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## The geographies of multiculturalism: Britishness, normalisation and the spaces of the Tate Gallery

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**THE GEOGRAPHIES OF MULTICULTURALISM:**  
**BRITISHNESS, NORMALISATION AND THE SPACES OF**  
**THE TATE GALLERY**

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Geography Discipline

Submitted: 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2002

AUTHOR NO. R5350910  
DATE OF SUBMISSION: 10 JANUARY 2002  
DATE OF AWARD: 15 AUGUST 2002

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the geographies of multiculturalism and their relationship to notions of Britishness through the example of the Tate Gallery. The evaluation of multiculturalism here reflects on the way it has been subject to various contentions of cultural politics and how it has operated through processes of normalisation.

Central to my consideration of the politics of multiculturalism and the argument I wish to make about its normalisation, is an emphasis on the importance of critically evaluating the way cultures are understood. This critical engagement places particular importance on the tracing of multicultural histories and the ways in which Britishness has often been constructed in order to 'cover over' or 'hide' its multicultural constitution. In several ways, I also take issue with the broad argument that multiculturalism has tended to perpetuate constructions of 'the other' which homogenise and reify, and in doing so I examine the role of power within the normalisation process.

The Tate Gallery has been used in order to articulate these issues in both an historical and contemporary context, drawing on constructions of Britishness from different periods, such as the time of the gallery's original inception in the late nineteenth century, the period between the world wars and the recent articulations of Britishness through the political rhetoric of New Labour.

As well as tracing multiple periods in time, another central issue has been to demonstrate the ways Britishness is constituted by multiple spaces. In this sense I have used the concept of networks of time-space and alluded to notions of movement, connection and circulation in articulating the dynamic nature of temporal and spatial relations. The Tate Galleries in London, Liverpool and St Ives have provided an intriguing focus of analysis in this sense, enabling me to demonstrate the strengths of thinking about the relations between the spaces of the Tate Gallery



(Frontispiece – Yinka Shonibare dresses Britannia, 2001, from *The Guardian*, 30/10/01)

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Yinka Shonibare (1998)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go first of all to my supervisors: John Allen and Steve Pile, for their encouragement, advice, inspiration and wisdom.

I am also especially grateful to the Open University for their financial and administrative support and to Phil Crang for getting me here in the first place

The Geography Discipline at the Open University as a whole has been an inspirational and supportive environment during the course of this thesis and I would especially like to thank Doreen Massey, Dave Featherstone and Jessica Jacobs.

I am also grateful to all those beyond the Geography Discipline who have made my research a little easier through offering me contacts, opportunities and advice, all of which have helped to strengthened my work. In particular I would like to thank Gordon Fyfe, Kevin Hetherington, David Matless, David Crouch, Kath Woodward, Emma Barker, Susan Mains and Fiona Candlin.

At the Tate Gallery, I would like to thank Sandy Nairne, Martin Myrone, Toby Jackson, Michael Tooby, Judith Nesbitt, Lorna Healy and Lewis Biggs for their valuable time and Robert Hewison for time, tea and an inspirational morning in his study. Researching the Tate Gallery has also been helped greatly by the support of Alan Crookham and the staff of the Tate Gallery Archive, as well as the staff of the Tate Gallery Library and the Turner Study Room. Thanks also to the staff of the St Ives Public Library Archive for their assistance and tea.

Personal, motivational, financial and practical support has been generously provided by Marion and Jeremy Thorpe, Emily, Penny, Richard, Cheryl, Darren, Claire, Simon, Anna, Reuben, Rob, Jo, Ian, Emma, Dave, Liz, Rick, Jessica, Sarah, Divya, Boo and Gervase.

Special thanks must also go to David Woodhead, Julia Cream, Vron Ware, Noel Campbell and John Williams for telling me I could do it.

Finally I want to express my deepest gratitude to my family; to Fran and Nick and to my parents for their love, support and belief.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Ice-cream Effect*

On 18<sup>th</sup> May 2000, I travelled to Tate Britain in order to visit the gallery archive and interview Sandy Nairne, the Tate's Director of National Programmes. Having completed these tasks in the buildings to the rear of the gallery site at Millbank, I walked round to the front of the gallery and to the main entrance in order to make use of the recently established inter-gallery bus service. This service had been set up by the Tate Gallery in order to take visitors from Tate Britain to their new gallery, Tate Modern, which had opened six days earlier on 12<sup>th</sup> May. It was a particularly hot day and I decided to leave the small bus queue of around half a dozen and buy a drink from the ice-cream van which is almost permanently situated on the pitch in front of the main gallery entrance. During my brief conversation with the ice-cream seller he commented on the good weather to which I replied 'yes, I expect you'll be doing a good trade today'. His response to my observation was not as enthusiastically optimistic as I had anticipated. 'Oh its gone dead, everyone goes to the new Tate now', he replied somewhat forlornly. 'Oh well, they'll probably come back', I said attempting, I suspect rather unconvincingly, to provide a hint of optimism. 'Maybe...maybe', he added, with a look of resignation.

This brief exchange with a man who sells ice-creams and drinks outside Tate Britain may seem insignificant in the context of an analysis of multiculturalism, Britishness and the Tate Gallery, but there is a sense in which his observations and the concern he fostered for the future of his trade offer an insight into the relationship between these issues and the role of the Tate Gallery in the broad social, cultural and economic context of contemporary Britain.

For me, the most apparent issue illustrated by the ice-cream seller was that his predicament vindicated a concern which had been expressed by the Tate Gallery in terms of the effect of Tate Modern's opening on visitor numbers at Tate Britain. This was a prominent issue raised in 1994 when the gallery began discussion groups to consider the division of the gallery into two London sites. The concern, in basic terms, was that Tate Modern would provide a more 'glamorous' spectacle than Tate Britain which would have to be carefully marketed if it was to avoid being seen as a comparatively dowdy, old fashioned and, as a result, less popular gallery<sup>1</sup>. The ice-cream seller's fears seemed to be confirmed the following month when *The Guardian* ran an article describing the heavy downturn in visitor numbers at 'poor old Tate Britain' since the opening of the new gallery on Bankside (Jones, 2000a).

So, in one sense, the ice-cream seller's gloom can be seen as a barometer of falling visitor numbers at Tate Britain and, by implication, the growing popularity of Tate Modern, but what I did not, and perhaps should have asked of the ice-cream seller is why he thought this change in popularity was occurring. My somewhat vain attempt to suggest that visitors would return to Tate Britain was based on the implied assumption that the novelty of the new Tate Modern would inevitably provoke initial interest but that this would, to some extent, not be sustained. What I think was also implied in this exchange, however, was that we both suspected that this was not an ephemeral interest in the new gallery but indicative of a more substantive shift in cultural consumption; and the reasons why this shift had occurred and, I think we both suspected, would continue to occur, was due to more than mere novelty.

Tate Modern was described in *The Times* as being 'built on a wave of Labour Party enthusiasm for "cool Britannia"' (Morrison, 2000, p7) aligning Tate Modern's opening with the political and cultural aspirations of Blairite New Labour<sup>2</sup>. Since the beginning of the first term of the new Labour government and the cultural manifesto provided by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in his book, *Creative Britain* (Smith, 1998), there had

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<sup>1</sup> See interview extracts with Robert Hewison in Chapter 2 for elaboration of this point.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 for an elaboration of this point.

been a political shift in the way the notion of Britishness was to be associated with patterns of cultural consumption and production. The previous Conservative government had, when concerned with such issues at all, sought to couch Britishness in the context of 'heritage' and 'history'. However, for the new government this would be replaced with the language of 'culture' and the evocation of a contemporary, 'vibrant' Britishness which reflected ethnic diversity and anti-elitism (see for example Leonard, 2000; Wollen, 1998). Tate Modern was seen as an icon of this shift in cultural sensibilities, even being described as 'the birth of a revolution in Britain's cultural life' (Marr, 2000a) and while Bankside provided the space for this revolution to unfold it seemed that those concerned with the plight of Tate Britain, including the ice-cream seller, feared that Millbank would become a repository for the 'heritage' based notion of Britishness that this cosmopolitan revolution would leave in its wake.

What, arguably, was embodied in the concerns of the ice-cream seller, therefore, was a realisation that Tate Modern offered a large-scale, high-profile opportunity to consume an emergent relationship between art and Britishness which had gained enthusiastic support from the government, the press and, as has become clear, the visiting public more broadly. What I also want to go on to argue is that this event reveals something of a much broader issue relating to the way that the Tate Gallery, as an institution, has become highly significant as a site for constructing and articulating discourses of multiculturalism and Britishness and, as a result, has become implicated within a set of intricate and far-reaching spatial relations.

### *The Spaces of the Tate Gallery*

Since the opening of the Tate Gallery at Millbank in 1897, it has sought to represent ways of articulating Britishness through the display of art. A significant issue which arose from these early years of the institution was that by establishing a remit as a gallery of British art, contentions were opened up as to what actually constituted 'British art' (see for example

Fyfe, 1996). The openness of interpretation around this concept became integral to discrepancies over the gallery's early purchases through the funds provided by The Chantrey Bequest, the details of which I will elaborate on in Chapter 3. Here, however, I merely wish to establish the contentions this threw up in the form of having to establish whether 'British art' incorporated artists born in Britain, but who produced work abroad, and artists born abroad, but who produced work in Britain. In geographical terms, what this concern of the Tate's early decision makers illustrates nicely is that the concept of British art has always had a problematic relationship with the spatial definition of the nation state.

As I will go on to consider throughout this analysis, such narratives of British art involve various other nation states, such as Italy through the significance of 'The Grand Tour' of the eighteenth century or France through the perceived influences of Turner on nineteenth-century French Impressionism. What I will examine more closely, however, is the relationship between the concept of British art and the nation states which were previously claimed as British colonies. It is the ambiguity of the relationship between these nation states, and their place within the concept of *Britishness*, which has evolved into the fundamental concern as to how the Tate tells the contemporary stories of 'British art' in the context of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century multiculturalism.

However, the spaces of the Tate Gallery which I want to engage with are not just about the relationships between a series of nation states. What I want to examine is the way the spaces of the Tate Gallery can be traced on various levels and in different ways. In doing so, and by way of justifying this undertaking, I will demonstrate how the spatial 'stories' which the Tate is implicated in are significant, both in understanding how the Tate has created and defined spaces and, in turn, how the Tate has been created and defined *in relation to other spaces*. The significance of this issue is not solely in what it demonstrates about the Tate Gallery, but what it demonstrates about the formation of national identities, the interpretation

of multiculturalism and the way power operates in defining these concepts through, what I will refer to as, processes of normalisation<sup>3</sup>.

The various levels on which the spatial relations of the Tate Gallery are traceable can be defined, somewhat crudely, in terms of its connecting geographies through the local, the national and the international.

In 'local' terms, as I have illustrated in the previous section, it is possible to think about the Tate in terms of, for example, its London connections by tracing the ways Tate Britain and Tate Modern have shaped and defined each other.

Nationally, the Tate provides a particularly useful framework for analysis in that it has galleries established in three locations which, when viewed on a map of Britain, represent three physical points of an almost equilateral triangle which connect the south-east, the south-west and the north-west in the form of its two London galleries, Tate St Ives and Tate Liverpool. A significant issue which should be raised at this point, is that these galleries are all in England yet I will be addressing the issue of national identities predominantly in the context of Britishness. The reason for this is that in this thesis I wish to reflect on the discourses of national identity which are central to both the Tate and the political rhetoric of the Blairite Labour government. As I will explain in Appendix 1, where I also outline my research practices, these contemporary discourses are predominantly constructed around notions of Britishness rather than Englishness. What I want to think about at this stage is that through this physical spatial structure, the Tate Gallery connects three disparate locales within its institutional arrangement and a key issue of this arrangement is the way power operates within it. This will be addressed through examining the relationship between 'the regional' and 'the metropolitan'. In turn, this will demonstrate the way in which the galleries and the locales more broadly associated with them are shaped and defined *in relation to each other*.

The Tate's three gallery sites are also particularly productive in tracing the spaces of

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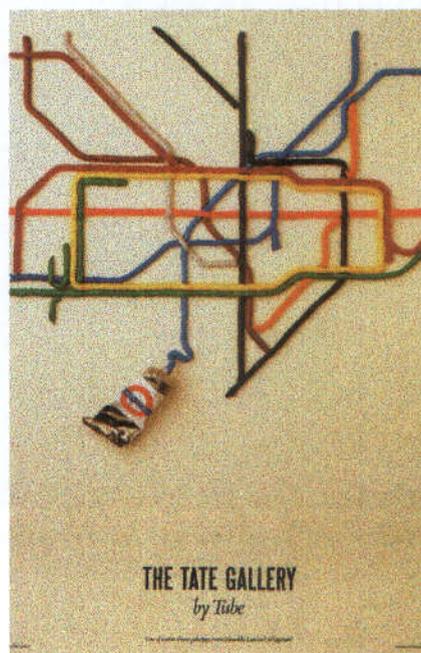
<sup>3</sup> The issue of multicultural normalisation will be foregrounded throughout this analysis and then examined more specifically in Chapter 7.

the Tate Gallery in international terms. For both Tate St Ives and Tate Liverpool, their position in relation to the Atlantic ocean is particularly significant for not only does the Atlantic provide the principle focus for the way I will be articulating spatial relations (through emphasising the movements through space which transcend the boundaries of the nation state) but it is also significant in showing the form of these relations. In the case of Tate St Ives, I will examine the way connections across the Atlantic and the 'flow' of people and cultures through this space can be seen as actively *constituting* the histories of St Ives as an 'art colony'. Similarly, in the case of Tate Liverpool, I will examine how the spatial connections originally formed by the Atlantic slave trade have continued to define Liverpool as a city and the way Tate Liverpool confronts the historical legacies of slavery as well as the contemporary spatial formations it has established. So, in the context of these far reaching international spatial connections, the Tate galleries in St Ives and Liverpool will be seen as situated within constitutive relations that involve Africa, the Caribbean and North America. What I will continue to emphasise, however, is that as well as these various places being relevant as 'endpoints' of journeys, the journeys themselves and the spaces 'in-between' are also important to this analysis; that is to say, what goes on in the movements and connections between places defines them as much as what goes on within (for example, St Ives).

Whilst the London galleries will also be considered in terms of international connections, the Tate's presence in London will also be considered in terms of its role in the various spatial relations; that is to say, 'the local', 'the national' and 'the international', as they co-exist. This is a key point in relation to all of the gallery sites, but the London sites, and particularly Millbank as the site of the original gallery, are consistently present in the formation of what I will be describing as spatial 'networks'. The use of this concept (which I will elaborate on later) is that it facilitates an understanding of how these various levels of spatial relation are 'woven' together. To put the point simply, what I will be arguing is that 'the local', 'the national' and 'the international' are all inter-connected in the spaces of the Tate Gallery. So, for example, in understanding the constitutive spaces of Tate Liverpool we

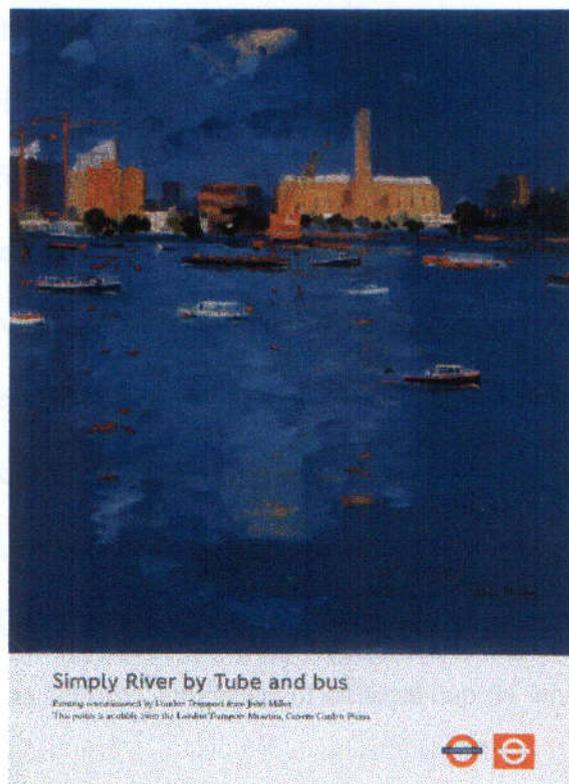
not only have to consider the spatial significance of the Atlantic, but also how it simultaneously represents *distant* spaces and the *local* spaces of the city, the role of the Tate at Millbank as a *metropolitan* 'centre' in relation to the *regional* Tate Liverpool and the importance of governmental negotiations at *local* and *national* levels in political debates over building the gallery in Liverpool. Each of these spaces is networked in such a way that they can be 'read' as a collective formation.

I want to illustrate thinking about the spaces of the Tate Gallery at this point by briefly looking at the way the Tate has become marketed in recent years and, in doing so, demonstrate the way that the Tate has come to occupy and define a network of spaces. In the most immediate sense, the Tate has, since the early growth of the London transport system, been marketed via posters at tube stations. This strategy has had two primary purposes; to attract visitors and to direct them to the gallery. This form of advertising can be seen in the example of the poster 'The Tate Gallery by Tube' used in 1987 (see figure 1.1). In this basic form of communicating the presence of the gallery, the Tate has 'occupied' the spaces of London's tube stations. However, more recently, the Tate can be seen to have extended its reach into the spaces beyond the gallery walls in more intricate and subtle ways.



(Figure 1.1 – The Tate Gallery by Tube, London Underground)

The poster entitled 'Simply River' appeared, again in London's tube stations, during 2000 and 2001 (see figure 1.2). What I want to emphasise about this poster, in comparison to 'The Tate Gallery by Tube' and indeed all previous Tate advertising posters, is that it is not in fact a Tate poster at all! 'Simply River' is part of a long running poster campaign used jointly by London Underground and London Transport to advertise London's transport service and the variety of London's spaces that the service can 'open up' to its users. From my perspective, this poster seeks, as does the series in general, to evoke the 'spatial imagination' of those who see the poster. The space which is evoked by the oil painting reproduced in the poster is presented as a kind of 'snapshot' of a London scene, in this case the River Thames. The focal point of the image is Tate Modern, rendered somewhat lighter in colour than it actually is, in order to accentuate its beacon like presence against the dark blue water and sky which dominate the image. What is presented here is Tate Modern as an icon of the London landscape. This is not an image used to 'sell' the Tate to us; rather it is an image used to 'sell' London.



(Figure 1.2 – Simply River, London Transport)

This point takes us back to the issue of Tate Modern as being at the forefront of Marr's 'cultural revolution' and valorised within Labour party rhetoric. This is a Tate Gallery which is, to put it crudely, more than the sum of its parts. In spatial terms it is 'going out into the world' and having 'effects'; it is occupying spaces 'beyond the Tate', carrying meanings which relate not only to the Tate but to the way London and, particularly in relation to the market for overseas tourists, Britain is being constructed as a space of new and innovative forms of cultural consumption.

This notion of the Tate having been transformed into an icon of cultural capital has also seen the Tate enter the private space of the home in the form of the DIY chain B&Q's Tate paint range (see figure 1.3), which allows you to 'treat your home as your personal canvas'<sup>4</sup>. The paint range is divided into four 'series' of colours which 'look for inspiration to'<sup>5</sup> each of the four Tate Galleries and in this sense they draw not only on the 'Tate as icon' but seek to communicate the separate spaces of the gallery through the medium of colours. It is also possible to integrate the Tate into the literal spatial network of the postal system by sending greetings cards from the 'Tate Collection' published and distributed by Camden Graphics. These cards, which are available nation-wide, use reproduced images from the gallery's collection allowing them into the home, perhaps to stand on a mantelpiece painted in 'Emma', 'Stuart' or 'Suffolk' from the Tate Britain paint range.

The point I am seeking to address in using these examples is that the Tate Gallery has, in recent years, certainly within the first term of the New Labour government, evolved in the way it reaches beyond the space of its galleries. Although these examples are significant in that they represent 'bits' of the Tate spreading out into the world, this fact, in itself, is not particularly new, after all, reproduction posters available in the gallery shop have made this possible for years. What I want to identify as significant, in terms of the way this process has evolved, is that the Tate has become a signifier of cultural capital which is able to function

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<sup>4</sup> This quote is taken from the 'swatch' brochure for the 'Tate series 2' range of paints.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

without needing to be directly contextualised in terms of the gallery spaces. The importance of this point for my argument is that this change has allowed the Tate Gallery to become spatially diffuse and as a result able to use power in shaping and defining space. However, what I will also be examining is the way that the Tate has, in less obvious ways, been doing this throughout its history.



(Figure 1.3 – Tate colour series 2, B&Q)

### *The Tate Gallery and the Geographies of Multiculturalism*

The various ways in which the Tate Gallery has shaped and defined space as well as having been constituted in relation to other spaces will provide a framework for looking at the way the theories of multiculturalism have operated within these processes. At the outset, and as a way of foregrounding my arguments, I want to assert the simple claim that multiculturalism matters.

The term multiculturalism first entered the social and cultural politics of Britain in the 1980s. The incorporation of multiculturalism into these areas can be traced to the growing disquiet which had surrounded the inclusion of non-white ethnic groups in British society

since the Second World War. The period from the 1940s to the 1970s saw significant levels of inward migration of such groups, either through the need to address a post-war labour shortage through encouraging Caribbean workers to Britain, the African-Asian diaspora created by Idi Amin's strategy of expulsion in Uganda or the broader issues associated with Britain's declining empire during this period. The political debates ignited by Enoch Powell, and later by Norman Tebbit, saw multiculturalism firmly placed on the political agenda and represent a period of unfolding unease in confronting the issues posed by a settled second and third generation of these groups leading up to the debates over multicultural education in Britain in the 1980s. It is in this period of post-war Britain that the contemporary histories of multiculturalism are situated (see for example Rattansi, 1992; Parekh, 2000a; Hesse, 2000a).

However, from the 1990s onwards the debates around multiculturalism changed significantly. In brief, this was a result of certain inadequacies associated with the use of the term multiculturalism. As a result, the term became unpopular and was seen as inseparable from the baggage of clumsy theorising of culture and ethnicity. In broad terms, this theoretical clumsiness related to multiculturalism's connection with homogenous cultural identities which were tightly defined by particular material signifiers of, for example, dress, custom and moral codes. It became apparent that multiculturalism was not being evaluated in particularly multicultural ways (Hesse, 2000a).

My argument is that this predicament resulted in the need for multiculturalism to be re-addressed both in light of these theoretical problems and their political implications. What remains is the need to examine more productive ways of how culture operates in relation to identity and how the juxtaposition of multiple cultures, ethnicities and cultures in British society should remain central to political debates. The realisation of this was conveyed perhaps most significantly in the events surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and has continued to surface through issues such as the effect of political devolution on national identities and the treatment of asylum seekers in Britain. It is issues such as these

which highlight the urgency for critically re-examining multiculturalism and establishing more productive ways of thinking about being multicultural.

In arguing that the politics of multiculturalism have been critically neglected, particularly throughout the 1990s, I also want to argue that this period has also seen the rise of multiculturalism's presence in less overt ways. Central to the argument I will make, is thinking critically about the way non-white ethnic groups have become represented in relation to art and its display at the Tate Gallery. What I will show in this thesis is the way that such groups, rather than being made less 'visible' through the decline in debating multiculturalism, have become, what Kobena Mercer has termed, 'hyper-visible' (Mercer, 1999). Though my concern is with demonstrating this through art, Mercer points towards a broad range of media contexts through which this can be identified. The crucial point about this hyper-visibility is that it has situated the ethnic 'other' as visible only within certain contexts, allowing only selective narratives to be read into their visibility. This can be characterised as being largely dependent on constructions of 'the other' as passive, apolitical and assimilated into constructions of 'mainstream' cultural identity. I will extend this premise and the work of Mercer by thinking about two inter-related areas involving a geographical take on this issue.

In geographical terms, as a result of this selective ordering or, as I will refer to it, normalisation of 'the other', such discourses also serve to construct the visibility of 'the other' in particular times and spaces. This can, in temporal terms for example, be characterised in terms of the construction of ethnic diversity as present in Britain only during the post-war period I have discussed above. As I will demonstrate, by constructing multiculturalism as a post-war issue not only has Britain's ethnic diversity over several centuries been historically marginalised, but 'the ethnic other' has become characterised as a 'new' phenomenon, 'added to' a sense of pre-existing Britishness. This sense of 'newness' has also seen an equation made with a sense of 'coolness' in the context of a New Labour rhetoric which seeks to reinvigorate understandings of the notion of Britishness. To this end it has been suggested that it was 'the

ethnic other' who provided the 'cool' in the ephemeral New Labour phrase 'cool Britannia' (Hall, 2000a).

In spatial terms, and as a direct result of these discourses of multicultural normalisation, I will also argue that the presence of 'the ethnic other' has been constructed within particular spatial boundaries. Often, as in the convergence of the metropolitan and the cosmopolitan represented by Tate Modern, multiculturalism is framed as an inherently urban issue. However, there is also a less obvious sense in which 'the other' is constituted as more spatially peripheral. This issue will be elaborated on in particular in Chapter 5 where I will draw on the relationship between the notion of the 'primitive' artist and their association with the 'untamed' evocations of 'nature'. In both senses what is at work here are discourses which localise 'the other' and restrict ways in which they can be conceived of as spatially mobile through being understood in terms of an integral relationship to the localised landscape.

In tracing these processes of normalisation, I will draw on a range of examples and a variety of methods<sup>6</sup> which will be explored through the Tate Gallery both historically and in the contemporary context and through the various Gallery sites and the relationships between them and the wider temporal and spatial networks that constitute them. I will now outline the form that this thesis will take by describing the content of the chapters that follow.

### *Outlining the Analysis*

Chapter 2 will begin with many of the foundational issues to my argument. This will include an exploration of how multiculturalism has been constructed within debates of British social and cultural life, whilst also providing background to some of the key areas of the American debates which have influenced them. This will involve the examination of how multiculturalism, as a concept, relates to the multicultural society it seeks to address and draw attention to what seems to be 'lost' in the 'translation' between multiculturalism and the

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1.

multicultural. This will then be extended into thinking about the articulation of multiculturalism, in its more implicit late 1990s form, in the context of Blairite rhetoric and the opening of Tate Modern. What I will also introduce as a form of counter-theory to this formulation of the 'cool' 'new' multicultural Britishness is the role of J.M.W. Turner's '*Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming On*' (1840) in pointing towards a historical understanding of multicultural Britishness.

In Chapter 3, I develop my theoretical argument by way of introducing the concept of 'non-linear histories'. This will be used to demonstrate the way that writing about the histories of the Tate Gallery can be productively extended by tracing the ways that events and 'moments' in the Gallery's histories can be seen to 'depart' and 'return' and, in so doing, illustrate the spatial and temporal contingencies which open up understandings of the Tate as operating 'beyond the Tate'. This will draw, once again, on the work of Turner's painting as well as utilising two other examples: the Gallery's early purchasing fund (The Chantrey Bequest) and the flooding of the Gallery in 1928. This chapter will contextualise my particular 'take' on examining the Tate and demonstrate the benefits of using a geographical approach.

Focusing on the specific galleries within the Tate's institutional structure, Chapter 4 will look at Tate Britain. Having provided a foundational level of theory, here I go on to describe the use of 'networks' in elaborating on my non-linear approach to the Tate. This will involve the consideration of Tate Britain as a 'centre' through which Britishness is both historically and contemporarily constituted, exemplified, in this instance, by an analysis of one particular gallery in Tate Britain as it was hung for the opening display '*Representing Britain 1500-2000*'. This gallery, entitled 'Artists Abroad', will be used to address the notion that the pictures contained in this non-chronologically organised display raised certain contentions over the meaning and usefulness of bringing them together under the collective banner of 'Britishness'. As a result of this I develop my argument around a comparison between two paintings, one by Turner, the other by the contemporary artist Lubiana Himid, to show how they exemplify this tension through their ambiguous relationship to the notion of Britishness.

The discussion of the Tate's specific galleries will be continued in Chapter 5 where I will look at St Ives. This chapter also further develops the theoretical argument by considering the role of 'networks' in thinking about the Tate and examining their construction in relation to the role of 'centres' within them. This argument will be exemplified by comparing the role of the Cornish artist Alfred Wallis and his definition as a 'primitive' painter with the roles of some of the London artists who 'colonised' St Ives during the period between the wars, to see how the history of St Ives art has been constructed through the power inherent in the spatial relations forged through the Tate in London. I will also extend the spatial relations of St Ives art by considering the spatial network of the Atlantic ocean and in particular how Alfred Wallis' movements through it disrupt his construction as a 'local' figure. The latter part of this chapter will centre more specifically on St Ives in the contemporary context and particularly on the role that Tate St Ives has played in maintaining the historical networks previously discussed. This will involve the gallery's part in defining St Ives art and the relationship between the art and its locality, both in the context of Tate St Ives and the Tate Gallery in London.

Chapter 6 will assess Tate Liverpool and continue to examine the importance of 'networks' and 'centres' in understanding the construction of, what I will refer to as, the gallery's constitutive time-spaces. This will again involve the gallery's spatial relations to London, both in the context of the Tate Gallery and the governmental plans for the urban regeneration scheme which was largely responsible for the gallery's location in Liverpool. As with the previous chapters I will also draw on an historical perspective in order to emphasise the importance of the histories of the Atlantic slave trade in shaping both the city of Liverpool and Tate Liverpool. This will involve the identification of the gallery's founder, Henry Tate, as a 'nodal point' in these networks, through which Tate Liverpool was able to stabilise its place in Liverpool through constructing historical narratives which legitimated its claim to being part of Liverpool's cultural and social landscape. Here I will again use the Atlantic as a

framework for describing the movement of people and cultures through this spatial network by engaging with the concept of 'circulation'.

Before concluding, Chapter 7 draws together the points made about the way multiculturalism has become subject to processes of normalisation and how this has manifested itself in temporal and spatial terms. This will involve a return to some of the issues first raised in Chapter 2 in seeking to create a sense of 'book-ending' to my argument. Whilst returning to aspects of multicultural debate and exploring them within the context of artists and their work at the Tate I will, once again draw upon the importance of an historical understanding of multicultural Britishness. This will be pursued by looking at the work of the artist Yinka Shonibare and the way it seeks to establish meaningful continuities between the historical and the contemporary understandings of the multicultural. What this work also embodies is a sense of 'movement' and 'flow' which I develop throughout my analysis by combining the concepts of 'networks' and 'circulation'. Shonibare's work provides a fitting exemplification of my overall argument in demonstrating how the Tate Gallery provides us not only with a gallery space, but a network of spaces through which multicultural Britishness can be explored, disrupted, defined and normalised.

### MULTICULTURALISM, BRITISHNESS AND THE TATE GALLERY

Culture is another name for propaganda

(Fumaroli cited in Hewison, 1997, p309)

In his account of post-war British art and politics, *Culture and Consensus*, Robert Hewison takes up the issue of culture (or Culture)<sup>1</sup> as a concept which has become increasingly marketable within a context of ‘cultural engagement[...]as cultural consumption’ (Hewison, 1997, p310). His critique of the alignment of cultural activity with market forces and governmental leverage came at a time when such issues were gaining new currency as the General election of May 1997 saw the arrival of a ‘New Labour’ government intent on a ‘New Britain’, inscribed with the language of a ‘new’ cultural economy. For Hewison, the arts in Britain had reached crisis point under Thatcherism as a result of the sharp decline in public funding and the insistence on an elitist and revisionary ideology which talked of ‘Heritage’ rather than ‘Culture’. For ‘New Labour’, whilst ‘Culture’ would provide the language for a manifesto of dynamic, diverse and resolutely millennial Britishness, it would also arguably become even more closely sanctioned by government, giving new credence to Hewison’s observation that:

Culture is seen more and more as a commodity like any other. The market place has become the model of culture, and through the operation of the enterprise culture, the long front of culture has become a supermarket of styles.

(Hewison, 1997, p310)

In this chapter I will be examining the relationship between ‘Culture’, multiculturalism, the Blairite ‘re-branding’ of Britishness and the ways in which the issues

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between these two terms will be outlined in the following sub-section.

generated by these concerns have become articulated within the spaces of the Tate Gallery. Although I will not, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, strictly argue that 'Culture' is propaganda, what I will be asserting is that 'Culture' can be seen as performing an instrumental or divisive role within the discourses of this relationship. As a starting point for this enquiry it will be necessary to evaluate the notion of 'the cultural' in order to address some of the inherent tensions and complexities bound up in a word which has, over the last few decades, prompted its own academic legacy. As this extensive amount of attention given to the study of culture implies, what I am able to present here will not be an exhaustive review of culture. What I do aim to achieve through this brief account, however, is a sense of the importance of understanding culture in order to explore the concept of multiculturalism.

My account of multiculturalism will initially engage with some of the foundational theoretical material which has informed it. This will involve an analysis of the contemporary account of Multiculturalism formed by Charles Taylor. Taylor's work *The Politics of Recognition* provides a basis for much of the contemporary debates concerning multiculturalism and in particular debates between the importance of 'recognition' and 'redistribution'. Having explored something of the background to multicultural thinking I will then engage with some of the issues which have been raised through multiculturalism and situate these within the context of the Tate Gallery. One of the specific areas of interest here will be the critical thinking around 'whiteness' which has emerged in relation to issues of race and identity connected with multiculturalism and the consideration of these issues through the Tate's *Picturing Whiteness* conference held in February 2001.

A principle issue which I address is what will be described as multicultural time-space. I will argue that the cultural and the multicultural are constructed and understood through particular temporal-spatial frameworks and that this has led to some problematic issues of cultural politics in that their meaning has become constrained or 'fixed' within these temporal-spatial contexts. These concerns resonate closely with the Blairite

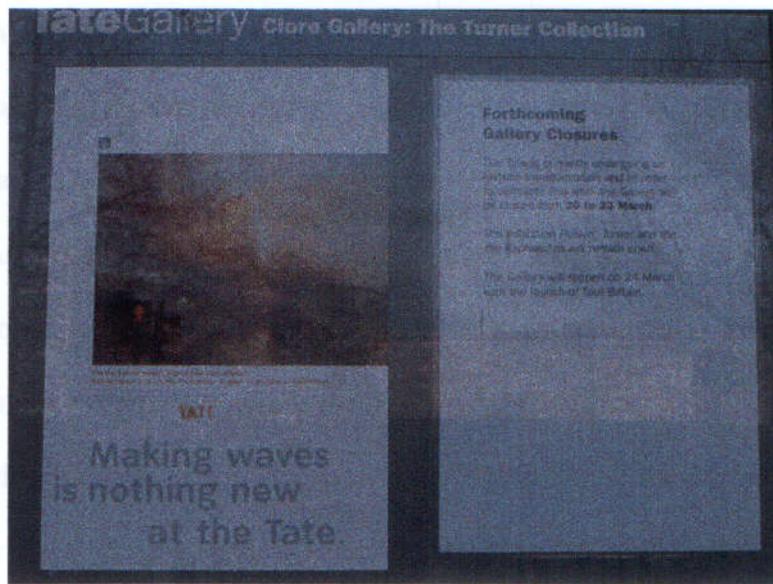
articulation of 'Culture', referred to above, through the sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit, equivalence made between 'Culture' and 'Modernity' in relation to Britishness. In this sense, as I will argue, culture/ 'Culture' and in particular the multicultural in Britain are often talked about in contexts of 'newness' and 'vitality'; multiculturalism in particular is often seen as a distinctly post-war phenomenon. Although I will, in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, go on to examine Tate St Ives and Tate Liverpool in relation to debates on multiculturalism and Britishness, here I will pursue the tracing of these multicultural time-spaces through the division of the Tate's London based display sites into two, namely Tate Modern and Tate Britain. I will use this example to illustrate how inter-related discourses produced and articulated through Blairite New Labour, multicultural Britishness and the temporal passage from one millennium to another, can be seen to represent a 'moment' or 'event' within which the Gallery's spatial division within London becomes defined.

I will also, both at the beginning and end of this chapter, discuss the opening exhibition at Tate Britain: *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites*. This will form the basis for a critical engagement with the 'fixing' of multicultural time-space at the Tate, particularly in relation to understandings of Britishness. The exhibition provides a useful illustration of the argument I wish to make regarding multicultural time-space through its inclusion of J.M.W. Turner's painting: *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon Coming On (The Slaveship)* (1840). This painting has previously been the subject of a critique by Paul Gilroy (Gilroy, 1990) based around the relationship between art and Britishness and I will reconsider some of the points made in this account. In thinking about Gilroy's analysis of the painting and the display of it as a central part of the Tate Britain exhibition I want to argue that there is much important, critical work remaining to be done in enabling a more productive understanding of the relationship between multiculturalism and Britishness at the Tate Gallery. Initially, however, I want to look at this painting in a slightly different context to the one in which it hung inside Tate Britain.

## Culture, Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity

### *Multicultural time-space and the reproduction of The Slaveship*

In the weeks leading up to the opening of Tate Britain in March 2000 an advertising campaign was launched which saw posters on the London Underground network and other sites across London. The image used in the poster, which covered the vast majority of it, was a reproduction of Turner's *The Slaveship* (1840), as it is commonly referred to (see figure 2.1). Beneath the image can be seen the line, 'Making waves is nothing new at the Tate'. The intention of this juxtaposition was two fold. In a literal sense, it was an opportunity to attract potential visitors by utilising one of Turner's most famous paintings to advertise its inclusion in Tate Britain's opening exhibition *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites*. In a metaphorical sense, the reference to Tate Britain's ability to continue 'making waves' linked the literal waves depicted in the image to the critical discursive 'waves' caused by the controversial 'Turner Prize' for British art, which, as the poster inferred, would continue to be held at Millbank.



(Figure 2.1 – 'Making waves is nothing new at the Tate')

Therefore, the image attempts to align the historical with the contemporary within Tate Britain's remit as a gallery whilst on face value offering an image which visitors would readily associate with the Tate in its role as the prime custodian of Turner's work in the country, despite the fact that this particular painting was in fact on loan from The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. However, it is the more 'traditional' appeal of a Turner painting which provides the over-riding point of reference and the advertisement depends very much on continuing a distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' British art based on the effect of the advertisement being one of surprise at the breadth of the gallery's displays. This can also be seen as a distinction which was carried through to the painting's display in the exhibition, as I will go on to suggest at the end of this chapter. However, what is significant to emphasise at the outset is the effect of this image and the way it constructs a particular relationship between Britishness and multiculturalism.

Essentially the power of the image is in its iconic value. The fact that it reproduces a Turner painting which is seen as a particularly good example of his work, and is only in the country for a limited period, provides an obvious appeal to prospective Tate visitors. What is perhaps more important however, is that this image is highly recognisable as an archetype of his seascape painting; it carries with it the historically constructed meanings of Turner's painting *per se*. What these meanings did for the Tate, through its association with the image, was to imply that the gallery could offer the visitor the highest quality, 'groundbreaking' art in both a historical and contemporary sense; Turner stands as a signifier for both and to this end is a valuable commodity in enabling the Tate Gallery to reach its market. In this sense the image of *The Slavership* is a commodity which has become valuable in the market of 'Culture'.

However, this 'Culture' is a selective market. Whilst *The Slavership* is used to convey the quality and historical richness to be found within this market of British art and the Britishness to which it relates, the poster and the market in which it is situated does not emphasise the less celebratory meanings of the painting; meanings which are also a part of

the stories of Britishness. These are the issues generated by the images of drowning slaves in *The Slaveship*. It is clearly apparent that these images are present in the poster and such vivid depictions might seem a strange way to advertise a gallery. However, I would suggest that the reason the drowning figures remain unproblematic is because this is not a context in which the politics of race are seen as being played out. Neither the reproduction of a Turner painting or a poster advertising Tate Britain are sites where addressing British multiculturalism are 'expected', and this, as I will argue, is because multiculturalism is constructed as emergent only within certain temporal and spatial frameworks. The multicultural is constructed not as a concept which impinges on nineteenth-century British society, but post- Second World War society. Neither is it constructed as something which is situated within a space which fosters the appreciation of fine art, but into the spaces of the urban poor. What this poster demonstrates is the way that multicultural time-space and, as a direct result of this, Britishness are constructed selectively through discourses which shape and define the way these concepts are temporally and spatially contextualised. What I want to do is question this construction and explore the ways the multicultural not only permeates but is integral to the broader geographies of Britishness. First, however, this will require a foundational examination of how the notion of culture can be understood.

### *Defining culture*

As I have suggested above, culture is a term which has been the subject of sustained academic analysis. This level of engagement, in the form of Cultural Studies, has contributed greatly to the development of understandings of culture which reveal the inherent issues, such as contingency, negotiation, contestation and syncretism, which are involved in the understanding and articulation of culture. However, before engaging with the complexities of this thing called culture, I will consider its definition in order to provide a foundational point from which to examine the dynamics of culture, cultures and

the multicultural. Indeed one of the principle concerns which has been expressed in relation to multiculturalism is that it is often formulated without a sufficiently rigorous evaluation of what culture 'is' (see for example Rattansi, 1992). Therefore, and by way of agreeing with this sentiment, I will attempt to outline a definition of the term by drawing briefly on the descriptions of Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams<sup>2</sup>.

Stuart Hall has offered a definition of culture as:

The systems of shared meanings which people who belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world...The term 'culture' includes the social practices which produce meaning as well as the practices which are regulated and organised by those shared meanings.

(Hall, 1995, p176)

The first sentence of this quotation provides us with a broad but useful definition of what culture might be and how it might be understood. In effect this is to suggest that central to its definition is a sense of meaning that is socially shared. The second part points towards a distinction between the way culture can be simultaneously interpreted as the practices which produce this shared meaning and the practices that are 'regulated and organised' by these shared meanings. In this sense, culture can be seen as *producing* shared meanings as well as being *the product* of shared meanings. What I want to take from this latter part of the quotation is that this distinction forms an important premise in relation to the way culture can be understood in what might be termed, its 'institutionalised form' – in the form, as I will exemplify, of the Tate Gallery. That is to say, as it is interpreted within the context of, say, the Tate Gallery. This is also the definition within which we can situate 'Culture'; the particular construction and articulation of culture within the Tate being that of 'high art'. However, 'culture' might be better understood in relation to the definition by which meanings are produced; what might be crudely defined for preliminary purposes as social interactions of 'the everyday'. However, whilst culture can be talked about in such

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<sup>2</sup> It should also be noted that Hall has critiqued William's work (see for example Morley and Chen, 1996).

different terms and within different contexts, it can also be counterproductive to think of it in terms of the mutually exclusive categories of 'Culture' and 'culture'.

In order to clarify *the produced* 'Culture' of the institution and *the productive* nature of 'culture' further, a brief reference to Raymond Williams' definition of culture is also useful. For Williams there are three categories within the definition of culture: the 'ideal', the 'documentary' and the 'social' (Williams, 1965). Whilst Hall's definition of culture is presented as an undifferentiated but multifaceted account William's three distinct definitions seem to suggest a different conceptualisation. Importantly though, he adds that:

We have to try to see this process as a whole, and to relate our particular studies, if not explicitly at least by ultimate reference, to the actual and complex organisation.

(Williams, 1965, p60)

As Williams suggests then, these are perhaps more usefully understood as interdependent categories. Thus, for both Hall and Williams, we are directed towards an understanding of culture which is made complex through its multiple and contestable meanings and its fuzzy boundaries. So where does this leave the distinction between 'Culture' and 'culture' and why is this distinction of interest here?

Having tried to articulate the complexity of defining culture through this 'thumb nail sketch', I also want to retain a sense of structure in the way culture is understood as 'product' and 'producer'. The use of the 'Culture'/'culture' distinction here maybe contestable in some respects, particularly where there is no sharp distinction between product and producer within a given context, such as in art, but it can usefully emphasise culture in its 'institutionalised form'. This is a conceptualisation of culture through marketability and commodification. It is a way of thinking about culture in the context of Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986), where culture is ascribed a quantifiable currency. We can also find resonance with the understanding of culture as it is expressed through the language of 'mass production' (Benjamin, 1973) and 'industry' (Adorno, 1991), where culture is *produced* within the context of industrial capitalism. To

this end the Tate Gallery, as an institution, can be seen to relate to the notion of 'Culture' as commodity. However, rather than being the polar opposite of 'culture', two concepts can be seen as relational in that 'culture' becomes interpreted through 'Culture'.

As I will argue, the opening of both Tate Britain and Tate Modern can be seen as a 'moment' within British cultural politics. This 'moment' is also constituted by New Labour's appropriation of culture as commodity in its 're-branding' of Britain as a modern, dynamic multicultural society. Having examined the meanings of 'culture' and 'Culture', I will now apply this to analysing the distinction which has also been made between 'the multicultural' and 'multiculturalism'.

### *Defining the multicultural, understanding the 'ism'*

Before thinking about the broader implications of the co-presence of multiple cultures, I want to illustrate how the distinction made between 'Culture' and 'culture' is related to the distinction between 'the multicultural' and 'multiculturalism'. As a result of problems in identifying the relationship between cultural production and cultural product, defining the relations of multiple cultures is affected from the outset. Once again Hall offers a useful definition:

Multi-cultural [...] describes the social characteristics and problems of governance posed by any society in which different cultural communities live together and attempt to build a common life while retaining something of their 'original' identity. By contrast, 'multiculturalism' is substantive. It references the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up.

(Hall, 2000a, p209)

Reflecting on the previous distinction made between 'Culture' and 'culture' it is possible to apply a similar one here. The 'multicultural' is, for Hall, the circumstances and

outcomes of co-existent multiple cultures; that is to say, the multicultural is what is being *produced* by this co-existence. However, 'multiculturalism' is understood as a 'substantive' collection of 'strategies and policies' and in this sense it is a *product* which can be regulated, quantified, commodified and consumed. Therefore, we might draw a comparison between multiculturalism and 'Culture' and multicultural and 'culture', but again, whilst outlining this structural definition, it is important to assert that rather than constituting binary opposites the use of this distinction is that it enables us to understand how multiculturalism attempts to translate and settle what 'the multicultural' means.

This distinction has also been defined by Barnor Hesse through the language of semiotics:

The multicultural is a signifier of the unsettled meanings of cultural differences in relation to multiculturalism as the signified of the attempts to fix their meaning in national imaginaries.

(Hesse, 2000a, p2)

If multiculturalism can be seen as an attempt to 'fix' meanings, then this 'fixing' can also be seen as a strategy which is undertaken in several ways, in different contexts and within particular time-spaces, that is to say, 'there are very different 'multiculturalisms'' (Hall, 2000a, p210). Hall identifies six forms of multiculturalism: 'conservative', 'liberal', 'pluralist', 'corporate', 'critical' and 'commercial'. It is the last of these which can best be aligned with the strategies associated with New Labour thinking and is evident within the cultural constructions and articulations of the Tate Gallery. The notion of 'commercial multiculturalism' also further illustrates the problems of attempting to convey 'culture' through 'Culture' as commodification. Hall asserts that:

Commercial multiculturalism assumes that if the diversity of individuals from different communities is recognised in the marketplace, then the problems of cultural difference will be (dis)solved through private consumption, without any need for a redistribution of power and resources.

What Hall also alludes to here is one of the key debates within multicultural theory, which is the tension between issues of ‘recognition’ in relation to cultural identities and the ‘redistribution’ of ‘power and resources’. This is a debate which has emerged from Charles Taylor’s foundational account of *The Politics of Recognition* and which provides a suitable platform from which to outline the development of multicultural debates more broadly. Before considering the notion of commercial multiculturalism and its potential problems more closely therefore, it is important to consider first what is meant by ‘recognition’ and ‘redistribution’ and how they inform the identity politics of the multicultural in multiculturalism.

The basis for Taylor’s account is a reflection on the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. More specifically, it is Rousseau’s insistence on morality as ‘following a voice of nature within us [and that] our moral salvation comes from recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves’ (Taylor, 1994, p29). This concern with authenticity is carried through Taylor’s engagement with Herder and his concern that there is a prerequisite ‘to discover my own original way of being [which] cannot be socially derived, but must be inwardly generated’ (Taylor, 1994, p32)<sup>3</sup>. Essentially then, Taylor’s foundational argument for a politics of recognition can be understood as based in identity politics and what he sees as the ‘massive subjective turn of modern culture’ (Taylor, 1994, p29) from the end of the eighteenth century. However, what Taylor uses these earlier theories, based on the understanding of human dignity, to demonstrate, is that their understanding of the subject is ultimately flawed, in that:

There is no such thing as inward generation, monologically understood. In order to understand the close connection between identity and recognition, we have to take into account a crucial feature of the human condition that has been rendered almost invisible by the overwhelmingly monological bent of mainstream modern

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<sup>3</sup> The issue of authenticity will be developed more specifically in chapter 6.

philosophy. This crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally *dialogical* character.

(Taylor, 1994, p32 – emphasis in original)

Taylor's insistence on acknowledging the dialogical nature of identity formation can be said to provide the basis for his engagement with the issue of multiculturalism and has also been seen as central to the importance of Taylor's work as it makes an important critical intervention in asserting that 'the dichotomy posed by some political theorists between atomistic and socially constructed individuals is therefore a false one' (Gutman, 1994, p7). It is this troubled distinction which is also said to be at the heart of the brand of liberalism that has dictated modern Western political thinking, with its emphasis on an individualistic market led system (Waltzer, 1994). In this sense, then, Taylor approaches his critique of multiculturalism by pointing towards fundamental flaws in liberalism's treatment of identity in its cultural, political, social and economic context. The importance attached to Taylor's questioning liberalism's 'monological bent' is also endorsed by Stuart Hall:

It [liberalism] does not recognise the degree to which the individual is what Taylor (1994) calls 'dialogic' – not in the binary sense of dialogue between two already constituted subjects, but in the sense of its relationship to the other being fundamentally constitutive of the subject, which can position itself as an 'identity' only in relation to what it lacks – its other.

(Hall, 2000a, p 230)

The problem in conceptualising the multicultural in the form of multiculturalism is therefore to be found in the difficulties of capturing the dynamic nature of this dialogue. As Hall suggests, this is a process of negotiation which depends on an understanding of identities as formed *in relation* to others<sup>4</sup> and it is this sense of dialogue in terms of

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<sup>4</sup> Hall expands on this by referring to Derrida's concept of *différance*, which I will go on to explain in chapter 7.

relationality which I will develop throughout this thesis. As with the definition of cultures outlined above, the importance is in avoiding fixity and this is how we might best link the notion of 'culture' to that of identity; if 'culture' produces 'shared meanings' then it is these same shared meanings which can be seen as the site of the creation of cultural identities. But once again we are faced with the problems which arise from attempts to 'fix' meaning, identities are not stable, they can be contingent and change across time-space, and this is where the problems of translating the multicultural into multiculturalism become emphasised. What Taylor instigates, therefore, is a debate as to how, or if, constitutional strategies (such as those I will be going on to consider within New Labour and the Tate Gallery) can hope to capture these contingencies. In relation to this concern and reflecting on Taylor's work, Jürgen Habermas also questions such strategies in terms of their preservation of cultural identities:

Cultural heritages and the forms of life articulated in them normally reproduce themselves by convincing those whose personality structures they shape, that is, by motivating them to appropriate productively and continue the tradition. The constitutional state can make this hermeneutic achievement of the cultural *reproduction* of life-worlds possible, but it cannot guarantee it. For to guarantee survival would necessarily rob the members of the very freedom to say yes or no that is necessary if they are to appropriate and preserve their cultural heritage.

(Habermas, 1994, p130 – my emphasis)

In addition to his general point about cultural identity, Habermas also makes an important point here regarding the relationship between the state and cultural reproduction. As well as applying to cultural *reproduction* it also applies to cultural *production* in that not only, as Habermas points out, can the state be seen to perform a facilitative role in enabling, though not guaranteeing, cultures to reproduce, but that the state can also facilitate its own particular cultural interpretations as a site of their production. This is the issue at the centre of Hall's definition of 'commercial multiculturalism', where forms of

cultural recognition are produced as commodities within a market place. This also addresses what has been identified as a shortcoming within Taylor's account; that as well as acknowledging the dialogical nature of cultural identity construction it is important to consider that 'the politics of culture is integrally tied up with the politics of power because culture is itself institutionalised power' (Parekh, 2000a, p343). This then involves a closer consideration of the state's role within the construction, articulation and facilitating of cultural identities because, as Parekh continues, culture is also:

imbricated with other systems of power. Cultural self-esteem cannot be developed and sustained within a vacuum and requires appropriate changes in all the major areas of life. No multicultural society can be stable and vibrant unless it ensures that its constituent communities receive both just recognition and a just share of economic and political power. It requires a robust form of social, economic and political democracy to underpin its commitment to multiculturalism.

(ibid)

I will now briefly examine this concern to ground multiculturalism in a broader context before turning to the substantive issues of multiculturalism in relation to the Tate Gallery.

Though Taylor makes very little reference to redistribution, those that have taken up the issues raised in his account have sought to extend multicultural concerns within this area. Much of this work has emerged from writing in the United States where multiculturalism received extensive critical attention during the mid-1980s and into the 1990s (see for example Fraser, 1995; 1997; Young, 1997) and which has informed the more critical engagements made in Britain since the latter part of the 1990s (Hesse, 2000). Essentially what the discussion of these co-related issues attempts to address is the need to situate multiculturalism within concerns beyond 'the cultural'. This is typically characterised by an opposition between the perceived importance of the recognition of cultural identities to be maintained without hegemonic concessions being made to a dominant culture and the need for equality to be addressed through material redistribution.

The aim is to create a necessarily more nuanced context for discussing multiculturalism, as Parekh states above. However, the problem is that it has often led to the ‘redistribution-recognition dilemma’ (Fraser, 1995). This is seen as the result of the following tension:

Recognition claims often take the form of calling attention to, if not performatively creating, the putative specificity of some group, and then of affirming the value of their specificity. Thus they tend to promote group differentiation. Redistribution claims in contrast, often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity [...] Thus they tend to promote group de-differentiation. The upshot is that the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution appear to have mutually contradictory aims.

(Fraser, 1995, p74)

The challenge, therefore, has been in attempts to overcome this ‘dilemma’ through formulating multicultural debates which fully incorporate and account for the relationship between the economic, the cultural, the collective and the individual. This challenge has been confronted through drawing attention to the fact that making the distinction between recognition and redistribution has served to perpetuate problems of understanding the cultural. Iris Marion Young has criticised the distinctions made in Fraser’s account, asserting that ‘this categorisation fails to understand that, for most social movements, what Fraser calls “recognition” is a means to the economic and social equality and freedom that she brings under the category of redistribution’ (Young, 1997, p152). Similarly, it has been noted that ‘the politics of social justice or economic redistribution [...] was never merely about redistribution and had an implicit or explicit cultural agenda. Classical socialism was not just about better economic opportunities for the poor and underprivileged but also about creating a new culture and new forms of social relations’ (Parekh, 2000a, p2).

The recognition and redistribution debate might be said to have problematised itself within the limits of language. Contestation over categorisations and definitions have often limited the extension of these debates beyond the theoretical and whilst critiquing the

fixity and inadequacies of multiculturalism the debates have also had problems defining their own terms<sup>5</sup>. However, through opening up discursive possibilities there appears to be an acknowledgement that multiculturalism has suffered from a misreading of culture as 'Culture', and that the former can be re-articulated beyond the notion of market led production which has characterised the latter. By defining the forms that multiculturalism has taken, such as Hall's 'commercial multiculturalism', it is possible, at least, to articulate their inadequacies whilst moving towards a more productive understanding of how multiple cultures can and do co-exist. Focusing more closely on the example of the Tate Gallery I explore some of these inadequacies and the problems faced by equating 'culture' with 'Culture'.

### **The Problems and Possibilities of Multiculturalism**

#### ***From the 1980s to the 1990s: reassessing multiculturalism***

It was in the context of school education that contemporary debates of multiculturalism first emerged in Britain. As a consequence it is important to briefly evaluate education's role in the formation of these debates as they have emerged over the last two decades. A key moment in the development of multiculturalism in education was the publication of the Swann Report – *Education for all*(1985). This report represents a distinctly liberal intervention into the issues of 'cultural pluralism' (Rattansi, 1992) which drew criticism from anti-racists. The report took an assimilationist line which has been described as creating the hope that 'minorities would simply blend into a homogeneous British or even English stew, perhaps adding some harmless spice' (Rattansi, 1992, p13)<sup>6</sup>. Whilst there are clearly issues of national identity alluded to here, the main concern is

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<sup>5</sup> Again, see Fraser, 1995; Young, 1997; Fraser 1997.

<sup>6</sup> This quote also conveys the notion of 'multicultural normalisation' which I will discuss in chapter 7.

perhaps the way in which multiculturalism is presented as an issue by governmental and educational institutions. This is illustrated in the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation's (CERI) report *Multicultural Education* (1987) which conveys the assimilationist terms of multiculturalism at this time through the language employed.

The report's opening line states that 'finding solutions for the educational problems posed by cultural and linguistic minorities presents a challenge for educational systems' (CERI, 1987, p7 – my emphasis). Here then, the problems, which are not in question, are couched in terms which suggest that rather than being the result of any insensitivities or forms of racism within the British education system, it is the cultural and linguistic 'other' who constitutes the problem: their inability to 'fit in'. It goes on to assert that 'there is a definite incompatibility between the scheme of schooling and the *acculturation* of ethnic minorities' (ibid – my emphasis); giving further confirmation of the report's intentions to follow an assimilationist line where minorities are expected to conform to the dominant culture.

For what might be termed 'the multicultural project' then, immediate concerns emerged regarding its intentions. What was perhaps more damaging still was the fact that this was a high profile institutionalised definition. This was how multiculturalism came to be understood in the broader public context and, whilst it attracted criticism from anti-racists for its assimilationist approach, the right wing media also criticised the Inner London Education Authority, amongst others, for its 'loony left' preoccupation with teaching about 'other' cultures. This problem can be seen as the result of multiculturalism's 'fixity', in so far as the definition of multiculturalism was presented as non-negotiable, dealing in a prescriptive rhetoric which was presented as 'the answer'. As Barnor Hesse claims 'multiculturalism as a political discourse in Britain was profoundly untheorised' (Hesse, 2000a, p10) and he goes on to suggest that:

'[this] related to a failure to consider the discourse of multiculturalism as itself susceptible to the logic of the multicultural [...] the discourse of multiculturalism

that sprang up in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s was generalised as its only possible conception’.

(ibid)

This takes us back to the fundamental understanding of culture and, I would suggest, to an understanding of culture as ‘Culture’; a product which is bounded in its definition as a commodity which can be taught in the classroom, perhaps begging the question, ‘what, after all, does it mean to *understand* any culture, including one’s own, whatever that might be?’ (Rattansi, 1992, p28 – emphasis in original).

The failings of multiculturalism as defined in educational debates of the 1980s can therefore be seen to drastically affect the popular use of the term in subsequent debates, or indeed, as a result of this, the lack of them. In crude terms, multiculturalism became ‘a four- letter word’, a term to be avoided for its problematic baggage.

The problematic connotations of multiculturalism are implicit in its continued absence as a term in institutional debates around cultural identity. For the Tate Gallery a need is identified to address ‘increasing awareness of a population representing many ethnic and social positions’ (Deuchar, 2000, p8) and the display of the permanent collection: *Representing Britain 1500-2000*, at Tate Britain, proposed to undertake this<sup>7</sup>. At Tate Modern there has been an emphasis placed on redressing the Tate’s past acquisition policies which have:

‘reflect[ed] the economic and cultural dominance of European art in the twentieth century’<sup>8</sup>.

(Nairne, Kinley and Morphet, 1994, p4)

As a consequence, attempts have been made to raise the gallery’s profile of non-western art. Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives have also sought to address issues of cultural and ethnic diversity through their displays<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 4 for an account of this display.

<sup>8</sup> This source was copied from the original document contained in the Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>9</sup> See chapters 5 and 6 respectively for examples where the issue of regional identities is also addressed.

However, what I would regard as particularly significant in relation to these initiatives is the consistent absence of the word ‘multiculturalism’ and even, perhaps by association, the word ‘multicultural’. It might seem overly prescriptive to insist on the importance of using these words within such institutional strategies, however I would argue that it is fundamental to concede that:

Everybody knows...that multiculturalism is not the promised land...[However] even at its most cynical and pragmatic, *there is something about multiculturalism which continues to be worth pursuing...we do need to find ways of publicly manifesting the significance of cultural diversity*, [and] of integrating the contributions of people of colour into the fabric of society.

(Wallace cited in Hall, 2000a, p211 – my emphasis).

I agree that although the term multiculturalism may have its problems it also has its possibilities, and, it might even be said, necessities. Rather than erasing the term, a more productive approach might be to consider that ‘there are possibilities for re-working the term ‘multicultural’ in the spirit of a critical multiculturalism’ (Dwyer, 1998, p8).

Multiculturalism in this context would require certain pitfalls of the 1980s to be overcome, some of which have been addressed in recent years as those, such as Dwyer, have pushed for its realisation. There are three related areas of importance for this reappraisal. Broadly speaking these can be described as *addressing the reification of culture*, the cultural politics of *whiteness* and a revision of *multicultural histories*. The latter two of these I examine in the following two subsections, the first I outline briefly below.

The first of these concerns is the issue of cultural reification<sup>10</sup>. This effectively addresses Rattansi’s question about the problems of *understanding culture*, even if it is ‘our own’. The point of departure from ‘old’ multiculturalism is in the avoidance of what has been termed a ‘sari’s, samosas and steel bands’ view of culture (Dwyer, 1998; Bonnett, 2000) and this is a concern which also relates to drawing a distinction between ‘culture’

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<sup>10</sup> N.B. – the issue of reification is also discussed in chapter 7 as a form of normalisation.

and 'Culture'. In the past, multiculturalism has tended towards an identification of 'the other' through the material products which are seen to represent a culture. Not only does this understanding of culture serve to oversimplify by focussing on the material, it can also be seen to construct a particular view of a culture as de-politicised. This rendering of culture as product also tends towards fixing it within particular times and spaces, thus producing multicultural time-space in which 'the multicultural' can be seen to be 'in place'. The avoidance of reifying culture in this way is an important issue if multiculturalism is to move beyond the confines of culture as 'Culture' and make possible the articulation of cultural lives

As composed of similarities and differences, continuities and new elements, marked by ruptures and cross-cut by *difference*. Its meanings are the result of a constant, ongoing *process* of cultural negotiation which is constantly shifting and changing its contours to accommodate continuing tensions.

(Hall, 1995, p185 – emphasis in original)

What this understanding of culture also serves to do is overcome the fact that through reification culture often becomes essentialised in terms of its 'authenticity'. This not only serves to constrain individuals in terms of how they are expected to conform to an ideal of cultural identity, it also serves to make 'culture' the definition of the subject.

The concern over culture's role in defining the subject highlights a problem for the use of the term multiculturalism which is important to examine if a new critical multiculturalism is to be productive. This relates to the tendency of the terms multicultural and multiethnic becoming interchangeable, though the two terms are in some respects linked if we consider ethnicity to be the product of culture. The problem arises when ethnicity is seen as *equating to* culture, which in turn leads to the reification of the subject as culture. As Susan Wolf notes, there are resonances here with issues within feminism:

The problems of women who have been constrained by their role as women can remind us that, say, African-Americans can also be constrained by an intolerant insistence that they give cultural identity a central place in their lives.

(Wolf, 1994, p77)

This has perhaps been the principle concern in relation to the visual arts and something which has seen a response from some contemporary black British artists whose work has been displayed at the Tate<sup>11</sup>. For a critical multiculturalism there needs to be an insistence on culture being understood as something which informs ethnicity but does not define it. It is through this misreading that notions such as ethnic 'communities' have become problematic in the tendency to homogenise, say, British Asians, around a collective understanding of a life defined by culture. As Ali Rattansi claims, regarding the term 'Black', 'it can still serve as a powerful descriptive and political signifier. But the cultural essentialism at its core has begun to disintegrate' (Rattansi, 1992, p40). What is perhaps most important, is that the relationship between culture, ethnicity and identity remains non-essentialised and in keeping with Hall's sense of being a 'process' of negotiation. This 'process' should also be seen as dependent on Hall's notion of 'difference' being realised; that it cuts through identity at every level, not just *between* cultures and ethnicities but *within* them also. This in turn depends on addressing what Hall describes as 'the dilemma, the conundrum – the multi-cultural question' (Hall, 2000a, p235); the need to understand 'equality *with* difference' (ibid).

This leads us on to the requirement of a critical multiculturalism to address the previous failings of multiculturalism in its tendency to equate these issues with an 'us and them' dilemma. What needs to be emphasised is that:

What [...] can no longer be sustained in the face of 'the multi-cultural question', is the binary contrast between the particularism of 'their' demands for the recognition of difference versus the universalism of 'our' civic rationality.

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 7 for an account of multicultural normalisation and the art of Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare.

Or as Bhikhu Parekh's report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* states:

The development of Britain as a community of communities is not about 'multi-ethnic Britain' alone; it is for the benefit of all people, not just so-called minorities, and is dependent on much more than race-specific policies.

(Parekh, 2000b, p9)

This issue is important in terms of acknowledging that different cultures co-exist within co-produced spaces, or diaspora spaces where the 'us and them' becomes disrupted (Brah, 1996). It is also important in disrupting the notion that cultural identities are something that only apply to 'the cultural other'; 'to use 'multicultural' as a euphemism for 'non-white'' (Alibhai-Brown, 2000, p107). This latter issue has drawn significant and increasing attention through the 1990s and into the 2000s through an engagement with the cultural politics of 'whiteness', a concern which has also been raised at the Tate Gallery.

### ***'Picturing Whiteness'***

The critical evaluation of whiteness has developed out of a concern to place white identities within the arena of racial and cultural politics alongside the much discussed issues of blackness and black identities. Within these debates it has been noted that whiteness maintains an 'invisibility' (Dyer, 1997) and that there has been an 'erasure of whiteness' (Bonnett, 1997, p193). As stated above these debates emphasise that it is often only 'the other' that is regarded as culturally constituted. What they also emphasise is the not unrelated construction of 'the other' as racially constituted. In this sense, the concern is to problematise the notion of whiteness being associated with 'a social group which is to be taken for the human ordinary' (Dyer, 1997, p47) and critically consider how this became culturally constructed through racialised discourses associated with the oppression of empire.

In February 2001, the Tate Gallery staged a one day conference at Tate Britain entitled *Picturing Whiteness*. Organised by Lorna Healy, the Tate's 'Curator of Adult Learning', the day featured speakers from a variety of academic backgrounds including Art History, Sociology, Film Studies and Fine art. With the exception of one of the six papers presented, all drew on visual sources, from art or film, to explore issues of whiteness. These included a key note address from Richard Dyer, commonly regarded as one of the foundational figures in the engagement with Whiteness as an area of academic concern following a paper written for the journal *Screen* (Dyer, 1988). His paper drew on work from his more recent book *White* (Dyer, 1997) which centred on the portrayal of women in art, predominantly in the nineteenth century, as 'hue' white; the literal white used, as Dyer argues, to denote purity and 'colourlessness'. Other papers engaged with issues such as the whiteness, or lack of whiteness, of the mixed race subject; whiteness in film; whiteness in day time talk shows; and the place of whiteness within the construction of racial stereotypes within art.

In an interview after the conference, Lorna Healy suggested that despite the perceived success of the Tate's staging of the event, reservations were expressed regarding some of the ways the issues had been interpreted:

There was a lot of positive feedback from the day but it was unfortunately misinterpreted by many as to do with the handling of white paint, etc.

Others misinterpreted it as to do with 'white supremacy'. I think this goes to show how underdeveloped the discourse of whiteness is in Britain<sup>12</sup>.

Having attended the conference I would agree with Healy's concerns over the issue of how this engagement with whiteness was interpreted by some in the academic and non-academic contingent. As Healy implies, this is arguably a problem inherent within the study of whiteness per se rather than the Tate's conference.

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<sup>12</sup> E-mail interview with Lorna Healy 4/4/01 and 23/4/01.

The issue of addressing the cultural and 'racial' politics of whiteness is an important one. In moving towards a more productive multiculturalism, this 'naming [of] whiteness [...] disrupts power and brings into focus the politics of white dominance' (Erasmus, 2000, p193). It can also make an important contribution towards the understanding of 'social interpretations *as* social interpretations, as socially constructed and mutable re-presentations rather than as common-sense facts' (Bonnett, 1993, p167 – emphasis in original). However, as Healy suggests, there are perhaps interpretative problems regarding what purpose is being served by considering whiteness. A significant issue in this apparent confusion relates to the distinction made by Nancy Fraser that:

A major aspect of racism is Eurocentrism: the authoritative construction of norms that privilege traits associated with "whiteness". Along with this goes cultural racism: the pervasive devaluation of things coded as "black".

(Fraser, 1995, p81)

Whilst there is a general consensus around the function of engaging with whiteness as an attempt to overcome the former, I believe that problems emerge through the ways in which the latter concern is approached. The concern here is that rather than critiquing the construction of racial categories, discussions of whiteness can merely serve to reinforce them by establishing a binary *within* these categories. The importance of these debates must, therefore, instead, be in their self-conscious situation *within discourse*.

In attempting to overcome this binary construction it might be useful to focus on 'the development of relational narratives' (Jackson, 1998, p104) which echo Hall's concept of cultural 'flows' as well as considering the internal differences within these categories which are, again echoing Hall, 'cross-cut' by aspects of class, gender and region. The importance however, is in the context of these debates. For example, when Dyer refers to the gradations of hue whiteness employed to convey cultural meanings between the masculine and the feminine in visual art (Dyer, 1997), this must necessarily be articulated as cultural construction rather than an ontological racialised logic.

What can also be seen as problematic is the dominance of the 'visual' forms of representation being used to articulate the arguments being made regarding whiteness. This becomes problematic when whiteness becomes grounded only in the examination of paint and paintings; disconnected from the effects of these images in the social and cultural world. This is perhaps where Healy's concern over the misinterpretation of the conference regarding 'white paint' can be located. Whilst painting or film can be utilised to discuss the social and cultural constructions of whiteness, the immediacy of these visual images hinders a more critical engagement. In other words, it can be suggested that equating the colour of paint with the colour of skin does not take us very far and that, intentionally or otherwise, this can prove to be the boundary of such debates.

I asked Lorna Healy about the importance being placed on visual representations in addressing the issues of whiteness and whether the engagement with these issues was something which would extend into the gallery space of the Tate itself in addition to, and perhaps as a result of the *Picturing Whiteness* conference:

I had the support and interest of Tate curators who did attend the day but there are not plans as far as I know to do a special focus room on whiteness<sup>13</sup>.

Though it might not necessarily be required, or desirable, to partition a space within the gallery to consider whiteness, a productive evaluation of the role of whiteness within the historical discourses of the Canon of western art, say within Tate Britain's 1500-2000 framework, might contribute towards a critical multiculturalism. In the case of Tate Britain, hosting a conference such as *Picturing Whiteness* might signal a critical intervention into the cultural and racial politics of the Canon but, as I now want to go on to argue, it is also important for a more critical multiculturalism to reconsider its histories.

### *Recovering Multicultural Histories*

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

The importance of reassessing histories in a multicultural context is to acknowledge that:

Cultures are not the achievements of the relevant communities alone but also of others, who provide their context, shape some of their beliefs and practices, and remain their points of reference. In this sense almost all cultures are multiculturally constituted.

(Parekh, 2000a, p163)

And this is one of the principle tasks of a critical multiculturalism. However, what this consideration should not signal, is a move towards a homogenisation of histories, if it is to avoid the tendencies of multiculturalism's past failings. Whilst re-reading histories as 'multiculturally constituted' it is also necessary to retain the notion that:

'we all locate ourselves in cultural vocabularies and without them we are incapable of enunciation as cultural subjects. We all come from and speak from 'somewhere'; we are located – and in that sense even the most 'modern' bear the traces of an 'ethnicity'.

(Hall, 2000a, p233)

This sense of location is important to retain, not merely in the spatial sense of place location, which may or may not be relevant in a 'localising' sense, but in the sense of acknowledging how we have come to be and continue to be located through our 'routes'. In this sense, we can retain Hall's notion of cultures interacting within 'processes', but register the fact that these processes produce and continue to produce particular cultural formations within which we can locate ourselves. Referring to Ernesto Laclau, Hall goes on to suggest that 'we can only think 'within a tradition' [but that this can only be meaningful] 'if one conceives one's relation to the past as a critical reception'' (Laclau cited in Hall, 2000a, p233).

How then should such critical histories be undertaken? The work of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker is of use here in the way it reveals political and ethnic alliances of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. In their account of trade and colonisation in the Atlantic world, the task is ‘to *recover* some of the lost history of the multiethnic class that was essential to the rise of capitalism and the modern global economy’ (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000, p6 – my emphasis). It is this process of recovering or retracing ‘routes’, which I develop here and in forthcoming chapters<sup>14</sup>. In doing so it is necessary to reaffirm that ‘Britain is ‘a multiculturally diverse’ society, long before one begins to consider the impact of post-migration multi-ethnic communities’ (Hall, 2000a, p230). What is equally important is the acknowledgement that the ‘covering’ of these histories:

owes much to the violence of abstraction in the writing of history, the severity of history that has long been the captive of the nation-state.

(Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000, p7)

For multiculturalism, what this must also entail is a consideration of how it has come to be temporally and spatially defined. That is to say, how this ‘violence of abstraction’ has served to *dictate* multicultural time-space.

Defining this multicultural time-space can be informed by the identification within New Labour rhetoric of an equation made between multiculturalism and the Blairite insistence on the vitality of British culture at the turn of the millennium. In an unreconstructed notion of multiculturalism where it is used implicitly to refer to ‘the cultural other’, it is ‘they’ who are ‘the ‘cool’ in that transient New Labour phenomenon, ‘Cool Britannia’ (Hall, 2000a, p221). In this sense then, the multicultural ‘other’ comes to represent Britain’s modern-ness; multicultural Britain is seen as a distinctly post-war nation-state (Hall, 2000a) and as a result multicultural Britain is constructed as being without a history before this point. However, the temporal-spatial definition of

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<sup>14</sup> This is an issue which is present to some extent throughout but perhaps most explicit in chapters 5 and 6.

multiculturalism in Britain can, more specifically, be seen as a response to certain determining factors in British social, cultural and political life as I will now go on to consider.

## **New Labour Britishness and the (S)Tate of a Nation**

### ***Multicultural Britishness?***

What, at this point, is useful to assess, is the broader context of Britain's re-imagining, or re-branding to use New Labour speak, and the ways that multiculturalism functions within this rhetoric. More specifically, my concern here is to examine multiculturalism's integral role in the re-branding of Britain whilst also arguing that in spite of the possibilities of a newly critical multiculturalism the institutionalised interpretations of multiculturalism maintain some of its established failings. Whilst, as Hall points out, *multiculturalism is distinctly palpable within New Labour's 'vision for Britain'*, questioning the failings of multiculturalism's previous incarnation and embodying concerns such as those I have just outlined appear not to be a part of this vision. What we are perhaps more accurately faced with is the dilemma of questions such as the one posed by Brett St Louis when he asks: 'what did multiculturalism mean when we witnessed the careful racial manicure of 'Cool Britannia'?' (St Louis, 2000, p71).

In providing a context for the emergence of the multicultural concerns of New Labour at the turn of the millennium we can establish that the inception, or re-emergence, of these concerns came as a result of what might be described as a convergence of both political and societal 'eruptions'. When Bhiku Parekh, in the Runnymede report: *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain*, describes Britain as being 'at a turning point' (Parekh, 2000b, p2), this is not mere hyperbole. He continues, 'it is a coincidence but symbolically

apt that the current confluence occurs simultaneously with the start of a new millennium' (ibid).

There are three particular 'lines' of influence that converge on this construction of Britishness which I want to identify. To be more precise, there are two issues of particular significance and one lesser, though still considerable, issue here. The first of these, and I would argue perhaps the least significant, is the death of Diana Princess of Wales. The least significant because I would argue that the effect of this event is more problematic to link directly to the issues involved in multicultural identity politics. However, it is significant still in the way that it has been aligned with Labour's landslide election victory four months earlier as an event which represented a departure from previous and long-lasting forms of state insularity (Nairn, 2000). Though perhaps a sensational account, it might still be significant to consider Andrew Marr's observation that 'Diana was the queen of another country, a multicultural, more liberal, emotionally open Britain...Diana was only a symbol of social changes already happening' (Marr cited in Alibhai-Brown, 2000, p36).

The second significant issue was the realisation of political devolution in Britain. Not only did this impact on a re-thinking of the relationship between the British nation-states in terms of political process, but it highlighted two particular issues of cultural politics. Firstly, the hegemony of Englishness over Britishness became exposed through the reappraisal of the former as a significant expression of national identity. Whilst this became an issue of political identity it also served to emphasise that "England' and 'Britain' may seem much the same thing to the English' (Nairn, 2000, p39). Whilst this exposed the issues of multiple cultures on one level, it also gave way to a second and perhaps more significant complexity, as Stuart Hall points out:

The rising visibility of ethnic communities together with the movement towards devolved government have posed questions about the 'homogeneity' of British

culture and 'Englishness' as an ethnicity, precipitating the multi-cultural question at the centre of a crisis of national identity.

(Hall, 2000a, p221)

The principle concern which emerged from this issue was that at a point when the use of a term such as Black Britishness was becoming feasible for some, if not many, the notion of Englishness attaining the same cultural flexibility seemed more problematic. As Tom Nairn has noted, 'it is possible to think that one breathes more easily in a non-ethnic [sic] 'Britain' than one would upon the narrower ground of England' (Nairn, 2000, p40).

The third issue of significance for thinking about multicultural Britishness at this point in time, was the murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence<sup>15</sup>. Although this had taken place in 1993 and was not, sadly, the first or last racist murder to take place in Britain, the significance of Stephen Lawrence's death was to unfold over the years following it. Following criticism over their handling of the case, the police were found guilty of 'institutional racism' in the subsequent, and long delayed, enquiry into the death six years later. Perhaps more than any other event or incident, the Lawrence case became central to motivations behind a re-opening of debates about racism, ethnicity and multiculturalism in Britain (see for example Parekh, 2000b). The New Labour government, who commissioned the report into the murder, also saw it as a significant reference in relation to the changes required in their vision of multicultural Britain.

It is these three, and particularly the latter two, events that, I would argue, defined a new discursive era for multiculturalism in relation to Britishness at the turn of the millennium. This sense of convergence saw a plethora of publications during 2000, including Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's *Who do We Think We Are?*, Andrew Marr's *The Day Britain Died*, Tom Nairn's *After Britain*, Jeremy Paxman's *The English* as well as Darcus Howe's television series *White Tribe*. Whilst these works encompassed many aspects of social, economic, political, historical and religious concern within millennial Britain,

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<sup>15</sup> See also chapter 7 for the discussion of Chris Ofili's work *No Woman, No Cry* (1998).

issues of cultural identity were central to all and this echoed the interests of New Labour's point of engagement.

Two years earlier Chris Smith, holder of the then recently created post of 'Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport' (DCMS), wrote his account of *Creative Britain* (1998). Aside from the commentary of the book itself, as Bhikhu Parekh points out, the title of the ministerial department raises a point of interest regarding the understanding of culture, or more pertinently 'Culture' as it is spelt, being employed. He notes that 'the DCMS uses the term culture instead of arts, thus implying that media and sport are not key aspects of the country's cultural fabric' (Parekh, 2000b, p160). It is the perpetuation of this sense of 'Culture' which can be seen to represent the key concern regarding new Labour's vision of multiculturalism in Britain. In the book itself, implicitly echoing the sense of unassured status that British cultural identity might face in light of events such as those outlined above, Smith asserts that,

cultural activity can help us with the development of our sense of who and what we are. It can help therefore to set a sense of direction for our society which would otherwise be impossible.

(Smith, 1998, p22)

This allusion to culture implies that it is something which we *produce* through 'activity', rather than something which produces. Also, through the reference to 'direction' and 'development', the over-riding inference is given that culture is something which is developing now and will enlighten the future. Similarly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown stated that:

As [...] the Stephen Lawrence case illustrates, there are those who would *retreat* from an expansive idea of Britishness [...] my vision of Britain comes not from uniformity but from celebrating diversity, in other words a multi-ethnic and multinational Britain.

(Brown cited in Alibhai-Brown, 2000, p100 – my emphasis)

Again the emphasis is on the importance of this 'vision' of Britain as something which can only be found in the future where 'Britain has a new spring in its step [and] 'Cool Britannia' sets the pace' (Leonard, 2000, p13).

Within the forward looking emphasis of *Creative Britain* there are hopeful expectations for multicultural Britishness. However this has also drawn criticism in relation to the concern that 'New Labour's enthusiastic backing of culture bears witness to the peculiar new demands which they make upon it, namely economic and social regeneration' (Charlesworth, 2000, p8). Hopes for the regeneration of cultural, economic and social Britain may be ambiguously related to their means of achievement and optimistically attached to the regenerative prospects of the 'cultural industries' (Charlesworth 2000, Hesse 2000a). However, despite an apparent adherence to an unreconstructed multiculturalism, the end of the millennium can be said to represent a significant 'moment', and 'the significance of this moment lay in the simple fact that multiculturalism had long since ceased to feature in the semantics of British political discourse' (Hesse, 2000a, p3). As Hesse also points out,

up until the publication in February 1999 of the MacPherson public inquiry into the racist murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence, the question of racism had virtually been eliminated from the vernacular of British public culture.

(Hesse, 2000a, p9)

Despite questions over the effectiveness of the 'Culture' of the 'culture industries' being the antidote to the 'culture' of racism, it seemed that 'cultural activity', to refer back to Chris Smith, multiculturalism and regeneration were significant, co-related concerns for New Labour. So, when, during the same year as the Lawrence report, the Tate Gallery began to publicly spread news of its forthcoming opening of Tate Modern in May 2000 within Southwark, one of the inner London boroughs ripe for regeneration, it seemed that

the new gallery would play a significant role in New Labour's 'vision for Britain' as a 'flagship' project of urban regeneration and commercial multiculturalism<sup>16</sup>.

### *Tate Modern, Tate Britain and how they went their separate ways*

The other significant concern that the Tate shared with the New Labour government was how to overcome the common perception that Britishness and Modernness are, if not mutually exclusive, somewhat incongruous. For whilst the new gallery on London's Bankside was to be unveiled in May 2000, the existing London Gallery at Millbank would become Tate Britain prior to this in March. Whilst I will discuss the opening of Tate Britain in more detail in Chapter 4, here I will examine Tate Modern and the splitting of the Tate Galleries in London between two sites. Of more specific interest is the way this process was seen to depend on drawing together notions of Britishness and Modernness so that, at least to some degree, Tate Britain could be seen as Modern and Tate Modern could be seen as British.

Alongside the media engagement with issues of Britishness and cultural identity, the Tate also entered these debates by staging a major two day conference at the Millbank site on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2000 entitled *Britain and Modernity*. Organised in association with *The Guardian* and *The Observer* newspapers, the conference brought together major figures from areas such as Architecture, Design, Comedy and Art to discuss what Britishness meant to them in the new millennium. The first day of the conference took the form of a discussion panel which included Stuart Hall, Andrew Marr and the arts broadcaster Joan Bakewell, also head of the 'Friends of the Tate'. The discussion was chaired by the newscaster Jon Snow. Although 'race' and racism was not an issue discussed explicitly, culture and multiculturalism were, and Snow's position as chair itself

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<sup>16</sup> See also chapter 6 regarding contemporary political and urban regeneration ideology and the principle that socio-economic deprivation can be addressed by the regenerative effects of cosmopolitan 'flagship' projects.

stood as a symbol for both the implicit and explicit nature of the discussion having only weeks earlier chaired a television debate to mark the end of Darcus Howe's series *White Tribe* which had dealt with racism and multiculturalism in a direct and antagonistic post-Lawrence context.

The panel discussion produced many opinions on Britain's understanding of itself as a nation, its inclusiveness, its exclusiveness and its somewhat troubled relationship with 'modernity' as expressed through racism, Euro-scepticism and a reliance on old notions of Empire. Though the context of the debate was often broad based, several issues emerged in direct relation to the Tate and in particular Tate Britain which would be re-opening on the conference site the following week. Andrew Marr expressed concerns that Tate Britain would, rather than reflect a sense of Britishness, be more likely to relate to Englishness or even London-ness and also used the Anglo-Indian dish Chicken Tikka Masala as a metaphor of the 'hybridity' of Britishness which the Tate might reflect, a metaphor which would re-emerge the following year during Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's defence of the Campaign for Racial Equality's anti-racist pledge which three Conservative M.Ps refused to sign<sup>17</sup>. For Stuart Hall there was also the issue that modernity was seen as something which Britain needed to aspire to and that this represented a tension with the old insular understandings of Britishness. He went on to emphasise that Britain had not suddenly become more pluralistic, that it had always been more internally differentiated than was commonly perceived.

The following day's discussion on 'Art', as one of several themed discussion groups, related back to Hall's comments of the previous day. The arts broadcaster Matt Collings felt that Tate Britain needed to reflect Hall's concerns, but added reservations about the Tate's commitment to achieving this, he stated that:

**If Tate Britain was like the inside of Stuart Hall's head it would be great [but]**

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<sup>17</sup> See Wintour, P (2001) 'Chicken tikka Britain is new Cook recipe' in *The Guardian*, 19/4/01.

the people at the Tate are not philosophers; it's like selling cars or Cornflakes<sup>18</sup>.

Collings went on to suggest that for him Tate Britain represented a rather 'dreary' project as opposed to the more 'glamorous' prospects of Tate Modern. This view was reflected on two months later after the opening of Tate Modern when Collings wrote in the journal *Modern Painters* that 'Tate Modern [...] has made Britain more exciting because now we have something we used to think you could only get in Paris or New York' (Collings, 2000, p19). Elsewhere in the journal a telling description of the splitting of the Tate's collection was given:

The Tate has split its collection in two: historic British *left in the old Millbank building*, international modern to Bankside, with modern British *torn* between them.

(Lubbock, 2000, p60 – my emphasis)

There are two particular issues here which I believe say something about a broadly held opinion of the Tate's rearrangement. Firstly, there is the language used to describe the status of the historic British art, which is 'left' at Millbank suggesting its perceived irrelevance, anachronism, lower status and perhaps popularity. This is also emphasised by the description of the Millbank site as 'old'. Whilst it is true to say that the gallery at this site is originally a product of the 1890s, the building used to house Tate Modern is only four decades newer in its original form and whilst the latter has been seen as constituting a 'new' building due to its internal refit, Tate Britain's major extension to provide five additional galleries, a new shop and an additional entrance does not, it would seem, constitute even a suggestion of newness. In addition, the modern British collection is seen as being 'torn' between the two sites, suggesting connotations of disorganisation. Both the concern over Tate Modern's overshadowing of Tate Britain and the concern over the

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<sup>18</sup> 'Art' panel discussion at *Britain and Modernity*, Tate Gallery, 18/3/00.

separate functions of the galleries in terms of the modern British collection were concerns which were both shared and anticipated by the Tate.

The Tate had originally drafted two discussion papers which were compiled for a series of round table discussions held in 1994 (Nairne, Kinley and Morphet 1994; Nairne, Wilton and Moorhouse 1994). These dealt with the need to address and define the roles which the two galleries would take. Those involved in the discussions included figures from a broad range of arts and media interests. One of the discussants was the cultural historian Robert Hewison who I spoke to about these events. He described the significance of the meetings as follows:

Once you've decided that you're going to exist on two sites then questions of what the identity of the two - is it going to work or not - become very important and that really was the agenda for the meetings which took place<sup>19</sup>.

I also asked him about the problems associated with splitting the collection between the two sites and its implications for British art:

The institutional tension was between, I suppose, people who believed that umm... British art would suffer if it was split away from the much more glamorous modern art<sup>20</sup>.

I also asked if this related to the decision to keep the 'Turner Prize' for modern British art at Tate Britain:

It's a crucially important decision and it's emblematic of the fear that Tate Britain will become a second class... a second class citizen in all this<sup>21</sup>.

However, it would seem that in the months following Tate Modern's opening the Tate's fears were realised. Whilst Tate Modern achieved visitor figures of 1 million within six weeks of opening, Tate Britain's opening month saw 162,000 visitors. In the month of

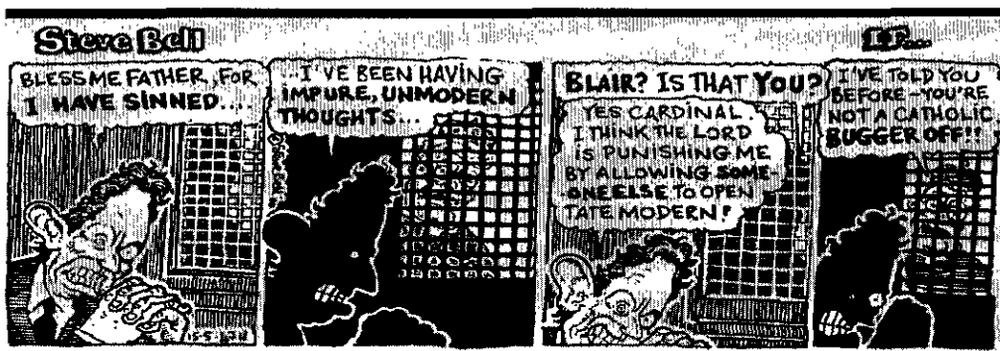
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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Robert Hewison 24/3/00.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

Tate Modern's opening attendance's at Tate Britain fell to 99,000, declining further the following month (Jones, 2000a). What also emerged during the coverage of Tate Modern's opening was its necessary alignment with the rhetoric of New Labour. Described in the broadsheet press as 'the cathedral of cool' (Marr, 2000a) and as being 'built on a wave of Labour party enthusiasm for "cool Britannia"' (Morrison, 2000, p7), the internationalism and modern-ness represented by Tate Modern became seen as integral to New Labour's multicultural and diverse Britain. *The Guardian's* cartoonist Steve Bell even suggesting that Tony Blair had been denied his destiny when it was the Queen who was asked to open the gallery (see figure 2.2).



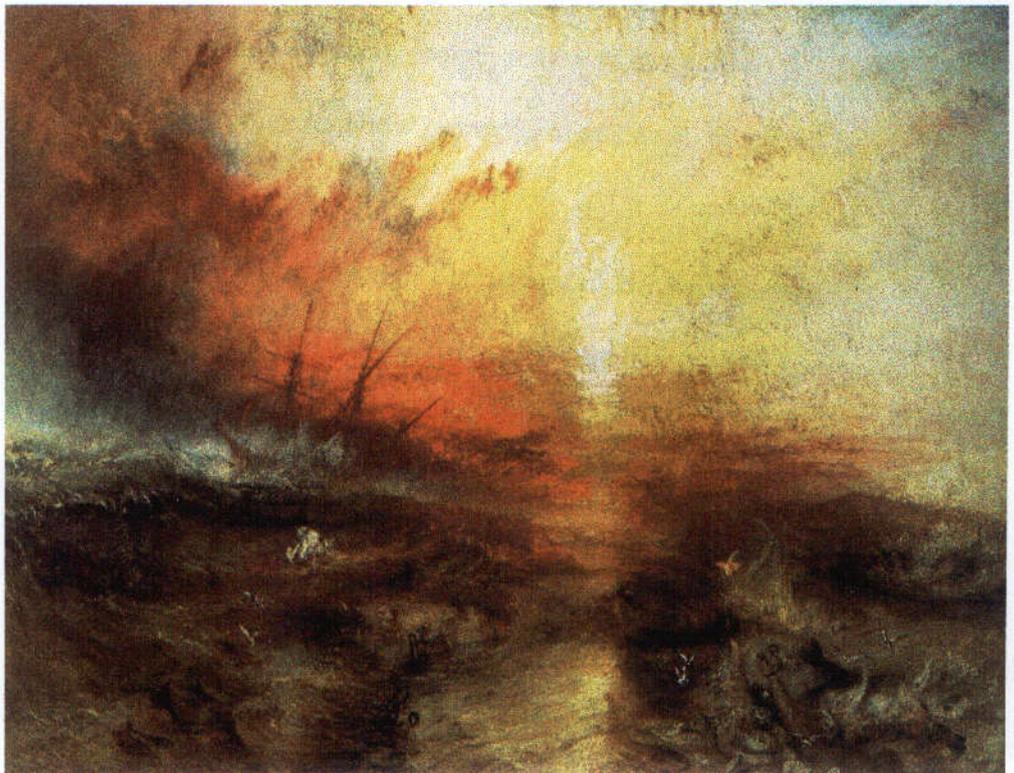
(Figure 2.2 'Bless me father, for I have sinned', Steve Bell, from *The Guardian*, 12/5/00)

If the Tate represented something of New Labour's 'vision' of Britain, then this responsibility was apparently placed almost entirely on Tate Modern; its connotations of urban regeneration, social inclusion through employment policies which centred on the local population, outward looking internationalism and Britain (or at least London) as 'Cultural' centre fitting the New Labour agenda. However, in multicultural terms, as I have continued to emphasise, these aspirations can be seen as defined within a fixed and limiting understanding of its constitutive time-spaces. The temporal – i.e. 'modern', and spatial – i.e. urban, cosmopolitan framework within which this New Labour post-devolutionary, post-Lawrence multiculturalism is situated serves to constrain the possibilities of a more productive, critical form which would avoid such a constrained notion of multicultural time-space. However, I now want to argue, in the final section of

this chapter, that the opening exhibition at Tate Britain *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* did provide possibilities for a more critical engagement with multiculturalism.

### **Tate Britain, Turner's 'The Slaveship' and the 'Hidden' Histories of Britishness**

Turner's *The Slaveship* was painted in 1840 (see figure 2.3), two years after the abolition of slavery in British colonies and when the issue of slavery was at the forefront of political debates. It depicts the act of 'jettison'; the throwing overboard of slaves in order to claim insurance money rather than lose the slave's lives through the ship capsizing, which would not provide payment. This reference was explicit at the time of its painting and when John Ruskin became the owner of the painting he 'deemed the ship 'guilty' [indicating that] he was aware of the nature of the subject' (Hewison, 2000, p71). Ruskin's apparent unease with the subject matter and the general consensus that supported his view led to the painting's export to America where it remains.



(Figure 2.3 – *The Slaveship*, J.M.W. Turner, 1840)

In 1990 *The Slaveship* became the subject of an influential article by Paul Gilroy, published in the journal *Third Text*. The article seeks to address the relationship between 'Black Art' and its problematic relationship to Englishness and the use of *The Slaveship* as Gilroy's example seeks to contest the notion that:

'race is something that enters English culture from the outside during the post-war period [and that what is required is] a re-reading of that culture's history which places the idea of 'race' at the centre rather than the margin

(Gilroy, 1990, p48)

This painting provides an opportunity to explore Britishness, art and multiculturalism in historical terms at the Tate by addressing a British history of art built on 'routes' and giving a more productive meaning to the notion of the 'international context' (Myrone, 2000) which Tate Britain seeks to show British art within. What this painting provides is a context in which to approach the notion of Britain's multicultural histories in a way that illustrates:

The extent to which race has been tacitly erased from discussion of English culture and how a 'racial' theme, relocated at the heart of national self-understanding, can contribute to a new more pluralistic conceptualisation of both England and Britain.

(Gilroy, 1990, p49)

It also conveys this through a treatment of Britain's histories as innately multicultural, an assertion which, as I have affirmed, is highly significant to the realisation of a more critical understanding of multicultural Britishness. What this also achieves, by extension, is an opportunity to disrupt the 'us/them' binary which is problematic within multiculturalism, and the subsequent reification of 'the other' as the sole bearer of an 'exoticised' cultural identity. More broadly it is an understanding of multiple cultures as mutually constitutive of the grand narrative of Britishness or Englishness exemplified in the valorisation of painters such as Turner, as the use of this painting in the Tate's poster served to emphasise.

What makes this concern particularly pertinent, and indeed ironic, with regards to the aspirations of Tate Britain for the *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* exhibition, is that gallery Director Stephen Deuchar states in the catalogue to the exhibition that:

Tate Britain is particularly pleased to be exhibiting paintings by Verrocchio, Catena and the School of Botticelli [...] these are works of a kind rarely seen at Millbank and reflect our renewed wish to explore the world of British art *in its broadest historical and cultural contexts*.

(Deuchar, 2000, p8 – my emphasis)

However, whilst the Tate points towards the historical context of the painting in relation to the issue of slavery, even referring to the fact that this related to the British colonies, this is not in any way reflected on in the context of Britishness or national identity.

I spoke to Sandy Nairne, the Tate's Director of National Programmes, about this issue. He was himself familiar with the article by Gilroy, but added that:

I think actually our communications department working with the advertising agency simply worked on the idea that they wanted to take something out of the Ruskin show and use it as a way of picking up the launch of Tate Britain. So, you're quite right, those ironies are there but I don't think they were conscious in the communications department and I don't think...I wish they had...I don't think our communications department have read Paul Gilroy<sup>22</sup>.

It is, however, perhaps a more fundamental questioning of the assumptions made about how British art is being articulated and conveyed within this kind of context that is required. In order to uncover Ruskin's feelings towards the subject matter and Turner's motives for painting them, it should, as Gilroy argues, be remembered that 'these images were not an alien or unnatural presence that had somehow intruded into English life from

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Sandy Nairne 18/5/00.

the outside. They were an integral means with which England was able to make sense of itself and its destiny' (Gilroy, 1990, p51).

Such stories as can be read through Turner's *The Slavership* can prove useful if demystifying the historical construction of Britishness and pursuing a more critical and productive sense of multicultural Britishness is to be achieved. But whilst these concerns are often situated within academic debates they are also useful to integrate into the narratives of the gallery space. Opportunities such as the one provided by the loan of this painting in a gallery which seeks to explore British art and 'explore [...] different kinds of historical stories' (Myrone, 2000, p11) may prove invaluable if multiculturalism is to re-emerge as a meaningful and productive term.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, my principal aim has been to examine how multiculturalism, despite criticisms which have been levelled against it, can still provide a useful way of articulating the role of cultural identity within understandings of Britishness. By drawing out some of the foundational definitions of culture, I have also aimed to convey how many of the problems associated with multiculturalism can be related to how culture itself is conceptualised, particularly in terms of the way culture becomes reified through the material. By situating this within the context of the distinction between the commodification of 'Culture' as a notion of something which can be seen as a product which becomes uncontested and 'culture' as a lived, negotiable and on going contestation, I have also sought to emphasise the need for several key critical engagements in the realisation of a more productive multiculturalism.

These aspects have, through the gallery's wish to engage with the multiple histories of British art, found themselves situated within debates at the Tate Gallery. The issue of whiteness, in its attempts to de-centre the 'othering' of the non-white subject, has been

engaged with through the Tate's *Picturing Whiteness* conference, whilst the discussions around *Britain and Modernity* also sought to open up debates about inclusion and exclusion relating to Britishness as an identity. This latter issue is particularly pertinent within the context of the example of Turner's painting *The Slavership* at the opening exhibition of Tate Britain: *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites*.

The context in which multiple cultures are constructed and articulated within the Tate also, I have argued, serves to emphasise a particular approach to the multicultural which draws comparison with the New Labour approach to these issues. This is perhaps best articulated by Stuart Hall's concept of 'commercial multiculturalism' and I have shown how a market-based ethos can be seen to pervade the multicultural in this context.

In a broader context, I have also attempted to convey the understanding of multiculturalism as a 'modern' issue which has been articulated through New Labour's rhetoric and read as a distinctly post-war social and cultural issue. What the Turner example also serves to illustrate is how recovering aspects of British history which belie this interpretation is essential in the move towards a critical multiculturalism. The split of the Tate's collection between 'Modern' and 'Britain' also serves to emphasise not only these tensions but the way they have manifested themselves within discourses which cut through party politics, institutional decision making and cultural representation. It is, I have argued, not only through understanding the histories of the ways culture has been interpreted in Britain, but through the histories of those cultures, that a productive understanding of multicultural Britishness depends upon.

The concept of historical 'routes' will be expanded upon in the next chapter where I continue to assert the importance of a critical mapping of histories and suggest that this can be more productively undertaken in the form of 'non-linear histories'. Furthermore, I will examine some of the constitutive historical routes of the gallery itself in illustrating this.

### **HISTORY IN THE MAKING: EVALUATING LINEAR AND NON-LINEAR HISTORIES OF THE TATE GALLERY**

In this chapter, I will define and evaluate what will be described as linear histories and non-linear histories. Through this analysis I will extend the notion of historical 'routes' mentioned in the previous chapter and in doing so establish a theoretical context which will be used in subsequent chapters. In broad terms, then, what I want to argue here is that conventional ways of writing the histories, or indeed the more singular notion of 'a history', of the Tate Gallery rely, either heavily or totally, on a linear framework of analysis. Consequently, I argue that by adopting a non-linear approach it is possible to open up productive ways of understanding the constitutive histories of the Tate Gallery.

Initially then, the task is to outline the limits to the linear approach to historical accounts. These limits can be described through three broad inter-related concerns: the way a linear framework constructs temporal relations, the way it constructs spatial relations and, as a product of these constructions, the way linear histories 'frame' temporal-spatial relations within particular bounded understandings which serve to keep them 'in place'. This last point can be seen in relation to the notion of 'multicultural time-space' developed in the last chapter, but here it will be extended to illustrate the broader context in which the linear framework can be seen to 'break' histories into 'chunks' of time and space.

On a basic level, the principle concern over the linear construction of time is that it is often characterised as a progressive or sequential 'march'. As I argue, this can fail to convey the way that histories sometimes connect different times in the form of reconnections or 'returns'; or rather, histories can be seen to 'go away' and 'come back' in ways which can disrupt the idea of a ceaseless, linear progression.

In relation to the spatial aspect of linear histories, I argue that a principle concern is the way linear narratives can often construct, either implicitly or explicitly, a concept of space as undynamic and heavily reliant on internalised spatial relations. By this, I mean that conventional linear histories of the Tate Gallery often prioritise the spaces of the institution and fail to make the broader, 'external' spatial connections which constitute the gallery. In this sense, I demonstrate that there is much to be gained from tracing these spatial connections, both near and far, and thinking in terms of the way these spatial connections can be seen to constitute the 'Tate beyond the Tate'.

The final point combines the two issues of temporal and spatial concern in drawing attention to the way that linear histories, by breaking history into 'chunks' of time-space, can fail to emphasise the sense of historical 'routes' (which I mentioned in the previous chapter). By drawing attention to this, I argue that adopting a non-linear approach to the historical relations of the Tate Gallery can reveal these 'hidden' routes by drawing attention to the way histories sometimes 'circulate' or 'return' through time-space. This notion will also foreground thinking about histories in terms of networks, which is developed more fully in the following chapter.

In the first section of this chapter I outline the linear account by drawing primarily on two of the existing written historical accounts of the Tate Gallery's histories. These two accounts are *The Tate Gallery* (Rothenstein, 1966) written by former director of the Tate, John Rothenstein, shortly after the end of his tenure and *The Tate: A History* (Spalding, 1998) written to coincide with the gallery's centenary in 1997. These accounts will be used primarily to assess the linear histories which they operate through, the former, to a greater extent than the latter. Though I use this account to illustrate the limitations of linear histories, I do not seek to dismiss, out of hand, the role of linear histories and that the explanation of certain historical connections are indeed more productively conveyed by a linear account.

This first section will also incorporate the evaluation of two specific examples of what I will call 'events' in the constitutive histories of the gallery. These two events are the issuing and maintenance of the 'Chantry Bequest' which provided a substantial amount of the gallery's initial works of art when it opened in 1897 and the flooding of the gallery which occurred in 1928. These two events, as I will point out, are constructed as key points in the histories of the Tate Gallery and I will demonstrate, by drawing on the conventional, linear recordings of them, how they form 'moments' situated within a historical narrative which can be reinterpreted and extended through a non-linear account.

Following on from this I develop the concept of non-linear histories by outlining the notion of historical 'circulation'. This will be undertaken by drawing on some of the key theoretical arguments for using such a concept of historical analysis. The works of Paul Gilroy (1993), Joseph Roach (1996), James Clifford (1997), Miles Ogborn (1998) and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker (2000) are particularly useful in assessing the concept of circulation in the construction of non-linear histories. This second section also points towards the consideration that not only can the Tate's histories sometimes be productively articulated through linear interpretations of history, but that we can also point towards instances when a more non-linear approach has been alluded to by the Tate Gallery in its display of art.

I then extend the notion of historical circulation into a more comprehensive move towards substantiating the role of non-linear histories. Here I will work the concept through a series of examples in order to provide a comparative reflection with the examples used to outline linear approaches. In doing so, I will also elaborate on the specific ways in which histories can be read in a non-linear context. Whilst processes of circulation are a principal concept here, I argue that non-linear histories can also be identified through variant but related concepts. Rather than necessarily working 'back and forth', sometimes we can identify a sudden, emergent 'return' of the past, or a process in which the past is 're-used'. In this sense I argue that non-linear histories are varied and

contingent whilst retaining the common linkage that they all demonstrate a constitutive relationship between past and present which is shifting and fluctuating rather than balanced, cumulative and inevitable.

I will return to the examples of the Chantrey Bequest and the 1928 flood in order to clarify the comparison between linear and non-linear histories as well as adding a further example by returning to the evaluation of Turner's *The Slavership* undertaken at the end of the last chapter, building on this previous discussion by integrating non-linear histories. By drawing together these examples and exploring their historical interpretation in both linear and non-linear terms my principle point will be to argue that non-linear histories are beneficial to the understanding of the constitutive time-spaces of the Tate Gallery.

### Identifying the Linear Account

#### *Reading conventional histories of the Tate Gallery*



(Figure 3.1 – *A Man in a Black Cap*, John Bettes, 1545)

In order to offer an initial illustration of how the linear histories of the Tate Gallery can be defined I will start at what might be described as the beginning of the Tate's 'time-line'. This 'starting point' for the trajectory of the Tate Gallery's linear history is captured by a painting entitled *A Man in a Black Cap* painted by the British artist John Bettes in 1545 (see figure 3.1). There are three importantly inter-related ways in which this painting embodies the claim of origins. Firstly, it is stated, by Tate Gallery curator Martin Myrone, that this is 'probably the earliest surviving easel painting signed by an English artist' (Myrone, 2000, p24) and in this sense it provides a chronological point from which we can trace the linear development of British (or English) art per se. Secondly, it is also 'the earliest painting currently in the Tate's collection' (ibid) thus providing a similar chronological starting point in the internalised sense of the gallery's collection. Thirdly, this painting was one of the first purchased by the Tate when the gallery opened in 1897. In a linear sense therefore, *A Man in a Black Cap* is presented to us as marking the chronological starting point of British art, the Tate's collection and the history of the gallery as an institution.

The painting is consistently featured as an opening example within the gallery's guide books (see for example Wilson 1990, Myrone 2000, Humphries 2001) and thus used to establish a progressive, linear chronology of the collection which is spatially situated by drawing attention to the fact that it is inscribed with the statement 'made by John Bettes Englishman' (Wilson, 1990). As well as providing a sense of the linear construction of time-space, the way this painting is written into the gallery's histories is also useful in emphasising another key concern; that is, the way these three claims to origin inter-relate. This is captured by the way that the painting can be read as a simultaneous 'starting point' in all three contexts through statements such as that made in the opening line of the 1990 guide book, that: 'The story of British art begins at the Tate Gallery with John Bettes's portrait of an unknown man in a black cap' (Wilson, 1990, p11).

The fact that this statement can be read simultaneously as a description of the origins of British art per se, which happen to occur at the Tate, or of the origins of the Tate's own particular story of British art, one amongst many perhaps, is highly significant for considering linear and non-linear histories. What it, perhaps unintentionally, demonstrates is that the stories of the Tate's histories and the stories of the histories of British art are ambiguously inter-twined. What I want to emphasise by making this point is that through the coalescence of these histories those of the Tate Gallery are implicated in those of the notion of Britishness itself. By extension, the complexity of routes involved in the examination of Britishness, as noted in the previous chapter, are also to be considered in the histories of both British art and the Tate Gallery. The importance of this point will be pursued further when the non-linear approach to these histories is evaluated. However, it is important to bear in mind that this understanding of coalescent histories is also often written into conventional linear accounts but, in these, the histories of Britishness, British art and the Tate Gallery are not so much conveyed as inter-twined but as one and the same. To illustrate this we can look to the first of the two main accounts I want to draw on here, that of John Rothenstein's *The Tate Gallery*.

John Rothenstein is, to date, the longest serving director of the Tate Gallery, his tenure covering the period from 1938 to 1964. His book, *The Tate Gallery* was written shortly after this period and published in 1966 offering, at the time, the most comprehensive account of the gallery's history. The most apparent way in which this book can be construed as a linear history is in its strictly chronological framing, a style of presentation which was also reflected in the presentation of art at the Tate under his directorship (see Spalding, 1998). Preceding the three main chapters which structure the book: 'Early Years 1897-1917', 'First Years of Independence 1917-1939' and 'The War and After', comes an introductory chapter entitled 'The Conception'. A common theme which links Rothenstein's account of the gallery's conceptual period is the issue of national identity. He asserts that 'throughout the nineteenth century there was in England a

growing disquiet over the inadequacy of the representation of the British school of painting in the national collection' (Rothenstein, 1966, p9). During this period the 'national collection' was based solely at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square which had opened in 1824 and Rothenstein's portrayal of the unease over the worthiness of this collection is conveyed in his statement that:

The power and wealth of Great Britain and her manifold activity and inventiveness had given her a position of eminence in the world such as she had never before enjoyed, even in the times of the first Elizabeth and the elder Pitt. The suggestion, implicit in her meagre and incoherent representation in Trafalgar Square, that she was inferior in one of the most brilliant fields of human endeavour was therefore unpalatable.

(ibid)

It is the sentiment expressed here that can be used to illustrate the issue of how the histories of the gallery and the histories of the nation are positioned in relation to each other within the conventional linear account. The brief sketch made here of a decidedly jingoistic allusion to national identity is seen as directly expressed through the display of art in the gallery space. For Rothenstein, the national collection, the need for the emergent Tate to act as its custodian and the eminence of national identity are barely distinguishable. The need for the gallery is written into a history which positions it at the end of a temporal line defined by the eminence of a sixteenth-century queen and an eighteenth-century first minister; a line which, through the use of these particular names, is also built on a resolutely insular spatial interpretation of nationhood, guarded against perceived threats of 'outside' influence.

Rothenstein's account in *The Tate Gallery* is also guided by the linear approach in a broader sense throughout its three main chapters. For him, this story of British art contained within the Tate's walls is a perpetual lineage in which 'artistic creation is not divisible into old and new but is a continuous process, always changing yet always the

same' (Rothenstein, 1966, p52). We can identify all three of the weaknesses of the linear approach identified above, with Rothenstein's account. The articulation of time is perhaps the most apparently linear. As something of a preoccupation of Rothenstein's, the unequivocally metered, progressive continuity of time is explicitly adhered to as a frame of reference<sup>1</sup>. Spatially, Rothenstein, whose directorship saw a period of significant imperial decline, also conveys an explicitly insular sense of Britishness. In the third sense, his treatment of both can be seen to break history up into 'chunks' of time-space. Though conceptually this may seem to contradict the notion of time as progressively continuous for Rothenstein, this point is illustrated by Spalding's description of his organisation of the gallery's works:

In his arrangement of the gallery Rothenstein had confined foreign art to the lower galleries, for he wanted 'to show the development of the national school from the Tudor to the present day with such regard to chronology, logic and proportion as to make it intelligible to a perceptive visitor without special knowledge of painting'.

He was noticeably less interested in certain aspects of contemporary art.

(Spalding, 1998, p137)<sup>2</sup>

What is exposed here by Spalding is that through Rothenstein's linear approach he has managed to simultaneously expose its weakness. The selectivity of his curatorial approach belies the continuity of the histories of British art and the aspects of contemporary British art which suggested a historical connection beyond Britain were excluded by Rothenstein's curatorial choices. His predicament becomes the realisation that *you can't 'locate' everything all of the time.*

Frances Spalding's account of the Tate's histories offers us a less rigid adherence to the linear framework, as suggested by her observation of Rothenstein's work. Written as a one hundred year retrospective, what is initially apparent with her account is

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<sup>1</sup> It is also of interest to note Rothenstein (1970) 'Time's Thievish Progress: Autobiography III (London: Cassell), if only for the title alone.

<sup>2</sup> Rothenstein quote cited from (Rothenstein, 1970, p157).

that it exhibits a reflexive awareness of the fact that her history is one of several possible histories, it is simply *The Tate: A History* (my emphasis). In this sense she implies that we need to think in terms of the Tate as having 'histories' rather than 'a history', or in other words, there is not *one line of history* to be pursued. Similarly, in terms of the spatiality of the Tate, she implies that the reliance on a spatially insular understanding of the Tate is insufficient and that:

It has been shaped by particular historical conditions; by the changing agenda set by the cultural and political issues of the day; and by subtle shifts in power between government and Trustees, Director and Chairman.

(Spalding, 1998, p9)

Although these sentiments might suggest a move away from a linear framework, there are also ways in which it is retained.

The book still follows a chronological course and the sequence of successive directors frames the flow of an account which, as a result, retains the defining importance of internally generated institutionalised decision making. In some respects, there is a point to be made here in defence of the linear narrative; often it is clear that to understand the form of the gallery at any given time we must be aware of decisions taken by a director. Similarly, one director's motives might be influenced to a significant extent by their predecessor, such as is illustrated by Spalding in describing the transition from Rothenstein's anti-contemporary stance to Norman Reid's counteraction of it (Spalding, 1998). However, I would argue that limits are still imposed by the linear approach taken up by Spalding as well as Rothenstein and I now want to go on to explore this issue by drawing on the examples of two key 'events' in the Tate's histories as conveyed within the linear context, predominantly that of Spalding's account, before then going on, in the following section, to demonstrate how they fail to 'confine' history to a single 'story'.

## *The Chantrey Bequest: A Linear Account*

The Chantrey Bequest formed the basis of the Tate Gallery's collection when it opened in 1897, but the significance of its historical legacy spans a broad period from before the Tate was opened to several decades after. This history starts with the release of the will of Sir Francis Chantrey, a sculptor and art collector, at the time of his death in 1841. His collection and bequeathed funds were stipulated in the will to be 'forever devoted towards the fine art in painting and sculpture executed within the shores of Great Britain' (original wording of will, cited in Borland, 1995, p129). The will did not come into effect, however, until the death of Chantrey's wife in 1876 and there was still nowhere to house the collection until the Tate opened in 1897.

However, the works contained in the bequest proved controversial on the basis that their quality appeared questionable, particularly to the Tate's early directors, or Keepers as they were initially titled. The reason for this controversy related to the fact that Chantrey had stipulated in his will that the funds be administered by the Royal Academy (R.A.), a body established in the 1760s around an aristocratic membership and under the highly conservative auspices of the R.A.'s first president, Joshua Reynolds (appointed 1768). The R.A. had used Chantrey's funds to finance works produced for its annual shows during the latter part of the nineteenth century. These works were largely produced with commercial interest in mind, tending towards 'subject' paintings which were marketable amongst the expanding middle-class for whom the collecting of art works had become *de rigueur*.

The reason why the Chantrey Bequest represents such a key event in the Tate's histories is not solely because of the significance of this body of works in constituting its opening displays but because it represents a power struggle which is seen as significant in the 'shaping' of the gallery's future. It is this sense of the bequest's history making significance which is most telling in accounts such as Spalding's (see also Borland, 1995; Fyfe, 1996; Taylor, 1999)

To a great extent the Tate was powerless in being able to change the nature of the Chantrey works which rendered the Tate, in Rothenstein's words 'a national Valhalla for shaggy cattle and rollicking monks' (cited in Taylor, 1999, p110). For Spalding:

The Chantrey Bequest, which produced annually a sum of around two thousand pounds, was of primary importance to the development of the collection. Yet though work bought through the Chantrey Bequest became the property of the National Gallery of British Art<sup>3</sup>, no one at Millbank had any say over the purchases, responsibility for which rested with certain members of the Royal Academy Council. This anomaly was to become the cause of fairly continuous dissatisfaction.

(Spalding, 1998, p23)

In addition to this lack of autonomy, the Tate Gallery's administration per se rested with the National Gallery at this time and until its full independence was granted in 1955. This, as with the issue of the bequest, defines the Tate for Spalding as an institution which becomes shaped through its formative decades by the struggle for both its autonomy and its identity (Spalding, 1998).

The 'unravelling' of this historical process is marked by a series of policy negotiations which are relayed as key points in the gradual distancing of the Tate from the terms of the Chantrey Bequest. Spalding notes how Chantrey's will became open to a series of interpretations, drawing particular attention to the fact that Chantrey's wish for the works purchased to be 'executed within the shores of Great Britain'<sup>4</sup> was elaborated on elsewhere in the document. This elaboration became a fundamental point of contention, it stated that works could be purchased by

Artists of any nation provided such artists shall have actually resided in Great Britain during the executing and completion of such works.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this was the original official title of the Tate Gallery though it was rarely used from the outset.

<sup>4</sup> See quote cited in (Borland, 1995) above.

(original wording of will, cited in Spalding, 1998, p27)

This statement fuelled the first significant challenge to the R.A.'s decision-making power on the grounds that it was excluding the possibility of such works consideration. This challenge was mounted by D.S. MacColl, the Tate's second director (1906-1911) and a keen enthusiast of the progressive works of the Post-Impressionists whose work was emanating from Europe at this time. His successful prompting of the Crewe Enquiry (1904) into the fund's administration had little effect in substantive terms and 'as a result there was little significant improvement in the purchases' (ibid). However, it is recalled by Spalding that MacColl persisted and was a significant figure in forcing a review of the issue in the form of the Curzon Report (1915) which was undertaken in 1911.

I will return to the significance of MacColl's interventions and the Curzon Report when considering the uses a non-linear interpretation of these events might offer, here though I want to emphasise Spalding's interpretation. For her, although the recollection of these events are necessarily sequential, and in a linear sense their significance is chronologically linked, she also provides a broad spatial context through which to interpret them. Unlike Rothenstein's account in which 'the public' are cast as subordinate to the guidance of the gallery's institutional knowledge and 'the exhibitions designed to provide this have accordingly a more closely integrated, in a word, a more didactic character' (Rothenstein, 1966, p42), for Spalding societal agency affects the structure of the gallery. She draws attention to the issue that during the period of the Chantrey debacle and the Curzon report 'the balance of power was shifting towards the professional classes' (Spalding, 1998, p28) and that the aristocratic regime of the R.A. was losing ground in the face of the 'enhanced power of the professions and the civil service' (ibid)<sup>5</sup>.

The point regarding spatiality that I wish to make in relation to Spalding's interpretation is that whereas Rothenstein regarded the Tate as a 'centre' which shaped

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<sup>5</sup> See also (Fyfe, 1996) in relation to this point.

public knowledge and embodied a sense of national identity which this public came to receive, Spalding offers a reading of the Tate as an institution which is 'shaped' by external forces from the 'outside'. In this sense, Spalding implies that the passage of time saw the administration of the Chantrey Bequest become increasingly influenced by, or, to use a spatial word, connected to, a series of emergent middle-class spaces. Therefore, with regards to the notion of a linear framework, I would argue that in spatial terms Spalding hints at the value of moving beyond the Tate's spatial boundaries when tracing its constitution and in this sense she disrupts the linear conceptualisation of space. This is not so much to suggest that she is engaging in what can be described as a non-linear reading of the Tate's histories, in so far as her treatment of the temporal conforms to this, but that, to put it crudely, some histories (e.g. Rothenstein's) are more linear than others (e.g. Spalding's).

In the second example of an 'event' in relation to the constitutive histories of the Tate Gallery, I will go on to consider the flood of 1928. By staying with Spalding as well as drawing on the accounts of others we can, through this example, explore further the way the Tate has, within linear accounts, been connected to 'outside' spaces.

### *The Flood: A Linear Account*

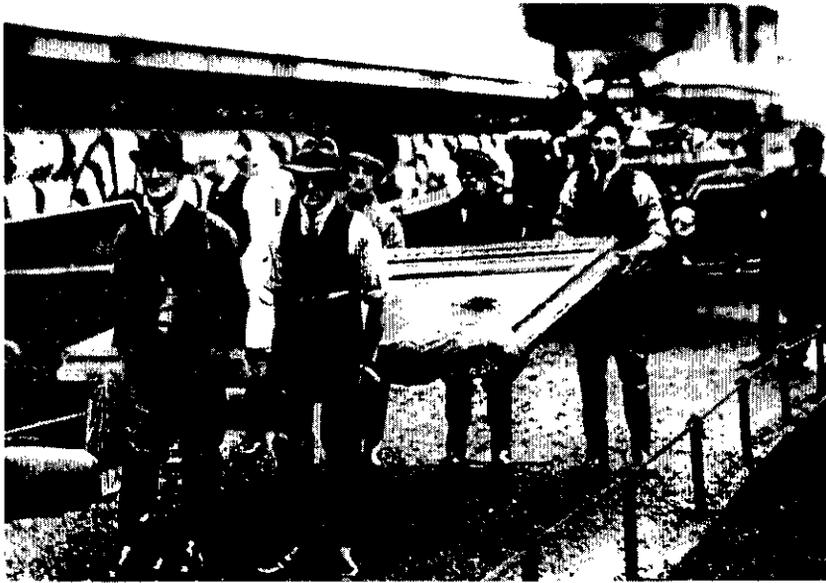
The flooding of the Tate Gallery in January 1928 was the result of several combined factors; predominantly, the gallery's proximity to the River Thames, the inadequacy of river embankments, the architectural design of the gallery and the weather. This 'event' is traced to heavy snow falls which had occurred in the Cotswolds over the Christmas period, close to the River Thames' source, which suddenly thawed early in the new year combining with gale force winds to cause a severe surge in the Thames' flow. Spalding describes the implications for the gallery as follows:

In the early hours of 7 January the Thames embankment wall collapsed near Lambeth Bridge. Soon after, the wall in front of the Tate Gallery was breached. The flood tore away 165 feet of wall, the water sweeping across the road and roaring into the lower galleries.

(Spalding, 1998, p54)

The facet of the gallery's design which contributed to this deluge was in the fact that within its foundations were the vaults of the former Millbank Prison and these had been inadequately filled in, allowing water to penetrate the gallery from beneath.

The significance of the flood for the Tate Gallery was in one sense obvious; the gallery's enforced closure (it only re-opened in part nearly three weeks later), the damage to, and loss of, art works and the cost of the salvage operation causing severe disruption. However, this sense of disruption is also significant in broader terms for the Tate's histories. In her account, Spalding devotes a chapter to 'The Flood and After' and through this asserts the sense in which the flood marks a transitional point for the gallery. Having recalled the occurrence of the flood and the rescue work (see figure 3.2) which saw paintings being blotted and laid out to dry outside the gallery (a point which I will return to later in the chapter), she points to the longer term implications. A notable issue for Spalding was the Board's (i.e. The National Gallery's) insistence that a large proportion of the Turner drawings and watercolours be removed from the vulnerable storage area and taken to the National Gallery (Spalding, 1998). These works had been presented to the gallery in the form of the Turner bequest after the benefactor Lord Duveen (Joseph Joel) had supplied funds for a Turner Wing to be built in 1910 and the importance of Turner's work in raising the gallery's artistic reputation made this a significant loss.



(Figure 3.2 – Pictures being taken to safety following the flood at the Tate Gallery, January 1928, from Taylor, 1999)

The Tate's confrontation of this scenario and the additional concern of needing to rectify the inadequate basement storage space are recalled by Spalding in a 'chain' of events which follow. The Tate once again drew on the financial resources of the Duveen family, this time through the original benefactors son, Joseph Duveen, who 'agreed to pay for the cost involved in creating storage space on the main floor' (Spalding, 1998, p55). This 'agreement', understandably, involved a degree of input from Duveen as to how his money should be spent and when plans were submitted to him 'he objected to the change of level which the plan entailed and he suggested another' (ibid). The significance of these negotiations is that as a result a series of adjustments were made to the gallery's spatial organisation (see ibid) allowing Duveen to add to his plan, new galleries for foreign sculpture. This, in turn, lends additional significance to the flood in terms of its part in allowing a new 'wave' of foreign art to alter the gallery's profile of works and bolster its artistic reputation in defiance of the restrictions of the Chantrey Bequest.

This issue is also picked up by Taylor in his account of the flood's significance but in the context of the events more literal effectiveness in eradicating the presence of the Chantrey works. Due to the unpopularity of much of these paintings, many were in the basement storage area at the time of the flood and Taylor notes that the official gallery

report of the flood stated that '[few] would be regarded as of primary importance from an artistic point of view' (cited in Taylor, 1999, p166). Thus, the aftermath of the flood is portrayed as providing something of an opportunity for the gallery in the sense that most of the lost works went un lamented whilst the gallery was also able to direct funds towards more favourable acquisitions.

Both Taylor and Spalding portray the flood as an event which acts as a key 'moment' in the Tate's history where outside spaces come to bear on the gallery's structure in the form of distant snow falls and riverside embankments and in the most literal sense demonstrate how these external influences (re)constitute the gallery space. What the flood also demonstrates through these accounts is that the consequences of this convergence on the Tate cause a significant 'break' with the past. Thus, integral to the spatial aspects of the flood is the temporal line of these events which allows us to interpret the significance of the structural damage of the flood as constitutive of the structural changes of Duveen's new gallery plans. Once again, as with her recollection of the Chantrey Bequest, Spalding demonstrates how conventional historical frameworks, while operating along a chronological line, can also draw in multiple spaces. However, while time and space become necessarily co-present in the telling of these histories they are not treated in the same way in terms of their multiplicity. What Spalding's story of the flood demonstrates is the way the linear approach constructs time in a distinctly singular sense, breaking history into 'chunks', in terms of 'The Flood and After'. This, I would argue, prompts us to read the significance of the event as a form of partition or division across a singular historical line.

What I want to go on to argue now is that both time and space can be thought of as existing in multiple forms and as integral facets. In this sense I want to convey how histories can be read as different temporal-spatial formations. On occasion, times and spaces can be seen to 'return', in other contexts we can identify a 're-use' of the past. Sometimes the past will re-emerge suddenly, or it might circulate 'back and forth',

demonstrating both the dynamics of historical processes and the ways these dynamics are varied and contingent. This is the principle concern in moving towards an understanding of how non-linear histories operate in various ways and how events in the Tate's histories can sometimes be seen more productively through this dynamic connection of multiple times and spaces.

### **Towards a Non-Linear History of the Tate Gallery and the Role of Historical Circulation**

So far, I have shown how conventional accounts of the Tate Gallery's histories utilise a linear framework for their articulation. I have also drawn attention to the issue that these linear accounts can vary in the degree to which they construct space; sometimes as an internally centred framework where histories are produced from within a singular space (e.g. Rothenstein) and also as a series of multiple spaces which co-produce events within the Tate's histories (e.g. Spalding). What I now want to move towards is a demonstration of how co-relations of time and space allow for historical understandings of the Tate which also see time as operating on a less confined and unsingular basis. In this sense histories can sometimes be seen as 'going away from' the Tate and 'coming back again', that they can 'repeat' or 'return'. It is in this sense that histories can be described as non-linear in that they connect different points in time as well as space within various patterns. What this notion will also capture is the sense in which non-linear histories are about the way time-spaces relate, in other words, how non-linear histories are concerned with the *relations of time-space*; the connections *between* and movements *through* time-spaces.

The task, therefore, in establishing the use of non-linear histories is to draw attention to the issue that they avoid the misconception, as Massey claims, of 'trying to fix and stabilise meanings and identities in relation to time-space' (Massey, 1999, p22). In this sense they can provide a useful challenge to the problem which Bruno Latour identifies as

‘our belief that space and time exist independently as an unshakeable frame of reference *inside which* events and place would occur’ (Latour, 1987, p228 – emphasis in original).

As Latour goes on to state:

This belief makes it impossible to understand how different spaces and different times may be produced *inside the networks* built to mobilise, cumulate and recombine the world.

(ibid – emphasis in original)

Latour’s notion of networks is something I will elaborate upon in the next chapter, what I want to emphasise here is that thinking historically in non-linear terms necessitates that we think about time-space as constructed within connections and continually subject to shifts of meaning.

The notion of non-linear histories has been employed in the work of Manuel De Landa (De Landa, 1997). Although his use of the concept differs from the way I wish to use it, most notably in that he does not account for the non-linear understanding of time, what I do want to build upon from De Landa’s work is the foundational concern that histories should not be understood as ‘a linear advance up the ladder of progress’ (De Landa, 1997, p15)<sup>6</sup> and that histories are characterised as ‘flows’ (De Landa, 1997). The notion of historical flows is particularly useful, as I will now go on to show, when describing circulation.

As Miles Ogborn has pointed out, the ‘ideology of circulation’ has been articulated through the use of body metaphors in terms of ‘the unity of the parts and the importance of flows’ (Ogborn, 1998, p164). This, I would argue, is a useful starting point for conveying the notion of historical circulation, particularly in terms of the metaphor of the heart as a ‘centre’ through which flows ‘go away from’ and ‘return to’<sup>7</sup>. What this fundamentally demonstrates about the use of circulation when thinking about the histories of the Tate

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<sup>6</sup> See also (Daniels, 1993) where the author proposes ‘linear’ and ‘cyclical’ theories of history.

<sup>7</sup> The example of the heart as metaphor in this context is described by Ogborn in relation to his account of the Universal Register office (see Ogborn, 1998).

Gallery is that it is the relationship between places and across spaces which are important (Ogborn, 1998). Or, more specifically, that the Tate's histories are constituted not within 'the heart' of the institution but in the processes that go on in its connections across space and, I would add, time. What I would also add, by way of a fundamental clarification, is that although 'flows' might, in some senses, still follow a linear progression, my emphasis in using flows in the context of non-linear circulation is that they mark shifts in the relations between time-spaces. To this end, things 'return' reconfigured from their 'departure'.

This idea is developed by Paul Gilroy in terms of the way the cultural identities of the Black diaspora have been formed in relation to the Atlantic Ocean (Gilroy, 1993). For Gilroy, the Atlantic is importantly a space of connection between places. These circuits, from Britain to West Africa to North America and the Caribbean, which originated out of the Atlantic slave trade continue to act as a framework where cultures and identities are created in relation to, but also, importantly, *in-between* places. For Gilroy, one of the key points of this project is to demonstrate how the histories of these identity formations 'transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity' (Gilroy, 1993, p19). The Atlantic has also been used as a framework for the historical circulations of working class struggle (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000) and performance (Roach, 1996). What is particularly useful to take from the latter example of Atlantic circulations is the way that Roach identifies modes of theatrical, musical and ritual performance as acts of 'mediation between the past and the future, between memory and renegotiated identity' (Roach, 1996, p121). In this sense, he traces histories through the way they influence such events across the relations of time-space; performances on different sides of the Atlantic and at different times being constituted *in relation to* each other.

These Atlantic circulations have also been instrumental in the constitution of the Tate Gallery in the examples of Tate St Ives and Tate Liverpool which I will describe in

chapters 5 and 6 respectively. At this point, however, it is the process of circulation and the way it articulates histories as non-linear formations that I am seeking to establish. What these examples all offer is a counteraction to the way that conventional histories tend to be place-centred and constructed through a linear chronology. In doing so, they can sometimes reveal histories which are consistently hidden or made peripheral within the conventional linear framework and demonstrate that 'these histories are not somehow separate from the main event' (Ogborn, 1998, p15).

It is in this sense that I want to trace 'the Tate beyond the Tate', re-connecting some of these histories to the institutional 'centre' by tracing the 'historical realities that slip out of the [...] frame' (Clifford, 1997, p23). I will explore these histories by focusing on three 'events' within the Tate's histories which act as points from which different time-spaces can be traced. Two of the three will return to the examples used earlier in the process of outlining the conventional linear framework; namely, the Chantrey Bequest and the 1928 flood. The other example, examined first, returns to the painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming on* (1840) or *The Slaveship*. This is different from the other two examples in the obvious sense that it is an object in the form of a painting rather than 'an event'. However, the implications of this should not be ignored, as they are a key issue which develop in the next chapter; that is the notion that objects, such as paintings, can be seen to have agency within the constitutive historical relations of the Tate Gallery. At this point however, it is the non-linear histories which can be traced through this painting that I want to consider.

## **Tracing the Non-Linear Histories of the Tate Gallery**

### ***Turner's 'Slaveship': Non-Linear Interpretations***

At the end of the previous chapter the example of Turner's *The Slavership* was used in order to demonstrate the way Britishness can be historically problematised through the paintings evocation of 'a 'racial' theme, relocated at the heart of national self-understanding' (Gilroy, 1990, p49). Here this issue is extended into tracing the 'routes' of the painting itself and the meanings it has carried with it across various time-spaces. In this sense I demonstrate the way the painting can be seen to 'return' to Britain in both the literal sense and in terms of the way this affects the stability of its meanings.

The Atlantic plays a part in the constitution of these meanings in two senses. In a broad sense it is, as Gilroy points out, written into the Atlantic histories through which 'blackness' can be located at the 'centre' rather than the 'periphery' of Britishness (Gilroy, 1990). It is interesting to note also, referring back to Ogborn's point regarding the use of body metaphors in describing historical circulations, that Gilroy uses the 'heart' metaphor in articulating this point (see above quote). The more specific sense in which the Atlantic is constitutive of the meanings generated in relation to this painting is in its literal movements across the Atlantic.

This latter point stems from the original purchase of the painting by the Victorian artist and critic, John Ruskin. As I recalled in the previous chapter, Ruskin became troubled by the subject matter of the painting and despite his admiration for its 'truth to nature' (Hewison, 2000) in capturing the rough sea in oils his awareness of the less painterly meanings attached to the picture forced him to sell it. The subject matter and the fact that the revered Ruskin saw fit to sell the painting made it an unattractive proposition in Britain and he eventually sold it to the American collector J.T Johnson in 1869 (ibid). The painting was exhibited in New York in 1872 (ibid) and later purchased by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts where it remains in the collection. However, its return to Britain and the newly opened Tate Britain in 2000 also saw a significant 'return' in relation to the meanings carried by the painting.

As noted in the previous chapter, the painting's inclusion in the new gallery's opening exhibition *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites* saw it situated as a centrepiece in the display. The use of the painting for the gallery's publicity (see previous chapter) further established it as a focal point for attracting visitors and in doing so rendered both the painting and Turner as signifiers of the zenith of British art. Tate Britain's Director, Stephen Deuchar, singled out 'The Slaveship' in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, stating that:

There have been many gestures of notable generosity – not least the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' loan of Turner's *Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon coming on* of 1840, so beloved by Ruskin, its former owner.

(Deuchar in Hewison, 2000, p8)

The important point I would draw from this statement, aside from its additional confirmation of the paintings importance in the exhibition, is the way Ruskin is recalled as being - far from disquieted by the painting - in love with it.

What this draws attention to is the way that the painting's meaning has changed through its journeys across the Atlantic and back; it has returned to Britain but it has also returned, in terms of its meanings, to those of Ruskin's initial sentiments towards it, rather than those which saw its sale and move to America. In this sense we can see that its meanings are unstable and negotiable in relation to the time-spaces which it occupies. In this sense we can identify the non-linear characteristics of the painting's histories through the way it has circulated between Britain and America. Its histories are not characterised by its linear progression through time and space but by the way its meanings are enhanced, changed or reconfigured at various points; what might be described as 'eruptions'. However, an additional matter is that these 'eruptions' are not just within the histories of the painting as an isolated object, they also constitute broader non-linear histories.

These broader histories are those of British art and Britishness as it is articulated at the Tate Gallery. In 1869, this painting stood at the periphery of British art, its subject

matter possibly considered ‘too close to home’ in relation to its proximity to the practices of slavery. The tract which has been marked by the painting’s temporal and spatial distancing allows the painting to be written into ‘new histories’. Although this concept may seem oxymoronic, it is only in the context of Tate Britain’s opening display in 2000 that this painting returns to find that it occupies *a new place in the past*. What this also shows us is that artists and paintings can occupy and, as in this example, shift between, different proximities in relation to the Tate’s constructions of Britishness. This way of looking at the work of Turner and others as being seen to occupy proximate positions in relation to Britishness is explored in the next chapter. The point here though, is that we can see how *The Slaveship*, at different points shifts between ‘near’ and ‘far’. As Linebaugh and Rediker imply in their account of the ‘hidden histories’ (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000) of the eighteenth century Atlantic, it is only through tracing these ‘hidden’ or ‘distant’ histories that it is possible to understand what *The Slaveship* means in the ‘here and now’ of British art at the Tate.

The constructions of Britishness and British art are also central to the next account I want to pick up on in returning to the issue of the Chantrey Bequest.

### *The Chantrey Bequest: A Non-Linear Account*

When the Tate Gallery first opened in 1897 its formal title, which was rarely referred to, was the National Gallery of British Art. Furthermore, and as a direct result of the National Gallery not wanting to concede any of the most famous historical paintings, its remit was established as covering only ‘modern’ British art which, at this time, was deemed by the Board, to be constituted by the works of artists born after 1790. As Spalding notes, this had a particularly instrumental effect on the Tate’s inability to gain the works of either Turner or Constable from the National Gallery, perhaps the most highly regarded British artists at this time (Spalding, 1998). Thus, through the Chantrey Bequest, the

'modern' products of the R.A.'s annual shows came to constitute much of the gallery's initial collection.

In having its remit established in this way the Tate, through its early reliance on the Chantrey bequest, became a place where British art could be seen in its contemporary forms, as it would be one hundred years later when the Saatchi collection would form the exhibition 'Sensation' (1997), ironically, at the Royal Academy. In this sense the early Tate Gallery was a place where Britishness was interpreted through emergent forms of British art, albeit decidedly nostalgic subject-based paintings. Gordon Fyfe has described the Tate in its early years as, 'a medium through which external processes are interpreted and through which cultural agents produce a sense of purpose' (Fyfe, 1996, p213). The point here is that the Tate acted as a 'centre' which drew on, or to be more precise, was constituted by, 'external processes' in its constructions of Britishness. Also, as Brandon Taylor has noted, at this time national pride and nostalgia were intrinsically linked in evocations of national identity and the 1890s are characterised by such events as the establishment of the National Trust (1895) and the first publication of *Country Life* (1897) (Taylor, 1999). For Taylor, the importance of these considerations when thinking about the opening of the Tate Gallery is that:

Such projects formed part of a wider network to which the National Gallery of British Art belonged, and which can be said to have created, as well as catered to, the prevailing mood of 'pride in the nation'.

(Taylor, 1999, p131)

There are comparisons to be made between this period and the articulations of Britishness taking place around the turn of the millennium, as described in the previous chapter. Although the forms of articulation can be argued as different, both times see *attempts being made to stabilise the meaning of Britishness. Therefore, the role of the newly opened Tate Britain can be compared, in a direct way, to the original opening of the gallery in 1897. This can be identified in comments made in an interview I conducted with*

Martin Myrone, a curator at Tate Britain and author of the gallery's guide: *Representing Britain 1500-2000*:

We are returning, in quite a concrete sense, to the original proposal of the Tate as the National Gallery of British Art – a peculiarly nationalist, centralist late Victorian idea. We have a responsibility to undertake this project with some self-consciousness<sup>8</sup>

In a literal sense, therefore, we can identify *Representing Britain 1500-2000* - the opening display of the permanent collection - as a 'returning' of history, or, perhaps more accurately, a 're-use' of the past. However, what I consider to be more significant to the non-linear understanding of this 'ret-use' is that, as Myrone implies, this is only a 'partial' return to the Chantrey-based original vision of British art. What should be emphasised (in the non-linear sense) is that Myrone's reference to the Tate's need to be 'self-conscious' demonstrates that how it chooses to construct its contemporary story of British art is a negotiation between contemporary discourses of Britishness which are generated outside the gallery in a broader cultural sense and historical constructions of Britishness within the Tate.

In this sense, the non-linearity of this event can be defined in terms of the selective nature of this 're-use' of the past. What Myrone alludes to is a present which sees aspects of the gallery's history returning to directly shape the present form of its spatial organisation alongside the more 'proximate' aspects of broader contemporary cultural discourse

To illustrate this point we can look not only at the relationship between the Chantrey Bequest and *Representing Britain 1500-2000*, but also in relation to the display of the permanent collection which replaced the latter: *Different Britain's 2001-1500*. This saw a shift from the latter's non-chronological, thematic display<sup>9</sup> back to a more

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Martin Myrone, 01/02/00.

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 4 for an analysis of this non-chronological, thematic display.

conventional chronological display, though it was claimed that despite this apparent reversion to conventionality, *Different Britain's 2001-1500* offered innovation in its approach, the Tate saying of it that:

“Different Britain’s 2001-1500” is about seeing the familiar with the unfamiliar, celebrating British art alongside British culture and revelling in the sheer unexpected relevance of it all to the way we live today.

(Tate Gallery, 2001, pviii)<sup>10</sup>

Not only does this reworking of the permanent collection itself bear a claim to achieving a ‘re-use’ of the past, also it emphasises that the negotiations that take place between historical stories of the past are an ongoing process at the Tate and that they continue to reshape the present in different ways. This sentiment of returning to the past in varying and innovative ways is reflected in director Nicholas Serota’s statement that:

Our aim must be to generate a condition in which visitors can experience a sense of discovery in looking at particular paintings [...] in a particular room at a particular moment, rather than find themselves standing on the conveyor belt of history.

(Serota, 2000, p55)

This ongoing process, therefore, is not composed of a linear transition from the Chantrey Bequest onwards through time, but through a continual sense of historical connecting ‘back and forth’, ‘near and far’. ‘British culture’ is reflected as well as constructed in the gallery space in the *relations between* its different constructions at the Tate over its history.

It is not only through the constructions of British art that the Chantrey Bequest acts as a historical point through which these processes of circulation occur, but also in the constructions of the relationship between British art and its constitutive other: foreign art. This point takes us back to the issue of the Curzon report (1915) which, owing to the First World War, did not conclude until 1915. The Tate’s then director, D.S. MacColl was

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<sup>10</sup> Note that this quote is taken from the ‘News, Events, Offers’ section of *Tate Magazine* which is of unacknowledged authorship.

supported by Lord Curzon in his endorsement of the qualities of bringing foreign art to the Tate Gallery and this was also reflected, as Taylor points out, in a broader shift in British society towards support for France in light of the outbreak of war (Taylor, 1999). The report made a tentative move towards allowing the Chantrey Bequest to be complimented by contemporary foreign works, stating that:

There ought to be a certain number, just to act as a stimulus, and let people see what foreigners are doing, but I do not think a great, separate gallery filled with specimens of Continental art would be good for our art.

(cited in Taylor, 1999, p140)

However, the report added, in a somewhat prophetic statement which would take approximately eighty years to be realised, that:

Ultimately a 'modern foreign' collection might assume such importance as to justify moving it to a separate and independent building, in which case the new extension at Millbank would revert to becoming a gallery for British art.

(ibid)

Although the prophetic nature of this statement anticipating the Tate's eventual split of its London galleries between Tate Britain and Tate Modern does not extend to the location of a second gallery at Bankside, it carries resonances with the debates over the tension between the 'modern foreign' and the 'British' collections generated by the controversies of the Chantrey Bequest.

As Miles Ogborn has pointed out (1998, 2001), the area around Bankside was the location for the eighteenth-century Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, a site where the 'dangers' of foreign cultural influence were embodied in the form of the 'Macaronis; young fashionable men steeped in the Anglo-Italian cultures of the Grand Tour. The area was, before this, also associated with cultural activities, providing the original location for London's theatres as well as other Elizabethan pursuits such as bear-baiting. In this sense, the location can be seen as almost dialogically opposed in a historical sense to the

landscape of the City of London and St Paul's which it faces, where histories are characterised by commerce and religious grandiosity (Massey, 2000). In one sense therefore, we can see Tate Modern's opening as another return within these spaces associated with cultural activities. However, there is another connection related to Bankside which bears more literal links across time and within this space; namely, 'the huge protest [...] aroused by Bankside power station' (Spalding, 1998, p56) – the building which would later house Tate Modern. This protest was sparked by the Tate's 'readiness to act over environmental issues' (ibid) and this sensitivity was generated by the lessons learnt from the 1928 flood, which is the subject of my final example.

### *The Flood: A Non-Linear Account*

A connection to the 1928 flood emerged at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens in 1998, in an exhibition featuring the work of the British artist Cornelia Parker. The particular works of interest within this exhibition's display (and which were commissioned for it) were contained within an installation called *Room for Margins* (1998). The description of the work's composition was 'margins and canvass liners from paintings, and blottings from drawings by J.M.W. Turner' (cited in Corrin, 1998)<sup>11</sup>. These 'ghosts' of the original paintings' (ibid) show faint traces of the originals with some areas more detailed than others. The blottings are pieces of paper used on the night of the flood to soak the excess water from their surfaces and which had been kept in drawers in the conservation department at the Tate Gallery until Parker had re-appropriated them as art works. The effect of this re-appropriation is Parker's ability to capture 'the event' in this particular form of historical return; it is simultaneously a work of art and a translation of the event. Written into these works are all of its constitutive elements: the Thames water, the weather, the broken embankment, the timing of the salvage operation, the miscibility of

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<sup>11</sup> N.B. – this exhibition catalogue contains unnumbered pages.

the paint and the absorption of the paper and, of course, Turner and the Tate Gallery. All emerge from various time-spaces in order to make this particular historical story readable at the Serpentine Gallery in 1998.

The combination of associations brought together in this space provided an effective demonstration of the way that histories can be productively interpreted in non-linear terms. Reference has already been made to the way that the flood has been written into conventional linear accounts through an understanding, even if this is implicit, that this 'event' was a product of multiple spaces. What Parker's work adds to this interpretation, however, is the way it articulates the circulation of these different elements through a demonstration of their continued movement through time-spaces and the new meanings brought to them as a consequence of this. Corrin goes on to state the Parker's work seeks to 're-contextualise historic object [...] incongruous items are brought into tense proximity with unexpected results' (ibid). In non-linear terms, this suggests not so much a process of circulation or even a 're-use' of the past but, more specifically, a sudden, unexpected 'return' of the past. It is this 'return' which enables us to read both the present moment of Parker's work and the historical event of the flood as integral. Furthermore, the inseparability of these facets which produce *Room for Margins* also demonstrate an inseparability of internal and external constitutive elements which illustrates how it is possible to talk of the Tate 'beyond the Tate'.

What *Room for Margins* represents is a sense of historical narrative which cannot be fully conveyed by linear histories. In one sense it is a story of the Tate Gallery's history, a form of record of the flood. In another sense it is no more than a work of art and this is captured in the fact that no explanatory label was provided in the Serpentine Gallery to contextualise the work; that is to say, it did not and did not need to cite the Tate Gallery to function as a work of art. In other words, this work is neither a projection of the Tate's history, nor does it determine what that history is, it plays a part in both. This resonates with what Bruno Latour has described as 'quasi-objectivity' (Latour, 1993) where objects

are neither 'hard' constructions which shape the world, nor 'soft' receptacles which are shaped by it. This notion links with non-linear histories in the way that what is at issue is not something which is static and which functions in a predetermined way, but something which conveys movements, flows and connections, and what becomes re-configured within and through these processes. What *Room for Margins* demonstrates is the way histories are generated *in the relations between time-spaces*. In this sense we gain an understanding of histories not as being 'of' or 'from' the Tate Gallery in a deterministic way, but of histories as stories which 'pass through' the Tate Gallery and which are continually shaped by it and reshape it. In a more straightforward sense, what *Room for Margins* also shows us about non-linear histories, is the way they can sometimes be characterised as a point in the past suddenly 're-appearing' to reconfigure the present.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have proposed that there are aspects of the histories of the Tate Gallery which remain 'hidden' within the conventional linear accounts. I have demonstrated this by drawing, initially, on what have been defined as linear accounts, most notably John Rothenstein's *The Tate Gallery* and to a greater extent, Frances Spalding's *The Tate: A History*. Through the use of these texts I examined two particular examples within the Tate's histories; namely, the issuing and display of the works and the administration of the funds generated by the Chantrey Bequest and the flooding of the Tate Gallery in 1928.

I have then gone on to outline the limits of a conventional linear framework through an account of non-linear histories. Here, I have made the claim that non-linear histories can be defined through various forms of processes in the relations between 'past' and 'present'. This has been taken up in order to demonstrate the relations and connections across time-spaces which, I have also argued, provide important historical considerations

in evaluating the constitutive histories of the Tate. More specifically this has shown how linear histories break up history into 'chunks' and how non-linear histories can be employed to demonstrate that history can also be seen as constructed within the relations between time-spaces.

This thinking has then been extended by returning to my earlier examples of the Chantrey Bequest and the 1928 flood. In addition to these examples I initially returned to that of Turner's painting *The Slaveship*. This first example was used to show how the meanings of the painting are unstable and contingent on the time-spaces it not only occupies, but the time-spaces it passes through. This was discussed through the notion of 'eruptions' of meaning at these various points in its circulations through time and space and how this notion is also tied to the way the painting can be seen to 'shift' from 'near' to 'far' in its relationship to the notion of British art as it moves through the Atlantic world.

Returning to the example of the Chantrey Bequest demonstrated how contemporary displays of British art at the Tate Gallery draw on various time-spaces for their definition. In this sense, they both represent the broader contemporary discourses of Britishness that connect with contemporary cultural constructions from beyond the Tate and the internal histories of the Tate's constructions of British art through a sense of 're-using' the past of the Tate's early, Chantrey Bequest years. These early years of the Tate's display of British art were also shown to be constructed from a combination of time-spaces, thus the contemporary display was shown to be composed of an ongoing negotiation of different historical 'routes'.

Finally, by returning to the example of the flood through looking at Cornelia Parker's *Room for Margins* installation at the Serpentine Gallery, I demonstrated how history can sometimes be seen as constituted in a relational sense through the sudden 're-emergence' of an historical event. Here the non-linear can be defined differently again; rather than the 'circulations' of *The Slaveship*'s journeys, or the intentional 're-using' of the gallery's own history in the example of the Chantrey Bequest, here there is a point in

the past which appears to suddenly 'pop-up'. Each form of temporal-spatial connection can be described as non-linear but they can equally be described as distinct ways of being non-linear.

In the next chapter, the construction and articulation of British art at the Tate Gallery is developed specifically in relation to Tate Britain. This will extend some of the issues I have addressed in terms of the stability of meanings within the notion of Britishness and British art and the relational sense in which this can be evaluated. Once again this will involve thinking about connections within the geographies of the Tate and this will be primarily addressed through exploring the way these geographies can be demonstrated in terms of networks.

## CHAPTER 4

### REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES: QUESTIONING THE GEORAPHIES OF BRITISHNESS AT TATE BRITAIN

The multiplicity of meanings associated with the notion of Britishness was demonstrated in the late 1990s by its various forms of cultural identity; from the reappropriation of the Bonzo Dog Doo Daa Band's term 'Cool Britannia' to Britpop, Britart, New Labour New Britain and the process of political devolution, it seemed that the discussion of what exactly Britishness meant was ubiquitous. Much of this process of re-evaluation and, in many cases, attempts at consolidation can be seen to have emerged from the rhetoric of Blairite politics, as hinted at in the examples above. The institutionalisation of this 'Rebranded Britain' manifested itself explicitly in spaces such as the much-maligned Millennium Dome in North Greenwich. Here we were invited to consume a Britishness that rejects the dusty conservation of Heritage and projects itself as innovation for the future. It is this allusion to the temporal aspects of Britishness which is of interest here, for the very name Millennium Dome facilitates, albeit in rather crude terms, an understanding of Britain as simultaneously pertaining to time and space, or time-space. By drawing together both the temporal and the spatial in this way it is possible to think about how time and space inform the ways in which we 'think' Britishness. Just as we might consider whether the Millennium is something which occurs more so on a reclaimed industrial site on the Greenwich peninsula than in say, the West country or the North west, we might also think about what Britishness means under New Labour compared to Charles II during the Restoration. Thinking of time and space as not only co-related but co-present, we can also consider 'where' Britishness is located. In this sense, what I want to engage with here is a notion of Britishness which links and 'cuts across' different spaces, moving

beyond the confines of the bounded nation state. As Brandon Taylor has argued, ‘art institutions termed ‘national’ are highly complex objects, whose histories can be told in many ways’ (Taylor, 1999, xiii). It is, I would argue, the multiple spatial and temporal dimensions contained within the notion of Britishness that constitute these complexities. For institutions such as Tate Britain this relates to the notion that ‘the national’ is not merely something which is internally generated, but, as I have argued in the previous chapter, that the times and spaces which have emerged within the British nation state can be seen as arrivals and departures, informed by ‘other’ times and ‘other’ spaces.

In this chapter, I want to consider the ways Britishness and the notion of British art are being questioned at Tate Britain. This will involve the examination of how they are being opened up as concepts which can be articulated in multiple ways and in relation to multiple times-spaces. By utilising the notion of networks and, more specifically, drawing on Actor Network Theory (ANT), I will also think about how the notions of Britishness and British art ‘act’ in this process of questioning. This will encompass an analysis of how Tate Britain’s commitment to conveying stories of British art also raises issues over the meanings which these concepts carry. Furthermore, I will go on to consider the problems faced by Tate Britain in its attempt to raise questions about how British art might be interpreted in opposition to the conventional accounts which are situated in a more insular understanding of the nation state. These latter accounts will be identified in particular through press responses to Tate Britain’s initial displays.

The problem of confronting the complexities of Britishness is not a new problem for the Tate, which as I have shown in looking at its role as the National Gallery of British Art in the previous chapter. In its early days the questions ‘when and where were British artists?’ (Fyfe, 1996, p221) became a major concern with questions raised by the

management of the Chantrey Bequest<sup>1</sup>. Whilst this Bequest was to be used for the acquisition and display of 'British Fine Art' (ibid), as Fyfe asserts, this led to a problem for the Tate in that it became 'a contested site at which the significance of nation and the meaning of British art were determined' (ibid). As I have also pointed out in the previous chapter, the problem of determining the meaning of a national collection at the Tate Gallery can be directly linked from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. However, changes in curatorial style meant that the contested character of British art was no longer something that was to be settled by the curator as didact. Rather, the uncertainty was to be exhibited as a guiding principle of display. As the Tate's present director stated: 'our aim must be to generate a condition in which visitors can experience a sense of discovery [...] rather than find themselves on the conveyor belt of history' (Serota, 2000, p55).

The principle behind this curatorial practice is that priority is given to the visitors 'experience' of a more direct relationship to art works as opposed to the 'interpretation' of the curator (Serota, 2000). *Questioning Britishness* can, therefore, be seen as a favoured aspect of the visitor's experience rather than as a mere curatorial inconvenience. But questioning Britishness in the latter part of the century reflected wider social and political issues; Scottish and Welsh devolution, the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, Britain's place in Europe and the presence of far-right racism have peppered contemporary debates on national identity. Confronting the difficulties of defining Britishness and, as I will argue here, considering the diversity of its constitutive times and spaces, has become a significant contemporary issue for the Tate Gallery within a broader reconsideration of Britain's geographies. Programme curator, Martin Myrone, conveyed to me the way this issue has been considered at Tate Britain as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3 for a more extensive account of the workings of this fund.

I guess the first thing to say is that Tate Britain is committed to opening up questions of national identity [...] given that the 'nation' and 'Britain' are so much in question in 'real' political terms (i.e. devolution) and cultural terms (i.e. regionalism, cultural diversity, post-colonialism)<sup>2</sup>.

So when on 27th March 2000 the Tate Gallery at Millbank re-opened its doors as Tate Britain for the first time its new display sought to engage with the notion of Britishness in a broad and inquisitive context. The idea of redefining the gallery's role had first been mooted over seven years earlier and was coupled with plans to open a new site at Giles Gilbert-Scott's Bankside Power station, to be known as Tate Modern. Design company Wolf Olins, specialists in re-branding and identity, had been consulted and the matter of establishing a remit for this new exposition of British art was undertaken. A principle concern was that the opening of Tate Britain should not be overshadowed by the opening of its counterpart. Bankside was a project that involved an expenditure of around £130 million in order to create the largest gallery of modern art in the world and, as I have pointed out in Chapter 2, there was an awareness at the Tate that this would represent a more 'glamorous' visitor attraction. Fundamental to this concern was the fact that whilst Tate Modern would open in May 2000, the completion of work on the North West Quadrant at Millbank, and thus the full realisation of a new Tate Britain, would not be until March 2001<sup>3</sup>. Mindful of the fact that this sequence of events might not be to the advantage of, and that it might even detract from, Tate Britain, Wolf Olins proposed a re-think. As a result, in the autumn of 1999 the Tate announced that it would 'begin to install a completely new presentation of the British collection.... leading up to the launch of the Tate Gallery of British Art<sup>4</sup> in March 2000' (Tate Gallery, 1999a). The new strategy was to facilitate a more graduated transformation at Millbank whereby rooms would be

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<sup>2</sup> E-mail interview with Martin Myrone, 1/2/00.

<sup>3</sup> This extension was in fact delayed and eventually opened to the public on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2001.

<sup>4</sup> This being the originally proposed title of the gallery.

systematically re-hung in the manner of Tate Britain before its new official opening date. Thus, by March 2000 the Tate at Millbank became Tate Britain with the completion of the re-hang but without the extended gallery space and with building contractors still at work.

Through the re-hanging of the collection, the Gallery, through the display of the permanent collection: *Representing Britain 1500-2000* set about disrupting a formal, chronological profile of the past, something which director Nicholas Serota had long espoused (Garlake, 1991). This process was to incorporate a broad curatorial distinction between 'themed' areas and rooms dedicated to 'major names'. Whilst the names included artists such as William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough and William Blake, the former were structured around broad themes such as 'Private and Public', 'Literature and Fantasy' and 'Home and Abroad'. These were subdivided into more specifically themed rooms; in the case of 'Home and Abroad' the rooms being 'British Landscape', 'Images of War' and 'Artists Abroad'.

It is the curatorial intentions of this last room which I consider in this chapter. The reason for selecting this room is that it was ascribed a particular function within the broader scheme of representing Britain, and one which I believe is central to Tate Britain's broader intentions to engage with issues of re-evaluating Britishness within the context of contemporary Blairite political discourses. The intention was that 'Artists Abroad' would show British artists' 'responses to landscapes and cultures around the world revealing the international context of British art' (Tate, 1999b). I will examine the room itself later. My initial task, however, is to explore the idea of an 'international context'. In doing so, I will consider aspects of what might be termed time-space dynamics and how they might help to inform the ways in which we might think about Britishness and its 'Representation' at Tate Britain.

## Time-Space and the International Context

In placing British art in an international context, Tate Britain can be seen to have confronted a tension between the homogeneous categorisation often imposed by the term 'British art' and a more diverse understanding of what this term might mean. The diversity that was being expressed in the Artists Abroad room was in the co-presence of the work of British born artists who have lived and/ or worked abroad, and those who were born abroad and have lived and/ or worked in Britain. However, the unification of this work was retained in the premise that 'British art has recurrently been shaped through interaction with foreign cultures' (Myrone, 2000, p18). This, therefore, goes some way towards defining what is being conveyed by the term 'international context'; that we are dealing with a notion that is attempting to overcome a sense of fixity about how British art is constructed. That is to say that British art becomes something which is *unbounded*; it can lay claims to be beyond the shores of the nation state and circulate back and forth. As Paul Gilroy has pointed out, and the Artists Abroad room appears to endorse, we can question 'the unthinking assumption that cultures always flow into patterns congruent with the borders of essentially homogeneous nation states' (Gilroy, 1993, p5). The new room afforded the visitor a sense of spatial dynamism. It also follows that, if we are talking in terms of dynamics, we are talking of processes, and by incorporating this awareness we can talk of time-spaces.

My argument is that if the Tate's notion of an international context alludes to what might be termed 'time-space dynamism', then this art gallery's conceptualisation of Britishness might relate to what Doreen Massey refers to as 'a progressive sense of place' (1993a). This sense of place can be defined in terms of the notion that 'what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalised history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus' (Massey,

1993a, p66). The implication of this perspective on culture and identity is that there is no fixed and permanent boundary which defines a nation or a 'national art'. In this sense there are no essences to be identified in relation to place, but that they are constituted within the dynamics between places and the networks which these dynamics produce. Also, in relation to this, I would emphasise that not only, as Gilroy has pointed out above, do these dynamics represent 'flows' of culture, but that it is within these that meanings are produced. British art cannot be unproblematically located in its international context as though the division between the two was not a process worthy of examination in its own right. Thus, to follow Massey, the locus that is this place Britain consists of a convergence of the larger constellation of spatial relations. These converge on the point of Britishness and in so doing provide a 'sense of place'. As Massey explains:

The uniqueness of a place, or a locality, in other words is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself.

(ibid)

There are two fundamental points to be made in connection with this notion of a progressive sense of place and which have implications for the ways in which Britishness might be articulated at Tate Britain. *First*, there is the matter of the relationship between place and identity as it has been approached within contemporary geographical debates. Because there are multiple ways in which people identify themselves in relation to any given place it is impossible to talk of anything other than identity in the plural. Despite the fact that this point of view has become widespread within contemporary cultural debate, its importance cannot be over emphasised. The implication here is that we need to think in

terms of various forms of Britishness. Furthermore, these various forms of Britishness relate to various time-spaces; they may be co-present but they are also the product of different 'strands' of place-based belonging. Central to this issue is the notion of 'meanings' which become woven into these various time-spaces, for 'it is us - in society, within human culture - who make things mean, who signify. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from one culture or period to another' (Hall, 1997a, p61), or of course one space to another. In due course I will return to these issues of multiple identities and the associated multiple meanings which attend debates about Britishness. At this point, however, I want to raise another issue that is associated with the idea of a progressive sense of place.

The *second* point relates to the way in which we need to think about the notion of place itself within this 'dynamic' context. This relates back to thinking about the processes which take place 'in place'. Whilst I have acknowledged that these are processes which can be seen to converge on a particular locus, as Massey points out, and that this is as a result of the premise that 'space is not static, nor time spaceless' (Massey, 1993b, p155), these processes should not be understood as being merely formative. By this I mean to say that, having established that time-spaces are constituted by dynamic processes, we can see that they do not arrive at a particular locus and then reside in stasis. Therefore, these processes are not formative in the sense that we do not arrive at an end product which then exists with unquestionable meanings and a true sense of 'form'. To this end, therefore, we must retain the notion 'that places are processes too' (Massey, 1993a, p67); that they are *no more* than a convergence of time-spaces, continually dynamic and deracinated. Indeed, whilst not wanting to get bogged down (sic) in organic metaphors, they convey this notion effectively, whether we think of place in terms of the rhizomatic 'body without organs' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) or the notion of a network whereby places 'can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations' (Massey, 1993a, p66).

I have discussed some ways in which Britishness and the place that is Britain might be seen as dynamic and processual rather than as being fixed within an international context. I will now explore the notion of time-space further through the notion of networks and show how these more general considerations of temporal-spatial networks may provide us with a useful way of thinking about the specific matter of the Artists Abroad room in Tate Britain.

### **A Few Thoughts on Networks, or Getting to the Route of the Problem**

The concept of network as it has been elaborated in Actor-Network Theory provides us with a way of illuminating the dynamic relationship between British art and its international context. As a theory, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has evolved from a number of sociological writings that emerged during the 1980s (see for example Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987). In its essentials ANT is a theory concerned with power; it is concerned with the way in which power is generated and ordered. This is confronted through the notion that ‘society, organizations, agents, and machines are all *effects* generated in patterned networks of diverse (not simply human) materials’ (Law, 1992, p380 – emphasis in original). In this sense, what things ‘come to be’ can be seen as a result of the connections being made within a network of heterogeneous elements. Size and power are seen merely as the result of different kinds of networks; ‘Napoleons are no different in kind to small-time hustlers, and IBMs to wheel-stalls’ (ibid). And, one might add, neither are directors of national galleries different in kind from small town curators. For ANT it is axiomatic that ‘actor’ and ‘network’ are two facets of the same social reality. They are inextricably linked; one is constitutive of the other so that actors can be seen as networks and networks as actors. If, for example, we are inclined ‘to talk of “the British Government” rather than all the bits and pieces that make it up’ (Law, 1992, p380) then the

question is this: how do networks come to appear as 'single point actors'? In the case of a national gallery of British art we might ask: to what extent and how was a coherent national art generated, enlarged and mobilised as a force within its international setting? Whilst it is impossible to do justice to what is an extensive and complex theory here, the broad usefulness of ANT in this account is through the ways in which it seeks to explain how small things become large things, how they generate power and how they become stable through the connection of heterogeneous elements within networks.

More recently, Bruno Latour has remarked that today the word network may carry connotations that are at odds with ANT (Latour, 1999). Whereas ANT thought of network as specifying the relationality of things and identified processes across the perceived boundaries of nature and society, the human and non-human, they have merely become reconfigured as static things. Latour draws on the example of the semantic shifts that have been associated with the push button understanding of the World Wide Web and how they may require us to clarify the meaning of the word network. That is to say that 'with the new popularisation of the word network, it now means transport *without* deformation' (Latour, 1999, p15 – emphasis in original) so that the double-click of the mouse faithfully transports far flung things such as images and texts into our presence. Latour's point is that the language of the WWW obscures ANT's concept of network as process by reducing it to a new set of static, immutable, bounded, 'stages'. Latour claims that originally 'the word network, like Deleuze and Guattari's term rhizome, meant a series of *transformations* - translations, transductions - which could not be captured by any of the traditional terms of social theory such as social structure' (ibid – emphasis in original). It is ANT's emphasis on transformation which I want to consider here. In studying the social production of Britishness we must acknowledge the movements and processes which enable Tate Britain's engagement with the notion of an international context. It is also important that we acknowledge time-spaces as being *transforming*; that is to say, they are processes in

themselves. The international time-spaces of British art cannot be resolutely fixed as the wider context of a national tradition. That is to say, British art is not something that can be cut, dried and conserved by the museum within its international context as though one of these is merely the context for the other.

As well as incorporating the works of artists who are seen as 'connected' with Britain and thus allowing a degree of fluidity in relation to place, the Artists Abroad room also covered a diverse time scale. The works included in what was the initial hanging of this room (there have and will be succeeding hangs<sup>5</sup>) covered a period of over two hundred years: from the late eighteenth century to the mid 1990s. The appearance of diversity was accentuated by a variety of artistic genres, or at least what might be loosely referred to as styles. These, predictably, represented different artistic 'moments' within art history which might be described as 'romantic', 'modernist' or 'Pre- Raphaelite'. The room was, therefore, hung with a strong emphasis on diversity, and this was further accentuated by the imposition of what has been referred to as 'challenging juxtaposition(s)' (Tate Gallery, 1999b). Within these juxtapositions the viewer was invited to consider the complementary as well as the contrasting qualities of works from different periods and genres. Through this hanging it was intended that a prioritisation of 'theme' over chronology would have the effect of 'drawing out new meanings' (ibid).

In thinking further about this challenge to museum conventions and the possibility of new meanings, there is, I believe, an intention to re-evaluate the gallery space itself and an attempt to capture the temporal and spatial flows and connections implicit within a progressive sense of place. Whilst we might consider that 'museums have always been heterogeneous classifying machines that aim to perform homogeneity' (Hetherington, 1997, p215), in the Artists Abroad room we were being told a self consciously

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<sup>5</sup> The display of the permanent collection which followed *Representing Britain 1500-2000 was Different Britains 2001-1500*.

heterogeneous story about Britishness. Indeed, I suggest that the aspiration of the room is to re-assert a heterogeneous sense of place and to perform heterogeneity within a new kind of museum space. The room could be seen as a kind of temporal-spatial analogy for Britishness in so far as it represents a space of convergence, of cross-cutting asymmetries. Just as a gallery space after closing time might look with its security infra- red lines shooting from wall to wall, we are subjected to a temporal-spatial dynamic which cross-cuts and intersects:

Unlike Euclidean geometry, which is associated with the mathematical properties of fixed, or rigid, spaces [we are presented with] what happens when a space [...] is folded, twisted and distorted in a variety of different ways while retaining its overall properties as a space.

(Hetherington, 1997, p200)

This last point is of great importance, for we need to retain the notion that when we were entering the Artists Abroad Room we were still being invited to think about, and within, 'a space'. Just as when considering the broader cultural geographies of the nation state, so too in the room we were faced with the possibility that in thinking about space progressively we must attempt to be critical about the functions and effects of boundaries, whether they are the borders of the nation state or the walls of the room. However, there is a danger here, that we may think of the space as merely being reconfigured along new lines and without a sense of *transformation* in which we grasp space as being inherently dynamic. The key point here is that space is not lost within this more dynamic counter-conceptualisation to the notion of Euclidean space, but re-thought in a more productive, relational sense, allowing us to draw time-spaces together within the representations of Britishness.

In order to clarify the matter at issue it may be useful to consider the visitor guidance which was provided at the door of the Artists Abroad room in the form of a text

panel. As is common in many galleries we are provided with a kind of résumé of the room's contents. In keeping with the thematic intentions of the room itself, the information did not strive to subject the works within to a process of fixing. As with the hanging of the works in the room, reference was made to the paintings within a non-chronological, discursive narrative. The text panel had a theme, it was peppered with references to journeys: the Grand Tour of the eighteenth century, mountainous journeys in search of the Romantic sublime, colonialism and its association with Orientalism, as well as the implications of mass tourism in the twentieth century. The concluding sentence stated that 'what home and abroad mean have become more complex with the growth and recognition of a culturally diverse Britain' (Tate Gallery, 2000a). This then is the 'international context': Italy, South East Asia, North Africa, to name but a few places, converge both on the room and Britishness itself; it is a sense of place produced by 'routes not roots' (Gilroy, 1997). The question remains however, to what extent is this a truly transformative sense of thinking and being? To what extent, if any, has the meaning of home and abroad become more complex? Are we witnessing a reconceptualisation of place as a rhizomatic network where time-spaces never rest and never close or are we merely noticing a convergence of things which come to rest at a centre, untroubled at a journey's end? In attempting to answer these questions it will be necessary to elaborate on Latour's idea of a network and draw upon his notion of a 'centre of calculation' (Latour, 1987).

In order to illustrate the temporal-spatial dynamics of what he refers to as centres of calculation, Latour draws on a particularly suitable historical example: that of a journey or rather journeys which were taken by sea in the late eighteenth century and, in the course of which Western sailors drew on the coastal knowledge of Chinese fishermen whose paths they crossed. The journeys were a series of explorations from Europe to the East Pacific in order to map the land of Sakhalin, and to ascertain whether or not it was an island. This was achieved, according to Latour, through the ability of the explorers such as English,

French and Portuguese sailors, to 'act at a distance' and mobilise 'events, places and people' (ibid) and bring them back to centres of calculation in Western Europe. Basically, the argument is that each exploration accumulates more information which it takes back in the form of 'immutable mobiles' (ibid) such as maps and charts. These are bodies of knowledge or otherwise which remain stable through time and space allowing them to become readable and combinable upon return. As Latour puts it, using the example of astronomy:

All these charts, tables and trajectories are conveniently at hand and combinable at will, no matter whether they are twenty centuries old or a day old; each of them brings celestial bodies billions of tons heavy and hundreds of thousands of miles away to the size of a point on a piece of paper.

(Latour, 1987, p227)

In establishing these immutable and combinable mobiles, European scientific discourses create what Latour refers to as 'a Great Divide' between the apparently local and closed worlds of Them (e.g. Chinese fishermen with their local beliefs about a place) and Us (e.g. cartographers with their global knowledge of places) (Latour, 1987, 1993). It is important to note, at this point, that in accounting for the differences between Western and non-Western cultures, Latour eschews both cultural relativism and rationalism. The Great Divide between them and us is neither denied, as with the relativists, nor is it reified as western cognitive superiority. Rather, it is a process achieved by way of a cycle of networked accumulation which, in this case, brings local knowledge of other lands back to a centre. By means of maritime charts and navigational tables localised knowledge becomes globalised or, perhaps more accurately, re-localised back in Europe and made readable and knowable at the centre of calculation in Versailles or London: 'everything can become familiar, finite, nearby and handy' (Latour, 1987, p230).

This Great Divide might provide a useful way of thinking about the workings of the Artists Abroad room. If we substitute charts and tables with paintings, we have a parallel between Latour's journeys and the journeys which were repeated in the room. The paintings are, after all, readable, reduced documents of 'other' places from 'beyond Britain'. Furthermore, the construction of the room can be seen as mediated through the notion of the works as combinable and immutable mobiles; they were being combined to give us a readable story of Britain's international context. From Lawrence Alma-Tadema's Roman baths (*A Favourite Custom*, 1909) to De Louthembourg's Alpine avalanche (*An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803), Richard Dadd's Egyptian desert scene (*The Flight out of Egypt*, 1849-50) to Philip Wilson Steer's Boulogne beach (*Boulogne Sands*, 1888-91) they were brought together in order to convey what Britishness means in an international context, and to do so they must be combinable. We might also speculate that if we were to make any sense of the room they must be immutable too. If this combination was to *mean* something from one day to the next within this one room, it must be stable.

To look at this another way, it might be useful to consider an example developed by Latour within the context of astronomy. In considering the inconceivability of the vast extensions of time and space which this body of knowledge draws upon, he states that 'we, the readers, do not live *inside* space, that has billions of galaxies in it; on the contrary, this space is generated inside the observatory... the firm grasp the astronomer has over it comes from a small *ruler* he firmly places to a *map* of the sky' (Latour, 1987, p229-30 – emphasis in original). The important point here is that time and space are not independent, autonomous things worked within, they are created *within the networks*. We only achieve these immense galaxies at a distance through combining stable, readable information at a centre of calculation such as an observatory. Similarly we might want to make the same claim for Britishness; we do not know this room as a 'Britishness' within which we live and operate, this is not an international context which we can say 'Britishness'

unequivocally constitutes. It has been constructed through the mobiles, and all the different time-spaces that bring us here have been, to a great degree, lost. The solution would appear to be that we must ‘force these immense extents of space and time... back inside their networks’ (ibid). Only through doing this can we hope to reveal the time-spaces which they have produced, and through doing this we can think about ‘meaning’. We must consider what meanings are being ascribed and what meanings are being lost in this story of the international context of Britishness.

### **Do They *Mean* Me?**

In order to reveal these networks, I will now go on to discuss two of the paintings which were displayed in the Artists Abroad room. The intention is to consider the temporal and spatial points and flows behind the individual journeys represented by the flat, readable surfaces that constitute the paintings. In doing so, we can reflect on what was being brought to this ‘centre of calculation’ of British art, if that is what it was, and aim to reveal how meanings functioned within this particular configuration, or to use Massey’s term ‘constellation’ of works. This also raises questions of choices, and how this particular constellation came to be the one which tells the story of Britain’s international context. In addition, and more generally, there is the broad concern of what British art and being a British artist means, or, to paraphrase Nicolas Pevsner’s question: ‘what is this Britishness in British art?’ (Pevsner, 1955).

The two examples I will use are Lubiana Himid’s *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991) (see figure 4.1) and J.M.W Turner’s *Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom House, Venice: Canaletti painting (Bridge of Sighs)* (exh. 1833)<sup>6</sup> (see figure 4.2).

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<sup>6</sup> N.B. – Although this title refers to ‘Canaletti’ it should in fact read ‘Canaletto’. This misspelling may have been made by Turner, but the reason and intentionality of this remain unclear. Thanks to the Turner Study Room for help with information on this.

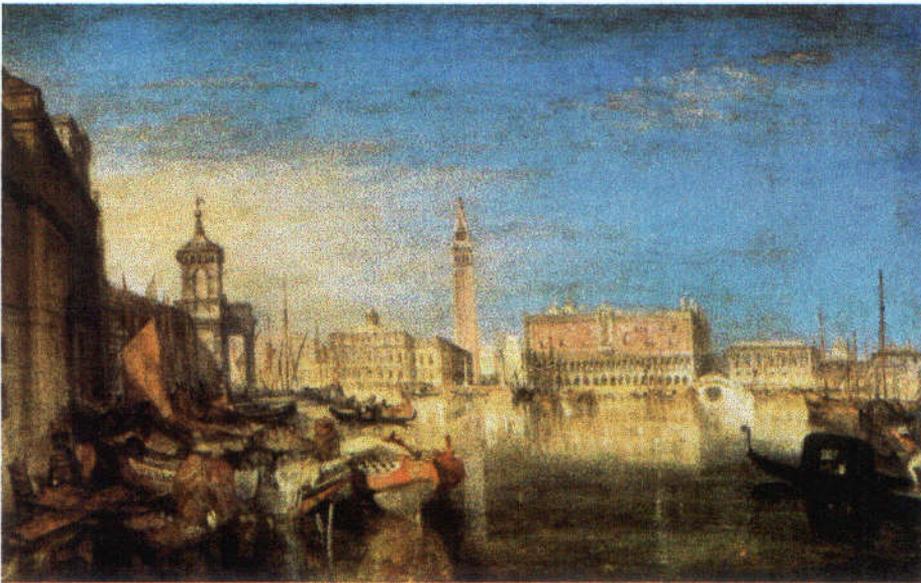
herself was born in Zanzibar and now lives and works in Britain. This example of her work depicts two black women in a boat at sea with a pile of navigational charts between them. An interesting point of reference here is that this work takes its title from a painting by the Victorian artist James Tissot. Tissot's painting depicts a Scot's Guard, again in a boat, with women seated either side of him. There are two versions of this work: a painting entitled *Portsmouth Harbour* (c1877) and an engraving entitled *Entre les deux mon coeur balance* (1877) (see figure 4.3). It is the latter from which Himid's title is inspired, the translation from Tissot's French title being 'how happy I could be with either'. This allusion by Himid was explained in the text which accompanies the picture where the curator makes explicit to the viewer her use of irony and her concern with gender politics.



(Figure 4.1 – Between the Two my Heart is Balanced, Lubiana Himid, 1991)

Unlike the Himid, the Turner is place specific. The title refers to the specific features of the localised landscape. It is a landscape scene which alludes to the style of Canaletto, who is featured in the foreground of the painting and as depicting his own localised landscape in his characteristic detailed and geometric style. These are important

considerations in moving towards an opening up of the networks which might be ‘in place’. We are presented with an evocation of the Grand Tour and the use of neo-classicism in British artistic taste; a story of journeys to Italy in search of antiquities which were, as the room’s text panel stated, ‘seen as part of Britain’s cultural heritage’ (Tate, 2000a). If there is an international context here it is one of artistic appropriation, both on Turner’s part and those on the Grand Tour. This is a story of temporal and spatial movement and connections from ancient Rome to eighteenth-century Rome, to nineteenth and now twenty-first-century Britain. But that is all the story says. The network, if that is what we can call it, comes to rest on British art. It can be seen as an almost systematic linking of localised points through time-space, one built on the other. So to what extent can we talk of immutability?



(Figure 4.2 – Bridge of Sighs, J.M.W. Turner, exh. 1833)

In considering this, it is important to bear in mind that ‘immutable does not mean that information is transferred unproblematically but that some features have to be maintained *in spite* of the mobility provided to them’ (Latour, 1998, p426 – emphasis in original). So in this sense immutability becomes some kind of battleground where it is in constant tension with mobility. This tension gives way to what we might think of as gradations of immutability through the maintenance of ‘some features’. Talking of

original). So in this sense immutability becomes some kind of battleground where it is in constant tension with mobility. This tension gives way to what we might think of as gradations of immutability through the maintenance of 'some features'. Talking of gradations of immutability may be useful, if a little demanding, but it is unnecessary here. What we can take from this notion is the idea that through these time-spaces created in the networks, some things can remain stable and immutable, and to that end we might say that some things carry more meanings than others. The important point though is to assert that it is precisely when things are made stable and immutable that their meanings are re-adjusted and re-ascribed; they cease to relate to all the different time-spaces which constitute them. The connections in-between are lost through processes of selection where certain meanings are fixed whilst others are shed.



(Figure 4.3 – Entre les deux mon coeur balance, James Tissot, 1877)

It is through these processes of fixing and shedding meaning that we can move from Canaletto to Turner to British art without really knowing how we got there as, like Latour's astronomers, curators reduced the constitutive elements of the painting to make it readable within a received notion of British art. There is a stability gained from the

mythology that Turner has come in some sense to 'be' British art rather than perhaps 'becoming' British art; that is to say that the dynamics of time-space are reduced and Turner ceases to operate through them. Turner becomes rendered in the very walls of the Tate, from the Clore Gallery built to house the Turner bequest, to the prize for contemporary art which bears his name, Turner is institutionalised. What this emphasises is the sense in which the meaning of Turner is being fixed, tying him and his work more closely to Tate Britain and the Britishness which it seeks to 're-present' whilst also shedding the complexities of the meanings contained within the temporal-spatial dynamics of *Bridge of Sighs*. In this sense Turner becomes something like a 'black box' (Callon & Latour, 1981) within the Tate; it extracts him from the networks of his constitution and puts him away safely in a bounded space where questions will not be asked of him. Although the painting tells us a story of Turner's artistic practices outside Britain, any spatial connections beyond its shores are only to be understood through Turner's Britishness. He is, first and foremost, secured tightly to the notion of British art.

So what of Himid's work which accompanied Turner's within this room. There are the explicit contrasts which the room drew to our attention: female/ male, black/ white, Zanzibarian/English. There are two notable aspects here though, which can lead us into a fuller understanding of the issues of immutability. Firstly, there is the contrasting association to place between the two works: one place-bound, the other, Himid's anonymous seascape, place-'unbound'. Secondly, there is Himid's critical feminism as reflected in the appropriated title of the work. In contrast to the kind of cumulative movements through time-space which can be identified in relation to the Turner, Himid hints at a more relational sense of connection. It is through Himid's historical reference that we *gain* meaning. If we were to consider the original work which she refers to, we might conclude that Himid 'brings new meaning' to it. Similarly, it is *through* the original painting that Himid's two women come to be in their boat, or at least for the time *being*.

The point here is that meaning is being generated through a realisation of the networks; through the re-opening of their time-spaces. These are not unquestioned black boxes, but a story of inter-connections and transformation. Indeed quite poignantly, Oguibe has stated that 'Himid has the "magical" ability to *give life to dormant historical events, objects and figures* [and that it achieves] *a penetrating understanding of historical processes*' (Oguibe, 1999 - my emphasis). For Himid then, processes are central. It is not important that we don't know the localised point on the atlas where the boat sails; the local is just a point through which they are passing. In this sense, Himid's notion of 'heritage as a guide for our present and future paths' (ibid), alludes precisely to the understanding of place as process.

A related point to this has been made by Margaret Garlake. For her, the painting also represented a more dynamic and productive interpretation of place and Britishness in comparison to the Turner and all of the other works in this gallery. She goes so far as to suggest that the Artists Abroad room was:

dominated by Lubiana Himid's *Between the Two My Heart is Balanced*, the only image to interrogate the fluid and unpredictable nature of a journey whereas the rest are *firmly fixated*, like most travellers, on their destinations, real or imagined.

(Garlake, 2000. P8 – my emphasis)

For Garlake then the conveyance of 'a journey' is what makes this painting such a desirable influence on this room's articulation of British art and it is set in opposition to the implied negativity of the fixity implied by the other works.

There is, perhaps, a criticism to make of this comparison. Of course Turner's work is more stable: it is older, and the artist is renowned. We might even suggest that this stability is inevitable; the price of artistic fame that he should be framed, bounded and take up residence for generations to come and admire as a cornerstone of British art. But, the point must be reiterated that these meanings are both contingent and constructed, their fixing or shedding is the product of curatorial choices. What this also implies is that we

cannot talk of mutability and immutability, we can only deal in degrees of immutability and that it can only ever be partial. Turner's work may be more stable at the Tate's centre and this may make it readable and knowable; 'ah yes, now this is British art!'. However, 'black boxes never remain fully closed or properly fastened' (Callon & Latour, 1981, p285). The time-spaces that constitute the Turner work are still processes as much as Himid's, but crucially, they are at different points and more durable at some of these points, the constellation is different to Himid's. Immutability, mobility and therefore identities can only be spoken of in degrees, they can only ever be(coming) in that they are continual processes. This insight appears to get lost, however, with the example of Turner. Because of his stabilisation and the concealment of networks he is cut adrift from the constitutive elements which give Turner meanings and these meanings, which provide a broader temporal-spatial context, are consequently lost. As a result of this, I would suggest that we are faced with an inverse relationship between mobility and Britishness. The latter comes to represent the immutability which, as Latour has suggested, is in tension with mobility. If Turner is made stable he has an unproblematic relationship with Britishness, Himid's mobility might be seen to make her 'less British'. If stability means the loss of meaning however, this inverse relationship also applies to meaning and Britishness and we are faced with the consequences of a logic which suggests that the more knowably British a work becomes, the less it can be meaningful. Or, more specifically, the more it is fixed in terms of its Britishness, the less it can be understood in terms of its broader spatial networks.

This then would appear to be a significant problem facing Tate Britain; what is it that holds these works together? How can we talk of Britishness in a meaningful way? Martin Myrone conveyed to me the complexity of Tate Britain's aspirations to work with the notion of British art in a broader spatial and cultural context:

Our ambition [is] to encompass art which is 'British' because the artist is British in strict terms, art by artists born or trained abroad, art by British

artists abroad, or art which is not British in any of these respects but none the less deals with British subject matter or relates to British art in some other way<sup>7</sup>.

What I would suggest this ambition emphasises however, is the difficulties of marrying two apparently conflicting notions; the temporal-spatial networks which connect many artists, works, cultures and places, and the meanings which can be articulated about those things through the notion of Britishness. One approach which might be considered is through thinking about 'the role of the national culture... not to express the unitary feelings of *belongingness* [my emphasis] which are always there in the culture, but to represent what are, in fact, real differences *as a unity*' (Hall, 1995, p184 – latter emphasis in original). This then necessitates a move away from a sense of things in black boxes that have stopped 'becoming' and an understanding based around process and transformation which is tied up with difference. The differences can be found in the multiple time-spaces which constitute Himid's work, Turner's work and all the other 'Artists Abroad'. The unity; this thing called Britishness, must then encompass all of these time-spaces, but how do we arrive at a progressive sense of Britishness? It must be truly reflective of a network; composed of similarities and differences, continuities and new elements, marked by ruptures and always crosscut by *difference*. Its *meanings* [my emphasis] are the result of a constant, ongoing *process* of cultural negotiation which is constantly shifting and changing its contours to accommodate continuing tensions.

(Hall, 1995, p185 – unacknowledged emphasis in original).

This characterisation of a kind of 'Britishness as process' has a problematic relationship with the notion of structure. As a form it must negate the notion of form - like the rhizomatic network it is always in flux, its contours shifting and changing, creating discontinuities, ruptures and *deformations*. This might allow the consideration of Turner's

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<sup>7</sup> E-mail interview with Martin Myrone, 1/2/00.

journeys and Himid's journeys as representing differences in 'return' and 'departure' characterised by 'flows' or 'circulations' back to, or away from Britishness, but retaining the understanding that they are still dynamic in some sense. But the issue is not just a case of confronting ways in which we might be able to talk of Britishness, the question remains, how can it be exhibited in a gallery? To draw once again on the astronomical metaphor, it must be seen as a constellation, one which is relational and, as Hall puts it, 'crosscutting'. The danger though is in managing to avoid what Latour, after Kant, calls a 'Copernican revolution' (Latour, 1987) where, as the term suggests, the works merely become elements revolving around a centre. This, I would suggest, is the problem which Tate Britain is facing; the Artists Abroad room became a centre within which all the elements revolved (almost literally) around its four walls. The visitor must always rely on some sense of *a priori* Britishness which all works relate to and this is what made Himid's work the subversive element which doesn't somehow seem to fit as comfortably. It is because Himid's work cannot be localised and because it comes from somewhere and goes somewhere else that the centre is not dutifully returned to and we might be left asking, 'is this British art?'

As with those who, in the wake of political devolution (and note that this disavowal of centralised power also represents a crisis of the Copernican revolution) had asked the question, so again it is raised: what use does this thing called Britain have left? The very use of the name Britain in Tate Britain creates a centre, and a centre, with its black boxes and its magnetic pull can only serve to pull out of place (and space) the crosscuttings and therefore the meanings. There is a need to talk of multiple identities and difference within Britishness and this is what brings Himid and Turner together in this particular room. But it is this 'bringing them together' which causes problems. Mediated at this centre the gesture of multiplicity also brings with it a loss of meaning, and it is this loss which can be traced in some of the early responses to the Tate's 'innovative' approach.

Three days before the opening of Tate Britain an article in *The Independent* unequivocally stated that ‘new fetish images of transmutation and multiplicity have replaced the constellated, defiant and immutable Britain of yore’ (Quinn, 2000, p13). Similarly, if a little more sanguine, an article in *The Observer* followed a few days later with the opinion that ‘by jumbling every era and style, [Tate Britain] counters the determinism of the former Tate with its linear story of art’ (Cumming, 2000, p8). These two comments on the Tate’s approach to rehanging reflect a general sense in the British press that some form of perceptive challenge to Britishness was being made on the part of Tate Britain. However, this sentiment was also accompanied with a degree of uncertainty as to how this more dynamic approach to the re-presentation of British art related to understandings of Britishness. In relation to a juxtaposition of Hogarth and Hirst, it was noted that ‘these are not different aspects of the same national identity; they are examples of art about meat that have been made on different planets’ (Quinn, 2000, p13). Similarly, having reflected on the inclusion of works by several contemporary British artists, an article in the *Guardian* concluded, ‘but none of that stops you feeling this museum is dedicated to the art of another country’. (Jones, 2000b, p5).

It seems from these sentiments that to talk of multiple identities and relationality is one thing, but to talk of Britishness is another. Through making these ‘challenging juxtapositions’ criticism of the Tate emerged to suggest that this only serves to lose meanings with regards to Britishness, or more specifically, that the meanings are not fixed enough. Whilst the Tate suggests that ‘ideas of what home and abroad mean have become more complex’ (Tate Gallery, 2000a), and this proposition may indeed be justified, a predicament remains. I suggest that this is as a result of what might be termed ‘complexity by addition’. That is to say, that the undertaking of a new understanding of what might constitute British art is not based on anything new, but on an addition to the existing paradigm whereby new non-linear understandings are laid on top of established

chronological ones. In this sense Tate Britain is faced with a tension between conveying a more complex approach to how we might understand British art, whilst presenting visitors, including those from the press, with an interpretation which they will be sympathetic towards and perhaps, it might be suggested, unthreatened by. This tension has, I would argue, placed Tate Britain in a situation where these concerns have proved to be difficult to reconcile, leading to ambiguities over the issue of questioning Britishness; what meanings should be fixed and what meanings should be shed. Whilst there was an invitation to make new connections between chronologically non-linear works it appears to be difficult to align the purpose of this with a questioning of what Britishness might now mean and whether it is still useful. Therefore, I would suggest, whilst the choice of juxtapositions provided challenges, they struggled to convey new, more dynamic meanings whilst being worked through an unreconstructed way of thinking about Britishness, and we were faced with a problem of square pegs and round holes.

Having problematised the question of how Britishness might be talked about and, more specifically, exhibited. This might provide the basis from which to consider the issues raised by Latour's allusion to the Copernican revolution and why Tate Britain's non-chronological approach has raised the tensions it has. What I want to do now is consider how this might be facilitated by thinking about the relationship between the centre (the Britishness in Tate Britain) and the network (the temporal-spatial dynamics which constituted the paintings in the Artists Abroad room).

### **What Goes Around, Comes Around**

Another one of the doubting voices heard at Tate Britain has come from the editor of the monthly publication *Art Review*. Its editorial of May 2000 was dedicated to a critique of the gallery's non-chronological, thematic approach. Asserting that the Tate is alluding

to what it describes as 'Blairite wishful thinking' (Lee, 2000, p1), and heavily laced with sarcasm, it goes on to state that 'convention is bad. Change especially for its own sake, is good' (ibid). The general tone of the critique is based on the perception of an unreconcilable tension between the 'proper' way to exhibit the likes of Hogarth, who is referred to frequently, and the 'inappropriateness' of such a form of 'progressive' curatorial practice. Although often couched in what might be described as decidedly reactionary terms, exemplified in the horror expressed towards the much used false opposition of 'political correctness', one example of the more lucid criticisms is of particular interest when considered in terms of network relations. These criticisms relate to the editor's perception of the gallery as a necessary centre; a place for ordering the flows of time-space through which a history of British art might be constructed:

The 'ism' art of the 20th century was made for different reasons and often with different ambitions to virtually all of the art done before it. These altered perceptions make transhistorical comparisons pointless and help explain the contrasts in quality so disadvantageous to recent works.

(Lee, 2000, p1)

For Lee then, the course of British art is very much a progressive linear formation. Each 'ism' has its own 'reasons' and 'conditions' and, we might suggest therefore, meanings. This then renders each 'ism' bounded, there are no rhizomatic networks in place within this understanding, merely points of entry and exit, and the prefix 'trans' is seen as anathema to the word 'historical'. For him, the Tate is revealing too many networks, or perhaps making networks where there are none. His interpretation of British art does not draw connections across time and space, nor does it aspire to the Tate's ambitions of achieving more complex understandings of what British art might be. This may well be a justified position to take, and is certainly one echoed in other journalistic accounts of the Tate's approach. Indeed, there does seem to be a strong case for suggesting that the Tate

has served to confuse and disorientate an account of British art. However, perhaps this is not so much to do with the idea of opening up the 'idea' of relationality; clarifying connections and establishing networks between paintings. Perhaps, I would suggest, the disorientation comes not from too much unboundedness, but from too little. Whilst inter-relations might have been reconsidered, the centre that is the Britishness in Tate Britain, as I have suggested, is very much intact; it has not enjoyed the same level of reflexive scrutiny. The reason that this is important to undertake, and this is the crucial point which I want to propose here, is because it is 'not simply the centre that [is] important but its relation to the network' (Ogborn, 1998, p184), or to make the point more directly, the centre is *dependent* on the network.

It is not simply a case of reconstructing the centre that is British art in order for it to give the networks meaning, but that in addition to this reconstruction there is a realisation that Britishness not be reconstructed *as a centre* but as a point within the networks. Through doing this it might be possible to consider that relationality doesn't just stop when it reaches the boundaries of the centre, but that this relationality permeates and indeed constitutes the centre itself. It is through achieving this that we might be able to assert that 'viewed as an artistic phenomenon, New British Art was (or is) neither new nor British' (Mercer, 1999, p51); these things are not merely the creation of the centre of Britishness but also times and spaces which are near and far, present and past. In recalling Latour's story of astronomers making sense of distant stars and galaxies, it is possible to conceive of the role of Britishness as an attempt to replicate roles of the charts and rulers that made all these networks readable at the centre. It is these things which *appear* to give meaning to the networks, but crucially, because they are not in fact fixed but variable and contingent, they achieve the opposite; we lose the sense in which the centre is dependent. If shifts and changes occur 'out there' in the things which are going on in the networks, the centre, in its state of fixity, becomes meaningless. We might still want to talk of centres, but they can

only retain meaning if it is realised that the centre does not hold power; it doesn't dictate the form of the networks, but that it is the networks which construct the centres and that any efforts to stabilise the networks at the centre can, and will, be reciprocated by destabilisation of the centre by the networks.

So, for all this paradigmatic re-evaluation how might this story be told in the gallery space? The thematic approach adopted in the Artists Abroad room does manage to convey a sense in which Britishness is not just something that is played out within the nation state, and furthermore it does establish that different time-spaces matter when thinking about Britishness. Perhaps the most important omission however, is a sense in which this Britishness is portrayed as a process; something which is not stable and collected but becoming. There is, perhaps, a consideration to be made to draw routes that go back out from the centre and capture a true sense of a flow *through* the centre. This might also facilitate a way of viewing Britishness as something which has been constructed through many time-spaces and is continuing to be constructed through others, so that the viewer might have stood in the Artists Abroad room and, in a positive sense, ask 'what is becoming of British art?'.

## Conclusions

Working through time-space and thinking about place, in this case Britain, in a progressive manner can only serve to open up understandings of how place-bound identities are constructed. It has been my aim to utilise this approach to set up ways of thinking about how networks might provide a tangible way of imagining this temporal spatiality. Whilst the Tate Gallery has attempted a move towards challenging the ways in which we think about Britishness, in so doing it has also highlighted tensions and complexities around the relationship between notions such as 'Britishness' and an

'international context'. The problem facing the Tate with its progressive gesture is that once it is embarked upon, if it is to remain a coherent reappraisal, reflexivity must demand that this quest for a more nuanced, complex understanding goes to the very centre of calculation where the Britishness of Tate Britain is made readable. The criticisms of the Tate's approach, though not explicit with regards to this particular tension, seem to endorse the notion that *Representing Britain 1500-2000* revealed the Tate as caught 'between camps'. I have argued that there are ways in which the networks which constituted works in the Artists Abroad room can be traced and offered arguments as to how a notion of relationality might be considered in the works through thinking about these various stories as 'becoming'. However, criticisms about incoherence or the calls for a return to established chronologies persisted whilst the Tate continued to address the tensions created by the drawing of boundaries.

In the next chapter I will continue the consideration of the Tate Gallery in the context of the actor-network and look at how the temporal-spatial networks can be mapped in relation to Tate St Ives and the construction of St Ives itself as an 'art colony'. This will also continue to evaluate the dynamics of these networks through a consideration of the relationship between mobility and power and how the latter can be seen as constructed within these networks.

### RIGHTS OF PASSAGE: POWER, MOBILITY AND THE TATE GALLERY IN THE STORIES OF ST IVES ART

St Ives has long been associated with an eminent artistic ‘scene’. When the Tate Gallery opened Tate St Ives in 1993, it was, therefore, situated within a place where artistic practice and display were already familiar. Moreover, the gallery’s role in constructing and articulating stories about the relationship between artistic practice and St Ives became placed alongside many others. Though the gallery’s establishment may have served to broaden the awareness of what I will refer to as ‘St Ives art’<sup>1</sup>, St Ives did not require the Tate Gallery to ‘put it on the map’ in artistic terms. However, the notion of a place-based artistic history raises certain questions. Through questioning the notion of St Ives as an artistically bounded space my intention is to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between place and cultural production; one in which the art doesn’t necessarily *belong* to St Ives, but does, none the less, connect with and reside within St Ives.

The broad concern of this chapter, therefore, will be to examine the ways in which a relationship has been constructed between St Ives and a place-bound sense of artistic practice. Furthermore, this evaluation will aim to identify the Tate Gallery within this process, as an institution which has been historically situated within what I will refer to as quasi-colonial discourses. By this I mean to explore the understandings of St Ives as an ‘art colony’ and argue that although this term is often used in a culturally and politically ‘benign’ context to describe a collective of artists, the notion of ‘St Ives as colony’ is bound up within a collection of discourses which allied colonialism and artistic practice. Furthermore, I want to argue that the Tate has played a role in mediating and perpetuating

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<sup>1</sup> My intention in using this specific wording is to avoid a possessive definition, i.e. ‘St Ives’ art’ or ‘the art of St Ives’. This is fundamental to the argument I want to make regarding the problematisation of the place based understandings of the work I will be considering.

these discourses. Having established this and having considered the cultural construction of St Ives, I will then explore connections between the Tate Gallery and St Ives from the inter-war period and argue that the Tate in London and associated London-based figures represent a quasi-imperial centre in relation to St Ives as colonial 'outpost'. In doing so I will, as in the previous chapter, draw on and further develop Latour's notion of a 'centre of calculation' (1987).

The exemplification of this argument will be predominantly based on the work of the St Ives artist Alfred Wallis. By invoking Wallis' work, I will aim to trace the construction of him as a localised figure through the labelling of him as a 'primitive' artist and the associations made between him, as both person and artist, with the landscapes and seascapes of St Ives. Furthermore, the example of Wallis will also be used to illustrate that both he and St Ives can be written into a more spatially dynamic account than the one provided through the localised understanding of the colony. This will be achieved through a consideration of what has been termed a 'politics of transfiguration' (Gilroy, 1993) and the related notion of 'circum-Atlantic' identities (Roach, 1996). In utilising these ideas, it is my intention to achieve a sense of reconnection between various places and cultures and demonstrate that Wallis was actually constitutive of and situated within a complex and far reaching set of spatial relations. This will be exemplified in particular through his painting *The Wreck of the Alba* (1939).

This particular work will then serve to open up a consideration of the contemporary role of the Tate St Ives within the construction of St Ives as an 'art colony' and the role of the gallery as agent in this context. This will involve an evaluation of the way that the gallery situates itself within stories of St Ives art and the way it has aspired to a 're-telling' of a story of St Ives which is consciously constructed as 'international'. Despite the apparent common agenda between this contemporary interpretation at the Tate St Ives and the argument I wish to construct here, there are critical enquiries to be made, and these will

form the concluding part of this chapter. Initially, however, it is St Ives as an ‘art colony’ and the geographical implications of this term that I want to examine.

## **St Ives as ‘Art Colony’ and Colonialism as Discourse in the Inter-war Years**

### *Provincialising the English*

Before engaging more directly with the role of the Tate Gallery within the stories of St Ives art, it is important to say something about the broader notion of the ‘art colony’ and understandings of provincial or regional England. Although the temporal framework of the inter-war years of 1918-1939 may seem somewhat rigid, it has been identified as a significant period in the development of open-air leisure in England (Matless 1992, 1995, 1998). Through the growth in activities such as rambling ‘a particular landscaped version of English citizenship emerged in the work of preservationists and planners; morally, spiritually and physically healthy’ (Matless, 1995, p93). It has been suggested therefore that this specific period produced certain articulations of ‘the art of right living’ (Matless, 1995), but the emergent discourses which these strategies produced can be seen to permeate thinking beyond this period and in some respects to the present. The reason for engaging with these observations is that the identification of St Ives as an ‘art colony’ coincides both temporally and, I want to argue, ideologically, with this emergent characterisation of Englishness. In artistic terms this can be identified in the practice of painting *en plein air*<sup>2</sup>, which formed a significant part of the attraction, associated with St Ives from this time. But, the substantive issue here is with the way artistic practice and the settlement of artists in St Ives can be read into issues of ‘the political significance of mythic regionalism in the inter-war years’ (Brace, 1999, p91).

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<sup>2</sup> This is an expression used within the landscape genre which translates, from the French, as ‘in the open air’.

A sense of this 'mythic regionalism' can be found in a book first published in 1959 and regarded as a major text on St Ives art (see for example Spalding, 1985); Denys Val Baker's *Britain's Art Colony by the Sea*. Recently re-published, this 'classic study [before which] surprisingly little had been written about the art of St Ives'<sup>3</sup> can be seen as strongly illustrative of the notion of 'mythic regionalism' in three identifiable ways.

The first characteristic I want to draw out, and the one which forms the basis of Catherine Brace's analysis, is the way 'national unity was formed by regional difference' (Brace, 1999, p91). This logic is even signalled in the title of Val Baker's book; the 'art colony' *belongs* to the nation, in this case Britain. For Brace, since the inter-war period, 'diverse regions in England, distinct in terms of landscape and culture, have been mobilised to represent something of the nation' (Brace, 1999, p90), and this can be seen in Val Baker's preoccupation with 'the unique nature of the art colony centred around St Ives' (Val Baker, 1959/2000, p11). The political significance of valorising the particularity of places, for both Brace and Matless, relates to the perceived threat of urban culture through suburban growth (Brace, 1999) and the rise of the motor car (Matless, 1995). In searching out 'unique' places on the periphery, the aim of such strategies can be seen to reflect Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's claim, in 1926, that 'the preservation of the individuality of the Englishman is essential to the preservation of the type of the race' (cited in Brace, 1999, p103). In addition, what this statement seems to raise is the resonance between a sense of regional particularism; that is to say, an Englishness based on the notion of a unified but distinct body of separate cultures, identities and general vernaculars, and the perceived threat of 'the other' which can be seen as constructed within colonial discourses. In this sense, Val Baker's 'art colony' can be translated from the colony as benign collective to a more exclusionary definition. Alternatively, following Matless, we might conceive of a St Ives landscape as being appropriated to perform a

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from the liner notes of the new edition. Unacknowledged authorship.

function within discourses of landscape and citizenship which bears similarities or even sympathies with the political ideologies of Nazism (Matless, 1995).

In addition to identifying a sense of regional particularism, the two further characterisations of 'mythic regionalism' I want to identify further strengthen comparisons between the 'art colony' and the broader manifestations of colonial discourses. The second of these relates to the issue of mythologising place, particularly in relation to the notion of St Ives as being steeped in a sense of Celtic mythology. For Val Baker, this is captured in dramatic fashion through the evocation of Cornwall's 'hidden forces, this strange, brooding, compelling quality' (Val Baker, 1959/2000, p13). Such hyperbole not only adds to the sense of uniqueness and fetishisation of St Ives as a landscape, but also evokes the qualities of the sublime, of fear, terror and darkness. Evocations such as these have been linked with the articulation of blackness in racialised discourses (see Gilroy, 1993) and are identified as qualities which have been written into colonial histories when describing conquest, such as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (see also Dyer, 1997). This descriptive treatment of the St Ives landscape, in its attempts to accentuate a sense of periphery or 'out there-ness', can be seen as particularly pertinent to descriptions of the British colonies when Val Baker goes on to suggest that:

It would be surprising if a land of mystery, drenched with so much dramatic mythology, did not contain in its atmosphere a sense of evil. It is generally supposed that even in recent times black magic meetings have been held in Cornwall.

(Val Baker, 1959/2000, p13)

Before I go on to consider more closely the racialised discourses which I believe are evident within such descriptions of St Ives, I will identify the third characteristic which can be drawn from Val Baker's account. This relates to a particular way of treating the relationship between Cornish peoples (or 'the colonised' as we might describe them in this context) and the landscape. In effect, they are treated as one and the same, in that the

relationship between place and identity is essentialised to the point of inscribing Cornish identity into landscape itself:

The Cornish people themselves are like their land, an old and knowing race, withdrawn to strangers, living as much in the past as in the present; without, as has been said, much creative inspiration yet with a quick response to things of that nature.

(Val Baker, 1959/2000, p14)

Aside from the conceptualisation of the Cornish as rooted within the landscape, a whole array of essentialisms are evident in this particular quote, constructing the indigenous St Ives population as 'of the past' and 'apart from' those visiting and colonising St Ives, on the basis of 'race'. This compelling characterisation can be seen to draw further comparisons with the colonial portrayals of 'native' peoples, such as those found in the works of Conrad and Kipling, for example. This resonance also serves to compare the construction of St Ives with the colonised spaces of Africa and India, as 'other' spaces. Furthermore, in addition to the racialised, colonial discourses being used to articulate the St Ives landscape and its 'native' population as mutually constitutive, they can also be seen to define temporal and spatial 'stagnation' through alluding to a sense of 'backwardness'.

Having considered Val Baker's account and the way it serves to provincialise St Ives as characteristically English, I want to go on to argue that this is achieved through a particular articulation of power which serves to define St Ives as simultaneously 'English' and 'other'. Unlike colonies abroad, this space is constructed as being within England whilst also being a space of 'otherness'. It is within this sense that we can think in terms of quasi-colonial discourses, linking the spatial otherness of the colony with artistic practice whilst also being constructed within a sense of Englishness, thus articulating a set of ideas which link notions of empire with provincial Englishness and its relationship to art. As with the construction of the temporal and spatial 'stagnation' of St Ives, the discourses that produce these characterisations are, I would argue, inherently racialised. Here though, the

construction is not formed around a polarised black/white divide, but through an internally differentiated sense of whiteness.

*The Darkness within Whiteness: putting 'the other' in its place*

Having discussed the notion of St Ives as having been provincialised through its regional otherness, its mythologisation and the embeddedness of people within landscape, I now want to consider the issue of racialisation more closely. This issue, within the account of St Ives as 'art colony', is to examine the role of whiteness in its construction and the implications that this has for the people of St Ives as 'fixed' and 'immobile'. The premise for this consideration is the idea that:

The instability of white as skin colour is not only a means for policing who at a given historical moment is going to be included in or out of the category, but also to differentiate within it, even among those whose racial identity is not in question.

(Dyer, 1997, p57)

Having already considered the issue of whiteness within the context of multiculturalism in chapter 2, I now want to isolate a particular issue within the politics of whiteness which I believe is fundamental to the consideration of the way power operates within stories of St Ives and St Ives art. As Dyer points out, the issue is that white as skin colour, through its instability as a signifier, can be differentiated within a group that might be considered homogeneously white. Val Baker's assertion of the people of St Ives as shrouded in mythology, timeless and inscribed into the landscape can, I believe, be situated within this logic. In addition to drawing on adjectives such as 'the primordial, the strange and the savage' (Val Baker, 1959/2000, p13), he goes on to assert that St Ives is 'revealed' (Val Baker, 1959/2000) through the following poetical extract:

This is a hideous and wicked country,  
Sloping to hateful sunsets and *the end of time*,

Hollow with mine shafts, naked with granite, fanatic

With sorrow. *Abortions of the past*

Hop through these bogs; *black-faced*, the villagers

Remember burnings by the hewn stones.

(John Heath Stubbs cited in Val Baker, 1959/2000, p13 – my emphasis)

In addition to the way this extract conveys its subjects as temporally ‘fixed’ in the past and embedded within a landscape story, there is also reference to villagers as ‘black faced’. Although it might be argued that this could be construed as a reference to the literal blackness created by the dirtiness of labour, I would argue that this ‘artistic colonisation’ draws together discourses that link the art colony and processes of racialisation. This can be identified through the influence of the artistic genres of ‘primitivism’ and ‘naïve’ art during the period after World War 1, artistic movements that were directly connected with the artistic colonisation in St Ives at this time.

The categories of ‘primitivism’ and ‘naïve’ art are often closely associated or taken as one and the same and this in itself conveys a particularly significant link between artistic colonisation and racialising discourses. In distinguishing the two, ‘primitivism’ can be characterised as ‘art by pre-historic or non-western peoples [...] or subjects or forms borrowed from non-western and pre-modern sources’ (Atkins, 1993, p174). Naïve art, more broadly, defines the art of ‘artists who are self taught’ (ibid) and seen, as the term suggests, to produce work which conveys innocence through infantile qualities. Thus, the close association and inter-changeability of these terms (ibid) draws upon colonial discourses which associate the non-western other with the intellectual deficiencies and naivety of children, the indistinct use of the terms articulating a patronising concept of the ethnic other as ‘backward’ both temporally and intellectually, Edward Mullins, for example, states that:

most painters who are dubbed 'primitive' or 'naïve' present a vision of a brightly-coloured world that is essentially childlike and innocent, A Garden of Eden before the Fall.

(Mullins, 1994, p15)

What this statement also conveys is the link between these genres and the desire within modern western art to capture 'Rousseau's notion of the "noble savage"' (Atkins, 1993, p174) and to 'express a truth that transcended mere fidelity to appearance' (ibid). This sentiment emerged at this particular time largely as a counter-response to the perceived 'loss' of innocence represented by the atrocities of World War 1.

These discourses can be seen as generated through colonialism and its constructions of race. In this case the 'art colony' and the more specific form of artistic colonisation can be seen to work these racialisations of subject and form into understandings of St Ives. In this context, the predominantly white, middle-class artists visiting and settling in St Ives were not only able to penetrate and inhabit this 'other space', they were also able to 'map' it. What discourses of racialisation also serve to enculturate is the imperial practice of spatial domination from the point of a centre, as articulated within 'Actor Network Theory' (ANT). By this, I mean to conceive of their mobility as being about 'ordering through space' (Law, 1992, p387). Mobility in this sense is also about creating strategies of control across space.

Having established that St Ives has been constructed through colonial discourses and an inter-war sentimentality in its identification as an 'art colony', I now want to examine these issues of spatial control through the notion of 'action at a distance' (Latour, 1987). The aim being to convey how, through the social and cultural relations between 'coloniser' and 'colonised', spatial organisation in the form of 'centres and peripheries are [...] generated by surveillance and control' (Law, 1992, p387). More specifically, it is at this point that we can situate the Tate Gallery within this account and consider its part within these processes of spatial organisation.

## Taking St Ives to the Tate and the 'Discovery' of Alfred Wallis

### *A 'genuine primitive'*

Although it is noted that Turner visited St Ives in order to sketch the landscape in 1811 (Tooby, 1997), the growth of its popularity as a place to travel to in order to paint or sketch *did not occur until the latter part of the nineteenth century*. Facilitated by the extension of the railway network, visiting during this period also gave way to the increased wave of settlement. From this period up until the 1920s the term 'art colony' begins to be more applicable not only in the benign sense of the collective, but in the 'colonial' sense as decline in the local fishing industry left sail lofts vacant and cheaply available. Converting these structures into artists' studios, the long term or permanent migration of largely middle class artists to St Ives also led to the foundation of the St Ives Society of Artists at this time.

The representation of St Ives painting in London can be traced to an exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1902. But the connection between London and St Ives which I want to consider here can be seen to have emanated from what has been described as a 'formative event' (Tooby, 1997, p14) in 1928 when the London based Modernists Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood visited St Ives for the first time and 'discovered' Alfred Wallis and his work. The story of how they came upon Wallis, catching sight of him at work on one of his seascape paintings as they passed his cottage, has been recalled many times as a pivotal moment in the stories of St Ives art (see for example Tooby 1997, Gale 1998, Berlin 1949/2000). What I want to engage with here is the way this 'moment' represents the beginnings of a set of exploitative connections between London and St Ives that reveal the colonial discourses within the 'art colony' through the notion of London as pseudo-imperial centre and Wallis as colonised subject on the periphery.

It is said that Wood and Nicholson purchased their first examples of Wallis' work on that day, inspired by the qualities of 'a newly discovered and genuine "primitive"' (Berlin, 1949/2000, p55). From this point, Nicholson, who shortly afterwards returned to London, instigated a series of transactions by post, with Wallis sending his paintings and Nicholson returning a cheque for those he wanted to keep along with the works he had rejected. Within the following year these paintings began to be distributed amongst friends and associates of the two London artists, one of the most significant of these being H.S. Ede who was an assistant curator at the Tate Gallery. Ede began his own correspondence with Wallis and developed a postal relationship with Wallis that continued until the artist's death in 1942.

Wallis was born in Devonport near Plymouth in 1855 and moved to St Ives in 1890, setting up business as a marine 'rag-and-bone' trader. The significance of this move, and more so the years before 1890 when Wallis had earned his living as a seaman, lie in his life beyond St Ives, aspects of which have been obscured by the construction of Wallis as a localised figure within St Ives art particularly, as I will show, in relation to the Tate Gallery. His life as a painter did not begin until around 1925 however, and it is this period of Wallis' life as an artist, in his seventies and eighties, that can be seen as an overriding influence in the construction of his identity. His portrayal as 'an old St Ives fisherman who lived like a hermit in a small cottage [who] managed to express in paint something basic to one's comprehension of Cornwall and the Cornish character' (Val Baker, 1959/2000, p75), can be seen as a reflection of the belief that the 'naïve' and 'primitive' sensibilities that the likes of Nicholson wanted to develop within their brand of academic Modernism, had been found in Wallis. His poverty and localised existence, which, unsurprisingly were evident by this stage of his life, are used to present Wallis as an essentialised personification of 'the native' with a 'child's eye vision' (Val Baker, 1959/2000, p26). The ascription of this localised, and implicitly racialised, identity can also be seen to function as a form of legitimisation for material exploitation.

As the more recent Wallis biographer Matthew Gale has pointed out, the sliding scale of payment for Wallis' paintings, from one to three shillings each, 'appear very modest' (Gale, 1998, p26). Both Ede and Nicholson bought vast quantities of his paintings for these sums, and Wallis' early biographer, Sven Berlin, reportedly 'enraged Nicholson' (Spalding, 1985, p232) when he exposed these exploitative practices. Berlin quotes a letter he had received from Nicholson in which the latter states 'of course there is always a possibility – a very real possibility – that one might have given Wallis all kinds of security and removed his urge to work' (Nicholson cited in Berlin, 1949/2000, p58). Berlin's suggestion was that 'the introduction of a certain security which would have assured him of normal needs, would only have served as a stimulus to his "urge to work", and in no way destroyed his art' (Berlin, 1949/2000, p59). The links with colonial exploitation are made explicit by the curator of Tate St Ives in the Gallery's guide book in the late 1990s:

The whole question of primitivism in modern art has unavoidable socio-political overtones. In retrospect, there are parallels between Wallis' situation and that of the 'primitive' artists of, for example, the European colonies in Africa. Where the art-world cachet did nothing to ameliorate the oppression and exploitation endemic in their daily lives.

(Tooby, 1997, p16)

As with material goods from the exploited colonies, Wallis' work, through Nicholson, began to find a following amongst 'the Hampstead avant-garde set' (Gale, 1998, p73) during the 1930s and 1940s. By this time Nicholson had met the sculptor Barbara Hepworth and they were both living in Hampstead as well as Ede and 'the most stalwart champion of modernism in London' (Gale, 1998, p29), Herbert Read. Although all four would later be directly connected with the Tate Gallery, only Ede was working there. During the early 1930s the Tate, under the directorship of J.B. Manson, remained very much a traditionalist institution and paintings by Nicholson and Wallis were not accepted as worthy of display. Gale notes that 'it was Ede's habit to hang paintings by his friends in

his office at the otherwise conservative Tate Gallery' (Gale, 1998, p28). However, when the directorship of the Tate went to John Rothenstein in 1938 it signalled a slow but progressive change in the Tate's acquisitions over the decades to follow.

What Nicholson, Hepworth, Read and Ede can be seen to establish over this period was a received notion of how St Ives art would be contextualised when it was finally to reach the Tate. This can be seen through the ways in which the London-based group created a particular narrative of St Ives art by 'acting at a distance' (Latour, 1987). The usefulness of this term here is through the way it can be seen as a strategy which constructs spaces and times; through their journeys to St Ives, the London-based artists can be seen to bring back elements of it, particularly in the form of Wallis' paintings, and reconfigure St Ives in London. The notion of Wallis being 'translated' through a network connecting St Ives and London, and the way this process affects an understanding of Wallis is exemplified by Berlin's recollection of an incident during a time when Wallis was troubled by thoughts of having to enter the workhouse. He recalls Wallis giving:

[a] long exposition to Barbara Hepworth and Herbert Read, about the Poor Law and pauper's grave, when they called on him one day, which, Barbara Hepworth tells me [Berlin], was "simply magnificent – just like an epic poem!"

(Berlin, 1949/2000, p87-8)

Though Berlin makes no reference to the incongruity of Hepworth's comment, I would argue that it is particularly telling of the relationship between Wallis and the London artists. Even in Hepworth's presence, Wallis seems to be a folkloric myth. Along with his art, he seems to be reduced to a collection of 'magnificent' tales, translated into what Hepworth finds appealing or productive towards her construction of St Ives. This reducibility of Wallis can be seen as indicative of his London-based representation, the result of strategies used in order to make Wallis '*mobile* so that [he] can be brought back' (Latour, 1987, p223 – emphasis in original) across space. For Latour, this is achieved through making *local* knowledge into *universal* knowledge (Latour, 1987). Thus making

knowledge, that is seen to constitute Wallis, *readable* when taken elsewhere. Through this process of mobilisation it can be claimed that power is being produced; it makes 'domination at a distance feasible' (Latour, 1987, p223). Therefore, despite the fact that it was Wallis who influenced the work of Nicholson, in particular, and that this artistic influence was not reciprocated (Berlin, 1949/2000), it is not Wallis but the London-based artists who find themselves as the dominant figures in the stories of St Ives art.

Despite Ede's interest in Wallis during his time at the Tate, it was Hepworth and Nicholson, around the time of their permanent move to St Ives in 1939, who were being described by Rothenstein as 'two shingly formidable professional creative instruments' (Spalding, 1998, p77). Whilst their work began to form the basis of the Tate's story of St Ives art in London, Wallis' work was not purchased by the gallery until 1958 in the form of 'Schooner under the Moon'<sup>4</sup>, sixteen years after Nicholson's work was first purchased in 1942 (see Spalding, 1998, p84). Although an exhibition of Wallis' work did appear at the Tate in 1968, this was organised by the Arts Council rather than the Tate, the latter merely providing the venue for one stage of a touring exhibition. The first major exhibition of St Ives art to include Wallis did not occur until the Tate staged 'St Ives 1939-64: Twenty five years of painting, sculpture and pottery' in 1985. The way these relations of power between Wallis and the London Modernists have been perpetuated is captured in Marion Whybrow's 'St Ives 1883-1993: Portrait of an Art Colony', published in 1994:

Surprisingly these sophisticated artists, who fled London, were taking note of the primitive paintings of an untutored and semi-literate old man in St Ives, Alfred Wallis.

(Whybrow, 1994, p110)

The 1985 exhibition at the Tate offers the first opportunity in the gallery's history to comprehensively review St Ives art. The way St Ives is mobilised for this purpose can, I want to argue, be seen as rendering the Tate as a form of 'centre of calculation' (Latour,

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<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Sue Liddell at the Tate for helping me with the background to this painting.

1987). As in Chapter 4, this idea relates to the way the works are presented and the meanings that are attached to them. Perhaps more specifically, I want to examine the way this process of re-ordering time and space privileges the London artists over Wallis.

*'St Ives 1939-64': a story of how the London artists 'transformed' space*

Through the two decades leading up to the 1985 exhibition at the Tate in London the artists who had settled in St Ives and their associate Herbert Read had formed closer links with the Tate. Having established their work through its display at the gallery, initially through contact with H.S. Ede at the Tate, a more direct involvement with the gallery at an institutional level began to evolve. In 1965 both Read and Hepworth were enrolled onto the board of trustees. In 1980, Patrick Heron, an artist who had settled near St Ives permanently in 1956, was also appointed as a trustee, his tenure covering the period of the exhibition, which included some of his own work. Furthermore, the director of the Tate at the time of the exhibition, Alan Bowness, who had been appointed in 1980, was married to the daughter of Nicholson and Hepworth in 1957. Whilst not wanting to imply that the 1985 exhibition was the product of blatant nepotism, I would suggest that the particularity of these Tate Gallery and St Ives connections have produced a story of St Ives art which serves to create, or at least, emphasise, certain 'moments' in the constitution of the stories of St Ives art, to the detriment of others.

The first, and perhaps most apparent, way in which the exhibition can be seen as operating selectively, is through its chronological 'framing'. By constructing the display around the dates 1939-1964 two events are evoked as being formative and conclusive of what constitutes this story. The *first* is the 1939 settlement of Nicholson, Hepworth and others on a permanent or semi-permanent basis, a move greatly influenced by the outbreak of war. The latter incident can be located as the death of the St Ives artist Peter Lanyon in

1964 which Michel Tooby claims 'has often been seen as symbolising the end of the great era of St Ives art' (Tooby, 1997, p28).

*Secondly*, and also due largely to the outbreak of war, the period from 1939 sees St Ives grow in terms of its status as an artistic 'centre'. This growth is related to the movement of peoples, and particularly artists, at this time due to 'the relative safety of London' (Tooby, 1997, p18) compared to many other Northern European cities. Whereas Paris had, until this time, been a dominant centre for intellectual and artistic activity within the Modernist movement, the connections being made with London artists by the European counterparts served to widen the formers' exposure and give London new found artistic credibility.

The combination of these two sets of events; the settlement of the academically trained modernists in St Ives and the movement to, or through, London, of other European artists, can be seen as a moment where cities in northern Europe, particularly Paris, London and St Ives form a spatial network. Between these three places there is a sense of 'shifting'; that is, they do not, in relation to Modernist aesthetics, remain as distinct places made up of exclusive properties, but spaces which 'co-exist, overlap and hybridise, move together, move apart' (Bingham and Thrift, 2000, p 289). Furthermore, the ways these spaces connect and the outcomes of these spatial inter-relations can also be seen to generate power. This can be seen through the way London becomes a 'nodal point' within the network; the point through which things were negotiated. For the artists, the outbreak of World War 2 influenced their mobilisation in search of a place of relative safety. The European artists came to London and the London artists travelled to St Ives. The important point here is that the mobility of the London artists and the safety of London for the European artists, allowed London and its artists to permeate other spaces: Europe, in an intellectual sense, and St Ives in a physical and intellectual sense. London became what Michel Callon has described as an 'obligatory passage point'(Callon, 1986), through which each element in the network passes and becomes defined by. It is this sense of London as a

'point' or 'centre' through which stories are 'translated' and made readable which produces power, and which informs the Tate exhibition.

In this sense the exhibition is simultaneously a story of the way this power is generated and its exemplification. It is both a description of and an active exposition of this power. The principle point of importance I want to draw from the construction of the exhibition is how it positioned London as this obligatory passage point, making it permeate the other spaces within the network, but more importantly, causing it to define them. This can be found through the way that the exhibition was spatially and temporally structured, and the way the accompanying literature for the exhibition defines other spaces 'around' the 'centre' that is London. In this context, the artists, their works, the stories of their movements, what might be referred to as a story of artistic 'influence', are utilised by the Tate, as with a centre of calculation, 'to impose framing conventions on local situations' (Murdoch, 1997, p328).

The influence and ability to define St Ives as an artistic space is firmly associated with the London artists within the exhibition guide through its assertion that 'Nicholson [and] Hepworth [...] had been the most important members of the abstract movement in London during the thirties' (Tate Gallery, 1985)<sup>5</sup>. Having established these as the dominant figures in war-time St Ives art, their international reputation goes from Europe to America through the next phase of the exhibition, which covers the period 1946-54. It was at this stage that they 'both had exhibitions in New York which was now the international centre of modern art' (ibid). However, far from this implying that these artists had become subject to the dominance of a new centre, the St Ives being 'created' by the London artists is revealed as retaining its role as a centre within these networks. In his review of the exhibition, Peter Fuller describes how 'deeply indebted to St Ives American post-painterly abstraction of the 1960s really was' (Fuller, 1985, p47). With perhaps more emotivity, he goes on to describe the exhibition's conveyance of this dominant position:

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<sup>5</sup> The authorship of this exhibition guide is unspecified (St Ives Public Library Archive).

The best aspects of *British* taste, tradition and sensibility before these things became defined by imported Made-in-USA anaesthesia [...] is what made the Tate's exhibition, 'St Ives 1939-64' such an exciting experience.

(Fuller, 1985, p48 – emphasis in original)

Here, then, it is St Ives which remains the centre of calculation when 'reading' the history of Modern art at this time, replacing the European centres at the forefront of these cultural developments and then going on to act as a foundational influence on New York's establishment as an art centre. As Spalding also states of the Tate's exhibition, it conveys a sense of Hepworth and Nicholson as having 'transformed St Ives into a vital centre of Modern art and set a standard of professionalism that a younger generation was to emulate' (Spalding, 1985, p232). The important point regarding this notion, however, is that it is not St Ives per se - an isolated landscape on the Cornish coast - that achieves this 'dominance' as a centre, it is Hepworth et al's 'St Ives'. This St Ives is a mobile space that is translated into international art exhibitions and which comes to be placed in the Tate Gallery. It is St Ives made mobile and durable by the ability of these particular artists to dominate the construction of its histories.

The other significant point in relation to the chronological framing of the exhibition is that it begins just three years before Wallis' death. Just as Berlin has pointed out in his biography of Wallis, in Frances Spalding's review of the Tate's 1985 exhibition she recalls that 'by 1939 [...] Wallis's (sic) example had long been assimilated and it was expediency that led Nicholson and his second wife Barbara Hepworth to accept [...] refuge in Cornwall' (Spalding, 1985, p232). Despite Wallis' role in this story, however, he is marginalised by the 'framing convention' and reduced to the exhibition's introductory section: 'Before 1939'. As a result, he can be seen not only as historically marginalised, but also homogenised into a pre-history, which serves primarily as a point of reference. The framing of the St Ives story in this manner and, in particular, the implications it carries for the consideration of Wallis and his work through the construction of what Chris

Stephens has called, a 'locational priority' (Stephens, 1993) can, I want to argue, be problematised by reconsidering its spatial relations.

### **Re-connecting Wallis: a circum-Atlantic reading of histories**

Having assessed some of the ways Wallis has been constructed as a localised figure; a 'native', a 'primitive', embedded in a landscape which defines his identity, I now want to examine what this construction serves to hide about Wallis and his relationship with a far broader spatial network. In this sense I want to argue that far from being localised, Wallis and his work are informed by what Paul Gilroy describes as processes of:

Moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity

(Gilroy, 1993, p12)

In asserting that this is the context within which Wallis can be more meaningfully understood, I also want to consider the implications of his situation within this 'circum-Atlantic' world, which can be seen as revealing 'the insufficiently acknowledged co-creation of an oceanic inter-culture' (Roach, 1996, p5). This is achieved by considering Wallis before he became the old man whom Nicholson and Wood first met and the role of his earlier adult life in constituting the art work which dominated his later years. The additional point of interest here is the way this earlier history has been contested, in order, I would argue, to retain Wallis as an immutable, localised figure.

It is Sven Berlin's early biography which first suggests that during his active working life Wallis sailed regularly on Atlantic voyages in search of cod (Berlin, 1949/2000). At this point, during the late nineteenth-century, the vessels used were still powered by sail and necessitated months at sea along with the additional and not irregular incidence of being blown off course which resulted in even longer journeys<sup>6</sup>. On the basis

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account of Atlantic cod fishing during this period see Kurlansky, 1999.

of Berlin's assertion then, it would seem that a substantial amount of each year of Wallis' early working life would have been spent at sea, circumnavigating the Atlantic ocean. Indeed, Berlin suggests that '*his* art school had been the Atlantic ocean' (Berlin, 1949/2000, p35 – emphasis in original).

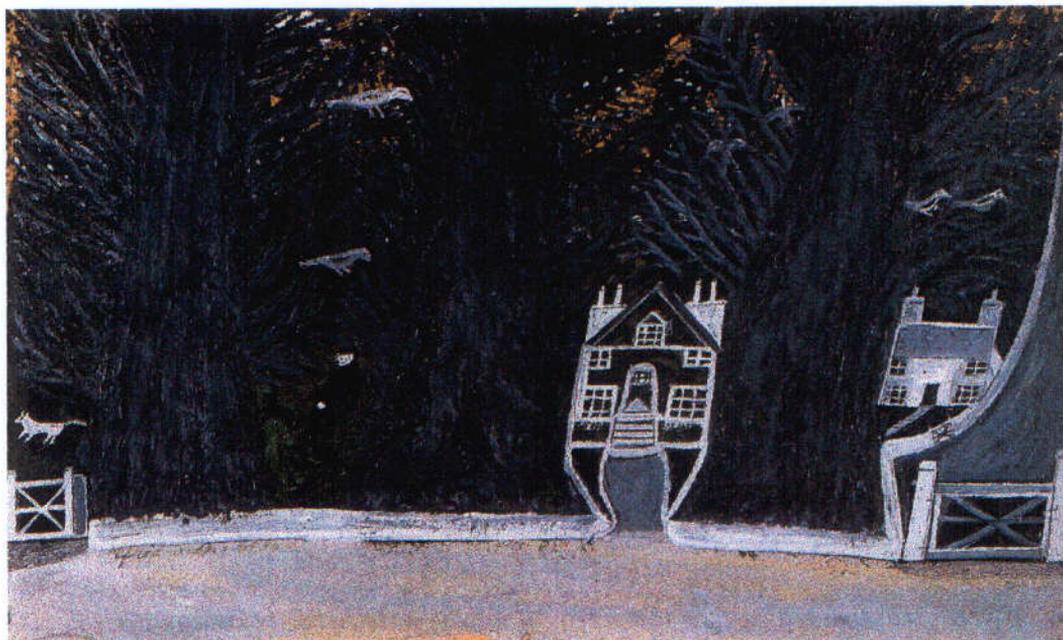
Many of the writers on the subject of St Ives art have overlooked the issue of Wallis' work being informed by these spatial circulations, or even that he travelled beyond St Ives at all (Whybrow, 1993; Val Baker, 1959/2000). Doubts over Wallis' voyages have also been more actively engaged with, particularly by Albert Rowe, who wrote that 'Alfred had never been to sea in his life' (cited in Gale, 1998, p12). However, this account was written long after Wallis' death in 1968, without any level of substantiation. Furthermore, it is evident that Rowe was a distant family member and that there had been many rifts within the family, particularly to the effect of Alfred Wallis' exclusion (Gale, 1998; Berlin, 1949/2000). It would appear then, that the exclusion of this aspect of Wallis' life, whether to portray him as a localised 'native', as I have suggested, or to belittle his artistic achievements, is explicitly deployed in the face of strong evidence to the contrary. Berlin, for example, substantiates his claim regarding the Atlantic ocean's role in informing Wallis' art by drawing attention to evidence in its content:

It is evident that he drew his experience of landscapes from other places than Cornwall, possibly from Leghorn, Genoa and other continental ports – also from Canada and even South America. The extraordinarily un-English, chateau like buildings in some pictures, and the wealth of plant life and animals and birds are quite distinct from the Cornish landscapes as such.

(Berlin, 1949/2000, p41)

This 'wealth of plant life and animals and birds' can be seen in pictures such as *Cottages in a Wood, St Ives* (c1928) (see figure 5.1). Although it is difficult to prove or disprove Berlin's assertion, Cornwall and West Cornwall in particular is characterised by granite

moors and its ancient history of mining has formed ‘a remarkable industrial landscape’ (Rackham, 1997, p160) quite distinct from that depicted in a painting such as this.



(Figure 5.1 – Cottages in a Wood, St Ives, Alfred Wallis, c1928)

It is also evident that this period of Wallis’ life did directly inform his work. This can be found in surviving letters, primarily from his early correspondence with H.S. Ede, when he explained the motives and interests behind his work. In a copy of one of these letters contained in the St Ives public library archive, he states that:

I never see any thing I send you now it is what I have seen before<sup>7</sup>

In a letter the previous year, which has been quoted elsewhere, he also states to Ede that:

What I do mosley is what used to bee out of my own memery what we may never see again<sup>8</sup>

Another source of evidence for Wallis’ travels appeared in 1997 when Peter Barnes, looking for evidence to support Berlin’s claims, came across a crew list for a ship called the *Belle Adventure*. He recalls that:

<sup>7</sup> Letter to H.S. Ede dated 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1936 (St Ives public library archive).

<sup>8</sup> Letter to H.S. Ede dated 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1935 (St Ives public library archive).

Alfred Wallis painted several pictures of one particular ship and took the trouble to name it. That vessel was the *Belle Adventure*. It seemed that this boat had had some particular significance for Wallis. Research uncovered a crew list which showed the *Belle Adventure* visited Newfoundland in 1876. An ordinary seaman joined the ship in St John on the 7<sup>th</sup> August of that year. That seaman was Alfred Wallis, said to be nineteen years of age and born in Plymouth. Wallis left the ship in Teignmouth on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1876. This evidence would appear to confirm Sven Berlin's statement that Wallis did sail to Newfoundland.

(Barnes, 1997)<sup>9</sup>

As well as providing strong evidence of Wallis' travels to Newfoundland, this statement also suggests that Wallis spent time ashore on the other side of the Atlantic, which seems to provide further evidence for Berlin's claims regarding the inclusion of 'un-English' landscape features within Wallis' work.

In drawing on this evidence and establishing the notion of Wallis as a far more mobile figure than has often been suggested, my principal concern is not so much to emphasise the 'un-English' qualities of Wallis' work, but to draw out continuities across time-space which reveal the hybrid qualities of the Atlantic world which constitutes Wallis and his work. Furthermore, I want to emphasise that these networks which stretch across time-space have been consciously 'covered over' in order to construct St Ives as a mythical, isolated 'colony'. Roach addresses this concern through the co-relation of place and memory in such constructions:

Memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting [...] selective memory requires public enactments of forgetting, either to blur the obvious discontinuities, misalliances, and ruptures or, more desperately, *to exaggerate them in order to mystify a previous Golden age.*

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from Peter Barnes dated 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1997 (St Ives public library archive).

Evidence for the continuities that do exist within this Atlantic world can be found in Kurlansky's work in his reference to St John's, Newfoundland, referred to above by Barnes:

[it] is located on the point of land furthest from Canada and the rest of North America and closest to Europe. The entire Newfoundland economy was based on Europeans arriving, catching fish for a few months and taking their fish back to Europe.

(Kurlansky, 1999, p73)

More specifically, in relation to spatial connections with St Ives, the notion of an 'oceanic inter-culture' (Roach, 1996) can be seen through two specific examples. Firstly, there are his strong connections with the Salvation Army which had a substantial following within St Ives. A mission had been present in St Ives since 1862 and was actually situated next to Wallis' original house in St Ives (Berlin, 1949/2000). A devoutly religious man, Wallis and his wife were active Salvationists, with Wallis apparently claiming that he had been "saved" by them (ibid). The Salvation Army also has an uncharacteristically large following in Newfoundland, as one of the dominant religious interests there. Secondly, there is the example of the coastal town of Rockport, Massachusetts which has also become referred to as an 'art colony'. As with St Ives, this has emerged from the same decline of the Atlantic fishing industries and the emergence of a mobile, middle-class; the spatially-connected economic decline of St Ives and Rockport giving way to spatially-connected constructions of cultural aesthetics.

What this last example in particular serves to emphasise is that Wallis was situated in more than an Atlantic world in the sense of a closed syncretic culture; that is to say, one which combines elements of two isolated points within space. What I want to argue is that this world was defined more so in the movements 'between' places - through the movements of Atlantic circulation as described by Paul Gilroy:

Ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected [...] a means to conduct a distinct mode of cultural production.

(Gilroy, 1993, p16-17)

To exemplify this sense of 'mobile elements' standing for 'shifting spaces' I now want to consider a particular example of Wallis' work entitled 'The Wreck of the Alba' (1939).

### **'The Wreck of the Alba'**

This painting (see figure 5.2) is one of a series, bearing the same title, which were painted from 1938-40. It depicts a ship being wrecked on the rocks just beyond Porthmeor beach in St Ives, the sea covers at least half of the ship, indicating that the process of its sinking is taking place. The precise location of the scene is emphasised by the inclusion of Godrevy lighthouse, apparently the cause of the accident due to its then recently reduced light, and the St Ives lifeboat crew within the scene. The sinking itself occurred on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1938 and is recounted by Matthew Gale:

The captain thought that the shore lights on Porthmeor beach were those of the harbour and ran aground on the rocks in seeking an anchorage. The St Ives lifeboat managed to take the men off in difficult conditions, but was overturned by a wave on rounding the freighter's hull. It too was swept onto the rocks. The men spilled out and floundered to safety on the rocks and the beach, aided by the townspeople who waded into the rough seas to save them. [...]. The epic of men pitted against the elements was reinforced by the special supplement of the *St Ives Times* and a BBC radio report.

(Gale, 1998, p64-5)

In the context of this reading of the event, it would appear that Wallis' incentive to depict the scene in *The Wreck of the Alba* was based on its high profile as a local event. Whilst this may have informed his decision to some extent, I want to argue that his principal rationale might have been the event's re-invocation of the Atlantic world and the inter-connections which constitute it. Whilst not wanting to overly imbue the work with melodrama, it might be seen as a point, for Wallis, where his earlier, mobile life is evoked by the event. The shifting of time and space embodied within the Alba can, in this sense, be recognised as a representation of the same Atlantic world through which he had circulated. There are two ways that this claim can be supported: through an alternative, 'circulatory' reading of the event and through a particular intervention in Wallis' depiction of the Alba.



(Figure 5.2 – The Wreck of the Alba, Alfred Wallis, 1939)

A 'circulatory' reading of the event accounts for the various connections across time and space which can be seen to converge on this localised event. This latter point is an important consideration also, in that this alternative reading is not a 'dissolution of the local'; the local is still a point within this spatial network, it is *the way the local is constituted* that I want to bring into question. In this context, therefore, what is significant

is that the Alba was a Panamanian freighter, served by a Hungarian crew and was carrying a cargo of Welsh coal. The intended destination of the Alba was the northern Italian port of Civitavecchia a place which Wallis is likely to have sailed to himself (see Gale, 1998). It is stated that the detail within *The Wreck of the Alba* 'suggests that he read the detailed reports as well as observing the events for himself' (Gale, 1998, p65) and this also infers that Wallis would have been aware of these international connections.

The fact that Wallis returned to this subject matter over a period spanning three years indicates that he had a degree of preoccupation with the event, perhaps because of the evocations of his own past, yet this sustained interest also suggests another connection that Wallis encompassed, which has been 'covered'; that is, his location in the present, rather than solely in the past. Whilst Wallis, in his own words, records an evocation of the past through his work, the example of the Alba paintings point towards more contemporary connections in his work. Rather than making a distinction between time as past and as present, however, it might be more accurate to consider Wallis as someone engaged with the connections across time. When Gale points out that through the Alba paintings, Wallis 'recorded the vanishing past, but also captured the receding present' (Gale, 1998, p65), I would argue that the importance of this assertion lies in the simultaneity of these two readings of past and present. Thus Wallis can be seen as situated within a circulatory understanding of time, as well as space.

The notion of Wallis as articulating time and space, or, perhaps more accurately, time-space, in a relational way, is supported by the second observation regarding his intervention in the depiction of the Alba. In the 1939 example of the painting, Wallis changed the name of the ship, displayed on the prow, from 'Alba' to 'Albian'. Perhaps the most immediate point of interest here is that once again Wallis, through his allusion to the issue of the nation, can be seen as making broader spatial connections than his localised characterisation would suggest. For Gale this suggests that:

Although probably ignorant of Blake's allegorical use of the name, Wallis was surely aware of the potential for such allusion especially in view of the returned threat of war.

(Gale, 1998, p66)

Irrespective of Wallis' knowledge of Blake's work, as Gale suggests, this remains an unequivocally allegorical reference, which, I would argue, provides further evidence for Wallis' breadth of temporal-spatial consciousness. The term 'Albian' and the use of allegory directly links an historical articulation to a contemporary issue, with the juxtaposition suggesting a sense of war as historically cyclical, repetitive and perhaps inevitable. This might also reflect something of Wallis' commentary on the international politics of war through the coalescence of Britain and the other nations implicated in the Alba story, on a site of disaster and loss of life. However, I would suggest that the most compelling of these interpretations can be seen in Wallis' depiction of the Alba as an embodiment of Britain, and perhaps Britishness itself; the sinking ship as an allegory of the fragility of the nation.

The broader point of interest regarding *The Wreck of the Alba*, however, is the way that this inscription of the nation on to the ship captures Gilroy's assertion of ships as 'mobile elements' circulating between 'the fixed places'. The notion of Britain as a secure and bounded space is effectively disrupted by its representation as the mobile and inevitably 'unstable' Alba, as well as its being depicted *in relation to* the other spaces represented within the scene. The Alba can be seen as a point in a far reaching network; indeed one which has been hidden by the localising effects of the colonial discourses which have interpreted Wallis within the context of the 'art colony'.

The localised interpretation of *The Wreck of the Alba* can be seen in its hanging at the Tate in St Ives after it was purchased by the institution in 1994. The painting was hung beside a seaward facing window in the gallery through which, at particularly low tides, parts of the wrecked Alba are still visible, thus providing an intriguing and poignant

juxtaposition. However, whilst this is perhaps an irresistible opportunity to allude to the localising aspect of the story, it might also have been an opportunity to, as Joseph Roach describes:

Map a story of memory and forgetting [...] in which both tellers and listeners have found more recoverable meanings in routes than they have in roots.

(Roach, 1996, p283)

## **Tate St Ives: contestation, connection and the spaces of St Ives**

### ***From local views to international connections***

The story of the Tate's acquisition of *The Wreck of the Alba* and the reaction of the Tate St Ives curator, Michael Tooby, when first shown the painting, was recalled in an interview with the Tate's Director of National Programmes, Sandy Nairne:

It went to Mike and his curatorial associate, they saw it and said "Oh you mean it's the Alba" and they knew the wreck! Because it turns out the Alba was the last big wreck in St Ives in 1939 and was a wreck that Wallis witnessed and it's a wreck that you can see at a very low tide...the boiler...the top boiler of the Alba sticks out of the sand, everybody down at St Ives knows the Alba [...] Mike often tries to hang it, umm, in fact there was this other artist who was (inaudible)...can't remember her name now, she was in a project show with Mike and actually she positioned it on a line, on an axis with the wreck, did an additional label and pointed out to the visitors that at low tide you could actually turn round and look at the painting, or did she have it facing, anyway, one way or another you could sort of make the connection.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interview conducted with Sandy Nairne 23/4/99.

*The Wreck of the Alba* was purchased the year following Tate St Ives' opening and the recollection of this story as one of local history can be seen to resonate with the early criticism of Tate St Ives by Chris Stephens in *Art Monthly*. In his critique of the early Tate St Ives, he refers back to the notion of the 'colony', describing it as 'a monolithic social network, the 'colony', with its own in-built hierarchy lead[ing] to the distortion of some artists' reputations [...] and the construction of a romanticised notion of the artist' (Stephens, 1993, p7). Having established this critique of the historical treatment of St Ives art, he then turns to the new gallery and suggests that:

The location of art from 'St Ives' in St Ives then implies a particular set of relations between artist, work and place that restricts historical and aesthetic appreciation and isolates the works' conditions of production from contemporary history and art practice elsewhere.

(ibid)

It would appear that Stephens' concerns for the then new Tate St Ives bear similarities to those I have expressed here in relation to the treatment of Wallis' work, he does in fact also refer to Wallis as having been subject to 'reification [...] as an archetype of authenticity and innocence' (ibid). From this perspective, therefore, it might be suggested that the Tate's establishment in St Ives can be seen, through examples such as the display of *The Wreck of the Alba*, as a perpetuation of the hierarchies established through the colonial discourses of 'the colony'.

Returning to the notion of a temporal-spatial network, I would suggest that what we also see is the perpetuation of the dominance of a 'centre'. Just as the 1985 exhibition in London, and before that the mobile practices of the London artists, allowed St Ives to be 'sent back' and 'translated' at a distance, so Tate St Ives might be seen in this light. In this sense then, the 'centre of calculation' has shifted; the point in the network which serves to 'calculate' St Ives and make it readable is not in London but also, spatially, within St Ives.

Once again, Stephens offers an implicit resonance of concern when he somewhat unassuredly states:

It may be that the new Tate, itself a tourist attraction, will be the right place to interrogate the notion of artistic colonisation, [...] and [...] the complex of relations between regionalism, nationalism and internationalism.

(ibid)

What I would take from this observation, and particularly the tone in which it is expressed, is that, in crude terms, Tate St Ives is more Tate than it is St Ives. By this I mean to suggest that St Ives is seen, by Stephens, as still being constructed through the Tate's 'gaze'; one which is built on knowledges constructed elsewhere, most notably London, and transplanted into St Ives in the form of this gallery. To simplify this, it might be suggested that Tate St Ives becomes a 'London space' or, after Latour, London 'at a distance' (Latour, 1987), and that its spatial location within St Ives does not necessarily disrupt the spatial hierarchies previously constructed.

However, whether or not in direct response to critiques such as these, it would seem that Michael Tooby has subsequently attempted to engage with a notion of St Ives art as situated within a broader temporal-spatial network in order to disrupt localised understandings of it. This is exemplified in the staging of exhibitions such as *Aresta Cortante* (1995) and *Foundations and Fragments* (1997-8)<sup>11</sup>. The first of these was based around the work of the artist John Aitken and formed an artistic enquiry into connections between Cornwall and Lisbon, with the intention of suggesting how 'an understanding of the Gallery's local character creates international resonances' (Tooby and Aitken, 1995). The second involved the work of Ralph Freeman, a St Ives based artist whose work reflects on the experiences of his Jewish family's escape from Nazi Germany. Again, Michael Tooby attempts to convey a sense of disparate spatial connectedness through this work:

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Michael Tooby for providing me with accompanying literature for these two exhibitions.

We might [...] be tempted to read the large blue oils as the work of an artist who, as we are informed, lives and works each day with a view of Porthmeor Beach from his studio. However, with the context generated by our journey through the artist's own background, we might think instead of an artist like Emil Nolde, trapped in his studio in the German-Danish borderland in the 1940s, looking to the far horizon; or emigrants like the parents of Mark Rothko, crossing oceans in fear and hope.

(Tooby, Cohen and Freeman, 1997)

This engagement with the international context of St Ives and St Ives art was a particular point of interest in an article in *The Independent* newspaper, published around the time of the gallery's fifth anniversary. Approaching the issue of Tate St Ives' display of international art from a different perspective, the author questions Tooby on why he will not include works of artists such as Picasso, of which there are examples within the Tate's collection in storage. Tooby emphasises that he wants to engage with an international body of work but that it must connect with St Ives:

What I don't want is to see the inside of the gallery as a sealed unit which relates not to the houses and people nearby, but to a concept called the art world. I just don't agree that an exhibit in gallery X can be curated in the same way as an exhibit in gallery Y 2,000 miles away.

(Tooby cited in Lister, 1998, p3)

In this context, then, I would argue that Tooby's concern about how St Ives should be connected with the gallery space has become an inversion of the original concern; rather than attempting to create a broader spatial context for the work, here Tooby is being questioned on the need for spatial connections at all. This, I want to argue, raises two distinct issues, the first of which I will raise below whilst the second will be developed through a more extensive consideration under the next sub-heading.

The first of these is confronted when Tooby is asked 'but is there not a case that the Tate, St Ives should be the national modern art gallery for the west country?' (Lister, 1998, p3) to which Tooby responds:

Precisely [...] if we show Rothko as we did, we have to say what is the context for Rothko here? He came for a long weekend having met Patrick Heron in the States.

(ibid)

Lister then asserts:

But his answer shows it is anything but "precisely" [...] Lateral thinking certainly impinges on the Tooby philosophy of art. But in the delightful gallery [...] visitors seem to relish a taste of the Cornish art tradition with international references, however lateral.

(ibid)

Here, then, the issue is one of a tension between the 'original' problem of creating an overly regionalised view of St Ives art, which would be seen as too parochial for Tooby and unprogressive in relation to critiquing St Ives art as it has been historically constructed through 'the colony' and an 'international' gallery which would not, in any way, reflect a 'locational priority', as Lister suggests. That the former position should be challenged is perhaps not so much in question. Neither of them supports a localised view of St Ives art. But, although Lister doesn't explicitly assert it, an over-riding consideration within this tension, I would argue, is the question of whether a gallery in London, such as the Tate at Millbank, would be expected to reflect a sense of London. In other words, the question that emerges is: why does the gallery need to say something about its location? And, in relation to the assumption that a London gallery would not be expected to make such a concession, is it still the perennial discourses of 'the colony' that are at work in defining Tate St Ives role in this manner?

In order to clarify this tension, in crude terms, it may be expressed as a tension between the gallery as 'provincial but connected' or 'international but disconnected'.

Ostensibly, this tension is embedded in the same issues which I have raised regarding Wallis; that is, the possibilities of a broader set of spatial connections and the power inherent in localising regimes. In relation to Stephens' comment above, as to the suitability of Tate St Ives as a place to 'interrogate the complex relations between regional, national and international', it seems his somewhat tongue-in-cheek assertion is vindicated. Rather than a constructive interrogation, I would suggest a reassertion of the dilemma has emerged around Tate St Ives. In attempting to forge meaningful international connections with St Ives, a regional and national tension has emerged, or perhaps more accurately, a regional and metropolitan tension, which has been produced by the long-established problematic of defining St Ives 'at a distance'. The discussion of this dilemma is too intricate to be fully explored here<sup>12</sup>, what I now want to go on to consider is what I believe to be the fundamental problem facing Michael Tooby's internationalising project and the predominant cause of this tension.

*...how many were going to St Ives?: questioning the connections*

Essentially, then, there are two problematic concerns within the issue of Tate St Ives and its relationship to the locale. Firstly, should Tate St Ives necessarily concern itself with St Ives stories, whatever their spatial dimensions, and if this is to be the case, then secondly, how should these stories be told? As I have mentioned above, while not wishing to discard the former out of hand, I want to argue that the source of this tension is embedded in the treatment of the latter concern. This I believe is the result of Tate St Ives constituting itself as a 'centre' within these spatial networks, in so far as it serves to connect places yet retains its 'locational priority'. In this sense, irrespective of the connections made between St Ives and Lisbon or Nazi Germany or Rothko's New York,

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<sup>12</sup> See in particular the following chapter for further consideration of the tensions around power and regionalism.

these connections are made *in relation to St Ives rather than in relation to each other*. All of these elements are brought to Tate St Ives and ‘translated’ there in order to ‘reword’ the stories of St Ives. Moreover, the crucial point here, I would argue, is that this creates the problem it does precisely because *these connections are not constitutive of St Ives*. Lister’s critique hints at this through his reference to what might be described as tenuous associations, such as Rothko’s ‘long weekend’ in St Ives forming a basis for his work to be shown in the gallery. Whilst this might constitute a point of interest and should not necessarily exclude Rothko’s work from being displayed, I would argue that there are more productive ways that connections may be made.

Here we return to the motivations for the consideration of Wallis and his work; namely that the circum-Atlantic world which he is situated in is constituted by connections *between* places. This co-creation might not be distributed evenly throughout a network, condensing at certain points in time and space more than others, such as Porthmeor Beach on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1938, but, crucially, it is not mediated by or defined in relation to a centre. The more productive forms of connection that I want to assert depend precisely on the idea that it is through the dynamics of connection rather than the stability of a centre that the stories of St Ives are defined. In this respect Tate St Ives’ temporal-spatial network, or ‘international references’ might be seen as constituted through Wallis, ships, cod fishing, Newfoundland, Rockport and the establishment of an ‘art colony’ there. However, what I mean to suggest here is not a ‘correct agenda’ for Tate St Ives, especially as this might prove problematic in relation to the acquisition of the ‘big names’ required for the gallery’s commercial success. Rather I wish to assert that in seeking a broader spatial context for these stories a tension has emerged as a direct result of the meanings of the connections being made. While Rothko’s ‘long weekend’ provides the basis for the display of work by a world famous artist, the story of Atlantic cod fishing is, perhaps, less likely to include such ‘big names’. However, if stories of St Ives spatial connections are to be made, the question remains: can these stories carry sufficient meaning with the exclusion of such

constitutive geographies as those established by the Atlantic network of trade and industry?

Another caveat I would insert at this point is that despite the emergence of a tension around the spatial understandings of St Ives a particularly important, and, I would argue, productive engagement has been with the issue of race and ethnicity. Tooby has not only critiqued the 'art colony's' racialisation of Wallis<sup>13</sup> in the historical context, but also produced an engagement with race and ethnicity in contemporary projects at Tate St Ives. The sculptor Veronica Ryan, who at the time of writing was still involved in a three year tenure as 'resident artist' at Tate St Ives, produced work made from marble donated by the Barbara Hepworth Estate, including a piece with 'exotic' fruit embedded in one of Hepworth's white marble blocks. I was shown the work by Michael Tooby who described his curatorial intentions in displaying the work as suggesting that:

a racial message is there, but it should not be in a brash, ethnically marked form.<sup>14</sup>

His insistence on addressing the issue that, as Sandy Nairne has suggested:

St Ives and Cornwall are pretty white,<sup>15</sup>

serves to facilitate a sense of cultural and ethnic diversity around the notion of St Ives art, but also seeks to address it in a manner which avoids 'marking' or reification on the basis of this. This has also been an issue addressed through Lubiana Himid's work at Tate St Ives<sup>16</sup>, an artist whose work deals not only with issues of ethnicity and gender but also of the diaspora experience and the relationship between movement and identity. In a more recent interview I asked Sandy Nairne about the choice of Himid's work for Tate St Ives<sup>17</sup>:

I think Mike was certainly keen on using that aspect of St Ives. There is a

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<sup>13</sup> See Tooby, 1997, p16 reproduced earlier in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Michael Tooby 4/3/99.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sandy Nairne 23/4/99.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 4 for a fuller account of Himid and her painting: 'Between the two my heart is balanced' (1991).

<sup>17</sup> N.B Michael Tooby is here referred to in the past tense as he had recently left to take up a position at the National Gallery of Wales in Cardiff.

thread of St Ives which is about emigration and about precisely people, whether its Naum Gabo the Russian émigré coming to Britain and spending time in St Ives and then going on to America...whether it's in a sense of displacements of even families like the Nicholson or Heron families, you know the Heron case was, they were partly from Cornwall, partly not from Cornwall, I mean...I think that Mike's always been aware of that as a thread and therefore had always wanted to invite other artists of different types who could reflect upon questions of journeys and journeying, and Lubiana was a very obvious case.<sup>18</sup>

What is of interest here is that whilst Himid is seen to link in with St Ives art through the notion of journeying, this link is being made with the artists who journeyed to St Ives and formed 'the colony' rather than Wallis, as an obvious example, whose journeys connect St Ives with other spaces. It would also seem that, through Himid's work, this might have been an opportunity to address the racialisation of Wallis and the colonisation of the 'colony'. Yet whether from the point of commercial necessity or not, again it is the stories of 'the colony' which are privileged.

While the issues carried through Himid's work are undoubtedly 'progressive' in disrupting some *a priori* understandings of St Ives art, again, I would argue that there is an incongruity about their context which marks these stories out more as 'additions to' rather than as 'elements of' stories of St Ives art. In this sense, a demarcation can be seen to exist which separates St Ives stories along a temporal-spatial axis so that we might talk about Himid and artists such as Gabo as 'recent' and 'international' and Wallis as 'historical' and 'local'.

In wanting to curate a space which conveys a sense of St Ives as diverse, Michael Tooby stated that:

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Sandy Nairne 16/5/00.

There is no story of St Ives.<sup>19</sup>

And while this is a point with which I would agree, in the sense that any space can be seen as having multiple meanings and interpretations, there is also a sense in which my analysis of St Ives and Wallis part company with this view. Rather, there is not so much a lack of a story, as one which is diverse and multi-faceted yet coherent through its connections.

Although the account at Tate St Ives can be seen to incorporate a multiple convergence of meanings within this space, it is precisely *within* this space that meaning is given. What this serves to ignore, within the context of a network, is the connections with other spaces on an equally constitutive basis. In this sense, there is an on-going division of space presented at Tate St Ives between St Ives, where meaning is generated and defined, and the 'other' spaces which are 'added to' but not inherently constitutive of St Ives. This can be seen to resonate with what Bruno Latour has called 'the Great Divide that separates us both from our past and from other nature-cultures' (Latour, 1993, p56). Latour uses this term in relation to anthropology, and the way in which analysis of 'the other' is undertaken within a context which is distinct from the cultural 'us'; a line is drawn between interpreter and interpreted which excludes the evaluation of the former through the same values and meanings as the latter. This, I have argued, is what divides Wallis from Nicholson, St Ives from London, and St Ives from Tate St Ives and renders an 'international' context more accurately what might be described as 'intra-national'; the spatial differentiation only making sense *within* Tate St Ives rather than *between* St Ives and other spaces. As Latour also points out:

As the moderns also extended this Great Divide in time after extending it in space, they felt themselves absolutely free to give up following the ridiculous constraints of their past which required them to take into account the delicate web of relations between things and people. But at the same time they were taking into account many more things and many more people.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Michael Tooby 4/3/99.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the way St Ives has been constructed as a space through the power relations that have emerged and developed within the notion of the 'art colony'. In addition to this, I have discussed how these constructions have been perpetuated or challenged by the Tate Gallery, in both the historical context of the connections between early colonising artists and the Tate Gallery in London and the contemporary context of Tate St Ives. In broader terms, this has situated the analysis within issues of provincialisation and the way the relationships between regional, metropolitan, national and international are constructed through discourses generated from colonialism. These colonial discourses have also been identified as mobilising two particular areas of interest, in the way that a racialised logic can be seen to be applied in the definition of St Ives, and how attempts to spatially dominate St Ives can be identified.

The artist Alfred Wallis has been instrumental in the exploration of these ideas and more specifically how *The Wreck of the Alba* can be seen as facilitating a way of considering him and his work through a network of temporal and spatial relations which disrupt the localised and historical understandings which, I have argued, were ascribed by artists who visited and settled in St Ives. In using this example, therefore, I have emphasised the way these understandings can be seen as an outcome of power produced within these colonial discourses and that these discourses are an attempt to dominate and articulate particular temporal-spatial understandings of Wallis and St Ives. This is demonstrated through the notion of St Ives as being 'brought' back to London in the form of the Tate exhibition and constructed through a 'translation' which reconfigures it through the work of the mobile, academic Modernists who had worked there. Furthermore, London

can be seen as a point within a spatial network through which St Ives became understood across a broader network which encompasses Europe and America.

In recovering something of the personal histories of Wallis, I have shown the multiple time-spaces which constitute him and inform his art; elements of a network which, I have argued, have been instrumentally hidden through the colonial discourses of the 'art colony' and attempts to read Wallis as a localised, temporally and spatially 'fixed' figure. In emphasising Wallis' movements through an Atlantic world which reveals the temporal and spatial connections that constitute him as a mobile subject and St Ives as a place, I have explored the way seafaring has produced a 'circulation' of Atlantic cultures. In considering these temporal and spatial dynamics and the continual production of hybrid forms, my intention has been to reconsider Wallis, through the example of *The Wreck of the Alba*, and suggest that both he and his work might be more meaningfully understood through the connections between places and the cultural forms which are produced through these dynamics.

In the latter part, I have gone on to consider this way of thinking about constitutive histories in relation to Tate St Ives. This evaluation has reflected on how the gallery may be seen to act as a 'centre' which continues to spatially dominate and define St Ives, but which simultaneously attempts to challenge some of the historical constructions of the St Ives 'colony' in relation to race. While there does seem to be a critical evaluation of how St Ives has been historically constructed in temporal and spatial terms at Tate St Ives, my principal concern here has been how these new stories of diversity might be, to put it crudely, diversity for diversities sake, and that they do not offer a meaningful sense of the multiple spaces that have *produced* St Ives. My final suggestion has been how this might be seen as the result of maintaining what Latour has called 'the Great Divide' and that a useful and productive way of making diverse spatial connections in the stories of St Ives might be achieved through thinking of St Ives *in terms of a space in relation to others rather than of its own definition*.

Thinking about spaces in relational terms will be continued and expanded upon in the next chapter where I will look at the example of Tate Liverpool. As with this chapter I will combine an examination of the relationship between another regional Tate and the original gallery in London with a historical consideration of Tate Liverpool's constitutive time-spaces. Once again this will relate to issues of colonial history, here more directly in relation to the histories of the slave trade. I will also return to the issue of 'Primitivism', once again in the more direct context of Liverpool's temporal-spatial relationship to Africa and how this has been explored in terms of the display of art at Tate Liverpool.

### MAPPING THE CONSTITUTIVE TIME-SPACES OF TATE LIVERPOOL

Tate Liverpool is located in the Albert Dock on the banks of the River Mersey to the south-west of Liverpool's city centre. The location of the gallery here is not only significant in considering the activities of the Tate Gallery as an institution of art, but also in addressing another principle concern; namely the gallery's relationship to the politics of multiculturalism. The Albert Dock stands as a symbol of the city's former prominence within Britain's mercantile histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period the creation and expansion of the docks and much of the city came as a direct result of the wealth generated by the 'triangular trade' between Liverpool, the west African coast and the Caribbean. The central role of slavery within Liverpool's trading, as with the other principal slave trading port city of Bristol, led to the settlement of a local black population with an integral historical legacy within the formation of the contemporary city. The Albert Dock therefore represents both a physical point of entry into the city of Liverpool for this population and a point within a larger spatial network which connects Liverpool to the Atlantic world through which the cultural identities of this population are historically constituted and continue to be mediated. The location of Tate Liverpool in the Albert Dock therefore provides a particularly poignant focus for examining the Tate gallery, the politics of multiculturalism and the spatial histories which constitute a relationship between them.

In this chapter I will consider the way Tate Liverpool articulates a number of key issues relating to some of the broad concerns raised in previous chapters. This will involve a further evaluation of the use of networks within the analysis of the Tate Gallery's histories and in particular will extend my thinking about the role of centres within these networks. By continuing to undertake the mapping of time-spaces within these networks I will also draw upon a diversity of temporal-spatial 'locations' which, as I will argue, come

to constitute Tate Liverpool. Furthermore, by examining Tate Liverpool's relationship to the Atlantic world I will further develop some of the issues addressed in Chapter 5 regarding the way cultures can be seen to 'circulate' within the temporal-spatial networks configured by the triangular trade.

There are three 'points' which I will discuss in relation to the interconnections within the network of Tate Liverpool's constitution; each has served to shape the gallery and, metaphorically speaking, a line can be drawn from each of them to Tate Liverpool, but these 'lines' often overlap and lose their distinctiveness, as I will illustrate. The first two of the three I will look at have been distinct influences on Tate Liverpool's establishment. The third 'point' will see a return to the issue of the Atlantic world, connecting with and extending the idea of a 'centre' which was developed in the previous chapter.

The first of these is, broadly speaking, constituted by central government in Westminster. Here I will briefly illustrate the direct and unambiguous ways in which the Thatcher government of the 1980s shaped the formation and remit of Tate Liverpool within its broader regeneration plans for the Merseyside area.

The second example will examine the relationship between the original Tate Gallery at Millbank and Tate Liverpool – the first of the institution's new galleries based outside the capital. Linking these first two examples will be the often implicitly raised, perennial issue of a north/south divide and the cultural hegemony of London.

Thirdly, and more extensively, I will explore the role of Tate Liverpool as a centre in relation to slavery and the broader mercantile histories of Liverpool. In this context I will continue to examine the gallery space as a point where these histories are made 'readable'. Here I will also examine Liverpool's slave trade and the contestations that have emerged over the Tate Gallery's founder – Sir Henry Tate – and his relationship to this trade. Through this consideration I will reflect more extensively on the resistance of Liverpool's black population to the oppressive effects of slavery in both a historical and

contemporary context. This will serve to draw out, in a substantive sense, the ‘circulations’ of cultures mentioned above and how they are mediated through Tate Liverpool. This will be illustrated by drawing on James Clifford’s notion of the museum as ‘contact zone’ (Clifford, 1997) which will be used to extend and develop my use of Bruno Latour’s notion of the ‘centre of calculation’ (Latour, 1987) in chapters 4 and 5.

Having argued that Tate Liverpool can be seen to function as a centre for ‘reading’ these histories I will then go on to utilise the example of an exhibition staged at the gallery in 1994 to emphasise the gallery’s functioning in this context. Here I will argue that the exhibition *Africa Explores: Twentieth Century African Art (Africa Explores)* can be useful in articulating the gallery’s engagement with the issues of slavery and Liverpool’s contemporary black population. Furthermore, the exhibition’s transferral from the New York Museum of African Art to Tate Liverpool will be used to extend thinking about the circum-Atlantic movement of cultures and draw upon issues of the relationship between ‘the local’ and ‘the international’ within both the city of Liverpool and the gallery space of Tate Liverpool. This will highlight the challenges which were faced by Tate Liverpool in the staging of this exhibition and assess how these challenges continue to be problematised by the circum-Atlantic formations of cultural identities and the risks posed by the exclusion of their importance within contemporary multicultural thinking. This last section will demonstrate the arguments for a more complex understanding of temporal-spatial relations in addressing contemporary challenges for the Tate, the city of Liverpool and Britishness more broadly. This will also serve implicitly to raise the issue of multicultural normalisation which I will go on to examine more closely in the next chapter.

### **Mapping Tate Liverpool: Art, Urban Regeneration and the Spatial Relations of the Metropolitan and Regional**

In the previous chapter I argued that St Ives art can be seen as largely dependent on the way it was constructed in London, initially through the movement and settlement of

artists from London, principally during the inter-war years, and later through the opening of Tate St Ives. Unlike St Ives, Liverpool is not associated with dominant 'local' artistic traditions in this way and as a result the proposed remit of Tate Liverpool was based more on the establishment of a *raison d'être* for art in this locale rather than the affirmation of a pre-existent association with art as in St Ives. This remit was supported by high levels of 'outreach' work in local communities undertaken by Tate Liverpool from the time of its establishment in 1988, which I will elaborate on below.

A common link between the establishment of Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives was the parts they played within broader regeneration plans within their respective areas. Although the times and contexts of these projects differed, both regions were subject to severe socio-economic decline throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century which led to their being targeted for regeneration funding. In both cases the Tate Gallery was able to benefit from subsidisation from these funds in order to build their galleries. With Liverpool's less obvious ties to art as a cultural form within its histories, promoting and indeed justifying its place within regeneration programmes was a central concern not only for the Tate but also for the Thatcher-led central government who were instigating urban regeneration schemes at this time under the auspices of Michael Heseltine. It is this drive for regeneration led by central government, as I now want to go on to argue, which forms the basis for considering Tate Liverpool's construction, in both the literal and metaphorical sense, as having been influenced by a particular relationship between the metropolitan and the regional. It is in this sense that I want to argue that as with Tate St Ives, Tate Liverpool can be seen as being produced not only within the local(e) but also within national and, as I will go on to argue, international networks. In this respect, again as I have asserted in relation to St Ives, I will also go on to propose that this approach will also engender a way of thinking about Liverpool as a place constructed *in relation to* other spaces within these networks.

What I will now go on to outline in more detail are the various issues raised by the broader project of Liverpool's urban regeneration through the late 1980s and 1990s. In doing so, a context will be developed in which the further geographical connections I will examine can be understood.

*Merseyside Development Corporation and London's part in the Regeneration of  
Liverpool*

Tate Gallery Liverpool opened in the early summer of 1988. The original proposal to the Tate's trustees came from the then director, Alan Bowness, in 1980, although the idea of a regional Tate in the north of England had been around since as long ago as 1968. Then, a trustee, Stewart Mason, had suggested the Tate's acquisition of an additional gallery would be a way of easing problems regarding the lack of space to display the gallery's increasingly large collection (see Spalding, 1998). At the time of Bowness's proposal, the location of the gallery was not settled, and it was only in the following year that Liverpool began to emerge as the likely candidate. Two inter-related events can be seen as informing the decision to locate the gallery in Liverpool. First of these was the foundation of the Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) in March 1981. The Department of the Environment established this body in order to instigate the regeneration of Liverpool's city centre. However, it is the second event which informed the decision of the MDC, namely the 'Toxteth riots' which followed a few months later, to encourage the Tate to locate in Liverpool. The central government appointment of Michael Heseltine as Minister for Merseyside came shortly before a time when rioting represented, 'an ultimate collapse in relations between the police and the mainly black residents of Toxteth' (Spalding, 1998, p225). While the regeneration programme was, in its infancy, not best equipped for immediate resolutions, unrest in the Toxteth area 'shook and secured the MDC's sense of purpose' (Curtis, 1993, p30).

Essentially, the MDC was set up for the purpose of 'reclaiming and if possible making profitable Liverpool's semi-derelict docks' (Hewison, 1997, p282). The initial tension faced by this strategy was that Toxteth, or Liverpool 8 as it is known within the city, did not come under the remit of the MDC and would therefore not be targeted as an area for regenerative efforts despite this timely reminder that they were apparently required. The areas that had been designated for the MDC's attentions were specific sites covering 865 acres within the South Docks and Riverside area, Bootle and the Wirral peninsula (Meegan, 1999), all of which were notable sites of post-industrial degradation requiring extensive and costly de-silting and decontamination work. The selection of these particular sites was not solely based on the need for their immediate attention but also, as large-scale water front areas (and in common with the concurrently run London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC)), it was hoped they could attract large scale private sector investment. It was this aim which was at the centre of the tensions raised between those, on the one hand, that pointed towards areas such as Toxteth and the need for public sector housing and leisure facilities, and on the other, those who sought to facilitate the needs of private business.

The critical view of the MDC's intentions soon became characterised by the needs of Liverpool's poor and the autonomy of local councils to allocate funding versus the divisive imposition of central government power. Initial criticisms of this type predominated within Merseyside County Council. Moves were made by central government to quash this resistance however: 'first, subtly, by the appointment of its leader, Sir Kenneth Thompson, as the first Vice Chairman of the Corporation and then, more crudely, with its abolition in 1986' (Meegan, 1999, p74). The other principle form of opposition to central government and the MDC came from Liverpool City Council after the election of Derek Hatton's left-wing 'Militant' administration in 1983. The Council's political opposition to central government was at its most effective by serving to alienate potential private sector investment within the MDC's public-private initiative (Meegan,

1999). This instigated the MDC's strategy of concentrating its efforts on tourism and leisure-based projects where private sector investment was most easily secured (ibid). As a result the redevelopment of the Albert Dock became a focal point for the MDC's work during the first phase of redevelopment from 1981-1988 and provided the Tate with a cost-effective location for its new gallery. The Tate Gallery was offered five million pounds of public money towards the cost of converting warehouse space in the Albert Dock to form its new gallery. The initial outlay for the gallery's establishment would be around six and a half million pounds, with three million pounds being needed for 'stage two' development at a later date when the gallery space would be extended further. The MDC's offer, therefore, represented a significant inducement to locate in Liverpool's prime redevelopment site.

In the Tate's 'Biennial report 1984-1986', Alan Bowness made a concession to this funding by stating that the site did offer 'conversion at a reasonable cost' (Bowness, 1986, p21). However, he was also keen to assert an affinity for the location by adding that when, in 1980, the directors and trustees 'saw the Albert Dock in Liverpool they knew they had found the right place' (ibid). Understandably, it has been suggested that the decision was less of a romantic compulsion on the Tate's part, and more of a case that '... it [the MDC] needed the Tate as much as the Tate needed the financial means' (Curtis, 1993, p30). The implications for the Tate within this mutually beneficial arrangement are also hinted at within the Biennial report, as Bowness continues, with undiminished commitment to the locale:

The new gallery will, we hope, serve sensitively and flexibly the needs of the northern community within reach of Merseyside. It will seek all means of integrating itself into the artistic and cultural life of that community.

(Bowness, 1986, p24)

For Bowness and the trustees, the issue of being implicated at the heart of the MDC's plans whilst not wanting to alienate any sections of the local population who

opposed the MDC's intentions would require careful negotiation. The dock's location, 'commonly perceived as being outside the city' (Curtis, 1993, p30) carried with it implications of anti-MDC arguments which pointed towards the needs of areas such as Toxteth and served to draw the Tate into arguments which were being levelled at central government's local insensitivities:

The lack of planned integration with the city leav[ing] the project isolated culturally and geographically.

(Mitchison, 1988, p17)

In this sense the MDC and, by implication, the Tate can be seen as having raised the issue of a spatial tension within the urban spaces of Liverpool. Furthermore, what I want to argue is that this local spatial tension is a direct product of a broader spatial tension between the metropolitan and the regional which serves to illustrate the way 'many locals viewed the whole development as something foisted on Liverpool by the government in London' (Barker, 1999, p185). The principal point I want to make regarding the relationship between these local and national spatial tensions is that they are represented as one and the same; that is to say, spatial division *within* Liverpool can be seen as an *extension* of spatial division *between* London and Liverpool. For example, at the time of the gallery's opening Phillip Dodd asserted that 'the Tate Gallery Liverpool remains a project in a metropolitan mould [...] its very existence tells the people of Liverpool that they cannot forge their own models of cultural development' (Dodd, 1988, p46). As with the example of St Ives in the previous chapter, London, in this case the perceived alliance of the Tate and central government, contributes to the construction of the internal spaces of Liverpool 'at a distance' (Latour, 1987).

In order to clarify this understanding of spatial tension it is useful to consider the broader context within which the MDC was conceptualised. The Albert Dock and Tate Liverpool's status was that of a 'flagship project' (Meegan, 1999; Cochrane, 1999) and

this notion was central to the UDCs's burgeoning approach to urban regeneration. As

Cochrane goes on to explain:

This association with prestigious projects is an ever present element of contemporary local regeneration strategies [...] There has been a shift in emphasis away from dereliction, decline and decay, towards one which stresses the cosmopolitan potential of urban areas.

(Cochrane, 1999, p255)

Not only can this new approach be seen to signal a shift whereby 'the 'problem' was defined in terms of areas, rather than people' (Cochrane, 1999, p248), but also, I would add, that this serves to usher in a new and inherently problematic way of understanding the role of these areas in terms of their spatial context. By adopting a ring-fence approach to regeneration funding, the spatially limiting connotations of this approach became apparent. Rather than working within the local spatial inter-connections that make up Liverpool 'local structures of democratic accountability and bureaucratic organisation were explicitly identified as problems by Heseltine' (Cochrane, 1999, p250).

Another 'flagship project' which was established under the auspices of the MDC was the International Garden Festival of 1984, again on an ex-industrial riverside site. In common with Tate Liverpool this project has also raised the issue of London's 'mainlining' the context of a specific site from the metropolitan centre. This example, I would argue, emphasises the process even more effectively through its endeavours to 'reinforce a conservative pastoral image, to declare that the manufacturing industry has gone for good' (Urry, 1999, p219). The sense of spatial tension created by the Festival in this context is further emphasised in the observation that:

The image of the South as predominantly green is *imported into* the North as a collective vision of a United Green and Pleasant Kingdom.

(Roberts cited in *ibid* – my emphasis)

The spatial tension created by this ring-fencing is emphasised by Meegan in his assertion that ‘the MDC appears to demonstrate, a simple focus on narrowly defined, property-led, regeneration is unsustainable’ (Meegan, 1999, p103) and that this is due to a failure to recognise that:

Urban regeneration, if it is to be truly effective, needs to be sensitive to the social, political, environmental and economic specificity’s of the localities in which it operates at the same time as being able to address the general processes which combine to shape them.

(ibid)

For the Tate, then, the MDC’s inducement of financial subsidy was not without its political costs, and the problems generated by perceptions of the MDC’s metropolitan authoritarianism were seen as being in need of immediate address through ‘an ambitious outreach programme run by Toby Jackson, Curator of Education’ (Spalding, 1998, p248). The multifaceted nature of these issues were explained to me by Jackson:

There were a number of interest groups who didn’t want the Tate in Liverpool. The local authority wanted houses, the black population objected to the Tate’s relationship to Tate and Lyle sugar and slavery...working people wanted ‘real’ art not Modern art. There’s all these associations with it being a cultural organisation parachuted in by the government.<sup>1</sup>

Tate Liverpool not only needed to consider how best to negotiate its constitutive relationship to the power of central government. The spatial tensions between regional and metropolitan were also working on another level: within the structure of the institution of the Tate itself

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Toby Jackson, 22/3/00.

*What's in a Name?: From London to Liverpool and the Emergent Geographies of the  
Tate Gallery*

Up to a week before its opening Tate Liverpool was still, in some cases, being referred to as 'Tate of the North' (see for example Mitchison, 1988), which had been its working title since the early 1980s. The reasoning behind this name change, however, stems not so much from the necessities of sound-bite marketing, but from a need to confront a specific issue or, what I have referred to above as, a spatial tension, the origins of which can be traced through from the inception of the gallery.

The notion of establishing the gallery as a resource for the local population and appeasing opposition to the MDC's perceived failings in this respect was, understandably, seen as hindered by the somewhat generic 'Tate of the North', and so the change to 'Tate Liverpool' was instigated. However, the original title for the gallery not only served to belie the Tate's original commitment to Liverpool as a site, it also hinted at a further aspect of this spatial tension. Implicit within the originally proposed title of 'Tate of the North' was the notion that Millbank had intended the gallery to function over a broader catchment than any individual city or, as Barker states: 'Tate Liverpool had never been intended to be a community resource but to attract visitors throughout the 'North'' (Barker, 1999, p185). The advantages of establishing this broader spatial context were two-fold: *firstly* to create interest from tourists and overseas visitors to bolster the attendance figures, and *secondly* to gain recognition through the international art scene and encourage loans of significant art works. Irrespective of the gallery's name, for it to develop the levels of autonomy it desired, international links were vital, and though the more grandiose sounding 'Tate of the North' might have been preferable for this purpose, local discontent would be more effectively appeased by 'Tate Liverpool'.

The full context of this spatial tension can, however, be traced further back to

Stewart Mason's original proposal for a Tate gallery in Northern England and, I would argue, reflects a similar tension to the one highlighted between the MDC and local residents regarding the perennial spatial politics of the relationship between the metropolitan and the regional. In his original statement to the board of trustees, Mason suggested that:

It would be necessary to disperse parts of the collection as temporary exhibitions to various sub-museums belonging to the Tate in the provinces.

(Mason cited in Spalding, 1998, p223)

Reflecting on the change of Tate Liverpool's name in light of this statement can also be read as an intention to subdue the gallery's historical metro-centrism. Firstly, for Mason, any galleries outside of London would act as 'sub-museums' and in this respect rather than acting as autonomous spaces would perform a function *for* the Tate in London and would not on their own, he implies, be regarded as 'proper' galleries. Secondly, the use of the term 'provinces' suggests a particular spatial relationship characterised by a distinction between London and a non-specific 'other space'. The word, as I have emphasised in the previous chapter, also carries with it connotations of 'backwardness' and inferiority within its constitutive relationship to the capital.

The change in the gallery's title from 'Tate of the North' to 'Tate Liverpool' can therefore be seen as a need to critically reflect on these connotations and avoid accusations of metro-centrism. However, what I want to argue in relation to the apparent granting of autonomy suggested by this name change is that it is a rather limited and divisive form of autonomy. Furthermore, and this is of fundamental importance to the point, I want to emphasise that this is not so much as a result of debates internal to the Tate, but the influence of Thatcher's central government. In this sense, what I am drawing attention to is that although here I am distinguishing the Tate's internalised metropolitan-regional relationship and the influence of Millbank, these are often interconnected. In other words I want to suggest that the Tate's London-Liverpool relations are, at the point of Tate

Liverpool's opening, shaped by central government's concept of these relations and that the autonomy of Tate Liverpool and the city of Liverpool are granted a somewhat tokenistic status as a direct result of Thatcherite policy.

To clarify the broad point I want to make here it is useful, as a premise, to reflect on a statement made by Hewison in which he concisely articulates the ethos of Thatcherism. He states that for Thatcher:

The ideology of power is such that hegemony is best maintained by the appearance of independence.

(Hewison, 1997, p260)

For Hewison, what was central to Thatcherism's principle of governmental 'non-intervention' is that it projected a façade of autonomy which was maintained precisely through governmental intervention. This ethos was, as I have outlined above, central to the functioning of the MDC; a project to regenerate and raise the 'profile' of a regional city but under strictly centralised terms. In this respect the name change of the gallery to 'Tate Liverpool' was in the MDC's interests of promoting their city-specific project and proffering the notion that this was a project with the people of Liverpool in mind rather than for the benefit of private enterprise. Another key policy move at this time, which shifted power to London whilst projecting a façade of regional autonomy was the creation of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

When central government moved to quash local opposition to the MDC by abolishing Merseyside County Council in 1986 it also 'damaged the system of arts funding to the extent that the area's seven museums and galleries had to be "nationalised", and directly funded by the government as the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside' (Hewison, 1997, p282). In an article entitled '*Capital Shift*', published in 1993 The Tate's Director, Nicholas Serota, who took charge shortly after the opening of Tate Liverpool in 1988, reflects on this as a positive move for the museums and galleries of Liverpool in its 'shift' of emphasis away from London as centre for the arts. He does, however, make a

passing concession to the fact that ‘the 1986 creation of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside [was] born not out of policy but out of political expedience’ (Serota, 1993, p29). For Hewison, who is arguably better placed to be critical of the government’s position, his use of inverted commas around the word “nationalised” reflect his cynicism of the autonomous effects of this ‘shift’. The reality of the outcome, as he goes on to point out, was that ‘successor authorities were too poor, or too preoccupied with other matters’ (Hewison, 1997, p282). The poignancy here is that these events - the change of the gallery’s name and “nationalisation” of Merseyside’s art institutions - took place at the same time. As Spalding notes in passing when referring to the commencement of building work, ‘the first phase of the conversion begun in 1986 [...] in the meantime, the title ‘Tate in the North’ was replaced’ (Spalding, 1998, p226). It would seem therefore that the internal metropolitan centre of the Tate and that of central government interconnected in their roles as constitutive centres.

Indeed, despite these apparent moves towards Tate Liverpool’s autonomy and away from Stewart Mason’s original concept of a ‘sub-station’, the notion of Tate Liverpool acting as the Tate’s peripheral appendage has persisted. With much of the impetus behind the gallery being Millbank’s desire to enable a greater display area for its collection, the decisions over which works would be seen at Tate Liverpool served to further the case that the gallery would be functioning as ‘their [Millbank’s] experimental out-station’ (Curtis, 1993, p31). With no permanent collection as at Millbank, questions emerged over Tate Liverpool’s ability to orchestrate its own displays. The predicament of those working within Tate Liverpool at this time is hinted at by Juler’s cynicism about the defensiveness of one of Tate Liverpool’s curators, Penelope Curtis:

As Penelope Curtis noted crisply in the *Museum’s Journal*, “the press often assume that the gallery exercises no choice... this assumption is false”. Some of her colleagues feel, unofficially of course, that London breathes down their necks a bit too much.

Elsewhere, Tate Liverpool has been continually referred to as an 'outstation' (Hewison, 1997, Spalding 1998) or 'outpost' (Graham-Dixon, 1989), hindering its perception as a gallery independent from the defining authority of the Tate at Millbank.

Some critiques of Tate Liverpool also suggested a more direct metropolitan domination of the gallery space. One particularly controversial example was the gallery's use of tape on the floor to form a restriction zone around the art works. As Graham-Dixon pointed out:

Permanent lines of thick, tatty industrial tape show you where you may and may not walk; this is ugly and patronising, implying that Merseysiders (no such measure is adopted in London) are somehow more likely to vandalise works of art.

(Graham-Dixon, 1989, p14)

More subtly, there was the issue of addressing the spatial tension inherited from the MDC that Tate Liverpool needed to demonstrate its allegiance to local 'communities' and shed its image as a project 'parachuted in' from London. This left Tate Liverpool in a difficult position in that forging local links was important in this respect but did not help to enhance the gallery's art world kudos as an independent institution. For the then Curator of Education, Toby Jackson, local involvement was fundamental to the gallery's acceptance:

What the Tate did in a sense was try and latch on to the urban schemes that were going on...we did a number of projects which helped the image of the Tate because they were good projects and helped the perception.<sup>2</sup>

Within the 'art world', however, the sentiment was often that this strategy was to be closely aligned with a sense that the Tate had established a gallery where 'the overall impression is one of worthy but utterly provincial attitudes' (Graham-Dixon, 1989, p14).

The same critic reflected on a project set up by the gallery with local children with disabilities:

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Toby Jackson, 22/3/00.

An exhibition of art by handicapped children which, although extremely lively and worthwhile, is not quite the sort of thing that seems likely to establish the Tate Liverpool at the forefront of the contemporary art world.

(ibid)

However, within the staff at Tate Liverpool there was also a determination to convey their role as a challenging gallery of Modern art in order to counter this 'safe' image. The perceived need to articulate a *tour de force* of its own even saw Tate Liverpool apparently happy to contradict its carefully nurtured 'community' status. When, in 1989, the gallery mounted a minimalist display, two of the central works, by the artist Carl Andre, included a piece entitled *Equivalent VIII* (see figure 6.1). This work had caused controversy at Millbank when it was originally purchased by the Tate in 1976 with many newspapers declaring outrage at the acquisition of a sculpture which consisted of a rectangular configuration of 120 house bricks. In 1989 the local response was that 'Liverpool residents called for 'work not bricks'' (Spalding, 1998, p238) allowing renewed claims of conspiracy with the MDC in alienating the local unemployed. The place of challenging Modern art in this socio-economic environment was a contentious one, but, as Toby Jackson explained, curators also wanted to stake a claim for Tate Liverpool in terms of its status as an art gallery by provoking a reaction:

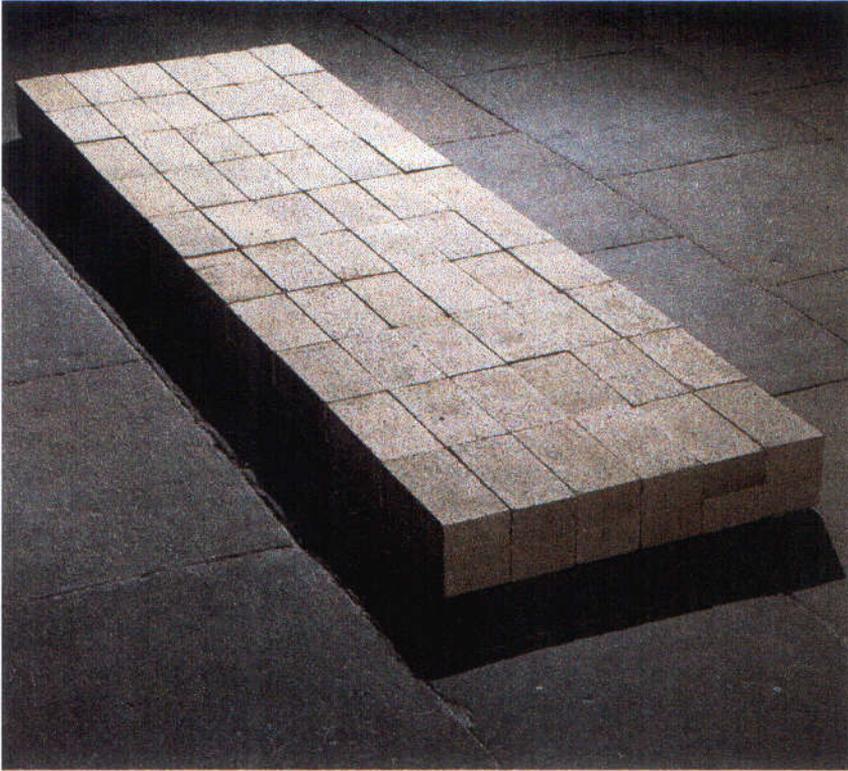
At the time there was a lot of negative reaction to it [Modern art] and I suppose in some respects we, er... we played to that negative reaction by doing a minimalist show and showing three sets of Carl Andre's bricks, kind of, er "hate the bricks? Well here are three of them".<sup>3</sup>

There are several ways, therefore, in which Tate Liverpool can be seen as constituted in relation to the Tate at Millbank. The initial thinking behind the establishment of the gallery can be seen to emphasise Millbank's view of it as a dependent and centrally

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Toby Jackson, 22/3/00. N.B. – conflicting accounts suggest there were either two or three of Andre's sculptures in this show.

controlled 'sub-museum'. This relationship altered in light of the MDC's development and the subsidisation of central government.



(Figure 6.1 – Equivalent VIII, Carl Andre, 1966)

At this point the autonomy of Tate Liverpool, as it became, takes on an ambiguous relationship to centralised authority. Although its renaming suggested the gallery to be 'of Liverpool' and independent from London, as was emphasised by staff at the gallery, there is also a sense in which only the appearance of the gallery's autonomy had been created as the Tate's metropolitan centre became implicated in the more covert forms of Thatcherite centralised power. The 'outstation' dependence of Tate Liverpool largely prevailed underlined by its dependence on the centralised collection of works and the arguably detracting obligations of 'outreach' work. However, as I have also argued, there was a degree of resistance mounted against this ascription from within Tate Liverpool through attempts to gain the status of an arts institution which also sought to challenge through its displays. The principal point I want to draw from this evaluation is that whether through acts of compliance or resistance Tate Liverpool was, through these processes, being

defined *in relation to* the Tate at Millbank. In this sense both central government and the Tate at Millbank can be seen as points of influence in the way Tate Liverpool is constituted *and constitutes itself*.

I will now go on to examine Tate Liverpool as a centre within this spatial network. This will involve the consideration of a spatial tension in a different context to the metropolitan-regional tension drawn on above in that it will consider Tate Liverpool's position as a centre itself within the histories of the Atlantic world. In this example, I will demonstrate how, as well as being situated in a spatial network where Tate Liverpool is influenced by other time-spaces, it is also a centre being defined by a spatial network.

### **Situating Tate Liverpool: Henry Tate, Slavery and Liverpool's Atlantic Histories**

#### *The Histories of Henry Tate*

In addition to the influence of financial inducement in the Tate's decision to utilise the Albert Dock as the site for their new gallery, there was one particular claim to a Liverpudlian inheritance which the Tate was able to invoke through the story of the gallery's founder.

In the guide book available at Tate Liverpool during 1999, the rhetorical question 'But why Liverpool?' (Gathercole et al, 1999, p7) is followed by recounting Henry Tate's 'strong connections with Liverpool' (ibid). It is recalled that Tate worked in Liverpool from the age of thirteen as a grocer and that his business ventures grew to a point which enabled him to buy shares in the sugar-refining industry at the age of forty. It was through this particular business venture that Tate made his fortune, enabling him to collect art works and eventually finance the opening of the original Tate Gallery at Millbank in 1897. Elsewhere, it is stated that Henry Tate spent a short period as a Liberal member of

Liverpool City Council and that his philanthropic ventures included donations to public institutions in the city (Spalding, 1998).

Through recalling these histories therefore, a process of legitimisation for the Tate's connection to Liverpool is asserted. Drawing on historical connections between Henry Tate and the Tate Gallery Liverpool, a spatial connection is made implicit. This can be identified in relation to two of Tate Liverpool's specific concerns. *Firstly*, by drawing on the histories of Tate's 'boy to man' working life in Liverpool and recalling his generosity to some of the city's public institutions, there is a story of Tate as a successful and public spirited Liverpoolian. The issue of Tate's philanthropy, in particular, draws a neat comparison with Tate Liverpool's intentions to contribute towards the socio-economic regeneration of the city. *Secondly*, and perhaps more subtly, Henry Tate might be seen to act as a medium through which the Tate can make historical connections between Liverpool and London or, as I have suggested above, invoke histories of legitimisation.

The usefulness of the histories of Henry Tate can be seen in the context of acting as a 'nodal point' in Tate Liverpool's metropolitan-regional spatial network. What I mean to convey by the use of this term is that within the spatial tension that is integral to this network, Henry Tate becomes a point through which attempts can be made to dissipate this tension. By articulating a sense of the Tate Gallery's historical connectedness to Liverpool through Henry Tate, the gallery's *raison d'être* is strengthened by drawing these time-spaces together at the site of Tate Liverpool. Henry Tate allows Tate Liverpool to create its own context within Liverpool's historical landscape, countering claims of the gallery merely being a result of expediency and offering a claim that, contrary to the contemporary interpretation of events, Liverpool becomes a centre from which the Tate Gallery in London was constituted.

This reversal of constitutive power is also reinforced through Spalding's recollection that, for Henry Tate, Liverpool was the site of his business development and when it came to the issue of expanding beyond Liverpool he opened a refinery in London's

docks on the Thames at Silvertown (Spalding, 1998). At this point, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, London's docks were a site of poverty and discontent, represented by a growing class-consciousness and organised industrial action. As a response to this and in keeping with his philanthropic ways, Henry Tate founded the Tate Institute at Silvertown 'for the benefit of the industrial classes of Silvertown and its neighbourhood' (Spalding, 1998, p12). There is no available evidence to suggest that this was an obligation on Henry Tate's part, in order to reciprocate for the acquisition of what would have been a cost-effective location, but the comparisons with Tate Liverpool's acquisition of the Albert Dock site and its involvement in community initiatives are difficult to ignore. Furthermore, when Tate decided to open his original gallery in London, he utilised the cost-effective location of the derelict site of Millbank prison. At this point in time, at the end of the nineteenth century, Millbank was a part of London much in need of regeneration and once again Spalding provides a description of the site which carries an explicit resonance with the scenes in Liverpool's docks before regeneration work began:

Existing close to the river, it was surrounded by decaying buildings, obsolete machinery, coarse grass and rank weeds, whilst at its back, behind a burial ground, sat two gasometers.

(Spalding, 1998, p16)

For the Tate Gallery as an institution then, Henry Tate not only provides a point through which Liverpool as a city can redress something of the power imbalance generated by the metropolitan-regional spatial tension, he also serves to historically legitimate the institution's role, and indeed success, within urban regeneration projects. However, there was one particularly significant historical connection which Henry Tate provides that was less useful for the gallery, especially in light of the controversy over Tate Liverpool's subsidisation whilst poverty and alienation were issues being raised regarding the mainly black population of Toxteth.

The issue in question was that of Henry Tate's connections with the slave trade as it was apparent that highly significant to Tate's wealth and success were the means by which he gained them, namely the international trade in sugar. Whilst this issue is alluded to in the Tate Liverpool guide book, it is approached within a particular context. In recalling the circumstances of Tate's personal wealth generation, the guidebook states that 'it was based not on trade, like the vast majority of the city's wealth, but on entrepreneurship' (Gathercole et al, 1999, p7). It goes on to assert that 'Tate was a manufacturer rather than a merchant' (ibid), and his charitable credentials are reaffirmed with the reminder that 'he used his fortune for many philanthropic purposes in Liverpool' (ibid). Affirming this distinction between Tate's activities and those of 'merchants' is often invoked as validation for the claim that Henry Tate had no direct links with the slave trade, its abolition having come earlier in the century. However, what remained problematic for Tate Liverpool, and the institution in general, is that opinion has persisted in some quarters that Henry Tate's links to slavery are less innocuous.

For example, writer, poet, television presenter and lecturer in Caribbean Studies at Warwick University, David Dabydeen,<sup>4</sup> in an article for *The Listener* published a few months before Tate Liverpool's opening, states that:

revenues from slavery and the West Indian trade not only funded stately homes in England, but also institutions of art and learning [...] there is the Tate Gallery, set up at the end of the nineteenth century by the sugar baron Sir Henry Tate.

(Dabydeen, 1987, p14)

It is notable that Dabydeen's use of language differs importantly from the Tate's assertion of Henry Tate as a 'manufacturer', labelling him instead as a 'baron', with all the uncompromising and aggressive connotations that this term carries. Dabydeen also goes on to recall that Henry Tate funded a library in Brixton in South London, outside which was

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<sup>4</sup> See also Dabydeen's (1994) poem *Turner*, based on the painting *The Slaveship* discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

erected a bust of the founder, informing the reader that:

History has caught up with Henry Tate: his bust in Brixton Square is defaced by graffiti and hemmed in by litter.

(ibid)

He does not elaborate on whether this graffiti actually refers to Tate or slavery, nor does he offer any substantive evidence in terms of Tate's mercantile practices. However, what remains is that such opinions are undoubtedly present and damaging to the Tate Gallery's image.

Alongside such direct and uncompromising accusations, Tate Liverpool was also faced with more subtle criticisms of Henry Tate's associations with slavery. As Taylor suggests, even if the actual practice of slavery had passed by the time of Tate's involvement with the sugar trade and industry, it is still possible to cite the legacy of this trade through pointing out that Tate's business was 'reliant upon poorly paid labour forces in Liverpool and the West Indies' (Taylor, 1999, p102). Also, citing Lumley's *The Museum Time Machine*, Graham et al suggest that there are questions to be asked of the regeneration of Liverpool's nineteenth-century industrial sites, as in the case of Tate Liverpool:

Such developments have attracted widespread criticism and controversy, particularly with respect to the class implications of such heritage, the manner in which its proponents chose to engage with these, and the gearing of whole localities to tourism consumption, arguably *reproducing contemporary forms of exploitation and entrepreneurship from the relics of nineteenth century capitalism and its social relationships*.

(Lumley cited in Graham et al, 2000, p43 – my emphasis)

This latter point is, I would argue, illustrated by the recollection of an incident which demonstrates, in unfortunate terms, the interconnectedness of Henry Tate's industrial wealth generation, the tensions of class-based politics, and Tate Liverpool:

It is ironically appropriate that seven years on from the closure of the Tate and Lyle refinery in the city – and the loss of 1,500 jobs – Liverpool should be compensated with an offshoot of the old boss's gallery.

(Mitchison, 1988, p17)

What all of these issues relating to the histories which can be traced through Henry Tate demonstrate, is precisely the fact that they are multiple and interconnected. Henry Tate does act as a 'nodal point' in this way and this has been to Tate Liverpool's advantage in enabling Liverpool as a city to lay some claim to the constitutive processes of Tate Liverpool and indeed the institution *per se*. However, some of these interconnections remain problematic for Tate Liverpool, particularly around issues of slavery and the gallery's political and spatial proximity to Toxteth. What I now want to go on to consider is the ways in which this third notion of a constitutive centre, namely Tate Liverpool itself as a centre for the convergence of these histories, has faced and continues to face the problematic issue of confronting a broader spatial tension. Rather than, as in the first two examples of Tate Liverpool's constitutive centres where this tension is generated by the spatial relations which can be mapped between the metropolitan centre of London and Liverpool, or more specifically Tate Liverpool, here we are confronted with a tension which is constituted by the broader spatial relations which converge on Tate Liverpool. These interconnected time-spaces situate the gallery at the nodal point that is Henry Tate and integrate the gallery's existence into the spatial network of the Atlantic world.

### *Slavery and the Time-Spaces of the Atlantic*

This broader spatial tension in which Tate Liverpool is situated reflects the historical constitution of the city through its mercantile activities, but importantly, as the controversy surrounding the predicament of Toxteth illustrates, these histories are interconnected with the present in fundamental ways. As Massey points out:

Liverpool has seen a succession of interconnections over time [...] and, as each new set of links is established, so new elements are added to the character of the place, mixing with and in turn being moulded by, the place's existing features.

(Massey, 1995, p61)

In this sense, Liverpool's histories can be seen as producing the city as a palimpsest; that is to say, new layers, in the form of peoples, cultures and all that these entail, are added to existing layers, but in addition to this, these layers are also permeable, they combine and form new spatial formations. It should also be taken into account that these 'new elements' differ in terms of their constitutive significance; some have more effect than others, some last longer than others, they may lay dormant or 'erupt' at various points in time-space. Toxteth again provides a context for this in that the long histories of slavery are constitutive of this space, but the significance of slavery in characterising this space is more intense at certain points in time than others, the starkest example being during the so-called 'Toxteth riots'. The principle point I wish to convey here is that Liverpool's slave trade connects various time-spaces in an ongoing, dynamic process, or as Gilroy puts it, that:

The history of the black Atlantic yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade.

(Gilroy, 1993, pxi)

Having established this premise, I want to trace some of these 'instabilities' and 'mutabilites' and demonstrate how the histories which are connected to Tate Liverpool should not only be seen as histories of movement or displacement from one point in time-space, such as eighteenth century West Africa, to another, such as twentieth-century

Liverpool, but as histories which ‘circulate’ through this Atlantic network. In this sense I want to emphasise how different time-spaces connect and re-connect. In undertaking this task however, it is first important to consider Liverpool’s histories of slavery.

The first recorded slave trading voyage to leave Liverpool was in 1700 (Martin, 1999). Though this trade, along with the trading in other goods, grew steadily from this point, it was not until the 1780s that Liverpool became the country’s dominant slave trading port city. This was enabled by the fact that the Mersey is significantly wider and experiences less significant tidal fall than the River Avon in Bristol, which had dominated trade activity up until this point and proved to be more suitably navigable for the increasingly large ships being used. By this point Liverpool had also become the largest construction site for slave-ships in England (ibid). Liverpool’s part in the ‘triangular trade’ itself was essentially characterised by the shipping of goods, usually textiles, leather and ceramics, to the West African coast in exchange for slaves. These slaves were then taken across the ‘Middle Passage’ and those that survived, estimated at around 70% on average (ibid), were put to work on plantations in the Caribbean producing sugar, coffee and cotton. The final part of the voyage saw these goods, along with some slaves, brought back to Liverpool.

Slave trading out of Liverpool was at its peak during the decades either side of the turn of the nineteenth century and eventually ceased officially in all British colonies, along with the practice of slavery, in the 1830s in part due to the growing philanthropic culture in Britain but also due to increased problems of governance associated with slave uprisings such as ‘Sam Sharpe’s Revolt’ of 1831 in Jamaica. Although some slaves were brought to Liverpool during this period what is perhaps more significant for the establishment of a black population in the city was the arrival of around 4000 ex-slave soldiers who had been drafted into the British forces after American Independence in 1776 (ibid). Liverpool’s status as a port, not only for trading but also for military campaigns, meant that for these soldiers the city was the first port of call and many settled there.

What this movement demonstrates is not only that a black population has been present in Liverpool for over two hundred years but that the 'triangular trade' established a spatial network through which peoples and cultures have continued to flow. This is demonstrated through Liverpool's importance in such apparently diverse movements through this network. During and after the Potato Famine of 1845-6, for example, Liverpool was a leaving point for many during the trans-Atlantic migration of the Irish diaspora (see Meegan, 1995); and earlier, shortly after the beginning of the slave trade in the early eighteenth century, several West African leaders sent their sons to be educated in this city of expanding wealth and status; these potentially representing some of the city's first 'free' black citizens (Martin, 1999). Not only are these important considerations in establishing the continued circulation through the Atlantic network for a variety of reasons, but also in establishing the historical extent of Liverpool's black population. Although this may seem an obvious point, it is significant in that it not only counters a popular myth about the black British presence being a post-World War II phenomenon, but that it also emphasises this particular population's place and identity relationship.

From at least the 1830s, Liverpool's black population has included people who were, before that, settled in West Africa, the Caribbean and the United States (Hesse, 2000b). In forming such a focal point across the Atlantic network, many black Liverpudlians have reflected this broader spatial connectedness in their sense of identity. Liverpool has been characterised as 'a city that looked outwards and forward towards the Atlantic rather than inwards and backward towards Lancashire' (Hesse, 2000b, p102). More significantly for Tate Liverpool's engagement with the contemporary population is the way this has continued to shape black identities in the city:

The continuity of this development into the twentieth century became part of the outward looking formation of Black Liverpool anchored in a pre-*Windrush*, regionalised, urban Black affinity with some of the diasporic lineages of the Atlantic world.

As well as emphasising the ‘outward looking’ nature of identity politics, derived from the connections across the Atlantic world, what Hesse also hints at here is the way these identities also simultaneously define themselves in very place-specific terms, particularly in relation to the spatially-confined, regionally-based nature of this population before the more spatially diffuse post-*Windrush* populations of common perception.

Once again we are faced with the issue of a spatial tension, here between defining and understanding oneself in relation to both the local world of Liverpool and the interconnected world of the Atlantic. This tension is a complex and far-reaching issue within the politics of race and ethnicity and is central to Gilroy’s use of the term ‘double-consciousness’, after the early twentieth-century writing of W.E.B. Dubois (Gilroy, 1993). Though it is too extensive an issue to do justice to here, Dubois’ original definition of the concept is useful in illustrating the spatial context in which this tension is expressed:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness...

(Dubois, 1903/1994, p5)

The central issue with this concept is not that this is a tension to be resolved by adherence to one of two mutually exclusive forms of identity, but that the task is to acknowledge the formation of identities *between* these positions and how they are constituted in a relational sense (Gilroy, 1993).

Confronting this sense of *between-ness* in terms of the spaces of the Atlantic network and the identities that it has formed is undertaken by Linebaugh and Rediker through considering its ‘hidden histories’ of working class struggle (Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000). In articulating this they centre their concerns on ‘a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, transatlantic working class, whose presence, much less agency, is rarely, if ever, acknowledged’ (Linebaugh and Rediker, 1991, p15). Through mapping the activities of

this 'transatlantic working class', particularly through the eighteenth century, they serve to simultaneously assert the importance of specific points in this network, such as Liverpool, whilst demonstrating the ways in which the political resistance of this 'class' interconnected and circulated through the port cities of the Atlantic. In relation to identity politics they also serve to confront something of Du bois dilemma of 'two-ness' by examining the collectivity of political resistance amongst this ethnically diverse 'class' and demonstrating the ways in which identities were simultaneously consolidated through actions of resistance whilst avoiding a sense of ethnic essentialism.

While Linebaugh and Rediker's attentions focus on the spatial circulations of the eighteenth century, the points of political resistance within the Atlantic network can also be joined up across time in more extensive, non-linear formations. In thinking about the non-linear connections of both time and space within this network mapping links between, for example, eighteenth-century resistance and late twentieth-century Toxteth can be useful in addressing the notion of the Atlantic's 'discontinuous histories' (Gilroy, 1993; Roach, 1996). In this context the use of the word 'discontinuous' is slightly ambiguous, whilst it emphasises the idea that these histories do not connect continuously across time and space, they do remain continuous in a non-linear sense, connecting histories at various points in time-space. For Hesse this is also characterised by acts of resistance:

The historical continuities of Black sea-faring populations [are] evidenced only too clearly in the 1948 'race riots' in Liverpool.

(Hesse, 2000a, p22)

The importance of these events are essentially two-fold. Firstly, they occur in the same year as the arrival of the *Windrush*, but for Hesse whilst the latter is seen as a seminal point for 'race relations' in the second half of the century, these riots are an expression of Liverpool's 'race relations' up to this point (Hesse, 2000a). Secondly, and simultaneously, 1948 also demonstrates continuities of the experience of black Britishness around issues such as 'institutionalised racism' and the problems of the local white population's

'perceived grievances around economic competition in employment' (Hesse, 2000b, p102). What this in turn serves to emphasise is the way these points in Liverpool's history connect and Hesse asserts the importance of this through his concern that:

Although recent scholarship has increasingly identified Black sea-faring as highly significant in fashioning the networks and affinities of the Black Atlantic's cultural and political communications, this has not yet come to terms with the tradition where it is signified in twentieth century Britain.

(Hesse, 2000b, p101)

This point then addresses the argument for making these discontinuous connections and pointing out that to remain coherent these histories, from the eighteenth century to 1948 and 1981, need to be understood as interconnected and constitutive of each other. This is illustrated by the fact that an initial concern for Toby Jackson at Tate Liverpool was that:

If you look at the way that black populations cluster in Liverpool and Liverpool 8, that sort of area, they don't move out of that space, you don't see them in the city centre and it's to do with lack of employment [...] it's a problem with the Albert Dock as a whole you see, you very, very rarely see black faces down there, very rarely.<sup>5</sup>

As Martin points out, this lack of assimilation is one of the most dramatic examples of racial demarcation in Britain historically too (Martin, 1999). In his recent report for The Runnymede Trust, Parekh also points out that in 2000 this lack of assimilation was highly apparent to the Commission and that Toxteth 'is demonstrably exceptionally deprived, and unemployment is high and morale low' (Parekh, 2000b, p88).

It is these historical interconnections therefore that Tate Liverpool finds itself at the centre of. In attempting to address its own histories it also addresses the histories of the Atlantic trade and the spatial network this established in the histories of the black Atlantic.

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Toby Jackson, 22/3/00.

What remains, however, is the problem of how we might conceive of Tate Liverpool as a centre in this network; a point where these histories not only come together in the gallery's strategies of addressing the local tensions of the population, but where they can be made 'readable' and coherent in expressing the intricacy of these histories. Before going on to look at a specific example of the problems faced by Tate Liverpool in this respect in the form of the *Africa Explores* exhibition, I want to briefly consider the usefulness of understanding the gallery's role as a centre through the concept of a 'contact zone' (Clifford, 1997).

### *Conceptualising Tate Liverpool as a Centre*

In the previous two chapters I have looked at the idea of the Tate's galleries acting as centres by drawing on Latour's notion of the 'centre of calculation' (Latour, 1987). The usefulness of this concept is in the way it illustrates the function of a point in a spatial network where elements near and far from within its structure are accumulated and made 'readable'. While this has been effective in demonstrating the role of these galleries within the broader geographies which constitute them, Latour's model remains, to some extent, limiting here in that as a concept based on the processing of scientific data it functions in ways which are slightly less compatible with the theorising of art institutions. These differences can be characterised around two particular issues.

*Firstly*, within Latour's centres, scientific enquiry not only accumulates things at a centre, it also instigates them. In this sense what is being collated is 'led back to the centres where these cycles started from' (Latour, 1987, p232). The function of Tate Liverpool as a centre does not work in this way, because the networks of the Atlantic are not issued forth from the gallery, it is only, in this respect, a point at which they accumulate. *Secondly*, scientific calculation is a different process from what is being carried out within an art gallery. Making this network readable within the gallery space through information boards,

catalogues, lighting, partitions, wall colours and of course works of art, is not so much an exercise in calculation as one of creating a centre of aesthetic authority. In wanting to extend Latour's notion of a centre of calculation therefore, whilst wanting to retain the idea of a centre Clifford's concept of the museum or gallery as a contact zone is of help.

For Clifford, in this contact zone 'stasis and purity are asserted – creatively and violently – *against* historical forces of movement and contamination' (Clifford, 1997, p7 – emphasis in original). Whilst this view of the contact zone's agency is perhaps a little extreme to be levelled at Tate Liverpool, what it does importantly convey is the notion that, at this centre, the curators role is to simplify and reduce social and cultural relations *in order to make a spatial network readable*. It also asserts that this is undertaken, whether to a greater or lesser extent, by containing and purifying 'cultural action' (ibid), and I would add, spaces, in order to generate this state of readability.

Drawing on the original use of the term by Mary Louise Pratt (Pratt, 1986), Clifford goes on to quote a part of her definition of the concept which has particular resonance with the way I have been referring to Tate Liverpool as being constituted within the Atlantic network and forming a centre which necessarily reflects the interconnections across time-space that this network forms. She points out that the idea of a contact zone:

Is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. [...] A "contact" perspective emphasises how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. (It stresses) co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.

(Pratt cited in Clifford, 1997, p192)

What I want to go on to illustrate now is how the idea of these processes being at work in Tate Liverpool as a centre of aesthetic authority, are demonstrated in the 1994 exhibition *Africa Explores*.

## ***Africa Explores: Reading the Atlantic Histories of the City at Tate Liverpool***

*Africa Explores* was a touring exhibition which emanated from the Museum of African Art in New York. Curated by the executive director of the New York gallery, Susan Vogel, it contained the work of artists from fifteen sub-Saharan countries, amounting to over a hundred works, an ambitious project for a gallery of Tate Liverpool's physical size. The exhibition, which had originally run from May 1991 to January 1992, was displayed at Tate Liverpool from May to August 1994.

One of Susan Vogel's principle aims for *Africa Explores* was that it would act as a response to an exhibition entitled *Magiciens de la Terre* which had been staged at the Pompidou Centre in Paris five years earlier and which had caused controversy over its display of African art. Despite the earlier exhibition's attempts to raise the profile of African art in the West 'the fundamental objection raised was that the curators remained wedded to a conception of the 'purity' (or authenticity) of 'other' cultures' (Court, 1999, p157). For Vogel the intention was to engage with African art in a way which avoided essentialisms based on 'the magical' and 'the tribal' (see Hall, 1994). This sentiment served to express an emergent concern within Western museum culture at the time, that displaying art from Africa and other 'developing' parts of the world should be undertaken more critically, particularly with reference to critiquing the history of Primitivism in Western art.<sup>6</sup> As Toby Jackson explained in relation to Tate Liverpool's interest in re-evaluating Primitivism:

The term primitive is used as an historical term and it is explained as a form of appropriation [...] these debates which were quite academic have surfaced in the public space and that's not radical but it's an indication of the way in which the museum has grown up, in the sense that it can be critical of its own history.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 5 for an explanation of the Primitivism movement in Western art.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Toby Jackson, 22/3/00.

It was Vogel's engagement with this critique which attracted Tate Liverpool to the idea of staging the exhibition by way of addressing Liverpool's black histories and attempting to actively promote itself as a reflexive institution willing to confront criticisms surrounding the opening of Tate Liverpool and Henry Tate's wealth creation. As Judith Nesbitt, who curated the exhibition at Tate Liverpool, explained:

We were aware of Liverpool's black population, I suppose the gallery was very...a sort of, sitting target if you like [...] I suppose Tate Liverpool was a kind of ready repository for that so, um, because of Tate and the sugar trading this was an issue which had come up since the Tate started there in '88...and I guess Tate Liverpool felt it was only right that we reflect and respond to that population.<sup>8</sup>

Within the exhibition space at Tate Liverpool, a 'Peter's Projection' map of Africa was displayed: 'commissioned locally through Liverpool's Africa Arts Collective' (Nesbitt et al, 1994). A notice board was also erected with attached postcards to encourage visitors to comment on both the exhibition and the comments of others. The curator estimated that of the 13,000 cards written during the exhibition's duration, 'criticism and congratulation came in about equal measure' (ibid). Nesbitt and her curatorial team also made a name change to one of the five categories around which Vogel had organised the exhibition. The New York categories divided the work around the themes of 'Traditional', 'New Functional', 'Urban', 'International' and 'Extinct'. It was the last of these categories which served to raise a few critical eyebrows (see Picton, 1993) during the exhibition's earlier incarnations. As a reaction to this the Tate 'changed [it] tactfully to Art of the Past and Present' (MacRitchie, 1994, p34) in order to avoid the negative connotations of the word's use.

Despite making these adjustments to the exhibition, Nesbitt admits that these were limited contextual adaptations to the display:

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Judith Nesbitt, 24/8/01.

Essentially we took the show more or less as constructed by Susan Vogel, again aware that these were her categorisations that were up for question.<sup>9</sup>

Although in one sense this might have allowed criticisms of the exhibition at Tate Liverpool to be redirected to Vogel, a problem for Tate Liverpool in this respect was that the exhibition, as Nesbitt has stated, was also simultaneously set up as being about Liverpool; addressing the city's and the gallery's position within the network of Atlantic histories. The point I want to emphasise is that this problem is a result of the way things *transform* within networks rather than move through them immutably (as I have argued in Chapter 4) and, in this sense, although Liverpool and New York are jointly implicated in the network, their different locations constitute different stories. As a result much of the British criticism aimed at the exhibition was directed at Tate Liverpool in spite of the fact that the exhibition was largely created in New York and this led to reflection on the part of Nesbitt as to whether greater intervention might have proved beneficial.

One of the principle criticisms was that 'it must be insisted upon that the problems are not with categories as such. Categories are an indelible part of human life... the problem here is essentially with the specific categories these spectators have employed' (Picton, 1993, p95). What matters for Picton is that such a form of curatorial organisation 'begins with people rather than *a priori* boxes' (Picton, 1993, p93). For the critic and artist Olu Oguibe this predicament raises the inevitability that 'Africans must narrate themselves and must not be mere stagehands in a ventriloquist's show' (Oguibe cited in Court, 1999, p158). This has been conceded by Nesbitt in her observation that 'It seemed from the response of visitors in Liverpool that many people would have done without the wall panels explaining each section, in favour of more information about the individual artists' (Nesbitt et al, 1994). Another point of criticism related to the treatment of Africa itself as an undifferentiated space. In an exhibition which deals with work from fifteen different African nations, it was suggested that it '[...] is a lack of knowledge and understanding

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Judith Nesbitt, 24/8/01.

which permits us to deal with the entire continent as if, historically and socially, it were a single entity, almost an off-shore island' (Picton, 1994, p48).

Here, I would argue, we can point towards Clifford's observation of the contact zone in terms of its tendency to spatially constrain and culturally 'purify' through the process of making the art work 'readable' at this centre. More specifically, this tendency is characterised by a perceived preoccupation with Western art institutions to engage with the notion of the 'authenticity' of such work, ascribing the works with an essential 'African-ness'. Rasheed Araeen has claimed that far from engaging in more critical dialogues over the display of African work within institutions, it has led to what he describes as 'benevolent racism' (Araeen, 2000a). This is grounded within the notion that a continuity of discourses have merely served to change the nature of homogenising 'the other':

The stereotyping of the 'other' has always been there as part of British society's desire and search for the exotic. But over the last fifteen years or so it has openly received institutional blessing and legitimation, reinforced by the popularity of the postcolonial cultural theory of difference as part of Western/ liberal multiculturalism.

(Araeen, 2000a, p62)

For Tate Liverpool, however, the intention was to avoid accusations of stereotyping around the notion of a search for authenticity through *Africa Explores*' combination of 'traditional' and contemporary works, showing African art which has also been influenced by the West via the cultural legacies of colonialism. In this context, one of Tate Liverpool's principal attractions to the exhibition was that it would convey an international context for the work which served to challenge the notion of African art as essentially generated within this 'pure' space. Despite this hope, certain critical responses served to vindicate Araeen's scepticism of the new liberal multiculturalism, as a reviewer of the exhibition from *The Times* demonstrated when commenting:

But the danger of “international” work lies in its tendency to become anonymous. If African artists plunge too whole heartedly into the supposed mainstream, *they could end up without an identity.*

(Cork, 1994, p31 – my emphasis)

While this ‘well intentioned’ liberal sensibility conveys a ‘concern’ for the welfare of African art, it is clearly expressed through the ‘contaminating’ effects of Western art and the ‘purity’ of African art. For Cork it appears that the art of ‘the other’ is not free to indulge in the experimentation of various artistic genres; it has been marked and constrained, and violation of codified practices will endanger its ‘authenticity’.

Once again, I would argue, this problem is integral to a form of spatial tension.

While Cork acknowledges that African art can be conceived of as being constituted through spatial connections beyond Africa, these are not seen as accumulations, through networks, at localised ‘centres’ within African countries, in this context African art is *either* African and therefore spatially isolated *or* implicated into a broader spatial network which implies a loss of local meaning. Picton alludes to the notion of *Africa Explores* being caught within this spatial tension:

There are all manner of particular, indigenous networks of patronage, production and evaluation, and artists also address common themes across these networks and institutions; but we shall never see any of this as long as we constitute artists within ready-made curatorial boxes.

(Picton, 1993, p98)

It would seem that for Tate Liverpool a quantifiable problem lay in this tension of trying to render the work ‘readable’ at a centre without imposing reductive and constraining categorisations upon it whilst also facilitating a reading of this work as constituted within a network of Atlantic spaces which included the influences of contemporary American popular culture but without losing its local context.

There are two problematic issues here. Firstly, there is the apparently unresolved issue of the West's power to 'define' cultures; in spite of the 'good intentions' of liberal multiculturalism there are still the presence of normalising discourses which serve to spatially and culturally constrain 'the other'. This issue will be pursued in more detail in the following chapter. Here I want to emphasise the second problem. This relates to the issue, mentioned above, of the exhibition's almost completely immutable transferral from New York and the effect this has on Tate Liverpool's ability to function as a centre within this particular Atlantic network.

When the exhibition was shown in New York it drew positive comment precisely on the issue of its conveyance of New York as a significant point in an Atlantic network which managed to articulate the circulation of cultures without questioning the work's local context. For the American art critic Thomas McEvelley:

Africa Explores - 20th century African Art [...] proposes a dialogue not only of objects but of their makers. These African works come to us in the West carrying with them memories of works of ours that went out to them some years ago, works that themselves carried memories of African works from a yet earlier passage. In so far as art is an expression of cultural identity, this work is a critique of our identity through the conflation of elements of *us* with elements of *them*.

(McEvelley, 1999, p96 - emphasis in original)

James Clifford also commented on the New York exhibition in this context:

"Africa Explores" [...demonstrates that...] the Center for African Art increasingly operates in an awareness of Africa as not simply "out there" (or "back then") but as part of a network, a series of relays forming a diaspora that includes New York City. This diaspora has well established, branching routes and roots in slavery, in migration from Caribbean, South American and rural North American places, and in current circuits of commerce and immigration from the African continent. In this

context, the museum's contact work takes on local, regional, hemispheric, and global dimensions.

(Clifford, 1997, p202)

In these cases it seems that the Museum has been able to convey its position within a constitutive network of the histories which it is making readable.

For Judith Nesbitt, the ability to read Tate Liverpool into the histories that were being conveyed through *Africa Explores* was always an aim in the same way as it had been considered important for Vogel in New York. It was also anticipated that by drawing these histories of Africa and Liverpool together at Tate Liverpool a degree of controversy would be aroused. As she stated:

Just the very presence of that work in that building in Liverpool, um, could be deemed to be provocative, um, but we felt that it was worth doing that for the sake of the learning that could be had from it.<sup>10</sup>

However, the significant difference for Tate Liverpool was that *connecting* these histories to Liverpool was not undertaken. The sole example of providing a point of contact between the histories of the art and the locale of the gallery was through enabling visitors to make connections via the postcards provided for them to write on and as Nesbitt admits:

Our decision was to actually incorporate that into the space and its, you know, it's not an amazingly brilliant way of doing it, but it was, um, it was, some kind of, um, allowance that, or recognition that, this work does represent a loaded history.<sup>11</sup>

Although this serves to acknowledge that visitors may find the juxtaposition of African art and the Albert Dock warehouse space provocative, the spatial connection is left both implicit and for the visitor to make. Unlike the New York exhibition, Liverpool was not mapped within the network but set slightly apart from it. In other words, the 'local world'

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Judith Nesbitt, 24/8/01.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

of Liverpool and the 'international world' of the African art do not fully connect and form a coherent spatial narrative. Just as criticism was raised regarding the lack of differentiation between artists and the African countries in which they are based so I would also argue that there is a lack of differentiation being made between the centres of New York and Liverpool within these networks.

This homogenising of spatial relations serves to reinforce a sense of Africa as an 'other' space and detract from demonstrating the way Tate Liverpool has been constituted *in relation to* specific spatial histories of the Atlantic slave trade. The continuously 'hidden histories' of black and multi-ethnic resistance that connect Liverpool into the Atlantic network remain hidden, as do the knowledge-based connections of the Liverpool slavers who travelled to Africa's West coast and the wealthy African sons who came to Liverpool for their education. The problem for Tate Liverpool is that, in taking a largely unchanged exhibition from New York, it served not only to homogenise the role of the centre but also to homogenise the spaces of cultural production of African art. From this observation, I would argue, it is of fundamental importance to assert that whilst we should...

want to develop the suggestion that cultural histories could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and inter-cultural perspective.

(Gilroy, 1993, p15)

The mapping of these Atlantic histories must also

be one that appreciates both the particularities of location *and* the connections to other spaces and other places.

(Ogborn, 1998, p32 – my emphasis)

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the various time-spaces that can be seen to influence and constitute Tate Liverpool. By considering the gallery's position within a spatial network which stretches across the Atlantic and through which cultures have circulated and continue to circulate I have demonstrated that the gallery and the wider city of Liverpool can only be understood in terms of their spatial relations both near and far.

More specifically, I have looked at the way power is mediated within this network of Tate Liverpool's constitution. I have identified the influence of London's central government, in the context of the imposition of centralised power through the establishment of the Merseyside Development Corporation and the Tate Gallery at Millbank, through its power to create and shape the construction of Tate Liverpool. Not only does the latter apply in the literal sense of the gallery's construction but also, and this applies to both, through the discourses of power bound up in the relationship between the metropolitan and the regional. I have then returned to the notion of a centre and explored the idea of Tate Liverpool as a centre for 'reading' the histories of its constitutive Atlantic histories and those of the wider city.

The notion of Tate Liverpool as a centre has been illustrated in two particular ways. *Firstly*, through tracing the histories of the Gallery's founder, Henry Tate, and his connections with the sugar industry, I have demonstrated how Tate became a key figure in establishing a sense of Tate Liverpool's autonomy from the metropolitan power of London. *Secondly*, I have drawn on the example of the exhibition *Africa Explores* to demonstrate how Tate Liverpool became a centre for drawing together Henry Tate's past and the past of Liverpool in the histories of the slave trade in a self-conscious move on the part of Tate Liverpool to address the histories of the local black population.

Finally, through drawing on the important implications of this exhibition being moved, almost entirely without adaptation, from New York to Liverpool, I have argued

that this created a distinct spatial tension for Tate Liverpool around the specificity of its location within the Atlantic network. In doing so, the exhibition, as shown at Tate Liverpool, can be seen as having constructed the spatial relationship between West Africa and Liverpool in a context which serves to perpetuate a homogenised view of constitutive spatial relations across the Atlantic network through failing to differentiate its multiple cultures. This sense of homogenisation has also been reflected in the criticisms of the exhibition's apparent appropriation of the notion of 'authenticity' in the Western perceptions of African art. Both of these concepts - 'authenticity' and the homogenisation resulting from non-differentiation - have been engaged with in order to foreground some of the broader issues around multicultural thinking through processes of multicultural normalisation which I will now go on to consider in more detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### REPRESENTING THE ART OF 'THE OTHER': MULTICULTURAL NORMALISATION AND THE TATE GALLERY

In October 2000 a commission, sponsored by the Runnymede Trust and led by Lord Parekh, published its findings into an investigation on 'The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain'. Compared, in terms of significance, to the post-Brixton riots Scarman report and the McPherson report, published in relation to the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence (Parekh, 2000c), the publication attracted a great deal of press coverage. Headlines, as well as features, varied from the emotive to the considered, much of them centring on the reports commenting on the use of the term 'British' (see Travis, 2000 for example). An emergent issue appeared to be the way in which press coverage centred not so much on the report's content, but on what might be termed 'the multicultural imagination' – that is to say, the way issues around multiculturalism are commonly fetishised and abstracted. One of the principle examples of this was the use of the familiar tabloid complaint about 'political correctness gone mad', and the assertion that the report suggested using the term 'British' was racist (ibid). It is how the press engaged with multiculturalism that was most prominent and, I would suggest, most significant. This was captured, somewhat poignantly, in a cartoon which accompanied *The Guardian's* front-page article referred to above (see figure 7.1). It portrays a suburban street located, by a roadside signpost, as the London suburb of Chingford, in Essex. Just before this signpost another is depicted, in the form of a warning sign. Below the signifier of an exclamation mark, the worded part of the sign reads: 'multiculturalism ends'.

From a geographical perspective, one of the explicit issues raised by this depiction is the way in which multiculturalism is commonly imagined in spatial terms. The demarcation

between urban centre and suburban fringe is also being presented as the point of separation between the multicultural and the monocultural. In thinking about the multicultural in this way what is suggested is not only an essentialised way of imagining 'the urban' and the 'suburban', but that 'cultures', to use a rather broad and cumbersome notion, are spatially fixed. In this sense cultures 'belong' to people and places. This way of fixing cultures not only relates to the way in which they become spatially located and bounded but, perhaps inseparably from this notion, the way in which they become imagined as bounded in a conceptual sense.



(Figure 7.1 – 'Multiculturalism Ends', 'Austin', from *The Guardian*, 11/10/00)

It is a critique of this spatial and cultural 'fixing' associated with the concept of multiculturalism that I wish to engage with here. This serves to identify the way multiculturalism can be seen to reduce cultures to the material signifiers of 'folk tradition' (Bonnett, 2000, p91), at the expense of a more complex range of cross-cutting issues such as power, wealth, gender, class and ethnicity. This also relates to what we can broadly define as cultural commodification. In thinking about cultures through this notion of commodity we

might want to engage with Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' (see Bourdieu, 1986). There are resonances within this idea that relate to what I wish to consider here around the notion that dominant cultures can be seen to reproduce their values through society's institutions and practices and thereby reduce the cultural capital of 'the other's' culture. What is fundamental to take from this notion is the idea that within the interplay of the cultural field *dominance is established through regulatory practices*. Whilst in no way wanting to limit Bourdieu's concept by skimming over it in such a way, its usefulness for my purposes is the way in which it helps to establish the role of norms within the dynamics of multiple cultures.

In a narrow sense we might think of norms as 'laws' or 'customs' which direct and govern behaviour in a certain way and within particular contexts. What I want to engage with in this chapter, is not so much the identification of *a priori* norms but the *processes* of normalisation. Whilst this issue has been touched upon in previous chapters<sup>1</sup>, and forms of normalisation have been implicitly identified, such as authenticity, reification and localisation, here I will work this idea through a more direct engagement with contemporary issues of multiculturalism as they connect with the Tate Gallery. In this sense I want to draw upon Foucault's understanding of normalisation in terms of the way that this process can be seen to operate through a range of practices and techniques which are articulated in a subtle and diffuse manner. The analysis will consider issues around contemporary British art and artists as defined by the loosely defined group known as the YBAs (Young British Artists), for whom the Tate's annually staged Turner Prize competition provides a focus of attention. I will also demonstrate how cultural and racial politics connect with some of these artists and the display of their works at the Tate in identifying processes of multicultural normalisation. Through examining the contentions of being a 'black' artist at Tate Britain and the issue of normalisation as such, I will also consider the work of Mona Hatoum within the gallery's

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<sup>1</sup> Here I am thinking in particular of arguments put forward in Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6.

opening display, the acquisition and display of Chris Ofili's *No Woman, No Cry* (1998) and comments made by Ofili and fellow black Turner prize winner Steve McQueen. I will then go on to discuss possible challenges and/ or strategies of resistance to the processes of normalisation by looking at the issues raised by Stuart Hall around the notion of a 'politics of representation' whilst reflecting on Hall's theory through the example of an exhibition entitled *Century City* held at Tate Modern in early 2001. Finally I will examine these possible counter-strategies through the example of the artist Yinka Shonibare, whose work was included in the Tate's first triennial exhibition of contemporary British art: *Intelligence*, during the summer 2000.

### **Foucault, Normalization, Multiculturalism**

In one of his earlier works, *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault addresses the issue of what he calls 'normalizing judgement' (Foucault, 1979) by drawing on the example of the system of classification for students at the Ecole Militaire. Basically, what he describes is a system whereby each pupil could be distinguished in terms of their place within a hierarchy of five groups which related to 'moral qualities' and 'behaviour', defined as ranging from 'very good' to 'shameful' (ibid). By visually marking the bodies of those being classified through the use of coloured epaulettes, the function of this system, as Foucault asserts, was to establish norms of behaviour which pupils could aspire to or descend from as signified by the loss or acquisition of the silver epaulette of the 'very good'. Essentially, therefore, the function of this system is that 'it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed' (Foucault, 1979, p182). Effectively, what Foucault identifies is a system whereby differentiation (or difference) and homogeneity, two apparently conflicting forces, are operating together. The way in which

differences are revealed as being highly visible, via the epaulettes, is central to the function of this system: difference becomes a 'marker' with which to judge the individual's degree of assimilation to 'an ideal'. As Foucault succinctly expresses it, the system 'compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*' (Foucault, 1979, p183 – emphasis in original).

Recalling this example from Foucault is of use for two reasons: *firstly*, in a broad sense, it presents us with an illustration of the way norms of behaviour are established through the use of practices and techniques. By establishing a relationship between norms and *discourse* (through which, for Foucault, practices and techniques operate), a theoretical framework is provided through which we are able to identify and question the construction and maintenance of multicultural norms at the Tate Gallery. *Secondly*, and somewhat pertinently, in relation to the engagement with art and the Tate, Foucault's example contains an important point about the role of 'visibility'. For Kobena Mercer, a central concern relating to 'the multicultural question' (Hall, 2000b) is the perception of 'an equivalence between political empowerment and public visibility' (Mercer, 1999, p56). For Mercer, the concept of normalisation is of use when thinking about multiculturalism because, as Foucault asserts, what this 'visibility' effects is the constraint rather than the empowerment of the subject.

To clarify the relationship between these two notions, I want to establish two further inter-related, significant considerations relating to normalisation, after which I will return to the issue of multiculturalism. If, following Foucault, norms are established through practices and techniques, it is important to consider both how norms, as 'laws' or 'customs', relate to a process called normalisation, and furthermore, how the practices and techniques which establish norms, are articulated. In relation to the first of these two points, the following statement forms a useful definition:

Norm does not refer to the force of tradition, collectively generated systems of values or patterns of moral action. Rather it refers to the routinized modes of behaviour that are so deeply inscribed on the body by disciplinary modes of power that they seem natural or normal.

(McNay, 1994, p111-12)

What is central to this definition is the distinction made between what norms are and what they are not. A distinction, albeit a fairly crude one, can be made on the basis of notions of structure and agency. In this assertion norms *do not* relate to 'tradition', 'values' or 'moral action'; things generated, at least in part, by an awareness or, in some sense, co-operation on the part of the 'agent' (for example, the culturally defined 'other'). In this sense the emphasis is on establishing that norms operate through a contestable level of consciousness; they are not consciously 'agreed to', 'chosen' or negotiated. What norms *do* relate to is, in some sense, an inscription upon the agent ('the body') by a structure ('disciplinary modes of power').

However, a fundamental point here is that this is not the hierarchical application of power 'from above'. In this sense, the word structure needs to be considered in a loose way; as something 'at work on' the agent (body), rather than something which is dictating to it from a particular 'position' of authority. Therefore, we can consider norms as being about a *process* taking place, where 'by norm, then, Foucault means normalizing' (McNay, 1994, p112).

In attempting to convey the relationship between norms and normalisation as being, for Foucault, necessarily one and the same, this leads into my second point regarding practices and techniques. As noted, normalisation is not imposed by structures of power in an authoritarian sense: 'power relations of inequality and oppression are created and maintained in more subtle and diffuse ways through ostensibly humane and freely adopted social practices' (McNay, 1994, p2). These 'freely adopted social practices' or practices and techniques, as I have referred to them here, form what Foucault refers to as 'a technology of

power' (Foucault, 1981, p144) whereby they become incorporated into a system which expresses power through normalisation. This is, perhaps, most effectively conveyed by Foucault in a passage from 'The History of Sexuality:

Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendour; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distribution around the norm.

(Foucault, 1981, p144)

The important point here is that practices and techniques can be seen to establish norms and in so doing generate power as an effect of these processes. Thinking of normalisation as both a process and as a way of articulating power through practices and techniques is essential for the purpose of establishing a link with multiculturalism. By thinking about normalisation in these terms, it is hoped that a coherent sense of how these processes relate to multiculturalism and the Tate Gallery can be expressed in a useful and engaging manner. This will necessitate thinking about multicultural issues at the Tate in the context that, 'power [...] operates not through direct forms of repression but through less visible strategies of 'normalization'' (McNay, 1994, p5).

As I have mentioned, one of the issues raised in relation to multiculturalism is the issue of 'visibility'. For Mercer, earlier writing around issues of black recognition, which I will consider here as being pre-1990s (for reasons that I will soon elaborate on), centred on a direct link between a heightened profile within the public sphere and the potential for racial equality. Taking the work of Franz Fanon as an example, he defines the predominant concern as relating to a contestation of 'the clear cut political boundaries of colonial domination or supremacist racism' (Mercer, 1999, p56). What Mercer goes on to argue is that the 1990s have witnessed the move into an era of what he describes as 'hyper-visibility'; a saturation of black

representation (Mercer, 1999). What is articulated by this phrase is a situation whereby 'blackness' has been transformed in relation to its levels of visibility in the public sphere through various forms of media and 'visibility has been won' (Mercer, 1999, p56). This apparent moment of liberation for black representation is, however, politically compromised. This heightened visibility 'serves not to critique social injustice, but to cover over and conceal increasingly sharp in-equalities that are most polarised *within* black society itself' (ibid – emphasis in original). Elsewhere, it has been suggested that this visibility is highly regulated in terms of the contexts in which it is facilitated (Hylton, 1999), as I will consider later in this chapter in relation to Tate Modern's *Century City* exhibition. For Mercer, it is this detachment of issues of visibility from issues of political empowerment that have 'ushered in a new regime of *multicultural normalisation*' (Mercer, 1999, p57 – emphasis in original).

What Mercer identifies through this understanding of multicultural normalisation is that cultural diversity has become normalised and difference has become marketable. This has been achieved through the 'sale' of blackness within a narrowly defined, fixed and bounded definition. Here we can identify the homogenising tendencies which Foucault attributes to normalisation, where 'media-visible figures like [the ex-footballer] Ian Wright co-exist with the Stephen Lawrence enquiry' (Mercer, 1999, p56). The question remains, however, why has this come about and why is this a phenomenon which we might associate particularly with the advent of the 1990s? Mercer relates these changes implicitly to Ulrich Beck's theory of the 'risk society' (Beck, 1991) in asserting that:

the neo-black subject of the nineties, born under a bad sign of global risk and uncertainty found the false choice of three new identity options: neo-assimilationist, closet resegregationist or genuinely confused!

(Mercer, 1999, p57)

The over-riding issue here, seems to be related to the perception of a sense of uncertainty over identity in the face of global cultural forces. The subject is seen as a reconfiguration which no longer renders it 'black'. The consequences for understanding blackness through this decade of uncertainty are, for Mercer, tied up with patterns in youth culture consumption:

When so called Generation X fully embraced the mass consumption of ironic and parodic hyperblackness in gangsta rap, club culture or designer label clothing, all common currency in global youth culture, the ground was pulled from under the diacritical feet or even 'oppositional' positioning of blackness.

(ibid)

For Mercer, the mechanisms behind the move towards multicultural normalisation are related heavily to a notion of the production and consumption of 'visible' blackness, or what Stuart Hall has referred to as 'commercial multiculturalism' (Hall, 2000b). In this context we might want to consider more closely the ways in which the black subject is constructed as marketable, and is indeed marketed. By pursuing this particular aspect, I would argue, we can more effectively pursue a Foucauldian sense of normalisation through an attempt to identify the practices and techniques which might be at work to achieve this marketability. If we can identify the homogenising tendencies of normalisation, which Foucault identifies, through Mercer's account, then we can also move on to develop an account of how differentiation is at work here. In order to achieve this, what requires to be conveyed is how 'the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another' (Foucault, 1979, p184). What, therefore, within the context of multicultural normalisation, are the practices and techniques which serve to 'put people in position'? They are, I would agree, the strategies which have 'defined alternative centres of cultural authority

primarily in terms of their difference from the norm of English culture, not in their uniqueness and their discontinuities' (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p2). Here, therefore, we can consider how both the homogeneity and differentiation of Foucault's normalisation can function within a multicultural context.

The specific nature of the practices and techniques which we can identify come in the forms which have been engaged with in previous chapters. These are, for example, the *articulation of whiteness*, where as John Gabriel claims, we can see how 'the power of whiteness lies in a set of discursive techniques' (Gabriel, 1998, p13). This is also related to another identifiable technique, '*naturalisation*, through which whiteness establishes itself as the norm by defining 'others' and not itself' (ibid – emphasis in original). Further, there is the way in which *appropriation* is at work, such as in Mercer's account of multicultural normalisation outlined above. These processes and techniques can also be traced through processes of *reification*, through the ways in which we can *identify lost meaning, displaced power* and '*visibility/ invisibility*'. There are also issues which relate to the *authenticity* of cultures and the ways in which they are rendered *mobile/ immobile*. This may seem like an extensive range of practices and techniques which form what seems like a rather unwieldy entanglement of theoretical concerns, but it is important to establish that this is how they should be seen to function: *these practices and techniques are constantly functioning as inter-related and inter-dependent formations*. It is possible to tease out a specific form of practice or technique in some incidences, as illustrated by reference to 'authenticity' in African art in the previous chapter. Here though, the aim is to focus on the broader workings of the processes of normalisation which incorporates all of these as a body of 'legitimizing social practices that reinforce an unequal distribution of power between groups differentiated in racial and/ or ethnic terms' (Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p2).

Having attempted to construct an understanding of what multicultural normalisation might constitute, I now want to explore the validity of this notion through an attempt to identify its institutional forms. The principle concern will be to trace the use of these practices and techniques through the framework of contemporary discourses of multiculturalism as espoused by 'New Labour' thinking and attempt to capture the ways in which they connect with the Tate Gallery. Multicultural normalisation can be identified within these contexts in terms of a premise offered by Donald and Rattansi which serves to unify these practices and techniques around one, central concern, namely:

not how *natural* differences determine and justify group definitions and interactions, but how racial logics and racial frames of reference are articulated and deployed, and with what consequences.

(Donald and Rattansi, 1992, p1 – emphasis in original)

### **Multicultural Normalization: From Millbank to Millbank**

#### ***Multiculturalism and 'The Third Way'***

There are now so many different voices that help to give us a *modern identity*. Just think of writers such as Ben Okri, Salman Rushdie and Kazuo Ishiguro, bands such as Massive Attack and Eternal, singers such as Roni Size, Jazzie B and Apache Indian, imaginative new fashion designers such as Ozwald Boetang. All these are *new ambassadors for a new creative Britain*.

(Smith, 1998, p37 – my emphasis)

The above quote is taken from the book *Creative Britain* written by, the then newly appointed Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith. The particular point of

interest regarding this quote, and indeed the paper Smith presented to the Fabian Society that it is taken from, is its highly implicit reference to issues of race and ethnicity. All of the people mentioned are black or Asian artists, or in the broader sense, ‘cultural producers’ and the bands are made up of predominantly black members, yet their ethnicity is not mentioned, let alone engaged with in a political sense! What is mentioned, and I would argue, engaged with perhaps to the point of fetishisation, is their ‘newness’ or qualities of ‘modern-ness’. And this, I would further argue, is representative of an identifiable liberal tendency within the multicultural politics associated with New Labour thinking as characterised by ‘Third Way’ politics and the associated, and much maligned term ‘Cool Britannia’. Whilst this has been discussed in Chapter 2, here I want to consider the normalising effects of this trend in political ideology before moving on to consider how these effects might be informing the institutionalisation of these values within the Tate.

For Anthony Giddens in his book ‘The Third Way’, ‘talk of Cool Britannia in the U.K. and of ‘rebranding Britain’, fumbling though they might be, mark a recognition that national identity needs to be actively shaped, in dialogue with other identities’ (Giddens, 1998, p137). Whilst this is a far from radical claim within the context of debates around multiculturalism, the problem which I would identify most readily relates to the rather vague terms in which this comment, along with that of Chris Smith, is being couched. This might be seen as relating to what Kobena Mercer describes as, ‘the managerial feel-good factor of Cool Britannia’ (Mercer, 1999, p60). Also, in relation to this rationale, there appears to be an identifiable fetishisation of the term culture itself, as a more ‘dynamic’, ‘with-it’ replacement for the old Conservative notion of ‘Heritage’. Effectively, therefore, within a New Labour vision of multicultural Britain, we might identify a progressive move away from a predominantly ‘white’ view of the past to a cultural present and future infused with cultural eclecticism.

The problem, however, is that within this conceptualisation lies its very undoing. The feel-good vagueness, I would argue, is an inescapable problem because of the fact that 'heritage' and 'culture' are here seen as mutually exclusive; cultural 'newness' and therefore the multiple cultures which produce it are apparently the product of some form of immaculate cultural conception, or as Mercer puts it:

While entirely valid and necessary as a starting point for a more inclusive account of contemporary art which assumes cultural mixing, or hybridity, as a cornerstone feature of modernism and modernity, the problem is that the story of how 'that time has passed', and the whys and wherefores of its passing, were not opened up for public discussion.

(Mercer, 1999, p60)

It is in this sense, therefore, that what Smith and the New Labour rhetoric offers us might be seen as a kind of cultural logic whereby Cool = New = 'The Other'; 'the multi in multicultural, the Cool in Cool Britannia' (Hall, 1999, p13). The cultural 'other' is being reified and made visible through its *appropriation*, to paraphrase Foucault; it is, in short, being normalised.

The way in which this logic might best be challenged is by emphasising the manner in which the 'cultural other' is being appropriated by acknowledging that we can consider a more retrospective account of multiculturalism's derivation. As argued in Chapter 3, through the example of Gilroy's critique of Turner's *The Slavership*, *constitutive histories are richer and more complex than this*. Even within the terms of a late-twentieth-century critique of New Labour's multicultural rationale, many non-white artists of the 1960s, 70s and 80s do not seem to figure in this contemporary vision of multicultural Britain. The institutionalisation of this discourse within the Tate is identified by Stuart Hall when he lists a group of artists from this pre-1990s 'erasure', including Aubrey Williams and David Medalla, and asserts that they

'have been quietly written out of the records. Not British enough for the Tate, not international enough for Bankside, I guess' (Hall, 1999, p10).

There are two broad issues around multicultural normalisation which I will draw out from this observation. Firstly, the way in which selection - what to appropriate and what not to appropriate - occurs, it would seem, around the norm of 'the new' which is being constructed. Some non-white artists, it would seem, 'fit the bill' better than others and in this sense these are not stories of 'alternative' or syncretic histories within art. What is being constructed is a homogenous view of the non-white cultural producer; that is to say that Ozwald Boetang, Roni Size and perhaps an artist such as Chris Ofili have more in common than, say, artists through the century. These figures are not being differentiated on the basis of their form of cultural production, they are homogenised on the basis of their 'otherness' and their 'newness'. To illustrate this in relation to Foucault's argument, Chris Ofili bears the visible traces of the 'very good' rank, whilst David Medalla fails to fulfil his role within the necessary aspiration to the norm. This is not to say that Ofili and Medalla are necessarily linked, for that would be to fall into another trap of normalisation through collective 'otherness'. However, what I want to emphasise is that through the processes of normalisation particular figures are constructed around a particular norm, appropriated for a particular end. What this then achieves is the establishment of a normative interpretation of relations between people and histories which serves to exclude other possible interpretations. In this sense, what the processes of multicultural normalisation achieve is the 'collapse [of] different histories, temporalities and racial formations into the same universalising category' (Hall, 1996, p243). And this relates to my second point, which is that another characteristic of normalisation is that, in effect, it breaks history into 'chunks'; it is not just artists and cultural producers that are mixed and matched in these appropriative practices, but also, as I have argued in Chapter 3, times and spaces.

One outcome of these properties of normalisation is how they serve to maintain the de-politicisation of the black subject, as Mercer has stated, through their institutionalisation. In a review of the Tate's triennial exhibition of British art, *Intelligence*, which ran through summer 2000, Waldemer Januszczak concluded that:

We are watching a Tate attempt to claim a more respectable path for British art in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's a less shocking path: multiracial, transgenerational, wholesome.

(Januszczak, 2000, p9)

Whilst the Tate has not formerly released any kind of agenda, or established a particular position with regards to multicultural issues, there are connections to be made with the multicultural aspirations of New Labour and the recent expansion of the Tate (see in particular J.J Charlesworth's *The Art of the Third Way*<sup>2</sup>). Following on from initial discussions around the proposal of Tate Britain, a discussion paper was published internally at the Tate which, under a section entitled 'Developing Audiences and Access', did serve to raise the issue, if only in passing. Though it refers to a broader sense of inclusion which incorporates issues of disability, multicultural concerns are present:

Much further work needs to be done in encouraging those who have to overcome psychological, cultural or physical barriers to visit the gallery. The sense of a Tate Gallery of British art reaching out to those who do not normally visit, or feel inhibited by their expectations of the singularity of the cultural narrative, is crucial.<sup>3</sup>

(Nairne, Wilton & Moorhouse, 1994, p15)

What both this quote and Januszczak's suggest is that the Tate is, in some respects, concerned with the issues of moving beyond a singular grand narrative of Britishness within art and its histories. In some respects, the first quote also serves to vindicate the latter; it appears that

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 for reference to this article.

<sup>3</sup> This source was copied from the original document contained in the Tate Gallery Archive.

they have succeeded in changing the intended sense of multicultural awareness. However, what is problematic here, I would argue, is the deliberate juxtaposition of the words ‘multiracial’ and ‘wholesome’ in the former. Whether taken in a literal or metaphorical sense, this might be seen to suggest a rather assimilatory brand of multiculturalism. The problem, as I have sought to emphasise throughout previous chapters, is that ‘different cultures represent different systems of *meaning* [and that in addition to this], cultures are internally plural’ (Parekh, 2000a, p337 – my emphasis). Therefore, this sense of ‘wholesomeness’ becomes problematic because it simultaneously serves to homogenise, and, as a result, *loses meaning* which, in turn, serves to negate political struggle. It is this displacement of the political that has provoked Slavoj Žižek to proclaim this neo-liberal brand of multiculturalism as merely a new form of racism (Žižek, 1997). It has also been suggested by Araeen, more specifically in relation to art institutions, that ‘the struggle has been hijacked [...] the system has now built a thick wall of multiculturalism around itself’ (Araeen, 2000b, p18).

Araeen’s standpoint might be viewed as distinctly radical in relation to his attack on art institutions and it should be noted that although not mentioned in name, the Tate is implicated in his critique, through comments such as those berating the Tate’s staging of the Turner Prize: ‘having thus achieved their recognition, and being celebrated with the Turner Prize, the hybrid children of multiculturalism are in no mood to upset the establishment’ (Araeen, 2000b, p16). For Araeen, institutions such as the Tate seem to be engaged in a self-consciously divisive ‘dumbing down’ of multicultural politics. For the Tate’s part, it would appear that when alluded to, such as in the above quote of Nairne et al’s, multicultural issues are something which they want to actively embrace through exploring issues such as the presentation of multiple readings of British cultural identities. This, I would suggest, however, is a perennial obstacle with regards to multicultural politics in that cultures operate, more often than not, in a far from polarised, oppositional sense. In effect, the Tate is unable to counter-normalise solely

by offering oppositional historical accounts of British art, but this, I would argue, remains a dominant strategy as a direct result of normalising practices and techniques and their 'subtle and diffuse' operations which relate to the idea that 'individuals are controlled through the power of the norm and this power is effective because it is relatively invisible' (McNay, 1994, p94-95). Thus the problem for the Tate is that it is, in a sense, operating through and creating multicultural norms by seeking to counter 'singular narratives' of British art with black narratives. It is precisely because normalisation functions without the need for intentionality that it is so effective; it is, quite simply, the power of the norm to render things 'normal' or 'natural' that keeps them operating so effectively. And, as a result, it might be argued that when Araeen takes the radical position of proclaiming that 'a subversive formation can only be achieved if one is able to penetrate the system and challenge its structures' (Araeen, 2000b, p17), only such a radical overhaul of institutional judgements is likely to reveal these subtle operations.

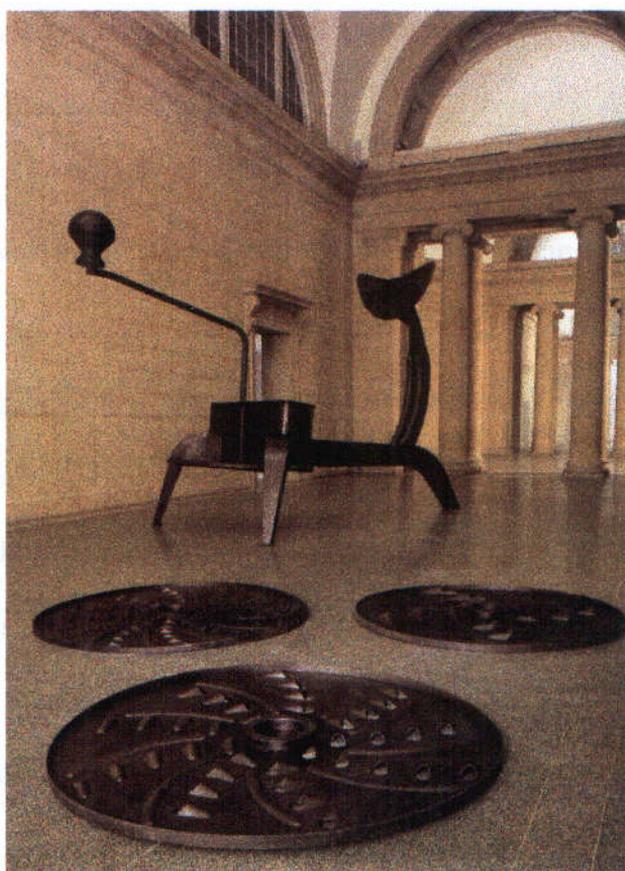
### *Reading 'The Other' at Tate Britain*

So how might we identify these forms of multicultural normalisation at work within the Tate? It may, I hope, be useful to consider two particular examples of artists and their works which have recently been displayed at Tate Britain. By asking critical questions of their display and, more importantly, the ways in which they are displayed, we may begin to identify processes of normalisation.

The first example is that of the Lebanese born artist Mona Hatoum whose work formed the first solo show at Tate Britain. It was used to fill the 'imperial grandeur of the Duveen Galleries' (Cumming, 2000, p8); the central, and by far the largest, of Millbank's galleries. The displayed work, which included *Mouli-Julienne (x17) (1999)* (see figure 7.2), worked

around the theme of hugely magnified steel kitchen appliances from the 1950s, this particular example being a vegetable shredder. The machine ‘becomes gigantic, human size – a threatening machine’ (Hatoum, 2000, p18), and is seen as a confrontation of ‘issues of exile and oppression’ (ibid). Having lived in Britain since 1975, due to her inability to return to Lebanon during civil war at the time, Hatoum, as an artist, represents Tate Britain’s aim to achieve a broader context for British art. As Sandy Nairne, Director of National Programmes at the Tate explained, this relates to a notion of:

issues of race and culture being part and parcel now of some of what Tate Britain will do.<sup>4</sup>



(Figure 7.2 – Mouli-Julienne (x17), Mona Hatoum, 2000)

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Sandy Nairne, 16/5/00.

The choice of Hatoum's work to form a centrepiece for the opening of Tate Britain was informed by two factors: firstly that it was 'high impact'<sup>5</sup> and furthermore, that it was the expression of:

someone whose own history and work was in itself fraught of the equivocation about place and culture and indeed intimidation, repression and other political difficulties [the intention being to signal] that Tate Britain wanted to take some of these things on and incorporate them as part of its work and displays.<sup>6</sup>

A criticism which Araeen has made, which again can be construed as an implicit reference to the Tate, and certainly offers resonances with this example, is that:

What is new is that the other is no longer just the culturally constructed other. We also now have a politically exotic other, who is supposed to be either exiled from or is critical about his/ her country of origin.

(Araeen, 2000b, p17)

In this context it might be suggested that a political struggle is being reified; that the complex issues surrounding exile are reduced to mere spectacle. There is a difficulty here though: is the institution expected to ignore this aspect of an artist's identity and/ or work? If Araeen is suggesting that the political struggle of 'the other' is being incorporated into a form of normalization, how might it be addressed without *the loss of meaning*? His justification offers a forceful yet ambiguous proposal:

Try to turn your eyes towards the ideological and institutional structures of the system, which is now so concerned with the plight and struggles of peoples in other countries, and you will see how the doors shut in your face.

(ibid)

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Again, the solution is seen to rely on a fundamental interrogation of institutional structure, but what these structures are perpetuating and how they might be questioned is not elaborated upon. However, what we can take from Araeen's point is the notion that there might be a new formation of exoticising around the normalisation of the 'political other'. This incorporates another characteristic of multicultural normalisation with resonance to issues raised in the previous three chapters: the issue of mobility<sup>7</sup>. As Richard Hylton asks, 'why are some artists movements continually policed whilst others are left to roam free [...] white Europeans who travel and settle outside of Europe are seen as the norm, while the others in Europe are seen as culturally specific' (Hylton, 2000, p4). Whilst the story of exile is certainly an important aspect of Hatoum's work, for the Tate's part, we might ask whether the visibility of a white European's mobility and the notion of a constructed identity would be so evident. Further, however, I would argue that this evaluation alone is not what might form a legitimate critical response to the Tate's use of Hatoum's work. An additional consideration, which more directly relates to the 'visibility' of Hatoum and her work, is its position within the gallery space. As Margaret Garlake has suggested:

Hatoum's not inconsiderable presence may be understood as a deniable attempt to redress the embarrassing sparsity of women artists and representatives of ethnic minorities, a situation all too evident in its historiography

(Garlake, 2000, p8)

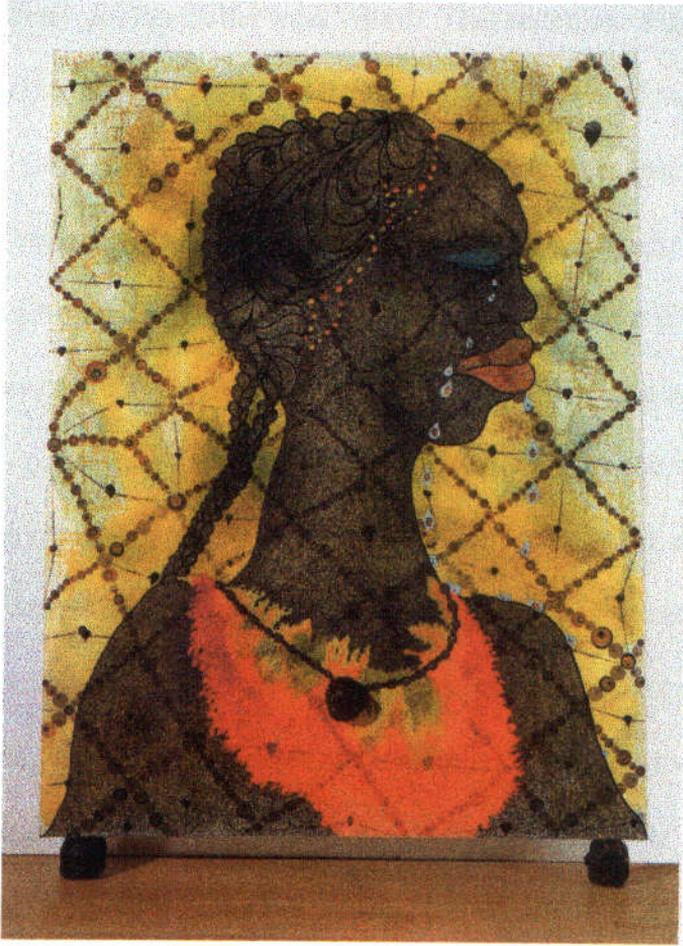
The motives for making Hatoum's work so visibly apparent could also be seen as questionable on the basis of her artistic reputation. Hatoum is not renowned for work on such a large scale and, from an artistic point of view, it is more characteristic for her work to appear on a smaller scale and within a smaller space. But, would this have promoted the Tate's drive

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<sup>7</sup> Here I am referring specifically to the issues raised regarding the 'Artists Abroad' room in Chapter 4, Alfred Wallis in Chapter 5 and *Africa Explores* in Chapter 6.

for inclusiveness and the raising of questions of cultural belonging so effectively? The answer, I would suggest, is that it would not have, and therein lies the issue of an identifiable process of normalisation. Hautoum's work becomes 'hyper-visible' and its hyper-visibility can be seen to simultaneously normalise the politically exotic other, as well as to proclaim the Tate's 'engagement' with these issues. Its commitment to the cause, almost literally, spelt out in ten foot high letters.

The second example I wish to consider is that of the artist Chris Ofili, and particularly his work *No Woman, No Cry* (1998) (see figure 7.3) which formed part of his Turner prize winning display of the same year, and which the Tate subsequently purchased. In a similar context to Hatoum's work, the Tate has emphasised the political significance of this work: 'Ofili intends the picture as a tribute to the murdered London teenager Stephen Lawrence' (Myrone, 2000. P141). Whilst Ofili does not conform to the 'exiled other' model, having been born and resided in Britain all his life, he draws on what has been described by the Tate as 'a wide range of cultural and popular references [...] producing work that challenges stereotypes of black culture, identity, exoticism and sexuality' (Button and Parkin, 1998, p8). This conceptualisation of Ofili's work offers an interesting contrast with those of Kobena Mercer and Ofili himself. Mercer is scathing of what he sees as 'a post-boomer whiteness that is *au fait* with the black vernacular [resulting in] a frenzy of over identification with the abjected 'nigga'' (Mercer, 1999, p57). For Mercer, it would seem that the Tate is implicated in this process of 'over-identification', which hints at a perceived need to make the black artist function within a normatively constructed political framework. The issue of Ofili's political engagement is alluded to by the artist himself in an interview in *The Guardian* just after the announcement of his Turner Prize victory: 'my project is not a P.C. project [...] it allows you to laugh about issues that are politically serious. There are no rules, and even the ones that you set for yourself can be temporary' (Glaister, 1998, p3).



(Figure 7.3 – No Woman, No Cry, Chris Ofili, 1998)

Regarding Ofili's work, I would argue that the Tate is more insistent on a cultural-racial political agenda, whereas the artist himself is more dismissive of seeing his project as 'seriously' political. But a picture which reflects the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence must surely be of 'serious' significance within the realms of racial politics? This may be true. However, once again the identification of normalising tendencies might be suggested by asking critical questions of the Tate, principally in relation to issues of selectivity and the 'visibility' of Ofili's political project. Whilst much of Ofili's work is grounded in the context of popular culture, such as the *Captain Shit* series (1998) or *Rodin...The Thinker* (1997), making reference to *Marvel* comics and pornography respectively, *No Woman, No Cry* represents a significant departure from these more dominant influences. In the process of

contextualising the latter piece, Glaister feels it necessary to point out that 'Ofili is unafraid to incorporate contemporary politics in his work' (ibid). This statement suggests a necessary demarcation between this piece of work and the majority, if not all, of his other works, and in this sense it is within Ofili's works exceptional for its more direct engagement with the 'serious business' of black political struggle. Within the literature which accompanied the 1998 Turner Prize exhibition, the Tate's profile of Ofili's work does not mention *No Woman, No Cry*, though it does consider the other two works mentioned here in addition to *Afrodizzia* (1996), a work which portrays 'a pantheon of black celebrities from the worlds of music and sport' (Button and Parkin, 1998, p8). Whilst these, and it might be said, all of his works, engage with issues related to the construction and articulation of blackness within contemporary popular culture, they are, as the artist has stated, executed within a humorous context and *No Woman, No Cry* is in this sense exceptional. The point I would make, in identifying this particular painting, is that the Tate can be seen to profile Ofili's work in a particular and it might be said decidedly uncharacteristic direction. It is black, it is tragic and it is 'new/ cool'; the latter point being accentuated by the fact that the picture is last placed in the chronological organisation of works within the catalogue for Tate Britain and represents the first and only entry in this lineage by a black artist. In this sense Ofili can be seen as fulfilling a particular role for the Tate: the visibly political, black, subaltern. These are identifications ascribed more by the Tate than generated by Ofili.

A second point which can be made about this painting relates directly to its subject matter, that is, the murder of Stephen Lawrence. Stuart Hall has pointed out that the ability of the murder to have such a profound impact on such a broad social scale can be seen in the possibilities for a dominant middle class empathy with the Lawrence family. As a Christian family and Stephen Lawrence as an individual with aspirations of a university education, Hall emphasises the potency of 'that could have been my son/ daughter' empathy amongst many

white, middle-class families which enabled a broader impact beyond purely non-white recipients of racial prejudice (Hall, 2000b). In this sense, the portrayal of this particular tragedy to a white audience can, I would argue, be seen as representing a non-threatening act of black political resistance. This can be related to the idea within Foucault's work that 'the behaviour of individuals is regulated not through overt repression but through a set of standards and values associated with normality' (McNay, 1994, p95). The display of *No Woman, No Cry* can therefore be seen as an act of 'regulated resistance' which is allowed to function through its compliance to prescribed 'standards' and 'values'. To look at this another way, we might ask whether the painting would have been as readily purchased and displayed had it highlighted the plight of black individuals in relation to institutional racism within the police force in, say, cases of death in police custody where the individual could be related to the perpetration of a crime? I would argue that this would certainly generate problems in that the notion that normalised 'standards and values' would be subverted and the act of resistance would present more of a threat to the white, liberal multicultural gaze. For Mercer, the institutional response to such an issue is unequivocal:

Be as visually different as you want to be, says the all inclusive idiom of free market enterprise, but woe betide you if you try and make any critical or dissident claim on the basis of your pathetic little identity.

(Mercer, 1999, p57)

The Turner Prize itself, and the associated influence of so called YBAs, has effectively called into question the role of 'the political' within contemporary British art. The issues of whether or not British art might represent a de-politicised art are bound up not only with issues of difference that may or may not be articulated through non-white artists, but also through the issues of what might be termed the 'commercial turn' within British art of the 1990s. This new commercialism is seen as a response to the inter-related growth of

commercial sponsorship in the arts and decline of public funds (see McRobbie, 1998).

Furthermore, issues have been raised regarding the shifting ways in which issues of race and ethnicity are being addressed, distinguishing it from the more 'radical' art of the 1980s as exemplified by the work of dominant black artists of this period such as Keith Piper, Eddie Chambers and Sonia Boyce<sup>8</sup>. For the issue of multicultural normalisation, political engagement and the commercial success of black artists in the 1990s presents us with several important issues, which I will now go on to examine.

## **The Death of the Artist: YBAs, the De-politicisation of British Art and the Politics of Representation**

### ***YBAs: Taking the Politics out of British Art?***

As with most, if not all, artistic genres or movements, the YBAs form less of a collective consciousness than their shared identification would imply. The term invokes no more than artists who are young, (for the purposes of Turner Prize nomination they must be under forty), and who live and work in Britain. The work which has been displayed collectively around the YBA tag is generally associated with the *Freeze* exhibition of 1988 and, more recently, *Sensation* in 1997; the latter exhibition signalling a period in which the term gained wider usage. Subsequently, the work of the YBAs has become associated with the Turner Prize and was featured in the aforementioned *Intelligence* exhibition (2000), also at Tate Britain. What has been suggested as a unifying characteristic of the work of these artists is their treatment of critical theory in relation to political and cultural debates. The understanding that 'the young British artists distance themselves from all the art theory, the

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<sup>8</sup> See Mercer, 1994 for further discussion of the political engagements of these artists.

Marxism and post-structuralism which they might have come across in their training' (McRobbie, 1998, p55) serves to suggest that British art has undergone a process of de-politicisation, and that these artists privilege commercial interests over political struggle.

Just as Ofili has attempted to deflect the issue of a political project, so too has another black, British artist; Steve McQueen – winner of the Turner Prize the year after Ofili in 1999. In an interview with Patricia Bickers for *Art Monthly* he acknowledges the shift of political engagement from the 1980s to the 1990s: 'for an older generation of black or female artists, visibility was a fundamental issue – Rasheed Araeen for instance [...], for him it was everything to do with his being black' (Bickers, 1996, p4). As stated by Mercer, McQueen identifies this shift in relation to the issue of visibility and, importantly, shares the notion that this is no longer a site of resistance. However, while Mercer also takes this observation as an entry point into the notion of a new form of multicultural normalisation, McQueen does not offer such a critical response. For him, the issue is not so much a concern around a collective consciousness as it is an incidental fact:

I'm in the position I am because of what other people have done and I'm grateful, for sure. But at the same time, I am black yes. I'm British as well. But as Miles Davis said, 'So what?' I don't say that flippantly but like anyone else I deal with certain things in my work because of who I am.

(Bickers, 1996, p5)

This trend of 'marked anti-intellectualism in their work' (McRobbie, 1998, p56) suggests that 'the yba's exonerate themselves from responsibility. They opt for infantilism instead' (McRobbie, 1998, p57), yet this 'anti-intellectualism' might also suggest a political project in itself. For the black YBAs such as Ofili and McQueen, issues of race and ethnicity are still present, but they are not articulated through the intellectualised style of 1980s artists such as Rasheed Araeen, Keith Piper or Eddie Chambers, and there are political motives for

this. For Mercer these motives relate to the fact that a 'postcolonial vocabulary, characterised by terms such as diaspora, ethnicity and hybridity [...] has extended to the apparatus of 'bureaucratic multiculturalism' [art] once sought to critique' (Mercer, 1999, p58). Such anti-intellectualism can be interpreted as a move towards the subversion of normalising practices; that is, a refusal to be defined within an institutional framework of blackness. Similarly, in an amusing swipe at the blatantly de-politicised forms found within the YBAs more broadly, John Roberts hints at an emergent political critique:

The truth is, playing dumb, shouting 'ARSE' and taking your knickers down has become an attractive move in the face of the institutionalisation of critical theory in art in the 1980s.

(Roberts, 1996, p29)

A fundamental issue remains, however, in relation to the undifferentiated role of racialised politics amongst the YBAs as a homogeneous body of artists. While Mercer and McQueen have affirmed that visibility has become detached from meaning in a constitutive, critical sense and that institutionalised interpretations of blackness must be subverted, how does this agenda become realised within the confines of the YBAs? The rejection of an art school education of Marxism and post-structuralism by the white YBAs is one thing, the subversion of multicultural normalisation within institutions is, for the black YBAs, quite another. As Angela McRobbie has asked: 'can the two black artists whose work was shown at Sensation, afford to do without a sense of history and of politics?' (McRobbie, 1998, p57). For Araeen, the answer appears to be no:

These games are now being played on the assumption that this has given us the freedom to express ourselves; but what we are in fact doing is only targeting the camouflage, leaving behind the structures of domination almost totally intact.

(Araeen, 2000b, p7)

So whilst Ofili, for Mercer, shows a 'willingness to play along with the jokey YBA demeanour' (Mercer, 1999, p57), it would seem that this is also at the expense of a truly critical stance against the institution. The alternative, it would seem, needs to address blackness as a differentiated position within YBA jokiness, whilst simultaneously subverting processes of normalisation which thrive on the hyper-visibility of blackness. Reflecting another fellow critic of the YBAs political engagement (or lack of it), Mercer states that, 'Robert's perceives the YBA's dumb pose as a knowingly 'philistine' rejection, of the textualist 'politics of representation'' (Mercer, 1998, p58). What I want to go on to argue here is that, as with the YBAs as a group, the function of a 'politics of representation' needs to be differentiated on the grounds of race and ethnicity.

### ***Challenging Multicultural Normalisation: Putting the Politics back into Representation***

For Stuart Hall, the concept of a politics of representation is defined in the following terms:

the way meaning can be struggled over, and whether a particular regime of representation can be challenged, contested and transformed.

(Hall, 1997b, p8)

The political, or perhaps de-politicising, project of the YBAs, in the broad sense, might be seen to reject theory and, for Roberts in particular, reject the specific idea of a politics of representation. Yet this definition offered by Hall also serves to describe their challenge to theory quite effectively. Without wanting to get submerged in the irony of this situation, what I do wish to emphasise is that while in one sense this provides a definition of the YBA's challenge to the notion of a Marxist or post-structuralist based artistic engagement, it can also provide a different political inflection for non-white YBAs. For the latter, Hall's definition

also serves to suggest that the politics of representation have a place in the struggle to challenge processes of multicultural normalisation. Essentially, Hall is defining a politics which might be mobilised in order to challenge the ways in which blackness is being defined within institutional 'regimes of representation'. In turn, this might also provide a clearer notion of how Araeen's 'call to arms' against existing institutional structures might be realised.

For Hall, the formation of a politics of representation centres around a shift which separates two different 'moments' in the history of black cultural politics. The period when he sees this separation as occurring is broadly marked out as post-Thatcherism and therefore again, broadly speaking, around the turn of the 1990s. This also reflects the distinction made here between more radical work within 'black art' of the 1980s and the advent of the YBAs in the 1990s. The latter period is seen as one in which 'strategies were principally addressed to changing [...] the 'relations of representation'' (Hall, 1992, p253). This initial form of resistance, prior to the 1990s, centred on a unified sense of blackness as undifferentiated through notions of ethnicity or historical context. The principle political motive during this 'moment' is seen as the formulation of 'a critique of the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible 'other' of predominantly white aesthetics and cultural discourses' (Hall, 1992, p252).

The second 'moment' which Hall identifies relates to the formation of a politics of representation where the struggle becomes one based around the terms of representation itself and the need to acknowledge that 'we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being constrained by the position as 'ethnic artists'' (Hall, 1992, p258). Attempts to engage with this set of issues at the Tate can be seen through the exhibition *Century City* which was the first major exhibition held at the newly opened Tate Modern in early 2000. The principle behind this exhibition was to

divide the twentieth century into ten periods and represent each period through a particular city's artistic activities at this time. These periods were also framed around significant artistic moments within these cities such as Vienna from 1908-18 around the time of Freud's initial influence on the arts and Lagos in 1960s post-independence Nigeria.

Whilst the representation of these cities through artistic practice can be as addressing Hall's concerns regarding the apparently egalitarian presentation of temporal-spatial positionality and particularity with examples from every continent, criticism in the artistic press demonstrates the difficulties of what I would argue can be construed as counter-normalising strategies. The most immediate concern for many was that in establishing this framework the presentation was too prescriptive and served first and foremost to demonstrate the overbearing curatorial power to categorise. As Januszczak stated in *The Times*:

Even a Tate curator ought to have been able to foresee how dates and places would have to be twisted severely to fit such a scheme.

(Januszczak, 2001, p14)

The implication of this perceived temporal-spatial constraint, or, I would argue normalisation, was that it served to construct what might be crudely termed the "non-white spaces", such as Lagos and Mumbai, within a particularly problematic context. Januszczak adds that:

Lagos, having been allotted one room to Moscow's three rooms, is patronised further by various inconsequential wall-loads of family snaps and magazine covers, shown to the continuous blast of highlife music.

(Januszczak, 2001, p15)

In her review of the exhibition in *Art Monthly*, Garlake also voices a concern over the treatment of Lagos in this form of representation:

While Lagos largely ignores the immense wealth of Moslem culture in Northern Nigeria and entirely fails to acknowledge the Biafran civil war of the late 1960s it

vividly conveys the prosperity of middle-class Nigerian society (the urban and rural poor are not with us on this occasion).

(Garlake, 2001, p4)

What these criticisms convey, in terms of the issue of normalisation, is that despite the apparent post-colonial critical engagement of the Tate over issues such as the naming of Bombay as Mumbai, criticism remains in relation to the reification of the subject through signifiers of material culture, which are argued to be fairly banal examples at that, and the failure to account for internalised differentiation. With regards to the latter issue, as Garlake suggests, Lagos is represented as a homogenised space which reflects an undifferentiated cultural identity of 'the other', resonant with what I have referred to here as multicultural time-space. The tension which appears to arise for the critics of the exhibition is that through attempting to offer an egalitarian comparative analysis of cities in Asia and Africa and South America with those in Europe and North America what has been lost in the process is how the cities of the former continents, and perhaps some within the latter continents, have been temporally and spatially normalised:

about how we live in cities, about the interactions between races, classes and cultures, it says relatively little. Nor, despite the international whirl through alternative aesthetic systems does it do much to dislodge the canon of western art.

(ibid)

In somewhat harsher terms, Januszczak claims that:

It is, so obviously, a display of trite cultural tourism mounted by an industry that crisscrosses the world these days as determinedly as a bunch of tennis pros on the make: the curating industry.

(Januszczak, 2001, p15)

For Hylton, the broader problem with these representations is that curators render the subject:

Ethnically tagged, they speak more about the mainstream maintaining control over how and when the other is visible; reinforcing their authority rather than making space for an unconditional visibility.

(Hylton, 1999, p10)

It is in this sense that we are drawn into a political engagement which has, in effect, the principle aim of challenging processes of normalisation through establishing a sense of difference which 'inevitably entails a weakening or fading of the notion that 'race' [...] will either guarantee the effectivity of a cultural practice or determine in any final sense its aesthetic value' (Hall, 1992, p254). More specifically, Hall uses the notion of difference as it is invoked by Derrida in his notion of *différance* (see also Hall, 2000b). The essence of this understanding is that difference is marked out as an ongoing process of the changes in relations which construct identity; it is never subject to closure. The application of this notion to thinking about how multicultural normalisation functions through the Tate, is, I believe, strongly supported by the notion that strategies of representational practice are seen as actively shaping meaning; they are, in the Foucauldian sense, practices and techniques of normalisation:

How things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a *constitutive* and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation – subjectivity, identity, politics – a formative, not merely an expressive place in the constitution of social and political life.

(Hall, 1992, p254 – emphasis in original)

As Hall has stated elsewhere, the outcome of these strategies is that they attempt to 'fix' meaning (Hall, 1997c), as Foucault has observed, within normalising practices.

Furthermore, as Ofili's *No Woman, No Cry* demonstrates, this enables the Tate to make art works readable within a multicultural context.

If, as I am arguing, the Tate is engaged in this fixing of meaning which, as Hall is inferring, leads to the loss of meaning, 'what are the counter-strategies which can begin to subvert the [normalising] representation process?' (Hall, 1997c, p269). For Hall, there are three such counter-strategies: the active reversal of stereotypes, the substitution of negative images with positive images within popular representation and a contestation of the forms at work within representational practices (Hall, 1997c). The first two of these form a direct resistance to dominant, essentialising stereotypes which have served to normalise blackness in representation; they are concerned with 'introducing a new *content*' (Hall, 1997c, p274 – emphasis in original), replacing for example the 'black villain' with the 'black hero'. These two strategies are principally based on addressing a dialogue *between* the construction of 'black' and 'white' stereotypes. The third counter-strategy presents a slightly more complex process of challenging representation *from within* and it is this counter-strategy which I want to develop. The attempt here is 'to make the stereotypes work against themselves' (ibid). Effectively, this takes the practices and techniques of normalisation 'head on' and challenges their development by confronting them rather than substituting them, as Hall explains:

Since black people have so often been fixed, stereotypically, by the racialised gaze, it may have been tempting to refuse the complex emotions associated with 'looking'. However, this strategy makes elaborate play with 'looking', hoping by its very attention, to 'make it strange' – that is to de-familiarise it, and so make explicit what is often hidden.

(ibid)

What I want to go on to argue is that this strategy can be identified in the work of the artist, Yinka Shonibare; an artist who has been identified within the YBA context (see McRobbie,

1998), but whose work offers a political confrontation which challenges the YBA anti-intellectualism. Furthermore, I want to consider the relationship between the artist, his work and the Tate through the exhibition of one of his works in the Tate's *Intelligence* exhibition and a talk entitled *Elsewhere* which Shonibare gave at Tate Britain shortly before the exhibition's opening<sup>9</sup>.

### Counter-Normalisation and the Art of Yinka Shonibare



(Figure 7.4 – *Diary of a Victorian Dandy (21.00 Hours)*, Yinka Shonibare, 1998)

The notions of 'making things strange' and 'de-familiarising' that Hall identifies as central to contesting normalising concepts of representing blackness are key concerns in the work of Yinka Shonibare. In a broad sense this is achieved through his continual challenge of placing incongruous elements together within his work, creating a sense of things being in

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<sup>9</sup> This talk was attended by the author, 3/5/00.

spaces they are not 'supposed' to be in. This serves to directly challenge the way in which power has been generated through normalisation: 'the fusing of disparate elements on my work remains critical of the relations of power through parody, excess and complicity' (Shonibare, 1998, p73). This has been confronted in two identifiable forms within his work. *First*, works such as the photographic series entitled *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (1998) (see figure 7.4), place the artist within a context which emphasises his visibility as a black man through his position of power and influence within scenes of British, Victorian luxury and excess. In these works Shonibare's 'lord of the manor' role is played out within the various spaces of a stately home; the library, the ballroom, the music room, the bedchamber. In each of the works he is the focal point of the interest and admiration of the onlookers around a sole black figure.

The *second* way in which this sense of incongruity is emphasised is through the artist's frequent use of batik fabrics within unfamiliar contexts, such as in *Mr and Mrs Andrews without their Heads* (1998) (see figure 7.5). In this example, Shonibare recreates Gainsborough's famous eighteenth-century work (see figure 7.6) by using two mannequins, both, as is made plain by the title, without their heads. They are dressed in the well-tailored costume of the original, but the fabric itself is replaced with batik; a self-consciously imposed signifier of African-ness. Not only does this work address issues of class, invoking an inversion of the 'off with their heads' cliché of the period, but more directly, issues of race and ethnicity through 'a commentary on the history of slavery in England and colonialism, and the place of the African subject in this gentle but perverse ideology of class' (Enwezor, 1998, p17). The batik-clothed figure was also used in the work *Vacation* (2000) (see figure 7.7) which featured in the Tate's *Intelligence* exhibition. In this work, the figure is that of an astronaut, complete with helmet and air supply, depicted in the active role of exploration. This work draws together elements of 'African-ness' with the metaphor of discovery and

exploration which the space suit carries, suggesting a move away from the familiarity of eighteenth/ nineteenth century imagery as the predominant temporal ‘sites’ of the colonial story.



(Figure 7.5 – Detail from Mr and Mrs Andrews Without Their Heads, Yinka Shonibare, 1998)



(Figure 7.6 – Detail from Mr and Mrs Andrews, Thomas Gainsborough, 1750)

The presentation of these works does, I would suggest, confront the issue of ‘visibility’ ‘head on’ (and, indeed, ‘head off’). As Hall has described, Shonibare’s work can be seen to

function *within* practices of normalisation rather than presenting alternatives to stereotypes. It is through this manner of presentation that we can also acknowledge Hall's claim about how such counter-strategies emphasise the process of 'looking'; the unfamiliarity and incongruity of the image forces a critical enquiry in order to make sense of it. In this sense we can more closely examine the role of meaning within the process of normalisation.



(Figure 7.7 – Vacation, Yinka Shonibare, 2000)

It has been identified how meaning becomes contentious as a result of techniques of normalisation; within this work, however, something else is occurring and its effectiveness is, I would argue, because it also works through a contestation *within* processes of normalisation. This is achieved through Shonibare's use of highly unambiguous signifiers; namely, the juxtaposition of images of colonial power with the visually familiar and striking form of batik

fabric. The fabric can be seen to act as a normalised form of 'African-ness', a symbol of the 'authenticity' of 'the other'. The subversion of such normalising processes is, however, also to be found in the story of the fabric itself through Shonibare's challenge to its authenticity in a complex story of its 'origins':

Designed by Mancunian Asians for export to Africa (where they are worn by urban Africans as a celebration of technological advance and as a declaration of independence from European dress conventions). The fabrics are then re-exported back to Britain where they retail as traditional 'African' crafts. Moreover, the Dutch wax technique used in the production of these batik textiles is not African at all but originates from Indonesia, from whence it travelled to Holland then on to Manchester and only then finally reached Africa.

(Guha, 1994, p88)

Through this elaborate story of the fabric's spatial circulations, Shonibare challenges the idea of its 'origins' and therefore its African 'authenticity', and in so doing another meaning is lost. Here it is *the meaning of the norm itself* which is lost. In this way we can identify a direct challenge to normalising practices through a process of *working them back against themselves* and exposing the reductive ways in which they operate. It is 'the artist's fundamental drive to question a search for origins' (Vincentelli, 1998, p5) that positions his work firmly within counter-strategies of normalisation through their questioning of what Foucault has called the 'will to truth'; 'the ceaseless drive to establish normalising regimes of truth [...]: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as truth' (McNay, 1994, p105). This issue was alluded to by Shonibare during his talk entitled *Elsewhere*, given at Tate Britain, when he described his first engagement with the use of these fabrics on a visit to Brixton market 'in search of my ethnicity' (Shonibare, 2000)<sup>10</sup>. What this

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<sup>10</sup> Quote from notes taken by the author at *Elsewhere* talk, 3/5/00.

thinking also serves to invoke is the way in which, as stated previously, normalisation causes history to be broken into 'chunks' through a kind of mixing and matching of material artefacts which are appropriated in order to articulate cultural norms. By Shonibare countering this notion we can identify another challenge to this outcome of normalisation, which, as considered in the previous two chapters, is the way in which histories 'circulate'.

Okwui Enwezor raises this issue when he comments that 'the textile is neither Dutch nor African, therefore the itinerary of ideas it circulates are never quite stable in their authority or meaning' (Enwezor, 1998, p10). In this sense, we might think of Shonibare's counter-position as a search for in-authenticity, a genealogical approach which re-invokes Hall's 'difference without closure'. This also carries resonance with Foucault's conceptualisation whereby '*our experience of the world is less that of a long line developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein*' (Foucault, 1998, p237). So, when Shonibare's work is described as 'a return to history' (McRobbie, 1998, p57), this should perhaps not be taken in the more straightforward understanding of what this phrase might mean. This is not merely a retrospective position, nor is it simply a 'rewrit[ing] of white cultural history' (Januszczak, 2000, p9), more accurately it addresses that:

There can, therefore, be no single 'return' or 'recovery' of the ancestral past which is not re-experienced through the categories of the present: no base for creative enunciation in a simple reproduction of traditional forms which are not transformed by the technologies and the identities of the present.

(Hall, 1992, p258)

The stories which Shonibare invokes are those which join up past and present, near and far, in the form of a temporal/ spatial network. What this also achieves is a notion of histories circulating between these places, leaving traces wherever and whenever they go. In this way we can also see 'that Shonibare's work announces itself in the political and cultural *gaps of*

*identity*' (Brockington, 1999 – my emphasis) through the evocation of 'counter-memories, or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and meaning as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences' (Roach, 1996, p26).

If, in the work of Yinka Shonibare, we can identify a challenge to the processes of multicultural normalisation as they have manifested themselves institutionally, what might this say for the Tate's critical consideration of multiculturalism? As an artist, his work has grown in profile, particularly through the latter part of the 1990s, moving from smaller independent galleries to the Tate. In 2000, Shonibare's work was shown at the Tate for the first time, first as part of the *Heaven* exhibition at Tate Liverpool and then at *Intelligence* at Millbank. The Tate has, itself, connected with the various issues raised by *Vacation*, registering how it raises questions about 'ethnic identity and ideas of home and authenticity [and that] the history of the so-called 'Dutch Wax' print renders it problematic as a symbol of authentic African identity'"(Tate, 2000b). The question remains however as to whether this can be seen as effective counter-normalisation and whether the problems facing such strategies can be realised.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the ways a Foucauldian account of normalisation can be used to think about the ways in which multiculturalism becomes regulated through the deployment of practices and techniques. By looking at the examples of artists whose work has become part of the Tate Gallery's displays, I have explored the ways in which multicultural normalisation becomes institutionalised. The nature of this institutionalisation, however, is not to be seen so much as an 'agenda', consciously constructed around the processes of normalisation, but as something which works through subtle and diffuse means and deep inscriptions. This has been outlined in the examples of how Mona Hatoum and Chris Ofili's

work has been contextualised at Tate Britain. As such, I have used the work of Stuart Hall in particular, to draw attention to the fact that if processes of normalisation are to be countered then there is a need to unsettle firmly established ways of 'looking' at representations of 'the other'. In addition, Rasheed Araeen's work has been used to draw attention to the fact that the counter-strategies, if they are to be effective, may involve the questioning of the foundational structures upon which the Tate is established.

What is of central importance to this account is the articulation of 'the power of the norm' through its ability to become naturalised within discourses. The implications of this, for the Tate, are the difficulties faced in attempting to counter discourses which are so deeply inscribed within institutional practices. From the example of Yinka Shonibare's work, I have shown that these counter-strategies may be realised through the artist's challenge to the perceptions of 'otherness' and the problematisation of thinking through notions of 'authenticity' and 'origins'. The Tate has displayed Shonibare's work and this in itself constitutes a reflexive move on the Tate's part to re-address the ways in which the white, liberal gaze might be more critically engaged. However, there is also a sense in which Araeen's concerns remain valid and that critical thinking can still point towards ways in which processes of normalisation remain untroubled and protected within discourses that continue to operate within the institutional structures.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have addressed several inter-related issues; namely, the politics of multiculturalism, the construction of Britishness, processes of normalisation and the connection and articulation of these issues within the context of the Tate gallery. In broader terms, all of these things have been explored in terms of their geographies; that is to say, their spatial and temporal formations. Before I examine the way these things have been combined and, more importantly, what I have demonstrated as a consequence of this combination, I want to begin my conclusion by thinking specifically about the Tate Gallery. More specifically, I want to outline what this thesis has revealed about the Tate Gallery in geographical terms and how this has contributed to enabling a 'rethinking' of the gallery, its formations and its context in contemporary, multicultural Britain.

#### *Rethinking the Times and Spaces of the Tate Gallery*

The broadest claim I wish to make is that I have demonstrated how the Tate Gallery has both constituted and defined as well as been constituted by and defined by various times and spaces. As a consequence of this observation I have made the equally broad claim that thinking about the Tate Gallery in geographical terms contributes to and, I have argued, extends our understandings of the Tate *per se*. Articulating the ways in which the Tate acts as both 'definer' and 'defined' in geographical terms has not been demonstrated through a dichotomy whereby the Tate either holds the power to define or is subject to the power of definition, it has been demonstrated more in terms of the ways power has moved and 'shifted' throughout the geographies of the Tate or, in other words, in terms of showing how power is generated within the networks that constitute it.

This has been shown initially through looking at the notion of non-linear histories in Chapter 3. Here I examined the way the ‘movements’ and ‘flows’ across time and space generate ways of understanding the Tate as well as what occurs within the gallery space. The example of the gallery’s early purchasing fund - the Chantrey Bequest - was used to show how defining what constituted British art was not decided at the Tate but negotiated within the relationship between the Tate, the Royal Academy and the National Gallery. Furthermore, defining British art was subject to broader issues of international relations in the context of the First World War and the tastes and purchasing power of an emergent middle class during the nineteenth century. In non-linear terms, what I also added to this point was showing how the Chantrey Bequest was integral to shaping the construction of British art for the opening display of permanent works at Tate Britain: *Representing Britain 1500-2000*. In this sense, the Chantrey Bequest ‘returned’ to Millbank but in the context of a new set of negotiations between this historical conceptualisation of British art, seen at the Tate one hundred years earlier, and the contemporary issues of presenting Britishness in light of what British cultural identity meant since the arrival of New Labour, Tate Modern and the death of Stephen Lawrence<sup>1</sup>.

What I argued in Chapter 3, therefore, was that the display of British art and the Britishness it sought to represent at the Tate Gallery was shaped and defined *between* the Tate and other times and spaces; that is to say, *in the temporal and spatial relations* that connect the Tate to all these things. Thus, the power to define British art can be seen neither to reside within the Tate or outside of it, but rather, as indicated, it is generated in the networks.

This notion of power in networks was developed further in my examination of St Ives art and the Tate Gallery in Chapter 5. Having established the use of networks in defining the geographies of the Tate Gallery, here I argued that St Ives art can be seen as

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of Stephen Lawrence’s death was referred to explicitly through the inclusion of Chris Ofili’s *No Woman No Cry* (1998)

having constructed power relations such as those embedded in the relationship between the art produced by the mid-twentieth-century, middle-class migrants to St Ives and the art of Alfred Wallis. The former, through their position in defining the received understanding of St Ives art at the Tate Gallery, were shown to be instrumental in shaping this genre through their ability to define what was central to and what was marginalised by 'St Ives art'. As a consequence, St Ives can be seen as a place constructed 'at a distance' (Latour, 1987) through the artists, dealers and gallery staff at the Tate at Millbank from the 1930s. In terms of Tate St Ives this, I have also argued, can be seen as a space where the construction of St Ives art is perpetuated through the articulation of power generated by the mobility of these migrant artists.

The geographies of the Tate Gallery were also addressed through the concept of circulation to expand on my initial use of the notion of non-linear histories. Introduced in Chapter 3, its use was then developed in Chapters 5 and 6. The impetus for using this concept, primarily in the context of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), was two-fold. *First*, Chapters 5 and 6 dealt with the Tate Galleries in St Ives and Liverpool respectively, both located on the Atlantic-facing coast of Britain and identifiable as entry and exit points that connect the spaces of the Atlantic Ocean, both places having histories of utilising the trade routes of the Atlantic. *Second*, the concept of circulation was used to extend the sense of 'flow' and 'movement' established through non-linear histories and the sense of spatial connection provided by networks.

What the concept of circulation has added to my argument is an understanding of place and identity formation as a process; dynamic and ongoing, or, as Gilroy states, it expresses 'the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade' (Gilroy, 1993, pxi). In Chapter 6, this understanding was employed in relation to Gilroy's subject matter to trace the histories of the Atlantic slave trade and its place in the ongoing processes of place and identity formation. This was particularly useful when examining the gallery's founder, Henry Tate, and his part in the sugar industry. What

I showed through using the example of Henry Tate was that he can be seen as a key figure in the way the Tate Gallery was able to establish a meaningful connection to the city of Liverpool as an attempt to counteract criticisms over the opening of Tate Liverpool. This I described as the construction of ‘histories of legitimisation’ and the point was illustrated by conceiving of Henry Tate as a ‘nodal point’ in the constitutive geographical networks of Tate Liverpool through which the Tate was able to construct its sense of belonging in Liverpool.

All of these issues were raised in establishing the Tate’s broad geographical context and the way it can be read into temporal and spatial stories. Furthermore, I have demonstrated, through these stories, that these times and spaces connect and reveal to us the network of past and present, near and far, which constitutes the Tate Gallery. This network should be seen as a collection of ongoing processes, or, as Bruno Latour has put it, a ‘series of *transformations*’ (Latour, 1999, p15 – emphasis in original). What is also significant about the Tate’s part in these processes is the understanding that it is part of them, but never totally subject to them, nor constitutive of them. In more simple terms, what I have established is that the Tate Gallery, for example in the context of looking at Tate Liverpool and its connection with the broader city, constructs times and spaces but is also constructed by them.

Examining the construction of these geographies has also drawn on the significance of works of art in these processes. Although I have referred to works of art displayed at the Tate from Chapter 2, it is Chapter 4 which addresses them in more detail and the more extensive ways in which these images can be seen to articulate something about the Tate’s geographical construction. The principle examples used here are two paintings from the ‘Artists Abroad’ room at Tate Britain which formed part of the galleries opening display: Turner’s *Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti Painting* (exh. 1833) and Lubiana Himid’s *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991). These two paintings were discussed in terms of their meanings and context within the Tate’s

construction of British artists abroad and how they relate to the concept of Britishness. By looking at the ways the meanings of the paintings are lost or gained in relation to this sense of Britishness, these two works allowed the evaluation both of the intricate nature in which paintings are used to construct geographies in this way and, on a more fundamental level, a way of addressing the notion that images have effects.

In this sense the paintings 'act' and this is explained initially through looking at the way they can be seen to 'circulate', and in doing so, directly affect the networks. This was initially discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to Turner's *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon Coming on (The Slaveship)* (1840) and then developed through the application of Actor Network Theory in Chapter 4. This agency is once again demonstrated in the context of the ongoing process of defining a sense of Britishness and how the paintings themselves 'produce and reproduce the [Tate's] imagined geographies' (Rose, 2000, p555).

As well as exploring this innovative perspective on the Tate Gallery in terms of the broad temporal and spatial relations which come to form it as an institution, I have revealed aspects of these geographies which establish their importance in utilising the Tate Gallery as a framework through which to explore Britishness, multiculturalism and processes of normalisation.

### ***The Tate Gallery, Britishness and Multicultural Normalisation***

The sense in which the Tate Gallery is constituted by a diversity of times and spaces also facilitates a way of understanding the constitution of Britishness. Indeed, the relationship between the geographies of the Tate and the geographies of Britishness are often integral. This is particularly evident in relation to the original remit of the Tate Gallery as the National Gallery of British Art and its contemporary form as Tate Britain. As outlined in Chapter 3 and developed more specifically in Chapter 4, in this sense the

Tate's display of British art can be seen not only as a representation of Britishness, but as a way of constructing Britishness 'itself'. This, I argued in Chapter 3, is central to the writing of the former Tate Director, John Rothenstein. What Rothenstein alludes to is a sense of the Tate's collection actually constituting Britishness and the gallery as a repository of it. This is expressed implicitly through his use of jingoistic language whilst also made more explicit through the weaving together of the historical significance of the Tate's collection with what he considers to be the significant historical personifications of Britishness, such as Pitt the Elder and Elizabeth I. It is through such conceptualisations of the relationship between Britishness and the Tate's display of art that I have also been able to explore what this reveals about the way Britishness is constructed and articulated.

Rothenstein's articulation of Britishness has been examined within the context of the time-spaces in which it is produced. That is to say, through the rhetoric of a wealthy, white, upper middle-class Englishman who is a director of a national art gallery in London from the late 1930s to the mid 1960s, a time of significant imperial decline. Having referred to the importance of evaluating such a discourse of Britishness in terms of who is articulating it and where and when it is being articulated, I then extended the significance of this point in Chapter 5 by looking at the sense of Britishness which informed the construction of St Ives as an 'art colony'. What this demonstrated in terms of the period, in particular the inter-war years, was a broader sense in which this time saw the concept of Britishness being articulated through a sense of rurality and 'wholesomeness' (see for example Matless, 1998). Such discourses sought to counter the sense of 'lost innocence' invoked by the horrors of the First World War and to stabilise the national identity during post-war economic decline and class-based political unrest. The formation of the Ramblers Association, the growth in popularity of country crafts and brown bread (see *ibid.*) are all identified as *emergent signifiers of a Britishness which was also captured in the political rhetoric of the time through such figures as the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin* (see Brace, 1999).

My argument in Chapter 5 is that it is this articulation of Britishness which is central to an understanding of the construction between place and identity in St Ives during this same period. This discourse of national identity through regionalism (Brace, 1999), or the ‘provincialising of Englishness’ as I have referred to it, sees St Ives articulated as a pastoral haven for creativity which is constructed as both particular in terms of its landscapes and its ‘quality of light’ (see for example Val Baker, 1959/2000), but simultaneously characteristic of a universal sense of national identity. The importance of this point, as I have mentioned above, is that it demonstrates the power relations which are at work in defining St Ives at this time. In terms of the examples of Hepworth et al and Alfred Wallis and their respective positions in relation to the working of this power, the effect is that whilst the former are mobile and able to define St Ives within the context of a pastoral nationhood, the later is rendered immutable and localised. As a consequence, what I have been able to demonstrate is the way that this construction of national identity sees both the distinction between Hepworth et al and London as ‘definers’ and Wallis and St Ives as ‘defined’ in the working of power through this discourse of place and identity.

The sense of national identity evoked by notions of a ‘green and pleasant land’ has been an enduring one, and one which, as I have argued, has been perpetuated by those often in positions of power, in both the explicit institutional sense of Rothenstein and Baldwin and the more subtle sense of St Ives migrant artists. However, I have also argued that the late twentieth century saw those able to affect power articulate a sense of Britishness quite different to this. This construction of Britishness was initially examined in Chapter 2 in terms of the cultural politics characterised by the emergence of New Labour and their early affinity with the notion of ‘cool Britannia’ and ‘creative Britain’ (Smith, 1998). This construction of Britishness was revealed, in Chapter 2, as characterised by metro-centrism, anti-elitism and multi-ethnic inclusion. As I went on to describe in Chapter 2, this vision of Britishness was seen by those subscribing to the New Labour rhetoric as being embodied in the establishment of Tate Modern on Britain’s cultural

landscape. And, as I went on to show in Chapter 4, this induced the need to reassess the construction of Britishness at Tate Britain in an attempt to keep its largely historical collection complicit with this emergent sense of Britishness.

The strategies for addressing this issue for Tate Britain were outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, where the role of consultants, Wolf Olins, was assessed in relation to how Tate Britain should be marketed. This evolved into a decision to open Tate Britain before Tate Modern in order to avoid the former being overshadowed by the latter as an 'event'. Similarly, this involved the decision to keep the staging of the Turner Prize for contemporary British art at Tate Britain in order to retain valuable media coverage for the gallery and foster its association with the sense of modern-ness that was fundamental to the emergent discourses of Britishness. As explained more specifically in Chapter 4, Tate Britain also sought to maintain an innovative image through its non-chronological, thematic display of the permanent collection in *Representing Britain 1500-2000*; a move which challenged the conventions of curatorial practice and attracted criticism from the more conservative quarters of the press.

What I have argued by addressing the Tate's strategies is that, as with the sense of coherence in articulating Britishness around the 1930s, this emergent Britishness sees a coalescence around the notion of a 'modern' 'creative' Britain between the Tate and government rhetoric. What I have also developed from this point is the way this has constructed a multicultural Britishness which has been subject to processes of, what I have called, multicultural normalisation.

Examining the processes of multicultural normalisation in this thesis has emerged from the premise, addressed in Chapter 2, that multiculturalism has been geographically constructed through practices of homogenisation and exclusion. This assertion has been arrived at initially through drawing attention to the issue that the multicultural subject has often been directly translated as meaning 'the ethnic other' and, to that end, multiculturalism, rather than being an issue concerning the multiplicity of co-existent

cultures, has been misconstrued as being something about being non-white (see for example Hall, 2000a). The effect of this conceptualisation of multiculturalism has, therefore, not only homogenised 'the other' but excluded non-whites on the basis that it is they who present British culture with a 'problem' to be solved and a 'tolerance' to be developed (Hall, 2000b). Thus, in geographical terms what has emerged is the manifestation of these homogenising and exclusionary practices in temporal and spatial terms, creating what I have termed 'multicultural time-spaces'.

In relation to the 'Creative Britain' conceptualisation of contemporary Britishness these multicultural time-spaces can be traced through their part in defining it as essentially 'urban', primarily London-based, and 'modern'. In a broad sense, this was captured in the '*Multiculturalism Ends*' cartoon reproduced from *The Guardian* in Chapter 7, which conveyed the notion of multicultural space as being bounded within the urban centre. In relation to the Tate, I argued that the renewed interpretation of Britishness characterised by *Representing Britain 1500-2000* was notable for its inclusion of the work of Chris Ofili as the final chronological entry in the accompanying catalogue (Myrone, 2000), thus asserting the 'modern-ness' of multiculturalism's temporal situation in the story of Britishness.

My argument, in terms of the normalisation inherent within such a conceptualisation of multiculturalism, has therefore been to demonstrate how the multicultural subject has been constructed and ordered in relation to prescriptive cultural norms. Furthermore, these norms strive to regulate and contain the resistance of 'the other' so that they enter the construction of this contemporary Britishness, subject to certain conditions and constraints of conformity and political benignity. In Chapter 2, I outlined these conditions and constraints in terms of *three* primary issues.

The *first* of these was the issue of cultural reification. This was identified in relation to the '3 s' definition of 'the cultural other' in terms of 'saris, samosas and steel bands' (see for example Dwyer, 1998; Bonnett, 2000) whereby the multicultural becomes articulated through the material signifiers of culture. This conceptualisation was shown to

render the subject as both reduced to a definition through objects and homogenised into undifferentiated groups. What this also leads to, I have argued, is a preoccupation with an essentialised cultural 'authenticity'. This was developed in Chapter 6 through the exhibition, *Africa Explores*, held at Tate Liverpool in 1994. This exhibition was used both to look at the role of African art in addressing the issues of the Tate's commitment to overcoming criticisms of its links to Henry Tate's sugar wealth and its associated exploitative practices in the West Indies, and to explore more broadly the way African art has been constructed in its display within Western galleries. The principle issue that this generated was that African art has continued, despite strategies of avoidance at Tate Liverpool and elsewhere, to be subject to a Western gaze which homogenises and exoticises African art and artists.

The *second* main aspect of multicultural normalisation addressed was the politics of whiteness and how the critical debates dedicated to this area of cultural politics have occupied an ambiguous position in terms of addressing the obvious inequalities which have seen the racialisation of difference between the white 'human ordinary' and 'the other'. This was related to the Tate conference, *Picturing Whiteness*, which, as the conference's organiser, Lorna Healy, recalled to me, captured the tensions and discrepancies which have emerged from debating 'whiteness'. The principal issue, I have argued, is that such debates have in some instances tended to serve only to reinforce discourses of racial categorisation. The tensions captured in these debates were then developed in Chapter 5, where I showed the ambiguity of how identities have become constructed in terms of their inclusion and exclusion from 'being white', and how this has been temporally and spatially contingent. Once again, this issue was explored through the example of the power relations inherent in the geographies of St Ives and the discourses of primitivism established by the largely middle-class migrant artists who constructed Alfred Wallis and the Cornish inhabitants they encountered in terms of their localised 'otherness' from the white, metro-centric norm.

The *third*, and most extensively discussed, aspect of multicultural normalisation was the issue of re-addressing Britishness in terms of its multicultural histories. What I have argued is that through the processes of normalising the multicultural subject in terms of their inherent 'modern-ness', multiculturalism has become constructed as a kind of 'late addition to' Britishness; an aspect which has been 'added to' a stable, pre-existent national identity. What the recovering of multicultural Britishness has achieved for my argument is the effective demonstration of how this understanding can and should be challenged by historically tracing multicultural Britishness. This issue was shown through the example of Turner's *The Slavership* in Chapter 2. By drawing on arguments made by Paul Gilroy in relation to this painting (Gilroy, 1990), I considered its place in the opening exhibition at Tate Britain: *Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites*, and argued that the racial politics which it evoked can be read as integral to the historical stories of Britishness at Tate Britain.

I developed this claim in Chapter 4 by indicating another way of disrupting the historical narratives of Britishness. Here, drawing on the examples of the Himid and Turner paintings in the 'Artists Abroad' room, I emphasised the way that they can both be read in terms of their portrayal of 'journeys' and that despite their differences in relation to a notion of Britishness, they both represent a similar story of departure from the bounded nation-state. As a consequence of this interpretation, the fundamental difference between the two works is centred on the relationship between racial politics and nationhood. Through this issue I also established the importance of thinking in terms of the 'routes' of Britishness in a historically multicultural sense. This was shown through an examination of the constitutive time-spaces of Liverpool and Tate Liverpool in Chapter 6. In terms of historical 'routes', I showed how Liverpool is constituted by its place in an Atlantic network which disrupts the idea of a post-war black Britishness by tracing the movements and settlements of a black population in the city over a period of approximately three hundred years. It is in Chapter 7 however, where the 'threads' are 'pulled together' in a

comprehensive analysis of multicultural normalisation with the example of the Tate's emergent relationship with the work of Yinka Shonibare capturing both the circumstances and outcomes of processes of normalisation, as well as the ways that they are being effectively countered by the historical references in Shonibare's work.

It is by examining the ways in which the multicultural subject and multiculturalism *per se* have been normalised that I have, through the example of the Tate Gallery, addressed what I consider to be a set of urgent and fundamental issues of cultural politics; issues which I will now spell out by way of concluding.

### *Summary of Principal Contributions*

In bringing together an analysis of the Tate Gallery, a critique of the constructions of Britishness and an argument for the identifiable processes of multicultural normalisation, I have contributed to three broad issues which, I wish to assert, are fundamental to moving forward the debates I have engaged with. In effect, these three issues represent the distillation of the arguments I have made throughout and characterise particular areas which deserve further critical enquiry, but which can only be pursued beyond the confines of this thesis.

The first of these key issues concerns the purpose and worthiness of formulating the notion of multicultural normalisation. What I have argued is that an understanding of the processes of multicultural normalisation are central to an understanding of the way identities are subject to power. And that, furthermore, the effect of this manipulation of power is the perpetuation of social, cultural, political and economic inequalities in an evasive and covert manner which makes it all the more effective for this mode of operation. In this sense, what multicultural normalisation captures so effectively, to paraphrase Foucault, is that silence is as performative as speech (Foucault, 1972). The effectiveness of normalisation lies precisely in its ability to construct, as normal, the

concessions which are imposed upon 'the other' if they are able to speak of themselves as British, or, indeed, if they wish to defer identification as such. The 'hidden' power relations that impose normalisation must undergo further critical attention if they are to be revealed for what they are; the perpetuation of a brand of cultural imperialism which refuses the establishment of equality in difference.

One of the effective traits of normalisation, as I have demonstrated, is its rendering of the multicultural subject as defined by a reified set of cultural practices and signifiers which they are expected always to 'speak for'. The second fundamental issue I wish to assert is that for multiculturalism to re-emerge as a productive force in addressing the inequalities in difference it requires an understanding of precisely what culture is as well as a critical re-evaluation of how it constitutes our identities. This, I would argue, could be effectively undertaken by starting from the premise that cultural activity is not a reflection of, an expression of or a denigration of national identities; *it is national identities* (Hewison, 1997). In this sense, Britishness is not something reflected back at us when we visit Tate Britain, but something we live and demonstrate in all the nuances of everyday interaction in the world. What the Tate Gallery performs when it constructs narratives of the relationship between place and identity is a fixing of meanings in that particular place and at that particular time. What I have argued for is an understanding of *place as a process* which is always unfolding, always ongoing and always doing so *in relation to other places and spaces* (see for example Massey, 1993a; 1995). If the multicultural subject is not to be normalised this entails an assertion of the place and the identities that are formed in relation to it as non-essentialised and understood by their 'routes' of construction.

It is these 'routes' which are also central to the articulation of my third and final assertion; namely reaffirming the importance of recovering the multicultural histories of Britishness. The critical attention to the way Britishness is historically constituted through a multiplicity of cultures and multiple spaces is fundamental to understanding the

formations of contemporary multicultural Britain. If a new and more productive critical multiculturalism is to emerge then this must encompass the realisation that Britishness has always represented a series of negotiations between cultures and places, and that the non-white 'other' is not 'added to' a pre-existing Britishness but is an integral part of the way Britishness has always been defined. What the murder of Stephen Lawrence has demonstrated, perhaps more effectively than anything, is that for some, and perhaps even many, this is a reality yet to be realised.

### *Changing Cultural Politics at the Tate Gallery*

The ways the Tate Gallery has engaged with issues of Britishness and cultural diversity has, as I have demonstrated, revealed a complexity of relationships between past and present; both in terms of its own histories and geographies, and those of the broader discourses of Britishness. But, in another sense, there is also a more institutionally centred historical consideration to be made about the way the gallery has developed over a recent period that has seen a substantial amount of structural and curatorial change. This period, more specifically, can be defined as being from 1988 to the present. What has occurred during this time is not only the extension of the gallery's structure from one London gallery to four galleries situated in three distinct regions of the country, but the emergence of a set of practices which are associated with this structural change. These practices can, I would argue in the case of Liverpool and St Ives, be described in terms of the Tate's need to assert its position within a regional, as well as, metropolitan context. Furthermore, in the case of Tate Modern, the gallery has sought to address the challenges faced by establishing a major new gallery of Modern international art in close proximity to one conveying a story of British art over the last 500 years. What I have focused on throughout this thesis is the way these changing practices have attempted to address the relationship between the displaying of art in the gallery space and issues of cultural identity. What I now want to

evaluate, finally, is the extent to which this might have been achieved and what might still be required in more effectively addressing the cultural politics of this relationship.

The changes to the galleries structure and practices alluded to above have occurred over a period of approximately fifteen years to date, but there have also been significant changes to both of these aspects during the period in which this thesis has been written and researched. Perhaps the most notable of these, in the structural sense, has been the opening of both Tate Britain and Tate Modern, but, I would argue, this period has also seen significant changes in relation to practice. One such example of these changing practices has been the move towards purchasing and incorporating the work of artists from previously under-represented socio-cultural 'groups'; namely the works of female and/or non-white artists. This has, I would argue, been carried out with varying degrees of success. The incorporation of Mona Hatoum's work in the opening display at Tate Britain, for example, suggested, as I have argued in chapter 7, a decidedly unsubtle declaration of intent to include the works of non-white women. Similarly, the purchase of Chris Ofili's *No Woman, No Cry* stood out as an uncharacteristic work of political engagement within the artists body of work which served, again rather unsubtly, to declare an agenda of confronting previous failings on the part of the gallery with regard to the display of works of non-white artists.

It is not, I believe, coincidental, that both of these examples emanated from the then newly opened Tate Britain. As I have pointed out, the gallery was at pains to maintain the profile of the gallery in the face of the imminent opening of Tate Modern and an engagement with, what might be described as, issues of difference, within British art was seen as a necessary move in reflecting a collection which moved beyond the confines of its own heritage and offered a more contemporary view of British art. But, therein lies the tension created by this move. Aside from the arguably tokenistic way in which this was carried out, the unsubtlety of its execution was compounded by the implication being made that the art of 'the other' equated to 'the new' in relation to Britishness. The irony, as I have

also pointed out, was that simultaneously the gallery was staging an exhibition which included as one of its focal points, Turner's *The Slavership*; a nineteenth-century painting which has been used, precisely, to illustrate the integral role of the black subject in the construction of British national identity (Gilroy, 1990).

It is the addressing of what I have termed the 'multicultural histories' of Britishness which I believe have been significantly underdeveloped within the Tate Gallery and this has been a particularly poignant way in which, I believe, the gallery has perpetuated processes of multicultural normalisation. However, the work of one artist in particular has, I have argued, been instrumental in addressing the normalisation of the black subject outside of the conceptualisation of historical Britishness: the work of Yinka Shonibare.

Shonibare is a particularly significant artist within this thesis in that I became aware of his work at a very early stage of the research. Having been engaged by the way his work directly critiques and questions issues of ethnic authenticity and the complexities of the relationship between nation, identity and history my only frustration was that his work was not represented at the Tate Gallery. This, however, was to change during the research process as his work was included in the *Heaven* exhibition at Tate Liverpool at the end of 1999 and then *Intelligence* at Tate Britain in 2000. Perhaps the most significant inclusion of his work, however, came at the very end of the research process in the form of his dressing of the statue of Britannia over the entrance to Tate Britain in October 2001 to mark the opening of the gallery's extension, the image of which I have included here as a frontispiece (see page ii).

As I have shown in chapter 7, the Tate's espousal of Shonibare's work incorporates explanation of his cultural political engagement, and what I believe was particularly significant about his dressing of Britannia was the way it unequivocally signifies the Tate's self-reflexivity in relation to its own history as well as that of the nation. What I believe this achieves for the first time at the Tate Gallery is the incorporation of the work of a non-white artist which actively seeks to question the way Britishness is historically constructed

in terms of a fixed and stable ethnic identity. Furthermore, as I have elaborated in chapter 3, particularly through John Rothenstein's accounts, the Tate has historically defined itself as an institution as closely allied to fixed and stable notions of nationhood. Even within the contemporary examples such as Chris Ofili's work, it is included as a kind of non-white addendum to the story of British art. The dressing of Britannia achieved a critiquing of the gallery itself in terms of its own histories; the way it has told the stories of British art, the way it has positioned itself as an institution in relation to such notions of Britishness and, perhaps, a critical reflection on the Victorian, imperial grandiosity of Henry Tate's building itself.

The Tate's engagement with its Victorian origins and the wealth generated by its founder are arguably given a more critical edge here than in the earlier instance mentioned in chapter 5 regarding the *Africa Explores* exhibition at Tate Liverpool. It was evident during my interviews with both Toby Jackson and Judith Nesbitt that, on reflection, this exhibition and the broader concerns Tate Liverpool had with addressing the cultural politics of its founders wealth generation and the regeneration project it found itself immersed in, were not as effective as they might have been. Whilst Nesbitt alluded to the insufficiencies of the gallery's narration of African art and providing a localised context, Jackson conceded to some of the criticisms made at the time regarding the gallery's 'worthiness' and preoccupations with curatorial autonomy. Whilst such criticisms are not perhaps as prevalent at Tate Liverpool now I believe this is due more to its avoidance of such issues of cultural politics rather than its effective confrontation of them. Over recent years Tate Liverpool has expanded its gallery space further and significantly improved its profile of 'big name' artists exhibited. To this extent it has perhaps realised the potential of the vision of a 'flagship' project within the MDC's regeneration plans. The benefits of extra revenue generated for the local economy have undoubtedly been a strength in allaying opposition to it, but if any solutions have been found they have more basis in successful commercialism than in the confrontation of the gallery's cultural political 'baggage'.

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Tate St Ives has continued to depend on the presence of the work of artists from the largely migrant populations of the early to mid-twentieth century. St Ives remains a highly popular tourist destination and, once again, the issue of the gallery's role in wealth generation for the local economy has been significant in its success. However, the gallery has continued to pursue a more ambitious side to its displays by inviting resident artists such as Lubiana Himid to reflect on themes of migration and journeying within a wider context than merely the movement of the white and largely middle-class artists of the dominant canon. The active reinterpretation of what St Ives are might mean, through projects such as artist's residencies, and the ambition to do this through a broader engagement with movements and journeys which open up a context for the politics of gender and race, has I believe, opened up possibilities for moving towards a more spatially diverse interpretation of St Ives art.

What Tate St Ives captures particularly effectively through its status within a small but busy tourist destination is the existence of a tension which is, I would argue, a central concern for the Tate Gallery as a whole, namely, the tension between commercial interests and the critical evaluation of the way art is purchased, displayed and curated. For Tate St Ives, there are the consideration of a commercial market which is upheld by the likes of dominant artists such as Hepworth, Nicholson, Terry Frost, Patrick Heron and Peter Lanyon. The presence of the works of these artists is significant in attracting the visitor numbers that it does and though a more critical evaluation of St Ives art and a broadening of its artistic remit is, to some extent, being pursued, as long as Tate St Ives represents mainstream dominance amongst the galleries of the town, it is unlikely that commercial interests will be compromised. As I have stated this was, and indeed still is, a significant issue for Tate Liverpool's success as a gallery. Similarly, Tate Modern is dependent on the likes of Picasso, Matisse and Monet, just as Tate Britain is dependent on Turner, Hogarth and Gainsborough, if it is to retain or improve visitor numbers.

In chapter 2 this issue was poignantly conveyed by the art critic, Matt Colling's claim that the Tate gallery is offering a product like 'cars or Cornflakes' which affected its ability to engage with critical thinking about its practices (see page 51). This, I would agree, is a significant obstacle in achieving a more nuanced understanding of the politics of culture which demand a critical evaluation of multicultural histories, notions of Britishness and the dynamic relationships that exist between place and identities. The dilemma of defining a collection in terms of its Britishness whilst trying to explore more productive ways of understanding this concept have proved to be a problem for Tate Britain and have coincided with declining visitor numbers. Yet the problems at Tate Britain are not due to abandoning the canon of British art, they are, I would argue, due to the incoherence of its project and its inability to address both its commercial potential and the potential of a stimulating exploration of the cultural politics of Britishness.

Over the course of its history, the Tate Gallery has undoubtedly become a more reflexive, more critical and less elitist institution and recent years have seen a greater diversity of artists represented beyond the conventions of the white, and invariably middle or upper-middle class, male. Similarly, although to a lesser extent, senior gallery staff are more diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity, though the latter to a lesser extent. But, as is a familiar issue within such debates, quotas and tokenism are an insufficient solution. Whilst, I believe, The Tate Gallery displays an awareness of this, I would also argue that in substantive terms the institution is still situated in a culture which continues to normalise high art as largely white, middle-class and male. This is demonstrated by the ways the 'other' can be seen as normalised through the particular constructions of 'the multicultural' that I have outlined in this thesis. As I have also argued, this is often the outcome of institutional decision making which addresses issues of cultural politics within the context of rhetoric rather than political engagement. The current engagements with issues of nation, identity and the multiple cultures which work through them remain inadequately

critical if the Tate Gallery is to realise the potential of a more productive, stimulating and rewarding exploration of the cultural politics it has only just begun to discover.

### RESEARCH PRACTICE

#### *Researching the Tate Gallery*

The Tate Gallery has necessitated a multifaceted approach to research practices. This is a result of dealing with a subject which links several areas of research and does not lend itself to any one research methodology. In this sense I have written a thesis which has been generated from a combination of methodological influences and a variety of forms of evidence.

In some respects this is a thesis which finds common ground with the work of those in the areas of museology or museum studies. Just as these disciplines concern themselves with the museum or gallery itself as subject matter, I have considered the Tate in terms of the way it presents its works in the context of curatorial conventions and its adherence to, or transgression of, such conventions. As well as the gallery spaces of the Tate and the examination of their historical development, the works of art contained within them have also formed an important part of my overall analysis. In this sense I have drawn on areas associated with art history by contextualising the works within artistic genres and exploring the broader significance of these genres, such as in the case of early to mid twentieth-century Primitivism. Furthermore, this discussion of the works themselves has been informed by some of the issues raised by the emergent interests in 'the visual' within cultural geography. For Gillian Rose, the effective study of visual culture should concern itself not only with the 'reading' of visual texts, but also take issue with the agency of visual images and the way they are looked at in historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific ways (Rose, 2001). What has also been significant to this thesis is the role of cultural studies, a discipline which is in effect an integral part of cultural geography and

central to the issues I have raised regarding the Tate Gallery, definitions of culture and culture's marketability. In this respect I am thinking first and foremost of the contribution to this thesis which has been made by drawing on the works of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, both of whom allow an exploration of the meanings of culture which have been key to enabling a comprehensive case for the importance of the multicultural in both a contemporary and historical sense.

As well as the Tate allowing me to draw on a breadth of academic areas to inform a more comprehensive account within the thesis, this breadth has also been reflected in the range of evidence used and the methods drawn upon. I will outline in more detail below what this range of evidence and methods has contributed to the thesis. Here I just want to establish at the outset what this variety of evidence and methods has encompassed; namely, this has included archival material, interviews, attending conferences and analysis of journalistic material both in terms of that produced directly in relation to art and the national and local press more generally. Additionally, I have examined images both in the context of the works of art on display at the Tate and the artists that have produced them and the production of images by the Tate in terms of promotional posters. The process of analysis when examining these images has itself drawn on a multiple methodology. I have not subscribed to a particular methodology, but instead concentrated on combining ways of looking at and interpreting the role of images that bears influences from discourse analysis, content analysis and also, to an extent, semiology. Once again, I will outline the implication for these approaches in more detail below.

Researching the Tate Gallery has proved productive in its ability to exemplify the arguments I have wanted to address in relation to the construction of national identities, multiculturalism and the identifiable processes of normalisation. However, researching the Tate Gallery has also provided several challenges to my research in both practical and epistemological senses.

In drawing on a broad range of disciplines, forms of evidence and methods I have attempted to maintain a coherency with the theoretical influences of the thesis. In this sense the 'ways of doing' research have reflected the 'ways of thinking' about the subject matter. The combination of theoretical and conceptual influences which I have worked together here are, I would argue, only at their most convincing when they are reflected by a similarly eclectic combination of the ways in which they can be shown. This eclecticism has been designed to enable the argument I have made and the evidence I have drawn upon to continually support each other. In this sense I have drawn together aspects which, rather than aim to complicate the articulation of my arguments, aim to clarify them. My engagement with the notion of non-linear histories, for example, has, in order to justify and clarify its development, been directly reflected in the way I have adopted a non-linear way of working with evidence and methods. They have been combined in ways which demonstrate their contingency as productive tools of research. What this variety of methods and evidence has therefore demonstrated is that not only the histories of the Tate, but the way they are researched are more productive when examined in terms of multiple 'ways of seeing'.

An example of how this negotiation between argument and evidence has taken place comes from the course of events which led to a great deal of the material in Chapter 5 regarding Alfred Wallis. Early on in the research process, I wanted to work with the arguments made by Paul Gilroy both in terms of circulation, mobility and identity based on work in *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy, 1993) and the importance of multicultural histories evoked by Turner's *The Slaveship* in his article *The Art of Darkness* (Gilroy, 1990). During one of my interviews with the Tate's Director of National Programmes, Sandy Nairne, he mentioned Alfred Wallis' painting *The Wreck of the Alba* and the story of its acquisition and display at Tate St Ives. This then opened up a new line of research for me in relation to

the Atlantic stories in terms of extending their use beyond thinking about the cultural geographies of black identities into their use in conveying the way Wallis could be traced as having ‘hidden’ Atlantic geographies and how his categorisation as a ‘primitive’ artist produced similar political issues to Gilroy’s. In this sense, new evidence served to shape my argument and take my analysis of Tate St Ives in unexpected directions. What this also meant was that I integrated additional methodological influences through, for example, adding the consideration of the discourses of early twentieth-century Primitivism to my analysis of the contemporary Tate St Ives.

Although content analysis, discourse analysis and semiology have not been formally deployed, they have been drawn upon throughout the thesis and often used alongside each other. My analysis of *The Slaveship*, for example, acknowledged the importance of such a combination. In terms of content, the depiction of the act of jettison and the drowning slaves alongside the painting of the sea were essential elements of reading the meanings contained within the painting. As discussed in Chapter 3, this tension of social comment and painterly technique were central to Ruskin’s troubled relationship with the work and it is the content of the various elements of this story on the canvas which has provided an initial point of engagement. In extending this, I have been drawn into issues related to the discourses prevalent at the time of the painting’s execution in terms of the slave trade and its abolition. By extension, this has incorporated issues not only of the importance of the site of its production but also of the way it was consumed by British audiences and, as a result of this, the reasons behind its move to America and the context of its return to Britain at the opening of Tate Britain. In terms of the painting’s semiotic analysis, this was perhaps most effectively drawn on through a discussion of the use of *The Slaveship* in the Tate’s poster which advertised the opening exhibition. Here the importance of the poster’s effectiveness was examined in terms of its significations of Britishness and modern-ness and the tensions played out in relation to Tate Britain’s remit and the compatibility of these concepts.

With regards to the forms of evidence drawn on, the archive has been central to my collation of a broad range of materials, both at the Tate Gallery and at the St Ives public library archive. It is the breadth of provision that has been one of its principle strengths as a research resource. Despite mentioning some of the limits of the Tate Archive, it has provided me not only with information such as the findings of the roundtable discussions held to discuss the splitting of the London galleries, but also with press cuttings from the local and national press in relation to exhibition reviews at Tate Millbank, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives. In addition to the archive at the Tate, I have used the resources of the staff at both the Tate Gallery Library and the Turner Study Room. Although I have not used these resources in person, their significance, alongside the archive in gathering evidence, has been through the ability to discuss materials with staff by telephone and facilitate the supply of relevant photocopied documents to me. To this end, they have acted as extensions of the archive facility and broadened the use of the Tate's stock of printed reference material within my research. The archive at the St Ives public library has also been productive in terms of its breadth of material, providing information not only on St Ives and St Ives artists, but also information on exhibitions of St Ives art elsewhere, including the Tate Millbank, and copies of letters which I have used in relation to my discussion of Alfred Wallis and his work.

What the Tate also provided was the staging of relevant conferences and seminars such as *Britain and Modernity*, *Picturing Whiteness* and Yinka Shonibare's *Elsewhere*. Although I have also attended relevant events not directly connected to the Tate Gallery, such as a conference entitled *Farewell Britannia* held at the London School of Economics in June, 2000<sup>1</sup>, what I have been able to draw out by using these particular examples is the relationship the Tate has constructed between gallery space and lecture theatre and the selectivity of the issues open for discussion under the auspices of the Tate Gallery. In this

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<sup>1</sup> This one-day conference on the future of Britishness featured Tom Nairn, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and Darcus Howe amongst its speakers, the work of the former two also having been used in this thesis.

sense, the talks have been of use both in terms of the discussion and the information obtained from them and in terms of considering their role within the construction of certain discourses at the Tate.

*The interview work conducted alongside these forms of evidence has been useful, particularly in relation to the fact that I was unable to obtain current information from the archive in light of the five year delay imposed upon its availability. Sandy Nairne, who I interviewed on two occasions during this research, was a central figure in his role as Director of National Programmes. In my examination of the spatial and cultural dynamics of the relationship between the various Tate Galleries and the importance of national identity construction and regionalism, the significance of this interview material cannot be underestimated in that his particular role is defined as much by what goes on between the galleries as within them. Similarly, I was fortunate in gaining access to key figures within the issues I set out to address. Martin Myrone's role as author of *Representing Britain 1500-2000* (Myrone, 2000) helped me in this sense by allowing me to speak to someone directly responsible for the Tate's articulation of Britishness at Tate Britain. The same is also true of Robert Hewison, curator of the gallery's opening exhibition as well as author of *Culture and Consensus* (Hewison, 1997), which has proved a useful text for contemporary and historical information on culture and Britishness.*

The fruitfulness of my eclectic approach has also been reflected in the way that the Tate itself takes on eclectic forms of influence. In terms of further evidence collection, the magazine *Tate* has been a productive source of information, once again articulating the Tate as an institution acting 'beyond the Tate'. This has been one among several journals and newspapers used either for their reviews of Tate exhibitions, broader debates about the Tate, often in relation to the London Galleries or in terms of my more specific interests around the discussion of the Tate in relation to issues of race and ethnicity.

The final and perhaps most significant form of evidence has been the study of visual images themselves, predominantly in the form of paintings. While there have been

many studies undertaken which have engaged more thoroughly with issues of representation within paintings (see for example (Daniels, 1993), I have drawn on this approach only in part. The usefulness of examining paintings when discussing an art gallery are perhaps self evident, but what this examination produced as part of a broader range of evidence is a context through which the agency of these images can be understood. In working through the multiple forms of evidence, it is the relevance of the images which is always returned to. Simultaneously, it is by evaluating these images as part of a network of other texts that they can be traced outwards from the objects themselves and read as having a broader and more productive meaning beyond the walls of the Tate Gallery.

### *Doing the Research: Challenges and Reflections*

The exemplification of the Tate as being both a productive and challenging subject of research is captured in the time frame over which the research was carried out. The initial period of research from 1998 onwards coincided with the extensive arrangements being put in place for the opening of both Tate Britain and then Tate Modern in 2000. Whilst this made this period an exciting and productive time to be researching the Tate, on a practical basis it undoubtedly affected the accessibility I was allowed to both relevant interviewees and archive material. In terms of the former, several prospective interviewees were not in a position to give up their time during this particularly busy period. In terms of the latter, there is a five year delay on all internally generated policy based documents reaching the archive and in this sense a problem was presented by the fact that I was unable draw on all but the earliest of the material relevant to this fascinating period of transition in the Tate's history. Furthermore, it is significant to register a point regarding the form of the material within the archive. Much of the work carried out at the Tate Gallery archive draws on its resources for researching works of particular artists exhibited

at the gallery. Whilst this was of some interest to the research carried out, the archive provides significantly less material on the Tate Gallery, its histories and its role as an institution.

The issues confronted by studying the Tate Gallery during this particular period also presented another challenge to my research practices, which was that the Tate also constituted something of a 'moving target'. It changed and developed in many respects and at a considerable pace during this time. This was exemplified through several incidences: the swapping of opening dates for Tate Modern and Tate Britain after advice from the Tate's consultants Wolf Olins that opening Tate Modern first would dramatically affect the impact of Tate Britain's opening, the changing of the gallery's names and the changes to the format of the display of the permanent collection at Tate Britain from *Representing Britain 1500-2000* to *Different Britains 2001-1500*. This last example presented a considerable degree of ongoing change. The change from a strictly thematic display in the former presentation to one built around chronological groupings in the latter was one which took place, as the titles suggest, within the space of a year. The title of the latter has since been changed to cover the period 2002-1500, the original title having lasted only a number of weeks. Such changes to the context of the displays and the rate at which they have sometimes taken place offer an obvious challenge to the researcher who is attempting to arrive at some form of settlement within the analysis. I have therefore had to exercise judgement in terms of which of these changes and transitions to pursue and which to omit by realising the practicable limits of this thesis.

In an epistemological sense, researching the Tate has proved both stimulating and challenging in terms of the knowledge base of the gallery staff. This issue manifested itself specifically in relation to the interview work I have undertaken. In addition to the concessions made due to the constraints of time on various interviewees, I have also been made aware of the academic grounding of the interviewees. Unlike their predecessors the current senior staff of the Tate Gallery have come from backgrounds in a period of art and

art history which has seen the incorporation of structural, post-structural and post-modern critical theory. As a consequence, I believe an informed awareness of critical debates has influenced the way in which interviewees have chosen to respond to issues which inform some of my theoretical arguments. A principle example of this is in the use or, more significantly, the non-use of the term multiculturalism.

As indicated (see for example Chapter 7), the term multiculturalism has accumulated a degree of problematic political ‘baggage’ through the debates which surrounded it from the 1980s and 1990s through to the present. The reticence to use this term as a consequence of its reputation is apparent among the staff at the Tate Gallery in that it is, to state the case plainly, never used. In so far as examining an institution such as the Tate Gallery in relation to issues of multiculturalism in circumstances where the institution does not use the term might seem problematic, it has proved to be a stimulating as well as a challenging scenario. In effect, it has necessitated a more nuanced examination of where and when multicultural issues come to bear on the Tate (where the term itself would have provided more direct points of reference). The benefit of having to adopt a more thorough appraisal of the politics of cultural identity in relation to the Tate is that it is precisely the more implicit and sub-textual articulation of multiculturalism that I have been engaging with in the form of multicultural normalisation.

A final issue which has been raised at the Tate, and in contemporary British cultural-political discourse on a broader level, is the way Britishness has been articulated, particularly in terms of its use in relation to that of Englishness. The most apparent tension around the use of these two terms and the issue of their apparent inter-changibility is exemplified in the Tate’s adherence to referring to Britain and Britishness despite the fact that all four of its galleries are situated within England and incorporate very little art or discussion of art in relation to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. With the exception of the discussion of ‘provincialising the English’ within Chapter 5, I have referred very little to England and Englishness. In the example where it has been referred to, this has been

done in the context of debates of national identity of the time in question; namely, around the inter-war years. Whilst England and Englishness tend to characterise this period (see for example Matless, 1998), the contemporary debates around national identity have shifted more towards conceptions of Britishness. This is captured within the titles and rhetoric I have referred to: Tate Britain, *Representing Britain 1500-2000*, *Different Britain's 2001-1500*, and more broadly: *Creative Britain* (Smith 1998), 'Cool Britannia' and *Britain<sup>TM</sup>* (Leonard, 2000). It has been argued that Britishness is often referred to when what is actually being talked about is England and Englishness (see for example Nairn, 2000). For the purposes of this thesis, however, my central concern has been to reflect the use of either term in the context of prevailing rhetoric, rather than to explore their socio-linguistic meanings. As a consequence this has not been an issue I have examined in depth and once again provides an example of an area of study which, though of interest, remains beyond the scope of this thesis.

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