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Collective and Democratic Experiments in the Politics of Knowledge in Britain since 1968: Reflections on Cultural Studies, History Workshop and Feminism

Abstract

The tumultuous events of 1968 had a profound and lasting impact on society, culture and politics on a global scale. In Britain, the effects of the upswing in radicalism were powerfully registered in developments and departures in cultural and intellectual life. Recent contributions to the history of the intellectual Left during this period, including the traditions of the New Left, cultural studies, and feminism, have documented many of the decisive shifts in theoretical outlooks and thematic focus. Less frequently acknowledged, however, has been the formation of a distinctive 'politics of knowledge', which contested established hierarchies and norms of academic work through forms of collective and democratic practice. This article argues that this project was a decisive outcome and achievement of the post-68 conjuncture, becoming part of a much broader democratising front in the 1970s and 80s that centred upon sites of cultural and intellectual expression. The key features of this alternative apparatus of intellectual production are explored in the context of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, History Workshop, and the scholarly endeavours of second-wave feminism, which paid critical attention to the possibilities, tensions and open contradictions intrinsic to this way of combining politics and intellectual practice.

Keywords: *1968*; *Britain*; *history*; *Cultural Studies*; *feminism*; *knowledge*; *politics*; *participatory democracy*

Introduction

The intellectual ferment generated by 1968 and its subsequent trajectories might be told as a progressive story of the development of new forms of empirical and conceptual content, discipline by discipline: in the expanding range of subject matter, the growing sophistication of social and cultural analyses based on class, gender and

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race, and the reception of new and unsettling theories of language, ideology and subjectivity. In the British context, it is also a story of the fortunes of a renewed and undogmatic 'native' Marxist tradition, British cultural Marxism, which originated in the pioneering writings of central figures in the 'first' New Left.[1] Whilst the New Left appeared in the aftermath of the events of 1956, the intellectual significance of 1968 cannot be separated from the shifting course of various currents of New Left thought and practice, as they underwent an extensive process of elaboration, revision, and systematic critique. The contours of these debates, which became increasingly divisive through the 1970s, can be outlined in a familiar roll call of names that indicate the rapid pace of intellectual change, beginning with Gramsci, Althusser and Poulantzas, and then, under the influence of the linguistic turn, Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida. The uptake of new theoretical trends was stimulated and amplified by the presence of women's, gay, and other liberation movements, but their consolidation in academic circles occurred against the rise of countervailing political forces through the 1970s and 80s, in which Left intellectual work became increasingly separated from more popular constituencies.

As a counterpoint to this narrative, we might also consider how the political and intellectual legacies of 1968 have been assimilated in other ways. The brief account above is overwhelmingly academic in character. By contrast, a different set of trajectories can be traced along activist lines, particularly associated with the diffusion of Situationist ideas and political practices as they have been appropriated by what George McKay calls 'cultures of resistance'.[2] Squatting and autonomous movements, but also punk, to take another example, abounded with Situationist influences and meanings, which inspired myriad direct actions and DIY projects. In the view of David Graeber, two different streams flow from before and after May '68: the former, a predominantly activist current; the latter academic: "the pre-revolutionary strain, kept alive in zines, anarchist infoshops, and the Internet, and the post-68 strain, largely despairing of the possibility of mass-based, organized revolution, kept alive in graduate seminars, academic conferences, and scholarly journals".[3] For Graeber, the bifurcation ultimately reflects the passivity of academic culture, which remains thoroughly immune to Situationist ideas, since they "cannot be read as anything but a call to action".[4]

Graeber is surely correct in a restricted sense, insofar as Situationism has not made much headway inside the university, where few academics believe what they write has anything more than a modest effect on broader political configurations. However, this

1 See Dennis Dworkin: Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies, Durham/London 1997.

2 George McKay: Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties, London 1996.

3 David Graeber: Direct Action: An Ethnography, Oakland, CA 2009, p. 260.

4 Ibid., p. 259.

separation of academic and activist stances, which is itself a historically contingent outcome, overlooks how 1968 propelled pre-existing anti-authoritarian and participatory impulses into new arenas of intellectual production, certainly in Britain. Unlike the new 'partisans of rigour' who took charge of the *New Left Review* under the editorial direction of Perry Anderson and others in 1964, the New Left always comprised a far broader set of repertoires and activities within an expanding extra-parliamentary arena and, as several observers have acknowledged, lived on beyond its original formation in the late-50s and early-60s.[5] Amid the general upsurge of student and industrial struggles during and after 1968, these afterlives can be traced in the work of the *May Day Manifesto* of 1967–68, the Institute for Workers' Control, History Workshop, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), and the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and other new social movements. Other subject-based intellectual groupings formed around this time, such as the Conference of Socialist Economists, 'new' or radical criminology, and radical philosophy, which shared a common commitment to collective modes of scholarly work. Yet the flourishing of a left-wing and dissident intellectual culture in the post-68 period extended far beyond the academic sphere, reaching into wider domains of grassroots and democratic cultural production, from working-class and women's writers' workshops, community publishing, and local and oral history projects, to radical printshops, film cooperatives, and community arts projects.[6] What is also elided in making a formal division between activism and academic scholarship is a critical appreciation of historical change, particularly of how long-term shifts in capitalist production eroded the infrastructural bases upon which these 'subcultures' rested, which seriously complicates the story of 1968 and its legacies.[7] Indeed, an intense effort to fashion a distinctive 'politics of knowledge' was made in Britain in the 1970s and 80s, which was given powerful expression in collective projects that strived to subvert and transform

5 Peter Sedgewick: The Two New Lefts, in: David Widgery (ed.): The Left in Britain, 1956–68, Middlesex 1976, p. 147. On the afterlives of the 'first' New Left, see Michael Rustin: The New Left as a Social Movement, in: Robin Archer et al. (eds.): Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left 30 Years On, London 1989, pp. 117–128.

6 A full list of bibliographic references would be impractical here. However, recent contributions include Tom Woodin: Working-Class Writing and Publishing in Late-Twentieth Century, Manchester 2018; Jess Baines: Experiments in democratic participation: feminist printshop collectives, in: Cultural Policy, Criticism & Management Research 6 (2012), pp. 29–51; Idem: Nurturing Dissent? Community Printshops in 1970s London, in: Julie Uldam/Anne Verstergaard (eds.): Civic Engagement and Social Media, Basingstoke 2015; John A. Walker: Left Shift: Radical Art in the 1970s, London 2001; and Sam Wetherell: Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the search for the 'Ordinary' in 1970s and '80s London, in: History Workshop Journal 76 (2013), pp. 235–249.

7 On the notion of a New Left 'subculture', see Alan Sinfield: Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain, London 1997, pp. 295–302.

dominant structures of scholarly inquiry through non-hierarchical, collaborative and democratic methods of work.[8]

In this article, my aim is to capture some of the key characteristics of this 'politics' by exploring the internal dynamics and tensions through which these projects cohered, evolved, and fractured. Taking the examples of the CCCS, History Workshop, and feminist research groups, I focus on the different configurations of social and institutional practices that shaped their democratic and collective aspirations, examining how they became embedded in the unfolding course of intellectual change, generated sources of oppositional meaning, and established relations of solidarity and mutual support among 'activist' intellectuals. The efficacy of these projects was always uneven and contradictory, as they ran up against the limits of what was collectively and democratically obtainable. Nonetheless, the history of such projects and their practices, which have only begun to be examined in detail, offers a rich seam of critical insights into the shifting relations between politics and intellectual work in the context of post-68 developments, and thereby bring into sharper relief the limits and possibilities of such work in the present.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: Collectivisation and the Politics of Authority

The place of the CCCS or simply the 'Birmingham School' in the formation and remarkable growth of the field of cultural studies has been firmly established in a now voluminous literature on the impact of its contribution. While the emergence of what became cultural studies predated the foundation of the Centre (often traced back to the classic texts of Richard Hoggart, Edward Thompson, and Raymond Williams), it is usually credited as the original site of cultural studies, witnessing "the birth of a new kind of academic endeavour".[9] This reputation has been enhanced by the later achievements of many of its former members, as well as the self-conscious efforts of the Centre to re-examine its own trajectories. Some of the key intellectual and institutional milestones are already well-established: the opening of the Centre in 1964 (with Hoggart at the helm) and the early influence of 'culturalist' analyses; his replacement by Stuart Hall in the late-60s and the turn to a deeper and more critical engagement with Marxism, particularly Western Marxism in the shape of Gramsci and Althusser;

8 On the relationship between the post-68 historical moment and the politics of knowledge, see Geoff Eley: Conjuncture and the Politics of Knowledge—CCCS, 1968–1984, in: Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell (eds.): Cultural Studies 50 Years On: History, Practice and Politics, London 2016, pp. 25–47.

9 Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell: Introduction, in: Idem (eds.): Cultural Studies 50 Years On, p. xi.

the proliferation of subject matter on popular cultural forms; the introduction of new theories of ideology, language and discourse; the departure of director Stuart Hall to the Open University in 1979.

Recently, a more detailed history of the CCCS has begun to emerge.[10] Drawing attention to the internal life of the Centre, this research demonstrates the generative capacities of its 'working practices' in the development of the CCCS's innovative and pioneering output, in particular the rise of the sub-group model as the principal organising focus of collaborative working relations among its members. Here, I consider some of the key factors behind the development of the practice, as well as the constraints and contradictions that limited its effectiveness.

If the Centre's formation was indebted to the intellectual achievements of the 'first' New Left, then the revolts of 1968 had a transformative effect on its future direction. In November 1968, students at the University of Birmingham held an occupation and sit-in; both CCCS faculty and students were significantly involved. The students' demands rehearsed calls for change which could be heard on campuses across the globe: "the abolition of assessments, the democratisation of relations between students and professors, the end of artificial barriers between disciplines, continual self-criticism and the creation of a curriculum based on 'felt needs'."[11] Unlike Hoggart, Hall was receptive to the student campaign and eager to channel their radical energies into the Centre, an outcome assured after he replaced Hoggart as director the following year. Indeed, the experience of the 1968 sit-in spurred efforts to 'democratise' organisational structures and modes of work, embedding the critical spirit of the times into all aspects of the management and practical running of the Centre. The subgroup model became the most notable manifestation of the commitment to collective practice, which was organised according to themes of common interest (subcultures, media, cultural history, education, work, the state etc). They provided the infrastructure to support collaborative research, generating a prodigious scholarly output, much of which was published in the journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* or as 'Stencilled Occasional Papers' through the course of the 1970s and early-1980s.

However, for as much as the subgroups provided coherence and direction to the activities of the Centre, they had emerged as a "compromise" solution after a rather intense period (1969–71) of trying to establish a tighter collective model.[12] Fraught discussions inside the Centre reveal the difficulties of unifying cultural studies as a singular project, which were intensified as both Hall and the students "struggled to

10 This includes Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell: The working practices of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, in: Social History 40:3 (2015), pp. 287–311 and their edited collection *Cultural Studies 50 Years On*.

11 Dennis Dworkin: The Lost World of Cultural Studies, 1956–1971: An Intellectual History, in: Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell (eds.): Cultural Studies 50 Years On, p. 15.

12 Ibid., p. 17, p. 21.

reconcile a commitment to the politics of 1968 with the politics of hierarchy and leadership."[13] Hall, in particular, was discouraged by this failure. In an intervention entitled 'The Missed Moment' in 1971, he decried the lack of political sophistication and collective solidarity in the Centre, resigning himself to an organisational format looser and more pluralistic than the 'utopian enclave' or 'red base' he had originally envisaged.[14] In retrospect, this seems an unduly pessimistic verdict and, indeed, some students challenged Hall's assessment at the time. There was also some difficulty in Hall's depiction of a 'missed moment', since he had not clearly articulated his own position in the course of discussions, which (as we shall see) was partly caused by Hall's own authority. "If you were the only one, Stuart, who saw the moment", as CCCS student, Rosalind Brunt, later recounted "why didn't you tell us?"[15]

While the reconstitution of the CCCS along non-hierarchical and democratic lines was not easily achieved, it found expression in new relations of sociality, especially between staff and students, which fostered a community of inquiry based on mutual support, trust, and solidarity. The thematic sub-groups certainly functioned in ways that recast hierarchical divisions in intellectual production via an egalitarian ethos which ensured that programmes and agendas were decided collectively. Still, the organisational practices of the sub-groups were never uniform or completely stable, and often changed over time as groups evolved. Some groups had a more exploratory focus as a 'discussion group', whereas others became closely structured around plans for writing up into a final publication, becoming somewhat 'closed' to new members.[16] In this respect, organisational arrangements and intellectual purposes were mutually constitutive. In the case of the 'State' group in 1976–77, the decision to undertake 'a major reformulation' of the object of study towards the 'crisis of the British social formation' required a rebalancing of organisational priorities between plenary sessions and the work of small groups. "This ought to help us to break up the formality of the large group, which many have found forbidding and 'get into' some particular area in greater depth, without losing some grasp on the whole", explained an internal memo.[17]

The sub-groups functioned according to a host of everyday micro-practices and instruments of intellectual work, which reveal the scale of collective labour: reading lists were compiled and circulated; reviews of literature and critical commentaries on key texts were produced; preliminary findings were shared; reports and memos of

13 Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell: 'Working practices', p. 300.
14 Ibid., pp. 304f.
15 Ros Brunt/Chris Pawling/Trevor Millum: Interview with Kieran Connell [27 March 2015].
16 The Period Group 1973–4: A Report, Cadbury Research Library [CRL], Richard Johnson Papers [RJ], US119/4/2/3; Proposal for History Journal, US119/4/2/3.
17 State and Hegemony, Work, State and Family Groups Research Material, CRL, RJ US119/1/2/4.

decisions, plans and future programmes were issued. Publishing in various formats became a distinctive element of the Centre's mode of scholarly communication, notably in the shape of the *Working Papers* or stencilled papers, but this vast corpus of internally circulated material was no less part of a local material culture of knowledge. This profusion of textual production was indeed 'social' in nature[18]; often dialogically constituted, this documentation addressed problems and arguments raised in ongoing sub-group debates. Of course, individual research projects and theses were also carried out, but the commitment to the work of exchange and sharing ideas became a central element of collective intellectual practice.

For all that, however, the collective ethos was always "necessarily uneven and contested".[19] Indeed, the decisive interventions of feminism and anti-racism recast the agenda of cultural studies in profoundly disruptive ways, particularly the former, which confronted the male-dominated environment inside the Centre.[20] As in many other places, women's struggle against their own subordination revealed the limits of 1968's radicalism, even for a project as committed to anti-hierarchical and egalitarian principles as CCCS, encouraging (as we shall see) the formation of autonomous feminist groups. The controversy surrounding the publication of the volume *Women Take Issue* (1978) by the women's studies group brought these matters to a head, and, as a consequence, the Centre underwent a process of what one student called "feministification".[21] Coming to terms with the challenge issued by women inside the Centre (and the conflicts that ensued) forced critical revaluations of existing practice. The episode, as Hall later admitted, was "where I really discovered about the gendered nature of power."[22]

More generally, Hall lived out the tensions and contradictions of his own position as both authority figure and participant—what he called a "double bind".[23] His presence at meetings was often a source of resentment for his students, who experienced the weight of his authority whether he chose to speak in discussions or remained

18 Ted Striphas/Mark Haywood: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, Or, the Virtues of Grey Literature, in: New Formations 78 (2013), pp. 102–116.

19 John Clarke: Hierarchies and Beyond? Staff, Students and the Making of Cultural Studies in Birmingham, in: Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell (eds.): Cultural Studies 50 Years On, pp. 101–110, p. 104.

20 For a critical account of feminism's presence inside CCCS, see Charlotte Brunsdon: A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS, in: Kuan-Hsing Chen/Dave Morley (eds.): Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London 1996, pp. 275–286.

21 Tom Wengraf: Interview with Kieran Connell [27 March 2015].

22 Stuart Hall: Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies, in: Kuan-Hsing Chen/David Morley (eds.): Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, pp. 261–274, p. 267, p. 269.

23 Dennis Dworkin: Lost World of Cultural Studies, p. 17.

silent.[24] Of course, even as he (and his fellow staff) sought to disavow and relinquish power, it was reinforced by the institutional structures of the university and his formal responsibilities as a member of staff, which could not be entirely circumvented by the ethos and spirit of egalitarianism. In the common aspiration to break down hierarchies between teachers and students, external constraints of this kind always impose some outer limit on the course of developments. Nonetheless, the CCCS represents a crucial example of how it was possible to negotiate—sometimes successfully, sometimes problematically—the effects of these structuring forces in order to forge a collective intellectual project.

In 1979, Stuart Hall left the Centre to take up a professorship in sociology at the Open University. In the 1980s, the CCCS underwent a rapid transformation and ceased to exist as a research unit, especially once it had been turned into a Department of Cultural Studies in 1984; it was closed by the University in 2002.[25] The continued marginalisation of cultural studies at Birmingham contrasted sharply with its massive expansion around the globe, as well as its wider reverberations in mainstream culture. Equally, the general conditions that secured its global influence have also worked to diminish the critical and radical elements of intellectual practice, as cultural studies has increasingly assumed routinised and institutionalised forms.[26] That fact, however, must be weighed as one of the major achievements of the Centre, in the sense that some of its most basic purposes, in particular the understanding of culture as an essential and irreducible dimension of politics, have become so much a part of the 'common sense' of contemporary life.[27] First, in channelling, then, in redirecting the spirit of the early New Left, CCCS was a crucial setting for the working out of an expanded definition of politics. Above all, perhaps, it was the insistence upon academic and intellectual work *as a form of politics*, not a diversion from 'real' politics that remains one of its most enduring legacies today. At a time when students, teachers, and activists are again confronting the challenge of relating scholarly enquiry to political praxis, it is worth recalling an earlier vision of the politics of intellectual work, one which encompassed not just conceptual and epistemological radicalisms, but also the politics of its production—of its organisational structures, pedagogical methods and curricula, internal relations of teacher-taught, and its published forms—as well as the specific ways of orientating that critical enterprise towards a larger politics outside.[28]

24 Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell: Working Practices, p. 308.

25 See Ann Gray: Cultural Studies at Birmingham 1985–2002—The Last Decades, in: Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell (eds.): Cultural Studies 50 Years On, pp. 49–61.

26 See Hall's remarks on the 'dangers' of institutionalisation in: Stuart Hall: Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies, pp. 273–275.

27 Geoff Eley: Conjuncture and the Politics of Knowledge, p. 39.

28 Recent struggles over education, pedagogy and knowledge have been radically intensified

History Workshop: the Making of Democratic History[29]

Like the CCCS, History Workshop occupied a marginal position *vis-à-vis* mainstream academic culture in Britain, though it attracted some rather prominent academic sponsors to its ranks. In fact, it drew on a rich and flourishing tradition of British Marxist historiography that had been pioneered by a previous generation of Marxist historians, who first cut their teeth inside the Communist Party Historians' Group (CPHG). A direct link to that earlier formation was provided by Raphael Samuel, the chief agitator and guiding spirit behind History Workshop, who was a schoolboy member of the CPHG and then key participant in the New Left. From the late-60s until the 1990s, History Workshop became a vanguard for radical, oppositional historical work based on the practice of history from below and an outlet for the declaration of socialist, feminist and anti-racist ideals. It too channelled the anti-authoritarian and participatory impulses of '68, in which the struggle to democratise historical study presented itself as a challenge to the elitist and hierarchical structures of professional historiography. In the words of the oft-quoted first editorial of *History Workshop Journal*, "history is too important to be left to professional historians".[30]

In many ways, however, it was a very different project to CCCS. A crucial difference was the emergence of History Workshop at Ruskin College, the workers' college in Oxford and cornerstone of the adult education movement in Britain, which drew its students from the trade unions. What began initially as a one-day meeting in 1967 quickly mushroomed into much larger, weekend-long annual workshop gatherings, which at their peak brought hundreds of enthusiasts, many from far outside the seminar room, to Ruskin to listen to and debate topics on working-class and people's history. Indeed, they were a meeting point for large sections of the Left, a constituency which cut across various divides. According to Bill Schwarz, what was distinctive about the Workshop was "its capacity to create connections between professional

by the growing demand to 'decolonise' the university. See Gurminder K. Bhambra/Dalia Gebrail/Kerem Nisancioglu (eds.): Decolonising the University, London 2018.

29 This section of the article draws on my doctoral research, which is due to be published as *A Different Kind of History is Possible: The History Workshop Movement in Britain and West Germany* (Berghahn 2021). See also Ian Gwinn: History should become common property: Raphael Samuel, History Workshop, and the Practice of Socialist History, 1966–1980, in: Socialist History 51 (Spring 2017), pp. 96–117.

30 Sally Alexander/Anna Davin: Editorial: Feminist History, in: History Workshop Journal 1 (March 1976), pp. 4–6, p. 6.

historians of radical disposition and an array of amateur-labour, feminist, and local historians, forging in the process a new intellectual mentality".[31]

In published statements (but also in oral history interviews), many of those involved recall with particular vividness the emotional intensities of those annual gatherings:

> [T]here was this kind of holiday feeling about it all, almost carnival feeling along with the very serious work involved. Very serious historians, very serious papers, very serious professional historians, serious amateur historians, serious student historians.[32]

> [T]hey 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.[33]

Certainly, memories can be tinged with nostalgia, but the frequency and richness of these recollections suggest a genuinely felt experience of a liberated moment in which the dominant norms and conventions governing the production of knowledge were relaxed. No doubt it had to do with the general egalitarian spirit of the late-60s and early-70s, but it can also be attributed to the invention of several specifically locatable practices or acts of 'levelling' the academic playing field.

First, the students who came to Ruskin (often with very demoralising experiences of education) were encouraged by Samuel to carry out archival research almost as soon as they arrived. There was a democratic ethic in the 'heresy' of letting first-time historians 'loose' on primary sources, which was combined with an appeal to the students' own experience as a supplementary source of authority to counterbalance their lack of academic training.[34] In Samuel's view, Ruskin students were "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 […]".[35] Hence, students often undertook research into their own trades or family background; some of this work was later published in the History Workshop pamphlet series, which while quite narrowly conceived, broke new ground in the social history of work and leisure. Their appearance was also proof of the demo-

31 Bill Schwarz: History on the Move: Reflections on History Workshop, in: Radical History Review 57 (1993), pp. 202–220, p. 204.
32 David Goodway: Interview with Ian Gwinn [23 February 2012].
33 Jerry White: Interview with Ian Gwinn [5 January 2012].
34 Dave Douglass: Obituary, in: Labour History Review 62:1 (Spring 1997), pp. 119f.
35 Raphael Samuel: History Workshop [reply to H. D. Hughes], in: History Workshop Journal 11 (Spring 1981), pp. 199–201, p. 200.

cratic ideal, demonstrating that valuable historical work could be produced by working-class, non-academic historians on the basis of mutual support, cooperation and a do-it-yourself ethos.

Second, and certainly in the early days, the Workshop was organised in order to give Ruskin students a platform to present their research. During the proceedings of the annual workshop meetings, students rubbed shoulders with seasoned academics and stars of the intellectual Left, who were placed on the same stage as one another. The prominence of working-class voices on the stage, plus the general juxtaposition of speakers and listeners that cut across class, gender, and generational lines, lent History Workshop meetings a distinctive egalitarian air and even theatrical edge. In a literal sense, worker-historians were placed on an equal footing with the academics, undermining the unequal relations that structured learning and teaching encounters. But their voice was different to that of the historian, carrying authenticity, excitement and political validation. This act of levelling was the most potent symbol of the Workshop's democratic appeal.

It was not long, however, before tensions in the coalition of Ruskin students and those who came from outside began to surface, which intensified as the 1970s ended. In the planning for the workshop meeting in 1977, the student collective insisted that there was "the need for greater participation by both Ruskin students and Rank and File people", and "to structure the annual workshops so as to attract Rank and File people as opposed to 'trendy' academics".[36] From the peak in the period 1968–73, the number of student papers presented at workshop meetings declined, particularly as Samuel, who had carefully prepared student research for workshop meetings, turned his time and energy towards the foundation of the journal (1976). Doubtlessly the diminished role of Ruskin students would have been keenly felt, especially since the students provided much of the unglamorous organisational labour that allowed workshops to run. At the same time, a broader dispute over the challenge of 'theory' for Marxist historical practice began to gather pace and found its way into the pages of History Workshop Journal (HWJ). Launched as an extension of Workshop activity and committed to what it termed 'democratic scholarship', the journal soon became engulfed in a controversy that served to polarise the Workshop's constituency around a deepening tension between popular forms of local or people's history and more theoretically-informed historical work.

In 1979, the conflicts over theory reached a crescendo when the History Workshop of that year staged an intensely hostile and vituperative debate between Edward Thompson and Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson of the CCCS. To the dismay of the many assembled, Thompson denounced his erstwhile comrades in a notoriously vitri-

36 Minutes, RCHWC, 20.10.76, RS7/002 [Raphael Samuel Papers], Bishopsgate Institute [BI], London.

olic performance, charging them with 'theoretical terrorism'. The substance of the debate centred on a set of critical and theoretical problems relating to Thompson's own approach to the history of working-class formation, which had had such a powerful influence on the Workshop's own historical practice. Thompson's behaviour was upsetting partly because it offended the democratic and open sensibilities of the Workshop itself; the supportive, convivial dynamics descended into what Samuel called "gladiatoral [sic] combat".[37] Arguably, the event was more significant for crystallising the increasing disconnection and segmentation of populist and academic interests, which became superimposed onto differences between the movement and the journal, revealing fractures in the Workshop's coalition.[38] This was dramatically illustrated at the final plenary, where the simmering resentment of the Ruskin students boiled over into expressions of discontent about doing all the organisational work without actually participating in the proceedings. In the aftermath, the annual workshops left Ruskin and travelled around the country in the course of the 1980s.

The effort to foster a supportive, informal and non-competitive environment for the production of historical research was fundamental to History Workshop's democratic claims. Yet it coexisted with a second more 'critical' purpose, which had remained a subordinate interest. As Samuel complained, "critical discussion is apt to take place far removed from workshops […] in small groups like the Birmingham Centre for Contempt [sic] cultural studies."[39] The challenge for the Workshop was to hold these two imperatives together: "somehow what is needed is to take in the need for a critical discussion without allowing it to explode into the ugly and competitive forms of the university seminar."[40] Ironically, Samuel's comments came only a few months after the 1979 workshop, which proved how difficult observing both 'supportive and critical' moments in workshop practice could be. In many respects, the process of democratising knowledge was always under threat of being overtaken by redefinitions of knowledge that reinforced, rather than undermined, existing relations of inequality. The engagement with theory pursued by the journal reflected a commitment to intellectual growth and development, but it also hardened tensions and incompatibilities, since only those versed in complex theoretical vocabularies could participate in such debates, diluting the solidarities that had hitherto sustained History Workshop as a common project.

37 Raphael Samuel: Editorial note, in: Raphael Samuel (ed.): People's History and Socialist Theory, London 1981, p. 376.

38 See Samuel's comments about the differences between the workshops and the journal in: Raphael Samuel: Editorial Introduction, in: Ibid.: History Workshop: A Collectanea 1967–1991, London, 1991, pp. I-V.

39 Raphael Samuel: Letter, Federation of History Workshops and Socialist Historians, RS7/004, BI.

40 Ibid.

Two other factors accelerated this departure that would profoundly recast intellectual priorities. First, the expansion of Workshop activity into new arenas, particularly the launch of the journal, favoured certain outcomes above others. For instance, while a considerable amount of attention was dedicated to making *HWJ* accessible to readers and to encourage first-time writers, financial pressures and demands of editorial work forced some unenviable decisions about content, which narrowed the democratic scope and squeezed out particular themes and voices. Second, as the conjuncture began to shift, a growing awareness of the insufficiencies of existing historical approaches and perspectives also hastened the shift towards emerging theoretical categories with greater purchase on the changing political times.[41] In some quarters, people's history was fundamentally recast in the 1980s and 1990s "at the cost of making it unrecognisable to its erstwhile and intellectual supporters".[42] That said, practices of recovery and preservation endured and even expanded into new areas, particularly with the development of local and community oral history work, which was encouraged and coordinated by such initiatives as Manchester Studies and the London History Workshop Centre.

Few cultural movements of the Left have carried their radical and democratising ambitions as far into the worlds of the extramural and the working-class autodidact as did History Workshop. The now unrepeatable political and economic circumstances of British society enabled such a convergence: the structures of the post-war state; institutions of adult and workers' education; traditions of labour and socialist activism; countercultural and oppositional experiments in artistic and cultural practice; narratives of class formation. History Workshop outgrew the conditions of its emergence, shaping and being reshaped by cultural and political forces unleashed by societal change, a process that incurred painful losses while making substantial gains. Its experiment in democratising knowledge, both by opening up the exclusive domain of scholarship to the excluded and underprivileged as well as conferring recognition upon those 'unofficial' forms of knowledge about the past, not only challenged the authority of professional historians, but also carried subversive and creative potential into wider domains. Even now, it continues to find contemporary resonance in recent discussions about how to rebuild a new radical politics from the left.[43]

41 For a detailed and penetrating account of these historiographical shifts, see Geoff Eley: A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society, Ann Arbor 2005.

42 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 1997, pp. 149–209, p. 165.

43 See the arguments about the politics of knowledge made by Hilary Wainwright in her recent *A New Politics from the Left* (2018).

Feminist Studies and Women's Studies

In the 1970s, feminism delivered a powerful challenge to established conventions of academic and leftist intellectual production. Its gradual passage into mainstream acceptance was marked by various kinds of resistance; it had, after all, "broken" into cultural studies, in Hall's bracing phrase, "like a thief in the night".[44] Likewise, in the case of History Workshop, the entry of feminism was hardly smooth. An original proposal for a meeting on women's history at the annual workshop in 1969 was greeted with a "gust of masculine laughter".[45] But it is notable that feminism and feminist historians quickly assumed a central position on the workshop platform, with History Workshop meetings in 1972, '73, and '74 organised on themes related to women's history. Feminist influence also encompassed the actual conduct of workshop meetings, in which a more "decentralised" format was adopted "to stop meetings being dominated by particular dominant, mostly male characters".[46] Unsurprisingly, the decade witnessed the burgeoning of a vibrant and autonomous feminist research culture, arising out of a whole series of initiatives, from feminist publishing houses, libraries, and resource centres, to journals and magazines, bookshops, reading and study groups, and women's studies classes.[47] They functioned not just as incubators of new knowledge, but also as spaces where new and egalitarian styles of discussion, presentation, and ways of relating to one another could be explored. In this respect, feminism can be seen to have extended and deepened the fundamental commitment to the politics of collective intellectual work.

Emerging from their own experiences of educational and academic institutions, women's sense of inferiority and exclusion was compounded by the practical obstacles they faced in actively and regularly participating in scholarly endeavours, especially if they shouldered childcare and other domestic responsibilities or had job commit-

44 Stuart Hall: Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies, p. 269.

45 Sally Alexander: Becoming a Woman: and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History, London 1994, p. 99.

46 David Douglass: Interview with Ian Gwinn [1 November 2011].

47 New archive-based historical accounts of the women's liberation movement in Britain are gradually emerging, some of which focus on feminist cultural practices. For example, see Simone Murray: Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politics, London 2004; Lucy Delap: Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000, in: History Workshop Journal 81 (Spring 2016), pp. 171–196; Laurel Forster: Spreading the word: feminist print cultures and the women's liberation movement, in: Women's History Review 25:5 (2016), pp. 812–831; D.-M. Withers: The politics of the workshop: craft, autonomy and women's liberation, in: Feminist Theory 21:2 (2020), pp. 217–234.

ments.[48] While their male counterparts could present their own intellectual subjectivity as utterly untouched by the intrusions of domesticity, childcare, or everyday life, women's subordinate position in the sexual division of labour underlying the production of knowledge became a wellspring of feminist critique. Alienated by the domineering manner of the university, women desired a more sympathetic and supportive research environment. "Our task", wrote historian Karen Hunt, "is to lose all the negative qualities of academic seminars: the elitism, the competitiveness, the destructiveness and hostility to feminist ideas".[49]

Located in the larger context of the women's movement, feminists established their own research and study groups, which were imbued with an egalitarian and participatory ethos and sometimes resembled consciousness-raising groups. Institutions like the Workers' Education Association (WEA) and university extra-mural departments afforded a degree of autonomy that allowed women to run women's studies classes collectively and informally (e. g. there were few if any entry requirements, wide discretion in the use of criteria to decide who was eligible to teach, no formal examinations).[50] Equally, the stress on personal experience as a source of insight into women's oppression and as a way of encouraging women to participate fostered a more open and trusting atmosphere where difficulties could be shared. In the case of the London Feminist History Group, "[t]here is no sense that you show yourself in admitting ignorance… speakers can and do freely admit to difficulties, ignorance and problems of many kinds".[51]

It was often important to restrict the membership of these groups to women only. For women at the CCCS, "this was a question of the masculine dominance of intellectual work [which] could only be seriously discussed in a small women's group."[52] In struggling against this domination, close ties were formed between members. According to Anna Davin, "there is a solidarity we experience as a group of feminist

48 Some of these experiences have been catalogued in personal testimonies and recollections of feminist activist-scholars. See Michelene Wandor (ed.): Once a Feminist: stories from a generation, London 1990; Anna Coote/Beatrix Campbell: Sweet Freedom: the struggle for women's liberation, Oxford 1982.

49 Karen Hunt: Manchester Women's History Group, in: Manchester Region History Review 1:1 (Spring 1987), p. 43.

50 On the origins and development of women's studies in Britain, see Elizabeth Bird: The Academic Arm of the Women's Liberation Movement: Women's Studies 1969–1999 in North America and the United Kingdom, in: Women's Studies International Forum 25:1 (2002), pp. 139–149; Idem.: Women's studies and the women's movement in Britain: origins and evolution, 1970–2000, Women's History Review 12:2 (2003), pp. 263–288.

51 Anna Davin: The London Feminist History Group, in: History Workshop Journal 9 (Spring 1980), p. 193.

52 Journal Group Draft for discussion, Rebecca O'Rourke Papers, USS 86/313, CRL.

women historians that would be weakened by the presence of men."[53] Likewise, the women's sub-group at the CCCS performed both a supportive and intellectual function, though this was not always a happy union. "Our need for solidarity in relation to the centre became confused with a supposed collective feminist intellectual position against which individuals felt they could not argue."[54] Attempts to separate out these functions proved difficult to achieve in practice.

Another way of fostering solidarities among group members, as well as to avoid the competitive pressures of the academic system, was to coordinate their efforts around collaborative projects. Collective group work became a major component of a feminist politics of knowledge. But the dependence on voluntary organisation created some basic difficulties. In the first place, there was the "frustration" of irregular attendance and the resulting problem of maintaining collective discussions from one meeting to the next.[55] Balancing different commitments and priorities proved challenging and could negatively impact the experience of group work. Birmingham feminist historians, who had embarked on a research project on feminism in the 1950s, found themselves in a contradictory situation, where the pull of individual work often overshadowed efforts to institute collective ways of working. Given that "the job market and research grants are geared primarily to 'individual achievement'", they could not simply drop their individual projects. This problem was "insurmountable": "[i]n a situation where jobs are 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."[56] Reporting in 1980, the conflict described here between the collective political project and the precarious professional and economic status of women in higher education appears particularly intense.

Elsewhere, the problems of turning intellectual work into a truly collective product proved intractable. As a project based on collective authorship, the Marxist Feminist Literature Collective (MFLC) presented a paper collectively to the British Sociological Association, where all members took it in turns to read it out, in the hope of "stimulat[ing] debate among & with the audience rather than accepting the usual speaker-audience division". Unfortunately, their aim proved unrealised, as traditional conventions of conference proceedings were upheld. "By not breaking down the usual 'authority' & distance of the speaker(s)", they admitted "we also did nothing to encourage the women in the audience to engage in dialogue". This flaw was partly due to the actual process of its production and to the way that the paper was written as a single argument—as they put—"as if by one individual voice but in fact by a hy-

53 Anna Davin: London Feminist History Group, p. 193.
54 Journal Group Draft for discussion, USS 86/313.
55 Minutes of MFLC, 14.5.78, USS 86/313.
56 Janice Winship: Birmingham Feminist History Research Group, in: History Workshop Federation Bulletin No. 1 (September 1980), p. 6.

pothetical single 'collective' voice… [rather than] to bring out the different positions within the group & lay it out as a debate."[57] If there was an issue of how far a single, collectively agreed view could be generally assumed, then the identity of the work as a collective composition remained problematic, since particular sections could be still attributed to the work of one individual. Thus, there emerged a potential conflict in the ethics and practice of solidarity within the collective: "should that person be able to use the work outside the group, or should we all claim equally to have 'written' the paper?" Again, the professional stakes of the individual ran up against collective political aspirations, such that privileging the claims of the collective appeared "self-defeating" in a highly individualised research culture.[58]

In many ways, women's studies straddled the liminal space between the world of the university and the WLM. Driven by the political ferment generated by the movement, the expansion of women's studies courses, especially inside the university itself, was soon accompanied by fears about the loss of its radicalising edge once it had become assimilated into the university context.[59] By the time of the first National Women Studies Conference in Manchester in December 1976, the process of assimilation appeared to have already led to a "tendency for women's studies to degenerate into academic courses treating women as a subject to be taught as any other", as well as to become isolated and ghettoised, and thus easily ignored.[60] As elsewhere, antagonisms arose at the conference between academic and non-academic definitions of women's studies. The problem became one of how to reconcile the politics of women's liberation with the structures of university authority, and of how it was possible to work within them to change them.

The insurgent character of feminist scholarship, as a critique of the traditional elitism and disciplinary hierarchies of academic knowledge, did not inhibit it from also seeking to demarcate an area of study around which intellectual work could be organised. Yet there remained some ambiguity as to the criteria by which knowledge produced by feminists should be validated. At one level, there was evidently a drive towards putting the study of women on a par with mainstream academic subjects, redressing 'the wrongs of women' via an equality of access defined in scholarly terms. For some feminists, this stance reflected the goals of 'equal rights feminism'. At another level, this was clearly a limited achievement when measured against the hopes of far-reaching radical change to dominant conceptions of knowledge. For others, what made feminist or women's studies potentially subversive of traditional epistemological structures was not simply an expanding range of objects, concepts and approaches,

57 Notes Towards Our Workshop Entitled Feminist Critics: Political Practice and Literary Theory at the BSA, USS 86/313.

58 Ibid.

59 Carol Dix: Where to Study Women's Studies, in: Spare Rib 18 (December 1973), p. 36.

60 Jane Cousins: Art, Women or Zoology, in: Spare Rib 55 (February 1977), p. 23.

but the way in which it sought to transform academic working practices and the very process of knowledge production itself through the political and social practices of the WLM. According to the CCCS's women sub-group, this comprised "collectivity", "non-hierarchical structures", and "consciousness raising":

> These elements affect the relationship between student/teacher and student/student. Their non-competitiveness and the group dynamics around the exchange and production of knowledge not only function to increase student participation and confidence but in the process of de-mystifying knowledge throw into relief the mode of operation of the taken-for-granted structures of education. The definition of the object of study in WS course is not given by the demands of the institution or potential careers. This definition rests on a basic feminism and thus these courses are politically rather than academically constituted.[61]

Still, the political direction of the women's movement could not be followed unquestioningly; at times, the relative autonomy of intellectual practice had to be upheld. For the MLFC that meant doing things differently, insisting upon a strict separation between their theoretical labours and personal experience, to which many other women's group had given voice. This paralleled their attempt to challenge a gendered divide in the treatment of literature between the WLM's tendency to celebrate "undervalued feminine qualities" like "intuition" and "emotional intelligence" and a "superior" set of masculine qualities associated with "reason" and "abstract thought".[62] In challenging women's exclusion from the latter realm, the group focused on appropriating theoretical work produced by men (in particular Althusser, Macherey, and Eagleton), which itself presented difficulties in advancing their aim. "[W]e speak in a language radically different from that of feminists who have celebrated women in a way which, by definition, excludes, refuses, the kind of theoretical discourse we have been using. […] [and] can be described as unnecessarily complex", they admitted.[63] Reliant on an inaccessible theoretical vocabulary, the MFLC's efforts to blast through the false dichotomy between feminised intuition and masculine reason may well have simply reproduced it.[64]

In placing theoretical critique in critical tension with the concern to validate women's writing and experience, the MFLC reflected a wider set of antinomies that came

61 Journal Group Draft for discussion.

62 Notes Towards Our Workshop, USS 86/313.

63 Ibid.

64 It should be noted that the MFLC actually gave rise to more inclusive projects like the 'Women and Writing' workshops, which "acted as a means of developing contact and discussion between women involved and interested in women's writing at a variety of levels". Janet Batsleer et al.: Rewriting English: Cultural Politics of Gender and Class, Oxford 1985, p. 123.

to play an organising role in debates on the British left from the late-70s onwards. We have already observed the controversy generated by the opposition of theory and history in the case of History Workshop. The contradictory imperatives inherent in any critical intellectual enterprise were intensified by a shifting economic and political landscape, which made the kind of dialogue that would bridge such oppositions harder to sustain. For the champions of Marxist-feminist theory, which enjoyed a brief but productive intellectual flowering, the desire to consummate a conceptual union between class and gender, capitalism and patriarchy, and production and reproduction, gave way to different theoretical emphases characterised by contingency, specificity, and discontinuity.[65]

Over the course of the next decade, many strands of feminist scholarship increasingly gravitated towards psychoanalysis, Foucault, or other post-structuralist thinkers.[66] These developments were hastened by a general epistemological uncertainty fostered by the crisis of the Left, postmodernism, and the impact of Thatcherism and post-Fordist transition, which fuelled a widespread loss of confidence in totalising metanarratives like Marxism and led to a fundamental restructuring of the entire field of intellectual production. In this sense, feminism was both agent and beneficiary of these trends. But while evidence of its impact and achievements in the sphere of scholarship and research is plentiful, the process of institutionalisation has remained partial and incomplete, making inroads into and across established disciplines rather than securing an autonomous space of its own. Indeed, one recent international survey of the fortunes of academic feminism discerns an "ambivalence of progress": considerable advances in terms of the growth of curricula, funding programmes, publications, and women in the profession have come at the expense of "marginalisation" and "depoliticisation".[67]

The gradual entry of the women's movement into academic institutions occurred at a moment when the grounds of critique and dissent had begun to shift in the 1980s and 1990s, as the scope for emancipatory and democratic projects contracted. The logic of incorporation 'splintered' the systemic quality of feminist critique, such that the epistemological challenge registered powerful effects across the social sciences and

65 Heidi Hartmann: The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union, in: Capital & Class 3:2 (1979), pp. 1–33.

66 For a general overview of these developments, which includes seminal contributions to feminist scholarship, see Terry Lovell (ed.): British Feminist Thought: A Reader, Oxford 1990.

67 Stefanie Ehmsen: How the Women's Movement Changed Academia: A Comparison of Germany and the United States, in: Kristina Schulz (ed.): Women's Liberation Movement: Impacts and Outcomes, New York 2017. See also Belinda Davis: The Personal is Political: Gender, Politics, and Political Activism in Modern German History, in: Karen Hagemann/Jean H. Quataert (eds.): Gendering Modern Germany History: Rewriting Historiography, New York 2007.

humanities, particularly under the sign of gender, while the institution proved far more impervious to the critique of academic hierarchies, mentalities, and cultures.[68] Revisiting the efforts of feminist scholars and activists to remake the entire sphere of knowledge production calls attention to the limited function of present-day 'progressive' agendas based upon the values of diversity, equality and access. Against top-down, corporate-driven mandates, the history of feminist study and reading groups (as well as many other areas of feminist activity), reveals a complex mix of engagements and enthusiasms, disruptions and disillusions that the commitment to the realisation of democratic participation and collective solidarity entailed. In the gap between then and now, we might begin to reconstruct this still incomplete project, finding new potentialities for this kind of collective intellectual work in ongoing struggles inside and outside the academy.

Conclusion

To consider these projects and their practices as conjuncturally specific, we should recognise the centrality of the general conditions of the post-'68 moment; above all, the structures and resources of the post-war social democratic state, which ran up against the limits of its own democratic capacities and entered into an ever-deepening crisis, enabling the expanded politics of 1968 to shape developments in culture, the arts, and in the academy. There were spaces at the margins of society for radicals, idealists, drop-outs, artists, filmmakers, part-time adult education tutors, and post-graduate students to combine forms of paid work with experimental pursuits of all kinds without having to commit themselves to salaried careers. Inspired by the utopian desires and revolutionary optimism of the long-1960s, left-wing activists extended the anti-authoritarianism of the student movement into wider regions of public and private life. The practice of participatory or direct democracy was central to this advance, functioning as both a radical critique of the forms of representative democracy and as a practical means of encouraging the widest involvement of people. In some areas, democratisation became more than just a commitment to decentralised, non-hierarchical decision-making structures; it served as a method of subversion, politicising whole areas of cultural and intellectual production whose dominant institutions and authority structures had gone thoroughly unquestioned. Indeed, this was an insurgent brand of cultural democracy, which went beyond the goal of achieving greater equality in the 'distribution of access' to knowledge towards actively pursuing the redefinition

68 Nancy Fraser: Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History, in: New Left Review 56 (March-April 2009), pp. 97–117.

of its content and form through an engagement with changing popular experience and expressions of meaning.[69]

A variety of cultural, educational and community initiatives, which were strengthened by the financial support of socialist-led local councils in the 1980s, coalesced and had a positive impact on outlooks and policy outcomes. However, the 'long revolution' of popular and democratic cultural transformation was met with a strong counter-offensive from the Right. The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 hastened the decline of the post-war settlement and the dispersion of organised socialist forces, not least in decisions to impose budget cuts and restraint upon local councils' funding. At the same time, larger shifts in the structures of political opportunity and everyday life altered the trajectory of movement politics, as decentralised and radically spontaneous grassroots mobilisations gave way to more professionalised groups engaged in mainstream campaigning, showing how rapidly traditional hierarchies and organisational structures could be recomposed.[70]

Evidently, the legacies of democratising knowledge in the 1970s and '80s remain uneven and incomplete. Yet recent pronouncements about the virtues of 'co-production' in research gesture towards that earlier ground, suggesting possible ways of renewing those legacies. Many of the projects that bring together community partners and groups with academic researchers are described in warm-sounding terms: 'collaboration', 'participation', 'shared authority', 'accessibility', 'partnership', and 'blurring the boundaries between the university and outside'.[71] We should, however, be extremely cautious about accepting some of the bold claims made on behalf of co-production.[72] Before we do so, we need more detailed studies of how societal change transformed the practice and politics of intellectual production. Among other things, we need to understand what kind of difficult compromises were necessarily entailed for movement organisations and their campaigns in the decision to receive external finance. We also need to understand precisely how the erosion of post-war social regularities and the withdrawal of material resources accentuated the pressure on activists to move into stable institutional worlds. And we need to understand the ideological effects of

69 Geoff Mulgan/Ken Worpole: Saturday Night Or Sunday Morning?: From Arts To Industry—New Forms Of Cultural Policy, London 1986.

70 See Chapters 5 and 6 in Adam Lent: British Social Movements since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power, Basingstoke 2001.

71 On co-produced research in the UK, see Catherine Durose et al.: Towards Coproduction in Research with Communities, Swindon 2011; Heather Campbell/Dave Vanderhoven: Knowledge That Matters: Realising the Potential of Co-Production, Manchester 2016.

72 Campbell and Vanderhoven claim that co-production "assumes […] no hierarchy of knowledge forms" and "can help to democratise the research process and in turn lead to socially just change". See Heather Campbell/Dave Vanderhoven: Knowledge That Matters, p. 12.

public sector and corporate assimilation of progressive agendas on the reorganisation of the languages and meaning of equality, democracy and so on.

In today's academic world, the conditions that made possible democratic and collectivised knowledge production have been dismantled by the rise of performance and competitive metrics, which reflect the dominance of neoliberal managerial regimes of accountability and control inside the UK university sector. Where once the struggle to establish oppositional spaces for collective and democratic experimentation was waged against external barriers, now constraints upon autonomous action work through the very structures and practices of programmes like 'widening participation', 'public engagement', and 'impact', which absorbed features of the earlier radical critique of academic authority in largely depoliticised ways in the embrace of an ethos based on partnership, inclusion and engagement.[73] Without an understanding of the contradictory processes of structural and institutional change and their implications for current academic practice, we will be unable to anticipate or to realise new possibilities for intervening into the production of knowledge in radically democratic ways.

While each of the three cases presented here became, in certain respects, casualties of that conjunctural shift broadly associated with the rise of neoliberalism, reconstructions of the shifting entanglement of commitments, practices, tensions, and contradictions through which these projects issued their challenge to established academic hierarchies may serve as a counterweight to the contemporary language of collaboration and participation, becoming points of contestation in present configurations of politics and knowledge. Instead of narratives of loss or disavowal, the unfinished legacies of their critique and positive example might be actively re-appropriated and politically reimagined in alternative readings of their significance.[74] All three had to contend with the frequently incompatible demands that the commitment to collective and democratic working methods placed on their intellectual ambitions. Negotiating competing impulses, from deepening the practice of equality in scholarly production, to withstanding the divisiveness of particularly explosive issues (e.g. feminism, theoretical vs. popular approaches), to maintaining links to some larger 'outside', relied upon a vast labour of solidarity and mutual support. More complete accounts need to address the emotional and political intensities of 'intellectual solidarity'. They must also attend to the necessarily complex and problematic status of ostensibly emancipatory intellectual practices, not least their potential to inadvertently reproduce forms of control and exclusion, as evidenced in feminist criticism of masculine forms of domination.

73 A critical discussion of co-production is provided by David M. Bell/Kate Pahl: Co-production: towards a utopian approach, in: International Journal of Social Research Methodology 21:1 (2018) pp. 105–117.

74 On narratives of loss common to both cultural studies and feminism, see Jackie Stacey: Idealizations and Their Discontents: Feminism and the Field Imaginary of Cultural Studies, in: Matthew Hilton/Kieran Connell: Cultural Studies 50 Years On.

In the end, despite key differences of formation and character, each of these projects found cohesion in a broadly shared commitment to a vision of the transformative potential of cultural and intellectual production that we might label 'Gramscianism'. Stuart Hall, among others, has been explicit in elaborating the Gramscian underpinnings of cultural studies. In his view, the politics of intellectual work involved irreducible tensions between two fronts:

1. hegemonic struggle at the level of ideas ("we had to be at the forefront of intellectual theoretical work") and
2. the necessity of "transmitting" those ideas "to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class". The challenge, he argued, was not how to resolve them but "how to live with them".[75]

The examples of CCCS, History Workshop and feminist and women's studies give us practical guides to living with the tensions, both productive and disruptive, inherent in any critical intellectual project. Given the political vicissitudes of our times, it is tempting to seek more consolatory legacies (whether strictly academic or uncompromisingly militant) of 1968. But this would be to overlook the potential resources of hope to be found in those unrealised, incomplete projects of the past, which offer a different point of departure for reassembling and reanimating complex historical trajectories in the present. Likewise, while a considerable distance separates those 'two fronts' today, the challenge to live the tensions between them can still arise in efforts to undertake collective work, even under highly circumscribed conditions.[76] Under neoliberalism, under the strains of academic 'individualisation', collective and collaborative intellectual work "remains a deviant practice".[77]

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75 Stuart Hall: Theoretical Legacies, p. 268.

76 See Richard Johnson: Complex authorships: intellectual coproduction as a strategy for the times, in: Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities 3:3 (1998) pp. 189–204.

77 John Clarke: Hierarchies and Beyond?, p. 101. On academic individualisation, see Angela McRobbie: The Smile Economy in the Teaching Machine: Undoing Neoliberalism in the Academy Today? (24 August 2018), at: https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3989-the-smile-economy-in-the-teaching-machine-undoing-neoliberalism-in-the-academy-today [accessed on 13 January 2020].