

Cosmopolitan Art and Cultural Citizenship

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Cosmopolitan Culture

IT HAS commonly been observed that in postmodernism the cultural distinctions that characterized the era of modernism have been undermined. In practice this means that it appears that social and cultural divides between high culture and popular culture are disappearing, with practitioners of the former losing much of their authority and prestige and simultaneously adopting many of the themes, idioms and marketing of their more commercial peers. The consequence is usually felt to be that a space for a distinctive type of cultural opposition to the rationalization of social order in the interests of global capital has been removed (Adorno, 1991; Clark, 1999). In other words, the provocative challenge to bourgeois consciousness that an avant-garde posed in the continual developments of modernism is effectively no longer tenable. When the challenge was effective it was often presented (or condemned) as cosmopolitanism and I will therefore use changing meanings and status of the cosmopolitan as a focus for my discussion.

I do not want to disagree with the initial premise of this account in that in this article I too will argue that there has been a fragmentation of the cultural order.¹ I will, however, suggest that a more complex situation than a straightforward loss of prestige for high culture has arisen. A cosmopolitan avant-garde has not only survived but also prospered in the sense of enjoying the privileges of celebrity status and concomitant financial reward. The prestige of cosmopolitan art has been won, however, in a process in which cosmopolitan culture in the visual arts has become a spectacular attraction. We might take it for granted that there is an international language for a global avant-garde; but more importantly, and almost

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paradoxically, this language has been popularized so that it has become a significant element in the repertoire of international tourism. In the process, cosmopolitanism has had to effect a curious accommodation with the institutions of national culture – an accommodation or conciliation that has been apparent in the discourses governing the provision of public art by those institutions. The more general context for these changes in the status and significance of cosmopolitan culture has been the strength of a populist current in which the cultural dimensions of citizenship have become more significant. Some of the implications of this approach for belief in the cultural challenge of avant-garde art will also be discussed.

In this article I will develop these ideas beginning by clarifying some of the terms used so far. The cosmopolis offers a principled challenge to the conventional idea of culture. The cosmopolis is a place or political space that encompasses the variety of human culture. It promises the potential to meet and become acquainted with all the strands of cultural diversity. The cosmopolitan is therefore someone who can cope with unpredictability. Cosmopolitans know what is expected in different cultural settings and can move between them with confidence and assurance. In its lack of order, the cosmopolis undermines the premise of culture. Although culture has been used in a variety of ways, not least to refer to ‘artistic heritage’, ‘civilization’ or ‘communal way of life’, primarily the concept has been significant as fundamental to the organization of social life – an organization which has been perceived to be more important than the arrangements and contracts of voluntary agreement. Culture tells us that there is a distinctive way of doing things – painting a picture, making and eating a meal, and what is expected of children – which will be characteristic of a social group. These distinctive forms of life are usually imbued with moral force, often as traditions, and they constitute a central element in group identity. These ways of doing things will therefore persist through generations; they will generally hold without discussion or question, and they display a level of group life that precedes individual experience (changing conceptions of culture are further discussed in Chaney, 2000).

The heterogeneity of cosmopolitan taste suggests either that it is possible to transcend one’s native culture, or that this culture has been in some significant sense diluted, or possibly both. The dilution implication is important because it alerts us to one of the ways in which a charge of being cosmopolitan has been used, particularly in nationalist rhetoric, to stigmatize minorities.² And yet, because a culture is not a uniform terrain but structured by inequalities of power and prestige, it has always been open, at least in European modernity, for individuals to use the differences of cosmopolitan style as a display of privilege. This opportunity has most typically been taken by intellectual groups eager to show both their learning and indifference to local expectations; however, the use of cosmopolitan style has also been able to function as a criterion of being cultured in the sense of familiarity with a variety of cultural vocabularies.

The point being made here is that the ability, and by implication the

willingness, to look outside national cultural traditions has been available to fractions in elite formations as a source of prestige. Reflexively, it has functioned as a way of influencing the substance of cultural discourse, so that their prestige and power are reinforced and legitimated. In the terms of Bourdieu's metaphor of cultural capital, it is as though being able to draw upon a wider range of currencies than the national has enabled certain sorts of transactions to be reserved for the privileged (Bourdieu, 1984). We should also recognize that my writing as though the option of cosmopolitanism is a choice, is to adopt a metropolitan stance. In smaller and/or colonized countries lacking cultural autonomy, national cultural traditions may well be forced into a client relationship with forms of imperialism. Such a cultural as well as economic dependence will ensure that elite groups use cosmopolitanism as a way of bridging divides between an indigenous popular culture and the prestigious influences of colonizing powers (Bhabha, 1990). It is also relevant that for those generating cosmopolitan innovation within metropolitan culture, as in the era of high modernism, both the popular culture of the indigenous proletariat as well as the experience of colonialism have provided new repertoires of primitivism and authenticity as contrasts to the conventions of national styles (see for example Hiller, 1991; Varnedoe and Gopnik, 1990).

National Culture and Popular Culture

These preliminary remarks are intended only to make the simple point that there is inevitably a politics to the practice of the cosmopolitan. Simple in the sense that the dynamics of cultural differentiation and elaboration are inevitably grounded in wider socio-political structures, but also complex in the sense that the meaning of cosmopolitanism does not have a general history but an infinite number of specific and overlapping histories in the formation of national cultures and cultural discourses. There is clearly scope here for a sociology of the politics of cosmopolitanism – how cultural institutions have negotiated tensions between the indigenous and the global in the process of cultural change. The specific angle that I will develop in the rest of this article concerns the conciliation of national with cosmopolitan culture in the institutions of public art in British modernity. I will initially briefly discuss this in relation to the era of urban popular culture, as I said initially that a strong distinction between cultural levels was a defining feature of the modern era. I shall then turn to more contemporary developments that I shall describe as a fragmentation of cultural order.

Notions of public art – that is cultural sites, buildings, objects, memorials and practices such as parades oriented to the anonymous masses of civil society – have had to be developed and articulated in the context of a fracture within a national culture between the popular cultures of the middle class and urban working class. It is unsurprising, then, that some of the early initiatives in public culture were explicitly directed at civilizing the urban proletariat. For example, the provision of public parks, reading rooms for working men, support for adult education classes, provision of sporting

facilities and the encouragement of sporting ideals through class mixing, and subsidizing municipal art galleries and museums were undertaken in 19th- and early 20th-century Britain in order to lessen class hostility and imbue working men, and through them their families, with the cultural capital of rationality (Cunningham, 1980; Meller, 1976). If we add to these sorts of initiatives associated developments in the provision of statuary of national heroes, local war memorials (particularly after 1919), parks, stadia and other public buildings dedicated to glorious moments in national history, then we can see a determined attempt to create what Horne has called a public culture for a modern nation (1986; see also Horne, 1984; Usherwood et al., 2000).

What I have described so far has been a number of attempts at creating a national culture, but we should also recognize that these were complemented by a discursive discovery of an already existing culture (neatly captured in Hobsbawm and Ranger's [1983] oxymoronic phrase of the invention of tradition). I am thinking here of projects as disparate as the folk song movement and the founding of the National Trust. Inspired in part by the feeling that the all-too evident urbanizing of Britain meant that a traditional culture was disappearing, there was also a desire to capture or formulate the distinctiveness of a national culture, partly as a source of integrative inspiration and partly to resist encroaching cosmopolitanism (Colls and Dodd, 1986; Samuel, 1989; Shiach, 1989). When we turn to national cultural institutions such as museums, galleries, academies and scientific societies, however, cosmopolitan cultural values become more explicit.

In large part this was because those founding the National Gallery, the British Museum, the Royal Academy and the Royal Society, etc., were concerned with the glory of the British state, the British ruling class and its attendant intellectuals (Barlow and Trodd, 2000; Haskell, 1993; Smith, 1993). The cosmopolitan could thus be identified with the metropolitan sophistication of imperial powers and, although it might occasionally be seen to degenerate into aestheticism and decadence, generally it was accepted as enhancing national culture. My point is that cosmopolitanism could be incorporated in the illusions, the imagination, of a national culture as long as an indigenous urban popular culture remained localized and fractured between the politics of imperial and class consciousness. In practice, though, the accommodation between different class levels began almost immediately to be undermined by a new culture of entertainment for the masses.

The new institutions of mass communication and entertainment – initially a national popular press, followed by the cinema, radio and television, in conjunction with a mass publishing and a recording industry and a national advertising industry – substantially modified the situation in a number of ways. First, the class character of different strands of popular culture was diminished although it did not disappear. A second form of modification derived from the fact that the mass media were national

institutions. Much of the regionalism of popular culture has gradually been washed away, although of course particular aspects, as in styles of local humour, for example, survive. Third, mass media have shifted the interface between, and consequentially altered the character of both public and private spheres. As these media are primarily consumed in the home, the public character of culture has changed towards a more personalized, intimate, domestic form of dramaturgy. A mass popular culture can therefore be characterized as a variety of entertainments made available as a broad social appeal, usually reinforced by strong advertising campaigns, to anonymous audiences who consume performances as commodities (on initial British accommodation to mass culture see LeMahieu, 1988). It is also apparent that the connections between the emergence of mass popular culture and the dominance of consumerism are not coincidental (Lury, 1996; Slater, 1997).

The intrinsic reproducibility of the media means there are no technical barriers to the size of the audience and, as the history of the cinema shows, national industries struggled in the face of foreign, particularly American, competition. The struggle has not been so much to reject a global culture of entertainment as to preserve a space for distinctive national variants. It is interesting in this respect that in Britain, at least, in looking to find a voice for a distinctive national cinema, the established themes of an arcadian community, both urban and rural, which stands opposed to both those who would exacerbate class tensions and those pursuing commercial advantage over communal interest, have continually surfaced in successive waves (Higson, 1995). It is as if sophistication is being equated with the cosmopolitan here, as an essential contrast to national essence. Significantly related to this trend was the development of a semi-autonomous BBC which, under the direction of John Reith, coined a new language of public service. Here again the commercialism of cosmopolitan (to be heard here as American) culture was kept at bay as far as possible, while attempting to raise the cultural and educational tastes of the national audience. The aim was in part the established desire to transcend class divisions, but also to promote a new model of suburban domesticity focused on the private family and its home entertainments (on subsequent developments in public service broadcasting see Tracey, 1998).

At the level of national cultural institutions there were changes. The previous pattern of municipal initiatives allied with private philanthropy, in conjunction with national cultural institutions, seeking to overcome the divisiveness of a modernizing society, evolved towards a more national programme of cultural paternalism. The most significant innovation in this approach came in the years immediately after the Second World War. Building on the social consciousness developed in that struggle, the Arts Council was founded to foster a national culture through support of local cultural initiatives, and to make the best of a global culture as widely available as possible. The inherent problems of reconciling national and cosmopolitan agendas of such a body had, of course, been compounded by the

development of international modernism in the first half of the century, which had been alienated from any sort of public credibility in part through its representation in caricatures in the mass media (Taylor, 1999). Although there was a popular consensus over the incomprehensibility of international modernism as the terrain of cosmopolitan taste, it was apparent to some policy-makers, at least, that America had gained considerable prestige through New York being able to claim for itself the position of centre of modern innovation (although this was not achieved through direct public patronage of artists [see Crane, 1987; Tagg, 1976]). The Arts Council therefore struggled to keep Britain abreast of contemporary culture through events such as the Festival of Britain.

A Fragmenting Culture?

I have suggested that British cultural institutions seeking to promote the cultural life of the nation were forced, in an era of mass culture, to struggle to reconcile what were perceived as national styles and themes with the expectations of popular cosmopolitan taste. It is also important to note that the developments I have sketched took place in an era of what Bennett et al. call 'welfare liberalism' (1999: ch. 9). This is a regime in which the state and associated public bodies assume a responsibility to provide public services in the cultural as in other spheres. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the dominance of this outlook was heavily attacked, in particular by right-wing thinkers and policy-makers who argued that cultural provision should be as governed by market forces as any other form of public service. One of the central tenets of this critique has been that, as consumption of cultural goods is dominated by socially privileged groups, in particular the better-educated, then public subsidies have shifted resources to the advantage of the better-off. This critique has not been confined to the right; as Bennett et al. put it, summarizing the views of Bourdieu: 'Viewed in this light, the public subsidy of such institutions, far from delivering a general benefit to all, delivers a selective benefit of distinction to those who are equipped, by their social and educational formation, to make use of them' (1999: 230).

Changes in both policy and ideological climate have, then, been the context for developments that I shall suggest are best characterized as a fragmentation of the cultural order. I shall briefly describe what I mean by this and present some reasons for why I detect the change. I have argued that the era of mass culture was intimately intertwined with the development of consumerism, and suggest now that the subsequent moves to fragmentation are based in the populism of mass consumerism. Another way of putting this is to say that the democratic compromise of the earlier phase between elite and popular tastes is being re-shaped towards a populist discrediting of many of the institutions of the first wave of modernization. In order to cope with the insecurity and reflexivity of de-structured social order, there have been a number of moves towards more ostensibly radically democratic forms of public participation in education and entertainment as much

as in politics or social policies more generally (Beck, 1992). It is not yet clear, however, whether these forms will effect real opportunities for participation in cosmopolitan culture other than as passive consumers.

I will briefly suggest three reasons for thinking there is a fundamental change in the character of the culture of everyday life. In giving these reasons I will say something about how I see fragmented culture differing from mass culture. The first concerns what I called the 'Fordist' rationalization of mass cultural provision. Ritzer's studies of the fast food industry and subsequent work on what he calls 'new means of consumption' may be taken as symbolizing this critique (1993, 1997). While the irrationalities of McDonald's et al. are manifest and significant, I will argue that this is not an appropriate model of cultural production (Barker, 1999; Featherstone, 1995). Rather, it seems that the Fordist rationalization of industrial capitalism is in a process of transition to what Lash and Urry have called an era of 'disorganised capitalism' (1994). In this era, the ubiquity of the various elements of material culture symbolizing prosperity and quality of life, such as cars, assorted domestic items, televisions and holidays, etc., is no longer remarkable, and lifestyles are increasingly catered for through an 'economy of signs and spaces'. Of course one recognizes that there are significant sectors of the population of post-industrial societies who are effectively excluded from the fashions of lifestyle concerns, and that common entertainments are still dominated by global corporations such as Disney, but it remains true that the ways of life of more stable social formations are being supplanted by the looser associations of lifestyle tastes (Chaney, 1996: pt 3). The relationship between culture and society is necessarily being re-considered in the context of new social forms of lifestyles (Chaney, 2000).

This leads on neatly to the second reason for detecting a new era that I am calling an era of fragmented culture. In a number of ways, it seems that cultural objects or performances are shifting from functioning as representations or depictions of social life to constituting the contexts or the terms of everyday life. Traditionally, cultural representations have been presented in a framed environment that bracketed the perspective presented and marked it off effectively as an alternative reality. This mode of performance is captured well by the proscenium arch of the theatrical stage, which encloses a performance space within a building which further separates the 'show' from everyday life. The same sort of analysis holds for the conventionally framed painting in an art gallery. Not only did this form of presentation articulate clear distinctions between art and life or culture and society, it also underlay an ideology of privileged authorship in which one man (and it usually was a man) was attributed with the power to have created this vision. It seems to me that the performances of fragmented culture are increasingly difficult to contain within the boundaries of theatrical space, so that they bleed into the texture of everyday life (Chaney, 1994).

What do I mean by performances escaping the boundaries of theatrical space? The answer is partly given by the proliferation of performance inputs, which has the effect that dramas are not sectorised but are continually

available in every aspect of everyday life. One consequence has been that there is an insatiable demand for new product, often filled by cheap dramas that mimic everyday life in ways that blur distinctions between fiction and reality (a process heightened by technological developments offering greater interaction between audience and performance). But perhaps more important is a second consequence that performances, particularly but not exclusively television performances, increasingly only seem to need intermittent attention, largely because of a style of incoherent, overlapping narratives that reflect the busy-ness of everyday life: 'MTV is now almost shorthand for a visual style comprising rapid alternation of clips or viewpoints with computer graphics and a "hand-held" camera style that emphasises the artificiality of the medium and its incompleteness as a visual record' (Mirzoeff, 1999: 97-8).³

Turning then to my third reason for detecting a new cultural era, and returning to my opening remarks about changing cultural order, art has through the greater part of the 20th century retained its position as an essential element in the 'capital' manipulated by elites. It seems to me, though, that an important element in the distinctiveness of contemporary culture is that the boundaries marking off and sustaining elite or high culture are increasingly being undermined and de-stabilized (an interesting aspect to this process is brought out in Whiting's [1999] study of the gendered ambiguities of Pop Art's embracing of the iconography of consumer culture). Intellectual elites may well have felt themselves threatened by popular or mass culture throughout the century but they did retain a sense of confidence in their own distinctiveness and critical importance (more generally on the significance of symbolic boundaries in maintaining cultural hierarchies see Lamont and Fournier, 1992). This confidence has been substantially undermined in the modernization of modernization, to be replaced with a series of accommodations to the populist demands of all-pervasive media of mass communication and entertainment; as Eyerman has put it: 'Professionalisation, specialisation and fragmentation rather than politicisation seem to be the fate of intellectual labour in late modern society' (1994: 195; see also Bauman, 1987).

In support of this assertion I can point to the ways in which status in the various aspects of the art world is established through the same sorts of media discourse as status in the spheres of, for example, politics or sport or cooking. If to this is added the proliferation of modes of innovation, then art is not restricted to particular social worlds or formal traditions but becomes a general name for prestige, perceived creativity and minority appeal. The effect has been that the established distinction between classical and popular music, for example, is no longer clear-cut, and that within each form there is a continuum between minority and more generally accessible styles. If one adds on to the initial binary distinction further forms such as jazz, folk and world music (and many other possible contenders), then innovation or seriousness is spread across the whole gamut of music-making and is not restricted to a European tradition or type of

instrumentation. Another factor that one would want to introduce here is technological innovations which have undermined the clarity of any distinction between performance and composition. This is too big an area to go into in any detail here, but the effect has been to subvert the privileged status of authorship.⁴

My argument that the authority and legitimacy of high culture have been fatally undermined has a further major consequence. I began by noting the belief that radical modernism articulated a distinctive and unique challenge to rationalizing authority, although we should acknowledge Bonnett's thesis (1992) that avant-garde revolt during the last century continually tried to resolve contradictory demands on the artistic role between radicalism and the privileges of high status. Now it seems that more generally those working in art world settings (such as teaching institutes, critical commentators and interpreters and public foundations of various sorts, etc.) have had to consider their social role. In practice this means they have to continually confront why objects and performances purporting to be high culture should be made and what their relationship with possible audiences should be. It would not be appropriate to review all the various ways these questions have been addressed in different cultural forms. I think, however, the example of the shift to conceptual art – and thus the provision of critiques of social knowledge and values – amongst visual artists is a good example of a practical recognition of the futility of traditions of visual representation in a world lacking an institutional rationale for those traditions.

Public Cultural Institutions

Although I have been setting out some reasons for believing that the cultural order of modernism has been fragmenting, this has not been a reiteration of the de-differentiation of the cultural sphere thesis (Lash, 1990). For it remains true that distinctively cultural activities, industries and practices are the focus of most people's everyday lives. It also remains true, despite the shift in ideological climate previously mentioned, that culture as a source of prestige for corporations and national bodies seems an unquestioned (or unquestionable) good. What does seem to be happening, though, is that cosmopolitanism has been naturalized and in the process robbed of much of its controversial character. Or rather I should say manufactured sensations, as in the Saatchi show of that name, or other provocations by members of an international circus, many of whom are British, seem to be little more than media stunts taken up to boost commodity values or flagging political careers.⁵ In combination, these factors, plus the innovation of deploying the subvention of lottery revenues and focusing resources on audience-oriented cultural institutions, have enabled continued investment in new or remodelled institutions of public culture such as galleries, museums, theatres and production companies, etc., which have bolstered the status of high culture as national and international resource as never before.

I do not think I need to spend much time detailing the almost all-too-well-known instances of international architecture, both cosmopolitan in themselves and often acting as repositories for an international cosmopolitan culture. I am thinking of examples such as the Sydney Opera House, the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Gaudi sites in Barcelona and, most recently, the Tate Modern in London. These are obviously important in the constitution of a global modernism and have been very effective in stimulating international tourism. To take but two examples, in terms of size and investment the converted power station that has become Tate Modern has been far more successful than the Millennium Dome; and Gehry's gallery, by itself, has put a working Spanish port on the international tourist circuit.

I am more interested, though, in the ways in which this global cosmopolitanism has been adapted to the re-energizing of a local identity, and in raising fundamental questions about the participation of citizens in cultural matters. In the British case, I am thinking of examples such as the Lowry Centre in Salford, the Saltaire site focusing on David Hockney in Bradford and Tate St Ives in Cornwall. These cases obviously use famous local connections as a peg with which to bridge (to mix my metaphors) a distinctive local identity with a global culture. I should note, almost as a digression, that this localizing through personal association is not limited to attempts to bridge local and global cosmopolitanism. Other examples are the creation of new cultural spaces based on real historical figures such as Captain Cook country in North Yorkshire, and completely fictional spaces such as Catherine Cookson country in the Tyne-Wear conurbation. These sorts of considerations could lead us off to a whole gamut of ways of dramatizing heritage as a theme in local culture.

In relation to the cultural institutions of public art, a link to a distinctive personality as famous local son/daughter is not essential, as the case of Gateshead shows. A typical rust-belt site of crumbling riverside decrepitude is being galvanized into life by the conversion of a derelict flour-mill (the Baltic) into a centre for the production and performance of the visual arts. This innovation is itself an outgrowth of earlier innovations through the local government policy of commissioning and locating public art works throughout the borough – most famously the *Angel of the North* – in the teeth of public hostility. The Gateshead example illustrates a number of interesting features of this new role for public art. First, success breeds success so that as the borough – previously, as even its best friends would acknowledge, a backwater in terms of contemporary art – has become known as a patron, it has attracted increasingly large amounts of public finance to support further ventures.

Second, a curious alliance between local pride and an international cosmopolitanism has been forged which has affected every aspect of local government and communal life, not least in stimulating new initiatives across the gamut of economic activities – and this in an area of conspicuous economic deprivation. It is worth noting in this respect that Gateshead had previously tried other more conventional stimulants to local activity

such as sponsoring athletics at the sports stadium (linked to a period of several international runners based locally) and a garden festival. These undoubtedly attracted a lot of publicity but did not seize local identity in the way that cosmopolitan culture has done. Which then links to the third feature, which is that, although this culture has been initially at least as derided here as in any part of mainstream Britain, now that it has in some sense become identified with Gateshead, its status has been reversed and it has become a source of local pride. This is particularly true of Gormley's huge casting of an androgynous *Angel*, which although – in a way that is characteristic of the style – it lacks any obvious rationale or function, or indeed anything you can do with it, regularly attracts a considerable stream of visitors (Usherwood, 2001). To the extent that, merely by existing, it acts as a focus for a day out by the family.

The attractions to politicians, both local and national, of using culture as the fuel of economic development are fairly obvious. The transformation of established sites and creation of new buildings primarily in run-down economically stagnant areas are a classic example of the Keynesian use of public funds as a trigger of development (and, surprisingly, followed by the Thatcher government in relation to inner-city regeneration). These public works not only create employment but help to support new leisure industries of associated cafes, bars and other aspects of the culture economy. There is an intensification of this process with both new-build and conversion residential developments, which bring further stimulants of the leisure economy into the region. Plus, of course, the re-evaluation of local status and prestige helps to attract other forms of inward investment and migration, so that the self-fulfilling cycle of economic decline can be at least modified, and possibly reversed. And, overall, the main boost to the local economy comes in the re-branding involved in the fairly startling accomplishment of being able to turn districts like Gateshead into tourist attractions.

It seems, then, that far from high culture in general, or, more particularly, cosmopolitan or avant-garde culture being discredited or discarded, they have become more successful in terms of generating public interest, or at least public legitimacy, than ever before. If it seems possible that the voraciousness of tourism is able to accommodate or encompass any form of spectacle as long as it is sufficiently remarkable, at least part of the reason will lie in consideration of the nature of tourism and what exactly we travel to find (Coleman and Crang, 2001; Gold and Gold, 2000; Rojek and Urry, 1997). In his amusing account of what he has called 'fatal attractions', Rojek (1993) has illustrated how the re-framing of places in terms of associations and significance can take up the most unlikely happenings and connections in order to make them reportable and attractive. Clearly in this process cosmopolitan culture has largely lost its associations with subversion and provocation. Whether or not the visitors understand or even like the buildings, objects and performances they come to visit cannot be established, but the art functions as a focus for locality and identity in a way that is independent of any functional role it might be expected to fulfil.

In its lack of any obvious meaning, lack of iconoclastic force and the absence of any technical expertise in its construction, the new cosmopolitan public culture might be characterized as the ultimate exemplification of theory. For all those art students who have sat through classes on theories of contemporary culture, the production of signifiers that lack any signification or indeed significance might seem to be the ultimate self-fulfilling prophecy. And yet we cling to more traditional notions. So that although the role for public art of civilizing a barbaric nation and reconciling class conflict has largely been superseded, culture retains a certain role as something good for you. This can be witnessed most clearly in the hordes of bored teenagers one sees being shepherded in sullen groups around cultural institutions by increasingly frazzled and harassed teachers. There is also endless scope in public discourse for further reflections by both practitioners and commentators on the meaning and significance of trends, styles and particular productions; reflections that continually offer the promise, if rarely the substance, of further enlightenment.

Cultural Citizenship

An educational role for cultural institutions is clearly part of a broader sense that becoming a citizen includes the right to benefit from the appropriate cultural heritage. One way of understanding cultural citizenship, then, is as a complex of policy issues around both the provision of cultural facilities and the regulation of cultural industries, including: 'electronic and print media, music culture, heritage parks, museums and public libraries, to name just a few' (Stevenson, 1999: 74; see also Moore, 1995). This is an important area of social policy and, as the shift from work to leisure as the central focus of individual identities and community life continues, will clearly become more important. It is not, however, just an issue of policy concern in the more traditional sense of bringing culture to the masses. There are at least three significant questions that need to be posed. First, following my remark at the beginning of this paragraph – what is an appropriate cultural heritage? In increasingly multicultural environments who is to decide? And what sorts of responsibility are appropriate for public authorities? Second, going back to an issue I raised earlier – to what extent, if at all, should provision attempt to meet redistributive goals? If cultural appreciation is highly socially stratified, should general public resources be used to support the tastes of privileged groups? And, if not, can those resources be used to support tastes that may well enjoy strong commercial endorsement?

Third, although we might conventionally think of cultural values as timeless, have we accommodated, or can we accommodate the sort of changes in the character of culture that I have briefly sketched? Although, in practical terms, the idea that citizenship carries cultural rights has been gaining ground over the past half-century, it has not equivalently been recognized in public discourse that the character of culture has been shifting from an established orthodoxy towards a more heterogeneous

populism. It is therefore unsurprising that the question of quite what is involved in cultural citizenship has recently stimulated academic interest in the extent to which cultural institutions can meet the needs of citizens in a changing cultural terrain (Kaplan, 1994; Karp et al., 1992; Lumley, 1988; Stevenson, 2001; Walsh, 1992). Certainly it is not at all apparent that the spectacular developments in public culture to which I have referred answer any of the questions I have just raised. In shifting cosmopolitan culture to the terrain of spectacular attraction, any issues about how cultural vocabularies can be used in the making of social worlds are effectively disregarded.

Stevenson points out that, conventionally, discussions of citizenship begin from Marshall's distinctions between civil rights, political rights and social rights (1999: 76–7). These rights of citizenship developed in the 18th century in the context of the emerging public sphere. This abstract space (constituted in new impersonal media of communication – at that time newspapers and magazines – and associated cultural forms of the novel, melodramatic theatre and the concert hall) provided a forum for the imagined communities of new national identifications with citizen populations (Anderson, 1983). To these traditions of rights a theme of cultural citizenship adds a fourth dimension of cultural rights (and remembering that rights are always complemented by obligations [Turner, 2001]). These new rights, however, are being formulated in a problematic relationship with the national context. This means that an idea of cultural rights has to begin from a radical concern with heritage and how it is being dramatized. Rights should mean more than expectations to be able to sample other cultures, either as cuisines or tourist venues, or even a capacity to seek support, advice or inspiration from outside local cultural traditions – although we should recognize that these have become standard expectations of a globalized cultural environment.

The changes I have described have meant that the implicit equation between nation and culture which informed so much of the national consciousness of high modernity is no longer sustainable. Similarly, the power of the nation state to enact cultural policies is being effectively curtailed with the further consequence that the relationship between citizen and state, at least in the cultural sphere, is shifting from the state encompassing identifiable rights and obligations to acting more as a facilitator of diversity and a mediator between its citizens and global trends and markets. One of the points of talking about the provision of culture and its unexpected popularity is to emphasize that being familiar with cultural vocabularies is becoming increasingly commonplace in ordinary experience. Being able to participate as a citizen will increasingly involve being able to appreciate what is to count as culture (see Huyssen, 1995 for more on new cultural roles for museums), and knowing how to 'read' the semiotic constructions of social reality available in different cultural forms. If the publics of the post-cultural era are to be as adept at disentangling the entertainments of cultural industries as they have needed to be in relation to the constraints

and foreclosures of public authorities, then an effective citizenship will need ever more supple resources in coping with the complexities of cultural discourse. It is in this respect that Bourdieu's notion of the unequal distribution of cultural capital, analogous to inequalities in property and financial capital, is a centrally important aspect of mechanisms of social exclusion (1984).

On another level I want to argue that skills of empowerment in cultural citizenship concern the ways in which relations in public are constituted – that is, how the institutions of everyday life are framed by public discourse. Cultural citizenship is in this sense an ability to use the reflexive potential (or be able to cope with the reflexive demands) of the radical democracy of fragmented culture. More generally, any account of cultural change needs to be able to trace, as a corollary, some of the ways in which dramatizations of authority and legitimacy have also been changing. These are quite clearly one aspect of cultural change in late modernity, but they are also concerned with membership of public life – being a citizen and how individual membership is mediated into collective opinions and attitudes. And it is in this latter sense that I want to make the more controversial claim that cultural citizenship has become more important in the life-politics of radical democracy than other more traditional types of citizenship.

Bennett et al.'s study of the consumption of public culture in Australia is relevant at this point (1999: ch. 9). Their careful analysis enables them to distinguish between four types of privileged taste. While it is true that all types work to sustain the distinction of privilege, they do not work to provide the advantages of inclusion in the same way. For example, those who feel sufficiently confident to own art works that they display in their private homes are the most privileged in terms of class and education. In contrast, the consumption of public culture – art galleries, museums, libraries – has a 'more democratic social profile . . . [as does] the administrative ethos of this sector which places much greater stress on access and equity objectives' (Bennett et al., 1999: 242). It may therefore be that, while the version of citizenship implied in the development of cosmopolitan tourism discussed in this article is hardly empowering, it can still be practically effective in blurring the meanings of traditional cultural distinctions and institutions.

Citizenship, as Turner (1993) has made clear, is meaningful in spheres such as legal, political and social because it guarantees an identity. If cultural policies are currently extremely confused about what sorts of rights are trying to be met, it is at least in part because of uncertainty over who citizens are and what they are members of (Roche, 2001). Perhaps, rather than trying to decide what sort of culture should be made available, policies for access, etc., policy-makers should be concentrating on ways in which they can facilitate citizens *deciding for themselves what is to count as culture and how it is to help them decide who they are*. It is quite likely that Turner (2001) is right when he sees a positive role for new media in facilitating this more creative sense of citizenship. For example, information that authorities

have tried to suppress and opportunities for subversive gatherings are proving very difficult to control on digital pathways. Even so, the most recent British government thoughts on broadcasting policy express a lot of positive encouragement for new community media in facilitating sustainability.⁶ The real potential of cultural citizenship when faced with the spectacle of cosmopolitan culture should be double-edged – both to sustain cultural diversity and to be able to facilitate indigenous development.

Notes

1. This thesis is developed at greater length in my new book (Chaney, 2001); Elizabeth Wilson has also recently written of the incoherence of contemporary culture (2000).
2. The paradigmatic figure in this respect has been the Jew in European thought, simultaneously admired and reviled for the same cosmopolitanism; and of course immigrants have typically been resented because of a fear that they might carry cosmopolitanism with them like a disease.
3. Most recently at the time of writing new digital technology has been used to make a mass market film in which four narratives are told simultaneously (*Time Code* directed by Mike Figgis), effectively of course fragmenting the narrative frame of performance and creating new rhythms of diegesis.
4. An illustrative example is provided by a leaflet accompanying an exhibition on Nordic Postmodernism held in Helsinki 2000, which used four themes to organize contributions: high and low – the unholy couple of art; sexuality – genres; multiple historical layers – fragmentation; and death of the artist – anonymous art (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000).
5. I am thinking here of Rudy Giuliani's simulated outrage at the presentation of some of this work in Brooklyn.
6. See Wessels (2000) for an example of the introduction of such an innovation; also Axford and Huggins (2000).

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