

**Scuffles in the Cathedral:
Of Principalities and Powers**

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One of Us

If God had a name, what would it be?
And would we call it to His face?
If we were faced with Him, and all His glory?
What would you ask if you had just one question?
[. . .]
What if God was one of us?
Just a slave, like one of us?
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home¹

I found myself singing this while writing, and its appropriateness only became evident after a while. I realised it was akin to asking what the impossible will look like, how does one negotiate the unknown, especially when the other known variables are familiar. In this case we have an understanding of who we are, but know that something is missing. There is an imagined ideal just out of reach.

'The [then] Artist Formerly Known As Prince' presents a conundrum to his listeners. It does not matter that the track presupposes the existence of God, that the questions are moot, in the final analysis the pressing questions cannot be answered. The desire to ask the impossible therefore becomes an answer in itself, it can only be resolved as a series of tautologies. It is possible to argue that the answers are already known, just difficult to admit.

Tate Encounters set about with the following set of questions:

The project aims to provide an in-depth account and analysis of the reciprocal meanings of a sustained encounter between London South Bank University (LSBU) students who have a migrant family background and an important national cultural site. The project will develop knowledge and understandings of how narratives of Britishness are contained, constructed, and reproduced within the curatorial practices and

¹ The Artist Formerly Known As Prince, 'One of Us' on *Emancipation*. NPG Records, 1996.

collection of Tate, and of how such notions are received and valued by different migrant and diasporic family members within the context of the active material/visual cultural practices of everyday life.²

The parameters of the exchange, the encounter has been set, Britishness is to be understood though those that are not British. This presupposes a set of clear categorisations where Britishness is concerned. Without necessarily burdening the issue, there is a series of concepts of Britishness emerging from the query: debatable concepts of Britishness tied up in geography; race; nation, lineage, and emotions. This is significant when considering that Britain is first and foremost a shifting political concept, specifically developed to foster conflicted national solidarities. We have settled into a perception of what the 'other' is supposed to be, and by definition what 'we' are, and represent. Prince's concept of a deity becomes an exercise in 'self-othering', the creation of an ideal self, a gathering of unachievable fantasies, a displacement of the self.

Art finds itself in this position over and over again, with the recurring question: But is this Art? Built into the question is an acceptance of what art is supposed to be, and this new 'thing' under scrutiny unsettles accepted orthodoxies. In the case of Tate Encounters, the question seems to be: What can these newcomers tell us about ourselves and our Art? Immediate problems arise in attempting to define who is whom in relation to the gallery and societal norms. The gallery system in Britain, and Tate Britain in particular, has lost the long held privilege of anonymity born of pervasive power; it has to serve more than keeping artworks safe from hostile elements, and this is not only inclement weather, it now includes the very population it is charged to represent. Gone are the days when it was known what it meant to *not* be British, to be British is now contestable, no body and no thing can be taken at 'face' value.

The Encounter

The understanding of culture within a context where the very nature of culture is not being questioned raises a unique set of enquiries within the person confronting artefacts already deemed significant. To define and determine significance empowers the reader, to be defined alongside and by relationship to inanimate objects complicates both the production and consumption of socially coded objects within a set discourse.

A Walk Through the Galleries

As I walk through the galleries, I become increasingly aware of my personal bias towards the works on the walls. I have come to look at the people this time, not the art. I have come to participate in an objective study of people counting, but have ended up with subjective feelings instead, I want to know what it is that I understand is happening to me in relation to the artworks made available to me. I know there are more works tucked away, some I will never see, even though they belong to me, and are supposed to partly tell me who I am. I want to come to an understanding with the gallery, the meeting points of its history and mine. I wonder if I could ever have an equal conversation with the gallery. I ponder the fashion of calling galleries 'spaces', as if all what the gallery is can be

² Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Culture, http://process.tateencounters.org/?page_id=297, 27 Jan 2010

collapsed into its ability to protect cultural artefacts within its bowels. I question the implication that the gallery is benign, unconcerned with its own place in society, to be construed as being outside society and society's effects, that it is the scheming visitor, someone like me, that makes and subsequently complicates meaning in the gallery, that it is only my interaction that counts.

So I play *Bitches Brew* in my mind, helps me to concentrate, hard to keep that classic going too long, better leave that to Mr. Davis, move easily into *So What?*, perhaps because 'so what' would be the answer to my complaint that the galleries are filled with objects designed to alienate me, I know I will be told that this is the national collection, it is to represent more than me. I expect to be softly chastised, that I am making too much of objects that do not hold me, that I need to look deeper, that it is meaning that counts, not the objects themselves. I progressively look around at the things on the walls, hanging from the ceilings, raised off the floor, that form part of the building's fabric, and I seek that point of mutuality.

I fantasise stumbling upon a Twins Seven Seven or Bruce Onobrakpeya the same way names from Western countries, other than Britain, greet me as I perambulate through the cathedral halls. Asking where I am within the collection seems pointless, when I knew all along that I was not there in the collection. I am supposed to place myself there, find how and where it fits me. It is a case of 'one size fits all', and it works most of the time. Perhaps I am making a cloaked demand when I ask that question. I too want to be present there amidst the objects made significant by the grandeur of the structure and the will of the British people.

And yet I am one of the British people and my will appears different to what it is supposed to be; my will does not wish for the reproduction of a collective consciousness seeking to identify with objects retained for posterity. How am I to decide what is important, are the works really being collected on the strength of their aesthetic value from within the nation? And even if that were the case (aesthetic judgements themselves are socially and culturally defined, not immune from collective pressure, personal identity, and political definitions), any other person would be in a strong position to question decisions made on their behalf.

Tate performs its magic and I feel I am being transformed into an object rendered subject by a collection of artefacts destined to outlive me. I know I am supposed to feel this, I know I am supposed to feel awe, I know this is not an accident, I know there are people planning my experience, I know my significance is supposed to feel a link to this array of human imagination, I know I am not supposed to question cultural and aesthetic decisions made on my behalf. I know I am encouraged to abdicate responsibility and accept the sacredness of the sanctum. I know all this, and yet I resist the metamorphosis, but control is slowly slipping out of my hands.

Students as Staff/Outsider Inside

Separating the role of the researcher and viewer was an interesting stance to take. It made the students from London South Bank University (LSBU) part of Tate as well as allowing them some distance from the institution. They could then look at Tate as outsiders who found themselves with keys and allowed to use said keys to gain access whenever they needed to. The role of co-researcher placed responsibility onto the students in a way that being called and seen as research assistants or participants in a workshop would

have not fostered. The ability to make the students insiders had a profound impact on the way Tate was used, rather than simply being observed or viewed, which would have happened without the structural and emotional empowerment.

Thieves in the Temple

Love come quick
Love come in a hurry
There are thieves in the temple tonight

They don't care where they kick
Just as long as they hurt you
There are thieves in the temple tonight

Love if you're there come save me
From all this cold despair
I can hang when you're around
But I'll surely die
If you're not there³

Open Invitation

Being on the periphery is never desirable, if ever fashionable. The centre appears to hold all the power and control, and institutions come to represent this duality. Entry into the institutions then becomes a method available to the outsider to bring about change 'from the inside' for themselves and others. The desire to make one's voice audible is be very compelling, and serves as motivation to engage with programmes that would otherwise bring about moral and political resistance within the participant. This is to be expected, considering that the remit for Tate Encounters was openly available and known to the then potential co-researchers, that the co-researchers would have maintained a level of awareness and suspicion that they were there to perform a role for the institution. That the many benefits of the research project are to be accrued to the centre is accepted by the co-researchers, it is the promise of 'opportunity' to the 'outsider' that is proffered in exchange for whatever will be given.

Of course, the above is one possible reading; another would be the recognition that the co-researchers were already part of the centre, that the markers used in their selection has a level of ubiquity which allows that almost anyone in London could have satisfied the call. (What is, however, significant is the fact of self-selection, that a great number of people will simply not imagine themselves fitting the bill.) Like any other aspiring professional, the eventual cohort chose to avail themselves of all opportunities provided to them, that the transaction has always

³ Prince. 'Thieves in the Temple' on *Graffiti Bridge*. Warner Records, 1990.

been between the 'centre' and itself. That the institution constantly mis-recognises itself and those outside its gates - by over-determining its objective societal role, while under-playing the inherent conflicts of being an overly subjective cultural arbiter. This misrecognition then informs all decisions and negotiations made with those outside its gates. The institution appropriately maintains a position that assumes its own acknowledged dominance, because it is this authority (and authoritative position) that makes the institution attractive, that allows it to retain the power of centrality needed by the periphery to define itself.

Research or Critique?

Research allows new understandings of the material being observed, the difference that I saw in Tate Encounters revolved around independence and autonomy. Within Tate Encounters there was greater freedom given to the co-researchers, perhaps this stems from their status as undergraduates, with the intentions of the project itself. The push towards film and documentary did limit this freedom somewhat. I also feel the unique nature of this project affected its form. Looking at Tate from within itself raises interesting conundrums, making 'art' out of a body devoted to visual culture brings institutional critique into sharp focus, even when this does not appear one of the intentions of the research project.

Co-researchers Becoming Artists

The incorporation of practices not normally in the vocabulary of the co-researchers was bound to emerge as the hierarchy of means emerged within the context of Tate Britain and Tate Encounters. In spite of the oppositional stance expected and taken as a response to the remit of the project, works like *Identity Remix at Tate at Tate March 2009* by Maria Cinta Esmel Pamies, soon start using the language appropriate to their setting. Even when the focus of the investigation is Tate Britain itself as in Dana Mendoca's *Tate Collection*, the instinct appears to be the creation of a text which merely uses collection boxes as a pretext: the form most artworks take.

The realisation that art is being produced as part of the project is made even more apparent in the series of photographs produced by Robin Sweeney for *A Bit of Tate in Your Life*, complete with double entendre, where familiar motifs from Western contemporary art make their way across the screen to a lively discussion on the very nature of what art is.

Where are we from?

There are some problems with concepts like 'transmigration' and 'transcultural' when invoked with 'diaspora' and 'migration', these concepts are available as no more than mere consumption to some, while being inscribed into the very bodies of others. Placing everyone 'on the move' flattens the above problem, makes it seem everyone is equally implicated in the same, somewhat divisive, cultural and political debate.

Co-researchers respond to art and become part of the discourse

While the intention of the research was to seek the meeting point of cultures represented by the co-researchers and Tate Britain, the co-researchers inevitably became involved in the discourses of art. They came to see the articulation of their own positions through the different media populating the confines of the gallery. Film and photography, in their immediacy and reproducibility, became the translator of choice. The co-researchers would have slowly become aware of their own co-option into the body of Tate. At that point, the ability to question Tate Britain (if question they desired), diminished considerably. The co-researchers started producing art, reliant on the tools Tate provided (and means has a profound impact on the finished product). The interventionist capabilities of the co-researchers were eroded (not completely), the longer they remained attached to the institution, the greater their regard for and acceptance of the machinery and mechanics of the institution, to the point that the language available to them merged into the extant.

The desire to equate interests is understandable, Mary Amponah sought to make links with her grandmother's exhortations to her to preserve and cherish family photographs and heirlooms. Amponah, in her film, praises the British for this trait, coming to terms with her own pleasure at Ashanti Easter festivals in relation to seeing traditions upheld in Britain. Then the desire to record emerges, to coincide with the recording of memories and experience that Tate Britain represents. This happens while Amponah argues for mixed identities: one British, the other Ghanaian. In a similar vein Deep Rajput in *Search: A Journey with Deep Rajput* looks to real and pseudo-religious traditions and codes of display to express his appreciation of the defined gallery space. Rajput's devotion to *Star Wars* becomes a defining factor in his discourses of art and artifice; completely divorced from lived realities, it becomes easy to hinge artistic value on grand narratives, craft, and ability. Both Amponah and Rajput point to childhood recollections as locators of personal identity, and like their peers shift between an ethnography and anthropology of the self.

Lest it be forgotten, the series of events that formed the public face of Tate Encounters was doubly framed, and then framed again. Tate Britain formed the larger backdrop to the encounter, then the fourth Triennial (this time titled Altermodern) restricted access and determined one's relationship to everything beyond the yellow veil. Making it into the defined space, with grey carpeting, arranged furniture, and the 'studio' atmosphere of the room, left the impression that a stage was in place where art and culture would play itself out. This third frame of architectural definitions within Tate Encounter's room had the impact of sealing the investigations into yet more art material. And yet, what else could an Art Gallery/Museum do, but simply be itself?

Who Am I to You?

Cultural Diversity, as a concept places the co-researchers in the awkward position of being the Barbarian in the Temple. It is expected that the Barbarian understands that the Temple is sacred, but not why and how. While this is not the case here, as the co-researchers form an integral part of the temple-worshippers, versed in the codes and manners of the sanctuary, there is still the expectation that their 'difference' (in this case

termed 'diversity') will allow the 'real' worshippers new understandings of the temple, and their own relationships to it because they will have the view of the new other to assess alongside what they already know. As the co-researchers themselves pointed out, they knew they had a role to play, and found themselves playing it, even if their awareness ought to have made things different. It was a complicated position to hold, the co-researchers were not professional artists and consequently did not have a deep investment in being 'shown' within the walls of the gallery, but did become aware of the privileged ramifications of having their work being: on display; exhibited; codified; determined; and rarified within the confines of Tate Britain.

Migration, within this context was a play on travel from the periphery to the centre. In this case wherever the co-researchers came from, of more importance was where their ascendants came from, was the periphery, and Tate Britain (as a repository of British National Culture) found itself playing the very real and definable central location of a particularly monolithic centre. This made migration clear and accessible to all in that there were those that had migrated and those that had not. There is an arbitrariness to modern day migrations, being that it is simultaneously lionised as the source of fresh and exciting ideas, and lambasted for bringing the dangerous alien into the homestead. However, depending on where this critique emerges from, the reverse can be the case, with the migrant being the conservative defender of the institutions and mores they have travelled to be a part of, denying them any critical or disturbing function in their new home.

The identity constructed out of this relationship, cultural diversity and migration, is one of some alienation. The individual is forced to recognise themselves as being different from some imagined pre-constructed self, and even though it is clearly imagined, it still has considerable control over the way the self is seen. Placed within the reaches of Tate Britain (and this extends beyond the physical building), it becomes imperative to know where one stands (physically, emotionally, politically, and even economically) when confronting unassailable cultural realities. (I mean here that the objects within the collection and the discourses that allow its existence can now only be scrutinised, It is not expected that any object in the collection will be removed or altered to meet new challenges, the most that will happen will be new interpretations. And even this will be contextualized to allow the dominant reading sway.)

Policy

Tate Encounters steered into the territory of cultural policy where the project becomes part of a possibly larger strategy for the management of art and diversity initiatives. The co-researchers functioned as a lightning-rod for ideas of inclusion and access. One recurring theme within the works made and shown in the final 'exhibition'⁴ was 'First Contact'. Repeatedly, the viewer is reminded that this was the first time (or as close to that as possible), that

⁴ Exhibition' becomes problematic in this context, because even though works were made for display and the language of the 'white cube' was invoked, the intention of the exhibition or display was to 'showcase' the results of research. The devices used in the room/gallery/project space strove to clarify what was being seen, it is just that they were identical in essence to other exhibitions available within Tate Britain. While this should be the case, it complicates the separation between art and a discussion on art and its discontents.

the co-researchers had been to or spent independent time in Tate Britain. This is made clear in the fictionalised accounts of *Whirlwind at Millbank* (where even proximity to the collection does not engender consumption), or in Jacqueline Ryan's documentary, *Trading Cultures*, where her mother stands as proxy to an avoidance of culture (this in the face of Ryan's mother being actively involved in the dissemination of cultural artefacts)⁵. Even though the presence of 'culture' in the co-researchers' lives is made apparent, as in Nicola Johnson Oyejobi's catalogue of her family's books and self-made art objects on *Tate Love*, or Patrick Tubridy's analysis of photography, memory, and culture in *Homemade*, their lives and experiences are still being read as alternative to whatever Tate has to offer.

It is this possibility, of the alternative, the new, that the co-researchers bring to the art within the gallery; an attempt to see through the eyes of the 'other', but the problem is that there is no 'other' truly available any longer, just a sliding scale of access and privilege.

Questions of Diversity

The 'diversity' of the co-researchers is an important aspect within Tate Encounters; difference, variety is essential for vigorous survival of any species, and if one extends the metaphor to the Nation State, then the ability of the national body to absorb as much difference as possible whilst retaining its fundamental defining qualities is important. Lasting queries will be: How much difference is too much? What sort of difference is immediately desired? Where has the difference emerged from? How does one repel difference dangerous to the body politic? How does one identify useful difference? What happens to global utopian fantasies on collision trajectories with nationalist ideals?

The implication of the need for diversity informs Rebecca Cairns in *Rebecca Cairns*, where she finds her 'difference' in her Armenian grandmother, choosing to become Armenian through her involvement with Tate Encounters, even though there has been little impact on her life as a consequence.

What Tate Encounters does not address, and perhaps cannot, is the often loss or lack of privilege attached to diversity as understood. In the meeting point of the diasporic, migratory, and identifiable body with Tate Britain, assumptions of various privations remain (be they social, economic, or political), and encourage the reading of diversity as simultaneous saviour and saboteur of cultural sublimity.

And Race?

I am interested how race has become the new abject object. In a 'post-race' society, race plays the insidious role of allowing perversions without needing to address visible difference. Race is difficult for Tate Encounters to broach, this is an attempt to understand the consumption of culture, other words are made available to make up for race and difference. 'Cultural Diversity' looms large in this context, in the same way

⁵ Jacqueline Ryan's film inadvertently reinforces a sense of otherness that Tate Encounters forefronts by reinforcing notions of separate cultures living distinctly within the same terrain.

that 'Urban' is a code for more than any large conurbation. London is an urban space, but not all Londoners are urban. And this has nothing to do with their address: Mayfair is in the centre of the urban sprawl.

Can Everybody Do Everything?

What has been the role of Tate Britain in the production of art, at what point does the carer become the maker, where within the showing of art did the realisation of social bias emerge? It is not that bias is not to be expected in the production, buying, collection and reification of art, when it is being collated as a tool for self aggrandisement, consequently art that serves that need will remain in the place of honour. It must not be imagined for a moment that it is the merit of the artwork alone that makes its presence in a personal or national collection tenable. The ability of the artwork to function as a marker for its community is important, and the society in question makes a tacit admission of what the composition of the imagined and desired community is when works are selected for the posterity of the community. As society changes, the markers of the community make a natural transition to represent the concerns of the emergent collective.

So Aminah Borg-luck introduces separate elements of the new collective, merging disparate voices in *A Bit Hämäläinen*. Where does the lone drummer meet the confident conspirators? And this is avoiding the proverbial elephant in the room: that the drummer is here to disrupt the acculturated peace of the gallery (make it inconvenient), the conspirators already 'own' it. Somehow both are supposed to meet in the halls of Tate Britain, but we are not invited to their caucus, they are here to meet in the real life they already confidently represent.

This is the desired fantasy of cultural representation, but the reality has become strikingly different. Deeply held notions of universality precede readings and understandings of the fashion by which culture is consumed. It also determines what is deemed important enough to be collected by the main storehouses. Once the items are in storage for safekeeping, the question then emerges for interpretation of the objects held. If an object does not speak to more than the maker and the collector who identifies with the object, then the trope of, and belief in universality fails.

Narratives of Britishness

Here I feel Tate Encounters has been its most successful. Viewing the material produced, one cannot but recognize that all the co-researchers were British, if not in a simple pre-determined fashion. It was important to see other possibilities for Britishness that were not apologetic or self-conscious in their incarnation. Understanding these new narratives are important in understanding modes of consumption, recognizing that the multiple reading of the same artefact no longer simply means foreign-ness. And that disparate readings do not necessarily mean opposition to ideas of Britishness, it may simply indicate codes of new ownership.

Realities

One of the realities the co-researchers have to face is that much is made in the name of art. The very material produced as research is what art now leans towards. Meaning is sought in the interchange between research of lived experience and life itself as faith in the fixed object wanes. The investigative, non-conclusive, multi-directional, open-ended, transgressive, or inter-disciplinary nature of cultural investigation is now being praised as an alternative to the mainstream.

As a consequence, these co-researchers, who as part of their selection process, identified as being diasporic, migratory, and having an identity, become prime material of art research, even as they themselves engage in art. Attach to this, race and ethnicity, and there suddenly a picture of the new face/object/experience is being presented in the gallery space.

If the question is interrogating Britishness, then maybe the search should be further afield.

Interestingly the co-researchers already have access to the very nature/type of the Britishness Tate Britain represents. And it is a particular quality of Britishness, distillable and marketable to those not in possession of the distinctions Tate Britain represents. It is a Britishness codified within culture isolated from the impacts of time and prevailing social, political, and economic realities. This is even more significant when the works being held and exhibited are supposed to make a comment on the world outside the gallery. The isolation of the works is the very thing that makes the commentary possible.

And it is this instinctive ability to remain outside time and influence that the co-researchers are privy to. Yet there is a desire that the co-researchers will generate something fundamentally different to any other type of co-researcher; that could have self-identified to become part of the project. In this case it would mean a co-researcher who does not necessarily interrogate their identity, does not consider themselves as having a race, or is at the least unaware of their own raced-ness, feels secure in the dominance of the ethnic group they 'belong' to, be fundamentally rooted in and to Britain, and be oblivious to their ascendants' possible migratory patterns. The guiding statement of the Project points to the direction that the research was supposed to head. The determination of the results is another thing altogether, it will never be simple enough to say that the co-researchers are merely performing their difference, their 'otherness', both guises rely on the possibility of cultural isolation, and a constant level of self-reflexiveness. Thoughts of WEB DuBois' concept of Double Consciousness comes into play, probably even more so when the co-researcher is aware that what they produce, defining and exhibiting their difference, will be made available for the public's scrutiny. This awareness leads to a particular wariness, especially as the co-researchers are conversant with the very arguments defining them.

As DuBois put it:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, —a world which yields Scuffles in the Cathedral: Of Principalities and Powers – Raimi Gbadamosi / [E]dition 5

him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.⁶

That the co-researchers consequently retreat or recede behind the artifice of art, of generating even more cultural material that will be read as personal exposure and narratives of their dis-placement within Tate Britain should come as no surprise. This artifice is made apparent in the stylistic creations. The films, and it is predominantly film or photo-montage, succeed in disguising the awkwardness of self-revelation. Nollywood pastiche by Adekunle Detokunbo-Bello makes this clear. He personifies the ambivalence Tracey Jordan intones within her eponymous *Tracey Jordan*. Her "I do not belong here" as she travels the waterways and watersides of London amidst the variform inhabitants and visitors to the city highlights her claim to being different, (Tracy from Barbados) only to find recognition in the misrecognised boy-child in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Beloved*, within the walls of Tate Britain where it becomes possible to say "I Belong here". It is this re-placement of the self, from identity to identification, that *Whirlwind at Millbank* points to. Here Taribo Dakuri, a Nigerian Student makes his transition from working in Tate Gallery's kitchen to being personally shown around by one of the Gallery's curators, with more than a hint of romance thrown in. In both cases there is the attempt to show both sides of their concerned feelings of difference. They also both manage to present mis-readings of *The Beloved* to satisfy their desire for place. Jordan seeks herself in an alien landscape, and finds it in a painted 'girl'. Detokunbo-Bello/ Taribo Dakuri seeks recognition and acceptance, made manifest to him (being the black boy in the painting) by being desired above all other suitors by the curator (who fashions herself after the central figure).

The mis-readings and re-readings of the gallery and its collection in relation to the insider/outsider position the co-researchers held at all times during their tenure at Tate Britain, is part of what the research sought. The new artefacts generated are meant to highlight the new possibilities open to the hegemony the Tate Gallery can come to represent, if it proves too resistant to changes demanded of it, to recognise the shifts in the population that comprises and actively creates the very Britishness it is meant to represent. Rephrasing Stuart Hall's question⁷ into: 'What is the British in British Art?' will lead to declaring the essence of British identity. And if identity is anything, it is fluid. Bricks, mortar, clarified remits, and cultural objects with their provenance records are not fluid enough to accommodate the accelerated rate of transition Britishness has to face.

A Walk Through the Streets

⁶ DuBois, W.E.B.. 'Of Our Spiritual Strivings' in *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903

⁷ Hall, Stuart. What is this "black" in black popular culture? (Rethinking Race). *Social Justice*, Spring-Summer 1993. v. 20, no. 1-2, pp.104-11.

I walk the streets of Pimlico, and realise after a while that nothing is real. How can I define who these people are to me? How do I relate to them? Are they the same as me? I do not feel so, they are strangers to me, I have to believe they matter. I know they will not matter till I know them, and that is not going to happen soon. This is Britain after all, and speaking to strangers is a short stop to the asylum. I smile at them, and they look away in embarrassment. When they smile back, I am embarrassed. What am I to do?

I look back on the prison site that spawned a precious, rarefied, and pockmarked national treasure. I am warm inside, I am possessive, know that it is mine, as much as anyone else, but I am willing to share, as long as they do not touch. Then I feel a sense of outrage, as if they have invaded my private space.

Chocolate, need some after all that. Now here is a British Institution: a shop that meets all your immediate needs in the converted ground floor of a house, casually situated at a junction. Values galore on show here: independence of means; pride in the home; self reliance in the face of adversity; colonisation of space and resources. I deliberate on the chocolate, in spite of my ambivalence and distrust in the hype I settle for the Fairtrade bar.

Reprise

This big old world can be so empty living in it all alone
I realize, in its best disguise, a pretty house don't make a home
There's a hunger deep inside of me, how the fire burns
I wanna give good love to someone and get good love in return

Tonight I wanna be somebody's somebody
Tonight I wanna belong to someone
Tonight I wanna be somebody's somebody
Tonight I want somebody that'll do it till the job gets done⁸

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⁸ The Artist Formerly Known As Prince, *Somebody's Somebody* on Emancipation. NPG Records, 1996.

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