The houses
of history

A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory

Selected and introduced by
Anna Green and Kathleen Troup

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Preface

Every piece of historical writing has a theoretical basis on which evidence is selected, filtered and understood. This statement is as true of scientific empiricism as it is of poststructuralism, although the theory is more likely to be explicit in the latter case. As Loewenberg said: 'Each historian and each age redefines categories of evidence in the light of its needs, sensibilities, and perceptions. The value of any conceptual framework is what new combinations of data or inferences from the data it may contribute to the historian's ability to interpret documents and the other raw material of history.'[1] In our view, this is one of the enduring strengths of the historical profession, and one of the pleasures of working as an historian.

The idea for this book developed from an introductory History and Theory course which we have taught for several years now. We wanted to introduce students to the theories behind different kinds of historical writing in order that they might read more critically and reflect on their own historical practice. We hoped to provide our classes with stimulating examples from the various historical 'schools'. To our surprise, no textbook existed in English which fulfilled our dual purpose.

In our experience, history students often find theory more difficult than do students from other disciplines, mainly due to their thorough-going historical training in the empirical method. We have therefore tried to make this book as straightforward as possible, while pointing to more complex debates in the brief additional reading lists concluding each chapter. References will also assist further reading, although we have kept these to a minimum, partly due to constraints of space. We refer to articles as well as whole books since these shorter readings will be initially more accessible to students.

In considering the structure of this reader, we decided to limit ourselves to those schools of historical thought which have had the greatest influence on the historical profession during the twentieth century. This was in part due to the restrictions of length necessary in a book designed as a university text, and partly in accordance with our belief that these schools were of most relevance to contemporary students. For similar reasons, we have concentrated on works of history, although there are a few studies by political scientists, anthropologists and other theorists. The applied readings range from the classic, such as the extract from *The Making of the English Working Class*, to the

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recent, such as Henrietta Whiteman's work. Again we have aimed for accessibility, both in language and length, while trying to represent historical writing covering a range of chronological periods and geographical areas.

Clearly the twelve schools are not discrete: for example, Catherine Hall, who writes on gender, also addresses issues of class; Inga Clendinnen, our ethnohistorian, is concerned with gender roles as well as Mayan ritual in general. Almost all historians use empiricism in conjunction with any other theoretical perspective which they might adopt.

An enterprise of this nature inevitably incurs a number of debts. The History Department at the University of Waikato entrusted us with the development of its theory course: we're glad to have this opportunity to thank its members. We also thank the Vice-Chancellor of this university for his financial contribution. We had the good fortune to encounter Vanessa Graham from Manchester University Press at the beginning of this process: her enthusiasm assisted our first foray into the textbook market. We're also grateful to our students who have stimulated us with their questions, pushed us in our efforts for clarity and even designed a class T-shirt, aptly emblazoned with 'The Scream'. Many friends and colleagues have discussed our work with us and have thereby lightened the burden of writing. We also thank the anonymous reader for helpful comments and the staff at Manchester University Press for their efficient processing of the manuscript.

In particular, Peter Gibbons, Mark Houlahan, Radhika Mohanram and Tom Ryan have severally read drafts, provided obscure references and rushed to our assistance with apparently the only copy of *Representations* in New Zealand, and we're very grateful for their interest. Finally we thank our husbands, Jack Vowles and Kai Jensen, for their domestic support, theoretical and editorial comments and patience with constant historiographical conversations throughout the writing of this book: their presence has been invaluable.

Note

1 Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach* (2nd ed., New Brunswick, 1996), p. 15.

Acknowledgements

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The empiricists

Empiricism is both a theory of knowledge, an epistemology, and a method of historical enquiry.[1] There are few historians who dissent from the use of empiricism as a research method, and most routinely employ the analytical tools and protocols developed over the past 150 years. But as a theory of knowledge empiricism has come under attack, most recently by postmodernism. Since the turn of the century philosophers have grappled with the epistemological difficulties of empiricism, and historians have been content to let them do so. Empiricist historians often prefer to describe their work as a 'craft', with all the connotations of hands-on knowledge and skill, and to emphasize the importance of methodology over theory. Yet all historical writing is constructed upon a theory of knowledge, and we cannot and should not leave these matters entirely to others. Let us begin with the origins of empiricism, which is, without doubt, the most influential school of historical thought over the course of this century.

The empirical approach to historical research has its origins in the 'scientific revolution' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[2] Central to the natural philosophy of the period, originating with Francis Bacon, was the belief that knowledge should be derived from observation of the material world. This, of course, challenged the control exercised by the Church and its clerics over the generation and dissemination of learning. The new ideas of scientific enquiry were carried forward by the philosophers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and applied to the study of human society. Many of the university disciplines with which we are now familiar, history, sociology and anthropology, emerged during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. Intrinsic to this new, university-led professionalism for historical study came an emphasis upon systematic archival research into material documents.

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revealing the truth about the past. Both men compared the creation of historical knowledge to building with bricks and mortar. Each published piece of research represented a brick and the work of the historian was therefore analogous to that of a skilled craftsman. The analogy is revealing, for neither Bury nor Elton expected, or desired, the labourer to have knowledge of the larger edifice. Bury visualized historians as labourers painstakingly adding bricks to a grand building, the design of which was unknown to them.[10] Elton defended the work of the student 'journeyman' who might never raise his eyes beyond the detail of his own minute area of study.[11] The material foundations of this edifice, the labours of countless scholars, had to be sound and both men placed a great deal of importance upon the correct historical method for the evaluation and use of historical evidence.

With irrefutable, factual information located at the heart of historical enquiry, the method of establishing the veracity and adequacy of the evidence became paramount, and this leads us to the first principle of empirical history. The careful evaluation and authentication of primary source material is one of Ranke's most significant legacies. In a widely-read textbook on the study of history Arthur Marwick lists seven criteria which should be applied to historical documents. The first four steps involve the basic verification of authenticity.[12] One of the most famous forged documents in history, the Donation of Constantine, purported to show that the Emperor Constantine gave his crown and empire to Pope Sylvester I after the latter cured him of leprosy. The document was exposed as a forgery seven hundred years later by Renaissance writer Lorenzo Valla.[13] But forgeries are not confined to the medieval world; the comparatively recent revelation that the 'Hitler Diaries' were fraudulent suggests that authentication of sources remains an essential part of the historian's work.[14]

Marwick's three final criteria relate more to interpretation than verification. The aspiring historian is advised to ask, for example, 'what person, or group of persons, created the source [and] how exactly was the document understood by contemporaries?'[15] Taking this process a significant step further, one of the foremost historians in the field of intellectual history, Quentin Skinner, transformed the study of major political texts. First he insisted that the works of political thinkers be understood within the 'more general social and intellectual matrix out of which their works arose'.[16] While social context could help explain a text, however, this alone was not enough. The intellectual historian

also needed to consider the intentions of the author, and how those intentions were to be achieved. In other words, Skinner argued that texts should be understood as acts of rhetorical communication.[17]

The limitations of the traditional criteria for documentary evaluation become apparent, however, when historians expand their focus beyond that of the literate elite. First of all, the records or artefacts that survive into the present are always incomplete and partial. Conclusions have to be based upon the extant records and these may reflect a very narrow range of experiences or perspectives. Most documentary material is created and/or preserved by the elite of a society, and to reconstruct the lives and perspectives of those further down the hierarchy the historian must find other sources and techniques beyond the limited range proposed by Marwick. Ethnohistorians, in particular those working in the area of culture contact, frequently work with evidence reflecting only the perspectives of the colonizer. They have learned from the discipline of anthropology how to read such evidence against the grain, and for its symbolic content, in order to reveal the subjugated peoples.

Secondly, even though much evidence is destroyed, it remains virtually impossible for any modern historian to read all existing archival source material bearing upon their research, for the time-scale (and endurance) is beyond any one individual. When the quantity of surviving documents exceeds human capacity Elton recommended the exhaustive study of one set of 'master' documents to guide the historian in his or her subsequent selective use of the remaining archives.[18] These strictures concerning selection may be applicable to source material consisting of a reasonably comprehensive documentary archive deriving from a known source, for example government records, preserved in only one or two depositories. They are, however, clearly inadequate when the research subject requires the historian to find the evidence in a wide range of sources, scattered all over the place, the quantity and relevance of which may not be known in advance.

Let us turn now to the second and third tenets of empirical history, which are closely linked: that of impartial research, devoid of *a priori* beliefs and prejudices, and the inductive method of reasoning. Elton argued that the historian should not impose his or her own questions upon the evidence; rather, the questions should arise spontaneously out of the material itself.[19] This is a useful warning, as Quentin Skinner has pointed out, to avoid 'the premature consignment of unfamiliar

evidence to familiar categories'. But Skinner illustrates, through the hypothetical analysis of a material object (in this case a house), how 'we are already caught up in the process of interpretation as soon as we begin to describe any aspect of our evidence in words'.[20] This too is the basis for Abrams' opening comments on Elton's study of *Reformation Europe* where the title of the work, without further elaboration, prefigures the field of enquiry.[21] Abrams continues his critique by examining what he calls the 'Elton dilemma', the problem of narrative as an explanatory historical device. Rejecting the notion that facts speak for themselves, Abrams argues that every narrative contains implicit analysis because the historian must decide how to arrange the evidence. The device of telling a story allows the historian to evade critical scrutiny of the theorizing underpinning its structure.[22]

Furthermore, judgements concerning causation or motivation are often the product of the historian's inferences, and are impossible to prove.[23] Let us take the example of the decline in fertility in Britain, the United States and Australasia between 1870 and 1920. Based upon quantitative analysis of the census data, historians accept that there was a significant decline in the average number of live births per married woman during this period. In this case the overall trend appears to be clear. But the reasons for the fertility decline are less so; there are at least half a dozen explanations which range from the economic (fertility behaviour determined by inter-generational wealth flows) to the social (the increased authority of women within the home).[24] While the fertility decline was undoubtedly the consequence of a complex set of factors, historians continue to search for the principal causes.[25] In a world facing rapid population increase, understanding human motivation for fertility control in the past acquires particular contemporary salience.

But agreement among historians is remarkably difficult to achieve, and historical events are open to a multiplicity of interpretations. The same evidence can generate two quite different stories about the past, and problems arise when these are incompatible. For a striking example of this in practice, see the comparison by environmental historian William Cronon of two histories of the long drought which struck the Great Plains of North America in the 1930s.[26] The first study describes the drought as a natural disaster over which the people of the Dust Bowl triumphed; the second focuses upon the failure of human beings to understand the cyclical climate of this semi-arid environment leading to ecological collapse. Cronon ultimately concludes that 'to try to

escape the value judgments that accompany storytelling is to miss the point of history itself, for the stories we tell, like the questions we ask, are all finally about value'.[27] Are we then to accept that all interpretations are relative? Relativism is the belief that absolute truth is unattainable, and that all statements about history are connected or relative to the position of those who make them. In the 1930s the American historical profession was convulsed by Charles A. Beard's critique of objectivity.[28] Beard, the brilliant revisionist historian and author of *An Economic Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution*, argued that historians could never be 'neutral mirror(s)' to the past:

> We do not acquire the colorless, neutral mind by declaring our intention to do so. Rather do we clarify the mind by admitting its cultural interests and patterns – interests and patterns that will control, or intrude upon, the selection and organization of historical materials. . . . What do we think we are doing when we are writing history? What kinds of philosophies or interpretations are open to us? Which interpretations are actually chosen and practiced? And why? By what methods or processes can we hope to bring the multitudinous and bewildering facts of history into any coherent and meaningful whole? Through the discussion of such questions the noble dream of the search for truth may be brought nearer to realization, not extinguished.[29]

In Britain a similar relativist critique came from the British historian E. H. Carr in *What is History?*, published in 1961. Carr shared Beard's perspective that historians wrote about the past in the context of contemporary concerns and perspectives. For Carr, the historian was a fisherman, choosing which pond in which to fish, and what tackle to use. All history writing, he insisted, was ultimately the product of the historian:

> In the first place, the facts of history never come to us 'pure', since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it.[30]

The significance of individual subjectivity in the writing of history has gained reinforcement in recent years from the influence of postmodernism. From this perspective, the orthodox historical preoccupation with facts about the past becomes redundant, because there is no independent reality outside language. The historian is always constrained by the limitations of his or her own intellectual world, from which the concepts and categories of thought are invariably drawn. Postmodernists argue that while language shapes our

reality, it does not necessarily reflect it. Further elaboration of this perspective will be found in chapter 12, but the major challenge to empiricism lies in the rejection of any correspondence between reality or experience, and the language employed to describe it.

One difficulty with subjectivism is that it leaves the door open to the unacceptable face of moral relativism. Is one interpretation of the past as good as any other? Should we not, for example, challenge those historians who attempt to refute the historical fact of the holocaust? An interpretation based upon such a travesty of the documentary and oral record indicates the moral deficiency of an unqualified subjectivist stance.[31] All this leaves empirical historians in a very unsatisfactory position, and as Dominick LaCapra has suggested, 'extreme documentary objectivism and relativistic subjectivism do not constitute genuine alternatives'.[32]

One way of addressing this unsatisfactory dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism was developed by the philosopher of science Karl Popper, whose writings span a large part of the century. Persecuted by the Nazis in the 1930s, Popper retained his faith in science as a rational tool despite the destruction wrought by totalitarian systems in Europe. Indeed, he agreed with Bertrand Russell's statement that epistemological relativism held a close relationship with authoritarian and totalitarian beliefs:

> the belief in the possibility of a rule of law, of equal justice, of fundamental rights, and a free society – can easily survive the recognition that judges are not omniscient and may make mistakes about facts and that, in practice, absolute justice is never fully realized in any particular legal case. But the belief in the possibility of a rule of law, of justice, and of freedom, can hardly survive the acceptance of an epistemology which teaches that there are no objective facts.[33]

In Popper's method, the historian begins with an hypothesis or 'conjecture', which he or she must then seek to disprove through examination of the evidence. The concept of refutation is central to Popper's goal of achieving objective knowledge. Such knowledge, he believed, could never be more than provisional, but 'those among our theories which turn out to be highly resistant to criticism, and which appear to us at a certain moment of time to be better approximations to truth than other known theories, may be described . . . as "the science" of that time'.[34] All theories should, in principle, be able to be refuted; for this reason Popper dismissed psychoanalysis, which he perceived as able to explain 'practically everything that happened'.[35]

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 310, 307.

23 See John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London, 1984), ch. 7, for an excellent discussion of these issues.

24 See Simon Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain 1860–1940* (Cambridge, 1996).

25 S. H. Rigby discusses the philosophical problems inherent in the search for principal causes in 'Historical Causation: Is One Thing more Important than Another', *History*, 80, 259 (June 1995), pp. 227–42.

26 See William Cronon, 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative', *Journal of American History*, 78 (March 1992), pp. 1347–76.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 1376.

28 Novick, *That Noble Dream*, p. 259.

29 Charles A. Beard, 'That Noble Dream' (1935), in Fritz Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History* (2nd edn, London, 1970), p. 328.

30 E. H. Carr, *What is History* (2nd edn, London, 1987), p. 22.

31 Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York, 1994).

32 Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, 1985), p. 137.

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34 *Ibid.*, p. vii.

35 Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (Oxford, 1985), p. 63.

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37 Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 28–31.

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ENGLAND UNDER THE TUDORS
G. R. Elton

Contents

Chapter II
HENRY VII: SECURING THE DYNASTY

1. Henry's claim to the crown

When victory was won at Bosworth, Lord Stanley, whose timely desertion of Richard III had made Henry's triumph possible, picked up the crown and put it on the victor's head; according to the chronicler, people rejoiced and clapped their hands and cried, 'King Henry, King Henry'. But while this acclamation must have been pleasant to his ears, it did not make the gold circlet sit any more securely on his head. Henry VII's first task was to convince the country and the world

that he really was king. Though he could feel the task somewhat eased as his journey to London assumed the proportions of a triumph, there was probably no need to remind him of men's fickleness. The city of London, in particular, had distinguished itself by the readiness with which it had hailed each successive conqueror of the crown.

Henry's own claim to the crown was far from straightforward. Fifteenth-century England knew no proper law of succession. The judges had repeatedly declared that the common law did not extend to such exalted matters; they had, in fact, been too scared of the consequences to attempt a definition in the middle of the dynastic struggles. Henry IV, in 1399, had put forward a claim compounded of the (false) assertion that he represented the true line of succession, the proof of divine favour contained in his actual victory, and the duty of removing a lawless monarch like Richard II. There were points here which Henry VII might profitably remember. Richard, duke of York, in 1450, and his son Edward IV after him, opposed an out-and-out theory of legitimacy to the claims which the oath of allegiance gave to Henry VI, the king in possession. Legitimacy—the doctrine that the crown can descend only to one man at any given time and that this succession is determined by primogeniture—was the centre of the Yorkist position; being descended from John of Gaunt's elder brother, they found in it a useful weapon against Gaunt's issue. Richard III exploited it further when he took the crown by the simple step of declaring his nephews bastardised; this left him as the only legitimate heir of the only legitimate line. There was thus a general idea that the succession should pass to the eldest son, but the strict theory of legitimacy was still the property of a party, and the Lancastrians had never subscribed to it.

The theory was of no use at all to Henry VII. He claimed to represent the line of Lancaster; his mother Margaret was the last of the Beauforts, John of Gaunt's illegitimate descendants who had been legitimised by the pope and by Richard II. However, an insertion, itself of doubtful validity, in Henry IV's confirmation of his predecessor's grant had denied them the right to succeed to the crown. On the male side, Henry had no royal ancestry; if direct descent from Edward III was to be decisive, the young earl of Warwick, son of the late duke of Clarence, had undoubtedly the best claim. Legitimacy was thus valueless to the Tudor king. Nor did he intend to base his right on the much-mooted marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV: it might be useful in appeasing the Yorkist faction, but Henry

year declared void all crown grants made since the death of Henry VI and recovered for Henry VII a vast deal of land; clearly, the king was from the first determined to improve his finances. In the true spirit of the civil wars, each stage of which had been signalled by the attainder of the defeated and the reversal of attainders previously inflicted on the victors, the parliament marked a Tudor, or even a Lancastrian, triumph. For the time being the Yorkists—even those who, hating Richard as a usurper, had supported Henry's bid for the crown—were left rather in the cold; the long overdue marriage to Elizabeth of York, so often promised, came none too soon to prevent the complete alienation of moderate Yorkist sentiment.

Moreover, there were still the extremists. In March 1486, having married his queen and seeing the south at peace, Henry travelled north into the Yorkist stronghold of Yorkshire, to show his face and overcome opposition. At Lincoln he heard that Francis, Lord Lovell, Richard III's friend and chamberlain, had broken sanctuary at Colchester, together with Humphrey and Thomas Stafford, and had fled to unknown parts. As the king continued into Yorkshire, news came in of armed bands raised by the fugitives and of threatened risings in Henry's path. But nothing happened. York, which recently had recorded an official lament at Richard III's overthrow, received his conqueror with pageantry and pomp; a local conspiracy was promptly scotched, and Lovell's forces melted away before the promise of a pardon. Lovell fled abroad; the Staffords, who had failed to raise the west country against the king, were dragged from sanctuary and taken to the Tower. The question arose whether they ought to escape justice because the Church's right of sanctuary had been violated. In his natural desire to prevent an acquittal, Henry tried to get the judges' opinion before the case came to trial, but since they were reluctant to commit themselves in advance he had to be content with requesting a rapid decision. In the end the judges of king's bench decided that sanctuary was a common-law matter in which the pope could not interfere—certainly a striking instance of the growing spirit of resistance to ecclesiastical pretensions—and that the privilege did not cover treasonable offences. Humphrey Stafford was executed, though Thomas benefited from Henry VII's awakening mercifulness. The rising itself was utterly insignificant, but the case deserves attention because it illustrates the Tudor principle of relying on the decisions of common-law judges, the Tudor readiness to respect the judges' independence, and the Tudor disregard for ancient franchises and immunities.

In September 1486, Henry's heart was gladdened by the birth of a son—Arthur (the revival of the ancient British name was meant to be significant)—who seemed to make the dynasty secure. The king himself was not yet thirty; there seemed no question that he would live long enough to see his heir of age. However, just at this juncture the first of the serious conspiracies of the reign came into the open. The country was much unsettled by rumours: many believed that the princes in the Tower were still alive and had perhaps managed to escape, or that the earl of Warwick, the true Yorkist claimant if Richard III had really disposed of Edward IV's sons, was again at large. There was plenty of credulity, plenty of Yorkist sentiment, and plenty of plain superstition for a skilful man to exploit. An Oxford priest of no birth but some brains, Richard Symonds, was the first to realise this. He planned to pass off a pupil of his, a harmless gentle boy called Lambert Simnel, as Richard of York, the younger of Edward's sons; soon after, when it was rumoured that Warwick had died in the Tower, Simnel's impersonation was changed to Warwick on the grounds that the government would not be able to disprove the fraud by exhibiting the real earl. The very fact that such a wildcat scheme could spring from an obscure priest's brain—and that it came within measurable distance of success—indicates the state of the country and the size of Henry's problem. Symonds found favour with the leaders of the Yorkist party—Margaret, the dowager duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV and the centre of all the plots against the Tudors, and the exiled Lord Lovell who had taken refuge with her. John de la Pole, earl of Lincoln, Richard III's successor-designate whom Henry VII had treated with kindness, repaid the king by fleeing to join the rebels who had raised the White Rose in Ireland. That country had always nursed Yorkist sympathies, and its most powerful noble, the earl of Kildare, welcomed any opportunity to throw off English control.

Thus Henry was suddenly faced with a major threat, all the more dangerous in that it centred upon Ireland where he could not touch it. Subsidiary moves in Lancashire and Cornwall could be disregarded, but the menace from across the Irish channel demanded immediate action. In vain the real Warwick was paraded through London; in May 1487, the false Warwick was proclaimed Edward VI in Dublin, and all Ireland except the city of Waterford went over to him. His power rested on Kildare, the Yorkist leaders Lincoln and Lovell, and 2,000 German mercenaries contributed by Margaret of Burgundy. In June they landed in Lancashire and began their march

on London. The familiar story of the Wars of the Roses seemed about to re-open. However, the country showed how tired it was of it all: even Yorkshire gave little support to the White Rose, and the rest of the country remained loyal to Henry. It is probable, also, that the inclusion in Lincoln's army of many wild Irishmen served to lose him much support. The decision came at Stoke, on 16 June 1487, where all the Yorkist leaders were killed, or disappeared never to be heard of again; Symonds and Simnel fell into the king's hands. Henry proved merciful in a politic manner; his treatment of Simnel, taken into the royal household where he made a career from scullion to falconer, bore an air of sardonic but not unkindly humour. Symonds was confined for life; there was no general proscription or holocaust of executions such as was to disgrace later Tudor victories, though a number of Simnel's followers paid for their treason in sizeable fines. One of the victims of the affair, for reasons which have remained obscure, was Henry's mother-in-law, the foolish and meddling Elizabeth Woodville; she ended her days in a convent. Throughout it all it is clear that Henry tried to play down the whole business, an endeavour in which he succeeded.

Before the next serious threat to Henry's throne arose, England became involved in a war with France. The full story is extremely complicated, and almost equally immaterial. But its main lines are important, for they indicate both Henry's VII's aims in foreign affairs and the European diplomatic situation which was to determine England's attitude to the continent until the fall of Wolsey in 1529. In the last twenty years of the fifteenth century Western Europe assumed a new aspect. France, consolidated by Louis XI (who died in 1483), and Spain, created by the personal union of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile (1469), took over the leadership of affairs, and their quarrels form the story of European diplomacy to which the machinations of Maximilian, king of the Romans, of Italian princes including the pope, and of the kings of England are subsidiary. Henry VII's immediate attitude in 1487 was decided by several considerations. The traditional hostility to France was far from dead; indeed, it was kept alive by the king's retention of a claim to the French throne which feeling in the country would not have allowed him to surrender even if he had felt so inclined. More materially, England's continued possession of Calais provided both a gateway into France and a permanent irritant to relations between the two countries. Furthermore, Henry earnestly wished to secure visible recognition for his dynasty from some European power, and

common interests, mostly commercial, suggested the rising power of Spain. In 1488–9 he negotiated a treaty of marriage between his son Arthur and Catherine, the younger daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. In return, Spain—who had ambitions for two French provinces in the Pyrenees—secured a promise of English help against France. The occasion of the quarrel was provided by the affairs of Brittany. That duchy alone had escaped the centralising activities of Louis XI, but his daughter (Anne of Beaujeu) and later his son (Charles VIII) were determined to remedy the omission. Though the French won a great victory in 1488 they lost its gains when the duke of Brittany died soon after, to be succeeded by his daughter Anne, aged twelve. Anne of Brittany was an important heiress whose hand was worth fighting for; Spain saw a chance of embarrassing France, and Anne of Beaujeu a chance of asserting French control of the duchy by claiming the wardship of the young duchess; the war revived.

England's part was decided for her by the danger of letting the Breton ports fall into French hands, by the fact that English volunteers had been killed in hundreds in the previous Breton defeat, and by Spanish pressure. In 1489 Henry prepared for war. With some difficulty he obtained a parliamentary grant of £100,000, only part of which was ever paid; its collection led to a major riot in the north in which the king's lieutenant, the earl of Northumberland, was killed. The garrison at Calais was reinforced. The treaty of Medina del Campo with Spain, in March 1489, bound England to the war. Henry gained big trading concessions, but Spain had much the best of the political bargain: either side could withdraw when it had achieved its ends, but since Spain wanted only the Pyrenean provinces while England spoke of recovering Henry V's conquests, it is plain where the advantage lay. However, Henry got what he wanted—trade on favoured terms and the betrothal of Arthur and Catherine; as events were to show, he had no intention of wasting blood or treasure over the affairs of Brittany or Spain. He fulfilled the terms of the treaty and assisted his other ally, Maximilian, in his struggle with Flemish rebels. Otherwise neither he nor anyone else made any move until in 1490 Maximilian suddenly married Anne of Brittany. Henry occupied 1491 in extracting money from his country by benevolences, that is, by forced gifts described as voluntary, a method declared illegal in 1484; but no one resisted Charles VIII when, stung to action by Anne's marriage, he proceeded gradually to conquer Brittany and in the end himself married Anne after she had

secured the necessary dispensation from her non-consummated previous marriage.

The situation was now handsomely confused. Spain showed no intention of supporting her ally; not for the last time did kings of England regret an alliance with Ferdinand of Aragon. Brittany was irrevocably French, and the vast English ambitions for the recovery of Henry V's conquests were merely ridiculous. It need not be thought that the king shared them. But he could not afford to associate the Tudors with the surrender of claims so tenaciously held by Lancaster and York, nor did he wish to write off the considerable loans he had made to Brittany earlier in the war. He therefore spent 1492 in making demonstrations designed to impress France with the gravity of the English threat. He even crossed the channel in person and took an army to besiege Boulogne, an action which came to be considered the *sine qua non* of Tudor generalship in Northern France. Charles VIII had no reason for continuing the war, the more so as his restless ambition was turning to thoughts of Italy. Thus in December 1492 the two powers signed the treaty of Etaples by which Henry agreed to hold his claim to France in abeyance and received in return a sum which he could and did call a tribute, as well as repayment of the Breton debts. At relatively small expense he had obtained an honourable peace and a sizeable pension to compensate him for his outlay. He had thrown over Spain—but Ferdinand and Isabella had themselves been contemplating a separate peace, so that Henry had merely beaten them at their own game. His other ally, Maximilian, also felt himself deserted, but his own conduct had been extremely shifty, and no one ever at any time had any scruples in neglecting Maximilian. The war had demonstrated that England was once again a power to be reckoned with and entitled to play a part in European diplomacy. It had led to the official recognition of the Tudor dynasty by France and Spain, with both of whom Henry had concluded treaties. The king could feel that he had manœuvred well in his first essay in this tricky game.

The treaty of Etaples came not a minute too soon, for Henry had to turn his attention to the most serious threat he was to face in his whole reign. In the year 1491, a young man of seventeen, servant to a Breton merchant, was walking up and down the streets of Cork, displaying on his person the silk clothes in which his master traded. His bearing and splendour made a great impression on the rather backward townsfolk, unsettled as they already were by tales of Plantagenet princes escaping hither and thither. They told the young man

that Sir William did not think even a chamberlain's staff sufficient reward for his services.

The arrests and executions broke the conspiracy in England and made Warbeck's projected invasion hopeless. Nevertheless, it was attempted. In July 1495 he appeared off Deal and landed gradually the better part of his forces; he himself remained prudently on board ship. The royal officers were ready: the men who had landed were killed or taken, and the affair collapsed in ridicule as Warbeck sailed rapidly off to Ireland. Here he failed to take the loyal town of Waterford in an eleven days' siege and decided to try Scotland. King James IV had come to the throne as the head of the party bitterly hostile to England, after his mildly Anglophil father had been murdered. He was therefore more than ready to receive the pretender and offer him assistance. But this business too came to nothing. In January 1496 a Scottish force crossed the border and burnt and looted savagely— distressing Warbeck not a little, it must be added, much to the amazement of both Scots and English. They then withdrew again. Border raids were one thing; an expedition to put Richard IV on the throne of England was quite another. Henry VII was the less inclined to take serious countermeasures because his natural dislike of war was being encouraged by Spain who wanted his alliance against France (then too successful in Italy) and therefore tried to arrange peace between England and Scotland. Moreover, the heavy war taxation led to a really serious rising in Cornwall. The Cornishmen had no interest in Warbeck; what they wanted was relief from exactions demanded by affairs on the far northern border which they did not consider concerned them. They therefore rose in 1497, under the leadership of the blacksmith Joseph and the lawyer Flamank, to march to London and state their case. They were peaceable enough at first but killed a tax-collector at Taunton, probably thinking little of so obvious a deed. Then, led by Lord Audley, an impoverished peer, they marched right across England, for with the king's forces tied up on the border there was no one to oppose them. In June 1497 they sat down at Blackheath, but instead of being overawed—Henry never parleyed with rebels under arms—the king proceeded to surround and attack them. Two thousand died on the day; of the survivors only the leaders were hanged. All this, however, did not make the problem of Perkin Warbeck easier for Henry.

In actual fact Perkin left Scotland, where he was kept as a potential but unused asset, in July 1497, hoping to try his luck once more in Ireland. But things had changed there; Kildare was, for the

moment, loyal; and Warbeck thought it better to follow an invitation from Cornwall where the king's clemency had by some been misinterpreted as weakness. Opposed by the new lord chamberlain, Giles Lord Daubeney, Perkin once again lost heart; at Taunton he stole away at midnight with some sixty leading followers, leaving his forces unofficered. Though he reached sanctuary at Beaulieu monastery, he was persuaded to throw himself on Henry's mercy, and so in August 1497 the king at last had the troublesome adventurer in his hands. It was now that the famous confession appeared, telling of Warbeck's true identity and early life; but there is sound proof that Henry knew all these details as early as 1493, and corroborative evidence exists to establish the truth of the confession. Warbeck was kept at court in honourable custody; once again Henry VII refused to make martyrs. In 1498, however, he tried to escape and on his recapture suffered a harsher confinement. Finally, he made another attempt in November 1499, as is supposed with the king's connivance, for now the government hoped to get at the real Yorkist, the earl of Warwick, through the pretended one. Warwick seems to have been quite innocent of any attempt against Henry VII, but for some reason of which we are ignorant the government had decided that his very existence constituted a danger. Indeed, the career of Perkin Warbeck, and that of Lambert Simnel before him, gave grounds for such a belief, and it may be that diplomatic difficulties—the insistence of Spain on a safe Tudor title before they would let Catherine of Aragon go to England—forced Henry's hand. At any rate, the government produced some sort of evidence of a conspiracy; Warbeck was hanged and Warwick beheaded; and the Tudor could sleep more easily. There is nothing to be said in extenuation of such judicial murders of which the reign of Henry VIII was to produce many more, except that those who saw a danger in so perfectly innocent a man as Edward of Warwick were far from wrong. It was not what he did or thought but what he stood for in other men's minds that brought him to his death. For Warbeck one may feel sorry, but he had certainly earned his fate several times over.

3. Ireland and Scotland

The stories of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck have served to underline an important truth: there was danger for the English crown within the British isles themselves. Ireland and Scotland were both

trouble spots. The Norman conquest of Ireland in the twelfth century had imposed upon the native Celtic population a feudal ruling class, but though the kings of England might claim to be lords of Ireland they never, in fact, effectively ruled much of it. The so-called English Pale—a strip of coast stretching some 50 miles northwards from Dublin—was the real limit of English influence, though the few towns in the south, especially Waterford and Cork, also provided precarious centres of civilisation in a country not far removed from tribal barbarism. The Irish nobility, Anglo-Norman in origin, had long since suffered the common fate of English settlers in Ireland and become as Irish as the Irish, so that there was little to choose, from the king's point of view, between Anglo-Irish families like the Geraldines or Butlers and the purely Irish chieftains. Even within the Pale, Englishry was losing ground to Irish speech, dress, and habits. The wars of the Roses had further weakened the hold of the crown. The local feuds adopted the terminology of the English dynastic struggles: thus the Geraldines, led by the earls of Kildare and Desmond, championed the Yorkist cause, while their enemies, the Butlers under the earl of Ormond, espoused the side of Lancaster. The Geraldines won, with the result that Ireland became something of a Yorkist stronghold. But on the whole these were phrases rather than realities; what mattered to the Irish lords was independence from royal control and the fighting of their own internecine quarrels. The better part of the wild, wooded, boggy, and hilly country of the north and west had never so much as seen an English soldier or administrator.

The recovery and reduction of Ireland proved to be a general Tudor problem; to Henry VII its urgency was brought home by the fact that the country offered a safe and friendly springboard to any claimant, however absurd. In 1485 the power of Fitzgerald was paramount. The elder branch of the Butlers had moved to England, and though Henry VII restored them to their forfeited lands in Ireland, this did not affect the position of the great earl of Kildare whose many links with native families and wide personal possessions made him the virtual ruler of the country. He held the title of lord deputy and his brother was chancellor of Ireland; for the moment, Henry VII could not attempt to attack these strongholds of Geraldine power. Kildare was a curious character: arrogant and restless, he was yet gifted with some political skill, little rancour, and a roughish humour which, as it happened, appealed to the king. The support which the

earl gave to Lambert Simnel was blatant and avowed, but Henry deliberately ignored it and permitted the two Fitzgeralds to continue in office when they admitted that they had been mistaken about the pretender. But forbearance was not the right treatment for a man who had earned the title of 'the great earl' by invariably getting his own way. In 1491, when Perkin Warbeck was acclaimed at Cork, Kildare showed himself cautiously ready to side with him, and in June 1492 Henry at last deprived him of the deputyship. Thomas Fitzgerald lost the great seal of Ireland, and the offices went instead to the arch-bishop of Dublin and Alexander Plunket, ancestor of a noble Irish line.

Kildare was sufficiently taken aback to seek the king's pardon, even asking his old enemy Ormond for help, but it was a full year before Henry would grant it (1493), and then only after the earl had come in person to seek it. The display of energy had at least produced signs of humility. Nothing, however, had been done to settle or even improve the state of Ireland. Government there was at the time managed at two removes: the king, as lord of Ireland, appointed a lord lieutenant (his uncle, the duke of Bedford) whose office was exer-cised for him by a lord deputy. More was required than the replace-ment of Kildare by a sequence of mediocrities, and in September 1494 Henry made his most determined attempt to solve the problem. He transferred the title of lord lieutenant to the infant prince Henry, his second son, so as to match in Ireland the nominal headship exercised by his elder son in Wales, and appointed as deputy Sir Edward Poynings, one of his most trusted and able min-isters. The offices of chancellor and treasurer, too, were filled by Eng-lishmen; the new policy announced itself from the first as hostile to all things Irish and determined to reduce the country to obedience to England.

Poynings was an experienced soldier and statesman, and the plan he had been sent to execute required the qualities of both. He was to conquer Ulster, the wildest part of the country where rebellion had always found safe refuge, and he was to impose on Ireland a con-stitution which would secure the full control of the English govern-ment. In the first he failed outright; in the second he succeeded after a fashion. His expedition against the tribesmen of the north got lit-erally bogged down, and he had in the end to content himself with buying the clans off. The only positive result was the fall of Kildare, who had accompanied Poynings' forces, on a suspicion of treason to which his family's actions (Desmond assisted Warbeck in the siege of

Waterford) and Ormond's whispers gave colour. The parliament of
Drogheda, summoned by Poynings in December 1494, attainted him,
thus mightily impressing the Irish to whom the earl had seemed an
almost more than human figure. The deputy promptly arrested him
and shipped him to the Tower. Some other acts of this parliament,
commonly known as Poynings' laws, were designed to achieve the
second of Henry's aims. Their total effect was to decree that an Irish
parliament could only be summoned, and could only legislate, with
the king's previous approval; no future laws were to be discussed
unless first agreed to by the king in council. Furthermore, all laws
made in England were automatically to apply to Ireland. Poynings'
laws thus destroyed the legislative independence of the Irish parlia-
ment and, in law at least, gave the king vastly greater powers in
Ireland than he had in England. It may be noticed that when these
and other acts against the lawlessness and wild violence of Irish con-
ditions were passed, they had the approval of the English colonist
element which in later years was to be foremost in the attack on
Poynings' laws.

However, Henry VII's success proved illusory. The failure to subdue
the wild Irish increased the Irish budget enormously by forcing Poyn-
ings to pay blackmail for peace, and though he had been so far suc-
cessful as to deal easily with Warbeck's attack on Waterford, the king
was not satisfied. Henry VII now showed one side of the Tudor char-
acter not often in evidence in his reign. When new difficulties ren-
dered a pre-arranged policy doubtful or expensive, these inspired
opportunists were always ready to give up, even though in conse-
quence the work already done might be put in jeopardy. In effect
Henry despaired of the success of the measures initiated in 1494
when in 1496 he recalled Poynings and restored Kildare to favour
and the office of deputy. If—as is reported—he answered the bishop
of Meath's complaint that all Ireland could not rule Kildare by saying
that in that case Kildare had better rule all Ireland, he may have
proved his wit but hardly his sagacity. The problem of Ireland had
turned out to be too big for solution; the return of Kildare meant the
end of effective English control, despite the operation of Poynings'
laws; and Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and Oliver Cromwell had to face a
problem grown even bigger in the interval. Henry VII had the best
chance of all to win success, before the Reformation came to
complicate matters; but parsimony (however necessary) and oppor-
tunism triumphed. There were no claimants about to disturb the
peace from Ireland; why, then, waste good money on a probably

though this was to prove anything but a blessing to her constitutional development, it did end the ancient feud on the border and opened the way to a union which was to be fruitful to both countries. Henry VII's Irish policy was right but not pursued long enough; his policy towards Scotland was wise and farseeing, and in the end completely successful.

2

Marxist historians

The single most influential theorist for twentieth-century historical writing is undoubtedly Karl Marx.[1] As Arthur Marwick has pointed out, 'most historians have in some way or another been affected by some aspect of Marxist thinking'.[2] This includes historians considered in other chapters of this book, for example, some historians of gender and the postcolonial historians of India. In this introduction, however, we will focus upon three historians of the British Marxist school, Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson. All were members of the Communist Party Historians Group, established in 1947, but the latter two severed their relationship with the Communist Party following the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet Union in 1956. Their combined body of historical writing, most influential during the three post-war decades, encompasses a wide range of subjects and centuries, including broad syntheses of history, biography, intellectual history and 'history from below' – studies of the 'common people'.

Raphael Samuel argues that the form that Marxist historiography took in Britain owed a great deal to its antecedents: 'Marxist historiography was chronologically preceded by, and has always had to co-exist with, a more broadly based and less theoretically demanding "people's history"'.[3] Taking this one step further, Arthur Marwick suggests that Thompson and Hill share in what might be called the 'main distinguishing characteristic of the contemporary British school of Marxist historians, an interest in ordinary people as such, rather than just in their political organisations or roles as revolutionary agents'.[4] The term 'history from below', coined by E. P. Thompson in 1966, is often used to reflect this interest.[5]

However, to conflate the broad body of social history with the work of Marxist historians may be to miss the very clear distinction between them. Harvey Kaye emphasizes the point that the British Marxist historians represent 'a theoretical tradition', the defining subject of

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which is 'the origins, development and expansion of capitalism as economic and social change'. Furthermore, their 'core proposition . . . is that class struggle has been central to the historical process'.[6] In contrast, social history has been fiercely criticized for its lack of explicit theorization, and a tendency to separate popular culture from the matrix of economic and political relationships in which it is embedded.[7] In order to understand the theoretical basis for Marxist historiography, we need to look at the ideas of Karl Marx.

Karl Marx was born in 1818 in Trier, Germany and spent his early adult life in Prussia and France. In the 1840s Paris was a ferment of revolutionary socialist ideas and movements, culminating in the 1848 revolution. Many of Marx's ideas about history emerged during this period, worked out in conjunction with his life-long collaborator, Friedrich Engels. Raphael Samuel rightly points out that Marx's published writings were primarily 'political interventions' arising out of the 'working class and revolutionary democratic movements in which Marx and Engels participated with such enthusiasm'.[8] Always under threat from the Prussian authorities, Marx lived an itinerant life in the late 1840s, moving between Prussia, Brussels and Paris. Finally, expelled from Paris, he left for England in 1849 where he spent the rest of his life.[9]

The theory of history for which Marx is known is not written down in one place, nor even developed coherently in a series of texts.[10] References are to be found scattered throughout his writings, and more than one generation of Marxist scholars have debated their meaning. Helmut Fleischer has identified three different historical approaches within Marx and Engels' writings, and these left an 'ambiguous and often contradictory legacy' to later Marxists.[11] Bear this qualification in mind as we consider the main strands of Marx's thought, and the concepts which have been most influential upon the writing of history.

Marx's interpretation of human history is known as the materialist conception of history, or 'historical materialism'. The basic principles were first developed in *The German Ideology*, written in 1846. Historical materialism locates the central dynamic of human history in the struggle to provide for physiological and material needs: 'life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself'.[12] Secondly, Marx argues the fulfillment of these

needs is never completed, for 'the satisfaction of the first need . . . leads to new needs'.[13] Marx identifies the way in which human material needs are met as the most important influence in human history: 'the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange'.[14]

Consequently Marx believed that the economic structure of society formed the base upon which all other aspects of society rested. Most important are the forces of production – tools, technology, raw materials – which when combined with human labour power are transformed into goods to meet human needs. The interaction between raw materials and human labour creates relations of production between people, and these relations may rest upon cooperation or subordination. For Marx, the rest of society – the superstructure of political institutions and legal systems – was derived from the forces and relations of production. In other words, he does not ascribe an independent existence to the realm of human consciousness and ideas, but perceives these as arising out of our material existence. The premises and main ideas of historical materialism is concisely described in the following, frequently cited, statement from *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859):

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.[15]

How, then, does human society change over the centuries? Marx separated human history into three historical epochs, each the product of a progressively more advanced mode of production: ancient society (Greece and Rome); feudal society; and capitalist (or modern bourgeois) society.[16] Transition from one to another took place through a process Marx described as a dialectic. Each mode of production contained within it contradictions which would cause its downfall; and each successive stage of human history contained both a dominant class, and one which would overthrow it. In capitalist

society Marx anticipated that the proletariat, or working class, would eventually overthrow the bourgeoisie, and initiate another system of productive relations, a fourth epoch of socialism. His grand, overarching evolutionary theory of human history rested upon a dialectic of economic transformation. In placing economic relationships at the core of his philosophy of human history, Marx fundamentally differentiated himself from contemporaries, such as Leopold von Ranke.

The driving force in Marx's conception of history are classes, which arise from different economic roles in the productive process.[17] In order to overthrow the dominant class, subordinate people must become aware of their oppression, and consequently the concept of human agency is critical to Marx's conceptual framework. Marx's theory, therefore, contains a kind of paradox: the dialectic of productive transformation (a consequence of the inner contradictions within the production process itself) is, nonetheless, dependent upon the consciousness and actions of men and women. The following sentence, taken from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1859), lies at the heart of the matter:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.[18]

This is an important phrase within Marx's work, for it challenges the economic determinism that can be seen as implicit within his formulation of historical change. Consequently, as Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, 'the crucial argument about the materialist conception of history has concerned the fundamental relationship between social being and consciousness.'[19] This might be described as one of the strongest unifying themes in the work of Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, to whose historical writings we will now turn.

Christopher Hill came to adulthood in the context of economic collapse and the rise of European fascism:

> The bottom fell out of our universe in 1931, the year I went up to Balliol. And there, the influence of undergraduate friends – a great deal of Marxist discussion went on in Oxford in the early thirties. Marxism seemed to me (and many others) to make better sense of the world situation than anything else, just as it seemed to make better sense of seventeenth-century English history.[20]

base . . . I may well have pushed the economism a bit farther in 1954 than I would do today, but the basic argument stands.'[34] Of the three historians considered here, Hobsbawm has remained closest to the economic determinism of the Marxist model of history.

Finally we turn to what was to become one of the most widely influential historical texts of the second half of the twentieth century. E. P. Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963, and William Sewell reminds us 'how much this book enriched and enlarged our conception of working class history', with its inclusion of not only trade unions and real wages, but popular culture, religion, festivals and beggars.[35] The central theme of Thompson's book is the emergence of a conscious working class between 1780 and 1832 in the context of proletarianization and political repression. Thompson draws our attention to the role of the cultural inheritance – popular traditions – and Methodism in shaping the critical response men made to the economic consequences of industrialization. It is this emphasis upon the role of ideas that has led Thompson to be characterized as a 'cultural' Marxist. While economic factors, such as wages and prices, are duly considered, Thompson is more interested in how the economic upheavals of industrialization are interpreted by those undergoing those experiences. By 1830, Thompson argues, a conscious working class identity formed the basis for collective political action. Thompson emphasized that the new consciousness and actions were due as much to human agency as to the economic structure within which people were born:

> [C]lass happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations in which men are born – or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not.[36]

The Making of the English Working Class immediately drew a fierce critique from Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson, whose perspective was greatly influenced by the structuralism of French philosopher Louis Althusser. Writing within the Marxist paradigm, Althusser emphasized the hegemony of capitalist ideology in society, arguing that the dominant economic class also controlled the superstructure of ideology, law and politics.[37] Consequently, Anderson and Nairn

perceived working class consciousness as structured by the economic, social and political environment, rather than as a product of human agency. From the structuralist perspective of Nairn and Anderson the ability of the working class to resist or form counter-ideology was perceived as minimal in the face of inescapable structural determination and capitalist ideological hegemony.[38] This debate, over the relative strengths of structure and agency, continued within labour history for two decades, albeit on slightly different terms.[39]

More recent criticism has centred around Thompson's characterization of the role played by radical working class women, that of 'giving moral support to the men'.[40] Joan Scott has described the book as 'a story about men, and class is, in its origin and its expression, constructed as a masculine identity, even when not all the actors are male'.[41] Thompson was unrepentant, explaining in personal correspondence that 'it *was* so gendered'.[42] His position is largely supported by the research of James Epstein, who found that women's intervention into public, male space was mediated in entirely traditional terms, and suggests 'nothing to alter the picture of radical women playing an active but fundamentally subordinate and supportive role to men'.[43] Nevertheless, Epstein concluded that Thompson's account failed to give sufficient recognition to the limited participation women did achieve in the face of widespread opprobrium.[44]

In later life E. P. Thompson refused to define himself simply as a Marxist, and argued that the best approach was a 'theoretically informed empiricism'.[45] Thompson strongly believed in the importance of evidence, tartly writing to *History Workshop Journal* in 1993 that '[w]riting history demands an engagement with hard evidence and is not as easy as some post-modernists suppose'.[46] This leads us to the last critique of Marxist historiography, that written from a poststructuralist perspective. A number of Marxist historians ultimately rejected the structuralism of Althusser, and turned to the study of ideology and language divorced from any relationship with the material world. Historians such as Gareth Stedman Jones and Patrick Joyce reject the idea that past experience can be retrieved through the medium of language, and consequently the vocabulary of class and radical politics has become de-materialized.[47] This is completely the opposite of Thompson's own views about the process of writing history, which he saw as a dialogue between theory and evidence:

Historical practice is above all engaged in this kind of dialogue; with an argument between received, inadequate, or ideologically-informed concepts or hypotheses on the one hand, and fresh or inconvenient evidence on the other; with the elaboration of new hypotheses; with the testing of these hypotheses against the evidence, which may involve interrogating existing evidence in new ways, or renewed research to confirm or disprove the new notions; with discarding those hypotheses which fail these tests, and refining or revising those which do, in the light of this engagement.[48]

The reading for this chapter is taken from E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson's interest in both literature (reflected in the biographies of the socialist William Morris, and the poet William Blake) and history is evident in the emphasis he places upon human consciousness in making sense of, and responding to, the profound social and economic upheaval of industrial capitalism. In the extract from his work which follows, what do you think is Thompson's hypothesis? To what kinds of evidence does he give particular weight in supporting his hypothesis? Why does Thompson attach so much significance to the views contained within the address of the Journeyman Cotton Spinner? Does he see economic factors as paramount in the creation of working class consciousness? In this account do men make their own history, but in circumstances not of their own choosing?

Notes

1 Friedrich Engels correctly declared at Marx's funeral that 'his name will live on through the centuries and so will his work', cited in David McLellan, *Karl Marx: The Legacy* (London, 1983), p. 7.

2 Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (3rd edn, London, 1989), p. 109.

3 Raphael Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880–1980: Part One', *New Left Review* 120 (1980), p. 37.

4 Marwick, *The Nature of History*, p. 113.

5 E. P. Thompson, 'History from Below', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966, pp. 279–80.

6 Harvey Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 5–6.

7 Tony Judt, 'A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians', *History Workshop Journal*, 7 (1979), pp. 66–94. See also E. F. and E. D. Genovese, 'The Political Crisis of Social History', *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976), pp. 205–21; Gareth Stedman Jones, 'From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History', *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (1976), pp. 295–306.

8 Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1800–1980', p. 22.

9 Peter Singer, *Marx* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 1–6.

10 See Erik Olin Wright et al., *Reconstructing Marxism: Essays on Explanation and the Theory of History* (London, 1992), p. 13.

11 Helmut Fleischer, *Marxism and History* (New York, 1973), pp. 8–9; S. H. Rigby, 'Marxist Historiography', in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), p. 889.

12 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology, Part One*, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York, 1970), p.48.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

15 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (New York, 1968), p.182.

16 Marx and Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', *Selected Works*, p. 36.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

18 Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 97.

19 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Marx and History', in *On History* (London, 1997), p. 162.

20 Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, p. 102. E. P. Thompson fought in the Second World War, while Eric Hobsbawm's family came to live in England in 1933 following Hitler's ascent to power.

21 Christopher Hill, *The English Revolution 1640: An Essay* (3rd edn, London, [1940] 1955).

22 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

23 Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603–1714* (London, [1961] 1969), p. 112.

24 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, [1972] 1991).

25 Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1958), p. 31.

26 Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (2nd edn, New York [1965] 1973), ch. 2.

27 Cited in Kaye, p. 126.

28 Christopher Hill, 'A Bourgeois Revolution?', in J. G. A. Pocock, *Three British Revolutions, 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton, 1980), p. 111.

29 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth-century Britain', in *Labouring Men* (London, 1964), pp. 272–315; for other sources in this debate see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Debating the Labour Aristocracy', in *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984), pp. 344–5.

30 Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth-century Britain', p. 296.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 274.

32 H. F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy', *Social History*, 3, 1 (January 1978), p. 72.

33 Alastair Reid, 'Intelligent Artisans and Aristocrats of Labour: The Essays of Thomas Wright', in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 172.

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37 For further elaboration of Althusser's theory, see S. H. Rigby, *Marxism and History* (Manchester, 1987), chapter 9.

38 Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review*, 23 (January–February 1964), pp. 26–53; Tom Nairn, 'The English Working Class', *New Left Review*, 24 (March–April 1964), pp. 43–57.

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40 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 4.

41 Joan Scott, 'Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*', in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), p. 72.

42 Bryan D. Palmer, *E. P. Thompson: Directions and Oppositions* (London, 1994), p. 185.

43 James Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 122 (February 1989), pp. 101–2.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
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For Engels, describing the *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* it seemed that 'the first proletarians were connected with manufacture, were engendered by it . . . the factory hands, eldest children of the industrial revolution, have from the beginning to the present day formed the nucleus of the Labour Movement'.

However different their judgements of value, conservative, radical, and socialist observers suggested the same equation: steam power and the cotton-mill = new working class. The physical instruments of production were seen as giving rise in a direct and more-or-less compulsive way to new social relationships, institutions, and cultural modes. At the same time the history of popular agitation during the period 1811–50 appears to confirm this picture. It is as if the English nation entered a crucible in the 1790s and emerged after the Wars in a different form. Between 1811 and 1813, the Luddite crisis; in 1817 the Pentridge Rising; in 1819, Peterloo; throughout the next decade the proliferation of trade union activity, Owenite propaganda, Radical journalism, the Ten Hours Movement, the revolutionary crisis of 1831–2; and, beyond that, the multitude of movements which made up Chartism. It is, perhaps, the scale and intensity of this multiform popular agitation which has, more than anything else, given rise (among contemporary observers and historians alike) to the sense of some *catastrophic* change.

Almost every radical phenomenon of the 1790s can be found reproduced tenfold after 1815. The handful of Jacobin sheets gave rise to a score of ultra-Radical and Owenite periodicals. Where Daniel Eaton served imprisonment for publishing Paine, Richard Carlile and his shopmen served a total of more than 200 years imprisonment for similar crimes. Where Corresponding Societies maintained a precarious existence in a score of towns, the post-war Hampden Clubs or political unions struck root in small industrial villages. And when this popular agitation is recalled alongside the dramatic pace of change in the cotton industry, it is natural to assume a direct causal relationship. The cotton-mill is seen as the agent not only of industrial but also of social revolution, producing not only more goods but also the 'Labour Movement' itself. The Industrial Revolution, which commenced as a description, is now invoked as an explanation.

From the time of Arkwright through to the Plug Riots and beyond, it is the image of the 'dark, Satanic mill' which dominates our visual reconstruction of the Industrial Revolution. In part, perhaps, because it is a dramatic visual image—the barrack-like buildings, the great

mill chimneys, the factory children, the clogs and shawls, the dwellings clustering around the mills as if spawned by them. (It is an image which forces one to think first of the industry, and only secondly of the people connected to it or serving it.) In part, because the cotton-mill and the new mill-town—from the swiftness of its growth, ingenuity of its techniques, and the novelty or harshness of its discipline—seemed to contemporaries to be dramatic and portentous: a more satisfactory symbol for debate on the 'condition-of-England' question than those anonymous or sprawling manufacturing *districts* which figure even more often in the Home Office 'disturbance books'. And from this both a literary and an historical tradition is derived. Nearly all the classic accounts by contemporaries of conditions in the Industrial Revolution are based on the cotton industry—and, in the main, on Lancashire: Owen, Gaskell, Ure, Fielden, Cooke Taylor, Engels, to mention a few. Novels such as *Michael Armstrong* or *Mary Barton* or *Hard Times* perpetuate the tradition. And the emphasis is markedly found in the subsequent writing of economic and social history.

But many difficulties remain. Cotton was certainly the pace-making industry of the Industrial Revolution,[4] and the cotton-mill was the pre-eminent model for the factory-system. Yet we should not assume any automatic, or over-direct, correspondence between the dynamic of economic growth and the dynamic of social or cultural life. For half a century after the 'breakthrough' of the cotton-mill (around 1780) the mill workers remained as a minority of the adult labour force in the cotton industry itself. In the early 1830s the cotton hand-loom weavers alone still outnumbered all the men and women in spinning and weaving mills of cotton, wool, and silk combined.[5] Still, in 1830, the adult male cotton-spinner was no more typical of that elusive figure, the 'average working man', than is the Coventry motor-worker of the 1960s.

The point is of importance, because too much emphasis upon the newness of the cotton-mills can lead to an underestimation of the continuity of political and cultural traditions in the making of working-class communities. The factory hands, so far from being the 'eldest children of the industrial revolution', were late arrivals. Many of their ideas and forms of organisation were anticipated by domes-

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[4] For an admirable restatement of the reasons for the primacy of the cotton industry in the Industrial Revolution, see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (1962), Ch. 2.

[5] Estimates for U.K., 1833. Total adult labour force in all textile mills, 191,671. Number of cotton hand-loom weavers, 213,000. See below, p. 311.

tic workers, such as the woollen workers of Norwich and the West Country, or the small-ware weavers of Manchester. And it is questionable whether factory hands—except in the cotton districts—'formed the nucleus of the Labour Movement' at any time before the late 1840s (and, in some northern and Midland towns, the years 1832–4, leading up to the great lock-outs). Jacobinism, as we have seen, struck root most deeply among artisans. Luddism was the work of skilled men in small workshops. From 1817 onwards to Chartism, the outworkers in the north and the Midlands were as prominent in every radical agitation as the factory hands. And in many towns the actual nucleus from which the labour movement derived ideas, organisation, and leadership, was made up of such men as shoemakers, weavers, saddlers and harnessmakers, booksellers, printers, building workers, small tradesmen, and the like. The vast area of Radical London between 1815 and 1850 drew its strength from no major heavy industries (shipbuilding was tending to decline, and the engineers only made their impact later in the century) but from the host of smaller trades and occupations.[6]

Such diversity of experiences has led some writers to question both the notions of an 'industrial revolution' and a 'working class'. The first discussion need not detain us here.[7] The term is serviceable enough in its usual connotations. For the second, many writers prefer the term working *classes*, which emphasises the great disparity in status, acquisitions, skills, conditions, within the portmanteau phrase. And in this they echo the complaints of Francis Place:

> If the character and conduct of the working-people are to be taken from reviews, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, reports of the two Houses of Parliament and the Factory Commissioners, we shall find them all jumbled together as the 'lower orders', the most skilled and the most prudent workman, with the most ignorant and imprudent labourers and paupers, though the difference is great indeed, and indeed in many cases will scarce admit of comparison.[8]

Place is, of course, right: the Sunderland sailor, the Irish navvy, the Jewish costermonger, the inmate of an East Anglian village workhouse, the compositor on *The Times*—all might be seen by their 'betters' as belonging to the 'lower classes' while they themselves might scarcely understand each others' dialect.

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[6] Cf. Hobsbawm, op. cit., Ch. 11.

[7] There is a summary of this controversy in E. E. Lampard, *Industrial Revolution*, (American Historical Association, 1957). See also Hobsbawm, op. cit., Ch. 2.

[8] Cit. M. D. George, *London Life in the 18th Century* (1930), p. 210.

Nevertheless, when every caution has been made, the outstanding fact of the period between 1790 and 1830 is the formation of 'the working class'. This is revealed, first, in the growth of class-consciousness: the consciousness of an identity of interests as between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interests of other classes. And, second, in the growth of corresponding forms of political and industrial organisation. By 1832 there were strongly-based and self-conscious working-class institutions—trade unions, friendly societies, educational and religious movements, political organisations, periodicals—working-class intellectual traditions, working-class community-patterns, and a working-class structure of feeling.

The making of the working class is a fact of political and cultural, as much as of economic, history. It was not the spontaneous generation of the factory-system. Nor should we think of an external force—the 'industrial revolution'—working upon some nondescript undifferentiated raw material of humanity, and turning it out at the other end as a 'fresh race of beings'. The changing productive relations and working conditions of the Industrial Revolution were imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman—and the free-born Englishman as Paine had left him or as the Methodists had moulded him. The factory hand or stockinger was also the inheritor of Bunyan, of remembered village rights, of notions of equality before the law, of craft traditions. He was the object of massive religious indoctrination and the creator of new political traditions. The working class made itself as much as it was made.

To see the working class in this way is to defend a 'classical' view of the period against the prevalent mood of contemporary schools of economic history and sociology. For the territory of the Industrial Revolution, which was first staked out and surveyed by Marx, Arnold Toynbee, the Webbs and the Hammonds, now resembles an academic battlefield. At point after point, the familiar 'catastrophic' view of the period has been disputed. Where it was customary to see the period as one of economic disequilibrium, intense misery and exploitation, political repression and heroic popular agitation, attention is now directed to the rate of economic growth (and the difficulties of 'take-off' into self-sustaining technological reproduction). The enclosure movement is now noted, less for its harshness in displacing the village poor, than for its success in feeding a rapidly growing population. The hardships of the period are seen as being due to the dislocations consequent upon the Wars, faulty commu-

nications, immature banking and exchange, uncertain markets, and the trade-cycle, rather than to exploitation or cut-throat competition. Popular unrest is seen as consequent upon the unavoidable coincidence of high wheat prices and trade depressions, and explicable in terms of an elementary 'social tension' chart derived from these data.[9] In general, it is suggested that the position of the industrial worker in 1840 was better in most ways than that of the domestic worker of 1790. The Industrial Revolution was an age, not of catastrophe or acute class-conflict and class oppression, but of improvement.[10]

The classical catastrophic orthodoxy has been replaced by a new anti-catastrophic orthodoxy, which is most clearly distinguished by its empirical caution and, among its most notable exponents (Sir John Clapham, Dr. Dorothy George, Professor Ashton) by an astringent criticism of the looseness of certain writers of the older school. The studies of the new orthodoxy have enriched historical scholarship, and have qualified and revised in important respects the work of the classical school. But as the new orthodoxy is now, in its turn, growing old and entrenched in most of the academic centres, so it becomes open to challenge in its turn. And the successors of the great empiricists too often exhibit a moral complacency, a narrowness of reference, and an insufficient familiarity with the actual movements of the working people of the time. They are more aware of the orthodox empiricist postures than of the changes in social relationship and in cultural modes which the Industrial Revolution entailed. What has been lost is a sense of the whole process—the whole political and social context of the period. What arose as valuable qualifications have passed by imperceptible stages to new generalisations (which the evidence can rarely sustain) and from generalisations to a ruling attitude.

The empiricist orthodoxy is often defined in terms of a running critique of the work of J. L. and Barbara Hammond. It is true that the Hammonds showed themselves too willing to moralise history, and to arrange their materials too much in terms of 'outraged emotion'.[11]

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[9] See W. W. Rostow, *British Economy in the Nineteenth Century* (1948), esp. pp. 122–5.

[10] Some of the views outlined here are to be found, implicitly or explicitly, in T. S. Ashton, *Industrial Revolution* (1948) and A. Radford, *The Economic History of England* (2nd edn. 1960). A sociological variant is developed by N. J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (1959), and a knockabout popularisation is in John Vaizey, *Success Story* (W.E.A., n.d.).

[11] See E. E. Lampard, op. cit., p. 7.

are lost, and the landless—in the south—pauperised labourer is left to support the tenant-farmer, the landowner, and the tithes of the Church. In the domestic industries, from 1800 onwards, the tendency is widespread for small masters to give way to larger employers (whether manufacturers or middlemen) and for the majority of weavers, stockingers, or nail-makers to become wage-earning out-workers with more or less precarious employment. In the mills and in many mining areas these are the years of the employment of children (and of women underground); and the large-scale enterprise, the factory-system with its new discipline, the mill communities—where the manufacturer not only made riches out of the labour of the 'hands' but could be *seen* to make riches in one generation—all contributed to the transparency of the process of exploitation and to the social and cultural cohesion of the exploited.

We can now see something of the truly catastrophic nature of the Industrial Revolution; as well as some of the reasons why the English working class took form in these years. The people were subjected simultaneously to an intensification of two intolerable forms of relationship: those of economic exploitation and of political oppression. Relations between employer and labourer were becoming both harsher and less personal; and while it is true that this increased the potential freedom of the worker, since the hired farm servant or the journeyman in domestic industry was (in Toynbee's words) 'halted half-way between the position of the serf and the position of the citizen', this 'freedom' meant that he felt his *un*freedom more. But at each point where he sought to resist exploitation, he was met by the forces of employer or State, and commonly of both.

For most working people the crucial experience of the Industrial Revolution was felt in terms of changes in the nature and intensity of exploitation. Nor is this some anachronistic notion, imposed upon the evidence. We may describe some parts of the exploitive process as they appeared to one remarkable cotton operative in 1818—the year in which Marx was born. The account—an Address to the public of strike-bound Manchester by 'A Journeyman Cotton Spinner'—commences by describing the employers and the workers as 'two distinct classes of persons':

'First, then, as to the employers: with very few exceptions, they are a set of men who have sprung from the cotton-shop without education or address, except so much as they have acquired by their intercourse with the little world of merchants on the exchange at Manchester; but to counterbalance that deficiency, they give you

enough of appearances by an ostentatious display of elegant man-
sions, equipages, liveries, parks, hunters, hounds, &c. which they
take care to shew off to the merchant stranger in the most pompous
manner. Indeed their houses are gorgeous palaces, far surpassing
in bulk and extent the neat charming retreats you see round London
. . . but the chaste observer of the beauties of nature and art com-
bined will observe a woeful deficiency of taste. They bring up their
families at the most costly schools, determined to give their offspring
a double portion of what they were so deficient in themselves. Thus
with scarcely a second idea in their heads, they are literally petty
monarchs, absolute and despotic, in their own particular districts;
and to support all this, their whole time is occupied in contriving
how to get the greatest quantity of work turned off with the least
expence. . . . In short, I will venture to say, without fear of contra-
diction, that there is a greater distance observed between the master
there and the spinner, than there is between the first merchant in
London and his lowest servant or the lowest artisan. Indeed there is
no comparison. I know it to be a fact, that the greater part of the
master spinners are anxious to keep wages low for the purpose of
keeping the spinners indigent and spiritless . . . as for the purpose of
taking the surplus to their own pockets.

'The master spinners are a class of men within all other master
tradesmen in the kingdom. They are ignorant, proud, and tyranni-
cal. What then must be the men or rather beings who are the instru-
ments of such masters? Why, they have been for a series of years,
with their wives and their families, patience itself—bondmen and
bondwomen to their cruel taskmasters. It is in vain to insult our
common understandings with the observation that such men are
free; that the law protects the rich and poor alike, and that a spinner
can leave his master if he does not like the wages. True; so he can:
but where must he go? why to another, to be sure. Well: he goes; he
is asked where did you work last: "did he discharge you?" No; we
could not agree about wages. Well I shall not employ you nor anyone
who leaves his master in that manner. Why is this? Because there is
an abominable *combination existing amongst the masters*, first estab-
lished at Stockport in 1802, and it has since become so general, as to
embrace all the great masters for a circuit of many miles round
Manchester, though not the little masters: they are excluded. They
are the most obnoxious beings to the great ones that can be imag-
ined. . . . When the combination first took place, one of their first

articles was, that no master should take on a man until he had first ascertained whether his last master had discharged him. What then is the man to do? If he goes to the parish, that grave of all independence, he is there told—We shall not relieve you; if you dispute with your master, and don't support your family, we will send you to prison; so that the man is bound, by a combination of circumstances, to submit to his master. He cannot travel and get work in any town like a shoe-maker, joiner, or taylor; he is confined in the district.

'The workmen in general are an inoffensive, unassuming, set of well-informed men, though how they acquire their information is almost a mystery to me. They are docile and tractable, if not goaded too much; but this is not to be wondered at, when we consider that they are trained to work from six years old, from five in a morning to eight and nine at night. Let one of the advocates for obedience to his master take his stand in an avenue leading to a factory a little before five o'clock in the morning, and observe the squalid appearance of the little infants and their parents taken from their beds at so early an hour in all kinds of weather; let him examine the miserable pittance of food, chiefly composed of water gruel and oatcake broken into it, a little salt, and sometimes coloured with a little milk, together with a few potatoes, and a bit of bacon or fat for dinner; would a London mechanic eat this? There they are, (and if late a few minutes, a quarter of a day is stopped in wages) locked up until night in rooms heated above the hottest days we have had this summer, and allowed no time, except three-quarters of an hour at dinner in the whole day: whatever they eat at any other time must be as they are at work. The negro slave in the West Indies, if he works under a scorching sun, has probably a little breeze of air sometimes to fan him: he has a space of ground, and time allowed to cultivate it. The English spinner slave has no enjoyment of the open atmosphere and breezes of heaven. Locked up in factories eight stories high, he has no relaxation till the ponderous engine stops, and then he goes home to get refreshed for the next day; no time for sweet association with his family; they are all alike fatigued and exhausted. This is no overdrawn picture: it is literally true. I ask again, would the mechanics in the South of England submit to this?

'When the spinning of cotton was in its infancy, and before those terrible machines for superseding the necessity of human labour, called steam engines, came into use, there were a great number of what were then called *little masters*; men who with a small capital,

could procure a few machines, and employ a few hands, men and boys (say to twenty or thirty), the produce of whose labour was all taken to Manchester central mart, and put into the hands of brokers. . . . The brokers sold it to the merchants, by which means the master spinner was enabled to stay at home and work and attend to his workmen. The cotton was then always given out in its raw state from the bale to the wives of the spinners at home, when they heat and cleansed it ready for the spinners in the factory. By this they could earn eight, ten, or twelve shillings a week, and cook and attend to their families. But more are thus employed now; for all the cotton is broke up by a machine, turned by the steam engine, called a devil: so that the spinners wives have no employment, except they go to work in the factory all day at what can be done by children for a few shillings, four or five per week. If a man then could not agree with his master, he left him, and could get employed elsewhere. A few years, however, changed the face of things. Steam engines came into use, to purchase which, and to erect buildings sufficient to contain them and six or seven hundred hands, required a great capital. The engine power produced a more marketable (though not a better) article than the little master could at the same price. The consequence was their ruin in a short time; and the overgrown capitalists triumphed in their fall; for they were the only obstacle that stood between them and the complete controul of the workmen.

'Various disputes then originated between the workmen and masters as to the fineness of the work, the workmen being paid according to the number of hanks or yards of thread he produced from a given quantity of cotton, which was always to be proved by the overlooker, whose interest made it imperative on him to lean to his master, and call the material coarser than it was. If the workman would not submit *he must summon his employer before a magistrate*; the whole of the acting magistrates in that district, with the exception of two worthy clergymen, being gentlemen who have sprung from the *same* source with the master cotton spinners. The employer generally contented himself with sending his overlooker to answer any such summons, thinking it beneath him to meet his servant. The magistrate's decision was generally in favour of the master, though on the statement of the overlooker only. The workman dared not appeal to the sessions on account of the expense. . . .

'These evils to the men have arisen from that dreadful monopoly which exists in those districts where wealth and power are got into

the hands of the few, who, in the pride of their hearts, think themselves the lords of the universe.'[12]

This reading of the facts, in its remarkable cogency, is as much an *ex parte* statement as is the 'political economy' of Lord Brougham. But the 'Journeyman Cotton Spinner' was describing facts of a different order. We need not concern ourselves with the soundness of all his judgements. What his address does is to itemise one after another the grievances felt by working people as to changes in the character of capitalist exploitation: the rise of a master-class without traditional authority or obligations: the growing distance between master and man: the transparency of the exploitation at the source of their new wealth and power: the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker, his reduction to total dependence on the master's instruments of production: the partiality of the law: the disruption of the traditional family economy: the discipline, monotony, hours and conditions of work: loss of leisure and amenities: the reduction of the man to the status of an 'instrument'.

That working people felt these grievances at all—and felt them passionately—is itself a sufficient fact to merit our attention. And it reminds us forcibly that some of the most bitter conflicts of these years turned on issues which are not encompassed by cost-of-living series. The issues which provoked the most intensity of feeling were very often ones in which such values as traditional customs, 'justice', 'independence', security, and family-economy were at stake, rather than straightforward 'bread-and-butter' issues. The early years of the 1830s are aflame with agitations which turned on issues in which wages were of secondary importance; by the potters, against the Truck System; by the textile workers, for the 10-Hour Bill; by the building workers, for co-operative direct action; by all groups of workers, for the right to join trade unions. The great strike in the north-east coalfield in 1831 turned on security of employment, 'tommy shops', child labour.

The exploitive relationship is more than the sum of grievances and mutual antagonisms. It is a relationship which can be seen to take distinct forms in different historical contexts, forms which are related to corresponding forms of ownership and State power. The classic exploitive relationship of the Industrial Revolution is depersonalised, in the sense that no lingering obligations of mutuality—of paternalism or deference, or of the interests of 'the Trade'—are

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[12] *Black Dwarf*, 30 September 1818.

deepening of our historical understanding through exploitation of the concepts and findings of modern psychology'.[5] In what did the psychoanalysis which Langer went on to specify consist?

While Freud's development of his psychoanalytic theory runs to many volumes, Penelope Hetherington elegantly summarized this into four basic propositions, upon which, she suggested, 'the whole body of theory ultimately rests'. These are:

1 That the experience of infancy and childhood have primacy in determining the shape of adult behaviour.
2 That there are stages of development through which all individuals pass in their very long period of maturation.
3 That adult behaviour is largely determined by the unconscious.
4 That there is a dialectical process in operation in adult behaviour, implying the existence of psychic conflict.[6]

Freud's ideas about childhood sexuality are embodied in the first two of these propositions. He believed that all humans were born biologically equipped with a powerful sexual drive. During infancy and childhood up to about five years of age, this (at this early stage) generalized desire for pleasure was expressed through various developmental stages, the oral, and anal and genital. These stages occur both in 'normal' development and in those individuals who later exhibit psychopathological symptoms; adult personality and behaviour are influenced primarily through the child's experience of this development and the experience is different for boys and girls. Because childhood gratification of these desires for pleasure is frequently frowned upon by society, embodied usually in the parents, awareness of the desires is repressed into a part of the brain known as the unconscious. The unconscious is inaccessible, except during the process of psychoanalysis, but reveals itself in daily life through dreams, word association and slips of the tongue, neurotic symptoms and 'irrational' or conflicting behaviours. Since the unconscious is not a 'thing' nor situated in a particular part of the brain, its existence cannot be proven but only inferred from otherwise hard to explain but ubiquitous data.[7]

Freud's theory has sometimes been seen as deterministic, in that he saw an adult as a product of a small group of people, the family, who interpreted the nature of society for her or him. Concomitantly, the range of adult choices is ultimately determined by childhood experiences and, for Freud, these childhood developmental stages are universal. While Freud did consider that the environment played a part

in the construction of the adult personality, his followers and critics have modified his theories, sometimes in ways which give a greater role to culture in relation to biology. Some feminist psychoanalysts, for example, have explained the clinical findings about women, such as the notorious penis envy, in terms of women's oppression by society and their subsequent discontent with their position, rather than positing that the cultural devaluation of women is a result of their lack of male genitalia, and consequent rejection of their femininity leading to low self-esteem.[8] As well, post-Freudian theorists have placed more emphasis on data gathered from 'normal' people, as compared to Freud's evidence, mainly derived from himself and his clinical practice. Thus, some would argue that later modifications to Freud's theory are of more use to the historian, although Freud's theory remains basic to these modifications.

In particular, Erikson's theory of ego psychology has suggested fruitful amalgamations of history and psychoanalysis. Rather than continuing to study the development of neuroses, Erikson posited a model of normal development in terms of the 'eight ages of man', and contended that human development was a matter of 'integrat[ing] the timetable of the organism with the structure of social institutions'. He outlined these ideas in *Childhood and Society*. In Loewenberg's words: 'A psychosocial identity is the sense of continuity between one's personal, family, ethnic, and national past and one's current role and interaction with the present.' Thus Erikson could argue that '[c]ultures . . . elaborate upon the biologically given', and that the 'psychoanalytic method is essentially a historical method'.[9]

As part of his theory, Erikson suggested that psychological development continued beyond childhood. He used these ideas in biographical studies of Luther and Gandhi, where material from early childhood was scanty.[10] Erikson's theories suggested new possibilities for historians. According to Loewenberg, '[e]go psychology and character analysis are particularly important and welcome to historians because they are based on the evidence of adult behaviour. They do not require reconstruction of infantile experience or reductions to origins – the behaviour and patterns of accommodating to the world exist in adulthood and the evidence is historical.'[11] Erikson's work has therefore been pivotal in the field of psychobiography.

Object-relations theory has also been useful in combining a psychoanalytic account of human development with an analysis of environment. Rather than focusing on the relatively autonomous

development of one individual, object-relations theorists argue that development happens in the context of a social and psychic relationship. The nature of the mother–infant relationship is most important, although contacts with other developmental figures are significant. Since the mother–child link is a social relationship, as well as an instinctual one, it is historically constructed and therefore changes with time and place.[12] Clearly individual childhood experiences vary, but historians often know in general terms when and how significant events occur. The age of weaning, the approximate age of birth of the next sibling, and ideas about nurturing and disciplining children are all factors which historians can take into account in psychohistorical explanations.

Psychohistorians have wanted to study the behaviour and motivations not only of individuals but of groups in the past. Langer, for example, discussed mass emotional reactions to the Black Death. Freud concentrated initially upon the relationship between a group and its leader, seeing the group as regressing to a state of dependency. But this approach does not deal with the dynamics of the group itself. What is it about groups, then, that allows their members to act collectively in ways which conflict with members' usual individual behaviour and values?[13]

Wilhelm Reich attempted to blend history, in the form of historical materialism, with group psychoanalysis.[14] In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, written in the early 1930s, Reich synthesized the theories of Freud and Marx. He argued that Nazism, like all political movements, was grounded in the psychological structure of the German masses, in particular of the lower middle class. This group was anxious due to their increasing poverty in the face of depression and German war debts. Lower-middle-class fathers were authoritarian, and able to sexually repress their children on account of the correspondence of familial and economic structures: that is, the family lived and worked together. These psychically damaged children therefore became submissive, and were relieved to rely on an authoritarian *Führer* in later life. At the same time they craved authority, and so acted in an authoritarian manner towards those below them. This is, of course, a simplified account but it serves to show how Reich enriched his analysis of a concrete historical situation with psychoanalytic insights.[15]

How have these psychohistorical approaches been applied and received by the historical community? In general we have been and are suspicious: psychohistory, for example, does not rate a chapter in

Routledge's massive *Companion to Historiography*.[16] Much current criticism revolves around either classic studies such as Freud's *Leonardo* and Erikson's *Luther*, or investigations of near-contemporary or at least twentieth-century individuals or group phenomena.[17] In the latter case, subjects can often be asked to make sense of their own lives, perhaps using oral interviews: that is, a relationship of sorts exists between the subject and the researcher, comparable to that between the analysand and the analyst in classic psychoanalysis. Moreover, the subject creates at least some of the evidence and may be available for the deeper exploration of areas thought to be crucial to psychohistorical explanation.[18] A fairer test of psychohistory, however, might be to examine research from an earlier age, where the researcher has only the extant primary sources with which to work and thus is on equal terms with other historians. The following two examples therefore derive from the medieval period. They may illustrate some of the advantages and pitfalls discussed by critics of psychohistory.

In 1976 Kantor examined the memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent, written in 1116, with the aim of 'better understand[ing] the relation between the man and the society of twelfth-century northern France in which he lived'.[19] Unusually, Guibert wrote at length about his childhood and upbringing, in a 'dreamy confessional narrative', where the rather fragmentary historical story contains sermons and anecdotes, usually of a judgemental and violent nature. Kantor argues that Guibert has unconsciously distorted the historical picture, but that this means that the memoirs are an ideal psychohistorical source.

In Kantor's view, Guibert's interior life was dominated by his mother, who was responsible for his upbringing, his father having died during Guibert's infancy. She was 'beautiful yet chaste', both saint and whore, and apparently had similarly contradictory impulses regarding the choice of a monastic career for Guibert. Kantor traces Guibert's sexual repression to that of his mother, as he does Guibert's own opposing 'ambition to glory' (which he seems to equate with lust) and 'submission to God'. Kantor explains that Guibert exhibits an imperfectly desexualized Oedipal attachment to his mother, and by transference to that 'seductive' cultural icon, the Virgin Mary. Rather than Guibert's superego forming in relation to his father, it developed along matriarchal lines due to his feminine upbringing, with the result that an internalized Virgin acts as superego. These opposing characteristics set up a conflict between erotic and non-erotic impulses with regard to the Virgin – in any case a paradox in her own right.

Thus women are threatening accusers and castrators as well as temptresses. In addition, the oedipal drama ascends to heaven: Guibert identifies with Christ, whose unconscious desires for the Virgin are chastened by God the Father (also a castrator in Guibert's fantasy life). Guibert's resultant guilt and self-hate leads him to aggressive and violent denunciations of those around him, especially the women.

Kantor also draws analogies between Guibert's interior and exterior worlds, contrasting the external masculine world of twelfth-century France with its adventure and loose morals, with Guibert's interior feminine one, attuned to the need for protection. His drama is thus linked to the courtly love scene as well as to the twelfth- and thirteenth-century cult of the Virgin. Parallels with the Madonna/whore paradox of twentieth-century southern Italy are also drawn.

Kantor's account is a plausible one, and he goes some way to situating an individual in the context of his time, although his classic Freudianism is now rather out-dated. His analysis does, however, exhibit some of the features for which psychohistorians have been criticized, rightly or wrongly. For instance, the study is a psychopathology and thus tells us little about normal life, despite Kantor's reminder that 'neurosis is but an extreme form of "normality"'. Nevertheless, the general importance of the Virgin in Guibert's internal life does seem likely to have been common among monks, given the emphasis on her cult in France at this time. Perhaps rather than the usual criticism that psychopathology serves to discredit leaders of society, in this version it appears to cast doubt on the possibility of psychic health within monasticism, at least in its medieval form. Kantor infers infantile psychological development from adult fantasy and inner experience, an approach sometimes labelled reductionist. In this sense, he treats the structure of the unconscious as constant over time, an analysis borne out by Kantor's comparison of Guibert's psyche with those of twentieth-century Italian men. He is therefore assuming that psychoanalysis, even in its classic statement, applicable to the past. Historians have been uncomfortable with this view.

Kantor situates Guibert's ambivalence towards women in the context of medieval misogyny, but again does not separate 'normal' misogyny from Guibert's extreme form. Feminists might also argue that Kantor's statement, '[w]e know that [Guibert's mother] was the probable cause of her husband's impotence for many years', displays a rather

of the researcher to her subject, known as counter-transference, is an essential part of the psychohistorical process. In this sense, presumably no two researchers will interpret the data in an identical way. This issue has been debated in the broader historical context for many years, however, since it is generally true that no two historians produce an identical interpretation of a collection of data. Therefore, this argument should not be used as justification for abandonment of the psychohistorical enterprise.

Overall, and despite the above reservations, psychohistory has much to offer. At the least, it can help reveal the rational roots of apparently irrational behaviour, and assist in explanation of the extreme situations of history, such as the persecution of witchcraft.[28] It can certainly be enriching, and adds a further perspective from which to examine both the past and our own interpretations of it.

Gay takes this rather minimalist picture of psychohistory further:

> Psychoanalytic history, then, is at its most ambitious an orientation rather than a specialty. I cannot reiterate often enough that psychoanalysis offers the historian not a handbook of recipes but a style of seeing the past. That is why Freudian history is compatible with all the traditional genres – military, economic, intellectual – as well as with most of their methods.[29]

Like the *Annales* historians, whom we examine in the next chapter, he calls for a total history, including the unconscious as well as our conscious world.

Erik Erikson, in his development of ego psychology, modified some of Freud's ideas. Like Freud, he saw the psychoanalytic method as an historical method, arguing that 'the history of humanity is a gigantic metabolism of individual life cycles'.[30] The following extract uses as its source Hitler's supposed autobiographical account of his childhood. Rather than carrying out a straightforward analysis of Hitler's pathology, Erikson examines the mythical Hitler and how his psyche fitted into the collective psyche of the German people.

Erikson discussed the unconscious as well as the conscious nature of myth. What does he mean by myth and how might a myth help to create or to explain historical events? Erikson also critiques those theorists interpreting the beginning of *Mein Kampf* in terms of Hitler's Oedipus complex. This is the way some psychohistorians have used apparently autobiographical material. What are Erikson's objections to this practice? Why, in particular, does he believe it is 'inexpedient to apply ordinary diagnostic methods to [Hitler's] words'?

Erikson claims that Hitler uses his father and mother as symbols which appeal to a particular part of Germany's population. How then does Erikson explain Hitler's wider appeal? Overall, how well do you think this account serves to elucidate the psychological background to the rise of National Socialism? How does it compare with any other explanations of which you are aware?

Notes

1 Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach* (2nd edn, New Brunswick, 1996), p. 3; Jacques Barzun, *Clio and the Doctors: Psycho-History Quanto-History & History* (Chicago, 1974), p. 23.

2 T. G. Ashplant, 'Fantasy, Narrative, Event: Psychoanalysis and History', *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), p. 167; Hans Meyerhoff, 'On Psychoanalysis as History', in Geoffrey Cocks and Travis L. Crosby (eds), *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New Haven, 1987), p. 17.

3 As George M. Kren and Leon H. Rappoport point out, this idea goes back as early as Herodotus and Thucydides. See 'Clio and Psyche', printed in Kren and Rappoport (eds), *Varieties of Psychohistory* (New York, 1976), p. 64.

4 In the past, and still in some historical writing, it has led, for example, to the misrepresentation or the omission of the experience of groups such as women, people of colour, or members of the working class.

5 W. Langer, 'The Next Assignment', *American Historical Review*, 63 (1958), p. 284.

6 Penelope Hetherington, 'Freud, Psychoanalysis and History', unpublished paper presented to the History Department Research Seminar, University of Western Australia, 1980, p. 4.

7 J. A. C. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians* (London, 1963), ch. 2.

8 Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, 1978), p. 47. Simone de Beauvoir critiqued the idea of penis envy much earlier: see *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (Harmondsworth, [1949] 1972), pp. 72–5.

9 Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London, [1950] 1995), pp. 221, 95, 14, and ch. 7; Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past*, p. 20.

10 Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York, 1958); *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York, 1969).

11 Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past*, p. 24.

12 Chodorow, *Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 47.

13 Langer, 'The Next Assignment'; Ashplant, 'Psychoanalysis in Historical Writing', *History Workshop Journal*, 26 (1988), p. 111; Bruce Mazlish, 'What Is Psycho-history?', in Kren and Rappoport, *Varieties of Psychohistory*, p. 33.

14 Reich (1897–1957) is a controversial figure within the psychoanalytic community. Once regarded as Freud's most promising follower, he was expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1934, and labelled 'psychotic': see Myron Sharaf, *Fury on Earth: A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (London, 1983).

15 Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (3rd edn, Harmondsworth, 1970), esp. ch. 2; Paul A. Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York, 1969), ch. 1, esp. pp. 40–8. Erich Fromm also discussed the psychological underpinnings of the Nazi movement: see *The Fear of Freedom* (London, 1942), ch. 6.

16 Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997).

17 Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, trans. Alan Tyson, *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James

Strachey with the collaboration of Anna Freud (London, [1910] 1957), vol. 11, pp. 63–137; Erikson, *Young Man Luther*.

18 See, for example, John Byng-Hall, 'The Power of Family Myths', in Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (eds), *The Myths We Live By* (London, 1990), pp. 216–24.

19 Jonathan Kantor, 'A Psycho-historical Source: The *Memoirs of Abbot Guibert of Nogent'*, *Journal of Medieval History*, 2 (1976), pp. 281–304. The following account draws heavily on Kantor's ideas and words.

20 These general critiques are derived from Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past*; Ashplant, 'Psychoanalysis in Historical Writing'; Frank E. Manuel, 'The Use and Abuse of Psychology in History', in Kren and Rappoport, *Varieties of Psychohistory*, pp. 38–62; Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 114–18; and John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern Society* (2nd edn, London, 1991), pp. 79–80.

21 Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago, 1985).

22 Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), esp. p. 14.

23 John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (Oxford, 1982); see the discussion in Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (New York, 1985), pp. 203–5.

24 See his chapter 'Accusers, Victims, Bystanders: The Innerlife Dimension', reprinted in Cocks and Crosby (eds), *Psycho/History*, pp. 254–66.

25 Gay, *Freud for Historians*, p. 203.

26 Thomas Cochran, 'Economic History, Old and New', *American Historical Review*, 74 (1969), p. 1567, cited in Gay, *Freud for Historians*, p. 101. See also Gay's discussion of self-interest, pp. 99–115.

27 For a succinct description of Lacan's theory, see Juliet Mitchell, 'Introduction – I', in Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds), *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne* (New York, 1982), pp. 1–26. For an example of historical practice, see Sally Alexander, 'Women, Class and Sexual Difference', *History Workshop Journal*, 17 (1984), pp. 125–49.

28 Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p. 115; Ashplant, 'Psychoanalysis in Historical Writing', p. 104.

29 Gay, *Freud for Historians*, p. 210.

30 Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 14.

Additional reading

Ashplant, T. G., 'Psychoanalysis in Historical Writing', *History Workshop Journal*, 26 (1988), pp. 102–19.

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THE LEGEND OF
HITLER'S CHILDHOOD
Erik H. Erikson

The most ruthless exploiters of any nation's fight for a safe identity have been Adolf Hitler and his associates, who for a decade were the undisputed political and military masters of a great, industrious, and studious people. To stop these experts of the cheap word from becoming a threat to the whole of Western civilization the combined resources of the industrial nations of the world were mobilized.

The West would now prefer to ignore the question mark which thus challenges the idea of unilinear progress. It hopes that, after some feeding and policing by occupation troops, these same Germans will once again emerge as good customers, easily domesticated; that they will return to the pursuit of *Kultur*, and forever forget the martial foolishness they were once more trapped into.

Men of good will must believe in psychological as well as in economic miracles. Yet I do not think that we are improving the chances of human progress in Germany or anywhere else by forgetting too soon what happened. Rather, it is our task to recognize that the black miracle of Nazism was only the German version—superbly planned and superbly bungled—of a universal contemporary potential. The trend persists; Hitler's ghost is counting on it.

For nations, as well as individuals, are not only defined by their highest point of civilized achievement, but also by the weakest one in their collective identity: they are, in fact, defined by the distance, and the quality of the distance, between these points. National Socialist Germany has provided a clear-cut illustration of the fact that advancing civilization is potentially endangered by its own advance, in that it splits ancient conscience, endangers incomplete identities, and releases destructive forces which now can count on the cold efficiency of the super-managers. I shall therefore go back this one step in our history and restate here a few formulations written for a U.S. government agency at the beginning of World War II, in preparation for the arrival of the—oh, so arrogant—first Nazi prisoners. Some of these formulations may already sound dated. Yet the psychological problems presented here do not vanish overnight either from Germany proper, or from the continent of which she is the

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histrionic genius. Goebbels knew this and he guided his barking master well—until very close to the end.

I shall not now review the psychiatric literature which has described Hitler as a 'psychopathic paranoid,' an 'amoral sadistic infant,' an 'overcompensatory sissy,' or 'a neurotic laboring under the compulsion to murder.' At times, he undoubtedly was all of that. But, unfortunately, he was something more and above it all. His capacity for acting and for creating action was so rare that it seems inexpedient to apply ordinary diagnostic methods to his words. He was first of all an adventurer, on a grandiose scale. The personality of the adventurer is akin to that of an actor, because he must always be ready to personify, as if he had chosen them, the changing roles suggested by the whims of fate. Hitler shares with many an actor the fact that he is said to have been queer and unbearable behind the scenes, to say nothing of in his bedroom. He undoubtedly had hazardous borderline traits. But he knew how to approach the borderline, to appear as if he were going too far, and then to turn back on his breathless audience. Hitler knew how to exploit his own hysteria. Medicine men, too, often have this gift. On the stage of German history, Hitler sensed to what extent it was safe to let his own personality represent with hysterical abandon what was alive in every German listener and reader. Thus the role he chose reveals as much about his audience as about himself; and precisely that which to the non-German looked queerest and most morbid became the Brown Piper's most persuasive tune for German ears.

2. Father

> . . . the father a faithful civil servant . . .

Despite this sentimental characterization of the father, Hitler spends a heated portion of his first chapter in reiterating the assertion that neither his father nor 'any power on earth could make an official' out of him. He knew already in earliest adolescence that the life of an official had no appeal for him. How different he was from his father! For though his father, too, had rebelled in early adolescence and at the age of thirteen had run away from home to become 'something "better,"' he had, after twenty-three years, returned home—and become a minor official. And 'nobody remembered the little boy of long ago.' This futile rebellion, Hitler says, made his father old early. Then, point for point, Hitler demonstrates a rebellious technique superior to that of his father.

Is this the naïve revelation of a pathological father-hate? Or if it is shrewd propaganda, what gave this Austrian German the right to expect that the tale of his boyhood would have a decisive appeal for masses of Reichs-Germans?

Obviously, not all Germans had fathers of the kind Hitler had, although many undoubtedly did. Yet we know that a literary theme, to be convincing, need not be true; it must sound true, as if it reminded one of something deep and past. The question, then, is whether the German father's position in his family made him act—either all of the time, or enough of the time, or at memorable times—in such a way that he created in his son an *inner* image which had some correspondence to that of the older Hitler's publicized image.

Superficially, the position in his family of the German middle-class father of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century may have been quite similar to other Victorian versions of 'life with Father.' But patterns of education are elusive. They vary in families and persons; they may remain latent only to appear during memorable crises; they may be counteracted by determined attempts to be different.

I shall present here an impressionistic version of what I consider one pattern of German fatherhood. It is representative in the sense in which Galton's blurred composites of photography are representative of what they are supposed to show.

When the father comes home from work, even the walls seem to pull themselves together ('*nehmen sich zusammen*'). The mother—although often the unofficial master of the house—behaves differently enough to make a baby aware of it. She hurries to fulfill the father's whims and to avoid angering him. The children hold their breath, for the father does not approve of 'nonsense'—that is, neither of the mother's feminine moods nor of the children's playfulness. The mother is required to be at his disposal as long as he is at home; his behavior suggests that he looks with disfavor on that unity of mother and children in which they had indulged in his absence. He often speaks to the mother as he speaks to the children, expecting compliance and cutting off any answer. The little boy comes to feel that all the gratifying ties with his mother are a thorn in the father's side, and that her love and admiration—the model for so many later fulfillments and achievements—can be reached only without the father's knowledge, or against his explicit wishes.

The mother increases this feeling by keeping some of the child's 'nonsense' or badness from the father—if and when she pleases;

while she expresses her disfavor by telling on the child when the father comes home, often making the father execute periodical corporal punishment for misdeeds, the details of which do not interest him. Sons are bad, and punishment is always justified. Later, when the boy comes to observe the father in company, when he notices his father's subservience to superiors, and when he observes his excessive sentimentality when he drinks and sings with his equals, the boy acquires that first ingredient of *Weltschmerz*: a deep doubt of the dignity of man—or at any rate of the 'old man.' All this, of course, exists concurrently with respect and love. During the storms of adolescence, however, when the boy's identity must settle things with his father image, it leads to that severe German *Pubertät* which is such a strange mixture of open rebellion and 'secret sin,' cynical delinquency and submissive obedience, romanticism and despondency, and which is apt to break the boy's spirit, once and for all.

In Germany, this pattern had traditional antecedents. It always just happened to happen, although it was, of course, not 'planned.' Indeed, some fathers who had resented the pattern deeply during their own boyhood wished desperately not to inflict it on their boys. But this wish again and again traumatically failed them in periods of crisis. Others tried to repress the pattern, only to augment both their and their children's neuroticisms. Often the boy sensed that the father himself was unhappy about his inability to break the vicious circle; for this emotional impotence the boy felt pity and disgust.

What, then, made this conflict so universally fateful? What differentiates—in an unconscious but decisive way—the German father's aloofness and harshness from similar traits in other Western fathers? I think the difference lies in the German father's essential lack of true inner authority—that authority which results from an integration of cultural ideal and educational method. The emphasis here definitely lies on *German* in the sense of *Reichs-Germany*. So often when discussing things German, we think and speak of well-preserved German *regions*, and of 'typical' yet isolated instances where the German father's inner authority seemed deeply justified, founded as it was on old rural and small urban *Gemütlichkeit*; on urban *Kultur*, on Christian *Demut*; on professional *Bildung*, or on the spirit of social *Reform*. The important point is that all of this did not assume an integrated meaning on a national scale as the imagery of the Reich became dominant and industrialization undermined the previous social stratification.

Harshness is productive only where there is a sense of obligation in command, and a sense of dignity in voluntary obedience. This, however, only an integrating cause can provide: a cause that unites past and present in accord with changes in the economic, political, and spiritual institutions.

The other Western nations had their democratic revolutions. They, as Max Weber demonstrated, by gradually taking over the privileges of their aristocratic classes, had thereby identified with aristocratic ideals. There came to be something of the French chevalier in every Frenchman, of the Anglo-Saxon gentleman in every Englishman, and of the rebellious aristocrat in every American. This something was fused with revolutionary ideals and created the concept of 'free man'—a concept which assumes inalienable rights, indispensable self-denial, and unceasing revolutionary watchfulness. For reasons which we shall discuss presently, in connection with the problem of *Lebensraum*, the German identity never quite incorporated such imagery to the extent necessary to influence the unconscious modes of education. The average German father's dominance and harshness was not blended with the tenderness and dignity which comes from participation in an integrating cause. Rather, the average father, either habitually or in decisive moments, came to represent the habits and the ethics of the German top sergeant and petty official who—'dress'd in a little brief authority'—would never be more but was in constant danger of becoming less; and who had sold the birthright of a free man for an official title or a life pension.

In addition, there was the breakdown of the cultural institution which had taken care of the adolescent conflict in its traditional—and regional—forms. In the old days, for example, the custom of *Wanderschaft* existed. The boy left home in order to be an apprentice in foreign lands at about the age—or a little later—at which Hitler announced his opposition, and at which Hitler's father had run away from home. In the immediate pre-Nazi era, some kind of break either still took place, with paternal thunder and maternal tears; or it was reflected in more moderate conflicts which were less effective because more individualized and often neurotic; or it was repressed, in which case not the father-boy relation, but the boy's relation to himself, was broken. Often the—exclusively male—teachers had to bear the brunt of it; while the boy extended his idealistic or cynical hostility over the whole sphere of *Bürgerlichkeit*—the German boy's contemptible world of 'mere citizens.' The connotation of this word *Bürger* is hard to transmit. It is not identical with the solid burgher;

nor with the glutted bourgeois of the class-conscious revolutionary youth; and least of all with the proud citoyen or the responsible citizen, who, accepting his equal obligations, asserts his right to be an individual. Rather it means a kind of adult who has betrayed youth and idealism, and has sought refuge in a petty and servile kind of conservatism. This image was often used to indicate that all that was 'normal' was corrupt, and that all that was 'decent' was weak. As 'Wanderbirds,' adolescent boys would indulge in a romantic unity with Nature, shared with many co-rebels and led by special types of youth leaders, professional and confessional adolescents. Another type of adolescent, the 'lone genius,' would write diaries, poems, and treatises; at fifteen he would lament with Don Carlos' most German of all adolescent complaints: 'Twenty years old, and as yet nothing done for immortality!' Other adolescents would form small bands of intellectual cynics, of delinquents, of homosexuals, and of race-conscious chauvinists. The common feature of all these activities, however, was the exclusion of the individual fathers as an influence and the adherence to some mystic-romantic entity: Nature, Father-land, Art, Existence, etc., which were superimages of a pure mother, one who would not betray the rebellious boy to that ogre, the father. While it was sometimes assumed that the mother would openly or secretly favor, if not envy, such freedom, the father was considered its mortal foe. If he failed to manifest sufficient enmity, he would be deliberately provoked: for his opposition was the life of the experience.

At this stage, the German boy would rather have died than be aware of the fact that this misguided, this excessive initiative in the direction of utter utopianism would arouse deep-seated guilt and at the end lead to stunned exhaustion. The identification with the father which in spite of everything had been well established in early childhood would come to the fore. In intricate ways treacherous Fate (= reality) would finally make a *Bürger* out of the boy—a 'mere citizen' with an eternal sense of sin for having sacrificed genius for Mammon and for a mere wife and mere children such as anyone can have.

Naturally, this account was made typical to the point of caricature. Yet I believe that both the overt type and the covert pattern existed, and that, in fact, this regular split between precocious individualistic rebellion and disillusioned, obedient citizenship was a strong factor in the political immaturity of the German: this adolescent rebellion was an abortion of individualism and of revolutionary spirit. It is my belief that the German fathers not only did not oppose this rebel-

and apology, he was likely to set the stage as he did in the first chapter of *Mein Kampf*. His tirades were focused on one foreign leader—Churchill or Roosevelt—and described him as a feudal tyrant and a senile fool. He then created a second image, that of the slick, rich son and decadent cynic: Duff-Cooper and Eden, of all men, are the ones he selected. And, indeed, Germans acquiesced to his broken pledges, as long as Hitler, the tough adolescent, seemed merely to be taking advantage of other men's senility.

3. Mother

> . . . the mother devoting herself to the cares of the household and looking after her children with eternally the same loving care.

Beyond this continuation of his fairy tale, Hitler says little of his mother. He mentions that she was sometimes lovingly worried about the fights he, the boy hero, got into; that after the father's death, she felt 'obliged'—out of duty rather than inclination—to have him continue his education; and that soon she, too, died. He had respected his father, he says, but loved his mother.

Of 'her children' there is no further word. Hitler never was the brother of anyone.

That Hitler, the histrionic and hysterical adventurer, had a pathological attachment to his mother, there can be little doubt. But this is not the point here. For, pathological or not, he deftly divides his mother image into the two categories which are of the highest propagandistic value: the loving, childlike, and slightly martyred cook who belongs in the warm and cozy background; and the gigantic marble or iron virgin, the monument to the ideal. In contrast to the sparsity of reference to his personal mother, then, there is an abundance of superhuman mother figures in his imagery. His Reichs-German fairy tale does not simply say that Hitler was born in Braunau because his parents lived there; no, it was 'Fate which designated my birthplace.' This happened when it happened not because of the natural way of things; no, it was an 'unmerited mean trick of Fate' that he was 'born in a period between two wars, at a time of quiet and order.' When he was poor, 'Poverty clasped me in her arms'; when sad, 'Dame Sorrow was my foster mother.' But all this 'cruelty of Fate' he later learned to praise as the 'wisdom of Providence,' for it hardened him for the service of Nature, 'the cruel Queen of all wisdom.'

When the World War broke out, 'Fate graciously permitted' him to become a German foot soldier, the same 'inexorable Goddess of Fate, who uses wars to weigh nations and men.' When after the defeat he stood before a court defending his first revolutionary acts, he felt certain 'that the Goddess of History's eternal judgment will smilingly tear up' the jury's verdict.

Fate, now treacherously frustrating the hero, now graciously catering to his heroism and tearing up the judgment of the bad old men: this is the infantile imagery which pervades much of German idealism; it finds its most representative expression in the theme of the young hero who becomes great in a foreign country and returns to free and elevate the 'captive' mother: the romantic counterpart to the saga of King Oedipus.

Behind the imagery of superhuman the mother there thus lurks a two-faced image of maternity: the mother at one time appears playful, childlike, and generous; and at another, treacherous, and in league with sinister powers. This, I believe, is a common set of images in patriarchal societies where woman, in many ways kept irresponsible and childlike, becomes a go-between and an in-between. It thus happens that the father hates in her her elusive children, and the children hate in her the aloof father. Since 'the mother' regularly becomes and remains the unconscious model for 'the world', under Hitler the ambivalence toward the maternal woman became one of the strongest features of German official thinking.

The Führer's relationship to motherhood and family remained ambiguous. In elaboration of a national fantasy he saw in himself a lonely man fighting and pleasing superhuman mother figures which now try to destroy him, now are forced to bless him. But he did not acknowledge women as companions up to the bitter end, when he insisted on making an honest woman out of Eva Braun, whom he presently shot with his own hands—or so the legend ends. But the wives of other men gave birth to their children in the shelter of the chancellery, while he himself, according to his official biographer, 'is the embodiment of the national will. He does not know any family life; neither does he know any vice.'

Hitler carried this official ambivalence toward women over into his relationship to Germany as an image. Openly despising the masses of his countrymen, who, after all, constitute Germany, he stood frenziedly before them, and implored them with his fanatical cries of 'Germany, Germany, Germany' to believe in a mystical national entity.

But then, the Germans have always been inclined to manifest a comparable attitude of ambivalence toward mankind and the world at large. That the world is essentially perceived as an 'outer world' is true for most tribes or nations. But for Germany the world is constantly changing its quality—and always to an extreme. The world is experienced either as vastly superior in age and wisdom, the goal of eternal longing and *Wanderlust*; or as a mean, treacherous, encircling encampment of enemies living for one aim—namely, the betrayal of Germany; or as a mysterious *Lebensraum* to be won by Teutonic courage and to be used for a thousand years of adolescent aggrandizement.

4. Adolescent

In this country, the word 'adolescence,' to all but those who have to deal with it professionally, has come to mean, at worst, a no man's land between childhood and maturity, and at best, a 'normal' time of sports and horseplay, of gangs and cliques and parties. The adolescent in this country offers less of a problem and feels less isolated because he has, in fact, become the cultural arbiter; few men in this country can afford to abandon the gestures of the adolescent, along with those of the freeman forever dedicated to the defeat of autocrats.

From here, then, it is hard to see what adolescence may mean in other cultures. In the primitive past, dramatic and bizarre adolescence rites were performed in an endeavor to modify and sublimate the adolescent's budding manhood. In primitive rituals the adolescent was forced to sacrifice some of his blood, some of his teeth, or a part of his genitals; in religious ceremonies he is taught to admit his sinfulness and bow his knee. Ancient rites confirmed the boy's intention of becoming a man in his father's world but at the same time of remaining eternally the modest son of a 'Great Father.' Leaders of the ritual dance, redeemers, and tragic actors were the representatives of guilt and exaltation. Germany's adolescent rebellion was a climactic step in a universal psychological development which parallels the decline of feudalism: the inner emancipation of the sons. For while there are close parallels between primitive adolescence rites and those of National Socialism, there is one most significant difference. In Hitler's world, the adolescent marched with his emancipated equals. Their leader had never sacrificed his will to

any father. In fact, he had said that conscience is a blemish like circumcision, and that both are Jewish blemishes.

Hitler's horror of Jewry—an 'emasculating germ' represented by less than 1 per cent of his nation of 70 million—is clothed in the imagery of phobia; he describes the danger emanating from it as a weakening infection and a dirtying contamination. Syphilophobia is the least psychiatry can properly diagnose in his case. But here again, it is hard to say where personal symptom ends and shrewd propaganda begins. For the idealistic adolescent's imagery is typically one of purest white and blackest black. His constant preoccupation is with the attainment of what is white, and the phobic avoidance and extirpation of everything black, in others and in himself. Fears of sexuality, especially, make the adolescent suggestible to words like these: 'Alone the loss of purity of the blood destroys the inner happiness forever; it eternally lowers man, and never again can its consequences be removed from body and mind.'[2]

The pre-Nazi German adolescent was passionately cruel with himself; it was not in order to indulge himself that he opposed his father. When he 'fell,' his guilt was great. Hitler, so this adolescent was made to feel, was the man who had the right to be cruel against black everywhere because he was not lenient with himself. What aroused suspicions in sensible non-Germans—namely, Hitler's proclaimed abstinence from meat, coffee, alcohol, and sex—here counted as a heavy propaganda factor. For Hitler thus proved his moral right to free the Germans from their postwar masochism and to convince them that they, in turn, had a right to hate, to torture, to kill.

In the children, Hitler tried to replace the complicated conflict of adolescence as it pursued every German, with simple patterns of hypnotic action and freedom from thought. To do so he established an organization, a training, and a motto which would divert all adolescent energy into National Socialism. The organization was the Hitler Youth; the motto, 'Youth shapes its own destiny.'

God no longer mattered: 'At this hour when the earth is consecrating itself to the sun, we have only one thought. Our sun is Adolph Hitler.'[3] Parents did not matter: 'All those who from the perspective of their "experience," and from that alone combat our

[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Quoted in G. Ziemer, *Education for Death*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1941.

method of letting youth lead youth, must be silenced. . . .'[4] Ethics did not matter: 'An entirely fresh, newborn generation has arisen, free from the preconceived ideas, free from compromises, ready to be loyal to the orders which are its birthright.'[5] Brotherhood, friendship did not matter: 'I heard not a single song expressing any tender emotion of friendship, love of parents, love for fellow-man, joy of living, hope for future life.'[6] Learning did not matter: 'National Socialist ideology is to be a sacred foundation. It is not to be degraded by detailed explanation.'[7]

What mattered was: to be on the move without looking backward. 'Let everything go to pieces, we shall march on. For today Germany is ours; tomorrow, the whole world.'

On such a foundation Hitler offered a simple racial dichotomy of cosmic dimensions: the German (soldier) versus the Jew. The Jew is described as small, black, and hairy all over; his back is bent, his feet are flat; his eyes squint, and his lips smack; he has an evil smell, is promiscuous, and loves to deflower, impregnate, and infect blond girls. The Aryan is tall, erect, light, without hair on chest and limbs; his glance, walk, and talk are *stramm*, his greeting the outstretched arm. He is passionately clean in his habits. He would not knowingly touch a Jewish girl—except in a brothel.

This antithesis is clearly one of ape man and superman. But while in this country such imagery may have made the comics, in Germany it became official food for adult minds. And let us not forget (for the Germans will not forget) that for long years German youth and the German army seemed to indicate a success for Hitler's imagery. Healthy, hard, calm, obedient, fanatic, they 'challenge everything that is weak in body, in intensity, and in loyalty.'[8] They were arrogant in the extreme; and it was only in their sneering arrogance that the old German fear of succumbing to foreign 'cultured' influence could be recognized.

In women, too, National Socialist race consciousness established a new pride. Girls were taught to accept joyfully the functions of their bodies if mated with selected Aryans. They received sexual enlightenment and encouragement. Childbirth, legitimate or illegitimate,

[4] Quoted in Hans Siemsen, *Hitler Youth*, Lindsay Drummond, London, 1941.
[5] Quoted in Ziemer, *op. cit.*
[6] Ziemer, *op. cit.*
[7] Quoted in Ziemer, *op. cit.*
[8] Ziemer, *op. cit.*

Bloch and Febvre's approaches to history were complementary. In Febvre's doctoral thesis, *Philippe II and the Franche-Comté*, he examined the geographical background of this region and the effect of its material situation on its social, cultural and political development. Febvre later turned to religious history. His best known book, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century*, asked not whether Rabelais was an atheist but whether such a stance was possible in his era. Thus what might have been a history of the Reformation became a broader examination of culture. By this means, Febvre anticipated the *Annales'* later interest in mentality.[3]

Bloch, however, concentrated overall on analysing the material structures of society. In *Feudal Society* he analysed not only the medieval aristocracy and the details of their land holdings and political dealings, but also their relationships with peasants, the customs by which each group held land, and the rituals by which property transfer was effected and formalized. He also emphasized the influence of the environment as part of the historical material world.[4] In contrast, *The Royal Touch* examined the importance of popular belief in legitimizing the power of medieval monarchy, and the ways in which kings utilized that belief for their own purposes. Bloch discussed touching in order to heal scrofula as a deliberately developed part of royal mystique.[5]

In this way Febvre and Bloch between them promulgated an ideal of *histoire totale* (total history), arguing that all aspects of a society were part of historical reality. Some of these ideas had been proposed previously, for example, in the historical geography of Vidal de la Blache and the issues of Henri Berr's *Revue de Synthèse Historique*, founded in 1900. It was left to Febvre and Bloch, however, to argue for this broad synthesis from an historical point of view, and thus to assert the place of history in the forefront of the human sciences.[6]

In 1947 the Sixième Section of the École Pratique des Haute Études was founded. This was a research centre in economics and the social sciences, outside the French university programme, and under Febvre's presidency it promoted a variety of *Annales* research. The event that rocketed the *Annales* version of history to the fore in France, however, was the production of a thesis by a student of Febvre's. In *The Mediterranean*, Braudel proposed a new model of historical time, and broke from the objective empirical methods of his historical contemporaries.[7]

Braudel expressed his schema of time in a metaphor of the ocean. He envisaged three layers of historical time, each moving at a different

speed, and each aligned with different historical topics. The slowest moving, 'man in his relationship to the environment', was geographical time, the 'almost imperceptible' shifting of geology and climate, entailing examination of communications and limits of production. This *longue durée* moved in slow cycles of hundreds of years or more. The medium *durée*, or *conjonctures*, was equivalent to the 'swelling currents' with 'slow but perceptible rhythms', and revolved in ten to fifty year cycles. This middle layer comprised economic cycles, trade, population fluctuations, and prices. His third aspect of time Braudel called *histoire événementielle*, 'the ephemera of history', 'crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs'. This is the concern of a more traditional political and diplomatic history.[8]

The similarities between Braudel's work and Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology are marked, although a direct influence is hard to trace.[9] One can certainly say that as contemporary French scholars they were subject to the same collection of intellectual influences.[10] Structuralists believe that we, as humans, make our world comprehensible by imposing mental structures upon it, consciously or unconsciously. Conversely, an analyst of society will seek to elucidate these structures. Kurzweil thus defines structuralism as 'the systematic attempt to uncover deep universal mental structures as these manifest themselves in kinship and larger social structures, . . . and in the unconscious psychological patterns that motivate human behaviour'.[11]

Some of these structures are synchronic, that is, unchanging with time. In the case of Braudel, the elements of the *longue durée* change so slowly that alteration is imperceptible to humans: these structures are effectively synchronic. Structures may also change over time and this diachronic change may manifest itself in an oscillatory form (for example, the cyclical *conjonctures*). Change over time can also be irreversible, as in the dramatic historical event. In all cases, it is the relationship between the structures which illuminates society and its history.

As well as using the three *durées* to organize his narrative, Braudel conceived time in a new way. For example, his famous phrase 'the Mediterranean was 99 days long' vividly evoked the effect of sea and horseback travel upon early modern communications. His spatial approach to the sea was equally novel; for Braudel, the Mediterranean extended as far north as the Baltic and eastward to India. Land and sea were inextricably connected: the history of the Mediterranean 'can

no more be separated from that of the lands surrounding it than the clay can be separated from the hands of the potter who shapes it'.[12]

Braudel in fact argued that there were many *durées*, not only three, and thus he converged with Febvre's and Bloch's aim of writing a total history. In Braudel's case the totality was to be expressed in a range of *durées* rather than by topic, although chronology and subject were linked. This was an avowedly structuralist approach, and the deepest layer was ultimately the most influential: 'the long run always wins in the end'. Thus he largely overturned the traditional emphasis on the importance of events and people as the agents of history. Braudel's agents are the mountains and the sea itself. Eschewing direct statement, he conveys his sense of agency through an expansive and emotional approach to writing. His style is evocative and by its wealth of detail transports the reader into the region which Braudel loved 'with passion'.[13]

Braudel's work, while widely applauded, also had its critics.[14] Their main arguments fell into two groups. Firstly, reviewers found problems with the structure of *The Mediterranean*, especially in terms of fulfilling its author's aim of *histoire totale*. To some, 'total history' seemed an impossibility, and others agreed that *The Mediterranean* certainly could not be so described, as Braudel had omitted key topics, such as culture, agriculture, law and religion.[15] Bailyn argued that the three sections of *The Mediterranean* lacked connection, and Le Goff (himself an *Annaliste*) in particular condemned the section dealing with events for its lack of relation to the early parts of the book.[16] Historians who accepted the idea of the *durées* suggested even so that Braudel had located some of his discussions under the wrong chronological heading; there were suggestions that his linkages of topic and chronology were arbitrary.[17]

Secondly, in the same way that Marxist historians have been accused of economic determinism, Braudel was labelled a 'geographical determinist'. As we noted above, Braudel seemed to attribute any historical agency which did exist to large and unchanging landforms, and his book was curiously devoid of people. Apparently lacking a theory of historical change, his structuralism tends to the synchronic, rather than the diachronic normally deemed appropriate to history.[18]

Despite these possible flaws *The Mediterranean* is one of the great works of twentieth-century history, combining earlier ideas into a novel paradigm of historical writing. Braudel set new trends in historical thinking and methodology, made history one of the most important

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