

convenience. 'There is not enough conversation across artistic boundaries' he said. 'Each art form tends to inhabit its own private world, with its own language, *dramatis personae* and myths'.

As examples of divisive controversies, Dr Hoggart cited: 1) whether it was the Council's job to help artists or to encourage audiences; and 2) whether the Council should be more concerned with present-day art or with art of the past? The arguments vary widely, in every department, apparently.

Then there was the strict interpretation, or intention, of the founding charter. The aim of making art 'accessible' to the public, may once have meant accessibility in geographical terms, but now the Council was also concerned with accessibility in another sense, that of helping to make the arts more generally understood and appreciated. This implied breaking down the barriers of background and education, and, to do this, involved the Council in greater emphasis on education . . . in 'a wide sense'.

The vexed topic of whether the Council was becoming more interventionist, was also raised. No doubt financial pressures forced this role upon it, but 'informed choices' had to be made and promulgated, whatever the pressures. *Dirigisme*, on the French model, where a national policy for the arts is set out, should be avoided. But serious debate should be encouraged about the role of the arts in a democratic society, and about its funding. 'Both of these debates are undernourished at present' he commented.

Then Dr Hoggart moved into more controversial – and more widely misunderstood – areas.

'The Council could not escape the problem of assessing standards and making judgements' he said. 'No precise checklist on standards was possible; but neither was a total relativism intellectually creditable. It was necessary to build up a body of case-law. 'Assessments must be in written form, but would be acceptable only in the context of face-to-face continuing relationships with clients. There was every argument for explaining in writing why a grant is given as well as why it was withdrawn. *The whole process of assessment had to be more continuous, more open and more active.*' (Our italics – Ed.) Dr Hoggart expanded this theme, and added, tellingly: '*Clients must perceive the process as being fair, well-motivated and much more open than hitherto.*' 'Council reached the unanimous conclusion' Dr Hoggart said, '*that a greater degree of openness was desirable in the conduct of its work.*' As a rider, however, he indicated that, on balance and 'after lengthy argument', they were not in favour of open Council meetings, on the grounds that further frank discussion might be inhibited. Openness best came after that stage, said Hoggart, when options had been clarified. The possibility was considered of opening to the public certain advisory panel meetings.

The appointment of a new public relations officer, Barry Jackson, formerly with the Greater London Arts Association and North West Arts, was an important part of

implementing the new 'openness'. Papers reflecting aspects of various policy-making discussions will be published (some have already appeared this autumn – more will follow early next year) and it seems likely that a greater number of public forums will be held. The *Arts Council Bulletin*, the monthly news-sheet, is a prime medium for disseminating news of all kinds, but other methods are being examined.

If any readers wish to air views or suggestions on any aspect of Council policy or specialist activities (training technicians; bursaries; exhibitions; grants) the time is now ripe for committing them to paper and creating a pile on Barry Jackson's desk, at 105 Piccadilly, London W1. Avoid phone calls, please, he says.

To be . . . or to be Continued

Given the historic and contemporary fascination of the British with continuing stories and their hatred of endings, whether happy or sad ('don't let Little Nell die', they pleaded), it is surprising how few writers for the theatre proper have attempted to serialise their works. Novelists, yes, and writers for television by the Channelload, but playwrights no. And yet the revival of *characters* in plays seems a much more creative undertaking than the tired old business of revivals *qua se*, and much more likely to bind the loyalties of what are optimistically called 'regular theatre goers' (defined pessimistically in the NOP survey for the Society of West End Theatre as people who go to the theatre '3 times + a year'). The Greeks, of course, knew all about the to-be-continued syndrome. The use of roughly the same cast of characters by Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles, 'though it probably made it more difficult for an audience to remember whose play exactly they had come to see, made it infinitely easier for them to settle back and empathise with a comfortable feeling of "this is where we came in"'. Shakespeare ran more or less the same Romans through two plays, Jack Falstaff ('Banish him not,' the groundlings shouted) through three, and chaps like Glendower, one feels, through ten. When you're on to a good cast-list, don't knock it.

But, in recent years, and surely what's been happening on TV should have taught them – J.R. being just as potent a model for villainy as Simon Legree – playwrights seem to have missed the opportunity to go on cashing in on personifications that catch the public imagination. The exceptions that could prove the rule might be Alan Ayckbourn with his "Norman Conquest" trilogy and, perhaps, Harold Pinter whose *conversaciones*, play by play, seem to take up where they left off before. Generally, however, the point has been missed that if you've made a good play and specially if you've brought to life strongly defined characters – they can be secondary to the main plot, like Mrs Malaprop in "The Rivals" or Doolittle in "Pygmalion" or, indeed, like Ena Sharples in "Coronation Street" – the cast and the setting and the same kind of dialogue can turn up all over

again in your *next* play. Change the argument or the moral of the work as you wish; what the audience will like you for *most* is the opportunity you give them for meeting and recognising old friends again.

Ever mindful of its responsibility for keeping theatres and minds open, CUE has some suggestions for the consideration of playwrights and managements of differing heights of brow. Would the appropriate authors try these titles of forthcoming attractions on for size?

"Wolfgang in London" (a play about an infant prodigy and his tyrannical father); "The Mitford Women" (Nancy in Neuilly, Jessica in jeopardy etc); "Won't you come home, Bill Bailey?" (continuing the life of Barnum); "Grand Motel" (a perfect vehicle for Noelle Gordon's return to the stage).

Pirouette at the Place

When the London Contemporary Dance Trust's home in Euston is completed next spring, it will be one of the best equipped dance-centres in Europe. A total of nearly one million pounds will have been spent on redeveloping the premises, in a careful programme of changes, tackled in phases, that began with the Trust's acquisition of the freehold in September 1976.

To date, conversion work has included a complex of nine dance studios and two music studios, a library and restaurant facilities. On completion, improvements to the building, lighting, ventilation, plumbing, safety regulations, will enable the theatre to operate with a Public Entertainments License, ushering in a new era of wide-ranging entertainments and other activities – from drama, music and professional rehearsals, to dance.

Jack Norton, the Trust's finance director, a genial commuter from the country, gave CUE an insight into the improvements, in an interview which outlined the obstacles to be overcome and the methods used to do so.

Seated in the premises of the former Royal Artists Rifles drill hall in Flaxham Street (which backs on to Duke's Place – the old main entrance, off Euston Road), which were opened in 1889 by Edward VII, then still the Prince of Wales, Norton looked thoroughly pleased with the state of play to date, and the new offices, which they moved into 18 months ago, after taking them over from London University, their former landlords. 'It has been every bit as difficult, in its way,' says Norton 'as the Barbican development, about which so much is being written. The difference lies in the complications involved in adapting parts of this old building for drastically changed uses.' One phase had to be scrapped almost entirely, owing to unforeseen structural weaknesses; and, after all, that's no way to build rehearsal studios, with dozens of dancers leaping in unison. There are sometimes constraints to which there are no economic answers; so it has proved here. On occasions, solutions were just too compromised to bear serious consideration. Other phases were exploratory, requiring a successful outcome before the