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## **Cultural Policy and Alienation: mission and sacrifice of the cultural worker**

‘Therefore when we speak of ourselves as divided into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, we must be understood always to imply that within each of these classes there are a certain number of aliens, if we may so call them, - persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection...’

(Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*)

The paper examines the ideals and values which lie behind a fundamental logic of cultural policy – the attempt to bring ‘the best to the most’, or ‘cultural democratisation’. Instead of examining the overt institutional rationales for cultural policy, this paper views cultural policy through the prism of individual ideals and beliefs. The paper accordingly attempts to throw light on certain subjective, irrational aspects of cultural policy.

The paper hypothesises that the desire to extend the promise of minority culture to a (presumed) uncultured majority reflects a crisis in elite culture rather than any altruistic desire to ‘improve’ mass culture. This crisis in turn stems from contradictions in the way culture is valued and directed, which in turn flow from contradictory attitudes to ‘culture’ in elite education.

The paper focuses on what Lasch (1965) describes as ‘the secret self-contempt’ of the intellectual. According to this logic, the missionary impulse to make elite culture accessible is rooted in a kind of self-rejection or revulsion within cultural elites, and Matthew Arnold’s ‘aliens’ are driven not only by a ‘love of perfection’ but by feelings of their own redundancy and uselessness. These emotions are in turn rooted in individual

biographies, and more broadly in education. The class alienation described by Arnold is thus inwardly directed, and the attempt to connect with other forms of culture and other social groupings is associated with self-sacrifice and redemption. More mundanely, the mission to share 'the best with the most' can be seen as a form of therapy for the missionary. The therapeutic benefits of cultural democratization apply not to the culturally deprived (Mirza 2005) but to the culturally sated.

The paper's argument is developed through an examination of higher education and of contemporaneous rhetorics of cultural democratisation. The research focuses on two periods. First, the paper argues that cultural 'outreach' through libraries, museums and settlement houses in the late nineteenth century was inspired in part by the alienated genteel middle class, who found their cultural heritage out of step with the needs of the time (Bilton 2006). This pattern was repeated among the arts graduates of the 1980s who found their cultural inheritance similarly outmoded and 'irrelevant' (Braden 1978).

The paper argues that these successive crises in the meaning and value of elite culture reflect fundamental contradictions in cultural policy. Following Gramsci (1971), the resulting upheavals in cultural policy reflect a long cycle of crisis and contradiction, resulting from contradictory beliefs regarding the value and purpose of culture.

### **This time it's personal: subjectivity in cultural policy**

Cultural policy research tends to focus on cultural policy as a product of objective (and rational) social forces – 'the clash of ideas, institutional struggles and power relations' (McGuigan 1996, 1). This approach has been fruitful in identifying the hidden

assumptions and ideologies which lie behind cultural policies and the institutional rationales which overtake them.

At the same time some researchers question the rhetorical truth claims of cultural policy. According to Belfiore (2009), many of the apparently rational and ideological arguments regarding the value or impact of the arts conceal not deeper assumptions but an underlying 'mindlessness'. In the UK, Belfiore notes that arguments have been deployed opportunistically or cynically to support a preconceived position of arts advocacy, a deep-rooted belief that the arts are inherently good. The truth of these supporting arguments and evidence takes second place to this irrational conviction.

In other words, despite the appearance of rational debate and objective evidence, much cultural policy is driven not by 'the clash of ideas' but by the subjective assumptions of individuals. These subjective beliefs precede, in every sense, any objective assessment of the evidence and the formal articulation of policy goals. There is an analogy here with religious faith. The mission of the arts advocate is not susceptible to rational explanation; rational argument is used rhetorically to convince the unbeliever, not to explain or justify the believer's own faith. Thus Belfiore cites Ministers and former Ministers of Culture acknowledging that they had to shape their rhetoric to the tune of the times in order to secure investment in the arts. The underlying belief in the goodness of the arts which justifies such tactics remains unquestioned. Similarly an arts centre manager in 2007 described to me her belief that the benefits of the arts are basic human necessities comparable to food and shelter. This conviction was based on irrational belief, not rational argument.

Having spent the last two decades in a more or less unconvincing attempt to present objective evidence for the economic and social value of the arts, policy makers are increasingly reduced to a more subjective, personal argument for the purpose and value of the arts. The accompanying rhetoric of 'excellence' or 'personal transformation' can only work from a subjective, personal perspective. As John Carey (2005) has argued, once we strip away the pretence that art carries anything more than a personal, private significance, we are left with a wholly subjective definition of art. One man's excellence is another woman's elitism; if we seek truth and beauty, these can only be found in the eye of the beholder. Pragmatically, policy makers have found the subjective language of arts advocacy effective in justifying policy goals (and in defending their own existence). Particularly when discussing the uplifting power of the arts for the urban poor, the crack in the voice and the tear in the eye are more persuasive than mere statistics.

The subjective turn in cultural policy is reflected in a changing language in policy documents with the increasingly unapologetic resort to subjective terms (quality, passion, excellence, emotion, happiness). It also reflects an impatience with the more 'objective' or 'scientific' attempts to prove the value of the arts using quantitative data. Behind the 'hard' data, 'soft' assumptions peep through the cracks. The drift from evidence to policy, as in 'policy-based evidence' has been succeeded by a shift towards emotion-based policy, with data and policies used to rationalise an emotional impulse or subjective belief.

The lack of evidence or coherent ideology in cultural policy should not surprise us. We are living in a time of 'post-policy' in which a Prime Minister's avowedly sincere belief that he 'did what I thought was right' can take a nation to war, regardless of political justification or strategic purpose. Passion or moral purpose trumps evidence. In this

context we are no longer shocked to discover that some of the data used to justify a cultural policy position are ‘made up’ after the event in order to ‘prove’ the rhetorical claim<sup>i</sup>.

A subjective sense of mission or purpose in the arts is no longer the preserve of passionate arts practitioners and advocates. Where do these subjective beliefs originate? Rather than attempt to answer this question through a history of ideas, I will in this paper focus on a history of individuals. More specifically, I focus on the belief that cultural democratisation or participation can address structural inequalities, summarised by one former cultural missionary<sup>ii</sup> as the belief that ‘colossal evils’ could be remedied by ‘small doses of culture and charity and amiability’ (Meacham 1987, 137).

### **The missionary position**

‘Mission’ in cultural policy usually refers to a collective, institutional statement of purpose. More broadly ‘mission’ describes a quasi-religious belief; for the believer, faith is framed in a collective acceptance of certain self-evident truths, whereas from the outside this faith appears personal and irrational, perhaps even perverse or misguided. In this paper I am interested in mission not as a collective summary of institutional strategy, but as a personal belief.

Historically, many of the institutions of cultural democratisation in Europe and the US were established in the late nineteenth century. According to Janet Minihan (1977), the museums, libraries and cultural education projects of the nineteenth century were inspired by a variety of motives, from economic development to moral ‘improvement’. These competing rationales were reflected in a middle class coalition of politicians,

clergy and industrialists who supported the foundation of the new cultural institutions: museums, libraries, settlement houses, university extension classes, art education programmes. These institutions were directed towards 'softening' or 'uplifting' the working class; Minihan charts the often contradictory motivations of the middle class legislators and sponsors, ranging from economic competitiveness and social control to more altruistic religious or sentimental ideals. These contradictions converged in the generation of idealistic young men and women who actually went to work in these new cultural institutions – the educators, librarians and cultural workers responsible for turning the 'civilising mission' into reality.

There was a close affinity between these new cultural workers and the universities. In the United States, college educated women found opportunities to turn their 'genteel' liberal arts education to use in libraries and other cultural institutions (Garrison 1979). In the United Kingdom, young men inspired by the 'muscular Christianity' of the public schools and the classical education of Oxford and Cambridge were inspired to open up the gifts of culture for London's poor (Meacham). These connections between university education and the new cultural democratisation led to the foundation of university 'settlement houses' on both sides of the Atlantic.

The settlement houses were residential institutions in cities like London, Chicago, and New York where young male and female graduates went to live among the urban poor, and offered a variety of cultural activities and classes to their working class 'neighbours'. The selection of musical soirées, exhibitions, lectures and debates offered by the settlement houses in the 1880s and 1890s may strike the modern observer as bizarre or patronising. Yet they were the precursors of many of today's community arts programmes, with settlement houses such as Henry Street (New York), Hull House

(Chicago), Toynbee Hall and Oxford House (London) continuing to provide a centre for community-based arts and cultural activities a century later. They would also provide the impulse for twentieth century social reform. Britain's post-1945 welfare state was partly inspired by William Beveridge's formative experiences as a young Toynbee Hall resident in London's East End. In the United States, the settlements gave birth to a range of social reform movements, including the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples. Even the settlement movement's critics, including, Beveridge in the UK and Saul Alinsky and Herbert Gans in the US, were often inspired to develop alternative solutions to problems first confronted by the settlement workers.

In this paper I am concerned with the psychology of the settlement workers rather than the activities of the settlement houses. For many American and British graduates, the settlement house would form the final stage in a liberal education, giving practical purpose to political ideals; this was certainly the case for Beveridge and R H Tawney in the UK, and for Eleanor Roosevelt and Jane Addams in the United States. Going further, the settlement movement seems to have satisfied an inner need amongst this generation of graduates for a missing sense of purpose or usefulness. From the 1870s, the old liberal arts curriculum was challenged by a more pragmatic, vocational approach to university education, designed to meet the needs of industrialisation and a rising middle class. The idea of 'furnishing the mind' which dominated the old Oxbridge colleges and American liberal arts education was associated with a fading aristocracy, out of step with the zeitgeist (Jarausch 1983, Garrison 1979). The cultural mission of the settlement house provided purpose and meaning for an educational system and for an educated class acutely aware of their own lack of direction and purpose.



The other aspect of this educational inheritance was religion. Oxford and Cambridge originally set out to educate future members of the clergy; many of the women's colleges in the United States had their origins in religious seminaries (Rousmaniere 1970, 51). For many of their students, this religious educational tradition again seemed out of step with an increasingly secular culture; the gap between the religious traditions of the colleges and the secular spirit of the times is nicely captured in Thomas Hardy's novel, *Jude the Obscure*. Some of the young settlement workers appeared uncertain in their religious beliefs, particularly when confronted with the realities of social change, poverty and immigration. The settlement house, together with other forms of cultural missionary work, provided them with a secular outlet for a religious temperament.

The experience of Jane Addams, one of the founders of the American settlement movement, typifies the spiritual crisis of the educated elite at this time (Bilton 2006). During a visit to Europe, the young Jane Addams seems to have suffered a spiritual crisis. She had already begun to question her religious faith; now she began to lose her faith in European culture. Christopher Lasch relates this crisis of faith to a specific episode, Addams' experience of a Spanish bullfight which seems to have exposed the gap between idealised European culture and bloody reality (Lasch 1965, 25 - 29). Whatever the trigger, Addams became increasingly self-critical towards her own culture and class following her trip to Europe, referring in her autobiography to 'a moral revulsion against this feverish searching after culture' and her sense of being 'simply smothered and sickened with advantages' when confronted with the gap between her own cultivated existence and the realities of urban poverty (Addams 1910, 45 - 46). She identified her own spiritual crisis with a wider phenomenon, reflecting on the experience of other educated young women, with 'no recognized outlet for their active faculties' (Addams 1910, 71).

Even as the settlement workers rejected their cultural and religious certainties, they continued to manifest a residual faith in the old rhetoric. Addams frequently uses the language of religious sacrifice to describe her personal commitment to the settlement movement<sup>iii</sup>. By immersing herself in the lives and cultures of Chicago's immigrant poor, she sought to cast off the burden of 'uselessness' and redeem herself as a useful citizen. There is a similar paradox in the settlement worker's attempt to both suppress and rehabilitate her genteel cultural traditions through the settlement house's activities. According to Addams, the settlement house was a 'subjective necessity' (Addams 1910 68). She identified the cultural mission of the settlement worker with the internal crisis of nineteenth century middle class culture as much as with the sufferings of the working poor (Bilton 2006). The subjective feelings of the settlement 'residents' were thus at least as influential in the birth of the settlement movement as the objective conditions of the settlement 'neighbours' (Addams 1910, 72).

For their critics, the settlement workers' self-involved pursuit of their own redemption prevented them from focusing on the cultures of the communities they professed to serve. Herbert Gans argues that this 'blindness' stemmed not only from class barriers 'but even more so from their missionary outlook' (Gans 1962, 151) which was based on a 'tourist's picture' of community life mirroring a 'vicarious identification with exotic culture and the dense street life' (Gans 1962, 150). Consequently the settlements appealed most to those who, like the settlement workers themselves, 'were marginal to the peer group society (Gans 1962, 159). Addams' desire to transcend ethnic and social divisions in pursuit of a shared humanity reflects the settlement worker's self-sacrificial need to escape 'the brunt of unnourished, oversensitive lives' (Addams 1910, 68). More particularly this self-destructive impulse was directed against the settlement worker's

genteel, educated culture, described as 'a hateful, vicious circle which even the apostles of culture themselves admitted' (Addams 1910, 43). This pattern of internal cultural crisis directed outwards into active community service would be repeated almost a century later in the British community arts movement.

### **Irrelevant: community arts in the 1980s**

'It is not that these cultural forms are 'above people's heads' but that it is a *bourgeois* culture and therefore only immediately meaningful to that group. The great artistic deception of the twentieth century has been to insist to *all* people that this was *their* culture'. (Braden 1978, 153)

The British community arts movement in the 1970s and 1980s was part of a wider European shift in cultural policy, questioning the post-1945 consensus which saw the arts as a common good which should be accessible to all. Su Braden, one of the advocates of the new approach, argued that the old 'common culture' had actually been the property of an educated, wealthy minority; attempts to make that common culture accessible to all were merely an attempt to impose this minority culture on the majority, for whom opera, ballet, theatre and classical music were 'irrelevant'. Instead the community arts movement sought to legitimise and celebrate the diverse cultures of the majority, including popular and commercial art forms, and the cultural traditions of the working class and ethnic minorities.

The italicised emphases in the above quotation capture the strident aggression towards traditional '*bourgeois*' culture and cultural institutions. Subjectively, community arts activists seemed as much concerned with attacking the old cultural forms as with

celebrating the new). Indeed the community arts movement seemed to spend as much energy cross-examining the meaning and value of middle class culture and the credentials of middle class community artists as it devoted to reanimating working class or minority ethnic cultural traditions. The movement became increasingly factional, with the Association of Community Artists in particular accused of placing the professional self-interest of community artists before the interests and cultural aspirations of 'clients' or participants in community arts projects (GLC 1986). Like the settlement workers a century before her, Braden's primary target is the redundancy and uselessness of her own 'bourgeois' culture. One of the paradoxes of community arts projects during the 1980s was that whilst community artists often went out of their way to focus on working class 'community' cultures to the detriment of their own 'bourgeois' traditions and skills, many of the people they worked with were aspiring in the opposite direction – seeking access to professional skills and mainstream art forms.

Whilst few community artists have displayed the same confessional honesty demonstrated by Jane Addams, there are parallels between the 'cultural crisis of middle class values' identified by Lash in 1890s and the estrangement of many artists from mainstream culture in the 1970s and 1980s. First of all, in Britain in the 1970s, a generation of educated young people found their culture at odds with the spirit of the times, with 'the arts' and 'The Arts Council of Great Britain' representing the burden of an elite culture which the community artists had themselves inherited and which appeared increasingly 'irrelevant'. Artists graduating from art schools in the 1960s found the bohemian tradition of experimental culture, anti-establishment rhetoric and self-expression increasingly disconnected from emerging economic problems and social divisions. Like the settlement workers before them, the community artist had inherited a

culture which was apparently 'useless' and responded by attempting to make themselves 'useful' by immersing themselves in the lives and cultures of the urban poor.

Secondly the impulse to engage with working class communities was driven by internal guilt as much as external conditions. Writing about the Arts Council in 1979, Richard Hoggart noted that 'there are among both councillors and officers, signs of bourgeois guilt, of elitism finding itself on the defensive and flipping over into a hurried acceptance of any populist claim' (Hoggart 1979, 395). There is an echo here of Hoggart's earlier critique in *The Uses of Literacy* of 'a callow democratic egalitarianism' and of 'the men who provide syndicated ordinariness for the millions... the back-scratchers for the "common man"' (Hoggart 1957, 178; 184). Ten years later, the theatre critic Mary Brennan makes a similar comment about cultural populism in 1980s Glasgow in a 1989 article for *The Listener*:

'Why do we want everyone to love theatre? I think it's guilt: if everyone likes theatre, then the middle classes can stop feeling guilty about their so-called elitist tastes, because really we're all the same' (Garner, pp. 29 – 30).

It is possible then, as Brennan implies above, to see community arts as an exercise in self-rehabilitation, allowing community artists to associate themselves with a wider social purpose and with the vibrant alternative cultures of the culturally disenfranchised. Community artist sought refuge in the warm glow of working class community, and reinvented themselves as champions of the poor against the dominant culture represented by the Arts Council 'establishment'.

Objectively, the community arts movement, like the settlement house movement, marked a decisive shift away from the complacent cultural consensus represented by the Arts Council's mantra of 'the best for the most'. Subjectively, the community arts movement was founded on self-critical feelings of redundancy and guilt, based on the gap between the artist's education and culture and the changing social circumstances. These inward feelings were projected onto external scapegoats, with the Arts Council bearing the brunt of the community artists' alienation from their own 'bourgeois' cultural inheritance.

These subjective motives of community artists would have objective consequences. First of all, the factionalism and self-recriminations within the community arts movement referred to above were self-destructive, undermining the more radical reorientation of culture and cultural policy the activists initially proclaimed. Secondly, community artists seemed drawn towards a consensual and depoliticised version of community, rather than with 'a cluster of class positions, conflicts and interests, some of which are irreconcilable' (Ross et al. 35). Similarly in a 1982 policy briefing for the GLC, Alan Tomkins (himself involved for many years in community arts in London), accused community artists of pursuing 'a bourgeois democratic 'general interest' and failing to recognise the more fragmentary 'communities of interest' which were repressed or ignored in 'dominant forms of representation' (GLC 1986, 143).

This uncritical version of community, with its connotations of an Arnoldian 'common culture', was at the heart of the community arts ideology (Braden 1978). This rather romanticised, consensual version of community seems to have been modelled on the self-image of community artists themselves rather than in objective reality. In the words of Liz Leyh, a community artist interviewed by Braden in Milton Keynes, 'I only like them

when they enjoy doing what I'm doing' (Braden 1978, 49). According to Richard Hoggart, the group life of working class communities centred on neighbourhoods and streets rather than planned group activities (Hoggart 1957, 68). In the 1980s, commentators were arguing that traditional 'working class communities' based on stable relationships and patterns of work had ceased to exist, replaced by more fragmented and diverse communities of interest (Wilmott 1982, 11 – 17). As with Gans' critique of the settlement workers for failing to recognise the diversity and complexity of the social lives of the urban poor, so community artists were accused of projecting their own desire for community onto others.

The American settlement movement in the 1890s was similarly criticised for promulgating a neutral, depoliticised version of community, smoothing out class conflicts and ethnic differences in the pursuit of consensus (Lissak 1983; Karger 1987). At one level this studious neutrality can be seen as viable tactic; Jane Addams' refusal to take sides in labour disputes in Chicago was consistent with her commitment to pacificism and perhaps gave the settlement workers a stronger negotiating position on behalf of the striking workers. But as the settlement movement evolved, the attempt to integrate European immigrants into American culture and society became a significant blind spot. Robert Woods, who succeeded Jane Addams as the leading figure in the American settlement movement, was particularly vociferous on the need to 'Americanise' poor immigrants during and after the First World War. In the 1950s and 1960s more radical commentators like Saul Alinsky and Herbert Gans in accused settlements of 'helping the poor become middle-class' and becoming agents of 'social control' (Trolander 1987 140 – 153; Gans 1964).

Aside from the accusations of social control and the self-recriminations within the movement, community artists in the 1980s were criticised for having become 'peripheral to the cultural activities of the working class' (Ross et al. 1980, 5) – ironically this was precisely the criticism the community artists had first directed against the Arts Council (Braden 1978, 153). As a result, 'community' projects and resources seemed increasingly to be adopted by middle class opportunists rather than working class participants; a report from a government pilot project on 'leisure and quality of life' in Scotland noted that 'a community arts approach will not necessarily generate community involvement' and that 'voluntary organisations based on a middle class membership are more skilful in "working the system"' (LQL 161 – 162). According to the GLC 'some critics saw the community arts as a middle-class management and policing intervention into working class culture (GLC 1986, 16). Again there are echoes here of the American settlement movement which tended to attract 'people of former education and opportunity who have cherished ambitions and prospects' (Addams 1910, 60; c.f. Gans 1964).

The cultural content of community arts likewise tended to default back to familiar assumptions and values. Community artists, possessing a certain cultural capital in the form of professional skills and knowledge, were in danger of either inducting communities into a diluted version of their own culture, or embracing a stereotypical version of working class culture and community which had ceased to exist. According to Roy Shaw, Director General of the Arts Council in the late 1970s and a regular sparring partner with Su Braden, the result was a second-class 'cod's head culture for the poor'. Similarly, urban cultural projects in Glasgow were criticised for alienating some of the local communities they nominally set out to benefit (Owen and Fisher 1990).



The objective narrative of the rise and fall of the community arts movement in Britain has been well documented (Kelly 1984). According to Kelly, the ideological debate about the meaning and value of culture broke down into an argument about resource allocation. Once resources were allocated to community arts, the movement lost direction and became trapped within the logic of local arts policies. The Arts Council of Great Britain, which had previously barely acknowledged the existence of community arts under the heading of 'new activities', delegated responsibilities for supporting them to regional and local level through the newly formed regional arts associations (later regional arts boards) and local government. At local level community arts were framed within localised social policy objectives based on quantifiable social impacts and targeted gaps in local provision. This instrumental approach neutered the vestigial political ambitions of community artists. By the mid-1980s, community arts had been absorbed into mainstream cultural policy at local and regional level, and most community arts organisations were happy to accept a less transformative, more pragmatic emphasis on well-being, inclusion and involvement in return for official recognition (and funding).

The subjective narrative of the community arts movement highlights the motives of the community arts workers themselves, and the contradictory theories of culture and community which lay behind them. Seen in this light, the community arts movement was concerned with the rehabilitation of an alienated middle class culture, and of a 'redundant' generation of cultural workers who, like the settlement workers before them, found themselves 'cut off from the centres of power and authority' in British society (Lasch 1965, 31), alienated from their own culture and class, yet still condemned to inherit the assumptions and biases they sought to cast off. Despite the best of intentions, community artists did not always understand the cultures and communities they were working with, and attempted to model their 'clients' in their own disaffected self-image,

as middle class 'aliens' seeking refuge in a harmonious consensual culture and an integrated class solidarity which had ceased to exist. The beneficiaries of this approach were often not socially excluded communities and minority cultures but a relatively well connected and opportunistic urban middle class who took advantage of resources which were of little value or interest to their intended recipients. But above all the primary beneficiary of community arts were community artists. Like the settlement workers before them, they discovered a role and purpose which many conventional cultural and educational organisations had lost. In terms of social inclusion and community development, community arts may not have changed the objective situation of their communities or clients; as a learning and development experience for artists and arts organisations (including, eventually, the Arts Council itself), the community arts movement fulfilled what Addams called a 'subjective necessity'.

### **Conclusion: subjectivity, rhetoric, narrative**

In this paper I have set out to explore some of the motives which lie behind cultural policy, focusing on the impulse to 'democratise' culture through the American settlement house in the 1890s and the British community arts movement of the 1970s and 1980s. I have argued that these interventions were driven by subjective, emotional needs of arts workers rather than rational policy objectives, and that these emotional needs are in turn rooted in individual biographies. Whilst further empirical study of individual community artists would be needed to demonstrate the full extent and effect of subjective motivation in the community arts movement, I believe there is sufficient evidence contained in the reports of those active in the community arts movement at the time (Ross et al. 1980; GLC 1986; LQL; Kelly 1984; Braden 1978) to infer emotions of guilt, alienation and self-disgust behind much community arts rhetoric.

For both the settlement workers and the community artists, the perceived 'uselessness' of middle class culture and education led to feelings of 'secret self-contempt' (Lasch 1965) and a therapeutic immersion in 'useful' work. For the nineteenth century settlement worker, these feelings were turned inwards, framed within a religious language of self-sacrifice and redemption ((Lasch 1965, 11; Rousmaniere 1970, 51). For the twentieth century community arts worker, the feelings of irrelevance were directed outwards, framed within political rhetoric against the 'establishment'. If the settlement worker's mission was framed in religious language, the community artist's mission took the form of public declarations and manifestos.

This paper is not arguing that institutional struggles and power relations are superseded by personal beliefs in the formation of cultural policy. In fact many of the formative 'subjective' experiences described in this paper are themselves the product of institutional contexts, notably the educational and class backgrounds of the protagonists. Yet neither community artists nor settlement workers could entirely escape their past. Community arts workers treated the Arts Council like an embarrassing parent, to be publicly ridiculed in spite of a private affinity; the children turned out to be more like the parents than they would care to admit, with many community arts activists and projects eventually absorbed back into mainstream arts organisations and funding agencies. The subjective narrative thus begins and ends with the dominant cultural and educational institutions which shaped the individual experience; to paraphrase Engels, we make our own history, but in circumstances not of our choosing.

Ideologically, both community artists and settlement workers seemed split between two notions of culture. On the one hand, culture was a means for transforming society, based on a Romantic or Arnoldian idealist version of culture. On the other hand culture

was a product of everyday experience, following a Marxian materialist logic in which cultures reflected the real experiences of a disenfranchised working class. In Europe a similar set of contradictions emerged in the concept of socio-cultural animation, embodied in the confusing role of the animateur. The animateur was expected to be both a charismatic leader and an self-effacing facilitator. Caught between these two logics, the role proved difficult to practise. Animateurs and community artists were attacked on both sides, accused by radicals on the Left of being agents for social control, criticised by established cultural organisations for cultural populism who sacrificed quality of cultural content for quantity of collective experience. These criticism were most vociferous within the community arts movement itself, as urban and rural projects, professional (officially funded) and amateur (self-directed) artists indulged in mutual criticism. The movement became increasingly divided against itself and increasingly peripheral both to the working class communities they sought to engage and the mainstream cultural organisations they sought to challenge.

One implication of this paper for cultural policy research is the extent to which individual emotions and experiences can motivate cultural policy. Given the frequency with which cultural policy outcomes deviate from avowed objectives, some analysis of the personal, emotional aspects of cultural policy formation may therefore be instructive. Specifically, this paper has focused on the subjective perspectives of those responsible for implementing cultural policies, not just the institutions which framed those policies in the first place. Cultural policy researchers are used to examining the 'why' and the 'how' of cultural policy, not just accepting the 'what' at face value; this should apply at a personal level to individual actors as well as institutions and organisations.

A second implication of this research is that anecdotes and personal experiences can be significant in cultural policy. The tendency to rely on anecdotes over evidence can appear self-indulgent among politicians, but it is perhaps effective in influencing practitioners. The shift towards an emotional, subjective language in contemporary cultural policy discourse was noted at the start of this paper. Narrative can trigger emotion, and stories allow us to make sense of the world around us (Czarniawska 1998; Weick 1995). In cultural policy narrative, formal institutions, objectives and rationales provide the organising plot, but personal emotion often provides the story's content. A few well chosen anecdotes can thus provide powerful rhetorical motivators and are a continuing feature of cultural policy discourse.

Finally, cultural policy depends on individuals to enact it. By examining the motives of individual cultural workers, we can start to unravel the contradictory bases and biases of cultural policy. The settlement worker and the community artist were motivated in part by feelings of alienation, self-destruction, self-contempt and self-sacrifice. Yet paradoxically, they also believed that individual actions and individual human contacts between artists and people can be transformative, redeeming both the giver and the receiver. Perhaps, despite the apparently egocentric thinking involved, their focus on their own individual biographies can provide valuable insights into the cultural policy process.

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<sup>i</sup> In a special supplement on 'Capitalising on Creativity' in *The New Statesman*, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2005, Matthew Evans disclosed that some of the statistics in Chris Smith's book *Creative Britain* (1998) had been 'made up by me and the copy editor at Faber to get the book published'. Chris Smith was at the time the UK's Minister for Culture and his book was seen at the time as an affirmation of the beliefs and ideals behind the new Labour government's cultural policies.

<sup>ii</sup> This was the young William Beveridge, future architect of Britain's welfare state, writing in 1903 as a 'resident' at Toynbee Hall in East London to his parents..

<sup>iii</sup> In her autobiography Addams refers to 'the joys of self-sacrifice' (Addams 1910, 75) and describes the settlement movement as 'the beginnings of a secular religion' (Addams 1910, 24) whilst organised labour provides 'an opportunity for sacrificial effort' (Addams 1910, 114). She relates her 'excessive sense of responsibility' as a child to her religious upbringing (Addams 1910, 4- 5) and recalls playing a game with a sacrificial altar (Addams 1910, 11).