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“I pictured you only as an adventurous explorer”: Deben Bhattacharya, Ella K. Maillart, friendship and polygraphic influence

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ABSTRACT

Ella K. Maillart (1903–97), the Swiss travel writer-adventuress, and Deben Bhattacharya (1921–2001), the Bengali field recordist and media producer, first corresponded in July 1949 and remained friends their whole lives. This article traces the evolution of their personal and professional relationship. I begin by discussing development of Bhattacharya’s career in the early 1950s. I then outline how Maillart offered Bhattacharya a model for using material collected in the field to produce multiple works. Reading Maillart’s work alongside Bhattacharya’s, it is possible to trace affinities, and sometimes tensions, between their practices. I then turn to the many records Bhattacharya produced. Through engaging with para-texts – liner notes, maps, and photographs – and the records themselves, I suggest these works can be read as forms of popular travel literature, written in sound. Overall, this article contributes to ongoing work to establish the profile of Bhattacharya, while highlighting the cultural influence of Maillart.

KEYWORDS

Ella K. Maillart; Deben Bhattacharya; polygraphic; friendship; sound travelogue; influence

Ella K. Maillart (1903–97), the Swiss travel writer-adventuress, and Deben Bhattacharya (1921–2001), the Bengali field recordist and media producer, first corresponded in July 1949 and remained friends their whole lives. Maillart and Bhattacharya were prolific cultural producers who worked dynamically across multiple mediums, countries, and territories. In some respects, they built their respective careers in favourable cultural and publishing conditions. Maillart benefited from the popularity of travel writing in the inter-war period; Bhattacharya embraced new audio recording technologies to document his travels which he, in turn, produced and published through the varied channels of rapidly growing, and ever-global, post-war culture industries. Both were, nonetheless, outsiders in their fields, and expended considerable energy to make ambitious ventures happen, often in precarious circumstances. Relationships, in such contexts, are vital elements within culturally productive activity; this article outlines how Maillart – through implicit and explicit actions – influenced the shape and trajectory of Bhattacharya’s career.

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The first part of the article draws on correspondence held in the Maillart papers at the Bibliothèque de Genève to discuss the development of Bhattacharya's career in the early 1950s. Then, using Charles Forsdick's theorisation of "polygraphic" practice (2009), I outline how Maillart provided Bhattacharya with a model for how to re-use material collected in the field of travel to (re)produce published works. As Forsdick argues, "Maillart might be seen as an exemplary 'polygraph', that is, a travel writer whose journeys are multiply rewritten to emerge in a variety of different minor genres", a cultural practice fuelled by the "necessity to capitalise on a recently completed journey in order to fund the next" (Forsdick 2009, 299–300). Across his career, Bhattacharya skilfully pursued this approach to fund his travel and documentary field work; it was the mode through which he built an international folklore collection business. He repackaged recordings in different mediums (radio, records, film, books, television, lectures, and so on); these packages were sold into numerous territories; Bhattacharya also sold recordings to national institutions in Britain and Sweden, to be used in media or educational initiatives (Withers 2023).¹ At the time of his death in 2001, Bhattacharya had produced over 120 records, 20 films and countless radio programmes that drew on over 400 hours of sound recordings made in countries across the world; this collection, along with slides, paper and photographic archives are archived at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.²

Beyond the polygraphic, reading Maillart's written texts alongside Bhattacharya's productions, it is possible to trace further conversations, affinities, and occasional tensions between their practices. In some respects, Bhattacharya followed literally in Maillart's footsteps, pursuing similar travel routes, albeit with important deviations. In the final section of the article, I extend the discussion of Maillart's influence with a reading of the many records Bhattacharya produced. Through engaging with para-texts – liner notes, maps, and photographs – and the records themselves, I suggest these works can be read as forms of popular travel literature, written in sound, despite not being grounded in the generic conventions of travel writing. Overall, this article contributes to the ongoing work to establish the profile of Bhattacharya among scholars, while highlighting the important and path-breaking influence of Maillart on his career.

Beginnings: Lewis Thompson

Bhattacharya first corresponded with Maillart in tragic circumstances: on 24 June 1949, he wrote to inform her that their mutual friend, English poet Lewis Thompson, had died from prolonged heat exposure in Benares (now Varanasi). Thompson's death is recounted in Maillart's 1951 memoir *Ti-Puss*, an account of her spiritual journey through India during the early 1940s, accompanied by "Puss", a ginger and white cat. In the book, Maillart described the place in Benares "near the water's edge" where "the body of Lewis the Poet was to become pure ashes. No fate could have been more magnificent for a man who, after having been slowly devoured by the relentless fire of his brain, had suddenly been killed by a ray of the sun, the symbol which had been paramount in his life" (1951, 75). Thompson accompanied Maillart and her cat during her travels in India, and several photographs of the gaunt and anxious poet are reproduced in *Ti-Puss*. Maillart's connection with "Lewis the Poet" was keenly felt; indeed, she disclosed in her early letters to Bhattacharya that she had been in love with him (Bhattacharya 1949b).

Bhattacharya also cherished his “most intimate” connection with Thompson, their passionate friendship charged by a mutual love of poetry (Bhattacharya 1949a). They had met when Bhattacharya worked for Swiss photographer Raymond Burnier and French musicologist Alain Daniélou at Rewa Kothi, Benares, the “high palace built to defy the ages, with two of its corners like round dungeons” (Maillart 1951, 76), that became home to European exiles who immersed themselves in Hindu philosophies, Sanskrit and Indian Classical Music in the 1940s. Early in 1949, Bhattacharya had decided to travel to England, and Thompson had given him Maillart’s address, and suggested he contact her (Bhattacharya 1949a). Following Thompson’s death, Bhattacharya’s journey to London acquired a new purpose. In conversation with Maillart, Bhattacharya intended to find a publisher for Thompson’s work, and this shared project provided the initial context through which their relationship developed. Finding a publisher for Thompson’s poems proved challenging, however, despite early support from Edith Sitwell.³ For the young and inexperienced Bhattacharya, the machinations and slow pace of London’s publishing industries were intensely frustrating. By November 1952, after concerted efforts, Bhattacharya ceased chasing publishers and began to focus his attention on other matters. Thompson remained an important reference point throughout their relationship, and both were delighted when his journals and poems were finally published in the early 1980s, thanks to the careful editorial work of Richard Lannoy.⁴

Maillart and Bhattacharya held different statuses during the early years of their friendship. Maillart was an established, indeed celebrated, author in her field. By 1949, her most epic journeys had already been completed and presented to the public. Books such as *Turkestan Solo* (1934), *Forbidden Journey* (1949) and *The Cruel Way* (1947/2021) had placed her among a cadre of authors who popularised travel writing during the inter-war period. She had also recently undergone a period of intense spiritual introspection, experienced during her travels in India, which signalled a change toward inner, rather than outward travel (Steinert Borella 2006). Beyond writing, her skill as a photographer was internationally recognised for its quality and, through collaborations with the Leica camera company, commercial potential. In the 1930s, for example, Leica provided her with equipment and used her images to publicise their cameras (Forsdick 2022). Filtered through Thompson’s impressions, Bhattacharya revealed ingenuously to Maillart that “I pictured you only as an adventurous explorer” (1949b). Surely, he had noted Maillart’s idiosyncratic celebrity and position in the world; “only” being an adventurous explorer was, in fact, an impressive thing to be.

Bhattacharya, in contrast, was just starting out. He moved to England in 1949 in search of purposeful work and, likely, adventure. He was clearly ambitious and determined: within weeks of arriving, he had made connections at the BBC, broadcasting with the Eastern Service (Withers 2023). One of his first actions after arriving in London was to phone Maillart’s literary agent to ask when the author might travel to England; perhaps he harboured hope this call would help him build connections with influential figures in the capitol’s literary scenes. Throughout his life Bhattacharya was a prolific correspondent, a method he used to good effect to build long-lasting personal and professional relationships (Bose 2022). He regularly wrote to Maillart in the early 1950s to inform her of his progress securing work, or to update her of his latest London address, as he struggled to find secure, good quality housing. In these early exchanges, Bhattacharya clearly had more to gain from staying in touch with Maillart than she did him. This is

not to say that Bhattacharya's pursuit of Maillart's friendship was purely transactional. Their early letters indicate intimacy, tenderness and mutual interest, alongside a desire to break down formality: "Of course you will call me Deben", he wrote to Maillart in November 1949, "why should you feel diffident because your interest does not concentrate on poetry? You cannot deny that you love life, and poetry is not something that excludes life" (1949c). At the same time, Bhattacharya had few worldly connections, and Maillart had many. She also had a practice, a track record of activity, that likely excited and inspired him.

The professional journey: Bhattacharya in the early 1950s

My dear Ella, this I write to you in the middle of my desperate hunt for a job and place to stay. (1949c)

Bhattacharya's correspondence with Maillart of the late 1940s and early 1950s provide an account of his early years in Britain, a time marked by frantic searches for meaningful work and secure housing. These letters are of great historical value because they provide emotional insights into the precarious conditions of creative migrant workers in post-war Britain. Bhattacharya used letters to inform Maillart of his professional journey, sharing breakthroughs alongside frustrations and failures. Such epistolary style was typical of Bhattacharya throughout his life, who regularly used letters to inform personal and professional confidantes of his various projects and schemes. These early letters, however, often reveal the stresses and strain of adjusting to London life, with its temporary work and unsuitable houses, which "has been too trying for the last four weeks; the BBC is too slow to decide anything quickly, the flat was crowded" (Bhattacharya 1950b).

As discussed above, Bhattacharya's first years in England were occupied with trying to secure a publisher for Thompson's poems. Such efforts did not come to immediate fruition, but the connection with Thompson did provide Bhattacharya with his first significant commission from the BBC Eastern Service. This was, he revealed to Maillart, "a sort of personal letter", recounting how he met Thompson in India, and would be recorded on 25 January 1950. Bhattacharya expressed ambivalence, and hoped he was "not doing something foolish" in delivering the talk (Bhattacharya 1950a). At the same time, he rationalised, broadcasting may raise the profile of Thompson among literary circles connected to the Eastern Service and, therefore, increase the chances of securing a publisher. Maillart enquired if Bhattacharya had met Louis MacNeice during these first visits to the BBC studios, but he was not interested to meet the young Bengali. "I did not thrust myself upon him", Bhattacharya wrote, tartly (1950a). Within the same letter, Bhattacharya revealed to Maillart that no decision had been made on the prospect of a regular job in the Bengali section of the Eastern Service. This was likely due to cuts in the government's grant-in-aid, which resulted in a reduction in programme hours, staff, and office space for many of the BBC's external services (Morse 2020, 118). Bhattacharya was nonetheless given regular opportunities to broadcast in Hindi and Bengali, and he would continue such episodic, bit-part work for the Eastern Service until the early 1960s (Withers 2023).

It is not clear from correspondence if Maillart suggested that Bhattacharya seek work with the BBC Eastern Service. It seems possible he would have found his own way there,

since immigrant creatives from Commonwealth countries could gain employment with the BBC's Overseas services (Bidnell 2017, 67). Even so, Maillart's interest in Bhattacharya's work, and suggestions of people to look out for, indicate an informal and at times subtle mentorship that would characterise their relationship over the coming years. During 1950, Maillart and Bhattacharya were in regular contact. Maillart sent postcards – an appropriate medium for a traveller, of course, but also outside the “immediate reciprocity of the classic letter” (Cardell and Haggis 2011, 130) – which somehow managed to find Bhattacharya at his latest London address. Between November 1949 and May 1950, he bounced around the city, moving accommodation three times. In March 1950, Bhattacharya shared better work news: bored with temporary work as a clerk at the Post Office, a more exciting temporary prospect emerged in the form of a one-month contract as producer for the Eastern Service's Bengali programme (1950c). This was to become more permanent by late May when he became joint producer (1950d). At this moment of relative job security, however, the restless Bhattacharya sought leave from the BBC to visit Paris. Here he hoped to meet Maillart and, failing that, asked if Maillart could introduce him to any of her friends who lived in the city. “Would you like me to meet any of your friends in Paris?” he plaintively wrote. If so, “please drop a postcard at the Paris address” (1950e). This is the first explicit evidence of how Maillart would come to act as a professional conduit for Bhattacharya, enabling him to build connections within her field of practice: travel writing and ethnography. From the late 1950s onward, Bhattacharya's professional success as a field recordist and producer grew from his ability to build productive relationships with individuals and institutions; he never seemed embarrassed to ask for assistance and, when he did, presented requests with a charming directness. In his correspondence with Maillart, it is possible to see Bhattacharya testing and developing such relational skills as he widened his search for interesting connections, personal and professional.

Paris complemented Bhattacharya's sensibilities: in contrast with England and the English, the Parisians are “much more alive, their nerves are quick and responsive” (Bhattacharya 1950f). Indeed, after a period living in Stockholm, during which time he collaborated extensively with Radio Sveriges and Rikskonserter (the Institute for National Concerts), Bhattacharya made Paris his permanent home in the late 1960s. 1951 was, however, another difficult year for Bhattacharya. In March Bhattacharya wrote to Maillart care of the Swiss Consulate in Bombay and told her he is “somehow plodding along” (1951). Without secure employment, he spent this time working on a book of children's stories, partly based on old Sanskrit tales. Bhattacharya was yet to find the niche that would enable him to flourish as a freelance creative; he was a few years away from discovering field recording which gave him the autonomy he relished, and the practical and intellectual stimulation he desired. Instead, as regular work with the BBC Eastern Service began to dry up, he wrote stories and pitched ideas to the BBC's “Home Service” producers, but with little success (Withers 2023).

During the first half of 1952, Bhattacharya and Maillart met in person, an occasion Bhattacharya reflected on positively in a letter dated 28 April 1952: “how I liked seeing you Ella, I wish I could have seen more of you and less of the crowd”. The meeting likely deepened their personal connection, trust, and mutual care. In fact, Bhattacharya wrote soon after the meeting to thank Maillart for a financial contribution towards his holiday: “I know how hard you work”, he stated, “it makes me a bit uneasy that I should deprive you of the financial result of your work”. It was, nonetheless, a holiday he badly needed. Intensive

temporary work in London had left him feeling “practically dead, or like a piece of cotton wool” (1952b). Beyond tacit mentorship, and practical support like money, how might encountering Maillart’s embodied presence help orient a young man like Bhattacharya in the early months of 1952?

It is easy to imagine Maillart informally sharing observations from her travels with Bhattacharya, especially the topographies of traditional music, sounds and dance she had encountered. Her books often make reference to the sonic experience of travel, whether that be “recruits drilling incessantly to the sound of trumpets, while their comrades rent the heavens with Turki songs” (1949, 224–225), or the “two bearded owners” of the horses “singing delightfully” (1949, 246) en route to Kashgaria; or the glorious “silence of the desert regions of the world, that silence which I miss so much when I am among human beings” (1949, 268). Such references – often fleeting but nonetheless embedded, ordinarily within the narrative – are suggestive of remote landscapes populated with rich, cultural resources. It is likely Maillart made Bhattacharya aware of the profusion of traditional sounds, music and dance, whether that was through passing remarks in conversation, or simply by him reading her books. The sonic qualities of Maillart’s narratives, which convey a ‘sense of [...] soundscape’ (Merchant 2014, 204) are also important, because they record a broader sound world that features the instrumentation of everyday coexisting with musical expression that emerges from work or celebration. These kinds of sounds – imperfect, raw, spontaneous – are exactly the kinds of material Bhattacharya would later record using a portable reel-to-reel and present as “living traditions”, his sense of their existence informed by Maillart’s knowledge, and example.

In conversation, Maillart may have conceptually orientated Bhattacharya to the field, but her mode of working could also have provided practical inspiration. During the 1930s, for example, she embraced opportunistic partnerships with media companies that enabled her to acquire equipment to document and present travel in cutting-edge forms (Forsdick 2022). Through this, and other resourceful acts, she had invented her existence as a successful travel writer. As Steinert Borella notes, Maillart wrote to support herself; she had no family money, her ability to travel was not patronised by a benevolent husband. In essence, “she wrote travel books – very popular ones – to pay for her travels” (2006, 4). From such travels she had acquired and interrogated a life philosophy, grafted from direct experience of movement, of problem-solving and embodying change. Speaking to the BBC in an interview recorded in 1987, Maillart reflected on these processes of transformation. When travelling alone, she explained, it is possible to be “captivated by what you see and smell and touch, you forget your background and your measurement according to the Genovese point of view, you become what you see, what you hear [...] you forget yourself because your self is a bar, is a wall, you have to forget and become what you see. Then your intuition can work”. These words, recorded in the last decade of Maillart’s life, and spoken with emphatic emphasis, exude the forcefulness of her personality. In relation with others, this forcefulness could often be expressed through what Bhattacharya fondly characterised as her “tactless simplicity” (1959) – a frankness that cut through polite social conventions. Spending time with Maillart, in other words, would have meant spending time with a highly individuated, “remarkable personality” (Fagan 2006, 199). Through their friendship, Bhattacharya made it clear he was sensitive to her insight, and vulnerability: “Did I tell you that [*Ti-Puss*] nearly made me cry, not for your cat but for yourself. The sadness and loneliness that I noticed in

Lewis and which he was trying to fight with intellectually, I see an exceptance [sic] of it in you" (1952a).

Support and collaboration

As Bhattacharya recuperated on the Isles of Scilly in June 1952, a holiday part-funded by a generous Maillart gift, he was on the cusp of first real professional success. In July 1952, the BBC's Third Programme broadcast Bhattacharya's talk on "Indian Classical Music". In a letter to Maillart on 11 August 1952, he reported that the programme had gone well, adding with pleasure that he had been busy "attending to the subsequent fanmail" (1952c). The public reaction was so positive, in fact, that the Third Programme producers commissioned Bhattacharya to deliver two further talks, on Indian Folk (October 1952) and Contemporary Music (March 1953). Bhattacharya also reported that his talk to the Royal Indian Society in Oxford had been well received. This was the first time Bhattacharya presented work in front of a live, public audience. He admitted: "I was slightly nervous [...] but as I noticed my audience was getting more and more interested I felt much at ease". Crucially, he revealed, this engagement was "thanks to you". It would seem, then, that at this time Maillart was actively using her connections to create professional opportunities for Bhattacharya, augmenting his own – and very active – efforts to secure BBC commissions (Withers 2023). In his correspondence from the Isles of Scilly, Bhattacharya also mentioned meeting the publisher and editor Rupert Hart-Davies, a man he found "extremely charming" (1952b). This, too, was likely a Maillart connection, since Hart-Davies Ltd published books by Maillart's colleague Peter Fleming, as well as Fleming's translation of André Migot's *Tibetan Marches* (1956). In a few years, Bhattacharya would meet Migot too, also through Maillart, as shall be discussed below. These facilitations and connections indicate how Maillart positively shaped Bhattacharya's career in its nascent stage. This is something Maillart did consistently throughout their friendship, as Bhattacharya's widow, Jharna Bose, recounted: "She gave parties and he would start meeting people, and Ella Maillart actually introduced him" (2022).

Importantly, these meetings place Bhattacharya within the field of post-war travel writing and travel writers, as formative habitus, and influence. This positioning matters, as I shall go to argue in more detail later in the article, because Bhattacharya's multimedia work doesn't seem to fit neatly into generic conventions. This may in part be a reason why his impressive cultural contribution has not yet received adequate critical recognition, at least of the same order as contemporaries working in aligned fields.⁵ Robert Millis captures this categorical ambiguity perfectly when he describes Bhattacharya's work of the 1950s as "not quite ethnography, not exactly travel literature, but somewhere in between and from a time long gone" (2018, 13). Positioning Bhattacharya within the networks of association and practice produced through the field of travel writing in the inter- and post-war periods, and most notably Maillart's professional and personal relationships, creates opportunities to better identify some of the generic conventions that informed his work and, crucially, made it practically possible.

In response to the success of the Third Programme talks, and before he acquired his first portable tape recorder, Bhattacharya had built up a stock of records to use within lectures and radio broadcasts. In November 1952 he wrote to Maillart to ask if she could provide him with slides of Indian musical instruments and performing musicians that

could be used as illustration in public lectures (1952d). While we do not have Maillart's response to this request, two years later Bhattacharya wrote to thank her for sending photographs, and for arranging a lecture at the Musée Guimet in Paris that featured "3 dozens of slides [...] to be] synchronised with music in order to give a visual help to the audience" (1954a). Bhattacharya stressed that he would "really [...] work hard on this lecture and make it a work of art instead of presenting a catalogue of information", and emphasised to Maillart his "feeling that you will approve the way I am planning the lecture. We shall, however, discuss it when we meet". This exchange suggests that Maillart and Bhattacharya were now actively collaborating, with Maillart's images utilised as aesthetic aid to the performance that Bhattacharya hoped would be artful, and not merely instructional. The significance of Bhattacharya integrating – or in his words synchronising – Maillart's images within his emerging practice cannot be underestimated, since she viewed photography and film as modes of intercultural contact and mediums for "writing" travel (Topping 2009, 332). Embedded in these photographs, that were part aide-mémoire and a vital node in her wider "polygraphic" practice (Forsdick 2009, 299–300), was not simply image as illustration, but a technique of looking and relating to the world, a mode of inter-cultural encounter that Bhattacharya would later adopt and extend through his own photographs and films.

In January 1954, Bhattacharya acquired a Gaumont-British GB732 reel-to-reel tape machine, an in-kind payment from the Argo Record Company (Millis 2018, 13). It is possible Maillart had shared her experience of partnering with media companies to source equipment to capture material in the field of travel. To date, I have not read a letter to indicate this concretely. Even so, Bhattacharya's resourcefulness mirrors Maillart's, and it seems probable she may have encouraged him – at least by way of example – to think along such lines. Having the means to record musicians in the field was, undoubtedly, crucial to the development of Bhattacharya's career. Original field recordings provided him with a rationale for travel, and bountiful source material that could be repackaged in different mediums, forms, and territories. By January 1955, and after returning from a six-month journey to India and Pakistan – his first field trip of this kind – he responded, on Argo headed paper, to a letter from Maillart about a potential collaboration. Maillart was in conversation with documentary filmmaker Baroness Marie-Thérèse Ullens de Schooten and André Migot about making a film in India. Maillart had asked Bhattacharya to record music, and he responded positively, impressed by the quality of Ullens's work. Despite his relative inexperience, Bhattacharya used the invitation to assert his emerging expertise: "while working in the field", he emphasised, "I like to be a master of my own, so that I am totally free to choose and select and select the music [...] the placing of the musicians is a tricky job and the entire recording depends on that" (1955a). Despite initial enthusiasm, the project did not however materialise, with Maillart doubling down on her position as instigator, or what Bhattacharya described as the "guiding spirit behind the whole business". Indeed, Bhattacharya pushed back when Maillart tried to give him authority to decide if the project would go ahead: "you have placed me in a slightly difficult situation by asking me to decide it all by myself. The idea originally came from you [...] Migot & Ullens are your friends. I really don't know how I can decide it" (1955a). Maillart did go on to produce a 16 mm colour film shot in South India, 1956–57.⁶ She approached Bhattacharya about providing music, which he was willing to do, but the final film remained silent.

Within the Maillart papers, this is the last reference to a clear project-based collaboration between the friends. They continue to correspond until Maillart's death; indeed, Bhattacharya was intensely conscious of maintaining friendships, and sent cards for birthdays and for major holidays, to keep relationships alive (Bose 2022). He was always keen to share good news with Maillart, whether that be lucrative royalty offers from record companies, successful collaborations with institutions, publishing deals or positive responses to his lectures. He also leant on Maillart for practical help, requesting contacts in regions he travelled to, or to ask her about cheap return tickets and free hospitality. For the lecture at Musée Guimet in December 1954, Maillart helped Bhattacharya acquire an official institutional invitation that enabled him to travel, along with his tape machine and tapes, past French customs with reduced friction (1954a). Bhattacharya was adept at selling his work across market territories, and asked Maillart for help brokering relationships with Swiss radio stations (1957, 1973). Maillart and Bhattacharya shared a keen interest in documentary technologies. In February 1960, he wrote to Maillart to ask if she could contact Nagra-Kudelski, the Swiss-based audio tape recorder company, about the cost and specifications of their latest model, and whether they were able to offer professional discounts. Maillart was quick to act, and months later Bhattacharya wrote to thank her for speaking to them (1960a, 1960b).

Maillart also asked Bhattacharya for practical help, and he was more than happy to provide it. The ability to truly appreciate the mutual support they gave each other is limited because, at the time of writing, only Bhattacharya's letters to Maillart are publicly available. There are nonetheless clear examples of his support. During the development of the India film idea, for example, Maillart wrote to Bhattacharya with a list of logistical questions relating to the weather, car hire, and local introductions, which he duly responded to (1955a). Sharing such information was clearly integral to the planning and actualisation of documentary travel projects.⁷ Bhattacharya also helped Maillart source information from the Nepalese embassy in London about the literary credentials of a potential collaborator (1953). Bhattacharya was consistently caring toward Maillart; he expressed concern about her health and warned her of the tendency to overwork. Sometimes he would tease her, especially about feelings she had for men. Overall, their relationship evolved across the decades and became characterised by mutual support and respect, informed by Maillart's professional generosity and mentorship, and Bhattacharya's enthusiastic care. That Maillart's work, in both practical and conceptual terms, shaped how Bhattacharya worked in the field, should already be clear, but will be further affirmed next, in relation to her "polygraphic" practice (Forsdick 2022).

Maillart and polygraphic influence

I have made friends with a very nice French boy who has made about half a dozen art-documentary films which have been shown in commercial cinemas. He is willing to give me training in shooting films etc – do you think it would be of some use? (Bhattacharya 1955b)

Bhattacharya's question to Maillart was likely posed in anticipation of affirmation, and we do not of course have her response to confirm this was the case. Yet we can imagine she used her letter (or, perhaps, postcard) to outline the rich potential of using film as a documentary medium. Maillart is known for her writing and photography, but between 1939 and 1957 she also experimented with 16 mm colour film to document travels, including

her journey to Kabul in 1939, recounted in *The Cruel Way*.⁸ It is possible to imagine the creativity sparked through correspondence with Maillart, who may have encouraged Bhattacharya to experiment and embrace new technologies to expand his practice. In the 1950s and 60s, however, Bhattacharya predominantly used material from the field to make radio programmes and long-playing records, but he continued to translate poetry. Three of his translations were published by Allen & Unwin, part-funded by UNESCO: *Love Songs of Vidyapati* (1963), *Love songs of Chandidās, the rebel poet-priest of Bengal* (1967) and *The Mirror of the Sky: Songs of the Bauls from Bengal* (1969). In 1966 he published *The Gypsies*, a hard back book with 7" record insert, a fascinating example of hybrid publishing that is suggestive of how record and book publishing occupied an equivalent cultural space in the mid-1960s. He was also beginning to branch into television. Between 1960 and 1962, for example, he advised David Attenborough for his programme *Adventure*, a BBC series that followed the expeditions of travellers across the world.

In 1969, and in collaboration with London's Argo Record Company, he produced his first films, *Krishna in Spring* and *Raga*.⁹ He would go on to make twenty other short films, which are archived at the Bibliothèque National de France.¹⁰ Bhattacharya's films combine sensitive ethnographic observation with educational instruction, with the film becoming a medium to preserve intangible cultural traditions and promote cross-cultural interaction. In this sense they are influenced by the post-war ethos of institutions like UNESCO which sought to valorise collective cultural achievements and promote the "intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind" (Meskell 2018, 27).¹¹ While the grand vision of such politics, grounded in the reconstructive, internationalist, utopian and pacifist impulses of the post-war period, ultimately buckled in practice, they do provide an important context that framed Bhattacharya's work (and especially his films) in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Discussing Bhattacharya's film work in sufficient detail is beyond the scope of the article. It is worth noting, however, that some of Bhattacharya's films return to practices and places mentioned within Maillart's travelogues. In *Forbidden Journey*, for instance, Maillart gives an account of visiting of what she first perceived to be an abandoned temple in Dzun, Tibet. After a moment of deep, solitary meditation, which led to "an extraordinarily intense feeling of being remote from everything and everybody I knew", she is startled by a "deep, lugubrious sound", a "bareheaded lama [...] blowing into a shell" (1949, 108). The lama then

Prayed in quick chant with well-marked rhythm. He punctuated the phrases by, in turn, striking cymbals, ringing a bell, and tapping a drum, or simply by making gestures with his fingers. He had delicate hands, a conjurer's hands, which he held in imitation of the Buddha gestures, but he did not feel bound to refrain from holding out one of them for an offering, with a smile. (1949, 108)

Maillart's account of the lama's prayer vibrates like the percussive elements it foregrounds, her viewing eye roves across "delicate" gestures of fingers and hands, offering a vivid and slow cinematic picture of the unfolding ritual. Bhattacharya's 1980 film *The Chanting Lama* was shot in Ladakh, India, and focused on the Tibetan refugees who settled in the region after the Chinese occupation of Tibet (1959). The film features a remarkably similar scene, and pace. It too begins with a deep sound, as two Tibetans blow into a Dung Chen trumpet, releasing sacred Buddhist intonations through the landscape (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *The Chanting Lama* (1980).

Much as Maillart's portrayal dwells in the lama's haptic movements as she attempts to articulate each element of the ritual, Bhattacharya's film lingers on the chanting lama's actions, musical instruments, and features of the temple (Figure 2).

Indeed, intimate shots of hands and faces, especially in musical performance, is a signature in Bhattacharya's films, a means to suggest that it is within the hands – “the conjurer's hands” – that the craft of traditional cultures is perpetuated (Figure 3).¹²

Reading these texts side-by-side, it is possible to further infer Maillart's influence on Bhattacharya's visual aesthetic-techniques, already intimated through their lecture collaborations in the early 1950s. On a practical level, Maillart's travelogues signalled *where* Bhattacharya could find examples of flourishing “living traditions”; her books, photographs and films also suggest aesthetic techniques for *how* to look at them. It is important to acknowledge that despite Steinert Borella's claim that, as a Swiss woman, Maillart can hardly be located “at the centre of [the European colonial] gaze”, some ethnographic



Figure 2. Instruments and ritual, *The Chanting Lama* (1980).



Figure 3. ‘Conjurer’s Hands’ in *The Chanting Lama* (1980).

descriptions in her books draw on crude, racialised stereotypes (2006, 4). These co-exist, however, with documentary forms that anticipate the ethos of post-war initiatives that placed inter-cultural heritage communication as central to securing long-standing world peace.¹³ While not free of monumentalising or orientalist tendencies, humanitarian concerns – a concern, that is, for humanity and its cultural properties – informed their inscription. This aspect of Maillart’s practice was highlighted by fellow Swiss travel writer Nicolas Bouvier, who articulated “what touches me in these photographs [...] is that they offer a pure record, neither for nor against, neither pedagogical nor politically motivated” (quoted in Topping 2009, 332). Such inter-cultural touching, what we might characterise as world heritage’s “structure of feeling” (Williams 1954), undergird Maillart’s practice as writer, photographer, filmmaker. Such orientation within the field influenced Bhattacharya whose films can, arguably, be coherently positioned in such heritage frames that were concretising by the late 1960s.

As should now be clear, Bhattacharya was, like Maillart, a polygraph: he re-used materials captured in the field in multiple ways that referenced established (travel writing) and emerging (heritage) generic conventions but were not reducible to them. Such an approach arose, no doubt, from his energetic personality and fascination with new mediums and technologies, a willingness to experiment and generate opportunities. It was also likely informed by Maillart’s example. As Forsdick argues, Maillart was “an exemplary ‘polygraph,’” a travel writer who re-wrote the same journey in multiple forms and genres (2009, 300). In Maillart’s case this included travel diaries; photographs and film, captured in the field as an aide-mémoire and as a form of writing in themselves; newspaper articles, lectures, and books; and numerous interviews, essays, and memoirs. These prolific reworkings of the same journey were core to her livelihood as a travel writer; they were how she “capitalise[d] on a recently completed journey in order to fund the next” (Forsdick 2009, 299–300).

Bhattacharya’s most Maillart-esque journey – and, by this, I mean a physically gruelling, long-form adventure traversing many regions and continents – happened between August 1955 and March 1956. Accompanied by the English architect Colin Glennie, who took photographs of the journey, Bhattacharya travelled from London in a boneshaker van, passing through Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and finishing in India. His aim was to record music along the route, starting after Turkey’s Bosphorous strait, in order to “settle into the rhythm of wandering so that whatever music I encountered I might record in a spirit of relaxed surprise” (2018, 17).¹⁴ Bhattacharya’s route to India echoes, even if it does not map onto directly, the journey taken by Maillart and Annemarie Schwarzenbach in the summer of 1939, recounted memorably in *The*

Cruel Way. Bhattacharya's journey begins earlier, of course, and detours south at Istanbul to drive through Syria and Iraq, before travelling north toward Tehran. Maillart and Schwarzenbach, on the other hand, hugged the shore of the Black Sea before entering Iran by its north westerly corridor, passing through Tabriz and Kazvin enroute to Tehran. After this, the journeys pursued by the travellers follow the same course until they reach India.

Bhattacharya's epic overland journey to India provided ample source material for poly-graphic (re)presentation. The BBC commissioned seven programmes that dramatised the journey and were broadcast between 11 February and 5 March 1957. Originally pitched as "Music and Men on Road to India", the series was eventually broadcast as "The Overland Route to India"; the gendered (and musically specific title) clipped into a generic travelogue via the BBC's editorial hands. Completing a journey in which he recorded over forty hours of material likely bolstered Bhattacharya's confidence. Indeed, this is reflected in his ambitious pitch to the Third Programme producers: "the series may seem long to you, but in order to preserve the continuity of the trip and to present each talk clearly [...] I find it necessary to present it in this form" (1956). Alongside the BBC series, Bhattacharya used material from the journey to release one of his most well-known albums, *Music on the Desert Road* (1958) – allegedly a favourite of Frank Zappa's – with Angel Records in the US.¹⁵ Significantly, the record carried the subtitle, *A Sound Travelogue*, which explicitly presents Bhattacharya's work as a form of travel writing, written in sound, a point I shall discuss in more detail below. Bhattacharya also sold 140 min of recordings from the trip to the BBC Sound Archive. There were further plans to publish a book-length account of the journey. In the late 1950s, Bhattacharya wrote excitedly to Maillart that *Men and Music on the Desert Road* had been "accepted with extraordinary amount of enthusiasm" by London publishers (no date). Despite this early publishing interest, *Men and Music on the Desert Road* was first published posthumously in 2018 as *Paris to Calcutta: Men and Music on The Desert Road*, accompanied by 4 CDs of music recorded on the journey. Alongside these distinct publications, recordings made on the overland journey to India were utilised by Bhattacharya across his long and productive career, as illustrations in talks and radio programmes, or as part of curated records. More research is needed to map the full extent of his polygraphy, in terms of this specific journey, but also across his wider oeuvre. This is vital to understand how Bhattacharya used completed journeys to fund further ventures, and how this journey, and countless others, shaped his work as a field recordist, and travelogue producer.

Bhattacharya, emergent formats and post-war sound travelogues

This article has already positioned Bhattacharya within the post-war milieu of travel writers and travel writing. In Maillart, he had an idiosyncratic mentor who was generous in facilitating connections and opportunities. Maillart also offered a polygraphic model of practice that Bhattacharya intuitively embraced, producing travelogues in diverse mediums, often packaged or re-sold across multiple territories. Yet can his varied outputs, especially of the 1950s and 60s, be interpreted as examples of "travel writing", and can he be placed within a cache of post-war travelogue producers? The post-war period is often portrayed as marking the end of the popular travelogue, or at least a moment of decisive break with its inter-war popularity. Mass tourism enabled ordinary

people to physically travel rather than do so vicariously via published texts, while the emergence of new media formats opened new vistas for inter-cultural consumption. The Second World War had also shifted the moral temperature, raising questions about travel ethics in a world of displaced peoples; maps were redrawn as new nations were created, through violent partitions and the struggles of anti-colonial, liberation movements. Concurrently, new rationales for documentary travel were gaining credence, institutionally and culturally. Concerns to preserve heritage, cultural property and traditions, alongside pop cultural folk revivals, stimulated expeditions and framed their re-presentations. These discourses also anchored Bhattacharya's work in the field, and informed how he framed the material he collected, in radio programmes and lectures.

Bhattacharya's travelogues were powerfully conditioned by new recording technologies. The growing availability of reel-to-reel tape recorders, while by no means available to everyone, enabled travel journeys to be captured with new degrees of fidelity and immersion. Bhattacharya was extremely resourceful in acquiring a GB732 tape recorder in 1954. This enabled him to enter the field as an amateur recordist whose judgement of what to capture was informed, ultimately, by his "own enjoyment" (Oliver 2003; Bhattacharya 2018, 17). Foregrounding "enjoyment" and marginalising ethnology as an incidental influence, Bhattacharya articulated how travel, and its cultural re-mediation in new media formats, could accrue new meanings. These arose from the ability to document spontaneity and improvisation, the "natural spirit and life of folk song and music" (2018, 17). These comments, written in the liner notes to *Music on the Desert Road*, may even have been an implicit dialogue with Maillart's own struggle, articulated in *The Cruel Way*, to justify travelogues as meaningful cultural forms: "what is the good of sending people around the world? I have done it: it doesn't help. It only kills time", she expired. "You return just as unsatisfied as when you left. Something more has to be done" (1947/2021, 226). Perhaps this "something more" emerged in the post-war period when new technologies converged with shifting cultural discourses and heritage urgencies. These combined to render travelogues as meaningful but also pleasurable, as new taste communities were cultivated through the consumption of traditional music recorded "on the road".

In the 1950s, Bhattacharya initially developed the production of audio travelogues through radio commissions. In 1954 he underwent his first field recording trip, spending six months in India and (what was then) East Pakistan. He had been commissioned to produce six "Letters from India" to be broadcast on the BBC's General Overseas Service's (GOS) "Commonwealth Club". While in India, he was commissioned by the GOS to record a further six programmes about Folk Music in East Pakistan (Withers 2023). Armed with a cumbersome tape recorder that frequently arose the suspicions of customs officers, his guiding intention was to record as much material as possible for future LP releases with London's Argo Record Company, known colloquially within the industry as the Third Programme record label, because they often released LPs of radio programmes. In 1956, Argo released *Music From India – Songs from Bombay*, and Bhattacharya collaborated with several other record labels to release LPs between 1958 and 1959: The Record Society (UK), Contrepoint and Boîte à Musique (France), Period, Angel and Westminster WF (US).¹⁶

In the 1950s, radio acted as the first filter through which Bhattacharya selected, organised and narrated the materials he collected. These programmes were travelogues, but

with an important difference. Intended as introductions to traditional music and cultures within a country or region, they were also invitations to cultivate new tastes and make social and aesthetic judgements about the value of such traditions, vis-a-vis an emergent heritage discourse, culturally buffeted by resurgent folk revivalism. Here, too, it is possible to infer echoes of Maillart, as expressed in *The Cruel Way*. Her concern for the weakening of traditional cultures through exposure to western materialism, for instance, reverberates through Bhattacharya's script for the "Folk Dance of East Pakistan" (1954b): "The tradition of the industrial civilisation has not developed enough to offer any substitute for what it destroys. Can you ever imagine life connected with factory producing a dance as natural and powerful as this?" The threat to nomadic life due to the growth of modern states and Maillart's worry for the wasting of "wonderful human material" (1947/2021, 238) in the face of progress, are shared by Bhattacharya, and informed his documentary practices. This ethos, or humanistic energy, offered a direction of travel that Bhattacharya followed, and adapted in new political, cultural, and technological conditions.

Bhattacharya's radio work of the 1950s was generically hybrid, fusing documentary travelogue with proto-heritage discourses. LP records, however, as standalone presentations of a journey intended for repeated consumption, offered new opportunities to mutate and enhance the travelogue genre. *Music on the Desert Road* – itself carrying the subtitle "sound travelogue" – can arguably be read more straightforwardly as a travelogue, albeit written in sound. The curation of the journey is not, of course, without authorial intention. Selections have been made deliberately to follow the journey in the sequence intended by Bhattacharya. Side one travels from Turkey to Iran, flipping the disc the journey from Iran to India unfolds. Entering the soundscape, the car engine roars, picking up the listener as they travel through arid landscapes, populated by spontaneous human encounters. The rhythms of Bedouin coffee-grinding in Jordan make music from everyday life; in Iran, the galloping train emulated by drum and whistle embodies the collapse of "tradition" and "progress". At the journey's end, revolutions of car and record arrive at a Bengali Kali Temple, vibrating with Temple Bells and Drums.

Numerous para-texts – liner notes, photographs, maps, technical description of locations and performances – accompany the recording. These materials also encourage readings of Bhattacharya's LPs as travelogues. The audio independently constructs raw proximity with the time and place of recording; an indexical conjuring that, in part, strips back the mediation of written travelogues to enact an emanating, expressive, inter-cultural encounter. *Music on the Desert Road*, as a sound travelogue, offers an immediacy and directness that textual and audiovisual mediums can never achieve. Their presentation as travel, and as music, invite independent critical judgement, perhaps even a fuller realisation of Bouvier's take on Maillart's photographs. It would be naïve to suggest that the making of such recordings were completely "innocent", and without power imbalances. These were uneven economic encounters, from which Bhattacharya claimed authorship as producer, held copyright, and profited.¹⁷ The existence of *Music on the Desert Road* as a cultural artefact, however, demonstrates that new media formats introduced in the post-war period were mediums for the conveyance of travel, despite the lack of research to date that has been conducted in this area (see Korte and Sennefelder 2022). LP records generated new kinds of mediated inter-cultural encounters and offered different sensory and aesthetic frameworks to understand them; their pleasurable consumption was also championed by producers and critics.

Packaging the post-war travelogue

The most compelling reason for reading Bhattacharya's LP records of the 1950s and 60s as travelogues is their packaging and para-texts. In general, there is a fascinating material instability between the packaging of books and LP records in the post-war period. The origins of the record sleeve and book jacket date back to the late nineteenth century; with the introduction of the LP record in the 1950s, external packaging became ever more important as a point of differentiation and to support consumer self-discovery within shops (Weidemann 1969, vii–viii). Along with cover artwork, some records featured covers that could be opened, and page leaves that could be turned, just like a book. This generous packaging, which gave ample space to text, photographs, and maps, was likely abandoned in favour of the more standard paper insert that feature in LP packaging today. Several Bhattacharya records were presented in this way. One example is *Religious Music from the Holy Land* (1968), released by the Swedish record label Expo Norr, which is essentially a hard back book with 3 LPs inserted at the back. The book includes a copyright and contents page, an extensive introduction, maps, and photographs. While presented in a different register to the travel narratives of Maillart, these para-texts drew on the paraphernalia of travel narratives to frame sound-based mediations grounded in travel and the veneration of cultural tradition.

Maps are an important element within these para-texts. As James R. Akerman argues, within written travel narratives, maps and texts are placed in a relationship of juxtaposition and correlation; they are “meant to be read together in close proximity to each other” (2020, 333). *Music on the Desert Road* features a route-enhanced map, designed to record a course of travel over large geographic contexts, a form which originated in the late eighteenth century as synopses of European voyages of discovery (Akerman 2020, 339). This map presents the route from London to Calcutta as an angular zigzag through continents that bisects a cartographic snapshot of the world, framed by the vast expanse of Russia above, and Africa, below. Clearly intended to augment the sound journey presented on the record, the map offers a path that the listener may wish to trace to orient themselves as musical expressions change, provoking the question: where am I?

Bhattacharya's “Living Tradition” series, produced in collaboration with London's Argo Record Company (1967–74), also featured maps on the back of the record sleeve. Two maps, prominently occupy the right-hand side of the back cover sleeve. The top map depicted the world, with the area featured on the record identified by shading or marks. The map below provides a close-up of the country or regions, affording the listener cartographic tools through which the sounds on the record can be contextualised, locally and globally. The colour maps (which only feature on some of the records) include a triangular beam that draws down the page, breaking open the map of the world, magnifying the relevant area. These maps locate and educate, enabling the listener to picture and hear where in the world the music they are listening to emerges from. A map that anticipates an answer to the question: where is this? Bhattacharya's “Living Traditions” reified new national expressions and their territorial imaginaries. At the same time, these LP publications reconfigured territorial access and familiarity through the market flows of the post-war culture industries. Such LPs constitute a layer of what Ben Piekut has termed the “vernacular avant-garde” of post-war music cultures, whereby field recordings sit on an equivalent plane with other experimental and popular genres, and become available for “promiscuous” consumption (2018, 439–440).

On the LPs, photographs feature prominently alongside liner notes, technical descriptions of songs and maps. Additional to his work as a translator, field recordist, film and radio producer, Bhattacharya was a prolific photographer. His archives at the BnF contain over 3500 photographic images, taken between 1969 and 1997.¹⁸ These images were used, first and foremost, as striking cover art for records, whose 12.375 by 12.375 in. cover provided the ideal canvas to present a full-colour snapshot of the traditional cultures featured inside. Photographs were also used to illustrate the practices he presented in sound, and these tended to depict sensitive depictions of human performance. As the sleeve for *Music from the Himalayas* (1967) is “opened”, for instance, there is a wide horizontal photograph of the Indian folk dance, Khery kā nāch. Men and women dance in a circle, their hands linked together in a weave, as elbows point to the floor. We see the back of the women’s white headdresses in the foreground, and the men look askance from the camera, at the floor or each other in concentration, on the opposite side of the circle. The photograph manages to capture the precise moment when the dance moves to the right; the feet of the women stepping in unison. Other photos on this album present similar portraits of musicians and dancers, often set at an angle, refusing the direct gaze at the camera, giving equal prominence to instrument and performer. Such images, accompanied by simple descriptions, function in a similar way to the maps that juxtapose the sound recording: travel aids that enable listeners to identify and, in some way, understand what they are hearing. Bhattacharya’s photographic practice, like Maillart’s, was an important medium through which he captured material in the field. Like Maillart’s, these images were not simply aide-mémoires, but an element through which he polygraphically re-presented his journeys.

Associations, influence, inference

I was asking myself why [gypsies] always attract me – even in Turkestan, where it cannot be said that they evoke far away countries. Is it that they are a symbol of what I am trying to be? – unencumbered by possessions, everywhere at home, intensely alive, without masters, unlimited by nationality. (Maillart 1947/2021, 23)

[Their] way of travelling reflect[s] the spirit of improvisation rather than of calculation. They move, as if for the sake of moving, regardless of the consequences. (Bhattacharya 1965, 9)

Maillart and Bhattacharya were kindred spirits. Their kinship was cultivated through acts of facilitation, tentative collaboration, and practical inspiration. Their relationship endured for five decades. In a new year note written in 1992, Bhattacharya signed off, emphatically: “I love you, Deben”. Bhattacharya and Maillart were idiosyncratic cultural producers who embraced the thrill, discomfort and exhaustion of travel, of crossing borders and encountering worlds beyond their immediate context and knowledge. As the above quotes indicate, both were seduced by the idea of gypsy life, the nomadic ability to adapt to circumstances, to live in the moment, “intensely alive”, unanswerable to state-imposed authority. They were both preoccupied with freedom, of movement, and of expression. In their own lifetimes such pursuits were, of course, political, but such sentiments were not easily absorbed by the overarching ideological frames of the twentieth century. As such, they have been hard to place in the historical record, as makers of cultural history. Yet studying the multivalent, polygraphic cultural practice of Maillart and

Bhattacharya, that were often pursued outside of legitimising institutional affiliations, and directed within mediated, market flows, can help recover alternative histories of how new genres, taste communities and fields of cultural production emerged.

Within the third decade of the twenty-first century, these histories are also a reminder of how internationalism, the desire for peace and inter-cultural connection intensely motivated acts of cultural production. Such acts are, now, surely political, and therefore invite re-interpretation, so they may be utilised as a cultural resource, a memory of alternative worldly (if imperfect) orientations. This article has also argued that it is important to recognise Maillart's cultural influence, traced through Bhattacharya's activities. These followed in her footsteps while modifying the journey's contours, as all acts of transmission ultimately do (Debray 2000). It has also demonstrated that further research on Bhattacharya's legacy and career is pressing – a fuller portrait of his life and work needs to be produced that can offer a detailed account of his varied practices and publishing activities within the international creative industries of the post-war period.¹⁹ More broadly, this article has demonstrated that engaging with the cultural legacies of Maillart and Bhattacharya reveal the evolving mediums in which travel writing was produced in the second half of the twentieth century and how generic conventions were obscured as they mingled with emerging discourses and practices, from field recording to heritage preservation. By foregrounding Maillart and Bhattacharya's personal and professional relationship in this article, I have told a story of how freelance cultural producers, reliant on their resourcefulness and polygraphy, support each other to travel, work and communicate their journeys, across territories and mediums.

Notes

1. In December 1968, Bhattacharya sold the Scandinavian rights for "school and school radio & television use of the Deben Bhattacharya collection of folk music" to Rikskonserter ("Concerts Sweden"). This consisted of 700 recorded tapes, 500 colour slides, 2000 black and white negatives from Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Rumania, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Tibet, Turkey and Yugoslavia. See "Agreement between Rikskonserter and Deben Bhattacharya", 2 December 1968, Riksarkivet i Stockholm/Taby, SE/RA/740055/02/F 8 c/2.
2. A comprehensive assessment of his cultural legacy, that documents all published works and collaborations is yet to be completed. This article contributes to a growing conversation appraising Bhattacharya's work and career. See the work of scholars and artists including Robert Millis, Moushumi Bhowmik, Sushrita Acharjee, Arindam Sen, Paul Purgas and Stéphane Jourdain, whose 2002 film *Music According to Deben Bhattacharya*, offers a sensitive portrayal of Bhattacharya's return to Bangladesh in 2001, shortly before he died. See also the BBC Radio 3 documentary, *Recording on the Nomads' Trail*, aired 12 December 2023: BBC Radio 3 – Sunday Feature, *Recording on the Nomads' Trail*.
3. See Guide to Edith Sitwell Letter and Telegram to Ella Maillart 1949 December 17 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001t2jj>)
4. Lannoy was a painter, photographer, author and publisher. He was the author of *India: People and Places* (Thames and Hudson, 1955) and *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1974), among other publications.
5. I have written, for instance, about the numerous works dedicated to the career of Alan Lomax, and other figures such as A.L. Lloyd, who both worked at the BBC in the 1950s and 60s, producing programmes on international folk music traditions (Withers 2023).
6. A copy of the film is deposited at the Cinémathèque Suisse, Lausanne.

7. See, for example, a letter from Maillart to Shri K.H.K. Menon, Ministry of Finances, Secretariat, New Delhi, with a list of questions about travel routes and religious sites in the Himalayas, as part of her plan to make a film about Hindu religious experiences in India, targeted at European audiences. BdG, Ms. Fr 7155/4.
8. This footage forms a core part of the narrative in *Double Journey*, a 2015 film by Mariann Lewinsky and Antonio Bigini.
9. This was a new direction for the Argo Record Company, that was producing multi-media educational materials such as *Voices*, in partnership with Penguin Education.
10. For a list of films accessible in the BnF, visit <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc103366g>
11. Birgit Lundin, who was Bhattacharya's partner in the 1960s–70s, was the camerawoman for these early films. Lundin supported Bhattacharya's work in multiple ways. She was a translator (into Swedish for his programmes on Radio Sveriges, but as she was fluent in French and German, she used these language skills to help with travel and work within Europe). Lundin also managed concerts Bhattacharya produced with Rikskonserter in the early 1970s. Crucially, since Bhattacharya did not have a driver's licence, she was the driver on many of the overland travel expeditions during the 1960s. Further research on Lundin's contributions to Bhattacharya's work is currently in development.
12. See, for example, the sitar performance that closes *Ragas* (1969), or *Instruments and Music* (1983), which features traditional music ensembles working in Chinese factories.
13. See for example the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (unesco.org)
14. These are the notes from the 1958 LP *Music on the Desert Road*, reproduced in *Paris to Calcutta*.
15. See, for example, Music On The Desert Road – Zappa Wiki Jawaka (https://wiki.killuglyradio.com/wiki/Music_On_The_Desert_Road).
16. Taken from to date the most extensive available discography of Bhattacharya's work: Deben Bhattacharya – vinyl discography | Folkcatalogue's Blog (<https://folkcatalogue.wordpress.com/2010/02/11/deben-bhattacharya/>).
17. See, for example, Moushumi Bhowmik's important commentary in *Recording on the Nomads' Trail*.
18. See <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc103366g/ca19924807>.
19. As an additional point, Maillart's will does not permit an authorised biography. Thank you to the anonymous peer reviewer for this comment.

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