FESTIVALS OF FREEDOM:

CITIZENSHIP, CHARACTER, AND THE RHYTHM OF DEMOCRATIC LIFE

Paper prepared for the History, Language, and Political Theory Workshop,

University of Chicago, April 2009.

Marc Stears[1]

Department of Politics and International Relations

Manor Road Building

University of Oxford

OX1 3UQ

U.K.

marc.stears@politics.ox.ac.uk

I

The period from the end of the Second World War to the early 1960s witnessed a series of cultural celebrations of "freedom" and "democracy" stretching right across the newly-described "Free World." Taking the form of grand international events, such as Expo '58 in Brussels, celebrations of national renewal, like the Festival of Britain in 1951, and a multitude of small, regional and local fetes, encompassing commemorations ranging from the first "Australia Day" in 1945 to the "Rededication Weeks" of 1947 in the United States, these were all celebrations that were designed to transform abstract political ideals into concrete social practices. They were events, festivals, and fetes organized to persuade potentially sceptical individuals how it was possible to *be* a democratic citizen, to feel free, and to enjoy all of the varying sensations that resulted. In Shakespeare's terms, they were events that sought to give the "airy nothingness" of high-brow political aspirations a "local habitation and a name."[2] And they did so for the most urgent of reasons. The "Free World" could resist the totalitarianism of the Soviet East, avoid a return to the Fascism of the European past, and overcome the squalor of the depression years, only if the everyday habits and the rituals of the citizenry took on a democratic hue.

This topic provides the basis for my current research. In a book provisionally entitled *Festivals of Freedom*, I intend to examine these post-war efforts to celebrate democracy and forge spirits of freedom in the United States, Britain, Western Europe, and Australia. The project has three overall objectives. First, it aims to analyze how the organizers of these events sought culturally to inspire a free citizenry to appreciate the political orders in which they lived, and how those organizers understood the ideals that underpinned those orders. Second, it will seek to discover how these events were received by the publics that attended them - often in great numbers - asking what it was about these celebrations that resonated powerfully with disparate individuals and groups spread right out across the globe and which aspects of them failed to secure so eager an audience. And third, and most crucially of all, it will ask what these events can tell us today about the very ideas that animated them, the ideas of freedom and democracy, and their relationship to each other.

In conducting initial research to this end, it has quickly become apparent to me that it is necessary to move outside of the dominant frame of most recent scholarly examinations: a frame which has been provided by what might be called critical power analysis, and which has been variously inflected by Gramscian and Foucauldian theories. This prevailing approach encourages analysts to study these events almost exclusively as "exercises in ideological construction and representation … integral to the efforts by national elites to preserve dominant relations."[3] Although we have undeniably learnt much from individual studies conducted in this vein (as the superb work of John Bodner and Robert Rydell admirably demonstrates,) it is an approach that has also occluded several crucial aspects of these "festivals of freedom." Most of all, an analytic perspective that focuses solely on the conscious or unconscious manipulation of cultural understandings in the service of potentially malign, sectional, and exclusive interests, has prevented scholars from addressing other crucial dynamics. It blinds us, in particular, to the remarkable ideological *variability* of the various celebrations - to the ways in which their central messages dramatically differed across both space and time - and to the consequences of that variability. It also, and more crucially still, conclusively distracts attention from the continuing normative *appeal* of some of the key aspects of these events. It prevents us, that is, from even beginning to ask how some of their successes might help us address the fundamental dilemmas that democratic political theory still presents us with today.

In my work, therefore, I seek to approach these events not only as instances of manipulation or as parts of a constant attempt to maintain relations of domination but instead as sometimes well-, and sometimes ill-, intentioned efforts to engender particular kinds of free and democratic political sensibility, efforts which dramatically differed across time and place, which were each inflected by sharply contrasting ideological variants, and from which we can still learn much as we seek better to appreciate the enduring nature and value of their core ideals of freedom and democracy.[4] Such analysis is not intended, in any way, to be immune to the lessons to be derived from a concentration on power and its perpetuation, but its goal is to broaden the range of insights that these cultural celebrations can provide beyond the scope of this critical perspective. It is attentive, in particular, to the historic and ideational contexts within

which each celebration, festival, or fete occurred, to the contrasting ideological understandings and intentions that lay behind each of them, to the resonances these ideological understandings and their expressions found in their societies and beyond, and to the potential points of connection (and disconnection) with questions in democratic theory which continue to the present. By the conclusion of the project, I hope to have contributed both to a richer understanding of the complex set of ideologies that constructed the "Free World," and to the dilemmas of free and democratic commitment in the present.

Rather than continuing such methodological discussions in the abstract, this paper aims to provide an example of how that work might proceed. It does so by concentrating on two of the most spectacular of these post-war events: the Festival of Britain and the American Freedom Train. The Festival of Britain ran from May to September of 1951, at the end of the post-war Labour government's six years of reform and, amongst other things, and transformed the South Bank of the Thames into a celebration of "British values" and constructed a wildly popular funfair at Battersea.[5] Despite early scepticism, the Festival eventually met with phenomenal public approval. The London attractions were visited by almost ten million people in its short summer season, and remained a touchstone for British architecture, design, and political symbolism for generations to come. The American Freedom Train was a similar success. It ran right across the United States three years earlier, bringing with it a cargo of original documents that celebrated American democratic institutions and values and being accompanied in each city it visited with "Rededication Weeks," where citizens celebrated the history of American democracy, "Freedom Fashion Shows," where they combined their political enthusiasm with the excitement of post-depression consumerism, as well as in "Veteran's Days," "Women's Days," "American Family Days," and "Freedom of Expression Days."[6] The Train was met with near frantic scenes wherever it went. By the end of its travels, an estimated fifty million people had taken part in events to celebrate its arrival in towns and cities across the United States, with many more people disappointed besides. In Charlotte, North Carolina, 100,000 citizens lined-up to enter the Train, even though only 8,416 were able to get on in any single day.[7]

The discussion that follows examines these events in order to address each of the three central questions of my overall project. First, it asks what these two events tell us about the ways in which "freedom" and "democracy" were differently understood in the United States and Britain at this vital moment in recent political history. Second, it enquires as to how they were received by the publics to which they were addressed and upon which they depended. Third, it asks how the unfolding of these events, their successes and their failures, can inform current-day debates in democratic political theory. The paper addresses this set of issues by exploring two sets of conceptual tensions that existed both between these two events and within them, troubling their organizers, visitors, and remaining difficult for theorists today. The first such set concerns the contrasting role of political institutions and the role of personal and national character in protecting and maintaining freedom. The second involves the relationship between the state and the market in a free society. It is analysis of the way in which the events differently responded to these tensions - between institutions and character, and state and market - that provides us with access both to a fuller appreciation of the organizers' conceptual intentions and to the legacy that their events leave us with today. I am conscious, of course, that all of this seems rather abstract at this juncture, which is why we need to begin by getting to grips with the events themselves.

II

The American Freedom Train of 1947 was born out of a deep anxiety regarding the sustainability of American political institutions and American political values in the postwar world. There was a grave concern amongst the upper echelons of American political society, across both left and right of the mainstream political spectrum, in the immediate that although the formal political institutions of the United States were right, the citizenry of the United States were somehow not capable of living up to them. A huge swathe of American politicians and political commentators, from both left to right, were thus convinced that there was a serious threat to Americans' rights and liberties as the Cold War began, and that threat came largely from the inadequacies of the citizenry themselves.

Such inadequacy, it was argued, had multiple causes. For some of it was driven by the privacy, inward-looking, and individualistic nature of Americans, widely discussed ever since Tocqueville. For others it emanated from the tendency of Americans to be deeply divided from one other, polarized by the demands of region, race, religion, and increasingly class.[8] The most prominent argument, though, emphasized the development of a new state of loss and alienation and loss brought on by the experience of depression and the barbarism of war. On this account, American citizens had become deeply confused as to the possibilities of the future and, as such, they were in danger of embracing anything that offered clear and definite political answers, however flawed those answers necessarily were. Postwar citizens' feelings of alienation, of loss, and confusion, the argument went, made them easy prey to those selling false-certainties in politics, religion, or any other aspects of social life. Yet such a spirit of certainty stood in essential contrast to the maintenance and protection of American freedom across time.

The expressions of this argument were multiple in the first few years of the postwar world. The eventually most widely cited version was Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford's, *The Authoritarian Personality*, which aimed to "develop and promote an understanding of the social-psychological factors which have made it possible for an authoritarian type of men to threaten to replace the individualistic and democratic type.[9] But Harold Metz and Charles Thompson's *Authoritarianism and the Individual* pursued a strikingly similar agenda and Franz Alexander's *Our Age of Unreason* offered an even more pessimistic take on the same theme in the same year.[10] Nor, more importantly, were these the first studies to present this argument. Many other less high brow versions had appeared since the United States' entry into the war, when a focus on the psychological prerequisites for upstanding citizenship had been a central concern of government during mass mobilization.[11] Probably the most entertaining of all was a cartoon film produced in 1947 and released a year later by Harding College, entitled "Make Mine Freedom," in which an evil salesman named Dr Utopia tries to sell poisonous potions (called "isms") to the gullible, depressed, and alienated sections of American society that he comes across on his travels.[12]

It was in response to these anxieties, and the collapse of previous attempts to instil a sense of patriotic pride, that United States Attorney General Tom Clark seized on the

idea of the Freedom Train when it was first put to him by William Coblenz and Timothy McInery of the Department of Justice's Public Information Division late in 1946.[13] Clark wanted to remind American citizens of the glory of the free and democratic structures of governance under which they lived and to encourage them to reaffirm their dedication to those structures and to the steely virtues that were required to maintain them over time. America needs a civic "reawakening," Clark insisted, if it is to survive and flourish in the post-Fascist, Cold War world and maintain its open and democratic ways of life.[14] The plan he came up with would see the great documents of American liberty, including the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights, sent around the country for people to see, with each village, town or city in which the Train stopped encouraged to organize a local celebration of American political structures and to organize rituals allowing local people to reconfirm their dedication to patriotic virtue. Clark proposed the idea to President Harry Truman, who was delighted, quickly establishing an American Heritage Foundation to oversee the Train's day-to-day operation.[15]

Soon 130 original and copied documents and flags were bundled onto a train and set off across the country. Irving Berlin was commissioned to write a song to wish it on its way, telling eager listeners that "Inside the Freedom Train, you'll find a precious freight, those words of liberty, the documents that made us great!"[16] Truman's Heritage Foundation were also pressed into literary service, producing a pamphlet, entitled *The Good Citizen*, reminding every American citizen of the serious purpose of maintaining freedom and democracy, through a series of telling short stories, pious poetry, and noble sayings along the lines made popular in the depression years by *Reader's Digest*. The Foundation also prepared a "freedom pledge" which each person who visited the Train was instructed to recite, a "freedom prayer" for them to offer in church on Sunday, and "nine promises of the good citizen" to which they should continually commit themselves. The "promises" ran as follows:

> Ask yourself,
> "Am I truly a citizen – or just a fortunate tenant of this great nation?"
> Here is a summary of the working tools of good citizenship. Pledge yourself

here and now to these nine points – that you, your children and your children's children may continue to enjoy the American heritage of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

1. I will vote at all elections. I will inform myself on candidates and issues and will use my greatest influence to see that honest and capable officials are elected. I will accept public office when I can serve my community or my county thereby.
2. I will serve on a jury when asked.
3. I will respect and obey the laws. I will assist public officials in preventing crime and the courts in giving evidence.
4. I will pay my taxes understandingly (if not cheerfully).
5. I will work for peace but dutifully accept my responsibilities in time of war and will respect the flag.
6. In thought, expression and action, at home, at school and in all my contacts, I will avoid any group prejudice, based on class, race, or religion.
7. I will support our system of free public education by doing everything I can to improve the schools in my own community.
8. I will try to make my community a better place in which to live.
9. I will practice and teach the principles of good citizenship right in my own home.[17]

The promise, pledge, and prayer all ended with the motto of the Train: "freedom is <u>everybody</u>'s job!" That left the Train's visitors in no doubt that freedom in the United States was a serious business, in part protected by the institutions of American governance, but needing a weary citizenry to rededicate itself to the fundamental ideals and the steely virtues believed essential to its protection and its maintenance across time. The Train was intended, as the *Washington Post* grandly put it, to restore a "heartening … virility to the democratic idea."[18]

III

Like the American Freedom Train, the Festival of Britain was also born out of a concern to cement the politics of freedom and of democracy in a nation much traumatised by the impact of war. But, unlike in the United States, there was hardly a mention of formal political practices or institutions on the Festival of Britain site in the South Bank, and there was precious little mention of civic duty or responsibility, and there was certainly no pledge-making. Instead, the Festival was conceived as what its Director Gerald Barry famously called a "tonic to the nation." It was dreamt up as a celebration of Britishness and of a form of rededication to freedom and democracy certainly, but was not in any manner concerned with its concrete structures of democracy or of the legal practices which made them work.[19]

So what was there if not a celebration of the formal structures of democracy and the protections of freedom? Eccentricity and enjoyment was everywhere on the South Bank, or at least it was intended to be. The Festival was really about a British sense of "fun and enthusiasm," the Director Gerald Barry told the *Daily Mail* in May of 1951. Some even called it an "austerity binge."[20] The South Bank site was designed with the purpose of stimulating the senses. "Young people especially were inspired by the colour and the texture, the glass and metal structures, the floodlighting and the instant landscape with fountains and lakes wherever you looked," the Festival's chief architect Hugh Casson recalled, and even the most serious of the exhibits on the South Bank possessed this character.[21] There was a recreation of a British seaside resort, a dancing pavilion, sound and music shows, the world's biggest television, and a giant Dome of Discovery, the world's largest domed building at the time. It was no coincidence that the most striking - and most popular - structure on the South Bank site, the Skylon, which bore a frightening similarity to a Nazi V2 rocket, had, in fact, *no purpose*. It was just there.[22]



The Skylon, with the Dome of Discovery just visible to the left.

Of all the many contemporary commentators, it was the poet Dylan Thomas who grasped the centrality of pleasure to the Festival most clearly. What everyone "likes most in it is the gay, absurd, irrelevant, delighting imagination that flies and booms and spurts and trickles out of the whole bright boiling," Thomas told the BBC in 1951. The whole Festival site was of this order, he explained, from "the small stone oddity that squints at you round a sharp, daubed corner" to "the sexless abstract sculptures serenely and secretly existing out of time … that appear, but for one struck second, inappropriate." Watching visitors explore the exhibits brought the issue home more clearly still. "You see people go along, briskly down the wide white avenues towards the pavilion of their fancy - 'Our Humbert's dead keen on seeing the milk-separators' - and then suddenly stop: another fancy swings or bubbles in front of their eyes. What is it they see? Small childbook-painted mobiles along the bridges that, at the flick of wind, become windmills and thrum round at night like rainbows with arms."[23] And none of this was unintentional. Hugh Casson described his masterplan for the South Bank as a "space for

leisured gaiety, a place if you like for pleasure." It was a "gigantic toyshop for adults" intended to be "even a little mad."[24]

This celebration of pleasure was not just the result of some unconstrained hedonism, nor was it simply a question of cheering the British people up after the adversities of the war, although that, of course, did matter a little. Rather, even though nothing was intended to be "solemn," everything was said to be "serious in purpose." "Of *course* it is instructive; of *course* there is behind it an articulate and comprehensive plan," Dylan Thomas impatiently insisted.[25] Centrally, it was a celebration of a particular kind of way of being that was considered central to the British idea of freedom. That way of being was partly constructed in opposition to the demands of the industrial world, capturing the difference between what Michael Oakeshott would later call the difference between *Homo faber*, man the maker of things, and *Homo ludens*, man at play, where the former is associated with externally-set goals, targets, and expectations, and the latter allows for a spirit of spontaneity, an enjoyment of events just as they are.[26] Freedom, on this account, was far from "everybody's *job*," as it had been for the Freedom Train. Instead, it was everybody's escape from a job. In Casson's words, the Festival's design had to provide an "inexplicable lift of heart" which would enable a "brief forgetting of office and factory."[27]

So fundamental was this goal to the Festival's organizers that the South Bank site itself was masked on the side that did not face the river by a coloured screen of bright baubles and zig-zag shapes designed to obscure the bleak working world on the other side. "Outside" of the Festival site, "the soot and the smoke were in charge," Casson thus explained. Inside, the demands of industrial labour were not to be felt. Even the waterfront was crucial. The Thames had not been seen from this side for many generations: blocked out by the Lion Brewery, and a series of warehouses and factories. Now it was revealed in all of its fluid and watery glory, interrupted only by periodically explosive fountains, modelled on those at Versailles, that were designed to give a playful air to the excessively grand gothic of the Houses of Parliament across on the north bank.[28]

But it was intended not just to oppose freedom to labour but also to underscore a particularly British conception of the way in which freedom is maintained. This was seen

most clearly in the "Lion and the Unicorn" exhibit which set out to tell the story of the British national character, and which was turned, with the help of the novelist Laurie Lee who wrote the descriptive placards, into an unconstrained celebration of eccentricity. "We are the Lion and the Unicorn – twin symbols of the Briton's character," the exhibit began. "As a Lion, I give him solidity and strength. With the Unicorn, he lets himself go!" Visitors then saw a fantastic sculpture by the folk-artist Fred Mizen of the Lion desperately trying to get the Unicorn to listen to him, whilst the Unicorn flits away. After that, they walked past a recreation of some moments in the history British liberty, including the signing of Magna Carta and a diorama of the early Trade Union campaigners, the Tollpudle Martyrs, until they finally reached "eccentrics corner" where they were told that the British "instinct of liberty" was best seen in the expressive diversity of its personalities, stretching from the village idiots of rural folklore to wild and fantastic creations of Lewis Carroll.[29]

Reflecting on the Festival's purpose, Gerald Barry wrote that "in a world given over to violence it is important to show that a free nation still has a mind to the creative virtues, on which the health of any people must ultimately depend."[30] Freedom, in other words, was to be maintained in Britain not be the formal structures of government or by parchment guarantees of rights but by a recommitment to a particular kind of personality, the kind that was willing to explore new avenues and was also healthily sceptical of all claims to authority. "Our greatest danger," the novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley noted in praise of the Festival, "is a possible loss of initiative, zest for life, energy. We need these to survive as part of the Western democratic world."[31] The same message was put in a different idiom at the end of the Lion and the Unicorn exhibit. "Hmm," the Unicorn was seen to say, the history of British character is "part earth … part cabbage."[32]

IV

This celebration of individuality, diversity, and eccentricity stood in a complicated relationship to a second theme of the Festival of Britain: the balance between state and market. For although the Festival site was designed as a celebration of the querulousness of British character, it was also intended to represent the triumph of a democratic form of

state planning over the free-range of the market, so discredited in British eyes by the traumas of the depression in the 1930s. There was a difficult tension to resolve there, whilst a related (if contrasting) tension faced the organizers of the Freedom Train: desperate in the United States, as we shall see, to turn a political, and somewhat state-centric, initiative, into one with broader popular appeal.

There were two straightforward ways in which the Festival of Britain's organization, design, and operation reflected the strong current of statism in British thinking about democracy in this period, a current that had been brought about by Labour's election victory in 1945. The first, and most obvious, concerned the way in which the Festival was planned and run. First conceived by the left-leaning journalist, Gerald Barry, who went on to be its Director, the Festival was first overseen at Cabinet level first by Stafford Cripps as President of the Board of Trade, and then later by Hebert Morrison, whose formal title of Lord President of the Council often gave way to the more endearing name of "Lord Festival." Morrison ran the Festival the only way he knew how: through a series of Public Councils and Corporations, which combined independent expertise with governmental oversight in just the way that nationalized industries were meant to.[33]

In fact, the Festival often seemed to be over-run by such quasi-governmental agencies. The recently created Arts Council commissioned all of the visual arts for the South Bank site, and it was joined by a host of new institutions. There was a Council for Science which governed the creation of scientific exhibits on both the main site and in the new Museum for Science in South Kensington. There was a Council for Architecture, Town Planning and Building Research, which oversaw the physical design of the Festival site and aimed to derive lessons from its architecture for future public projects. And there was a Festival of Britain Council, which was responsible for co-ordinating Festival activities outside of London. Such public bodies did not just provide the overall vision for the Festival, they ran its day to day operations, and the control of public bodies went all the way down. Catering on the main site was thus provided by the Ministry of Food, which oversaw 13 cafes and restaurants, and made special plans to ensure that foodstuffs otherwise unavailable due to rationing could be enjoyed by its visitors.[34]

As many cultural critics have since noted, the Festival site on the South Bank was intended to be a practical, lived, example of the advantages of a clean, orderly, well-constructed, and coherently planned age. It was the town planning movement - a movement that had always been close to Labour's heart - finally come of age. Whereas in the late nineteenth century Ebenezer Howard's aspirations for bringing order and enlightened design to the urban centres of England had resulted in the Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn, the grander ambitions of a new generation of planners were now concretely built on the South Bank.[35] The Festival site was intended to show London's citizens that "a well designed town is part of his wealth," Hugh Casson reported, citing Ruskin in the process.[36] It was a chance, as he put it in the Arts Council's official magazine *Image*, to "get architect and painters, engineer, landscape designer and sculptor working together in the same language."[37]

To this end, everything was taken care of on the South Bank by benign, well-informed experts and creative artists, free of the chaos of commercial imperative. There were even "bins for nice people to put their paper in," Casson noted, an innovation unheard of in most British cities in wartime.[38] It was not only well-planned, it was also highly modern. The Festival was conceived as a "monument to the future." For many visitors, the Festival offered a chance briefly to live out their *Dan Dare* comic fantasies, with its displays of rocket propulsion and the promise of new technological discoveries to come. Its central buildings captured this spirit perfectly, with the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon both highly modernist in design and technologically advanced in construction, even if they did bear an uncanny similarity in name and shape to the Perisphere and Trylon of the New York World's Fair of 1939-40.[39]

The Festival was thus explicitly an initiative for the public good which was to be overseen by the agents appointed and monitored by the State itself, uncontrolled and even uninfluenced by the commercial demands of the market. Barry and Morrison insisted that the main Festival exhibition on the South Bank eschew all commercial sponsorship. The market was not to be allowed to determine what the public saw nor was it to shape the experience that they had whilst they visited the main Festival grounds. As Barry insisted, "there was to be no space to let" on the South Bank. "No one would be able to get his goods exhibited by paying to do so; they would get there by merit or not at all."[40] A

battle was thus tirelessly fought against commercial interests which wished to capitalize on the popular appeal of the Festival. One bicycle company even tried to smuggle advertisements onto the site by hiding them on the side of a barge that had been bought by the South Bank's planners for the purpose of launching fireworks. Fortunately for Barry and Morrison's commercial-free vision, the eagle-eyed organizer of Festival River Spectacles, Anthony Hippisley Coxe, noticed the suspicious canvas covering the posters on the side of the barge, revealing all before the boat could be put in place on the Thames.[41]

Even with such sterling efforts, this battle was not entirely successful. Although Labour historian Kenneth Morgan might celebrate the absence of "tatty commercialism" from the Festival, then, he could only do so by adopting a perspective of astonishing myopia.[42] In fact, the Festival as a whole was swimming in tat. There were postcards, souvenirs, magazines, and maps of all sorts produced to "celebrate" the Festival by private firms interested more in making a profit than in edifying the nation and stimulating its communal creativity. There was also an astounding array of Festival-inspired advertising. As the Festival presented as "the story of the nation," one advertiser explained, so they offered "the story of the fountain pen" which was "the history of Waterman's." Another noted that "Dignity, Stability, and Durability" were the qualities of the British nation celebrated at the Festival and they were also the qualities of "Selleck, Nicholls, and Co. Builders in Concrete." One more suggested that the "Discovery of the Century" was the transformation of the "the Hinge of Today" into the "Hinge of Tomorrow." Finally, Bic, the makers of the Biro, modelled a celebratory pen after the Festival's most famous landmark, the Skylon.[43]

Such profusion of commercial advertising clearly diluted the image that the Festival organizers aspired to, indicating that even in post-war Britain the market could find a way to muscle in. The most serious challenge of all to the Festival's vision of an eccentric individual but state-centric democracy came, though, from inside the organization itself. And that concerned the Battersea Pleasure Gardens.[44] The Gardens had been intended to be a complement to the South Bank, where enjoyment would continue, but in a setting more rural and less strikingly urban than the main Festival site. But the plan unravelled almost from the start. Whereas everything else was run along

Morrisonian Public Corporation lines, the Gardens were run by a Limited Company, Festival Gardens Ltd, who were granted remarkably little financial support - receiving almost nothing of the $14million in government subsidy provided to the South Bank - and operated with significantly less oversight.[45]

The resulting Pleasure Gardens were almost everything the South Bank site was not. Where the South Bank was proudly British, with its products and its exhibits extolling the possibilities of a technologically-led and effectively-planned U.K., the Pleasure Gardens centred on features imported from outside. One of its highlights, the Big Dipper roller coaster had to be bought at great expense in America as apparently no-one in Britain knew how to construct one.[46] Moreover, where the South Bank was relentlessly modern, the Pleasure Gardens were nostalgic. Staff there dressed up in imaginary Victorian and medieval costumes, adopted what would now be called "mockney" accents, and provided traditional Music Hall entertainment in "Mr Sach's Song Saloon." But most importantly of all, whereas the South Bank site had waged a war against commercialism, the Pleasure Gardens were awash with it. Children were left at Nestle's playground, which offered not only "to look after children left in their care," but also to "give them a wee present when their parents came to collect them."[47] There were no prizes for guessing which chocolate manufacturer made the present, of course, or what the purpose of providing it really was. The most popular exhibit of all was the Guinness Toucan clock, which aimed to show that all time is "Guinness time."[48]

The Festival organizers were dismayed by this phenomenon not only because it undermined their efforts to put-on a commercial free endeavour but because it directed attention towards a crucial difficulty at the very heart of their conception of democracy. It was hard, after all, to celebrate the creative freedoms of the individual, as the Festival organizers wished to do, without allowing free expression to the forms of creation that British individuals actually liked.[49] And that is where the market muscled in yet again. For all the high-brow glories of the South Bank, it was the Toucan clock and the Far Tottering and Oyster Creek miniature railway that truly represented the "British at play," (even though one unfortunate passenger lost his life in a crash on the latter.)[50]

V

Over on the other side of the Atlantic, the organizers of the Freedom Train had quite different problems with commercialism. Within the United States of the mid to late 1940s the fashion for statism that was currently sweeping Britain had already passed away, as the New Deal's enthusiasm for state planning was superseded by a return to a strong form of market economy.[51] There was, then, no room for town planning, or order, or a commerce free zone in the ideas that shaped the Freedom Train. Instead, quite to the contrary, the dilemma which faced the Train's organizers from the start was more how to ensure that the Train met with commercial approval *and* promoted the idea of free enterprise, rather than its opposite. One of Attorney General Tom Clark's primary motivations in promoting the Train was that it might act to "guard against the impact of foreign ideologies" which challenged the free market, "aided by economic and political dissentions that undermine and discredit our system of government."[52]

To this end, Clark and Truman insisted from the outset that the Train be run not directly by the government or by public bodies such as the National Archives, but rather by the non-governmental American Heritage Foundation, headed by the banker Winthrop W. Aldrich, in collaboration with the Advertising Council of America, a co-operative group of all of the United States' leading advertising agencies, headed by Tom D'Arcy Brophy of Kenyon and Eckhardt Inc. Fund-raising for the Train was devolved still further, being largely conducted by Barney Balaban of Paramount Pictures.[53] The Freedom Train, Tom Clark told the House Expenditures Committee in June of 1947, was therefore to be no drain on public resources. Instead, it was to be entirely "privately financed and free of any political implications." It was American private enterprise that was to be solely responsible for this effort to overcome "subversive tendencies and lethargy by reawakening in the mind and heart of the American people a greater appreciation of our American heritage."[54]

This move had crucial implications. The first was that the Train's organizers in the American Heritage Foundation desperately attempted to disconnect its message from anything which might be thought to resonate support for New Deal-style statism and especially for any sympathy for the demands of organized labour. The initial proposal for

the Train from Harry Truman's appointees in the National Archives suggested that it should display the great documents of the 1930s, including the Wagner Act which had effectively protected the rights of trade unions for the first time in the United States and the Executive Order which had created the Fair Employment Practices Committee towards the New Deal's close. To Federal employees, this material was essential to explaining their vision of American freedom, the activists in the American Heritage Foundation, though, were aghast at such suggestions. They dismissed them as ideas that distorted the exhibit's focus on the "fundamental character" of American freedom: a freedom which was not rapped up in socio-economic concerns but which focused essentially on a Tocquevillian independence of the individual from the demands of an authoritarian State.[55]

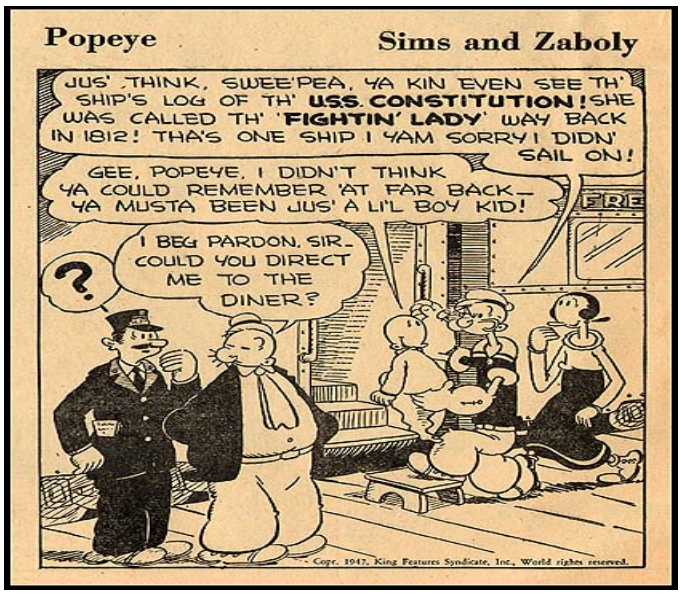
Surprising as it now may seem now to those of us raised on the individualist and anti-statist interpretation of the American tradition found in the work of Louis Hartz and Richard Hofstadter, this focus on the essential importance of individual independence rather than of socio-economic guarantees was deeply controversial at the time.[56] Importantly, it stood in stark opposition to a number of relatively recent celebrations of American political values, including the New Deal-inspired Federal Government Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939-40, which described the rights and liberties of Americans in terms of their social welfare, their education, their housing, and their health, rather than in terms of their independence from government.[57] It was in this context that Democratic Congressman Adolph Sabath led a campaign for the inclusion of the Wagner Act, and confrontations broke out in when the Train visited New York and in Philadelphia, from those who insisted on the "contradictions between the documents aboard the Freedom Train and the current state of American democracy."[58] Nonetheless, the position was non-negotiable as far as the American Heritage Foundation was concerned, and as soon as Truman expected it to support the Train he sealed that fate.[59]

The second implication of this "privatisation" of the Train was, of course, that the Train's organizers were led to welcome with open arms almost any effort to connect its travels with commercial interests or concerns. The Advertising Council went on a desperate hunt for sponsorship and support, arguing that the Train provided "an unparalleled opportunity to build public goodwill for themselves and to enhance respect

for American business a the same time that they make an important contribution to the country's welfare." American freedom and free enterprise, went hand-in-hand, the argument went, and by encouraging American citizens to celebrate and rededicate themselves to the one, they would at least implicitly do so for the other as well.[60]

This move met with some success. Local campaigns did occur across the Freedom Train's route and some large corporations sponsored the Train's journeys at crucial moments, a few even enquiring whether it would be possible to place advertisements on or near to the Train itself. Comic books like *Blondie* and *Mickey Mouse* also had special editions for the Freedom Train. *Captain Marvel* ran a multi-part spectacular, with the eponymous hero chasing an enemy of freedom through the Train's journey.[61] But there remained nevertheless a grave difficulty that the seriousness and explicitly political interest of the documents on the Train would dissuade the capitalistic interests from involving themselves to closely in the Train's work. There were only so many goods and services after all that could be made to reflect the story of American institutional liberty and the necessity of the steely qualities of civic virtue required to sustain it over time. It was thought inappropriate, moreover, for the documents on the Train to be commercially sponsored, or for their to be any direct product placement on the Train.[62] Just, therefore, as a crucial tension emerged in Britain between the need to reconcile of the importance of free eccentricity with the role of the orderly, planning state; so in the United States an opposite tension emerged between the explicitly political seriousness of the Freedom Train's project and the possibilities of free enterprise that it was essentially dependent on and whose interests it was supposed to promote.[63]

This American tension is well captured in this Popeye cartoon ostensibly designed to promote the Train:



Popeye, Olive Oil and Swee'pea visit the Freedom Train.

Here Swee'pea mocks Popeye's "old-mannish" interest in military history, joking that Popeye must have been alive in the early nineteenth century, with the implication surely being that no-one else would be interest in such antiquarian facts. And here, Wimpy idlely looks for somewhere to eat, much to the (disappointed) bemusement of the Train's conductor, who is surely looking for a somewhat more pious response to the vehicle carrying the documents that "made us free."

This underlying incompatibility between the Train's message and the commercial imperative eventually proved its undoing. Fund-raising for the Train was always difficult. Only $300,000 of the necessary $900,000 had been raised by the time the Train departed its first stop, Philadelphia, in September of 1947, and although the deficit was eventually made-up there was no sign of any more.[64] Despite the undeniable success of the Train with the public at large, the many efforts to revive it at the end of its original tour came to nothing. The organizers of the Train had originally hoped to run it again through different towns a year later, but their fund-raising efforts were a complete failure. They could not even raise the money necessary to buy the Train and find a secure base for it as a permanent exhibition of the National Archives.[65] The result was the discrediting of this kind of event for a considerable time to come. When the United States was asked to build a pavilion at the World Exposition in Brussels in 1958, the State Department decided to

eschew formal politics altogether, much to President Eisenhower's disgust, focusing instead on the advantages of the consumerist way of life.[66]

VI

In some clear senses, then, neither the Freedom Train nor the Festival of Britain fulfilled their visionaries' ambitions. The goal of the Festival of Britain's organizers had been to provide a clean, planned, and modernist environment that was nonetheless fun and open to individual eccentricity and ingenuity. To that end, they offered catering on the South Bank of the Thames for the first time, built a fake beach built alongside it with seaside amusements, and even offered sticks of peppermint candy with "South Bank 1951" running through them. And none of it was funded or sponsored or designed by capitalist enterprise. But Gerald Barry, Hugh Casson, Herbert Morrison and colleagues could not quite keep this up. The Pleasure Gardens and its commercialized entertainments demonstrated their weakness most of all, but even the South Bank failed sometimes to live up to their aspirations. The design of its landscape captured the compromises clearly. There were small courtyards throughout the Exhibition, nothing bombastic, and, unlike the World's Fairs of old, there were no processional ways. The South Bank offered an almost apologetic modernism, a softened version of Le Corbusier and Lubetkin's vision from the 1930s. What could have been "a true release of creative activity," Hugh Casson thus bemoaned, turned into "another retreat into Britain's familiar hidey-hole of nostalgia and whimsy." The vast majority of it was also demolished, replaced ironically enough by a garden in which dutiful subjects could celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation a year later. These were democratic "lessons unlearned," Casson concluded. What was intended as a transformative "tonic" had in fact turned out to be little more than a "tranquiliser."[67]

On the other side of the Atlantic a very different kind of democratic celebration had been intended. There, worried about the lack of seriousness and patriotic commitment in the American citizenry, Tom Clark, Harry Truman, and Thomas D'Arcy Brophy had sought to re-inspire the American people with their civic virtues, promoting their sense of their rights, their liberties and their duties by encouraging them to look glowingly on the documents of American political history, to recite pledges, speak

prayers, and make promises. But they had hoped to do so in a way that also encouraged a spirit of enterprise and of capitalistic initiative. They wanted the corporations which thrived on the flights of fancy of consumers, and the entertainment industry that satisfied the immediate thrills of the American people, to both foot the bill and to promote the cause. It was probably unsurprising that they let them down.

We should not conclude from these disappointments, however, that either event failed in their efforts to promote a deeper commitment to freedom and a richer understanding of the nature of a democratic society. Rather, both events contributed much to a wider public debate on exactly those themes, often in ways that might have surprised, possibly shocked, and even, paradoxically, disappointed some of their organizers.

One particularly noteworthy example of such an initially unintended contribution concerned the politics of race. When the idea for the Freedom Train was initially mooted, it offered little on the subject of race. As a result, it was received coolly, at best, by activists for racial justice and freedoms in the United States, who saw in it yet another effort to mask the realities of American unfreedoms with the propaganda of an American tradition of liberty.[68] Langston Hughes, for one, posed probing questions in poetic voice, in the *New Republic*:

> When it stops in Mississippi, will it be made plain
> Everybody's got a right to board the Freedom Train?
> I am gonna check up.
> I'm gonna check up on this
> Freedom Train.
> The Birmingham Station's marked COLORED and WHITE
> The white folks go left
> The colored go right
> They even got a segregated lane.
> Is that the way to get aboard the Freedom Train?[69]

As it transpired, though, Hughes received the answer that he was demanding. To almost everyone's surprise, that is, the American Heritage Foundation unbendingly insisted on

full equal rights of access to the Train, refusing to allow it to visit the two Southern cities, Birmingham and Memphis, the town councils of which had insisted on segregated queuing. The result was both an invigorated national debate on the incompatibility of segregation and the American tradition and some remarkable individual occasions. One such occasion occurred in Nashville, Tennessee, where for the first time formal civic events were organized which accepted the equal citizenship of African Americans. "For twelve hours Negroes and whites rubbed elbows in the same line" waiting to board the Train, *The New York Times* reported. An even more striking occasion took place in Sailsbury, Maryland, where the American Heritage Foundation made Mrs Annie Gray, a 95 year old woman who had been born in slavery, the guest of honour on the Train, taking her through their carriages, accompanied by the nation's media, in order to see the Emancipation Declaration. It was an event equally widely interpreted as a Federal rebuke to the practices of Southern Jim Crow.[70] Perhaps as a result, the number of African Americans attending the Train and its Rededication celebrations was estimated to have far exceeded their proportion in the population. "We have a particular interest when you talk about freedom," as one Nashville civil rights activist put it.[71]

The Festival of Britain also indirectly served such liberalizing purposes, especially through its much-commented on omission of any celebration of Empire and Commonwealth on the South Bank site. For the first time since the Victorian era, the Festival presented a vision of Britain stripped of imperial ambitions. The Festival featured none of the "anthropological" displays mocking the civic aptitudes of "non-civilized peoples" that had been so common in the British Empire Exhibitions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and which would even blight the Expo '58 in Brussels seven years later.[72] The Festival was also a world away from the Pavilion of the United Kingdom at the New York World's Fair in 1939-1940, where the visitor found illustrations of the ways in which "members of the Commonwealth of Nations and of the British Empire … regard their Sovereign as a symbol of unity, as a repository of trust, and as the natural focus for their loyalty and affection."[73] It is true to say that this stripping away of imperial illusions and myths of racist hierarchy at the Festival was not quite followed by the open commitment to racial equality that the 1948 British

Nationality Act might have encouraged, but it nonetheless marked the beginning of a new discourse about Britain's place in the world.[74]

Above and beyond these indirect contributions to liberalizing discussions, though, the most important success of all, and the one that remains most instructive for political theorists today, came from the actual experiences of the people who visited the Train and the Festival. For there was something strikingly both free and democratic about the ways in which people were able to interact with these events: actively shaping and reshaping them according to the impulses, rhythms, and registers of their own lives, rather than simply passively responding to them according to the direct dictates of either State or market. These were official celebrations of freedom and democracy, therefore, which actually presented those who attended them with an opportunity to be free in their midst, in a way that precious few celebrations of political ideals had been able, or willing, to do. It is that theme that provides the focus for our final section.

VII

That visitors came to both the Freedom Train and the Festival of Britain in their millions has never been in dispute.[75] Nor has it been overlooked that they came from sections of society that had all too often excluded from previous civic festivities or commemorations of national pride. "Mostly they came from lower income groups," *The New York Times* reported excitedly from the Freedom Train's travels, "with fewer blessings to count; from the sections of the city where labouring people live, from rural areas where dirt farmers work in their own fields," and the same could have been said of the Festival of Britain.[76] What is more frequently overlooked, however, is precisely how these people came or, to put that another way, the roles that they played when they got there. But this was, in fact, what was most remarkable about both the Festival and the Train.

Both the Festival of Britain nor the Freedom Train were entirely dependent on their publics. Visitors were crucial to both events not only because they could not have sustained themselves without their "consumers" but because both events were actually *about* "the people" themselves.[77] As Dylan Thomas suggested, it was not the architects, or the designers, or the politicians that mattered most to the Festival, but the vast variety

of British people "without whom the exhibition could not exist, nor the country it trombones and floats" and the same was clearly true of the Freedom Train.[78]

It might have been expected, then, that these celebrations of an idealized public would have required visitors to adopt some pre-ordained roles: to take upon themselves the distinct characteristics of abstracted citizens, unencumbered by personal idiosyncrasies, narratives, and allegiances. This is, after all, what most democratic political theory would have led us to expect. Within the idealized public sphere, as it was being described and lionized by Hannah Arendt and colleagues even as these celebration were unfolding, there is, after all, a sharp separation between the particularities and contingencies of the everyday and the universalism and impartialities of the political. Seen this way, indeed, democratic ideals often seem to be the very "opposite of what we do as members of society."[79] Democratic life being dependent upon what Michael Warner calls "a utopian universality that would allow people to transcend the given realities of their bodies and their status."[80]

But it was not like this in either the Festival of Britain or the Freedom Train. Indeed, quite to the contrary, both events presented visitors with opportunities to had of bring crucial components of their own lives, so often excluded by political celebrations and democratic displays, right into their heart. Their own distinctive individualities and the rhythms, cares, and concerns of their everyday lives were part of the show. They were asked, encouraged, and enabled to explore their own sensibilities and celebrate their own desires, even while they were also asked to glimpse the better future that democracy could bring and to rededicate themselves to the central ideals of their nations and the virtues and characteristics that were required to maintain them. Here, citizens were able to keep to the rhythm of their own lives, whilst also living it out against a backdrop of public value. The role that they were asked to play was the most important one there was in a free and democratic society: *themselves*.

This role was encouraged in many ways. Most straightforwardly, it was elicited from the self-consciously everyday and domestic scope and focus of much of what went on in the both events. There was technical innovation aplenty on the Festival of Britain's South Bank site, then, but most of it was focused on improvements which were both exciting and also related to the actual, lived experience of British citizens, of all classes

and backgrounds. “The South Bank paradoxically reinvented the city in the image of the home,” the cultural critic Alan Powers has noted, “two categories which long-standing convention had made strangers to each other.”[81] Such a theme was further reinforced by the continual emphasis on family. “For most people, visiting the [Freedom] Train is a family affair”, *The New York Times* reported. “Most Nashivlle parents brought their children. Some children brought their parents and led the way through the train pointing to the lessons they had studied in school.”[82] And the same was true of the South Bank. It is the children “swarming around the South Bank Exhibition and the Festival Gardens” that are “the most important spectators of all,” J. B. Priestley insisted, both because they reinforced the sense of fun that was so crucial to the Festival and because they connected its grand democratic narratives to the everyday experiences of parents across the nation.[83] He could also have described, of course, the manifold ways in which these children reinvented the Festival site for themselves and for their families. One child Festival-goer, Wendy Bonus, latterly remembered taking great joy in getting “lost in the Dome of Discovery.”[84] Such recreations captured much of the spirit of the event.

This intrusion of the “private” and the “personal” into the “public” and “political” was not just restricted to these domestic and familial patterns, though. The were much more strikingly transgressive elements at play in both events too. Sexuality played a vital part in this regard. The World’s Fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had often been sites where generally illicit forms of sexualized entertainment received a temporary official permissions: with the “exotic dancers” of the Chicago Fair of 1893 and the “Living Magazine Covers” of the New York World’s Fair of 1940, being the two most frequently cited examples.[85] But the Train and the Festival brought the importance that citizens gave to their sexual lives directly into the official space of democratic politics. At both events, then, sexuality was given more than a passing blessing, then, it was given a prominent place in a celebration of what it was to be a free and democratic citizen.[86]

Some of this was, it must be said, rather unimaginative and even potentially exploitative. The Festival of Britain, for example, drew crowds with its “gorgeous drum majorettes,” who paraded up and down the Battersea Pleasure Gardens many times a day, and, more worryingly still, with a game called “Tip the Lady,” which saw young women

balanced on stands until toppled off into vats of water at the throw of a rubber ball.[87] The Freedom Train had similar displays. In Brooklyn, young women were encouraged to apply the reddest lipstick they could find and to kiss the Train to have it carry their imprint across the United States. Such manifestations of sexuality have been insightfully deconstructed by many latter-day commentators, especially those of the critical theory school who insist that they be seen "as integral to the efforts of national elites to preserve dominant gender relations well into the future."[88] But the story is not quite as simple as that formulation allows. For despite their regressively gendered prescriptions, not to mention their heteronormativity, these moments of sexualized entertainment nonetheless encouraged many visitors to free themselves of the constraints of "proper" conduct, that is of the sort of conduct usually associated with public displays of political commitment and of the core values of a free and democratic society. As Michael Warner has acutely noted, public displays of sexuality "opens a wedge to the transformation of those social norms that require only its static intelligibility or its deadness as a source of meaning."[89] And so it did in these contexts.

That many visitors to the Train and to the Festival took warmly to this encouragement both to indulge themselves and to reimagine their personal possibilities is thoroughly recorded in their memories of the events and in the coverage provided by the local media. The Freedom Train's rallies and accompanying fetes were thus widely remarked upon for the opportunities they provided for sexualized expression otherwise forbidden in immediate post-war society, such as the opportunity to mingle with illicit loved ones, to go to dances with the blessing of the name of "Freedom," and to experience an atmosphere of open-hearted experimentation often lacking in small town America.[90] The same tendency was witnessed at the Festival in Britain, where visiting the Festival was often associated with secret *renedez-vous*, with affairs, and even with that most un-British of phenomenon: dancing with strangers in public and in the open-air.[91]

Recent commentators on the Train, the Festival, and other similar events have often noted these phenomenon but have almost entirely missed their importance. John Bodnar and colleagues have argued that the intrusion of the "private" into the "public" in the stories that people tell of these events simply demonstrates that "autobiographical memory" is more important than "civic memory." He uses the examples to demonstrate

what he sees as a perpetual rivalry between "personal" and "civic interests," with Americans said all too often journeying inward away "from the public life of politics to the private world of self." [92] The British historian David Kynaston made essentially the same point in his hideously sniffy retrospective of the Festival of Britain, published in the conservative newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* in 2001. There, Kynaston dismissed the Festival on the grounds that its visiting figures were "distorted by the South Bank's reputation as an easy pick-up place." The Festival of Britain was not what it should have been, he concluded, because of this "gap between elite and popular perceptions." To the one, it was a noble celebration of democracy, to the other the opportunity of sexual excitement.[93]

What Kynaston should have said, of course, was the fact that the Festival was *both* a celebration of democracy and an opportunity for sexual experimentation, and for other intensely personal experiences, was precisely why it mattered so much. The chief success of the Freedom Train and the Festival of Britain, then, was that these were event that invited visitors to stay themselves, even, it might be said, to become "more of themselves" by casting off some well-preserved inhibitions and restraints, whilst still playing their part in the celebration of democratic politics. All of this meant that there was nothing "shoddily cajoling" about the Festival of Britain or the Freedom Train, at least as experienced by most of the visitors themselves.[94] Occasions which could have been expected to have been grand, bombastic, and exclusive, with a focus on the martial achievements or on a narrow and prescriptive accounts of "good behaviour," where "the dream of community" could have been "dogged by the nightmare of engulfment and manipulation," were actually nothing of the sort.[95]

Freedom, as the activist folk-singer Woody Guthrie once wrote, is when "everybody and everything ain't all slicked up, and starched and imitation," and there was much of this spirit about both the rallies and fetes which accompanied the Freedom Train and about the South Bank and Battersea Pleasure Gardens of the Festival of Britain.[96] As Dylan Thomas once again so perfectly put it, those who mattered most in these celebrations of a free and democratic nation were "the suspicious people over whose eyes no coloured Festival wool can possibly be pulled, the great undiddleable; they are the women who will not queue on any account and who smuggle in dyspeptic

dogs; the strangely calculating men who think that the last pavilion must be the first because it is number twenty two; the people who believe they are somewhere else, and never find out that they are not" and, best of all, "the vaguely persecuted people, always losing their gloves, who know that the only way they could *ever* get around would be to begin at the end, which they do not want to; people of militant individuality who proclaim their right to look at the damnfool place however they willy-nilly will."[97] It was these people, whose invested the event with their own meanings and drew on their own particularities as they did so, who made it what it was. It was they who truly "sang free."[98]

VIII

In a series of strikingly perceptive reflections on whether it was ever possible to be free in modern democratic society, the novelist and cultural critic Ralph Ellison once remarked that jazz musicians seemed to be able to achieve a freedom that was beyond the grasp of most other American citizens. The problem, he continued, was that they did so only by living according to "an extreme code of withdrawal," involving a clear "rejection of the values of respectable society." Such musicians consciously "replaced the abstract and much-betrayed ideals of that society with the more physical values of eating, drinking, copulating, loyalty to friends and dedication to the … values of their art."[99] There was nothing wrong with those values *per se*, Ellison concluded. Indeed, it was precisely these most simple aspects of our personal lives that Ellison wanted to see given free reign in a democratic society, as they were all too often hidden at present, repressed or ignored by "polite" society or by those who thought they understood the grander patterns of democratic life.[100] What troubled Ellison instead was that the strategy of withdrawal lost the possibility of a broader, more communal, experience, whereby citizens could celebrate living together, rather than apart, and where they could recognize that their fates were shared, as well as their own lives different. The problem of freedom in a democracy, Ellison thus pithily insisted, should be seen as "the puzzle of the one *and* the many" and not of the one *or* the many.[101]

In concluding these thoughts, Ellison argued that the musicians had got something right. They realized that in order to be truly free each democratic citizen must be able to "define himself for what he is" and "for what he *desires* to be," without the excessive interference of orthodox opinion, or of the government, or of the dictates of the commercial market. To be truly free, moreover, each citizen must also be able to do that in a way which reflect all the multiple aspects that go to make-up her/his personality, including physical and psychological urges as well as more intellectualized commitments, particular-family narratives as well as socially-inherited and widely acceptable stories. Equally, though, Ellison was insistent that to be *democratically* free such citizens must also be able to explore and express themselves in a way that was compatible with "the larger framework of democracy." That entailed that they must also recognize that the very rhythms of life, the aspects which seem so personal, are partly shaped by shared lives as citizens of a common polity, by the inheritance of norms and ideals across the generations, from living political traditions, and from the opportunity that citizens get of working together in pursuit of a common good.[102]

For Ellison, there was no resolution to this puzzle, or set of puzzles. Being a free citizen in a democracy involved finding a way of living within, or between, the constant tensions of individuality and communality, personal hopes and shared stories, psycho-physical desires and noble political purposes. I have no doubt that he was right in that. In recent years, however, liberal and democratic political theory seems to have found it very difficult to live with those puzzles. Instead, it has largely pursued a harmonious union, where private lives, contingencies, and physicalities are left outside the bounds of politics, lest the upset the fragile, apparently barely-secured public order. Political philosophy of this sort offers what Michael Warner depends for its own survival on "a utopian self-abstraction" that for all of its attractions must always leave "a residue of unrecuperated particularity." Consequently, it constantly generates paradoxically unseemly scrambles to "keep politics from getting personal."[103]

What events such as the Freedom Train and the Festival of Britain demonstrate is that it has not always been thus. There have been moments in the relatively recent public histories of our countries, when citizens have been encouraged and enabled to come closer to developing the sensibilities that are necessary to living with those paradoxes: of

remaining individual, particular, and physical, at the same time as inhabiting shared spaces, pasts, and futures. “Everybody felt it was *their* show,” Hugh Casson said of the Festival of Britain, with an appropriate ambiguity between the singular and the collective. It is in the securing of this precarious achievement that these events’ lessons for contemporary democratic theory must surely rest.[104]

Notes

[1] This paper is derived from very early developments in a new project**.** I have already benefited, though, from very helpful conversations with Michael Freeden, Geoffrey Hawthorn, Bonnie Honig, Ben Jackson, Desmond King, Lizzy Pellicano, Tim Stanton, and John A. Thompson, all of whom have helped shape the argument as it now stands. I am grateful to them all.

[2] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene 1.

[3] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 17-18 and Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 140.

[4] In this way, the project follows the methodological suggestions in Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[5] For introductions to the Festival, see Becky Conekin, *"The Autobiography of a Nation": The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Elaine Harwood and Alan Powers (eds.), *Festival of Britain* (London: The Twentieth Century Society, 2001); Mary Banham and Vevis Hillier (eds.), *A Tonic to the Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Charlotte Mullins, *A Festival on the River: The Story of the Southbank Centre* (London: Penguin Books, 2007); Paul Rennie, *Festival of Britain: Design, 1951* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 2007).

[6] For introductions to the Train see, J. G. Bradsher, "Taking America's Heritage to the People: The Freedom Train Story," *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* 17 (1985), pp. 228-45; Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 249-52; Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming! Pageantry and Patriotisim in Cold-War America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 30-51; Stuart J. Little, "The Freedom Train: Citizenship and Postwar Political Culture 1946-1949," *American Studies* 34 (1993), pp.35-67; Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 201-41.

[7] See G. Bailey, "Why They Throng to the Freedom Train," *New York Times*, January 25 1948.

[8] See the extended discussion in Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming), chapter four.

[9] Theodore W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper Row, 1950), p. x.

[10] Harold Metz and Charles Thompson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual* (Washington DC: Brookings Institutions, 1950) and Franz Alexander, *Our Age of Unreason: A Study in the Irrational Forces in Social Life* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1950).

[11] For an example, see Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1942). For excellent discussion, see Andrew Abbott and James T. Sparrow, "Hot War, Cold War: The Structures of Sociological Action, 1940-1955" in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Sociology in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), pp. 281-313 and Mark Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," *Journal of American History* 77 (1991), pp. 1307-12.

[12] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2adXMHxASpg.

[13] See Fried, *Russians are Coming!*, p. 14-15.

[14] See Editorial, "Freedom Train to Start September 17," *New York Times*, May 23 1947.

[15] See Fried, *Russians Are Coming!*, pp. 29-33 and Robert Griffith, "The Selling of America: The Advertising Council and American Politics, 1942-1960," *Business History Review* 57 (1983), pp. 388-412.

[16] http://www.lyricstime.com/irving-berlin-the-freedom-Train-lyrics.html

[17] See "The Nine Promises of a Good Citizen," 27 August 1948, Port Huron Museum Collection, Port Huron, MI.

[18] *The Washington Post*, 30th November 1947, p. 4B.

[19] Gerald Barry, "A Tonic to the Nation," *Daily Mail: Festival of Britain Supplement*, April 1951, pp. 3-5.

[20] Barry, "Tonic to the Nation," p. 5.

[21] Hugh Casson in *Brief City*, directed by Maurice Harvey and Jacques Brunius, produced by Richard Massingham, Observer Films, 1951

[22] See Editor, "Festival Diary," *New Statesman and Nation*, 5th May 1951, p. 497 and Philip Powell, "No Visible Means of Support: The Skylon and the South Bank" in Harwood and Powers (ed.), *Festival of Britain*, pp. 81-6. On the Skylon's resemblance to a V2 rocket, see the contribution of C. E. Jones to *Festival Memories*: *The Festival of Britain*, at http://www.museumoflongon,org.uk/archive/exhibits/festival. See too Editorial, "Festivaland," *Time*, July 22 1951, pp. 25-31.

[23] Dylan Thomas, "The Festival Exhibition" in Dylan Thomas, *The Dylan Thomas Omnibus* (London: Orion Books, 2000. First broadcast 1951), p. 305.

[24] Casson, *Brief City*.

[25] Thomas, "Festival Exhibition," p. 304.

[26] See Michael Oakeshott, "Work and Play" available at http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=4057.

[27] Casson, *Brief City*. See too Hugh Casson, "Adventure of the South Bank" in *Festival of Britain Preview and Guide* (London: HMSO, 1951).

[28] See H. T. Cadbury-Brown, "A Good Time-and-a-Half Was Had by All" in Harwood and Powers (eds.), *Festival of Britain*, pp. 59-64; Alan Powers, "The Expression of Levity" in Harwood and Powers (eds.), *Festival of Britain*, pp. 49-56; Mullins, *Festival on the River*, pp. 26-43.

[29] See *Family Portrait*, written and directed by Humphrey Jennings, BBC films, 1951 and http://brianmizonthatching.co.uk/page8.html

[30] Barry, "Tonic to the Nation," p. 5.

[31] J. B. Priestley, "The Renewed Dream of Merrie England," *New York Times*, July 15 1951.

[32] George Murray, "Lion and Unicorn," *Daily Mail: Festival Supplement*, p. 16.

[33] See Robert Dahl, "Workers Control of Industry and the British Labor Party," *American Political Science Review* 41 (1947), pp. 875-900.

[34] For discussion of the Festival's administration, see Conekin, *Autobiography of a Nation*, pp. 26-38; Adrian Forty, "Festival Politics" in Benham and Hillier, *Tonic to the Nation*, pp. 26-38; Margaret Garlake, *New Art, New World: British Art in Postwar Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Rennie, *Festival of Britain*, pp. 13-21. For details of the food, see "Catering Arrangements" in *Daily Mail: Festival Supplement*, p. 42. When the South Bank Centre was rebuilt in 2005-07, public money was matched by commercial investment and the resultant redevelopment was heavily determined by commercial imperatives, as even a quick visit to today makes abundantly clear. See Mullins, *Festival on the River*, p. 20.

[35] See Hugh Casson, *Homes by the Million* (Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin Books, 1946) and Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[36] Casson, *Brief City*.

[37] Hugh Casson, "South Bank Sculpture," *Image* 7 (1952), p. 57.

[38] Casson, *Brief City*. Litter was a grave concern for the Festival's organizers, as it would destroy the pristine and well-planned landscape they wished to present. See Antony Hippisley Coxe, "I Enjoyed it More than Anything in My Life" in Banham and Hillier (ed.), *Tonic to the Nation*, pp. 88-9.

[39] See Mary Shoeser, "The Application of Science" in Harwood and Powers, *Festival of Britain*, pp. 117-126 and Rydell et al., *Fair America*, p. 93.

[40] Barry, "Tonic to the Nation," p. 5.

[41] Coxe, "I Enjoyed it More," p. 89.

[42] Kenneth O. Morgan, "The Autobiography of a Nation," *Twentieth Century British History* 15 (2004), p. 443.

[43] For examples, see *Daily Mail: Festival Supplement*, pp 5, 7, 9, 10, 46.

[44] See Becky Conekin, "Fun and Fantasy, Escape and Edification: The Battersea Pleasure Gardens" in Harwood and Powers (ed.), *Festival of Britain*, pp. 127-138.

[45] See James Gardner, "Pleasure Gardens: Battersea Park, Battersea Pleasures" in Hillier and Banham (eds.), *Tonic to the Nation*, pp. 118-120 and Editorial, "Closing Time," *Time*, October 8 1951, p. 34.

[46] See Conekin, "Fun and Fantasy," pp. 132-3.

[47] See An Executive of Festival Gardens Ltd, "Pleasure Gardens," *Daily Mail: Festival Supplement*, p. 53. See too contribution of Mark Farey to *Festival Memories*.

[48] Conekin, "Fun and Fantasy," p. 129. See too *Daily Mail: Festival Supplement*, p. 79.

[49] See the excellent discussion in Conekin, "Fun and Fantasy," pp. 136-8.

[50] See contributions of Noelle Bishop, Tony Button, Sandra Davies, William Jones, Annette Masters, Ann Morgan, John Weater, and Derek White to *Festival Memories*. See too Editorial, "Tragedy in Wonderland," *Time*, July 23 1951, p. 20.

[51] See Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

[52] See Griffith, "The Selling of America"

[53] See Bradsher, "Taking America's Heritage," pp. 229-33.

[54] Editorial, "Clark Explains Funds for Freedom Train," *New York Times*, June 19 1947.

[55] See Fried, *Russians Are Coming!*, p. 33. See too, Brinkley, *End of Reform*, esp. pp. 137-174.

[56] See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955) and Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Byran to FDR* (New York: Knopf, 1955).

[57] See United States New York World's Fair Commission, *Report to the Congress of the United States* (New York: New York World's Fair Commission, 1940).

[58] Editorial, "Propaganda: Traveling Heirlooms," *Time*, September 22 1947, p. 23. See too Bradsher, "Taking America's Heritage," p. 238 and Eric F. Goldman, "Heritage of Freedom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 35 (1948), pp. 107-8.

[59] For excellent discussion of this trend in a specific context, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fonest-Wolf, "Cold War Americanism: Business, Pageantry, and Antiunionism in Weirton, West Virginia," *Business History Review* 77 (2003), pp. 61-91.

[60] See Wall, *Inventing the "American Way,"* p. 4.

[61] See http://palletmastersworkshop.com/train.html

[62] See Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, p. 250.

[63] See Griffith, "Selling of America," pp. 399-401.

[64] See "Propaganda: Traveling Heirlooms," p. 23.

[65] See Bradsher, "Taking America's Heritage," pp. 241-2 and Fried, *Russians Are Coming!*, pp 45-7.

[66] See Gonzague Pluvinage et al (ed.), *Expo 58: Between Utopia and Reality* (Brussels: Brussels City Archives, 2008), p. 114.

[67] Hugh Casson, "Festival of Britain," *Exhibition Catalogue* (London: RIBA Heinz, 1986), p. 3. See too contribution of Judith Reid to *Festival Memories*.

[68] See William Berman, *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970) and Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[69] Langston Hughes, "Ballad of the Freedom Train", *New Republic*, 27 September 1947.

[70] Editorial, "13,000 See The Freedom Train," *New York Times*, November 23 1947.

[71] Bailey, "Throng to the Freedom Train"

[72] See Pluvinage, *Expo 58*, pp. 107-111.

[73] *Guide to the Pavilion of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the British Colonial Empire* (London: HMSO, 1939), p. 5 and p. 85. For illustrations, see Herbert Rolfes, *The 1939 New York World's Fair in Postcards* (Pittsdown NJ: Main Street Press, 1988).

[74] See Randall Hansen, "British Citizenship after Empire: A Defence," *Political Quarterly* 71 (2000), pp. 396-403

[75] Editorial, "Closing Time," *Time*, October 8 1951, p. 34.

[76] Bailey, "Throng to the Freedom Train"

[77] See the perceptive comments in Edgar E. Robinson, "Heritage of Freedom," *American Historical Review* 53 (1948), p. 830.

[78] Thomas, "Festival Exhibition," p. 304.

[79] Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since* Brown versus Board of Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 26

[80] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), p. 165.

[81] Powers, "Expression of Levity," p. 55. See too "Closing Time," p. 37; Mullins, *Festival on the River*, p. 54; Rennie, *Festival of Britain*, p. 32.

[82] Bailey, "Throng to the Freedom Train"

[83] Priestley, "Renewed Dream."

[84] Contribution of Wendy Bonus to *Festival Memories*.

[85] See Rydell et al, *Fair America*, p. 36 and p. 94.

[86] See Wall, *Inventing the "American Way,"* pp. 3-4.

[87] See contributions of anonymous, David French, Salim Ahmed, Judith Reid, and Roy Sunderland to *Festival Memories*. Intriguingly and worryingly, "Tip the Lady" was based on a game previously using African Americans in the United States called "Tip the African." See, *Fair America*, pp.

[88] Rydell, *World of Fairs*, p. 140.

[89] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, p. 208.

[90] See Fried, *Russians Are Coming!*, pp. 30-51.

[91] See

[92] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, p. 18 and William S. Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), p. 143.

[93] David Kynaston, "The Festival of Britain: A Model for Today's South Bank or an Awful Warning?," *Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 2007.

[94] Thomas, "Festival Exhibition," p. 303.

[95] Jean-Christophe Agnew, "Who Loves a Parade? Self and Society in American Social Thought," *Reviews in American History* 24 (1996), p. 91.

[96] Woody Guthrie, "Crossroads," *Common Ground* 3 (1943), p. 56.

[97] Thomas, "Festival Exhibition," p. 304.

[98] Guthrie, "Crossroads", p. 56.

[99] Ellison, "A Very Stern Discipline" in *Collected Essays*, p. 753.

[100] See Ralph Ellison, "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks" in *Collected Essays*, esp. p. 587.

[101] Ellison, "Hidden Name and Complex Fate" in *Collected Essays*, p. 207.

[102] Ellison, "An American Dilemma" in *Collected Essays* p. 329.

[103] Warner, *Public and Counterpublics*, p. 168 and p. 186. See too Marc Stears, "Liberalism and the Politics of Compulsion," *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (2007), pp. 533-553.

[104] Casson, “Festival of Britain,” p. 3.