

BLACK PHOENIX

THIRD WORLD PERSPECTIVE ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE No 2 SUMMER 1978 60p

"I think it means that people are really afraid that this might be swamped by people of different culture.... British character has done a lot for democracy for the world, but if there is a fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to rather host to those in.... We are British with a character- Every country take a different way and But to her

BLACK PHOENIX

Third World Perspective on Contemporary Art & Culture

No 2

SUMMER 1978

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We apologise to our subscribers and readers for the delay in publication of this issue. The difficulties are enormous, but we shall endeavour to continue this task. And although under the present difficult circumstances we may not be able to publish the magazine quarterly according to our original schedule, we shall fulfil our commitment to our subscribers and provide them with full four issues.

However, we cannot fulfil this task without your help. Send your contributions, subscriptions and donations, as soon as possible. If you wish to discuss with us about your contribution or if you want to help us in any way, do not hesitate to contact us.

The opinions expressed in the journal are those of the contributors and we do not necessarily agree with all of them.

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Rasheed Araeen was born in Karachi (Pakistan) but since 1964 has lived in London. Although a civil-engineering graduate, he has devoted himself to art and cultural activity. His main concern has been with the dialectical aspect of transformational processes. His first 'sculpture' comprised of *burning of bicycle tyres* in Karachi in 1959. Since early 1970s he has been involved in activities, both artistic & political, which are related to the predicament of the Third World. In 1975-6 he wrote his major work, *Preliminary Notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO*, which questions the pretended universality of Western Art and its international role in the world today, published in our issue No 1.

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We are being given a guarantee of £250 by the Arts Council of Great Britain in respect of the cost of illustrations in this issue.

SWAMPED?

AN ART STATEMENT/EDITORIAL

SWAMPED! SWAMPED! SWAMPED! IS THE OUTCRY. IT IS THE LIE. IT IS THE TRUTH.

"SWAMPED" is the word that reveals the racist face of the British ruling class, behind the facade of humanity a vicious being. SWAMPED is the word that defines today the predicament of the world. SWAMPED IS THE WORLD; swamped by European values, by consumer culture and technology, by guns, tanks and bombers, by poisonous gases and toxic matters, . . . and above all by an ideology that denies humanity to all peoples.

SWAMPED! Or perhaps the word is 'swarmed'. That brings to mind LOCUSTS: the Earth being swarmed by white locusts. The metaphor is not an exaggeration when one looks at the World, the world since the Renaissance. Its destruction and plundering under 'civilisation'.

TEN THOUSAND MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN DIE OF STARVATION EVERY DAY.

How could one forget what happened to the American continents, to Australasia, and the innumerable places where the White Man had set his foot? What happened to the Red Man? What happened to so many Amerindian tribes? Where are the Incas, the Mayas . . . ? Where are the Tasmanians? — the "British character" has done the job well!

Everywhere they were welcomed — the Pilgrim Fathers, the conquistadors, the explorers and adventurers, and even the convicted criminals, . . . What did the indigenous peoples get in return for their hospitality and innocence? Murders, genocide, rape and plundering. Those who managed to survive had their means of living taken away, their culture destroyed, their artefacts plundered and stolen.

And now those that "ruled the sea" are frightened of 2 million "numbers" at the bottom of the heap. Could anybody in one's right mind believe that Britain could be swamped, swamped by a few million "people of a different culture" in the next decade? Even if there are going to be 5 million blacks in Britain at the end of this century, so what? Why should anybody be frightened?

There are about 500 million Europeans outside Europe. Should people be afraid of them? And how about the European culture which is alien to the rest of the world?

Our presence in this country is the direct result of what happened, and is happening, to our countries due to the greed and violence perpetrated by the West; the greed and violence that have now been universalised through the imposition of bourgeois ideology in the world. Moreover, YOU asked us to come. Why shouldn't our women (or men) and children join us now?

We came here when you were passing through a difficult period. You needed us to run the factories, the hospitals, the transport system, . . . We worked hard, 12 to 16 hours a day, and helped rebuild the economy which was shattered by the War. But what did we get in return? Racist myths and propaganda about our inferiority! You have the nerve now to tell us that we should go home. Is it your "character" to threaten the people, who had helped you in difficult times, with "rivers of blood"?

FEAR! FEAR! FEAR! "FEAR EATS THE SOUL" — Fassbinder, and destroys the body!

About 1½ million unemployed and more to go. THAT IS THE REAL FEAR. The bourgeois ruling class, which is bankrupt and can no longer deliver the goods, must instead CREATE a fear that has nothing to do with reality, a fear of the unknown. It must utter blatant lies to cover its own misdeeds and incompetence. It must therefore perpetuate chauvinism and racial superiority among the white population to maintain its power.

RACISM HAS NO BIOLOGICAL ROOTS. IT IS A SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORY.

The black community in Britain today is under a constant threat of violence. THAT IS A REAL FEAR. The fear of being attacked in the street by racist thugs, of being maimed or killed. Two men killed in a month, and we should not worry. "You are being unnecessarily paranoid", we are often told, "our police is there to help you."

Wednesday 5 July 1978: a gang of some 30 white youths ambushes a group of Bangladeshis who have just come out of the factory after finishing their day's work, in East London. 13 of the Bangladeshis are injured. "I feel like a hunted animal", said Mirjan Ali. "I don't know what will happen tomorrow or after. There doesn't seem to be any reason, but they keep attacking us and shouting abusive language." (Reported by Sasthi Brata in the Observer, 9 July 1978.) A week has passed and as usual no arrests. (The black community has no choice but to get up and fight back; which is already happening.)

EUROCENTRICITY = HIERARCHY = DOMINATION = RACISM

The present-day racism is one of the manifestation of the domination of bourgeois ideology: the black man's predicament is not to be equated with that of the white man. Look at Rhodesia! Everybody is worried about the 'plight' of white man. Every time a white man is killed there is a big outcry in the British press.

Now look at these images from TV, of Rhodesia.

One image: a row of beautiful coffins with flowers waiting for the church service and funeral. The white man has died defending "Christian civilisation"!

Another image: soldiers piling up dead black bodies (look almost mutilated) or throwing them in a ditch, as if they were dead animals. NO COFFINS, NO FLOWERS, NO FUNERAL. . . THE BLACK MAN IS NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE A SOUL!

More than 600 men, women and children are slaughtered by the South African troops in a raid (in which tanks and fighter bombers, supplied of course by the Western powers, are used) on an Angolan village on 4th May 1978: NOT A SINGLE HEADLINE IN THE BRITISH PRESS.

HOW COULD ONE SHUT ONE'S EYES & MIND TO SUCH BRUTALITY AND BE AN 'ARTIST'? HOW COULD ONE THINK ONLY OF 'ART' WHEN ONE IS SURROUNDED BY SO MUCH RACIST FILTH AND VIOLENCE?

WHAT CREDIBILITY THE WESTERN BOURGEOISIE (perhaps the adjective 'Western' here is unnecessary) HAS WHEN IT TALKS ABOUT ALL HUMANITY (REMEMBER VIETNAM!)? HOW COULD IT TALK ABOUT 'HUMAN RIGHTS'? IMPERIALISM HAS NO LIMITS IN ITS PRACTICE OF MORAL DOUBLE STANDARDS AND HYPOCRISY.

Now let us see if we have really swamped this country. How many black (or non-white) prime ministers we have had in Britain? (You are expecting TOO MUCH.) How many black MPs are there in the Parliament? (How could a black man REPRESENT whites!) Which sector of the British economy



"... I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. ... The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to rather hostile to those coming in. ... We are a British nation with British characteristics. Every country can take some minorities, and in many ways they add to the richness and variety of this country. But the moment the minority threatens to become a big one, people get frightened."

Mrs. Thatcher

MY PEOPLE are showing great interest in reports from England of the immigration debate at present taking place. Many of them react sympathetically to the determination of Mrs Thatcher not to let her own tribe lose its cultural values in a tidal wave of immigrants, although they seem surprised that the British should feel that less than 5 per cent of the population is a cause for concern.

Perhaps it would comfort the British to know that we Maoris have managed to keep our language and some of our traditions alive in spite of being overwhelmed 10 to one by British immigrants over the last 150 years—and that in spite of a determined attack upon our culture by the immigrant majority which lasted for over a century.

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

Should any future Conservative, Powellite, or National Front government succeed in repatriating immigrants, we will hope to return your emigrants to take up the vacancies. It so happens that we have almost exactly the same number of "cultural aliens" as Britain has "coloured immigrants"—about 2½ million whites of pre-

KEEP BRITAIN FOR THE BRITISH

Only 200m to absorb

NGATA TE KOROU

Maori teacher in New Zealand

dominantly British extraction. There seems to be no reason why the indigenous populations of other old Commonwealth countries should not expect likewise.

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

Others among us would prefer more moderate solutions to our immigrant problem—which is the problem of your emigrants. Such people would wish us to absorb what is good in other cultures, while preserving the good in our own. They say that the world is now too small for anyone to claim rights of ethnic homelands, as Hitler did. This, you must agree, shows great

tolerance from those whose parents and grandparents were tricked by treaties, robbed by land grabs, ravaged by wars fought for even more land then evicted from what was left as a punishment for resisting the attacks, their children forced into schools in which their own language and cultural values were proscribed. In spite of that our moderates still dream of a world where any man can live wherever he likes.

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

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

They are depending upon the success of Britain's ultra Right wing.

institutions under the domination of black people? Which black artist is recognised in Britain, or which art-history book, art journal or institution, recognises the presence of black artists in Britain and their contributions to its contemporary art? (Why don't you stick to your ethnic traditions?) How many black artists have been sent abroad to represent Britain? (You must be joking: a black artist representing Britain! Art is not football or boxing.)

Are people really so frightened in Britain that they have stopped travelling by the public transport (since it is run by blacks)? Are people so scared, lest they be poisoned, that they have stopped going to the Indian/Chinese restaurants? Are people so fearful, lest the 'demoniac' spirits of our ancient tribes cast a deadly spell, that they are no longer visiting the British Museum?

Yes, we have swamped your little island with millions of our cultural artefacts; so much so that three million artefacts have to be kept wrapped in the safe-boxes in a Shoreditch warehouse, away from the ordinary people lest their Britian values are threatened. We are very sorry!

Yes, we are grateful that you have given us 'civilisation'. You have given us Rolls-Royces, Mercedeses, colour TVs, pin-striped suits with matching shirts and ties, ... aeroplanes, guns, tanks, bombers, ... WE EAT THEM TO FILL OUR HUNGRY STOMACHS!

Thank you for "democracy, for law, and (doing) so much throughout the world. ... Look at Rhodesia, Southern Africa, Cyprus, Palestine, Northern Ireland ... !

"OVER 100 DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WITH 50% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, ACCOUNT FOR ONLY 14% OF THE GLOBAL PRODUCT. IN CONTRAST, SOME 25 DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, WITH ONLY 18% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, ACCOUNT FOR 66 PER CENT."

The present predicament of mankind is the direct result of bourgeois ideology and its economic system which has now become international monopoly capital. It can only exist and survive by virtue of its exploitation of not only the people in its metropolises but more brutally by super-exploitation of the Third World. It has nothing to offer to the world except starvation and human misery. The capitalist system must now give way (it won't do it by itself, of course) to a system that totally rejects greed and competition as natural and which recognises and fulfills the equal needs of all peoples throughout the world. The resources of the world cannot be left in the hands of a few lunatics of multinational corporate states, who could bring life on Earth to an end by the turn of this century.

How could then one continue creating an art that fails to denounce the inhumanity of the bourgeois ideology? How could one shut one's eyes to the predicament of mankind and continue making an art that ignores the reality of its time; and yet continue making claims about its universality? How could one continue clinging to bourgeois illusions which have in fact led so many artists recently to intellectual masturbation and farting, masochism and self-destruction, pessimism, depression, nihilism, voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc, etc, ... ? The bourgeoisie, of course, loves all this because there is nothing in these states and their resulting activities that would threaten it. It actually pays ANYTHING for that is useless and meaningless, and for that which causes self-emasculation of the artist, thus destroying a potential critic of its ideology or revolutionary.

TO SAY THAT "THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE SWAMPED BY PEOPLE OF A DIFFERENT CULTURE", AT A TIME WHEN THE WHOLE WORLD IS BEING VICIOUSLY DOMINATED BY THE WEST, IS TO PERPETUATE IMPERIALIST LIES; LIES WHICH MUST BE EXPOSED AND DENOUNCED.

A Message to Margaret

Travelling these roads
That lead to nowhere
These dreams that have no meaning
Have finally come to light
The system Yes the system
Has shown it's colours at last

Lady in Blue Lady in Blue
Now we know your game

Repatriation is the cry
Repatriation is your aim

Sick and tired
Of this merry-go-round

This pain inside
We can't take it no more
We can't take it no more

Vote Vote Vote
We'll not be on any plane or boat

Our fore parents' sweat and blood
Is buried in this land

Our generation
Know no other land

Here we are. ...
Here we'll make our final stand
On this soil we were born
On this soil we will die.

official complaint about police violence. Mr Chris Ball, London area organiser of APEX, alleged that one of the organisers of the strike, Mr John Patel, aged 23, had been repeatedly hit by a policeman who called him a "Paki bastard."

"PAKI BASTARD"

(Portrait of the artist as a black person)
a live event with slides and sound by
RASHEED ARAEEN

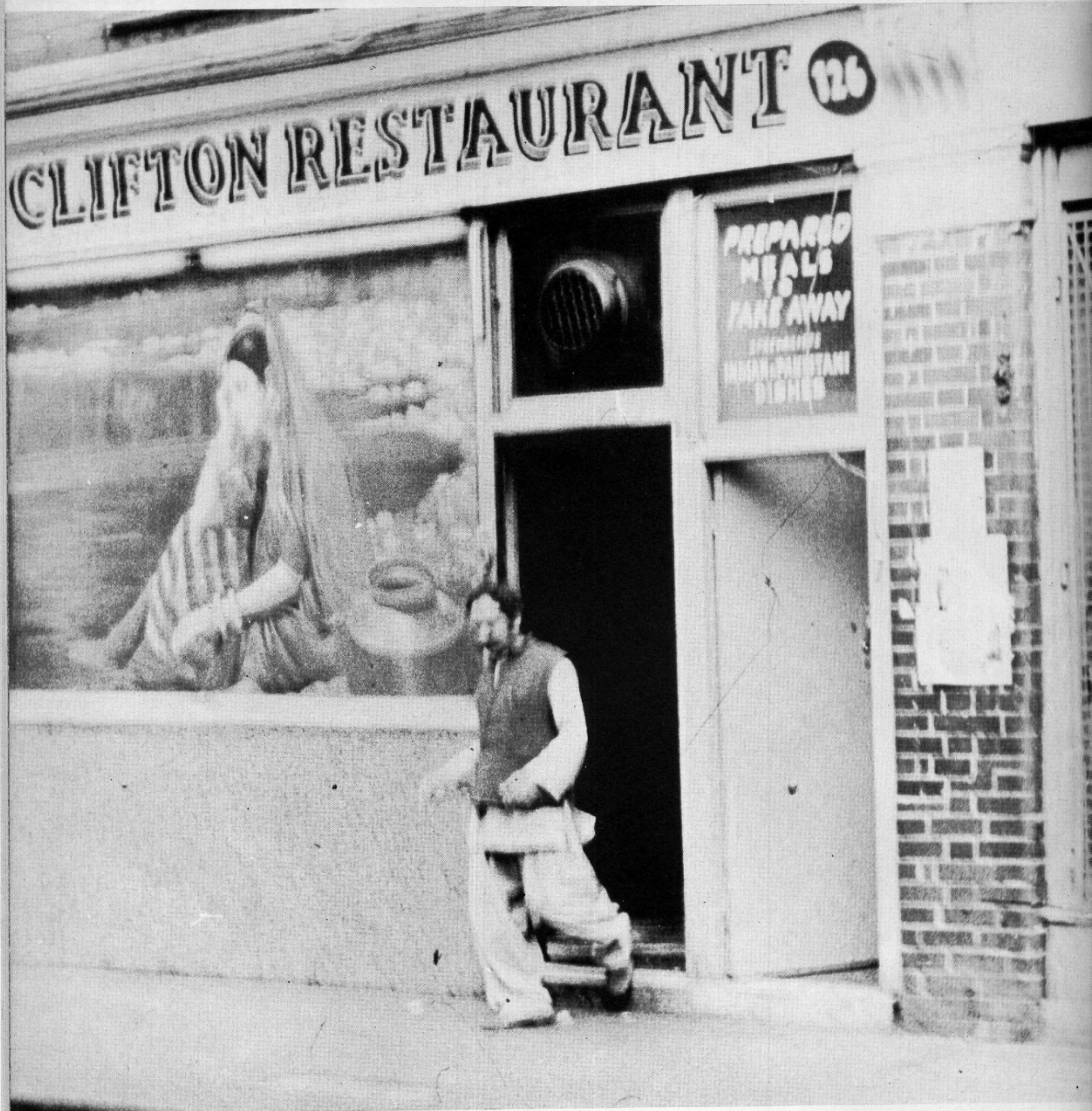
"Paki Bastard" is the 2nd part of the trilogy (art events) which was conceived in 1976-77 as part of Preliminary Notes for a **BLACK MANIFESTO** published in **Black Phoenix** No.1 and which deals with the relationship between the Third World and the West. "Paki Bastard", first performed on July 31 1977 at the ARTISTS FOR DEMOCRACY, London, specifically reflects upon the predicament of black people in Britain; showing also how a black artist, uprooted from his original environment in the Third World and rejected by white society in the West, eventually comes to terms and identifies with the reality of his people. The 1st and 3rd parts, called "Noble Savage" and "Blood Sausages" respectively, will, it is hoped, be performed later this year.

NOTE

The following 6 photographs is a selection from 50 sequences. The text is not exactly the interpretation of the images here, but contains some of the thoughts that went into the making of the work. And although it contains autobiographical references, it would be wrong to read it at personal level.



He sits there facing a slide projector, blind and gagged, holding a broom that defines his role in the contemporary world. In the background is the flute sound he made some time ago when he was very depressed. (He can't play 'music'.) The projector projects on him the image of one of his earlier works, the purpose being to create an artistic identity which is used throughout the piece in various manners. It also alludes, at a different level, to the mythical space, which is elevated, privileged and universalised, and in which the artist of the bourgeois world ends up cocooned and incarcerated. It is the mythical space within which the bourgeois 'freedom of artistic expression' manifests, and which is inversely proportional to the real space at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. The black, Third World, person thus remains outside this space confronted with reality.



of going to Paris and instead becoming a famous artist. They wouldn't understand. He had to tell them a lie, that he was going abroad for higher education... He remembers the day when he left. The whole family came to see him off at the harbour. How his two youngest sisters refuse to leave the ship... About three weeks later he was actually in Paris, lonely and homesick. He thought Paris was the centre of civilization... He thought of going back home, but he couldn't face the idea of being called a coward by his friends.... Instead he took train to London... Fourteen years is a long time... How could he come to terms with his 'failures'...

He exits. He leaves behind the fantasies, his own memories, his old dreams, and enters the world of real. It took him some time to realise that his own predicament is not unique. He is in fact part of the people who have been colonised, dominated and uprooted. He finally comes to accept the fact that he is part of the humanity which is being denied its own history, its culture and civilisation being undermined and plundered. He begins to under-



Sitting alone in a café in Brick Lane, he listens to the sexy, jazzy, romantic, sugary, vulgar, ... Indian film songs that pour out continuously from a jukebox. He is overtaken by nostalgia... He thinks of the time, his youth, when he himself secretly entertained the thoughts of becoming a film hero... He remembers his friends with whom he went to school/university, with whom he spent long evenings sitting in cafés and quite often talking about what was new from the West - literature, art, films, etc. How they all longed for the free and bohemian life in Paris, London, New York,... He thinks of his mother, father, brothers and sisters, who are still waiting for his return. They thought that their eldest son, their eldest brother, would one day be a successful engineer - after all he did complete his graduation. He would have been the pride of the family! But he had the crazy idea

Some.

Ahead of him in Hanbury Street was a young Bengali boy. As the boy approached a bend he was surrounded by six white youths. When Rouf rushed to his aid, the gang produced bottles from inside their coats and attacked him, cutting his scalp, cheek and wrists.

This was one of a series of random and vicious assaults



stand why he left his own country; why people leave their own countries and seek livelihood in the hostile and aggressive environment of Western cities. He can now see that the violence which is being inflicted upon people, whether it is physical violence or mental,

April 20 1978
KENNETH SINGH
MURDERED

May 4 1978
ALTAB ALI
STABBED TO DEATH

June 26 1978
ALI ESHAQUE
MURDERED

is the violence of the international economic system that has reduced most of the mankind to poverty and starvation. He can see now the true face of the civilisation that he once cherished. But confronted with all this violence and miseries he feels helpless again.... He thinks of the wretched of the earth, of his own 'wasted' life... Depression overtakes him again.....



But fallen men and women rise up again with the call of liberation. Remember Algeria, Vietnam... The sound of early morning at Grunwick, perhaps the longest strike (690 days) in the history of working class struggle, wakes him up from his sleep, from his apathy. The struggle of the people all over the world against all kind of domination, physical as well as mental, gives him hope and courage. He gets up to join the people: they in turn become part of his new consciousness...

(The role of art in human struggle perhaps needs a comment here. Should art become an instrument of a political struggle in a mechanistic and functional way, or it should maintain its specific function vis-à-vis ideology. If we truly accept the dialectics of the process of transformation, the dialectical interaction between different human activities, taking into consideration both the collective and individual levels of conscious-



ness, as well as the subjectivity (psyche) of the individual which is necessary for the critical reflection of the system in which one is living, then any prescription that marginalizes the role of the art must be rejected.)

However, the piece ends with a synthesis (above photograph): The top left is the face of an Indian woman who, after the big demo at Grunwick in which 10,000 people took part and in which many people were injured as the result of police violence (according to a Time Out report people received injuries on testicles and breasts), stands alone outside Grunwick holding a playcard that reads AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL. The word INJURY appears on the floor next to the artist cutting the broom into pieces. The top right is a sculpture done a few years ago by cutting the wood into pieces and then structuring them together.....

INNOCENCE & NEO-COLONIALISM

A CASE OF IDEOLOGICAL DOMINATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Ariel Dorfman

This essay is from a collection of writings completed by the author before the fascist coup in Chile and which were, along with hundreds of literary works, burnt or pulped shortly after Allende's overthrow. The collection was later published as *Ensayos Quemados* (Burnt Essays) by Ediciones de la Flor, Buenos Aires, 1974. The English translation, by John Lyons, is being published for the first time here.

"Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word; the others had the use of it. Between the two there were hired kinglets, overlords, and a bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end, which served as go-betweens. In the colonies the truth stood naked, but the citizens of the mother country preferred it with clothes on: the natives had to love them, something in the way mothers are loved. The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, white-washed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words 'Parthenon! Brotherhood!' and somewhere in Africa and Asia lips would open '... thenon! ... therhood!' It was the golden age."

—Jean-Paul Sartre

Preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon.

That child you have beside you—close in any case, there is always a child close—is potentially the revolutionary of tomorrow. Just as he may also be the most resolute of defenders of the established order. The process of the socialization of that little human being constitutes one of the neuragic points in any history: there the attitudes must be generated, the pre-rational assumptions conditioned, which permit that child to grow integrating himself, comfortable, functioning, an enthusiastic cog, in the *status quo*.

The function of mass consumption children's literature in the capitalist society (developed or under-developed) is to collaborate so that the child may pre-interpret the contradictions of reality (for example, authoritarianism, poverty, inequality, etc.) as natural, as he comes across them, as perfectly clear facts, understandable and even inevitable: the child must have in advance within his grasp, the ideological responses which his parents have internalised, forms of thinking, feeling, living, which overcome and unify in the mind the tensions which growing up will make each day more evident. The mechanism in that literature of substituting, compensating, distorting, while secretly justifying or rationalising, while defining a problem falsely so as to solve it triumphantly; re-affirming constantly a complete, invariable system of psychological and moral preferences from which all will be ordered, comes to reinforce the pedagogic process which the dominant class, and the family which is its agent, wishes to impose on the child so that he will carry out a determined function now and especially when older, a process which can be traced in all the products of capitalist societies (books, magazines, ABCs, toys, beds and cots, favourite colours, TV programmes, clothes, decorative objects, etc.). The privileged centre of that education will be the son of the bourgeoisie who is receiving on top the benefits of the system itself, but the children of the proletariat will also be bombarded with these images so that they may consolidate them inwardly, even if their very condition of being exploited will constantly tend to make manifest the falsity of the pattern which is established as norm.

If in this essay we are only going to examine a narrow sector within this immense zone of ideological domination, it is with the intention

that it may at the same time make patent the need to analyse the other regions, and with the certainty that in fact the structural models which are revealed will be found duplicated, with significant variations, adapted to the particular medium in which is inserted the subjugation in the rest of the sectors.

Furthermore, I would like the present analysis to contribute to a more precise re-cognition of the techniques and methods which are used in children's literature to achieve the submission of the child and his acceptance of the current bourgeois values, calling attention to the danger involved in the persistence of those forms in any society which is transforming its economic and social structures. Even if a new culture could not emerge except when the changes in the ownership of the means of production make more manifest the distance between the bourgeois ideology and the reality which it pretends to embrace, it is no less certain that vigilance with regard to official linguistic forms of the dominators in relation to those problems, specific and current, may accelerate the process of de-mythification.

Finally, perhaps a contribution may be made to a theory of the ideology, and of its ambiguous relation with reality, since the manner in which capitalism colonizes its young (the specific modes of concealment, reduction, mystification, inversion, partial or complete lies, and which are bound to relate to the weakest and most problematic links in society, symptomize also the fears and aspirations which derive from the falsification, from the ideal history which seeks to supplant the reality) serves to understand the true history. The mask which man chooses in order to confront his dilemmas, in order to smile in the worrying and questioning presence of the others, in order to simulate a unified and coherent consciousness which enables mental survival with the contradictions, which otherwise would lead to the abysses of madness, of revolution, or to the simple admission of an irrevocable immorality which pursues petty interests without justification, ethical or sublime (impossible, impossible), that mask which the system generates automatically so as to be able to function,¹ is absolutely no different from the face (does it exist?) which pulsates deeper down.

We are going to analyse the books that tell the story of Babar the elephant, which in recent years have begun to penetrate our society, after a success without precedent in the last thirty years in France (and also in other parts of the western world).² The reason for choosing this character and not another more popular, rests in the fact that in Babar there is expressed representatively a series of model characteristics which it would be difficult to find assembled with such clarity around another entity of children's literature: it is an almost archetypal model. In any case, when the need arises, parallels will be established with similar methods used in other current forms, especially with the world of Walt Disney.

Basically, Babar's story is that of an ordinary pachyderm who, owing to his strange upbringing and link with the world of men, became the king of the elephants, saving and transforming his country. More recently, on his having a family, the author and reader prefer to concentrate on the little children of Babar.

Babar is born like any old elephant: he grows up and plays in an idyllic reality, among other little animals. However, this adam-like setting is soon to alter, as a 'wicked hunter' kills his mother and forces him to escape from the forest and turn towards the bewildering city. Thus the first contact with civilization turns out negative: it intervenes to kill and to destroy. But the city repays Babar for what it took from him. The female figure of the 'old lady' substitutes for the mother, adopting the elephant. The first thing which Babar wants is 'to dress well': she proffers all the money needed. During the first drawings he walks on four legs: hardly does he lose his nakedness and confront himself clothed in a mirror, he becomes conscious of his skin and of that second skin which is the clothes. Babar begins to model himself on man, to use his two-legged movements. He gets up on two legs. Immediately there follows an educative process: Babar is going to be transformed—without losing his animal appearance—into a human being: he uses a serviette, goes to bed, does gymnastics, bathes in a bathtub

and with a sponge, drives his own car, dresses in fashion. "She gives him everything that he wants." A wise teacher instructs him, and thus he learns to write, to add up, etc. He can also glimpse a globe where Africa and America stand out very clearly.

Babar 'progresses': in place of instincts, ignorance, he acquires the knowledge and rules of the world which shelters him, he learns to behave in the face of reality in a certain normative way. Evidently, on a first superficial level, it would appear to be urging the young readers to conduct themselves in a similar way (to be obedient, intelligent, to have good manners, etc.). The child sets out, like Babar without social elements, is also wild, ignorant, walks on all fours, etc. The correspondence between these two innocents, the animal and the child, shapes—as we shall see in greater detail later on—the basis of ideological domination, the mechanism and bridge which will permit the distortion of reality. But it is enough for now to note that Babar is not merely a child: he has, besides, a country of his own, which remains primitive, tribal, naked, a country which has not evolved alongside him. From that reality—strictly from those sectors of his personality still not subjugated and which can never be erased, from his constantly emergent animality—emissaries come to look for him ("two little elephants completely naked") [my italics].

This first contact between Babar now civilized, almost adult one could say, and the other elephants, who are like a reflection of what he once was, defines the future of the land of the elephants: his cousins are immediately incorporated into the world of the old lady, she dresses them, and then—as a reward for having babbled the first step—she takes them to eat cakes (the sweet which domesticates, the sweet which calms the tears, which makes lies acceptable, the honey which facilitates the fluid transition towards *status quo*, the sweet-child, the sweet-adult). Having demonstrated the superiority and the infectiousness of his education, counting on allies, on a girlfriend (later he will marry Celeste, his cousin), he can now return to jungle.

"But he will never forget the old lady."

They set off driving, clothed, with suitcases, hooting and making a din. Running behind, on four legs, are the cousins' mothers who had come to look for them: it is the first visible consequence of the lack of civilization. Whoever does not accept those models will be excluded from the pleasures (of driving a car); they will be a bunch of failures.

Meanwhile, the king of the elephants having died accidentally, the arrival of Babar has become providential. "The oldest elephants" get together to elect a new king, "most worried": it is "a fateful day", "what a misfortune". The coming of a Messiah is looked to, a saviour to resolve the problem. In fact the king of the elephants differed from the rest only in the crown he wore; but on eating a "poisonous mushroom" he shows that he is a stupid, ineffectual individual, who performs actions which the child readers would be very careful to avoid. If the king (the best) of the elephants behaves in such a childish and dangerous way, what can be expected of the rest of them? The new government will have to come from outside: it will not be a native but someone educated in the land of men, a civilized being. While they deliberate in despair, Babar leaves the land of men (houses, a square, aeroplanes, a church, cars, in the distance neatly sown fields, monuments) with all the prominent signs of his links with this world. "What fine clothes you are wearing! What a charming car!" Before the great undifferentiated grey mass who welcome them, they appear with defined personality: colour, movement, technique, single them out and are converted into an erect, exterior sign of their personality, their assimilation into the values, objects, and conceptions of the fascinating and unknown world of men. Babar is assigned the investiture of predominance in a barbaric world where all are defenceless and ingenuous. His closeness to the western world (to the world of the adults), to the prestigious centre, will be now and in each future episode, the foundation of his authority, the fountain of his rule. Old Cornelius understands it this way. ("he returns from the city, where he has learnt many things while mixing with men") and he suggests they crown Babar. "Without hesitation", the elephants accept. "Cornelius has spoken like a book", that is, like an authoritarian, cultural object, loaded with wisdom, like the book which the elephants don't have but which men do. Cornelius speaks two languages, mediating between alternative worlds.

The reward does not delay. "You have some splendid ideas", Babar tells him (although the only one he has had is that Babar be proclaimed king), "well then, I nominate you general and when I have my crown I'll give you my cap". The one who helped to obtain power is rewarded with rank and with the symbol of civilization: he draws closer to power and its differentiating features. Babar imitates men, Cornelius imitates Babar; subsequently, all will imitate Cornelius and the whole country will turn 'civilised'. Therefore, the first thing Babar does ("he sends the dromedary to the city to buy him some costly ceremonial robes") is to reaffirm his dominance, by communicating once more with the metropolis to accentuate his status externally. In the celebration which follows, the invited animals (all of them, mouse, lizard, hippopotamus, leopard, lion, rhinoceros, giraffe, and, naturally, the elephants) get up for the first time on two legs and dance. Although they are still naked, already they are being transfigured, already they begin to raise

themselves, to better their condition. They will continue to lose their condition of animals, they will humanize themselves.

But it is not only a question of pedagogic theory, the integration of children (the elephants) into a benevolent adult world (the land of men), rather, that here, more than anything, there is a *theory of history*, the learning of an interpretative system which permits "illumination" of the origins of the contemporary world. Two countries are being related, two antagonistic dimensions, city and jungle, and one of the poles will end up absorbing and subordinating the other. The child will discover as he grows up, the palpable reality that there are developed countries and underdeveloped countries, a situation due to imperialism and to the place occupied by the underdeveloped countries within the international capitalist system. He will also meet with a rational explanation, which justifies and conceals this phenomenon and a series of theoretical and practical answers which are proposed as solutions, so that those 'backward' places may progress. The child's first contact with history will occur through books like those of Babar which—as we shall see—anticipate at another level, and with different means, exactly the same politics which will be propounded to him when he is older.

It tells the history of the incorporation of the non-western continents (America, Asia, but especially Africa) into the contemporary world. But the history has been de-realized, has been disguised. Instead of Europe, there is a city; instead of Africa, a jungle; instead of a negro or an Indian, an elephant; instead of the church or a monopolistic empire, the old lady, instead of a dependent bourgeoisie, Babar. The land of the elephants equals Africa without openly personifying it, without attaching the name which would have forced a too real and painful identification. It surreptitiously suppresses the linguistic link (the word Africa), which being shot full of contradictions, denunciations, concretions, immediacies, which on demanding a suspicious examination parallel to effective reality, past and contemporary, would invalidate the creation of an ideal history which could later replace that which effectively happened.³ The history which the child receives as true will do for the other, and will teach to consider it and to put it into perspective, and it succeeds because it doesn't attempt to teach absolutely anything, because it presents itself as ingenuous, fictitious, removed from daily problems, without compromises, neutral, beyond.

But this history is none other than the realization of the dream of the bourgeoisie with regard to their dominated countries. Since the 16th century onwards, capitalism justifies through literature its intervention in other realities, in the utopian hope of being able to construct there a mythical perfect space where the contradictions which afflicted Europe at that time (going through the transition from feudalism to capitalism) will not impinge. The myth of the noble savage, the longing for a beneficent and providential nature (God's steward), the necessity of a Golden Age in which the crisis might be resolved rationally and harmoniously, constituted a means of secularizing the medieval religious myth of Eden and Heaven, the two paradisaical dimensions between which the finite history of men unfolds. The educative ideal for indigenous native populations: there would be united in them the light of their natural reason (logos) and the law of civilized progress (the renaissance humanity offer a supposedly barbarous Middle Ages). A nation was to be recreated in which nature and civilization could live together, where technological advance did not corrupt but rather bring well-being: a place which would unite feudal qualities and bourgeois qualities and synthesize them without antagonisms. The outcome, as we know, was disastrous. However, Babar, four centuries later, will achieve that which the conquistadors could not do: he will inject progress into that jungle without disturbing the balance of nature. The story will be told of the relation of those two world making no mention of plundering, racialism, underdevelopment and misery, the dream of the bourgeoisie will be narrated, what the bourgeoisie would have wished the non-European world to be. It is a substitutive fantasy with which the author corrects (while Babar rules) the defects, difficulties, imperfections of the true historical development, a radiograph of the aspirations of European civilization, and which were never completely lost: the possibility of finding some island, some shore of the universe, which was not contaminated yet, where one could rebuild all the positive aspects of 'progress', sliding out of its dilemmas. This parallel pseudo-history which overcomes the everyday despairs, returning with nostalgia to a heroic, unshakeable project, continues to inspire in the 19th century, when Africa is colonized, and is used in the 20th century in order to intervene in Asia and in other places: it is necessary to save those countries for civilization, and it can't be done, moreover, without impeding its autochthonous being. In the land of the elephants the great contradictions in the history of the development of capitalism are resolved: the form in which Europe approached the natives comes out justified. The present day policy will also come out purified, the policy proposed today as a solution.

But here there is something more than an ideal projection, a deceitful construction. Although only later will it be appropriate to examine in detail in what way the development suffered by the land of the elephants reinforces and confirms the current neo-colonialist theory, it is important to understand that in the Babar books history is not ignored, it is not eliminated, it is sweetened, its sign is changed, it is boiled down, it is inverted, but the real history is there, it can be

uncovered and traced. The author has abstracted from the history of Africa those undeniable characteristics which, stripped of their immediate concretion and their problem-making connection, will serve to establish a subconscious system of equivalences. Each stage in the life of Babar corresponds formally (or will correspond, as the child continues to locate and recognize them) to a real stage which was produced in the true history. Those aspects have been selected and isolated to function in another context, so that, losing their category of accusation, litigation and denunciation, they remain enclosed within the all-inclusive borders of the dominating ideology. And if it were not so, this literature would not be dangerous, since the child would be shut up in a dream, in an imagination without points of contact with reality, in the anachronistic head of Thomas More or Father Las Casas. If the truth were not in Babar the elephant, hidden, bastardized, distorted, but if it were not as a concealed, correlative parallel, it would be impossible that the equivalences could be revealed to the child, he could not compare the fictitious process in his mind with the real process which will cry out to be interpreted and understood: the possibility of a future subconscious comparison, of a subduing of the contradictions of the dialectic in an obsessively reiterated emotional scheme, can only operate if the same structural stages are maintained, varying the appearance beneath which they are introduced and substantially modifying the consequences of their intervention. The false system becomes representative of the entire reality, because it includes, veiled, the problems which this world is going to continue presenting to the child as he grows up.⁴

We shall try to elaborate proof of this thesis while performing the analysis and obtaining a more complete vision of the effects that civilization has had on the land of the elephants, but it is necessary in any case to examine a concrete example here.

There are elements in the relationships between Europe and the other continents which cannot be denied: the plundering, the violence, the slavery. If these were omitted in Babar, the result would be a lie, and a reading of Babar would not help to interpret anything ideologically. The children would say: "You told us that there was no violence in the conquest of Africa. That's a lie; now we know that there was a lot of destruction, if you lied in this, surely you falsify other things as well."

Consequently, violence has been included in Babar. Nobody has tried to deny it. The wicked hunter represents precisely those 'evil' forces, which intervened in the past. Later, when Babar and Celeste are shipwrecked, they are picked up by a captain who 'gives' them (notice, they are not sold) to a circus owner. They suffer slavery, are caged up, lose their freedom.

European civilization thus contains conspicuous negative elements. But each time the representatives of the city appear doing wrong to the elephants, up towers the majestic, generous, charitable counter-figure of the positive element of the western Christian world. The old lady wipes out those characteristics, all roads lead to her guardianship and furthermore, it is the cruel, exploitative work of the others which presses the elephants to depend on her. Opposite the threat of extermination and servitude from one sector of the European world, there is an educative ideal, missionary and 'progressive', which wants to enclose Babar and his herd in the great western family. The natives must not be killed or put in chains: it is necessary to *Europeanize* them. It is noteworthy, also, that each time Europe shows itself negatively, the animals are *not clothed* (either because their state is primitive, or because they were shipwrecked—"since they lost their crowns in the storm, nobody has believed that they are the king and queen of the elephants, and the captain has had them locked up in the hold"). It is sufficient to progress so that never again are these interferences repeated, sufficient to match up to Europe, to bear the epiphanic signs of inclusion in the civilized world for the executioner to disappear and by this token the victim: one must be assimilated. And furthermore: the violent moments are established like links in a chain, they are the indispensable nexus between nakedness and clothing, between backwardness and development, between the jungle and the old lady. The stages of conquest and slavery have not been ignored: but the manner of their incorporation allows their meaning to change, the truth to be inverted. While the fact can be withheld, it will be done; but when the pressure of the exploited and neglected sectors renders impossible the simple forgetting of that which contradicts the official version of the facts, ideology splits up this phenomenon and reabsorbs it within the general system, which remains immutable. Certainly, we cannot lie: violence there was. But look how happy the elephants are now.

The procedure of admitting negative features, expelling them towards a remote past, is used constantly in children's literature. Opposite those beings will always appear the authentic heroes, who will wipe out the depravity of yesterday and consecrate the splendour of tomorrow.

Let us see some examples taken from Disney.

Donald Duck, the nephews and Grandma Duck have set off (due to their boredom, a typical situation) in search of adventure in the Far West. "Spectacular scenery, isn't it boys?" "Like television, but in three dimensions". But they are attacked by Indians, who are not *playing*, but hate all ducks. Fifty years ago Buck Duck tricked them twice over,

stealing their lands from them and then selling them back when they were no longer valuable. The Indians have to be convinced therefore, that not all ducks (white men) are bad and that the plundering in the past can be corrected. To rise above earlier exploitation and fraud is to abate mistrust: everything has changed, the peoples can reach an understanding, there is room for the marginalized in the present order and civilization, old differences can be forgotten. But behold! Two swindlers appear who want to buy the lands for "a thousand cents". The ducks, however, save the situation: "That is a swindle; they know how valuable the natural gas is which is seeping out in the mine!" The result is that the Indians make peace with the ducks. And how are the natives integrated into the world, once suspicions are allayed? In two ways: a) "A big gas company will do all the work and pay the tribe well". Opposite the swindlers, past and present is the (big) company which will resolve the problems with *justice*. The outsider (Scrooge McDuck?) is not necessarily bad; badness exists where the exact price is not paid (an imposed price, according to what conditions and what market), and b) *tourism*. This solution, which we will see repeated in Babar, means that the Indians sell their 'autochthonous' being and that the adventurers enjoy peace and a holiday. (In which their static ideal is realized, all senseless movement which dominates adventure achieves its resolution. Besides, they can rest without having worked, but meriting it through the misfortunes they have suffered: leisure without previous sweat, deconcretized leisure.)

Another example: the ducks search for a treasure in Aztecland.⁵ In the past, the bad conquistadors wanted to snatch the gold from the poor Indians (shown with figures of ducks). And now the 'bad boys' want to repeat exactly the same process. Besides emphasizing thus that history is essentially repetition of an identical contingency in which the bad want to take from the good their property (to which the whole capitalist system clings, without questioning the origin of the money), it allows the Indians' descendants to surmount the past, leave aside an anachronistic attitude and integrate themselves in the contemporary and technical world. The ducks rescue a shepherd's lamb. "I don't know how to repay that kind action." But the shepherd turns out to be the keeper of the treasure: "I maintained the tradition of hiding the loot from attackers". Donald replies: "This is absurd! The conquistadors don't exist any more." There is no reason to isolate riches. The faithful punchline: "Visit Aztecland, admission: one dollar". The natives eliminate the memory of a first bad experience; they open their doors to foreigners, who are *not conquistadors*. Those who come from outside educate the Indian ("This is absurd!") and they explain to him how to exploit his resources. And once again all the agitation is canalized in the holidays. ("Our adventure ends in the forms of a tropical holiday.") Between the routine (with which the story opens) and the leisure at the end, lies the adventure: the ducks are rewarded for having thus helped the helpless. But more than anything the adventure is the means to obtaining riches and reward. Just as gold is the abstraction of work (value) incorporated in the object, so adventure is the abstraction of the effort which is needed (which is suffered) to produce it: adventure is work inverted, negativized, deconcretized. Sweat made fetish.

It is handled in the same way in Babar. Violence is accepted as existent, but its meaning is altered radically.

The ideology contains, therefore, within itself the dream, the aspiration, the ideal scheme, perfect, abstract, but it also imitates reality, while masking it. Thus, for example, the bourgeois dream assured that natives would be found disposed to 'become civilized' and there are Babar and Cornelius to prove it. The first contact between Europe and a 'barbaric' country was by means of the indigenous interpreter: he is the linguistic connector of the two spheres. "Cornelius talks like a book." Examples are manifold, but it is preferable to return to the chronological analysis.

We had left Babar at the happy moment of his coronation. At the same time he weds Celeste; simultaneously the monarchy and family, the kingdom and the possibility of heirs are established. The two springs of the future.

They leave on a honeymoon. To this effect they have a balloon (a loud yellow colour, the same as Babar's crown), in which the two will rise above the other elephants. This is a recurrent motif: to *climb*. The first thing Babar rushed to do arriving in the city was to play in the lifts, to seek vertical mobility. Undoubtedly this idea (remember Dumbo the flying elephant) contains the desire to deny the heaviness of the body, of that concrete element which always keeps us so anchored to necessity and circumstances.⁶ In other books he climbs mountains to ski (twice), is invited to the land of the birds, acquires a disguise which enables him to fly. There is here an obsession to ascend: the protagonist needs to be accepted in 'society', in the 'high' circles. Having abandoned the vertical position, now on two legs, the elephant only thinks of continuing to rise. The image consolidates the urgency of divesting oneself of the lower condition, of moving up, of being someone greater. Clambering up the ladder which society offers.

But more than this it is important to underline the journey itself. The land of the elephants has lost its exotic quality: it is reserved to be the backyard of Europe. One of the fundamental themes of contemporary story books is 'adventure', the search for new sensations

which break the routine and habit, the meeting with dangers (disorders) which could place in doubt the interior and exterior order of the characters, but which they always manage to overcome. In the world of Disney, for example, the remote geographical settings facilitate the search for treasures, since there, evidently, no one is owner of the riches and no one has worked to obtain them. But in Babar this journey fulfils various other specific functions. Already in the bizantine-baroque novels and their contemporary derivatives, the kings (and at times lesser heroes) found themselves scourged by misfortune (shipwreck, captivity, etc.) and, as a result, brought closer to the reader, 'deflated'; but by means of *fortitude* and *magnanimity*⁷ they showed themselves worthy of the riches with which providence eventually showered them. They return exalted and triumphant to their country, which meantime has great need of them. Their estrangement serves to show they are indispensable.

However, if we look closely at the story, the ultimate meaning of accidentality is to put them *to the test*. Just like Robinson Crusoe, they arrive on an island, and like him, they don't lose contact with civilization⁸ either: they wash their clothes, cook and season their food exquisitely, etc. The two elephants could well have reverted to primitivism, have slid back into bestiality (as occurs in several European novels of the fifties, for example in *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding). They carry Europe like an internal dimension, have proved their exemplary capacity to govern. And precisely they confront "fierce and wild cannibals", creatures who have not attained civilization. It reproduces an experience much treated in European literature: the contrast of two types of natural creature, one of the positive sign, the other of negative sign.⁹ Being civilized, paradoxically, the animals will defeat the men. Opposite the nakedness of the cannibals, the clothes of the elephants; opposite the cannibalism (taboo), the fire which domesticates, the rice and fish. The distance between Babar and the savages implies that there is no possible return to the primitive state. But even more important, it is going to prepare us for the struggle, within the land of the elephants, against those animals (the rhinoceroses) which also have not been civilized, and which is paralleled in the next episode.

In fact there is a war in the land of the elephants. While the old lady is rescuing her friends from the circus (naturally the first thing she does is to *clothe* her proteges and let them rest in separate beds, subdued by a portrait on the wall of their protectress), Arthur (Babar's young cousin) has played a "nasty prank" on a sleeping rhinoceros (a rocket tied to its tail). Cornelius apologizes in a polite tone, promising to punish the child, etc. The rhinoceros is not placated and turns threatening. The war which follows, and in which Babar assures his leadership and, definitively, the superiority of civilization over barbarism, appears to originate thus in a marginal issue, in the eccentric personality of the rulers and, in fact, in their lack of civility.¹⁰ To explain the struggles between the animals (between the Americans, Africans, Asians), there is recourse to their primitive state. These 'lunatics' magnify the facts beyond their reality: "They wanted to catch Arthur to make a meat pie". To avoid further pitfalls, it will be sufficient for the rest of the animals similarly to become sensible, 'westerners'. It does not deny—as can be seen—the struggles in that continent where European ways of life arrive: only that they are not provoked by the Europeans, but rather, on the contrary, the acceptance of civilized patterns is what will allow the 'barbaric' state of war to be left behind. Babar will use his ingenuity, his capacity as strategist, to take on brute force and cruelty: an ingredient of civilization (paint) will serve to disguise his soldiers and frighten his adversaries. "The rhinoceroses, believing they are monsters, flee in disarray, terrified." The economic backwardness, and the natives' superstition, have been decisive: technical ability has tamed those who wished to continue practices at variance with reason. The elephants, being armed (they have technical knowledge which separates them qualitatively from their enemies) will win. The closeness to western interests and all they represent, signifies strengthening the country and defeating the rest. In the drawing, Babar climbs up on one of his own subjects, one of the elephants, lifts his hands in sign of victory, while the rhinoceroses (who are remarkably alike to the elephants themselves in size and colour), are put in chains. Later peace will be signed. The immediate, military effect, has shown the goodness of the system, and augurs the way for the next step: to put this knowledge into elaborating a new, civilized order. The time has arrived to build the first city of the elephants. After the war, a peaceful civilization identical to the European one. The steps to colonization.

The dromedaries 'brought Babar his heavy luggage and all the things he had bought when on his honeymoon in the land of men'. Magically, the whole of civilization is contained in these boxes. Babar gives a speech: "My friends, in these trunks and bales and cases I have presents for you all and all the tools necessary for the building of our city". For the first time, then, the elephants set to work. It is the crucial moment: the natives build a city which follows European lines. Imperialism penetrates Africa. But the elephants "are happy". "They hammer, pull, push, dig, toss, carry and open their great ears to listen to the old lady's records". In the drawing each one is seen working on his own, a harmonious division of labour, Babar in the middle directing operations. The end result is cloying docility: each one of them has his own

bungalow. At the edges, higher up (climbing, climbing), there is a two storeyed house for Babar, and another identical one for the old lady.

In fact, the old lady has decided to remain with them. But now her character is finally made clear to us: during the war, (with Celeste) she founds a hospital (with a huge Red Cross), where she works "unselfishly". The charitable aspect of her intervention is accentuated. Later she is decorated ("she has done so much for them and the wounded"). In the picture she appears in a white monastic gown and now we can be certain: she is the missionary spirit in Africa (and in other places). Her frail, stretched form, her motherhood without children, her charitable gestures, her spirituality, outline militant Catholicism. But there is no overt reference to religion: she represents Christian values without mentioning them. The war over, she reverts to her original role: education. "She often tells stories to the elephants", who form a circle around her on the ground. Although it is still not the moment to analyse in depth the paternalism in these works, it is necessary to point out that the aboriginals, negroes, natives in general, are treated as 'children' and the exploiting country as the motherland, source and womb of the riches. It is emphasized sentimentally that it is the metropolis which gives life (light) and gives birth to that poor orphan (the satellite); subsequently it nurses it and hands on the instruments so that it may grow and be educated. The old lady summarizes in one, therefore, the characteristics of the distant mother (grandma, governess, aunt, schoolteacher, and what have you). This is related, besides, to the basic idea that nations constitute one big family. We will see later that this brings as a consequence the idea that underdevelopment is a lack of (biological) growth, an earlier, inferior stage towards maturity, and that therefore it is enough to 'take off', to progress, in order to reach the next stage. When Babar is older he is going to be exactly like the old lady. The ties of emotional and intellectual dependence are also legitimized. It is evident, then, that the bourgeois ideology prefers to avoid—see the case of the ducks, their family of uncles, nephews, cousins, girl friends, but without mothers, children, fathers—the very image of the *father* in this literature. Preferable is a more distant relative, a more ambiguous figure, who rather than dominating grants certain benefits. In effect, then, the paternalistic relationship is consolidated, which tends to create in the 'child' a psychological dependence, a constant waiting for orientations, values, routes, advice and handouts¹¹ and to cap it all it creates a situation such that when the 'offspring' uses (if he can) the education they have given him, to free himself from the parental yoke or to examine his own situation critically, the relationship is always defended through 'gratitude', through 'loyalty', through 'respect for your elders', through the perennial fairy godmothers.

Babar (son) is going to repeat with his subjects (and with his children) what he has learned in his motherland, the secret, magic, almost Oedipal source of his power: he will treat them as children. "Babar now kept his promise: to each elephant he gave a present, together with good working clothes and lovely holiday costumes." It is an economy—at present—without money, but already there is a form of debt and payment. The elephants "went home dancing". But the drawing is striking: through one door dozens of elephants enter, an amorphous crowd, all on four legs, queuing up to receive their present; from the other door they leave on two legs, half-clothed, gifts in hand. A stage in ideal history has come to an end: without snags, a city has been created in the margins of time, without exploitation or money. The dancing will never end.¹²

But their day now appears divided in two, emphasized by two types of outfit: leisure and work. The presents they have received serve to increase their dependence, to remove them from their 'barbaric' state, but with their enthusiastic agreement. The result will be a Garden Party on Sunday: but they will have to work now for the whole week to prepare the occasion.

With clothes comes the division of the elephants. The youngsters go to school, the older ones "have chosen a job". It is something voluntary, implicitly involves great delight: the division of labour appears as necessary, something which benefits everyone equally in a society of exchanges of services. "When Capalousse had holes in his shoes he took them to Tapitor, and when Tapitor was ill Capalousse attended him. If Barbacol wanted to put a statuette in his mantelpiece he told Podular, and when Podular's jacket was worn out Barbacol measured him for a new one. Justinien painted Pilophage's portrait and Pilophage defended him against his enemies. Hatchibombotar kept the streets tidy, Olur repaired motor cars, and, when they were tired, Doulamor played to them."¹³

The model proposed by Babar has had satisfactory effects: the well-being and happiness of his people are evident. The arcadian myth has become reality: the hallowed and natural life of the savage, obtaining all the utilities of technical progress, combines morality and civilization. This privileged space condenses Europe and its nostalgia, it eliminates frictions between developed and underdeveloped countries, between exploited and exploiters. Urban values have not destroyed nature, they have perfected it; the savages have incorporated themselves painlessly into the bourgeois world, just as imperialist mythology had always proclaimed. The European intervention has been a *total success*. The shot which killed Babar's mother, even the cages in which they

were locked up afterwards (not to mention those perverse and primitive rhinoceroses who made war for trifles), are things of the past: they have had a rather excellent, miraculous consequence: the development and harmony of the elephants. Thus the basic idea behind Babar is that no such underdevelopment exists, colonialism no longer exists: there are only backward countries which, on imitating the more 'advanced' ('grown up') countries, on importing technicians and setting to work as they should, on bringing in foreign teachers, they will manage to put themselves on a level. It is a model to be followed, a triumphant experiment. And fundamentally it has been so because the elephants themselves have achieved it. There is no need to occupy militarily those countries (which would signify, besides, tremendous expense), there is no need to have direct political domination. It is enough to maintain an economic, technical dominance, a dependent bourgeoisie is enough. This is the neo-colonial thesis.

This theory has been described by Basil Davidson:¹⁴ a middle class has to be created which facilitates the step from the primitive to the civilized state, but whose function consists, in effect, in guaranteeing that the economic system of the ex-colonies will continue being a fragment within the world capitalist system. "Almost always", writes Davidson, "the great colonial powers achieved their objective. In so many colonies they assured that the power would be handed to the traditional chiefs (caciques), members of the small educated elites, which were allied to the groups of national businessmen, graduated in the universities, who had ambitions for personal careers in which the superiority of Oxford or Paris, or others similarly styled, would be emulated. The colonial governors naturally did not regard with closed eyes the deficiencies of 'their Africans': they argued simply, but speaking carefully, that 'these are the best we can find'. Having found those 'best', they did everything they could to insure that this 'government by an elite' should be prolonged. The native political institutions were twisted or were wrapped in simulacra of parliamentary systems copied from the London or Parisian models, and simultaneously a tremendous programme was developed tending to convince the Africans that the essence and the object of political mental hygiene were found in these forms of democracy, and that any other forms were inferior, impossible or conducive to 'communism'."¹⁵

The growth of Babar follows very closely the development of a dependent bourgeoisie. For this reason it takes on great importance for us, in a dependent country, to analyse and decodify its ideology. To imitate Babar, in Chile, means internalizing the appropriate emulatory methods in order to continue to progress, to arrive at being 'king', it is to accept a particular theory of development and underdevelopment: the need for foreign models, disdain for the backward reality, the desire to educate oneself in accord with those models (modernizing and ultimately technocratic), to understand that the closer one gets to the centre the more one is bound to power and truth, and that there is no way of advancing other than being transformed into the USA or Europe,

....Without being simplistic we may observe that the children who read Babar in France were the same ones who fought in Algeria; that those who read Babar in England support the Labour and Conservative line on South Africa & Rhodesia; as for the North Americans, we know very well where they have been, are, and will be. — A. Dorfman

that it is necessary to adopt a charitable, sentimental, paternalistic stance, towards the dispossessed and the 'weakest', and that in a hierarchical world everything functions well.

But above all, the fundamental instruction is to not see underdevelopment as a product of the development of other nations, to not see poverty and wealth as two sides of the same coin, the two results of the same phenomenon. Underdevelopment, its problems, its difficulties, its miseries, would resemble the turbulence which Europe suffered in the transition from feudalism to capitalism: it is a 'normal' stage within the 'normal growing up' of a nation. According to W.W. Rostow, it will suffice that those countries mature, that they be more integrated (that they carry on buying capital goods) into the western system, that they 'start off', that they 'take off', for the crisis of growth ('growing pangs') to disappear. The system is not responsible (if it were one would have to break off the dependence and, as the only solution, marginalize oneself from the world capitalist system); certain reforms must be carried out ("Alliance for Progress", a "Marshall Plan" for Africa, the "Vietnamization" of the conflict) which will destroy the "feudal" structure (read here, primitive, traditional, pre-capitalist) and which will permit civilization to flourish. Lincoln Gordon writes: "... the already significant nuclei of industrialization, the gradual consolidation of the middle class and the formation of a

group of firms full of vitality, although often undisciplined, are realities which give the hope that, through a well organized effort of cooperation, the greater part of Latin America may match the modern world economically in the space of ten years or so."¹⁶ He wrote this in 1959-60.

This theory, as marxist sociologists have demonstrated,¹⁷ reinforces the ties of domination, intensifies exploitation. You must have patience, the dominators suggest: when a mature middle class emerges, the "adolescent" phase of the underdevelopment will be over.

The idea that countries change like organisms, that they follow the same stages of growth as human beings (birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity etc.), afflicted with the same types of difficulty and problems (violence, sickness, domination, instability, etc.) as a product of growing up,¹⁸ helps us to find the key which permits us to appreciate the basic structure of Babar and that of almost all the children's literature of our time. To summarize it in a word, the basic form of ideological domination must be the use of *innocence* to de-realize and reconcile the contradictions of the system.

We have already said that through the elephants the traditional values are incorporated pedagogically in the child. Not only are we informed in what beneficial way Africa (or any other primitive sector) has been brought up by civilization, but also it is demonstrated in what way innocent beings, playful, ignorant, affectionate, ingenuous — in short, children, in short, elephants — are confined in the world of grown-ups and have a place in it. Parallel to the historical schema of the land of the elephants, a psychological-social message is developed: just as the elephants have adapted to the world, and have grown up, thus the child must do so as well. And he is assured that he has nothing to lose, he can be an adult without renouncing his child condition, just as in the utopia of Babar one can be African and European, man and animal, developed and underdeveloped, working without exploitation or money. ("Before going to sleep Babar thinks about this beautiful day. We will work happily, he tells himself, and thus we will continue using contented".) It is possible to enter the responsible world of adults, without denying ourselves the rights of childhood. It is possible to be initiated in the European world without losing one's nature.

The space in which this literature is perpetuated appears as essentially innocent: living tribally, without money, the relationships between people are simple and Edenic, dwelling proximity to the natural (also understood as ingenuous, immediate, without artifice or complexities) and all this is connected with one of the great human myths, that of the golden age, a uterine space, a paradisaical womb. A scenario is fostered, which corresponds to infancy, and within it the animals make possible the necessary identification and projection. The child learns thus — through an alter ego elephant, but which could be a dog, bear, lion, bird — to admire the paternalistic civilized forms, work, education, etc., as though he were also another animal (another colonized being), another little savage who must come to fruit. The customs of the world are learned imitating the evolution of the elephants: the latter begin in a primitive state, crawling (four legs), start to mature, put on clothes, then work, acquire responsibilities. The changes in the child's world, in the stages of each individual's growth, coincide with the transformations in the same world of the elephants. But by means of this identification, of this innocent bridge, he acquires a pseudo-historical vision, he is introduced to a pre-existing scheme concerning the dialectic, to a prioristic way of understanding the world in which he lives (prejustification of a history which he doesn't yet know, but which he now has located, interpreted and snugly fastened in its place).

Innocence is therefore the habitual substratum which makes ideological domination possible: the stages of colonial penetration, the stages of the native's assumption of western civilization as the norm of perfection, (the same stages in which the child legitimizes that civilization and allows himself to be engaged within the limits of its system, form an indivisible whole, confusing through the process of innocence, economic innocence, sexual innocence, almost metaphysical, natural innocence. The child does not suspect the animal (nor the adult): the confidence which the animals place in the system is translated into confidence which the children feel with respect to the animals.

The world of adults can conserve, while being permeated with ingenuousness, all its essential dominating characteristics, can be transferred to the child and internalized without creating anti-bodies of rejection. The child swallows *en bloc* the world itself, the system and its necessary kindness, the forms of its functioning, and this will permit him to flow through the ducts of socialization: the child prepares himself to function, to be an adult, to be Babar; to learn that this colonization (by his parents, by the most advanced nations) is highly beneficial to those who receive it, that those primitive nations (one of which may well be his own) are in a submissive and excellent relationship with mother-Europe, and that whatever type of dependence (his, on the values of his parents) is equally magnificent, and that he — elephant — will continue gloriously and without interruption the labor started by his ancestors, the old lady, grandma, the governess, mother church. Individual psychological life has been confused with the historical life of nations, and the result is a parallel

structure of domination in both, just as he has been treated like a child for his own good, thus the natives have to be, thus the backward nations The underdeveloped are children (and not a consequence of a world imperialist system), who only needed, education, only needed technology to accede to the western, Christian, adult world. The contradictions and the changes are explained thus by biologizing the stages in society. The way in which the child grows up, will foster in him the idea that the maturing of the peoples-identical-to-children will be similar, will follow the same auspicious channels: the colonial and family systems reinforce each other mutually.

The innocence of that world appears in this way as the framework which makes possible all the other inversions and concealments. In animals the history of men — without its contradictions — can be developed; society moves within the limits of the "natural". The child is positioned at just the right spot of removal and closeness with respect to the models: he senses they are human beings, but at the same time knows they are not. This first fusion of nature and society, of animality and history, is the introductory step to the later simplification of the real tensions, the unity of city and country, development and underdevelopment, Europe and Africa, order and liberty, work and happiness. The contradictions have been resolved, we have arrived at the end of human history: it is not essential for socialism to realize *through the dialectics of change* the overcoming of the antagonisms, their synthesis, because in reality — just as men are elephants and elephants men — there is no such antagonism, no irreconcilable tension exists.

And hence the name of the protagonist: *Babar* recalls the childlike (the babble, the stutter, the naive repetition of syllables, but it is also a way of referring to Papar, to the father, to the admired future model. And as if it were small matter the idea is attached of babarian ("babare" in French), a barbarian missing an *r*, a quasi-barbarian, a semi, a perhaps, a who knows. And likewise the script in which the story is written appears equally naive: rounded, a little hesitant, careful, almost archetypal in a young child who has already learnt to write.

There are many other methods of preserving the innocence of that paternal figure. Among them, the most notable is a constant fluttering of birds around Babar, a gentle spiritualization of his character, a benediction of wings. It is something like — excepting the distance — the circle of violins about the illuminated head of Christ in Bach's *Passion According to Saint Matthew*. The story is always commenting on the message, reaffirming it pictorially.¹⁹

But the story is not over yet. There remains a final stage, which will last forever. In the anniversary parade of Celesteville the elephants are seen dressed up in costumes from all ages and countries: musketeers, Napoleonic Roman soldiers, lancers, boy scouts, etc.

Let us remember that the elephants do not have a cultural past of their own, since before the arrival of Babar they lived primitively and ingenuously in the haven of cyclical nature, they breathed paradise without time and without problems, in which one day was identical to the next. But on receiving a present modelled on Europe, on the commencement of colonialization and assimilation, they jump to another stage: they must attach themselves to the European past, invent an elephantine history which may be human history. The land of the elephants loses its essence of colony, its dependence on annulling the consciousness and knowledge of its peculiar situation: it now desires to be totally assimilable to Europe, for on erasing the past of the elephants and substituting it with a European one, the whole previous stage is cancelled, it eliminates all reference to the fact that an elephant once fled to the city and returned Prometheus-like with civilization and that they had a war with the rhinoceroses and were caged in and all the rest. The land of the elephants is not a mere orbit of Europe; it is one more of the centres which consider themselves heirs to the universality of western culture. It is not enough to adopt the present conditions of Europe (i.e. industries, etc.), but rather it is imperative to abolish its own history and to live that of the colonizers.

And therefore, simultaneously (out of the blue, so as to avoid questions) Babar's three children are born: the first generation conceived in the civilized ambit. This fictitious past is constructed for the children, for the heirs to the kingdom. It is a European world, radically removed from Babar's infancy: their mischief, accidents, toys (they have miniature lions and giraffes), are those of human beings. On the way to Belletroupe Castle a completely European landscape is seen: A tractor, a plane, a latest model stationwagon, a lorry. The mechanization of the land of the elephants implies — for the author — the suppression of the past, the fading out of primitivism.

"In the majestic hallway, the children admire the ancestors' portraits. Oh what an elegant musketeer, says Arthur. I prefer the Roman, says Zephyr". But we know that, given the progress of Babar from a primordial state to great worshipper and importer of civilization, it is impossible for their ancestors to be Romans, or Renaissance or Eighteenth Century people. They were simply elephants. Just as western history is imposed on subjugated races as their own, as *theirs*, when in reality their history is that of pitiless socio-economic domination, similarly the tracks left by the elephants in their march towards this civilized state are wiped out. It becomes impossible for the little elephants (and the equally little children) even to glimpse the

process of changes which were necessary for "progress" to arrive in that land. The earlier books are erased, even that fictitious pseudo-history remains subsumed within the temporal European canons. The falsification which Babar verifies from his own past, which in turn was already an idealization (the rosy history of the conquest and exploitation), corresponds to a dependent bourgeoisie which ends up perpetuating, detemporalizing, the roots of the real. Babar's children (and the readers) learn the history of Europe as their own, but from this recollection has been eliminated all reference to the rest of the world, by the domination of which capitalism developed some countries and stunted others. The elephants become men, and do not wonder about their strange hybrid being of elephantman. We are "the English of South America", "the Switzerland of America". This need has been brilliantly described by Fanon and by Clevaver: the neo-colonial and racist mentality wishes to establish a dependent relationship in which the exploited behave as children and are loved as such, as . . . elephants. "Every colonized people", writes Fanon, "— in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality — finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation: that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle."²⁰ (italics added). At the back of Babar one feels, then, the racist theory with which capitalism has justified anthropologically its superiority: the coloured man needs the white man, there is a subconscious desire to be squashed and to surrender their personality. As woman needs man and wishes to be subjugated, possessed; as the child renders the father indispensable. All relationships which recur in the books and reiterate the central thesis.

Thus Babar, his family and his realm enter the territory certain of lasting stability, of progress without change. From now onwards, the world will be immutable. On assimilating completely the bourgeois normativity, all possibility of transformation is lost, since not even the falsified roots exist: each incident, as in TV series, as in picture stories, as in comic stories, as in the majority of the products of alienating mass consumption, resembles structurally the following and the previous one, it is one more in a concatenation of identities within a static totality. The whole evolution of Babar has been created with the ultimate intention of acting as though he did not exist, to arrive at an ideal situation, identical to that of other characters, like Donald, Porky, Woody, etc. In the case of Babar it is especially interesting: he covers a path which other storybook animals have not covered (there are atemporal, asexual, their country neither advances nor deteriorates, they were never born, they have no father or mother), to finish up the same as them: in not knowing his history, the stages of his genesis, he is absorbed into Donald Duck or whoever, he becomes identical to him, and therefore the tales which are going to be reproduced in this mythical, ahistorical space, will not differ from those which occur in other storybooks. In this way, Babar can be transformed into a monthly magazine, a television series.

The miracle has been completed: the elephants are Europeans and they have Greek mythological statues, cherubims, satyrs, sirens, in pachyderm shape. Africa has been forgotten. But without doubt the elephants continue being innocent, good, and a little marginal, since therein rests their particular value. The author will focus from now on those moments when the elephants adopt such and such a specific western value, and which thus serves as a way of teaching the child-reader to accept, to learn, that characteristic as well. The primitive is erased insofar as historical stage, but not where a substratum which facilitates the learning of the apparatus and the processes of domination.

An example: *Babar and Father Christmas*. The little elephants discover how the children in other countries celebrate Christmas. "Don't you think we could write to him (Father Christmas) so that he might come to our houses in the land of the elephants?" But Father Christmas does not reply and Babar has to intervene: "Why didn't it occur to me before? I will go myself and ask Father Christmas to come to the land of the elephants". He follows the trail until managing to have a word with the Christmas visitor: "Babar asks him to go to his kingdom to distribute toys to the little elephants, just as he does with the children of men". After bringing the Old Man to the land of the elephants, where he relaxes in the sun, the reward comes: the responsibility is delegated to Babar. "Do you know what there is inside this bag? A Father Christmas suit of your size! A magic costume, which will enable you to fly (my italics) through the air, and a basket always full of toys. You will substitute for me on Christmas Eve in the land of the elephants. I promise to return when I have finished work and bring you a beautiful Christmas tree for your children." Babar imports, and then embodies the foreign model, which naturally is sought by all children (elephant and human) since it carries with it benefits and gifts. Paternalism is accentuated, the international habit is internalized: the attainment of happiness and wellbeing comes from imitating "the land of men" until there is no distinction. The great White Father fuses with the Great Father King and they mutually glamorize each other. For the children (for the elephants) the

representative of Father Christmas, and therefore of magic, of control over the air, of the paradise of presents and profit, of power, the representative of foreign charity and the channel through which it arrives, the one who assures the continuation of childhood forever, is Babar, chief, father, civilized being, thrice powerful, God.

Babar is and isn't Father Christmas: he bestows presents but his suit is a foreign disguise. The children intuit that the true strength of Babar rests in maintaining an adequate, affectionate relationship with the land of men. The creatures who come from outside become indispensable, as much for the economic progress of the land of the elephants, as for the psychological wellbeing of the reader, who has already appropriated his role in the power structure (father-son, metropolis-satellite, rigidity-instinct) and who expects to see concretized and verified at all times the same system. Repetition creates a mental habit and everything converges to create a neutralized child — and, in the future, man.

Thus, from "outside" Professor Grifaton arrives, brother of the old lady (the gerontocracy continues): he brings a series of novelties, each one more marvelled at by the elephants. He goes out to catch butterflies for his collection: he is the intellectual (or technocrat) who comes to tell the natives about the riches they have and how they should exploit them. The drawing we see now shows books, a microscope, a series of scientific instruments, geometric designs on the wall and a Picasso reproduction. This space is of Europe, but always a little behind the times, always faintly animal: sufficient to always import the technology, science, the art, the progress of Europe, the latest model Citroën. The young readers, themselves a little behind the times, will identify themselves with the elephants, especially the children of the elephants, and will also find those ideals admirable, the constant need to modernize themselves, to be up-to-date; technocracy as a solution to problems.²¹

A cave is discovered. It is Professor Grifaton, with his enterprising spirit, who leads to it being explored. "This cave interests me a great deal", says Professor Grifaton. "Do you not also think, my dear Babar, that we should explore it?" And they set out on an expedition, provided with modern equipment (helmets, lamps, etc.). But the affair does not end here. On discovering an underground river, "Dear commandant", says Professor Grifaton (note the politeness, a certain paternal condescension, distance and affection, a certain patience in the professor's voice), "wouldn't it be marvellous if all the elephants could sail up and down the subterranean river in motor launches? I have had an idea to build a pleasure boat". The ideas are always accepted with a "Bravo", "Long live", "Yes, yes", fixed interjectional forms which reaffirm assent and imposition. The result is a boat: "atomic propulsion with paddle wheels". Once again the most advanced technology (the atomic) is blended and made innocent, with the nostalgia of an earlier age, of an uncontaminated and placid world (the paddles).

But the ulterior aim of Professor Grifaton is tourism; the out of the way place is hitched to the world economic system, being transformed into a retreat for happiness and relaxation. Without industrializing the country, and furthermore maintaining it in an "exotic" state, "conserving" it, its nature and ancient traditions are traded on. It is developed, certainly, but it is a photographic development: the country is sublimated within a postcard, a *souvenir*, a "memento of Chile", and the inhabitants — in order to extract the tourists' money — must fit in with them and adjust their landscapes (their natural resources) to the demands of the travel agencies, must read about themselves through almanacs, encyclopedias, guidebooks, handbooks (for Junior Woodchucks).

The plan is a success. "And in the evening, in the amusement hall, Cornelius decorates Professor Grifaton, with the order of merit, as benefactor of Celesteville". The hospital and educational services of the old lady, already received their reward; now it is the turn of the bearer of the Scientific Word.

The form of domination — as time passes — is modernized. "The latest ideological invasion", writes Gunder Frank, "proposes that North American know-how and technology can resolve all the problems of the peoples of the world, with simply showing the Yankees to apply them without meddling. In industry this means foreign investments and a higher degree of monopolization . . . and unemployment. In agriculture this means methods of cultivation, seeds, fertilizers and machinery, etc. from the United States . . . and the production of fertilizers and machinery by Standard Oil and Ford. For the population, it means birth control through contraceptive pills, and medicines . . . and pharmaceutical companies. For culture it means 'the American way of life' in everything, through the media of mass expression, 'popular' education, through 'science', through electronic statistics, etc. The great Latin American bourgeoisie accepts all this on the basis of lesser partner. The 'nationalist' elements in the bourgeoisie and part of the petty bourgeoisie reject North American participation, but accept the technology, saying they will apply it themselves . . . and better."²²

And the children, what do they say to all this? "At home, the children watch the fete (the decoration) on television, in the company of the old lady. They are very excited and clap loudly."

Thus, the Babar books never miss a chance to accentuate

paternalism and even if occasionally the grown-ups come out slightly ridiculed, generally there is a tendency towards adoration of the fathers and their civilization. A divine transcendence is affirmed (God) which grants validity and meaning to the world. Liberty, non-dependence, is rejected.

But this means that the ties of domination can be made clear without much problem: the very rebelliousness of the child will end up disproving the relationships which are established in Babar's world, however innocent may be the unending jargon of submission.

Therefore, before ending, it would be interesting to show, although briefly, a form of domination in children's literature which proves to be more hidden and subtle, and consequently more dangerous: a complete ideological inversion. I have chosen, for this comparative effect, an episode in the hazardous life of Donald Duck (No. 434 of *Disneyland*).

In the first picture we are presented with a meeting of the "prudent parent club of Duckland". "It is the duty of all parents to watch for the safety of their children", asserts a mastodontic and old fashioned woman from a platform. Among the audience, Donald Duck stands out, wanting: if his nephews were in danger, "I would resort to my great strength and skill to rescue them". And now he will have an opportunity to put into practice his knowledge and precautionary measures: they are about to travel to South America ("full of dangers"). It appears we are dealing with a paternalistic attitude similar to that of Babar. However, the world of adults is already satirized in the first scene, and Donald above all. All the grown-ups are ridiculous, cross-eyed, archaic, falsely solemn; they smile idiotically, sit in rigid postures, gathered together for a plainly absurd, grotesque reason. They are caricatures of parents, pigs, dogs, human beings intermingled. And the worst is Donald: everything he proposes (boasts, clichés, "correct" answers) is ridiculed in his imbecilic face, in his fixed obsession.

In effect, the next pictures confirm this intention to criticize the adult world: while the nephews calmly contemplate the wharf moving away, Donald (shouting out that he will save the children if they run any risk) sways on the deck railing. When Donald falls, it is the children who save him. This situation is repeated *ad nauseum*. Donald is stupid, foolhardy, cowardly, mistaken all the time, lacks forethought, is selfish and disorganized, and the children have to rescue him from the most unlikely situations. It is an upside-down world, emphasized by the four or five occasions when Donald appears drawn with legs in the air falling, floating half-drowned, etc.). The adult is good for nothing, in spite of his words, his grandiloquence, his outward gestures. It is the children, in this world, who represent goodness and intelligence.

The structure of the story therefore coincides apparently with the criticism which present-day children and young people direct at the adult world. In all of Disney's work the little creatures (Chipmunks, the Big Bad Wolf, Dumbo, the mice Gus and Jaq, the little pigs, Scamp the dog) are more mature than their elders and always come out victorious. The readers, consequently, may feel that here the ideal adventure of the marginalized is played out: those who have the power are eccentric, extravagant, failures, hardheaded, foolish. One of the intentions of the comic form²³ is to make the social burden weigh on those who do not fulfil their duty, who are a pure phantasmagoria.

However, having achieved the identification of the reader with the little ducks, it is necessary to ask oneself, in effect, from where is the criticism of the stupidities of Donald Duck exercised, from what objectivity and norm? First, from his very intentions which are not discussed, and which are not fulfilled: the necessity of an order to protect the defenceless from danger. And secondly, from the responsible actions of the nephews: they are all that he should be. Rational, cautious, generous, wise, foresighted, brave, responsible, in a word, paternal. It transpires that Donald Duck, in the form of adult, is in reality a child, and that the young ducks, in the form of children, are in reality adults. The child attacks Donald Duck who represents all the childish characteristics; the child identifies with the nephews who symbolize all the adult characteristics. The nephews, for example, have to their credit the Junior Woodchuck Handbook, where all reality (amid that reality is South America) is defined and prescribed. There is nothing to discover in the world: everything is already written,²⁴ everything has already been met. It is sufficient now to apply the pre-established nomenclature, technocratize the universe, find the page of an encyclopedia in order for the problems to disappear. Chance (the great adventurous protagonist of these comic strips) remains subordinated to rationality and order: if Donald ascribed to these categories it would no longer be laughable, there would be no further discordance in the world. We could continue enumerating characteristics. But what is urgent is not deep analysis in this instance. It is important to note how an *inversion* has been brought about.

The child participates in the domination of himself, in the criticism of his axioms, and validates the paternalistic features in the universe when he identifies with children who are in reality the adults. The energies which tend to be rebellious, and which should destroy the existing order, inquiring into the contradictory sense of the world, are taken advantage of to neutralize an unruly being, are channelled so as to reaffirm the dominating categories in society. It is permitted that Babar criticize the old lady, make himself independent, live his own

life, his country be liberated; but always provided he does it in the surreptitious name of the values represented by the old lady, provided he assumes the authentic representation of the western and Christian world. In favour of the existing order, Donald's little nephews should manage the situation. When they are adults, when they grow up, they will not repeat the wild errors of their elders. They will continue to progress, rising from sergeant to commanding officer, to general of Disneyland Club, from Junior Woodchucks, climbing *en masse*, small but reliable.

Behind Babar, behind Donald Duck, behind the multiplicity of children's literature in the capitalist countries, there is a single bourgeois vision, a single clear aim: to convince the dominators and the dominated of the goodness of the system, and to legitimize the forms in which it may be changed without threatening the existing order. In our dependent countries this literature acquires a particularly harmful function, since its preconceptions coincide with the way in which we were colonized, the way in which our economy is organized, our culture, our institutions. The bourgeoisie of the "advanced" countries educates its young with these models and the same do for our nations, because we also must be integrated into the scheme, repeat it by heart, just as it is done by the children and adolescents of the dominators and beneficiaries. This form of literature penetrates the whole functioning order, the whole theory of the universe and is reinforced by society as a whole.

A mere denunciation, a substructural, idealistic endeavour to replace these forms with others is not enough. If there is no change in the system of economic, political, cultural domination, if there is not a revolution, the new children's forms conceived will be branded as mere propaganda, and will be rejected as such. Precisely, the dominating ideology is not obtrusive because it flows with the system, because it reinforces and does not break the ties in force. Nobody takes notice of Babar because Babar is a part and echo of the accepted reality. The moment that Babar should start to do mad things, to stand on the side of the proletariat, to educate his children in a different way, to use another (poetic) language, the defence mechanism would end up expelling him, he would make himself too conspicuous. The struggle against current forms cannot be done surreptitiously, because the break with the order calls attention to itself. While every emphasis, every justification, inversion, is camouflaged in the environment, is dissolved in the set-up.

The new forms of children's literature will have to emerge in the struggle for a new society, they will become necessary in that combat. Only the destruction of the capitalist system, the gradual defeat of economic and mental neo-colonialism, can guarantee that one day, finally, Babar may risk killing the old lady and, by the loss of his innocence, hit upon the first step on the road to complete liberation.

Translated by John Lyons © 1978

1. Cf. among other texts by Althusser, *La revolución teórica de Marx*, Siglo XXI, 1967; Lucien Sebag, *Marxism y estructuralismo*, Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1969, and the studies by Armand Mattelart, published in the CEREN.

2. Babar emerged in 1939 and reached its widest distribution after the Second World War. Thus it coincided with the neo-colonialist thesis regarding the African colonies which were gaining independence. Without being simplistic we may observe that the children who read Babar in France were the same ones who fought in Algeria; that those who read Babar in England support the Labour and Conservative line on South Africa and Rhodesia; as for the North Americans, we know very well where they have been, are, and will be. When Babar is translated into Spanish in 1965 and imported into Latin American countries, there is an acceptance of the process of ideological domination of the children of dependent bourgeoisie, which proceeds to interpret their own countries with the patterns and concepts of imperialism. This coincides, furthermore, with the reformist policy of the 'Alliance for Progress'.

3. "Myth does not, then, lend significance to an object which before the myth was lacking; on the contrary, it derives from the signs which make up social reality and superimposes a second meaning . . . This second superimposed meaning is presented in the myth as the unique meaning, and causes the first one to disappear, or if you prefer, 'eclipse it'." Elíseo Verón, *Conducta, estructura y comunicación*, Buenos Aires, Jorge Alvarez, p.234, 1968.

4. "Writing being the spectacularly compromised form of the word, contains simultaneously, through a rich ambiguity, the being and the semblance of power, what it is and what it would have believed of it." R.Barthes, *El grado cero de la escritura*, Buenos Aires, Jorge Alvarez, p.26, 1967.

5. This is not the place to go into the geographical mystifications which occur in children's storybooks. However, I cannot resist the temptation to go a little deeper into this reference to Aztecland. On the one hand this place is an abstraction, remote, non-existent, incredible; consequently, any adventure could take place there, and there would be no

other order than that brought by the characters. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that this country is Mexico and no other. There is a tendency to judge the real country (Mexico) as exotic, primitive, having external categories of the fictitious country it represents. The caricature substitutes the face itself. The poverty of these countries, their backwardness, do not have causes: it is a mere superficial eccentricity. This implies that to solve their problems it is sufficient to *technocratize* them (underdevelopment is a lack of modernity); and that the inhabitants of these very places, or similar places, become self-aware within the terms of the dominant ideology. The peculiar characteristics of the marginal country (a way of creating new sensations) distinguish themselves among nations which occupy an equal position of dependence and which continue judging each other mutually according to the models lent by the dominators, making fun of themselves when they think they are doing it of others.

6. Cf. Gaston Bachelard, *El aire y los sueños, ensayo sobre la imaginación del movimiento*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura, 1968. Also my essay 'To Fly? A study of the narrative of Jorge Edwards and Antonio Skarmeta', *Revista Chilena de Literatura*, 1, pp.59-78, autumn 1970.

7. Cf. Wolfgang Kayser, 'Origen y crisis de la novela moderna', *Mapocho*, year II, vol.III, No.3, vol.9, pp.58-60.

8. Cf. Ian Watt, 'Robinson Crusoe as a Myth', in *Eighteenth Century English Literature*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp.155-173, 1959. The pages of Marx's *Capital* are too well-known to be quoted; here also occurs a production of goods in isolation, a fiction of the *homo economicus*.

9. In *La Diana*, by Jorge de Montemayor; in the pastoral comedies of Shakespeare; in the plays of Lope de Vega; in Sannazaro's *Arcadia*; in *Asdrábal* by Urte, this division within nature proclaims its ambiguity: a generous and basically rational and courtly (shepherd) nature, opposed to a passionate, unrestrainable nature (Machiavellian characters, horrifying wild men who disavow the law of God to have themselves on their instincts).

10. Everything happens by chance in this world. There is a concept of changes as catastrophic, random, and in general unpredictable: the mother's death, meeting with the kindness of the old lady, the king's death, and now the war of the elephants. There are never reasons why anything happens: it is clouded in magic, in the inexplicable, the harsh day-to-day of facts.

11. Cf. Erik E.Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Penguin, 1965. Apart from this, the other characteristics of the old lady permit her relationship with the real world to be traced. In France, her figure acquires vaguely recognisable features: the effigy of Marianne, of Joan of Arc, of the Statue of Liberty (given to a country which is shaking off its colonial ties), but subjected to an aging, possibly a result of the well-being and the refraining from too close relationships. Furthermore, the neo-colonialist theory accentuates the neutral and mediatory role of the state regarding the conflicts between the monopoly which operates from its own country and the interests of the conquered nations. Her austere benevolence appears thus uncontaminated by those perverse elements.

12. The elephants are always dancing. According to the racist theory concerning negroes, that is what they are good "at that", that they excel in music and sport. Cf. Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on ice*, Dell, 1968.

13. Albert, Babar plays tennis with Pilophage and his wife, that is to say, he keeps on good terms with the military and no one else.

14. 'What's wrong with Africa?', in *International Socialist Journal*, Milan, 1, 4, August 1964, and by the same author, *The Search for a New Society, Which Way Africa?*, Penguin, 1964.

15. Davidson, op.cit., p.482.

16. Lincoln Gordon, 'Abraxo versus Coexistencia. Otros comentarios', in *Contraversia sobre Latinoamérica*, directed by Alberto O.Hirschman, Buenos Aires, Editorial del Instituto di Tella. Rostow's book, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist manifesto*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1960. The stages he distinguishes are: "the traditional society; the preconditions for take off; the take off; the drive to maturity; the age of high consumption". The relationship between biology and economy are evident, as are the terms extracted from aeronautical jargon. Babar flies with Rostow's wings.

17. Gunder Frank, Cockcroft, Johnson, *Economía Política del subdesarrollo en América Latina*, Buenos Aires, Signos, 1970; Petras and Zeitlin, *Latin America: Reform or Revolution? A Reader*, Facet, 1968. Theotonio dos Santos, *El nuevo carácter de la dependencia*, CESCO, Univ. of Chile, 1968.

18. "From the newly constituted league of Nations they accepted the duty of governing them [the African countries] as a 'sacred trust of civilization' until such time as they were able to 'stand on their own feet' in the arduous conditions of the modern world"; and Page, *A short History of Africa*, Penguin, p.210, 1962. Cf. also Romano Ledda, 'Africa: a stage of transition, Social classes and Political Struggle', *International Socialist Journal*, Milan, IV, No.22, pp.560-580, August 1967.

19. Cf. Umberto Eco, *Apocalípticos e integrados ante la cultura de masas*, Lumen, the section 'El lenguaje del comic', pp.169-178, 1968.

20. *Black Skin White Masks*, Palatin 1970, London, p.14.

21. On technocratic models. Cf. Armand Mattelart, Carmen Castillo, Leonardo Castillo, *La ideología de la dominación en una sociedad dependiente*, Buenos Aires, Signos, 1970.

22. 'Subdesarrollo capitalista o revolución socialista', in *Pensamiento crítico*, La Habana, No.13, pp.3-41, Feb., 1968.

23. For an analysis of the comical see my study, 'La muerte como acto imaginativo en Cien Años de Soledad', in *Imaginación y violencia en América*, Santiago, Universitaria, 1970.

24. The world would be pre-coded signs where mythology is possible. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Las palabras y las cosas*, Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1968.

...under complaint about police
 inquiry violence. Mr Chris Rail, London quar
 ashes, area organiser of APEX, alleged day,
 and that one of the organisers of Geor
 who the strike, Mr John Patel, aged publi
 that 23, had been repeatedly hit by time
 bruta- a policeman who called him a the
 "Paki bastard." his 2

"PAKI BASTARD" (Portrait of the artist as a black person) a live event with slides and sound by RASHEED ARAEEN

"Paki Bastard" is the 2nd part of the trilogy (an
 events) which was conceived in 1976/77 as part of
 Preliminary Notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO
 published in Black Phoenix No.1 and which
 dealt with the relationship between the Third
 World and the West. "Paki Bastard" was
 performed on July 31 1977 at the ARRESTS FOR
 DEMOCRACY, London, specially tailored to
 the production of black people in Britain.
 It was also how a black artist, separated from his
 original environment in the Third World and
 rejected by white society in the West, eventually
 comes to terms and identifies with the reality of
 his people. The 1st and 2nd parts, entitled "Noble
 Savage" and "Evil Savage" respectively, were
 performed after this year.

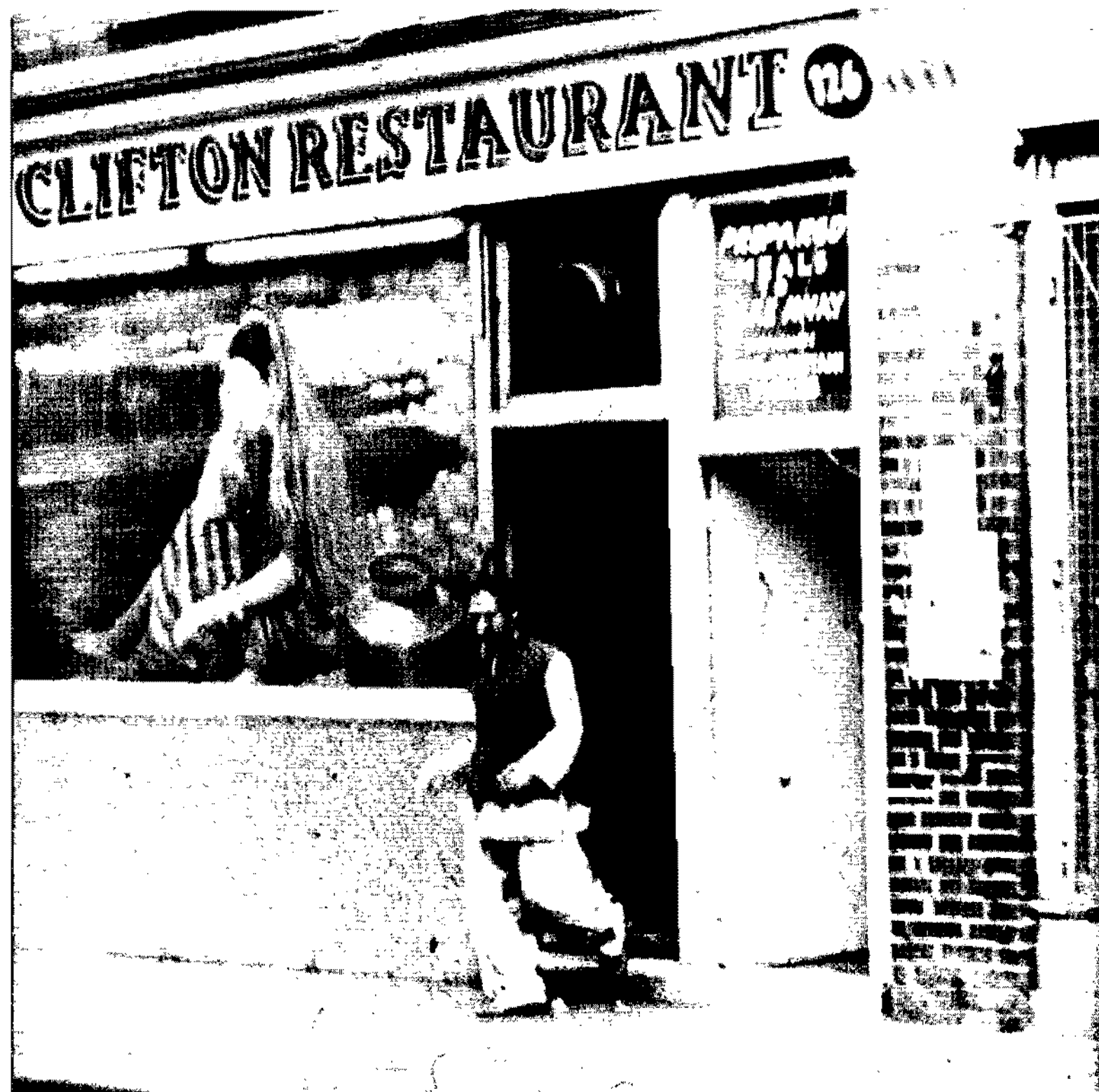
NOTE

The following 6 photographs is
 a selection from 50 sequences.
 The text is not exactly the
 interpretation of the images
 here, but contains some of the
 thoughts that went into the
 making of the work. And althoug
 h it contains autobiographical
 references, it would be wrong
 to read it at personal level.

He sits there facing a slide projector, blind and gagged, holding a broom that defines his
 role in the contemporary world. In the background is the flute sound he made some time ago
 when he was very depressed. (He can't play 'music'.) The projector projects on him the
 image of one of his earlier works, the purpose being to create an artistic identity which
 is used throughout the piece in various manners. It also alludes, at a different level, to
 the mythical space, which is elevated, privileged and universalised, and in which the artist
 of the bourgeois world ends up cocooned and incarcerated. It is the mythical space within
 which the bourgeois 'freedom of artistic expression' manifests, and which is inversely pro-
 portional to the real space at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. The black, Third
 World, person thus remains outside this space confronted with reality.



Sitting alone in a café in Brick Lane, he listens to the sexy, jazzy, romantic, sugary,
 vulgar, ... Indian film songs that pour out continuously from a jukebox. He is overtaken
 by nostalgia... He thinks of the time, his youth, when he himself secretly entertained the
 thoughts of becoming a film hero... He remembers his friends with whom he went to school/
 university, with whom he spent long evenings sitting in cafés and quite often talking
 about what was new from the West - literature, art, films, etc. How they all longed for
 the free and bohemian life in Paris, London, New York,... He thinks of his mother, father,
 brothers and sisters, who are still waiting for his return. They thought that their eldest
 son, their eldest brother, would one day be a successful engineer - after all he did comp-
 lete his graduation. He would have been the pride of the family! But he had the crazy idea



of going to Paris and instead becoming a famous artist. They wouldn't understand. He had to tell them a lie, that he was going abroad for higher education... He remembers the day when he left. The whole family came to see him off at the harbour. How his two youngest sisters refuse to leave the ship... About three weeks later he was actually in Paris, lonely and homesick. He thought Paris was the centre of civilization... He thought of going back home, but he couldn't face the idea of being called a coward by his friends.... Instead he took train to London... Fourteen years is a long time... How could he come to terms with his 'failures'...

He exits. He leaves behind the fantasies, his own memories, his old dreams, and enters the world of real. It took him some time to realise that his own predicament is not unique. He is in fact part of the people who have been colonised, dominated and uprooted. He finally comes to accept the fact that he is part of the humanity which is being denied its own history, its culture and civilisation being undermined and plundered. He begins to under-

Ahead of him in Hanbury Street was a young Bengali boy. As the boy approached a bend he was surrounded by six white youths. When Rouf rushed to his aid, the gang produced bottles from inside their coats and attacked him, cutting his scalp, cheek and wrists.

This was one of a series of random and vicious assaults



stand why he left his own country; why people leave their own countries and seek livelihood in the hostile and aggressive environment of Western cities. He can now see that the violence which is being inflicted upon people, whether it is physical violence or mental,

April 20 1978
KENNETH SINGH
MURDERED

May 4 1978
ALTAB ALI
STABBED TO DEATH

June 26 1978
ALI ESHAQUE
MURDERED

is the violence of the international economic system that has reduced most of the mankind to poverty and starvation. He can see now the true face of the civilisation that he once cherished. But confronted with all this violence and miseries he feels helpless again.... He thinks of the wretched of the earth, of his own 'wasted' life... Depression overtakes him again.....



But fallen men and women rise up again with the call of liberation. Remember Algeria, Vietnam... The sound of early morning at Grunwick, perhaps the longest strike (690 days) in the history of working class struggle, wakes him up from his sleep, from his apathy. The struggle of the people all over the world against all kind of domination, physical as well as mental, gives him hope and courage. He gets up to join the people: they in turn become part of his new consciousness...

(The role of art in human struggle perhaps needs a comment here. Should art become an instrument of a political struggle in a mechanistic and functional way, or it should maintain its specific function vis-a-vis ideology. If we truly accept the dialectics of the process of transformation, the dialectical interaction between different human activities, taking into consideration both the collective and individual levels of conscious-

ness, as well as the subjectivity (psyche) of the individual which is necessary for the artistic reflection of the system to which one is living, then any prescription that marginalizes the role of the art must be rejected.)

However, the piece ends with a synthesis (above photograph): The top left is the face of an Indian woman who, after the big demo at Grunwick in which 10,000 people took part and in which many people were injured as the result of police violence (according to a Time Out report people received injuries on testicles and breasts), stands alone outside Grunwick holding a playcard that reads AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL. The word INJURY appears on the floor next to the artist cutting the broom into pieces. The top right is a sculpture done a few years ago by cutting the wood into pieces and then structuring them together.....

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL COLONIALISM

Kenneth Coutts-Smith

This paper was offered to the Congress of AICA held in Lisbon, September 1976. We are reprinting the paper here as the author's contribution to the debate initiated by 'BLACK MANIFESTO' published in our last issue, with due acknowledgement to ARTERY in which the paper was first published in winter 1976-77. The two illustrations are our own choice.

Traditionally, historians of culture in general and art-critics in particular have tended to base their analyses and their theoretical platforms upon the assumption that art somehow represents the embodiment or the concretization of basic values and fundamental truths that exist somewhere outside of history, beyond social mutation, external to political and economic reality.

The complex of ideas that is clustered around the interrelated notions of the essential spirituality of art, the sublimity of the creative experience and the passion of genius, has served as a central nexus in the vast majority of thinking concerning matters of aesthetics since the inception of that area of inquiry as a specific discipline down to the present point in time. The validity of this position is, however, currently being severely questioned; though from the great majority of published art-criticism in specialist books, in art journals and in catalogue prefaces, it would not seem that our discipline has yet begun to take much note of a major shift in focus that is now occurring in the broad spectrum of world culture.

The present commentator himself is no longer able to accept the idea of the extra-historicity of art and the notion that artistic events take place in some manner in a continuum that is divorced from social and political dynamics. It also appears evident to him that when (in the vast majority of instances) we speak of a world-wide 'high' culture, a significant part of which is formed by the whole spectrum of the Fine Arts, we are actually speaking of a tradition that is largely restricted to the European cultural experience. Even a cursory glance at recent issues of the various 'international' art journals, or at museum and major exhibition catalogues, whether they emanate from Europe, from North America, Latin America, Soviet Russia, India, Japan or wherever, reveals a homogeneity of thought which fails utterly to question the Eurocentricity of most contemporary art-critical assumptions.

The two phenomena, the notion of the extra-historicity of art and the Eurocentric bias of our thinking on culture, are not merely in a clear reciprocal relationship but would seem to be mutually dependent one upon the other. In the present writer's opinion, they would also appear to be central aspects of a total attitude towards art which cannot, in clear honesty, be defined as anything less than Cultural Colonialism.

The stated theme of this present Congress is **Modern Art and Negro-African Art, Reciprocal Relations**. Such a subject obviously presupposes an examination of the relationship between African culture in terms of its national and regional heritage and its present manifestations on the one hand and the historically-defined edifice of European culture on the other. This inquiry cannot possibly avoid the issue of Cultural Colonialism, and the following observations are offered in the hope that they may be found to be of some value in this debate.

These observations, however, can only serve at this point in time as a sketch outlining the problem in broad strokes and thus attempt to define the general areas in which research and analysis is indicated. This specific inquiry is currently of an extremely pressing nature for obvious moral as well as historical reasons; but the scope of the question is very wide and far-reaching, penetrating as it does into every corner and cranny of our cultural superstructure, into every assumption and belief that helps to support our identity and self-esteem, into every facet and aspect of life that we regard as justifying our individual roles and activities.

In the broadest sense, what we regard generally as culture and specifically as art is the continually mutating end-product of a process that is basically mythic in nature, that is to say, a process in which beliefs and assumptions gain substance, become validated. But the dynamics of culture do not only lead in this way towards the fluid identification of a collective identity within a society, they also tend towards the freezing of concepts supportive to the interests of a dominant minority within that society.¹ Ideas which are at first the products of historical necessity are thus transformed into absolutes that are cited in justification of attempts to arrest the historical process, to maintain the status-quo.

The need to examine our present cultural assumptions in the light of the above contention cannot be emphasised strongly enough. It would seem that in the present majority view, there is hardly a single facet of that complex structure which we refer to as 'high' culture that is understood to remain conditional upon historic necessity; rather, the whole cultural superstructure appears to be generally regarded as constituting a self-enclosed system obedient only to the exigencies of 'art-history'—a different matter altogether. The discipline of art-history has never, until now (excepting in the work of isolated individuals regarded, institutionally, as tangential) been required to submit itself to the historical rigours of social and political fact, but has been nourished in the main on poetic insight and metaphysical speculation.

Art-history has been, since its inception in the late Renaissance, ultimately little more than a scholarly elaboration of myths inescapably engendered by the twin concepts of the essential sublimity of the creative process (which logically defines art as an experience located in the sphere of the ideal rather than the actual) and the centrality of style (which predicated the sequential development of an art whose central subject-matter is restricted to its confrontation with previous art rather than with real experience taking place in history).

The notion of the extra-historicity of art is, however, clearly a false one—not even, but especially—in terms of the class who do not only defend this idea, but who have also raised it to an ideological imperative. The bourgeois insistence upon the idealist nature of the whole creative process can be seen to serve, on the one hand, as justifying the view held by that class that its understanding of the individualistic, competitive and acquisitive nature of man is not a class-view but an absolute human condition, and, on the other hand, to obscure the almost total appropriation of 'high' culture as both the private property and preserve of a privileged group and as the spiritual vindication of their continuing economic and political domination.

Enough has been written elsewhere upon the question of a dominant class appropriation of cultural institutions to dispense with arguing this point in the present context: it is hoped that it will be here accepted that the possession of a broad culture and of a liberal-humanist education is not merely the privilege of the bourgeoisie but that it also comprises the structure of the code signals by which individual members of the class recognize each other and consolidate their own private identities. The institutions in which the transference and acquisition of cultural property take place are set up in such a manner as to perpetuate existing class privileges and to restrict the entry of extra-class individuals to those whose status is considered in terms of necessary recruitment, that is to say, as candidates for indoctrination into the bourgeois value system.

It might be stated that it is not our purpose here to consider the still-existing, though possibly eroding, bourgeois class dominance other than where class hegemony relates to colonialist assumptions. But this finally would be a meaningless statement since it is not possible to separate either, historically, the development of bourgeois consciousness from the development of colonialism, or, socially, the bourgeois value-system from racist and imperialist assumptions of superiority. Very little that is fruitful can be achieved in attempting to think of imperialism as a phenomenon divorced from the class assumptions of capitalism; this is an error frequently made in the past by many writers concerning the internally-colonialist status of the Blacks in North America and elsewhere, and, more recently, in regard to the Amerindians and internally-colonialized aboriginal peoples. The 'whites', as a collective and political undifferentiated mass, rather than the capitalist system which produces the alienation requisite for racist attitudes, are seen as the oppressors.

In our present context it is absolutely crucial to recognize that the two questions of cultural colonialism and class appropriation are interrelated and interdependent; and, although space clearly precludes that this paper should attempt an analysis on these lines, it must be emphasized that the dimension of class contradiction be borne in mind throughout the remainder of this exposition.

We have intimated that culturally colonialist attitudes and assumptions permeate the whole domain of 'high' culture, and that this is nowhere more evident than across the spectrum of the Fine Arts. The reason for this may well be related to the reason for the apparent pre-eminence in our present culture of the visual mode in the arts over both the musical and the verbal. Up until the end of the 19th century it would appear that musical and verbal culture were more highly regarded than was plastic culture, which, with few significant exceptions, essentially was considered as being the province of mere artisans. Indeed, in Anglo-Saxon countries, such an attitude has persisted until very recently, whereby literature might, under certain circumstances, be considered a fit occupation for a gentleman, while, at the same time, there was something suspect, indeed disreputable, in the idea of making a career as a painter.

It is interesting to observe, over a period of time, the changing social attitudes of the European and North American middle-class towards the Fine Arts. This process is perhaps due less to the fact that financial profit was possible in both production and speculation than to the supposition that painting (and sculpture to a lesser extent) was the art-form that best objectified bourgeois ideals, since the individual picture could become property *in the absolute sense*, since it could uniquely embody both the status and the aspiration of its owner in a manner that was obviously denied to the poem, the novel, the play or the opera.

That direct financial potential was not a factor to be taken into serious account becomes clear if one is to remember that only twice in the history of art during modern times was there a brief situation of boom and speculation in which art production and marketing could be said to approach a sufficiently high temperature of speculative potential to interest the serious investor or financier. One of these booms was in late Victorian genre painting, but this cannot in any way be considered a phenomenon of visual culture since it was, in essence, the sentimental and moralistic subject-matter exemplified by the work of such painters as Landseer and the late Millais that was at issue.

It is not possible, in this instance, to regard the art work as a cultural product designed for the consumption of a visually literate public, nor is it possible to see the individual painting operating as a special *objet de luxe*. The whole phenomenon was more in the nature of an early construct of mass-media soporific, one designed as a placebo for a restless lower middle-class and upper-proletariat. The vast prices that were paid for individual works, the aura of gossip and fame, the celebrity status awarded such artists as Watts, Alma-Tadema, Leighton and Poynter, as well as to such support-system mandarins as Ruskin, would seem to make it obvious that, if parallels were to be drawn with more recent times, then this extraordinary period should be related to the extravagance of Hollywood at its zenith, at a point when a later and only slightly more sophisticated generation of the articulate deprived were clearly persuaded to submerge their claims in a vicarious participation in constructed glamour.

The art boom, now substantially deflated, of the immediate past was a different matter altogether. It was the product of two forces; first, a direct and every lucrative dimension of speculation whereby industrial and corporative marketing techniques allied to sophisticated promotional methods were applied to the merchandising of art, and, secondarily, the recently initiated and still-ongoing 'canonisation' of culture whereby the arts have, to a certain extent, been required to fill a role of secular spiritualization in the vacuum left by the demise of religion within an increasingly alienated consumer society.

It is, however, not in respect of, but rather despite these two art 'booms', both resulting from forces extraneous to art itself, that we note the progressive ascension of the Fine Arts from a somewhat lowly status to a position of pre-eminence among other cultural pursuits to a point whereby the word 'art' became synonymous with the visual experience and connotes a dimension of sublimity only previously associated with mystical and divine visitation. The hypothesis that this process represents the development of the cultural symbol-system most appropriate to a society increasingly geared to profit and consumption would seem to be supported by a historical juxtaposition of the events in art during the last 150 years or so and the parallel emergence to social confidence, to political and to economic power, of the bourgeoisie.

If there is any virtue in the above line of thought, then one would expect to discover a more clearly impacted and more deeply ingrained structure of colonialist assumptions in the domain of the Fine Arts than in other parallel disciplines. Literature, certainly in the past maintained a clear allegiance to a tradition whereby it sought to locate itself in an 'academic' stream of liberal-humanism which restricted the definition of verbal culture to the European experience; however, on the threshold of the modern period, as we shall see, it abandoned this specific structure of collective civil value for a general structure of subjective and regional value.

The notion that culture comprises a humanizing body of values and concepts through which the *educated* both recognize each other and communicate with each other (through the common possession of a vocabulary of metaphors and historical or classical references) was an invention of the High Renaissance. There is an incontestable logic in the fact that, during the first years of evolving imperialism and condensing European identity, the emerging mercantile society should have



Ivory Mask brought back by Sir Garnet Wolseley from the Ashanti war in 1874, and now in the British Museum. Nigeria has been trying in vain for its return. It was even refused for the exhibition during the international 'Black Art' festival in Lagos, FESTAS'77, which had its image as its emblem.

regarded itself as both a historical and cultural nexus, and, in order to justify itself by initiating a claim upon predecessors and exemplars, should have projected value and *virtu* onto a mixed tradition that was part historical fact and part legendary construct.

The appropriation, in this manner, of a past that was an amalgam of myth and actual event was in essence the cultural dimension of a European expansionism that had its mental dimension in the developing scientific approach towards the natural world and its political and geographical dimensions in the mercantile and maritime explosion which took place at the crumbling of the Aristotelean universe. The birth of Europe was not only achieved in relationship to the twin forces of emergent science and emergent capitalism, but it was also fixated with a profound conviction of the fundamental centrality and manifest pre-eminence of the new political and social structures, and this event was accompanied from the very first by a deeply ingrained process of appropriation.

Colonialism did not appear in the modern world with the forays of Cortez into Yucatan, or with the destruction of Tenochtitlan, but with the claim of historical cozenage extended by Renaissance mercantile republicanism towards the exemplars of a dimly-remembered Roman *polis* observed through the roseate lenses of political ambition and swiftly-consolidating class interest.

It is from this point that we can note the development of a body of cultural property that was later to be defined as the tradition of liberal-humanism. At the beginning this represented simply the collective self-identification of a small but enormously self-confident mercantile class in Florence and elsewhere; but as time went on, the idea of 'humanism' was to be identified with civilized value itself, it was to become the prerequisite base of culture and education. In this way, the special interests of a specific class and the broad sweep of absolute cultural value were seen as synonymous. This claim upon history initiated the process of cultural mystification from which we are still suffering, and, as we may now perceive, it relied for its continued expansion upon a process of cultural appropriation.

Culture, in the new post-Renaissance understanding, was henceforth to serve the interests of a class rather than those of the collective; as the new economic imperatives penetrated the feudal world they inexorably mutated the relationships that existed in that world, transforming the

uncovered and traced. The author has abstracted from the history of Africa those undeniable characteristics which, stripped of their immediate concretion and their problem-making connection, will serve to establish a subconscious system of equivalences. Each stage in the life of Babar corresponds formally (or will correspond, as the child continues to locate and recognize them) to a real stage which was produced in the true history. Those aspects have been selected and isolated to function in another context, so that, losing their category of accusation, litigation and denunciation, they remain enclosed within the all-inclusive borders of the dominating ideology. And if it were not so, this literature would not be dangerous, since the child would be shut up in a dream, in an imagination without points of contact with reality, in the anachronistic head of Thomas More or Father Las Casas. If the truth were not in Babar the elephant, hidden, bastardized, distorted, but if it were not as a concealed, correlative parallel, it would be impossible that the equivalences could be revealed to the child, he could not compare the fictitious process in his mind with the real process which will cry out to be interpreted and understood: the possibility of a future subconscious comparison, of a subduing of the contradictions of the dialectic in an obsessively reiterated emotional scheme, can only operate if the same structural stages are maintained, varying the appearance beneath which they are introduced and substantially modifying the consequences of their intervention. The false system becomes representative of the entire reality, because it includes, veiled, the problems which this world is going to continue presenting to the child as he grows up.⁴

We shall try to elaborate proof of this thesis while performing the analysis and obtaining a more complete vision of the effects that civilization has had on the land of the elephants, but it is necessary in any case to examine a concrete example here.

There are elements in the relationships between Europe and the other continents which cannot be denied: the plundering, the violence, the slavery. If these were omitted in Babar, the result would be a lie, and a reading of Babar would not help to interpret anything ideologically. The children would say: "You told us that there was no violence in the conquest of Africa. That's a lie; now we know that there was a lot of destruction, if you lied in this, surely you falsify other things as well."

Consequently, violence has been included in Babar. Nobody has tried to deny it. The wicked hunter represents precisely those 'evil' forces, which intervened in the past. Later, when Babar and Celeste are shipwrecked, they are picked up by a captain who 'gives' them (notice, they are not sold) to a circus owner. They suffer slavery, are caged up, lose their freedom.

European civilization thus contains conspicuous negative elements. But each time the representatives of the city appear doing wrong to the elephants, up towers the majestic, generous, charitable counter-figure of the positive element of the western Christian world. The old lady wipes out those characteristics, all roads lead to her guardianship and furthermore, it is the cruel, exploitative work of the others which presses the elephants to depend on her. Opposite the threat of extermination and servitude from one sector of the European world, there is an educative ideal, missionary and 'progressive', which wants to enclose Babar and his herd in the great western family. The natives must not be killed or put in chains: it is necessary to *Europeanize* them. It is noteworthy, also, that each time Europe shows itself negatively, the animals are *not clothed* (either because their state is primitive, or because they were shipwrecked—"since they lost their crowns in the storm, nobody has believed that they are the king and queen of the elephants, and the captain has had them locked up in the hold"). It is sufficient to progress so that never again are these interferences repeated, sufficient to match up to Europe, to bear the epiphanic signs of inclusion in the civilized world for the executioner to disappear and by this token the victim: one must be assimilated. And furthermore: the violent moments are established like links in a chain, they are the indispensable nexus between nakedness and clothing, between backwardness and development, between the jungle and the old lady. The stages of conquest and slavery have not been ignored: but the manner of their incorporation allows their meaning to change, the truth to be inverted. While the fact can be withheld, it will be done; but when the pressure of the exploited and neglected sectors renders impossible the simple forgetting of that which contradicts the official version of the facts, ideology splits up this phenomenon and reabsorbs it within the general system, which remains immutable. Certainly, we cannot lie: violence there was. But look how happy the elephants are now.

The procedure of admitting negative features, expelling them towards a remote past, is used constantly in children's literature. Opposite those beings will always appear the authentic heroes, who will wipe out the depravity of yesterday and consecrate the splendour of tomorrow.

Let us see some examples taken from Disney.

Donald Duck, the nephews and Grandma Duck have set off (due to their boredom, a typical situation) in search of adventure in the Far West. "Spectacular scenery, isn't it boys?" "Like television, but in three dimensions". But they are attacked by Indians, who are not *playing*, but hate all ducks. Fifty years ago Buck Duck tricked them twice over,

stealing their lands from them and then selling them back when they were no longer valuable. The Indians have to be convinced therefore, that not all ducks (white men) are bad and that the plundering in the past can be corrected. To rise above earlier exploitation and fraud is to abate mistrust: everything has changed, the peoples can reach an understanding, there is room for the marginalized in the present order and civilization, old differences can be forgotten. But behold! Two swindlers appear who want to buy the lands for "a thousand cents". The ducks, however, save the situation: "That is a swindle; they know how valuable the natural gas is which is seeping out in the mine!" The result is that the Indians make peace with the ducks. And how are the natives integrated into the world, once suspicions are allayed? In two ways: a) "A big gas company will do all the work and pay the tribe well". Opposite the swindlers, past and present is the (big) company which will resolve the problems with *justice*. The outsider (Scrooge McDuck?) is not necessarily bad; badness exists where the exact price is not paid (an imposed price, according to what conditions and what market), and b) *tourism*. This solution, which we will see repeated in Babar, means that the Indians sell their 'autochthonous' being and that the adventurers enjoy peace and a holiday. (In which their static ideal is realized, all senseless movement which dominates adventure achieves its resolution. Besides, they can rest without having worked, but meriting it through the misfortunes they have suffered: leisure without previous sweat, deconcretized leisure.)

Another example: the ducks search for a treasure in Aztecland.⁵ In the past, the bad conquistadors wanted to snatch the gold from the poor Indians (shown with figures of ducks). And now the 'bad boys' want to repeat exactly the same process. Besides emphasizing thus that history is essentially repetition of an identical contingency in which the bad want to take from the good their property (to which the whole capitalist system clings, without questioning the origin of the money), it allows the Indians' descendants to surmount the past, leave aside an anachronistic attitude and integrate themselves in the contemporary and technical world. The ducks rescue a shepherd's lamb. "I don't know how to repay that kind action." But the shepherd turns out to be the keeper of the treasure: "I maintained the tradition of hiding the loot from attackers". Donald replies: "This is absurd! The conquistadors don't exist any more." There is no reason to isolate riches. The faithful punchline: "Visit Aztecland, admission: one dollar". The natives eliminate the memory of a first bad experience; they open their doors to foreigners, who are *not conquistadors*. Those who come from outside educate the Indian ("This is absurd!") and they explain to him how to exploit his resources. And once again all the agitation is canalized in the holidays. ("Our adventure ends in the forms of a tropical holiday.") Between the routine (with which the story opens) and the leisure at the end, lies the adventure: the ducks are rewarded for having thus helped the helpless. But more than anything the adventure is the means to obtaining riches and reward. Just as gold is the abstraction of work (value) incorporated in the object, so adventure is the abstraction of the effort which is needed (which is suffered) to produce it: adventure is work inverted, negativized, deconcretized. Sweat made fetish.

It is handled in the same way in Babar. Violence is accepted as existent, but its meaning is altered radically.

The ideology contains, therefore, within itself the dream, the aspiration, the ideal scheme, perfect, abstract, but it also imitates reality, while masking it. Thus, for example, the bourgeois dream assured that natives would be found disposed to 'become civilized' and there are Babar and Cornelius to prove it. The first contact between Europe and a 'barbaric' country was by means of the indigenous interpreter: he is the linguistic connector of the two spheres. "Cornelius talks like a book." Examples are manifold, but it is preferable to return to the chronological analysis.

We had left Babar at the happy moment of his coronation. At the same time he weds Celeste; simultaneously the monarchy and family, the kingdom and the possibility of heirs are established. The two springs of the future.

They leave on a honeymoon. To this effect they have a balloon (a loud yellow colour, the same as Babar's crown), in which the two will rise above the other elephants. This is a recurrent motif: to *climb*. The first thing Babar rushed to do arriving in the city was to play in the lifts, to seek vertical mobility. Undoubtedly this idea (remember Dumbo the flying elephant) contains the desire to deny the heaviness of the body, of that concrete element which always keeps us so anchored to necessity and circumstances.⁶ In other books he climbs mountains to ski (twice), is invited to the land of the birds, acquires a disguise which enables him to fly. There is here an obsession to ascend: the protagonist needs to be accepted in 'society', in the 'high' circles. Having abandoned the vertical position, now on two legs, the elephant only thinks of continuing to rise. The image consolidates the urgency of divesting oneself of the lower condition, of moving up, of being someone greater. Clambering up the ladder which society offers.

But more than this it is important to underline the journey itself. The land of the elephants has lost its exotic quality: it is reserved to be the backyard of Europe. One of the fundamental themes of contemporary story books is 'adventure', the search for new sensations

which break the routine and habit, the meeting with dangers (disorders) which could place in doubt the interior and exterior order of the characters, but which they always manage to overcome. In the world of Disney, for example, the remote geographical settings facilitate the search for treasures, since there, evidently, no one is owner of the riches and no one has worked to obtain them. But in Babar this journey fulfils various other specific functions. Already in the bizantine-baroque novels and their contemporary derivatives, the kings (and at times lesser heroes) found themselves scourged by misfortune (shipwreck, captivity, etc.) and, as a result, brought closer to the reader, 'deflated'; but by means of *fortitude* and *magnanimity*⁷ they showed themselves worthy of the riches with which providence eventually showered them. They return exalted and triumphant to their country, which meantime has great need of them. Their estrangement serves to show they are indispensable.

However, if we look closely at the story, the ultimate meaning of accidentality is to put them *to the test*. Just like Robinson Crusoe, they arrive on an island, and like him, they don't lose contact with civilization⁸ either: they wash their clothes, cook and season their food exquisitely, etc. The two elephants could well have reverted to primitivism, have slid back into bestiality (as occurs in several European novels of the fifties, for example in *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding). They carry Europe like an internal dimension, have proved their exemplary capacity to govern. And precisely they confront "fierce and wild cannibals", creatures who have not attained civilization. It reproduces an experience much treated in European literature: the contrast of two types of natural creature, one of the positive sign, the other of negative sign.⁹ Being civilized, paradoxically, the animals will defeat the men. Opposite the nakedness of the cannibals, the clothes of the elephants; opposite the cannibalism (taboo), the fire which domesticates, the rice and fish. The distance between Babar and the savages implies that there is no possible return to the primitive state. But even more important, it is going to prepare us for the struggle, within the land of the elephants, against those animals (the rhinoceroses) which also have not been civilized, and which is paralleled in the next episode.

In fact there is a war in the land of the elephants. While the old lady is rescuing her friends from the circus (naturally the first thing she does is to *clothe* her proteges and let them rest in separate beds, subdued by a portrait on the wall of their protectress), Arthur (Babar's young cousin) has played a "nasty prank" on a sleeping rhinoceros (a rocket tied to its tail). Cornelius apologizes in a polite tone, promising to punish the child, etc. The rhinoceros is not placated and turns threatening. The war which follows, and in which Babar assures his leadership and, definitively, the superiority of civilization over barbarism, appears to originate thus in a marginal issue, in the eccentric personality of the rulers and, in fact, in their lack of civility.¹⁰ To explain the struggles between the animals (between the Americans, Africans, Asians), there is recourse to their primitive state. These 'lunatics' magnify the facts beyond their reality: "They wanted to catch Arthur to make a meat pie". To avoid further pitfalls, it will be sufficient for the rest of the animals similarly to become sensible, 'westerners'. It does not deny—as can be seen—the struggles in that continent where European ways of life arrive: only that they are not provoked by the Europeans, but rather, on the contrary, the acceptance of civilized patterns is what will allow the 'barbaric' state of war to be left behind. Babar will use his ingenuity, his capacity as strategist, to take on brute force and cruelty: an ingredient of civilization (paint) will serve to disguise his soldiers and frighten his adversaries. "The rhinoceroses, believing they are monsters, flee in disarray, terrified." The economic backwardness, and the natives' superstition, have been decisive: technical ability has tamed those who wished to continue practices at variance with reason. The elephants, being armed (they have technical knowledge which separates them qualitatively from their enemies) will win. The closeness to western interests and all they represent, signifies strengthening the country and defeating the rest. In the drawing, Babar climbs up on one of his own subjects, one of the elephants, lifts his hands in sign of victory, while the rhinoceroses (who are remarkably alike to the elephants themselves in size and colour), are put in chains. Later peace will be signed. The immediate, military effect, has shown the goodness of the system, and augurs the way for the next step: to put this knowledge into elaborating a new, civilized order. The time has arrived to build the first city of the elephants. After the war, a peaceful civilization identical to the European one. The steps to colonization.

The dromedaries 'brought Babar his heavy luggage and all the things he had bought when on his honeymoon in the land of men'. Magically, the whole of civilization is contained in these boxes. Babar gives a speech: "My friends, in these trunks and bales and cases I have presents for you all and all the tools necessary for the building of our city". For the first time, then, the elephants set to work. It is the crucial moment: the natives build a city which follows European lines. Imperialism penetrates Africa. But the elephants "are happy". "They hammer, pull, push, dig, toss, carry and open their great ears to listen to the old lady's records". In the drawing each one is seen working on his own, a harmonious division of labour, Babar in the middle directing operations. The end result is cloying docility: each one of them has his own

bungalow. At the edges, higher up (climbing, climbing), there is a two storeyed house for Babar, and another identical one for the old lady.

In fact, the old lady has decided to remain with them. But now her character is finally made clear to us: during the war, (with Celeste) she founds a hospital (with a huge Red Cross), where she works "unselfishly". The charitable aspect of her intervention is accentuated. Later she is decorated ("she has done so much for them and the wounded"). In the picture she appears in a white monastic gown and now we can be certain: she is the missionary spirit in Africa (and in other places). Her frail, stretched form, her motherhood without children, her charitable gestures, her spirituality, outline militant Catholicism. But there is no overt reference to religion: she represents Christian values without mentioning them. The war over, she reverts to her original role: education. "She often tells stories to the elephants", who form a circle around her on the ground. Although it is still not the moment to analyse in depth the paternalism in these works, it is necessary to point out that the aboriginals, negroes, natives in general, are treated as 'children' and the exploiting country as the motherland, source and womb of the riches. It is emphasized sentimentally that it is the metropolis which gives life (light) and gives birth to that poor orphan (the satellite); subsequently it nurses it and hands on the instruments so that it may grow and be educated. The old lady summarizes in one, therefore, the characteristics of the distant mother (grandma, governess, aunt, schoolteacher, and what have you). This is related, besides, to the basic idea that nations constitute one big family. We will see later that this brings as a consequence the idea that underdevelopment is a lack of (biological) growth, an earlier, inferior stage towards maturity, and that therefore it is enough to 'take off', to progress, in order to reach the next stage. When Babar is older he is going to be exactly like the old lady. The ties of emotional and intellectual dependence are also legitimized. It is evident, then, that the bourgeois ideology prefers to avoid—see the case of the ducks, their family of uncles, nephews, cousins, girl friends, but without mothers, children, fathers—the very image of the *father* in this literature. Preferable is a more distant relative, a more ambiguous figure, who rather than dominating grants certain benefits. In effect, then, the paternalistic relationship is consolidated, which tends to create in the 'child' a psychological dependence, a constant waiting for orientations, values, routes, advice and handouts¹¹ and to cap it all it creates a situation such that when the 'offspring' uses (if he can) the education they have given him, to free himself from the parental yoke or to examine his own situation critically, the relationship is always defended through 'gratitude', through 'loyalty', through 'respect for your elders', through the perennial fairy godmothers.

Babar (son) is going to repeat with his subjects (and with his children) what he has learned in his motherland, the secret, magic, almost Oedipal source of his power: he will treat them as children. "Babar now kept his promise: to each elephant he gave a present, together with good working clothes and lovely holiday costumes." It is an economy—at present—without money, but already there is a form of debt and payment. The elephants "went home dancing". But the drawing is striking: through one door dozens of elephants enter, an amorphous crowd, all on four legs, queuing up to receive their present; from the other door they leave on two legs, half-clothed, gifts in hand. A stage in ideal history has come to an end: without snags, a city has been created in the margins of time, without exploitation or money. The dancing will never end.¹²

But their day now appears divided in two, emphasized by two types of outfit: leisure and work. The presents they have received serve to increase their dependence, to remove them from their 'barbaric' state, but with their enthusiastic agreement. The result will be a Garden Party on Sunday: but they will have to work now for the whole week to prepare the occasion.

With clothes comes the division of the elephants. The youngsters go to school, the older ones "have chosen a job". It is something voluntary, implicitly involves great delight: the division of labour appears as necessary, something which benefits everyone equally in a society of exchanges of services. "When Capalousse had holes in his shoes he took them to Tapitor, and when Tapitor was ill Capalousse attended him. If Barbacol wanted to put a statuette in his mantelpiece he told Podular, and when Podular's jacket was worn out Barbacol measured him for a new one. Justinien painted Pilophage's portrait and Pilophage defended him against his enemies. Hatchibombotar kept the streets tidy, Olur repaired motor cars, and, when they were tired, Doulamor played to them."¹³

The model proposed by Babar has had satisfactory effects: the well-being and happiness of his people are evident. The arcadian myth has become reality: the hallowed and natural life of the savage, obtaining all the utilities of technical progress, combines morality and civilization. This privileged space condenses Europe and its nostalgia, it eliminates frictions between developed and underdeveloped countries, between exploited and exploiters. Urban values have not destroyed nature, they have perfected it; the savages have incorporated themselves painlessly into the bourgeois world, just as imperialist mythology had always proclaimed. The European intervention has been a *total success*. The shot which killed Babar's mother, even the cages in which they

...under complaint about police
 inquiry violence. Mr Chris Rail, London quar
 ashes, area organiser of APEX, alleged day,
 and that one of the organisers of Geor
 who the strike, Mr John Patel, aged publi
 that 23, had been repeatedly hit by time
 bruta- a policeman who called him a the
 "Paki bastard." his 2

"PAKI BASTARD" (Portrait of the artist as a black person) a live event with slides and sound by RASHEED ARAEEN

"Paki Bastard" is the 2nd part of the trilogy (an
 events) which was conceived in 1976/77 as part of
 Preliminary Notes for a BLACK MANIFESTO
 published in Black Phoenix No.1 and which
 dealt with the relationship between the Third
 World and the West. "Paki Bastard" was
 performed on July 31 1977 at the ARRESTS FOR
 DEMOCRACY, London, specially tailored to
 the production of black people in Britain.
 It was also how a black artist, separated from his
 original environment in the Third World and
 rejected by white society in the West, eventually
 comes to terms and identifies with the reality of
 his people. The 1st and 2nd parts, entitled "Noble
 Savage" and "Beast Savage" respectively, were
 performed after this year.

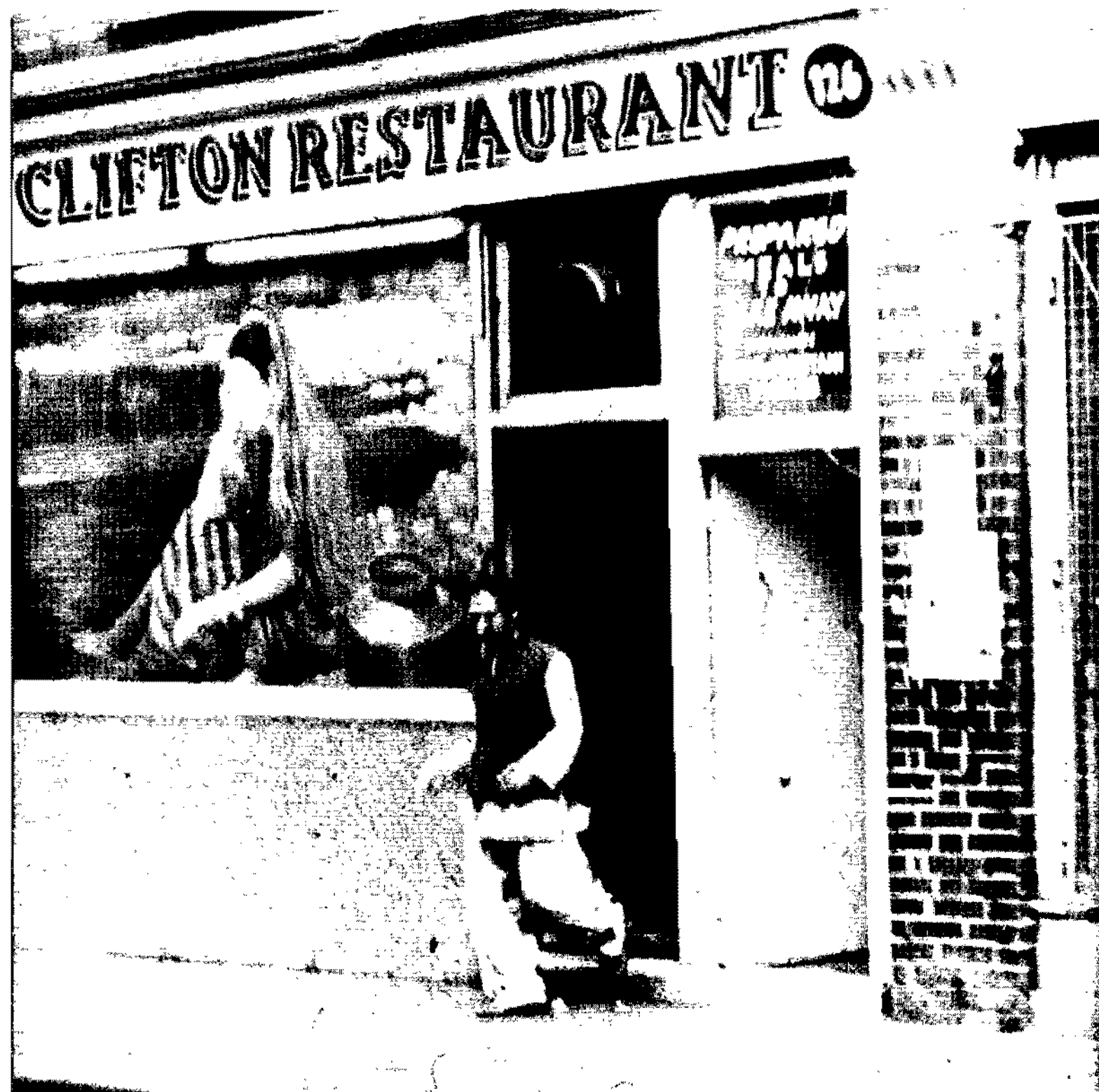
NOTE

The following 6 photographs is
 a selection from 50 sequences.
 The text is not exactly the
 interpretation of the images
 here, but contains some of the
 thoughts that went into the
 making of the work. And althoug
 h it contains autobiographical
 references, it would be wrong
 to read it at personal level.

He sits there facing a slide projector, blind and gagged, holding a broom that defines his
 role in the contemporary world. In the background is the flute sound he made some time ago
 when he was very depressed. (He can't play 'music'.) The projector projects on him the
 image of one of his earlier works, the purpose being to create an artistic identity which
 is used throughout the piece in various manners. It also alludes, at a different level, to
 the mythical space, which is elevated, privileged and universalised, and in which the artist
 of the bourgeois world ends up cocooned and incarcerated. It is the mythical space within
 which the bourgeois 'freedom of artistic expression' manifests, and which is inversely pro-
 portional to the real space at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. The black, Third
 World, person thus remains outside this space confronted with reality.



Sitting alone in a café in Brick Lane, he listens to the sexy, jazzy, romantic, sugary,
 vulgar, ... Indian film songs that pour out continuously from a jukebox. He is overtaken
 by nostalgia... He thinks of the time, his youth, when he himself secretly entertained the
 thoughts of becoming a film hero... He remembers his friends with whom he went to school/
 university, with whom he spent long evenings sitting in cafés and quite often talking
 about what was new from the West - literature, art, films, etc. How they all longed for
 the free and bohemian life in Paris, London, New York,... He thinks of his mother, father,
 brothers and sisters, who are still waiting for his return. They thought that their eldest
 son, their eldest brother, would one day be a successful engineer - after all he did comp-
 lete his graduation. He would have been the pride of the family! But he had the crazy idea



of going to Paris and instead becoming a famous artist. They wouldn't understand. He had to tell them a lie, that he was going abroad for higher education... He remembers the day when he left. The whole family came to see him off at the harbour. How his two youngest sisters refuse to leave the ship... About three weeks later he was actually in Paris, lonely and homesick. He thought Paris was the centre of civilization... He thought of going back home, but he couldn't face the idea of being called a coward by his friends.... Instead he took train to London... Fourteen years is a long time... How could he come to terms with his 'failures'...

He exits. He leaves behind the fantasies, his own memories, his old dreams, and enters the world of real. It took him some time to realise that his own predicament is not unique. He is in fact part of the people who have been colonised, dominated and uprooted. He finally comes to accept the fact that he is part of the humanity which is being denied its own history, its culture and civilisation being undermined and plundered. He begins to under-

Ahead of him in Hanbury Street was a young Bengali boy. As the boy approached a bend he was surrounded by six white youths. When Rouf rushed to his aid, the gang produced bottles from inside their coats and attacked him, cutting his scalp, cheek and wrists.

This was one of a series of random and vicious assaults



stand why he left his own country; why people leave their own countries and seek livelihood in the hostile and aggressive environment of Western cities. He can now see that the violence which is being inflicted upon people, whether it is physical violence or mental,

April 20 1978
KENNETH SINGH
MURDERED

May 4 1978
ALTAB ALI
STABBED TO DEATH

June 26 1978
ALI ESHAQUE
MURDERED

is the violence of the international economic system that has reduced most of the mankind to poverty and starvation. He can see now the true face of the civilisation that he once cherished. But confronted with all this violence and miseries he feels helpless again.... He thinks of the wretched of the earth, of his own 'wasted' life... Depression overtakes him again.....



But fallen men and women rise up again with the call of liberation. Remember Algeria, Vietnam... The sound of early morning at Grunwick, perhaps the longest strike (690 days) in the history of working class struggle, wakes him up from his sleep, from his apathy. The struggle of the people all over the world against all kind of domination, physical as well as mental, gives him hope and courage. He gets up to join the people: they in turn become part of his new consciousness...

(The role of art in human struggle perhaps needs a comment here. Should art become an instrument of a political struggle in a mechanistic and functional way, or it should maintain its specific function vis-a-vis ideology. If we truly accept the dialectics of the process of transformation, the dialectical interaction between different human activities, taking into consideration both the collective and individual levels of conscious-

ness, as well as the subjectivity (psyche) of the individual which is necessary for the artistic reflection of the system to which one is living, then any prescription that marginalizes the role of the art must be rejected.)

However, the piece ends with a synthesis (above photograph): The top left is the face of an Indian woman who, after the big demo at Grunwick in which 10,000 people took part and in which many people were injured as the result of police violence (according to a Time Out report people received injuries on testicles and breasts), stands alone outside Grunwick holding a playcard that reads AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL. The word INJURY appears on the floor next to the artist cutting the broom into pieces. The top right is a sculpture done a few years ago by cutting the wood into pieces and then structuring them together.....

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF CULTURAL COLONIALISM

Kenneth Coutts-Smith

This paper was offered to the Congress of AICA held in Lisbon, September 1976. We are reprinting the paper here as the author's contribution to the debate initiated by 'BLACK MANIFESTO' published in our last issue, with due acknowledgement to ARTERY in which the paper was first published in winter 1976-77. The two illustrations are our own choice.

Traditionally, historians of culture in general and art-critics in particular have tended to base their analyses and their theoretical platforms upon the assumption that art somehow represents the embodiment or the concretization of basic values and fundamental truths that exist somewhere outside of history, beyond social mutation, external to political and economic reality.

The complex of ideas that is clustered around the interrelated notions of the essential spirituality of art, the sublimity of the creative experience and the passion of genius, has served as a central nexus in the vast majority of thinking concerning matters of aesthetics since the inception of that area of inquiry as a specific discipline down to the present point in time. The validity of this position is, however, currently being severely questioned; though from the great majority of published art-criticism in specialist books, in art journals and in catalogue prefaces, it would not seem that our discipline has yet begun to take much note of a major shift in focus that is now occurring in the broad spectrum of world culture.

The present commentator himself is no longer able to accept the idea of the extra-historicity of art and the notion that artistic events take place in some manner in a continuum that is divorced from social and political dynamics. It also appears evident to him that when (in the vast majority of instances) we speak of a world-wide 'high' culture, a significant part of which is formed by the whole spectrum of the Fine Arts, we are actually speaking of a tradition that is largely restricted to the European cultural experience. Even a cursory glance at recent issues of the various 'international' art journals, or at museum and major exhibition catalogues, whether they emanate from Europe, from North America, Latin America, Soviet Russia, India, Japan or wherever, reveals a homogeneity of thought which fails utterly to question the Eurocentricity of most contemporary art-critical assumptions.

The two phenomena, the notion of the extra-historicity of art and the Eurocentric bias of our thinking on culture, are not merely in a clear reciprocal relationship but would seem to be mutually dependent one upon the other. In the present writer's opinion, they would also appear to be central aspects of a total attitude towards art which cannot, in clear honesty, be defined as anything less than Cultural Colonialism.

The stated theme of this present Congress is **Modern Art and Negro-African Art, Reciprocal Relations**. Such a subject obviously presupposes an examination of the relationship between African culture in terms of its national and regional heritage and its present manifestations on the one hand and the historically-defined edifice of European culture on the other. This inquiry cannot possibly avoid the issue of Cultural Colonialism, and the following observations are offered in the hope that they may be found to be of some value in this debate.

These observations, however, can only serve at this point in time as a sketch outlining the problem in broad strokes and thus attempt to define the general areas in which research and analysis is indicated. This specific inquiry is currently of an extremely pressing nature for obvious moral as well as historical reasons; but the scope of the question is very wide and far-reaching, penetrating as it does into every corner and cranny of our cultural superstructure, into every assumption and belief that helps to support our identity and self-esteem, into every facet and aspect of life that we regard as justifying our individual roles and activities.

In the broadest sense, what we regard generally as culture and specifically as art is the continually mutating end-product of a process that is basically mythic in nature, that is to say, a process in which beliefs and assumptions gain substance, become validated. But the dynamics of culture do not only lead in this way towards the fluid identification of a collective identity within a society, they also tend towards the freezing of concepts supportive to the interests of a dominant minority within that society.¹ Ideas which are at first the products of historical necessity are thus transformed into absolutes that are cited in justification of attempts to arrest the historical process, to maintain the status-quo.

The need to examine our present cultural assumptions in the light of the above contention cannot be emphasised strongly enough. It would seem that in the present majority view, there is hardly a single facet of that complex structure which we refer to as 'high' culture that is understood to remain conditional upon historic necessity; rather, the whole cultural superstructure appears to be generally regarded as constituting a self-enclosed system obedient only to the exigencies of 'art-history'—a different matter altogether. The discipline of art-history has never, until now (excepting in the work of isolated individuals regarded, institutionally, as tangential) been required to submit itself to the historical rigours of social and political fact, but has been nourished in the main on poetic insight and metaphysical speculation.

Art-history has been, since its inception in the late Renaissance, ultimately little more than a scholarly elaboration of myths inescapably engendered by the twin concepts of the essential sublimity of the creative process (which logically defines art as an experience located in the sphere of the ideal rather than the actual) and the centrality of style (which predicated the sequential development of an art whose central subject-matter is restricted to its confrontation with previous art rather than with real experience taking place in history).

The notion of the extra-historicity of art is, however, clearly a false one—not even, but especially—in terms of the class who do not only defend this idea, but who have also raised it to an ideological imperative. The bourgeois insistence upon the idealist nature of the whole creative process can be seen to serve, on the one hand, as justifying the view held by that class that its understanding of the individualistic, competitive and acquisitive nature of man is not a class-view but an absolute human condition, and, on the other hand, to obscure the almost total appropriation of 'high' culture as both the private property and preserve of a privileged group and as the spiritual vindication of their continuing economic and political domination.

Enough has been written elsewhere upon the question of a dominant class appropriation of cultural institutions to dispense with arguing this point in the present context: it is hoped that it will be here accepted that the possession of a broad culture and of a liberal-humanist education is not merely the privilege of the bourgeoisie but that it also comprises the structure of the code signals by which individual members of the class recognize each other and consolidate their own private identities. The institutions in which the transference and acquisition of cultural property take place are set up in such a manner as to perpetuate existing class privileges and to restrict the entry of extra-class individuals to those whose status is considered in terms of necessary recruitment, that is to say, as candidates for indoctrination into the bourgeois value system.

It might be stated that it is not our purpose here to consider the still-existing, though possibly eroding, bourgeois class dominance other than where class hegemony relates to colonialist assumptions. But this finally would be a meaningless statement since it is not possible to separate either, historically, the development of bourgeois consciousness from the development of colonialism, or, socially, the bourgeois value-system from racist and imperialist assumptions of superiority. Very little that is fruitful can be achieved in attempting to think of imperialism as a phenomenon divorced from the class assumptions of capitalism; this is an error frequently made in the past by many writers concerning the internally-colonialist status of the Blacks in North America and elsewhere, and, more recently, in regard to the Amerindians and internally-colonialized aboriginal peoples. The 'whites', as a collective and political undifferentiated mass, rather than the capitalist system which produces the alienation requisite for racist attitudes, are seen as the oppressors.

In our present context it is absolutely crucial to recognize that the two questions of cultural colonialism and class appropriation are interrelated and interdependent; and, although space clearly precludes that this paper should attempt an analysis on these lines, it must be emphasized that the dimension of class contradiction be borne in mind throughout the remainder of this exposition.

We have intimated that culturally colonialist attitudes and assumptions permeate the whole domain of 'high' culture, and that this is nowhere more evident than across the spectrum of the Fine Arts. The reason for this may well be related to the reason for the apparent pre-eminence in our present culture of the visual mode in the arts over both the musical and the verbal. Up until the end of the 19th century it would appear that musical and verbal culture were more highly regarded than was plastic culture, which, with few significant exceptions, essentially was considered as being the province of mere artisans. Indeed, in Anglo-Saxon countries, such an attitude has persisted until very recently, whereby literature might, under certain circumstances, be considered a fit occupation for a gentleman, while, at the same time, there was something suspect, indeed disreputable, in the idea of making a career as a painter.

It is interesting to observe, over a period of time, the changing social attitudes of the European and North American middle-class towards the Fine Arts. This process is perhaps due less to the fact that financial profit was possible in both production and speculation than to the supposition that painting (and sculpture to a lesser extent) was the art-form that best objectified bourgeois ideals, since the individual picture could become property *in the absolute sense*, since it could uniquely embody both the status and the aspiration of its owner in a manner that was obviously denied to the poem, the novel, the play or the opera.

That direct financial potential was not a factor to be taken into serious account becomes clear if one is to remember that only twice in the history of art during modern times was there a brief situation of boom and speculation in which art production and marketing could be said to approach a sufficiently high temperature of speculative potential to interest the serious investor or financier. One of these booms was in late Victorian genre painting, but this cannot in any way be considered a phenomenon of visual culture since it was, in essence, the sentimental and moralistic subject-matter exemplified by the work of such painters as Landseer and the late Millais that was at issue.

It is not possible, in this instance, to regard the art work as a cultural product designed for the consumption of a visually literate public, nor is it possible to see the individual painting operating as a special *objet de luxe*. The whole phenomenon was more in the nature of an early construct of mass-media soporific, one designed as a placebo for a restless lower middle-class and upper-proletariat. The vast prices that were paid for individual works, the aura of gossip and fame, the celebrity status awarded such artists as Watts, Alma-Tadema, Leighton and Poynter, as well as to such support-system mandarins as Ruskin, would seem to make it obvious that, if parallels were to be drawn with more recent times, then this extraordinary period should be related to the extravagance of Hollywood at its zenith, at a point when a later and only slightly more sophisticated generation of the articulate deprived were clearly persuaded to submerge their claims in a vicarious participation in constructed glamour.

The art boom, now substantially deflated, of the immediate past was a different matter altogether. It was the product of two forces; first, a direct and every lucrative dimension of speculation whereby industrial and corporative marketing techniques allied to sophisticated promotional methods were applied to the merchandising of art, and, secondarily, the recently initiated and still-ongoing 'canonisation' of culture whereby the arts have, to a certain extent, been required to fill a role of secular spiritualization in the vacuum left by the demise of religion within an increasingly alienated consumer society.

It is, however, not in respect of, but rather despite these two art 'booms', both resulting from forces extraneous to art itself, that we note the progressive ascension of the Fine Arts from a somewhat lowly status to a position of pre-eminence among other cultural pursuits to a point whereby the word 'art' became synonymous with the visual experience and connotes a dimension of sublimity only previously associated with mystical and divine visitation. The hypothesis that this process represents the development of the cultural symbol-system most appropriate to a society increasingly geared to profit and consumption would seem to be supported by a historical juxtaposition of the events in art during the last 150 years or so and the parallel emergence to social confidence, to political and to economic power, of the bourgeoisie.

If there is any virtue in the above line of thought, then one would expect to discover a more clearly impacted and more deeply ingrained structure of colonialist assumptions in the domain of the Fine Arts than in other parallel disciplines. Literature, certainly in the past maintained a clear allegiance to a tradition whereby it sought to locate itself in an 'academic' stream of liberal-humanism which restricted the definition of verbal culture to the European experience; however, on the threshold of the modern period, as we shall see, it abandoned this specific structure of collective civil value for a general structure of subjective and regional value.

The notion that culture comprises a humanizing body of values and concepts through which the *educated* both recognize each other and communicate with each other (through the common possession of a vocabulary of metaphors and historical or classical references) was an invention of the High Renaissance. There is an incontestable logic in the fact that, during the first years of evolving imperialism and condensing European identity, the emerging mercantile society should have



Ivory Mask brought back by Sir Garnet Wolseley from the Ashanti war in 1874, and now in the British Museum. Nigeria has been trying in vain for its return. It was even refused for the exhibition during the international 'Black Art' festival in Lagos, FESTAS'77, which had its image as its emblem.

regarded itself as both a historical and cultural nexus, and, in order to justify itself by initiating a claim upon predecessors and exemplars, should have projected value and *virtu* onto a mixed tradition that was part historical fact and part legendary construct.

The appropriation, in this manner, of a past that was an amalgam of myth and actual event was in essence the cultural dimension of a European expansionism that had its mental dimension in the developing scientific approach towards the natural world and its political and geographical dimensions in the mercantile and maritime explosion which took place at the crumbling of the Aristotelean universe. The birth of Europe was not only achieved in relationship to the twin forces of emergent science and emergent capitalism, but it was also fixated with a profound conviction of the fundamental centrality and manifest pre-eminence of the new political and social structures, and this event was accompanied from the very first by a deeply ingrained process of appropriation.

Colonialism did not appear in the modern world with the forays of Cortez into Yucatan, or with the destruction of Tenochtitlan, but with the claim of historical cozenage extended by Renaissance mercantile republicanism towards the exemplars of a dimly-remembered Roman *patria* observed through the roseate lenses of political ambition and swiftly-consolidating class interest.

It is from this point that we can note the development of a body of cultural property that was later to be defined as the tradition of liberal-humanism. At the beginning this represented simply the collective self-identification of a small but enormously self-confident mercantile class in Florence and elsewhere; but as time went on, the idea of 'humanism' was to be identified with civilized value itself, it was to become the prerequisite base of culture and education. In this way, the special interests of a specific class and the broad sweep of absolute cultural value were seen as synonymous. This claim upon history initiated the process of cultural mystification from which we are still suffering, and, as we may now perceive, it relied for its continued expansion upon a process of cultural appropriation.

Culture, in the new post-Renaissance understanding, was henceforth to serve the interests of a class rather than those of the collective; as the new economic imperatives penetrated the feudal world they inexorably mutated the relationships that existed in that world, transforming the

co-operative *gemeinschaft* of the collective of Christianity into the competitive *gesellschaft* of economic, and later, of industrial man. Furthermore, the new concept of culture, as in the very nature of capitalism itself, demanded both a continually expanding tide of resources and a continually-expanding 'market'.

In opposition to the static and genuinely 'absolute' value of feudal culture, it was in essence dynamic and relative (though, of course, it pretended claims to the absolute) and thus could only function in a condition of permanent expansion. Since its subject-matter was not *realist* in the feudal sense, that is to say, one not reflecting the existent and, internally to that society, self-evidently timeless and eternal values subscribed to by that society, but, rather, was *idealist* (in that its motive was to project the poetic and the conditional, to project metaphorical allusions to a universe that did not yet exist but which might possibly be brought into being through the powers of the imagination) then, clearly, it was constrained to look outside of the general body of symbols and concepts that made up the common heritage of the society.

The culture of the feudal world, in terms of the understanding of that world, was far from a metaphysical one, for despite the totally Christian nature of its symbolism, the basic concept of the universe was of a hierarchical continuum rising vertically upward from the lowest peasant through the ranks of the nobility, the ranks of the church, through the Pope to the empyrean, to Christ and, finally, to the Godhead. The structure of medieval thought, just like the content of medieval religious painting, was essentially one which was concerned with things as physically present in both time and space as was man and his daily mundane activities and aspirations. Paradoxically, it is with the development of pictorial realism in the purely technical sense that we first note the shift towards the depiction of a metaphysical and idealist universe.

It would not seem to be coincidental that the Media and their successors should have chosen and reinforced the medium of the visual arts to express and confirm the justification for their vision of a new, fragmented, and competitive structure of human social relations, since this medium could perhaps best embody the dimension of subjective idealism with the notion of individual 'genius', and thus help to salve and obscure the paradox engendered by the necessary opposition between usury and charity, between competition and co-operation, between the possession of economic power and privilege by a minority and the requisite resignation to poverty and to subservience demanded of a majority.

The new idea of the creative power of the imagination as the prime assumption within the domain of culture was, in so raising isolated and personal actions to a fundamental principle, without doubt engendered by the need to vindicate the moral ambiguity of individual economic and entrepreneurial aggression. Similarly, the claim upon precedent raised by the delineation of parallels between the 15th Century mercantile reality and an idealized view of Roman republican virtue was conditional upon the need to legitimize a social stance that was based upon fiscal manipulation in a society that had for centuries regarded usury as a cardinal sin.

A concept of appropriation that is soon to declare itself as colonialist in nature can thus be seen to have initiated its central role in European culture from the very point of the emergence of a continental 'European' consciousness. Though the first phase of this phenomenon can be seen to have operated almost exclusively in the domain of 'history', we must be clear at this point that the force that was working in this context was far from what we understand by the concept today.

An understanding of history as a continuum of events whereby the occurrences of the past to a great extent logically preclude the patterns of the future is dependent upon the possession of accurate records or plausible speculation together with an objective analysis of the evidence. History, until the end of the 18th Century at least, was as much, if not more, a matter of projection as it was of research and analysis; the separation between legend and fact was not accomplished until the comparatively recent past. Bishop Ussher's widely-accepted chronology, for example, whereby the world was understood to have been created in scriptural totality upon a specific day in February 4,004 B.C., or the fact that Isaac Newton was himself ultimately more interested in his theological and his historiographical speculations than in his scientific observations, demonstrates a profound ambiguity in regard to the past existing as late as the Enlightenment. At that time it was still imperative to somehow equate the literal and revealed truth of biblical text with the virtual and observed truth of archaeological and palaeontological evidence.

Even on the threshold of Romanticism we may observe William Blake alternately swinging between, on the one hand, his 'modernist' response to the injustices of industrial society and to the revolutionary aspirations of an awakening political consciousness and, on the other, his residual, but deeply intuitive, conviction of scriptural and his intellectual debt to Swedenborg and Jacob Bryant; indeed, it is from the very tensions of this paradox that his poetic inspiration depended.

The Romantic period, however, was not simply the major cultural response to the developing technological dimension of the industrial revolution and to the emerging social dimension of class-consciousness;

it also marked the shift of central emphasis in the ongoing process of appropriation from the historical domain directly to the geographical, and, ultimately, to the colonial domain.

The conflict between Classicism and Romanticism that marked the closing decades of the 18th Century as well as the opening ones of the 19th Century, was not the result of simple stylistic or scholastic rivalry, it was not even primarily the expression of antagonism between the waning, closed society of post-Restoration aristocracy and the social forces unleashed by the French Revolution. Rather, it was much more the expression of the fact that a developing body of scientific knowledge had begun to render history opaque to the penetrations of capitalist appropriation. History had become, itself, a science, and, as a result, the possibility of a reinterpretation of the past in favour of an elite began to recede in the face of the increasing availability to a wider public of clear and unambiguous information.

In the light of the archaeological discoveries of Winckelmann and others, the ancient world took on the clearly defined lineaments of real life. The Classical antique, revealed at last to the scrutiny of daylight, thus lost the ambiguous and problematical dimensions which alone made it malleable to the idealism of appropriation. The Classical mutated into the neo-Classical; and, as the distinction between legend and fact was clarified, so images in art became more archaeologically 'truthful' and progressively less and less able to support the process of mystification.

In a final and spectacular burst of historical appropriation, the French Revolution itself claimed justification from the ancient world; but the brief paganism of the divinity of Reason was soon to fade, and by the time of Napoleon we note the sudden shift of focus, first to a neo-Classical past, then, directly, to the double perspective of a geographical and colonial dimension balanced by the obverse invasion of purely mental territories.

Napoleon's colonial adventure into Egypt was the first one since the imperialism of the ancient world to return in triumph bearing cultural spoils as proof of conquest and territorial sovereignty. During earlier phases of colonialism, during the Spanish domination of Central and South America, for example, or during the British and French expansion into North America, artefacts, usually of a religious or totemic nature, were sometimes brought back to the colonizing metropolis. But it was not *cultural property* that was transported in this way as much as evidence of the spiritual and religious domination and subsequent conversion of the barbaric heathen. Conquistadors, gentleman-adventurers and merchants had no interest whatsoever in artefacts as cultural property, only in their possible value as precious metal. Neither did priests have any interests in such objects beyond exhibiting them as proof of their missionary zeal and as examples demonstrated before their ecclesiastical superiors of the thousands of pagan idols they have burnt and smashed in the name of the propagation of the faith.

The Napoleonic campaigns were innovative in that cultural property was accounted among the spoils of war; and not merely physical objects and artefacts either, but also the intangible and abstract property of artistic style. Together with the obelisks and statuary looted from the Nile valley, the victorious returning army brought back an artistic style that was to be rapidly adopted as the formal and official visible hallmark of the moral and political authority of Empire.

At the very point when the mother lode, as it were, of the Classical antique dried up as a resource for historical appropriation, a new pre-Classical civilization was offered as substitute. Yet, just as a transition was being made in the matter of resources, so parallel transition was also effected in terms of needs. The Egyptian civilization, dying as it did during the Classical period, turns out to be one-dimensional; there are, apparently, no decipherable records, no historic personages save a few vague shadows, no heroes, no exemplary legends, merely the single dimension of visual style.

Style alone, it quickly became apparent, cannot long fill the role now being proffered it—a radical departure, incidentally, to any previous response in regard to visual culture, and one crucially in need of proper analysis. This new aesthetic relationship clearly places style under the constraint of consumption, without subject-matter, without a moral or exemplary dimension, there must now be initiated a process of mutation, of change, novelty, surprise.

In this way, a specific element attached to the new imperial Egyptian style becomes first isolated, then made central; it is an element that seems at first to be capable of near-infinite variety, of almost continuous mutation, the element of strangeness itself, the element of *exoticism*.

The Romantic movement now has its *leit-motiv*, its theme; it is, however, to expand the search into the exotic into two essential and different directions. One, which is our direct concern here, is to result in the conscious attempt to appropriate and to incorporate into the body of European culture the diverse cultures, not only of the whole world, but also of the whole of history. It is here that the tacit historical appropriation that we have attempted to define becomes a clear and overt programme of colonial appropriation throughout the whole of world culture. There would seem little doubt that the expanding European military and economic imperialism in the early 19th Century



Mother and Child by Henry Moore, or an Eskimo sculpture?

onwards it paralleled and echoed with a developing structure of cultural colonialism.

The other direction taken by the Romantic movement in general constituted a similar expansion, but one that operated inwards, towards a 'colonization', as it were, of subjective mental territory. As the first force can be observed as co-opting the cultures not only of the non-European peoples but also of the vanished peoples of the past, so the second force may be seen to launch an attempt to appropriate the whole twilight territory of the mind, the landscapes of dreams and fantasies, the preserves of psychology and psychopathology, the primitivism of childhood, the bizarre territories of superstition, magic, folklore and the absurd.

It is not within our scope here to enter into an inquiry concerning the subjectivist space that the arts have invaded and which has become so firmly a characteristic of artistic modernism; suffice, at this point, to briefly remark on two points. Firstly, during the early years of the Romantic movement, the visual arts entered the subjectivist area with considerable vigour. In a spectrum that might include Fuseli, John Martin and Caspar-David Friedrich at one pole and Gericault's fascination with abnormality at another, we could stretch out the whole band width of the sublime and the picaresque, particularly in terms of landscape, and even include the gentler Wordsworthian echoes to be found in such celebrators of the spiritual in nature as Constable.

However, despite the dramatic intensity of the period, the theme of mental space in painting is, after a short time, to be almost completely abandoned until it is picked up once more, at a later date, in a minor key by the Surrealists and by various introspective individualists such as Paul Klee. Secondly, in considering subjectivist appropriation, we may here return to a point that was earlier intimated concerning the relationship between the visual arts and other creative areas of activity. A simple glance at the events of the Romantic movement and after will reveal that it is verbal culture in general and literature in particular which has most consistently explored the subjectivist arena. During the Renaissance and the Baroque, literature naturally expressed the Classical structure that we have defined (witness Spenser or Racine) but for some reason, perhaps partly because pre-Renaissance writing (Chaucer, Dante, Petrarch, Villon, Rabelais) retained more direct links with the antique world, it never objectified Renaissance and Baroque society as eloquently as did the plastic arts.

Similarly, at the point of the Romantic movement, literature, and to a similar extent, music, was to concentrate almost exclusively on the subjectivist view of society, of the world, and of nature. This may also partly explain why present-day literature, though obviously by no means totally free of colonialist assumptions, stands in a less crucial position in this regard than do the plastic arts.²

As we have remarked, the subjectivist position exhibited in early 19th Century painting was not to hold centre stage for more than a brief

period. Such subjectivism demands *content* in painting, even if it be no more than that found in Turner, for example: the flux of the individual artist's emotions in the face of nature. It was not Gericault, with his deeply humanistic response to man, who was to survive and to condition the future, but Delacroix, the flamboyant and brilliant master of style, the inaugurator of pure painting, the dynamic colourist, the anticipator of expressionist abstractionism, and the artist who, above all, defined the ideal subject matter of painting as the *exotic*.

It was Delacroix who travelled North Africa in the wake of a colonizing Embassy and, in observing the picaresque Bedouin, the harem *odalisque*, relished them into exotic and glamorous objects. He painted people as if they were guitars, and personally inaugurated the long process through which European art was to attempt to appropriate the visual culture of the whole planet into its own self-conceived 'mainstream'.

Can we here isolate an imperative within the general structure of capitalist social relations? A subjectivist artist, even if his overt motivation is that of an egoic sensibility who desires his personality to expand to the dimensions of the universe, still observes and recognizes his fellow creatures. But if the necessities of capitalist society require art to maintain its appropriative roles in the real-time world, having lost its hegemony over the 'historical' world, then it could hardly be expected to observe and recognize *real* fellow human beings; too many contradictions could result and inhibit the process.

If the visual arts were to be about *modern life*, if painters were to anticipate Baudelaire (or at a slightly later date, to follow him), they would find themselves in a different position from the poet and outsider who was comparatively more free of social claims. It seems plausible to envisage a situation of pretending a more profound bohemianism than is accepted as commitment, and, subsequently, avoiding conflicts by reifying the subject matter. The logic of the situation demanded that people had to be treated as still-lives (or, more eloquently, as *nature-mortes*), the logic of the situation also revealed that the imperative towards abstractionism was inevitable.

We can note with the Barbizon painters a swing not only against the commitment of content in painting but also the first intimations of the idea of a pure painting of style. The landscape, in their hands, began to become the starting point for an essay into pure visual sensibility, and was thus the initiation of a process later to be explored by some of the Impressionists into the point of negation. For the individual artist, this represented the threshold of an exciting and passionate voyage into the potential of the eye, and despite their conscious intentions (even, paradoxically, in opposition to a stated allegiance to content, to a search for rural innocence), the hegemony of style over content was inaugurated.

The later landscape painters of the pre-Impressionist period were already committed to the pure visual adventure. In their conscious understanding, as well as in their visual intuition, the separation between narrative painting and pure painting was achieved. Both the creative experience and the artistic product were thrust firmly into the sphere of the absolute, and from that point onwards we began to become used to thinking of 'high' culture in general and the Fine Arts in particular as operating in some sort of mental and moral space totally divorced from any but the most abstract and tenuous relationship with social realities.

The present world climate of thought, however, now obliges us to begin to reassess the relationships that obtain, historically, in regard to the arts; there is a current tendency to query whether it is possible for any event to take place in isolation from the social domain. If this is so, then the initial commitment to pure painting represents not merely the cultural echoes of an attempt to reify the world, but also a significant factor operating towards this end. It could be said that the *plein-airistes*, developing commitment to style, reversed the image celebrated by such of their predecessors as Constable who envisaged a coherent and humanized landscape, and in this way projected an image of an absolute, fragmented and dehumanized landscape.

Immersed in their narrow stylistic concerns, the individual artists, many professing liberal, humane and even 'socialist' affiliations, nevertheless acquiesced in a restructuring of man's relationship with his environment which, ultimately, was profitable to restricted political interests. The capitalist social relations that were consolidating at the peak of the Industrial Revolution demanded a divorce between man and his natural environment in order that the masses might better accept the artificial environment of the industrial milieu.

It is possible that an earlier stage of this process was initiated during the period of the Gothic Revival, for, with the ideas of the picaresque, we can observe the first intimations of the transformation of the natural environment (the basic arena for man's presence, identity and social interaction, the archetypal space in which man labours and humanizes the world and himself) to a product, a commodity designed to be consumed. It is capitalism, rather than the technological exigencies of the modern world, that required our present almost total alienation from natural phenomenon, and it would simply not seem plausible to regard a major cultural event, such as the process of developing abstraction in 19th Century landscape painting, as being socially unrelated to capitalism's achievement of this aim.

In this context, we are obliged to observe the developing hegemony

of 'style' and pure painting as not merely a series of events taking place in the domain of 'art-history', but as events taking place in real history, events taking place in respect of the continually mutating structure of social relations. In substituting style for content, the visual arts were suddenly launched, as we have seen, upon a process of reliance on external resources. The speed with which art, as it were, consumed landscape, eroded its stylistic potential (the rapidity of the voyage between Barbizon and, for instance, Monet's *Haystacks*) was remarkable.

Most of us are culturally and historically conditioned to regard the intense burst of activity that took place largely in Paris between the 1860s and the 1920s, to consider that period of roughly half-a-century which begins with the mature work of Manet and which climaxes with Surrealism, Constructivism and the Bauhaus, as a peak in terms of human dignity and freedom. We usually think of this as a point where the human race compares favourably with its more common idiocies and barbarities. The only cloud that occasionally shadows this myth is a Pimpoudu-like French chauvinism that would claim national credit for this wonder which, in reality, belongs to the world; but that does not seem serious, since we are all, apparently, proud to claim passports to the moral citizenship of the Parisian *avant-garde*.

There would seem to be no question that we would have to regard this period in art as a unique and positive moment in human history if the version proposed by art-history be correct; if it really is true that a group of the most talented people that the world has ever seen congregated almost by accident and created, *in vacuo*, as it were, a dazzling perspective of images so multitudinous and so fruitful that, for half-a-century, style succeeded style, concept displaced concept, in a variety and complexity that historians and curators have hardly been able yet to begin adequately to comprehend and classify the wealth of cultural material thus placed to our common heritage.

However, it is questionable that this is what happened. It is questionable that a great and fruitful stratum of creativity was suddenly brought to light in this manner. A doubt would appear to be raised if we are to regard the whole phenomenon of modern art in the context which we have here attempted to define; for thus we would note the centrality of *appropriation* rather than that of creation. An art structure that is rapidly expanding, both in terms of its audience and in terms of its practitioners, develops a pressing need for nourishment. And an art restricted to style, as we have seen, cannot feed from its own social and historical reality, but demands a constant supply of raw forms for its survival.

When the potential of landscape was 'consumed' some time in the 1880s, a brief foray into the twilight territory of the Parisian *demi-monde* was undertaken, but this alone did not appear to provide substantial fare. A more solid source of material was required; and this was provided just at the point of most pressing need. At various levels throughout late 19th Century society, from the academic ethnologists and anthropologists, guardians of brand-new sciences, to the frivolity of salons and dinner tables, an awareness of extra-European culture was penetrating. Peoples in distant countries and in 'primitive' societies began to take on a substance more solid than that of the undifferentiated native. Suddenly, with the possibility of an almost apparently limitless material ripe for stylistic adoption, the vertical take-off of modern art was assured.

The process of co-option and appropriation was extraordinarily rapid and complete, beginning jointly, and perhaps hesitantly, with Degas and Whistler staking out claims in the Japanese, and with Gauguin grasping first the 'primitive' of Breton folk-art, then that of Melanesia, the pattern was set. Every artist, from the most significant members of the cénacle at *La Lupin Agile* to the most obscure dauber in the *Place du Tertre*, attempted to secure for himself some sort of cultural territory to exploit. Within thirty to forty years not one corner of non-European culture remained untouched as a source of imagery either, geographically, to the most obscure tribal totem, or, temporarily, to the most shadowy Celtic dolmen and palaeolithic cave.

Despite the ransacking of time and space, the individual artist by himself, the painter in his studio, did not, of course, personally appropriate the complete cultures of non-European space and extra-modern time. However, both by his adoption of aspects of these cultures to contemporary idioms and by his elevation of style to an absolute principle, he was responsible for permitting the European and Eurocentric institutions of culture to consummate the appropriation totally.

For in this way was laid the justification for the process first described by Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and ultimately formalized by Malraux in his invidious concept of *The Museum Without Walls*, wherein the whole of known culture is placed on terms of neutral and negative institutional equality, divorced from function, divorced from meaning, divorced from human use, divorced from any social dimension whatsoever.

Any lingering doubt concerning the now almost total acceptance of this view of art, of the world-wide *bourgeoisification* of culture, may be laid to rest by visiting at random any fair-sized Fine Art Museum in any city in the world.³ Inevitably, one will there observe cultural artefacts from diverse societies and from diverse historical epochs torn out of social context and presented in a manner where the only standard of

comparison or relationship is similarity or divergence of style. Further, one will see these cultural artefacts displayed peripherally to a central collection of European or Eurocentric painting (usually covering the period from the International Gothic to the latest in Conceptual Art).

We are so conditioned to this relationship, we are so ingrained to the central imperative of style, that the implications of the display usually escape. Only a certain type of analytical approach (such as has been attempted here) whereby art is regarded primarily from the point of view of its social role, is capable of revealing an assumption so arrogant as to stagger the mind: the assumption that the whole existing body of world culture from the very dawn of human time must be conventionally understood and appreciated *in the light of the European visual experience of the last 500 years!*

It has been the intention of this paper to propose that it is a plausible idea to regard the assumptions of modern art and the traditions that have led up to these assumptions as being neither international in scope nor absolute in nature. On the contrary, it is suggested that the assumptions of modern art are fundamentally of a Eurocentric character and are ultimately limited to a specific world-view that is defined by the nature of the dominant class in the capitalist world.

It would seem that there is evidence to demonstrate the possibility that the Fine Arts have, historically, long been (though, no doubt, unwittingly) in a position of service to social interests that are inimical, both economically and politically, to its own well-being. It would also seem that the Fine Arts have, historically, fallen victim to a myth concerning the absolute and metaphysical nature of its activity, as a result of which its actions and its products have been used to justify not merely a criminal structure of social relations but also the world-wide edifice of imperialism upon which this structure still depends.

Should this line of thought be found in any way to be a viable one, then the ramifications to the artistic community in general, and to the art-critical community in specific, are enormous. We may currently observe significant factions of the academic disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology questioning whom they serve in terms of the conventional and accepted methodology of these sciences. Art-criticism deserves to do no less than to examine the nature of its own role in this regard.

The whole question of cultural colonialism needs desperately, for obvious reasons, to be placed under scrutiny. To the best knowledge of this present commentator, this task has yet to be initiated; and this current paper may well be the first tentative attempt in this direction. The moral obligation of the European critical community to clarify their position is uncontested. The pressing need for the Third World countries, presently struggling for economic, political and cultural independence, to dispel the myths obscuring the true social nature of culture, goes without saying.

The scope of the question is vast, and the implications penetrate into most levels of local, regional, national and international political relations wherever cultural differences are either a significant factor or where cultural autonomy is being threatened by more forceful neighbours. The problem does not only reside primarily in the emergent Third World countries, but everywhere. One crucial area, for instance, is located in the clear policy of cultural genocide through assimilation that is currently being practised in North America and elsewhere in regard to the indigenous peoples. A sub-section of this area is the ambiguous cultural activity residing in the artificial 'airport-art' constructs of Navajo jewellery and Eskimo stone-carvings, whereby bureaucratic political institutions are *inventing* art-forms on behalf of subservient and internally-colonised peoples.

It is not within the scope of this paper to chart, at this point, the enormous task of analysis ahead of us. However, should some debate which might lead to the commencement of this analysis result from this thesis, then the author will feel that its primary purpose has been achieved.

1. Roland Barthes speaks of myth as being 'depoliticised speech', *Mythologies*, Paladin, London 1972, p.142. I am using the word 'mythic' here in an analogous manner. See also (ibid) "... myth is a type of speech ... a mode of signification (p.109) ... [it] is an inflexion ... it transforms history into nature." (p.109).
2. Naturally, the very subjectivist bias that the mainstream of the literature of the last 100 years or so (e.g. since Rimbaud's *Lettre de Voyant* of 1871) seems to justify the bourgeois contention that extreme individualism and competitiveness are the "natural human condition", thus, in turn, appearing to vindicate a political and economic system that accords priority to competition over co-operation.
3. We should clearly remark here that this would be at the present time with the obvious exception of China. It remains to be seen what forms the art institutions of that country will take in the future. In this context, it is perhaps as well to emphasize here that this *does not except* Soviet Russia and other Eastern European socialist countries who remain European chauvinists in this regard.

The phrase 'Fine Art Museum' has been used in this paragraph. It is possible to remark here upon a tendency that is occasionally observable in certain so-called Ethnographic or Anthropological Museums where cultural artefacts are displayed as if they were 'art', defining them minimally in a social context. The bourgeois assumptions concerning culture are very insidious indeed.

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Where is Ngugi?

Since the arrest of Ngugi wa Thiong'o by the Kenyan Government on Dec 31st 1978, nobody has been allowed to see him, not even his wife and children. Nobody knows where he is being kept or if he is alive. The reason for his not being put on trial is obvious. He has committed no crime. It is not a crime to speak up openly about the continual misery of one's people or to oppose foreign domination. One can see why those who are making loud noises about 'human rights' have not come forward to comment upon the plight of Ngugi. It is therefore the duty of progressive people all over the world to demand the immediate release of Ngugi. Those who wish to help must contact NGUGI DEFENCE COMMITTEE, 28/29 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

The following report, by Chris Wanjala, sent soon after the arrest from Nairobi, is being published here with acknowledgement to THIRD WORLD MEDIA, London. The quotes in the boxes are from Ngugi's interview which he gave to THE WEEKLY REVIEW, Nairobi, after the publication of PETALS OF BLOOD.

Evenings are calm in Limuru, Ngugi's home village some 15 miles north-west of Nairobi. The traffic from Limuru is heavy. On one of our visits to Ngugi's family we stopped at a shop to buy some soda. The shop-keeper was an ex-freedom fighter. 'Limuru was the centre of fighting during the Emergency', he put in with pride. For him the shop meant a lot for Kenya's independence from the British. We asked him about Ngugi. 'Ngugi stays at the University of Nairobi where he teaches', the old man said cowering. 'He comes home in the evening, and we do not see him here'. This feeling of suspicion pervades the way people receive visitors to the area since Ngugi's arrest. The people dodge questions put to them about the play.

Although children in Ngugi's house eventually talked to us when we visited his home, the house-girl ran into the kitchen and she remained in hiding while we were there. Ngugi's third child, one of the five, told us that his mother was away in town. Ngugi's mother stays at her eldest son's home in Kawangware ten miles away from Limuru. In the morning people in the area hurry through the early mist on

their way to their various places of work. The watchmen can be seen trekking home after their night's work. You have to keep your car lights on lest you run over the little girls and boys trotting feverishly to school. Unlike the workers they seem little aware of the arrest of the Kenyan novelist. The play, *Ngahika Ndeenda*, is about these workers. It was co-authored by Ngugi wa Thiong'o to help *Kamiritho Community Centre*, the local educational and cultural centre for integrated rural development. Initially the play was envisaged as the follow-up to a highly successful literacy scheme run by the centre. The hope that its success would put the centre on its feet seems doomed after its closure by the authorities. The future of the centre as 'the soul of the village' once again looks dim.

The other co-author of the play is Ngugi wa Mirii, a specialist in adult literacy. He is free and at work as a research assistant at the University of Nairobi's Institute of Development Studies.

The play owes its success to many songs collected from the people by the authors. These songs were sung by the people themselves acting in the play. The play makes satirical comments at religion and the accumulation of wealth, focusing on the way the owners of small plots of land easily lose their land to richer people in the process of seeking to improve their lot. Kigunda, the 'hero' but also the victim, is the worker who is swindled into asking for a loan from the bank using his title deed. The land is taken away from him when he fails to repay the loan.

The play also shows the misuse of church by the rich. 'Ndini ... ndini ...', says Njaki, a character in the play, 'Ndini ni uria wa ngoro. Ni urogi wa mearia' (religion intoxicates and bewitches the brain).

"I have always thought of Christianity itself as part and parcel of cultural imperialism. Christianity, in the past, has been used to rationalise imperialist domination and exploitation of peasants and workers. It has been used to blind people to the reality of their exploitation because religion as a whole wants to tell people that their lot is God-given, as opposed to being man-conditioned. So if you see that you are poor because God has willed it, you are more likely to continue to pray to God to right your conditions. But if you know that your poverty is not God-conditioned, but it is socially conditioned, then you are likely to do something about those social conditions that are assuring that you be poor."

The Director of the play, Dr. Kimani Gecau, recalled that the people had enjoyed the play immensely, and indeed, where the script fell short of the message the play wanted to put across, the players themselves suggested changes. They, for instance, suggested a more rigorous questioning of the acquisitive values which had come with Western culture. In a way it was their own play.

As one of the papers in Nairobi has put it, '(the play) was certainly (Ngugi's) most radical, in form if not in content. *Ngahika* was a play written in Kikuyu, the first piece of literature by any major author which tried to interpret for its audience society's workings in one of Kenya's ethnic languages ...'

Ngugi has moved from the English tradition of literary criticism and sunk deeply into the collective spirit of the countryside. He is the only professor at the University of Nairobi who operates from his home in a village. The play itself is the result of his growing desire to communicate through his work with the people of Kenya rather than the 'international' English language audience at home and abroad who so admired his work.

"In the course of writing the novel, I became more and more attracted, as I said, to the national songs, songs like those of the Mau Mau which are national songs. Songs which were sung in the 1930s against the British which were also national songs. Of course, they form a very important part of Kenya's national literature."

The language issue is a slightly different one, although it is related to the novel in the sense that it was in the course of writing the novel that I came to be more and more disillusioned with the use of foreign languages to express Kenya's soul or to express the social conditions in Kenya. I think the people should express their national aspirations and their national history in the various national languages of Kenya, including the main national language which is Swahili."

Ngugi was picked in the small hours of December 31st from his Limuru house, and subsequently detained. It is not clear whether or not Ngugi's arrest was related to his play. But by taking this play to the people, Ngugi has elicited a lot of reaction from the theatre-goers. People have read what they wanted from the play. Its producer, however, says: 'The government has always called the people to develop their indigenous culture, so the play is very much pro-government'.

In the absence of an official statement, it is difficult to know precisely what Ngugi was detained for, as a paper in Nairobi has put it. *The Weekly Review* in Nairobi, on the other hand, has said that the writer might have been detained because of Chinese and other

communist literature (in his possession) which is banned in Kenya.

People in Nairobi have reacted in many different ways to the arrest of and detention of Ngugi: 'We cannot sympathise with Professor Ngugi', says one academic between sips of beer at the Nairobi University Common Room. 'He was arrested outside the precincts of the University at his own house in the village'. For this academic Ngugi was not covered by academic freedom unless he was operating from a University house.

Students, however, have reacted to the arrest differently. *The Anvil*, a student newspaper at the University of Nairobi, reports: 'Crowd-pulling notices appeared last week referring to the arrest and subsequent detention of Prof. Ngugi wa Thiong'o. It goes on to say: "The note also condemned the government's action and Ngugi's critics". *The Anvil* also reported how graffiti referring to Ngugi's arrest was hastily removed by the authorities. One of the graffiti showed, 'a courageous Prof. Ngugi being whipped'. The students have thus joined Ngugi's well-wishers in Kenya and abroad in their demand for the immediate release of Ngugi.

"History is very important in any people. How we look at our past is very important in determining how we look at and how we evaluate the present. A distorted view of a people's past can very easily distort our views and evaluation of the present as well as the evaluation of our present potentials and our future possibilities as a people. Our history up to now has been distorted by the cultural needs of imperialism, that is, it was in the interest of the imperialists to distort Kenyan history with the view of showing that Kenyan people had not struggled with nature and with other men to change their natural environment and create a positive social environment. It was also in the interests of imperialism to implement missionaries and other agents of imperialism in bright colours, and they did all these things using the terms of apparent objectivity. Now I feel that Kenyan writers, intellectuals, historians, political scientists, must be able to show us Kenya's past which correctly evaluate Kenyan people's achievements in the past, in the present, and at the same time, pointing out their creative potential in the future.

Sometimes when I look at Kenya's history, I ask myself what about all those Kenyans who so resisted the Portuguese intrusion into Kenya in the 16th Century to the extent that the Portuguese were forced to build one of the strongest forts in the world, Fort Jesus? Or rather put it this way: Isn't the strength of Fort Jesus a comment on the ferocity of the resistance by the Kenyan people. What about all the Kenyan people that fought against Arab slave owning and slave hunting classes, and for many years successfully made sure that the Arabs were unable to penetrate into the interior of Kenya? What about all the fierce wars of resistance by Kenyan people in the Nineteenth Century against British imperialism? What about the wars fought by heroes like Waiyaki and others? What about all the fierce wars fought by Kenyan people around Mount Elgon?

We, as writers, as historians, as Kenyan intellectuals must be able to tell these stories, or histories, or history or heroic resistance to foreign domination by Kenyan people. Doing so, we shall not be looking at ourselves as people who were weak in the face of foreign domination, threats, aggression, but as a people whose history shines with the grandeur, if you like, of heroic resistance and achievement of the Kenyan people. That's why I think history dominates PETALS OF BLOOD so much. I feel that Kenyan history, either pre-colonial or colonial has not yet been written. . . . It is important because we are still not yet free of imperialist domination and exploitation. The Kenyan people must know their history in order to face up to the challenge of imperialism."

"The question of what is international itself needs to be questioned very seriously because there is a tendency of imperialists, capitalists, thinking of their own culture as being international, and this includes their languages. Often, what they mean by this is that they want their language and culture to hold sway in all those areas under their exploitation. What this means is that if you learn a people's language, and you adopt their culture, you are more likely to see yourself in terms of their world outlook, their aspirations. And you are not likely to see their system as an enemy system, but as a friendly system with one or two possible anomalies. So, the term international depends upon the base from which you look at it. So, why don't we look at internationality from the point of view of the needs of the peasants and workers of Kenya? Our national languages are international and national to the extent that they are able to stress the aspirations of the vast majority of not only the Kenyan people but also of peoples the world over. It is the content of internationality whether a language or not is expressing the needs that affect the mass of the people the world over. In Kenya, to the extent that national languages are the ones which are used by the vast majority of the people, . . . then those languages should be used, utilised, and developed; and a literature ought to develop in those languages so that there will be a vital relationship between the writer and the mass of Kenyan people."

Notes on ART & LIBERATION STRUGGLE

N. Kilele

These notes have two aims.

Firstly, to distinguish artistic practice (AP) from political practice (PP), since they are often confused and substituted for each other, so as to increase the effectiveness of AP. I shall primarily concentrate on painting, sculpture and drawing — although they constitute specific spheres within AP owing to their peculiarities. I hasten to add that I am not making a claim for the 'independence of art', as will be clear in the course of these notes. The production of art is in fact a social activity and is determined 'in the last instance' by the existing social relations.

After having outlined the first, I shall examine the tasks of AP with regard to a specific reality, that of Tanzania. I shall try to show that the development of 'national art' is a necessary component of liberation struggle.

The production of art is relatively an autonomous activity; for although it can be situated within the ideological level, it is partly determined by the economic level. The elements of which art is composed are specific to it and most of them do not exist in the various spheres that constitute the ideological level, which in turn exists within a specific socio-economic formation.¹

An indication of the specificity of the practices in general is the phrase 'red and expert' used by many revolutionary leaders. If all practices were reducible to PP, if PP were to be the only practice, then one would only speak of 'red'; painting a mural would then equal political agitation. This phrase further indicates that every specific practice must be informed by political criteria. Although general criteria are required to judge whether an artistic product is in the interest of the majority of the people, an additional criterion specific to each practice, whether AP or PP, is needed since each practice uses different materials in a particular manner.² This will be clear if we briefly examine the nature of PP and AP and the relations between them.

PP has as its object the social relations of a society upon which it acts in order to transform them. It is guided by a correct political line which necessitates a revolutionary theory, a proletarian party that works out the political line and implements it, depending on the relations between classes. The correct political line is worked out from experience in the struggle itself.

PP involves itself not only with economic struggles (wage demands) but also raises political demands (e.g. equal rights for minorities); its strategic aim being the seizure of state power and the transformation of social relations.

AP differs from PP by having a different mode of operation and in having as its object the ideology of the spectator and/or participant. The mode of operation varies in the materials used, the manner of the usage of materials even when common to both, and the conditions necessary for the usage of the materials.

AP shares with PP, as their object, the ideology. The ideology is only a means for PP, a channel for it to act upon social relations. Whereas for AP, the ideology is its main object; and this affects its mode of operation.

Being a specific practice, AP is informed by a theory of art which provides an understanding of the history of the production and consumption of artistic products. In this manner it also contributes to the effectiveness of AP by providing tools of analysis for the present. This theory of art is in turn informed by the science of historical materialism and the philosophy of dialectical materialism, both of which provide the former with some of the necessary categories and concepts.

Marxist theory in conjunction with PP maps out the road which AP has to travel upon; it points out the enemy at this historical juncture: the prevailing bourgeois capitalist class and its ideology.

It should be made clear that aesthetic elements do not contain ideology(ies) in themselves; it is the latter that arranges the aesthetic elements in a specific manner. Often more than one ideology may be present in an artistic product and these may manifest themselves in different or even the same type of aesthetic elements. This explains why art that embodies bourgeois ideology may also appeal to our senses, for it is the aesthetic element(s) that may attract us. On the other hand, aesthetic elements used in revolutionary art could be appropriated and used in works whose dominant ideology is reactionary or used

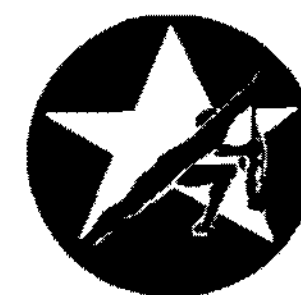
in such a way that perpetuate bourgeois ideology. The use of the aesthetic elements of Chinese revolutionary posters by *The Sunday Times* in its publicity ads to boost its circulation is such an example of bourgeois appropriation. The aesthetic element(s) exudes a particular ideology depending upon how it is arranged, the use made of it, and the manner of its production, reproduction and consumption.

A few brief examples of AP will clarify the above and indicate the differences between the various practices based on the materials they use and their mode of operation. These differences also influence when and how one uses a particular practice.

A painting or a novel cannot convey all the contradictions in their changing forms — their simultaneity and determination — and their historical development.

Cartoons, for example, can attack the ruling order, but they must be transmitted through a material (paper or a wall for the graffiti) whereas poems can be transmitted orally — very useful in countries with high literacy and/or where political activities are banned. Similarly, watching a film necessitates a degree of darkness, equipment, and the audience has to remain stationary — often exposing themselves to retribution from the oppressive state machinery.

Consider the design of two badges: one aimed at making the people in Britain aware of massacres in another country and the other to show that there also exists a revolutionary movement in the country concerned. A badge is usually worn on the lapel. It has to have an image that is immediately understood so that the message is comprehended in the few seconds that a passerby has on a bus, in the street . . . it cannot explain how and why such a situation exists; it can only state that there are massacres. Pamphlets, meetings, etc. can then explain why these massacres have taken place and by whom they have been committed



The other badge can only state that a revolutionary movement exists. But its programme, how it arose, its stage of development, can only be explained by other means.

Certain incorrect positions are held by artists as a result of the confusion between AP and PP.

Some hold the position that 'my art is my politics and my contribution towards changing society is my AP'. This position, partly a result of the complete separation between AP and PP, often leads the artists from withholding him/herself from PP.

Another position is that 'I participate in PP and that is my contribution to changing society. My art is my work as an artist'. This position, again a result of separation between AP and PP, ignores the ideology embodied within artistic products.

Finally there are artists who are primarily concerned with celebrating the marginal achievement of socialism in a capitalist society instead of questioning and criticising the ruling ideologies — a task that comes before the portrayal of the 'achievement of socialism'.

AP and artistic products are in the final instance determined by the existing social relations, by the concrete situation, for not only does ideology exist within a definite social formation but the production and consumption of art takes place within such a formation. The class position and the ideology of the person who commissions/buys a work, the relationship of the ideology embodied within an artwork to the other prevailing ideologies, and the level of development of the productive forces, are among some of the factors that affect the artistic product.

However, while one can speak of an advanced mode of production or a higher level of productive forces, one cannot pass such qualitative judgements on aesthetics. It would be incorrect to say that African aesthetics are more advanced than European or vice versa. There cannot be one 'correct' aesthetic, nationally as well as internationally. The nature of perception and aesthetic values vary according to different cultures and historical periods.

Artistic products can, however, hold different meanings for different societies — this appropriation depends on the ruling aesthetic ideologies and the prevailing material conditions.

The specificity of AP, its mode of operation, enables it to carry out certain tasks that PP would find difficult in conditions where overt political activities are banned, and where the revolutionary struggle is young. In these conditions one has to use all possible means to spread the truth (the truth about who exploits whom and how . . .). In his essay of 1932, 'Writing the Truth: 5 Difficulties', Brecht mentions

cunning as one of the skills necessary in spreading the truth.

AP can then play an important role in national struggle, especially since by its very nature (that of being *unable* to advance prescriptions to political contradictions) it usually has more leeway. It can help to raise the consciousness of the masses, even though only to a certain level. Additional use of other means (pamphlets, study classes, meetings and other forms of communication available) can raise the consciousness to a higher level. This should be clear since very few forms of AP can advance prescriptions. (Novels or poems that try to do this lose their effectiveness by straddling between AP and PP.) It is enough to show that things are wrong and that they should be changed . . . 'How?' can be dealt more effectively by other practices.

I shall now consider the tasks that face AP in a concrete situation, that of Tanzania.

At the end of the 19th century, Tanzanian society came under the rule of colonialism. The primary aim of colonialism was profits which were realised through the extractions of raw materials, the production of agricultural products, and the selling of manufactured goods. This was achieved by the military, political and cultural subjugation of the Tanzanian people. In practice this meant the shattering of the incipient division of labour that was developing and the hindering of the growth of the productive forces.

Artistic products were stolen or destroyed. Tanzanian dances, songs and art were frowned upon and repressed. Craftsmen were instead 'taught' the making of chairs etc. according to European norms. Education was to impart 'a sound knowledge of German customs and patriotism'. The aim of drawing classes in the government schools was clearly expressed in a German report (1911): Pupils drew 'illustrated pictures of German history from Germany's greatest era (which) deepened their grasp of Germany's strength and greatness!'³

At the present time, Tanzania is a neo-colonial state under the rule of the bureaucratic native bourgeoisie allied with imperialism which maintains the backwardness of peasant production by various methods including outright state repression. It also represses the workers and the lower sections of the petty-bourgeoisie.

Thus the present stage of the Tanzanian revolution is to prepare the ground for a socialist revolution by establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the peasants. This requires the overthrow of imperialism and its allies to pave the way for the building of the national economy and culture.

One of the means of maintaining the bureaucratic bourgeois rule in Tanzania today is through the ideological state apparatus. It controls the only two national newspapers and the radio station; the latter is regarded as the main instrument for spreading its ideology since the majority of the population is illiterate and newspapers do not reach all parts of the country. ' . . . the radio has been used as an educational medium, for it reaches further and more quickly into our villages than any other form of communication' — Nyerere in *10 years after the Arusha Declaration*.



It propagates its ideology through the educational system strictly controlled by the government. Further, any form of cultural activity has to be approved first by an organ of the ruling party (which is the only one allowed).

The ideological hegemony of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie in Tanzania does not preclude the existence of other ideologies. In fact, in spite of its anti-imperialist noises, the ideology of world imperialism dominates certain spheres. The few cinemas that exist in the towns show a steady diet of 'Kung Fu' and 'Westerns'. African films or films from socialist countries are not shown since, as the Tanzanian Film Board puts it, 'they do not make money'. The rural areas are sometimes rewarded with films about technology or the few productions that espouse the ruling class ideology. Imported cheap novels and magazines (from the West) monopolise the bookshops.

The sphere of production of painting/sculpture is underdeveloped in Tanzania today. Even then, the State tries to monopolise whatever exists. It also promotes tendencies that are to its benefit. The parastatal SIDA has set up centres that produce 'sculptures' for sale to tourists who are the main buyers. In fact the Tanzanian Arts Council has a catalogue from which they order large series of sculptures based on one model. These are usually copies of traditional art produced in the past under a different mode of production, embodying the dominant ideology of the remote past and serving a different purpose. Just as pre-capitalist relations of production are reinforced, are utilised by imperialism, the pre-capitalist aesthetic elements are promoted to serve a different (imperialist) ideology.

An example of this is the promotion of the 'shetani' (spirits) Makonde Art since the mid 50s whose ideology is dominantly mystical. It gained its popularity because the 'customers in the art shops seemed to find it attractive... and more carvings of strange spirit shapes were created in the shed. Today shetani carvings are produced in most of the craft communities'. — Jörn Korn in *Modern Makonde Art*.

As a result, that section of the art of Makonde people that commented upon the issues which concerned the Makonde people and, in some cases, that of the whole country, has declined. Contemporary political satire, birth and death, and other social issues do not interest the tourist.

Contrary to this, the Makonde Art produced recently in Mozambique deals with the dominant issues of the time. The liberation struggle helped strengthen the elements that dealt with social function and thus provided it with a new dynamic for a genuine development, in form as well as content.

The production of art that has to pander to the buyers' conceptions is a problem that faces artists in all capitalist countries. African artists have an additional handicap, for the market that allows them to survive is located outside the continent in all respects. The fact that they have to produce for those people who in most cases do not have any knowledge of the African reality (neither are they concerned about it) totally alienates them from their own contemporary reality. The art objects are usually sold or taken to the West where private collectors or museums hoard/display them as examples of 'primitive' art. The second or third-rate objects that are generally stocked in 'art galleries' in Africa are also mostly bought by Western tourists who usually see them as mementoes of a holiday.⁴

The dealers who control the production of these objects, and in some cases the artists themselves, have no scruples about imitation or pandering to the tourists' demands; new objects are deliberately broken and then mended and/or in other cases new objects are buried in the ground for some time in order to give them the appearance of antiques. The extent to which the market dominates the production of artistic objects in Africa today is illustrated by the fact that Hausa metalworkers now produce the famous Ashanti goldweights.

Furthermore, one of the consequences of large numbers of best past works being stored in museums in the West is that the contemporary African artist often has to work in a complete vacuum. And since information about Western art is more easily available, he/she is more likely to be influenced by it, and, as a result, often turns out bad copies of it.

There are two reasons for the encouragement of such 'artistic' products by the Tanzanian regime. Firstly, it is a source of profits (foreign exchange). Capitalist relations encroach upon all spheres of production and these products are no exception. They have become commodities and hence are subjected to the market forces.

Secondly, the Tanzanian regime uses the ideology located in the past to negate the dynamic of the present struggle by positing the idea of one united nation as the dominant one. It also presents itself as the inheritor and the protector of the peoples' culture for all time. This is in effect achieved by taking the past works out of their historical context so that the question of the ideology(ies) of the works is ignored. (It is for this ideological purpose that the Tanzanian regime, like other African governments, is demanding the return of past works which were stolen by colonial powers. One supports the call for the return of all the works to their land of origin, but at the same time it is essential to expose their ideological use under reactionary regimes).



The idea that the past works represent the African reality for all times hinders the development of an AP that has its roots in the contemporary social reality, a practice that probes the issues that concern the majority of the people and exposes that which is not in their interest.

Another ideology within AP in Tanzania is the ideology of naturalism. This ideology was part of the emergence of the bourgeoisie in Europe but was imposed on the rest of the world during colonialism. In Tanzania, being under the heels of imperialism, this ideology still dominates the country. It can be found in illustrations of all sorts (advertising, posters, stamps, books, painting, etc.). Students were, and are still, taught to portray things exactly as they saw them — a methodology that has nothing in common with African aesthetics (and a task that is impossible anyway).

What then are the tasks that face Tanzanian artists today? These are, as stated before, governed by the political tasks which have already been outlined. They are: 1) To combat the specific form that cultural imperialism takes within the sphere of artistic production in Tanzania and cultural imperialism in general; 2) to look at the dominant ideology (of the ruling class) critically and expose its real function in the context of the present reality of the oppressed Tanzanian masses, and thereby assist them in their struggle. Both tasks are interrelated.

Before tackling the question of how to achieve this, the question of style within artistic production must be clarified. By style I mean specific elements and a specific combination of these elements (motifs, forms). Thus a national style would comprise of elements, and their relations, indigenous to Tanzania. Owing to historical factors, some of these elements and their specific combinations are common to many parts of Africa; since there still exist similar combinations are common to many parts of Africa; since there still exist similar modes of production and the division of one people into different countries as a result of boundaries imposed by colonialism. Therefore the national style of Tanzania would have a lot in common with that of the surrounding countries.

Such a style would combat the encroachment of the 'international' style, which is rooted in the West, and would enable us to develop our culture according to our needs and the concrete situation. However, we cannot imitate our past or other cultures.

If life as a whole were built on the basis of imitation only, then there would be no development or human progress but a mere repetition of a phenomenon.

The ideologues of imperialism argue that the development of the peoples (whether material or cultural) who are 'late' in entering the road of progress has to tread the paths of the advanced nations. We totally reject this.

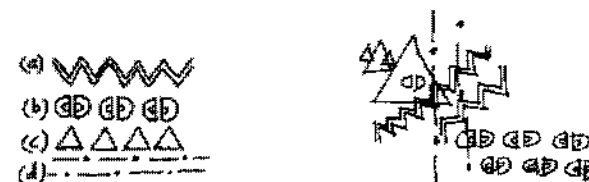
We do not oppose utilising the experiences of other peoples provided we are in a position to utilise their positive aspects and learn lessons from the negative ones. We have to bear in mind the concrete conditions that exist within our own country in applying these lessons.

The historical development of Tanzanian society has been disrupted by imperialism. One of the present tasks of AP is to forge a link with

the past, to establish a continuum to serve as a basis for the leap into the future. In order to do this, attitudes to past works must be re-assessed: they must be analysed in the context of the fact that they were produced in a different time and served different purposes. However, the traditional forms (whether from the remote past or prevailing in the present) can be used to express the present realities without losing the identity of their specific aesthetic.

I shall now try to illustrate one method of using the past to create the new. A study of past works will show that the elements are used in a specific manner. That is to say, the elements and their inter-relationships are of a specific order; and it can be shown that this specific order relates to specific socio-economic relations. It is now possible to isolate the elements and by reconstituting them in a different order, create a new relationship between them to reflect the new reality of our different age.

Consider the following illustration as an example:



a, b, c, and d each denote a different element. Each element is made up of sub-elements. Line c is made up of a number of triangular elements. There also exists a definite hierarchy: a is above b, and b above c, and so on. This hierarchy is one relationship between the elements. There are others.

We have now destroyed the previous relations of the sub-elements of c by placing one above the other, by enlarging them to varying degree, and so on. The relation of c to the other elements is no longer the same; d is now to the right of c and not below c as before. The relationship of the sub-elements of line d has also changed.

The drawing above is that of a mask. The drawing below it shows how it is possible to 'extract' elements from the mask. The two-dimensionality of the drawing is emphasised by the lines crossing each other. Nor is the nose symmetrical any longer.

In other words, the aesthetic elements of the past have been separated from the ideology that arranged them in a specific manner, and they can now be used in a different manner reflecting another ideology. The relations between the elements may go on changing/evolving as society evolves. There will come a time when the elements themselves are outmoded and replaced. This 'replacement' will not occur at a single moment. As the relations change, so do the elements. New elements may have to be introduced for task for which there are no precedents and which the elements of the old order are unable to satisfy.

However, much research needs to be done on the past works, not only at isolating their elements or their specificity but also situating them in their original context, including the relationship of the aesthetic elements to the dominant ideology(ies) of that time.

There exist many nationalities within Tanzania: many of them have different art forms. This may result in the national aesthetic having different tendencies within it. Some artists may prefer to work with a certain number of aesthetic elements. All this (and much more) can only be 'tested' in practice.

Production implies consumption, for only when it is consumed does a product become a product. Production and consumption are united by the fact that consumption determines the ideal object of production. However it is production that is the primary determinate. It is not possible to consume a product unless it exists and the product determines the manner of consumption by shaping or creating the object in a definite manner (painting can only be seen and not heard).

National art can and must struggle against the ruling ideology within the sphere of artistic production and thus combat the ruling ideology of the native bourgeoisie which is not in the interest of people. It can expose the actions of the ruling class (e.g. through cartoons). But ideology cannot be struggled against solely at the ideological level. The deterioration in the living conditions of the masses will increasingly dent the hegemony of the ruling ideology, resulting in economic and political repercussions and affecting the ideological level. To a certain extent, this is already happening in Tanzania.

The development of national art will also help combat the increasing influence of cultural imperialism. Care will have to be taken that the national art does not advance too fast in isolation from the people or so that it loses its connection with the past, for the attempt to bridge the gap will not be perceived by the majority of the masses and the national art will be in a danger of becoming an alien art form again.

If art is to avoid becoming sterile, if it is to avoid 'talking' to itself, if it is to gain acceptance by the majority of the people, then it will have to deal with the issues that face them. This will also work to its advantage for it will then gain mass acceptance, it will be understood by the people. The artist then has to become a part of the vanguard,

not only in the political sense but also in the realm of his specific practice.

We have only dealt with the sphere of artistic production. Other practices also face similar tasks; to struggle against bourgeois ideology (within their specific domains) in such a manner that the struggle is located within the concrete situation of Tanzania, e.g. old myths and stories can be turned 'upside down'; instead of God being the cause of the misfortune that befalls a family, the same story can be used to show the material causes behind the poverty of the people.

Though every practice and every possible means should be utilised in the struggle, the actual circumstance will determine the particular practice that will be the most effective.

However, the specific tasks of various practices at all times will be defined by the political analysis/situation. It should be clear now that the artist cannot content him/herself with AP only, for it can never be a substitute for PP. As the Senegalese film director, Sembene Ousmane, has pointed out, '... it is impossible to make a revolution with a film no matter how progressive it is'.

1. The relatively autonomous nature of artistic production has often been indicated by various revolutionary leaders: "... [the] question of right and wrong in the arts and sciences should be settled through free discussion in artistic and scientific circles and in the course of political work in the arts and sciences" — Mao Tse Tung in *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*. "There is no question... that in this field [literature] greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content", and that the "literary side of the proletarian party cause cannot be mechanically identified with its other causes" — Lenin in *Party Organisation and Party Literature*.
2. Mao, who was a poet himself, is explicit about this. After listing political criteria that can be used to judge whether actions and words are in the interests of the people, he continues: "Naturally, in judging the truthfulness of scientific theories or assessing the aesthetic value of works of art, other pertinent criteria are needed...", *ibid*.
3. K.F.Hirji, *Colonial Ideological Apparatuses in Tanganyika under the Germans*.
4. For a long description of this, see "The Contemporary-Traditional Art Market in Africa" and "The West African Art Market Revisited" by Daniel Crowley in *African Arts*, Autumn 1970 and Summer 1974.

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an introduction to RADICAL URDU POETRY

Mahmood Jamal

Urdu poetry has for centuries played an important role in the cultural life of northern India.* Originating in the courts of nobles and princes, the *mushtairi* or poetry reading has developed into a regular cultural event providing a platform for poets to show their mastery of the art and to come in contact with their audience in a far more direct way than is possible through books.

Before this century, the bulk of Urdu poetry consisted of *ghazals* or love lyrics. There was very little which could be described as political or social; nonetheless varied subjects of philosophical and psychological importance were dealt with in great depth and with astounding beauty of expression. The *ghazal* has the added advantage of being very musical and many are easily sung by poets themselves or by singers. As a result their popularity has remained undiminished.

In the earlier part of this century, Urdu poetry reached a turning point; poets facing the trauma of colonial oppression began to reflect this in their poetry. Mass politics were also taking shape in the form of the Indian freedom movement. Poets began to forge new poems to meet the changed and changing reality that faced them.

The inspiration no longer came just from cruel red lips and dark eyes, nor from ancient kings and queens; although some poets in a nostalgic delirium started to sing in praise of old ideas and values, took to reviving dead themes that modern man had long left in the museums. (Granted that a vigorous re-appraisal of history is required by all nations struggling to liberate themselves from colonial domination, but that in itself is not enough and future too must be charted to avoid sinking into the mire of obscurantism and mystification.) The inspiration for the progressive poets came not from some abstract promise of palaces in the skies nor from rivers of milk and honey nor from the exploits of ancient warriors or reformers. It came from the concrete possibilities which were opened before mankind by the revolution of 1917, by the struggles of freedom fighters in India and around the colonised world.

A much needed dynamism had at least been injected into Urdu literature and a new era had begun in Urdu poetry, different both in content and form though traditional forms also continued and the *ghazal* still flourishes.

Those who supported national independence have seen their dream go sour with the collaborationist attitude of their native bourgeoisie and with the advent of neo-colonialism. They want the promised freedom; they only get new forms of repression. They hoped that a new dawn would break upon their land with the departure of the hated colonisers; instead the night grows ever darker:

This is not that dawn with longing for which
the friends set out . . .

Then the brutal realisation that the struggle is not yet over:

Where did that fine breeze, that the wayside lamp
Has not once felt, blow from—where has it fled?
Night's heaviness is unlesened still, the hour
Of mind and spirit's ransom has not struck:
Let us go on our goal is not reached yet.

— Faiz Ahmad Faiz

The real face of the rulers is exposed. The mask of democracy was inadequate. The guns had to come out backed by tanks, planes, and AID programmes. A single spark here! A poem can have the force of a storm. A banner placed in the mental landscape, a symbol of revolt, a terrifying scream against oppression, a rallying point for revolution.

The writers and intellectuals, poets and artists have all been radicalised in varying degrees by being witness to a systematic denial of humanity to the people around them. They are intensely aware of this and their works reflect this awareness. But the rulers can survive only by keeping the people in ignorance. So, inevitably, the poets come in conflict with the rulers.

Poetry and imprisonment seem very incongruous indeed to someone

who lives in a culture where poets have become mere entertainers playing with words usually to a small audience of academics. But if we cast a glance at the important names of Urdu poetry, we can hardly think of any poet who has not been to prison or has been threatened with worse. Faiz has been to jail. Sardar J'afri has been to jail. Habib Jalib went to prison several times in Pakistan. Hazrat Mohani was imprisoned by the British in India. Other forms of restrictions have been imposed on those who stayed out: Josh's famous poem *To the Heirs of East India Company* was banned by the British.

Those who went to jail did not stop writing there. In fact, many of them came up with their best poems: like Yanis Ristos in Greece. Kim Chi Ha in Korea, Saad Zahir in Singapore, Denis Brutus in South Africa, Nazim Hikmet in Turkey, many Palestinian poets in Israel, and numerous others around the world.

How much frustration they must have caused their captors! To see the unbroken spirits fighting up flames in the darkness of their oppression, sending out sparks to light prairie fires!

* In 1947, the Indian sub-continent was partitioned into two independent countries and so was Urdu poetry, so to speak. Of the poets presented here Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib live in Pakistan while Sardar J'afri and Sahir Ludhianavi are from India.

A GIFT OF BLOOD

Searching for a garden in my world
you will find fiery winds, not spring.
No rainbow colours here, in this gray afternoon;
from one end to the other swings the noose.
Once again they go towards their gory end
those leaders who have lost their way so many times!

Behind the veil of their democracy,
they build prisons they make whips.
In the name of peace they conjure war
in the clamour for justice they produce disparity.
Fear guards the heart and lips are sealed;
Overhead, the tents of iron bars stretch out.

Yet have they ever feared cruelty and oppression
those ideas that have given strength to the imagination.
No mercenary army can ever break
that glass that holds the people's awakened spirits.
At each step, life gives a gift of blood
to the lamps that entangle with the darkness.

Onward moves the caravan of human progress
shaking the heart of tyrants
All around the drums of revolt are sounding
young people walk around like lighted flames.
The whole earth is a boiling ocean
the mountains and the forests are alive!

It's easy to stifle my scream
but who will stop the challenge of life?
The wall of steel and fire may be high
but who will stop the force of changing times?
You who block the way of new ideas
who will stop the sword of rising masses?

From the very place of darkness where you seek refuge
the armies of morning will emerge!
In the air unfurl the red flags
The east and west converge!

Sahir Ludhianavi

ONE YEAR

What is the meaning of imprisonment?
What the significance of jails?
O year now asleep in times graveyard
on your shrivelled shadow
barking jaildogs weep,
I look at all this and I laugh.

Those venomous stings of moments past;
the blood-soaked sharpness of the morning's sword;
that blackness left in the evening's eye
by gunpowder,
and those riders of weeks on the months' backs
who came to crush my revolt;
All those I've left sleeping
by your side O passing year.

Blood drips from the eyes of sentries.
The rifles speak through iron lips;
and bullets sting with tongues of brass.
And LAW, that chain of property,
extends its links and gathers more
within its deceptive embrace.
Year after year the snake changes its form.
Inside the charmers basket
poisonous cobras lurk upholding the rule
of LAW and JUSTICE
while his flute hides the humming
within its waves of melody.

Still the proud hearts of selfless
fighters are beating,
the throb of struggling veins resounds;
and through time and history's streets
pass the processions.

(ii)

How many youthful yearnings bled in China
to adorn the face of the new dawn?
And how many hearts the free beauties of Greece
have sown in anticipation of spring!
The tears that rained down

from the eye of Spain are restless
to become pearls and dewdrops.
Like a bright banner the blood of martyrs
from Vietnam and Malaya
is shimmering in the mirror of the sky.
The fire of revolt in Tilangana
rushes to burn the fields of slavery.
The wounded spirit of Bengal
has recovered its might.
Pain and cries for mercy
have found the fiery language
of slogans demanding demanding.
From each corner the bursting force of floods;
from each particle the dance of emerging light.
Pain of death, terror of slavery
and against them,

WAKING AND RISING HUMANITY!

What is imprisonment?
What is the significance of jails!

(iii)

What are days and nights
but milestones on the roads;
months and years are dust left
by travellers.
Imprisonment comes and passes.
We meet mountains of trouble
valleys of ignorance;
hearts burning in deserts of starvation,
life burns in the boiling river of blood.
And in the thorny wastes and plains
footsteps become red lines of blood.
Yet the caravan moves towards the destination.
Eyelids unvail the scenery
dreams erupt with flowers.

(iv)

I am not lonely here
for so many yearnings are imprisoned with me.
So many youthful faces bred in mountain valleys

So many sons of the green fields
So many workers that drive trains and machines
So many fragrances from kismet
So many curls of lovely hair
So many sisters' lotuses of hope
So many Mothers' lamps of fulfillment.
So many storms, gusts of wind
So many mutilated hands of strikers
So many banners of revolt!

The higher the mountain to climb
the greater the courage we muster;
soaring like eagles of Himalaya
tearing through the skies
our endless courage!

And the old prisoners, wise friends
whose wrinkles are pages of historical events;
the laughter in their sparkling eyes
the wrinkles of their smiles,
are a mockery of the system's cruelty.
In this night of slavery
the silver of their hair foretells
that morning is approaching.
And those passionate poets and story tellers
mett the chains of worry
with the warmth of their song.

Each verse they write the story of heroism.
Each song they sing shakes these walls!

The flames of voices rise with such force
that they set fire to the dark dungeons
and our destination glimmers in the arches
of Time, rays from the morning sun.

If I have companions like these
then the purpose of travelling is great!
If the night is so bright
how much brighter the dawn!

— Sardar J'afri, Central Jail, Nasik, India,
April 1950.

MY DAUGHTER

Thinking that it was a toy,
When she saw the chain around my wrists
my daughter jumped with joy.

Her laughter was the gift of morning,
Her laughter gave me endless strength.
A living hint of a free tomorrow
gave meaning to my night of sorrow.

ON THE BANNING OF A BOOK OF POEMS

In my hand I hold a pen
In my heart the light of consciousness
How can your forces of oppression
Ever win?
I, concerned with peace for all mankind
And you just out to save your precious skin.
Into the world I dawn, the rising sun;
Into the ocean of oblivion you shall sink!

Habib Jalib

MY CITY

What is the latest fashion in my city now?
What price the spring extorts these days?
Are they in lonely streets
tearing out their hearts;
or inside the dungeon their empty
morning starts?
Are they in dreary houses
deep in wine?
Tell me! Tell me what my friends are suffering
in these troubled times!

Faiz Ahmad Faiz

A PRISON NIGHTFALL

The night descends
step by silent step
down the stairway of stars.
The breeze goes by me
like a kindly whispered phrase.

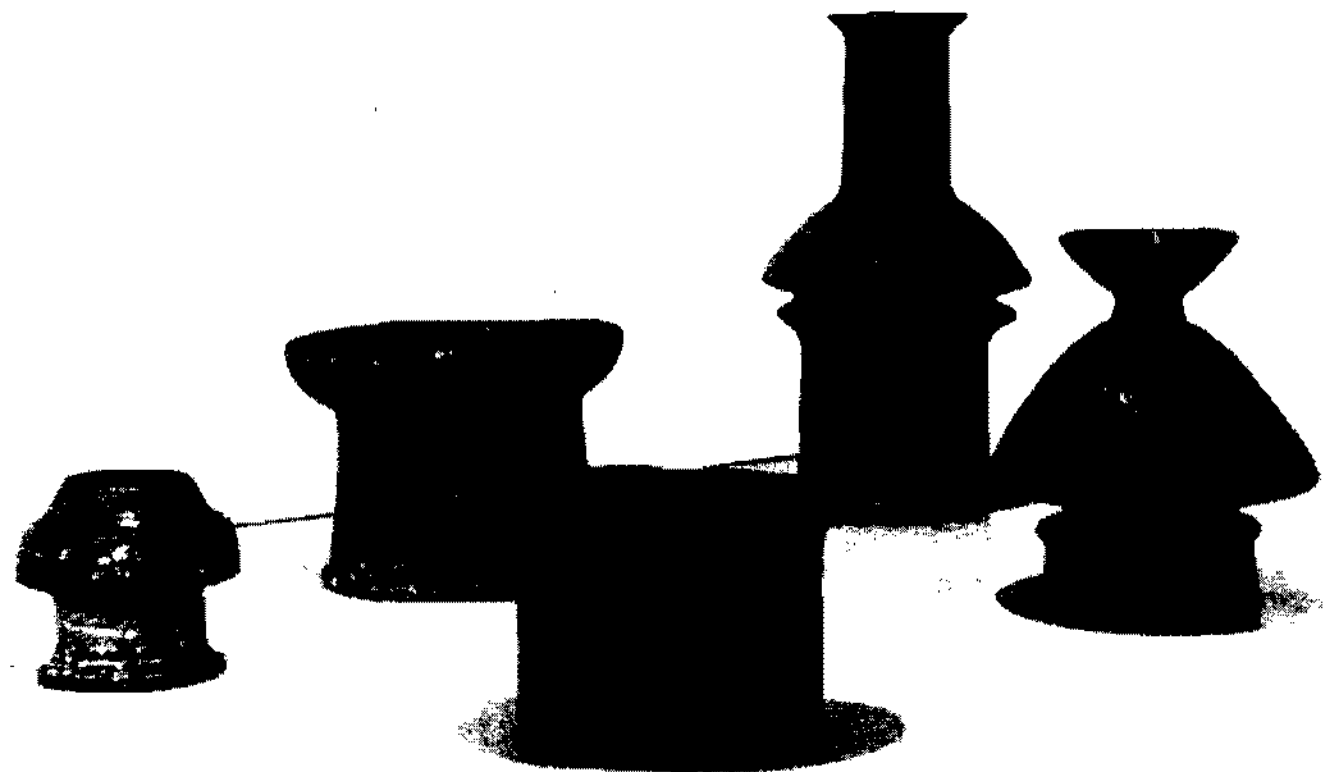
The homeless trees of the prison yard
are absorbed in making patterns
against the sky.

On the roof's high crest
the loving hand of the moonlight rests.
In dust is drowned the stony river
and the sky is glowing silver with moonlight.
In the dark foliage
shadows play with the wind
as a wave of painful loss
invades the heart.

Defiantly, a thought tells me
how sweet life is at this instant.
Those that brew the poison of cruelty
will today nor tomorrow win.
They can put out the lamps
where lovers meet;
they cannot blind the moon!

Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Lahore Jail, Pakistan.

All the poems are translated
from Urdu by Mahmood Jamal



Group of Ceramic Pots by M.A. Abdalla

Afro-Caribbean Art

An analysis by Rasheed Araeen

In May 1978, Drum Arts Centre, an organisation formed in 1974 in order to encourage and promote the artistic and cultural interests of Afro-Caribbean people in Britain, presented this exhibition at the Artists Market (sometimes called Warehouse Gallery as well), London. The exhibition comprised of painting, sculpture, pottery/ceramics, photography, etc. produced by black artists (of Afro-Caribbean origin) in Britain.

In the introduction to the exhibition Drum's Executive Director, John Mapondera, says, "The rarity of such exhibitions underlines the lack of opportunity for these artists to expose their work to genuine criticism and evaluation. For it is only when this can happen freely and often enough that Afro-Caribbean Artists in Britain could be expected to make a meaningful contribution as part of the 'main currents' in the common artistic endeavours. Some of the artists whose work is included in this exhibition are already making a significant contribution to art in Britain and even internationally. We include their work in order to focus on the enormous scope for development which exists when opportunities are available.

But what is Afro-Caribbean Art? is the question one cannot help asking after seeing the exhibition. And in fact one wonders if there really is such a thing as Afro-Caribbean Art. The question can be answered in two different ways, affirmatively as well as negatively, depending upon how one would like to look at things. Whether one is just happy to see some black artists exhibiting together under some title, or one is seriously concerned about the nature and content of the work beyond liberal sympathy and sentimentality.

The reality which qualifies an art as 'Afro-Caribbean art' is to be there. Just because an art is produced by somebody who is of Afro-Caribbean origin, or for that matter from Africa or the Caribbean, does not itself lend to that art an Afro-Caribbean particularity unless that particularity is expressed in the work, unless the work reflects upon or deals with a reality which in turn necessitates the work to be called Afro-Caribbean Art. This is particularly essential for an art produced by Afro-Caribbean people living outside Africa or the Caribbean.

In other words, the work must express or show different aesthetic

characteristics, not necessarily in the deployment of different techniques or/and material but in the essence that separates it from its non-Afro-Caribbean contemporaries. It must have a content which, in some way, is reflective of Afro-Caribbean experience, in this case, in Britain.

African Art, for example, clearly distinguishes itself in its specificity; not only because it has been created in Africa, not only at its formal level, but because it also expresses the African world-view — and it expresses it very profoundly indeed. It communicates the socio-economic, cultural, as well as political, reality of its people(s) in various periods in its history, through a specific sensibility which became known as African aesthetic sensibility expressed in a variety of formal innovations. (It was this African sensibility that was injected into, if not appropriated by, the mainstream of European culture in the beginning of this century, and as a result we had the development of Cubism and so on.)

Looking at the exhibition, however, one finds little that is distinguishably Afro-Caribbean in its contemporary context. There is little which is distinctly different, in form as well as content (if any), from various Western styles. Here one is not necessarily looking for a formal criteria that may remind one of Africa or the Caribbean, or that looks 'African'; and in fact there are works in the exhibition (by Taiwo Jegede, Adesola Wallace, Cyprian Mandela and the pottery/ceramics) that have a traditional African quality. The important thing here really is what is that which is being expressed, its specificity and aesthetic quality, as well as its social relevance.

The work, with a few exceptions, lacks an originality and a sense of purpose. It shows no guts for an original experimentation and search for a methodology necessary for the communication of its supposed specificity. Nor does it bother to address to its social reality. Most of the works are either art-school exercises (amateurish, naive and childish) or bad imitations of various Western styles developed in this century but now outmoded. There are no surprises and the painting section is particularly bad.

Three works by Frank Bowling, who is supposed to be



Portrait by Bill Patterson

internationally known, might have impressed us twenty years ago. In fact we would have certainly credited him if he had innovated this method of throwing paint directly on the canvas or contributed further to its development. Now one has to be ignorant, or pretend ignorance, to appreciate what is no more than a decorative pastiche of the outmoded styles of post-abstract expressionist period in New York. They might look beautiful in somebody's house or office but have nothing to say. (This criticism, in fact, applies to many artists today, black and white, who are dabbly pursuing a kind of mannerism.)

However, *Carnival Dancer* by Merdelle Irving, *When the Albino Comes* by Reynold Duncan, *Trophies of Empire* by Donald Locke, are interesting works and show skill and some originality. Donald Locke's other works, like *Seed Pot*, show his competence as a craftsman. One would, however, like to see him coming out of the cocoon of his sexual fantasies and come to terms with the world outside as well.

Groups of Ceramic Pots by M.A. Abdalla shows a real professional dedication of a craftsman; the sculptural arrangement — which does evoke a feeling of an African village — would have been more effective spatially if the pots were slightly bigger. *Four Ceramic Plates* by Giddig El N'goundi have also been beautifully done.

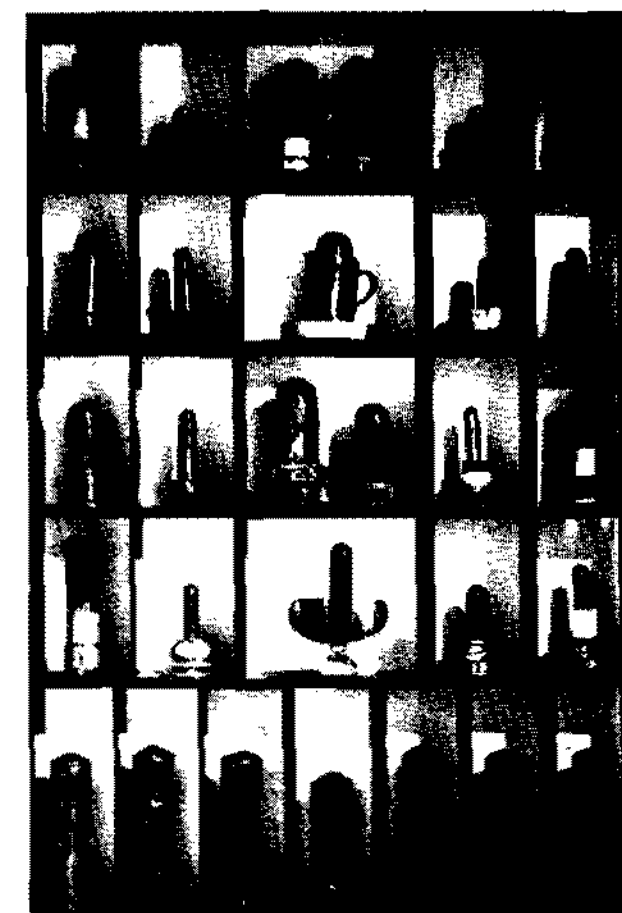
The photographic section shows professional talent, but the content of the works suffers from stereotyped themes. It lacks boldness in the choice of the subject and misses so much of the social reality of black people in Britain. It is particularly disappointing to see the work of Lance Watson comprising only of a few Nigerian portraits, which are technically impressive. He has been actively involved in the community and has done a lot of work that is particularly related to Afro-Caribbean reality.

In this respect, one is also reminded of the important work done by Errol Lloyd in book illustrations, particularly storybooks for black kids. One wonders why this work was not included.

The exhibition was perhaps a celebration for its liberal supporters who look to such an occasion or a venture to show their paternal concern for the predicament of black people (there were in fact some faces from the art establishment present during the opening) and absolve their guilty conscience, but for those who are seriously concerned with the state of art of black people in Britain it was a big disappointment. The exhibition in fact conforms to the general and erroneous notion about the level of development of the non-white artist.

One could say, and perhaps rightly say, that we are being harsh in judging this exhibition, since it was the first chance for many to show their work. If there had existed equal opportunities, an opportunity for the black artists to develop and show their work along with their white contemporaries, and thus subjected to open criticism and analysis, we would have seen a better standard. Very true. In fact, we were the first ones to put forward an analysis of the difficulties faced by black artists (here we include Asians as well) in Britain (see 'Black Manifesto' in our issue Number 1) and we have pointed out that there has been a deliberate policy on the part of the art establishment to ignore black artists or marginalise their status. But that does not mean that all black artists were defeated by the difficulties and produced compromisingly third to fifth-rate works. We are particularly pointing out this because there is a general impression that this was "a survey of black artists in Britain" (Time Out No. 422); which is not true.

The point is that this kind of exhibition, at this particular time in the history of black people in Britain when there is a widespread ignorance about their actual contribution (vis-a-vis art) of the last thirty years or so, does not serve any real purpose. On the contrary, by gathering some amateurs and mediocres under some convenient title, it could perpetuate the myth of marginal black artist. The issue



Trophies of Empire by Donald Locke

here really is of *Black Artists in Britain* and not of 'Afro-Caribbean Art', and it ought to be dealt with seriously outside the superficial limits of ethnic categories. That does not imply that Afro-Caribbean particularity ought to be suppressed but that it ought to be dealt with within the larger context of black predicament.

This brings us to the context of the exhibition, which in fact reveals the real issue. It is not coincidental that the work (in the exhibition) resembles so much of the kind of work being done today in most Third World countries, the work that fails to question the reality of neo-colonialism but accepts it, resulting into its subordination and marginality to the 'mainstream' art created in the West. It is this marginality created by cultural imperialism that is also evident here.

Neo-colonialism is now being 'brought' home to the metropolis of the capitalist world, for there exists a people within the Western world that must be neo-colonialised and marginalised. That means an intermediary class must be created, a counterpart of the *native bourgeoisie* in the Third World, an *ethnic bourgeoisie* in the West — exotic and subservient.

A black middle-class leadership (with white liberal advisors) is now being created in Britain. It would supposedly look after the interests of its respective people but in reality serve the dominant ruling ideology. A class of ethnic intermediaries will help contain and submerge the consciousness of black people and thereby try to destroy the potential radical role of the sub-proletariat class, by channelling its energies and frustrations into the field which is considered (by the bourgeois) safe, neutral and non-political: art and culture. It would therefore be natural for the 'ethnic minority' artists, who accept the intermediary role of their respective middle-classes, to incorporate the middle-class view of the world in their work. 'Afro-Caribbean Art' exhibition betrays such a tendency.

This is however not an unexpected occurrence. There will in fact be many such exhibitions, supported by the establishment, taking place under various ethnic titles during the coming years, including exhibitions of neo-colonial art (see again 'Black Manifesto') imported from various Commonwealth countries, which will attempt to re-ethnicise the black artist and thereby marginalise further his/her role in this society.

The choice for us is clear. Either we accept our marginalised separate categories or reject them. The rejection will entail hard thinking and commitment. It would require us to look deep into our reality as black people in this country, as well as in the world at large, and unless until we incorporate critically this reality in our creative work we would have nothing to say or contribute. Art is not merely a craft, decoration or entertainment, but means of expression through which one asserts one's own humanity.

BLACK PHOENIX : NUMBER TWO : SUMMER 1978 : EXTRACTS

To say that "this country might be swamped by people of a different culture" at a time when the whole world is being viciously dominated by the West, is to perpetuate imperialist lies; lies which must be exposed and denounced. — BLACK PHOENIX

The new form of children's literature will have to emerge in the struggle for a new society, they will become necessary in that combat. Only the destruction of the capitalist system, the gradual defeat of economic and mental neo-colonialism, can guarantee that one day, finally, Babar may risk killing the old lady and, by the loss of his innocence, hit upon the first step on the road to complete liberation. — ARIEL DORFMAN

It is not possible to separate either, historically, the development of bourgeois consciousness from the development of colonialism, or, socially, the bourgeois value-system from racist and imperialist assumptions of superiority... the Fine Arts have, historically, fallen victim to a myth concerning the absolute and metaphysical nature of its activity, as a result of which its actions and its products have been used to justify not merely a criminal structure of social relations but also the world-wide edifice of imperialism upon which this structure still depends. — KENNETH COUTTS-SMITH

While one can speak of an advanced mode of production or a higher level of productive forces, one cannot pass such qualitative judgement on aesthetics. It would be incorrect to say that African aesthetics are more advanced than European or vice versa. There cannot be one 'correct' aesthetics, nationally as well as internationally. — N.KILELE

Neo-colonialism is now being 'brought' home to the metropolis of the capitalist world, for there exists a people within the Western world that must be neo-colonised and marginalised. That means an intermediary class must be created, a counterpart of native bourgeoisie in the Third World, an ethnic bourgeoisie in the West - exotic and subservient. — RASHEED ARAEEN