outside world disintegrates' (Zecchini 2014, 107).

And as you look on,
the cracks that begin round her eyes
spread beyond her skin.

And the hills crack.
And the temples crack.
And the sky falls [...]

And you are reduced
to so much small change
in her hand.

(Kolatkar 1998, stanzas 8; 10–11)

¹¹¹ The 2000 NEAB/AQA GCSE examination question on language directed candidates toward 'Search for My Tongue', Tom Leonard's 'Unrelated Incidents' and John Agard's 'Half Caste' (see appendix F).

As Zecchini points out, Kolatkar's text 'cracks' to 'the point that all boundaries dissolve' reducing the reader-spectator to 'small change / in her hand' (2014, 107).

Above all, literary texts such as Daljit Nagra's rich meta-institutional poem, discussed at the start of the chapter, can enable us to reflect on the very things that Cox passes over. The force of Kabba's challenge to his son's English teacher, and to the creators of the *Anthology* lies partly in the fact that he is doing so from within one of the 'other cultures' supposedly being opened up. Though his disavowal of the model representatives of Indian culture provided by the *Anthology* is explicit, the concluding stanzas make clear that much more is going on than this question of power.

Yoo teachers are like
dis Dalgit-Bulram mickeying
 of me as Kabba. I say for di garment
 of my voice may be sestina, sonnet, tanka,

tum-ti-tum
wid best vurds please! A dictation
 of the vay I lecture Punjabi to my boy
 after school. So vut di coconut do – too shy to uze

his voice, he plot me
as “funny”, or a type, even vurse –
 so hee is used in British antologies –
 he hide in dis whitey “fantum” English, blacked,

to make me sound “poreign”!

(Nagra 2007, stanzas 7–9)

novel' and 'Caribbean poetry' for 'differing cultural perspectives'. Kabba is, as Rachael Gilmour pointedly notes, precisely the 'kind of naïve, reductive reader' that the *Anthology*, and Cox behind it, 'runs the risk of producing' (2014, 12).¹¹² He is, 'an unsubtle reader', vocalising an unswerving, eccentrically Arnoldian, commitment to poetry's high cultural value as 'best vurds please!' within his own culturally inflected, creolized mode of speech. Registering Nagra's own amenability to processes of examination board anthologisation, the poem's self-conscious final turn demonstrates that the catch 22 for 'Black' writers is the same for anthologists. As long the prevailing categories and the thinking behind them is in play, poets and their poems will always-already be caught in trap of being representative.

This final chapter has partly sought to appraise some of the bids for authority that get made about literature in relation to cultural identity. Following on from the previous chapter on the Arts Council, it has demonstrated the promise and the perils of state-instituted cultural diversity through the English curriculum. Kabba's critique of the liberal-multiculturalist motives of the 'free-minding teacher' questions, as Mphahlele did in chapter 1, and Pitt-Kethley in chapter 2, who counts as 'other' in the relationship between England and the world, and who was setting the terms. We turn to this question in the concluding section of the thesis.

¹¹² Gilmour's close linguistic analysis of the poem—including its graphotextual and phonotextual elements—interrogates Nagra's careful play on the authenticity attributed to poetic voice.

Postscript

From the lighthouse: liberalism, the state and the world

Day Two (Morning): Lighthouse Hill.

After a lunch of prawn curry and rice at the Bunder, you may want to visit Lighthouse Hill and its vicinity. The famous lighthouse, built by the Portuguese and renovated by the British, is no longer in use. An old guard in a blue uniform sits at the foot of the lighthouse. If visitors are poorly dressed, or speak to him in Tulu or Kannada, he will say: 'Can't you see it's closed?' If visitors are well-dressed or speak English, he will say: 'Welcome'. He will take them into the lighthouse and up the spiral staircase to the top, which affords a spectacular view of the Arabian Sea. In recent years, the Corporation has been running a reading room inside the lighthouse. (Adiga 2012, 41)¹¹³

'It happens at least twice a year', the narrator of Aravind Adiga's *Between the Assassinations* (2012), tells us. A prisoner surrenders to arrest and, with an expression of 'insolent boredom' on his face, outpaces the two 'scampering' policemen en route to the police station. 'Xerox', the protagonist of an untitled short story set in the invented Indian town of Kittur in the years between the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 and 1991, pedals an illegal trade in bootlegged books.

In the past nine years, the man known as 'Xerox' Ramakrishna has been arrested twenty-one times on the granite pavement in front of Deshpremi Hemachandra Rao Park for the sale, at discounted rates, of illegally photocopied or printed books [...]. A policeman comes in the morning, when Ramakrishna is sitting with his books spread out on a blue bedsheet; he places his lathi on the books and says, 'Let's go, Xerox'. (Adiga 2012, 42)

Supplying the steady flow of customers from the local high school, Xerox plays on market forces. His manoeuvres on the black market take place at the foot of the old imperial lighthouse, a confusing commemorative of colonial power, anti-colonial resistance and its failure. Adiga's narrator notes that an independence activist redressed Kittur's limited participation in the 1857 mutiny by hanging a Congress tricolor from it in

¹¹³ The passage is one of a number designed to simulate a *Lonely Planet* style travel guide to the invented town on India's south west coast.

the 1920s. Xerox's market is also a neocolonial tourist economy, one delineated by the politics of 'local' vernacular languages versus 'global' English. His name constitutes an appropriately characteristic compound: part dry copying method (xerography), part patented American multinational (Xerox), and part Indian mythical hero (Rama-) and deity (-Krishna). Yet Xerox's copyright infringement is also an odd bid for textual freedom. It not driven by mere money making, at least not in the main, but by a fixation on the material processes of book production, the 'whirs and hums' of the photocopier that 'flashes like lightning', and the affective power of books.

He looks at the image of Adolf Hitler from the cover of *Mein Kampf*, and he feels his power. He looks at the face of Khalil Gibran [...] and he feels the mystery and poetry. [...]. That's why he once told Inspector Ramesh, 'I have no wish to make any trouble for you or for the publishers, sir; I just love books: I love making them, holding them, and selling them. My father took out shit for a living, sir; he couldn't even read or write. He'd be so proud if he could see that I make my living from books'. (Adiga 2012, 44)

Despite his pure devotion, Xerox is thwarted time and again by the police and the publishers' lawyer, D'Souza. Together, they temper routine arrest with pleasant hours spent swapping obscenities at the police station. Like the lighthouse guard, Xerox is conscious of the specificities of language. He observes that English words 'have power', and English books an 'aura'. Nonetheless, one specific 'English book' causes him to stumble, and fall afoul of the state. Attempting to sell homemade paperbacks of the banned book *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie, Xerox's transgression is not met by 'cups of chai', but with a frenzied beating by the police and the lawyer, who drunkenly imitate American gangster films. The story ends as Xerox, maimed but undeterred, heads to the lighthouse. For though the climb 'took two hours and a half', the book 'banned throughout the Republic of India', was 'the only thing that Xerox intended to sell that day' (49).

In both narrative text and self-consciously performed ‘paratext’, Adiga offers us the image of the lighthouse as a possible space of literary freedom subject to political and economic realities. The first passage underscores India’s emergence into a neoliberal global economy with its deliberate slippage between the corporate and the corruptible state. The reading room sponsored by the ‘Corporation’ (the municipal government) promises an exclusive, and suggestive, view over the Arabian Sea to the Persian Gulf, registering the longstanding ambiguities between the state and the market interests laid down by the East India Company’s historic involvement in the town. Perhaps most telling of all is that Adiga’s presentation of literary space as both carefully bordered and productive of inevitable excess takes us to a specific historical moment for the book in India, and globally. Xerox’s fate at the hands of the police and behind them, the publishers, turns on none other than *The Satanic Verses*, giving Adiga’s characteristically sceptical view of literary freedom a much more pointed register in the crises of literary liberalism at the close of the twentieth century.

The lawyer implicated in the attack is D’Souza, an allusion, perhaps, to Frances D’Souza founder of the International Committee for the Defence of Salman Rushdie and His Publishers and a leading figure in the associated public campaign for free expression, the ‘deviations’ from which, she recalled, ‘have been disastrous to many and to one man in particular’ (1993, 9). Her account of the consortium of international newspapers that published a series of letters to Rushdie by world writers, later collected as *The Rushdie Letters* (1993), underscored the truly global community of literary figures that stood behind the principle at stake: what Rushdie described as the freedom to ‘*bear voices talking about everything in every possible way*’ (Rushdie 1991, 429). From the lighthouse of the late twentieth-century lettered world, *The Rushdie Letters* stood for the belief invested in the ‘socio-juridico-politico guarantee granted *in principle* to literature: the promise of “being able to say everything”’ (Derrida 1992, 40). Peter Mayer, Chief Executive of Penguin was also keen to emphasise the ‘principle’ behind the decision to publish Rushdie’s novel.

‘We all came to agree that all we could do, as individuals or as a company, was to uphold the principles that underlay our profession and which, since the invention of movable type, have brought it respect. We were publishers’ (quoted in Malik 2010, 14).

Compelled to ‘defend the assumptions and processes of literature’ as that which ‘all free men and women could take for granted’ and ‘all unfree men and women continue every day to struggle’, Rushdie’s response to the ‘attack upon the very idea of the novel form’ and ‘the art of literature’ itself was to reassess his relationship to the sacred (1991, 417; 415). In the 1990 Herbert Read Memorial Lecture read on his behalf by Harold Pinter (and later published as the essay ‘Is Nothing Sacred?’), he declared that ‘[n]othing so inexact, so easily and frequently misconceived’ as literature deserved the ‘the protection of being declared sacrosanct’ (Rushdie 1991, 427). Though conscious not to ‘become what we oppose’, he mused that there might be ‘something sacred’ after all in the ideas ‘of the absolute freedom of the imagination and alongside it [...] notions of the world, the Text and the Good’ (Rushdie 1991, 427; 418).¹¹⁴ He concluded by laying out his core beliefs about the autonomy of literature from the world.

Literature is the one place in any society where, within the secrecy of our own heads, we can hear *voices talking about everything in every possible way*. The reason for ensuring that that privileged arena is preserved is [...] that we, all of us, readers and writers and citizens and generals and godmen, need that little, unimportant-looking room. We do not need to call it sacred, but we do need to remember that it is necessary. [...] Wherever in the world the little room of literature has been closed, sooner or later the walls have come tumbling down. (Rushdie 1991, 429)

Rushdie, Anthony Julius points out in *Transgressions: the offences of art* (2002), offered every conceivable defence ‘when called upon to defend *The Satanic Verses* and his life’ (2002, 30). Julius’ reading of Rushdie’s arguments in the essays ‘Is Nothing Sacred?’ and ‘In Good Faith’ include how he deployed all three of the main defences that have circulated in culture ‘since modern art’s (and literature’s) inception’ (2002, 31). Firstly, *The Satanic*

¹¹⁴ Rushdie refers to the act of literary creation as a permeable ‘frontier’ between the artist and the world ‘allow[ing] the world to flow into the artist and the artist to flow into the world’ (1991, 427).

Verses was an act of literary reimagining that ‘by its nature challenges readers’ preconceptions’, secondly the prioritisation of the formal aspects of the novel over the scandal of its content and the ‘fictionality of fiction’, and thirdly the novel’s place in a longer tradition of literature (Julius 2002, 30). Attentive to the intricacies of Rushdie’s position, Julius also noted the tensions between the three defences (estrangement, formal, canonical) in failing ‘to make for a perfect fit’.

For example, while the estrangement defence hints that Rushdie’s adversaries are right to mistrust the novel (who would welcome affronts to one’s beliefs?), the formalist defence endeavours to demonstrate that they have nothing to fear. The canonic defence attempts a reconciliation of the other two, relating both the formal and estranging qualities of the stigmatised work to the novelistic project itself. (Julius 2002, 31)

That Rushdie and his defenders stumbled upon these defences of literary freedom ‘was not by chance’. Instead, their embeddedness in the cultural world reminds us of the worldliness of the transgressive work.

This thesis has documented some of the features of the complex relationship between the modern state and anglophone literary cultures as it acted as a sponsor of literature’s autonomy. By showing how culture has often been inseparable from the state in this period—and not only in the overbearing manner of Orwell’s novel—it has brought into view aspects of the public status of literature in recent history. In doing so, it has highlighted some of the unlikely and under-documented dimensions to this relationship. For instance, that the avowedly neoliberal state under Thatcher came to sponsor the multicultural, and a category of state-sponsored multicultural literature, was ironic on two counts. First, because of the longstanding liberal suspicion of cultural community, articulated most vocally by Pitt-Kethley, but also by philosophers such as Brian Barry.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ In this respect then, the analytical argument made by Barry is complicated by the historical material discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Second, the centralized form of state involvement in some arenas—notably, national education—contrasted sharply with the delegitimising of state responsibility in other areas, most conspicuously, and troublingly, with regards to financially supporting literature.

Yet it is also true that literature has shaped the state in turn. The implementation of the ideals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the National Curriculum have also been marked by crises of various kinds, which illustrate the way in which the modern state was heavily contingent upon the public or publics it sought to address or represent, or in some cases passed over. In this sense, this thesis has staged the essential contestability of the plural pronoun, the ‘we’ to which Rushdie (but also others) refer, in declaring that ‘we, all of us [...] need that little, unimportant-looking room’. One way it has done this is by tracing, through the distinct but interlinking case studies, a broad post-war narrative in which Euro-America globalized itself to the ‘world’, and the ‘world’ that came to live ‘at home’ in Britain. That the effort to grasp multiculturalism at home was envisioned as taking place through literary reading, as a seemingly problem-free mode of acquiring the experiences of ‘others’, was a curious if not altogether surprising development in the process.

The kind of diachronic and comparative project I have begun here would naturally benefit from considerably extended parameters, whether chronologically, geographically, or laterally across different institutional contexts co-existing at a particular moment. To give one obvious example, the decade of the 1970s constitutes a clear opportunity for further development. Among other things, the decade has deep significance as a period of profound socio-political and economic alienation—or ‘break’—from the conditions of the post-war settlement. John Reith’s BBC could also figure as a parallel to the Arts Council at an earlier pre-war moment, as Charlotte Higgins’ recent analysis of the BBC demonstrates. Identifying how the founding paradox of the BBC has neither altered, nor remained exclusive to it, she argues that ‘[s]upported by taxation to do things that the

market is deemed unable to supply’, the BBC was obliged to ‘appeal to the widest possible audience to justify that taxation’ (Higgins 2014a). On her analysis, the predicament facing this ‘vast and many headed Hydra’ is also that of the National Health Service and national museums (2014b), as one ‘of a dwindling number’ of autonomous institutions within the British public sphere (2014c).

The three case studies presented in this thesis map a wider phenomenon that is also worth pausing over. Stepping back, it is apparent that tracking the role of the state takes us to another kind of continuity: the history of political liberalism as it has informed and become embedded in the democratic English speaking world. To probe the parameters of this second dimension it is useful to consider the view from the lighthouse—Adiga’s reading room, or Rushdie’s ‘little room of literature’—of the world.

In an essay published for the fiftieth anniversary edition of the *New York Review of Books* titled ‘From the Lighthouse: the World and the NYR After Fifty Years’ Timothy Garton Ash revisited what he saw as the journal’s defining characteristics in documenting recent political history. ‘Think of the *Review* as a lighthouse at the center of the Western world. Time-lapse photography reveals how the world has changed under its steady illumination’ (Garton Ash 2013, 51). In his view, the ‘specific quality of the beam’ was attributable to two defining aspects of the journal’s response to the political world as it unfolded after 1963 (its founding ‘Camelot’ year): a discourse of ‘human rights’, expressed by the willingness to publish writing by dissident individuals on the authoritarian state; and an Orwellian critique of the shortcomings of ‘the West’, and especially where United States policy failed to live up to the ideals of its own constitution. ‘There are other ways of describing this combination of value system and method’, he acknowledged, but ‘we could call it “liberal”’. With its ‘community’ of

writers and readers, as he saw it, *The New York Review* constituted a modernised epistolary republic and a project of ‘Applied Enlightenment’.

In casting the journal in these terms, Garton Ash’s account surprisingly echoed recent reassessments of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. In *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (2012) for instance, Andrew Rubin has claimed that the kind of heavily mediated, syndicated, transatlantic print culture pioneered by the CCF not only ‘rearticulated a historically specific idea of world literature’ by making a canon of ‘national’ writers visible in simultaneous translation and publication, it also ‘marked a definitive historical phase of intellectual and humanist practice’ in the post-war world (2012, 58). Historically ‘definitive’ as the Congress may be, however, Garton Ash’s view from the ‘lighthouse’ may be useful in helping us consider the Congress’ efforts in less exceptional terms by placing it in a broader continuity. The ‘Widest West’ that the *New York Review* has looked to and drawn from in its fifty years (Garton Ash 2013, 51), has, like the CCF, both constituted and exceeded the immediate English-speaking world. In fact, by offering Enlightenment values as the central orientation of the lighthouse, Garton Ash points to that very forces that might bring the CCF of the Cold War, the democratic internationalism of the *Review*, and perhaps even D’Souza’s *Rushdie Letters* (1993) into the same frame.

Our republic also extends to the whole English-speaking world, Latin America, and South Africa—and to wherever, be it in India, Burma, Egypt, or China, there are writers and readers who shared the basic values of this modernized version of the Enlightenment. (Garton Ash 2013, 51)¹¹⁶

The constancy of the ‘same, steadily rotating beam’ of the *Review* in the last half-century

¹¹⁶ ‘Together, these journals made visible, in all the European languages, a group of writers, intellectuals, and critics who seemed to represent the best of contemporary thought in their national traditions’ (Rubin 2012, 58). D’Souza has described *The Rushdie Letters* in similar terms as produced ‘by writers representing a wide range of opinion’ and ‘taken up by newspapers in Argentina, Austria, Belgium [...] the United Kingdom, the United States and Yugoslavia’ (1993, 9)

is, in his view, indicative of how periodical culture has repeatedly constituted the main response to a recurring set of political problems (2013, 52). For Garton Ash the emergence of new economic centres of gravity, the cosmopolitanism of global elites in graduate education, the failure of a democratic reprise in the Arab world, and a ‘post-Gutenberg’ era of the digital poses considerable challenges for this republic of letters in a new millennium. Yet, though the world was ‘differently’ illuminated, and ‘much less encouraging’ on the whole, he reasserted the *Review*’s founding vision of the world with cautious optimism.

Never ceasing to explore what it means to sustain equal respect and concern for every individual’s freedom and dignity, we must remain true to the core values of a modernized Enlightenment liberalism, Western in origin but universal in aspiration. And we must continue to offer a special platform to the persecuted and censored individuals in less free countries who largely share these values, even if – perhaps especially if – their chances of political success there are small. But we must also be able to hear, to listen to, and to engage with those different voices from other traditions, which may prevail politically for some considerable time to come. There is no better place to do this than our now digital republic. (Garton Ash 2013, 53)

Garton Ash’s self-conscious restatement of the *Review*’s outlook was familiar, indeed in its language it was strikingly familiar, and reminds us where we have been already. The particular view from the lighthouse of the post-war twentieth century world was one also intellectually embedded in the institutions that surrounded him. His references to a stance that was ‘Western in origin but universal in aspiration’ placed the *Review* in a longer tradition that could also take in the CCF’s global project, and shared a pre-1989 view of the world, inexorably inflected by the Cold War.¹¹⁷ The wording of his description of the *Review*’s efforts to reach out and offer ‘a special platform’ to ‘individuals in less free countries who largely share these values’ evoked Edward Shils’

¹¹⁷ See Garton Ash’s recent review of Robert Darnton’s *Censors at Work* for a good example of this (Garton Ash 2014).

beliefs about ‘enter[ing] into contact with like-minded Asians and Africans, who, at least superficially, share our views’ (Shils 1961, 2). Similarly, its embrace of the democratic possibilities offered by the enlarged space of ‘our now digital republic’ contained the threads of Arnold Goodman’s language in speaking of extending the elite culture from the ‘privilege’ of a few, to become ‘the democratic right of the entire community’ (ACGB 1970, 10). Moreover, how could Garton Ash’s careful modification of this ‘modernized Enlightenment liberalism’ as ‘be[ing] able to hear, to listen to, and to engage with those different voices from other traditions’ fail to evoke Brian Cox’s own deliberations over the place of ‘literature from different parts of the world and written from different points of view’ in the English classroom? For all of Garton Ash’s astute self-awareness and informed political vision, arguably his statements on culture, like those before him, stopped short of fully recognizing how an encounter with different ‘voices’ might cause a transformation in his own position. On this point at least, the contrast between the two lighthouses, and the perspectives each offered, were clear. Adiga’s position as a younger South Asian writer depicting the commotion and coarseness of life in India’s emerging neoliberal economy to a global literary marketplace was markedly different from that of the liberal Oxford academic inexorably shaped by the Cold War-world.

Garton Ash’s article not only enables us to gain insight into the *New York Review* as a specific kind of institution in the literary field. The genealogy of his way of thinking, which reverberates across the institutional histories of the CCF, the Arts Council, and the curriculum, also tells us much about some of the larger forces that have had a bearing on the literary in the second half of the twentieth century. From principled publishers, to state sponsors and neoliberal multinationals, modern liberalism has played a critical role in shaping the anglophone literary field, in which literature has been variously cast as a special space of freedom, and as a distinctly human presence in a disenchanted world.

Understanding the role of the modern state in intervening to underwrite the autonomy of literature necessarily involves tracking the complex history of liberalism in its entanglements with literature and culture. Recognising liberalism more as a plural set of 'liberalisms' (Ryan 2012, 52), and literary cultures in this period as necessarily international, the question of how modern political liberalism has shaped the production, circulation and reception of anglophone literatures may not only help us approach reading the literatures of the period differently, it can also help us think differently about the role of liberalism in the post-war world.¹¹⁸

There are fertile contexts for this kind of work. Examples might include, for instance, Penguin Books as a publisher with strong civic ideals and global ambitions.¹¹⁹ It might also examine the ideas underpinning the rise of Commonwealth literature as a sub-category of literary studies in the Anglo-American academy in the mid-1960s, in which ex- and late colonial literatures and languages were grouped for common study, before giving way to a more overtly politicised and oppositional critical practice in postcolonial literary studies. Equally, it might trace the (dis)continuities between the communitarianism of black cultural politics, for example, and the liberal individualism of the English literary establishment, particularly as an outmoded and seemingly inclusive internationalism was replaced by politically abrasive forms of neoliberalism. It might examine the paradigmatic shift in the European community from contested policies of multiculturalism to a comparative interculturalism, which created new funding avenues and supported new ventures in cross-cultural education. Equally, the challenges and opportunities of the digital era might be considered in light of how Penguin sought to reconcile its stance on the exclusive English-language publishing policy that caused its

¹¹⁸ I refer here to the central preoccupations of modern liberalism as related to the freedom of the individual imaginative spirit, freedom of expression, restricted state intervention, and the formation of the individual through exposure to difference, among others. Its varieties might include social-democratic liberalism, liberal anti-communism, Commonwealth internationalism, and neoliberalism.

¹¹⁹ Comparatively little has been done on the global ambitions of Penguin Books given the available archive, with the exception of an article by Alastair McCleery (2013).

overseas autonomous branches to flourish with its 2004 decision to enter the booming digital and vernacular markets in South Asia.

Existing attempts to address the significance of liberal thinking on literature and culture post-war have tended to broach the topic both through traditional literary criticism, and via the close reading of fiction and the novel especially.¹²⁰ Yet it appears that by approaching the question in this way, rather than in the light of the institutions that have mediated literature in the public sphere—both as material texts, and as an idea of ‘literariness’ more generally—this tendency demonstrates the possible inadequacies of a purely literary and work-based criticism. The possible alternative would necessarily engage with other disciplines—political theory and intellectual history especially—in order to see how literary culture has been construed as part of a wider ‘humanist practice’ (to use Rubin’s term), and thus place literature in productive debate with a number of pressing public issues. Put differently, it would illuminate the ways in which the kinds of political thinking circulating in institutions has influenced the creation, dissemination and reception of literature through their avowals and disavowals, the frames, categories and protocols they enact, their internal conflicts and dynamic interrelations.

Such speculative mapping might also put the question of close reading under scrutiny as literary studies’ most privileged method. If one of the supplementary goals of this thesis has been to forge a method of analysing literature institutionally, hopefully it has also blurred the traditional boundary between the ‘internal’ and ‘external’, chiefly by reading ‘external’ ‘texts’ as closely as literary ones. The apparent separateness of these classifications as categories of study deserves, ultimately, to be treated with some healthy

¹²⁰ See, for instance, Lionel Trilling’s *Liberalism and the literary imagination* (1950), Cox’s study of liberal humanism in the novel *The Free Spirit* (1963), and more recently, Joel A. Johnson’s re-evaluation of the aesthetic critique of creativity under liberal democracy through nineteenth century American fiction (2007).

scepticism. Troubling them by attempting to work across both, however tentatively, is to go some way toward meeting the demand that literature makes of us as critical readers.¹²¹

¹²¹ Gilmour's reading of 'Kabba Questions the Ontology of Representation...' might be considered one example of this kind of close reading for its careful consideration of how poetic voice emerges from and is inflected by the institutional conditions of 'particular historical junctures' (2014, 2). To the formulation: '[i]t is by attending to the poem's evocation of voice [...], and by exploring beyond this, to its dialogic relations with other voices, that we can develop techniques of a postcolonial "close reading"—or "close listening"—that can account properly for the complexities and subtleties of black voice poetry', I would add the 'voice' of the text's institutional frame, including the kinds of reading promoted by specific institutions (Gilmour 2014, 13).

Appendices

Appendix A

Edited transcript of executive committee meeting of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 15 October 1964, London

In attendance: Ezekiel Mphahlele, Minoo Masani, Denis de Rougemont, Michael

Josselson, Stephen Spender, John Hunt. All emphasis original.

Mphahlele: The whole African program so far has shown very fruitful ‘finds’, and if we are often despondent about or even hesitant about the role of the Congress outside Africa, we can at least take courage in the fact that the work we have so far initiated in Africa has thrived very well, and is showing signs of growing bigger and bigger We have created since 1961, already three centres in Nigeria [...]. These are writers’ and artists’ clubs, and they are involved in interesting various people in actual creative activities: theatre, music, creative writing, and the visual arts. And subsequently, very recently we have established Chemchemi Cultural Centre, in Nairobi, which I am directing at the moment; this does very much the same things as Mbari Centres do in Nigeria. And we have, apart from these also with the initiative of the Congress, various publications, which although being financed by Fairfield Foundation and another Foundation, would not have come into existence if we had not come in contact with them: Black Orpheus, in Ibadan which has not become a publication of the Mbari Centre, [...] The Classic which is a literary journal in Johannesburg, and Transition, which is a socio-political literary journal in Kampala. We work very well as a family and we are able to publish various things which come from these Centres through these journals. So that there is a chain – you might think of it as a chain – of events which have become a very important feature in African life today. This is the English-speaking part of Africa.

In the French-speaking part of Africa we haven’t had much success. In 1962, I undertook a tour of various countries, and I think I would be right in saying Dakar is quite a typical area [...]. You will find [the situation in French-speaking Africa] is an unstable situation, and particularly so because it is various pros and antis at the same time: pro-French and therefore anti-American and therefore anti-English; and in fact, when they see me, they don’t see me as a black person but as a representative of the Anglo-Saxon world. It is often amusing – it amuses me a lot – but it does mean that not much is being done. [...]

I said if we are a bit despondent elsewhere, we should take courage in the fact that these centres do exist in Africa. I said at Zurich, when we met [c. 1961] [...], I said that the dialogue about Communism and anti-Communism, Capitalism, and they are sometimes foggy and sometimes well-defined antitheses, had only just begun in Africa, and that we are at the stage where they are very much a toy in the language of the people, that nothing had yet gone far deep and that we were to be very careful and not be categorical in labelling one territory and another pro-this or pro-that. [...].

[...]

We need to be much more patient, and examine each situation in its historical context, in any African country. [...] [I]t can frustrate our activities if we try to use a ruler which is common, as I say, to a situation where you have certain reflexes about certain things; you don't even need to question yourself, these things become categorical; you say 'well, I insist for intellectual freedom in [a]dvance' and it is a reflex which has not grown in any other context, you see, so you can't use the same ruler, and one simply has to allow things to incubate, and allow things to come to a certain point. This is all I would like to ask the members of the Congress to do, and without [...] justifying anything at all.

Josselson: I just want to convey to you that my own feeling is that one should not wait too long. I think that most of us around this table do have patience, do try to understand the African situation; I think there is no reason, there is no precedent even, there is no reason why if atrocities are committed African voices, and I say African not ours, because ours would be misunderstood probably, they would resent it; but the African voices of those Africans who have followed, who have seen the things that we do, should not wait too long before they start protesting against atrocities by their own countrymen or by their next door neighbours.

Mphahlele: Yes, I agree with you, Mike, the only thing is that the colonial wound is still too fresh, the scars [...] are still too fresh, and you have to wait... how long you say we shouldn't wait too long; at the same time when you consider that the European in Africa is not just fifty years, it is more than that, sixty, seventy, a hundred years, and the kind of thing that I am talking [about] is in fact a cultural thing, it is a cultural thing; you could build up reflexes about certain things, when they build up responses, communal responses to a particular situation it is a cultural thing, and we have to... much as I agree with you [that] we can't wait too long, sometimes you have to wait long.

Appendix B

Contents of proceedings: Conference Of African Writers Of English Expression

CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN WRITERS OF ENGLISH EXPRESSION

Makerere College, Kampala, Uganda
11-17 June, 1962

- I. Introduction.
- II. Discussion papers
 - i. Saunders Redding: Trends in American Negro Writing
 - ii. Arthur Drayton: Socio-historical compulsion in the West Indian Novel
 - iii. Gerald Moore: Towards realism in French African writing?
 - iv. Ulli Beier: Contemporary African poetry in English
- III. Critic's time
 - i. Donatus Nwoga: the short story
 - ii. Ezekiel Mphahlele: the novel
 - iii. Bloke Modisane: the East African short story
- IV. Reports from conference study groups
 - i. Segun Olusola: Drama
 - ii. J.P. Clark: Poetry
- V. Press reports
 - i. Lewis Nkosi. Published in *The Guardian*, 8 August 1962, Manchester, England.
 - ii. Ezekiel Mphahlele. Published in *Africa Report*, July 1962, New York, U.S.A.
 - iii. Bernard Fonlon. Published in *Afrika* no. 8, August 1962, Munich, Germany.
- VI. List of Participants
- VII. Bibliography

Appendix C

List of participants at the Conference of African writers of English expression

ACHEBE Chinua	Nigerian, Writer, Director of External Broadcasting. Published, "Things fall apart" (Heinemann 1958), "No longer at ease" (Heinemann 1960), "Sacrificial egg" (Etudo Limited) and other short stories.
ADEMOLA Frances	Ghanaian, Talks producer for Radio Nigeria, Ibadan.
AWOONOR-WILLIAMS G.	Ghanaian. Poet and Teacher at the Institute of Administration, Accra.
BULL Theodore	British, Publisher, Editor of the <u>Central African Examiner</u> . Salisbury.
CLARK John Pepper	Nigerian, Poet and Playwright. Published, <u>Poems</u> (Mbari Publications), "Song of the Goat".
DRAYTON Arthur D.	Trinidadian, University Lecturer, Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies, University College, Ibadan, Nigeria.
DUERDEN Dennis G.	British, Managing Director of the Transcription Centre, London. Formerly teacher and Education Officer in Northern Nigeria & on BBC.
DUODU Martin C.	Ghanaian, Journalist, Editor of <u>DRUM</u> . Published in <u>Voices of Ghana</u> , (Inf. Services 1957).
FONLON Bernard	Cameroonian, Teacher, Chargé de Mission à la Présidence de la République Fédérale du Cameroun.
HUGHES Langston	American, Author, Playwright, Anthologist, Advisory editor. Published, "Selected Poems", "Ask your Mama", "Tambourines to Glory", Books of Jazz and plays including "Black Nativity", "An African Treasury", and anthologies of African writing.
JOACHIM Paulin	Dahomean, Editor of <u>Bingo</u> , Paris.
KARIARA Jonathan	Kenyan, E.A. Literature Bureau, Book Production Officer [...].
LESHOAI B.L.	South African, Teacher, Manager of Union Artists, Johannesburg, writer.

LOWE Joe. A.	South African, exile, now working as a journalist in Tanganyika.
MACAULEY Robie	American, Editor, Editor of the <u>KENYON REVIEW</u> and Professor of English, Kenyon College [...].
MAIMANE J. Arthur	South African, Journalist, Reuter News Agency, London. Published short stories in magazines and anthologies.
MODISANE Bloke	South African, exile, and is now working in London as a writer and actor. He has written essays, articles and short stories and is working on a book. He has appeared on the London stage: recently in a leading role in Jean Genet's <u>THE BLACKS</u> at the Royal Theatre.
MOORE Gerald	British, Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Makerere College. He has been actively involved with <u>BLACK ORPHEUS</u> , the West African review of Negro literature, and contributes regularly to several journals in Africa. Has translated several French works into English.
MPHAHLELE Ezekiel	South Africa, Fiction Editor of <u>DRUM</u> before leaving South Africa. In exile in Nigeria. [...] Now in Paris where he is Head of the African Dept. at the Congress for Cultural Freedom [...].
NAGENDA John	From Uganda, final year Honours student (in English) at Makerere. Has written a play, short stories and verses.
NEOGY Rajat	From Uganda, Poet and Editor of <u>TRANSITION</u> a bi-monthly review.
NGUGI J.T.	Kenyan, Student at Makerere College. Published short stories. Has written "The Black Messiah", "Weep not child".
NJAU Rebecca	Kenyan, has written radio-plays.
NKOSI Lewis	South African, Journalist and broadcaster, London.
NWOGA Donatus	Nigerian, teacher, M.A. in English, London University, critic.
OGO[T] Grace	Kenyan, fiction writer and teacher.
OKARA Gabriel	Nigerian, Poet, Information Officer, Enugu, Eastern Region. Published poems in <u>BLACK ORPHEUS</u> .
OKIGBO Christopher	Nigerian, Book Publishing, Representative in Nigeria, Cambridge University Press [...].
OKOT P'Bitek	From Uganda, writer.

OLUSOLA Segun	Television producer, Western Nigeria Television.
RECKFORD Barry	West Indian, Writer [...].
REDDING Saunders	American, Negro Critic, Teacher at Hampton Institute, U.S.A.
RICHARDS Charles G.	British, Publisher in Government Literature Bureau, Director East African Literature, Bureau, Nairobi. Published "The Provision of Popular Reading Materials" (UNESCO 1959) [...].
RUBIN Neville	Co-Editor of <u>The NEW AFRICAN</u> , Cape Town.
SAMB Amadou	Senegalese, Teacher.
SEGAL Philip	South African, [...] Senior Lecturer in English Literature, University of Cape Town. Editor of <u>CONTRAST</u> .
SOYINKA Wole	Nigerian, Poet and Playwright, Lecturer in English at University of Ife, Ibadan. Published "Dance of the Forest", "The Lion and the Jewel", "The Trials of Brother Jero", "Swamp Dwellers".
SPIO GARBRAH	Ghanaian, Writer.
PUBLISHERS	André Deutsch Roger NORRINGTON (Oxford). Robert ARMSTRONG (Northwestern University Press). Van MILNE (Heinemann). Longman's representative.

Appendix D

Court judgment *Helen Fiona Pitt-Kethley vs. Arts Council of Great Britain*

Delivered by Judge John Harris on 22nd September 1989 at Westminster County Court.

Miss Helen Fiona Pitt-Kethley the Plaintiff in this action is a poetess writer and journalist. In an action against the Arts Council she claims [...] that the Defendant has discriminated against her contrary to the Race Relations Act 1976 in that the Arts Council deliberately omitted or refused the Plaintiff's application for a bursary. She has now asked for an injunction preventing contravention of the Act and damages for loss of opportunity, injured feelings, aggravated damages and other monetary loss because of the alleged discrimination.

Her case is that she has been discriminated against contrary to the provisions of the Race Relations Act. I have sat, as is the practice in actions of this nature with two experienced, learned assessors [unnamed] with great experience in this background. They are merely advisors to the Judge and the Judge has the ultimate duty to decide on the law, facts and merits of a case. I shall be influenced in my decisions by the assessors. In any event we are generally in agreement.

The Plaintiff's case in essence was that the Defendant, the Arts Council of Great Britain advertised, offered and awarded three bursaries of £5,000 each to three persons of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin and that she was precluded by that test from applying for one of the bursaries [...].

[...]

This is an important case for the Defendant Council because they of all people who dish out money to the Arts are the last to wish to be labelled racist. That cannot be taken into account and the case must be decided on the evidence and the facts.

At one time in the case we were suspicious of a battle in the background between the Commission for Racial Equality and the Arts Council i.e. the Arts Council were trying to what the CRE said they should but the hand that fed them had bitten them.

However on the facts and analysis there is no great dispute on the actual facts. The dispute between the parties is more on the nature of inferences to be drawn on those facts.

We need to look into the history of setting up bursaries and awards. The Defendant Council inspired by the CRE carefully devised a policy which was done with care and was democratically analysed by various committees until it was decided that three bursaries should be given to three members of black minority groups only.

Were these actions of the Defendant Council discriminatory against the Plaintiff, who wished to apply for the bursaries i.e. if it was discriminatory have the Defendants established a Defence under Section 35?

[...]

The Defendants had moved the goal post after she had shot at the goal. Miss Pitt-Kethley says this amounts to discrimination against her. The case then meandered slowly through the Court until it came to trial [...].

I have no doubt that black writers have a difficult approach to getting work published. Perhaps they have a smaller readership than white writers, but it is quite clear in my judgment that they have special needs, something which the Defendant felt the need to cater for. [...]

Mr Menon says that they should have sought the CRE's approval beforehand. That might be right, but it was not until after the advert had been published that the question of the breach of the Act had been raised. It was on 12th November that Dr Dabydeen raised the point [...] and by that time it was too late. No one really thought anyone would ever raise the point in the manner that it has been raised now. It was a unanimous decision with all people considering black/ethnic minorities needs as special.

One of the witnesses whose evidence has been brought before the Court is Margaret Drabble. [...] She sums up the matter with the words "thriving black literature is of the greatest importance to mutual understanding in a multi-racial society like our own, and black writers do seem to have special needs arising from their special circumstances at a particular moment in British cultural development". Having read that I must concede that I could not have put it better myself.

In my judgment the Defendants have satisfied me that they come within the exception or exemption of Section 35 of the Act and any Acts they may have done in limiting the scholarships are not unlawful in accordance with the aims of the Race Relations Act 1976. The Plaintiff's case must fall or fail.

Appendix E

NEAB/AQA examination questions for GCSE English Paper 2, Part 2: 'Poems from Other Cultures and Traditions', 1999-2000

English examination 11 June 1999: Foundation level

1. Choose two poems which look very different on the page. Explain:
 - How they are different from each other
 - Why they are different from each other
 - Which you prefer and why
2. Choose two poems where you think the writers reveal strong feelings about culture or tradition. Explain what you have enjoyed about:
 - What they say
 - How they express their feelings
 - How language helps them to do this.

English examination 11 June 1999: Higher level

1. Poets often choose unusual ways to organise their ideas in order to affect their readers' responses. With reference to two poems show how this is the case.
2. Select two poems. What do they have to say about culture and tradition and how do they say it.

English examination 8 June 2000: Foundation level

1. Choose two of the following poems: *from* 'Search for My Tongue', *from* 'Unrelated Incidents', 'Half Caste'. Write about:
 - What you think the poems are about
 - How the language of the poems brings out ideas
 - Your own response to the ideas in the poems
 - Your own response to the ways they are written.
2. Choose two poems where the poet is looking back on the past. Write about how poems show:
 - What the past was like
 - What the present is like
 - The contrasts between the past and the present through the language used.

English examination 8 June 2000: Higher level paper

1. Compare the ways in which two poets from this selection explore the idea that your own identity is closely linked with the language you use.
2. Compare the methods *two* poets use in their poems to explore the past.

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