‘A Different Kind of History is Possible’: the History Workshop Movement and the Politics of British and West German Historical Practice

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I can’t remember exactly when the idea for this project first took shape, or even when I first heard of the History Workshop, only that it was a late discovery. Indeed, it is to my everlasting chagrin that I managed to somehow navigate a route through a good part of my historical education without knowing much at all about British social history or history from below. Even as I became an enthusiast of radical history (at first in American history), around the same time I was drawn into the orbit of far-left politicking, the greater part of that historiographical legacy associated with the names of Hill, Hilton, Hobsbawm, Kiernan, and Thompson, escaped my attention. In fact, it was Ian Tyrrell’s appropriately titled The Absent Marx, which served as an eccentric induction into this field. That my development was delayed somewhat probably reflects the political moment in which I first encountered the still strange and disorientating world of the university; the signs for those who are doing likewise today are much more promising.

Marxism, of course, no longer carries the same weight of intellectual prestige or authority as it once did, at least within academic circles. Yet the spirit of searching historical inquiry and critique fostered by that tradition has been continued by feminist and other revisionist historians, whose contributions are catalogued in this thesis, even though they brought into question some of the most incorrigible assumptions and beliefs upon which it was built. With its mixture of insurgent élan and high seriousness, History Workshop became a chief inspirer of second- and third-wave radical historians through the 1970s and 1980s. I’m forever grateful that the pursuit of this research afforded me the chance to meet many of the leading participants, both in Britain and Germany, and I thank them for their willingness to sit down and share their memories with me. I hope that the legacies of what they achieved, which I have tried to take some account of here, will stir a new wave of historians who believe not only that ‘a different kind of history is possible’, but also that it remains as necessary now as it did then.

Beyond these inspirations, I incurred innumerable debts – practical, intellectual, financial, and spiritual – in the course of completing this research, which are impossible to repay, but I hope these words of gratitude will suffice. Firstly, I'd like to thank Anna Davin and Alf Lüdtke respectively, who, at the very outset, gave me much needed advice and support, which helped to get things off the ground. Many thanks must also go to the staff of the archives I visited for their help and assistance, and general good cheer. They include Stef Dickers and the rest of the team at the Bishopsgate Library in London; Bernd Hoffman at the Max Planck Society archives in Berlin; Beate Winzer and other volunteers at the Berlin Geschichtswerkstatt archive in Schöneberg; and the staff of the Stadtarchiv Konstanz, particularly Gert Zang for helping me find my way around.

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Finally, I will always be grateful for having a small but close family unit that has always been an ever-dependable presence in my life. To my cousin and friend, Jon Phillips, who put me up in London for several months whilst I ploughed through the archives, thanks for your kindness, advice, and unstinting humour. I know that my PhD was a source of much amusement and mirth, but I'm glad we were able to share so much, from football to film to politics – even if we did not always see eye to eye.

To my parents, Alan and Rita, my '5 o'clock heroes', who showed me what hard graft really is, I owe you much more than I can say. There was a time not all that long ago when reaching this stage seemed a very remote possibility, as I tottered on the brink of an unremarkable fall through the back door of the academy. That I got this far and gradually

gained a measure of confidence in my intellectual pursuits is testament to your love and support.

To Fiona, my compadre in all things, who has shared this journey from the very beginning, thank you for sharing all the good times and the not so good times. I'm sure there will be many more to come – this is only the beginning.

ABSTRACT

This research examines the meaning and practice of History Workshop as a site of knowledge production and emancipatory politics in Britain and West Germany from the late-1960s to the early-1980s. In this respect, it marks a departure from most secondary accounts that have been written on the movement and associated forms of historical work in both countries, which have tended to separate out intellectual history from the social and cultural histories of protest and activism. The aim of this research is to preserve the interdependence and mutual implication of these two realms, treating them as part of the many-sided political dynamic that energised and directed the activities of the movement. Furthermore, it goes beyond the existing literature by broadening the scope of inquiry to encompass transnational spheres of activity, which includes an investigation of the forms of interaction, exchange and mutual perception between Workshop historians in both countries, along with a focus on the social networks and institutional apparatuses, and the ways in which they connected participants. This approach follows trends in recent scholarship on the history of social movements, where historians have increasingly turned their attention towards the comparative, transnational and global contexts of protest, a trend that is also slowly filtering into other fields like intellectual history and even the sub-specialism of the history of historiography.

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INTRODUCTION

I. HISTORY CONTRA POLITCS?

On the publication of issue 39 of the *History Workshop Journal* (*HWJ*), which appeared in spring 1995, the editors announced without fanfare the decision to drop the subtitle 'a journal of socialist and feminist historians'. It marked the recognition of the vastly transformed contemporary situation in which they found themselves and the receding influence of those political commitments that had defined the original character of the History Workshop. Gone was the explicit identification with the causes named on the masthead. 'We think it better for us to sail under our own colours' declared the editorial collective. That did not mean, however, the journal would be retreating from the political fray. In fact, the editorial collective sought to reaffirm the basic connection between history and politics: 'we want to bring history to bear on the present, to use historical knowledge and analysis to engage with present political practices in the interests of political change.'[1] The decision was not lightly taken and was only reached after prolonged discussions about the subtitle and political character of the journal. Significantly, they were also conducted in parallel with deliberations about how to reform the editorial group and to recruit a younger generation of historians on to the collective. New editors were generally supportive of the subtitle's removal, whilst misgivings about the relevance of socialism and feminism were also aired by editors of long-standing, for whom the question of the journal's appeal to new generations of readers and students was paramount.[2]

[1] 'Continuity and Change', *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995), iv.

[2] A couple of remarks may suffice here: '[BT] UEL students see anti-racism as priority; socialist and feminist old hat'; and '[LR] Words socialism and feminism now turn off and problematic; students don't see themselves that way.' Minutes of HWJ meeting, 29.10.94, RS9/132

The announcement was greeted with sorrow and dismay by sections of the readership, or at least readers who felt strongly enough to write a letter to the editorial collective to protest at their decision. They levelled various charges at the collective, from political defeatism and abandonment of political values, to the unilateral way in which it was handled, which was contemptuous of its own democratic pretensions.[3] Taking aim at the general drift of the journal's preoccupations, they deplored the influence of the linguistic turn and 'postmodernism', the obscurity of the language, and, correspondingly, the weakening of its connection to its original political programme and the absence of part-time, non-career historians from its pages. The danger was that *HWJ* would become, in the words of Logie Barrow, 'yet another prestigious pigeon-hole for article-placements.'[4]

The dropping of the subtitle was not the only indicator of the declining political fortunes for the kind of radical and left-wing historical practice that the History Workshop stood for. The very same issue also carried contributions to a conference dedicated to an assessment of the historiographical legacy of E.P. Thompson, who died in 1993. A towering figure and major influence upon an entire generation of social historians in Britain and beyond, Thompson had been a pioneer of history from below and a chief source of inspiration to the development of the History Workshop movement and like-minded projects. His death was serious blow to the vitality of such enterprises. In the response to that conference, one editor was moved to write 'I thought there was quite a lot of grieving for an end of an era going on.'[5] This sentiment was doubtlessly reinforced by the decline of the annual workshop meetings, where complaints could be heard about dwindling attendances (not to mention the general character of the audience). The last of these gatherings was held in Brighton in 1994 and entitled, ironically, 'the End of History'. To a

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[3] See Logie Barrow, 'Letter', *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995), 241-42; and letters by Keith Flett, John Gorman and Ian Hughes in the following issue, *History Workshop Journal* 40 (Autumn 1995), 270-71.
[4] Barrow, 'Letter', 242.
[5] Actually, the remark, made by Barbara Bloomfield, was in response to a letter from an undergraduate who had felt completely disconnected from the discussions held during the conference. See 'Voices from the crowd: Some outside comments on the conference', *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995), pp. 113-123, quote at 121.

great extent, one cannot help but view this moment as constituting a final break; not so much the 'end of history' as extolled by free-market triumphalists, but rather the end of a certain constellation of forces – political, intellectual, socioeconomic – in which the junctures of history and politics cohered, found expression, and had effects. The sense of fracture or dislocation is revealed in the following statement taken from an announcement of a colloquium on cultural history in 1994:

> What is the role for historians as public intellectuals today? Can the study of history still have an emancipatory narrative? … These questions reveal considerable anxiety about the value of historical knowledge in political cultures today. Particularly, they touch an intellectual generation who came to history as part of a broader socialist or feminist project — for whom the connections between historical work and politics was its purpose. Today the connections between history and politics seem more tenuous. Historians struggle to make sense of the broken social formations around them and of those repetitions which compose the historical times of our epoch. Politics itself assumes new configurations.[6]

The political valence of any historical representation is always dynamic and context dependent, the terms of opposition contingent upon the conditions of the present and the possibility for political transformation. Here we see how an awareness of the changed political landscape, particularly the diminished strength of socialist and feminist traditions, drastically reduced estimates of the political efficacy of history. The 'tenuousness' of the connection between history and politics can still be felt twenty years on, as configurations of the political have narrowed the scope of possibility for the circulation of and engagement with radical histories.

It is understandable that the examples cited here reflect how this break was experienced and represented in generational terms. They belong to that cohort of left

[6] SA, Catherine Hall, Bill Schwarz, Cultural History Colloquium, 19.5.94, RS9/131

historians who came of age in an era infused by the rebelliousness of 1968 and the rapid rise of social history to the front rank of the discipline. The potency of 1968 as a marker of generational identity among left-wing activists and intellectuals is well established.[7] For later cohorts, as the ascendant position of social history was being replaced by the 'new cultural history', new registers of 'late capitalist modalities of exploitation and inequality' became available to analyses in historical writing.[8] For those of us born in the 1980s, who have reached maturity in an era entirely dominated by global free-market capitalism, however, the revolutionary and utopian heritage of the late-sixties has been appropriated in ever-more agreeable ways, tinged with the nostalgia that has become a source of refusal amongst protesters in recent struggles.[9]

Now, in a period of ecological and economic crises, the problem of how to renew political commitments in the practice of history is all the more pressing. If the crisis is to be more than 'moment of potential rupture', if it is to engender some deeper fissure in neo-liberal ideological hegemony, then we must be able to offer a different vision of society and some ideas about how it might gain critical purchase on public consciousness.[10] The task of re-imaging the future, therefore, calls for new analyses of the present and new understandings of the past. But what kinds of history will illuminate the conditions of the present and how can they be brought to bear in current struggles for new forms of democratic and emancipatory politics? As a way of setting about this question, I argue that by critically analysing past instances of left historiography we can learn to identify a

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[7] Ronald Fraser, *1968: Student Generation in Revolt* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988). For an account of the complexities of generational belonging surrounding 1968, see Anna von der Goltz, 'Generational Belonging and the '68ers' in Europe', in idem., "*Talkin' 'bout my generation": Conflicts of generational building and Europe's '1968'* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 7-28.
[8] Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, "Starting Over: the present, the postmodern and the moment of social history", in *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 372.
[9] This refusal is encapsulated in the widely reproduced slogan 'Fuck May '68, Fight Now'. On the legacy of 1968 in the present, see Kornetis, Kostis, '1968-2008: The Inheritance of Utopia', *Historien* 9 (2009), 7-20.
[10] Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin, 'After neoliberalism: analysing the present', in Hall, Massey, and Rustin (eds.), *After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto* (Soundings, 2013), 8.
http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/pdfs/manifestoframingstatement.pdf

particular range of methodologies, perspectives and approaches better suited to current politics.[11]

With that in mind, the aim of this study is to examine the activities and political dynamics of the History Workshop movement as it originated in Britain in the late-1960s and later gravitated elsewhere, with reference to how it was taken up in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the early-1980s. Both examples provide an immensely fertile ground upon which to think through '*the conditions of possibility for left historical praxis* [emphasis in original]'.[12] At the same time, they also formed part of a broader history of the political and intellectual culture of the left in the postwar period, particularly in the struggle for an expanded sphere of democratic politics associated with the New Left, the student movement of the late-1960s and the new social movements that appeared in its wake.[13] The analysis of the forms of cultural politics, the organisational structures and relations of solidarity, and historical work pioneered by the History Workshops can add significantly to our current understanding of socialist and extra-parliamentary milieus in Britain and West Germany.

The next two sections provide an explanation of the rationale and the intellectual context for these two motivations that lie behind this study.

II. WHERE IS LEFT HISTORY NOW?

Key moments of political conjuncture have been crucibles in which left historiographies have been forged. For example, British Marxist history, though it had its roots much further back in the English past, was informed by the populism and national orientations instituted by the

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[11] My thinking on this question has greatly benefitted from reading Gavin Smith's unpublished paper 'Historical knowledge for the vanquished: the long and short of it', 9 November 2005.
[12] Ibid.
[13] For the best overview of the post-war period in Europe, see Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005). On the left in the post-war period, see Eley, Geoff *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 299-489; and Sassoon, Donald, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The Western European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London: IB Tauris, 1996), 115-728.

popular front politics of the Communist Party and continued by the wartime anti-fascist alliance. The subsequent formation of history from below was shaped by the political and intellectual ferment of the New Left, which arose in response to 1956, and was energised by the insurgencies of student revolt in 1968.[14] A fuller exposition of the formation of a distinctive 'Anglo-Marxist' historiographical tradition is presented in Chapter One, but we should add that each of these moments (though the latter more problematically) sustained a narrative of class politics and progressive advance that found their efficacy in the social realities of postwar Britain and in a strongly institutionalised labour and working-class movement. A defining statement of this historiographical approach was E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), in which the discovery of the collective experience of the subordinated classes was tied to a politics of liberation that was carried forward, however incompletely, by social and political movements for whom these subjects were seen as the bearers of historical change. In Thompson's hands, it was an argument about the dynamics of working class self-making, detailed in historically-grounded reconstructions of popular cultural traditions of dissent that served as the bridge to contemporary political struggles. This at least was how it appeared in the context of the late-1960s. '[W]e engaged with a past which spoke to a mood in the present', recalled Sheila Rowbotham '[h]istory from below made sense in the context of a ground floor, grass-roots, rank-and-file socialism.'[15]

Thompson's work had an international influence and history from below found new guises in different national contexts, none more so perhaps than in West Germany where the appearance of *Alltagsgeschichte* (the history of everyday life) marked a turn towards the experience and agency of the lower classes in the past, representing a critical departure from

[14] For a portrayal of this intellectual context, see Eley, Geoff, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (AnnArbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 13-60

[15] Sheila Rowbotham, "Some Memories of Raphael", *New Left Review* 221 (Jan-Feb 1997), 130.

existing modes of historiography.[16] The political context here was considerably different to Britain, where the problem of how to explain the history of National Socialism meant there could be no simple identification of the people or workers with the struggle for emancipation to serve as the basis of oppositional narratives. Rather, in the late-1970s, the turn to the history of everyday life radicalised the interpretation of Nazi Germany by examining the nature of ordinary Germans' complicity, an issue which been largely excluded from historical and public debate around the Nazi past.[17]

In Britain at least, from the mid-1970s, this conjuncture of politics and history broke apart. The end of the postwar settlement and the attendant crisis of social democracy undermined narratives based on working-class formation, as a general process of capitalist restructuring brought about a fundamental transformation of the social and political realities around which class cohered. With the halting of labour's forward march, but also with the epistemological unravelling of 1968, and, above all, with the challenge to Marxism and socialist politics set out by second-wave feminism, social histories of class and the determinations of material reality upon which they were based were no longer seen relevant to the changing conditions of politics.[18] In the midst of socialist retreat in the 1980s and end of communism in the revolutionary events of 1989-91, historians followed the linguistic and cultural turn as a way of reworking historical analysis to take account of new realities. The historiographical canvass, in this respect, has been massively enlarged, as have the registers of inequality and oppression, including gender, ethnicity, race, and sexuality. But if the turn

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[16] On the reception of E.P. Thompson in West Germany, see Thomas Lindenberger, 'Empirisches Idiom und deutsches Unverständnis: ANmerkungen zur westdeutschen Rezeption von E.P. Thompson's 'The Making of the English Working Class', in Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, and Peter Schumann (eds.), *HIstorikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos, Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750-2000* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 439-456.

[17] For an overview of the formation of *Alltagsgeschichte* in the Federal Republic in Germany, see Eley, Geoff. 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte": Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday--a New Direction for German Social History?' *The Journal of Modern History* 61, 2 (June 1989), 297-343; and Lüdtke, Alf. 'What is the history of everyday life and who are its practitioners', in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experience and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 3-40.

[18] Hobsbawm, Eric, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', *Marxism Today* (September 1978), 279-286. For a considered account of the historiographical trajectories over the last forty years, see Eley, Geoff and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2007).

to non-class forms of identity and the introduction of new epistemological departures signified by the categories of language, discourse, and subjectivity constituted a liberation from existing theoretical straight-jackets, then it also reflected a significant contracting of the conditions of possibility.

In the 'post-socialist' era, the absence of a collective political agent programme to carry through a universal programme of social transformation has seen a dispersal and fragmentation of struggles around the pursuit of so-called 'identity politics'.[19] There is a historiographical corollary here too, since the production of histories from below, histories of minority and subaltern groups has coincided with a gradual diffusion of their radical and oppositional stance as the price of their inclusion into the mainstream of the historical profession. As Dipesh Chakrabarty writes '[s]uccessfully incorporated "minority histories" may then be likened yesterday's revolutionaries who become today's gentlemen. Their success helps routinize innovation.'[20] He goes to argue that these 'minority histories', though they have significantly transformed the discipline, did not engender any sort of permanent crisis and are perfectly compatible with the pluralist values of the discipline. Indeed, they have proved to be a rich source of renewal for history, as long as they 'come together in accepting shared rational and evidentiary rules.'[21] The tension detected by Chakrabarty here touches on the problem of how the politics of history is limited by the procedures and rules of the discipline.[22]

This general predicament is sharpened all the more in the fact that this has occurred at a time of global capitalist advance. Capitalism has become 'a truly universal system',

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[19] For a critique, see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left', *New Left Review* (May-June 1996), 38-47. See also Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist Condition'* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. Chapter 1.

[20] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 100.

[21] Ibid.

[22] In a later essay, Chakrabarty turns to the notion of 'historical wounds' as a way of thinking the politics of history in ways that do not conform to disciplinary methods by privileging experiential access to the past. Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 'History and the Politics of Recognition', in Jenkins, Keith, Morgan, Sue and Alun Munslow (eds.), *Manifestos for History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 77-87

where 'the logic of accumulation, commodification, profit-maximization, competition – has penetrated just about every aspect of human life and nature.'[23] The attempt to understand the relationship between historical production and the political economy of late-capitalism is crucial for how we define what it means to do radical and left history; not in the least because history has increasingly come to assume a commodity form, both in popular culture and in the academy.[24]

More than forty years ago, in the conclusion to the book *Warwick University Ltd* (1970), Thompson asked: 'is it inevitable that the university will be reduced to the function of providing, with increasing authoritarian efficiency, pre-packed intellectual commodities, which meet the requirements of management? Or can we by our efforts transform it into a centre of free discussion and action, tolerating and even encouraging "subversive" thought and activity, for a dynamic renewal of the whole society in which it operates?'[25] Since Thompson chose to resign his post as director of the Centre for Social History soon afterwards, we can probably guess what his answer would have been. These remarks are all the more prescient today, since struggles over the purposes of the university and education, and the role of the intellectual continue to be fought. Radical discontent with the nature of intellectual life, with the tenuous links between academics and the public, the decoupling of scholarly work from political activity, or, more critically, the substitution of 'real' world politics for the politics of the academy and the fruits of the capitalist marketplace has been widely publicised.[26] The subsumption of the institutional autonomy of the university to the coercive regime of neoliberal managerialism is frequently condemned, but its effects on the

[23] Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Back to Marx", *Monthly Review* 49, 2 (June 1997)
[24] On the place of history in contemporary Britain, see Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2009).
[25] E.P. Thompson (ed.), *Warwick University Ltd: Industry, Management and the Universities* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2014), 166.
[26] This argument has perhaps been most forcefully made by Russell Jacoby. See his *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

habits and culture of academic research, at least within history, are little known, aside from the massive expansion of research output in quantitative terms.[27]

At this point, it is by no means clear how or what kind of historical approaches will advance emancipatory agendas or what the role of the engaged historian should be. The commitment to being on the side of the oppressed, as was the case in Thompsonian versions of social history, can no longer be assumed to guarantee progressive political credentials. Indeed, it may simply serve to reproduce those very structures of inequality and exclusion that it sought to challenge in the first place, in which history from below has more in common with the struggle for academic rewards and recognition than with the struggle to end oppression.

Yet the question of the state of history in the present is not exhausted by a discussion of the work of academic historians. After all, there are many places for the production of history, which have been likewise affected in various ways by changes in political and economic conditions. From the 1980s, the 'boom' in history and memory, especially in popular culture with the emergence of the heritage industry, has reflected the increasing use of the past for commercial purposes.[28] At the same time, the gap between historians' priorities and the public's growing demand for the past widened, as new popular forms and mediums of representation have been popularised, eroding the former's position as cultural authorities. History became part of the expanding repertoire of consumptive practices and commodified forms of mass entertainment, recreation and leisure.[29] Historians who claim a

[27] See David Cannadine, "British History: Past, Present – and Future?" *Past and Present* 116 (August 1987), 169-191; idem, "Making History Now", inaugural lecture as Director of the Institute of Historical Research, 1999 http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/cannadine.html; James Vernon, "Thoughts on the Present 'Crisis of History' in Britain', Institute of Historical Research, London (November 1999) htttp://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/vernon.html. More detailed accounts have been offered by anthropologists, see Cris Shore and Susan Wright, 'Whose Accountability? Governmentality and the Audit of the Universities;, *Parallax* 10, 2 (2004), 100-116.

[28] The literature on heritage and public history is now vast, but the key texts include Lowenthal, David, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Wright, Patrick, *On Living in an Old Country* (London: Verso, 1985); and Samuel, Raphael. Theatres of Memory (London: Verso, 1994).

[29] de Groot, *Consuming History*.

broader purpose for their work or who seek to inspire readers cannot be indifferent to the wide and diverse range of activities, forms and media that comprise the historical in contemporary life, for they tell us something important about the sense of the past today.[30] It is against this backdrop that the example of the History Workshop movement comes into view.

What was distinctive about it was how it recast the equation between politics and history in a manner that opened up a space for breaking down social hierarchies, imagining new configurations for emancipatory and democratic politics in the production and transmission of knowledge. By way of illustration, in an essay on people's history, Raphael Samuel, the moving spirit behind the British History Workshop, wrote:

> People's history also has the merit of raising a crucial question for both theoretical and political work – that of the production of knowledge, both the sources on which it draws and its ultimate point of address. It questions the existing intellectual division of labour and implicitly challenges the professionalised monopolies of knowledge. It makes democratic practice one of the yardsticks by which socialist thought is judged, and thus might encourage us not only to interpret the world, but to see how our work could change it.[31]

In contrast, in a review of the volume in which Samuel's essay appeared, his colleague and mentor, Eric Hobsbawm argued that whilst history is inseparable from politics, it should be separated from it in practice, adding that 'history as a form of political activity invariably stands on the fringes of the political struggle.'[32] Whereas, Hobsbawm is concerned with the politics of history as pre-eminently a scholarly practice, Samuel emphasised the problem of the conditions under which history is produced, a problem that required a decidedly political response. This latter concern underlines the way histories and memories are an act

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[30] This is akin to what Bill Schwarz calls the 'past-in-the-present'. Schwarz, Bill, 'Not Even Past Yet', *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004), 101-115.

[31] Raphael Samuel, 'People's History', in Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), xxxii.

[32] The latter quote comes from a paper by Bob Scribner to the collected volume above. Eric Hobsbawm, 'In search of People's History', *London Review of Books* Vol 3, 5 (19 March 1981), 9-10.

of political construction, part of a struggle within the realms of ideology and culture.[33] History Workshop and its West German counterpart engaged in this struggle as cultural and intellectual movements, intervening in everyday and popular conceptions as much as academic ones. As a result, the history of the two movement occupies precisely the ground we have just identified and is, therefore, a crucial example for historicising the present conditions of history-making.

III. FROM THE HSTORY OF DEMOCRACY TO DEMOCRATIC HISTORY: THE NEW LEFT, 1968 AND BEYOND

For much of the twentieth century, the historiography of the left has tended to be framed by a bifurcation of its two main political traditions: social democracy and communism.[34] Both Marxist or social democratic historians have organised their narratives in terms of their competing views about the ultimate means and ends of socialism, usually represented in short-hand by the dichotomy of 'reform or revolution'. However, this dichotomy is structured by the question of how to respond to capitalism and, as Stefan Berger argues, it reflects a shared order of explanation within both camps, in which the social and economic took precedence over the political. '[F]or much of the twentieth century', he writes 'communist and social-democratic historiographies shared the firm belief in the existence of such links between a primary economic order and a secondary political system.'[35] This discursive structuring has informed assumptions about the true meaning and purpose of socialism and the left, about what constitutes effective political organisation, and, ultimately therefore, about determining the boundaries of left politics. As a consequence, statist forms of political organisation and models of the evolution of the political process have

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[33] For a discussion of the relationship between memory and history in the present, see Hodgkin, Katharine and Susannah Radstone, 'Introduction: Contested Pasts', in Hodgkin, Katharine and Susannah Radstone (eds.), *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 1-21. See also Smith, Gavin, *Intellectuals and (Counter-)Politics* (New York and London: Berghahn, 2014).

[34] Stefan Berger, "Communism, Social Democracy and the Democracy Gap", *Socialist History* 27 (2005), p. 1.

[35] Ibid., p. 3.

predominated, whether parliamentary or vanguardist, relegating other issues to the margins of political debate and rendering illegitimate or irrelevant other, more radical moment in the history of the left.

One of the areas where historians have sought to reconnect left politics to accounts of its past has been in debates about the forms and traditions of democracy, which, as Berger points out, have been given short shrift in accounts of both social democracy and communism.[36] Even in some of the most sophisticated accounts of European social democracy, like Donald Sassoon's *One Hundred Years of Socialism* (1996), the treatment of democratic forms is strictly limited to the formal arenas of parliamentary parties and centralised bureaucracies.[37] By contrast, Geoff Eley's *Forging Democracy* (2002) offers an expanded definition of the left commensurate with forms of democratic advocacy irreducible to the socialist tradition, though the latter remained indispensable in making democratic advances. 'For a century after the 1860s', he writes 'two complementary principles held good: socialism was always the core of the Left; and the Left was always larger than socialism.'[38] According to Eley's periodisation, the 1960s witnessed the unravelling of this equation, as new radicalisms on the left carried forward democratic claims.

In fact, the resurgence of heterodox ideas about democracy followed in the wake of the Communist crisis of 1956. This began with the formation of the first New Left, an alliance of older ex-communist and a younger generation of mostly non-aligned leftist intellectuals, which marked a critical break with both Stalinism and social democratic reformism.[39] One of the early catalysts of popular and democratic mobilisations in the late-

[36] Ibid, p. 8.
[37] See Geoff Eley, 'Socialism By Any Other Name? Illusions and Renewal in the History of Western European Left', *New Left Review* 227 (Jan-Feb 1998), 97-115.
[38] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8.
[39] On the British New Left, see Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995) and Chun, Lin, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993). On the West German New Left, see Klimke, Martin, 'West Germany', in Klimke, Martin and Joachim Scharloth (eds.) *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism,*

1950s and 1960s were the campaigns against nuclear weapons, which were mounted in both Britain and the FRG.[40] Early forms of protest, such as direct action and civil disobedience were developed by these movements, and a more pluralist and participatory form of socialist politics was adopted by the New Left. These groups were forerunners to the student movements and protests that erupted in the late-1960s. Alongside opposition to the Vietnam War, racism, and support for third world struggles, student activists also articulated demands for an enlarged conception notion of democracy. As Phillip Gassert put it, 'they combined ideas of personal autonomy and fulfilment with an all-encompassing approach to democracy that made the "private political".'[41] As the revolutionary optimism of May 1968 faded, these impulses fed into the emerging new social movements in the 1970s, like feminism, the peace and environmental movement, and later, the anti-nuclear movement, which were broadly based on the principles of grassroots democracy and anti-authoritarian forms of organisation.

The study of the radicalism during the years of the 'long 1960s' has often coincided with a broader interest with material and cultural change. Here the subjects of youth subcultures, lifestyle, growing prosperity, technological innovation and mass consumption, have broadened the enquiry into the processes through which Western society was democratised.[42] Other trends in recent historical research on this period and on the events of 1968, in particular, include the investigation of the transnational and global dimensions of

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1956-1977 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 97-110.A broader survey is offered by Katsiaficas, George, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987).

[40] On the transnational interchange between movements in both nations, see Holger Nehring, National Internationalists: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons, the Politics of Transnational Communications and the Social History of the Cold War, 1957–1964', *Contemporary European History* 14, 4 (2005), 559-582.

[41] Phillip Gassert, 'Narratives of Democratizatioin: 1968 in Postwar Europe', in Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activisim, 1956-77*(New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 313.

[42] For example, Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Social and Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1969-1980* (Oxford: Berghahn Boks, 2006).

these changes, the role of memory, and the use and constructions of generation as both experience and category of analysis.[43]

In the burgeoning literature on the radical and popular politics of the post-war era, the fact that so little attention has been paid either to the History Workshop or the *Geschichtswerkstätten*, outside the treatments offered by individuals involved, might reflect their relative unimportance for understanding cultural and political changes in Britain and West Germany.[44] Admittedly, they were smaller in size, they did not engage in more spectacular forms of protest or mobilise tens of thousands on demonstrations. However,

[43] There is by now a small-scale industry of scholarly publishing on the student movement and revolts of 1968. The following selection includes the most recent monographs and collected volumes published in English and German: Cornils, Ingo and Sarah Walters (eds.), *Memories of 1968: International Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); Davis, Belinda, Mausbach, Wilfried, Klimke, Martin and Carla MacDougall (eds.) *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012); Etzemüller, Thomas, *1968 – Ein Riss in der Geschichte? Gesellschaftlicher Umbruch und 68er-Bewegungen in Westdeutschland und Schweden* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2005); Fink, Carole, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, *1968, the World Transformed* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Gilcher-Holtey, Ingrid, *1968: Vom Ereignis zum Mythos* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004); Gilcher-Holtey, Ingrid (ed.), *A Revolution of Perception? Consequences and Echoes of 1968* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014); Goltz, Anna von der., "*Talkin' 'bout my generation": Conflicts of generational building and Europe's '1968'*(Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011); Gildea, Robert, Mark, James and Anette Warring, Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Hodenberg, Christina von, and Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Wo '1968' liegt: Reform und Revolte in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Horn, Gerd-Rainer. *The Spirit of '68. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kießling, Simon, *Die antiautoritäre Revolte der 68er: Postindustrielle Konsumgesellschaft und säkulare Religionsgeschichte der Moderne* (Köln: Böhlau, 2006); Klimke, Martin and Joachim Scharloth, *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activisim, 1956-77*; Kraushaar, Wolfgang, *1968 als Mythos, Chiffre und Zäsur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2000); Kraushaar, Wolfgang, *Achtundsechzig. Eine Bilanz* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 2008); Rathkolb, Oliver, and Friedrich Stadler (eds.), *Das Jahr 1968 – Ereignis, Symbol, Chiffre* (Göttingen: V & R, 2010); Ross, Kristin, *May 68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Thomas, Nick, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

[44] In addition to the list of works cited above, one could add volumes that have dealt with activism and protest across the entire period, including: Anton, Lorena, and Timothy Brown, *Between the Avant-Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe from 1957 to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2011); Dirke, Sabine von*, "All Power to the Imagination!" The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Klimke, Martin, Pekelder, Jacco and Joachim Scharloth, *Between Prague Spring and French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (New York: Berghan Books, 2011). There is also a growing literature on the alternative and autonomous movements that arose in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in the Federal Republic. Recent works include Balz, Hanno, and Jan-Henrik Friedrichs, '*All we ever wanted…': Eine Kulturgeschichte europäischer Protestbewegungen der 1980er Jahre* (Berlin: Karl Dietz, 2012); Baumann, Cordia, Gehrig, Sebastian and Nicolas Büchse (eds.), *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011); Katsiaficas, George, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Humanities Press, 1997); Kraushaar, Wolfgang, 'Die Frankfurter Sponti Szene: Eine Subkultur als politische Versuchsanordnung', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004), 105-21; Reichardt, Sven and Detlef Siegfried (eds.), *Das Alternative Milieu. Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968–1983* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010); Reichardt, Sven, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2014; and Steen, Bart van der, Katzeff, Ask and Leendert Van Hoogenhuijze (eds.), *The City Is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* (Chicago: PM Press, 2014).

recent work has concentrated on 'less attention-grabbing' political activity and it is surely arguable that cultural activities are as important in breaching the limits of democratic possibility.[45]

It is here that the usefulness of the example of the History Workshop movements for the history of the democracy comes into view, both in the practice of democratic politics in the socialist and extra-parliamentary milieus, but also in the way in which they challenged power relations and dominant hegemonies in the production of knowledge.[46] In situating their work and practice outside and in opposition to the academic sphere, they threatened the professional historian's monopoly on historical knowledge and redefined the boundaries of what constitutes history and who is and who is not a historian, thereby democratising the process of making history.

IV. PLACES OF HISTORICAL PRODUCTION

Neither British History Workshop nor West German *Geschichtswerkstätten* gave up the ambition to produce high level historical scholarship and, indeed, this proved to be in both cases a source of critical tension. Recent work on the transnational dimensions of historiography has begun to shed light on the cross-national relations between historians of the two countries and several observers have noted the close parallels between the groups under consideration here,[47] but little empirical work has been conducted thus far. A more significant factor here is that the practice of the history of historiography, not renowned as

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[45] Belinda Davis, 'What's Left: Popular Political Participation in Postwar Europe', *American Historical Review* 113, 2 (April 2008), 367.

[46] See Schwarz, Bill, 'History on the Move: Reflections on History Workshop', *Radical History Review* 57 (2003), 202-220; and Lindenberger, Thomas and Michael Wildt, 'Radical Pluarality: Hstory Workshops as a Practical Critique of Knowledge', *History Workshop Journal* 33 (1992), 73-99.

[47] See Burke, Peter, 'The Web and the Seams: Historiography in an Age of Specialization and Globalization', in Stuchtey, Benedikt, and Peter Wende. *British and German Historiography, 1750-1950: Traditions, Perceptions, and Transfers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000

being an area of intellectual growth for the discipline, is particularly unsuited to the subject at hand and to the kinds of research to be pursued.[48]

The theoretical foundations of this study begin with one of the most critical yet underappreciated contributions to debates about the theory of history: Michel de Certeau's *The Writing of History* (1975; translated 1988). One possible reason why this text has not garnered the kind of interest afforded other works in the genre is because it does not fit neatly into the opposition between realist defenders of the historical profession and its postmodernist critics.[49] Like a number of self-styled 'postmodern' historical theorists, de Certeau does not endorse the view that the reality of the past can be unproblematically reconstructed via the application of the historian's tried and trusted interpretive procedures and methods. But he distinguishes his position from either those who regard history as a discourse which reflects forms of power and ideology in the present, or those who analyse the poetic structures of historical representation and emphasise the creative power of the individual historian. For de Certeau, historiography is not an opposition between a subject and an object, but nor is it merely fiction. Rather it is the product of a "triangular structuring" between a social place, scientific practices, and a form of writing or discourse, or what he describes as the "historiographical operation".[50]

The focus on the production of history and the relations that exist between the place of production and its product introduces a crucial analytical perspective for thinking about the limits of knowledge, of what is made visible and what is concealed in order for it to maintain a basis of in rational, scientific inquiry. In the case of historiography itself, de Certeau sees the present place of production as an "unspoken condition", part of the discursive procedures by which the past is turned into an object of knowledge. "A silence

[48] For a discussion of this subfield, see Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield (eds.), *Making History: An Introduction to the history and practices of a discipline* (London: Rutledge, 2004).
[49] This point is elaborated in Wandel, Torbjorn,'Michel de Certeau's Place in History', *Rethinking History* 4, 1 (2000), 55-76.
[50] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 10.

was the postulate of this epistemology" as he put it.[51] It also draws our attention to the multiplicity of practices that are involved in historical production, which are not simply reducible to the formal protocols of academic history, but encompass all those places where historical activities occur, from practices of collecting, classifying and archiving, to the proliferation of sources and media for the transmission of historical ideas. Place, in this view, can become the locus for the critique of academic history and its hierarchical view of knowledge by demystifying the workings of intellectual production, which returns thought to its origin and to the specific conditions and social relations out of which it emerged. It reveals how the authority of knowledge rests not on some innate property, but on the function it performs in society and on the symbolic power it is able to wield.

In this regard, it follows the general trend in the humanities and social sciences towards a understanding of knowledge as being 'situated'.[52] The influence of social and cultural anthropology, the sociology of science, cultural studies, and the work of Clifford Geertz, Thomas Kuhn, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, in particular, have been important in the departure from the idea of knowledge as unified, coherent totality and towards a conception of knowledge as culture, practice and text, and to an interest in the role of knowledge in the reproduction of structures and relations of power.[53] Recent developments in the fields of cultural history and the history of science have taken up these concerns, turning to the examination of the material conditions and quotidian practices that shape collective mentalities and embody forms of subjectivity.[54] Research in the history of

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[51] Ibid., p. 59.

[52] Haraway, Donna, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14, 3 (Autumn 1988), 575-599.

[53] Here we might cite a key text from each of these thinkers' oeuvre: Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1962); Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); and Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991). For an important discussion of these trends and the influence of these theorists and others (though Kuhn is absent), see Dirks, Nicholas B., Eley, Geoff, and Sherry B. Ortner, 'Introduction', in Dirks, Nicholas B., Eley, Geoff, and Sherry B. Ortner (eds.) *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[54] For a good account of the general approach, see Dear, Peter, 'Cultural History of Science: An Overview with Reflections', *Science, Technology and Human Values* 20, 2 (Spring 1995), 150-170.

the book and reading, for example, has focused on the way in which ideas and knowledge are diffused throughout society, exploring the practices and technologies of publishing, literary and reading cultures, and the processes of cultural transmission.[55] In a similar vein, Adrian Johns' *The Nature of the Book* and Steven Shapin's *A Social History of Truth* have detailed the constitutive role played by the social in the formation of knowledge, analysing the dynamic interconnections between material objects and practices, instruments and tools, technical skill and expertise, forms of sociability, and social identities in the making of cultures of inquiry and knowledge.[56] With a concern to describe what the practices and activities of knowing actually are, rather than a prescriptive effort to theorise what knowledge is or ought to be, studies in the cultural history of ideas and history of science have challenged the separation of elite form popular, high from low culture, the lofty world of science from the mundane world of the everyday.

Keeping that in mind, thesis is less about how to assimilate the story of History Workshop into a narrative of the progress of a tradition of thought and critique, largely defined in intellectual terms. Rather it is concerned with how the Workshop represented an episode in the history of struggle over the definition and ownership of knowledge. The focus here is on how long-term trajectories – political, institutional, and experiential – assumed new configurations and were articulated in the forms and practices embedded in Workshop activities. Between the pursuit of scholarship and the pursuit of equality, relations of solidarity were forged through these activities, which were constitutive of a democratic culture of politics and historical production. But this was an uneven, contingent and contested process of democratisation, where exclusions based on class and gender were challenged or reinforced, and its own internal hierarchies were constructed.

[55] On the history of the book and reading, see Darnton, Robert, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111, 3 (1982), 65-83; and Darnton, Robert, 'History of reading,' in Peter Burke (ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 140-67.

[56] Johns, Adrian, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998); Shapin, Steven, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chigaco: Chicago University Press, 1994).

From a Gramscian perspective, we can see how the History Workshoppers and *Geschichtswerkstattler* initiated a form of cultural politics that was oppositional and counter-hegemonic, and dedicated to contesting the values and norms of the dominant culture at the level of what Gramsci called 'common sense'.[57] The thesis aims to explain how that contest over the production of the past was conducted in and through a variety of cultural, intellectual and pedagogical forms: meetings, conferences, books, journals, pamphlets, exhibitions, and archival research and retrieval.

In respect to the production of the thesis, I used a combination of primary material, including the recording of a number of oral history interviews, and published work as the evidentiary basis for the arguments presented here. Both archival and oral sources provided a fertile ground for pursuing a methodological approach that relied on a narrowed scale of analysis, the close of reading and description of cultural practices, and the exploration of subjective experience and the articulation of meaning. Personal correspondence, internal memos and minutes, and position papers were especially useful in illuminating the relationship between personal and private life, and public persona of intellectuals and activists.

To that end, the selection of case studies was determined by considerations of the availability and the nature of materials, but it has also been informed by the research process itself. For example, the decision to take West Berlin and Constance as case studies of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* was partly because they were two of the earliest and most prominent local workshops, but they also held the largest amount of material on the national organisation, which has no centralised archival deposit.

Insofar as the practicalities of primary research are concerned, archival material was drawn from several archives. In Britain, I visited the papers of Raphael Samuel and the History Workshop, which are deposited at the Bishopsgate Institute in London. In Germany,

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[57] Gramsci, Antonio, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers, 1972.

I visited a number of archives, including the collections of the Max-Planck Society in Berlin, the *Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt*, the *Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte* housed at the *Stadtarchiv* in Constance, and the *Darmstädter Geschichtswerkstatt* at the Technical University in Darmstadt. I also conducted a series of oral history interviews with 28 participants from Britain and 14 from West Germany. I also undertook three e-mail interviews and used the transcripts from two interviews conducted as part of the Around 1968 project based at Oxford University.

The face-to-face interviews were organised in a semi-structured way, which sought to place the interviewees' involvement in political and cultural activism within the larger story of their own lives. In the majority of cases, I kept the same format for each interview in order to enable a degree of uniformity in responses, though this was not always possible given time or personal constraints. Participants for the interviews were either recruited by direct contact over the internet (many had a public or institutional profile) or through a snowball effect, drawing from the recommendations and social networks of other interviewees. One of the methodological difficulties in this process was in trying to reach something like a cross section of the movement and variable degree of involvement in recruiting participants, so that different voices and experiences could be included.

I offer a short reflection on the intersubjective dimensions of oral history interviewing in Chapter Six. More so than any other historical method, oral history makes palpable the conscious act of invention performed by the historian in organising materials and narrating the past. It is perhaps unsurprising that oral historians have been pioneers of the autobiographical form among historians.[58] Work on the intersubjective dynamics of the interview has led oral historians to recognise the way in which their own subjectivities

[58] For example, Fraser, Ronald, *In Search of a Past: The Manor House, Amnersfield 1933-1945* (London:Verso, 1994); and Passerini, Luisa, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

influence the interview: 'certain questions were asked, and not other ones; certain replies were given, and on other points there was silence'. [59]

Of course, the breadth and scope of this topic is too big for a single study and the treatment of what were heterogeneous movements is necessarily limited, both in terms of coverage and analysis. As such, this thesis focuses on several key moments, places, formations of the History Workshop and the *Geschichtswerkstätten* in order to illuminate the meanings, practices, and complexities of these movements. In particular, themes of class and gender have emerged as influential in shaping people's experiences of the History Workshop movement.

V. PLAN OF THE THESIS

The chapters of this thesis intersect a various points in the interrogation of the key questions and themes it addresses, but they do not fit neatly into a singular and coherent narrative of change over time. A breadth of coverage is sacrificed for temporal depth as a means of capturing political and cultural reconfigurations at specific moments of flux in historical formation.

Chapter 1 places History Workshop in the political and intellectual landscape of post-war Britain and analyses its formation in the context of Ruskin College. The main focus of this chapter is devoted to the pedagogical and spatial practices, the informal networks, and relations of solidarity through which the original democratic ethos of History Workshop first took shape. It goes on to assess the development of the movement during the 1970s as it began to develop regional offshoots.

[59] Luisa Passerini in Sarah Elsie Baker and Rosalind Edwards, "How Many Qualitative Interviews Is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling Expert Voices," *National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper*, 2012. For a discussion of the place of intersubjectivity in oral history interviews, see Abram, Lynn, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 71-76.

Chapter 2 offers an account of the history of the *Geschichtswerkstatt* in West Germany in the 1980s. It focuses on three groups crucial to its overall development, the *Berliner Geschichtswerktatt*, the *Arbeitskreis fuer Regionalgeschichte* in the Lake Constance region, and the national coordinating body *Geschichtswerktatt e.V.* The regional dimensions of the movement are emphasised in the first two cases, where the function of place and locality are related to the articulation of different forms of grassroots historical practice. The latter section explores the tensions between the academic and movement orientated fractions of the national organisation.

Chapter 3 looks at the first History and Anthropology Roundtable held in Göttingen in 1978. It uses this single encounter as a prism by which to examine both the transnational relations between British and West German historians and the social and personal dynamics of intellectual exchange.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide an extended treatment of the first years of the *History Workshop Journal* between 1976 and 1982. Here the analysis of the journal is twofold: on the one hand, it discusses the material processes of its production, where the interplay between economic, political, intellectual, and more quotidian factors, such as the internal lives of the editors themselves, is detailed; on the other, it considers the role of aesthetic and discursive forms in shaping the political and intellectual complexion of the journal.

Finally, Chapter 6 marks an extension and partial reworking of arguments in previous chapters. It analyses the individual subjective experiences and memories of History Workshop supporters based on oral history testimony. In particular, it pays attention to the class and gender dynamics of the movement with respect to the affective and emotional components of the movement.

CHAPTER 1: 'HISTORY SHOULD BECOME COMMON PROPERTY': THE HISTORY WORKSHOP MOVEMENT AND THE POSTWAR BRITISH LEFT

The antecedents of History Workshop can be traced far back in English history. In Raphael Samuel's editorial preface to the compendium *People's History and Socialist Theory* (1981), the radical origins of people's history in England begins somewhere in the tales of 'lost rights' and Norman Yoke, or in the idea of the 'freeborn Englishman'.[60] Following these threads takes us from the revolutionary thought of the Levellers and Diggers in the English Revolution, to the English Jacobins of the 1780s, and on to the early socialists like Belfort Bax and William Morris, who drew upon the liberal-democratic version of people's history promulgated in J.R. Green's *A Short History of the English People* (1874).[61] For those purposes of this study, however, we begin at a more immediate and convenient starting point with the integration of this indigenous radical dissenting heritage and Marxism in historical writing, which was carried out by members of the Communist Party's Historians' Group (CPHG) founded in 1946.

Beginning in the early post-war period then, this chapter traces the History Workshop's formation to the historiographical agenda launched by the CPHG, particularly as expressed in the work of Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, and Edward Thompson. The latter's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) is crucial in this respect, partly because it reflected the changed political complexion of the left after the events of 1956 and the emergence of the 'first' New Left, in which Thompson was a key player, where questions about agency, lived experience and culture came to the forefront of socialist thought in this period.[62] The impetus behind the generation of new modes of thought came from the

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[60] Samuel, 'People's History', xiv-xxxiv.

[61] On the early roots of British Marxist history, see Samuel, Raphael, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880-1980: Part One', *New Left Review* 120 (March-April 1980), 21-96.

[62] For discussions of the influence of Thompson's work on the historical profession, see Kaye, Harvey J., and Keith McClelland (eds.), *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), Eley, Geoff, *A Crooked Line*, 48-59, and

changing cultural and social circumstances of Britain, especially as they demanded the revision of existing notions about working-class community and life, which grew out of fears and anxieties about the rising consumer society. Adult education is also extended a central place in the development of History Workshop. Indeed, the chapter argues that the democratic ethos of the Workshop arose out of (and against) the educational priorities and practices of Ruskin College, which occupies a key section of the chapter. The chapter turns from an examination of pedagogy to explore other forms of Workshop activity, principally the production of the pamphlets, the annual workshop meetings themselves, and the organisation of a wider network of workshop groups around the country. In the final section, it follows the evolution of workshop practice up to the explosive confrontation that occurred at History Workshop 13 in 1979 between Thompson, and Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

I. FORMATIONS OF THE FAR-LEFT IN POST WAR BRITAIN: CULTURE, HISTORY, POLITICS

There is a voluminous literature on the activities and writings of members of the well renowned CPHG and the tradition of Marxist historiography that they successfully pioneered.[63] Founded in 1946, the CPHG was a conduit for a much more capacious form of Marxist thought to emerge outside of Party dogmas, which adhered to a rigidly deterministic view of the historical process. Yet it was the realignment of communist

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for a more recent appreciation, see 'Roundtable on E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* at Fifty', *Labour/Le Travail* 71 (Spring 2013), 149-192.

[63] See Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, Chapter 1; Bill Schwarz, 'The People in History: the Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946-56', in Richard Johnson et al. (eds.), *Making Histories: Studies in history-writing and politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians: An Introductory Analysis* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1995). For a personal account of the CPHG's work, see Hobsbawm, Eric, 'Communist Party's Historians' Group, 1946-1956', in Cornforth, M., *Rebels and their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), 21-47.

political strategy from the 1930's popular front onwards that provided the ideological basis for the reworking of Marxism in a native empirical and historiographical idiom.[64] The watershed of 1956 marked the end of this intense and productive period of shared intellectual enquiry, since most of the historians resigned from the CPGB as a result of the fallout from Khrushchev's Secret Speech and the Hungarian uprising.

The CPHG's contributions were vitally important for later historians. To considerable extent, they defined the agenda of radical historiography for years to come. Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* was a key early work, in this regard, which centred on the problem of the transition to capitalism and was strongly indebted to Marx's own method of theoretical abstraction in *Capital*.[65] In addition, there was a focus on the subjective process of class formation, which opened up a consideration of the role of lived experience, consciousness and culture. There was, at least for a time in the 1950s, an ambition to reconstruct a totalising picture of the history of capitalism. Writing about a summer school of the CPHG in 1954, Hans Medick has argued that '[i]t has to be seen as a declaration of future intent to write the history of British capitalism as a 'History of Society', as an economic, social and cultural history from the point of view of the "common people determining and shaping society".'[66] This ambition went unrealised. Instead, a division between the two orientations emerged, but it was the histories of working-class culture that became central to the project of social history in which History Workshop was steeped.[67] Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* reflected this latter trajectory, marking out new areas of enquiry outside narrow institutional histories of the labour movement.[68]

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[64] Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, 41; Schwarz, 'The People in History', 55.
[65] On Dobb, see Schwarz, 'The People in History', 48-54.
[66] Hans Medick, 'The transition from Feudalism to Capitalism: Renewal of the Debate', in Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, 122.
[67] Ibid.
[68] For some useful remarks about the related development of British labour and social history in the 1950s and 60s, see Obelkevich,

Jim, 'New developments in history in the 1950s and 1960s', *Contemporary British History*, 14, 4 (2000), 125-142, and the 'Witness

The CPHG also sought to engage wider publics in its reconstruction of English history. On the one hand, this was represented at the academic level initiatives like the journal *Past and Present* (1952). On the other, it tried to popularise this history inside the labour movement and beyond, setting up local branches in provincial cities and publishing primary sources aimed at a broader audience. The former was undeniably more successful than the latter, which failed to bring historians closer to party members and the socialist movement.[69]

The desire to make history usable in political and popular forms took shape in the recovery of a radical English tradition of popular revolt and struggle. Relying on a conception of the 'people' identified as an innately democratic force, it served to legitimise the present politics of the CPGB.[70] This appeal to the 'people' was deeply problematic, however, for it assumed an unbroken line of continuity and because it was completely divorced from the contemporary moment, avoiding any reckoning with the history of the 20th Century. As a result, unresolved contradictions and tensions were stored, which would later resurface when such assumptions could no longer be sustained. The CPHG was a precursor of the History Workshop, albeit much more for the model of historical practice it bequeathed, which was largely national in focus and rigorous in its adherence to the established standards of historical scholarship, than for its effort to bridge the gulf between intellectuals and the rank-and-file.

If the work of the Historians' Group had been an important point of intellectual growth in left-wing thought, then the fortunes of the left in the 1950s, more generally, had gone into pretty rapid decline. A conservative era of electoral dominance had ensued following the Labour government's (1945-51) programme of postwar reconstruction, which included the nationalisation of industry and the building of the welfare state. The events of

Seminar' in the same issue, 143-167.

[69] See Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, 23-24.
[70] Schwarz, 'The People in History', 69.

1956 – the Suez crisis and Soviet intervention in Hungary – marked a fundamental break with Cold War orthodoxies, creating the conditions for a different left political project to cohere beyond social democracy and communism; the New Left offered the prospect of socialist renewal. As Stuart Hall explained, the New Left's "rise signified for people on the left in my generation the end of the imposed silences and impasses of the Cold War, and the possibility of a breakthrough into a new socialist project."[71] But its political outlook was also grounded in new analyses of the changing realties of British realities, particularly in response to a rejuvenated capitalism and the effects of rising affluence amongst traditional constituencies of the left due to the postwar boom.[72]

In thinking about the lineages that persisted from the New Left to History Workshop, it is important to recognise the function the New Left has come to play in larger narratives of the post-war left. Part of the problem here is related to the tendency to focus on the New Left's intellectual and theoretical output, and to downplay, if not dismiss, its distinctive but amorphous political contribution.[73] This has led to an emphasis on the breaks separating a 'first', 'second' and even 'third' New Left, whether they are identified with a specific grouping or a period or some combination of the two, rather than the lines of continuity.[74] In the first place, the original New Left was a broad and eclectic movement, which encompassed a range of viewpoints on forms of political mobilisation and prospects for socialism. A sense of cohesion and movement, as well as grounds for optimism in its

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[71] Stuart Hall, 'Life and Times of the First New Left', *New Left Review* 61 (Jan-Feb 2010), 177-196.

[72] A notable exchange in this regard occurred in the pages of the *Universities and Left Review* sparked by Stuart Hall's 'A Sense of Classlessness', *ULR* 5 (Autumn 1958), 26-32, which was followed by critical responses by Raphael Samuel, 'Class and Classlessness', *ULR* 6 (Spring 1959), 44-50, and Edward Thompson, 'Commitment in Politics', 50-55.

[73] See Kenny, Michael. *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995, 2. On the political dimension of the first New Left, see Rustin, Michael. 'The New Left as a Social Movement', in *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On* (London: Verso, 1989), 117-128.

[74] For different readings of the metamorphoses of the New Left, see Sedgwick, Peter, 'The Two New Lefts', in Widgery, David (ed.), *The Left in Britain, 1956-68* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), 131-53; Andrews, Geoff, 'The Three New Lefts and their Legacies', in Andrews, Geoff. Cockett, Richard, Hooper, Alan, and Michael Williams (eds.), *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), 66-84; and Reid, Alistair J., 'The dialectics of liberation: the old left, the new left and the counter-culture', in Feldman, David and Jon Lawrence (eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 261-280.

programme, was crucially provided by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmanent (CND) and the mass mobilisations it was able to orchestrate. Divisions within the New Left are often drawn around the two editorial groups surrounding the journals *New Reasoner* and the *Universities and Left Review*. Without discounting key differences in intellectual and political formation, such as the former's closer adherence to old left ideas about organised labour and the working-class movement, and the latter's attempt to formulate a vibrant cultural politics based on their reading of contemporary cultural changes, both shared a commitment to popularising socialist ideas, combatting anti-intellectualism in the labour movement, and bringing intellectuals and workers into closer proximity, which was based on a critique on Leninist forms of organisation. Through the medium of New Left clubs, which held lectures and talks, and distributed books, pamphlets and newsletters, New Left supporters stressed a democratic and participatory approach to political activity.

Ultimately, the New Left movement ran out of steam in the early-1960s and the transfer of the editorship of *New Left Review* (formed out of an amalgamation of the editorial boards of *NR* and *ULR*) to Perry Anderson and a younger cohort of scholars who eschewed the movement oriented politics of the earlier New Left as well as their vision of socialist transformation, particularly that stream of moral and humanistic critique of both Stalinism and capitalism, which emerges most fully in the writings of Edward Thompson, setting the stage for a series of fierce polemics between the two.[75] But it was this commitment to developing new political forms of engagement, however much they may have proved frustrated at the time, which should be seen as foreshadowing later developments, including History Workshop and the new social movements. This was coupled with an "expanded

[75] As several commentators have remarked, the decision at the Labour Party's annual conference to reverse its decision unilateral nuclear disarmament blew the wind out of the sails of both CND and the New Left movement. However, there were also internal tensions between members of the journal's board and between the journal and the clubs that contributed to its break-up. See Hamilton, Scott, *The Crisis of Theory: E.P. Thompson, the new left and postwar British politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 99-102, and Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism,* 72-75. The intellectual antagonism between Anderson and Thompson was exemplified in essays like the former's 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* 23 (January-February 1964) 26-53, and the latter's 'The Peculiarities of the English', *Socialist Register* (1965), 311-362.

definition of the political" which, according to Hall, "entailed a recognition of the proliferation of potential sites of social conflict and constituencies for change."[76] In its turn towards civil society, as some observers have noted,[77] there are parallels with Gramscian ideas about forms of cultural struggle. There were, of course, limits to this emancipatory vision, most notably with regard to gender, and, in practice, it proved mostly unable to fuse the intellectual and popular in ways that appealed to working-class constituencies. But these political undercurrents, which were infused by the rehabilitation of romantic, ethical, populist and utopian elements of British socialist thought, represented in the writings of Thompson and Raymond Williams, another key figure in the British New Left, outlived the specific moment of the first New Left and flowed into other initiatives in the 1960s, including History Workshop.[78]

Another important carry over from the New Left, which was also strongly associated with the figures of Thompson and Williams, was the salience of popular and adult education for rethinking the foundations of socialist politics. Following the end of the Second World War, provision for adult education was expanded with the establishment of university extra-mural departments, where both Williams and Thompson were appointed to positions as tutors (to the Oxford Regency in 1945 and Leeds in 1948 respectively).[79] Workers' or popular education has always been a setting where conflicts over different ideologies and models of pedagogy have played out, particularly between competing liberal and radical

[76] Hall, 'Life and Times of the First New Left', 187

[77] See Geoff Andrews, 'The Three New Lefts and their Legacies', in Andrews, Geoff. *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 70

[78] On other incarnations of the New Left, see Michael Rustin, 'The New Left as a Social Movement', in *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On* (London: Verso, 1989), 117-128. Other initiatives could be said to have included the Institute for Workers' Control, the May Day Manifesto of 1967 and 68, and a whole series of community action groups. For a discussion of these strands and others, see Rowbotham, Sheila, 'The Women's Movement and Organising for Socialism', in Rowbotham, Sheila, Segal, Lynne, and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London: Merlin, 1979), 31-33.

[79] For accounts of Wlliams's and Thompson's involvement in adult education, see respectively McIlroy, John, 'Border Country: Raymond Williams in Adult Education', in McIlroy, John, and Sallie Westwood (eds.), *Border Country: Raymond Williams in Adult Education* (Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 1993), 269-323; and Fieldhouse, Roger, 'Thompson, the Adult Educator', in Fieldhouse, Roger and Richard Taylor (eds.), *E.P. Thompson and English Radicalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014),

perspectives. Thompson and Williams represented a tradition of adult education that stood against the imposition of academic standards and definitions of knowledge, and instead drew attention to the need to make learning relevant to the concerns and experiences of adult students.[80] Experience, therefore, was not simply a key category of analysis for the likes of Thompson or Williams, but it formed the basis of their critique of university education and articulation of an alternative and democratic notion of education, whereby relations of dialogue and exchange could be forged between radical intellectuals and working people. In this light, we can see how the relatively autonomous domain of adult education played a pivotal role in shaping the complexion of New Left political thought, which, along with the crisis of 1956, capitalist boom and waning power of predestined beliefs in socialism, helped to crystallise the shift from social being to social consciousness as the ground of left thought and, then, on to its forms of expression and, thence, to understandings of culture as a site of political struggle. At the very moment they began to elaborate this politics, however, culture itself, and especially a long and unbroken tradition of working-class culture, was being fundamentally transformed.[81] Such considerations about the education, democracy and cultural politics, particularly in relation to the relations between left intellectuals and the working-class, would continue to exercise the minds of many radicals and socialists.-

Finally, a brief mention should be made of another legacy that was inherited by the History Workshop, which descended from socialist and communist cultural politics, finding expression in the production of left-wing theatre and music. The most influential movement of this kind in the postwar period was the second English folk revival that first gained notice in the early-1960s. Strongly imbued with left-wing values, it became a feature of the burgeoning countercultural scene and took inspiration from CND. It shared the ideal of people's history in its recovery of the struggles and drudgery of working-class life. In

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[80] Steele, Tom. *The Emergence of Cultural Studies: Adult Education, Cultural Politics, and the 'English' Question* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997).

[81] On this process of class and labour decomposition, see Eley, Geoff and Keith Nield, 'Farewell to the Working Class?' *International Labor and Working Class History* 57 (Spring 2000), 1-30 and Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 284-404.

summarising its radical ethos, two participants in the folk revival have written "[f]olk music, the creation of the common people, could form the nucleaus for a socialist music, re-connect the workers with their past, and could be developed so as to articulate the realities of contemporary society".[82] In many ways, the high point of the folk revival was the radio ballads of Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker, which mixed folk with native voices. Folk music was a regular attraction for many activists who grew up in the left-wing milieus of the early-1960s and, as we shall see below, it became a staple feature of History Workshop events.

II. HISTORY WORKSHOP AT RUSKIN, 1966-73: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENTS, TRAJECTORIES

The position of leaders is often contentious in protest movements, the more so when they are committed to egalitarian and democratic principles. It is, however, difficult to overestimate the role of Raphael Samuel in the formation of the History Workshop movement, not just in bringing it to life, but as a source of enthusiasm and energy, and constant incitement to action throughout the period of its existence. His role is not explicitly thematised here, but they are never far from the surface. In fact, he was uniquely placed in pulling together resources and people in order to make things happen. At some stage, he was involved or connected to: CPHG, the first New Left, *NLR*, the Social History Group in Oxford, the Society for the Study of Labour History (SSLH), and, via Ruskin, the world of adult education.

In addition to that, he was, as many of his friends and collaborators have recognised, a very canny political operator and initiator of projects and schemes, often spontaneously

[82] Frankie Armstrong and Brian Pearson, 'Some Reflections on the English Folk Revival', *History Workshop Journal* 7 (1979), 96

and often to their later chagrin. In Sheila Rowbotham' words, 'Raphael was not simply a writer but a renowned organiser [...] He was not one you could say no to easily.'[83] Or as Sally Alexander recalled 'you find yourself doing things with Raphael, you never, had you been in your normal frame of mind, you would never, ever have agreed to do'.[84] This did not always endear him to everyone, but without him and without his relationship to cohorts of students at Ruskin, especially those of the late-1960s and early-1970s, the History Workshop would never have appeared nor have acquired the momentum it did.

Born out of Struggle? Ruskin College and the Contested Origins of History Workshop

Established in 1899, Ruskin College was dedicated to "the promotion in a residential setting of liberal education for working-class adult students, recruited mainly from the trade unions."[85] Whereas the main arms of the adult education movement offered correspondence courses, day-release courses, evening classes or summer schools, most students at Ruskin spent their two years living at the College in Oxford, either at the Headington or Walton Street site. Located at the centre of British elite education, yet with a long association with the labour movement, Ruskin occupied a paradoxical position, which lent it a distinctive character as well as being a source of frequent tension. Though not formally linked, the relationship of the College to the university was a close one and it exerted a powerful influence over the genesis of the History Workshop. In the first instance, Ruskin students took the Oxford University Diploma, which set out the curriculum structure and method of assessment, requiring them to sit five three-hour examinations at the end of their two-year course. In fact, it was in response to this classical model of pedagogy, as well as the built-in

[83] Rowbotham, 'Some Memories of Raphael', 131.
[84] Sally Alexander, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* 29.2.12
[85] Pollins, Harold. *The History of Ruskin College*. Oxford: Ruskin College Library, 1984, 63.

assumptions about the function of education and the character of adult learners, that History Workshop first took shape.

Rather like Thompson and Williams before him, Samuel claimed that the educational tradition served by the University Diploma was inadequate to the specific needs of adult students, who arrived at Ruskin with less than encouraging experiences of education. His aim and that adopted by the Workshop was to liberate the learning process from the hierarchical relations and practices of domination established by the College's course, declaring that the History Workshop was conceived:

> as an attack on the examination system, the humiliations which it imposed on adult students. It was an attempt to create, within a very limited compass, an alternative educational practice, to encourage Ruskin students –working men and women, drawn from the labour and trade union movement – to engage in research, and to construct their own history as a way of giving them an independent critical vantage point in their reading.[86]

Under his guidance, students would be given the chance to carry out original primary research almost as soon as they had arrived at the College. The rationale behind this approach was to "'demystify' the learning process and put students on a par with the authorities".[87] In contrast to the tutorial essay or the final-year examination, the pursuit of independent study and research could have liberatory effects, since it released the students from the instrumentalising logic of learning for exams and allowed them to engage with primary sources, such that teacher-student relationships could be potentially mediated. It also lent authority to students' own experiences of life and work, because they were seen as equally valid a basis upon which to begin to explore the past as were formal academic modes of learning. According to Samuel, research was conducted outside the structures of course programmes, often in the form of unofficial projects that were "smuggled" into seminars as

[86] Samuel, 'Afterword', in Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, 410.
[87] Samuel, Raphael. *History Workshop: A Collectanea, 1967-1991 : Documents, Memoirs, Critique and Cumulative Index to History Workshop Journal*. Oxford: History Workshop, 1991, 67.

extra-curricular activities in time dedicated to tutorial requirements or in the students' own time. Such work had to be carried out in "clandestine" fashion, Samuel insisted, because "at Ruskin then the very activity of primary research was a forbidden luxury".[88] This attempt to bypass Ruskin's formal procedures became a source of contention and aroused the hostility of what he frequently called the "College authorities". The first sign of this emerged with the introduction of a series of weekly seminars on the theme of "The English Countryside in the nineteenth century" in the autumn of 1966, which alarmed the College principal, Billy Hughes, since it included a talk by a Ruskin student and closely avoided being shut down.[89]

In Samuel's account, this episode was but the opening skirmish in a periodic battle over the status of History Workshop inside the College. His first serious elaboration of this history came in a 1980 article in the *New Statesman* and it forms the basis of all subsequent versions. He presents a story in which the challenge to the traditional methods of teaching history and the clash with the Ruskin hierarchy is associated with broader spheres of revolt of that time. The rise of History Workshop is situated in the context of student agitation against the College and in keeping with the general upsurge of oppositional political currents of the late-1960s. "The Workshop", he claimed "was shaped by – and to some extent anticipated – a series of left-wing stirrings, common to Britain and Europe in the later 1960s".[90] In locating the initial confrontation in 1966, Samuel portrays the Workshop as portending the student protests of 1968 and the general revolt against the authoritarian structures of higher education. Another seminal influence on the Workshop, albeit also a source of friction and tension, which appeared slightly later on the scene, was the Women's Liberation movement. Indeed Ruskin played host to the first national Women's Liberation Conference in 1970, which was organised by a group of feminist Workshop historians. As a consequence of this event (and a 'Black Power' weekend), the Workshop was banned for

[88] Samuel, Raphael, 'On the Methods of History Workshop: A Reply', *History Workshop Journal* 8 (1980), 163.
[89] Samuel, *History Workshop: A Collectanea,* 68.
[90] Samuel, "A Reply", p. 164.

that year. In making the connection to contemporaneous moments of protest and action, Samuel secures the Workshop's own radical credentials. As Hilda Kean observes, "anti-academicist approaches to history and anti-authoritarianism united in common cause people's history, feminism and black power".[91] These sentiments are echoed by other Workshop participants, perhaps articulated in the most militant terms by Samuel's former student, David Douglass, who recalled:

> To be a student of Raph in the early 1970s was at once to be part of an ongoing revolutionary struggle developing across the academic and student body [...] The struggle for people's history [...] was one to us in parallel with the black consciousness movement and the efforts of socialist feminist historians...Raph's wildly controversial, iconoclastic heresy was to let us plebs loose on the raw material of history, primary sources and sacred scrolls and let it blow our minds.[92]

The account given by Samuel was heavily disputed at the time by former members of the College staff, including the principal Hughes and a tutor, Harold Pollins. Pollins, who also authored the official history of Ruskin College, made a lengthy reply to Samuel in a piece published in the Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History entitled "History Workshop: the Making of a Myth". He challenged Samuel's characterisation of the Workshop's formative moments and, in particular, his identification of the Workshop with the wider student revolt and denied that the College had been hostile. Unable to recollect the moment himself, he was sceptical of Samuel's claim that the Principal had tried to have it closed down, indicating a more supportive attitude by reference to statements from the College's Annual Reports. Hughes himself took exception to that claim in letter to the *History Workshop Journal*. Whilst both Pollins and Hughes conceded that the Workshop was an unwelcome intrusion, this was actually due to the extra administrative and domestic

[91] Hilda Kean, "Myths of Ruskin College", *Studies in Education* (1996)
[92] Dave Douglass, "Obituary", *Labour History Review* Vol, 62 No. 1 (Spring 1997), 119-120.

burdens it created for staff. This was the reason behind the decision to ban History Workshop following the Women's Liberation Conference. "For the College it was a traumatic experience" wrote Pollins. "Very large numbers turned up for a weekend in term time and the place was in turmoil. The staff (not just the 'authorities') decided that in future, in term time, there were to be no such large meetings or overnight accommodation".[93] Opposition to the Workshop, such as it existed, was motivated by issues of health and safety, not the more insidious motives attributed by Samuel.

Moreover, Pollins also rejected the claim that the College had inhibited independent student research, referring to several instances of student research that pre-dated Samuel's arrival at Ruskin and the emergence of the Workshop. "Such work was done outside normal Diploma teaching and it was encouraged, not discouraged", he argued.[94] The issue appears to be partly a matter of timing, as changes to the regulations of the Special Diploma in 1967 freed space on the curriculum for the inclusion of student projects.[95] This development came prior to the first History Workshop and, in the view of Pollins, gives the lie to the accusation that 'primary research was a forbidden luxury'. In addition, the introduction of internal college diplomas, the first of which, the Labour Studies Diploma, designed by Ruskin tutor John Hughes in 1967 and made available in October 1968, made room for new assessment methods, such as the sitting of exams part-way through the course, open book exams, and provision for research dissertations. In fact, the College Diplomas were not initially popular amongst the students, with only a handful opting to take them in the first year, a point stressed by Pollins in order to refute the notion that there was a widespread student demand to transform the traditional examination system. Indeed, as he goes on to assert, if there was opposition to the Workshop, then it came not from the 'authorities', but

[93] Harold Pollins, "Communication: History Workshop: the Making of a Myth", *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 17.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Pollins stated that the regulations of the existing Special Diploma is Social Studies were in changed in 1966 allowing students the 'option of spending half a term on some form of project', which was first implemented the Spring of 1967. Ibid.

the students themselves. Concluding, Pollins was adamant that Samuel had got things wrong. “Charitably one could say that he has misremembered the mid and late 1960s” he wrote. “Or he has produced a retrospective justification”.[96]

Before rendering judgement, it may worth add one or two more details to the picture. Firstly, as Pollins elsewhere acknowledged, there were confrontations between the College's administration and the students in the period between the late-1960s and early-1970s. As he explained in his *History*, students expressed hostility towards the University Diploma and pushed for changes to both the content of courses and methods of assessment. This derived from a changing mood amongst the students, a mood even Pollins attributes to the general sensibility which was characterised by 1968 and Paris students' uprising.[97] Still, only rarely did this escalate into overt disputes; a two day sit-in by students in 1974 was as militant as it ever got. When Ruskin students did engage in direct action, they did so as part of University protests. This was due to the peculiar institutional circumstances that prevailed at Ruskin. The struggle for democracy and changes to the curriculum was softened by proposals which, in words of Bob Purdie (also ex-Ruskin), "channelled 'student power' into a set of committee structures which kept student activists tied up in meetings". Thus, "the College had contained the rebellion by routinising it".[98]

Secondly, as several authors have indicated, there were considerable political differences within the student population at Ruskin.[99] If many of them had been part of the revolt against the College, not all students — not even those of a left-wing persuasion — participated in the running of History Workshop meetings. In Samuel's mind, however, the Workshop was still very much part of this general tendency. "In the years when student unrest at Ruskin was majoritarian", he argued "the Workshop was seen as representing the

[96] Pollins, “Making of a Myth”, 18.
[97] Pollins, *A History*, 52.
[98] Bob Purdie, 'Long-haired intellectuals and busybodies': Ruskin, student radicalism and civil rights in Northern Ireland", in Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson eds. *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge, Dissenting Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), p. 59.
[99] See Samuel, “Reply”, 200; Purdie, 78.

kind of independent, self-producing learning that the students as a whole were fighting for".[100] Pollins, by contrast, considered the growing demands by students for change and the rise of History Workshop as independent developments. Interestingly, Pollins barely mentions the role of History Workshop (or the Women's Liberation Conference) in his history of Ruskin, preferring instead to concentrate on a series of institutional and procedural developments internal to the College.

In the end, matters of fact are clouded by deeper ideological differences arising from opposing perspectives about the meaning and representation of the events in the context of the history of the College and adult education. Finding resolution to the questions of whether or not the principal had wanted the seminars in 1966 closed down, or the extent to which independent research was encouraged prior to the formation of the Workshop, will not clarify the dispute between Samuel and Hughes and Pollins. On the face of it, the College did not appear as incorrigibly hostile to History Workshop, nor quite so resistant to student research projects as Samuel's depiction. In sifting through some of the evidence, we find a letter from the principal to Samuel asking "do you want to run another History Workshop next year on similar condition to the last? If so you should reserve dates and establish a responsible organising committee."[101] Whilst in the minutes of a staff meeting in early 1970, we read that History Workshop was "a useful adjunct to the teaching programme and should, if possible, be continued" and "[t]here was strong support for placing the History Workshop as a Collegiate responsibility".[102] This meeting took place not long after the storm created by the Women's Liberation Conference held at Ruskin, but it shows a concern to bring the Workshop under its bureaucratic sway and to control its size and scope, reflecting the College's inclination to 'routinise' revolt. Evidently, this is not what Samuel had in mind for the Workshop, since it was intended to subvert the teaching

[100] Samuel, ibid.
[101] (Bill Hughes), Letter to Samuel, 14.5.71, RS7/001
[102] Minutes of Staff Meeting, 10.3.70, RS7/001

programme not supplement it. From his viewpoint, primary research could have radical implications and be the basis for a more democratic encounter with the world of knowledge, so that students did not passively apprehend academic culture and standards, but could mediate that process through their own experience and, thereby, offer a corrective to dominant perceptions of working-class students. As he put it:

> were they as adult men and women, drawn from the labour and trade union movement, to be regarded as 'educationally under-privileged, the working definition adopted by the College authorities? Or -the contention of History Workshop - as fellow-socialists particularly well qualified by reason of life-experience and political formation, to write with authority on subjects which, through pain-staking research, they could make their own?[103]

In the next section we will examine Samuel's teaching method and his relationship to his students, but it is evident that, for Samuel at least, this moment was formative in crystallising the purpose and ethos of the History Workshop, as it grew out of his tutorials and into a flourishing political and intellectual venture. Conversely, the account of Hughes and Pollins rests on unspoken assumptions about the relationship of adult students to formal academic learning, although the latter's subsequent narrative confirms the 'official' view of a liberal tradition of education and acceptance of democratic reform. In representing Samuel's version of events as a "myth", Pollins seizes for himself the role of arbiter of historical reality. But he could also be said to be involved in his own myth-making, downplaying the significance of radical moments in the past and presenting an unbroken line of continuity, which secures the inviolability of the present.[104] As a result, the whole episode taps into the contested history of Ruskin going back to the revolt of the Plebs' League in 1909, to

[103] Samuel, 'Reply', 200.
[104] See Kean, 'Myths of Ruskin'.

rival perspectives on the meaning of adult and working-class education, and, at a level further removed, to the significance of the late-1960s as a moment of sharp disagreement over the function of education in a democratic society, informed by both the growing student unrest on campus and the shifting conceptions of adult education within the labour movement.[105]

It is not hard, then, to see both sides engaging in a project of 'retrospective justification'. For Samuel, the elaboration of this account of the Workshop's origins came at a critical juncture in the life of the movement. It followed on from the bitterly fraught and, at times, vituperative exchanges at the History Workshop meeting in 1979, particularly the clash between E.P. Thompson, Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson. That moment was politically symbolic. "The Workshop", he recognised "has outlived the original circumstances of its formation, and now has to make its way in a colder political climate."[106] But the event itself helped to accentuate differences and sow further discord between elements of the Workshop faithful, as we will discuss below. Samuel's insistence upon the College's enmity and on the inextricable link to the revolutionary moment of 1968 ought to be set against the background of surfacing oppositions, for example, between populist and academicist modes of representation, history and theory, experience and ideology, and the rank-and-file and intellectuals, which increasingly came to structure debates within socialist and feminist political circles, and shaped the trajectories of Workshop activity.[107] Samuel's history of the movement can be read as an intervention into a political moment in order to reaffirm

[105] The 1960s was a significant moment in the history of education, a time when its place in society was undergoing a fundamental transformation as it became increasingly integrated into the functioning of the capitalist system. At the same time, , however, the shifting outlook of the trade unions, now that they had become an integral part of the post-war order and involved in national bargaining and state planning, also had a powerful impact on the purposes of education. 'Now the demand of the labour movement", states John McIlroy "was increasingly for education to make the system work.' As a result, there was a growing trend towards narrow and instrumental approaches to the education of trade union officials, as well as the separation of specialist training from the broader social and humanistic purposes of education.

[106] Samuel, 'Afterword', 416.

[107] See Caplan, Jane, 'Postmodernism, Postructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians', *Central European History* 22, 3/4 (Sept-Dec 1989), 265-266.

the methods and principles of the History Workshop, perhaps even placate contending parties, and diagnose the current impasse in socialist historical practice. As he explained, "the main danger facing Marxist historical work in the 1960s was that it would become 'fat' and 'Norman' – i.e. comfortably incorporated into academic routines – today it is possibly that of fragmentation into entirely separate discourses."[108]

'Ruskinmania and the 'Long 1960s'

The first Ruskin History Workshop, as it would become known in retrospect, was held on Saturday, 4 March 1967 under the title 'A Day with the Chartists'. Those who attended heard talks delivered by David Goodway, Brian Harrison and Dorothy Thompson on various aspects of the Chartist movement, in-between which they were treated to a visit around Charterville, the site of a Chartist Village near Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire. Although described as a 'modest affair' (around 40 attended), this first meeting brought together many of the future leading figures of the Workshop. From then on, the Workshop experienced a rapid rise in numbers and a corresponded expansion in size and scale. The next Workshop, held in November 1967 and entitled 'Education and the working class in Nineteenth Century England' included twelve speakers, two of whom were Ruskin students. By the time of History Workshop 4 (November 1969), which was spread over both days of the weekend, there were around 600 in attendance to hear fifteen speakers and to take part in a walk around Jude's Oxford.

The burgeoning congregations at annual Workshop meetings were the result of the general upturn in student and industrial militancy in Britain during the late-1960s and early-1970s. Youth and youth culture are regarded as key indicators of social and cultural change throughout this period, in which a generational divide expressed itself in radically divergent

[108] Samuel, 'Afterword', 417.

lifestyle choices, patterns of behaviour, and, to some extent, political views.[109] A growing sector of the population, students were peculiarly responsive to both transformations affecting domestic society and to a destabilised international order, due to events like the Vietnam War, accelerating the breakdown of social and ideological consensus over the post-war social democratic State and the bipolar Cold War framework. Student unrest reached its peak at this time, especially over Vietnam, which witnessed several demonstrations led by the far-left sponsored Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), but it also emerged in protests and occupation across university campuses that took aim at the authoritarian and undemocratic structures of power of the institution.[110] In Britain, student protest coincided with waves of industrial struggle and strike action against both Labour and Conservative governments, which was prevalent within certain sections of the labour movement, notably miners, dockers, and seamen. However, the concurrence of student and labour agitation did not result in the kind of revolutionary ferment seen elsewhere in Europe, above all during May 1968 in France.[111]

Nevertheless, as many commentators have argued, 1968 symbolised a fundamental break in the global history of the post-war period, the disintegration of the old order and the coalescence of a new political conjuncture.[112] New possibilities, impulses and dynamics were released and incorporated into new forms of left-wing politics and new social movements, which lent '68 a distinctive mood or spirit embodied in the collective experience of activists; a feeling that each and every act of resistance was part of the general movement of revolt.[113]

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[109] On youth and youth cultures in Europe, see the essays in Schildt and Siegfried (eds.), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola* and Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe*. For recollections of an English alternative culture in the 1960s, see Green, Jonathon, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground*, 1961-1971 (London: Pimlico, 1998).

[110] On the campaign against the Vietnam War in Britain, see Ellis, Sylvia, '"A Demonstration of British Good Sense?" British Student Protest during the Vietnam War', in Gerard J. DeGroot (ed.), *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* (Essex, 1998), 54-69.

[111] Fraser, *1968: Student Generation in Revolt*, 233-256; Gildea, Mark and Warring, *Europe's 1968*, 129.

[112] For considerations of the interpretive differences in the history of 1968, particularly regarding the relationship of the politics of 1968 to long-term, large-scale cultural and economic changes, see Brown, Timothy S. "1968. Transnational and Global Perspectives," Version: 1.0, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 11.6.2012, and Eley, Geoff, 'Telling-Stories about Sixty-Eight: Troublemaking, Political Passions, and Enabling Democracy', *German Studies Association Newsletter* 33, 2 (Winter 2008-09), 39-50

[113] This sense of the connectedness of struggles was powerfully fostered by the cause of anti-imperialism. See Gildea, Mark and Warring, *Europe's 1968*, 96-99.

For Chris Harman of the International Socialists (IS), "[t]he coming together of different elements of crisis had led to a mighty process of generalization, particularly among students, so that even those involved in relatively small and marginal struggles – such as in British universities – felt them to be part of a worldwide movement."[114] Outside the small revolutionary factions, the student and new social movements marked a departure from the intellectual and theoretical priorities of the earlier New Left, which was closely identified with the class politics of the labour movement, represented in the shift from agency and class struggle towards a focus on more dispersed structures of domination and ideology.[115] But at the same time, much of this radical activity went on at a distance from the interests of working-class constituencies and the labour movement.

The History Workshop movement was one place where the political outlooks of organised labour, the New Left(s) and countercultural and student radicalism overlapped. "History Workshop", remarks Dennis Dworkin "was a rare example of working class militants and new left radicals finding common ground."[116] The ideological complexion of History Workshop gatherings was highly diverse, stretching across the many varieties of socialism, feminism and anarchism, but the proceedings took place in a general atmosphere of libertarian openness.

From the Personal to the Pedagogical: Raphael and Ruskin Worker-historians

As we have seen, the History Workshop emerged in reaction to the educational system in place at Ruskin. From there, it became a wider challenge to the professional authority of historians as privileged producers of knowledge. Indeed, the two endeavours were barely

[114] Chris Harman, *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and After* (London: Bookmarks, 1988), p. 167.
[115] See Andrews, 'The Three New Lefts', 73-77.
[116] Dworkin, Dennis L. *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997, 186.

distinguishable, since the effort to escape the confines of the teaching curriculum by conducting primary research circumvented the whole process of academic training and the internalisation of the rules and conventions of historical history through the faithful reproduction of legitimate knowledge (and the relations of power) upon which disciplinary authority rests. In recounting the differences the separated the Workshop from established historiography, Samuel wrote that they had "attempted, from the start, to enlarge the constituency of historical writer and researchers, to demonstrate in practice that the career historian had no monopoly of writing and research."[117] But before that could happen, he first had to instill that idea in his own students.

In a pamphlet dealing with training and education, CPGB stalwarts James Klugmann and Jack Cohen offered "hints for party tutors" on how they should teach the principles of Marxist-Leninism. "The more you get to know your students, talk their language, *draw on their experience*, use their experience to help them to understand new things", they suggested "the more successful you will be." [118] We might wonder about the influence of communist pedagogues on the development of teaching methods in adult education, but the application of this approach, even in a less doctrinaire fashion, undeniably won a number of converts to Samuel's way of thinking about and doing history. As several of his former students confirm, Samuel's manner was certainly to get to know his students and find out about their lives and interests. For example, Sally Alexander recalled that he would "get you to talk about what you'd been doing. He'd find something interesting in what you were saying and open it up". Armed with an encyclopedic knowledge, "he immediately discovered my interests" she admitted.[119] Sid Wills vividly remembered how Samuel encouraged his class to say something about themselves and their experiences of work by bringing in a related object. As a compositor, Wills brought in setting sticks and recalled how he "demonstrated picking

[117] Samuel, "Afterword", p. 415.
[118] Cohen, Jack, and James Klugmann. *A Reader's Guide to the Study of Marxism*. London: Communist Party (Education Dept., 1966), 50.
[119] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Central London; 29.02.2012)

up type, said something about the companionship, which is a term of the people who work in the composing room [...] Oh God, I would have gone on quite a bit about different things and I remember Raphael...I could see he was absolutely riveted"[120]. Following this introduction, Samuel inspired Wills to research and write the mechanical typesetting in the print industry. The point of the exercise was to show his students that their experiences were historically important and that they were part of the historical process. According to Bernard Canavan, he believed "that you are knowledge and that if you understand yourself that is knowledge".[121] Canavan, who had emigrated from rural Ireland, sees the process as one in which knowledge was added to an already existing experiential basis: "we all built upon ourselves, and I'd say that is something really runs through the History Workshop movement [...] I wrote a thesis on what I knew about: Irish peasant life".[122]

Samuel also helped to demystify the process of carrying out research in practical terms, explaining how to read card indexes, how to search for books and how to find source material. His expertise in knowing the state of the field was also important. "You were very, very reliant on your tutor for sources and idea and books", Sally Alexander acknowledged "and he knew they best ones, you never wasted your time on stuff that wasn't good to read".[123] For the most part, Ruskin students were immersed in the sources. A sense of the excitement and wonder attributed to them is articulated by Samuel himself, who wrote "primary sources were invested by us with magical properties; for some students the discovery of them was in the nature of a conversion experience".[124] Soon they were hitching down to London to sit in the reading room of the British Museum, the Public Records Office, or back in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. But memories of doing research were also closely related to recollections of meeting Samuel in London, on the steps of some

[120] Sid Wlls, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Interviewed in North London, 10.5.12)
[121] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn (North-West London; 28.11.11).
[122] Ibid.
[123] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Central London; 29.02.2012)
[124] *Collectanea*, 68

library or archive or studying at his house. "You were supported incredibly by Raphael", remarked Sid Wills "you'd be getting letters, you know, why don't you look at that". For David Douglass, staying at Samuel's house in Spitalfields was all part of the experience of going back into the past. "I felt I could step out of the door and they'd be Hackney carriages going by", he remembered "I'd be in a time-warp and I'd be back in the 19th Century".[125] Whilst the tendency to uncritically reproduce memory's nostalgic tropes ought to be resisted, we can, nonetheless, understand this very hands-on, "learning by doing" approach to history as Samuel's way of inducting his fledgling charges into the activity of research and, in the process, forging relations of solidarity with them.[126] During his time at Ruskin, Wills remembered that "straight away there was this tremendous sort of support" and also an "amazing acceptance that you had a lot to say, because somehow you came from somewhere that he hadn't been to and neither had anybody else".[127]

This sense of earnest appreciation and respect for adult learners extended to how Samuel dealt with what we would now call 'feedback'. Delivering criticism could be tricky. "Many comrades find things difficult; many are diffident, are nervous at first in the field of study", counselled Klugmann and Cohen.[128] The testimony of his students suggests that Samuel's tactic was to encourage and reassure them in the face of their own doubts through his energy, enthusiasm, and comradely manner of accentuating the positive. In recounting Samuel's treatment of his essay, Douglass described how "he would never tell you [that] you were rubbish [...] he would tell you all they through how wonderful it was". In actual fact, Douglass continued "without telling you all that was bollock, he left you feeling you'd done something amazing, when actually he was criticising you and you didn't realise it".[129] Similarly, Alexander recalled that "I'd read a paragraph out of my terrible essay and he'd say

[125] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn (South Shields, Tyneside; 01.11.2011)
[126] Samuel, Raphael, Alison Light, Sally Alexander, and Gareth S. Jones. *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain*. London: Verso, 1998,
[127] Sid Wlls, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Interviewed in North London, 10.5.12)
[128] Klugmann and Cohen, *A Reader's Guide to the Study of Marxism*, 50.
[129] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn (South Shields, Tyneside; 01.11.2011)

'wonderful'. I'd think the man was mad!"[130] Others, however, were not quite so amenable to Samuel's enthusiasms and persuasions. Bob Purdie felt Samuel's exaggerations were misplaced and insincere, a feeling he ascribed to the cultural and class gulf separating them. "I read the message as being insincerity and I had to learn that it wasn't insincerity", he acknowledged "it was sincerity just sincerity the opposite way in which I would have been sincere".[131] Feelings of cultural distance were also expressed by Alexander, who stated that "he had no idea what it was like to be brought up in a philistine, from a philistine background where people didn't have books".[132] His ability to enthuse and to cajole his students (and others we should add) into doing research and giving papers at the Workshop can be attributed to his own personal gift in inspiring dedication and loyalty in them. But his relationship to those from less educated backgrounds was shaped by a mix of fascination, high esteem, and a wealth of knowledge about (amongst other things) the social history of the working-class, but it was not based on experience 'from the inside'. This can be seen in Douglass's observation about how "Raph would throw you into the deep-end and if you couldn't swim and you were drowning, he'd ask you to record what drowning was like".[133] Or, as Alexander explained, "he never heard you if you said 'but I don't think I can do that' or 'I can't [...] he would just not hear you talk about self-doubt".[134]

This attitude did not always elicit a sympathetic response from students, however. For one thing, his style and method of teaching was mostly at odds with the requirements of courses and examinations. Samuel's classes proved a frustrating experience. "Some people were very, very annoyed and very disillusioned with Raphael", remarked Canavan.[135] His method of letting his class talk about themselves could engender some degree of disenchantment amongst those who had expected a formal programme of learning. Canavan

[130] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Central London; 29.02.2012)
[131] Bob Purdie, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Interviewed in Kircaldy, Scotland, 12.4.12)
[132] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[133] Ibid.
[134] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[135] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn (North-West London; 28.11.11).

imagines a response that was probably typical: "all we were talking about was a bloody fireman's strike of 1969 [...] I came here to hear about Weber. I came here to study sociology".[136] Another respondent admitted that "he actually created a lot of resentment in his students because they realised that he was far more interested in getting history off them than teaching them history". The experience of feeling like Samuel was using his students in order to extract history for his own ends was noted elsewhere. Sue Woodbine reported that "he'd be your student for five minutes out of sixty, asking you questions and then your work would suddenly appear in one of his books".[137]

Samuel's faith in his students' ability was richly rewarded with the completion of many quality research project. A number of these projects were published as the History Workshop Pamphlets between 1970 and 1974, marking the beginning of the Workshop's practice of publishing work. Even though one of their authors was described as an "amateur brain surgeon" by the doyen of labour historians, Royden Harrison, the pamphlets exemplified the history from below approach of the History Workshop and represented an original contribution to the growing scholarship on neglected features of working-class occupations and quotidian life.[138] The focus on the experience of students, however, was not merely a pedagogical tool or a technique to stimulate an interest in historical research; in epistemological terms, a personal and lived connection with the experience of the poor and working-class of past times informed the process of historical reconstruction. Epistemological privilege, thus, transferred to the marginalised themselves. Or, in the words of a young Sid Wills, 'if some of us worked in a particular job they are bet qualified to write the social history of the job.'[139] Whilst this might be seen to be a problematic formulation, experience did offer a counterpoint to the limited perspectives of sociological observers. Bob Gilding, a former cooper who wrote *The Journeymen Coopers of East London,*

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Sue Woodbine, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Sheffield, 2.8.12)
[138] 'Noticeboard', *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981), 212.
[139] Wills quoted in Harrison, Brian, 'Historical Happening', *New Society* 18 February 1971, 267.

demonstrated this possibility in blending evidence from the historical record with his own personal recollections. For Gilding, earlier observers of the coopering trade like Charles Booth or the Webbs were "outsiders looking in, and they missed a great deal", whereas 'Mayhew, for instance, writes about the wine vaults, but doesn't say anything of the drinking that went on in there - a gap which pleasant personal experience enables me to fill.'[140]

Like Gilding, most of the pamphlets were written on topics to which the students had a strong personal attachment, whether it was occupational, political or geographical, although that was not always the case. Dave Marson, a Hull Docker who began by researching the Hull dock strike of 1911, discovered a widespread children's strike in the same year, producing a pamphlet on the topic in 1973. Yet the resonance of the personal could still be heard: "[i]t was a photography that really affected me – it was a picture of the children picketing the gates of Courtney Street Primary School, the same school I had been to myself. I identified myself with those strikers – some of them might have been the parents of the children I went to school with."[141]

Given the limited circumstances of their production, the pamphlets focused on relatively small-scale events or narrow aspects of working-class life, recounting them in sympathetic light and painstaking attention detail, composed under the general influence of Thompson's *The Making*. But since they began life as pedagogical exercises, Samuel had a crucial hand in stimulating the thinking and ideas behind them. A sense of how he did this is conveyed by David Douglass, who describes what we might term a pedagogy of thick description: "Raph tended to be frustrating in term of his repetition, his method of repetition, which was to put the point down in several different ways at the same time to make sure it came out [...] It was a style of really getting the full acknowledgement and use

[140] Bob Gilding, *The Journeymen Coopers of East London: Workers' Control in an Old Lond Trade with Historical Documents and Personal Reminiscences* (History Workshop Pamphlet No. 4), ii.
[141] Dave Marson, *Children's Strikes in 1911* (History Workshop Pamphlet No. 9, 1973), i.

of that fact […] rather than just throwing it away in a line".[142] The range of topics covered by the pamphlets did not just concentrate on the social history of work and workers, but also popular and working-class culture, as in the case of Sally Alexander's *St. Giles Fair*, Stan Shipley's *Club Life and Socialism*, and John Taylor's *From Self-Help to Glamour: The Working Men's Club, 1860-1972.* In outlining a general rationale for a proposed book series to be published by Penguin and to include Ruskin-based papers, Samuel felt that it should be conceived as 'historical anthropology' and the 'dramatic and exceptional should be used to focus more closely upon the everyday, rather than in and for themselves.'[143]

Critics of the early historiographical output conducted under the auspices of the Workshop have drawn attention to the naively empirical and positivistic approach to historical research. David Selbourne called it a 'resurrectionary mode of historical writing'.[144] For Dennis Dworkin, 'the Workshop's early work seems to have been founded on the tacit assumption that the sympathetic portrayal of the lives of the subordinate classes was by definition a radical act, guaranteed by the people's "natural" propensity to resist, revolt, and transform the social order.'[145] Made in isolation, such remarks are not without foundation, but they profoundly miss the point of this early work, both in terms of pedagogical and in its extension of social historical practice into new areas. In turning their attention on the lives of ordinary people and to the terrains of personal and everyday life, Ruskin students went beyond the conventional territory of labour history and raised the question of subjectivity (which would become an important ground for rethinking the politics of history), which was not without political effects, particularly at a time when the tradition of political history maintained a dominant position in university departments.[146] In the context of History Workshop, the pamphlets were directly political in that they showed

[142] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn

[143] RS, Letter to Martin Lightfoot, 27.8.70, RS4/102

[144] Selbourne, David, 'Critique: On the Methods of the History Workshop', *History Workshop Journal* 9 (1980), 151.

[145] Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism,* p. 191.

[146] Samuel, "Reply", p. 164.

that history could be a democratic practice. Beyond the purely pedagogical aspect, the main political aspiration was to demonstrate that valuable historical work could be produced by working class, non-professional historians on the basis of mutual support, cooperation and a do-it-yourself ethos. Given this purpose and the highly restricted setting in which this work was produced, it would seem unreasonable to expect a more theoretically self-conscious approach. In fact, the political imperatives towards greater theoretical scrutiny of the underpinnings of popular and working-class history *even among salaried historians* had not manifested themselves at this point.

The pamphlets had originated within the institutional confines of Ruskin College, though, as we have seen, they were often developed independently, in the students' own time. In these circumstances, the constraint of time meant that Ruskin historians had to choose a research topic that was sufficiently narrow in scope and where the archival materials were accessible enough to ensure that it could be completed. There were other pressures too, particularly in regard to the economics of production and the need for the pamphlet to sell out in order to cover costs and ensure that future pamphlets were printed, considerations which determined, at least on one occasion, what got published.[147] Yet at the heart of the process was a spirit of self-reliance and enthusiasm which made it possible. From the editing of manuscripts to that of their printing and distribution, the whole process had an improvised, makeshift feel. In the History Workshop *Collectanea*, Samuel recalled how "the pamphlets [were] printed in off-set litho, with a golf-ball typewriter taking the place of the compositor's frame, and the paper plates doing service for hot metal".[148] The process of publicizing and selling the pamphlets reveals how the History Workshop was able to draw upon a network of supporters and sympathisers in the left-wing and national press, and a number of radical bookshops. Reviews of the pamphlets or occasionally excerpts from them were published in a variety of places, including *Time Out*, *The Morning Star*, *Times*

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[147] *Collectanea*, p. 69.
[148] Ibid.

Literary Supplement, *The Guardian*¸ and *New Society*. In one instance, a writer for the *TLS* admitted that printing a review faced the barriers of 'prejudice, snobbery, incomprehension, ignorance' in the media, but he was able to get a review 'smuggled in'.[149] They were also reviewed in dedicated history publications, such as in *The Local Historian* by George Ewart Evans and the *Urban History Newsletter*. At the time, a number of reviewers recognised the value of the pamphlets' contribution. In private correspondence with Samuel, Ewart Evans wrote that 'your series is rigorously breaking new ground',[150] while in a review of Alexander's *St. Giles Fair* for *New Society*, Asa Briggs claimed 'in format as well as in content this is the "new social history" at its best'.[151]

The pamphlets ceased production as History Workshop began to take a different direction, moving towards other forms of publication, which appeared with the History Workshop book series (the first book published under the imprint was *Village Life and Labour* (1975)) and the founding of the *History Workshop Journal* in 1976. As alluded to above, there was interest in this work from several publishers and a series of volumes entitled 'Ruskin Essays in social history' was planned as early as 1971 though it never materialised.[152] Nevertheless, the production of the pamphlets was a formative experience for many of those who went on to become important figures in the movement and journal. Anna Davin recalls that the experience helped to 'demystify' the process of publication and gave them the confidence that they could publish a journal themselves.[153] Furthermore, it was not the complete abandonment of the idea of the pamphlet form and calls for its return were made on several occasions. In the early-1980s, plans for the production of pamphlets resurfaced in the deliberations of the History Workshop Centre for Social History (HWCSH), though by then the stated aims of the pamphlets, along with the times, were very different.

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[149] Nicholas, Letter to Samuel', 25.5.72, RS4/001

[150] George Ewart Evans, Letter to Samuel, 9.6.71, RS4/001

[151] Asa Briggs, *New Society* 3rd December 1970.

[152] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Comrade, 29.11.71, RS4/001

[153] Anna Davin, "The Only Problem was Time", *History Workshop Journal* No. 50 (Autumn 2000), p. 241.

History, Democracy, Space

The early practice of the History Workshop was profoundly shaped by its pedagogical origins and an initial concern for the work and life experience of Samuel's students and what that experience could bring to the study of the past. As the Workshop grew in size, this practice became a focal point of meetings when Ruskin historians spoke about their research on the Workshop stage. The prominence of working-class voices on the platform lent the proceedings are more theatrical edge and helped to make the Workshop a distinctive intellectual environment. There were, however, a whole series of other unique features — political, social and intellectual — that are crucial to understanding how the Workshop developed a particular cultural *esprit d'corps.*

One of the main threads that run through the recollections of old 'workshoppers' is reference to a distinctive spirit or atmosphere that was fostered at History Workshop events. Stuart Hall remembers them as 'great, crowded, celebratory festivals of learning" that took place in "an atmosphere of absolute egalitarianism which Raphael, the Great Leveller, rigorously imposed".[154] For John Gorman, the History Workshop had "energy" and was conducted in a "chaotic spirit of improvisation";[155] for Dave Douglass, they "bore more in common with rock festivals without the mud".[156] This sense of excitement, informality and celebration is not merely a trivial or frivolous by-product of the more serious business of producing and disseminating scholarship, but is indeed intrinsic to understanding how the Workshop was constituted as a political enterprise, a social movement, and space of knowledge production. The spirit of those occasions was not simply embedded in the broadly leftist political values and attitudes shared by many of those involved — what Samuel described as "a free-floating utopianism, some of it feminist, some of it socialist,

[154] Stuart Hall, "Raphael Samuel: 1934-96", *New Left Review* No. 221 (January-February 1997), p. 124.
[155] John Gorman, "Banner Bright", in *Collectanea*, p. 13.
[156] Dave Douglass, "In Tribute", *Labour History Review* Vol. 62, No. 1 (Spring 1997), p. 120.

some of it anarchist, in which the past became a licence for impossiblist imaginings about the future".[157] Rather it was carried in the complex interactions between multiple forms of knowing and being that it legitimised: in the performance of intellectual and cultural activities and practices, the social and personal relationship between individuals, the circulation of material objects and bodies in a lived social space, and in the cultural, sensory and embodied experiences of subjects.

To begin with, this can be discerned in the latent meanings conferred upon the proceedings by the very concept of 'workshop'. Borrowed from Joan Littlewood's 'theatre workshop' of the 1940s and 1950s, which itself had combined political commitment with values of self-reliance and improvisation, the idea had a more historically specific content than today, where the term is used in academic circles in a rather generic fashion to indicate any gathering that suspends the formal divide of speakers and audience. In the context of Ruskin College, the meaning of workshop was particularly resonant: "it suggested not only the improvised and the informal but also the idea of a shared and common task. Still more potent…was the analogue with craft production, the idea of history as unfinished, of the miniature which could be built to make a larger whole, of a task which united hand and brain".[158] Thus, for Samuel, it signified "a deliberate attempt to escape the conventions and the coldness of the research seminar".[159] Given that it stood in opposition to the seminar, it may be useful here to indicate some of those conventions that the Workshop was seeking to break free from.

As William Clark has shown, the research seminar evolved as a method of teaching in the German universities in the early nineteenth century, which became a universal model of organisation adopted by the rest of Western world by the end of the century.[160] Clark

[157] *Collectanea*, p. 95.
[158] Ibid, p. 97.
[159] "Reply", p. 167.
[160] For Clark's discussion of the institutional formation of the seminar, see *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), chapter 5 "The Research Seminar".

describes how in the process of institutionalisation, the seminar became a site where particular techniques of power inscribed a modern form of bureaucratic discipline into the organisation and production of knowledge, and fashioned the modern academic self as competitive, individualised, and bureaucratic. Here, new pedagogical activities in the shape of writing, disputation and mechanisms of grading and evaluation inculcated students into accepting certain habits and values. Clark summarises this disciplinary ethos: "Punctuality and output count. Written assignments, paperwork, must be handed in on time. Sloth and defiance constitute grounds for expulsion”.[161] Though the structure of the seminar took shape more than 200 years ago, the way it regulates the processes of learning and knowledge acquisition through various disciplinary rituals and practices is perhaps not so far removed from the period under discussion here.

In Britain, the picture of the state of history teaching in the post-war period is unclear since little has been written about its history, though it is generally accepted that undergraduate teaching was rooted in the Oxbridge tutorial system.[162] Clark’s account of the rise of the modern academy suggests that the tutorial system performed much the same function as the seminar in German universities insofar as it became a site for the intimate training of students and where, we might assume — in a Foucauldian sense — the disciplining of knowledge and of bodies took place.[163] The tutorial usually involved one lecturer and one student and thus it relied upon the relatively elite nature of higher education in Britain, which restricted access to a very small minority. A description of the tutorial in the early-post-war period indicates how the activity of teaching was absorbed by an attention to the techniques of writing and, in particular, to the essay as the paradigmatic form through which historical knowledge is recapitulated by undergraduates. Tutorials were

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[161] Clark, *Academic Charisma*, p. 171.

[162] For a discussion of the tutorial system, see Norman Hampson, “Tutorials”, *The History Teacher* Vol. 22, No. 3 (May 1989), pp. 239-44; John Cannon, “Teaching History at University”, *The History Teacher* Vol. 22, No. 3 (May 1989), pp. 245-75; and for a broader overview of history teaching in the UK, see Alan Booth, “Pedagogy and the practice of academic history in late-twentieth century Britain”, *Rethinking History* Vol. 13, No. 3 (2009), pp.317-44.

[163] Clark, ibid., p. 147, 153, 180-181.

an exercise in conveying criticism on writing and thus served as a primary mechanism for the socialisation or acculturation of students into the established beliefs, conventions and values licenced by the discipline. Indeed the disciplinary pedagogy has been wedded to a broader educational ideology, which, according to Alan Booth, "rested for its authority upon an appeal to precedent, in line with the broad traditions of a liberal education". This involved "an emphasis upon a training of the mind, combined with an in-depth study of an academically demanding subject capable of enlarging the capacity to sift and organize information, recognize complexity, and form considered and objective judgements through close scrutiny of documentary evidence".[164] For Booth, such notions operated as a 'moral order', where the development of certain skills and qualities of mind in the study of history was related to the role individuals perform as citizens within democratic societies.[165]

From the 1950s onwards, a reaction against the staid subject matter of the dominant political history coincided with growing discontent with the traditional and elite teaching methods customary of an Oxbridge education.[166] An important development in this regard was the founding of the new universities and the rise of history-teaching in the polytechnics in the 1960s, which encouraged the change in approach to pedagogy pioneered by History Workshop. Emancipatory in design, this approach sought to reconfigure the traditional pedagogic status of lecturer and student, as well as the grounds upon which subject expertise and authority rested. "The History Workshop", claimed Samuel more than twenty years on, "was in the first place an attempt to replace the hierarchical relationships of tutor and pupil by one of comradeship in which each became, in some sort, co-learners".[167] As this implies, the Workshop's intervention into the traditional pedagogical relationship and the relations of power upon which it was enacted was connected to a wider framework of beliefs,

[164] Booth, ibid., p. 321
[165] Much the same argument for the study of history is advanced in Spalding and Parker, *Historiography: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).
[166] See here Jim Obelkevich, "New developments in history in the 1950s and 1960s", *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2000), pp. 125-142.
[167] *Collectanea*, p. i.

assumptions and practices that can be attributed to a long-established, though often submerged, British socialist culture. This can be said to include such values as cooperation, mutual support, solidarity, and comradeship, which were embodied in the performance of a mixture of intellectual and social activities that became staple of features of the Workshop. The Workshop sessions, for example, were injected with an air of egalitarian fervour that arose from the juxtaposition of speakers and listeners which cut across class, gender and generational lines. Writing in the *New Society*, Brian Harrison praised what he saw as the most distinctive features of the Workshop: “the intense absorption of the audience, most of them young, in historical problems: the valuable research conducted by inexperienced historians of only a few months' standing: the genuine collaboration of teacher and taught, without stiffness or formality”, recommending that “these were the things that should not be confined to the Workshop world”.[168] The conditions created by the Workshop were also given shape and intensity by the arrangement and embodiment of space. Most presentations took place in Ruskin’s Buxton Hall, which was not large enough to accommodate the ever-greater numbers that descended on the College and it quickly became a tightly cramped space. Samuel recognised the importance of this, remarking that “the crowding and physical discomfort certainly helped to generate a degree of informality”.[169]

The attempt to democratise history and dismantle the hierarchies upon which it had traditionally been based can also be seen in more experiential activities of ‘learning by doing’ that ran alongside the more scholarly sessions, such as the visit to Charterville, the walk around Jude’s Oxford and exhibitions of labour movement material and paraphernalia. The spirit of collective endeavour and mutuality also found an outlet in the ad-hoc social arrangements and living conditions, which saw people having to sleep on the floor, and the reinvention of the intellectual space into a social and communal space. Folk music and theatre were the most popular mediums through which emotion and passion were given

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[168] Brian Harrison, *New Society,* 18 February 1971, p. 269.
[169] *Collectanea*, p. ii.

expression and political expectancy generated. In recounting her experience of the early Workshop, Sheila Rowbotham recalled that "one of the things about History Workshop — one of the things which made it exciting was a certain amount of dalliance going on; there were attractions as well as the history…it became a great kind of social and political scene".[170] Another long-time Workshopper, Anna Davin, remembered "the general intoxication of the occasion, how people listened, and carried on discussions long afterwards…Whether you were listening, joining in, or sharing a song new to others, it was a heady mix, this fusion of music, politics, history and like-minded company. In some ways it symbolized our common project".[171] These recollections give a strong impression of History Workshop as a constellation of multiple spaces, subjects, experiences and relations, not merely as a milieu in the production of historical knowledge, but as a social movement and a political subculture, one that helped to foster favourable conditions for the interchange and coalescence of interests between working people and the intelligentsia, feminists and socialists, and the domains of the everyday and the academic, the political and the personal.

The sense of unity and common purpose that centred upon the democratising of historical practice, the pursuit of people's history, and a commitment to the political relevance of history, and was fostered by vibrant intellectual and cultural activities helped to cohere a wide and diverse constituency within which the Workshop found its appeal. No doubt this was also supported by external circumstances, such as the long pedigree of amateur and local historical work, which showed that enthusiasm for people's history preceded and stretched beyond the History Workshop milieu, the close proximity of the academic world to the Workshop world and, more generally, the propitious political climate of the late-1960s and early-1970s.[172]

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[170] Sheila Rowbotham, "Memories of 1967", in *Collectanea*, p. 3.
[171] Davin, "The Only Problem was Time", p. 240.
[172] Other networks or formations involved in efforts to democratise knowledge, with which the History Workshop had certain links, included the Communist University of London, Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies, and the Federal of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.

III. DEPARTURES AND DIVISIONS, 1974-79

From the standpoint of 1980, Samuel viewed the development of the annual workshop meetings as a highly contingent process, holding together a number of elements in tension, whilst it faced 'changes in the political climate, changes in historical work, and changes in the precise way in which the workshop comes about.'[173] The experience of History Workshop and this sense in which it responded to and reflected changing needs derived from the fairly unstructured and ad-hoc way in which it was organised. Its existence also depended on the institutional framework of Ruskin, which played both an enabling and confining role. For instance, the banning of the Workshop in 1970 was overturned by students who managed to convince the Principal Billy Hughes to get the Executive Committee to reverse its earlier decision. There was, however, a quid pro quo: 'the numbers should be limited and nobody should sleep on the premises'.[174] The 1971 Workshop would go ahead, but even Samuel himself was uncertain of its status. 'Raph doubted if a full weekend's programme could be put together, but after experiencing the enthusiasm of the committee he changed his mind.'[175] Efforts were made to find accommodation for visitors coming to the Workshop, with junior common rooms of other Oxford Colleges providing space, but there was little regard for limiting numbers. One of the members of the organising recalled 'doctoring numbers'.[176] In all, around 700 people attended. The 1971 Workshop was also strategic in a political sense, running on the theme 'Workers' Control in 19th Century England' just as the Industrial Relations Bill was debated in parliament.

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173 Samuel, 'Thoughts about the future organisation of national history workshop', 28.7.80, R7/004
174 History Workshop No. 5, Undated, RS7/016
175 Ibid.
176 Sid Wills Interview.

In 1973 the students voted not to hold the History Workshop at the College (in 1974 it took place at LSE).[177] Again, however, the decision was overturned by another cohort of students and the Workshop returned in 1975.

The organisation of the Workshop depended upon both Samuel and his students, but their relationship to Ruskin was structured along very different lines. This is not simply a result of the division between teacher and student, but rather the fact that the cycle of student participation rotated every two years with each new intake. Samuel, of course, was a permanent fixture. In many ways, this could be both a limiting and enabling condition, though neither Samuel nor his students were able or willing to bureaucratise the Workshop. Beneath the annual fluctuations of the workshop meeting, however, Samuel identified a deeper shift in its direction:

> 'The first workshops, from 1967 to 1973 were rather carefully shaped, a large component of the work being prepared, over a long period, by students and ex-students working with myself or (in the workshops of 1972-3) myself and Anna Davin…In the middle and later 70s, partly because of the formation of History Workshop Journal, which took up my energies, partly because of the weakening of the oppositional current among the students at Ruskin, the Workshop developed a much more open character…The proportion of long prepared Ruskin and ex-Ruskin papers in the Workshop declined; the shape of the workshop came to depend more on work that people could offer from their existing resources.[178]

There were other changes to workshop practice after 1973 too, such as the decision to have shorter presentations to allow more discussion time and the introduction of parallel sessions. At the same time, the Workshop began to move outside Ruskin. Beginning in 1975, a number of local and regional workshops were organised, which ought to been seen in the light of this general shift.

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[177] Pollins, 'The Making of a Myth'

[178] Samuel, 'Thoughts about the future organisation of national history workshop', 28.7.80,

Local History Workshops

The example of the History Workshop gave vital encouragement in the development of many grassroots and local historical initiatives. An alternative network of historical activity, much of it socialist and feminist in character, was established in the 1970s, which operated through institutions of adult education, polytechnics and universities, and allowed the Workshop to extend its influence far beyond the centre of Ruskin College and Oxford. There was, however, already a number of pre-existing organisations and people, who contributed to the workshop in different ways. One of the most important, in this regard, was the Society for the Study of Labour History and, in particular, the regional labour history societies, who were often seen as an older generation, but overlapped, to a large extent, in terms of historical interest and political outlook.[179] This can be seen in the case of Eddie and Ruth Frow, members of the Communist Party and the North West Labour History Group, as well as the founders of the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. The first Manchester History Workshop, held in 1976, was organised by Samuel and Eddie Frow, whose list of speakers reflected a cross-section of the general field in which History Workshop was situated. It included a standing Labour MP, trade unionists, members of worker-writers workshops, and adult education tutors, as well as full-time academics and postgraduate students.[180]

Also involved in the organisation of this conference was Bill Williams, leader of the Manchester Studies Unit based at Manchester Polytechnic, set-up in 1974 'for the recovery, study and communication of working-class history.'[181] The retrieval of documents, photographs, videos, and, later, oral histories occurred at a time when the city's working-

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[179] For an account of the SSLH's history, see McIlroy, John, 'The Society for the Study of Labour History, 1956-1985: Its Origins and Its Heyday', *Labour History Review* 75, 1 (2010), 19-112, and on relations between the SSLH and History Workshop, see 75-77.

[180] See 'Noticeboard', *History Workshop Journal* 1 (Spring 1976), 281.

[181] Bill Willams, 'Manchester Studies Unit', *Collectanea*, 22.

class districts were undergoing demolition. As Williams recalled, early meetings with Samuel and the oral historian Paul Thompson influenced the Units' use of oral history, but they also had a personal influenced on his own approach to history, crediting Samuel as his main inspiration. 'Not only did he collect the material, he used and he used it in a very political way', he remarked. 'And I was converted really to his view of history.'[182] Other converts were unearthed right on Samuel's own doorstep. In the mid-1970s, the London historian Jerry White, a housing officer by day, was conducting his own independent research in Spitalfields, before he eventually encountered Samuel. Supported in his research by Samuel, White soon through himself into the movement, helping to organise regional workshops in East London and Islington, and joining the *HWJ* collective.

History Workshops like those held in Manchester or East London followed a similar pattern to Ruskin Workshops. They were single one-off events and, though they were assembled around local and regional themes, were brought together for the purposes of public presentation. This approach to workshop activity had serious flaws, according to Samuel, who observed that 'the workshop meeting has been thought as the primary end of workshop activity, rather than being a high point in a continuing programme of personal and to a lesser extent collective work.'[183] The result was that 'the local workshop has tended to run out of steam, having exhausted the available amount of historical work'.[184] A strategic alternative in the local production of history was suggested to Samuel by the example of small working groups who set out with the aim of publication. One example he cited here was the Tottenham History Workshop, which grew out of a WEA evening class ran by Jerry White. Organised collectively, the members of the group used local sources and oral history to produce a book on the people's history of Tottenham. In White's view 'it seemed to me to represent the sort of local history that I would have wished to have done more of really. It

[182] Bill Willliams, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Manchester, 16.1.12)
[183] Samuel, 'Federation of History Workshops and Socialist Historians', 14.2.80, R7/004
[184] Ibid.

was collective… [and it] did seek to use other sources and to set people's lives in a context.'[185] Another local workshop group, the East Bowling History Workshop based in Bradford, was established in 1978 with virtually no previous connection to the movement. It emerged as a community group, made up largely of senior citizens, which produced a book based around their memories of childhood. However, the purpose of the group was to serve the needs of a deprived community rather than producing a programme of historical work. As we are told in a report for the *HWJ*, the group 'played a large part in helping to re-establish and develop a community identity, re-enlivening the self-image of individuals and of the area of East Bowling.'[186]

Samuel himself attended the Somers Town History Workshop in 1977, which was organised by a community action group, describing it as being 'much more local than any that have been held before.' That did not mean, however, it was without fault. One of the issues he had with it was that 'the research side of the Workshop was overshadowed by the testimonies, and that the historical perspective was foreshortened'.[187] In reply, the organisers faced down his criticism by arguing 'we were walking a tightrope between academic interests on the one hand, and parochial local history on the other.'[188] They rebuked him for assuming that the workshop was an end in itself; a point ironic in view of preceding discussion. Instead the workshop should be seen as a starting point for further activity with the potential to fulfill broader aims and possibilities. More pointedly, they insisted that '[l]ocal people are entitled to know that they can contribute'.[189] Evidently, the uses of local history were wider and not necessarily compatible with the concerns of the academic historian.

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[185] Jerry White, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Leamington Spa, 5.1.12). The book published by the Tottenham History Workshop was *How Things Were: growing up in Tottenham 1890-1920* (London: Tottenham History Workshop, 1981)
[186] Lydia Merrell, 'New Life in Old Areas', *History Workshop Journal,* 14 (1982), 173-176.
[187] RES, ''Somers Town History Workshop', *History Workshop Journal* 4 (1977), 205.
[188] Linda Clarke et al., 'Reply', *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977), 249.
[189] Ibid.

Nowhere was this tension more apparent than in the Workshop's uneasy relationship to the People's Autobiography of Hackney, a project that was inspired both by the History Workshop pamphlets and the 1972 History Workshop meeting on childhood.[190] Housed in the Centerprise bookshop, it was here where people's history met locally-based radical community politics. The People's Autobiography and other projects were designed as locally and independently organised publishing initiatives, which used people's history and autobiography as a form of cultural production from below. The local community were directly involved in the writing and publishing process, and, thus, they were responsive to local pressures. 'Finding itself based in a community centre in a multi-racial, volatile, and at times politically divided urban community", wrote Ken Worpole 'the Hackney project could not but respond to events, conditions, and struggles as they happened, developing a trajectory of its own rather than fulfilling a political & cultural programme mapped out in the seminar room or party headquarters.'[191] Here the meaning of history (or autobiography or memoir) was defined in terms of the local, as an instrument or technique that could help to realise some other goal. In Worpole's view a different political dynamic was at work in the conceptions of the People's Autobiography and History Workshop: 'you could say there is also a difference between those whose commitment is to place [...] and those whose commitment is to a programme of ideas'.[192]

The Road to '79

The difficulties of attracting working-class people to come to History Workshops were not isolated to the local sphere of activity. The national workshop had also become increasingly disturbed by the complexion of the audience, which was intensified, as Samuel comments above illustrate, by the fact that fewer papers were delivered by Ruskin students and by

[190] For a brief account of this project, see Worpole, Ken, *Local Publishing and Local Culture: An account of the work of the Centerprise publishing project 1972-1977* (London: Centerprise Trust, 1977).
[191] Ken Worpole, 'People's Autobiography of Hackney', *Collectanea*, 29.
[192] Ken Worpole, Interview with Ian Gwinn (North London, 9.11.11)

resentment created by the volunteer labour of students who felt increasingly undervalued. The 1975 Workshop was organised outside the College's structures and had been so large that it was moved to the Oxford Union and a lot of students were drafted in to help in the organisation. A situation that created friction between Samuel and the students. 'He took all the decisions', remembered one bystander 'which is one of the things that alienated a number of these students who turned against it…they came to consider that they had been manipulated and exploited'.[193] As a consequence, the Workshop was placed under the control of the student union, so that it would be done 'in a much more controlled way for the next time'. For the 1976 Workshop, a formal collective of students was established, who the size of the attendance would be strictly limited and [p]riority in distributing tickets will be [sic] given to people applying from the Oxford area.'[194] There was, however, a considerable expansion in the numbers of speakers with the introduction of multiple parallel session.

The next workshop meeting – 1977 – looked very different. Focused on the theme of rank and file movements, the Workshop returned to single sessions, which were delivered by far fewer academic historians and most of the speakers were drawn from the labour movement or from Ruskin. On the basis of the previous years' experience, the student collective decided that there was 'the need for greater participation by both Ruskin students and Rank and File people' and 'the need to structure the annual workshops so as to attract Rank and File people as opposed to "trendy" academics.'[195] The Workshop oscillated in the other direction in its content and form for 1978, which was organised in parallel sessions once again and, in a sign of the times, it addressed the place of the left in the post-Second World War period. As the blurb for the conference put it, '[t]his Workshop offers

[193] Bob Purdie, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[194] 'History Workshop Guidelines', undated, RS7/002
[195] Minutes, RCHWC, 20.10.76, RS7/002

an opportunity for the Left to take a view of both of itself and of some of the wider determinations shaping the course of politics, culture and personal life.'[196]

The 1979 History Workshop, which brought many tensions and latent antagonisms to the surface, both inside and outside Ruskin, is now etched in the collective memory of the British intellectual left as the scene of the ugly clash over theory between Edward Thompson and the CCCS's Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson.[197] The genesis of this dispute, at least within the context of *HWJ* is dealt with in Chapter Five. But there was also another source of discontent sparked by Ruskin students themselves, who felt deeply alienated by the character of the proceedings and by their subordinate status as volunteers rather than participants. The airing of their grievances at the end of the conference rehearsed complaints that were heard at earlier workshops since 1975. The incident reflected the limits of History Workshop's democratic scope and, moreover, the uniqueness of the pre-1975 period that allowed greater latitude for experiments in democratic politics.

The fallout from the conference led to the decision to not run the Workshop, though it did return in 1991 for the 25th anniversary. The national workshop then began its itineration around the country in the 1980s, where it was mostly held at the polytechnics with groups that were able to run it. Particular places of strength were Brighton, where it was held four times, and Leeds, where it was held on three occasions. More broadly, during the 1980s, there were a number of important developments, though none of them lasted. The London History Workshop Centre and the History Workshop Centre for Social History indicated a more institutional focus, but there were also significant new departures, as in the case of TV History Workshop. The book series kept up with the changing political climate as signified by the three volume work in *Patriotism* (1989). The last official workshop meeting was held in 1994. But it maintained a steady following almost until the end. As David

[196] Ruskin History Workshop 12, In Our Time, Undated, RS7
[197] A number of recent accounts of this event are now available. For instance, see Hamilton, Scott, *The Crisis of Theory*, 155-79 and Ree, Jonathan. 'EP Thompson and the Drama of Authority', *History Workshop Journal* 47, (Spring 1999), 211-221.

Goodway, speaker at the very first workshop gathering, recalled ‘it was really 93 in Leeds it really hit me that this is the beginning of the end in term of numbers of people’ and, mercifully in his view, ‘[it] almost turned over and sank without people flogging it and trying to keep it going’.[198]

[198] David Goodway, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Keighley, 23.2.12)

CHAPTER 2: *GESCHICHTSWERKSTÄTTEN* IN THE FEDERAL REPBULIC OF GERMANY: LOCAL AND NATIONAL VARIATIONS

If the 1979 History Workshop meeting witnessed a deep and painful rupture on the intellectual left in Britain, then it also marked an important departure in terms of the internationalization of the movement. The previous year's workshop had been exclusively focused on post-war Britain ('In Our Time – Britain 1945-78'), but the programme of 'People's History and Socialist Theory' brought together a broad array of speakers from across Western Europe.[199] The presence of several West German historians here reflected both the impact of historical work being produced in the Federal Republic and the greater coalescence of international trends, but it also highlighted the central organisational role of History Workshop within a loose transnational network of historians, facilitating contacts and exchanges that had otherwise not been established through formal channels. For some historians, the support and friendship of this network was a haven in the face of their own embattled status inside the academy.[200] In the case of the future development of German *Geschichtswerkstätten*, several leading members met one another for the first time at History Workshop meetings and then helped to spread the ideas and message of grassroots historical activity. Sometimes this message was overtly requested. Following the 1979 meeting, for example, Lutz Niethammer wrote to Raphael Samuel to solicit an article for publication, stating 'there is a great deal of interest in the idea of the History Workshop among young historians and a short, informative and inspiring piece would now come just in the right time.'[201]

The influence of the British model on its West German counterpart has been acknowledged by members of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* and, likewise, the rise of *Alltagsgeschichte*

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[199] They included Maurice Aymard; Alain Cottereau; Patric Friedenson; Yves Lequin; Jacques Ranciere; Claude Robinot (France); Franz Brüggemeier; Alf Lüdtke; Hans Medick; Lutz Niethammer; Anne-marie Tröger; Rainer Wirtz (West Germany); Paola Di Cori; Carlo Ginzberg; Luisa Passerini; Carlo Poni; Sandro Truilzi (Italy); Selma Leyersdorf (Holland); Peter Larsen (Denmark).

[200] See the reflections of Patric Friedenson, Lutz Niethammer, and Luisa Passerini in 'International Reverberations: Remembering Raphael', *History Workshop Journal* 45 (Spring 1998), 246-260.

[201] Lutz [Niethammer], Letter to Raphael, 25.3.80, RS9/068.

owed much to the general inspiration of British Marxist historians and history from below.[202] However, the processes of transmission and appropriation from one country to the other were uneven and selective. In the next chapter, the character of this unevenness will be explored through a detailed analysis of scholarly networks and communication between British and West German historians, which shows how social and technical practices of academic discourse, as well as the wider cultural context, shaped the forms of exchange through which ideas were presented and understood. Here the aim is to understand the very different national and local contexts of historical production in the FRG, in which activists of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* were situated, and how they played a critical role in mediating the perception and application of research methods and practices. The complex arrangement of transnational, national, and local specificities, it is argued, depended on the purposes to which historical practices and forms were put.

The *Geschichtswerkstätten* understood themselves as part of the general wave of protest and activity signified by the new social movements of the 1970s and 80s, which opposed government policies in various domains and issued a general challenge to the destructive effects of modern industrial society.[203] These movements were formed out of local citizens' initiatives and an alternative culture that had its roots in the student movement of the 1960s and the *Ausserparlamentarische Opposition* (APO), which had unleashed a process of transforming the political culture of the Federal Republic from below.[204] Based on anti-authoritarian ideals of participatory and grassroots democracy, the peace, environmental and anti-nuclear movements formed a broad coalition of forces, which later found electoral expression in the establishment of the Green Party.[205] In the social science literature, the new social movements have been assimilated into theories about the general pattern of democratisation

[202] See Michael Wildt, "History Workshops in West Germany: A Survey at the End of the German Post-War Era', in Samuel (ed.) *A Collectanea*, 56-64.
[203] See Schöttler, Peter, 'Eine «grüne» Geschichtsschreibung? Von der Alltagsgeschichte zur «Geschichtswerkstatt»', *Moderne Zeiten*, 3, 9 (1983) 47–49; and Eley, 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte"', 298, 343.
[204] On the *Bürgerliche Initiativen*, see Burns, Rob and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extra-Parliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 164-204.
[205] For the Greens, see ibid, 230-262; and Gorski, Philip S. and Andrei S. Markovits, *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

and broadening of civil society, but for other commentators they were responses to the frustration of more radical hopes of the left. 'It represented not the triumph of a generation over the established order', contends Joachim Jachnow 'but rather the blockage of earlier emancipatory struggles.'[206] In keeping with the general tenor of the new social movements, the *Geschichtswerkstätten* shared a common interest in extending the sphere of democratic participation and human emancipation, challenging state policy in the field of memory, and reflecting a certain frustration with existing forms of left politics.[207]

In post-war West Germany, discussions of history and memory have been intimately linked to democratic legitimacy and national identity, but it was only after the Adenauer years that the process of coming to terms with the Nazi past (Vergangenheitsbewältgung) was seen as a necessary component of a democratised and integrated West German society.[208] The terms by which the crimes of the Nazism were public discussed gradually expanded during the 1960s, with the return of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to government, with the protests of students movement against the silence about the Third Reich, with the critique of the New Left, which crystallised around the debate over fascism. But this expanded scope of discussion remained limited. According to Rudy Koshar, 'the new generation stopped short of making a more searching exploration of their parents' and grandparents' participation in mass murder.'[209] In fact, 1979 heralded the arrival of a new era in the confrontation with the National Socialist past, certainly in the public sphere, with the broadcast of the TV mini-series Holocaust,[210] an event which showed the gulf between academic history and broader public consciousness. For Alf Lüdtke, 'it demonstrated to

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[206] Joachim Jachnow, "What's Become of the German Greens?" *New Left Review* 81 (May-June 2013), p. 103.
[207] For an introduction and early assessments of the work of the new history movement, see Heer, Hannes and Volker Ullrich (eds.), *Geschichte Entdecken: Erfahrungen und Projekte der neuen Geschichtsbewegung* (Hamburg: Renbek, 1985).
[208] Herf, Jeffrey, *Divided Memory: the Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 334.
[209] Koshar, Rudy. *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
[210] On the 79er generation, see Marcuse, Harold, 'Generational cohorts and the Shaping of Popular Attitudes towards the Holocaust', in John K. Roth et al. (eds.), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol 3, *Memory*, 652-663.

professional historians how limited the impact of their research on Nazism had been.'[211] A growing interest in the history of everyday life was given a boost by the President's Prize for German History in Schools, which was dedicated to the theme 'The Social History of Everyday Life' (1977-79), and in 1980-81 the theme of 'Daily Life under National Socialism' was selected.[212]

During the 1980s, the history of modern Germany became more openly discussed and contested, both amongst the professoriate and the public at large. The dispute known as the *Historikerstreit* (1986-7) revealed how interpretations of the Nazi regime had implications for present politics as well as role of history in legitimating different versions of national culture and identity. In short, proponents of the *Sonderweg* thesis, which placed Nazism in a specifically German path of historical development and broadly coincided with a social democratic perspective, did battle with conservative historians who they charged with trivialising the crimes of the Nazi period in order to re-nationalise German historiography.[213] This antagonism occurred in a climate of conservatism brought about by the *Tendenzwende* in the late-1970s and the elevation of Helmut Kohl to chancellor in 1982. In this context, *Alltagsgeschichte* flourished, though not without strong opposition.[214] By bringing neglected or suppressed areas of the German past to wider public attention, particularly in relation to National Socialism, the *Geschichtswerkstätten* pursued a radical approach to public history and

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[211] Alf Lüdtke, "Coming to terms with the Past": Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany", *The Journal of Modern History* 65 (September 1993), p. 543.
[212] Eley, 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte"', 298.
[213] A considerable amount of work has been published on the *Historikerstreit*. For the most important discussions in English, see Maier, Charles S. *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988); Evans, Richard J. *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York: Pantheon, 1989); and Eley, Geoff, 'Nazism, Politics, and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German *Historikerstreit* 1986-1987', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), 171-208. For a general survey of the relationship between German history and national identity, see Berger, Stefan, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1997).
[214] The opposition to Alltagsgechichte was particularly vehement by representatives of the Bielefeld School, none more so than by Hans-Ulrich Wehler. See his 'Königsweg zu neuen Ufern oder Irrgarten der illusionen? Die westdeutsche Alltagsgeschichte: Geschichte 'von innen' und 'von unten', in Franz Bruggemeier and Jurgen Kocka (eds.), *Geschichte von unten--Geschichte von innen:* Kontroversen um die Alltaqsgeschichte (Hagen, 1985), 17-47. See also Fletcher, Roger, 'History from Below Comes to Germany', *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (1988), 557-68, and Rosenhaft, Eve, 'History, Anthropology, and the Study of Everyday Life', *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 29 (1987), 99-105.

memory work, which was organised through a variety of local and national events, activities and projects.

This chapter examines the organisation of such initiatives and considers how far the general impetus provided by British History Workshop was translated into various practices of historical recovery and representation. It focuses on three key constituents of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* movement: the Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt (BGW); the Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte am Bodensee; and the national organisation Geschichtswerkstatt e.V.

I. BERLINER GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT

Origins: 1980-82

A former typesetting factory situated on Gneisenau Straße in Kreuzberg, the Mehringhof was a notable centre of radical and alternative activity in West Berlin. In the summer of 1980, discussions about organising an alternative archive and history group were first held here, leading to the formation of the *Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt* (hereafter BGW). The original inception of the idea was prompted by a concern to collect materials from protest groups and activists. As Ursula Schröter recalls, 'there was a great interest in material, in posters, flyers [...] from the alternative movement' and 'that this material was not lost'.[215] But it also responded to other interests. In a contribution to these embryonic discussions, Diethardt Kerbs suggested the basis of the project should come 'not from the impulse of salvaging and preserving material, but from the impulse to face our own history and actively engage with it'.[216]

Kerbs sounded a call to arms. The history of the 'underdogs', he wrote, is too often 'suppressed and distorted by the victors, but it is also sometimes suppressed by the defeated and resigned themselves'. There remained, however, redemptive power in the recovery of history, since 'any present could learn a lot for its current struggles'. But in the circumstances of post-war, divided Germany this demanded 'reworking, reconstituting and pursuing the multiply interrupted (and partially obliterated) continuity of left movements and progressive traditions'. According to Kerbs, this reworking of the past was as much about maintaining a sense of left identity as it was about instigating political activity. It was about being able to locate oneself in a continuing tradition of struggle and not feel 'bloody

[215] Thomas Lindenberger, Susanne zur Nieden, Ursula Schröter, Interview with IG, 19.2.14
[216] Diethardt Kerbs, 'Vorlage zum Gespräch im Mehringhof am 18.7.1980', File 'Montags 1980', BGW

isolated and confined'.[217] The thematic focus of this initiative would centre on the history of the labour movement and the class struggle, the history of youth protest and other emancipatory movements, citizens' groups (*bürgerliche Initiativen*) and grassroots and democratic activities. For history activists in Berlin, the aim was 'to try to understand the history of the city and our history in it'. In keeping with the spirit of British History Workshop, there were also pleas not to leave history to the academics, to overcome the barriers to non-academic participation in historical research, and to determine historical themes on the basis of social and political purposes and pursued 'in partisan fashion'. Finally, the idea was to deliver findings, not in the traditional written manner of academic research, but choosing the best medium of presentation 'according to the purposes, themes and target audience'.[218]

For Thomas Lindenberger, a student at the Free University at this time, what was important was carrying out historical research outside the ivory towers. Coming to the idea of *Geschichtswerkstatt* through his own engagement with English Marxist social history and the History Workshop movement, he was motivated by the possibility of 'carrying out historical research outside the socially isolated and established sphere of academic research together with those for whom its findings can be directly relevant to their own social interests here and now'.[219] But caution was also expressed about the prospect of connecting history and politics. Martin Kauder, for example, wondered 'how far and at what points the reappraisal of history can lead to a distinctive political practice'.[220] In another internal memo, Kerbs himself raised the tension between historical and political activity, comparing their respective weight of importance. As he put it: 'would I rather drive to Gorleben or use the time to do a taped interview with Augustin Sondurf, who is 94 and might die tomorrow?

[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Thomas LIndenberger, 'Meine Vorstellungen und Motive für die Mitarbeit in einer 'Geschichtswerkstatt' nebst 'Archiv', 31.10.80, File 'Montags 1980', BGW
[220] Martin Kauder, 'Werkstatt Geschichte', undated, File 'Montags 1980', BGW

Where am I least necessary? What is more important to me?'[221] Indeed, the very question of whether we can learn from history at all was raised, the answer to which, going on past experience, was less affirmative. 'Didn't we in the student movement', it was suggested 'begin by deliberately ignoring and deriding the experiences of struggle of the earlier generation?'[222] Yet this attitude persisted; as Andreas Ludwig remembers, 'a lot of people active in the grassroots things said why are you doing history? What's that good for?'[223] Notwithstanding such reservations, the concern with how to connect historical practice to the struggles of the present grew.

In the practice of *Spurensicherung* (see below), we see how politics and history were mutually imbricated in the process of translating general political aspirations into concrete research methods. In reply to the question 'why do we do *Spurensicherung?*' came a single word answer: 'emancipation'. 'Partly it is about the individual emancipation of the researcher' it was claimed, but also 'of the researcher contributing to the emancipation of others'. The source of this 'turning back to history' resided in criticisms of 'the people's fascist turn' and of existing left politics. And, as it was asked, '[w]hat are the causes of this criticism? Is it personal experience, which was always in latent contradiction to the theoretical and practical premises of socialist politics, but could not find intellectual expression?'[224] Here the turn to the lived experience of everyday life expressed frustration with politics, but also with the objective posture of academics. 'If we want to research credible experiences of everyday life, want to secure the traces of everyday life, first we must discuss our own experience, to take seriously our own experience and not hide behind "scientific" results/theory.'[225] *Alltagsgeschichte*, then, would be a vehicle for emancipatory

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[221] Diethardt Kerbs, 'Hauptprobleme linker Archivare', 18.7.80, File 'Montags 1980', BGW. Gorleben was a site of nuclear waste diposal against which the environmental movement protested.
[222] L.B. 'Geschichte als Gegenwart', File 'Montags 1980', BGW;
[223] Andreas Ludwig, Interview with IG, 29.9.13
[224] AG-Spurensicherung, 12.3.82, Unfiled Notes, BGW
[225] Ibid.

politics in critiquing academics modes of knowledge, in rethinking existing categories of the political, and, as we will see, in challenging the silence over National Socialism.[226]

The first step in bringing the BGW into being was to circulate an appeal for participation and support around various left-wing newspapers and magazines like *taz*, *Neue*, and *Zitty*, citizens' initiatives, youth and women's groups, and existing history projects. It was addressed to those 'who want to prevent the history of various movements and struggles of the left (in its broadest sense) from going under the radar or being forgotten', to those 'who want to oppose state-decreed views of history', and to those who wanted to develop 'opportunities for action for today and tomorrow'.[227] A date was set in January 1981 for all interested parties to come to the Mehringhof to begin the process of formally establishing the BGW.

In the meantime, activists were being kept abreast of developments farther afield. At a meeting in November 1980, there was a report on the recent annual conference of the British History Workshop in Brighton by Gabi Mischkowski. Nearer home, there was a series of talks with the veteran radical Theo Pinkus, who gave an introduction to the *Studienbibliothek zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* in Zürich. Pinkus was something of a mentor to members of the BGW and was described by one as a '*Gründungsvater*' (founding father).[228] Pinkus was involved in putting together a meeting on the Dig Where You Stand movement planned for May/June 1981 in Salecina, at which Sven Lindqvist was to be present. Lindqvist himself came to Berlin to give a talk at one of the early forums of the BGW. At another forum, Hans-Jürgen Stöppler reported on the work and activities of the

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[226] On the connection the between the critique of academic history and left theory, see Alf Lüdtke, "What is the history of everyday life and who are its practitioners", in Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experience and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11. For a parallel argument in regards to people's history in Britain, see Raphael Samuel "People's History", in Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), xiv-xxxix.

[227] 'Aufruf zum Aufbau einer Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt', Undated, File 'Montags 1980', BGW

[228] Gisela Wenzel, "'Grabe, wo du stehst': Zwei Jahrzehnte Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt", in *Geschichtswerkstätten: gestern- heute-morgen* (2004), 48.

Centerprise project in East London.[229] The appropriation of the language of *Geschichte von Unten* and *Grab wo du stehst* into the lexicon of Berlin's grassroots activists registered the presence of these foreign influences. To begin with, the direct adoption of the German translation followed a similar rationale to that outlined by Samuel earlier. According to Susanne Zur Nieden, 'there is, of course, a certain anti-academic impulse in it, that you work with your hands' and 'concretely on the ground'.[230]

An early position paper explained that history from below 'means counterposing the history everyday life, of the oppressed, their struggles and defeats to a history of statesmen and war…We want to make the people speak whom the dominant history has silenced'. Meanwhile, 'the barefoot research' pioneered by the latter, it claimed, 'means discovering our own surroundings, the history of the city districts, the places of work and our left history'.[231] But these meanings would be significantly modified and reworked in the West German context, in the articulation of activists' experience with concrete problems of research on the ground.

The BGW's appeal was met with a strong response. Records from March 1981 indicated 110 contacts, with historical interests ranging from the labour movement, archives and libraries, Berlin's firms and companies, and local history, to youth, women, schools, and the student movement.[232] At the inaugural meeting, it was agreed that the BGW had three responsibilities: to carry out documenting and archiving; to serve as a point of contact for researcher; and to stimulate new research. Members of the BGW also questioned whether it was useful to think about left history in the organisational terms of workers' parties, since they wanted to examine those movements that did not fit into 'bourgeois but also proletarian conceptions of history'. For Schröter, 'we didn't want to update the history

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[229] 'Hans-Jürgen Stöppler berichtet über das Stadtteilprjekt CENTERPRISE im Londoner Ost-End…', 18.10.81, File 'Montags 1980'
[230] Lindenberger, zur Nieden, Schröter, Interview.
[231] 'Entwurf für ein programmatisches Selbstverständnis', August 1981, File 'Montags 1980', BGW:
[232] 'Info Brief 1. Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Organisation', [23.8.81], File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

of the labour movement'.[233] Rather they wanted to examine those movements that did not fit into 'bourgeois but also proletarian conceptions of history'.[234] 'Could the anarchist movement, the women's movement of the 19th Century and today's diverse BI's [citizens' initiatives] and alternative projects', it wondered 'be placed in a distinct "tradition"?'[235] The ambition of articulating a theoretical framework for this alternative historiography was also envisaged.

Following these initial exchanges, the next task for the BGW was to establish some kind of organisational structure as well as to constitute itself as a non-profit body. To start with, a working group was set up to handle formal organisational requirements, with others formed around particular tasks – the building of the archive, the organisation of monthly forum events, and funding. With respect to how responsibilities would be handled, there was also an agreement 'to forgo a strict division of labour and to manage particular tasks collaboratively'.[236] Soon, the first Monday of every month, 'Blauer Montag', was used as a hub for organisational activities, where 'we meet newcomers, interested people, active members, in order to forge projects, to produce ideas, to theorise, to politicise, and to get to know people'.[237] The 'Montagsgruppe' evolved into the central coordinating body of the BGW as the ad-hoc demands of running the organisation accrued, creating tensions between it and the working groups. In late 1981, problems were raised about the routines and arrangements of activity, in particular in relation to how project groups were run ostensibly autonomously, but had become increasingly reliant on the involvement of the Montagsgruppe. This was blamed on the work flow of the Montagsgruppe itself: 'because of the more or less spontaneous week-by-week decision making …, the effectiveness of work depended on who happened to be there by chance – the people who knew about particular

[233] Lindenberger, zur Nieden, Schröter, Interview.
[234] 'Geschichtswerkstatt Berlin. Ein Zwischenbericht zum Stand im März 1981', File 'Montags 1980', BGW
[235] Ibid.
[236] BGW, Info Brief 1. Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Organisation, 23.8.81, File 'Montags Gruppe', BGW
[237] Einladung zum Preussentag der Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt', 8.10.81, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

issues or not'.[238] In order to improve the long-term planning of activities and the communication between the Montagsgruppe and project groups, as well as between the project groups themselves, a restructured format was proposed, in which each Monday of the month was devoted to separate tasks. 'Blue Monday' would remain as the occasion to welcome newcomers, but there would also be a 'Publication Monday' for project reports and development of a newsletter, an 'Office Monday' for routine matters, and a 'Strategy Monday' for long-term planning and preparation. The difficulties of maintaining a balance between competing priorities – between efficient working relations, on the one hand, and the commitment to autonomous and democratic modes of organisation, on the other – would remain an ongoing one for the BGW, especially once the organisation received external funding and people were paid for their work.

In their own retrospective judgements, members of the BGW admitted that the autonomous manner in which things were organised gave rise to a 'strong potential for conflict', particularly in relation to the responsibilities imposed by the receipt of funding. 'Projects that had been supported by the Berlin Senate with public resources, i.e. taxpayer's money', Schröter explained 'had to therefore account for what happened with it'.[239] The question of whether or not to accept state finance was 'highly contentious' and extensively debated inside the BGW, certainly insofar as it threatened the loss of independence. But there were other debates too, over content and over politics: 'what should the next exhibition do? What is the most important thing now? [...] Can you make [the event] critical?'[240] These questions provoked 'heated debates'.[241] Anyone could propose a project to the group, but the proposals were heavily scrutinised. As Ludwig recalls, 'it was not a laissez faire thing [...] it was debated intellectually and politically, of course [...] and you had to defend yourself'. Revealing an insight into the internal dynamics of the central group,

[238] 'Bericht von der Organisationsgruppen-Sitzung am 16.11', 23.11.81, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.
[239] Lindenberger, zur Nieden, Schröter, Interview.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.

he ‘remembers so many Monday nights after the history workshop meeting – I was totally exhausted […] emotionally, intellectually because it was intertwined […] there were hard fights and it really burned when one of the people you really like a lot in the group suddenly turned out to be opponents to what you wanted next’.[242] In this respect, autonomous ways of organising allowed tensions and conflicts to come to the surface, placing greater demands on the emotional and intellectual energies of activists, but at the same time, they could also foster much deeper personal ties. ‘Everybody relied on the group and the solidarity of the group, which was an active solidarity not a passive one. You wanted to be accepted, you wanted helped, you wanted the deep feeling that you could rely on the group’, recollects Ludwig.[243]

The Practice of Spurensicherung: From Resistance to Everyday Life

Having formally established the BGW, the main activities of the society, revolved around the construction of an archive and the organisation of talks, presentations, discussion circles. Inspired by a series of talks on the post-war history of Berlin, an early foray into public historical work was conducted with an exhibition on the period of 1945-49 held at the 'Volksuni' in 1982.[244] The purpose of the project was to recover details and memories of the integration of West Berlin into the Western bloc that remained hidden or concealed by official historical accounts, focusing on the process of ‘normalisation’ that occurred in everyday lives of ordinary Berliners. At the same time, the exhibition was conceived as an intervention into present-day politics, into a political culture that had been forged in those years by the Cold War. The ambition was to encourage a more critical understanding of this period. ‘It can't only be about people of various generations marvelling at this exhibition’

[242] Ludwig, Interview.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ursula Schröter, ‘Letter to Spurensicherer/innen’, 4.6.82, File ‘Unfiled documents’, BGW.

one organiser wrote, 'rather it should provide an occasion for engaging with this period, provoking contradictions and questions, new contributions and broadened horizons'.[245] What was also stressed here was the context of that engagement; the histories of everyday life that had occurred in the neighbourhood or local district should be re-presented in those same localities, as a way of directly shaping people's confrontation with the past.

The exhibition was never actually taken into local areas, but the idea nonetheless converged with trends emerging elsewhere. Under the title 'historische Spurensicherung und Stadtteilarbeit', a weekend workshop was organised by academics at the Technical University (TU) in November 1981, which was designed to bring together a number of local history projects in order to share experiences and reflections. Representatives of around fifteen projects assembled during the weekend, including members of the BGW, with topics ranging from the history of social work, teaching and schools, a film history of a Berlin factory, and local history of anti-fascism. Many of the participants had developed their projects through local educational institutions — the *Volkshochschule*, the *Fachhochschule*, the Free University (FU), and the TU. At the outset, it was decided that the group should avoid the discussion of theoretical and methodological problems, and instead hear presentations from each project in turn. The discussion focused mainly around the practical challenges of engaging with local populations and purposes of such work. Responses were wide-ranging and the projects were diverse. Some were organised as student projects in university seminars, hence a lot of attention concentrated on how to access local networks, generate dialogue with residents, or find conversation partners to interview about their lives; others were firmly anchored in community life, with collective and open forms of organisation. For example, Lutz von Werder, a representative of a grassroots initiative 'story-telling workshop' (*Erzählungswerkstatt*) located in Schöneberg, raised issues about the ethical implications of carrying out local memory work. Reflecting on the needs of local

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[245] Thomas LIndenberger, 'Für eine AG Geschichte (West-) Berlin in der Zeit nach dem 2. Weltkrieg (45-49). Einige Ideen', Jan 82, File 'Ursula Schröter', BGW.

participants and the alienating effects of letting writing skill predominate in some groups, he asked 'What does it [local history] do for people? It has to help them cope with real life problems, otherwise it has no effect'.[246] In this regard, the practice of the story-telling workshop intended not simply to allow local people to recount their histories and memories, but 'also to write them down and to find an appropriate form for them'. Here the emphasis was placed on shared practice and authority in the production of these histories, what von Werder described as 'collective editing processes' or 'Stellvertreterschreiben' (writing by proxy). [247]

In his review of the workshop, co-organiser Bruno Schonig elucidated the theme of *Spurensicherung* that had given it a title.[248] He linked it to the work of Sven Lindqvist and his approach to 'Dig where you stand', which was not simply an effort to correct an historical imbalance in our understanding in recovering the hidden traces and materials of the past. Knowledge about the people and the workers who lived in the past cannot be easily secured because 'they won't speak to everyone', Schonig stated; rather, 'they speak to those who they assume will understand them: today's factory workers'.[249] There are echoes here of the early approach of British History Workshop, which insisted that worker historians were well-placed to write the history of work, and, indeed, Schonig referred to 'Anglo-Saxon historical research' and the method of oral history. He went on to describe Lindqvist's practice as the self-appropriation of history ('Selbst-Geschichtsaneignung'), which 'has a double meaning: it is about the history that people work up for themselves, but it is also about the history of the self, our own history'. What distinguished *Spurensicherung*, above all, was the location of history-making activities – 'streets, neighbourhoods, housing estates, but also homes'. From this standpoint, the physical space of the city structured not only the

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[246] 'Historische Spurensicherung und Stadtteilarbeit. Protokoll', 11.11.81, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Literally translated, the term means the securing of evidence and it is also the German word for the forensic department of the police force.
[249] Bruno Schonig, 'Historische Spurensicherung und Stadtteilarbeit Bericht über ein Werkstattgespräch', *TU Journal* February 82, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.

research process, but the entire field of knowledge, embedding relations between past and present, knower and known. *Spurensicherung* could be said to break down the distance between the object of knowledge and the subject, reimagining historiography as a local and democratic form of knowledge production. Indeed, in Schonig's view, historical production should be organised 'as a shared process and in a common context'.[250] 'In this way', he concluded 'perhaps the difference between the 'researcher' and 'researched' could be defined and productively changed'.[251]

A second meeting was soon convened, this time at the BGW, which was then regularised into a project/working group.[252] The ongoing exchanges increasingly brought to light the political and pedagogical interests of these projects, as well as the general methodological challenges posed by their work. In this regard, several important, though unresolved issues were raised in terms of the implications of life history for historical reconstructions of the neighbourhood and district. First, although some projects had an immediate resonance emanating directly out of current political struggles, there were various efforts to clarify the link between politics and these forms of 'situated' historical research. Here a central place was reserved for thinking about ways of connecting to the self and identity in the engagement with and (re)experiencing of the past. 'What was important was that people began to engage with life history'.[253] This purpose was closely related to the choice of research methods, particularly oral history and biographical practice. However, the potential shortcomings of these methods were recognised, as unease about how the 'situation' itself would circumscribe the recollections of memory were voiced. It appeared that there was a 'will to nostalgia' and it remained to be proved 'whether this need for history is real, or [just] a means for getting in contact with other people'.[254] Difficulties

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[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid
[252] U.S. 'November – Forum in der Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt', Dec 81, File 'Unfiled Document', BGW.
[253] Elke, 'Lankwitz Austellung 1945-1949', Undated, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.
[254] Untitled notes 'Methoden/Inhalte/Interessen', Undated, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.

arose in the relationship between researcher and the *Zeitzeuge* (eye-witnesses) because the latter did not want simply to be 'witnesses' but 'they want to satisfy their need for human contact'. In the case of *Stadtteilarbeit* (community work), such conditions were not easily surmounted, and it was recommended that 'researchers must seek to shield their interests from the human expectations that arise out of any human relationship'.[255] Another recurring question was the relationship of the individual to 'objective history'. It was a concern that was also debated at the first workshop, where positions were divided between the practice of a faithful and 'pure' presentation of the informants' memories, and one where they could reflect on and reconsider their statements, which raised a methodological conundrum for *Spurensicherung* as a form of historical pedagogy. Schonig 'pleaded for a thinking, judging and productive reader, who is thoroughly able to connect the objective strand of history writing with subjective breaks in the form of individual life and historical memories'.[256]

One of the major impetuses behind the pursuit of oral and life history in the locality concerned the place of (or lack of) the anti-fascist resistance in the memory culture of the FRG. As the official policy of commemoration was heavily dictated by Cold War divisions between East and West, left-wing resistance to the Nazis was equated with the dictatorship of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and went virtually unacknowledged.[257] As a result, several anti-fascist walking tours sprang up. Their aim was to correct 'the image of fascist resistance conveyed by "20th July"' and 'mak[e] public the suppressed memory of the social democratic and communist resistance'.[258] Under the auspices of the BGW, a meeting was arranged drawing together the tour guides of these anti-fascist walks. These walks were established in several districts of Berlin, including Wedding, Tempelhof, Reinickendorf,

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[255] Ibid.

[256] 'Historische Spurensicherung und Stadtteilarbeit. Protokoll', 11.11.81, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.

[257] On the remembrance of resistance in the FRG, see Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002), chapter 3.

[258] Untitled notes 'Methoden/Inhalte/Interessen', Undated, File 'Unfiled documents', BGW.

Zehlendorf, and Neukölln.[259] They used a variety of presentational forms and styles in order to convey historical understanding, such as the active participation of resistance fighters on the tour, the inclusion of material from eye witnesses, and the focus on specific landmarks like areas of industry, labour camps, sites of armament production, and meeting places of the Communists and Nazis.

Most of the tours sought to engage the young and involved the participation of school classes. Indeed, this was at the core of their pedagogical mission. 'The experience of neo-Nazism currents among the young was overwhelmingly the impetus behind the work', declared a BGW report.[260] The tours were organised against the backdrop of rise of neo-Nazi organisations and their increased use of violence in the 1980s. The rising support for right-wing extremists was also a cause of concern, later confirmed by the electoral success of the far-right *Republikaner* in 1989.[261] The capacity of the walking tours to act as a medium of political education ran up against 'problems with the young people and the way they acted', which created a feeling, as one observer speculated, that 'maybe they haven't learnt any other way to process [this material]? They just make jokes'.[262] At another meeting, a similar difficulty was raised: 'how can young people's defensiveness towards the theme of fascism be explained and changed?'[263] Part of the problem was about how to relate to young people and to overcome their apathy. 'The youth in Wedding know that excitement is hard to come by', explained one participant.[264] What was deemed important, then, was the shared identification with the locality and to recognise that 'it's only when you yourself have grown up in a neighbourhood…that you know where they come from [and] they realise that

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[259] 'Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten in Berliner Bezirken', File 'Montags 1980', BGW.
[260] 'Bericht über die 1. Veranstaltung der Blner. Geschichtswerkstatt Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten', 29.1.1982, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.
[261] For a discussion of the activities of neo-Nazi groups in the 1980s and German attitudes to far-right extremism, see Ivor Lee McGowan, 'Remnants of an Unwelcome Past: The Existence of Neo-National Socialism in the Federal Republic of Germany', (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1991).
[262] 'Spurensicherung', 8.2.82, File 'Unfiled documents, BGW.
[263] 'Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten in Berliner Bezirken (Teil II) am 26 März 1982', File Montags 1980', BGW.
[264] 'Spurensicherung', 8.2.82, File 'Unfiled documents, BGW.

that's where you come from too'.[265] Another placed stress on 'avoiding the tedious historical explanations of particular objects' and 'overfeeding participants information'.[266] It was also felt that the purpose of the history walks was undermined when they were introduced into the school curriculum. Classes were often poorly prepared and pupils lacked motivation, which was exacerbated when the tours were turned into compulsory elements of schooling.

On a practical level, the efforts of the BGW aimed at establishing greater coordination between the anti-fascist history tours, finding areas of cooperation and sharing information and material. But the practice of *Spurensicherung* as a tool of political education was also burdened with contradictions. The ambivalence about the pedagogical uses of historical example reappeared, as the invitation to the second meeting of the discussion group asked simply: 'what could be learned from the resistance today?'[267] Examples of resistance were vital, but lessons of the past would also have to be found outside stories of tragic if heroic resistance. Understandably, there was a fear that anti-fascist history would 'degenerate into a history of "great men"'.[268] But a history of those years would have to confront the support or consent to Nazi domination, as well as the problematic use of the concept *Widerstand* as a means of categorising people's behaviour. Like the process of 'normalisation' of West Berlin into the Western bloc after 1945, it would be necessary to investigate the experiences of everyday life and to assess what meaning great politics or objective structures actually had there. At this stage, there was no certainty on how such investigations would proceed, and doubts about the efficacy of such an approach surfaced. One wondered whether everyday life had any meaning for either educators or audiences. 'Is

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[265] Ibid.

[266] 'Bericht über die 1. Veranstaltung der Blner. Geschichtswerkstatt Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten', 29.1.1982, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

[267] 'Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten in Berliner Bezirken (Teil II) am 26 März 1982', File Montags 1980', BGW.

[268] 'Bericht über die 1. Veranstaltung der Blner. Geschichtswerkstatt Alternative – historische – antifaschistische Stadtrundfahrten', 29.1.1982, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

everyday life actually so overpowering or does it serve the flight from the engagement with 'reality'?'[269] Many of these doubts, concerns and open questions would find concrete expression in the activities of the BGW, after members decided to take part in the planning of events for the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi takeover of power in 1933.

1933-1983: the BGW and the 'Destruction of Democracy'

Anniversaries of major historical events, commemorations and other days of remembrance provide the occasion for celebration and national myth-making, drawing upon a supply of political and cultural motifs in order to reinforce a sense of national cohesion, unity and identity.[270] By comparison, the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi *Machtgreifung* (seizure of power) was an experience less easily assimilated into the practices of nation-state making in post-war West Germany.[271] For an organisation like the BGW, however, it served as an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of what happened under National Socialism.

The events organised in West Berlin reveal a contest over public memory and its representation within and between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary milieus, and local official and grassroots institutions. From the outset, Berlin's public authorities had established an official programme of events, including a lecture series sponsored by the historical commission of Berlin, exhibitions at the Academy of Art, and events organised by Berlin's museums on the discrimination and persecution of the Jews. There was no provision, however, for grassroots initiatives. A broader, more decentralised programme

[269] 'Termin – Arbeitskreis – lebensgeschichten', 16.11, File 'Unfiled Documents', BGW.
[270] For a discussion of the role of one particular anniversary in the context of German memory culture, see Elizabeth Domansky "'Kristallnacht', the Holocaust and German Unity: The Meaning of November 9 as an Anniversary in Germany", *History and Memory* 4, 1 (spring-summer 1992), 60-94.
[271] The literature on public memory of Nazi Germany is vast. See, for instance, Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*; Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: the Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Klaus Neumann, *Shifting Memories: The Nazi Past in the New Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).

was agreed only after the Berlin *Kulturrat*—a coalition of some 30 cultural organisations — had asked the *Alternative Liste* (AL) fraction of the *Abgeordnetenhaus* (Berlin's state parliament) to support their demands.[272] The BGW, which joined other groups in helping to draft the programme, felt this omission on the part of the authorities deserved condemnation because 'a critical discussion particularly with the young generation would have been almost avoided'.[273] Agreement was reached on the involvement of local initiatives by the *Abgeordnetenhaus*, with the SPD and FDP also endorsing the programme of the *Kulturrat*. 'They welcomed', it was reported 'the fact that a variety of non-state institutions and initiatives have come together to carry out events of an informative and critical nature'.[274] As it became apparent, however, the plan of local officials was to negotiate with each individual group, rather than deal with the *Kulturrat* collectively. In response, the *Kulturrat* formed a coordination group in order to support local groups and projects in their negotiations. The BGW, for instance, soon commenced negotiations over the extent of financial support. An initial cost plan was rejected by the Senate and a more detailed breakdown of expenses was requested. Such demands were felt to be unnecessarily restrictive, clashing with the autonomous and open working arrangements of the groups under the umbrella of the *Kulturrat*. As the BGW complained, 'because we are starting out at the beginning of our research process, the details of how the process ends are not yet fixed'.[275]

As protracted negotiations with the West Berlin Senate continued, doubts were raised about which projects would get funded. By October 1982, a letter from the *Kulturrat* to the groups revealed that 'the list of funded projects is still not known' and urged the need

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[272] On the Greens and Alterative List in West Berlin, see Keith Duane Alexander, 'From Red to Green in the Island City: the *Alternative Liste West Berlin* and the Evolution of the West German Left, 1945-1990', (PhD diss, University of Maryland, 2003).
[273] 'Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82, File Montags 1980', BGW.
[274] Christiane Zieseke, 'Letter to colleagues', 23.3.83, File '33 Projekt 1983 KK', BGW.
[275] 'Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82,

‘to think about how we realise as much of the programme as possible’.[276] In the face of a shortfall of 50,000 DM, the *Kulturrat* sought to protect the autonomy of the programme, because the very character and success of these projects depended on their decentralised organisation in the local area. On the matter of advertising the programme, the *Kulturrat* wrote a letter to the Senate stating ‘decentralised projects, of course have to advertise in a decentralised fashion, if they are to reach their public…to make the individual project known in the district, in order to obtain unknown material from private persons’.[277] In late October, the Senate decided to release a further 520,000 DM to organisations participating in the general programme, entitled ‘The Destruction of Democracy’. But such an act of generosity was seen as merely ‘window dressing’ from the viewpoint of the *Kulturrat*, since almost 300,000 DM of that was earmarked for additional programmes of the Academy of Art, the PEN-Zentrum, and the German Association of Artists. What was left over was not sufficient to support many of the remaining projects. The *Kulturrat* saw in those decisions of the Senate ‘the attempt at covert censorship’, which ‘through the delaying tactics and selection process…has choked off important initiatives’.[278] In the event, the programme ’Zerstörung der Demokratie’ encompassed the events and activities of 30 groups — 6 music, 7 theatre, and 19 exhibitions or locally-based projects.[279]

Against this background, the BGW continued to develop the definition and scope of its project — entitled 'Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus an ausgewählten Beispielen einzelner Wohnquartiere und Bezirke in Berlin' — building on existing contacts and seeking new collaborators amongst neighbourhood groups. The chief planning document declared that the project would be situated ‘on the middle level between

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[276] Christiane Zieseke, ‘Letter to colleagues’, 8.10.82, File ’33 Projekt 1983 KK’, BGW.
[277] Christiane Zieseke, ‘An den Senator für Wissenschaft und Kulturelle Angelegenheiten’, 2.9.82, File ’33 Projekt 1983 KK’, BGW.
[278] Christiane Zieseke, ‘An Frau Dr. Geleng’, 25.10.82, File ’33 Projekt 1983 KK’, BGW.
[279] 30 out of an initial figure of 45.*

the general thematic of politics and everyday life under fascism and its concrete form'.[280] In this conception, the research was to be conducted and its results transmitted in a twofold process. On the one hand, there was the local area, the district or neighbourhood, where residents would be both encouraged to be active participants in the project as well as the intended audience for the local exhibitions. On the other, materials gathered from these local research projects and elsewhere would be used to explore aspects of everyday life under Nazism in a centralised exhibition. This dual approach proposed different orientations towards the audience based on different methodological conceptions:

> 1. starting from the Stadtteil as the local frame of reference of everyday life in various neighbourhood groups, there should be an examination of how the "great events of history" were reflected on the local and community level.....
> 2. starting from the functional breakdown of everyday life into thematic aspects, a reworking of the problematic of everyday life more relevant to this concern should occur in respective working groups and flow into the central exhibition.[281]

In outlining the scope of the local research, the document explained that 'the objects of investigation are the processes of accommodation and resistance which distinguished everyday life'.[282] This would involve an investigation into collective behaviour as well as individual experience, and a focus on not only workers' resistance, but also 'the process of formation and implementation of the national socialist movement'.[283] The structure of the research would proceed chronologically, incorporating the general sweep of political events across the period 1919-45. Here '1933' functioned synecdochically for this whole period in which fascism emerged, took hold, came to power and perpetrated its crimes. The focus of investigations would centre on 'the time before and after 1933, therefore the process of

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[280] 'Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82,
[281] Ibid.
[282] Ibid.
[283] A.L. 'Stand der Vorbereitungen', 6.9.1982, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

crisis and fascist solution to the crisis…understood not only as economic but also as social and cultural crisis in the widest sense'.[284] At the same time, it would descend in an ever-narrowing analytical scale. As an earlier draft paper put it: 'the view goes from the known national events onto the Berlin level, then onto the district level, in order to be able to pursue the real effects of 'great politics''.[285] In this analytical framework, weight would be placed on the structural features of the local areas, the built environment, and the social stratification of the population, as well as local sites of events of national significance. In organisational terms, events and exhibitions in the localities would be timed to coincide with pivotal moments in the past. For example, the planned exhibition in Schöneberg addressed not only the Kapp Putch in 1920 and the Reichstag elections of 5th March 1933, but also local aspects, such as local voting behaviour, demonstrations, and police raids against the left.[286]

The BGW was not the only organisation involved in local historical work of this kind. A programme coordinated by the *Kulturrat* listed exhibitions or initiatives by numerous groups, like the *Neuköllner Kulturverein*, *Kulturhaus Wilmersdorf Lunapark*, *Verein zur Förderung der kulturellen Jugendarbeit in SO 36*, and so on. The BGW, however, had no single designated locality for its activities. Indeed, the range of potential sites 'was more or less random', with Schöneberg, Charlottenburg, Reinickendorf, Spandau, Steglitz, and Wedding named as possibilities.[287] The choice of location depended on 'the existence of willingness to collaborate amongst groups already cooperating with the Geschichtswerkstatt'. However, only Schöneberg, Charlottenburg and Steglitz were later singled out, and ultimately, only the first two held exhibitions. In Schöneberg, the project was made up of existing local initiatives, members of the BGW and other individuals, though it lacked coordination and

[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid.
[286] 'Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82,
[287] G. Wenzel, ''Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 2.9.1982, File 'Montags 1980', BGW.

structure in the beginning. Gisela Wenzel, who was tasked with the responsibility of coordination by the BGW, stated that discussions over the content revolved around three issues: the use of archival material or oral history; a focus on the content of local history or everyday life; and the problems of the group dynamics. Dilemmas were resolved by acknowledging the compatibility of archival and oral materials, compromising between local historical research and the investigation of everyday life, and more structured working arrangements where individuals took responsibility for specific tasks. This meant that 'newcomers could be integrated into concrete work', but those 'who already had firm working relations outside the group and BGW, stayed away because the expense of time was too great',[288] which indicates some of the difficulty in sustaining momentum and the complexities of affiliation and commitment to different initiatives.

Within the *Kulturrat*'s overall programme, different sections (music, theatre, local exhibitions and working groups) were planned and coordinated. The working groups collaborated on a number of areas of mutual concern, from the exchange of information about sources and literature, to the design and production of posters, fliers, and brochures, and the presentation of project plans and conceptions. It was evident that quite different approaches to the subject matter had been adopted by these groups. One document delineated two contrasting orientations: 'resistance' and 'everyday life'. In the first, 'National Socialism is distinguished as forms of political-economic power and domination, which it is valid to oppose'; in the second, 'National Socialism is analysed as the result of the interaction of political-economic power in connection with the approval by the masses and acceptance in everyday life of the exercise of domination'.[289] In another document, a parallel division was discerned in how the pedagogical strategies of the respective projects were conceptualised. First, there was an insistence on starting with the current political and social

[288] Gisela Wenzel, 'Zwischenbericht für die Geschichtswerkstatt aus dem 33-Projekt', 20.1.83, File '33 Projekt organisation', BGW.
[289] Vorschlag zur Herausgabe einer gemeinsamen Mappe der Stadteil-Ausstellungen 'Zerstörung der Demokratie – Machtgreifung 1933', Undated, File '33 Projekt 1983 KK', BGW.

situation, addressing the audience 'in terms of the consciousness, level of knowledge, and experience which they have gained in everyday life, and, thus, smoothing their entry into the research on the history of National Socialism'.[290] In opposition to the 'demands of completeness', it was claimed that 'those addressed should not be excluded by their experiences of everyday life, but should feel that they themselves are the bearers of history'.[291] Conversely, others stressed the need to help the audience classify the research results, address key themes, and provide contexts for their historical understanding of developments.

In many ways, with their two-pronged action and as implied in the title of their project, the BGW pursued both approaches. The central exhibition was to follow on from the local exhibition, aiming to generalise their results. It was arranged according to a series of quotidian themes, including reproduction (living/shopping/neighbourhood), women/men, work/school, social sphere/leisure/clubs and societies, youth/youth organisations.[292] There would still be collaboration between the local and thematic groups, where the main point of interchange was 'the connection of concrete local historical research…with general questions of the history of everyday life'.

Regarding the theoretical status of everyday life, it is evident that members of the BGW were engaged in an extensive intellectual encounter with explanatory models of fascism and the recent literature on National Socialism. A discussion of Detlev Peukert's *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde* (1982) was undertaken, which referred to his misgivings over the use of the concept of everyday life.[293] The BGW emphasised the combination of local history and the history of everyday life in their conceptual scheme, and explained that the local historical dimension was not simply reduced to confirming those places and areas which had a historical significance in a wider context. What was also important to explore

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[290] Michael Drechsler 'Protokoll des Treffens der Stadtteilprojekte vom 30.9.1982', 1.10.82, File '33 Projekt 1983 KK', BGW.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82,
[293] Ibid.

was local identity 'as an essential requirement for local communication and collective resistance in the district'.[294] Against the ambivalence raised above about everyday life ('so overpowering or flight from reality'),[295] here it became the terrain for understanding both the processes of integration and assimilation, and that of protest and resistance. Thus, the project was to turn its research interests towards 'the politicisation of everyday life'. Given that this had taken a particularly repressive form under National Socialism, the dichotomy between accommodation and resistance was inadequate to grasp the nature of political action. How would one categorise, as it was suggested, 'a small example of civil courage, like continuing to buy in Jewish shops'?[296] The point was to indicate how the personal and political situation of individuals moved them in certain directions, but also to the embedded forms of domination in everyday activities and behaviour. The inadequacies of existing models and categories encouraged an encounter with the formation of local politics and identity, which recognised that the neighbourhood was not just the physical setting of research, but part of its object too, contributing to the emerging problematic on everyday life. There appeared to be an element of reciprocity in this relationship in that local historical research operated as the empirical record of everyday historical actions and as a category of analysis in the elucidation of the conceptual parameters of everyday life. However, the development of critical analytical possibilities was only one of the impulses driving the production of these exhibitions. They also gave expression to a variety of historical forms and linked a myriad of places in an unofficial network of history-making, addressing a local and general public in an experiment in political education.

In examining the BGW's pedagogical practices and purposes, emotions and affects were clearly of central importance. As the planning document reports, 'the attempt to understand everyday life and resistance under fascism can only succeed if personal

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[294] Ibid.
[295] See p. 94.
[296] Eva and Barbara, 'Protokoll des Treffens vom 12.12.82', File '33 Projekt 1983 KK', BGW.

Betroffenheit sets in'.[297] For many of the young, it was the feeling of 'compassion' that gave the research on National Socialism impact. There was, however, felt to be a danger that young people would act like the 'Uncontaminated' towards the older generation, a sign that they had not understood and against which compassion could not guard.[298] It was possible to 'create a feel for how National Socialism could develop', it was claimed, 'by getting into the subjective and psychic structure'. Thus, one of the recommendations was to explore the effects of Nazi propaganda and attempt 'to identify and to illustrate how this production of images of the enemy influenced everyday consciousness of the people at the local area'.[299] We can observe here how certain forms of historicising and memorialising the past were related to the generation of both feelings and understandings. The purpose of such a didactic exercise, we might argue, was neither to denigrate nor to exculpate those who acquiesced or even supported the Nazi takeover, but to recognise its potentiality within very everyday forms of human behaviour. From this angle, the ground of everyday life also serves an important pedagogical purpose in bringing the past closer to people's lives, creating imaginative identifications with that past, particularly so, if they are actively involved in digging it up. 'Local activities', it was argued, 'allow the population to recognise the traces of the Third Reich in their familiar setting. Here the people addressed by the project can themselves contribute to the research and representation of everyday oppressions and resistance under National Socialism and so learn from the experiences of history'.[300]

The exhibitions appeared to be mostly a success. A BGW report recorded that the exhibition held in Charlottenburg attracted around 500 visitors during a showing held between the 10th and 20th April, whilst the exhibition in Schöneberg, which took place

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[297] Ausstellungsprojekt 1933: "Spurensicherung des Widerstands und Alltags im Faschismus…", 19.10.82. In the context of dealing with the Nazi past, Betroffenheit has a complex meaning. The term is best rendered in English as dismay or concern, but it is regarded as a superficial or automatic response of the German public to the horrors of Nazism. In Klaus Neumann's view, it indicates 'an emotional reaction to the Nazi past that accepts guilt rather than responsibility'. Neumann, *Shifting Memories,* p. 10. See also Niven, Bill, *Facing the Nazi Past*, p. 186.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid.
[300] 'Zerstörung der Demokratie – Machtgreifung und Wderstand 1933', Undated, File '33 Projekt 1983 KK', BGW.

from 18 April to 4 May, received around 1000 visitors. The report also found the response to the central exhibition, which was held in a space below Schlesisches Tor U-Bahn during June and July, was 'positive' and many of the 1800 visitors who saw the exhibition comprised 'an unusual number of people who did not regular attend exhibitions'.[301] In the media, however, only the *taz* reacted in any detail.

The work of the BGW promised a democratic methodology: at once offering a rising level of understanding through explorations of everyday life themes, but also a situating of historical events within the locality that evoked attachments to place. This can be seen as a grounded application of *Alltagsgeschichte* in keeping with the very surroundings of Berlin itself. Different environments and localities, however, required different approaches to local historical research and pedagogy.

[301] A. Ludwig, 'An den Senator für kulturelle Angelgenheiten, 7.10.83, File '33 Projekt organisation', BGW.

II. ARBEITSKREIS FÜR REGIONALGESCHICHTE AM BODENSEE

Alongside with the BGW, the *Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte am Bodensee* (hereafter *Arbeitskreis*), was a key organisation in the development of the History Workshop movement in West Germany. The area covered by the *Arbeitskreis* was spread across the western stretches of Lake Constance, south-west Germany, though it was centred in Constance. Founded in 1979, the *Arbeitskreis* grew out of a long-term collaborative project established at the University of Konstanz on regional social history. The major achievement of this project was the book *Provinzialisierung einer Region* published in 1978, which brought a materialist social analysis to bear on regional political developments in the latter half of the 19th Century.[302]

The University of Konstanz, founded during the expansion of the German higher education system in the 1960s, became an outpost for international currents in social history, which were only just beginning to take root in the Federal Republic. Like social history more generally, regional history occupied a rather marginal position in the domestic academic field, even though as a member of the project recognised, 'there is a great interest in this kind of work and its findings outside academic history'.[303] The aim of the *Arbeitskreis* was, therefore, to bring enthusiasts and researchers interested in the region's history together in order 'to integrate their efforts, hopes and desires, which exist sporadically in many places, into a shared context of discussion'.[304] This process of integration was framed in terms of creating 'a forum of discussion and exchange between lay people interested in history and historians'.[305] This statement also included a commitment to investigating the history of the 'lower classes', to addressing the politics of everyday life, and to relating this historical practice to the context of current societal problems. In a democratic vein, the aim

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[302] It seems pertinent to note, at least in the context of this thesis, that the book was especially praised by two leading British historians of Germany, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley. The book was largely ignored in Germany itself.
[303] G.Z. [Gert Zang], Untitled paper, 8.8.78, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Vereins Register, Stadtarchiv Konstanz.
[304] Ibid.
[305] 'Der Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte stellt sich vor', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe.

was also 'to put interested parties in the position of not just passively consuming history, but to develop history through their own activity'.[306] As Dieter Schott puts it, 'there was a general consensus that we would sort of bring the history to the people in a way, or help them rediscover their own history'.[307] Like BGW, the importance of place in thinking about historical production was evident: 'what appears particularly important to us for the communication of historical processes is to connect the perception of the region with the representation of the events, which took place in it'.[308] This would be carried out in familiar forms of presentation in lectures, publications and exhibitions, but, critically, in excursions and trips to sites of historical significance in the region.

The *Arbeitskreis*'s practical, pedagogical and theoretical concerns were organised in two directions: inwards to scholarly discourse and outwards to the regional community. For Gert Zang, a leading contributor to the university project, the idea was both to raise historical consciousness in the region and articulate the theoretical significance of regional history. Not everyone agreed. Firstly, the constituency that the *Arbeitskreis* hoped to serve was questioned; doubts were raised about the contributions that non-academics could actually make. Put bluntly, 'what can the lay person really do?'[309] A slightly more positive tone was struck by Rainer Wirtz, who indicated that there was at least the 'possibility that the object becomes the subject, [that they] themselves can perhaps write the history of their family'.[310] This scepticism towards the prospects of collaboration with non-professional historians coincided with the commitment to high scholarship and to a programme of regional historical work which aimed 'to gain general insights about detail reconstructions of society, economy, politics and culture of a region in their totality'.[311] The idea of the region

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[306] Ibid.
[307] Dieter Schott, Interview with IG, 26.11.13.
[308] Ibid.
[309] 'Protokoll der Gründungsversammlung – Arbeitskreis f. Regionalgeschichte', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Vereins Register
[310] Ibid.
[311] 'I. Entstehung', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Vereins Register

as the context of communication coexisted uneasily with this exclusive scholarly focus: 'a common point of reference is not a particular region, but regional history as a scholarly instrument of analysis and medium of practice'.[312] Reinforcing this tension, a programmatic outline included a proposal to split the work of the *Arbeitskreis* into 'primarily scholarly oriented groups' and 'primarily practically oriented groups', where the former was described as 'broadly coextensive with the existing focus of the project' and the latter included proposals for an 'archaeology of the industrial period', 'historical radio dramas', 'teaching materials' and 'family history'.

The bifurcation of the scholarly and the practical does not appear to have been simply a pragmatic division of labour, but arose out of a relation whereby the former retained a position as primary origin and epistemic authority. Indeed this can be seen in attempts to define it in term as a 'problem of communication' or of 'break[ing] the ignorance and lack of knowledge'.[313] Notwithstanding sentiments like 'communication for us is no one-sided process from above to below', there was a certain inattention towards the political and social dynamics of such processes or to critically assessing the residual forms of hierarchy and inequality embedded in their formulation of the project.[314] If the *Arbeitskreis* was to become a democratic and collaborative enterprise, then a way of reconciling the unresolved contradictions between scholarly and practical ventures would certainly be required. To this end, one of the earliest initiatives was to organise meetings with readers of the *Provinzialisierung* book in order to canvass their views about it. 'It is our aim to learn from the experience of readers of the text', insisted the promotion material, 'or to gain more clarity one or two points on the basis of discussion with readers'.[315] In the view of Alfred Frei, 'it was an attempt by us to mediate' in wider society and 'to bring the people

[312] Ibid.
[313] 'III. Ziele des Arbeitskreises', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Vereins Register
[314] 8
[315] 'Projekt 'Regionalgeschichte'', 6.11.79, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungs Rundebriefe

closer'.[316] Yet public interest in the book was modest. 'The chairs for the readers' discussions remained empty', one observer remarked after one occasion.[317] At this stage, it appears serious issues remained about how to bring readers into the process of historical production or how their experiences could be integrated into new forms of historical practice.

Lakes and Localities

The *Arbeitskreis* sought the revival of what it called the 'democratic tradition of our history' and to study the development of this tradition over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. This ambition sharply departed from the traditional interests of local history in the Lake Constance area, with its obsession with churches, castles and 'quaint old towns'. For members of the *Arbeitskreis*, this reflected a 'romanticised nostalgia for feudal and imperial splendour', which, from a didactic perspective, carried little consequence for current political and social issues.[318] 'The conception of history ends around 1800', it was argued '[and] it contributes so little to the understanding of the present'.[319] Clearly, the *Arbeitskreis* would adopt a very different approach to the historical landscape of the region.[320]

The aim of making history practically relevant and accessible to the local populace rested on a variety of media for the communication and dissemination of historical research. Still, publications remained one of the chief modes of expression for the *Arbeitskreis*, who put out a series of brochures aimed at a regional audience. The first, entitled 'Das neue Konstanz', recounted the early years of the SPD's formation during the so-called 'liberal era'.

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[316] Afred Frei, Interview with IG, 18.2.14
[317] Alfred Georg Frei, "Alltag- Region – Politik: Anmerkungen zur 'neuen Geschichtsbewegung'", *Geschichtsdidaktik*, 9, 2 (1984), p. 115.
[318] 'Leben am See im Wandel', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungs Rundebriefe
[319] Ibid.
[320] In Constance, these interests were represented by the 'Verein für Geschichte des Bodensees und seiner Umgebung', which was founded in 1868. See http://www.bodensee-geschichtsverein.eu/geschichte.html Accessed: 20th October 2014

Other brochures followed on 'Wohnen in Niederburg' (1980) and 'Die Gailinger Juden' (1981). In turning away from purely scholarly demands, consideration was given to how to translate pedagogical aspirations into more accessible forms of presentation. The group tried to 'put an emphasis on comprehensible language and, as far as possible, vividness by printing images and documents'.[321] At the same time, a series of lectures was organised in cooperation with the local adult education centres. The first of these was titled 'Leben am See in Wandel' and took place in the autumn 1980, which included presentations from members of the *Arbeitskreis* on such topics as 'the peasants' war on the Lake', 'Lake Constance and the revolution of 1848/49', and 'a region becomes a province - the area of Lake Constance in the late 19th Century'.[322] The promotional leaflet situated the lectures in the context of contemporary social ills, observing how the region had yet to have the effects of industrialisation fully inflicted upon it. 'What guarantees greater "quality of life"', it enquired, 'the continued industrialisation of all areas of life or a change in how we think ecologically' to which 'a retrospective view may be useful and helpful'.[323] Of course, creating a usable past in support of contemporary issues would not be easy considering the area's feudal and preindustrial heritage. The purpose of the lectures, nonetheless, was to 'contribute to a better regional understanding of today and of the "successes" of tomorrow'.[324]

These lectures were considered a success, though with between 20 and 35 people attending the first three in the series, expectations were perhaps quite modest.[325] From 1983 onwards, another set of lectures – or 'Geschichtstreff' – were held in the town Meersburg, situated on the northern side of the Lake, whose ambition was to provide people 'an easier

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[321] 'Der Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte stellt sich vor',
[322] 'Leben am See im Wandel',
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.
[325]. Dieter Schott, 'Letter to members', 14.12.81, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe

way into regional history and help to their own engagement with history'.[326] Thematically, the lectures were also more widely spread, tackling such areas the labour movement in Friedrichshafen and Lindau, the history of Vorarlberg, and the peasants' war in Linzgau.[327]

Walking and cycling tours and excursions were also a central part of the *Arbeitskreis* repertoire of historical activities. Visits were made to notable sites and locations, such as to the areas of the peasant war in Upper Swabia or to the satellite camp of Dachau in Überlingen. They were also made to areas of industry, including the uplands of Zürich around the towns of Wetzkon and Uster. The purpose of these experiential forms of historical participation was to reimagine the historical landscape, as it were, from the bottom up. As one of the guides declared, the motive was 'to see this region not only as a cultural area of central Europe with amazing historical buildings but also as the Heimat of the many nameless, who lived, worked and suffered there and in the peasants' war fought for their rights'.[328] A different scene and very different history was described on the occasion of the visit to Überlingen:

> Around sixty men, women and children went through a large tunnel. …and the guide, a history teacher from Überlingen, explained the meaning of this tunnel: in the Winter 1944/45, they tried to force the final victory here at the last minute. On the command of the Reich government, bomb-proof tunnels are built immediately, in order to allow the continuation of armament production undisturbed. …Once the satellite camp of Dachau was finished, between autumn 1944 and April 1945 its inmates were forced to hollow out Goldbach mountain with untold effort and primitive means. A quarter of the detainees died as a result of this grinding labour.[329]

[326] 'Allgemeine Veranstaltungsangebote', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe
[327] Ibid.
[328] Dieter Schott, 'Pressebericht', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe
[329] 'Der Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte stellt sich vor',

It would seem that these excursions found a receptive audience in the regions, and were considered to be 'very interesting by non-members, so that by now they have been repeated several times'.[330] In keeping with the original intent, the tours were designed – much like the brochures – to make history more tangible and immediate. The feeling of taking a tour through Jewish Gailingen was captured in the following terms: 'it is closer to the bone, sometimes going deep under the skin and sometimes repelling; witnessing stories and history, people and houses in this way and not only in books, newspapers and the television'.[331]

One of the core themes of the *Arbeitskreis*'s work was industrialisation. A working group on industrial archaeology dedicated itself to collecting photographs and material on the housing estates and factories 'in order to preserve such buildings, which have fallen victim to modern redevelopment and rationalisation'.[332] The overall ambition was to reconstruct the forms of life associated with industralisation in an exhibition or a monograph. The area of Peterhausen in Constance was chosen as the site of a documentation project, largely because it was a working class district. Here photographical material would be combined with documents and testimony from local residents. Of course, documenting the processes of industrial change implied a parallel concern for the lives of the people, above all workers and the labour movement.

In February 1982, a touring exhibition came to Constance and was held at the civic hall. Entitled 'Workers' culture and ways of life in the Kingdom of Wüttemberg', it was devised by the Ludwig-Uhland Institut at the University of Tübingen and originally displayed in 1976. Consciously designed by its creators as a form of 'historiography from below', it explored the hitherto largely neglected aspects of workers' lives and culture beyond the

[330] t.w. 'Heimatgeschichte auf neuen Wegen', *Südkurier* 10.3.82
[331] 'Führung durch das jüdische Gallingen', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[332] 'Arbeitsgruppe 'Archaeologie des Industrialzeitalters'', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe

main organs of the labour movement.[333] As part of this exhibition, members of the *Arbeitskreis* put on their own exhibition, 'Walking tours through the history of workers and the labour movement in Constance, 1860-1933'. The assessment of the exhibitions by members of the *Arbeitskreis* was mixed, with complaints made about the role and sponsorship of local dignitaries, the social composition of visitors (one member decried the high proportion of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle class)), and fears about it being simply an occasion for nostalgia. These problems were intensified by the location of the exhibition, the short duration of its staging, and more fundamental challenges, like the political landscape of the area itself, which suffered from, as Gert Zang admitted, 'the limited meaning of the SPD and the union'.[334] A subsequent effort was made to encourage teachers at local schools to visit the exhibition with their classes, an imperative that was reflected in other endeavours, such as the *Arbeitskreis* working group formed in 1981 in and around Überlingen for the purpose of producing teaching material on regional history for schools.[335]

Provincialising History: the Geography of Memory Work

One of the more public efforts of the *Arbeitskries* to intervene into local memory was on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Nazi takeover. However, unlike larger urban and metropolitan areas, funds were limited. Attempts had been made to obtain funding from municipal administrative bodies, such as the Mayor's office, though only the rather modest amount of 1000 DM was allocated. That paled in comparison to the sums of money provided to projects in West Berlin or even, closer to home, in the city of Stuttgart, which gave generous support to put on public exhibitions. The frustration was spelled out in a

[333] Martin Scharfe, 'Wanderungsausstellung Arbeiter. Kultur und Lebensweise in Königreich Wüttemberg', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Industrialisierung
[334] E. Friedrich, 'Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung des Arbeitskreises fürRegionalgeschichte e.V. am 12.2.1982', 21.2.82, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe
[335] Oswald Burger, 'Lehrer-AG, 'Regionalgeschichte im Unterricht' Überlingen', File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Weller mitlungsblatt

letter to the Mayor: 'these initiatives must be limited in their effectiveness, if they aren't supported and sustained by a broader range of political and social groups in the town'.[336]

The main contribution of the *Arbeitskreis* to the fiftieth anniversary was to publish a series of short biographies in the local newspaper, the *Südkurier*, of opponents and resistors of Nazi rule and to write an open letter to municipal representatives to lament the absence of local historical work. They appealed for research and documentation of 'resistance and persecution in Konstanz… which already exists in other towns'[337] Emphasising the fact that there was no memorial to the victims of Nazi tyranny from Constance, nor even an exact figure of the numbers who perished, the letter recalled a long-forgotten proposal (1947) of the local council to establish a monument to the victims. Given that memories of what had happened had been suppressed for so long, the aim of raising consciousness and awareness of this past would not be achieved by treating it as 'a matter of duty', but only through 'small steps, which begin slowly and must be backed by as many of Constance's population as possible'.[338] However, the proposal was not taken up by the parties of the local council. A letter sent in response to the pleas of the *Arbeitskreis* from the *Oberbürgermeister* praised the work of the group, but dismissed the idea of a memorial along the lines of the 1947 plans, stating that 'it can no longer be viewed today as a sensible form of historical representation'.[339]

Reflecting on his own experiences of the 30th January (the date of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor) in Constance, one member of the *Arbeitskreis*, Werner Trapp, considered the frenzied activity surrounding that date as yet another example of the way in which public awareness of the history of National Socialism tended to recur periodically in 'waves'. Previous occasions included the 'Hitler wave' in the early 1970s and the one caused

[336] Dieter Schott, Werner Trapp, 'Letter to Dr. Eickmeyer', 17.1.83, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[337] Ibid.
[338] Rolf Riedel, Werner Allweiss, 'Antrag der Freien Grünen List zur Behandlung im Konstanzer Gemeinderat', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[339] Eickmeyer, 'Letter to Schott, Trapp', 30.3.83, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe

by the television drama series *Holocaust*. For Trapp, this manner of handling the Nazi past was not only insufficient, but complicit with its continuing suppression. 'In the practice of speaking as loudly and as much as possible about a thing', he wrote 'other important witnesses to history are silenced'.[340] The preoccupation with that single date, according to Trapp, avoided a confrontation with the local past and he questioned whether those involved in commemorations were conscious that 'a piece of their own past also shone through'.[341] He mused on the fact that a *Narrentreffen* (a festival or carnival) was held on the very same date (30th January), which had been more important to the people of the town than what was going on elsewhere at the same time. Finally, in a comment that could be read as bearing upon both the past and the present, Trapp felt that 'people hold on to their life plans, their traditions, to that which is important to them, independent of what happens around them'.[342]

It is clear that the task of memory work required measures for connecting people's own memories to broader narratives of events, or, as Benjamin might have put it, to 'shock' them out of their historical amnesia and into an 'awakening' of the presence of the past.[343] But the realisation of this idea depended on a range of factors that the *Arbeitskreis* was only partially able to shape. This example illustrates some of the problems of carrying out memory work and its efficacy in a particular locality. Firstly, and on a basic level, the realm of possibility is limited by material factors, of which finance and funding are the most obvious. Secondly, the accessibility of funding from local government bodies was more fundamentally a question of politics. The general lack of any significant alternative forms of memorialisation in Constance may well be due to the intransigence of local politicians and lack of political will, but the ability of the *Arbeitskreis* to successfully play into existing

[340] Werner Trapp, "Gedanken zum Gedenken an den Tag, an dem es dunkel wurde in Deutschland", *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 37.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Ibid. p. 39.
[343] For Benjamin, see Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989).

political agendas and to affect changes on the ground was hampered by the contours of the terrain, from the power of local cultural and political institutions to the cohesiveness of local activist networks and the alternative movements. Equally, there was the 'place' of the past, its material locality and situatedness, which determined the forms and tactics of historical activity. Or rather: how could one hope to represent a history of workers' struggle, for instance, in a place with few working-class neighbourhoods? Furthermore, there were also the internal dynamics of the *Arbeitskreis*, its organisational structure and its membership constituency.

The *Arbeitskries* was not without critics. In a letter outlining the reasons why he decided to withdraw from the group, Jochen Kelter felt he could no longer be part of an association, as he put it, 'whose structure (public appearance, regional engagement, critical capacity, ways of working) is essentially influenced by the personal ambitions of some professional historians'.[344] In attributing the source of its organisational defects to uneven power relations and to the real but unspecified division between professionals and non-professionals, Kelter drew attention to the group's original context of formation within the university. 'I want to belong to an engaged democratic counterpart to the Lake Contance history society', he wrote 'not an extended Uni[versity] project'.[345] He also reproached the group's inability to accept the criticisms of others and the way in which they were handled.[346]

By the mid-1980s, another member of the *Arbeitskreis*, Oswald Burger, a teacher from Überlingen, had also voiced long-held dissatisfactions. In an 'open letter' to the rest of the membership, he insisted that the association no longer lived up to its name and that it should be renamed 'a clique of young historians in the western Lake Constance region'. Burger believed the enterprise of regional history was in a serious state of decline; there was neither

[344] Jochen Kelter, 'Letter to the Vorstand', 31.12.83, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[345] Ibid.
[346] Here he refers to the handling of the Ernst Köhler

an active forum for the work of the group, nor was there any real shape or definition to the approach of regional history. There was, he claimed, 'no clear definable link between actual members and the concept of "regional" history as distinct from traditional local, Heimat, or *Landesgeschichte*'.[347] Where at one time the *Arbeitskreis* had evoked a certain political feeling or intensity, which expressed itself in opposition to tradition forms of research and writing, now that divide was indiscernible. Rather than taking on the guardians of traditional history, energy was being expended in rear-guard actions against 'radical, anarchist, subjective, personal and unqualified criticisms'. Practically, Burger pointed out the barren state of events and planning for the coming year, which were 'so thin and insubstantial that it is not worthwhile carrying on the association formally'.[348] The decision to abandon the jointly held lecture series with the adult education centre in autumn 1985 and proposals for activities at a general meeting in April 1986, which included suggestions for the repeat of previous excursions might be evidence of this trend.[349] Following that meeting, Burger admitted in 'private correspondence that 'I couldn't fight off the impression that of a lack of imagination and a certain stagnation'.[350] In later recollections, Schott admitted as much: 'I think in the mid-80s I felt this sense of stalemate, at least in Constance group, in a situation where we were stagnating'.[351]

To some extent, it was always probable that the *Arbeitskreis* would be criticised for the preponderant influence and position of academic historians. As part of the research project housed in the university, they also formed a cohesive unit involved in historical work on a day-to-day basis, in which the purposes (not to mention the personnel) of the *Arbeitskreis* and the project overlapped.[352] There was, at least, recognition of this issue amongst academic members and on one occasion a proposal was made to organise an 'open door' at the

[347] Oswald Burger, 'Offener Brief', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[348] Ibid.
[349] MargareteLorinser, Letter to Herr Dreher, 1.7.85, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[350] Oswald Burger, 'Letter to Elmar [Kuhn]', 29.4.86, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte
[351] Schott, Interview.
[352] Margarete Lorinser, Letter to Martin Ulmer', 26.6.84, File: Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Schrift Kontakte

university ‘so that the relationship of the *Arbeitskreis* to the project could become more transparent’.[353] Of course, the association was not made up solely of university historians and their non-academic counterparts were equally represented on the board. In the estimation of Alfred Frei, scholars and students composed around a third of the *Arbeitskreis*'s membership, with teachers making up another third, and a further third drawn from other, largely professional, areas such as journalism, law and archival work.[354] Thus, it lacked the variety of social and historical experience that might have provided a rich and critical counterpoint. That it carried out a concerted programme of broader cultural work, developing alternative ways of communicating historical events and processes, and engaging different communities in the Lake Constance region is not disputed. But the slender social basis upon which it was formed ensured a narrow commonality of interests and inhibited the kind of creative tensions that might have served as a ground for renewal.

The original vision of the *Arkeitskreis* and its activities illustrate how it tended to bracket scholarship from public or practical forms of history work and to designate those outside the university as ‘lay’ in way that figured them as passive recipients of historical research. The debates at a subsequent meeting of the *Arbeitskreis*, where questions of theory took centre stage, reveal how these lines of thinking had crystallised by 1983.

It began, however, with a discussion of the theory of 'provinicialisation' in which a good deal of the focus turned on how to specify theory's relationship to the empirical and vice versa. Here 'provincialisation' stood for a reorientation of historical perspective both in terms of the integration of agency from below and the emphasis on the periphery vis-a-vis the centre. One contributor to the debate stated that ‘[t]he opposition between the centre and the province is extremely important…almost more important than the opposition

[353] E. Friedrich, ‘Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung des Arbeitskreises fürRegionalgeschichte e.V. am 12.2.1982’, 21.2.82,
[354] Frei, “Alltag – Region – Politik”

between capital and proletariat'.[355] But the province was not simply an object of knowledge or analytical construct. For some of those involved, the idea of 'provincialisation' and, by extension, the activities of regional history were entangled with the task of negotiating their own regional identifications. According to Gert Zang, 'most of us come from the province and have occasionally suffered as a result of it (narrowness, limitations, restrictions, the intellectual attractiveness of the centre)'.[356] It would be unwise to place too much weight on a single reference, but the assumption that provincial life is a kind of disabling or limiting condition implies some kind of reconciliation is necessary. For Zang, 'suffering from the Province is overcome with the empiricism of the academy'.[357]

Issues of identity and its connection to geographical place will be discussed further shortly; for now, we should note that the meeting was also significant because it reproduced many of the same divisions used earlier. The very form of the meeting rehearsed the separation of scholarship and public/practical work: the first half was solely dedicated to theory; the second half dealt with 'the question of how to put theoretical and empirical work into practice'.[358] Tensions in the relationship between the *Arbeitskreis* and the wider Lake Constance community were also brought out in the discussion: 'the danger exists that we only respond to work brought to us randomly from outside, instead of choosing the sequence of work that corresponds to our priorities'.[359] This relationship was likewise framed along rather hierarchical lines; it was about the 'popularisation of work findings', or 'the translation of academic work into other literary forms'. In addition, though the *Arbeitskreis* opened up channels to the local public sphere to history through different mediums and forms of address, a lot of those activities, such as the lecture, the brochure,

[355] 'Protokoll der Mitglieder-Versammlung des Arbeitskreis…dem 27.6.1983', Undated, File Arbeitskreis Bodensee, Veranstaltungen Rundbriefe
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid. Zang also published a book entitled *Die aufhaltsame Annäherung an das Einzelne*, which sought to deal theoretically with the practice of regional history, casting historians in the role of therapists for the community in the search of their origins.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.

even the guided tour, still rested upon an original model of knowledge that itself relied upon a single authority. The problem was conceived in terms of how to bring knowledge in from outside, as opposed to beginning from other end of spectrum, with people as they were, their memories and cultural practices.

In thinking about the conditioning effects of both the institutional context of the *Arbeitskreis* and the politics and geographies of the region on the possibilities of developing forms of historical production, it is important to observe the contrast between the BGW and the *Arbeikreis* insofar as they imagined and represented the idea of place and their relationship to it. West Berlin, of course, was an urban centre, but it was also uniquely placed at the heart of Cold War tensions; an 'island' city surrounded by the East German State, which gave it international prominence. It was also the 'capital' of political activism and alternative culture in these years.[360] In pursuing historical research as *Stadtteilarbeit* or *Spurensicherung*, BGW activists were making a virtue out of a necessity. As might be expected, there was little talk of *Stadtteil*, *Bezirk* or *Kiez* in how the *Konstanzer* framed their projects, where references to the region or *Provinz* were far more pronounced. Territorially speaking, the region around Lake Constance was highly dispersed and encompassed three nation states (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) and two German federal states (Baden-Wüttemburg and Bavaria). If the philosophy of the West Berliners was based on situating historical engagement in the familiarities of the lived space of the city, then the choice of excursions as a means of exploring the region surrounding Constance typically meant moving away from the familiar and so a different set of emotional attachments would have to be stirred.

In addition, the Lake itself provided something of a barrier to communication and cohesion. On occasions, the point had to be made not to forget 'übersee'[361] or that the work

[360] On West Berlin as a symbolic centre of activism, see Belinda Davis, "The City as Theatre of Protest: West Berlin and West Germany, 1962-1983", in Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse (eds.), *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 247-274.
[361] Here "ubersee" meant those places on the other side of the lake to Constance.

and function of the *Arbeitskreis* was 'also a problem of geography'.[362] In the words of one member, 'gradually the fact that the Lake created a separation became a problem: it divided the association into members who lived in the north and those who lived in the south. The ferry is arduous and expensive'. It was in response to this separation that the 'Geschichtstreff' was set up in Friedrichshafen and Überlingen in order to 'balance and supplement the centre of gravity of the association's activities in the Constance area'.[363] In this regard, political organisation was saddled with the additional burden of geographical inequalities.

We can see this in relation to the work of the alternative and emerging green movement in the region, in particular in the effort to set up a regional left newspaper. Here the problem of how to find a suitable organisational form, divisions of responsibility, and even the format of the paper were understood with the geographical situation in mind. In one proposal, a division of editorial labour and responsibilities was to be spread across different towns (Constance, Singen, Überlingen, and Stockach), with a central editorial office (Constance).[364] In a geographically dispersed region, it is arguably more difficult to mobilise and sustain an oppositional or alternative politics, certainly one committed to radical forms of autonomous organisation, with sufficient critical mass. A meeting of the *Grünes Bodensee Forum* in April 1984, for example, included the participation of seven different affiliated groups from West Germany, Austria and Switzerland.[365]

In many respects, however, this was an improvement on what had gone before. 'Those of us from Constance', wrote Werner Trapp and Dieter Schott, 'have a strange relationship to our Swiss twin city Kreuzlingen':

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[362] 'Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung des Arbeitskreises fürRegionalgeschichte e.V. am 12.2.1982', 21.2.82,

[363] *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 58.

[364] Nebelhorn, 'Diskussionsvorschläge zur Form und Organisation der 'Regionalzeitung westl. Bodensee'', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Regionalgeschichte Bodensee, Weller Mittlungsblatt

[365] 'Grünes Bodensee- Forum, Konstanz, 13-15th April 1984', Undated, File: Arbeitskreis Regionalgeschichte Bodensee, Weller Mittlungsblatt

> Although the border is open today and we pass through there almost daily, we care precious little for what's going on "over there". The feeling is mutual and the regional news coverage encourages such non-awareness rather more than it reduces it: for the newspaper readers of Konstanz the regional world ends on the outskirts of Allensbach. We rarely hear about interesting developments in nearby cities, if they don't find a way into the "Bodensee" pages of the newspapers.[366]

The local and provincial, which moved increasing to the centre of politics under the influence of the peace and Green movements, became the locus of attempts to construct a positive sense of German identity and community via the reinvention of the idea of Heimat.[367] Once discredited by association with National Socialism, Heimat was appropriated by the West German Left to enact a cultural politics of belonging and identity in a way that would appeal to the emotional valences of the local and regional without racial connotations of *Blut and Boden*;[368] 'as life possibility not as proof of lineage.' But this new vision of Heimat required a new historical imaginary. Writing in the volume *Seegründe*, Schott and Trapp underscored history's role: 'Regional history could thus have a useful purpose by playing an active part in the observable process of consciousness raising, and to give it a historical dimension, showing the people of this region, for example, their own history, whose future outcomes depend on them'.[369] Whilst not always effectively or self-consciously pursued, in its efforts to open up a marginalised history and bring it to wider public attention, the *Arbeitskreis*, contributed to the process of articulating a new regional consciousness under often unpromising conditions.

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[366] Dieter Schott and Werner Trapp, 'Introduction', in Schott and Trapp (eds.) *Seegründe: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bodenseeraumes*((Weingarten: Drumlin, 1984), 16.

[367] For an extended discussion of Heimat, see Confino, Alon. *The Nation As a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

[368] The theme of Heimat in the context of the left during the 1980s is discussed in Michael Geisler, 'Heimat and the German Left: The Anamnesis of Trauma', *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn 1985) 25-66.

[369] Bodensee, Weller Mittlungsblatt

[369] Schott and Trapp, 'Introduction', 17.

III. BETWEEN GRASSROOTS AND PROFESSIONALS: BUILDING A *BUNDESWEIT GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT*

The first time a national spotlight was extended to the History Workshop in the Federal Republic was when *Der Spiegel*, the popular current affairs weekly, published a report about the new history movement in June 1983.[370] The report detailed the activities of numerous local history initiatives and projects across West Germany, which, despite their diverse range of interests, themes and approaches, were united by the common aim of recovering of the lives and experiences of ordinary people. It cited examples not only from the history workshops, but also a group of miners from the Ruhrgebiet who were collecting material for a local history of mining and a group in Oldenburg doing likewise for the glass industry. It also recognised the impetus given to social and everyday life history by the President's school competition on German history as well as the rising interest within the SPD in its own history.

Geschichtswerkstätten was understood as part of a broader upsurge of civic and local engagement with the past, though they represented perhaps the most well-organised, politically committed and adventurous of the initiatives. In this context, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the history workshops was their attempt to bring the interests and endeavours of 'memory activists' and academic researchers under one umbrella. The *Der Spiegel* article mentioned recent efforts to organise a network of *Geschichtswerkstätten* and historians throughout West Germany and announced that a large *Geschichtsfest* (history festival) would be held in West Berlin in 1984. The *bundesweit* network became the central forum for efforts to harmonise and harness the different interests of the *Geschichtswerkstätten*.

The formation of a nationwide organisation had its origins in an earlier initiative to establish an 'alternative' academic history journal, an initiative led by historians at the University of Hannover. Prompted by a general sense of isolation and, specifically,

[370] "Ein kräftiger Schub für die Vergangenheit", *Der Spiegel* 23 (June 1983), pp. 36-42.

dissatisfaction with the direction of the journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, they organised a series of meetings in order ‘to formulate a common position and form working groups to prepare substantive discussions’.[371] The participants, mainly university-based historians, came from across the Federal Republic to attend the second and third meetings of the initiative, held at Bremen in October 1981 and Cologne in May 1982 respectively.[372] Among those who were present in Bremen were members of the *Arbeitskreis für Regionalgeschichte* in Constance, who proceeded to explain the importance of relating historical research to the currents and movements in society and argued that ‘the university appears as too rigid a setting for this’.[373] Amongst the local history workshops and groups present in Cologne were the *Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt* and the *Franz-Mehring Gesellschaft* from Stuttgart. Initial deliberations over the structure and terms of any form of collaboration (as well as the content of intellectual positions) are especially revealing in terms of how they bring to light the maze of tensions and contradictions in the process of instituting cooperative and democratic relations and the issues of power and control that that raised. This final section explores the founding moments of national cooperation amongst historians and the History Workshops.

Following the introduction by the Constance group, the assembled participants in Bremen heard presentations on existing foreign 'alternative' history journals, namely the Italian *Quaderni Storici* and *History Workshop Journal*. The distinguishing aspect of the latter, it was remarked, was its emphasis on practical relevance, though the demand outlined in the 1976 editorial calling for the ‘close connection of theory and empiricism’, had succeeded ‘only to a limited extent’.[374] In the main, agreement was reached on the importance of integrating groups and projects inside and outside the university, and the participants

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[371] Dieter Schott, ‘Bericht vom 4. Historiker-Treffen “Zeitschriften-Projekt” bzw. “Geschichtswerkstatt” in Göttingen, 12/13.11.82’, Undated, File: Geschichtswerkstatt Bundesweit Treffen

[372] From the minutes of both meetings, the list of places includes Amsterdam, Berlin, Bremen, Bielefeld, Duisburg, Freiburg, Göttingen, Hamburg, Hannover, Cologne, Constance, Osnabrück, and Unna.

[373] ‘Protokoll über das gemeinsame Gespräch in Bremen am 17.10.1981’, 23.11.81, File Geschichtswerkstatt e.V., BGW.

[374] ‘Protokoll über das gemeinsame Gespräch in Bremen am 17.10.1981’, 23.11.81, File Geschichtswerkstatt e.V., BGW

resolved to contact other groups. A similar format was adopted in Cologne, where members of the *BGW* and the *Franz-Mehring Gesellschaft* introduced their current and forthcoming programme of work. This time it was followed by a presentation by Peter Schöttler on French history journals, including *L'Histoire*, *Mouvement Social*, *Les Cahiers du Forum-Histoire*, and *Les Révoltes Logiques*. Afterwards, discussion ensued on the problem of how to bring together different themes, with the history of capitalism touted as a potentially unifying thread. In preparation for the next meeting, groups working on 'rural history and the origins of capitalism' and 'provincial/regional history' were invited to organise sessions. Finally, discussions on whether or not to form a society were resumed and a decision on that issue would be made at the next meeting. The choice of the venue for the next meeting was Göttingen.[375]

Göttingen, November 1982

Spread over one-and-a-half days, the meeting in Göttingen was ostensibly designed to allow more time to be devoted to discussions of both basic questions of organisation and various themes related to individuals' research interests.[376] A sense that the tone of the meeting had shifted was apparent, not least because there was a rather sizeable increase in the numbers in attendance.[377] For example, criticism was voiced from various quarters about the original intention to establish a journal 'in a kind of patronising way without an actual constituency'.[378] It was clear that the plans for a journal and the creation of a network were not necessarily compatible.

[375] 'Protokoll über das gemeinsame Gespräch in Köln am 8.5.1982', 4.7.82, File Geschichtswerkstatt e.V., BGW
[376] Presentations were given by Gert Zang, Utz Jeggle, Hans Heinrich Nolte, and Karl-Hans Hauptmeyer, among others. 'Programm für die Zusammenkunft am 12/13 No. 1982', Undated, File Geschichtswerkstatt e.V., BGW
[377] A comparison between the attendance lists of the meetings in Bremen and Göttingen shows that there was 38 and 60 attendees respectively – a 58% increase.
[378] Dieter Schott, 'Bericht vom 4. Historiker-Treffen "Zeitschriften-Projekt" bzw. "Geschichtswerkstatt" in Göttingen, 12/13.11.82', Undated, File: Geschichtswerkstatt Bundesweit Treffen

The opening discussion proceeded from a position paper sketched out by Alf Lüdtke and Peter Schöttler, 'Für eine bundesweite Geschichtswerkstatt'.[379] This paper began by describing the relatively marginal status of the historians who gathered at these meetings - those who belonged to an 'alternative' standpoint within the historical field and who were 'partly characterised by socialist orientations'. Here the influence of Marxist perspectives, particularly those transmitted through English social history, the French *Annales*, and the recent turn to social anthropological work, was registered. Second, the authors identified, as an essential requirement of their alternative programme, the need to overcome the sharp distinction between the professional and the public in the undertaking of historical work, though 'the impulse for this doesn't come from the university or academic context'.[380] Rather, it came from the groups that were at the heart of 'socially critical memory work'. At the same time, they anticipated the potential effects of what they called 'the dialectic of integration', whereby the waging of institutional battles would serve to blunt the radical and critical edge of alternative history, 'reproduc[ing] the discipline of "history" as part of the "ideological apparatus" of the university, with the attendant hierarchisation and pseudo-scientific constraints'. Negotiating the mechanisms of incorporation required, according to the authors, 'a social constituency which justifiably demands historical writing orientated towards the interest of the victims of exploitation, oppression and discrimination'.[381] They expatiated on the need to avoid academic structures of work and communication and to challenge 'traditional hierarchies' and 'rituals of domination' via radical and democratic forms of practice and organisation. In their view, and in keeping with the general tone of previous meetings, the journal project should not be the main priority, as it would not, at this stage, assist in the effort of strengthening grassroots of the history movement. They argued for an organisation that would function as an alternative forum for the development

[379] Alf Lüdtke and Peter Schöttler, 'Für eine bundesweite Geschichtswerkstatt', File Gechichtswerkstatt e.V., BGW.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.

of historical work. Critical of dominant forms of history, but also self-critical in its own practice, it would condemn all 'forms of authoritarianism, patriarchy and discrimination'. Ultimately, 'there should be no masters in this "workshop"', only journeymen and women, who treat one another with solidarity and openness, critically but also cautiously.'[382]

The paper was not received with unanimous assent. Again, criticism focused on the partial perspective from which it was written – that of the university-based historian – which was entirely inapplicable from the point of view of local practice. Issues were also raised about the way in which the participation of the 'people' was treated unproblematically, without awareness of the different relations of domination and subordination. As one critic put it, 'the problems of communication, of the equal relations of cooperation with the audience and interested people, are treated too short-circuitedly and optimistically'.[383] The shortcomings of the paper reflected the fact that it was (unavoidably perhaps) shaped by the interests and preoccupations of the majority of those present, those attached to the university, leaving little room for the experiences of those outside the institution.

For all that, however, the paper articulated a vision of democratic history – or at least a theoretical justification of one – which connected up a politics of social transformation to a historical practice(s) that could be pursued as much on the concrete terrain of the workshop activist as on the more general level of the intellectual.

> The 'interior' of conjunctures or crises should be the crucial element of social revolutions or systemic political change…[and] impetus comes from the insight that any democratic self-determination, any individual and social emancipation has its origins in the daily insubordination of 'ordinary people' against the authorities.[384]

[382] Ibid.
[383] Lü[dtke], 'Protokoll des Treffens der "Geschichtswerkstatt" vom 12/13 Nov. 1982 in Göttingen', 3.12.82, File Geschichtswerkstatt bundesweit Treffen
[384] 'Für eine bundesweite Geschichtswerkstatt'

Here, then, was the locus for a politicised engagement with the past rooted in the local and microscopic focus on the history of everyday life.[385] Emancipatory potential was stored in the daily and habitual routines embodied in people's lives and experiences, which could be released in the research and reconstruction of these concrete histories. The practice of the history workshops, embedded as it was in the local neighbourhood or province, could act as an intellectual transistor for the conduct of this political charge.

Nonetheless, doubts and concerns about how a common ground for cooperation could be generated continued to be uttered. For one thing, historians who worked in areas outside Germany or Europe would have no obvious way of relating to any local social base. On points of intellectual substance, queries about 'objective' structures, about the relationship of the micro to the macro, and about how experience 'from below' was mediated at different levels of the historical process were all raised.[386] More contentious was the opposition of members of the BGW to naming the society a *Geschichtswerkstatt*, because, unlike initiatives based locally 'a supra-regional discussion circle didn't deserve the name'.[387] Disputes over language also emerged over how to identify their political standpoint. A preference for the 'pluralistic' was recorded as was 'socialist', and 'radical democratic' was strongly debated.[388] Moreover, the manner in which the discussion itself was conducted was a cause of concern for some, especially the delivery of formal papers, which ran counter to earlier statements of support for developing new forms of communication. The observation was made that 'while "radical democracy" appeared to be only a question of research

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[385] For a discussion of the political implications of much of Lüdtke's practice of *Alltagsgeschichte* as a theoretically-informed historiographical project, see Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte": Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday--a New Direction for German Social History?" *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 61, No. 2 (June 1989), pp. 297-343

[386] The contours of this debate is too extensive to be reproduced entirely, but there seems a contest between *alltaglich* approaches and more conventional socio-historical ones, revolving around precisely how to understand the opposition of objective and subjective, macro and micro.

[387] 'Bericht vom 4. Historiker-Treffen "Zeitschriften-Projekt" bzw. "Geschichtswerkstatt" in Göttingen, 12/13.11.82'

[388] It appears that consensus was reached on the latter term. Ibid.

approaches for some, others understand it as including new forms of cooperation'.[389] The preference for discussion in smaller working groups rather that in the plenary reflected the latter desire, as it was felt that plenaries tended to lead to mainly uncooperative exchanges.

At one point, something of a rift occurred amongst the history workshop groups and the academics, with the representatives of Berlin, Stuttgart, and Constance holding their own conversations separately. Indeed, they feared 'that the initiatives could be instrumentalised and misused as a foundation for a "pressure group" of historians working in institutions'.[390] The frequent expression of such fears reflected, as Schöttler insists, '[a] very strong apprehension against the university, academic work [...] non-academics were afraid, in fact, of being marginalised by academics'.[391] Unanimity, however, was reached on the aim of setting up a national platform of *Geschichtswerkstätten,* which followed an announcement that the local workshops might, if necessary, organise separately from the original meeting group. A preparatory committee was chosen to organise the next meeting, which would be held in Bochum on the theme of 'resistance'.

Bochum, May 1983

In a dispatch sent to participants ahead of the Bochum meeting, the organisers offered a preliminary outline of the proceedings, which rested on two main areas: the subject matter and questions of organisation and communication. On the first, they identified not just 'resistance' as the theme, but stressed different forms of agency or capacity to act irreducible to this original conception. 'What is interesting and worth discussing from this point of view', they declared 'are those situations and contexts in which "resistance" was closely related to or appeared alongside acceptance, passivity, distancing, seeking or building

[389] Axel and Helga, 'Bundesweite Geschichtswerkstatt ins Leben gerufen', Undated, File: Geschichtswerstatt bundesweit Treffen'
[390] 'Bericht vom 4. Historiker-Treffen "Zeitschriften-Projekt" bzw. "Geschichtswerkstatt" in Göttingen, 12/13.11.82'
[391] Peter Schöttler, Interview with IG, 18.03.13

niches'.[392] On the second, they ruminated on the possibilities of encouraging 'equal cooperation' with the wider populace, and expressed an interest in how public memory work resonated or stimulated new findings. They invited anyone to propose a contribution on these matters, with the aim of balancing various interests.

In the event, the substantive discussions around the concept of resistance were carried forward mostly by leading historical authorities present at the meeting. Michael Zimmermann, the host in Bochum, led off with an account of his research on communist resistance in a miners' district in the Ruhr region. He was followed by a presentation from the members of a project based at the Ludwig Uhland Institute (University of Tübingen). As the published report of the meeting recorded, the discussion of the two papers descended to the very premises of the research: 'under what conditions is resistance generally possible, what preconditions must be given for it…what kinds of resistance are political in the sense of an active commitment to changing the political and social system?'[393] Responses to these questions came from prominent figures, notably Heide Gerstenberger, Lutz Niethammer, Detlev Peukert and Rainer Wirtz. Gerstenberger, for example, challenged the concept of resistance employed at the meeting 'which might better have been titled 'conformity'…and emphasised that moments of *Resistenz* did not add up to "resistance"'.[394] For a group of newcomers to the national *Geschichtswerkstätten*, members of the Solingen History Workshop, this session was experienced as a largely male-dominated academic forum, 'sophisticated but also divorced from reality', which galled those who had expected more than a 'history conference led by the guild'.[395] A disturbing presence at earlier gatherings, this opposition also shaped the dynamic of the Bochum meeting.

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[392] Alf Lüdtke et al., 'Brief an Kollegen', 11.12.82, File Geschichtskwerkstatt bundeweit Treffen

[393] D. Schott, 'Bericht vom Treffen der Geschichtswerkstatt in Bochum 27-29.5.1983', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1 (1983), p. 6.

[394] Ibid, p. 7. Ibid, p. 7. *Resistanz* in the German sense is closer to the meaning of non-conformity, whereas *Widerstand* signifies active opposition.

[395] Sollinger Geschichswerkstatt, 'Arbeitsgruppe Fremdarbeiter', *Geschichtswerkstatt 1* p. 8-9.

There was another expansion in the number of history workshops and initiatives represented. Besides the regulars from Berlin and Constance, representatives from recently established groups from Dortmund, Freiburg and Solingen were in attendance and, as had become customary, introduced their group. The plenary was then divided up into working groups as a means of fostering the exchange of information and experience; working groups were organised around various themes like 'foreign workers', 'anti-colonial resistance', 'resistance in the early modern period', and 'history in the left-wing media'. Still, there was some discontent with how the meeting was organised. Ultimately, the effectiveness of collective meetings would only be achieved by reconciling the competing interests of the participants. The problem was summarised as follows: 'one side is interested rather in a specialist conference about specific themes, which can serve theory building in academic discussion, while the workshops are interested in sharing experiences about the research process'.[396] But in optimistic mood, the authors of the report believed that this was no major obstacle to cooperation, and a national organisation could provide the setting for the pursuit of both. Such an optimistic appraisal, however, was at odds with how the remainder of the meeting unfolded.

Two specific proposals were tabled in Bochum. The first was the production of a newsletter for improving communication and the sharing of information, which would be edited on a rotational basis between groups and individuals. No mention was made here of any dissent. The same could not be said, though, of the second proposal, which was put forward by the *Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt*, to hold the next meeting in the form of a *Geschichtsfest*. For Thomas Lindenberger, one of the proponents, the purposes of a Geschichtsfest were obvious: 'we can't just talk around things but have to make an effort to

[396] Margarete Lorinser and Sybille Leipold, 'Samstag 28. Mai 1983', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 13..

effect the outside world'.[397] Alfred Frei remembers that 'we didn't want copy conferences' and believed that 'we should not take it too seriously'.[398]

Designed to address a variety of concerns and interests, the proposal received the support of some workshops but sparked a fierce debate with others. The intensity of the disagreement was caused as much by the naming of the prospective event as anything else. That reaction, of course, was indicative of the specific circumstances of history and memory within West German culture, where 'as far as historians are/were concerned there is/was nothing to celebrate about history'.[399] Equally, unease was felt at the prospect of having such a large event attended by hundreds of people. For one eyewitness, Alfred Frei, the discussion was a 'low point'. The unity of common interests, if somewhat delicate, had been replaced by dissension, prejudices and a polarisation of positions:

> Now a front of joyless *Schreibtischtäter* joined battle against a bunch of chaotic barefoot historians, who want to – use mass unemployment, massive rearmament and the surveillance state as an excuse for a big party – at any rate that was how each side in the debate constructed the 'enemy'...[400]

Given the intensely personal nature of the 'bloodletting', a break in the discussion restored some sense of calm and a compromise was eventually brokered. Experience showed that a nationwide body was unlikely to be harmonious undertaking. The report announced that, as the basis of consensus, 'both groups and both needs must be able to develop inside the *Geschichtswerkstatt* (minimally: "peaceful coexistence"; in perspective: fruitful exchange)'.[401] The *Geschichtsfest* would go ahead, but there would be scope for a diversity of approaches and

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[397] Lindenberger, zur Nieden, Schröter, Interview.
[398] Frei, Interview.
[399] Margarete Lorinser and Sybille Leipold, 'Samstag 28. Mai 1983', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 14..
[400] Alfred Georg Frei, 'Miteinander schaffen wir's oder: gemeinsam sind wir unausstehlich': EIn Kommentar zum 2. Treffen der Geschichtswerstatt 27-29 Mai 1983 in Bochum', *Geschichstwerkstatt* 1, p. 32. Schreibtischtäter (literally 'desk crminal') refers to the complicity of state bureaucrats and administrators under National Socialism.
[401] Carola Lentz, 'Der Kompromiß', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 16

presentations within the framework of the event, so that both the groups and individual historians would be able to organise their own activities.

The one outstanding issue was to go through formalities of agreeing the statutes and actually founding the national *Geschichtswerkstatt, e.V.* This was carried out with rather less enthusiasm amongst those gathered (only 23 people were present). An outline of the statutes was discussed and unanimously agreed, as was a position paper, which recapitulated the core themes of the history workshops. That such accord was reached was remarkable in light of the earlier furore. But as Frei warned, '[o]ne thing now appears to have become clear: <u>the *Geschichtswerkstatt* can only survive and thrive if the initiative groups and the individual historians pull together</u>'.[402]

'Geschichtsfest', Berlin May-June 1984

The plan for the *Geschichtsfest* laid out by the *BGW* in Bochum was reprinted in the first issue of the *Geschichtswerkstatt* newsletter. In it, the Berliners explained that the aim behind their proposal was, in part, to escape the rather academic and restrictive character of previous gatherings by running a 'broadly conceived meeting, oriented more towards the practice of the *Geschichtswerkstätten*'.[403] The *Fest* had two principal purposes: 1) in line with previous demands, it was designed to provide the occasion for shared learning and exchanging experiences; and 2) it would give the history workshops the opportunity to bring wider attention to their work in the public sphere:

[402] Frei, 'Miteinander schaffen wir's oder: gemeinsam sind wir unausstehlich',

[403] 'Für Geschichtstage/ein Geschichtsfest in Berlin 1984!', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 27.

> This function of the meeting has to be seen in the context of the long-term aim of the history workshops, to gain influence in society's common and practical historical consciousness in the public sphere and in politics.[404]

Closely allied to the alternative milieu in West Berlin, the *BGW* was able draw on the lessons of previous autonomously organised events, such as the 'Volksuni'. That experience taught them that ‘the conception and determination of a programme by a central group results in a few doers being faced with many consumers’.[405] Hence, the decision was made to ensure a pretty strict delineation of tasks and responsibilities, whereby the main organisational effort was performed by activists based in Berlin, but the structure and content of each workshop session was ‘the product of the collective effort of the *Geschichtswerkstatt*’.[406] In consequence, the BGW would not be overloaded by work, but also cooperative relations to local autonomous groups would be maintained, and more people could take an active role. This was a crucial factor. ‘Without the broad support of initiatives from the FRG in the preparation and conduct, it will not run’, the proposal stated.[407] Arguably, the very idea of the *Geschichtsfest*, which had caused so much animosity in the first place, held out precisely the opportunity to ‘pull together’ that was thought necessary for the network to thrive.

One sign that tensions had been lightened was the designation of the event itself. In their blurb, the BGW had equivocated over the label, opting instead to offer the choice of *Geschichtstage* alongside *Geschichtsfest*. Indeed they claimed that whichever name was used would depend on the very character of the event, which, in their view, ‘cannot yet be foreseen in the current status of the preparations’.[408] At the preparatory meeting in

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[404] Ibid, p. 28.
[405] Ibid.
[406] ‘Wie es zum Geschichtsfest kam’, *MOZ*, Sondernummer ‘Geschichtswerkstatt’ (April 1984), p. 20. This special issue of *MOZ* doubled as the third issue of the newsletter *Geschichtswerkstatt*. It is notable, at least in the context of this project, for the inclusion of a translated piece by “Ralph Samuel” called ‘Das britische Modell: Die englische History-Workshop-Bewegung und ihre Ziele’, pp.7-9.
[407] ‘Für Geschichtstage/ein Geschichtsfest in Berlin 1984!’, *Geschichtswerkstatt* 1, p. 31.
[408] Ibid.

December, a proposal was made to rename it 'Geschichtsforum', which was refused on account of the fact that it would reopen a 'fundamental debate' at a time when the name had already been widely circulated.[409] For the actual programme, published in a special issue of the eco-socialist magazine *MOZ* in April 1984, potential criticism was anticipated by acknowledging the reality that the experience of history was as much a bearer of grief and misery as of celebration. The research of the *Geschichtswerkstätten*, in fact, was not lacking in seriousness, but the use of the appellation *Fest* was an effective way of distinguishing their practice from 'the ritualised earnestness of the disciplinary *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (also known as "being serious")'.[410] Whilst German history was hardly cause for celebration, it did not follow that it had to be treated with the affected solemnity of state commemorations.

More substantively, the BGW also described the different types of events that could be held, departing from the normal style of discussion of the academic seminar and achieve the 'sensual and vivid communication [...] of history and the work of the local workshops'.[411] Instead of lectures, which 'adhere to the rigid opposition of "knowing" speakers and "ignorant" audiences',[412] workshops with longer duration and more intensive focus on specific methodological questions were recommended. Initially, the proposal was for three-day long workshops, but as the programme explained, this was scaled back to a single day in order to prevent isolated specialisms from being created. In the event, there were around 14 workshops held in Berlin, ranging across a variety of themes and purposes, from oral history, video and exhibitions, and historical photographs, to the history of the constitutional state, the post-war period, and films from the Cold War.

Another proposal was to allow groups and projects to display the findings of their research and activities in an area of the meeting where touring exhibitions, videos or tables could be installed. This was all part of the mission to swap contacts, to read project

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[409] 'Bericht über das überregionale Vorbereitungstreffen für ein Geschichtsfest in Berlin', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 2, pp. 1-7.
[410] 'Geschichte – Was gibt's den Da zu feiern?!', *MOZ*, p. 17..
[411] Lentz, 'Der Kompromiß', p. 16.
[412] 'Workshops', *MOZ*, p. 20.

paraphernalia, and to get to know one another. By December 1983, a number of initiatives had already expressed an interest in this and, in the end, seven displays were housed in the foyer of the Ballhaus, the venue of the *Geschichtsfest*.[413] Whereas the workshop was aimed much more at the internal constituency of the *Geschichtswerkstätten*, there the showcasing of this work was aimed at the public. This aspect was supplemented by the plan to run evening events, such as theatre or music, and to organise guided historical tours around Berlin, a plan which was duly implemented. There was even room to squeeze in separate meetings on 'women in the *Geschichtswerkstatt*', 'children at the *Geschichtswerkstatt*', an annual members' meeting, and an evaluation discussion.

On the whole, the *Geschichtsfest* was a great success. As Schöttler recalls, 'there was a huge amount of people. It was a big success. We didn't expect it'.[414] In his review of the events, the historian Anthony McElligott reported the 'unexpectedly huge response' of over 700 people attending the meeting, adding that the 'often very overcrowded parallel sessions and its atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm, testified to a lively interest in history on the alternative left in Germany'.[415] The attraction of West Berlin was certainly a contributing factor here. In Lindenberger's words, 'there was a lot of shared accommodation, there were a lot of people from West Germany who came to Berlin to study, people who came from West Germany to party'.[416]

A slightly different picture is conveyed by the reports and reactions published in the follow-up issue of the newsletter. Much attention here concentrated on the criticisms raised about the *Geschichtsfest*, which included often contradictory claims. Complaints focused on the overcrowding of sessions, the lack of time for discussion, too many parallel events at one time, how discussions were conducted in a style that was too academic, amongst others. Even the structure of the *Geschichtsfest* was cause for complaint. As one participant

[413] See 'Austellungen, Infotische, Videos und anderes mehr', *MOZ,* pp. 39-45.
[414] Schöttler, Interview.
[415] Anthony McElligott, 'The German History Workshop Festival in Berlin, May-June 1984', *German History*2, 1 (1985), p. 22.
[416] Lindenberger, zur Nieden, Schröter, Interview.

remarked, 'I found it a pity that the opportunity was missed to introduce at least some of the workshop providers during the welcome session, to learn the expectations of visitors and to create an atmosphere in which people who had travelled long distances could start to get to know each other'.[417] Perhaps it was only right that scrutiny should fall on what did not succeed rather than on what did.

Moreover, problems that were felt were not only of an organisational nature. For Udo Gößwald, a member of the *Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt*, there had been no consideration of how far the practices of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* connected up to political demands and to the aspiration of shaping public consciousness. What Gößwald wanted to see was a way of structuring workshops to allow practical and theoretical understandings to be raised so that everyone could get on board – 'the village researcher from Upper Bavaria, the youth worker from Erlangen and the big city ethnologist from Hamburg'.[418] This point touches on a deeper, perhaps even irreducible, tension in the politics of the *Geschichtswerkstätten*, in the sense that the implementation of such a proposal would require greater control from the centre, thereby undercutting the values of autonomy and democracy upon which the network was established.

Elsewhere, the problematic status of theory was brought up by Michael Wildt, this time over the decision taken at the members' meeting to amend the position paper to incorporate a reference to class struggle. The invocation of class, he argued, betrayed a lack of clear theoretical definition and a presumption that the *Geschichtswerkstatt e.V* would not be a forum for such necessary debates, but merely 'an incubator for hatching young historians'.[419] The contradiction between the theoretical concerns of some participants and the 'distrust' of theory by others, which 'worried' the academic historians, was detected by McElligott. Against this undercurrent of feeling, McElligott encouraged both sides to

[417] Casimir Bumiller, 'Erfahrungsbericht zum Handwerk-workshop mit Anmerkungen zum Geschichtsfest üverhaupt', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 4 (August 1984), p. 32.
[418] Udo Gößwald, 'Pi(e)kbube oder Herzdame', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 4, p. 49.
[419] Michael Wildt, 'Die Geschichtswerkstatt ist keine Gemischtwarenhandlung', *Geschichtswerkstatt* 4, p. 47

undertake a 'critical dialogue' as a way 'to combine theory with an undoubted, indeed overwhelming ability to conduct local researches'.[420] Quite how this dialogue would be conducted was left unexplored.

If the first *Geschichtsfest* had not managed to invent a mechanism to conduct such a dialogue, then at least, it had passed off without too much internal wrangling. It is conceivable, however, that this occurred precisely because theory and practice did not explicitly confront one another. The highly fissiparous nature of debates up to that point may have encouraged a reluctance to face head-on the difficulties of instituting some basis for equal and reciprocal exchange. This predicament was made all the more acute when a group from Göttingen edited the *Geschichtswerkstatt*, hitherto published as a newsletter or pamphlet, and turned it into a fully-fledged academic volume.

[420] McElligott, p. 29.

CHAPTER 3: THE PRACTICES OF SCHOLARLY EXCHANGE AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL HISTORY: GÖTTINGEN, 1978

> We take the view that the present state of social history writing in West German is in some ways uniquely interesting. Relatively recent in origin, social history there represents a field of knowledge in process of urgent self-constitution. The amount of work is prodigious, the central ideological questions relatively clear, and the whole process informed by methodological and theoretical discussion which tend elsewhere to be blurred and incomplete.
>
> Over the last two or three decades, transformed versions of various foreign traditions have provided a basis for innovation in social history [...] Amongst the more encouraging of recent trends, for instance, we might mention the recourse to French and to lesser extent to British anthropology, the growth of oral history projects, and for a British audience perhaps most encouraging of all, the interest in the so-called 'Anglo-marxist' group of social historians.[421]

In 1979, the British-based journal *Social History* published a special issue to showcase recent work emanating from the Federal Republic of Germany. The above excerpts, taken from the editors' introduction, lay out the rationale behind the issue and explain why the German field ought to have a special interest to readers of the journal. The editorial went on to detail how a single interpretive perspective on social history, indebted to a form of sociological theory, had attained a dominant position within the German historiographical field. It was a trend not identifiable with a single school, but rather 'a general structure of discourse', which 'occupy[s] a central methodological and theoretical space in the West German discussion'. Taking aim at how this dominance had frustrated and held back the emergence of alternative modes of historical explanation, the editorial declared that the issue was

[421] "Editorial", *Social History* Vol. 4, 2 (May 1979), 169-70, 170

conceived as ‘a self-conscious intervention in current historical debates in the Federal Republic’. An intervention, it continued, that would ‘give a hearing to other kinds of work which we believe in the long run will provide a better basis for adequate social history, as well as explicitly to re-affirm the value and legitimacy of marxist [sic] approaches in social historical analysis’.[422] Of course, the unspoken intellectual antagonist here was ‘historical social science’. Frequently associated with the so-called Bielefeld School, its most fervent proponent, this historiographical tendency could be said to encompass a wider layer of social and labour historians, who had, by this time, achieved a large degree of institutional consolidation.[423]

Unusually explicit in its stated purpose, this editorial neatly captures a fragmentary moment in the conjuncture of the politics of history writing as it concerned transnational relations between British and German social history. On the one hand, there were methodological debates amongst German historians, which corresponded to broader questions about how to rewrite the German past and, on the other hand, the emergence of a cohort of younger British social historians who brought a Marxist (or neo-Marxist) approach and spirit of critique to the study of the origins and character of Imperial Germany and National Socialism.[424] Crucially, this moment reflected and responded to critical international impulses in the field of social history, where its guiding assumptions were undergoing re-examination and exclamations of 'crisis' could be heard.[425]

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[422] Ibid, 171

[423] See Georg Iggers’s distinction between the Bielefeld historians and those who subscribed to the general interpretive standpoint in his “Introduction” in Iggers (ed.) *The Social History of Politics: Critical Perspectives in West German Historical Writing since 1945* (Berg: Leamington Spa, 1985), 33.

[424] The first British post-war social historian to make a significant impact on the historical scene in the Federal Republic was Tim Mason, who made several contributions to the debate over German fascism in the Marxist periodical *Das Argument*. A slightly younger generation of British social historians of Germany followed in his wake, many of them writing their doctoral theses on the Kaiserreich. The volume *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1978) edited by Richard Evans could be regarded as something of a collective expression of this generational cohort.

[425] This is evident in Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth-Fox Genovese, “The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxian Perspective”, *Journal of Social History* 10, 2 (1976), 205-210; and Tony Judt, “A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians”, *History Workshop Journal* 7, 1 (1979). In an important article, Geoff Eley and Keith Nield identified a serious theoretical deficit in social historical practice, particularly in how to integrate cultural analyses of working class experience with

The politics at stake in this encounter can be understood along Bourdieusian lines, where the dynamics of intellectual discourse are prefigured by the differential amounts of intellectual (and academic) capital invested in particular methodological and theoretical standpoints, which, in turn, shape the general distribution of positions within the intellectual field.[426] Here the presence of a wider international field, albeit one modulated by distinctively British orientations towards Marxism in the post-war period, exerted a force or pull over the internal structure of the German domestic field by enlisting intellectual work aligned with its own general contours of interpretation in a common struggle against hegemonic rivals. From this perspective, the publication of the issue was a strategic act, in which the recognition conferred upon this dissident historiography in the international realm would be converted into 'scientific capital', serving to recompose the parameters within which the domestic discourse in West Germany was conducted.

The significance of this intervention for the politics of the academic field and the transmission of ideas across national borders, and how far this can be empirically verified, is uncertain. Obviously, this example was one of a whole series of intercultural exchanges and encounters between British and German historians, which occurred at a time of a general expansion and thickening of contacts and networks amongst social historians in Western Europe and North America, as part of the continuing process of disciplinary institutionalisation. In thinking about the process of transmission, Bourdieu's approach is useful insofar as it can show how and why certain interpretive paradigms assume different meanings in different fields, according to the relative position they occupy. In this instance, an asymmetry of power mediates these transnational and cross-cultural relations, given the institutional status of social history in Britain in comparison to its West German counterpart, a major conditioning factor in analysing the reception and appropriation of

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political and ideological processes. Eley and Nield "Why does Social History Ignore Politics", *Social History* 5, 2 (May 1980), 249-271

[426] For an explanation of the use of the concepts capital and field, see Bourdieu, Pierre, 'The specificity of the scientific field and the social conditions of the progress of reason', *Social Science Information* 14, 6 (1975), 19-47.

intellectual work.[427] However, such an analysis cannot be reduced to the struggle between positions internal to the structure of a given field, because they neither encompass the entire domain of what constitutes intellectual 'production' nor, for that matter, does it determine the actual content of those positions themselves, only their relational value, which is always fluid and dynamic.[428] Instead what is required is a concrete analysis of the forms of interaction and exchange through which the diffusion and transmission of knowledge occurs.[429]

The emphasis on what might be described as the 'machinery of knowing' complements trends in other important fields of research, particularly the history of science. But it also responds to Patrick Joyce's recent call for a critique of the politics of historical knowledge. This demands, he argues, scrutiny of 'the entire material infrastructure of institutions', including the institutional apparatuses, organisational structures, and social networks, as well as the tools and techniques of the discipline (the lecture table and chair, the seminar room, the academic paper, the journal and the conference). These are things that 'not only do not merely stand to our attention', according to Joyce 'but as it were shape that attention itself. They are the tools of knowledge, and like all tools they leave their mark upon that which they fashion'.[430]

With this in mind, the chapter offers a micro-historical account of an encounter between British and West German social historians (and others), which occurred at the first 'History and Anthropology' roundtable organised at the Max Planck Institute for History at

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[427] For a general discussion of social historical trends in the post-war period, see Welskopp, Thomas, 'Social History', in Berger, Stefan, Feldner, Heiko and Kevin Passmore (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 203-222.

[428] For an elaboration of such criticisms, see Rajani Naidoo, "Fields and Institutional Strategy: Bourdieu on the Relationship between Higher Education, Inequality and Society, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25, 4 (September 2004), 457-471.

[429] See, for example, Christophe Charle, Peter Wagner, and Jürgen Schriewer (eds.), *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2004), 13.

[430] Patrick Joyce, "The gift of the past: towards a critical history", in Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alum Munslow (eds.) *Manifestoes for History* (Routledge 2007). This argument is presaged by research conducted into the small, everyday practices of such institutions as science, the academy or bureaucracy. See Becker, Peter and William Clark (eds.), Little Tools of Knowledge: Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Göttingen (MPIG) in 1978, as a way of rethinking the task of historiography as a material history of the production of knowledge. In the context of this thesis, the aim is to consider how far the pursuit of the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) in the Federal Republic represented a continuation of the British tradition of history from below. By taking the conference as a local site of historical production, as something akin to the humanists' laboratory as it were, it is possible to reveal how the practices of scholarly exchange intertwined with the production of discourse.

PLACES OF HISTORICAL PRODUCTION

The Max Planck Institute for History

The Max Planck Institute for History (hereafter MPIH) was founded in 1956 under the directorship of the historian Herman Heimpel. As part of the cluster of institutes of the Max Planck Society, the leading organisation for research in the human and natural sciences, it was located outside the formal structures of the West German university system. Under the Harnack principle, outstanding scientists and researchers were to be appointed as directors and given broad discretion to organise and lead research. The principle itself (named after the first President of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society (KWG), Adolf von Harnack) had been formulated in response to the perceived inability of the German university to adapt to scientific innovation elsewhere. 'The guiding decision to found KWIs', according to William Clark 'consist[ed] not in recognizing geniuses in need of power, but rather discerning new fields in neglect at the university, thanks to the professorial oligarchy and its inability to integrate or allow new fields'.[431] To what extent the principle was actually applied in

[431] William Clark, *Academic Charisma* p. 470. For a general discussion, see Clark pp. 466-71.

practice is a matter of debate, but it is evident that the director was given a high degree of personal latitude and independence in setting the research agenda.

The early years of the MPIH do not appear to have been particularly innovatory. Alongside two long-standing projects, 'Germania Sacra', a project on church history during the Holy Roman Empire, and Dahlmann-Waitz, a bibliography of sources and literature on German history, scholarly discussions based at the MPIH did not deviate far from the main topics of research that dominated in the historians' *Zunft*, namely political, institutional and constitutional history.[432] The beginnings of a more tangible shift in direction can be discerned with the change of leadership of the modern division, when Rudolf Vierhaus succeeded Dietrich Gerhard in 1968 and outlined future problems to be investigated, including the concept of property, the social history of ideas and institutions related to *Bildung*, and what was described as 'the history of social and political consciousness', which was to be organised less in terms of a history of political thought than as the study of the 'collective mentalities' of specific groups.[433] Further evidence of a departure from the primacy of political and institutional history was signalled in the progress report for 1971/72, which stated that the 'primary interest is to be directed less at *landständischen* institutions and their function inside the state than the problems of social structure and the political function of specific social groups'.[434] Another pivotal moment in the life of the Institute came in 1971 with the retirement of Heimpel and his replacement by Vierhaus and Josef Fleckenstein as co-directors. Here institutional reorganisation served to advance new intellectual departures, since the hand-over was accompanied by the inception of a gradual programme of expanding the personnel. In consequence, several new members were appointed to the Institute in relatively short space of time. Among them were Peter Kriedte,

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[432] The colloquium of the modern division of the MPIH in the 1960s included such topics as "legal and political thought in 18th Century France", "the Bavarian countryside Decrees of 1714-1778", "Rural structure, corporate organisation and royal administration in the middle of 17th Century Pomerania", "Sovereignty and Estates in the Bishopric of Osnabruck in mid-18th Century".

[433] Vierhaus, "Tätigkeitsbericht an die Geisteswissenschaftliche Sektion", 10.6.68, II/53, File 39, MPG.

[434] "Arbeitsbericht des Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte für das Jahr 1971/72", II/53, File 39, MPG.

Jürgen Schlumböhm and Hans Medick, who set about laying-out a collective project to study the transition from agrarian society to industrial capitalism, or what became known simply as 'proto-industrialisation'.[435] The MPIH provided fertile surroundings for the flourishing of such a long-term and large-scale research project.

The freedom to define and to undertake this programme was made possible by the receipt of funding over many years, so long as it was approved by the *Beirat* of the Institute. Institutional support also came through the provision of short and long-term fellowships, which allowed members of the MPIH to invite overseas scholars to stay for several weeks or months at a time. These fellowships helped to facilitate a vital channel for intellectual exchange and communication between Göttingen and international fields of inquiry, deepening pre-existing connections to scholars and institutions elsewhere. There were also resources to assist research in other ways, as in the case of Manfred Thaller, who was hired to develop a computer system that would permit the use of quantitative methodologies, primarily for those involved in the work on proto-industrialisation.[436] These were not insignificant factors in allowing critical modes of historical production to cohere at the MPIG. Above all, however, it was the position of the Institute within the field of West German historiography that was structurally important in shaping the historiographical developments that took place over the next few years.

Outside the formal organisation of the Germany university system, which tightly controlled recruitment to the historical profession and, thus, restricted the range of interpretive and methodological standpoints, the MPIH insulated to a significant degree the formation of a heterodox perspective that might have otherwise been stymied by the professional practices and codes of the historical guild or *Zunft*. This is not to say, of course,

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[435] The culmination of this collaborative project was the publication of the volume *Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung* (1977), which was translated as *Industrialization before Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). The inventor of the term 'proto-industrialisation' was Franklin Mendels, who used it in his doctoral dissertation on Flanders. See Mendels, F. 'Proto-industrialization: the first phase of the industrialization process', *Journal of Economic History* 32, (1972), 241–61.

[436] "Arbeitsbericht des Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte Berichtsjahr 1978/79", II/53, File 39, MPG.

that locations or outlets for alternative historical approaches could not be found at this time.[437] But it did mean that a vibrant intellectual environment, based on collaborative working arrangements, 'pure' research, and intensive engagement with theoretical problems and international debates, could be fostered. At the same time, the institution's position made the singular focus on the advancement of cutting-edge research paramount, since none of its members held teaching positions or supervised research students. This meant they were largely excluded from those activities and practices involved in the reproduction of the institutional field (i.e. teaching, curricula, Ph.D. supervision) and the acquisition of what Bourdieu called 'academic capital'. Strategically speaking, the connection to and participation in international fields of debates were vital sources of recognition or 'scientific capital' in the effort to transform the structure of the domestic field.

Fortunately, then, the project on proto-industry, which was published as *Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung* (1977), achieved a good deal of international recognition. That was due in no small measure to the fact that it was entering into a long-existing Marxist debate over the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which had been initiated by Maurice Dobb's book *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, published in 1946, which had taken on a distinctively international complexion with subsequent contributions from Paul Sweezy and others. The work on proto-industrialisation can be seen as a continuation of that debate as well as an attempt to re-engage an earlier problematic that emerged out of the British Communist Party's Historians' Group (CPHG).[438]

On its publication, the book was favourably reviewed in both the *English Historical Review* and the *American Historical Review*. Detailed discussion and criticism was provided in more specialist outlets, such as *Social History* and the American *Journal of Social History*,

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[437] Here we should mention the work of Lutz Niethammer, Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Detlev Peukert, and Karin Hausen, amongst others. For a brief comparison of some of these historians and the Max-Planck-based historians, see Igger's "Introduction" in *The Social History of Politics*, p. 41.

[438] Medick was also one of the co-translators of the volume entitled *Der Ubergang vom Feudalismus zum Kapitalismus* (Frankfurt 1978), which contained the writings of Dobb and Sweezy. On the splintering of the initial totalising paradigm of the CPHG, see Chapter 1

though both praised the study extensively. The book was also swiftly translated into English, being published by Cambridge University Press in 1981 in their series 'Studies in Modern Capitalism'. Furthermore, at the first meeting of the SSRC research group on Modern German Social History held at the University of East Anglia in 1978, which was based on the history of the family, their collective efforts were acknowledged by the British historian Bob Lee and held up as an example to be emulated: 'the work of the Gottingen research group has provided a crucial extension of our understanding of the structural function of the family in the transition from feudalism to capitalism; now this kind of analysis should be applied to other periods'.[439] These sentiments were echoed by another participant at this conference, David Crew, who singled out their project because it 'tried to conceive of family history in terms of the total social and economic context…consequently, their work has a broad impact and relevance'.[440]

Whilst the proto-industrialisation project garnered acclaim, Medick's own profile amongst British and American social historians was also rising, particularly as a result of the paper he presented at the same conference.[441] The paper concerned plebian culture in the transition to capitalism and foregrounded the use and relevance of social anthropology in analysing everyday cultural activities, elaborating an interpretive perspective that offered a critique of E.P. Thompson's work on moral economy and the rise of early capitalist markets. It appears to have been generally very well received, being regarded by one commentator as 'capable of stimulating important new research'.[442] In a private letter, another attendee, Jane Caplan, later admitted that the paper 'was the source of much enthusiasm'.[443]

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439 David Crew and Eve Rosenhaft, "SSRC Research Group on Modern German Social History. First Meeting: History of the Family, U.E.A., Norwich, 7-8 July 1978", *Social History* 4, 1 (Jan 1979), 104.

440 Ibid, 106. Similar sentiments are echoed by Geoff Eley in his *A Crooked Line*, p. 43.

441 An abridged version of this paper appeared as "Plebian culture in the transition to capitalism", in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* ed. Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 84-113

442 Crew, "SSRC Research Group on Modern German Social History", p. 107.

443 Letter to RS 9/025, 862.

Evidently, the proto-industry group and Medick, in particular, had made a significant impression on their foreign colleagues. However, they were not simply reporting their findings in an empirical fashion; they were also leading the way in terms of current international discussion around the theoretical implications of writing social history. In this respect, David Crew's remarks at the end of his conference report bear repeating:

> …if their work can be classed amongst the most positive and productive elements of that 'potential for considerable growth' which Lee pointed to in his introductory remarks, it must be understood that this potential derives specifically and directly from their theoretical concerns and their concern with theory.[444]

In its relation to historical practice, theory was highly contested matter, especially within circles of British Marxist historians. In the context of British-German historiographical relations, the SSRC conferences organised at UEA were an important register of the consequences of theory for the priorities of social history, especially in terms of how this theory-history dynamic played out against the background of an encounter between two national traditions, which had, until recently, followed two very different historiographical paths.

The second meeting on the history of the German working class in January 1979 sparked a critical intervention into this field by Eley and Keith Nield in their 'Why Does Social History Ignore Politics?'[445] In raising this question, the authors outlined a critique of labour and social history in both Britain and Germany. But they also took issue with the assumption, implicit in Richard Evans's introduction to the conference that the simple importation of Anglo-Marxist social history would be an adequate basis upon which to

[444] Crew, 106.
[445] Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, "Why Does Social History Ignore Politics?" *Social History* 5, 2 (May 1980), pp. 249-271.

reconstruct German historical practice.[446] 'By simply adding a social-historical dimension to existing labour history', they argued 'the new work offers no necessary challenge to the orthodoxy outlined above – the "sociological interpretation of German labour history" – but on the contrary may leave the latter largely intact'.[447] In order to displace the latter, social history had to move beyond the impasse that it had reached, whereby the lacunae and indeterminacies of the existing 'problematic', sustained by a political conjuncture rapidly receding from view, could only be resolved through the 'difficult' labour of theory itself.

The value and necessity of theoretical work for the reconstruction of social historical practice was, however, usurped by the explosive polemics that surrounded the annual History Workshop meeting later in 1979. Thompson's vehement denunciation of the pernicious influence of Althusserian structuralism and his angry dismissals of Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson of the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) over its potential uses for the study of history served, in the words of one critical commentator, 'to reinforce an instinctive reluctance among historians to get involved in "theory".'[448] The locus of this conflict soon shifted beyond Althusser to engage questions of language and discourse.[449] In the West German context, no such antagonism was aroused by theory, since Marxism itself was largely a submerged presence.

That is not to say that the contours of the British debate were unknown; both Johnson's original essay, which appeared in *History Workshop Journal* and Thompson's own *The*

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[446] The thrust of Evans's position and his response to Eley and Nield is presented in his introduction to the volume *The German Working Class, 1888-1933* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 15-53.
[447] Ibid, 259.
[448] Gareth Stedman Jones, "Anglo-Marxism, Neo-Marxism and the Discursive Approach to History", in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *Was bleibt von marxistischen Perspektiven in der Geschichtsforschung?* (Göttingen: Wallstein 1997), p. 163.
[449] Social historians have spilt a considerable amount of ink on debating the implications of the linguistic turn for their practice. For two important contributions, see Eley Geoff, 'Is all the world a text? From Social History to the History of Society Two Decades

Later', in Spiegel, Gabrielle M. *Practicing History: New Directions after the Linguistic Turn* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 35-61; and Vernon, James, 'Who's Afraid of the Linguistic Turn? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents', *Social History*
19, 1 (January 1994), 87-97.

Poverty of Theory were published in German translation in 1980.[450] Moreover, a number of German historians were present at that History Workshop conference, among them members of the MPIH.[451] Unlike much of the existing historiography produced in the FRG, the work being carried out at the Institute took place in explicit conversation with British and wider international debates. One of the main reasons for this was the appointment of Medick, whose prior knowledge and contacts to the British historical scene was pivotal to the historiographical developments that took place.

Formations: the "Core" Group

Frustrated with what he saw as a lack of interesting and challenging work in the field of German history, Medick was encouraged to pursue his dissertation topic on British history. From the mid-1960s onwards, he was a frequent visitor to Britain, which brought him into the orbit of a number of social historians, with whom he established regular correspondence. They included the Marxist historians, chiefly Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, but also Peter Laslett and other members of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. They had a lasting impact on his own historical 'thought. As he put it, "[i]t was their way of seeing things that I brought back to Germany'.[452] Indeed Medick saw his subsequent work as an attempt to bring together the insights of Anglo-Marxist historiography and the Cambridge Group. Given the rivalries that existed between the two intellectual camps, he felt his outsider status was important in

[450] Johnson, Richard, 'Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese und sozialistisch-humanistiche Geschichtsschreibung', *Das Argument* 119, (Jan-Feb 1980), 39-49; Thompson, Edward, *Das Elend der Theorie: Zur Produktion geschichtlicher Erfahrung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1980).

[451] Both Lüdtke and Medick made contributions to the workshop, as did Lutz Niethammer and Franz Brüggemeier. Their papers were collected in the volume *People's History and Socialist Theory*

[452] "*Grabe Wo Du Stehst:* Recovering an Up-close Look at History, Violence and Religion. A Conversation with Professor Hans Medick", *Focus on German Studies*, Vol. 17 (2010), 193.

giving him room to move between them. 'As an outsider from Germany', he reflected 'it was possible to keep ties with both sides in a way that British historians could not'.[453] The effort to tether these twin influence really took shape when he embarked upon the collaborative study of proto-industry, but it has been evident in all his major work.[454] Whilst Medick was an important conduit for the transfer of British historiographical trends into the German field, he was also instrumental in recruiting other, like-minded scholars to the Institute.

The development of the project on proto-industrialisation found parallels, somewhat independently, with the work of David Sabean, an American historian of early modern Germany. Sabean's own intellectual migrations were quite broad, at least within Anglo-American academic circles. At a time (mid-1960s) when the 'new' social history was lifting-off, his initial introduction to the likes of Tilly, Thompson and others began at the University of Wisconsin. His decision to choose a dissertation topic on the German Peasants War brought him to Germany for fieldwork and then to the University of East Anglia to take up a lecturing post. Here he started an intensive engagement with the Annales School and social anthropology, became acquainted with the Cambridge Group, and then embarked upon a new project exploring the interconnected areas of kinship, property and family organisation in a single village. Following a stint at the University of Pittsburgh, Sabean returned to England to undertake a post-doctoral year (1972-3) at Cambridge with the anthropologist Jack Goody, where he regularly attended Alan Macfarlane's and the Cambridge Group's seminars. In fact, it was through Laslett that Medick and Sabean first made contact.[455] Travelling to Germany to participate in a conference on the 450th anniversary of the German Peasants' War (1975), Sabean attended a subsequent meeting of

[453] Hans Medick, in conversation with the author, 09.01.14
[454] Hans Medick, *Weben und Uberleben in Laichingen, 1650-1900: Lokalgeschichte als Allgemeine Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).
[455] David Sabean, E-mail interview with the author,

Werner Conze's ‘Arbeitskreis für moderne Sozialgeschichte’ on family history.[456] As a result of this meeting, Sabean was invited to join them at the MPIH; an initial sabbatical visit the following turned into a seven year stay at the Institute (1976-83). Moving in similar circles and sharing many intellectual points of reference, it is perhaps no surprise that there were strong affinities between the approaches they developed, even before their formal collaboration commenced.

Emerging out of a very different set of circumstances, Medick was also influential in bringing Lüdtke to the Institute. They had met at the *Historikertag* in Regensburg in 1972 following a panel on the subject of "Organised Capitalism", which was organised by Hans-Ulrich Wehler and to which Medick had contributed.[457] From this initial encounter, the two kept up a personal correspondence.

For both historians, the 'sixties' were a formative political and intellectual experience, through which they forged an oppositional stance to the historical and academic establishment. At the same time, however, the West German historical *Zunft* itself was undergoing a methodological and interpretive transformation, as a number of ‘critical’ historians rose to prominence, challenging the existing mainstream status quo. Medick's and Lüdtke's position to what became known as *Historische Sozialwissenschaft* and its most vocal proponent, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, in particular, was initially quite close.[458] The importance of ‘Historical Social Science’ in breaking the conservative stranglehold over the discipline cannot be underestimated for those who came later.

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[456] For the conference on the German Peasants’ War, see Rainer Wohlfeil, “The 450th anniversary of the German Peasants’ War of 1524-26”, *Social History* 4 (January 1977), 515-20. The latter conference held in Bad Homberg in April 1975 resulted in a volume edited by Conze entitled *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1976). See also Karin Hausen, “Wissenschaft und Leben: Eine Serie wissenschaftlicher Arbeitstagungen zur Familiengeschichte in den Jahren 1977 bis 1983: Ein Rückblick”, in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *Gelehrtenleben. Wissenschaftspraxis in der Neuzeit* (Köln / Weimar / Wien: Reiner Prass 2008), 175-184.

[457] Heinrich A. Winkler (ed.) *Organisierter Kapitalismus: Voraussetzungen und Anfänge* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

[458] Alf Lüdtke and Hans Medick, “Geschichte – für Wen?”, in Davis, Belinda, Lindenberger, Thomas, and Michael Wildt (eds), *Alltag—Erfahrung—Eigensinn: Historisch-anthropologische Erkundungen* (2008).

The point of lingering upon some of these individual biographical details is to emphasise that new ideas and perspectives do not arise fully formed out of the brains of thinkers, nor are they simply the expression of particular political and social reality. Rather they are mobilised by a whole series of material networks that connect actors, places, institutions, objects, and relations, which are themselves freighted by personal and emotional investments. The History and Anthropology roundtable was assembled out of a cluster of previously established, yet disparate relations and contacts. Some of these contacts had been sustained over a long period of time, in encounters across a number of academic milieus and shared domains of enquiry, and they relied upon various mechanisms, from funding for overseas travel and research trips, to the circulation of knowledge through books and journal, and international conferences and seminars.

THE MECHANICS OF EXCHANGE

As we have indicated, in the process of assembling a fairly disparate band of scholarly collaborators for the first roundtable, the Göttingen group drew upon an existing network of contacts and associates, which linked a number of institutional centres and currents of research that crossed national and disciplinary divides. David Sabean's connections to U.S. historians secured the participation of Joan Scott and William Reddy, whilst his time in England also brought him into the orbit of members of the *History Workshop Journal* editorial collective, who were represented at the conference by Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones.[459] Both Medick and Sabean knew the Cambridge social anthropologists, notably Jack Goody, who himself was well acquainted with two other key 'English' contacts for the

[459] An initial link between the two groups (or at least between Sabean and Tim Mason) appears to have stretched back to a seminar on peasants' history in 1973. David Sabean, "Letter to Tim Mason" 24.06.75 RS9/002, BI.

group: Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm.[460] But not everyone who gathered in Göttingen was entangled in these pre-existing scholarly webs. Gerald Sider, for example, who was not previously known to the group, was invited predominantly on the strength of an article he published in *Past and Present*.[461] There were also some who had little interest in the group's plans (Keith Thomas[462] is noteworthy) and others who had been scheduled to attend but, for whatever reason, never did (Jürgen Kocka, Pierre Bourdieu).

The Politics of Invitation

The process of deciding who to invite and, equally important, who not to invite was not determined purely on the basis of who was known to the group. A number of informal discussions were held with a handful of senior academics, who advised the group about who should participate and how the conference itself should be organised, including Goody, Thompson, and, crucially, Clemens Heller, the head of the Maison des Sciences l'Homme in Paris. These deliberations centred on the mix of participants, the themes to be debated, as well as the larger project of history and anthropology. Moreover, the link with Heller seems to have been crucial in terms of establishing contact with French scholars, who were less acquainted with the Göttingen group. The roundtable was jointly sponsored by the MPIH and the Maison (the second roundtable was held there in 1980).

In preparation for the conference, questions about the nature and organisation of the agenda, about how to facilitate exchange, and how they would proceed were carefully considered and closely interrelated. The discussions with Heller and other French scholars (particularly Bourdieu) reveal how far considerations about the politics and hierarchies of

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[460] For the connections between Goody, Thompson and Hobsbawm, which went back to their university days at Cambridge in the 1930s, see chapter 1 of Maria Pallares-Burke, *The New History: Confessions and Conversation* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2002).
[461] The article in question is "Christmas Mumming and the New Year in Outport Newfoundland", *Past and Present* 71 (1976), 102-125.
[462] David Sabean, E-mail interview with the author

academic work, as well as how to mitigate their impact, came into their thinking. In the first place, Heller feared the unwelcome intrusion into the organising group by elements within the French academy. As Berdahl reported, '[h]e thinks Bourdieu should be added to the list of the core group even if he won't play an active role on it, merely to defend the core group from the interference of other French scholars who may penetrate it'. Heller's concern also related to who would make suitable interlocutors and to the social dynamics of the conference space and to the potentially disruptive presence of eminent figureheads. 'He thinks we should avoid ever inviting the "popes" as he calls them such as Godelier, whom he said could and would dominate a meeting to the point of destroying it', wrote Berdahl. 'Better take some of Godelier's students, who are more modest, than Godelier himself'.[463] In Heller's view, such matters of academic standing and seniority could not be uncoupled from the content and style of debate, advising that invitations be restricted to younger scholars actively involved in doing fieldwork and research, so that discussions could avoid theoretical excursions that would likely result in an impasse or simply hinder productive exchanges. These recommendations were only partially heeded by the Göttingen group. Although Godelier was not invited, they decided quite late on, and not without internal dissension, to ask Thompson and Hobsbawm to participate – surely not academic 'Pope's', but nonetheless heavyweight figures.[464]

Heller's advice derived partly from the experience of holding the international labour and economic history roundtables that were run by the Maison, which began in 1975 in Paris before gravitating elsewhere, including Pittsburgh and Constance. The organising committee of these conferences included such luminaries as Bourdieu, Georges Haupt, Hobsbawm, Le Roy Ladurie, Charles Tilly, and Thompson.[465] In light of this, Heller recognised the importance of equal numbers of participants from different countries in

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[463] Berdahl, "Notes on Paris Meeting (2-4 March 1977)", II/53 File 73, MPG.
[464] David Sabean, E-mail interview with the author.
[465] See Louise Tilly, "Round Table on Labor and Economic Change", *Newsletter, European Labor and Working Class History*, Vol. 8 (November 1975), pp. 10-12.

order to help foster dialogue. 'Parity', as he was quoted as saying 'is essential to their cooperation'.[466] This suggestion was adopted by the group, as an initial letter sent out to invitees to announce the roundtable indicates:

> We have come to the conclusion that rather strict parity between participants from Germany, England, and France (with additions from elsewhere) and between the two disciplines is necessary. It is also probably a good idea to have different participants at each session.[467]

The plan was to have 7 participants each from Germany, France and England, 5 from the U.S. and 2 from Italy. In the event, however, parity was not quite maintained.

Alongside a balance of numbers across national and disciplinary, there was also an effort to ensure that the principle of equality was extended to the sphere of gender and to ensure a gathering made up of half men and women. 'In order for a real balance to take place', Sabean stated 'one needed to balance the sexes'. Here too the underlying rationale behind this commitment was bound up with the everyday procedures of academic exchange and with how to foster more harmonious social and personal interactions within which intellectual debate could occur. In Sabean's words 'the entire feeling of meetings changed with the major presence of women…the dominance hierarchies among men were abated somewhat. Discussion flowed more easily'.[468] The serious attention paid to considerations of size and the national, disciplinary and gender composition, as well as the professional status of the participants reveals how both social and intellectual factors were at work. How the social space of the roundtable would be inhabited and by whom was directly related to its meaning as an intellectual event. This was also true of the material and social practices that structured the space and organised the forms of encounter that emerged in regards to the discourse in which it was situated and articulated.

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[466] Berdahl, "Notes on Paris Meeting"

[467] Lüdtke, Medick, Sabean, "Some preliminary considerations on a workshop "History and Anthropology"

[468] David Sabean, E-mail interview with the author. In the end, only 9 out of the 30 participants were women.

Staging the craft

In his reflections on the conference, the director of the MPIH, Rudolf Vierhaus admitted that this manner of drawing together participants was an ‘experiment’, as it was ‘an open question, whether both [historians and anthropologists - IG] would actually talk with one another and could arrive at results’.[469] The idea of the roundtable as an experiment pertained both to its format and to its subject matter: ‘work processes’. This stemmed at least in part from a general feeling of unfamiliarity and uncertainty about how to set up a conversation between two disciplines, but it also owed something to the insistence of the core group to involve the participants in the design and construction of the roundtable. In a letter sent out to one participant, they enclosed ‘a short-write up describing the first one [roundtable] that we plan and some of the other ideas that we are thinking about’, adding ‘[w]hat we would like from you is your reflections on what we propose [and]...to know how you would like to contribute’. What was anticipated on the part of invitees was left largely undefined: ‘papers from some, introductions to research problems, criticisms of previous work, discussion of articles or books’.[470]

This sense of openness was also incorporated into the decision not to impose a formal structure on the meeting and to enable a degree of flexibility and spontaneity to emerge in the course of discussions. Contrasting with what we might take to be the conventional protocols of the academic conference comprised of the formally allotted time for the presentation of research followed by discussion, the aim was to allow the roundtable to organise itself.[471] An indication of what this meant in practice is provided by the following statement:

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[469] Rudolf Vierhaus, “Letter to Dr. Zarnitz (Volkswagen Foundation)”, 24.7.78 II/53 File 73, MPG.
[470] Sabean, “Letter to Raphael Samuel”, 26.7.77 RS9/038, BI
[471] “Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable and Workshop”

> If, for example, an issue was raised during one session that seemed important to pursue, a subsequent session would be organized around it. At the beginning of each session two or three participants would present informal remarks, based on their research in part, but also frequently based on their perceptions of problems as those perceptions had developed in the course of the discussions.[472]

This participatory approach to organisation has a whiff of the political spirit of the time, although a degree of cohesion necessarily obtained in the choice of topic for discussion. One of the reasons why work processes were seen as a fertile subject matter was because they had received little interest from either historians or anthropologists. But they should also been seen against the background of the efforts to stimulate an interdisciplinary exchange. A salutary feature of work processes was their ability to concretise problems of research in both disciplines. 'Only within a discussion of very concrete examples of research', claimed the organisers 'could [we] be expected to reach an understanding of the larger problems of method and conceptualization within each discipline'.[473] What would help to make these concrete empirical reconstructions of the work process meaningful to historians and anthropologists alike was the discipline of context. In a preliminary statement, the core group wrote:

> What both disciplines have in common is a concentration on context, and it is perhaps on this basis that comparative discussion can first take place. In this regard it might be useful to consider a number of detailed descriptions of actual work processes fixed in specific contexts, considering the way that different products shape relations in the work place or the family or the village.[474]

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[472] Ibid.
[473] "Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable and Workshop"
[474] Lüdtke, Medick, Sabean, "Some preliminary considerations on a workshop "History and Anthropology" 20.6.77 II/53 File 74, MPG

This emphasis on 'detailed descriptions' and 'specific contexts' was later described by Gerald Sider as less microhistory than something 'more like historical electron microscopy'.[475] One might return here to Heller's cautions about how a fixation with theorising could stifle discussion, as this microscopic focus on the grounds of empirical research implies a certain deferral of theory. And yet the same document soon drifts towards abstract and theoretical questions, which are elaborated within a broadly Marxist framework signified by reference to Althusser's and Balibar's distinction between 'the appropriation of the product and the appropriation of nature'. For the organisers, such a theoretical distinction served to refocus attention on important aspects of historical reality: 'under capitalism the appropriation of nature long remains in the hands of the workers in their ability to establish the rhythms of work, hierarchies on the shop floor, and so forth'.[476] The utility of work and work process appeared not simply in how they facilitated the trade of empirical insights across geographical and historical boundaries, but also in how they would open up new departures and perspectives within or against existing theoretical systems. The document then went on to suggests other areas of inquiry as potential sources of discussion, such as 'the shaping of male/female roles', 'work and time disciplines', 'symbolic and socio-cultural aspects of work', 'family and kinship', and 'the relationship of work to other aspects of everyday life'.[477] In this way, work processes were seen as fertile ground because they could be connected up to a variety of wider concerns common to both social historians and anthropologists. In his conference report, William Reddy declared 'we seemed to agree that the notion of "work-process" was in one sense a kind of node linked to a great variety of issues'.[478]

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[475] Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith (eds.) *Between History and Histories: The Making of Silences and Commemorations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), vii.
[476] "Some preliminary considerations on a workshop "History and Anthropology"
[477] Ibid.
[478] Bill Reddy, "Report on the conference of work processes" II/53 File 73, MPG

At this stage of preparations, the formation of the roundtable as an arena of discourse had been established via a set of arrangements and material practices, such as the circulation of readings, papers and protocols that aimed to order and regulate the space of scholarly exchange. It relied upon personal and working knowledge of scholarly encounters, of individual dispositions and qualities, and the current state of academic research. Work processes would give content to these forthcoming discussions in the reconstruction of a specific sequence of acts (and the use of certain tools, skills, resources, divisions of labour) and their configuration within a local context. But as objects of investigation, work processes were simultaneously instruments of scholarly communication, a part of the material process of staging the roundtable, which shaped its ultimate contents. This latter point was acknowledged by the organisers themselves: '[i]n a fundamental way the work process of the conference determined its substance'.

"THE ONLY POSSIBLE LABORATORY OF EXPERIMENT"

Delimiting the Parameters

> In the discussion of work processes in the last several years, historians and anthropologists have been presenting an objective challenge to one another. To some degree, the discussions proceed from a fundamental distinction that Marx has made concerning the notion of work. That is, work (labour) is in the first instance a "process between man and nature, in which use-values are formed - things which serve to satisfy needs of one kind or another". As such, it is easy to see that this is a factor common to all human societies. Work, however, also takes on specific forms and meanings in each society, and has therefore a dynamic, historic content. The French anthropologist Godelier sees the distinction as one between labour and production: labour deals with relations on a material

> level, but production as a process includes men's relations to each other "in the appropriation and control of the means of production." "These relations of production may be presented in the shape of kinship relations or relations of political or religious subordination" Following up this distinction, Godelier argues that activities that maintain or reproduce the kinship relations or those of political or ideological subordination are also to be seen as work. His best examples come from an analysis of the Mbuti Molino rite, which he interprets as "symbolic labour"…
>
> If the challenge here is one of analysing symbolic activity as work, there has been on the part of historians a concern with labour primarily in the first sense, that is with the making of products, the day-to-day working experience, together with the relationships between men that arise in and from the immediate processes of production. This involves a concern with the question of what makes history move forward, which is with Edward Thompson above all the problem of the relation between culture and production. To the phrase, "Without production no history", Thompson has appended: "Without culture, no production". That is, it becomes central to the problem of the historian to analyse "the culture, the norms, and the rituals…intrinsic to the mode of production itself…
>
> Thus consideration of "work processes" should lead the investigator to analyse the dialectic between cultural forms and production as a process with a temporal dimension.[479]

The preeminent site of scholarly and academic exchange, the conference is also a space invested with political, social and cultural meanings. It is here where research findings are presented, objects are identified and analysed, and arguments are tested, challenged and revised. Displays of scholarly erudition, however, are wrapped up in the enacting of rituals and routines inculcated by the culture of inquiry, the politics of everyday social interaction, and the wider distribution of power relations that organise the production and circulation of discourse. We have already observed how the grounds for this encounter were prepared,

[479] David Sabean, "Introductory Remarks", II/53 File 75

but another key structuring device in locating and giving meaning to the speech of the conference is the introduction itself. As Heidrun Friese explains, the introduction 'sets the bounds for discourse, explicates the title of the event, and emphasizes, like in the introduction of a book, its sense in a general discursive field and in social space'.[480] We begin this account of the roundtable by analysing David Sabean's opening remarks (above) to the roundtable, which was the only substantive intervention given by a member of the organising group and, as such, deserve extended treatment.

Several comments arise from thinking about how the practice of setting out the intellectual agenda was inextricably linked to establishing the event as a legitimate and credible site for the production of knowledge. Firstly, it is curious to note how the interface between history and anthropology seen as opposite sides of the same coin: history with its emphasis on economic production, anthropology likewise with regard to the cultural and symbolic dimensions. Thus the rationale of the conference and the choice of subject matter appear to emerge directly out of these competing disciplinary orientations, so that dialogue between both sides is structurally placed in such a way as to be mutually beneficial. The document (or speech), then, has a certain rhetorical force in how this encounter is compelled by the inner-logics of both fields. Secondly, the division of labour between history and anthropology is mapped onto a conceptual distinction that originates in Marx, which served to add further relevance and import to the exchange. Invoking Marx carried a weight of authority of historical and political significance that was bound up not only with his own prodigious corpus, but also within the Marxist tradition as a system of thought as it has been transmitted through thick layers of sedimentation deposited by generations of readings, interpretations and appropriations.

[480] Heidrun Freise, "Thresholds in the Ambit of Discourse: On the Establishment of Authority at Academic Conferences" in William Clark and Peter Becker (eds.) *Little Tools of Knowledge: Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 294.

The name of Marx situated the roundtable in a specific discursive horizon and historical moment, one that can be seen as both a source of cohesion and of dissonance and fracture. Cohesive in the sense that Marxism and the framework of historical materialism defined a common set of theoretical precepts through which to observe and interrogate the social world; harnessed, at the same time, to an integrative and totalising vision of the historical process, which served to validate intellectual work in political terms and to tie it to a political cause. From an overarching explanatory synthesis of historical and societal developments, Marxism rested on the assumption that knowledge was indivisible, as was the link between the critical understanding of society fostered by such knowledge and ways of changing the world. This view could at least be said to characterise the period prior to the Second World War, when the main currents of Marxist thought developed outside the institutional setting of the university. By the same token, however, Marxism has never been a settled canon of beliefs, generating a diversity of readings and interpretations that have cut across national, political and - at least after 1945 - disciplinary lines. The period of the late-1970s was no exception. Schematically, one can see this division in oppositions between structuralism and humanism, with the former originating in French philosophical and theoretical currents, and the latter arising out of an English empiricist idiom indebted mostly to the work of historians.[481] Traces of this cleavage were visible during the proceedings, but they were mediated by how the parameters of discourse were delineated. It is worth, therefore, pursuing this analysis a little further, since the reinscription of the two-fold definition of the work process, which acted out a dual ambiguity in Marx's own formulation, had critical implications for how the debate unfolded at the roundtable.

Sabean's opening statement elaborated Marx's distinction between two notions of work via Godelier's (rather than Althusser and Balibar) separation of the labour (as the

[481] For analysses of both Western and English Marxism around this time, see the work of Perry Anderson, particularly Considerations on Western Marxism (London: Verso 1979) and Arguments within English Marxism (London: New Left Books, 1980).

process of creating use values) and production, which refers to the relations of production and exchange, but in an expanded sense – symbolic labour – which encompasses political and kinship relations – culture in short. We should remember that Godelier's concern here is with how the relations of production are reproduced in *pre-capitalist* social formations. In the book *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, from which a quote is drawn, Godelier sought to relocate the bases of Marxist analysis on a sounder theoretical footing, adapting the theory of base-superstructure as a way of dealing with the problems posed by pre-capitalist societies to that framework.[482] He treats the function of political or kinship relations as part of the general process of reproducing social relations, such that their visible symbolic and ideological representation was not mere epiphenomena. In this regard, the contrast between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies is significant, since Godelier presumes that the reproduction of social relations under capitalism is determined by a purely economic mechanism.[483]

A similar line of argument was developed in an article published by one of the participants, which appeared on the conference list of readings – Gerald Sider's 'Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland'.[484] In an analysis of the significance of the mumming ritual to the fishing villages of Newfoundland, Sider linked its function directly to the reproduction of social relations of production within this society. Elaborating this claim at the theoretical level, Sider drew similar observations to Godelier to the extent that he saw how, in communities like those found in Newfoundland, the cultural domain is 'structurally integral to the relations of production'.[485] In contrast to industrial capitalism, where 'relations of production contain, or determine, relations of work', Sider asserted that, in the case of the Newfoundland fishing communities, 'basic relations of production, for example between merchants and fishermen, are far more separate from relations of work, for example, who

[482] Maurice Godelier, *Perspective in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1977).
[483] See Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology*, 33.
[484] Gerald M. Sider, "Christmas Mumming and the New Year in Outport Newfoundland";
[485] Ibid, 124.

fishes together'.[486] The discontinuities apparent in the conjunction of the work process and the relations of production elevated the position and role of culture to something greater than that of simple reflection or reinforcement. For both Godelier and Sider, effectively translating Marxist analysis to the conditions of societies without capitalist relations of production demanded a commensurate transformation of the ways in which culture and production intertwined and articulated together.

From this perspective, we can discern a latent tension or aporia in how the very concept of work was framed. In *Capital*, Marx distinguished between the labour process as the creation of use values and the labour process under the capitalist system of production, which is characterised by two aspects: 1) 'the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs'; and 2) 'the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer'.[487] As this suggests, 1) and 2) introduce factors of ownership, property and social relations of production, and it is from such deductions that capitalism is postulated as a self-reproducing system. But the former is not absent here.[488] In light of Godelier's and Sider's remarks about pre-capitalist modes of production, the question then is at precisely what point does culture enter the picture? The question appears to be clarified, however, in the reference to Thompson, who construes the relation between culture and production as irreducible, by which point the essence of the conference's appeal is distilled.

The rest of the statement which draws on several of the commentary papers to suggest directions for further discussion in order to give 'material focus to our discussions'. A key locus for exploring the intersections between culture and production was the ground of the subject itself: the experiences and perceptions of work, as well as how these

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[486] Ibid, 120 fn

[487] Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, Part III, Chapter VII, "The Labour-process and the Process of Producing Surplus Value"

[488] As Marx writes, "The process of production, considered on the one hand as the unity of the labour-process and the process of creating value, is production of commodities; considered on the other hand as the unity of the labour-process *and* the process of producing surplus-value, it is the capitalist process of production, or capitalist production of commodities" [emphasis added]. Ibid.

experiences and perceptions were mediated by other activities and spheres of everyday life, notably the family and the household. '[O]ur task here', Sabean wrote 'is to examine how the experience of work shapes the perception of work, gives it value, and brings into play elements of the culture and how in turn these moments give shape to the experience of work'.[489] These proposals were also posed in terms of the place of work in socialisation, in psychological and personal development, and how such processes were shaped by other factors like gender and life-cycle. Technology and innovation were also considered important components, particular as they revealed the complex nature of work changes and the struggles against them, struggles 'which should not be seen simply as one of workers against owners'. Rather, as it was claimed, '[d]etailed reconstruction of such conflicts should be able to furnish us with a clearer understanding of the emotional satisfactions, as well as an understanding of the web of social relationships, arising from certain work situations'[490] All in all, the tacit aim is to broaden the analytical scope of work, to juxtapose work and extra-work situations, and to examine symbolic as much as economic aspects.

One reading of this moment sees the incursion of the subject and everyday life into the dialectic of culture and production as intimating an alternative starting point for posing the question of the meaning of work; alternative, that is to say, to a deeply embedded Marxist formula which 'rests on the notion that capitalist social relations are inherently antagonistic', becoming 'in much analysis a meta-historical category, a kind of intellectual straight-jacket'.[491] Paradoxically, returning to Marx's original conception of the work process locates a gap or interstice in the discourse of Marxism, interrupting this logic of representation that seeks to reconcile the vicissitudes of historical reality to a pure class subject, upon which idealised visions of class interests and consciousness are projected. In the interval between the work process and the social relations of production, however, new

[489] Sabean, "Introductory Remarks"
[490] Ibid.
[491] Patrick Joyce, "Introduction", in Joyce (ed.) *The Historical Meaning of Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

questions could be posed that were irreducible to the outcome of the capital-labour dialectic.

"Work Processes" (1): The Social Dynamics of Conferencing

In the event, the roundtable was a rather unsettling experience for some of participants involved. The early stages were punctuated by expressions of 'irritation' and 'uncertainty about the aims of the conference'. Later, there were calls to give the discussions 'greater focus'. In their conference report, the organisers conceded that some attendees were uneasy about the lack of structure. They also recommended that 'more care should be taken in preparing future conference [sic] to make certain that the participants understand more precisely the objective of the meeting and the procedure to be followed'.[492] However, this admission was qualified by the assertion that the improvised format of the proceedings and the open and amorphous nature of discussions were entirely in keeping with the ambition of the roundtable, because it was never intended to reach any form conclusions or results. As they explained, 'the procedure was appropriate for an exploratory conference'.[493]

One of the unanticipated consequences of this form of organisation was relocation of the social place of discourse. In the words of William Reddy, 'much of the useful work of the conference was occurring in the one-to-one small-group discussions during meals, breaks, or evening hours'.[494] Though we have no record of what was said, by whom and in what manner, nor how it impacted the course of later debates, the very acknowledgement of what often goes unrecognised – that discourse spills over into the intermediary zones of everyday life and the private moments of communal interaction that always attend and surround the formal arena of the conference hall – is itself significant.

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[492] "Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable"
[493] Ibid.
[494] William Reddy, "Conference Report", II/53 File 73

This displacement of discourse was perhaps due to the intensification of intellectual labour demanded by the roundtable, which was concerned both with the structure of discussions and their substance: form and content. The lack of formalised structure may also have exposed the conference to the informal and hidden dynamics of intellectual life, particularly to the presence of pre-existent friendships and social networks, and to the personalities, influences and tensions that they sustained.[495] More substantially, the question of gender became controversial. Though unmentioned in their 'official' report on the conference, the organisers later recollected how Hobsbawm 'blew up' at Vanessa Maher and Joan Scott for raising the issue.[496]

Tales of personal animosity and scholarly in-fighting are generally the stuff of what F. G. Bailey called the 'folklore of academic politics', though rarely do these customs and rites offer themselves up to scholarly inspection.[497] But they are not simply tittle-tattle or gossip, passed on to enliven the daily routines of academic research or to initiate new members into the inner-workings of the field. The worlds of scholarship should not be exempt from the subjective and reflexive turns and, to this extent, incidents of personal enmity take on an added salience, representing much more viscerally and corporeally claims to authority and knowledge, contests over symbolic capital, and webs of norms and constraints about how to speak, write, and act as a 'knowing subject'. They are intimately intertwined in the material fabric of knowledge production, which are inescapably freighted with cultural, linguistic, and ideological baggage that give meaning to intellectual activities. In the case of the Göttingen roundtable, what started out as an attempt to bring together social historians and anthropologists in collaborative dialogue, seeking a common ground and unity of purpose in the choice of subject matter, became hostage to these 'external' forces in the process of

[495] This was notable in relation to the frosty relationship between Hobsbawm and Thompson, which became apparent during the proceedings. Hans Medick, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[496] David Sabean, E-mail Interview with Ian Gwinn; Medick, Interview
[497] F.G. Bailey, *Morality and Expediency: The Folklore of Academic Politics*

translating ideas across intellectual frontiers. This can be seen in the actual proceedings of the conference.

"Work Processes" (2): Fragments of a Discourse

Disturbances and interruptions in the roundtable discussions did not ultimately prevent substantive exchanges from taking place. The opening session began by examining various factors that constrained the form that work processes took and the social relations that emerged. In the case of Newfoundland, Gerald Sider showed how the organisation of the work process was related to the constraints imposed by the place of fishing as the sole enterprise of the inhabitants. Likewise, Eric Hobsbawm took examples from villages in the Andes and industrialisation in 19th Century England to demonstrate the significance of geographical factors and the role of transportation in determining the process of production. The following session addressed the theme of work through the lens of the sexual division of labour and men's and women's work roles, which was led by Joan Scott. She was followed by the anthropologist Andrew Strathern, who used his research on New Guinea Highlands to explain 'how men's domination of property and exchange resulted in the creation of an ideology justifying the division of labour between the sexes'.[498] According to the conference report, the ensuing debate centred on the cultural and ideological aspects of the sexual division in a wide variety of contexts, in particular the different perceptions of work amongst men and women. Another session, on the subject of technology, was notable for the contribution given by Carlo Poni on the 'metayage system' in Bologna in the 16th century. This addressed the struggle between peasants and landlords over the cultivation of crops. In one case, Poni showed how 'the peasants left the centers of the fields unplanted and, as the hemp grew tall, used that space for the planting of vegetable gardens hidden

[498] "Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable"

from view of the proprieter'.[499] Poni's paper was notably for the fact that it was delivered as a lecture, confounding the informal set-up established by the roundtable. 'It was quite brilliant', remembered David Sabean.[500]

With the exception of the question of gender, of which we have no record, these discussions do not appear to have generated too much in the way of controversy or division. In fact, sources of discontent and contestation were most palpable when the debate turned to the core problematic of the conference: the definition and utility of work as a category of analysis. Thompson opened his presentation with trenchant criticisms of the way in which the focus of the roundtable had been articulated. As the conference report described it:

> Edward Thompson began by criticizing the distinction made in the "Introductory Remarks"... Thompson showed that man never faces nature in an unmediated way; the work process is always mediated by property rights, social relations etc. The drawing of a sharp distinction...between economy and culture, creates a false dichotomy. Historians, Thompson suggested, have tended to emphasize economics, anthropologists have emphasized culture; yet there is no situation in which economy and culture, basis and superstructure, can be separated he argued.[501]

As we know, Thompson was at that time engaged in an ongoing polemic with Althusserianism. Intriguingly, in the handwritten notes, Thompson was recorded as stating 'Godelier's distinction is really Althusser's...still close to the analogy of basis and superstructure'.[502] The presence of this ideological subtext, which would soon be reignited, may well have skewed Thompson's own reading of the situation.[503] In the first place, his agitation against the 'false dichotomy' between economy and culture, base and

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[499] Ibid.
[500] Sabean, E-mail Interview
[501] "Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable"
[502] "History and Anthropology", handwritten notes [HM]
[503] Richard Johnson, "Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese and Socialist-Humanist History", *History Workshop Journal* 6 (Autumn 1978), 79-100.

superstructure appears somewhat misplaced given the organisers approving references to Thompson's work and their recommendation to analyse 'the dialectic between cultural forms and production'. It is also not clear that the distinction Thompson began criticising was the same as the one he finished with.

Admittedly, there are ambiguities and inconsistencies in how Marx's original distinction was adopted and redescribed in the introductory remarks in order to characterise intellectual divisions between history and anthropology. Thompson, in any case, took it to mean 'work as the creation of use values and work as the creation of social relations'. In *Capital*, the latter constituted the basis of Marx's specific conception of the labour process under the capitalist mode of production, in which application of human labour power served to produce surplus value for the owners of capital, and was the source of his critique of human exploitation and oppression. To presuppose that 'the work process is always mediated by property rights and social relations', is to insist upon the fundamental exploitative nature of the class antagonism between capital and labour and, thus, to a commitment to certain classificatory schemas and perceptual modes through which working class experience, interests and consciousness is rendered intelligible. Reading the general pieces of commentary provided by the conference organisers, however, it is evident that they did not intend to keep culture and production apart. Rather the attempt to consider the structures and organisation of work, the use of instruments and materials, and relations between men and women, and work and other spheres of life as concretely observable phenomena, suggests an ambition to take these objects on their own terms without the scaffolding of pre-existing theoretical categories.

The tension is symbolised in the decision to name the conference 'work processes' and not 'labour processes', although it might equally have something to do with the linguistic indeterminacy in the meaning of work and labour as translations of *Arbeitsprozess*. Keeping in mind the above distinction, *Arbeitsprozess* could stand both as a term for any kind

of labour, which would equate to the notion of work process, and as the labour process under capitalism as Marx understood it. In this respect, labour process was invested with a specific political meaning, whereas work process implied a de-radicalising move, at least in the view of Thompson. Indeed in his own position paper, he made a point of putting quotation marks around 'labour process' as if to stress his dissatisfaction. Towards the end of the conference, he went on to dismiss 'work processes' as 'an empty category, one which comes from modern management studies'.[504] Unwilling to entertain the premise of the conference, Thompson turned his attention to how different national traditions defined culture, namely the Anglo-Saxon and German, as if to signal the breakdown in intercultural exchange. Conjuring up the names of Orwell, Eliot and Raymond Williams, he noted the broad concept of culture in English, equivalent to 'a whole way of life of a people'; whereas *Kultur* in German denoted a narrower understanding, closer to 'high culture' in England and America. Finally, Thompson mused over the reasons for the separation of economy and culture, suggesting that the problem arose from the shifting form of exchange, which in primitive societies had been a cultural phenomenon that occurred with the "rise of money" such that 'the fundamental cultural exchange is masked'. Impressing the pertinence of his observation upon those gathered, he declared that it was 'in the process of unmasking that exchange, of studying the dialectic between the mode of production and the norms and values of society, that historians an anthropologists share a common task'.[505] The divergence between this formulation and that put forward in the introduction seems remarkably slight indeed!

More generally, the terms of the discussion over work were largely set within the problem of how to account for the formation of class consciousness. In his presentation to the conference, William Reddy reiterated arguments he laid out in his paper on the relationship of money exchange to the work process, analysing the systems of piece-rates

[504] "Report"
[505] Ibid.

and wage labour as opposite poles of the method of payment in industrialisation. 'At what point', Reddy asked 'did class consciousness arise? At what point, do the workers consider themselves to be exchanging commodities and at what point do they think they are exchanging labor?' The question of class consciousness was taken up by Eric Hobsbawm, who, according to the conference report, 'stressed that the study of the work process itself was a second order question, which in isolation from the larger economic and social ensemble, could not account for class consciousness or explain the relations of production'.[506] This claim was repeated by Poni, for whom work processes had a limited explanatory value. Conversely, Franz Brüggemeier supplied empirical evidence to suggest 'how persons with similar backgrounds and life experiences who moved into industrial labor developed very different levels of political action and class consciousness as a result of the conditions of the work process'. However, Brüggemeier swam against the prevailing tide of opinion, which regarded the work process as a subsidiary historical interest. In his own account of the conference, Reddy summarised the dominant position: '[w]hat was fruitful, it was said, about work processes was not their form in itself, but the constraints imposed on that form by the ways in which society organizes both the "appropriation of nature" and the "appropriation of the product" of work. Variations in the work process were therefore of interest only insofar as they reflected varying regimes of property and exchange relations'.[507]

For the group based at the Max Planck Institute, this was not quite what the roundtable had initially set out to achieve. The positive tone struck by the official conference report jars with their later recollections of the event. For Hans Medick, 'it was a failure'.[508] Meanwhile, David Sabean admitted 'that the meeting was more or less a disaster', in which

[506] Ibid.
[507] Reddy, "Conference Report"
[508] Medick, Interview

Thompson and Hobsbawm 'kind of hi-jacked the meeting and set their own agenda'.[509] That such a scenario was likely is borne out by the prior warnings of Clemens Heller about the disruptive presence of overbearing intellectual authority. The inability to simply get on and discuss the topic at hand may also have something to do with the rather oblique way in which the intentions of the conference were conveyed. As later statements confirm, the focus on work was part of a critical and heuristic effort to illuminate the rhythms, patterns and practices of work in a variety of local contexts – the village, the factory, the family – without recourse to overarching narratives of socio-economic or class formation. At that time, however, there was no alternative explicit theoretical programme to be advanced, though a few comments gestured in this direction, such as when Sabean made brief reference to Lüdtke's work (though there is no evidence that it was taken up during the conference), which raised the problem of situations that 'cannot be subsumed under the discussion of work as the production of products or work as the production of social relations, what he labels situations of non-work'.[510] These comments allude to the future development of *Alltagsgeschichte* as it was elaborated in a series of articles and programmatic essays.[511]

Lacking the usual structures of a formal agenda, the conference itself may be said to have constituted the agenda. It unfolded in the very practice of the conference, as much as it was specified in the determination of themes and topics for discussion. Material practices and discursive objects were tools that expressed the dual character of the intellectual encounter. At one and the same time, the conference was about advancing debate and understanding, *and* facilitating interchange across disciplinary and national cultures. The aim of lending a provisional, exploratory, and spontaneous air to the proceedings was to prove

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[509] Sabean, E-mail Interview
[510] "Introductory Remarks"
[511] A key article here is Alf Lüdtke's 'Alltagswirklichkeit, Lebensweise und Bedürfnisartikulation: Ein Arbeitsprogramm zu den Bedingungen "proletarischen Bewußtseins" in der Entfaltung der Fabrikindustrie', in Gesellschaft Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie 11 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 311-350. For an introduction to Lüdtke's historical work, see Eley, 'Labor History, Social History, "Alltagsgeschichte": Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday', 321-326.

unrealised. The differences over the meaning of work processes, then, cannot be reduced to purely theoretical or cultural doctrines, but can also be found in the mode of exchange, or the scholarly disposition or temper required to develop new analytical questions and examine new objects of analysis. At the end of the conference, Thompson seems to have been left puzzled. He sought 'to find out our motivation' and wondered about the common ground with anthropologists and 'what would that be'.[512]

EDWARD THOMPSON AND THE MAKING OF GERMAN SOCIAL HISTORY

A number of the participants were invited to stay on for a few days to join a 'follow-up' workshop held immediately after the main roundtable, which gathered together 20 or so graduate students and young researchers from West Germany and Switzerland. The main impetus behind the second meeting lay in the ambition to communicate the substance of the earlier discussions to a broader audience in the German-speaking academic world.[513] In the face of the indifference and scepticism, if not hostility on the part of the historians' guild to the convergence of history and anthropology, the decision to bring the fruits of international trends and debates to a group of young historians can be read as a strategic move designed to exert the maximum 'pull' over the field.

The encounter was conceived as a pedagogical exercise, where the aim was to generate dialogue between the parties and, thus, the major focus of the sessions was centred on the students' own research, presented and discussion in small working groups. As it was later explained, 'the discussion won't come from a one-sided "enquiry" by authorities'.

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[512] "History and Anthropology" handwritten notes

[513] Rudolf Vierhaus, Letter to Dr. Zarnitz (Volkswagen Foundation), 24.7.78, II/53 File 73, MPG; and "Report on the History and Anthropology Roundtable and Workshop", II/53 File 73.

Stress here was placed on the setting of the MPIH as an important factor in this process, as 'reciprocal exchange [...] is more difficult in the everyday of the university', which was due to 'temporal and financial limits' and 'an attitude of resignation as a consequence of diffuse career prospects'. In a less foreboding environment, where constraints imposed by social and professional hierarchies could be held in abeyance, 'a relaxed atmosphere of discussion is possible'.[514] Of course, the MPIH was not without its own forms of hierarchy, not least the complete separation of research from teaching. And yet, conversely, its position outside the customary routines and procedures of the university allowed it to become a locus for exchange and interaction across social and professional divides.

Pedagogical concerns, it should be noted, were not simply an afterthought for members of the MPIH. In fact, they were a key element of Lüdtke and Medick's critique of the German historical establishment and, especially, the organisation of history teaching at schools and universities. Lüdtke had been centrally involved in publishing the journal *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen für Unterricht und Studium* (*SOWI*), which, according to Lüdtke, set out to 'bridge the gap between scholarship and history teaching' by communicating recent research to teaching professionals in schools and *Hochschulen*. Several pieces presented at this follow-up workshop were later published in subsequent issues of *SOWI*.[515]

Although the meetings held in Göttingen were driven ostensibly by intellectual and pedagogical impulses, convening an array of top international scholars on German soil, whether consciously or not signalled an intervention into the historical field. In this sense, it can be seen as a counterpart to the issue of *Social History* discussed above, only that the process of intellectual transmission is reversed, working from the inside to translate and naturalise foreign concepts and knowledge into the national context and thereby transforming the existing parameters of discourse. For German historians who sought to

[514] "Notes on the reasons for holding a follow-up conference", II/53 File 73.
[515] See Alf Lüdtke and Hans Medick, "Geschichte – für Wen?"; quote taken from Lüdtke, Interview with Ian Gwinn, 31.05.13

understand the historical experience of the lower orders, whether plebians or proletarians, the figure of Thompson loomed large in this process and his visible presence there should not be underestimated. Norbert Schindler recalled the Göttingen encounter 'as an awe-filled youngster', and remembered how Thompson 'squirmed with increasing impatience at our convoluted, abstract and heavy-handed scholarly explanations of how we saw "history from below" and finally interrupted with an imploring gesture, "Do it! Do it!".'[516]

The history of Thompson's reception in the Federal Republic has been traced back to Michael Vester's *Die Entstehung des Proletariats als Lernprozess* (1970),[517] but in the field of history it is an interesting quirk that the later Thompson was translated into German first; the book *Plebische Kultur und Moralische Ökonomie*, which later became *Customs in Common*, appeared in 1980, whereas the translation of *The Making of the English Working Class* was not published until 1987.[518] This oddity resonated with the beginning of the turn towards social anthropology amongst German historians that the first conference at Göttingen represented. Thompson's work on the plebian culture and moral economy of 18th century England was critically informed by an engagement with anthropological concepts, though there were tensions in how he framed this cross-border engagement that were present in his intervention at the conference.[519] Yet unlike elsewhere, the very engagement with anthropology in West Germany was a major point of contestation, directly challenging many of the key analytical tenets of the critical school of historical social science. The appropriation of Thompson ought to be viewed within the context of this emerging contest over the permissibility of different perspectives and methods in social history; as well as being a general source of inspiration, Thompson also carried a weight of prestige from the

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[516] Norbert Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 295.
[517] See Thomas Lindenberger, "Empirisches Idiom and deutsches Unverständnis: Anmerkungen zur westdeutschen Rezeption von E.P. Thompsons >The Making of the English Working Class<".
[518] E.P. Thompson, *Plebische Kultur und Moralische ökonomie*
[519] For Thompson's reflections on the relation between historical and anthropological forms of enquiry, see his "History and Anthropology" in E.P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (The New Press: New York, 1994), 200-225; and "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context", *Midland History*

Anglo-American academy and it is perhaps unsurprising that his general approach encountered strong resistance.[520] What was also significant here was the capacity of certain events and actors to perform the necessary cultural mediation in order to import Thompson's English language-based conceptual lexicon. Take the concept of social class, for instance, which in Thompson's hands differed markedly from how it was applied and understood in the German context, specifically in how he conceived it as a process, a relation and, ultimately, a lived experience.[521]

Yet this process of mediation worked both ways. In his editorial introduction to the volume *Plebische Kultur und Moralische Ökonomie*, Dieter Groh warned readers that 'the example of Edward Thompson cannot be made fruitful by…uncritically adopting the Thompsonian view' and the prospect of the 'threatened loss of any broader research perspective would do anything but improve the developmental perspectives of social history in the Federal Republic'.[522] The realities and events that characterised very different national pasts, as well as the political exigencies of historical representation, serve to place limits on the translation from one context to another; by the very nature of German history, the working class as object could not be portrayed in the singular light as Thompson had done to the English working class, not to mention the more celebratory and romantic modes of history from below.[523] Furthermore, as already mentioned, the general field of social history was beginning to experience a wave of theoretical convulsions and upheaval that would eventually lead to the break-up of the 'materialist consensus' that had held it together.[524] We noted earlier how Eley and Nield had cast the problems afflicting social history in terms that could only be resolved or advanced through new theoretical departures, and not by the simple importation of existing British historical practice into the FRG. The subsequent

[520] See Jürgen Kocka, "Klassen oder Kultur? Durchbrüche und Sackgassen in der Arbeitergeschichte" *Merkur* 36 (1982), 955-65.
[521] Medick, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[522] Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom*, 296.
[523] See here, Eley and Nield, "Why Does Social History Ignore Politics", 259-60.
[524] Eley and Nield, "Starting Over: the present, the postmodern and the moment of social history, 374.

articulation of *Alltagsgeschichte*, particularly in the writings of Medick and Lüdtke, was partly shaped by and responded to the broader impasse that social history had reached.

A case in point is the second meeting in the series on History and Anthropology based on the theme of 'material interests and emotions', which was held at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris in 1980. Devoted to the study of family and kinship relations, the title of the conference symbolised the intention to move past the dichotomous relations between these two categories that characterised the literature. In the introduction to the collected volume of essays taken from the conference, which were published in 1984, Medick and David Sabean acknowledged the dilemmas. '[S]ocial historians have been calling into questions many aspects of their practice', they observed. 'They are no longer sure in what way the story which they relate is part of a larger story of political change, the struggle for power, and the analysis of the forces of domination'.[525] In many ways, this recognition gave voice to something that was hardly apparent in 1978. By then, however, the terrain of social history in Britain and West Germany was being fundamentally recast.

The aim of this chapter has been to highlight the salience of what de Certeau calls the 'place of production' in historiography.[526] It is important because as Eley and Nield observe 'the temporalities of historiographical change are never straightforwardly supersessionist and linear'.

> Historical work seldom moves forward in a self-evidently improving register of enhanced understanding…On the contrary, projects and problematics have a tendency to persist and overlap, interpenetrating and getting in each other's way, jostling and speaking out of turn, in a simultaneity of practices and conversations whose meaning become far messier – but also more rewarding – than the advocates of consistency allow.[527]

[525] Hans Medick and David Sabean (eds.), *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the study of family and kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1.
[526] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 59.
[527] Eley and Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007) 27.

In the example of the History and Anthropology conference, we can see the messiness of historiographical temporalities at work. Here the discussions around work processes revealed the existence of not only disputes on matters of interpretation, but they also betrayed signs of more profound dissonances in the fundamental presuppositions of (Marxist) social history, symbolised in the sceptical, even dismissive attitudes of some towards the purpose of the conference itself. In that regard, the conference foundered. If the intent was to refocus attention on new problems and new objects of analysis, then it remained largely stillborn. 'Work processes' became a site of contestation and misapprehension, rather a source of seamless intellectual advance and enhanced understanding. The encounter was riven by differences over the use of such terms as 'work processes', 'labour' and 'production', and how they were mobilised by certain ideological and theoretical agendas, as well as shaped by cultural and disciplinary specificities. To understand the local rhythms, movements and oscillations of historiographical change, we ought to pay increased attention to those occasions when exchanges do not succeed, when they bring no discernible coherence of viewpoints, and when cultural, theoretical and personal baggage interrupt discursive practice. Indeed it is perhaps here where the unspoken 'doxa' of academic discourse becomes most visible and available to analysis.

CHAPTER 4: "A MOST DELICATE MATTER OF BALANCE": *HISTORY WORKSHOP JOURNAL AND THE DILEMMAS OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOLARSHIP*, 1975-77

I. BACKGROUND

The founding of the *History Workshop Journal* (*HWJ*) in 1975 marked the extension of workshop activity into a new sphere of operations, namely, the serial publication of historical scholarship; a move that would come to redefine the Workshop and its position within the constituencies and milieus of the Left. It was, nevertheless, strongly committed to the principles of the Workshop. 'Like the Workshop, like the pamphlets, like the books in the workshop series', announced the inaugural editorial 'the journal will be concerned to bring the boundaries of history closer to people's lives' and will be 'dedicated to making history a more democratic activity and more urgent concern'.[528] Whilst declaring its devotion to areas of historical inquiry synonymous with the Workshop, not least to the centrality of working-class culture and experience, *HWJ* proposed to enlarge the historiographical canvass by its turning attention towards new subjects like literature, music, film, theatre and art. More ambitiously, and in contrast to the Workshop practice of local and particularised forms of historical reconstruction, the journal intended to situate its work 'within an overall view of capitalism as a historical phenomenon, both as a mode of production and as a system of social relations'.[529]

HWJ, then, occupied the overlapping horizon between political and intellectual worlds, intersecting neatly into a single encompassing vision of 'democratic scholarship', which would find expression in both the choice of subject-matter and forms of address. This ambition set it apart from the prevailing orthodoxies of professional scholarship that governed the design, content and format of academic publication. Unlike the narrow

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[528] "Editorial: History Workshop Journal", *History Workshop Journal*, No. 1 (1976), p. 1.
[529] Ibid.

specifications and routines of academic history, the opening manifesto stressed the urgency and relevance with which historical topics would be taken up in articles, which would be longer than normal journal articles and more accessible. *HWJ* would also seek to be 'workshop in character', the purpose of which was 'to bring together working historians of whatever background or experience, and offer them solidarity and practical help, encouraging a collaborative approach to the problems of research'.[530] It planned to introduce a series of shorter sections in the back half of each number to serve as a point of contact for the readership and to explore alternative sources of historical understanding and imagination. In this regard, *HWJ* did not just hope to speak to or on behalf of the Workshop's constituency, but also to establish forms of dialogue through the pages of the journal to encourage an active and critical readership. As the editorial declared, '[d]emocratic scholarship means a two-way relationship between writer and reader, and we hope that in the pages of the journal there will be collaboration and understanding between them'.[531]

As we observed in Chapter One, the appearance of *HWJ* coincided with a period of expansion in the Workshop's scope. In this context, one of the motivations behind setting up the journal was to counteract an excessive emphasis on public presentation rather than generating publishable work. In the words of one founding editor, 'we lack a regular forum for ideas and we need a place in which the sort of material presented at the workshop could be published'.[532] However, *HWJ* would not simply be a passive outlet for the production and dissemination of the fruits of workshop research. Indeed, it was conceived as a focal point for stimulating new work and for co-ordinating enquiry into areas of political and intellectual significance. An early planning document outlines this rationale:

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[530] Ibid, p. 2.
[531] Ibid, p. 3.
[532] Alun Howkins, 'Notes on the idea of HWJ', 10.4.75, RS9/013, BI.

> [t]he Workshop and the books to have coherence have had to be organised around discrete, themes, and in a once-and-for-all way. With the journal we shall be able to co-ordinate the different components of a socialist historical inquiry, and to relate them to a developing understanding of capitalist society as a whole. The work can be a continuing one both on the subjects which have been at the centre of the Workshops and those which we, in common with other Marxists, have allowed to fallow over the past decade or so.[533]

In this formulation of the project, *HWJ* would not merely affirm the democratic intent of the Workshop, but it would also mark a departure in the strategic organisation of historical production and the broadening of its research horizons. Alongside the aim of producing democratic history, the political efficacy of the journal was predicated on the need for intellectual advance and innovation. Turning to the past, Raphael Samuel warned his fellow editors that 'the old NLR – pre-1962 ran into the ground because it stopped any forward thinking'.[534] But a possible point of contradiction comes into view here: if the watchwords of democratic scholarship and dialogue signal, in a Gramscian sense, an effort to overturn relations of inequality and hierarchy in the construction of knowledge, and to recast the social organisation of intellectual activity towards some 'new equilibrium', then the necessary and often exclusive task of elaborating ever-more complex and superior conceptions of the world threatens to reconstitute those hierarchies and inequalities.[535] The question for the collective would be how to keep these twin aims in dialectical tension.

In its efforts to put democratic practice at the heart of journal production and to seek out wider and popular constituencies for historical writing, *HWJ* distinguished itself from contemporaries and predecessors alike. Although it shared a grounding in post-1968 socialist and feminist culture with other publishing ventures, such as *Radical Philosophy* (f. 1972), *Capital and Class* (f. 1977), and *Radical Science* (f. 1974), *HWJ* claimed an audience beyond

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[533] Unauthored, 'Editorial Structure', 1.4.75, RS9/013, BI.
[534] Ibid.
[535] For Gramsci's views on the function of intellectuals and their relationship to the 'masses', see Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*(London: Lawarence & Wishart, 1971), pp. 1-15 and 416-425.

the university. For this reason, it also differed from comparable historical journals like *Social History* (f. 1976) and, further back, *Past and Present* (f. 1952), which were mostly preoccupied with academic debates among radical historians. If there is a journal that *HWJ* most closely resembled in terms of spirit and outlook, despite the differences in content and subject matter, then it is perhaps the first incarnation of the *New Left Review* (1960-62) under the stewardship of Stuart Hall. The belief that a journal could provide a place for collaboration between intellectuals and the labour movement, and a vehicle for spreading ideas that could be engaged by a broader public and relevant to political activity, were assumptions shared by both projects. 'Our hope is', wrote Hall in the first issue, 'that NLR will bring to life a genuine dialogue between intellectuals and industrial workers'.[536] This shared endeavour can be seen as one instance of how the political currents arising from the first New Left were carried forward into succeeding radical formations, including History Workshop.[537] For the editors of *HWJ* to succeed where the *NLR* failed, however, they would have to find a way of translating the political ideal of democratic scholarship into a variety of literary forms and practices, as well as into the organisation of production.

With that in mind, this chapter deals with how this process was established and evolved over the course of *HWJ*'s first three years (1975-77), analysing in detail the intertwining logics of practice, representation, social relations which gave it form. The next chapter extends this analysis through the succeeding period (1978-82), documenting the shifting contours of its political and intellectual development. First, however, the next section offers a brief reading of a set of preliminary editorial notes in order to illustrate how the project was initially envisioned and, consequently, to explain how and why it later departed from that vision.

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[536] Stuart Hall, "Introducing NLR", *New Left Review* 1, January-February 1960

[537] Sheila Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organising for Socialism, in *Beyond the Fragments* pp. 24-5

II. A WORKSHOP MODE OF INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION

Prepared for the very first meeting of the editorial collective in April 1975, a collection of documents were, according to a covering note, 'compiled on the basis of a number of discussions over the past few weeks and are [sic] the work of different hands'. They are worthy of closer scrutiny because they reveal certain patterns of thinking and logic underlying the decision to found the journal and the way in which its production would be organised. For instance, in a section entitled 'finance', the main point of contention was the question of how to publish the journal, i.e. whether to publish it themselves or turn the responsibility over to a publishing house. A lot of the discussion centred upon the potential costs of printing, the length of the print-run and sales, and whether money could be saved if the journal was published independently. But this decision did not solely revolve around financial considerations; it was also framed in terms of its possible effects on the time and psychic energies of the editorial group. 'Personally I like the idea of our making our own journal', the author declares 'but I think the anxiety, time and labour isn't worth it', and adds 'I'm worried about the dispersal of energies that negotiations and dealings with printers involve'.[538]

Despite these reservations, and following a series of discussions with various publishers and one serious offer from Pluto Press to take on the job, the editorial collective decided to publish the journal independently. What actually determined the outcome of the issue, however, were not worries about over-burdened and over-worked editors, but contrasting outlooks towards the relationship of the economics of publishing to the politics of the whole enterprise. For the editorial group, proceeds from sales would be used to raise the print run and to keep the subscription price down, whereas for Pluto the converse was the case, i.e. to raise the subscription and collect profits for themselves. What was at stake

[538] Unauthored, 'Finance', 1.4.75, RS9/013, BI.

was noted in the following: 'ceiling of success where Pluto w[oul]d take money which could stop sub rising + help extend circulat[io]n further. If economies at 4000 used to hold sub, you can then print + sell more + so lower unit cost further'.[539] In the resulting letter declining Pluto's offer, Samuel wrote that the 'offer made excellent sense in publishing terms', but 'it left us with the feeling that our needs would at some point or another be subordinated to the wider needs of Pluto'. For the politics of the enterprise to succeed, independent control and autonomy were deemed too important, but concerns about the management of time, workload and collective morale would continue to play a significant role.

The next section, headed 'editorial structure', defined the nature of editorial tasks and responsibilities and how they would be distributed in keeping with the political ethos of the collective. There was a need to formalise an organisational structure that was both democratic and non-hierarchical, but would also allow the editors to operate in a cohesive and efficient manner:

> [in] point of socialist principle it is better if everyone associated in working together on the journal can have an equal degree of responsibility and commitment. But I don't think, in our case, this will be best done by making everything a joint responsibility, rather it can be done by meticulously defining tasks, and then seeing that no one is caged up in the performance of them, but takes part in other aspects of the journal's life.[540]

In strictly delineating responsibilities and divisions of labour, it was believed that the collective could avoid time-consuming and fractious editorial quarrels, as well as the potential for resignations or rows. This general approach to the administration of the journal reflected the peculiar conditions out of which it grew and the nature of the work itself. It

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[539] 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 19th April 1975, RS9/014, BI.
[540] Unauthored, 'Editorial Structure', 1.4.75, RS9/013, BI.

was possible to spend time resolving disputes 'in a group of people with time on their hands – a half-employed or free-floating intelligentsia…and it also makes sense if the journal is primarily a form of group expression'. However, in this case, neither of these conditions pertained: '[m]ost of us have family and household responsibilities; paid employment of one kind or another; major research projects and theses to complete; other political involvements. And our journal is in the first place to be a service to others'. For the good of the project, it was crucial to harmonise the structure of editorial work with the personal life circumstances of the editors. '[T]he great point to search for in the organisation of editorial work is to combine a wide distribution of work load (so that no one has a breakdown, drops out, or has their work ruined) with tight control over the fate of individual articles, and the shape of the ultimate contents', the documents advised. Another salutary effect of distributing and rotating tasks among the editorial collective was that it would prevent *HWJ* from assuming a homogeneous complexion. As it was argued, this procedure 'avoids the imposition of a uniformity of lay-out and style, which is inevitable if everything is shaped by a single hand'.[541] Evidently devising suitable editorial procedures rested on the consideration of several factors.

The distribution of editorial labour into specific tasks was conceived on the basis of a division between issue editors, who would be responsible for seeing the issue through to publication, and the rest of the collective, who were individually charged with the handling submissions, circulating them around the collective, collecting feedback, and corresponding with authors. Given that the burdens and pressures on issue editors would be severe, this role would be rotated amongst the collective. The main business of journal production would be dealt with at monthly meetings of the collective. But this was very much seen as a provisional structure and the exact division of responsibilities, particularly on the question of

[541] Ibid.

who would make decisions about content and arrangement of each issue, would be worked out in practice.

Another site of latent tension can be seen in the relationship of editorial labour and time to the ambition of making *HWJ* the focus for the coordination of a long-term programme of enlarging the territory of socialist historical work. The plan was to orchestrate this research by setting-up autonomous groups devoted to specialist subject areas, drawing people together in order to run a workshop event, which would provide the initial testing ground for ideas. The rationale behind this proposal was unequivocal: 'the flourishing of the journal will depend on the vigour of the intellectual life around it'. It was hoped that by coordinating various areas of research in this way the journal's intellectual and political influence would be carried across a broader social field. A note of caution was sounded by one sceptical onlooker, who felt this additional labour could become severely disabling. 'Nothing is more demoralising to a group (Tim argues) than starting something they can't complete. He thinks the editors should conserve energies and deliberately and self-consciously husband expenditure of time to use it to the maximum advantage.'[542] Like the decision to build the journal independently, there was recognition that the capacities of time and energy available to the editorial collective placed limits on the pace of intellectual and political advance, though the success of editorial procedures in releasing editors from the necessary routines and responsibilities of journal work could mediate this process.

Finally, a section called 'character of the journal' described how the journal was conceived in strategic and aesthetic terms, which derived from perceptions of the Workshop audience, the anticipated readership of the journal. 'We expect to be read by students, by teachers, and by scholars', the document claimed, but 'the journal will have failed if it does not win a following among trade unionists and active political workers in the labour movement and the new left; among socialists in the women's movement; among writers,

[542] Ibid.

artists and musicians.'[543] If the success of *HWJ* depended on reaching a wide and heterogeneous readership, then their different interests and preoccupations had to be reflected in the design, content and format of the journal. This would be achieved through a series of innovations in style, in literary form and features, and in an ethics of solidarity, which would expose to scrutiny the unspoken conventions of historical scholarship, reinforcing the democratic and egalitarian ideals of the Workshop. This also applied to the guidance given in the composition of scholarly articles, which would be written in such a way as to 'raise a number of different general issues, placing their subject in the full appropriate variety of contexts', so that their 'widest natural frontiers are explored'. In eschewing the narrowness of the monograph, the enemy was not so much the codes of the profession but their limiting effect. 'It is not the demands of the professional historian's ethic which stand between our subject and people who read books, but the insidious comfort which derives from accepting the limits of this professional ethic as if they constituted the boundary of what the subject is about.' Alongside a more expansive definition of the historian's craft, there were other demands too. In the very construction of the argument, historical writing should be accessible: '[t]he reader <u>must be carried through an article</u>, instead of asked to fight his [sic] way through a thicket… a matter of presenting not just the fruits of research but also one's considered thoughts about them, of taking the reader by the arm rather than addressing him from the high majesty of a lectern.'[544] The aspiration to ensure that writing was 'informed by a high sense of solidarity' also reflected a desire to escape the restrictions of an increasingly specialised and fragmented profession, which had become distant from any wider public purpose. As the inaugural editorial claimed, '[t]he great bulk of historical writing is never intended to be read outside the ranks of the profession, and most is written only for the attention of specialist groups within it.'[545]

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[543] Unauthored, 'Character of the journal', 1.4.75, RS9/013, BI.
[544] Ibid.
[545] "Editorial: History Workshop Journal", p. 1.

Since the journal was designed to serve a number of diverse functions and purposes, all of which would have to be accommodated in its contents, there was an imperative to impose some kind of coherence and unity on journal policy. A strategic focus, therefore, centred on the overall complexion of each issue and balance of elements it could strike. '[If we] carefully select the contents of each issue to give a maximum of coverage, contrast and balance', it was argued 'we can serve our different readerships in each issue'. By bringing together the contents of individual issues on the basis of 'a multiplex classification of subject matter', the editors could appeal to the widest possible readership, despite the inevitable restrictions of space.[546] The ideal of democratic scholarship was, thus, translated in concrete terms into, as it was described elsewhere, 'a most delicate matter of balance';[547] an arrangement of material based on theme (feminism, working-class, museums, art and theatre, etc.), purpose (research, service, critical etc.), voice (scholarly, experiential, personal etc.), and scope (20th Century, international, national, etc.). But whether this strategy would work depended on how well the collective could manage the converging or competing pressures and interests as they affected the different stages of the production process.

III. THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF PRINT

Having decided to take the independent route into publishing, one of the main imperatives was to settle on a general working definition of the size, length and price of the journal in order to prepare an appeal distribute publicity in advance of publication. A 'broadsheet' statement put out by the editorial collective fixed the rate of subscription at £5 for a twice yearly publication of 125,000 word length. It anticipated total expenditure through the period between May 75 and October 1976 (issue 2 publication) at around £12-13,000 based

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546 'Character of the journal'

547 RS, AD, SA, 'Letter to the editorial collective', 25.3.76, RS9/022

on a print-run of 3000, and estimated collecting 1750 subscriptions and selling 1000 copies of each issue in bookshops. The aim of keeping costs and rates as low as possible could be secured in the long-term only by enlarging the circulation of the journal in order to generate an increased economy of scale. 'There is only one way for us to keep our costs and prices down', the broadsheet declared 'and that is to sell more numbers of the Journal: unit costs fall quite dramatically as our total sales rise above 2,500'.[548] Obviously, the initial effort to publicise *HWJ* would be crucial in determining the viability of the project, which began in earnest following the official launch at the 1975 History Workshop.

In support of this campaign, letters and copies of the broadsheet were sent out to friends and colleagues. Samuel canvassed hard for donations and subscriptions from a large group of personal contacts on the left and in the academy.[549] Fraternal groups and organisations, like the SSLH and the journals *Radical Science* and *Radical Philosophy,* also boosted the publicity drive by letting *HWJ* circulate the broadsheet to their subscribers. The need to mount an aggressive campaign for subscribers was clear in view of the calculations upon which the financial security of the journal was based, which, according to the broadsheet, required 1000 subscribers by October 1975. However, only 440 had been recruited by that point[550] and, as the editors reported to subscribers, they did not 'have enough yet to secure our long-term future'.[551] By the following year, the situation was no brighter. The publication of the first issue had been longer and more expensive than initially estimated, and, as a result, measures to cut production costs and to raise revenue were tabled and extensively debated. One option advocated by Samuel was to raise the subscription to £6 to prevent a reduction in the journal's size. Others demurred. 'Our main hope in financial terms is to maximise the number of subscribers', Sue Bullock argued 'so

[548] 'Finance and Subscriptions', HWJ 'Broadsheet', Undated [May 1975], RS9/002, BI.
[549] In several letters, Samuel claimed that they were writing to 200 individuals to help bring in subscribers for the journal. See Raphael Samuel (RS), Letter to Eileen Yeo, 10th May 1975, RS9/015, BI.
[550] 'HWJ Business Report', 10th October 1975, RS9/002, BI.
[551] 'Progress Report for Subscribers', 21st November 1975, RS9/019, BI.

that income goes up and unit costs come down. Any increase in the sub must work against this'.[552] The problem was how to balance the need to keep the price low in order to make the journal widely accessible with the necessity of ensuring its economic viability, but to do so in such a way as not to risk the overall mix of content that existing and potential subscribers would find attractive.

An alternative strategy proposed to use the income generated from existing subscriptions to increase the print run for issue 2. This appealed to several members 'because this brings down our unit costs, will enable us to restrict increases in the sub. and the book price, and thus will undoubtedly make it easier to recruit more subscribers'.[553] It would also mean a small second issue and, thus, increased pressure on space inside the journal. Samuel's response to this was to urge fellow editors hold off measure to economise for the first three issues so that the full potential of the project could be tested. The editorial collective faced a choice between 'whether to retrench or to explore.'[554] Samuel's preference for the latter, which would maintain the current size and price, depended upon a rapid rise in subscriptions for its success; a doubling of their existing number, which stood at less than 1200 in May 1976,[555] was estimated. Although subscriptions did grow, they failed to grow quickly enough, and the collective opted to retrench.

The editorial for issue 2, 'Problems and progress in the first year', clarified for readers some of the financial difficulties and constraints *HWJ* faced. It explained the decision to reduce the length of the issue and admitted that initial forecasts about the numbers of subscribers required to put the journal on a sound footing – 2000 – were mistaken, as were assumptions about the ideal length that could achieve an equitable balance and coverage of material. The editorial declared that '[i]f the Journal is to maintain the length which is right and true for it, there must be more than 2,000 subscribers', and then stated: '**History**

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[552] Sue Bullock (and TM and AS), 'Document', Undated, RS9/003, BI.
[553] TM, AS, SB, 'Notes for editorial meeting 22.4.76', 14.4.76, RS9/003, BI.
[554] RS, 'Letter', 22.4.76, RS9/023, BI,
[555] See 'Notes for editorial meeting 22.4.76'

Workshop needs 2,500 subscribers by April 1977 [emphasis in original].'[556] An appeal to enlist subscribers in a canvassing drive for the journal was issued.

The editorial collective's hope of producing democratic scholarship was powerfully shaped by economic factors. But deliberations over length, price, and numbers of subscribers cannot be detached from the meaning of *HWJ* itself and how this was construed in terms of contents and styles of presentation through which the journal was organised. For example, the ideally balanced issue was not predicated solely on financing ever-greater numbers of journal pages. According to one collective member, 'most of us are against excessive length: I think issue 1 was already a bit long and certainly shouldn't be exceeded, and that it's a question of accessibility and democracy, as well as length and price'.[557] Indeed, the second editorial worked out an optimum length and price: '[t]he experience of the first 12 months suggests that the formula 2 x 240-250pp for £5 per year puts us on the right track.'[558] This calculation did not account for other, less easily measureable factors. Subscribers, for instance, were not just understood in quantitative terms, but also qualitative ones, especially insofar as there was a certain symbiosis imagined between the content of the journal and the character of its readership. In a letter, Samuel explained the rationale:

> We want at the start to claim the attention of the labour movement for the journal, and to make sure that it has a real following among active socialists who are not professionally engaged in historical writing and research… It will make a great difference, though in imperceptible ways, if they constitute a good part of our readership; a kind of guarantee that we don't evolve into an a-political scholarship, and a count-vailing [sic] force to the pressures in that direction which are likely to appears.[559]

[556] Editorial Collective, "Editorial: Progress and Problems in our first year", *History Workshop Journal*, No. 2 (Autumn 1976), p. 2.
[557] Anna Davin, 'Letter to Tim [Mason]', 16.8.76, RS9/026.
[558] "Progress and Problems in our first year", p. 1.
[559] RS, Letter to John [Saville]', 28.2.76, RS9/021

To win a following amongst trade unionists and socialist activists was key to the project of democratic scholarship, but it would be a test of their strategy to see whether the journal could adequate cover the disparate interests of its readerships through a corresponding balance of content across each issue, and whether or not this approach could hold that interest. On top of that uncertainty, the decision to publish independently, whilst it meant a degree of freedom from the profit motive, accentuated the degree of contingency in the production of the journal, which was sharpened by the failure to attract more subscribers.

IV. WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE MEANING OF SOCIALIST HISTORY

Whilst the costs of running the operation were kept firmly in view, one of the challenges the editorial collective faced was over how to give voice to *HWJ*'s political commitments inside its pages. This began with the broadsheet statement drafted in April 1975, which, for the first time, publicly articulated the aspirations of the enterprise. It was important, therefore, to strike the right tone. Given that *HWJ* had been subtitled 'a journal of socialist historians', a criticism of the original draft was it was 'overpolitical'. It was important to 'reassure nonsocialists or even socialists who may be suspicious about what sort of socialists we are'. For political expediency, it was wise to show restraint in conveying the political message, 's]ince the title of the journal is uncompromising, the tone of the appeal must be more diplomatic'.[560] As a result, later revisions dropped references to the journal's 'polemical character' and phrases like 'a journal of combat'. The importance of sounding the right tone was even evident in the decision to use 'socialist historians' instead of 'socialist history',

[560] Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Letter to Anne [Summers] and Tim [Mason]', Undated, RS9/014.

because the latter created problems of definition and because of an intention to 'make positive overtures to historians who might feel politically debarred from contributing'.[561]

A browse through editorial correspondence confirms that the initial launch of *HWJ* was greeted with a good deal of enthusiasm. However, some early correspondents did not concur with the subtly crafted message of the broadsheet. One historian was distressed by the idea 'that a historical journal could be contemplated which will actively discriminate against historians who are not socialists, and who do not in their work exhibit a socialist bias'.[562] A more supportive reader stated that 'I find myself in complete agreement with all your aims and objectives', but remained troubled by the subtitle. He deemed it 'unfortunate that the journal should commit itself in advance to just one point of view on working-class history', adding that 'I myself will find nearly all the articles listed for the first two issues of great interest and yet am not a socialist'.[563] Evidently, an interest in working-class or labour history did not necessarily entail socialist proclivities, but neither did the latter necessarily entail support for socialist approaches to history. David Vaisey, a contributor to the first issue, declined the offer of writing another piece for the journal, on the grounds that he did not 'want it to be thought that I was writing from a particular doctrinaire standpoint'. His admiration for History Workshop and the practice of encouraging non-professionals in the study of social history was tempered by what he saw as the 'unnecessarily aggressive Left Wing stance of the whole production', admitting that '[w]hile I would regard myself as, in some measure at least, both a socialist and a historian, I am not a Socialist Historian'.[564] If the idea of linking politics and history was for some an anathema, then the lack of any clear indication of what the label would actually imply for historical practice probably aroused certain misconceptions about the meaning of the enterprise.

[561] 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 19th April 1975, RS9/014
[562] Geoffrey Alderman, 'Letter to Anne Summers', 4.6.75, RS9/001
[563] Don Steel, 'Letter to Anne Summers', 2.10.75, RS9/001
[564] David Vaisey, 'Letter to Tim [Mason]', 10.6.76, RS9/001

To openly display political allegiances in a publication that purported to be a scholarly venture was seen as a radical step. Responding to Vaisey's rebuff, Tim Mason recognised that 'the journal *has* deliberately broken a major scholarly taboo', but denied that this meant the *HWJ* would espouse aggressive or 'doctrinaire' positions. Indeed he insisted that 'all of the editors agree that there must always be room in the journal for a wide range of different approaches, concerns and interpretations'. The decision to self-identify as socialists was a symbolic gesture, taken in 'the certain knowledge that a large number of our non-professional authors and readers care deeply about both present-day public affairs and history'.[565] To a large degree, it reflected the political composition of the Workshop's constituency, so that by affirming this commitment, the editors underscored that what they were doing was 'indissolubly linked' to the socialist tradition, appealing to a readership that would give substance to its political aspirations.[566] But, as noted above, the social composition of this readership was not uniform; some oriented more towards the university, others towards different social and institutional bases, whether in the labour movement or elsewhere. In fact, the aim was precisely to 'break through the current rigid division between academic and non-academic journals'.[567]

Part of the symbolic value of the subtitle, contrariwise, was also related to its capacity to guard against the co-opting influences of the academy. As Samuel put it, '[w]e didn't want to become another outlet for academic publication, and hoped that by having the title "socialist" in our masthead we would be protected from the kind of incorporation into the research machine which *Past and Present* had been exposed to'.[568] If the subtitle affirmed its political convictions and distinguished it from run-of-the-mill academic publications, then its symbolism was also deeply ambiguous and even paradoxical, because it functioned as a maximal political statement *and* yet signified a broadly plural set of historical

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565 TM, "Letter to David [Vaisey]', 14.6.76, RS9/001
566 RS, 'Letter', 15.3.77, RS9/003
567 Unauthored, 'Letter to Ralph Blond', Undated, RS9/019
568 RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 4.10.77, RS9/003

practices. Like democracy, socialism is one of those essentially contested terms, inviting alternative understandings and meanings, particularly so because it is not a static concept but dynamically-related to wider forces of change. More practically, however, there was the question of how to give socialism content in the pages of the journal.

To return to an earlier point, one of the main aspects of the Workshop's and the journal's socialism was its non-sectarian character, distinguishing it from the assorted socialisms of the political parties and sects, which were based on platforms, lines and programmes. Of course, the collective's historical work was political in different sense and its engagement with present-day events was indirect and less doctrinal, such that different political standpoints could more easily co-exist alongside one another. Their practice was also founded, at least in principle, on a democratic federation of editors, authors and readers, rather than the authority of leaders and a disciplined, hierarchical organisation. For one editor, *HWJ* should be 'more concerned with different ways in which socialism can be made accessible' and 'its democratic egalitarian character were the essence of its socialist appeal'.[569] For another, individual attitudes themselves were less crucial than the way in which they were articulated: '[w]e could be as revolutionary as we wanted to be in our outlook *provided* that we did not take the reader's assent or sympathy for granted'.[570] In avoiding the presumption of shared views and in recognising that 'we don't have all the answers',[571] the democratic address of the journal could not be assumed, but had to be worked at through its pages, engaging readers' concerns and encouraging them to participate, in a tone and manner that was neither stridently didactic nor overly familiar.[572]

Not everyone, however, was impressed by the journal's democratic pretensions. Commenting on the broadsheet, Philip Corrigan uncovered an elitist drift in the document, which he found in the unacknowledged supposition that 'a group of knowers (the authors of

[569] 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 18.7.76, RS9/003 [AS].
[570] [RS], ibid.
[571] [TM], ibid.
[572] See RS, 'Letter to editors', 24.6.75, RS9/002

the broadsheet, the planned authors of the papers) and wider group of unenlightened, who need to be shown'. Corrigan recommended that the editors place restrictions on the contributions from professors and academics, which would allow 'workers to voice their truth', and stave off the temptation to seek blessings from 'bourgeois sanctification'.[573] The response of the editorial collective to Corrigan's letter was fairly muted. Notwithstanding the problematic notion of 'workers voicing their truth', Corrigan's doubts about the journal's claim to dialogue and collaboration pointed to the problem of how readers could actually be participants in this process. The possibilities for such an exchange would greatly depend on the types of written expression and forms of knowledge that were privileged by the collective, and on what basis their validation was established.

The principle of making history accessible and democratic was an integral part of the Workshop's ethos, but it offered little tangible guideline as to how articles or contributions should be written and arranged. An observation made at the time by Asa Briggs in a review of the journal is illustrative.

In a general statement on the work of *HWJ*, Briggs felt that 'much of this activity is not socialist', and, referring to Mason's two-part article on 'Women in Nazi Germany', he suggested that it 'might well have been published in any historical journal'.[574] This contention caused no little amount of irritation. An editorial meeting in March 1977 discussed this matter and explored wider considerations about how the journal could strengthen its political appeal. Whilst some editors rejected Briggs's accusations *in toto*, others conceded that the journal had not yet lived up to its subtitle. '[W]here we have succeeded has been our democracy, rather than our socialism', acknowledged Samuel.[575] The question of how to justify this claim inspired different ways of thinking about the relationship of history to the politics of socialism. One measure of the journal's political

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[573] Philip Corrigan, 'Letter to Raphael', 8.5.76, RS9/015

[574] Asa Briggs, 'The Secrets of Society', *The New Statesman*, 11 March 1977, reprinted in Samuel (ed.) *History Workshop: A Collectanea*, p. 117.

[575] [RS], 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 20.3.77, RS9/003.

efficacy, suggested by Stedman Jones, was in 'how many readers have been offended'.[576] Samuel concurred, finding the potential for offense in 'exposing capitalism' and repeating a similar idea he pushed at a previous meeting about how they should 'raise the temperature of people's feelings about capitalism'.[577] Where Samuel laid the emphasis on feelings, Mason advanced a rationalist conception of historical argument. 'I believe that a part of HWJ's socialist pluralism', he wrote 'involves being political, without seeming to be, consists in leading people to conclusions which are uncomfortable to them, pulling them through the evidence and then saying: "Look, where are you now?"' He went on: '[t]his is a rationalistic approach to the problem of socialism and historiography, it rests upon argument and evidence, rather than imagination and distinctive voice'.[578] The examples drawn upon here show an appreciation of how the persuasive force history operates on different levels of articulation, appealing, in some sense, to different sensibilities and faculties. In underscoring this point, Samuel remarked 'that a particular strength of the workshop, in its meetings especially, but also in the Journal, is that it speaks to people's feelings as well as to their thought'.[579]

The definition of socialist historical practice was, evidently, vague and imprecise. On the one hand, it represented a symbolic attachment to a wider socialist culture and tradition, whilst, on the other, it was associated with an eclectic and pluralist historical practice, though neither endowed it with specific ideological content nor enabled it to develop a distinctive theoretical or analytical perspective. But in some sense, this is the wrong way to look at it. In her view on the matter, Jane Caplan insisted that the politics of the journal could not be judged on the basis of 'individual articles, but the combination of articles we publish that no one else would'.[580] Its socialist appeal was, then, commensurate with the

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[576] [GSJ], ibid.
[577] [RS], "Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 18.7.76
[578] TM, 'Letter to Sue [Bullock]', 4.5.77, RS9/001
[579] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 22.3.77, RS9/003
[580] [JC], 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective Meeting', 20.3.77,

strategic design of each issue, according to the delicacies of selecting and balancing material; an aesthetic rather than a purely ideological concern. From the perspective of the 1990s, Samuel recognised the socialism of the early issues as having 'stood for a diffuse identity rather than a specific platform or line'.[581] If the nature of this socialism is better grasped as an aesthetic or an identity, then it is towards the various practices and forms that fashioned the text that we need to look in order to see how its political appeal worked.

V. THE PARATEXT

The name of the subtitle, as we have seen, was chosen in a very deliberate manner. It was premised on a subtle transmission of meaning, a message that was sufficiently resonant to target a specific class of reader whilst repelling others, but without arousing problems of definition or sectarian suspicions. In this sense, it functioned as one of those devices which constitute part of what we might describe, after Genette, as the paratextual field, a liminal ground for the reception and interpretation of books and texts between readers, authors, editors and publishers.[582] The subtitle, however, is but one practice in the construction of this field.

By interpreting the meaning of a literary object on the basis of paratextual materials, such as typographical arrangements, cover design, graphics, logos, adverts, colour, size and weight, we can understand how it was given material and visual form, texture and tactility, but it also gives clues as to how it was supposed to be read and how the experience of reading was organised. 'Readers', Roger Chartier asserts 'never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality.' Rather, '[t]hey hold in their hands or perceive objects and forms whose structures and modalities govern their reading or hearing, and

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[581] Samuel, *History Workshop: A Collectanea*, p. v.
[582] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

consequently the possible comprehension of the text read or heard.'[583] The editors of *HWJ* were keenly aware of the mutual unfolding and interplay between content and form in creating the right texture and feel in each issue. The conception and design of the journal's visual appearance was indispensable, therefore, to the articulation of its political aspirations and character.

Initially, it was recommended that *HWJ* should be printed in book form, an idea which was based largely on commercial reasons.[584] In a letter to the collective, Samuel declared that each issue would be 'a book in itself', which was 'a fundamental strategy of the manifesto, and of the first issue'.[585] But if each issue was to be a one-off, then this was at odds with the purpose of *HWJ* as a regular expression of the Workshop and a publishing plan that prioritised subscriptions over book sales as a way to secure its economic viability.[586] One editor felt that the latter policy did not reflect the habits of readers who bought the journal. 'I can understand people buying specific single issues like a book', wrote Stan Shipley 'because they do not want the issues either side, as they do not contain something lengthy on their particular interest'.[587] Here we also see a limitation in the policy of balancing content, which was designed precisely to maintain readers' interests through issues when they could not be fully accommodated, and upon which the hopes for a growing subscription base were pinned. If the source of the journal's appeal could not be entirely derived from its contents, then the impression of continuity would have to be sought elsewhere.

Paradoxically, *HWJ* assumed a form that combined an imperative to print issues that were distinctive and unique with a desire to cultivate an identity and appeal through the reiterative use of familiar structures, styles and forms, which were used to compensate for

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[583] Roger Chartier, "Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader", *Diacritics*, Vol. 22, 2 (Summer 1992), p. 50.
[584] This suggestion was mooted by Martin Eve of Merlin Press in correspondence with Samuel. Martin Eve, 'Letter to Raphael', 4.4.75, RS9/013.
[585] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 22.4.76, RS9/023
[586] Unauthored, 'Notes for editors on the draft agreement with Pluto', Undated, RS9/021
[587] SS, 'proposal', 22.8.77, RS9/003

gaps in editorial coverage. This is evident in the journal's visual appearance, particularly in the use of photographs, illustrations and adverts.

The embedding of illustrations, line-drawings and graphics in the text served several purposes. Firstly, they broke up the text in the hope of making it more appealing to readers. As one memo explained, they 'not only relieve the physical appearance of weight and length; they help to make sections of the journal distinct'.[588] The concern to lighten the heaviness of the text also extended to how typography was used, particularly in the case of the 'Noticeboard' feature, where double-columns were used. Secondly, images were valuable because they extended the range of historical material and were a way of engaging readers in different ways of thinking about history. 'We want people to trat [sic] them as an exercise in visual history and also to convey the realities which perhaps the text may not have been able to evoke', it was argued.[589] A promising start was made in this direction with the publication of Kathy Henderson's piece on 'Pictures in History' in issue 1 and in 1977 an 'Art and Society Group' was set up to advance this interest. Thirdly, it was felt that images and illustrations would set *HWJ* apart from other academic journals, an important factor, because, as it was claimed, 'to be socialist necessitates the attempt to broaden the distinction between the socialist and bourgeois'.[590] A visually engaging journal would also help to counter academic and elitist pressures by seeking to engage people whose relationship to books and reading was estranged. Shipley, for example, recognised the kind of entrenched attitudes that the journal faced in enticing non-traditional readers, remarking 'there is a large section of the working class who on sight of books register a thought that "this is not for me"'.[591] If only as a symbolic gesture, the visual dimension could bring the journal closer to the lives of working people. *HWJ*, of course, targeted existing communities of readers, in the university, in the labour movement, the New Left and the Women's Movement, and in

[588] Unattributed, 'Editorial balance sheet for HWJ 1', Undated, RS9/023.
[589] Ibid.
[590] SS, 'Letter to Anna [Davin]', 21.7.76, RS9/025.
[591] Ibid.

adult education and community history groups, where its visual appearance and layout functioned both as an extension of the contents *and* as an affirmative expression of the journal's political identity and its radical, socialist credentials.

This approach to the visual and aesthetic arrangement of material carried over into more unlikely areas. For example, a great deal of effort went into trying to solicit the kind of adverts that would add to the strategic design and political appeal of each issue. 'I think advertisements sh[oul]d be treated to some extent editorially as an extension of our content as well as being a source of revenue', Samuel wrote 'since they indicate a certain spectrum of activity and concern'.[592] The first issue carried notices from trade unions, second-hand bookshops, publishers, educational institutions, museums, and other journals. Adverts were used to reinforce the character of *HWJ*, linking it to movements and organisations whose political ground it shared, and identifying common ties with sections of the readership. They were also seen as a way of reflecting the range of subject matter and themes the journal hoped to cover, and often referred to particular item of content. Intangible benefits could accrue from the judicious arrangement of adverts, it was believed, strengthening the movement character of *HWJ*.[593]

Another exemplary paratextual item that ought to be mentioned here is the section 'Notes on Contributors', which described the background and interest of authors who appeared in the journal's pages. Although it occupied a marginal space, it was deemed politically valuable because it distinguished *HWJ* from other academic publications and carried an alternative form of authority, a counter-disciplinary authority, which derived much more from the political and life experience of authors than from any academic credentials.

In a missive to the editors of issue 2, Samuel elucidated the political rationale behind the compiling of the 'Notes':

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[592] RS, 'Letter to Oliver [Turnbull]', 21.3.76, RS9/022

[593] See, for instance, Samuel's 'A Note on Advertising', 21.4.76, RS9/003

> The strategy of the Notes on contributors in issue 1 was to stress extra curricular and community based activity, upbringing and the like so that people had some small idea of what kinds of people they were reading, where they came from and what they belonged to. To put official positions as briefly as possible, and where there was indication of how people came to be historians - to put this at some length…The political dimension was also made where possible explicit.[594]

These guidelines were adopted in later versions of the 'Notes', playing up the exceptional or unconventional details in the lives of authors. Such was the case with Edmund Frow, who (together with his wife Ruth) contributed the piece 'Travels in a Caravan' in issue 2, where a number of his exploits were listed, including his election as a shop steward, his expulsion from his trade union, and his arrest on a demonstration of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. For Samuel, these details served to demonstrate the political credentials of the journal. Indeed, he enthused over the prospect of having them printed, declaring 'I'm much in favour of a period of imprisonment for taking part in NUWM appearing in notes about contributors: nothing c[oul]d differentiate us more from the Soc[ial] Hist[ory] Journal and other such journals'.[595]

If political activities and achievements were prominently displayed, then so too were more prosaic aspects of contributors' lives, including their past or current job occupations, especially if they were involved in manual trades, their educational background, more so if they had taken an unconventional route into higher education, and ever broader interests and hobbies. For some, this verged on the banal, as Anne Summers cautioned, 'something must be done about the terrible tendency to slide into self-indulgent tweeness'.[596] Another feature of the 'Notes' was the tendency to downplay the professional achievements of

[594] RS, 'Letter to Tim, Anne, Sue', 17.5.76, RS9/003
[595] RS, 'Letter to Tim, Anne, Sue'
[596] AS, 'thoughts on issue 3', 2.9.77

academics, particularly men, whose entries revealed scant detail about their political or personal lives.[597] With a preference for the political and everyday lives of authors, the 'Notes' expressed the multiple identities that authors inhabited, and, in the process, sought to bring writers and readers closer together. In Samuel's words, 'we think it an important part of demystifying scholarship (showing that the writers are people very much like the readers)'.[598] They can be seen as a literary device designed to shape the reception of *HWJ* by democratising the ground between readers and writers.

'Strip the title of professor from the author of a historical study', de Certeau writes 'and he is no longer anything but a novelist.'[599] His point is to indicate that the name of the author refers to a social and institutional place, and it is this place that guarantees the legitimacy and authority of the knowledge carried by the text. In this sense, the 'Notes on contributors' located *HWJ* in a different social place, in which an alternative mode of securing the validity and credibility of its writing was established. But it was not the only place in which the journal was located; like the Workshop it traversed the borderlands between different places and spaces: the extra-mural, the political, and the university, the traces of which were interwoven into the very fabric of the text. A contest between different places (and the institutional and social control they exercised over the production of knowledge) played out in the very organisation of the text; above all, in the division between its two principal components: research articles and feature articles.

VI. DEMOCRATIC SCHOLARSHIP: THE WHOLES AND THE PARTS

In outlining the initial thinking behind the arrangement of editorial content, we noted how it rested on the notion of 'coverage, contrast and balance'. In fact, the process was twofold:

[597] Women, on the other hand, tended to list the number of children they had.
[598] RS, 'Letter to Ruth [Frow]', 30.4.76, RS9/023
[599] Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 32-3

first, articles and features were assessed in terms of their own intrinsic qualities, including the richness of the source base, the style and vividness of the prose, the rigorousness of the arguments, and so on; and second, they were also subject to the vagaries of editorial deliberations over how pieces fitted together in the overall texture of the issue. These latter determinations were made on the basis of judgements about how the issue achieved the optimum balance across a range of subject matter and themes, forms of address, contrasts of style of presentation and argument, and varieties of voice and experience. As we indicated above, at the heart of the collective's strategic vision was the belief that a pursuit of a balance of form and content would keep the diverse interests of readers in view. A sense of the mutual implication of the parts and whole in how *HWJ* was perceived to function is present in the following statement:

> It may be that we do this by our long articles; or by our essays; or by our enthusiasms; or by our texts; or by our services and noticeboard; or by our physical appearance, including line drawings and photographs; or by our coverage of a range of activities. If we succeed it will be by some partly mysterious alchemy which will make the journal a satisfying whole. It's very difficult to separate the parts from the whole…when people respond to a particular piece it is in the context of the whole.[600]

The principle of balance gave focus to and measure of the journal's political praxis, but it also obscured real tensions and contradictions in the articulation of its contents, which were conditioned by the constraints and pressures that encroached on editorial work. To begin with, there remained a certain ambiguity in statements about the relative importance of its different parts. An early planning document proclaimed that 'the journal will stand and fall by the quality of its articles'.[601] Though in agreement, Samuel sounded a more

[600] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', Undated, RS9/022
[601] 'Character of the Journal'

ambivalent note, writing 'I think reader loyalty to the journal will depend upon its texture as a whole, and particular perhaps the less detachable pieces, which though comparatively brief in space, will give the journal much of its distinctive character.'[602] The separation of the main articles from the shorter features, between the front and back, was underlined by other collective members.

Mason, for one, feared that the collective was losing sight of the virtues of balance owing to the patchy quality of some typescripts, where some of them were 'basically good and interesting but a little dry and scholarly', and others that were valuable because the 'strength lies in the immediacy of their prose'.[603] Instead of waiting for ideal articles to roll in, he urged the inclusion of both types of writing because 'our subscribers are an exceptionally heterogeneous group of people, and to swing too strongly in either direction would be certain to alienate one or another group among them'. Compromises between these two directions, which were essential for financial reasons as much as intellectual or political ones, Mason admitted, 'bring with them the risk of dividing mentally the readership into distinct categories'.[604] Reticence about dividing the readership is less apparent in a later statement made by Samuel, who tried to elaborate some generation propositions on journal production: 'a) [f]rom the point of view of our readership and standing in higher education we need normally to offer at least two research-based pieces per issue. b) [f]rom the point of view of readership following and support it is the almanack character of the Journal which is the greatest strength'.[605] The way in which Samuel separates the readership, superimposing it onto a division between articles and features, betrays something of the incompatibilities the journal had to negotiate in realising its stated aims. This is not to argue that there was a conscious design to make rigid demarcations between a section of the journal and a discrete

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[602] RS, 'notes for editorial meeting 16.6.[75]', Undated, RS9/002
[603] TM, 'Draft note on typescripts', Undated, RS9/003
[604] Ibid.
[605] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 21.1.78, RS9/045

class of reader, but rather that there was a pattern of affinities between literary form, function and audience.

Research Articles: "A Special Standard of Excellence"

Taken on their own terms, articles had to satisfy a series of stringent demands. We saw their original formulation in Section II, where stressed was placed on accessibility and on an expanded conception of their task. As a result, a great deal of editorial time and effort went into improving the readability of manuscripts. Several stipulations were made, including limits on the use of technical terms, the elimination of Latin abbreviations, and the translation of foreign terms. Even footnotes were tightly regulated. A draft document 'Notes for Authors' ordered that '[f]ootnotes should be kept to the minimum necessary to give full reference to sources, and to discuss minor problems of interpretation…[t]hey should not be used to sustain a running commentary on the work of other historians'.[606] In addition, *HWJ* editors exercised quite a broad license to amend texts, changing the syntax, vocabulary, or reducing the length. Sometimes they made requests for substantial modifications in the structure of the text in order to enhance the flow or texture of the argument. Such was the case with Mason's article 'Women in Nazi Germany', where cuts were suggested to support those 'who ought to read it and might find it more difficult than it need be because of the…presentation'.[607] On other occasions, editors urged authors to insert additional material or background information for the benefit of non-specialist readers. Colin Jones ('Prostitution and the Ruling Class in eighteenth-century Montpellier', issue 6), for example, was encouraged to add details about the size and structure of the population of the town.[608] Likewise, in another article on the legal profession, the author

[606] TM, 'Notes for authors on the writing of articles and the preparation of typescripts', Undated, RS9/021
[607] RS, 'Letter to Tim', 28.10.75, RS9/018
[608] RS, 'Letter to Tim', 10.6.78, RS9/050

was advised to flesh out the description of the trade by referring to Uriah Heep and Jarndyce and Jarndyce.[609] Other instructions, however, were less easy to incorporate.

From the outset, one of the ambitions of the editors was to develop ways of demystifying the workings of high scholarship. Below we will see how this ambition was given form in features like ‘Historian’s Diary’ and ‘Archives and Sources’, but it was also present in statements about the construction of research articles. ‘Authors of major articles are asked to include, perhaps as an afterword’, declared the 'Notes for Authors’ document, and ‘a brief statement concerning why they became interested in their subject, how it relates to the rest of their work and what perspectives are opened up for further work in the field’.[610] But aside from Mason, the suggestion was never really developed. In the epilogue to his own article, Mason reflected ‘[i]mpersonality is one of the costumes worn by authority’.[611] Despite an admirable frankness about the limits and weaknesses of his work, however, we hear scarcely anything about the more personal dimensions of that authority. This perhaps follows from the journal’s narrow conception of the task, which bound the historian’s subjectivity to the arena of work. As such, efforts to unmask those ‘conventions of mystifying reticence’ and undermine the authority of professional historians were destined to have limited effect, as it belied the editors’ commitment to the integrity of the historical discipline; that commitment was discernible in the definition of research articles.

The original aim was to publish articles that distinguished *HWJ* from orthodox journals, being much longer (up to 30,000 words) and different in structure and form. As explained in Section II, research articles were conceived in terms of raising questions of general significance, placing their subjects in a variety of contexts, and ‘in such a way that their widest natural frontiers are explored not cut off by any arbitrary, alien, professional,

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[609] RS, ‘Letter to Avner [Offer]’, 12.3.77, RS9/034
[610] TM, ‘Notes for authors on the writing of articles and the preparation of typescripts’,
[611] Tim Mason, “Women in Germany, 1925-1940: Family, Welfare and Work. Part II”, *History Workshop Journal* No. 2 (Autumn 1976), p. 25.

or specialist definition of territory.'[612] There is an epic quality to this depiction as well as a reassertion of intellectual autonomy in the face of narrowly professional measures of scholarly worth. The inaugural editorial, for example, deplored the fragmented state of organised academic research and argued that history had undergone a 'progressive withdrawal from the battle of ideas' and retreated from its popular constituencies. The sense of a return to a less contained and enclosed field of scholarly activity can also be detected in Samuel's remarks about the fate that had befallen *Past and Present*.[613] It is in response to these developments that editorial policy ought to be viewed. Hence articles for *HWJ* had to be relevant, accessible, and push the boundaries of historical understanding forward. Clearly, the demands placed on authors were high and not necessarily compatible. Samuel himself touched upon these tensions when he remarked '[w]e don't want to simplify, we don't want to lower standards but on the contrary to raise them; and yet we want to carry all or most of readers with all the articles'. The burdens would be heavy: 'the demands on each article, each paragraph, each sentence, <u>each word</u> are severe'.[614]

In the event, however, some fairly conventional kinds of criticism were levelled at manuscripts. Some of them were rejected because they did not show basic knowledge or understanding. For example, comments on one paper included 'no real sense of the context conveyed' and 'little conceptual clarity about its overall significance'.[615] More typically, articles were weeded out on the basis of the narrowness of their scope, even if they were well written and coherently argued, though, on occasions, writers were invited to undertake extensive re-writings and extra research. A few remarks taken from editorial comments are representative: 'it doesn't seem to me that at any point there is any decisive advance on what we already know';[616] 'what the writer says has been fairly common

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[612] 'Character of the Journal'
[613] See p. 194.
[614] RS, 'Letter to Tim', 25.10.75, RS9/018
[615] GSJ, 'Letter to TM', 24.3.[76], RS9/001
[616] RS, 'Comment sheet', 15.3.77, RS9/022

currency not only in discussions but also in print for some years now';[617] '[e]xcept for the fact of its general standpoint it is indistinguishable as an article from the kinds of articles on sexual and family mores appearing in the orthodox journals'.[618] The comments about published articles, in contrast, reflect the sought-after qualities described above, e.g. it 'opens up the question of the relationship of socialism and history in a whole variety of salutary ways – world-wide perspectives, imperialism, analysis of capital';[619] 'it makes very well its linkages between detailed study and the very large movements of society'.[620]

The problem was that the latter were fairly thin on the ground. In fact, as Mason conceded, the journal received many submissions that were entirely publishable but wholly undesirable from the viewpoint of the journal's strategy. As one of the editors reported, 'a considerable number of texts coming in seem worthy and well-meaning but not exciting - or even potentially so, killed off by academic preoccupations'.[621] This unpromising situation made the task of selection and coverage all the more problematic. 'There can be no room in the journal for dead copy', cautioned one internal memo.[622] Of course, this applied to other parts of journal content, but the pressure for articles that were of a distinctive or exemplary kind was intense; only handful were published in each issue.

The disparity between the exacting standards placed on articles and the inability of authors to match them created difficulties in reaching a common measure by which to determine their worth. 'It is frankly alarming', wrote Samuel 'that there can be such wide differences in response to articles'.[623] Similarly, Mason found that amongst the 20 manuscripts in circulation each one had been both heavily criticised *and* strongly supported by at least one editor. A widely-shared understanding of what an ideal article looked like led

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[617] RS, 'Comment sheet', 7.3.77, RS9/034
[618] RS, 'Comment sheet', 16.3.77, RS9/034
[619] TM, 'Letter to Charles [van Onselen]', 28.7.76, RS9/001
[620] RS, 'Comments', Undated, RS9/050
[621] GSJ, 'Some brief suggestions', 17.3.77, RS9/003
[622] RS, GSJ, 'Memo on editorial practice', 28.7.77, RS9/003
[623] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 16.10.76, RS9/003

to a habit of 'measuring all typescripts under consideration against this unrealistically high standard of this yet unwritten ideal article'.[624] Each editor valued different qualities in an article, whether in terms of 'speaking directly to the reader' or 'the requirements of extensive research', but few could display all the virtue prized by the collective in a single article.[625] Responding to this situation, Mason warned against certain modes of criticism, where articles were rejected because they failed to reference other contexts and themes. 'We have to start with authors and their work', he insisted 'who have their own particular interests and concerns'. His point was that the collective could not decide how authors should proceed, but should 'allow them real latitude in their approach'.[626] To compensate for their limitations, different pieces could be balanced against one another.

An alternative position was outlined by Samuel, who claimed that editors could demand more of authors in terms of rewriting articles: 'you can go back again and again and again until the thing is right'.[627] But this manner of conducting relations with authors had the potential not only to multiply the time and effort that went into re-reading draft material, but also raised questions about what the proper relationship between editors and authors ought to be. There was a feeling, moreover, that if the collective wanted to shape historical debate, they could not rely on what was sent in. They should launch a long-term programme of research by organising a series of discussion groups, which would enhance the journal's output and provide, according to Stedman Jones, 'an area where new ideas can be exchanged and developed under HW umbrella' and would 'remove some of the frustration we feel in editorial meetings where strategic questions rarely have time to be discussed';[628] a proposal that would also add to existing burdens on editors.

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[624] TM, 'Draft note on typescripts', Undated, RS9/003
[625] Ibid.
[626] TM, 'Letter to Sue', 4.5.77, RS9/001
[627] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 22.3.77, RS9/003
[628] GSJ, 'some brief suggestions'

The idea that the collective could ask authors to undertake numerous revisions was questioned by some editors, because negotiations could not drag on indefinitely. As Mason made clear, 'we have to be more efficient, more decisive, more thoughtful in our contacts with people'.[629] Jane Caplan felt that the journal could not remain non-committal on a piece until it reached an acceptable state, as it would create tensions with authors and would be, moreover, politically problematic. 'It threatens [sic] to stifle debate which ought to be reflected in our pages' and 'sets us, the collective, up as something we are not & cannot be – a political president of the state of socialist history'.[630] The disagreement relates to the question of how to implement journal strategy when confronted by external constraints and recalcitrant realities. In insisting that 'each slot in the journal must attain its own special standard of excellence', the thrust of Samuel's and Stedman's proposal implied an uncompromising and maximalist path towards the journal's goals.[631] Timing is important here, as these discussions were occurring at a strategically significant moment.

By mid-1977 three issues of *HWJ* had been published and its agenda had been largely established;[632] attention turned to questions of how to sustain the journal's momentum. In Caplan's view, a gradualist approach to long-term planning was needed. 'From now on perhaps it would help to accept that we are embarked on a <u>cumulative</u> project', she argued 'whose stages cannot be compressed into each & every issue'.[633] The pursuit of the immediate political and aesthetic achievement of the individual issue, and the process of building up standing, a readership and an identity over the long term, the historiographical equivalent of the long and short revolution, as it were, were goals held together in *HWJ*'s original programme of democratic scholarship. But the tension between them became more acute as the difficulties mounted.

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[629] Tim Mason, 'Anti-position paper on editorial practice', 21.8.77, RS9/003
[630] Jane Caplan, 'some thoughts on HWJ after a year', Undated, RS9/003
[631] RS, GSJ 'Memo on editorial practice'
[632] Samuel agreed: "[t]he first three issues are in certain respects exceptional. Each will be produced by a first-time set of editors experimenting in what is in many ways a novel journal form". 'Letter [to collective]', 24.4.76, RS9/023.
[633] JC, 'some thoughts on HWJ after a year',

One area where the journal had already begun to face difficulties in living up to the promise of democratic scholarship was in the lack of articles published by worker or first-time historians. Under the insistent demand for high quality copy to enter the journal, this is hardly surprising. Aside from the first issue, no other major article was published by what could be described as a 'worker-historian', though a number of manuscripts were submitted.[634] In a memo entitled 'Worker historians: Absolute beginners', Samuel worried about this imbalance, outlining the reasons why this exclusion was likely to continue unless they took action. He pleaded for positive discrimination.[635] Elsewhere, however, he wrote that 'we ought to have an overwhelming preference for worker-writers and first-time historians over established and academic ones but we can only give this if they also substantially enlarge or deepen historical knowledge.'[636] Therein lay the rub. Lacking the skills (and time and resources to acquire them) to craft a substantial, research-based article, worker-historians would be unable to bridge that gap without some long-term support from the collective. But whilst there was lucid appreciation of the structural obstacles to their inclusion, there was less reflection on how historical discourse itself might reproduce undemocratic relation in the definition of knowledge. Here is a general description by Samuel of articles produced by worker-writers:

> The article may follow a stream of consciousness rather than an implicit or explicit sequence of phases. The argument may contain an unruly mixture of metaphor, theory, political apostrophe and empirical illustration. The account may ride a particular hobby horse hard, irrespective of its relevance to the general argument (Dave Douglass's long and valuable account of rank and file organisation in the 19th C Liverpool docks, for instance,

[634] The article in question is Frank McKenna's "Victorian Railway Workers", which had been largely prepared well in advance of the journal's publication.
[635] RS, 'Worker historians: Absolute Beginners, for meeting 12.9.76', Undated, RS9/003
[636] RS, 'Letter [to editors]', 1.6.77, RS9/003

> contains an eight to ten page excurses on Sea Monsters, a subject which has fascinated him since early school days…[637]

In adhering to the rigours of scholarly discipline (if not professional norms), the editors ensured that the vast bulk of articles would be written by university-based historians, many of whom were unable to meet such standards either. If the hope was to encourage readers to become writers, then, as far as research articles were concerned, the grounds for doing so were drastically undercut. Yet greater promise was held for the shorter features in the journal.

Archives and Sources, Calendar, Critique, Enthusiasms, Noticeboard, Readers' Letters et al.

There was, as we have noted, a degree of ambivalence about the relative status of articles and features. If the main articles were designed to establish *HWJ*'s reputation as a serious intellectual enterprise, then the features had an equally important role to play: 'they will actually be more important in establishing the identity of the journal, or at least in setting up a dialogue between the journal and the readers, and winning – or failing to win – their loyalty, participation and support'.[638] There were other good reasons for their inclusion, such as providing a practical service for readers and offering the possibility of developing novel literary forms in history.

The back of the journal carried regular sections like 'Noticeboard' and 'Calendar', which gave details about up-coming events, talks, and meetings, as well as other information of interest to enthusiasts of history. They were the most immediate kind of help provided by the journal to its readers, but, in doing so, they were also regarded as a matter of forging

[637] RS, 'Worker historians: Absolute beginners'
[638] RS, 'Notes to fellow editors', 24.6.75, RS9/002

solidarity with those pursuing historical work outside the academy.[639] 'Readers' Letters' were also placed at the back of the journal, which often addressed issues and themes raised in articles in a critical manner, but were also used to explore wider problems and questions of historical research. For Samuel, readers' letters were very important to the overall impact of the journal. 'Readers' letters can make an uncertain journal into a good one', he affirmed 'and they can easily become the central feature of a journal, as happened for many years to The New Statesman'. What was vital about them in *HWJ* was that they were the simplest and most direct way in which editors could claim an active relationship with their readers through the journal's pages. Given the frequent avowals of democracy, readers' letters were one of the few tangible expressions of this sentiment and may explain why Samuel was moved to describe them as 'the important single thing we carry in the Journal'.[640]

A number of bye-lines featured with varying degrees of regularity, which were primarily seen as performing a supportive function. 'Archives and Sources' informed readers about the nature and whereabouts of historical material. 'Museums' offered reviews of museums and their exhibits, and 'Workers' Libraries' and 'Local History' did likewise for the documentation of working-class life. Other features, such as 'History on Film' or 'History on Stage', were dedicated to capturing a wider sense of the historical culture, a principal aim of the journal, which enabled other people involved in the production of history to write for *HWJ* – archivists, teachers, curators, and film and theatre producers.

The journal also published shorter pieces that were of a more experimental, critical or reflective nature. These included 'Critique', 'Essays', 'Work in Progress', 'Historian's Notebook', and 'Enthusiasms'. The last two, notably, constituted rather novel forms of expression, allowing a more personal encounter with the past to be presented. But they also raised, for editors and authors alike, issues of definition and literary form. 'Historian's

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[639] See 'Minutes of HWJ Editorial Collective', 1.4.75, RS9/013
[640] RS, 'Letter to Anna, Jane', 19.9.77, RS9/040

Notebook', for instance, which aimed to impart a personal or political quality to historical research, proved particularly challenging. The first choice to write this section was the Welsh historian Gwyn Williams, who was advised that 'the idea for this notebook is necessarily vague, since it should be a personal piece of writing, and we do wish to lay down or even suggest contents and style. That is, almost anything goes'.[641] In fact, anything did not go, as Williams's piece on the 'Madoc legend' proved unsuitable, which was due to 'the writer's uncertainty (which we all share) of how Notebook/diary piece should be set out'.[642] In the end, the first 'Notebook' section appeared in issue three with Sheila Rowbotham's piece on Edward Carpenter, which was, in fact, published under the heading 'Essays'.

Other contributions raised similar dilemmas. Considerable vacillation accompanied the handling of Jeffrey Weeks' text on 'Sins and Diseases', which had been commissioned for 'Archive and Sources', but was later recommended for 'Essays'. Though praised as a model piece, it aroused confusion because, as one editor commented, 'it doesn't fit into our existing categories'.[643] It was published as a contribution to 'Work in Progress'. These difficulties did not escape the attention of some editors. Prior to joining the collective, Caplan admitted to finding the bye-lines 'muddling' and, even as an editor, confessed that 'the distinctions between Essay, Historian's Notebook, & Work in Progress are so subtle as to be lost on anyone who has not been trained to recognise them in their natural habitat'.[644]

Uncertainties over form and style were less pronounced in the case of 'Enthusiasms', the journal's alternative to book reviews, which was seen as a highly accessible literary form to which readers were invited to contribute.[645] Much was expected of 'Enthusiasms' as a medium for conveying the kinds of experiences and voices that would resonate with the

641 TM, 'Letter to Gwyn [Williams]', 25.6.75, RS9/002
642 RS, 'Letter to Tim', Undated, RS9/002
643 RS, 'Letter to Sally', 1.10.75, RS9/018
644 JC, 'Some thoughts on HWJ after a year'
645 See "Editorial: Progress and Problems in our first year", p. 4.

readership.[646] In his reply to Corrigan's earlier put-downs, Samuel thought that 'it should break down the sense of hierarchy in reading, by putting the unofficial and extra mural sources on a par with the formally recognised ones.' It also had a strategic role to play in balancing other sections of the journal. 'They need to both make up for deficiencies elsewhere in the journal and to offer a contrast of voice and texture in themselves'.[647] Alun Howkins's piece on George Ewart Evans, which Samuel believed had 'spoken to the heart of all our readers',[648] and Dave Douglass's on Jack Common were two such examples. Yet 'Enthusiasms' were not exempt from excruciatingly high standards, which appears to have limited their capacity to widen the circle of writers published in *HWJ*. With pressure on space, the journal could not afford to publish sub-standard material, even in the case of 'Enthusiasms'. Reminiscent of how articles were treated, it was argued that 'with only three or four books per issue then either the book, or what our writer is saying about it, must have some exemplary force'.[649] Samuel's comments on Douglass's piece reveals unease caused by this dilemma, writing 'not altogether happy with the way it's shaping; but think we must print it as it is because otherwise we'll have so little in the way of that kind of voice'.[650] In the same way, he fretted over a piece submitted by Ken Worpole, which he felt unsuitable for publication, though he was keen to see it appear. In this context, Samuel made a telling statement, touching on the very crux of the matter:

> we clearly need to be on guard lest the effect of our own critical standards is going to be to drive off that kind of contribution in favour of pieces which, though individually excellent, are going to give a uniformity of tone and intellectuality to the journal which will in the end lose our precious but very fragile links with some large outside [...] It seems to me

[646] According to Samuel, "this is a feature where readers can express themselves: I think we should take that seriously and perhaps use it especially to encourage worker and first time writers". RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 20.9.76, RS9/003.
[647] RS, 'Letter [to collective]', 15.3.77, RS9/003.
[648] Ibid.
[649] RS, GSJ, 'Memo on editorial practice', 28.7.77
[650] RS, 'Letter to Tim', 9.8.76, RS9/026.

> we're not well set up yet, either in our editorial time, nor in the technical resources available to us - especially in terms of typing to encourage or even to cope with the kinds of pieces that have gone into the Workshop pamphlets and books [...] Pressure of time, fraying nerves and the like are going to mean that if we don't take some positively discriminatory measures we shall lose that kind of contribution.[651]

Samuel's fear that the editors' own standards could vitiate the link to the wider world of politics and movements was well-founded, but his intimation that greater editorial support could act to prevent such an occurrence evades some of the deeper problems in the formulation and actualisation of their publishing project. Critical standards were due, in the first place, to a specifically aesthetic response to the challenge of making democratic history, the conception of which was tied to the character of its readership.

Following a strategy of balance had a double purpose: to keep the different interests of readers in sight and to fashion, in the deployment of diverse material and representational forms, a final product with wide appeal. In doing so, practices of exclusion were inscribed into the production process alongside practices of equality. If the journal could claim to provide a service to readers, to make scholarly work more accessible, and to broaden the boundaries of history, then an outlet for dialogue between readers and writers had yet to be found. To escape from this predicament, however, would surely require some lessening of the demand to print exemplary and outstanding material, and an acceptance of what seemed plain ordinary, fragmentary or unoriginal. Though *HWJ* aimed to break through the divide between specialist and popular publications, it was also geared towards intellectual growth. Whether or not the intellectual development of the journal was compatible with reaching a larger outside and extending its democratic compass depended on what direction the former would take and the extent to which editorial labour could be harnessed to maintain their congruence.

[651] Ibid.

CHAPTER 5: *HISTORY WORKSHOP JOURNAL*, 1978-82: MOMENTS OF TRANSITION

I. THE SPECTRE OF THEORY

In a handwritten postcard sent to Samuel in response to the publication of the fourth issue of *HWJ*, Edward Thompson remarked tersely that 'I think the theoretical pronouncements have been weak'.[652] The statement is remarkably ironic in view of what was to follow. For a historian and self-described 'Marxist *empiricist*', Thompson was unusually receptive to questions that raised problems of theory and historiography.[653] His earlier polemical exchange with Perry Anderson in the mid-1960s, where matters of theory were brought into play in their dispute over explanations of the historical development of British capitalism, was one such instance. It proved to be largely unfruitful as both protagonists moved in different directions, leaving history and theory to continue their 'separate development".[654] But by the 1970s, Thompson was again drawn into the turbulent waters of theory, in response to what he saw as the baleful influence of Althusserian theory within British Marxist circles.[655] In 1978, he published the essay 'The Poverty of Theory' in an eponymously entitled volume that collected some of his other articles – a vitriolic screed against Althusser's brand of structuralist Marxism and a defence of the historian's craft.[656]

At almost the same moment, an article penned by Richard Johnson, a member of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), appeared in the *History Workshop Journal*, which advanced, as much in tone as in substance, a very different reading

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[652] E.P. Thompson, Letter to Raphael Samuel, Undated, RS9/045

[653] Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Second Edition; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 18.

[654] For a detailed summary of the issues at stake in this debate, see Keith Nield's "A Symptomatic Dispute? Notes on the Relation between Marxian Theory and Historical Practice in Britain", *Social Research* 47, 3 (Fall 1980), 479-506.

[655] For an explanation of origins of Thompson's essay 'The Poverty of Theory', see Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: E.P. Thompson, the new left and postwar British politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 166-67.

[656] *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin, 1978).

of potential utility of structuralist theory for socialist historians.[657] Leader of the cultural history group at the CCCS, which was involved in the task of rethinking the bases of Marxist historiography, Johnson's ostensible aim was to bring the insights of Althusserianism to bear upon the limitations and deficiencies he identified in the practice of 'culturalist' Marxists like Thompson. The decision to publish the article was taken in the hope of sparking a debate around the themes raised by Johnson and further contributions to that end were solicited. A debate was sparked, which culminated in a highly-charged and exceedingly vituperative encounter at the thirteenth History Workshop conference in November 1979. In retrospect, the clash between these competing strands of Marxism identified with the names of Thompson and Althusser, which had been bubbling away throughout the 1970s, generated more heat than light, at least for the onlookers gathered at St. Paul's Church in Oxford on that ignoble Saturday evening.[658] Ultimately, Althusserianism held little interest for practicing historians, whilst Thompsonian versions of social history were shortly to become a source of critique that would significantly diminish their explanatory force. Given the successive waves of theoretical currents (psychoanalytical, linguistic, feminist, semiotic, and cultural) that would break across history's shore during the 1980s and 1990s, the controversy now appears as a relic of a bygone era. What remains to be explained, however, is why the *HWJ* collective, a group heavily indebted, politically and methodologically, to the kind of historical approach pioneered by Thompson, decided to open up the debate over theory by publishing Johnson's article in their pages.[659]

[657] Richard Johnson, "Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History", *History Workshop Journal* 6, (Autumn 1978), 79-100.

[658] For two published eye-witness accounts of the occasion and, in particular, of Thompson's behaviour, see Jonathan Ree, "EP Thompson and the Drama of Authority", *History Workshop Journal* 47, (Spring 1999); and Gavin Kitching, "A View from the Stalls", *New Statesman* 14 March 1980, 398-99.

[659] It should be said that individuals on the collective held different viewpoints and expressed varying degrees of sympathy towards Thompson's approach.

‘Critical and Supportive’

‘The great strength of workshop meetings, at Ruskin and elsewhere’, wrote Samuel ‘is their supportive character - people don't on the whole come to snipe or vent their personal competitiveness or aggression, but to appreciate work that has been done’.[660] When the *Journal* was formed, that supportive character was carried over into editorial practice, as was evident in the commitment not to publish reviews and instead to replace them with 'Enthusiasms'.[661] One of the drawbacks of making the workshop a ‘reassuring and comforting atmosphere’, it was felt, was that it inhibited the development of more critical impulses, though the editorial collective had tried to make it clear in the very first issue that *HWJ* would take up critical and theoretical discussions by carrying an editorial on the nature of the relationship between history and sociology. ‘It does not engage the historian in the development of theoretical work’, they argued ‘but simply in a passive acceptance of categories derived from elsewhere’.[662] Stedman Jones gave the theme fuller treatment in the article ‘From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History’.[663]

In a similar vein, and a short-lived outlet for critical energies, the 'Counter Sociology Group' was formed in 1975 in parallel with the *Journal*. Samuel and Stedman Jones were both centrally involved; other contributors to the group included Eileen Yeo, Jane Kenrick, Goran Therborn, Jeffrey Weeks, and Pat Thane, plus other members of the collective like Alun Howkins and Tim Mason.[664] The aim was to produce ‘a critical account of the history of sociology as a reflection of bourgeois ambitions and anxieties’, with a book or special issue of *HWJ* suggested as possible outlets, though neither ever materialised.[665] The critical thrust of this largely still-born project was waged against the ideological sources of

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660 Raphael Samuel, ‘Federation of History Workshops and Socialist Historians’, 14.02.80, RS7/004
661 Raphael Samuel, ‘’A third memo on the future of HWJ’, 9.7.79, RS9/005
662 “Editorial: Sociology and History”, *History Workshop Journal*, 1 (Spring 1976), 7.
663 “From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History”, *British Journal of Sociology* 27, 3 (September 1976), 295-305.
664 ‘Social Science/chapters in the history of sociology project’, 29.7.75, RS9/017; Raphael Samuel, (ed.), *History Workshop: A Collectanea 1967-1991* (London: History Workshop, 1991), 113.
665 Ibid.

sociological thinking and the utilitarian character of its scientific pretensions, which were apparent in its preference for quantification, abstraction, and top-down analytical schemas. Criticism was also directed towards the growing prevalence of such modes of thought in social history and the consequent dilution of Marxist theoretical categories, as illustrated in a short piece by Stedman Jones in *HWJ* 4 called 'Class Expression versus Social Control?' Another sign that theory would be taken seriously was the publication of Rodney Hilton's article on 'Feudalism and the Origins of Capitalism', which 'indicates [sic] that the journal will be a place where socialist historians can discuss among themselves, adopting an explicit theoretical standpoint'.[666] It was hoped that further contributions of a theoretical nature would be made, with pieces from John Saville on primitive accumulation and Perry Anderson on bourgeois revolutions lined up.[667]

However, the balance between critical and supportive tendencies, as the first editorial anticipated, was not adequately struck in the early issues of *HWJ*. The contributions from Saville and Anderson never materialised, and although Jane Caplan did eventually get the section 'Critique' up and running with a consideration of Poulantzas in issue 3, it was mostly outweighed by the accumulation of pieces of an experiential, evocative or service character. The lack of headway made in advancing critical or theoretical arguments did not go unnoticed. A reviewer of the first four issues observed that '[i]n the general enthusiasm for local history, oral history, the history of popular culture, and "history from below", one misses a consciously articulated theory of socialist historiography within which debate and discussion of class development, class relations, and the contest for and exercise of state power could move forward.'[668] These issues, as well as the related ones of ideology and politics, pressed themselves upon the minds of social historians with ever-greater urgency,

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[666] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Rodney Hilton, Undated, RS9/018
[667] Ibid.
[668] Gail Malmgreen, "History Workshop Journal", *Victorian Studies* 22, No. 2 (Winter 1979), p. 234.

betraying the difficulties and lacunae of class-based, materialist forms of explanation.[669] But in 1978, the discussion of such theoretical subjects amongst Marxists was largely confined to other publications, such as *NLR*, *Economy and Society*, and the 'Working Papers' of the CCCS.

The effort to nurture a supportive, informal and non-competitive setting for the presentation of historical research was understandable given the workshop's democratic appeal and counter-institutional ethos. As we saw in chapter 1, this manifested itself into a pedagogical practice that was almost exclusively devoted to the use of archival and source material, rather than the work published by other historians. It is hardly surprising that these commitments eclipsed the treatment of critical perspectives in *HWJ*. 'It wasn't that we did not think such critical work worth while', Samuel explained 'rather that there were other Journal tasks which imposed themselves with greater urgency'.[670] Another reason for the absence of critique or controversy was the reticence towards entering into interpretive disputes over the history of the Left. Tim Mason indicated to a prospective contributor, 'the Journal wishes as a whole to avoid taking positions within historic controversies on the left'.[671]

This disappointed some readers who were expecting to find greater discussion of the history of socialism. John Saville complained to Samuel that '[a]part from Fascism and places a long way off your collective seem to have an almost pathological distrust of politics'.[672] Even from within the collective, murmurings about the lack of coverage of the history of the Left were audible.[673] Later issues may well have appeased demands for greater political interventions, with the appearance in issues 4 of Stephen Yeo's article on 'The Religion of Socialism'. Privately, murmurings of disquiet about the journal's failure to provoke controversy were also heard. Recalling their conversation at a previous social function,

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[669] Eley, *A Crooked Line*, 90-102.
[670] 'A third memo on the future of HWJ', 9.7.79, RS9/005
[671] Tim Mason, Letter to Alan Pratt, 2.12.76, RS9/001
[672] John Saville, Letter to Raphael Samuel, 24.8.77, RS9/039
[673] Minutes of the HWJ collective meeting held on 20.3.77, RS9/003

Samuel wrote to Stedman Jones that 'I thought one of your remarks - about the fact that the Journal has not yet produced a controversy - really worth retaining and looking for ways to meet'.[674] Controversy would indeed come to engulf the *Journal*; not over an issue within the historiography of the Left, but on the epistemological status of Marxist historiography itself.

'Historiographical Parricide'

Sources of antipathy towards theory were not hard to find on the British intellectual scene in the second-half of the 20th Century. We could go back further to recover the tradition of British empiricism and its suspicion of rationalist thought, or closer to home, to the formation of the historical profession in the second-half of the nineteenth century. British historians, as Peter Burke has observed, 'have swallowed a double dose of empiricism'.[675]

The Cold War era reinforced a suspicion of theory as something alien and continental, equating it with authoritarian impulses. In her essay 'A House of Theory', Iris Murdoch expressed this view, writing it is 'felt that theorising is anti-liberal [...] and that liberal-minded persons should surround their choices with a minimum of theory, relying on open above-board references to facts or to principles which are simple and comprehensible to all'.[676] Often, it was Marxist theory and Soviet totalitarianism that was conflated, personified in the figure of Karl Popper, whose influence over social science was considerable. Even where Marxism did gain a foothold in British intellectual life, through the work of the Communist Party Historians' Group that paved the way for the establishment of a native tradition of Marxist historiography, theoretical allegiances were

[674] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Gareth Stedman Jones, 22.12.77, RS9/043. Elsewhere, Tim Mason also recognised an absence here, stating "I think we have been short on arguments in HWJ to date, and I think things certainly need stirring up". Tim Mason, Letter to Jerry White, 27.1.79, RS9/003
[675] Peter Burke, "Historians, Anthropologists, and Symbols", in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierny (ed.), *Culture Through Time: Anthropological Approaches* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 282.
[676] Iris Murdoch, 'A House of Theory', in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (London: Penguin 1999), p. 179.

lightly worn.[677] Here too criticism of theoretical abstraction was fused with Stalinist authoritarianism in the polemical broadsides of E.P. Thompson, who confronted his usurpers on the board of the *NLR* before he took up the cudgel against Althusser and his epigones. Laden with such weight of meaning, theory (or rather 'high theory') became a subject fraught with tension, particularly for the History Workshop movement, which counted on working-class and labour movement support, and where charges of obscurity, inaccessibility, and elitism could be heard.

Despite the efforts of the editors to cover a wide range of topics and themes, some early readers of the journal were left with the impression that it represented a narrowly populist approach to the history of working-class life and culture.[678] In this regard, it had moved little from the original programme of the Workshop itself. That this was what a substantial section of the readership expected and favoured was duly noted in a report to an editorial meeting, which asserted that 'the articles which have made the most impact so far have been McKenna and Martyrdom of the Mines'.[679] McKenna's 'Victorian Railwaymen' and the Edward Rymer text about mineworkers were accounts of working-class experience and struggle. Equally, the belief that *HWJ* should not occupy itself with abstruse academic theorising was also evident in readers' correspondence. Eddie Conway suggested that Caplan's article would 'fit more readily in say NLR rather than "the workshop"', adding that 'the style of the article, its vocabulary, its part pre-supposition that arguments between Poulantzas and Miliband are staple diet for the wider readership you desire seems at variance with the rest of the issue'.[680] The kind of scholarly absorption and expertise demanded by

[677] For a critical account of this tradition, see Gareth Stedman-Jones, "Anglo-Marxism, Neo-Marxism and the Discursive Approach to History", 149-209.
[678] John Saville expressed great disappointed in the early issues of the journal, remarking that "the whole tenor so far is really to de-politicise British history. Even the covers reinforce the impressions of antiquarianism". John Saville, Letter to Raphael Samuel, 24.8.77, RS9/039. Another academic historian wrote bitterly about the fact that "it seems to be determined to confine itself to a narrow group who work on a limited range of subjects from a workerist point of view". (Author unknown), Letter to Gareth Stedman Jones, 8.3.78, RS9/001.
[679] Minutes of History Workshop Journal Editorial Meeting 20.3.77
[680] Eddie Conway, Letter to 'Comrades', 11.10.77, RS9/041

what Althusser called 'theoretical labour' was squarely at odds with the journal's pre-existing commitments to forms of democratic address and accessibility, pronouncements of solidarity with readers, and the publication of contributions of a quite untheoretical nature.

Given the vexing nature of the topic and the stringency with which they wielded editorial control over what went into the *Journal*, it is surprising that the Johnson article was endorsed by the collective in the first place. Evidence about editorial views is scant, but it shows that reactions were rather lukewarm. Samuel described it as 'deeply flawed'. In his opinion, it put forward a 'total misreading of the history of British Marxist historiography', and engaged in 'a series of detours, some more valuable than others, but none organically related to his declared central theme'.[681] Mason, who composed a lengthy riposte to Johnson's paper, felt that Johnson was not a strong basis upon which to start a debate because 'his piece is so inadequate and misconceived'.[682] If others shared similar misgivings about his critique as Samuel and Mason did, then it is notable that, when it came to the decision to publish it, there was a sole dissenter.[683] Evidently, the need to develop a discussion around the questions it raised trumped the intrinsic worth of the piece. 'It's perfectly possible for a bad or imperfect text to serve as the inspiration for a sustained piece of writing', argued Samuel.[684] Mason's position is interesting because he had been initially opposed to publication, but then became something of an enthusiast for building up the debate around the issue of theory. Far from being an advocate of structuralist Marxism, Mason believed the article had a salutary purpose:

> it is the first piece of new high theory I have read which tackles the work of major marxist historians <u>and</u> is clearly enough written to be understood by historians who have been left

[681] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Tim Mason, 27.1.78, RS9/045
[682] Tim Mason, Letter to Jerry White, 27.1.79, RS9/003
[683] See 'the Minutes of the HWJ editorial meeting 19 Aug 78', RS9/052.
[684] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Tim Mason, 27.1.78, RS9/045.

stranded by the earlier theoretical literature…I think I can begin to see what the arguments are about.[685]

No doubt the disparity between the alleged quality of the article (or lack thereof) and the decision to publish may be explained by the need to make good on the collective's promise to deliver theoretically-engaged history. More broadly, however, the desire for controversy that the opening to theory presented, at least for some editors, laid bare a drive to achieve intellectual prominence, if not predominance, within fellow socialist academic circles by taking theoretical debates forward. That the article would cause something a stir was already clear. 'It is going to provoke some explosive reactions', admitted Samuel. Upon its publication, Mason announced to his fellow editors that they had 'released a genie',[686] or, as he put it elsewhere, mocking tabloid journalese 'HWJ attacks EPT. Read all about it!!! – this is big news, historiographical parricide'.[687] Controversies and disagreements are the lifeblood of academic discourse, but if there was an element of oedipal conflict[688] about the publication of Johnson's critique, then it must also be situated within the wider purposes of the journal, which were beginning to undergo a process of re-evaluation.

Samuel's internal memos and missives from 1977 onwards reflect a range of contradictory worries, hopes and anticipations. To begin with, he feared that the collective was losing touch with its New Left constituents, those involved in the women's movement, community action projects, and radical faculty inside the University. Unlike its audience drawn from elsewhere, such as the adult education and labour movements, the New Left were more critical in attitude and theoretical in orientation, which had originally given Workshop meetings 'a restless, turbulent character' and 'had the great positive effect of

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[685] Tim Mason, 'HWJ rough draft: Poetry, Science and Theories of History – comments on the critique of Thompson + Genovese', 2.8.78, RS9/052
[686] Minutes of HWJ editorial meeting 10.2.79, RS9/003
[687] Tim Mason, Letter to Jerry White
[688] When the journal was formed, Mason was heard to remark "we are the Young Turks come of age, should try for state power". Alun Howkins, 'Notes from the Sticks', Undated, RS9/005

imparting urgency to the proceedings'. He hoped that *HWJ* could speak to them in a way that remained consonant with the original bases of the Workshop. 'Our journal would be a great help to New Left people', wrote Samuel '[by] showing that Marxist and revolutionary ideas need not involve, and ought not to involve, cutting oneself off from the language and the experience of the masses, of everyday life…'[689] A similar point was expressed in a later circular, as Samuel conceded that *HWJ* was rather marginal to intellectual debates occurring in other left-wing outlets like *NLR* or *Radical Philosophy*. He suggested theoretical subjects upon which an intervention could be launched 'which it won't be possible for our brother and sister journals to ignore'.[690] These included 'the discussion of historiography', 'feminism', 'aesthetics', and 'class consciousness and the theory of labour movements'.[691] If that was one of its shortcomings, then one of its strengths – what set *HWJ* apart – was its distinctive character, and breadth of concern and varied sense of life, which gave it greater resonance culturally, internationally and in the socialist and working class movement. In reference to those fraternal counterparts, Samuel declared 'there's little chance of them reaching out to change the intellectual and political climate of Britain, whereas that's something which, with all its limits, HWJ can make some real contribution to doing'.[692] At other moments, such optimism is replaced by a less sanguine picture of the future direction of *HWJ*. In anticipating 'invisible pressures' that were liable to impact journal production, Samuel felt it likely that work on socialism and the working class would remain their 'basic theme', which would 'mean a sad narrowing of our project'.[693] Equally, and as disclosed in the previous chapter, highly visible pressures, like space, length and cost, were still at work. In a telling remark, Samuel reckoned that the commitment to theoretical discussion was not 'absolutely incompatible within a smaller journal, but I think that the sense of life,

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[689] Raphael Samuel, Letter to comrades, 29.4.77, RS9/003

[690] Raphael Samuel, Letter to comrades, 11.1.78, RS9/045

[691] Ibid.

[692] Ibid. Here Samuel names *Capital and Class* and *Radical Philosophy* as catering largely to initiates intimately familiar with their self-enclosed debates.

[693] Raphael Samuel, 'Invisible Pressures', 11.1.78, RS9/003.

movement, locality, projects and variety of voice and experience probably is [sic]'.[694] Amid the scarcities of space and money, a strategy of how the *HWJ* could still succeed appears to expose an ever-growing sense of incompatibility between more academic commitments and the 'almanack' character of the journal. In addition, there was another factor to consider: growth.

> Clearly we ought to be as solvent as we can, and to do everything to cut costs and raise funds; but I fear it will be a false economy if our solvency is only achieved at the cost of relative stasis; at the moment and for some time to come it seems to me that the Journal simply has to be visibly moving forward.[695]

But in what direction should the journal move?

As a supplement to the reception of the Johnson article, an editorial 'history and theory' was penned, which revealed some of the discomfort and unease around how to convey to the wider readership the relevance of theory for historical scholarship. It is a carefully crafted statement, conciliatory in tone, which charts a middle course between the Scylla of theoretical absolutism and the Charybdis of naïve empiricism.[696] Out of the extremities of the structuralist case, theory is posed not as 'model' or 'hypothesis' to be demonstrated, but as a critical imperative, constantly raising questions and problems that 'can inform the practice of historians at every stage in their work'.[697] Here theory had both critical and constructive capacities: on the one hand, it forced historians to be more self-conscious about the categories they use, the questions they pose, and the epistemological foundations of their enterprise; on the other hand, 'theoretical work may be undertaken for

[694] Raphael Samuel, Letter to comrades, 11.1.78, RS9/045
[695] Ibid.
[696] In the words of the editorial, "[t]he fetishisation of theory should be no more acceptable to Marxists than the empiricist fetishisation of facts". "History and Theory", *History Workshop Journal* 6 (Autumn 1978), 4.
[697] Ibid, p. 5. The editorial also mentioned the implications of Gramscian and feminist theory for historical work, which have been generally more fruitful in their application than Althusserian theory.

putting things together, and connecting seemingly distinct orders of historical phenomena - say, culture and politics, or economics and family order'.[698] That said, cautions were made against the hubris of the theoreticians. Theory was not an end in itself, nor was it immune to external determinants or to empirical interrogation and verification. Overall, the editorial reaffirmed the worth of historical enquiry.

As later evidence bears out, the purpose of the editorial was to allay the fears of the readership, seeking to dispel what it described as a 'climate of anxiety around the very notion of theoretical work'. In Samuel's words, the point was to show 'how the questions raised by Marxist "structuralism" however strange the language, are in fact questions which in other contexts, whether as practicing historians or as Marxists, readers will have encountered and thought about before'.[699] But it was also written out of a fear of the likely reaction to the piece and the need to distance the collective from it lest the conclusion was reached that agreement to publish meant identification with the actual position staked out by Johnson. 'We are publishing Richard Johnson's critique of the work of Edward Thompson and Eugene Genovese in this issue', the editorial explained 'not because we are committed, as a collective, either for or against the case he makes, but because we think it raises important issues in historiography, and the relationship of history to theory'.[700] In fact, the editorial's equivocal stance reflected differences within the collective that made such a commitment impossible, as did the unwillingness to explore the specific points raised in the article, which would, according to Samuel, 'open[] up the differences of emphasis and indeed perspective which undoubtedly exist amongst us'.[701] This certainly occurred, not just on matters of substance, but also in terms of how the debate was handled inside the journal.

In the event, the editorial had little meliorating effect. The editorial in issue 7 acknowledged that '[t]here has been a mixed response, among readers and editors, to the

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[698] Ibid.
[699] Raphael Samuel, Letter to comrades, 29.9.78, RS9/003
[700] "History and Theory", p. 6.
[701] Raphael Samuel, Letter to comrades, 29.9.78, RS9/003

article by Richard Johnson which we published in issue 6'.[702] Privately, there were admissions amongst the collective that they had taken a lot of 'flak' over the article and editorial.[703] The task of making theory accessible and less alienating proved largely unrealised. Samuel lamented the fact that 'we have commenced a theory debate in ways in which a portion of our readership find alienating and do not understand…they fear we are going the way of the academic Marxist journals or (like my mother) simply do not follow what we – in the editorial – or Johnson, in his article, are on about'.[704] The problem of how to carry readers with them was compounded by a disagreement over how to organise the follow-up pieces written in response to Johnson. Mason, who caused a minor crisis for the collective over the way in which he tried to circumvent editorial procedure, advocated a 'symposium', collecting a series of contributions and publishing them together. Others protested. Jerry White was 'appalled at the thought that we could publish five contributions', adding '[i]t seems to me a hysterical overkill for which we really cannot find space'.[705] Anxious about the balance of the journal, Stan Shipley was equally aghast at the prospect of a greatly enlarged critique section than in previous issues. 'We have to carry our enthusiasm', he insisted 'to the readership gradually'.[706] The alternative proposal of staggering several pieces across future issues was shared by Samuel who stressed that 'a large chunk of the readership…won't understand what it is centrally about'.[707] This was indeed how the collective agreed to handle things, with responses by Keith McClelland and Gavin Williams printed in issue 7, and further contributions coming from Simon Clarke and Gregor McLennan in issue 8.

As a provocateur of intellectual controversy and agitation, the publication of Johnson's article was, by any measure, an undeniable success. The near-simultaneous

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[702] "Difficulties…" *History Workshop Journal* 7 (Spring 1979), 2.
[703] See Tim Mason, Letter to Jerry White, 27.1.79
[704] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79, RS9/056
[705] Jerry White, letter to Tim Mason, 23.1.[79], RS9/003
[706] Stan Shipley, 'Comments', Undated, RS9/045
[707] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79, RS9/056

appearance of Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory* raised to a new level the stakes in the debate and the attention it received, and probably ensured that some kind of showdown would eventually result. That book, in Stuart Hall's estimation, 'proved to be a remarkable political and intellectual event. It has dominated intellectual debate on the left for more than a year'.[708] The timing, however, does not seem to have been contrived in advance. One editor of *HWJ* bemoaned the fact that Thompson's volume came out 'at such a moment as to make it look as though we are deliberately slighting/ignoring the great man'.[709] In fact, Thompson never took up arms against Johnson in the pages of the journal, though a number of scholars were only too happy to march into battle on his behalf. The resort to battlefield metaphors is apposite here, as the opportunity to propel the discussion forward in intellectually productive ways was largely squandered by the urge to take positions on the original piece, to expose its deficiencies and to rebut its claims.

As we mentioned above, this was partly a problem of Johnson's own presentation of his arguments, which made it difficult to respond because 'he faces in too many different directions at once'.[710] But reservations were also raised against the subsequent pieces that appeared in the journal. Samuel listed several faults of which they were guilty: they were tangential to the main argument; not powerful enough polemically; lacked urgency;[711] or 'compound[ed] some of Johnson's original errors' and 'add[ed] layers of confusion'.[712] From the point of trying to advance the discussion, an ideal contribution ought 'to acquire a life of its own, and to be more or less self-sufficient'.[713] One contributor was praised for its attempt to 'take one substantial question in theory...and pursues it with reference to a

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[708] Stuart Hall, "In Defence of Theory", in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 378.
[709] Tim Mason, letter to Jerry White, 27.1.79
[710] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 27.1.78
[711] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason [handwritten], Undated, RS9/056
[712] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79, RS9/056
[713] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 27.1.78

specific question of historical interpretation and a specific historical text'.[714] Yet Samuel's insistence that the whole exercise should foster a genuine 'theory debate' as opposed to 'the Johnson controversy' went unheeded.[715] In his assessment, Stedman Jones made the point that one did not have to agree with Johnson *in toto* in order to take seriously his arguments about the limitations of socialist humanist history and criticised the contributors' refusal to do so. 'We shall never make progress if socialists and marxists shout across at each other in a generalised dialogue of the deaf', he wrote.[716]

The 'Symposium'

The one editor of *HWJ* in whom the issue of history and theory provoked a spirited reaction was Tim Mason,[717] whose own work on the German working class under National Socialism owed much to the inspiration of Thompson's example. He was clearly not much impressed by Richard Johnson's intervention, but took full responsibility, as a member of the editorial collective, for the decision to publish it.[718] When it came to arranging the Journal's follow-up and his proposal for a 'Symposium', however, he acted in a manner which caused a great deal of distress, upset and resentment amongst his fellow editors and culminated in his own threatened resignation. It was as a result of his 'reckless determination to get his own way' that the collective was faced with its first serious 'crisis'.[719]

In a long memo about the mini-saga,[720] Samuel tried to rationalise Mason's actions and understand his state of mind. In Mason's own mind, Johnson assumed 'the increasingly phantasmagoric character of the enemy' and the Symposium a means of combat, such that

[714] Ibid.
[715] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79
[716] Gareth Stedman Jones, 'History and Theory', *History Workshop Journal* 7 (spring 1979), 202.
[717] For a discussion of Mason's work, see Eley, *A Crooked Line*, 102-113.
[718] See Tim Mason, "The Making of the English Working Class", *History Workshop Journal* 7 (spring 1979), 225.
[719] Raphael Samuel, letter to collective, 4.4.79, RS9/057
[720] Knowing how Mason struggled throughout his life with mental illness, it is with some apprehension that one turns to an examination of this episode. Its interest here emerges not only in what it tells us about the intensity of the issues but, significantly, the internal dynamics of the editorial group.

‘rather low-key pieces were transformed into the opening salvoes of a Holy War’. Mason's objective was not to open up debate, reported Samuel, but to ‘decontaminate the journal of Johnson’ and he sought not refutation but ‘pulverising [sic] Johnson into the dust’.[721] Elsewhere, Samuel felt that his friend made the debate a matter of ‘intellectual and political honour’,[722] whereas the real concern for *HWJ* was about how to ensure both accessibility and the existing balance of contents in its pages. That the debate could be quickly dramatised in this way and overlaid with political and moral imperatives, attests to its highly combustible nature. In some respects, Mason's bid to corral the rest of the collective and to demolish his opponent’s viewpoint resembled Thompson's own polemical display at the later History Workshop meeting. He even accused other editors of being timid and ‘afraid of open and hard political controversy within the collective’,[723] an accusation that was levelled by John Saville against those audience members who took exception to the manner of Thompson's attacks on his opponents.[724]

A sharp contrast, in tone if not entirely in outlook, is Mason's moderate and more even-tempered reply to the Johnson article, entitled ‘Poetry, Science and the Theories of History’. It is a curious document, at once registering the contours of the historiographical moment and, at the same time, disclosing the experience of personal diffidence and intellectual apprehension in the face of theoretical thunder. Whilst affirming the ambition to write the ‘history of society’, a commitment to Marxist historiography and to a totalising analysis of the past, it recognised the necessity for greater theoretical clarity in carrying forward the project of social history:

> New questions (or old questions, re-discovered) are on the agenda, questions which reach out beyond the social and economic history of capitalism and class conflict to ask about the

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[721] Ibid.
[722] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79
[723] Tim Mason, letter to Raphael Samuel, 18.3.79, RS9/057
[724] Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory*, 177.

> changing relations between these spheres of life and the arts, law, literature, religion, the state.[725]

But the abstractions and protocols which passed for high theory were signally ill-suited to reaching beyond Marxist constructs like base and superstructure, or social being and social consciousness.[726] A problem of incomprehension and uncertainty as much of the incorrectness of contemporary Marxist theoretical statements. Indeed, Mason's rejoinder is partly styled as a confessional, frankly conceding his feelings of bafflement, doubt and anger at the obscurities of theory; 'that cloying sense of uncertainty [...] which grows out of the admixture of incomprehension, and distrust and intellectual inadequacy generated by the effort to read theory', as he described it. Conflicted by a sense of the intellectual weight and momentum of developments for historical writing and the inability to understand what is being written, the struggle to come to terms with theory appears to have been a particularly agonising, despairing experience for Mason. 'We ought to understand what they are saying', he implored. 'But it is no use'. Rather than the abrupt dismissals of his published letter, Mason ends on a more hopeful, conciliatory note: '[w]e have to talk to each other, to lay our difficulties out on the table, rather than suppressing the discomfort which they cause (historians), or claiming that there are solutions which lie to hand (theorists)'.[727] The reliance upon the confessional mode and personal experience can be viewed rhetorically, a way of connecting emotionally with readers over the difficulties and inaccessibility of the language of the theory. In this respect, it can be seen in the context of the divisiveness that theory caused for the journal in its relations with Workshop supporters. To illustrate the point, Mason remarked elsewhere:

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[725] Tim Mason, 'HWJ rough draft: Poetry, Science and Theories of History – comments on the critique of Thompson + Genovese', 2.8.78, RS9/052

[726] See, Eley, *A Crooked Line*, 95-96.

[727] Tim Mason, 'HWJ rough draft: Poetry, Science and Theories of History'

> we are now under very heavy pressure indeed from our readership to show the flag – to show that their unease at the hifalutin crap which passes for theory is shared by a lot of working historians and philosophers; that you don't have to buy 'protocols' and 'privileged vantage points' etc. etc. in order to be a theoretically interested socialist historian.[728]

One area where Mason was noticeably consistent and uncompromising was in his refusal to concede any criticisms of Thompson's work.[729] Members of the collective had been neither unconditional supporters of Richard Johnson nor inimically hostile to theory being discussed in *HWJ*, but not all shared the need to defend Thompson from criticism. For Samuel, the problem was the weaknesses of the original article (and also the follow-up pieces), which would fail to generate a far-reaching impact. Regrettably, it was not 'likely to develop, as I'd hoped it might, into a sustained discussion on the socialist historiography of the 1960s, and EPT in particular'.[730] Arguably, the real significance of the episode, at least in the context of History Workshop and *HWJ* was the increasing separation of academic and more populist orientations.

One of the main thrusts of the issue 6 editorial had been to unmask epistemological ignorance by separating out historical representations from past reality and 'to consider them as ideological constructions rather than as the empirical record of past events';[731] surely a move that went against the spirit of people's history as a project of political recovery.[732] In fact, the implications of the structuralist critique of the conceptual basis of historical work are alluded to in a reader's letter, which claimed that Johnson's critics had largely missed his major point about *The Making of the English Working Class*; viz., 'that its

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[728] Tim Mason, letter to Jerry White, 27.1.79
[729] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 2.2.79
[730] Raphael Samuel, letter to Tim Mason, 31.1.[79], RS9/056
[731] "History and Theory", 3.
[732] Following his critique of Thompson's problematic use of the concept of experience, Stuart Hall writes "something very much like this is often inscribed in, for example, History Workshop's notion of 'people's history' – as if, simply to tell the story of past oppressions and struggles is to find the promise of socialism already there, fully constituted, only waiting to 'speak out'. Hall, "In Defence of Theory", in Samuel (ed.) *People's History and Socialist Theory* 384.

[*The Making*] methodological flaws – its suppression of theory and its pseudo-empiricism – support and are supported by its (largely concealed) theoretical position'.[733] It is not too far of a leap from here to show how theoretical choices structure Thompson's account of class formation. That this did not prompt an immediate revision of existing historical premises was due no doubt to the revered status of Thompson's book and to Thompson's own pronouncements on the subject of theory. But this was beginning to change, especially as the gradual emergence of new political situation added ballast to growing doubts about many of social history's existing categories. For the Workshop, the introduction of theory into the pages of *HWJ* became an increasing bone of contention amongst readers and editors, and a lightning rod for grievances about the changing nature of the publication. In the short term, the 'difficulties' that were identified in issue 7 were to be resolved, the editors announced, by taking the debate to the upcoming History Workshop meeting. 'This will provide a forum for the kind of open and comradely discussions which are essential if we are to go forward'.[734] A highly ironic comment in retrospect.

II. (EN)GENDERING CONTROVERSY: HOBSBAWM AND FEMINIST HISTORY

In a remarkable piece of synergy, the publication of issue 6 not only brought to the surface tensions and unease in *HWJ*'s relationship to one elder statesman of British left historiography, but also with another: Eric Hobsbawm. Like Thompson, Hobsbawm too had shared the Workshop stage in the late-1960s and was considered to be a chief influence upon its formation. Indeed Workshop practice was directly descended from themes originally raised by Hobsbawm himself.[735] A draft editorial traced these connections:

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[733] John Baxendale, "Socialist Theory", *History Workshop Journal* 9 (spring 1980), 195

[734] "Editorial Notes", *History Workshop Journal* 7, 101

[735] In a letter to Hobsbawm, Samuel wrote "We are certainly standing up publicly for a whole number of causes which you've spent a lot of your life fighting for". Raphael Samuel, Letter to Eric Hobsbawm, 9.8.77, RS9/039

> The whole path of the early Ruskin studies, with their concentration on occupational work groups was directly or indirectly inspired by his Labouring Men, while the preoccupation with social underworld and its relations to wider popular movements – another feature of the workshops – owes a great deal to his Primitive Rebels.[736]

One area where Hobsbawm's influence was more mixed was in the case of women's and feminist history. Still, initial explorations into the history of women and the women's movement grew up in close proximity to labour and working-class history, as well as the socialist politics of many of its leading practitioners. In many ways, it was History Workshop that acted as catalyst and conduit for the coalescence of these currents, principally after Sheila Rowbotham's call for a meeting on women's history at the History Workshop in 1969, a suggestion which inspired the first national women's liberation conference.[737] In the context of Ruskin College, an overwhelmingly male institution, feminism was treated with a considerable degree of suspicion.[738] Even Samuel was forced to admit that Ruskin students 'have not felt solidarity with the women's movement'.[739] That did not prevent, however, several of the Workshops being run under feminist auspices, such as 'Childhood in History' in 1972, 'Women in History' in 1973, and 'Family, Work, Home' in 1974. In this context, feminist history developed in a direction that began to challenge and make problematic the practice of labour history, as it would, in time, the commitment to Marxism and class-based analysis.[740]

By the time that Hobsbawm's manuscript, entitled 'Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography' had reached the editorial desk of *HWJ*, feminist history in Britain was undergoing a period of gradual transition. The earliest writings on women's history,

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[736] Raphael Samuel [?], 'Draft possible editorial for issue 6: History Workshop and Eric Hobsbawm', Undated, RS9/052

[737]. For further information about the Ruskin Conference in 1970, see the reminiscences of Sheila Rowbotham, Anna Davin and Sally Alexander in Michelene Wandor, *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London: Virago Press, 1990).

[738] Alexander, *Becoming a Woman*, 250;

[739] Raphael Samuel, letter to collective, 6.12.79, RS9/063

[740] See Anna Davin 'Feminism and Labour History', in Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, 176-181.

particularly Rowbotham's *Hidden from History* (1973) and *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973), were produced very much in the recuperative spirit of people's history, which were giving way to more self-conscious and sustained attempts to articulate feminist theoretical perspectives in history. Re-readings of sexual difference based on ideological rather than biological grounds offered an account of gendered forms of domination and subordination that could not be easily reduced to capitalist relations of production. Drawing on Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, feminist theorists like Juliet Mitchell proposed the concept of patriarchy as a way of dealing with how sexual divisions are constructed in male-dominated social orders.[741] For socialist feminist historians, patriarchy became an important term for understanding forms of women's oppression, though this did not imply an abandonment of Marxism and theory of class as a standpoint from which to delineate the mechanisms of exploitation and inequality in past societies. 'It is the consistency of this articulation of the capitalist mode of production through a patriarchal family structure', Alexander averred in 1976 'which must form a central object of feminist research'.[742] The 'unhappy marriage' of Marxism and feminism lasted for only a brief period. In retrospect, patriarchy can be seen, in Alexander's words, as 'the transitional term which was to link women's oppression with economic exploitation via the family'.[743]

The ostensible aim of Hobsbawm's article had been to offer an account of changing depictions of men and women in the iconography of the labour movement through the 19th and into the 20th Century, describing the increasing displacement of the latter by the former. The author billed it as an attempt to redress the lack of attention accorded women by historians. Upon receipt, the article sparked 'the most furious controversy' and divided the

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[741] See Terry Lovell (ed.), *British Feminist Thought: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 187-95.

[742] Sally Alexander, "Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London: A Study of the Years 1820-1850" in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin, 1976), 111.

[743] Alexander *Becoming a Woman*, xviii. For a debate over the utility of patriarchy for feminist historical analysis, see Sheila Rowbotham, "The Trouble with Patriarchy", 364-369; and Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, "In Defence of 'patriarchy'", in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* pp. 364-369 and 370-373.

collective on the question of whether or not to publish it.[744] Disagreement centred on two points: first, the place of controversy in the *Journal*; and second, feminism, or rather Hobsbawm's general treatment of the gender question. Almost everyone who passed comment on Hobsbawn's piece recognised its inherent shortcomings. He was widely criticised for the rather reductionist approach he took to explaining changes in iconography, which depended upon a 'reflection theory' where such changes were expressive of more fundamental changes in the underlying social reality.[745] Concerns were also raised about the superficiality of the analysis, the sweeping scope of the argument across time and place, and, for some, the patronizing tone and style of presentation. Additional problems were identified by those responsive to the question of the historical role of women. In the beginning, Hobsbawm had outlined a general ambition that he plainly did not fulfill nor even seek to. 'What we also need to study', he instructed 'is the changing forms of the relations between the sexes, both in social reality and in the image which both sexes have of one another'. For feminists on the collective, this only served to underscore his male bias. 'What we are getting is only one side of the picture – men's image of women' charged one editor.[746] A more egregious example of his blindness to matters of gender was perhaps his ignorance of recent feminist work and a treatment of the sexual division of labour which remained firmly within the traditional bounds of labour history (i.e. men went out to work and women stayed at home). This included a rather snide remark about 'feminist historians' for challenging the view of nineteenth-century industrialisation.[747] When it came, the verdict of feminist historians to the piece was unambiguous:

[744] Raphael Samuel, letter to Eric Hobsbawm, 21.5.78, RS9/044
[745] See, for instance, Tim Mason, 'on Eric on Iconography', 3.4.78, RS9/044
[746] Eve Hostettler, 'on Hobsbawm', 5.5.78, RS9/044
[747] Eric Hobsbawm, "Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography", *History Workshop Journal*6 (Autumn 1978), 131. He was asked to remove that comment and consider a rewrite in certain places. He did neither. Minutes of the History Workshop Collective Meeting, 13.5.78', RS9/003.

> The relationship between industrial capitalism, class struggle and sexual difference is treated as unproblematic, questions which should be the proper concern of labour and socialist history are unasked, and the effect is to foreclose discussion and blunt curiosity.[748]

In an editorial note appended to a reprinted version of his article 'From Social History to the History of Society', Hobsbawm admitted 'embarrassed astonishment that it contained no reference at all to women's history'.[749] This omission is hardly surprising since it was largely endemic to a male-dominated profession. But in Hobsbawm's broader historical vision, women only ever occupied a marginal position vis-à-vis the narrative of historical materialism. This vision was wedded to a political outlook heavily shaped by the experience of the 1930s and by communist axioms about the real character of political organisation and social transformation, at the apex of which stood an organised labour movement and the vanguard party.[750] His hierarchical classification of politics could be discerned as much in his interpretations of 'primitive rebels' and anarchism as in his attitude towards the revolts of 1968. In an essay entitled 'Revolution and Sex', which appeared in 1969, Hobsbawm played down the cultural dimensions of politics, writing 'taken by themselves, cultural revolt and cultural dissidence are symptoms, not revolutionary forces. Politically they are not very important'.[751] Divisions of generational experience and gender separated Hobsbawm from the politics of History Workshop, which embraced a much more inclusive socialist platform, from the libertarian currents of the New Left and feminism, to the 'old' Left of social democracy and the labour movement.

The decision over whether or not to publish weighed heavily on the collective, throwing up a dilemma that forced a critical review of editorial policy. One of the repercussions of editorial strategy, examined in the last chapter, was the collective's strong

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[748] Sally Alexander, Anna Davin and Eve Hostettler, "Labouring Women: a reply to Eric Hobsbawm", 181.
[749] Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1998), 94.
[750] For a lucid overview of Hobsbawm's historical and political thought, see Gregory Elliot, *Hobsbawm: History and Politics* (Pluto, 2010).
[751] Eric Hobsbawm, "Revolution and Sex", in *Revolutionaries* (London: Abacus, 2007), 288.

identification with the content it published. Some felt this was a hindrance, which could only be resolved by publishing work that not all editors agreed on. Again, Samuel and Stedman Jones pushed this line in advocating acceptance. The former stressed the quite fundamental nature of the questions Hobsbawm raised for the history of socialism, ones that ought to be debated in *HWJ*, all the more because an Art and Society group had been formed around the journal to take up precisely these questions. Stedman Jones, meanwhile, argued that what was at stake was nothing less than the reputation and standing of *HWJ* itself. Was it to be a place for open and challenging argument or a 'cosy orthodoxy'? 'If we evade the Hobsbawm article', he wrote 'we will be making a policy decision with long term consequences, which I think, will be disastrous'.[752] To the feminists who opposed publication, he counselled against shrinking from disagreement and debate. Indeed feminist history was 'by now surely strong enough to debate these issues, with a left historian of Eric's stature – and would only do itself good by doing so'.[753] A full-blown clash between members of the collective was averted and the article was published, as were a series of replies. Yet the question of the status of feminist history, at least in the journal, was a good less assured than Stedman Jones's comments implied.

III. FEMINISM, HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF PUBLISHING

The politics of the Women's Liberation Movement and the writing of feminist history emanated from shared origin: a common experience of oppression.[754] Reaching back into

[752] Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Thoughts on publication of Hobsbawm in Issue 6', Undated, RS9/044
[753] Gareth Stedman Jones, Comment on Hobsbawm, 22 April [1978], RS9/044
[754] On the women's liberation movement in Britain, see Meehan, Elizabeth, 'British Feminism from the 1960s to the 1980s', in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990), 189-204; and Campbell, Beatrix, and Anna Coote, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (2nd Edition; Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). For an account of the development of British feminist history, see Hall, Catherine, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), principally Chapter 1 'Feminism and Feminist History, 1-40. In the German context, see Davis, Belinda, 'The Personal is Political: Gender, Politics, and Political Activism in Modern German History', in Hagemann, Karen and Jean H Quataert, *Gendering Modern German History: Rewriting Historography* (New York: Berghan Books, 2007), 107-127.

the past for explanations of the historical dynamics of women's subordination to men, political activity and academic research were closely intertwined. The fusion of feminist politics and historical research adopted a specific organisational form with the appearance of several feminist history groups.[755] These groups were founded for a number of reasons.

Founded in 1973, the London Feminist History Group acted as a form of mutual support for women engaged in research who 'often face isolation and even hostility', as well as for others with an interest in particular subject areas. Like the History Workshop, this group was a space constituted outside the competitive arena of the academic seminar and was based upon the principle of 'sharing findings and problems in a spirit of collective self-education and advance'. The difficulty of regular attendance for a lot of women meant that it operated less like a study group and focused more on individuals' own research. Men were generally not admitted on account of fears about the harmful effect their presence might have on the social dynamics of such occasions and the solidarity built up between the women.[756] In Birmingham, conversely, the group was constituted much more as a collective enterprise, with an ongoing research project focused on women in the 1950s.[757] One the intriguing aspects here related to the difficulties of pursuing collective research work; of how to manage competing demands on time, but also how to navigate the contradictions between collective ways of working and individual research priorities.

> …because the job market and research grants are geared primarily to 'individual achievement' we cannot just give up on individual projects…If we're optimistic we can reformulate the problem as being one about gauging how much we can realistically do…But to be pessimistic, the problem is insurmountable. In a situation where jobs are

[755] A postscript to the volume *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance* (London: Pluto, 1983) published by the London Feminist History Group noted that groups had formed in Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, and Liverpool.
[756] Anna Davin, "The London Feminist History Group", *History Workshop Journal* 9, (Spring 1980), 192-94
[757] The results of their research were published as "Feminism as Femininity in the Nineteen-Fifties?" *Feminist Review* 3 (1979), 48-65.

> becoming scarcer the rewards for our 'labour of love' as a collective seem doubtful if we are prevented from finding the individual labour which could bring us economic gain.[758]

These groups were a vital unofficial network and space for the continued development of feminist historical work.[759]

From the outset, *HWJ* had been established in order to give voice to and to reflect this growing constituency of readers and writers. The inaugural issue signposted the collective's commitment to feminist history, carrying an editorial written by Sally Alexander and Anna Davin, which disabused readers of the notion that socialism automatically entailed an awareness of the historical status of women, as existing work in labour and social history proved. Though they hoped to publish research by and about women, the purpose was not simply to redress the imbalance, of putting women back into the historical picture as it were. 'Feminist history demands much more than then token recognition of women', the authors declared. In line with the general thrust of the main editorial, feminist history was predicated on the idea that it could illuminate wider layers of historical reality, transforming the understanding of capitalist production and working-class politics and culture. Framed in these terms, the integration of women into an expanded framework of analysis indicated the need for greater conceptual innovation than sympathetic empirical reconstructions of women's lives along the lines of 'people's history' could afford. Nonetheless, the different emphases of feminist historians, particularly around forms of sexual division, were elaborated in ways that stressed their compatibility with socialist history; as contributions to the same overall programme, rather than fundamentally bringing it into question.

That *HWJ* would carry the flag for feminism did not guarantee its place within the collective or that a stream of feminist articles would follow in its wake. As there were only

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[758] Janice Winship, 'Birmingham Feminist History Research Group', *History Workshop Federation Bulletin* No. 1 (September 1980), 6.

[759] In a letter to Davin, Leonore Davidoff wrote "reading this [Davin's article] has made me realize how much I owe to the F.H.G". Leonore [Davidoff], letter to Anna Davin, 19.11.79, RS9/063.

three female historians (out of a total of nine) who joined the collective in its initial phase, the need to ensure a vigorous airing of feminist issues was paramount. Following the first editorial meeting, Davin wrote to Alexander to urge her future participation: 'I think it's really important you should come because, it's the first meetings which will shape the journal in which the collective will set, [and] it needs you – I had to make all the points about women last time'.[760] One of the main demands made at these meetings was for positive discrimination in favour of women authors and women-related topics.

The actual content of the first few issues suggests at least some success on this score, even if a fully developed feminist interpretive approach remained inchoate. The first two issues carried Mason's 'Women in Nazi Germany', issue 4 published two shorter articles on abortion and family respectively (as well as a 'Historian's Notebook' on suffrage history), issue 5 printed a major article by Davin on 'Imperialism and Motherhood' and in issue 6 two of the main articles dealt with themes where women were central. There were, however, frequent expressions of disappointment with the feminist side of *HWJ*, despite the presence of feminists on the collective (Eve Hostettler and Jane Caplan were added in 1977) and a belief that this was an area of growth where real contributions could be made. As Samuel wrote in 1977: '[t]he journal has scarcely begun to reflect the strength of feminist representation in the collective'.[761]

In the late-1970s, historical work by feminists was beginning to take-off, certainly amongst British (and British-based) feminists who had been left somewhat behind by their American counterparts.[762] Following on from the work of Rowbotham, Jill Liddington's and Jill Norris's *One Hand Tied behind Us* (1978) and early collective volumes, such as *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (1976) and *Fit Work for Women* (1979), spearheaded the advance. Despite these pioneering examples, however, there was a general shortage of acceptable

[760] Anna Davin, letter to Sally Alexander, 3.4.75, RS9/013
[761] Raphael Samuel, letter to comrades, 29.4.77, RS9/003
[762] For a brief comparison of British and American feminist historical writing, see the editors' introduction in Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz (eds.), *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 1-15.

pieces on women's history. As a result, *HWJ* struggled to establish itself as an outlet of feminist scholarship, which added to the difficulty of maintaining the range of coverage and continuity of subject matter from issue to issue. At a meeting of the newly formed advisory editorial group in 1980, Davin explained that they were still 'working on getting more feminist work, and more work from women', but it was proving 'difficult'.[763] During the same meeting, Samuel conceded that in regards to feminism the journal, thus far, had been a 'failure'.[764] What added to the predicament was the standard by which the quality of submissions was measured. As we have observed, each piece had to be exemplary. According to Samuel, 'feminism must have a large part in shaping each issue, and that it shapes it in a distinct way – i.e. we can't simply have contributions to women's history, but need to have pieces of the calibre of Women in Nazi Germany'.[765] On another occasion, he responded unenthusiastically to 'a piece that was more or less interchangeable with many other worthy, useful, but in the end…unprintable pieces of women's history'. Sometimes, however, compromises had to be struck in order to actually carry an item about women, which occurred in issue 4, with the balancing of two pieces on abortion, which individually were deemed to be insufficient.

It was difficult for *HWJ* to appear like a natural home for feminist scholarship, not least because it was faced with competition from feminist presses and other publishing outlets, and was, after all, not exclusively concerned with feminist work. Although the claim to feminism as a central pillar of their project was unreserved, Samuel acknowledged the fact that 'the journal has been much more successful in establishing its identity as a labour and socialist than as a feminist journal'.[766] In fact, as Alexander explained to Samuel in a letter 'women prefer to publish in Spare…Rib or write for Virago'. A similar scenario was described elsewhere. 'I suspect we're not usually likely to be first choice place of

[763] 'Record of advisory editors HWJ meeting, 25 April 1980', RS9/005
[764] Ibid.
[765] Raphael Samuel, letter to comrades, 11.1.78, RS9/045
[766] Raphael Samuel, Letter to Anna, Sally, Eve, and Jane, 29.7.77, RS9/038

publication for work most of them [feminist scholars] […] because *Feminist Studies*, perhaps *Signs* […] are more obvious outlets, likely to reach the U.S. feminist readership more effectively'.[767] It is perhaps worth mentioning here that the first volume of the History Workshop book series dedicated to women's history, *Sex and Class in Women's History*, was a collection of essays taken from an earlier issue of *Feminist Studies.*[768] There were also structural barriers to account for the limited supply of submissions on women's history, from the smaller pool of writers, to the lack of institutional support and recognition. The situation of women writers also made it tough for them to produce research. Many feminist scholars did not hold secure university positions, but taught on extra-mural courses or for the WEA, and were completing PhD theses, and juggling family and other political commitments. The conditions of daily life significantly shaped women's experience of intellectual and editorial work, particularly for a journal where the demands on time and energy were considerable.[769]

IV. INTELLECTUAL LIFE AND LABOUR

The Sexual Politics of Time

In exploring how the conditions of historical production were experienced at the level of the everyday, the relationship of intellectual work to other areas of personal and political life move into view. This is particularly evident in the symbolic meaning of work, the construction of identity, and, significantly, the problem of time.

Time is both a condition of political possibility and a dimension of practice itself; constantly being ordered and reordered, disciplined and made efficient. It is also an inescapable precondition of historical consciousness, which may explain why it is rarely

[767] AD, Brief report on US visit, 24.5.80, RS9/005

[768] Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz (eds.), *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).

[769] See also Anna Davin's remarks in 'The Only Problem was Time', *History Workshop Journal* 50 (Autumn 2000), 239-245.

deemed worthy of critical scrutiny, save for a handful of philosophers and historical theorists.[770] In the field of labour and social history, scholars have tended to treat time as an aspect of the history of work, notably in regards to how it is in involved in the organisation and experience of labour.[771] E.P. Thompson's essay 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism' is a classic of the field, which describes the transition from a task-based orientation to labour, to one based on the linear time of the clock, under constraints imposed by the factory system and wage labour. In his account, Thompson upheld the view that women's experience of time was radically different from that of men.

> …one part of the work, with the children and in the home, disclosed itself as necessary and inevitable, rather than as an external imposition. This remains true to this day, and, despite school times and television times, the rhythms of women's work in the home are not wholly attuned to the measurement of the clock. The mother of young children has an imperfect sense of time and attends to other human tides. She has not yet altogether moved out of the connections of "pre-industrial" society.[772]

A secret collusion exists between the rise of capitalism, modernity and History as an idea of progress (and as a field of inquiry), each bound to the same singular mode of temporality.[773] It fused in the thought of Marx, who showed how the logic of capital unfolded through linear, universal and historical time.[774] With the bulk of their efforts concentrated upon the workplace and the organisation of production, Marxist historians have been largely uncurious about other experiences of time. Women have lived out there lives beyond the

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[770] There have been several critical contributions to the theorisation of the function of time as it relates to historical writing and narrative, none more so than Paul Ricoeur's three volume *Time and Narrative*. But see also Carr, David, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[771] For an extended discussion, see Richard Whipp, "A time to every purpose: an essay on time and work', in Patrick Joyce (ed.), *The Historical Meaning of Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 210-236.

[772] E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism", *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967), 79.

[773] On the connections between capitalism, modernity, and historicism, see Dipesh Chakrabarty *Provincializing Europe*, especially Chapter 1.

[774] On Marx and time, see Osborne, Peter, 'Marx and the Philosophy of Time', *Radical Philosophy* 147 (2008), 15-22.

purviews of both capital and history. Brushing up against the very limits of our dominant mode of 'historicity', feminist scholars have explored the role of different temporal structures in constructions of subjectivity and identity without retreating into paternalistic assumptions of the 'pre-industrial'. 'Histories of femininity and feminism have temporalities of their own', writes Alexander 'apart from those of class or men'.[775] The notion that female subjectivity conforms to a different order of time is an argument posed elsewhere, notably by Julia Kristeva. Her observation that the first-wave feminist movement envisioned a place within the temporal regime of history, whereas post-68, second-wave feminist was characterised by a refusal of linear time and values, and the identities and subjectivities that instantiate it, identifies an interesting point of tension in the project of feminist history.[776] From this viewpoint, feminist history is a contradictory endeavour because the historian's effort to represent (and perhaps reduce) women's lives and experiences according to the linearities of historical time conflicts with the actual politics of feminism. Less abstractly, we can see how this contradiction was lived by women as they carried out the work of the editorial collective, mediating between the multiple contingent rhythms of their own lives and their sense of identity.

A minute taken from a meeting in May 1980 recorded the following observation: '[t]here was a very short sharp discussion about the sexual division of labour on the collective, women seem to volunteer for more of the work, but we are short of feminist history, is there a connection…?'[777] This discussion was the catalyst for a lengthy disquisition on the nature of women's relationship to editorial work and to the collective by Anna Davin.

In reflecting on why it was that women found it difficult to write and to publish, she pointed to the marginal status of women in higher education and to their general life

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[775] Alexander, *Being a Woman*, 129.
[776] Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time", *Signs* 7, 1 (Autumn 1981), 13-35.
[777] Minutes of HWJ Editorial Meeting, 12 May 1980, RS9/005

circumstances, where they had to balance research with various responsibilities. At the earlier meeting, Davin noted, different attitudes to work amongst men and women had been discussed, where 'it was suggested that women are less motivated towards achievement, meeting deadlines, even advancing careers'.[778] Women's traditional domestic role and responsibility for family and children did not make it easy to filch spare time for other work. Indeed, this time was unpredictable and liable to be interrupted, and, therefore, unsuited to the nature of the tasks demanded by research. Taking an example from her own experience, Davin wrote:

> I am aware that when I sit down to my desk it is always with a finite time ahead, seldom longer than two hours, and this means that I am more likely to start a finite job - reading an article, proof-correcting, typing minutes, preparing a class, writing a letter - than an indefinite one like embarking on the final stages of my thesis. No doubt the same applies to anyone who is trying to write an article.[779]

The outward appearance of having time available to carry out other tasks obscured the fragmented and capricious nature of its actual rhythms, giving rise to a sense of futility about attempting to undertake more extended forms of work, which added to the willingness of women to volunteer for the 'odd-jobs'. On occasion, feelings of futility discouraged even this. 'My time is so broken up and disrupted that I find myself reluctant to do even the most simple chores'.[780]

Without the stability and respect of full-time work, and the centrality of childcare to their daily lives, women found it hard to put their own needs in before those of others. Davin's impressions of US feminists supported this picture, as they were generally more productive, had fewer children, and more of them had jobs 'and jobs which allow long

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[778] Anna Davin, 'Notes on HWJ and Feminism, arising from the brief discussion at 10 May meeting', 25.5.80, RS9/005
[779] Ibid.
[780] Sally Alexander, 'letter to Raphael Samuel', Undated, RS9/047

vacation for research and are reasonably paid'. But female social conditioning was also acknowledged, which explained why women tended to be less able to clearly separate the personal from work-related matters. This concerned the peculiar quality of the labour to be performed, but also with meaning of work in the context of women's social and emotional relationships. According to Davin, 'creative writing requires a pitch of concentration that (especially if long maintained) will mean the withdrawal of attention from loved ones, which they may then resent'. Fears about such resentments were, for Davin, to be understood in relation to the greater weight of moral obligation placed on a woman 'to maintain her level of emotional…support and giving'.[781] There were other reasons as to why women were less eager to plough their own furrows, such as their greater sensitivity to social pressures and fears of other people's opinions, a greater need to seek approval, and a stronger sense of collective responsibility.

In a letter to Davin, Sue Bullock corroborated and extended this last point. She found that women felt a responsibility for the whole: 'that is the entirety of what they're involved with and not just the bit they're supposed to be responsible for'.[782] Identifying a gendered approach to work on the editorial collective, Bullock stated 'it does seem that while the men by and large do what they see as their job, the women perceive the gaps, the problems…because they have greater responsibility to the whole in practical and concrete terms, not just say ideologically'.[783] It is tempting to read this perception and experience of work as a corollary of a different notation of time, though not as some essentialised notion of maternal or cyclical time, but as being bound up with a particular construction of female identity and feminist political practice.

As Davin recognised, in many ways, the position of feminist historians and writers was subject to the same pressures that affected women in wider society. These external

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781 Davin, 'Notes on HWJ and Feminism'
782 Sue Bullock, letter to Anna Davin, Undated, RS(/070
783 Ibid.

'material and moral' conditions, which made it hard for women focus their time and energy on writing, also made it difficult to offer proposals to raise the submission rate amongst women. To her fellow editors, she warned against seeing this as a personal rather than a structural problem, and was concerned by the tone of discussion at the previous meeting, where defensive reactions and personal disavowals belied the actual situation. 'It trivialises the issue to assume that it's just a question of how individuals arrange their lives and inter-react', she corrected 'and creates unnecessary feelings of guilt or self-justification'. But there was no straightforward solution to reforming existing divisions of editorial labour in order to change this situation because the editorial process seemed singularly impervious to efforts to tame the ever-increasingly abundant workload; 'we are already overloaded and it's not possible to argue that those who don't volunteer are shirking, but only that those who do must be mad' Davin wrote.[784]

The issue of publishing more feminist-related pieces in the journal, like many others that the collective faced, was raised against an increasingly unfavourable political backdrop and in an air of editorial 'desperation'.[785] But it was not until late-1981, at a time when the very future of *HWJ*, its format, organisation, and political purpose, were coming under intense scrutiny, that the problem was taken forward by the decision of the collective to rename the subtitle 'a journal of socialist and feminist historians'. The main argument for the change, set out by Barbara Taylor, was based on the fact that it 'would encourage feminist writers to view the journal as their platform to a far greater extent than they do now.' But it was also made on behalf of a commitment to 'place an unswerving obligation' on the collective to raise sexual consciousness amongst the readership.[786] Coincidently, following a meeting in November 1981, it was reported that women on the collective 'had found it oppressive and dominated by certain men.' Minutes from a meeting of women on

[784] Davin, 'Notes on HWJ and Feminism'
[785] HWJ Minutes, Dec 1981
[786] BT, Letter to collective, 17.11.81, RS9/005

the collective recorded how some of the problems identified by Davin affected the dynamics of editorial meeting, particularly in regards to the way that major discussions on the collective were determined by internal memos, which were mostly written by men. '[O]ur diffidence or lack of time means we're less likely to write memos' it was noted, which made 'it [h]ard to introduce (or even have) new ideas in meetings'.[787] Tensions around relations of inequality that structured the experience of research and editorial work in gendered ways, however, can also be seen as part of a more general state of despair over the dysfunctional nature of the entire editorial process itself.

'Routinization is not Counter-Revolutionary'

In the last chapter, we saw how the decision to publish independently, the commitment to accessibility and democracy in the production of the journal, and, indeed, the very articulation of their political vision would demand a considerable effort from the editorial collective. As the mounting exigencies and contingencies of the production process threatened to undermine the implementation of that vision, measures to redress the situation appeared to require greater expenditures of editorial labour. As a result, there was a consistent drive to economise time and to regularise journal routines and procedures.

Initially, the main feature of organisation was the separation of 'normal' editorial duties from the specific tasks of getting the issue published, which would be handled by a rotating group of issue editors. In terms of the actual make-up and design of the issue 'a two tier system of responsibility was envisaged, with issue editors responsible for the individual issue and a wider collective for the general direction and character of the editorial enterprise as a whole'. In practice, however, the collective played a much more hands-on role, with most of the articles being read by each editor and the final contents being decided upon at collective meetings. '[I]t seems to us', a review of the first issue explained 'that the system

[787] AD, Notes from meeting of women on HWJ collective, 6.12.81

which has evolved is the right one: that the whole collective should be quite closely involved in the shaping of each issue'.[788] Although the collective appointed a business manager, Sue Bullock, to administer their finances, there were several other duties and obligations that to be coordinated, such as dealing with the advertising, publicity, and business and other administrative matters, not to mention handling, in a more or less ad hoc fashion, unanticipated circumstances or deficiencies in the editorial process as they arose.

To start with, a great strain was placed on issue editors. The job of subediting, for example, involved not just the correction of typos and grammatical errors, but also the alterations of style and vocabulary to increase the readability of articles. Proofing drafts and galleys, which were subbed by more than one editor and returned to authors for approval, had to be completed under heavily compressed timescale. All in all, issue editing was a highly pressurised and time-consuming activity, one which, in Mason's words, relied upon 'a <u>routine of brilliant improvisation</u> in producing the journal'.[789] Subject to the uneven quality of submissions and fluctuating economic fortunes, the structuring of the content of early issues of HWJ was often a last minute affair. There were, however, potential costs in operating in such an improvised way. In a memo on editorial planning, Mason feared the unequal capacities of some editors to cope with the adverse effects of this work regime, because 'different editors have different working conditions and different work rhythms'.[790] He was also concerned about how excessive pressures could lead to the bypassing of the collective's democratic process of decision-making.[791] Indeed, the efforts to forge effective work practices had to square political values with the integrity of the production process, and, as Mason's remarks imply, inventing forms of collective practice had to take account of challenges to concretising egalitarian relations.

[788] Editorial balance sheet for HWJ 1, Undated, RS9/023
[789] TM, HWJ Memo on editorial planning, 19.8.78, RS9/052
[790] Ibid.
[791] For example, neither the editorial for issue 4 nor issue 6 went in with full editorial approval.

Two areas where the editorial process was beset by problems, and to which a great deal of feverish memo writing was devoted, were 1) manuscript circulation between collective members; and 2) the procedures of collective meetings. The first was flagged up at an early stage and references to the 'slowness of circulation' appear frequently in the minutes of the editorial meetings.[792] Ideally, speed and efficiency in the passing around of proposals would allow the collective to arrive at quick decisions about submissions, saving time for the planning of future issues and for the selection of a wider range of material. At the same time, the circulation of manuscripts was an integral part of the editors' commitment to democratic practice. But letting each editor have an equal say in what was published necessitated discipline in reading, commenting and then passing on scripts.

An editorial meeting in March 1978 listed some of the reasons why circulation had got bogged down: editors' forgetfulness, the piling up of other demands, and individuals' propensity to let things back up.[793] Here it was decided greater formality ought to be brought to the process by establishing an article log to record the progress of articles as they passed through the collective. The problem never went away, however, and further reports of discontent about the state of article circulation resurfaced at editorial meetings in October 1978 and April 1980. In the summer of 1980, Anna Davin sent round a memo, which suggested additional procedural elements to be followed by article editors in collating editorial feedback and keeping a track on circulation. 'IF ALL ARTICLE EDITORS DID THIS', she implored 'WE'D SAVE PRECIOUS TIME AT COLLECTIVE MEETINGS AS WELL AS SPEEDING THE RATE OF CIRCULATION'.[794] By the following year, however, the procedure was completely revamped, in light of discussions that again raised the continuing weaknesses in the process ('very long gestation period, demoralisation as scripts drag from meeting to meeting, anger at bottlenecks which develop now with one

[792] HWJ minutes 8.10.78, RS9/005
[793] HWJ minutes, 19.3.78,
[794] AD, Notes on the circulation of mss', 2.8.80, RS9/005

editor now with another; slow production schedule').[795] Instead, articles would be henceforth circulated initially to three editors only, who would make a decision on the seriousness of the submission, before releasing it to other editors for comment. The decision marked the abandonment of the practice that all members of the collective could read and comment on all articles. But it also had repercussions for the internal dynamics of collective meetings:

> meetings will now be the only place at which editors can learn of and decide on articles going into wider circulation. This means that editors will have to exercise self-restraint when they find themselves at a meeting where a decision is to be taken on an article they have not seen because, when circulation was being decided, they were in a crisis, sick, child-caring, teaching abroad, speaking at a provincial workshop or feminist meeting etc.[796]

Not only does this issue show how the constraint of personal life intervened to disrupt editorial activity, a point to which we will return, but it also reveals another side to the purpose of collective work. The arguments about reforming existing procedures were born of frustration with editorial inertia, but the minutes also record how 'others pointed to the way in which the general discussion of all MSS by all editors was perhaps the most unifying feature of our collective practice'.[797] Besides the role they performed in journal production, what was also important about such practices is how they sustained and reproduced bonds of comradeship and solidarity that tied the group together, and gave the project personal and political meaning. In this sense, talk of 'self-restraint' suggests an attenuation of this process.

Turning to the structure of collective editorial meetings, one can discern a similar dilemma in attempts to institute measures to make them more productive. In early 1977, it

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[795] HWJ minute, 3.10.81
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid.

was widely felt that editorial meetings were caught up in discussions of marginal issues. Tim Mason felt that 'these [meetings- -IG] have got bogged down in routine matters and in sweeping up split milk and broken glass, at the cost of really intensive discussions of major typescripts and projects for future articles'.[798] Samuel too regretted the squandering of precious meeting time and the dispersal of intellectual energy in the focus on a variety of problems. 'A lot of decisions are made', he argued 'but they are often about comparatively minor issues which, worth while in themselves, nevertheless eat up energies which are then spent when more important issues arise'.[799] A method of prioritising matters by allocating time on the agenda in advance of meetings was introduced. Nonetheless, the minutes of subsequent meetings reported that topics remained outstanding, in particular 'post-mortems' on recently published issues or planning for future issues. Several editors were also unhappy about the organisation, content and general tenor of discussions during meetings. In one memo, a co-authored note slammed the whole format: '[s]ome comrades regularly turn up late and/or leave early, our discussions are friendly and shapeless, major decisions are taken by default (or silently devolved upon individual eds/issue eds)'.[800] In reply, another group of editors proposed further organisational changes in order to routinise editorial tasks as a way of 'releasing the time required for matters that need really full collective attention'. 'Not to plan in this way', they continued 'is like destroying our instruments of production each time we finish an issue'.[801]

The lack of continuity in the transition between issues was identified elsewhere as a significant difficulty, because the production process underwent changes imperceptible to editors not directly involved. This problem centred on the increasingly demanding role of the 'link person' responsible for liaising with the journal designer, the printers, and the

[798] TM, Letter to collective, 10.2.77, RS9/003
[799] RS, thoughts on Sunday's meeting
[800] Sue Bullock and TM, To all editors, Undated, RS9/056
[801] SA, JC, GSJ, Letter to editors, 1.1.79, RS9/056

typesetters, who 'has to virtually re-learn the job or learn it, if a first-timer'.[802] But this issue revealed a more fundamental and worrying trend: the weight of responsibility was not being shouldered equally by all editors. In one memo, Eve Hostettler underlined the implications for collective practice: 'the point is that the democratic principle of job-sharing isn't working, and couldn't work, given editors' committments [sic]'. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the burdens of the job were so onerous. 'Whoever is the Link Person is occupied with that work for two or three months to the near-exclusion of other Journal work (never mind about own job, family life, research, writing etc)'. [803] But the pressure of managing editorial duties was being felt by everyone on the collective.

There were frequent calls for new editors to join the group[804] and a greater attentiveness towards individuals' workloads and responsibilities. '[I]f feelings of unfair burdens were to be avoided', the minutes of a meeting in early 1979 noted 'it was essential for each editor to be realistic in taking on work, and for all to watch out for anyone taking on too much'.[805] Occasionally, some editors felt it necessary to take an extended leave of absence from the collective. The strains and stresses of such a heavy workload threatened to undermine the collective morale and personal energies, both from the perspective of those who took on additional tasks and of those who felt they were unable to contribute effectively. Under these conditions, avowals of democratic intentions and shared responsibilities could not conceal genuine incompatibilities in editorial practice. Aligning efforts to economise time and energy together with an admission that not all work had been shared equally, Samuel turned on the manner that business matters were handled. 'I cannot believe that all the time we spend in editorial meetings on business' he argued 'is justified by the result, when what actually happens ends up by being done by a minority of collective members. Better to recognise that fact and appoint a minority rather than maintain fiction of

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802 EH, Memo from Eve, Undated, RS9/005
803 Ibid.
804 HWJ Minutes, 2.5.77; HWJ Minutes, 9.9.79
805 HWJ Minute, 14.1.79

equal involvement'.[806] When it obscured real inequalities, whether structural, personal or contingent, the limits of the collective model became evident, creating emotional burdens and distress that could be 'truly paralysing'.[807]

From Labour to Life: Economies of Politics and Emotion

As a model of political organisation, the collective was a reified construct, in that it posited an absolute equality between individuals who were clearly not equal. However much the ideal was held up as a condition of practice, it assumed what had to be constantly achieved, that is: a democratic structuring of duties and responsibilities that mediated relations between individual autonomy and collective action, creative impulse and bureaucratic procedure, means and ends. But too literal an application of the concept had the potential to reproduce real inequalities by obscuring the role of social and personal circumstances in limiting the scope for individuals' activity.[808]

An equitable division of labour required the reinvention of existing editorial arrangements in order to take account of editors' different and changing capacities *for* work. As the decision of some editors to take a break from journal work illustrated, not everybody could play a fully active role all the time. Jane Caplan asked to reduce her involvement in day-to-day editorial tasks for six months in order to concentrate on turning her thesis into a book.[809] Similarly, Alun Howkins requested a temporary withdrawal from the journal collective, because he 'felt under extreme pressure from a number of commitments, especially the need to complete his thesis'.[810] Periods of intermission in editorial output were not a rare or one-off occurrence; they became part of the condition of collective work.

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[806] RS, A third memo on the future of HWJ
[807] Ibid.
[808] See the well-known critique of Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structureness"
[809] Jane Caplan, 'letter to collective', 1.5.80, RS9/069
[810] 'HWJ minutes, 20.5.79'

In the words of one editor, 'there are always going to be people on full or half leave, having babies, writing theses, going to America or doing a demanding job and so on'.[811] In the longer term, this would mean evolving editorial structures that coped with 'people working with different degrees of intensity at different points in time'; or, as Samuel put it, 'we need to be more plastic in making space for differing levels of involvement and commitment'.[812] The interruptions of individuals' professional and personal situation were not the only register of differences within the collective. In proposals for changing editorial practice, consideration was given to the fact that the collective was composed of varying talents and abilities, some of which were more suited to some tasks than to others. 'Practice', Samuel urged 'should be bent to take account of people's particular talents [because] […] [p]recious energies get exhausted on a variety of tasks none of them done as well as they could be'.[813]

As such recommendations suggest, negotiating the tensions between the individual and the collective was a central preoccupation in the striving to maintain editorial vitality and effectiveness. The extensive meditations reflected an urgency to regulate the emotional economy of journal production, to inhibit those feelings and emotions that were likely to disrupt editorial harmony, and to allow other ones, more likely to enhance productivity, to flourish. Indeed it was precisely at the affective level that the experience of and relations to collective work were most keenly registered and expressed. The following quotation serves as an example:

> I do find meetings intolerable sometimes. I'm not quite sure why. Perhaps because they always seem to come as the final straw at the end of a busy week and by the time I've left house for the meeting I'm angry, rushed, thinking about all the chores I've left behind or just how nice it would be to spend a day at home…I know I'm an intellectual and I enjoy the life and so on, but what depresses me is that that seem to be all I do nowadays. So that

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[811] Hostettler, 'Memo from Eve'.
[812] Raphael Samuel, 'letter to Tim Mason', 12.12.79, RS9/005
[813] Samuel, 'A third memo on the future of HWJ'

> when I have spare time from reading, teaching and reading I have 85 million articles for the journal to read...I'm not convinced that the journal is the most important political activity I could be involved in because I get so depressed by having to read articles all the time.[814]

Familiar gripes about the tedium or dreariness of intellectual work is probably of fleeting interest to the historian of ideas, but for a project like *HWJ*, they were a reminder that the ability of the project to sustain itself depended greatly upon the emotional valence of editors' relationship to their work (and also to one another). Feelings of apathy and alienation towards editorial work reflected the fact that the political purpose of *HWJ* was wrapped up in a host of personal desires and emotional satisfactions that were only being inadequately met by the performance of routine and time-consuming tasks, none more so perhaps than the creative freedom and self-expression associated with the intellectual vocation.[815] That so few editors had managed to write for the journal was a frequent lament. Equally, the most gratifying aspects of collective work appear to have been meetings which eluded bureaucratic routines.

In view of anxieties about the pressure of workloads on collective morale, it is not surprising that they restricted the circulation of manuscripts if they seemed like a non-starter.[816] 'Most of the stuff that comes to us out of the blue occupies hours and hours of dead reading time at home, and dead discussion time in meetings'.[817] But it was not just negative emotional responses to 'deadening' editorial practices that had to be guarded against. In fact, the smooth running of the collective required the cultivation of a certain temper and attitude towards editorial work and to relationships between editors. Returning to the anguish caused by Tim Mason's handling of the Johnson article offers an illustration.

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[814] Sally Alexander, 'letter to Raphael Samuel', Undated [1975?], RS9/019

[815] In his own case, Mason described the problem as one of finding a balance between "externally imposed and freely chosen forms of work", which he later tried to qualify as "more a distinction between tasks/activities and intellectual work". Tim Mason, 'letter to Collective', 4.6.80, RS9/070

[816] HWJ minutes, 6.9.80

[817] HWJ minutes, 3.1.82

According to Samuel, Mason's behaviour was not to be explained by personal strain, since other members of the collective had faced far greater stresses. Indeed 'the very fact that the collective has held together so well under the strain shows its fundamental soundness and personal trust'. The extremity of Mason's personal reaction was an outcome of a certain style of work and habits of mind that were greatly at odds with his own political attachments. Overriding the opinions of his fellow editors, failing to compromise or to understand the reasons for disagreement, he relied instead upon his own convictions at the expense of trust in the collective's decision-making process. Such conduct was born out of an elevated sense of commitment and 'emotionality', which, in Samuel's view, tended to exaggerate the significance of issues beyond their actual merit. '[A] collective can be destroyed', wrote Samuel 'by too great a commitment, too high an emotional investment in its proceedings, too total an identification with its work'.[818] To keep the enterprise going and to prevent the collective from being torn apart by personal outbursts of this kind, it was important to recognise and to accommodate differing personalities and temperaments. But it would also mean a certain emotional self-discipline with respect to the manner in which editorial deliberations ought to be conducted inside the collective. 'You can't make rules about temper' explained Samuel 'but my own view is that bad temper on the collective ought to be repressed, or at the very least ironised – because what it provokes is <u>fear</u>, and fear is a bad guide for coherent intellectual or political work'.[819] For his part, in a letter tendering his resignation, Mason saw his own personal inclinations at odds with the forms of social intercourse necessary for the collective succeed. He argued that his 'style of work is too aggressive and too individualistic for the collective'. He went on to describe himself as 'an impatient, urgent, militant (and self-important) person and I don't belong in a collective which is dedicated to the slow and primitive accumulation of scholarly and political

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[818] Samuel, letter to collective, 4.4.79, RS9/057
[819] Ibid.

influence, by means of friendship and compromise, right down the line'.[820] Certainly, the practice of collective decision-making placed a premium on particular virtues – compromise, consensus, patience, openness, and understanding – that were coextensive with the medium of the journal as a programme of political work.

The unstinting care and attention accorded to the internal life of the collective and its members reflected less the anti-authoritarian inclinations of the Left in the 1970s than the degree of personal intimacy, longevity, warmth and love that strengthened the bonds between editors.[821] When the question of inviting new journal editors on to the collective was raised, it was argued that 'the solidarities of the collective are a precious thing, not to be diluted lightly'.[822] Likewise, there was concern for how to integrate new editors once they had been chosen. In anticipation of feelings of being left out of group experience, Anna Davin suggested that existing members should 'avoid jokes and references which assume knowledge of events/documents/discussions which new members cannot know about'.[823] Encouraging a greater self-consciousness towards the minutiae of everyday social interaction was not trivial; 'we mustn't put the streamlining of meetings – important though we all know that to be – before the building up of an effective working group'.[824] Sometimes, though, the effort to balance contradictory pressures and priorities could become too much to bear.

V. AFTERWORD: ONLY CONTRADICTIONS TO OFFER?

Looking back fifteen years after its inception, Samuel admitted that few of the initial hopes remained as part of *HWJ*'s programme. Indeed, the journal, he remarked, 'bears all the hall

[820] Mason, 'letter to Raphael Samuel', 18.3.79, RS9/057
[821] In a letter counselling against Mason's belligerent stance, Samuel wrote "I love you as much, or more, than anyone else in the world, and nothing you are doing at the moment diminishes that".
[822] Samuel, 'Second thoughts about new editors', 6.6.79, RS9/005
[823] Anna Davin, 'note on the integration of new editors', 26.10.76, RS9/003
[824] Ibid.

marks of a learned journal', wherein 'articles typically follow the protocols of high scholarship'. Still, he was not fully prepared to give up all attachment to that original platform, insisting that the journal retained close affinities to the extra-mural realm and spoke 'more easily to those who are called in Britain "mature" students than to the move conventional undergraduate'. To explain how that democratic programme faded from view, Samuel pointed to 'the wildly incompatible aims we set ourselves' that became evident in the eclectic and highly diverse material printed in the journal. What had radically transformed the situation, however, were the seismic social and political shifts that British society underwent and, in the resulting shockwaves that rippled through the Left, the disarray and terminal decline of socialism's political and intellectual agendas. In fact, it was the willingness to address new problems and themes thrown up in the wake of these transformations, he argued, that was the mark of *HWJ*'s continuing vitality: 'History Workshop has survived [...] by not sticking to its manifestos, or allowing itself to be trapped in orthodoxies of its own making, or the routinisation of its subject matter. It has not jettisoned its past, but rather attempted to engage on its old terrains from a new vantage point.'[825]

Samuel is surely right to suggest that the fate of *HWJ* and its original political programme was ultimately tied to the broader fortunes of the political cultures and institutions of the Left, from which they drew support and energy. It is not difficult to imagine how the withering of those forces and structures radically diminished ground upon which its democratic and emancipatory designs could succeed. The implications of the emerging political configurations at the tail end of the 1970s for a project like *HWJ* were quickly becoming apparent. But more immediate factors were also at work here, accelerating the mutation of the journal.

[825] Samuel, 'Editorial introduction', *A Collectanea,* iv.

Matters came to a head in 1982. The collective was faced with a plateau in subscriptions at around 2,000 and an increasingly precarious financial position. Equally, the life of the collective itself had experienced a depletion of collective energies and a general feeling of exhaustion heightened by counterproductive working practices. The extremity of the situation necessitated some rather drastic action: first, *HWJ* gave up its independence and negotiated a deal with Routledge & Kegan Paul to publish the journal; and second, editorial decision making was centralised with the creation of an inner circle of editors, who would be responsible for putting together two or three issues independent from the outer circle. Against this background, the journal and the movement drifted apart.

These decisions reflect how the democratic aims of the journal placed too many incompatible demands on the editorial group; it would surely have been easier to have designed the journal as either a popular history magazine or as a strictly academic journal, though that is what it became. In the end, it was probably a combination of external pressures and internal contradictions that forced these changes. Still, the study of how these competing impulses were perceived and handled remains profitable labour, as any programme of radical emancipatory change must necessarily operate under comparable conditions in the future.

CHAPTER 6: 'HISTORY KNOCKING-SHOP' AND OTHER STORIES: FEELING, EMOTION, AFFECT

I. GENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION: FROM '68 TO TODAY

It is an oft-repeated injunction that all history must be rewritten by each generation to fit the age in which they live.[826] They do not do so in isolation from the generations that came before, or outside of the cultural forms and institutional mechanisms by which ideas are propagated and received. The transmission of ideas, concepts, and traditions is an inevitably selective and mediated process, one governed by changes and developments in society, as well as one's own views towards them. What was at the core of much of historical work discussed here was the belief that histories of women, the working-class and other subaltern groups could be told and that this telling contributed to political ends in the present. Now, that belief has become a lot harder to sustain.

In the historiography on the protest movements of 1968, the category of generation has functioned as a primary organiser of the narratives and experiences of that period, employed in the shifting memories of the participants and, more critically, by contemporary scholars.[827] Equally, there has been an ongoing effort to de-politicising the events in both the testimonies of former activities and in the accounts of historians, where the radical politics of 1968 has been subsumed within long-term social and cultural processes of change and

[826] In the words of Christopher Hill "[h]istory has to be rewritten in every generation, because although the past does not change the present does; each generation asks new questions of the past and finds new areas of sympathy as it re-lives different aspects of its predecessors." Hill quoted in Harvey J. Kaye, *The Education of Desire: Marxists and the Writing of History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 172.

[827] von der Goltz, 'Generational Belonging and the 68ers'. For a critique of the concept of generation, see Bracke, M. 'One-dimensional conflict? Recent scholarship on 1968 and the limitations of the generation concept', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47, (2012), 638-646.

thereby marginalised from the bigger story.[828] Certainly younger generations of scholars have sharpened our understanding of the period, whose 'sober, critical assessments', provide 'broad perspectives and challenging mythologies'.[829] But seldom do we see in this literature considerations of how the production of these histories might work against current realities rather than simply submitting to the hegemonies of neoliberalism.[830]

This is not an argument for heroising or glorifying earlier radicalism. Rather it returns us to the critique of the present set out in the Introduction of this thesis, as well as to the role of affects, emotions and sensibilities that has been a recurring theme in this study. Here I want to briefly extend that critique by running together to two arguments. On the one hand, in rehearsing the point made by Chakrabarty about how public and popular histories directly engage and elicit emotional and affective responses, constituting a logic of persuasion and pedagogy that operates instantaneously, we can see how this undercuts the intellectual capacities and dispositions required for the slower, patient process of learning history through books and print. Such logics may be said to encompass the whole domain of highly mediatised Western democratic polities, which rely upon the articulation of images, symbols and rhetoric, alongside rational argument.[831] On the other, academics and other cultural producers, among others, have become forced to assume forms of subjectivity and patterns of behavior, in which they are increasingly encouraged to act in entrepreneurial

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[828] As Marwick puts it, 'the moment of "1968" was a moment of high drama but not of significant long-term change'. Marwick, Arthur, '"1968" and the Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties (c. 1958- c. 1974), in Kenney Padraic and Gerd Rainer-Horn (eds.), Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989 (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 81-94. For critical comments on this trend, see Eley, 'Telling Stories about Sixty-Eight', and Bracke, 'One Dimensional Conflict?', 642

[829] Davis, 'What's Left', 387.

[830] This criticism might be deemed unfair, given that it could just as easily be applied to historians working on any topic or theme. My concern here hangs over the question of the uses and purposes to which contemporary historical writing is put. As Howard Zinn warned, 'While scholars do have a vague, general desire to serve a social purpose, the production of historical works is largely motivated by profit (promotion, prestige, and even a bit of money), rather than by use. This does not mean that useful knowledge is not produced…It does mean that this production is incidental, more often than not.' Zinn, Howard, The Politics of History (2nd Edition; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 18.

[831] Here I am following Jon Simons' view about the inherent aesthetic dimensions of politics, which the left has largely failed to recognise. See Simons, "The Aestheticization of Politics: An Alternative to Left-modernist Critiques", *Strategies* 12, 2 (1999), pp. 173- ; and "Aestheticization of Politics: From Fascism to Radical Democracy", *Journal for Cultural Research* 12, 3 (2008), pp. 207-229.

ways. Under widening regimes of precarious and insecure labour, and through neoliberal practices and mechanisms of control, the bases of creative and intellectual autonomy have been eroded, as academic labour submits itself ever more to the logic of economic rationality.[832] In theories of 'affective' or 'immaterial labour', the sensuous and corporeal realm is subsumed by processes of economic production.[833]

In these different ways, bodily affects and emotions become sites of political contestation in the production and circulation of history. The analysis of affective states and embodied experiences in the past, therefore, might extend the imaginative possibilities of radical history in terms of how we go about representing histories of democratic revolt and utopian desire. Indeed, we might see them as ways of thickening the lines of transmission between 1968 and today, from the transmission of academic knowledge to the transmission of affect.

This chapter expands upon these ideas in three main ways. Firstly, it borrows Raymond Williams's conception of structure of feeling in order to explore how emotional experience was central to the formation of History Workshop and to the British Left more generally, particularly in terms of how it related to constructions of personal and political subjectivities and forms of sociality. Secondly, it adopts the personal voice in order to engage with the intersubjectivities of the research process. Finally, it considers the concept of 'affective histories' as way of thinking the past in terms of the multiple and diverse ways of being historical today.

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[832] On neoliberal forms of governance, see Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*, especially Chapter Three "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy". A critical account of the management of cultural and academic production is Sarah Brouillette, "Academic Labor, the Aesthetics of Management, and the Promise of Autonomous Work", *Nonsite.org* Issue 9 (Spring 2013) http://nonsite.org/article/academic-labor-the-aesthetics-of-management-and-the-promise-of-autonomous-work (Accessed 09.02.2015)

[833] On affects and affective labour, see Hardt, Michael 'Affective Labor', Boundary 2 26, 2 (June 1999), 89-100; and Clough, Patricia Ticineto 'Introduction', in Patricia Ticineto Clough (ed.), The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 1-32.

II. STRUCTURES OF FEELING

In a general sense, Williams's conception of structure of feeling was devised as a way to understand the movement of experience and culture through history, whereby each new phase or moment in its development is defined in generational terms.[834] This approach provides a way of thinking about emotions and feelings beyond the purely individual level and to connect them up to wider sociocultural arenas. Indeed, it enables us to observe how experience is related and articulated socially from a structured perspective, but retains a sense of its living dynamic in the process (always on the precipice of being reduced to preexistent articulated forms), which remains, in the emphasis on 'the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity', open to unarticulated emergences.[835] In this respect, structure of feeling 'is social, before it becomes abstracted and formalised as '"the Social".'[836] This distinction allows us to explore how the felt and embodied aspects of experience are implicated in the production of social and cultural discursive formations, give expression to identities that are inflected in class and gender ways, and have political effects, without reducing them to a function of systems of thought, belief or ideology. Rather than attempting to situate History Workshop within the boundaries of a coherent tradition of radical thought and politics, we can approach it as part of an affective and emotional economy – on the Left in Britain, but on an even broader level, reaching out towards the 'social, political, and epistemological configurations of modernity.'[837]

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[834] See Williams, *The Long Revolution,* p. 65. In *Politics and Letters*, Williams is quizzed by his interlocutors about the role of generation in his formulation of the concept (as well as the place, or lack thereof, of class), see pp. 157-58.

[835] *The Long Revolution*, p. 64. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams defines the structure of feeling as "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available", quoted in Josh Dickens, "Unarticulated Pre-emergence: Raymond Williams' 'Structure of Feeling'", *Constellations* 1 (2011) http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/constellations/structures_of_feeling

[836] Dickens, "Unarticulated Pre-emergences".

[837] Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram, "Losing our cool? Following Williams and Grossberg on emotions", *Cultural Studies*, 18, 6 (2004), p. 865.

There are certainly limitations to how Williams' devised his concept, however.[838] Methodological speaking, he privileged the literary work as the cultural medium of choice from which to deduce the real character of the structure of feeling out of literature's conventions and forms. This may also have shaped his tendency to equate the structure of feeling to a unified expression of culture as a totality and underplay the roles of social differentiations in how it is experienced. But there is no reason why we cannot deal in a more specific and differentiated notion of structure of feeling, or, for that matter, in multiple structures of feeling, in which different forms of evidence can be used to deliver insights into how they operate. From this vantage point, '[s]tructures of feeling as mediating concepts are specific deployments of emotion at specific historical junctures with particularized effects.'[839] Such effects, as I hope to show, emerge in the interchange between the personal and the social, in the ways in which wider political and cultural spheres of experience were transmuted into interior lives, producing new social identities and forms of sociality, and expressing broader processes of emotional change.

History Workshop: Emotional Economies and Political Topographies

What was distinctive about the formation of History Workshop, contends Bill Schwarz, was 'its capacity to create connections between professional historians of radical disposition and array of amateur-labour, feminist, and local historians, forging in the process a new intellectual mentality.'[840] As we saw in Chapter One, it was this capacity that allowed a democratic conception of history to emerge and gain traction, albeit one that proved fragile and ultimately disintegrated. We have also seen how this conception rested on a coalition of forces and interests that arose out of the political and social formations of the post-war era,

[838] Here I follow the criticisms of Williams's model made in Kevin Hetherington's *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* ( ), pp. 75-76; and Harding and Pribram, "Losing our Cool?" pp. 870-872.
[839] Harding and Pribram, "Losing our Cool?" p. 870.
[840] Bill Schwarz, "History on the Move: Reflections on History Workshop", p. 204.

in particular, from the late-1950s onwards, as old political structures and other traditional forms of authority were challenged and rolled-back. Beginning with the New Left and the anti-nuclear movement, currents of dissent and opposition rode the waves of rebellion unleashed by the events surrounding 1968, as represented by student protest and labour and trade union militancy (though the mix was less explosive in Britain), and, finally, were carried forward by the women's movement in the 1970s. Predictably, the fractures in this coalition appeared precisely at the moment when the enabling contexts of the post-war Welfare State and the political and cultural agencies of the 1960s and early-1970s started to go into decline.[841] But what this does not really explain is precisely the nature of this 'capacity': what was it and how was it constituted? An answer to these questions is sought in the experiences and memories of the people who were 'connected' by the History Workshop.

A common, but nonetheless compelling feature of individuals' recollections of Workshop weekends is how they are articulated through feelings of euphoria, excitement, and a general sense of a heightened and charged atmosphere (see below). At one level, of course, the gatherings of the History Workshop captured the broader experience of revolt and utopian possibility that suffused much of the radical left in the late-60s and early-70s. But it is not simply the importance of the 'spirit of 1968' in fostering enthusiasm and élan for the movement we should recognise here. Rather it is how a particular set of relations and practices within and between a variety of cultural forms (and institutions, political traditions, social relations, subjectivities, emotions etc.) gave definitive shape and substance to that experience, which lay at the heart of its democratic appeal. In the process, History Workshop fused new bonds of solidarity across relations of inequality, forging an effective

[841] On the history of the 1970s, see De Groot, Gerard J. *The Seventies Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Violent Decade* (London: Macmillan, 2010) and Black, Lawrence, Pemberton, Hugh and Pat Thane (eds.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

cultural politics out of the political culture of the Left.[842] To take account of this process of formation, we might consider how existing structures of experience were reorganised and recombined in the light of emergent possibilities and imperatives, reshaping the terrain of politics and culture in important ways. A possible line of enquiry begins by focusing on the way in which the emotional and affective undercurrents channelled by the History Workshop tapped into the desires, passions, experiences and conditions of life of people who became quite crucial to its dynamic and general development.

Epistemic Drives

The most striking feature of the testimonies collected here is the central role of knowledge and ideas in articulations of the self in memory; the way in which passions and desires to know gave emotional and affective meaning to subjective experience, and to the search for personal and political understanding and self-expression. These articulations are heavily inflected by class and gender, and are shaped by individuals' trajectories through the social and economic formations of post-war Britain, as well as the political and cultural agencies of the Left in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the context of the lives of working-class men, the drive and search for knowledge is inversely related to a lack of access to or denial of education. A feeling of educational disadvantage is hardly remarkable in the early-sixties, a period when class and gender inequalities in educational opportunities were high and only a small percentage of the population in the UK entered university. The contrast to the landscape of British higher education today is stark; it is now a system of mass higher education with almost 50% of

[842] For a vital study of the formation of international solidarities across time and place, see Featherstone, David, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

school leavers attending and a higher proportion of women to men.[843] Sally Alexander alighted on the differences between then and now, remarking 'people felt starved of lack of knowledge. It's impossible to imagine now'.[844] For several members of History Workshop, a sense of this denial materialised in early experiences of formal education, which were often humiliating and demeaning:

> because I was branded a thicky, and I knew I wasn't thick, I started to explore books, books which weren't allowed [...] I studied books galore and was always in conflict with teachers for having books. I used to get caned for having books.[845]

Other people also reported an assortment of oppressions, exclusions and resentments that held back their educational progress. Nonetheless, they were still able to find sources of fascination and stimulation outside the classroom. Douglass's extra-curricular interests, for example, included a fascination with mystical animals like the Loch Ness Monster and the Abominable Snowman, as well as sea and naval history. A thirst for reading and absorbing a wide variety of knowledge was widely expressed and continued to be nurtured, even in quite unpropitious circumstances. Bernard Canavan, who had to leave school because of illness, remembered how 'education stopped when I was 12 and didn't have any more education after than until I went to Ruskin, but I did read a lot, and when I say I read a lot I probably read all the European classics in translation'.[846]

In place of school or college, the drive for self-education was advanced and nourished by the workplace and, crucially, by the informal spheres of learning surrounding the bourgeoning countercultural scene. 'The counterculture was much more important for me

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[843] A recent estimate on participation rates at UK institutions based on figures from 2011/12 predicated that the rate would rise to 49% in 2013, with 55% of women entering Higher Education compared to 45% of men. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22280939 (Accessed 20.01.2015)

[844] Sally Alexander, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* (Central London; 29.02.2012)

[845] David Douglass, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* (South Shields, Tyneside; 01.11.2011)

[846] Bernard Canavan, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* (North-West London; 28.11.11).

than the education culture', affirmed Ken Worpole.[847] Youthful intellectual energies were spent on cultural activities like painting, poetry, folk music, and jazz. For Canavan, organising poetry and music groups was about 'individualism, the product of the self [and] trying to flourish as a person'. Almost without exception, however, participation in cultural movements like Beat poetry, jazz, theatre and the folk music revival was inseparable from an engagement with left-wing politics.[848] In these recollections of the socialist milieu in the early-sixties, the mention of joining the Young Socialists or the Young Communist League, going on CND marches, and, for the more adventurous, direct action and the Committee of 100, is made in practically the same breath as countercultural pursuits. The convergence between these forms of cultural expression and radical politics, which has been recognised elsewhere,[849] fused in various ways, especially in making dynamic interconnections between the individual and the collective.

Again and again, however, many History Workshop members attest to the critical role of books and reading to their lives, fuelling personal and educational aspirations, and giving voice to inner feelings of indignation and injustice. Indeed, the process of remembering these practices pulls many of strands of life together. And it was not just Marx that was being read;[850] quite a broad and eclectic range of literary and philosophical tastes was revealed:

> [...] I read *White Fang*, *Come of the Wild*. Loved them; and found a book called 'Jack London, American Rebel', which was a collection of his writings and an autobiography by an American author, and discovered he had been a socialist. I read some of his writings and realist that was what I was, a socialist (Bob Purdie)

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[847] Ken Worpole, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* (North London; 09.11.11).
[848] On the role of literature, poetry and music in this period, see Rainer-Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, 16-36.
[849] For instance, see Sheila Rowbotham *Promise of a Dream: remembering the sixties* (New York and London: Verso, 2001), p. xiv.
[850] Here one might remark in passing that several interviewees referred to aspects of the Marxist literature at that time in Britain, including how works were circulated, which works were read, and the extent of their availability, though no overall conclusions can be drawn.

[…] there was a passion to make things better, but the theoretical basis for this was […] it was pretty paper thin what I knew […] I was reading a lot. I was reading a lot of stuff like Colin Wilson (Sid Wills)

I read bad novels. I read novels that I had no sympathy with like Ayn Rand. I read comics. I read westerns. But I went into a shop once and I bought a strange little book that I found fascinating. It was *Discourse on Method* by Descartes […] you started off with the self. Well that was [a] terrific, new position, because we all started off on God. […] the whole of Ireland was infested by, well, first of all, clerics… (Bernard Canavan)

Literary writers who were named by Workshop members as having an influence on their political outlook included London, H.G. Wells and, notably, George Bernard Shaw. As one of them admitted, '[I] came to socialism via Bernard Shaw. I read all his prefaces and all his plays when I was about 17 and that was an education for me. That's how I became, so far as I am, radicalised'.[851] Whilst the place of literature in the intellectual lives and pursuits of working-class autodidacts has been well-documented, it has proven more problematic to make direct correspondences between the assimilation of particular literary influences and political consciousness.[852] But in thinking about the role of book reading as a process of realisation and understanding, or becoming, as one respondent put it, 'a socialist within my own mind', it should be recognised that this does not take place in isolation from or within a static model of culture. Indeed, the material and symbolic status of the book was undergoing a process of transformation during the 1960s, owing to the emergence of television, the arrival of 'mass culture', and a growing paperback market.[853]

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[851] Bernard Canavan, *Interview with Ian Gwinn*. In the case of Shaw, this does not appear to be an untypical experience. He came top of a poll run by *New Society* in 1961 asking Labour MPs about who had influenced their politics. See Philip Graham, "Bernard Shaw's neglected role in English feminism 1880-1940", *Journal of Gender Studies* 23, 2 (2014), p. 178.
[852] See Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (Second Edition; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), particularly Chapter Nine 'Alienation from Marxism'.
[853] On the fortunes of various cultural forms during 1960s Britain, see a number of the contributions to Moore-Gilbert, Bart and

Drawing book publishing and radical politics together, Ben Mercer argues that the rise of the paperback had profound effects on reading practices, which became a kind of harbinger of student protest at the end of the decade.[854] But if the paperback constituted a 'desacralization of the book', blurring divisions of culture and canon, and undermining inequalities of access, then these testimonies recall an earlier ideal belonging to the tradition of working-class autodidactic culture in British life. Indeed, several of them identified strongly with that tradition. Bourdieu's description of the 'old-style autodidact', who was 'fundamentally defined by a reverence for culture which was induced by abrupt and early exclusion', clearly has resonance here, but we should add that the boundaries of what determined 'culture' were, at that time, being fundamentally contested.[855]

In an earlier age, the self-educated working man, as depicted by Sheila Rowbotham, cuts a 'lonely figure reading in dinner hours or before work', a man who 'still lived in a different world from the middle class student and university lecturer.'[856] The adult education movement had always provided a bridge between workers and intellectuals, but changes in post-war Britain meant that the distinction between two separate cultural worlds could be less easily drawn.[857] This can be observed in various social and cultural changes over the period, from demographic and employment structures, to the rise of consumer capitalism, the commercialisation of popular culture, and new forms of identification and belonging, to rising standards of living and levels of affluence as a result of full-employment (in the 1950s and 1960s).[858] The decline and transformation of a traditional, industrial working-class culture and experience became a constant source of anxiety and obsession for

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John Seed (eds.), *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

[854] Ben Mercer, "The Paperback Revolution: Mass-circulation Books and the Cultural Origins of 1968 in Western Europe", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume 72, Number 4 (October 2011): pp. 613-636

[855] Bourdieu is quoted in Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, p. 461.

[856] Sheila Rowbotham, "Travellers in a strange country: responses of working class student to the University Extension Movement – 1873-1910", *History Workshop Journal* 12, 1 (1981), p. 79.

[857] On adult education in the early post-war period, see Tom Steele, *The Emergence of Cultural Studies: Cultural Politics, Adult Education, and the English Question 1945-65* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997).

[858] For a recent discussion, see Black, Lawrence and Hugh Pemberton (eds.), *An Affluent Society? Britain's Post-War "Golden Age" Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

socialist writers.[859] At the same time, the whole radical efflorescence of the late-sixties and early-1970s – protests against the Vietnam War, racism, apartheid in South Africa, and the movement for civil rights in Northern Ireland, as well as local campaigns around community provision and housing, and rising industrial militancy – provided opportunities for cooperation between students, middle-class radicals, trade unionists, and working-class intellectuals, though this rarely manifested in the kind of large scale mobilisations seen in Europe. For this stratum of working-class men, the pursuit of politics and ideas took them out of the immediate class situation, allowing them to acquire mobility to transit across the borders of class and cultural difference. In sharing recollections of his early adulthood, Sid Wills remembered that 'there was this whole thing of putting oneself in a place where you might move, it might be a doorway you know'.[860] One of the places where 'you might move' was, naturally enough, Ruskin College.

Tales of Two Ruskins

Alongside the Workers' Education Association, Ruskin College stands at the centre of a long ideological contest over the meaning and value of adult education in Britain. In *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Jonathan Rose assails radical critics who have accused such institutions of being the class-collaborationist purveyors of liberal education, curbing the influence of more radical forms of instruction consecrated for the purposes of waging the class struggle.[861] The reality, as his assessment of the motivations and attitudes of adult learners bears out, was more complicated. But beliefs and attitudes about how Ruskin moderated radicalism and was used as a ladder to escape from the working class persisted.

[857] On this issue, see Seed, John, 'Hegemony postponed: the unravelling of the culture of consensus in Britain in the 1960s', in

Moore-Gilbert and Seed (eds.), *Cultural Revolution?*, 15-44.
[860] Sid Wills*, Interview with Ian Gwinn* (North London; 10.05.2012).
[861] Rose challenges the arguments of Roger Fieldhouse and Stuart MacIntyre, see *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, pp. 256-57.

'There used to a joke at Ruskin that you'll go in bright red and come out pale pink', recalled Sue Woodbine 'and then there was another one: you'd go in a dustman and come out a managing director'.[862] In an educational climate shaken by the general mood of late-1960s' revolt and challenging of all forms of authority in society, the contradiction between ideological antagonism and individual desires and satisfactions could be sharply felt by the most fervent class agitators:

> [...] the offer, the chance to go and actually study something properly, when I never had the chance before ever [...] you couldn't have offered me the crown jewels and me being more tempted by it. Now there was some soul-searching about whether this wasn't selling out. Why did I need the approval of the bourgeois establishment? Why did I need to study under them? What was I looking for? Why did I want a pat on the back from an institution that I wanted to destroy? These were relevant questions which never lost me the whole time I was at Ruskin.[863]

Not all those who enrolled at Ruskin exhibited the same kind of inner turmoil. In fact, a number of Workshop members agreed that the idea of going to Ruskin had been seeded by someone else, often friends or workmates.[864] Some were not all that enamoured by the idea: 'I didn't really want to go into education at all', Canavan conceded 'I was quite happy in the world I found myself in'. With the demise of the do-it-yourself culture of publishing that through which Canavan had made a living from his drawings and illustrations, he felt the compulsions of beckoning full-time employment and the urgings of people around him who asked 'what was I going to do with my life'. In 1970, he applied and was admitted to Ruskin and became, like others who ended up there, a 'kind of refugee[] from the radical sixties'. For Canavan, the decision to go to Ruskin, then, 'wasn't part of my

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[862] Sue Woodbine, *Interview with Ian Gwinn* (Sheffield; 02.08.2012).
[863] David Douglass, *Interview with Ian Gwinn*
[864] They include Sally Alexander, Bernard Canavan, Sid Wills, and Sue Woodbine.

life plan' and, indeed, came about out by a 'sheer stroke of luck'. His narrative of his time at Ruskin is represented as part of a personal journey, rather than as an act in a larger story, reflecting a different relationship of politics to the self. Whereas Douglass deploys a language of collective action, Canavan repeatedly invokes a personalised political self-conception:

> The personal was political, rather than I thought 'oh yes'. I wasn't one that thought 'oh the Communist Party under Stalin [...] or the Communist Party as it should have been under Trotsky', would have been a wonderful thing [...] I just thought people were having a rent strike, that they couldn't pay their rent and they were on strike. I would do a poster for them [...] In fact my [...] whole aesthetic and involvement was tied to personal matters, rather than to some abstract thing [...] I'm afraid my political profile might show up as being rather weak in one sense, that, you know, I wasn't organising big pickets.

Feelings of political inefficacy were shared by Sid Wills, for whom Douglass was also remembered affectionately as an archetypal revolutionary mischief-maker. For Wills, Ruskin had been a way of getting into politics and out of the moderate print union. A member of the International Marxist Group (IMG), he was involved in a series of campaigns in and around Oxford, some quite daring, but admitted that he could have been perceived as 'frivolous' and 'a bit of adventurist'. Looking back, he recalls how he was 'actually seduced away active revolutionary politics', but felt no regret for going down the countercultural route. He represents this decision as a largely positive encounter with different influences, in which the origins of current interests and sense of social conscience, via the well-trodden path of counselling and psychotherapy, reside. But there was no admission of difficulties in reconciling the goals of personal and collective emancipation in the process of narrating the self. In discussing his own experience of the personal element of politics in relation to the more Marxist revolutionary kind, Wills explained:

> I'm not aware of ever having a conflict no. [...] I mean, you know, you don't have to say one way or the other [...] I mean my progress was going to be different to a lot of people who I was at Ruskin with. Dave [Douglass] went straight back to Hatfield after Ruskin, because he was there to arm himself more for the struggle, and I might have thought that to a degree, but in a sense I wasn't, you know. I didn't have that clear thing.[865]

Whether their attachment to politics was articulated in a personal or ideological idiom, the extent of their differences vastly diminished when set beside the rest of the student body in Ruskin.

The ways in which the complexion of student politics inside the College informed members' attitudes towards the History Workshop is complex, as interviewees' accounts diverge on this point. In any case, what inclined them towards Samuel and the History Workshop appears to have rested on a certain set attitudes and expectations about education shaped as much by their purpose for going to Ruskin as their political background.

Student life in Ruskin is depicted as a world separated by two different traditions, a majority and minority, which followed two separate paths in their approach to learning and, it seems, to life. Workshoppers who counted themselves among the latter represented the former with varying degrees of scorn and sympathy. 'There was us who you could say were quite left and quite revolutionary', Wills observes 'and then there were guys who were, many guys who were careerist Labour Party hacks basically. They wanted a good job in the union'. Those who had no aspirations of that kind were rather keen observers of the ones on a path of upward mobility. Canavan recalls that 'when they came the first day, they bought a scarf, a college scarf, and they bought a briefcase, and you could see they were on a trajectory that would put them into management'.[866] This may not be true of all at Ruskin

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[865] Sid Wills, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Interviewed in North London, 10.5.12)
[866] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn

and a lot, no doubt, remained in the labour movement (perhaps moving from shop-floor to trade union officialdom) or went to university after Ruskin.[867] But most students showed little inclination to get swept up in Samuel's enthusiasms, though that did not preclude attendance at History Workshops.

To begin with, trade union students, most of whom were leaving their families at home to come and study, and were being funded by their trade union, had no time for Samuel's style and method of teaching, which was ill-suited to their instrumental demands. In Chapter One, I discussed the personal pedagogy of Samuel, which began with trying to connect with inner-subjective life of his students rather than with knowledge as an external object to be acquired. That approach had limited interest for those who sought a structured education imparted in a rather more formal and disembodied fashion. What these aspirant students wanted, in the words of Canavan, was 'to go to the right courses, pass the right exams, have the right letters after their name'. For such purposes, Samuel's class proved a frustrating experience. 'Some people were very, very annoyed and very disillusioned with Raphael', Canavan adds. But there were other reasons too. For one thing, few students were prepared to risk taking the College's own recently instituted history diploma rather than the well-established Oxford Diploma. But there was also an element of cultural dissonance at work. For Sid Wills, one of only two enrolled on the history diploma in 1970, '[t]here was no way they were going to go with this eccentric, weird guy Raphael Samuel'.[868] Sue Woodbine, another former Ruskin student, expressed similar sentiments: 'An awful lot I don't think had seen anything like him in their life'.[869]

For the students who came to identify with Samuel and his way of working, however, he was an inspiration and mentor. His fascination and enthusiasm for the lives of students inevitably feed the image of Raphael Samuel as a great romanticiser of the working-

[867] See Pollins, *A History of Ruskin College*,
[868] Sid Wills, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[869] Sue Woodbine, Interview with Ian Gwinn

class, but this was his ploy to capture the interest of students and introduce them into the world of research, as several Workshoppers confirm. At this level, it was not about academic achievement or political motivation; it was simply because 'he pulled you in through sheer fascination in the work'.[870] The appeal and enthusiasm of Samuel rubbed off on these individuals, who shared a voracious appetite for knowledge that was channelled into historical research and who were closer, socially and culturally, to the rather bohemian and romantic world that he inhabited than the more conservative trade unionists. 'With others, with Dave Douglass and lots of others', Canavan insists, '[I was] part of the romantic movement of the labour world and he'd [Samuel] provide part of the intellectual movement'.[871]

This outlook was also reflected in attitudes towards Oxford and the opportunities that it offered. 'I was just absolutely thrilled with Oxford', Douglass proclaimed. 'Whereas a lot of the students purported to hate Oxford, I loved it.'[872] This did not prevent Douglass from agitating for changes to the content and form of courses, particularly the abolition of examinations, and he was involved in setting up a Dissatisfaction Committee.[873] More extreme arguments in support of the College breaking away from the University, however, were dismissed by Canavan 'because I enjoyed the university immensely, the lectures and the Bod, the libraries and stuff.' Similarly, Bob Purdie, who went to Ruskin in 1974, recalled how 'there was a definite anti-intellectual thing developed amongst a number of students', who 'came to consider that being a student at Ruskin College was a betrayal of the working class.' This left-wing group of students were reportedly hostile to Samuel and the History Workshop. They also rejected Oxford as elitist and refused the Bodleian's ritual declaration in order to get a reader's ticket. In Purdie's view, this kind of workerist attitude was a dead end. 'I was appalled at that idea. I had this library full of books on my doorstep

[870] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[871] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[872] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[873] Harold Pollins records these internal disputes within the College in his *The History of Ruskin College*, 55-56.

[...] I could read those books [...] [but] I would somehow deprive myself of that, seemed crazy to me and I argued against it.' The Bodleian, as he put it, 'was heaven. Why would I deprive myself of heaven?'[874] Throwing themselves into the cause of History Workshop carried them beyond the confines of Ruskin. But so too did their participation in the general political and cultural ferment of the time. In the words of one former student, 'I went outside Ruskin to further that side of things. I ended up being in all sorts of different colleges, meeting different people. It sort of immediately broadened'.[875]

One final aspect to draw attention to here is the place of relations with women and attitudes towards feminism. It is perhaps an index of what may be called their cultural 'liminality' that these narratives are peppered with illustrations of the significance of the challenge to accepted gender codes and how that was assimilated into a kind of reformed masculine identity. Sid Wills remembered a pre-feminist world where strippers were part of the entertainment at union meetings: 'I didn't have a particularly sort of view of "well, this is pretty outrageous", you know, "it's demeaning to women" [...] there was none of this'. But through an engagement with arguments made by women connected to the Young Socialists, he confessed that 'I started thinking about that and understood, you know, you quickly take on'. Once the women's movement had got underway, 'they just played a powerful role in all events', Wills acknowledges, who also gave a paper on women munition workers during the First World War at History Workshop 7 on women's history. In fact, the History Workshop was a place where the confrontation with prevailing male assumptions and beliefs could play out. Dave Douglass recounts one particular episode:

> a guy got up and asked me where were the women in this paper of mine and I hadn't mentioned women in the thing [...] even though me mam and me sisters had been involved in stuff I hadn't actually mentioned them in the paper. Why wasn't their involvement

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[874] Bob Purdie, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[875] Sid Wills, Interview with Ian Gwinn

important? It left an undying impression on me that, even without knowing it, you sort of subliminally excluded stories yourself, in the story that you thought had been excluded.[876]

What was also a significant factor here was the impact that the women close to them had on their intellectual and emotional sensibilities. One interviewee, for example, credits the role his partner and future wife had on his political development, stating 'she was the person who took me on, further on'. Another, when questioned about the masculinity of the Left, explained that it was only until after the emergence of feminism that he began to recognise this and accepted the feminist critique, unlike some revolutionary currents, which clung to 'old-fashioned masculine values', because he felt that an important part of his identity was associated with feminine values like 'caring' and 'nurturing'. 'I still think back to feminism as being the most inspiring and uplifting movement', he reflected. By contrast, being involved in revolutionary politics 'was affecting my psyche'. Indeed, going to Ruskin, which occurred at a moment of personal and political turmoil that would see him eventually move away from the revolutionary Left, would help to ease that psychic burden: 'actually the relationship I got in Ruskin with [...] was very, very healing and I'm always grateful to her for the way in which she helped me bring me out and turn me into a more complete human being'.[877]

Of course, Ruskin itself was a very masculine place at this time and only a handful of women were enrolled on courses. In recounting his time at Headington in the first year, Canavan reveals that reverberations from the previous year's Women's Conference could still be felt at Ruskin. Even though he differentiates himself from other men who were very hostile to the women's movement, characterising them as 'totally unreconstructed, northern, macho, working class, get on in life, do well guys', the story is complicated by the

[876] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn

[877] Chris Taylor (pseudonym), Interview with Ian Gwinn. On masculinity and the British Left in the 1960s, see Hughes, Celia, 'Young Socialist Men n 1960s Britain: Subjectivity and Sociability', *History Workshop Journal* 73 (Spring 2012), 170-192.

way in which the 'Ruskin experience' became reconfigured for some in the intertwining of class, gender, life trajectories, and the radical and permissive atmosphere of the time. Moving down to central Oxford for the second year carried with it realisations about what you were going to do after Ruskin, which, according to Canavan, 'meant that you couldn't retain [...] certain old working class views'. With events like the Miners' Strike in 1972, even 'unreconstructed' men from the College got caught up in the sexual revolution and, because most of them were married, 'wives would come down at the weekends and almighty rows would break out'. There were divorces at the end of Ruskin, a sign of raised aspiration and desire to escape one's origins, in Canavan's view, which 'propelled these young men to think of themselves as going on to university and achieving that outside world they want to go to'. Conversely, 'most of the history workshop types were just going to continue whatever they did before' adds Canavan, 'only now built up on themselves'.[878]

A Feminist Insurgency in the Landscape of Thought

If the History Workshop had harnessed what remained of the spirit of the working-class autodidact man in the 1960s, then it was buttressed by a more ineffable excitement that was stirred by the sense of recovering lost or forgotten pasts, an endeavour that contributed to new and pioneering historical understandings. A quite different set of affective responses could be said to have accompanied the initial discovery of women's history, which emerged out of this highly charged setting. In the middle of the fissile atmosphere of the late-1960s, it was the milieu of Ruskin and the History Workshop, with its apparent respect for subaltern experience, which greeted that first call for women's

[876] Canavan, Interview.

history with a 'gust of masculine laughter', fanning the flames of fury and indignation, and fuelling the desire to put an end to women's subordinate historical status.[879]

That call did not arise *ex nihilo*. Sheila Rowbotham, who issued that call at the 1969 History Workshop, had already presented a paper at an earlier Workshop on 'The Self-Educated Working Man', an episode she recalled as rather like 'taking coals to Newcastle'.[880] Indeed, the derisory response to the idea of women's history masks some rather obvious parallels with the formation of working-class history. Like the latter, women's and feminist history was seared by the experience of social injustice and marginalisation created by a narrowly-defined, elitist and patriarchal culture, lending it emotional intensity and political edge. They can be seen to follow in the great expansion of cultural production that introduced voices that had hitherto been suppressed and neglected in public life, which, in the historical field, had been energised by Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. There are also similar exclamations of the amazement and wonder that greeted the rediscovery of these hidden histories. 'I can remember Sheila Rowbotham first talked to the London women's history workshop' states Jane Caplan. 'It was an eye opener that women had a history, that there were women utopian socialists, nobody knew that stuff, you know, except for six elderly feminists who had been keeping the flames going from the 1920s. We hadn't the faintest idea. It was extraordinary'.[881] However, consciousness of sexual oppressions certainly had a much greater incendiary effect than class ones, given that the former ran up against the unspoken gendered assumptions that were imbibed by the culture of the Left as well as the professional culture of historians.[882] What the issue of sexual difference did, which class did not, was to

[879] Sally Alexander, "Women, Class and Sexual Difference in the 1830s and 40s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History", in *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History* (London: Virago Press, 1994), p. 99.
[880] Rowbotham, 'Memories of 1967', *A Collectanea*, 3.
[881] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Oxford, 28.1.13).
[882] On the gendered character of the early New Left, see Lynne Segal, "The Silence of Women in the New Left", in The Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group (ed.), *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left 30 Years On* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), pp. 114-16. For the most extensive treatment of how the historical profession has been organised on the basis of

challenge the stability of a political order of emotions tied to a masculine vision of class politics and collectivity based on the values of discipline, seriousness, diligence, and the suppression of emotions.[883]

Most of the women I interviewed for this project were born around the same time as their male counterparts, but they had quite different experiences of the Left in those years, that is, if they participated at all and were not prohibited by virtue of traditionally gendered responsibilities like childcare. For those who did, the same points of reference are given: CND, direct action, the Young Socialists, etc. Jane Caplan, who came from a politically progressive family, got involved in activism at an early age, but remembered the Young Socialists as her 'first sort of experience of the men being in charge [...] we became the catering secretaries and the boys took the [...] They became the, you know, chair, treasurer, secretary that kind of thing'.[884] A similar kind of experience in left-wing circles was felt by other women. Reflecting on her brief stint in the International Socialists, Rowbotham summarised the dominant procedure, where 'it tended to be all men who spoke in all of these things, and it wasn't that all of the men were opposed to women speaking [...] it was just difficult for women to kind of take that central role'.[885] Such sentiments are shared by other women who encountered far-left groups, which offered little encouragement to those entering the world of politics for the first time. Sally Alexander's memories of feeling alienated by the politics and language of the Left are illustrative: 'I think I was a very uninformed and diffident young woman and there was no place for a young woman like myself [...] in the male Left, as we came to call it, in the

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constructions of gender difference, see Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[883] For a useful discussion of how emotions are related to forms of politics, see Eleanor Wilkinson, "The emotions least relevant to politic", *Emotions, Space and Society*, 2 (2009), pp. 36-43. In his account of the British Communism, Samuel remembers the tendency to repress inner thoughts and feelings in following the Party's political line, which reflected a general sense of conformity in British life at that time. Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* p. 12. –new left and old left

[884] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn.

[885] Sheila Rowbotham, Interview with John Davies (Interviewed in Oxford, 10.06.09)

mid-sixties'.[886] But feelings of subordination were not confined to the Left. Sexism could be experienced at university, in the workplace, and, more generally, in everyday life. 'If a man came to talk to a man', Rowbotham recalled 'they would talk to the man but they wouldn't even say "Hello" to you or, you were just not there'.[887] The restricted circumstances of women's lives stimulated impulses for greater freedom and release from the structured world of marriage and motherhood. Anna Davin, who was married to an academic, observed the independence of student life at a close proximity. 'I was a looker-on at student life, full of envy for the time they had to read and think and have affairs' she remarked, and then added, 'in the mid-sixties, I was restless and knew I'd had enough of being only a housewife.'[888]

In recollections of that time, it appears that an unquestioned world of sexual divisions and unequal gender relations made expressions of that collective experience of inequality in a common language especially difficult. As Caplan observes 'this is a period where the Left is incredibly heavily marked by a kind of really misogynistic male authority, which I didn't know to name as that', and thus 'I felt silenced'.[889] The Women's Movement broke through the invisibility and silence that women had previously felt, though it began with few clear theoretical guidelines. According to Rowbotham, in its earliest beginnings, 'we didn't have any theories you know, nobody knew so there was just this chaos of random experiences and people trying to compare them and understand them and realising that there were certain things that they had in common'.[890] Finding a vocabulary for the lived experience of women's oppression turned the focus of attention away from the great set-piece battles of class politics and towards personal life, feelings and emotions, and social and sexual relations. This is not to say that feminists did not seek the

[886] Sally Alexander, Interview with John Davies (Interviewed in London, 21.07.10)
[887] Sheila Rowbotham, Interview with John Davies
[888] "Anna Davin" in Michelene Wandor, *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London: Virago, 1990), 56, 57.
[889] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn.
[890] Sheila Rowbotham, Interview with John Davies.

kind of change in the fundamental structures of society as Marxists. But the political practice of feminism started on the level of personal experience and emotional life. Guided by, in Rowbotham's description, 'only our own feelings, women on and around the student left began to try and connect these feelings to the Marxism they had accepted only intellectually before.'[891] Arguably, this appreciation of the correspondence between thought and how it is embodied suggest a moment of disturbance or conflict in the articulation of experience, a gap arising out of the discontinuity between newly-emergent realities and existing social categories. In showing the inescapable sensuousness of thought, so often obscured by the privileged view of scholarly enquiry as impartial and disembodied, it also reveals how one's sense of the true is a creature of the personal and subjective; in Paul Valery's words, 'there is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography.'[892]

If the work of consciousness-raising was vital to the construction of a feminist politics based on giving voice to inner experience, then equally as important was its intellectual counterpart in the shape of feminist study and readings groups, alongside other institutional outlets for feminist intellectual production, such as WEA classes or the establishment of independent libraries, archives, and publishing projects. The two methods were not mutually exclusive and, in fact, bear comparison with the practice of History Workshop in the fusion of experience and scholarship. Similarly, women's history took root and found its audience in this sphere of extra-mural, informal education, which became an important arena for the interplay of thought and feeling in political discourse. '[W]omen's history' Steedman writes 'was used in and outside the academy for the purposes of consciousness-raising – used in fact as a pedagogy of the emotions and of

[891] Sheila Rowbotham, "The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain" in Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas: Collected Writings* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 35. See the rest of this chapter for an account of the origins of the women's liberation movement in Britain.

[892] Valery quoted in Corrigan, Philip, 'The body of intellectuals/the intellectuals' body (remarks for Roland)', *The Sociological Review* 36, 2 (May 1988), 368-80, here 371.

individual experience in much the same way as was the oral history and the working-class writing movement'.[893] Barbara Taylor recalls teaching classes for the WEA and the London Extra-Mural Department, which she describes as 'sort of led study groups' that were 'directed at the women's movement and recruited through the women's movement'.[894] Likewise, her research on women and the utopian socialists, published as *Eve and the New Jerusalem*, was taught over a period of 24 weeks at the Essex Women's Liberation Centre. The organic connection of feminist history to the women's movement parallels the relationship many socialist intellectuals were able to establish with the labour movement through adult and workers' education earlier in the century. Equally, we hear the same expressions of a passion and drive for knowledge, and the exhilaration of intellectual life at that time. As Taylor remembers:

> I was in so many study groups [laughs]. My intellectual life went on, was almost entirely extra-academic and it was wonderful. I mean it was a wonderful time to be a young thinker, you know, someone interested in ideas, because there was so much going on [...] And it was fantastic. I just was so excited. [...] I loved reading all of this [...] I mean I was either in a reading group or a meeting, you know, seven days a week. It was great.[895]

The culture of feminist study groups in the 1970s, which stretched from political economy to the latest translations of Lacanian psychoanalysis, were not just incubators of new ideas but were also places where new ways and styles of discussion and relating to one another in the organisation of intellectual work were established. For instance, the London Feminist History Group, which was set up in order to provide support and a congenial environment for women to present their research and for other women to listen. This was partly conceived in order to address the position of women and their intellectual concerns

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[893] Carolyn Steedman, "La Theorie qui n'est pa une, or, Why Clio doesn't Care", *History and Theory* 31, 4 (December 1991), 34.
[892] Barbara Taylor, Interview.
[895] Ibid.

within academic circles, where they 'often face[d] isolation and hostility', and in opposition to the dominant norms of academic intercourse and practice with an emphasis on 'learning and research as a collective process' and a commitment to political relevance of history. 'There is no sense that you show yourself up in admitting ignorance', Anna Davin commented. 'And, equally, speakers can and do freely admit to difficulties, ignorance and problems of many kinds – they are not presenting work so as to make an impression in a competitive academic context, but sharing findings and problems in a spirit of collective self-education and advance.'[896] The valuing of participation, sharing and listening, and sensitivity to feelings of weakness and inferiority belonged to the general desire to create women's autonomy outside institutional orders dominated by men. Hence the serious reservations about inviting even sympathetic men to their discussions. '[O]ne difficulty is the fear of inappropriate discussion style' wrote Davin, while another was related to 'a feeling that women are in greater need of mutual support and less likely to rip each other off'.[897] The content of talks and the personal social dynamics also depended greatly on it being all-women participation –'"there is a solidarity we experience as a group of feminist women historians that would be weakened by the presence of men.'[898] That, of course, did mean the total exclusion of men in all areas of historical activity feminists were engaged in. Indeed, History Workshop became a platform where men and women could participate on an equal basis. Dave Douglass credits feminist influence for making the Workshop more decentralised with a series of smaller workshops instead of the big discussion so as to, as he put it, 'stop meetings being dominated by particular dominant, mostly male characters'.[899] And, as we saw in Chapters Four and Five, the collective of the *History Workshop Journal* was strongly informed by feminist politics and ideas, though, admittedly, this did not always lead to an equal balance of contributions.

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[896] Davin, Anna. 'The London Feminist History Group', *History Workshop Journal* 9, (Spring 1980), 193.
[897] Ibid.
[898] Ibid.
[899] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn

If the rise of second wave feminist historiography in Britain was unthinkable without the decisive influence of the Women's Movement, then it would not have made such deep and lasting inroads into the landscape of historical thought without this supporting intellectual penumbra of independent groups and projects, and institutional contexts. It was here where feminist activists and thinkers sought to assimilate existing modes of thought for their own uses, challenging the authority of the prevailing order of theoretical priorities and fashioning new concepts and perspectives in the process, which represented, to some extent, both an extension of and departure from the scope of left-wing thought and politics. The experience of women found various forms of intellectual articulation in connecting up their personal understandings and subjectivity to wider social formations and structures. But it also realised itself in the actual forms of political practice and relations of solidarity, which found expression in non-hierarchical and democratic structures.

"A Certain Form of Chaos of Life"

Even though a relatively short time has passed, historically speaking, since the heyday of History Workshop, to sensibilities moulded more completely by twenty-first century outlooks and attitudes, these memories and experiences are a window on to a different, almost unrecognisable world, testaments to the otherness of the past. Reflecting back on that time, one of Workshopper recollected that 'we always loved what we were doing. We felt it terribly worthwhile. Incredible. It's so far away from this world [...] it's terribly hard to put yourself back into the 1970s'.[900] This disjuncture comes across strongest in relation to the collective place of knowledge and learning in these individual lives, and in the descriptions about the intensity of sensation and emotional investments, endowing them

[900] Sally Alexander, Interview with Ian Gwinn

with an aura and magical properties. To quote David Douglass 'books to me have always been a great, almost religious experience that you can possess that knowledge of the works, almost without reading them, just by having them [...] You absorbed the knowledge that was contained in them even before you turned the page'.[901] Turning to a specific historical moment and to a different quality of sensation, Caplan conveys a sense of the maddening aspect to some of the intellectual engagements of that time: 'I remember having a long conversation with her [Sally Alexander] in one of the coffee places near the British Library at some point, probably when I, late-70s, where we were all struggling to read Hindess and Hirst. We were all going mad. I mean our brains were busting and she said we've got to understand this stuff, and I said it's making me bananas, and she but we've got to read it. We've got to know this whole stuff about pre-capitalist economic formations'. In depicting the fervour and urgency of thought, it is difficult to avoid either the traps of romanticised nostalgia or the cynicism of the present day.

We can, of course, ascribe the formation of this 'intellectual mentality' to the spirit of the times and to the feeling that ideas were indeed moving the world in a different direction. What I have tried to show here is precisely how that spirit and feeling was lived out in concrete situations, and how it acted [902] as conduit for various currents and streams of thought, old and new. Chief among these has been Ruskin College and the tradition of adult education, which was crucial in enabling the kind of affinities and antagonisms detailed above to coalesce. But it is easy to overlook some of the more quotidian aspects of life, like time, money and leisure. It can be said that the very critique of post-war British society depended upon the material conditions it supplied, or, to be more exact, it afforded the possibility of escaping the logic of capital, institutionalised arenas and the structured world

[901] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[902] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn

of labour. There was an outside to capitalism, from which the autonomy of cultural production could be defended.[903]

This struggle for autonomous existence was part-and-parcel of the political movements: women's and gay movement, squatting, claimants unions, experiments in communal living, community activism and broader circles of libertarianism. According to Bernard Canavan, this was a common denominator among those who were drawn to and became partisans of History Workshop. 'The one thing that unites us or brings us together is a certain form of chaos of life, of life's structure', he reflected, and suggested that 'they don't see themselves as conforming simply to some outward structure'.[904] Echoes of this sentiment can be heard elsewhere. Sheila Rowbotham admitted that she 'never had a notion of a career, in the typical sixties complacent way; I just thought you lived for politics and earned enough money to survive'. Similarly, Jane Caplan comments that 'I feel many people's lives were somewhat on hold, nobody quite committed themselves to, you know, ordinary life [...] I turned down a number of proper jobs because I didn't want to be constrained by identification with an institution'.[905] Even those who were becoming more firmly established in academic settings, research was not an isolated activity. 'Those days it was a lot more leisurely business', Gareth Stedman Jones remembers 'which I could combine with politics and all sorts of things'.[906]

For those who occupied positions, even marginal ones, within the sphere of intellectual and cultural production, fewer restrictions on time meant greater scope of opportunity to pursue various interests and activities, adding an impression of the fluidity of

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[903] Jameson writes : late capitalism in general (and the 60s in particular) constitute a process in which the last surviving internal and external zones of precapitalism--the last vestiges of noncommodified or traditional space within and outside the advanced world-are now ultimately penetrated and colonized in their turn'. Jameson, Frederic, 'Periodizing the '60s', *Social Text* 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984), 178-209, here 207. For an argument about how the 60s radical critique of capitalism was integrated into a transformed model of capitalist production, see Boltanski, Luc and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2007).

[904] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn

[905] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Oxford, 28.1.13)

[906] Gareth Stedman Jones, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Cambridge, 24.1.12)

the times, as well as the instability of personal life in the narration of these individual experiences. As one contributor recounted, 'you've got to remember at that time that my personal life is in constant revolution, [...] that relationships are being made, being broken up [...] These are very tight groups in some sense and there's just a shit load going on, you know, intellectually, politically, sexually, you know, personally [...] It was all happening at once'.[907] The basis of creative intellectual and cultural life rests on a continuous struggle to secure the economic and social conditions of autonomy, where, in the context of the post-war social democratic state and in a period where social movements were ascendant, the balance of forces in this equation favoured an expanded limit of material support.

III. "HISTORY KNOCKING SHOPS"

'Let's talk about sex!' Well, perhaps not. For the aspirant and hesitant oral historian, the subject of intimate private lives and sexual relations is not easily broached, if not quite taboo. Examining the inner life of any interviewee is an enterprise fraught with tension and anxiety, threatening to run up against personal inhibitions and the tacit forms of propriety already negotiated prior to or at the outset of the interview.[908] In my case, a fund of mutual agreement was established via e-mail correspondence and in the explanation of the aims and scope of my project, which were sometimes supplemented by a pre-prepared list of questions. At the beginning of the interview process (interviews were conducted between November 2011 and June 2014), my attention was drawn towards the interior world of individual selves only insofar as it was refracted through the prism of intellectual and political experience. The range of topics and issues was also not insignificantly shaped by the

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[907] Jane Caplan, Interview with Ian Gwinn

[908] For a discussion of the intersubjective implications of oral history interviewing, see Penny Summerfield, "Dis/composing the subject: intersubjectivities in oral history", in Tess Cosslett et al (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 91-106.

social setting of the interview and the intersubjective dynamics that emerged through the process, which often combined to license (and limit) the expression of different persona – public and private, academic and activist – determining, to some degree at least, how the interview unfolded. Exactly how these social and interpersonal relations affected what questions were asked and what responses were elicited is hard to document, at least beyond one's personal impressions. It is noticeable, however, that a number of interviewees, explicitly or implicitly, referred to the generational differences that divided them from myself, particularly in regards to accounting for change, whether in the course of their own life or in the wider social and political world.

Equally as important to the interview process was the way in which certain narrative frames were used, which drew upon or were articulated against dominant public discourses and popular imagery of the sixties. To take one example, Ken Worpole contrasts public representations of the sixties with what he feels is the real significance of the period:

> I think that's the problem when people talk about the sixties. They, you know, the sixties seem to be a short-hand term for fashion, music, design, sex, free. But for me the sixties is Beat poetry, Third World struggles, class, class identity becoming a badge of honour, and hope and optimism around different social relationships.[909]

We should locate this statement among all those efforts that have insisted upon the centrality of the political radicalism of the time and resisted the waves of representation that have sought to trivialise or obscure the politics from public memory, particularly through a titillated fascination with (or revulsion towards) tales of hedonistic excess: the triumvirate of sex, drugs and rock n' roll. In the case of May '68, 'the political dimensions of the event', according to Kristen Ross, 'have been, for the most part, dissolved or dissipated by commentary and interpretation,' though the ramifications of this process of forgetting are

[909] Ken Worpole, Interview with Ian Gwinn

understandably less severe for public discourse in Britain.[910] Still, as the twentieth anniversary of May '68 approached, the journalist Paul Foot railed against an emerging '1968 anniversary industry' that sought to portray what happened as 'an aberration, a momentary delirium which seduced the youth of the time, but out of which that youth have grown up into sensible middle age.'[911] The public disavowals of 'reformed *gauchistes*' have helped to produce an official memory, which serves this depoliticising effect.[912]

There are other ways of coming to terms with the unravelling of that conjunctural moment and the dashing of its utopian hopes and promises, which look, almost inevitably, quite outlandish and fanciful in retrospect. If the total renunciation of the legacy of 1968 has been one powerful response, then one might also expect memories to be shaded by nostalgia, regret or defiance. Many of these emotional responses coalesce uneasily in the interviews, though none of them fall into either unremitting condescension or blind devotion. If anything, the process of remembering is complex and variegated, in which the present self is fashioned as old experiences, convictions and selves are recalled or repudiated. That process certainly depends on how one interprets the political world we live in now, but in order to give personal meaning to that world requires an effort to rationalise earlier dreams and desires by distancing, ironising or patronising. Barbara Taylor remembers that she 'spent a lot of time worrying about what would happen when the revolution came and what would workers' councils, would they be a good idea'.[913] She went on to reflect that 'talking about these ideas didn't seem like kids' stuff, which is the way it sort of feels to me now'.[914] Likewise, Gareth Stedman Jones offers an unsentimental verdict on present opportunities: 'I carry on with my particular preoccupations and, well, I hope they will

[910] Kristin Ross, *May 68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.
[911] Paul Foot, "The Fire Last Time", *New Statesman* 22 April 1988
[912] Ross, *May 68 and its Afterlives* p. 5.
[913] Barbara Taylor, Interview.
[914] Ibid.

make some minor impact. I don't have illusions in the way one might have done in the, you know, 60s or 70s'.[915]

As should be obvious by now, the whole enterprise of History Workshop (and the movement of history from below in general) was about turning the practice of history into something much more than a sedate academic exercise. Politics, undeniably, was the major energising force behind that aim, no matter from which direction it came or at what level its effects were felt. For Workshop historians, making sense of history was about making sense of the political world around them, but, as many acknowledge, it was also about making sense of themselves and giving a place to personal meaning. Eve Hostettler, for example, recalls how the politics of uncovering women's lives in the past brought together lived experiences, notably her participation in the women's movement and her social origins, which were given expression in an oral history project on the lives of women in agricultural labourers' families. That project, as she explained, 'did tie up with the women's politics and my original background in Lincolnshire and then doing this oral history course'.[916] Of his pamphlet *Pit Life in County Durham*, Dave Douglass remembered that 'discovering all of this stuff [...] was like finding a forgotten world and seeing it in print'.[917] That sense of wonder was also wrapped up in memories of his father sharing copies with his fellow miners, who were 'absolutely thrilled to see their work written down and the stuff they'd said written down and recorded for the time, the lives of people who had never been recorded before'.[918] For Bernard Canavan, the message of History Workshop was related to the idea of 'the personal being historical, the historical being the personal'.[919]

Yet lines of mutual influence between the personal, the political and the historical are perhaps less easily and unproblematically traced at times when radical social movements are

[915] Gareth Stedman Jones, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Cambridge, 24.1.12)
[916] Eve Hostettler, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Interviewed in East London, 29.11.11)
[917] David Douglass, Interview.
[918] Ibid.
[919] Bernard Canavan, Interview.

not ascendant, or when one has no personal or experiential attachment to the object of enquiry. In writing about the personal here, considerations inevitably turn to one's own personal relationship to the subject. Of course, I cannot write personally about these events in the ways that so many others have done in autobiographies, memoirs, or personal testimonies. I have no direct experience of that time. And yet my own understanding of this period has not only been supplied by academic study. An intimate and fragmentary knowledge has been inherited from a personal family history, as my own parents, like most of my interview subjects, were born in the period between 1940 and 1950, reaching adulthood in the early- to mid-1960s. Handed down by their occasional reminiscences of episodes about life growing up or commonplace ancedotes about the world of full-employment and rising affluence ('you could quit your job in the morning and get another one in the afternoon'), it could scarcely be regarded as a secure basis upon which to build more structured learning. They were part of the great mass of unpolitical people who were committed to 'ordinary life' and for whom the ideas and events recorded in this study have little bearing.

In offering a short reflection on the research process, I have in mind Carolyn Steedman's recommendation that '[i]t is important to at least attempt to write a history that at some point reveals the processes of its production.'[920] The discontinuity between listening to the lives of 68ers and familial origins shaped my own relationship to the subject, particularly through experiences of class and gender. On the one hand, hearing narratives of class belonging and history, which so animated the collective imaginary of the History Workshop, generated a personal sense of discomfort and anxiety. The traditional image of working-class life centred on industrial production is a relic of the past, but its cultural habitus can be said to live on in the inheritance of a sense of life chances and expectations,

[920] Carolyn Steedman, 'Prisonhouses', *Feminist Review* 20 (Summer 1985, 11.

common sense wisdom and practical handling of the past.[921] It surfaces in consciousness in efforts to reconcile new fields of experience that demand new identities. Here feelings of doubt and a sense of being deracinated are redescribed in the words of one of the interviewees: 'I was one step removed from it [...] it's a kind of self-consciously working-class, which is different from being working-class. When you're self-consciously working-class, you want to say something about what other people just were'.[922] On the other hand, gender has never created the same feelings of interiorised limitations or the disruption of one's sense of self when it runs up against gendered norms of behaviour. As a result, it is harder to recognise the meaning of gender as an internal or felt experience.

Perhaps it was little wonder then that when mention was made of sexual matters I greeted them with a slightly embarrassed smile, like when David Douglass admitted that History Workshop was a 'great place to pick up lasses as well', adding – and perhaps alluding to contemporary tastes – 'this wasn't regarded as the politically correct thing that you did at workshops, but it was what we did'.[923] A slightly different note was struck by Bernard Canavan who recounted that 'an awful lot of people just enjoyed the conviviality. Of course, with the conviviality went romantic liaisons and marriage break-ups and all that would entail [...] it was the sixties writ large and long into the 70s'.[924] I never pushed for explanation of such insights into the experience of the Workshop on these occasions. It is not that I regarded sexual politics as a mere adjunct to the serious business of radicalism. Even the quote from Worpole earlier in this chapter reveals its ambiguous status and it was, of course, at the heart of feminist thinking about how to transform of social relations

[921] For some sociologists, the historical memory of class has served only to cloud our understanding of late-capitalist society, in which its conceptual utility has become drastically reduced. See Bauman, Zigmunt, *Memories of Class: The Pre-History and After-Life of Class* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982). For some highly resonant remarks on being an academic from a working-class background, see Reay, Diane, 'The Double-Bind of the 'Working-Class' Feminist Academic: The Success of Failure or the Failure of Success?', in Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (eds.), *Class Matters: 'Working-Class' Women's Perspectives on Social Class* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 19-30.
[922] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[923] David Douglass, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[924] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn

between men and women (although Sheila Rowbotham writes in her memoir '[b]y the late sixties sex was often not a big deal')[925]. Rather it was more a question of how the importance of sexual relations as an index of the felt capacities and intensities of the Workshop experience had remained hidden from view.

In Chapter One, there is a reference to Sheila Rowbotham's recollections of the early workshops printed in *History Workshop: A Collectanea*, who remembered the 'dalliance' caught up in the Workshop's proceedings. Whilst I wanted to convey the widest sense of the synergies between cultural, social and intellectual life, at the time of drafting the chapter, the full significance of that reference (i.e. dalliance not just in the sense of toying or casual involvement, but also romantic or sexual relations) had not been grasped. Ignorance of the semantics of language here stands in sharp contrast to the return of a general letter invitation for interview participation I had sent out, upon which the words 'UNFORGETTABLE NICKNAME[] – HISTORY KNOCKING SHOPS' were printed. The pun is amusing, but also derisory, mocking the pretentions of the workshops and puncturing the impression of the movement cultivated at the time and in later years. Nonetheless, the letter helped to crystallise a realisation (later confirmed in subsequent interviews) that behind descriptions of the heightened and euphoric atmosphere that accompanied History Workshop meetings lay libidinal energies, though this is hardly news to any psychoanalysts or literary critics. There is something else to be said here too, however: this 'nickname' expressed a view of the Workshop as it appeared from the outside looking in. Or rather, the allusion to prostitution and illicit sex acts to delegitimise the politics of sexual liberation, representing it as something sordid and disreputable. Sex marked the moral and political boundaries of politics for the established left.[926]

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[925] Sheila Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream*, 166.

[926] On the relationship between sexual politics and the left in Britain, see Brooke, Stephen, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Robinson, Lucy, *Gay men and the Left in post-war Britain: How the personal got political* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

The resentments and frustrations of Ruskin students involved in the organisation of History Workshop, especially over the character of the audience that it attracted, are detailed in Chapter One. In the testimonies of a few interviewees, perceptions of 'trendy academics' also reflected subtler distinctions of cultural style and disposition between different sections of the left. One interviewee described the 'trendies who were loud and more confident and everything else, and the trade unionists were sort of respectful and file in and sit there, with clip board and things'.[927] For another interviewee, sartorial differences marked out the History Workshop crowd. 'They just stood out. The women were wearing the classic kind of clothes of the period. Kerchiefs on their head and very long dangling earrings and maybe a bit of Henna'.[928] These comments were situated among concerns about how to relate to people outside the Workshop, where previous experiences of politics in IS acted as a counterpoint: 'we were given instructions on how to dress and how to present ourselves so we didn't alienate people…they [History Workshop people] didn't have any notion that sometimes the way that they presented themselves could be alienating'.[929] Such cultural differences indicate some of the barriers to working-class participation in something like History Workshop. After all, among the audience 'would only be a certain type of trade unionist and a certain type working-class person'.[930] But the History Workshop was not alone in this regard. The relative lack of a working-class presence was a general feature of socialist (and feminist) politics of the time.

[927] Sue Woodbine, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Sheffield, 2.8.12)
[928] Roger Spalding, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Ormskirk, 13.12.11)
[929] Ibid.
[930] Sue Woodbine, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Sheffield, 2.8.12)

IV. THE ECSTASY OF HISTORY

When asked to recount what were his strongest memories of the Workshop, one interviewee characteristically responded in the following way: 'the size of it; the variety of it; the workshops; the intensity of the discussions; the huge variety of people and some great people [...] it was exciting and interesting, and a huge variety, and I loved it'.[931] For another, the Workshop 'really brought home that education should be fun [...] it shouldn't be about nose to the grind stone; it should be about adventure; it should be about the excitement of discovery and finding out new things and arguing for interpretations of history, arguing for this piece of space'. Against those who would separate pleasure from seriousness in learning, the Workshop stood for their unity in the study of the past. 'There was this kind of holiday feeling about it all, almost carnival feeling', remembered one participant 'along with the very serious work involved. Very serious historians, very serious papers, very serious professional historians, serious amateur historians, serious student historians'.[932] This sensibility was in keeping with an awareness that history was not a subject to be apprehended in a coldly detached manner. Indeed, the Workshop 'made history very immediate. This wasn't something to be studied in the seminar rooms or even classrooms. It was something which is part of everybody and every society'.[933] Shifting the place of historical knowledge, bringing history out the ivory tower and into the realm of everyday life involved the construction of a new economy of emotion in the production of thought.

These intensities of feeling and affect expressed by partisans and supporters of the History Workshop relate to the transgression or erasure of the general order or hierarchy of social positions and functions that are usually delimited in such situations, particularly traditional markers of class and gender in intellectual divisions of labour; that is to say, of opening up the historical field to 'those not "destined" to think', to quote Jacques

[931] Bob Purdie, Interview with Ian Gwinn
[932] David Goodway, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Keighley, 23.2.12)
[933] Ibid.

Ranciere.[934] Voices of the excluded in past times juxtaposed with voices in the present, though neither were accorded a more privileged status of truth. As one participant recalls of the workshop:

> they were fantastically vibrant and enjoyable. A huge diversity of people; the ones that I remember. Not by any means just academics and really getting a good mixture of people from universities and then politicos of one sort or another. You know ranging from sort of ordinary working class people talking about their own lives and as it were being put on the stage as the agents of history if you like, other people then asking them questions about their own lives and throwing in stuff they got from their own academic reading.[935]

Leaving aside for the moment the tension in making the excluded – in the shape of the working class – both the object and subject of historical process, we can observe how egalitarian relations enter the domain of knowledge through this voicing of past experiences of class oppressions or class solidarity, a meeting place for the interspersing of history and memory. But this activity was given meaning and effect by wider forms of social and cultural life in this period, where the boundaries separating different spheres of life had been attenuated. For example, a Workshopper recalled that meetings 'were pretty convivial. So there was a lot of drinking and sex and all that stuff, not during the sessions. But they were always sort of friendly dynamics. They were celebrations you know'.[936] Another interviewee remembers that 'there was also a lot of sex. So you've got to remember there's also, you know. I mean it's a youthful, buzzy, erotic atmosphere as well'.[937] A third contributor makes a similar point: 'social life is a key thing. Absolutely. And that would transcend the editors or anybody else. That would be everybody…conviviality, absolutely

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[934] Jacques Ranciere, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Ninetenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) p. xii.
[935] Jerry White, Interview with Ian Gwinn (Leamington Spa, 5.1.12)
[936] Ibid.
[937] Barbara Taylor, Interview.

[....] actually, looking back on it, you have to think that the whole enterprise has been a great work of conviviality'.[938] The emphasis on the forms of sociality through which the proceedings were conducted, where we find the cerebral and carnal, seriousness and pleasure intertwined, reflect the way in which the Workshop was an extension of everyday life. But it was all the more extraordinary for that. Indeed, in the experience of life at moments of flux, in the charge released by the simultaneity of erotic and epistemological drives, the scholarly world is turned upside down.[939]

These moments of remembrance are doubtless tinged by nostalgia and romantic evocations, not least because many interviewees admit the great importance History Workshop and the period as a whole had for their lives. But these recollections catch something of the utopian dream too, of going beyond the worldly divisions upon which all forms of oppression, inequality and suffering depend. Wendy Brown describes the irruptive quality of that experience:

> a radical protest of the status quo was lived out in a highly charged subculture that was as libidinally compelling as a group experience can be, a revolutionary erotics that paradoxically bound its participants precisely by inciting challenges to all conventional bonds—those containing intellectual work within the academy, those restricting love and sex to the family, and, above all, those separating eros, politics, ideas, and everyday existence from one another.[940]

The potency of such experience is inevitably partial, fleeting and evanescent, not to mention confined to a relative minority of radicals. But it is this potency that gives these memories their felt intensity, perhaps signalling the moment where experience left its deep

[938] Bernard Canavan, Interview with Ian Gwinn (North-West London; 28.11.11)
[939] In the words of Terry Eagleton, "[s]exuality began in the late Sixties, as an extension of radical politics into regions it had lamentably neglected." In his *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Zizek and Others* p. 129.
[940] Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 108.

imprint on the interior life or how 'memory takes the form of a reliving of the emotion in the present.'[941] For the historian, these embodiments of utopian impulse cannot be recovered from the half-light of memory or from the images, slogans and fantasies they gave rise to. They resist our categories of representation, arrest history and its demand for closure, and are only domesticated as a form of hallucination, loss, or disavowal. Indeed, the very concept of utopia threatens to shatter the separation of past and present as well as experience and representation.[942] Epistemologically speaking, the goal of representation is unrealisable. Even in works of fiction, 'the effort to imagine utopia ends up betraying the impossibility of doing so.'[943] That same impossibility may be said to be at work in traces of the past in memory. As one interviewee recalled his experience of May 68:

> it was lively, it was colourful, it was exciting, and it was difficult actually to, it was impossible to draw it together into an overall coherent picture of what was happening. *Except that I got the feeling* that the world was changing in the direction I wanted it to change, and that change was getting faster and faster and faster, and I thought it would continue like an express train until all of capitalism and Toryism and oppression and racism and imperialism would be overthrown.[944]

But if the utopian is indispensable to new forms of radical politics and, as Jameson argues, it is also 'part of the legacy of the sixties which must never be abandoned in any reevaluation of that period and of our relationship to it,'[945] then perhaps we must look towards the domain of affects to find traces of its afterlife.

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[941] Callard, Felicity and Constantina Papoulias, 'Affect and Embodiment', in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 246-262, here 261.
[942] Max Haiven, "Are Your Children Old Enough to Learn about May '68: Recalling the Radical Event, Refracting Utopia and Commoning Memory", *Cultural Critique* 78 (Spring 2011), 74
[943] Frederic Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia; or, Can we Imagine the Future?" *Science Fiction Studies* 9, 27 (July 1982). See also Haiven 60-87.
[944] Bob Purdie, Interview with Ian Gwinn.
[945] Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke University Press*, 1991.p. 159

Feeling Utopia: Affective Histories and the Commons

In recent times, scholars have paid greater attention to the affective side of doing history.[946] This insight has been most fully developed in connection with that defining and alluring of historical activities, the archival visit. It is a paradoxical experience, intense yet ultimately frustrating, 'where historians can literally touch the past, but in doing so are simultaneously made aware of its unreachability.'[947] The tendency to privilege archival work as the predominant site of emotions, however, does not necessarily overturn the conviction that 'a lack of passion is what is expected of historians'.[948] It also gives this discussion a somewhat limiting and ahistorical air, since there are no shortage of other arenas where the felt dimensions of historical practice can be registered outside the unchanging condition of historiography inscribed in archival encounters.

In fact, it is arguable that the affective often eludes the grasp of academic historians, whose objectifying stance and adherence to the rules of empirical veracity would appear to petrify it and render it inert. Here we must distinguish between the history of emotions and affective history,[949] where the former demands an accurate representation of the past, but the latter concerns how we reappropriate and reimagine radical moments in the present, an undertaking which may or may not coincide with the protocols of the discipline. In this respect, affective history corresponds more closely to the vast array of forms and media that make up the historical imagination in the 21st century and to the forms of politics available today.

If every work of history, to paraphrase Benjamin, must begin with awakening,[950] then the place we must begin is to realise that what is crucial to 'thought that moves and moves

[946] Emily Robinson, 'Touching the Void: Affective History and the impossible', *Rethinking History* 14, 4 (2010), 503-520.
[947] Robinson, 'Touching the Void', 517-18.
[948] Plamper, Jan. *The History of Emotions: An Introduction. Oxford University Press*, 2015. 290.
[949] On affective history, see Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 18.
[950] Buck-Morss, *Dialetics of Seeing*, 39.

us' is its 'sensuousness'.[951] For radical history to be successful, not only must it work against dominant reality, but it also must have some effect on the senses. A renewal of the critical and radical possibility of history, to make it open to the 'torrent of potentiality' that flows from the promise of utopia, means working along the edges of the moral and epistemological limits of historical discourse.[952] Benjamin's own concept of 'dialectical images' can be seen in this light.[953] In a less technical or philosophical fashion, the History Workshop movement was responsible for inventing a series of affective historical practices, which were crucial to its democratic and emancipatory claims. These practices met with varying degrees of success, of which the annual workshop, with its theatre, folk singing, drinking, sex, and sprit of camaraderie, mixed in with accounts of popular experience and class struggle, was able to arouse the most powerful aesthetic and somatic intensities. For those who became closely involved, it was this that invigorated the Workshop's vision of making history 'common property' and inspired efforts to replicate it elsewhere. With the renaissance of interest in ideas and practices of the commons in the late-20th century, it is perhaps here that the example of History Workshop can be most productive.[954]

[951] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2. In commenting on the text 'Theses on the Concept of History', Taussig writes that Benjamin "didn't place much faith in facts and information in winning arguments, let alone class struggle, and it was in the less conscious image realm and in the dreamworld of the popular imagination that he saw it necessary to act." Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 368-69.
[952] Haiven,
[953] Buck Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing*
[954] On the commons, see, for example, George Caffentzis, 'The Future of the Commons: Neoliberalism's Plan B or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?' *New Formations* 69 (Summer 2010), 23-41.

CONCLUSION: OUT OF ANXIETY[955]

It was in the first few weeks of beginning my research that I made the hour-long train journey to Oxford from my parents' home to visit the archives at Ruskin. Getting off the train, walking over the bridge, turning down Walton Street, it wasn't long before I was staring up at that grand and imposing structure. I don't recall having any momentousness or occasion on entering the building. It would have been unlikely. I knew relatively little about the History Workshop or, in fact, British social history. Hung on the wall in the foyer was a commemorate plaque dedicated to Raphael Samuel, which seemed a little awkwardly placed. I walked down the corridor towards the library and pat the main hall, Buxton Hall (later renamed Raphael Samuel Hall). It stood empty. It was only later, when I began to read about what went on at workshop meetings and then listened to people recount their experience, that I reimagined it – its size, its layout, and wondered how it could have squeezed so many people inside.

I only went to Oxford a handful of times; the archive was soon moved to the Bishopsgate library in London. But I'm grateful that I did. The Walton Street site was sold to Exeter College in 2011 for several million pounds and is currently undergoing redevelopment. All that remains of what was Ruskin College are the brick facades from the original 1913 building.[956]

I recount this brief episode not to take a tokenistic swipe at the endurance of entrenched privilege and inequality in the British higher education system, or even to mourn the loss of a heritage that has laid dormant for so long.[957] Rather it draws me back towards

[955] Anxiety appears to be a sign of the times. According to the Institute for Precarious Consciousness, each phase of capitalism has a "dominant reactive affect" and in our current phase "anxiety" has assumed this position: "it has become the linchpin of subordination." The Institute for Precarious Consciousness, "We Are All Very Anxious: Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It", http://cloudfront.crimethinc.com/pdfs/We-Are-All-Very-Anxious.pdf (Accessed 26.01.2015).

[956] For photographs of the site and updates on the construction work, see http://exetercohenquad.com

[957] This heritage appears to be going under something of a revival. In Britain, the Bristol Radical History Group have been active for a number of years. The recently formed international history from below network (http://radical.history-from-below.net/)

the questions that opened this thesis regarding the uses of the past and of how we might it more usable today.

The demolition of the Walton Street site is illustrative of how universities are now used to serve the acquisitive drives of capitalism, with their fetish for the new and modern. At the same time, in the effort to preserve the historical frontage of the building, yet gutting the remaining material of its physical memory, it draws attention to the general conditions and consciousness of history, particularly the underlying tension between capital and history.[958] In this respect, it reflects less the attempt to erase all trace of the past than the way in which the desire to preserve it has become entangled in circuits of consumption. There is also something allegorical about how the external surface of the building remains unchanged, whilst the inside is radically overhauled: the paradox of observing the popularity of historical themes and genres in the media, on television, and in popular culture generally, with a profound sense of how history lacks any real consequence.

There is a well-established discourse about the shifting landscape of our historical imaginary in the face of structural changes undergone in the age of late-capitalism and the postmodernisation of culture. In Frederic Jameson's words, we have experienced 'a weakening of historicity', a condition he summarised as the 'attempt to think the present in an age that has forgotten to think historically in the first place.'[959] Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the nostalgia for the past arising from global processes of change has coincided with people's inability to see themselves as agents of historical change. One of the main driving forces behind the production of all social historical work produced in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the activities of the History Workshop and, more complicatedly, the

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and the annual Unofficial Histories conferences (https://unofficialhistories.wordpress.com/) also reflect the return of interest in forms of radical public history-making (though I should acknowledge my own involvement in the latter).

[958] Again, Chakrabarty has usefully explored these issues, see 'The Death of History? Historical Consciousness and the Culture of Late Capitalism;, *Public Culture* 4, 2 (Spring 1992), 47-65; but also Lawrence Grossberg, 'History, Imagination and the Politics of Belonging: Between the Death and the Fear of History', in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg and Angela McRobbie (eds.), *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London: Verso, 2000), 148-164.

[959] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, ix.

Geschichtswerkstätten, was a vision of the people as major protagonists in the unfolding dramas of historical change.

Relatedly, one might observe a comparable process at work inside the formal spheres of intellectual production. Here the use of fashion vocabularies that claim some kind of radical intent in critically analysing the workings of power and knowledge seem to carry virtually no implications for action outside the lecture room. 'What's not okay – or anyway, what's considered tiresome and uninteresting', write Graeber and Shukaitis 'is to write works that cannot be read as anything but a call to action.'[960] But the radical posture is not purely an affectation. It is an effect of the culture of academic research, the necessary routinisation of ideas in an expanding and highly competitive industry, which has become colonised by managerial and auditing mechanisms, making life ever more pressurized and precarious. The contradictory consciousness of academics, who have to 'internalize the very habitus their work is usually ostensibly critiquing',[961] makes it harder to envisage how dissident and subversive ideas might find a release.

If this is too bleak an assessment of the situation, then it remains the case that we scarcely have the analytical means with which to make visible or comprehensible the effects of changes that have been wrought on contemporary modes of historical production. If we are to gain some purchase on this problem and revitalise history's connection to politics, then an initial step could be to arouse a sharper consciousness of the conditions under which historians' labour, in the past and present. In this respect, one of the main purposes of this study has been to try to develop an approach that might help to illuminate this problematic. Here, in the effort to situate intellectual and political work in the multiplicity of everyday

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[960] Shukaitis, Stevphen, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle. Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations//collective Theorization. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007, 23.

[961] This quote is taken from a post by David Graeber to an online discussion board, which can be found here: http://openanthcoop.ning.com/forum/topics/producing-academic-scholarship-if-universities-are-failing-where?groupUrl=theanthropologyofanthropology&groupId=3404290%3AGroup%3A25976&id=3404290%3ATopic%3A177016&page=2> (Accessed 07.02.14).

life, we might come to see the significance of structural and political change in a different light, and find ways to contest those changes.

The common thread that binds these chapters together has been the focus on multiple sites of historical knowledge and the attendant practices they gave rise to. In each case, they sought to identify the various mutual imbrications of history and politics in specific practices and how that dynamic unfolded in concrete micro-contexts. They also framed these practices as part of collective forms of democratic activity and examined how they were given organisational form and were enabled by specific assemblages of social relations, experiences and subjectivities, which helped to create solidarities across divisions of class and gender inequality. They also traced the limits and contradictions inherent in these activities and how they reinforced social inequalities and hierarchies.

Here Chapter One, for example, showed how educational hierarchies were mediated through the articulation of certain pedagogical and spatial practices, which used experience as a common ground of equal participation. Chapter Two analysed the role of particular methodological and research practice of the German *Geschichtswerkstätten* and revealed how they were shaped by differing geographies of knowledge and politics. Chapter Three used an academic conference to detail the way in which academic hierarchies and social relations are implicated in the performance of intellectual exchange and can derail their intended function. Chapters Four and Five underscored the interplay between different facets of print production, such as economics, editorial organisation, intellectual argument, in accounting for the development of the *History Workshop Journal*. Chapter Six situated the discussion of History Workshop in the context of individual subjectivities and memories of participants, locating important sources of its appeal in the experiences of class and gender of life experience.

Overall, the thesis is offered as a contribution to the history of cultural protest and intellectual production in the post-68 period. Within a highly delimited circumference, it has sought to situate the everyday activities, subjective meanings and experiences, and actors' identities in a broader context of democratic and political change in the post-war period. Focusing on the logic of the actors' own representation of their activities, as well as their limits, lacunae and contradictions, the aim has been to illustrate that forms of democratic politics, particularly its grassroots varieties, are contested, riven by tensions and conflicts, contingent upon broader forces, but are ultimately a process of organising relations between people. As such, methodologies, research, public presentation, the organisation of space can also be seen as practices that enable solidarities to be built, to be maintained, but also to be dissolved. Likewise, the concern with personal and emotional live of participants was also important aspect of this focus on democratic politics, as political commitment, especially to the time-consuming politics of democratic work, depends on time, energy, and the handling of other life responsibilities.

In addition, the interest in the quotidian aspects of intellectual life was partly an attempt to decentre the narrative structures of intellectual history, which are based around lines of continuity, tradition, moments of break and rupture. The main thrust here was to complicate these stories about intellectual life in order in some way to put it on a par with the study of the rest of social and cultural life, so as to avoid the reification of intellectuals and not participate in their heroising; and thus, to see them as equally subject to internal and external constraint.

This approach has naturally left some gaps and biases that future research would correct. To start with, the transnational and comparative dimension could be extended. The importance of the role of the local and geographical in the case of the *Geschichtswerkstätten* highlights an important contrast with the British case, which had strong national and metropolitan orientations. Another point of comparison that could be developed is how

both movements approached and responded to efforts to re-politicise the national past from the right. In the 1980s, both Britain and West Germany saw conservative attempts to intervene in the public representations of history and memory. The use of history on the national curriculum in Britain and the plans to establish a German Historical Museum in the FRG are two such examples where the History Workshops mobilised against oppositional forces.

As indicated in the Introduction, it will be the task of further work to connect the history of everyday life to broader social structures and formations, both as determinants and also insofar as they were perceived and interpreted from the viewpoint of actors. In this regard, Chapters Four and Five sought to understand the role of print economics as integral to the meaning of *HWJ*. The sociology of the academy is an important factor here, as is the role of the state as a producer, funder and disseminator of ideas about history, and other institutions in the public sphere, such as museums, libraries, galleries, archives, the press, and television. Alternatively, it could be used to spread outwards and downwards to incorporate the wider people's history movement, such as preservation societies, re-enactment societies, industrial archaeology, and others. In part, this would help to explore the kind of reach that the History Workshop movements. In short, it would be about writing the culture of history into the history of culture. The History Workshop movement and the *Geschichtswerkstätten* would seem to be a good starting point, since they acted as a conduit for impulses arising from below and above.

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