

Ruskin, Radicalism and Raphael Samuel: Politics, Pedagogy and the Origins of the History Workshop

by Kynan Gentry

During the 1980s and early 1990s a number of reflections on the History Workshop were published.¹ Among the varied accounts, one theme in particular – that of the early Workshop's relationship to Ruskin College – provoked heated, and often personal, debate. On one side was the Workshop's founder, Raphael Samuel. Linking the Workshop directly to the anti-authoritarian and liberationist movements of the 1960s, he argued that it began as a 'clandestine' activity, beleaguered by the hostility of the College authorities, where 'the very activity of primary research was a forbidden luxury, reserved for those who had been given the accolade of a university degree'.² On the other side were Samuel's Ruskin colleagues Harold Pollins and Herbert 'Billy' Hughes, who questioned the extent of the Workshop's 'revolutionary origins', and rejected charges of the College's hostility towards the Workshop and its methods. As they correctly noted in defence of the latter charge, while Ruskin was primarily a teaching institution, its students had been encouraged to undertake primary research since the mid 1940s – especially in local history.³ Samuel's case for the College's opposition and for Hughes's alleged 'indignation that the students were listening to each other's talks instead of to a lecture' failed to acknowledge that both the College executive and most of the faculty regarded the Workshop's development as 'a valuable extra-curricular activity'.⁴ Pollins, however, was equally guilty of generalization, especially in his claim that the Workshops were quickly taken for granted as a normal feature of College life.⁵ The reality lay somewhere in the middle – the College had been cautiously supportive of the Workshop, yet this support wavered in 1970 following the conjunction of History Workshop 4 and the first Women's Liberation National Conference, two weekends when large numbers descended on the College during term-time, and the administration (and some students) resented the resulting chaos.⁶

Yet as the debate quickly descended into a series of personal recriminations and accusations of questionable memories, the exchanges unfortunately did little to clarify either the Workshop's broader origins or the

School of History, Australian National University

Kynan.Gentry@anu.edu.au

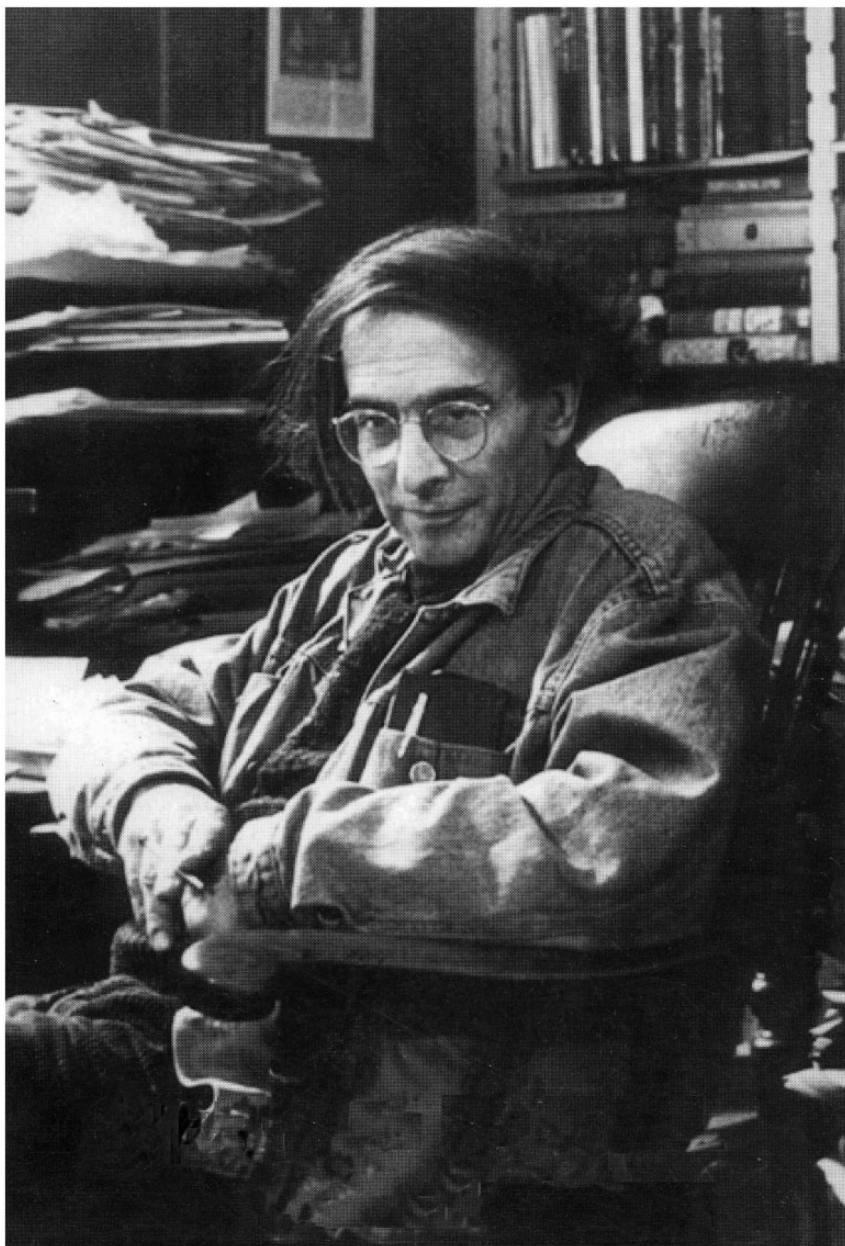


Fig. 1. Raphael Samuel, 1934–1996.

wider question of its emergence within the politics of change taking place in Ruskin during the late 1960s. Indeed, short of a handful of brief pieces (principally by Samuel) on the Workshop's early years, the circumstances of HW's establishment have received little scholarly attention. Rather, the bulk of published work has tended to explore the broader place of the Workshop in postwar British historiography, or to focus on specific elements, such as the rise of the feminist voice in the Workshop community; the juncture between the Workshop as a 'movement' and the establishment of the *History Workshop Journal* (HWJ); or Workshop efforts to bring together forms of historical or historically informed inquiry which normally existed in separate spheres.⁷ Yet as Barbara Taylor has recently suggested in respect of HWJ, this singular historiographical consideration of the Workshop has tended to obscure internal divisions and what have at times been significant shifts in its goals and objectives.⁸ Indeed, far from defining History Workshop as a consistent position or set of objectives, it is perhaps more appropriate to regard it as a sort of transit lounge: people came in, were influenced, and then moved on, often in disparate directions.⁹ In this respect it more resembles *Annales*, many of whose historians have insisted that they do not represent a 'school', but rather a spirit and a wider approach.¹⁰

Samuel's own writings on the early Workshop often confused matters further. His anti-authoritarian and at times anarchic stance often led to a somewhat romanticized account of the Workshop — supposedly established as 'an attack on the examination system — and the humiliations which it imposed on adult students', or of its broader aims having been to '[democratise] the act of historical production, enlarging the constituency of historical writers, and bringing the experience of the present to bear upon the interpretation of the past'.¹¹ These writings similarly cultivate the radical image of the Workshop as running 'against the grain' (a phrase he had used of *Universities and Left Review*), and as anticipating later political developments.¹² Earlier or parallel influences that shaped and contextualized the Workshop's emergence, such as the renaissance of English local history grounded in working-class populism and the rapid growth of industrial archaeology and oral history (not to mention the significant changes occurring in the British tertiary sector), were typically pushed into the background. This context is the focus of the present article. Centred on the recently opened Raphael Samuel Archive at the Bishopsgate Library, it explores the circumstances, influences and motivations behind Raphael Samuel's establishment of the History Workshop at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1967.

* * *

Ruskin College was established in 1899 with the aim of creating a cadre of union functionaries and labour officials drawn from the working class.

Its founders wanted 'to take the windbags out of the trade union movement and fill them with sand so that they are the sandbags for stability not windbags for the revolution'.¹³ After only nine years, however, the College's purpose was challenged in a series of protests launched by some of Ruskin's more class-conscious students, who together with a number of former Ruskin students set up the Plebs League in November 1908. Committed to the principle of independent working-class education, the League members opposed the College's expanding relationship with Oxford University, which they viewed as too pro-establishment. They also resisted the introduction of examinations, because it would bring the College curriculum closer to that of the university. This was seen as intended to cut working-class students off from their roots and fill them with notions of competitive achievement instead of class solidarity, thus rendering working-class militancy impotent. They also argued that with its ties to the labour movement, the College should be less impartial and less 'neutral' in discussing social conflicts between workers and capitalists.¹⁴ The failure to consider such a position, they concluded, was evidence that the College administration did not understand them as workers, and was too rigid in trying to remedy educational weaknesses.¹⁵ The College authorities rejected this argument, claiming that the combination of scholarly aims and a strong sense of social purpose did not negate the dispassionate search for truth.¹⁶ When in 1909 Dennis Hird, the College's Plebs-sympathetic principal, was dismissed, the Plebs students went on strike. The following summer they seceded into what became the Central Labour College (CLC), headed by Hird, which sought to give workers a theoretical vocabulary grounded in their own experience, educate them on the origins of social and economic injustice, and provide them with strategic weapons to overthrow capitalism.¹⁷

Ruskin, meanwhile, sought to retain its loyalty to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the labour movement and also to preserve its academic integrity. Following the departure of the Plebs a number of changes were made. A new constitution gave a clear majority to the College's governing council, the curriculum was revised, and in general the administration became more flexible. Without the dissident students, the relationship between the College and the University improved, and in 1910 the University's Diploma in Economics and Political Science was opened to Ruskin candidates; this soon became the primary course of study for Ruskin students. Ruskin grew steadily in size and reputation and its relationship with the TUC strengthened. By the early 1960s trade-union scholarships provided forty percent of the College's total income, a figure which was matched by the Department of Education and Science grant, while the remainder came from Local Education Authority awards.¹⁸

Raphael Samuel joined Ruskin College in late 1962 as a part-time tutor in sociology, having been recommended to the position by Christopher Hill. Two years later he joined the permanent staff when a tutorship in

economics, social history and sociology became vacant.¹⁹ ‘Politically and intellectually precocious’, as Stuart Hall described him,²⁰ Samuel had been raised in a household steeped in the culture of the Communist Party. Immersed in the ways of the Party, and sure that his future would be tied up with it as a Communist agitator, propagandist or organizer, in the early 1950s at Balliol College, where he read history, he had been a central figure in the small group of young communist undergraduates around Christopher Hill, and reputedly spent much of his first year ‘building the party’ – recruiting, and skipping classes to sell the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin around the colleges.²¹ Devastated by the events of 1956 – during which Stalinism, Socialist Zionism and the Anglo-French ‘civilising missions’ were revealed as little more than fronts for imperialism – he poured his energies into the emergent New Left, with its hopes of reconstituting British socialism, and into the launch in 1957 of the heterogeneous *Universities and Left Review* (ULR) with Stuart Hall, Gabriel Pearson, and Charles Taylor.²² In 1960 ULR merged with Edward Thompson and John Saville’s *New Reasoner* (NR) to form the *New Left Review* (NLR).

Samuel’s background also profoundly shaped his perception of Ruskin, which he viewed as having earned its place in the history books as ‘the College which brought the working man to Oxford’.²³ Mirroring the radical politics of *Universities and Left Review* and its emphasis on the importance of ‘community’, he was particularly taken with Ruskin’s early history when, untroubled by exams, the College was very much a movement, with its own extension lecturers visiting the towns and villages of industrial England; its own local classes and study groups; and a large number of students enrolled in its correspondence courses. There were even satellite ‘Ruskin Halls’ at Stockport, Birkenhead and Handsworth. The early Ruskin College also identified with the newest ‘social sciences’ of sociology and psychology, from which it claimed for itself a pioneering intellectual and educational role. Thus, in Samuel’s reading of the College’s early history, the spirit of endeavour was high, as was a search for truth, beauty, and what one of the early writers called ‘the knowledge of fundamental things’.²⁴ At a more personal level he was also fascinated by the unquestionably proletarian backgrounds of its early students – individuals such as William Harry Goostrey, a finisher in a paper-mill warehouse; Joseph Freakley, a blacksmith’s striker, ‘[whose] human sympathies have been touched and his imagination quickened by Dickens’; or Joseph William Lake, tramway conductor from Leeds and Christian Anarchist, a non-resister and believer in the teachings of Tolstoy, who ‘deem[ed] it wrong to hold for one’s future use money or goods that others need in the present’.²⁵

The reality of Ruskin in 1962 was thus something of a shock for Samuel, who was soon arguing that the College had lost its way – its ties to the working class were largely gone; its relationship with adult education and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) was weak; and there seemed

to be little feeling any longer that students leaving the College were going out to 'change society' or invigorate the places in which they worked.²⁶ Rather than building up their confidence, the Ruskin experience intimidated with its tutorial discipline, and left them with an ingrained sense of their own weakness and social inferiority:

Too many of our students – though a minority – end up working for the capitalist class, a net loss to themselves, to the College, and to the communities from which they were originally drawn. Unless the College has some clear social purpose, and fully-worked out educational ideal, our work will continue to be marked by a low level of aspiration and by a virtual absence of moral intention. Loyalty to the College will continue to be weak unless it can give its tutors and students a reason to be proud, and establish its reputation as a centre for independent work.²⁷

Ruskin, he concluded, was now a stepping-stone to university rather than an alternative.²⁸ In renewal and reaffirmation of its original purpose, the College needed to take a closer look at its recruitment and the political constituency of worker students, and to re-examine the whole intellectual curriculum and the purpose it served.²⁹ The study of history, he believed, needed to be central to this.

Samuel's own association with history ran against the grain, beginning with his uncle – the renowned Judaic scholar and historian of socialism Chimen Abramsky – and a supposedly 'secret communist' history-master at the progressive King Alfred School in Hampstead.³⁰ This was followed by Samuel's introduction to the Communist Party Historians Group (CPHG) while still a teenager. Here he worked side by side with 'Gods' (as he described them) such as Rodney Hilton, Eric Hobsbawm, A. L. Morton and Christopher Hill – the latter someone whose work he especially admired.³¹

Established in 1946, the CPHG's primary objective was to anglicize the Marxist tradition and demonstrate its compatibility with a native idiom of critical social theory.³² Driving this shift was the Popular Frontism inaugurated by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, which sought the rehabilitation of progressive or allegedly progressive aspects of national history and national cultural traditions in the name of demonstrating that the Communist Party was the inheritor of a long tradition of English popular radicalism.³³ Two threads were central to the recovery of this national-popular tradition – the assumption that the true national culture was national *because* it was popular, and the argument that the 'people's heroes' needed to be reclaimed from the bourgeois society that had hijacked them.³⁴ Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s British communists accordingly discovered Coleridge as the English dialectician, the English Civil War as the English version of the French Revolution, and

other such intellectual traditions, as documented in Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958).³⁵ Behind the appeal of the national and the need of 'the people' to 'hear its own history' lay recognition that the study of history and the 'production of memories' was political, and that, suspicious of bastard patriotism' as the left had traditionally been, jingoism and flag-waving had for years been used by the right both to oppress colonial peoples and to undermine feelings of international solidarity among British workers. Such considerations were all the more pressing in the immediate postwar period because of the perceived threat to British culture posed by the United States.³⁶

In its efforts to 'bring history to the people', the Group sought to produce a range of historical publications for teachers and for popular consumption – the most notable being the 'History in the Making' series inspired by Dona Torr and produced under her general editorship.³⁷ In late 1950, motivated by the value of the plebeian dimension of local history as a theoretical basis of social movement, the CPHG also established a local-history group, and began publishing a local-history bulletin.³⁸ As the first bulletin noted in October 1950:

In order to bring the policy of our Party right into the lives of the people we need to understand, better than many of us do at present, the class structure and local traditions of the place in which we are doing our political work. Study of the local history, and especially of the development of the local labour movement, will not only help us to do this but will also provide us with vital material for local propaganda which, by reviving the old traditions of militancy and solidarity in the working class organization, will help to make possible the united action without which we cannot achieve socialism and peace.³⁹

The CPHG's notion of local history here differed from 'traditional' local histories (which tended to ignore or distort class struggle), by developing a history in which the main theme would be the life of the ordinary people – their jobs and living conditions; the local class struggles; the building of the local labour movement; and the part played by working-class organization in local and national politics. To further the development of such histories they also offered guidance on the use of different labour resources such as trade-union histories or old newspapers and minute-books, as well as promoting the value of personal recollections of the Labour movement and stressing the need to record them before it was too late.⁴⁰

With the events of 1956 things came to a grinding halt as most members of the CPHG resigned and the emergent New Left set its focus not on history, but on politics and issues of international solidarity. Samuel's time with *Universities and Left Review* and *New Left Review* nonetheless had a profound effect on his approach to, and interest in history. Indeed,

by early 1961 he had become especially critical of the *NLR*'s lack of history and the 'historical context' of socialism, and pushed for the journal to re-embrace history and move away from a narrow sociological focus.⁴¹ His experience in the New Left also saw him move into new historiographical spaces, most notably towards a socialist history critical of the theoretical model of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, long dominant in British working-class historiography. Following Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Edward Thompson, he sought to abandon structuralist 'laws of development' and instead explore the cultural dimension of politics, which he saw as a mechanism through which to redefine the relationship between structure and agency. He was especially influenced here by Thompson's identification of radical resources in the early English working-class tradition as a platform that could inspire demands for social justice in the present; his view of the people as 'makers' rather than 'victims' of history; and his desire to recover the experience of the oppressed 'from the enormous condescension of posterity'.⁴² Centred on the perceived importance of the self-activity and creativity of working-class movements and groups, and on their anti-authoritarianism and internal democracy, this was an ideological shift from Marxism's critical futurist spirit to one that gave pride of place to stories of everyday struggle.⁴³

Yet Samuel's interest in 'experience', 'ordinary' people and bringing history 'closer to the central concerns of people's lives' was also significantly different from Thompson's. While such humanist emphases were not new,⁴⁴ Thompson and the older generation of Marxist historians primarily conceptualized 'below' and 'above' in terms of class and the relationship between class and resistance. He was also ultimately concerned with working-class contributions to the national political culture: *The Making of the English Working Class*, for example, is deeply embedded in arguments over British economic and political history. Samuel was far more diverse. Taking cues from his *Universities and Left Review* influences, he saw the 'culture of the oppressed' as virtually an alternative culture. Furthermore, by the beginning of the 1960s he was also becoming increasingly interested in questions around the apparent boundaries between history and the social sciences – especially sociology. Here new work on 'deviance', identifying the 'urban guerrilla', the 'outcast' and the 'abandoned', offered history a progressive and at times subversive influence, opened up new areas and methods of inquiry and encouraged historians in the use of comparative method.⁴⁵ Social and cultural anthropology were equally key, with its methods of observation, its local and familial focus, and its attempt to give a theoretical and cultural dimension to the workings of everyday life.⁴⁶ Drawing upon such work, he effectively sought to extend the subject matter of historical enquiry, exploring fields and topics which had been 'hidden from history' (in Sheila Rowbotham's phrase) and excluded from the majestic historical overviews of the older generation of Marxist historians. Indeed, his attention to stories lost in history's nooks and crannies was

to be an area of conflict between himself and Thompson, who despite being interested in both the micro and macro, feared that micro-history could seriously undermine the social value of history. 'The new social history', Thompson warned in 1973:

is becoming a series of prints, snapshots, stasis upon stasis. As a gain is registered, in the new dimension of social history, at the same time whole territories of established economic and political history are evacuated. The central concern of history, as a relevant humane study – to generalize and integrate and to attain a comprehension of the full social and cultural process – becomes lost.⁴⁷

For Samuel, however, there was no necessary disjunction between the general and the particular: it would simply be a matter of travelling over an area in a different way – 'on foot instead of in armoured car or tractor'.⁴⁸

Samuel's views here also owed much the rise of alternative educational practices which by the mid 1960s presented a major challenge to the abstract empiricism of academic history.⁴⁹ Younger historians, who flocked to the new universities during the postwar expansion of British tertiary education, were central to this, becoming attracted to interdisciplinary approaches as the scope of their own research became broader.⁵⁰ Many British historians had been attracted to Marxism for similar reasons, seduced not just by its political implications, but by its interrelatedness with social phenomena – as illustrated by R. H. Tawney and Harold Laski's work on the links between religion, political thought and economic development, and later by Hill's work on seventeenth-century England and Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*.

For many on the left, the methodological initiatives of Marxist history – and more still of social history – were also specifically designed to break the structural preoccupations of dominant approaches to the research, writing, and teaching of history, and to make learning more relevant to the contemporary world. Such change had been taking place for some time in schools, where 'learning by doing' and project work were beginning to break down the separation between teachers and students, while the extension of extra-mural departments opened up new levels of ambition for 'second-chance' learners.⁵¹ The recent growth of interest in the study of 'people's history' was similarly enmeshed with adult education. Both Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958) and Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (1963) were products of the adult-education setting – the former generated from Williams's teaching of WEA classes in Oxford, the latter from Thompson's time as a WEA extramural lecturer in the West Riding.⁵² R. H. Tawney, G. D. H. Cole and Dona Torr similarly had wide participatory relationships with audiences far outside the groves of academe.⁵³ Extending this, Samuel's particular take on the relationship between history and education also

linked back to the argument expounded by Iris Murdoch in her 1958 *Conviction* essay 'The House of Theory'. Seemingly echoing Gramsci's dictum that the 'moral' function of culture was central to the production of hegemonies, she argued that with their emphasis on education and consumption, the new forms of egalitarianism were reorganizing social hierarchy, creating a new division between the 'expert' and the 'non-expert'.⁵⁴ While Murdoch and the New Left's engagement with the problems of 'the establishment' and cultural integration owed more to William Morris and the abandonment of the bankrupt orthodoxy of both Marxism and Fabian empiricism than it did to Gramsci, as English-language translations of Gramsci's work slowly became available in the late 1950s and early 1960s his ideas were rapidly taken up by the New Left.⁵⁵ Key to this was his notion of the 'organic intellectual', which in attaching agency directly to the working class countered the collapse of faith in the role of communist parties as necessary forces for revolutionary change. The implications of this for the development of 'history from below' were profound, as was the importance of 'critical pedagogy' to working-class culture and the nurturing of working-class intellectuals.⁵⁶ Indeed, Hill had made such an observation in his 1946 Communist Party pamphlet *Oxford – A Future for our University*, in which he explicitly linked the issue of syllabus and educational reform to the politics of the university. Questions specifically around adult education and the politics and inequalities of the British education system more generally had also been frequently discussed in the pages of the *New Reasoner*, *Universities and Left Review*, and the early *New Left Review* – especially following the publication of *Conviction*.⁵⁷ From the early 1960s radical educational ideas similar to those Samuel would deploy in the Workshop were also being discussed in radical journals such as *Anarchy* and the short-lived *Black Dwarf*.⁵⁸

Samuel had first raised the idea of running weekend class sessions and other 'unofficial' lessons while still an undergraduate student. He saw such gatherings as providing a space to discuss problems of specialization, vocational training, class composition of students, syllabus, and the even older problem of breaking down the isolation of intellectual life from the people.⁵⁹ Far from alone in such concerns, following his return to Oxford in the early 1960s he and a number of other graduates who were equally dissatisfied with their undergraduate experience came together to form the Social History Group at Nuffield College, thereafter held at St Antony's. This built upon existing ideological connections between Nuffield and Ruskin which had grown through the 1950s and early 1960s around Allan Flanders, Hugh Clegg and Alan Fox's 'Oxford School of Industrial Relations'. The academic standing of Industrial Relations at the time was tenuous, and Flanders maintained that such a course could not be properly studied by someone with no practical experience in the field. It is not surprising, then, that lectures were attended mainly by Ruskin students – indeed it became one of the most popular papers for

Ruskin Diploma students, as were the weekly seminars of the 'Clegg Group' held at Nuffield College.⁶⁰

Seeking to escape from the aggressive and narrow professionalism of Oxford, and concerned to have a more direct encounter with history, members of the Social History Group took up 'history from below' as a central theme. From early 1966 weekly sessions were run on topics such as 'Popular Theatre', 'The Working Man's Holiday', 'Working-class Funerals', 'Proletarian Sundays' and 'Censorship and Morals in the Nineteenth-century'.⁶¹ Especially influential in prodding the group in this direction was the young Tim Mason, who had recently returned from a stint as a junior lecturer at the University of York with details of a social-history-oriented course run by Gwyn Williams, medievalist turned modernist. Convinced that the left could be mobilized on Gramscian lines, Williams broke with pedagogical convention and initiated his students into the study of history by having them spend their first term with 'original' documents.⁶² Samuel himself had just been similarly enlightened: after a summer spent scouring the Record Offices and presbyteries of Lancashire in search of the nineteenth-century Irish poor he returned to Ruskin preaching the evangel of documents.⁶³ Now wishing to challenge the Ruskin curriculum in a similar way, in the spring of 1966 he decided to experiment with the Social History Group's format at the College, introducing an extended seminar series on the theme of 'The English Countryside in the Nineteenth-century'.⁶⁴ Embracing alternative sources, the seminar drew in speakers from across the British university system and labour movement to speak on topics ranging from 'Chartism' and 'West Country Methodism', to 'The Nineteenth-century Food Market' and 'Folk Songs from the English Countryside'. Heavily influenced by Williams's course and by a mixed sociology and social-history course which Thompson had recently started at the University of Warwick, in the classroom Samuel too introduced his first-year students to the archive and primary sources for local history.⁶⁵

Yet the introduction of the seminar was also a provocative act, conceived by Samuel as something of a modern-day Plebs protest against the innate conservatism of Ruskin's educational practices and perceptions of its 'heritage' – of what the institution was and for whom. In Samuel's view, this heritage was grounded in service to the labour movement, and graduates should – whenever possible – return to the service of the unions. Far from being new, however, such ideas formed something of a historical Ruskin career-pattern. Within a few decades of the College's establishment it had seen the majority of graduates return to their trades, take up union positions, become teachers, or take posts in the rapidly growing welfare structure.⁶⁶ Indeed, this had been one of the hopes of the College's founders, who, in line with the liberal views on education of the College's namesake John Ruskin, saw the College as an institution where students would be able to use what they acquired at Ruskin however they wanted. The founders hoped, nonetheless, that many would go back to their trades, and that,

as the *Oxford Chronicle* noted at the time, the general tendency of the movement would be 'to implant in the working-class of England a leaven of men who will bring to their daily work wider minds, and artistic perception'.⁶⁷ Even in the late 1970s many members of the College's Governing Council and some school officials and tutors believed that students should return to their jobs and to their communities and unions after graduating. Such variables were also reflected in the constituency of Ruskin's students, where in the late 1950s four-fifths of entrants still came from local unions and adult-education organizations, and most arrived at the college wanting to serve the labour movement in some way after their studies.⁶⁸

Yet by the mid 1960s the situation was also not so straightforward. Despite students' desire to serve in union positions, the dearth of available posts meant that growing numbers of Ruskin graduates instead went on to teacher-training courses, or, from the early 1960s, to university – especially to Oxford and Cambridge, which welcomed adult students and granted them senior status – much to the displeasure of some of their Ruskin 'comrades', who felt that those that did so were betraying their class, guilty of the sin of social mobility.⁶⁹ Jay Blumler, in his research on adult education in postwar Britain has added another dimension to this, concluding that one of the major effects of residential adult colleges such as Ruskin was the growth of graduates' confidence, which in turn facilitated their ability to climb the 'social ladder'.⁷⁰ Indeed, by the early 1960s the Oxford Diploma was popular with many Ruskin students specifically *because* it facilitated entrance to university courses. Further to this, labour specialist Al Nash later added, while some graduates became more objective, less committed, and more sceptical of the labour movement, others moved in the opposite direction.⁷¹ Pollins drew similar conclusions in his history of Ruskin, suggesting that some students went through a 'crisis of identity' because they wanted 'to retain their connection with their roots or their commitment to trade unions or political parties or – in a rather general sense – with their class'.⁷² Similar conclusions had in fact been reached decades earlier, when the monumental 1936 survey of adult education in Britain by William Williams and Archie Heath concluded that most students enrolling in the WEA and Ruskin did so for both cultural enrichment and political concerns. Few believed that adult education should aim exclusively at building socialism; while even some of the most militant Marxists argued that only a broad liberal education could prepare workers for political struggle.⁷³

Yet this very issue lay at the heart of Samuel's problem with the College's ties to the University, as in his mind the relationship eroded the natural inclination of the students. To return to Hughes's earlier statement of support for the Workshop as a 'valuable extra-curricular activity', for example, Samuel believed that the Workshop should not be an extra-curricular activity, but central to the College curriculum. Accordingly, in mid 1966, as he was organizing the first History Workshop seminar, he also wrote to the College executive arguing that labour studies should be the distinguishing

feature of the Ruskin curriculum. His argument for this was twofold. Firstly, drawing upon economist Herbert Turner's thesis around the importance of interplay between the past and the present, he reasoned that a course grounded in labour history would be of more use to students when they left college for work in trade-union offices or industry, as a historical understanding of industrial relations would help them to comprehend the present form.⁷⁴ History was also seen to be especially valuable as a vehicle for moral argument and political debate, providing the crucible in which opinions and commitments were formed.⁷⁵ As he noted at one early seminar on popular radicalism in the nineteenth century, for example, one of the main purposes of the seminar was 'to show the continuities not only in organization . . . but in cultural striving and moral ideals . . . That is to say, the seminar ought to keep coming back to the character of the individual Radical working man – surprisingly constant through all the vicissitudes of organization and events'.⁷⁶ History was thus not just a 'discipline', but a 'tool', which to be effectively used within the College required a shift from 'economics' to 'tradition' – embracing labour and liberal studies, social and economic anthropology, and the study of international industrial and social organization, local government, and the left.⁷⁷ The failure of the College to make this leap would mean it continued to turn out rootless people, spun off from their background.

Secondly, at a pedagogical level Samuel argued that far from being educationally underprivileged – as the working definition adopted by the College authorities suggested – adult students were peculiarly well placed to write about many facets of industrial and working-class history, and much of the 'authority' of Ruskin students' research came from their lived experience. This notion of breaking down the division between learning and common life lay at the heart of the early Workshop. The joining of the voice of experience with that of research was similarly seen to offer a distinctive contribution to social history. Considering the ability, background and preference of the typical Ruskin student, this also plugged into questions around the Oxford Diploma, where the examination-centred assessment was seen to handicap the typical Ruskin student by discounting their previous experience and 'natural tendencies'. While most passed the 'ordeal', they were likely, Samuel said, 'to emerge as chastened men and women, with a low view of their own capacities'.⁷⁸

Indeed, as the case was later to be made by the Ruskin Students' Association (RSA), such issues had influenced the educational writings of John Ruskin himself.⁷⁹ While themes of active learning claimed a place in the work of many European educationalists, during Ruskin's lifetime such ideas had yet to make an impact upon English mass schooling. This was characterized more by the mechanical accumulation of facts, competitive examination, and Robert Lowe's dreary code of 'payment by results', which made school funding and teachers' salaries dependent upon students' success in standard government examinations. Repudiating this system in

1853, Ruskin argued that as no two individuals are exactly alike they should not be educated in exactly the same way:

Among all men, whether of the upper or lower orders, the differences are eternal and irreconcilable, between one individual and another, born under absolutely the same circumstances. One man is made of agate, another of oak; one of slate, another of clay. The education of the first is polishing; of the second, seasoning; of the third, rending; of the fourth, moulding. It is of no use to season the agate; it is vain to try to polish the slate; but both are fitted, by the qualities they possess, for services in which they may be honoured.⁸⁰

Echoing Ruskin, Samuel contended that the existing syllabus, shaped by a stolid determination to 'cover the course' without any serious consideration of the nature of the subject itself, stifled student creativity and offered little place for experiment.

One is forever 'on the hook' and though this may serve, in the short run, to make our students work hard – they work harder than a great deal of uni undergrads – it may have the effect in the long run of devaluing the very purpose of intellectual work. The individual voice falters, curiosity is stifled, confidence may be irretrievably undermined.⁸¹

A change in the Ruskin syllabus to one that better drew on students' existing knowledge and skills would thus help those who went on to university as it would give them the confidence and intellectual strength of a distinctive field of knowledge, as well as helping those who decided not to pursue further study. Accordingly, starting in the first year students ought to be producing distinctive intellectual work in order to give them the opportunity to pick and choose their own subjects and learn from mistakes:

the student who has successfully undertaken an independent piece of work, however limited the subject, finds himself the equal of his teacher; he will have tested the evidence at its source rather than in its textbook residue, and he will therefore have some vantage point, more substantial than that of mere opinionization, from which to criticize the secondary works he is given.⁸²

Primary research thus showed that students need not learn their history second-hand, that they could go to the sources in the confident hope of making findings of their own, and could make a contribution to research at the same time as having an apprenticeship in its skills. Within this also lay an assertion that the sources available to the social historian were more extensive than those which could be discovered in the course of library

work alone – a claim that was to be most clearly illustrated by the richness of Sally Alexander's work on St Giles's Fair, which was due not only to the Bodleian Library and to city and county records, but to interviews conducted 'on the road' with well-known Oxfordshire showmen.⁸³ Echoing Edward Thompson, this approach also of course drew in the libertarian themes of autonomy and resistance by seeking to open up new areas of historical enquiry and to challenge the academic notion of what constituted 'history'. This also lay behind the focus in the early Workshop on the nineteenth century and on themes that were neglected in the standard university consideration of British history.⁸⁴

Most importantly, the demythologizing of the archive sought to break the rigidity of the 'expert-amateur' juxtaposition and the staid view of history as being the study of 'past' alone. Indeed, while on the one hand the Workshop platform sought to bring student and teacher together on the basis of a common research endeavour rather than that of a shared anxiety about exams, the establishment (or re-establishment) of a dialogue between history and community was its principal aim. The openness of the Workshop was thus envisaged as providing a conduit to new lines of historical discussion and inquiry by showing the work that could be done through local research and the building of a critical voice within the community – *à la* Gramsci's organic intellectual.⁸⁵ It had also, of course, a political dimension that linked back to Samuel's earlier education in the CPHG. Elaborating on this in the introduction to *Village Life and Labour* (1975) – the first of a series of volumes to emerge from the Workshop – he noted that not only were sources sparse or scattered, but those available were seldom neutral.

The magistrate's clerk – or the police officer – guides the researcher on his journey into crime, the senior partner takes him by the arm when he looks at business, the temperance advocate leads him in and out of the pubs. Unless he is careful the historian may end up as their mouthpiece.⁸⁶

While techniques were employed to circumvent the ideological distortions inherent in primary documents, the use of personal recollections and physical evidence such as photographs, handbills, posters, diaries, business records, family papers, wills and deeds not only made it possible to fill gaps in the record, but could redefine historical inquiry itself. As Samuel later noted, 'Instead of allowing the documents to structure the work, ... the historian can make his touchstone the real life experience of people themselves, both domestically and at work'.⁸⁷ The privileged position given here to working-class experience and consciousness was thus premised on the belief – naive as it may have been – that as a means of contact with the people, 'direct' testimony was somewhat free of ideological contamination.⁸⁸

The 'spatiality of history' was a further part of this, valued both as a radical new connection to the past, and for its confrontation with dominant narratives by driving home the changing historical nature of place. At the first Workshop, for example, groups trooped off to 'Charterville', the Chartist model village at Witney, and at the third Workshop to Otmoor Common (site of Enclosure Act riots in 1829–30), while at the fourth Alun Howkins conducted a guided walk through 'Jude's Oxford'.⁸⁹ Doubling as an introduction to 'the real Christminster life', Howkins's walk also highlighted the different and changing historical character of the Oxford landscape – the 'oppressively genteel' North Parade, which in the 1850s had been inhabited by market gardeners who sought to barricade themselves in against the encroachments of St John's College; the great antiquity of Port Meadow as common land and the protracted struggle of the City Freemen to defend it against outside trespassers, whether the Colleges, the Railway Company, or the private developers who cast on it a covetous eye. It also served as a reminder that the 'smoothly shaven' historians and worldly clerics of Hardy's time were not the only inhabitants of Oxford.⁹⁰

Focused as Samuel's ideas were on bringing change to the wider historical practice, he was also centrally concerned with the notion that the embracing of the Workshop's ideals would in turn add support for change within Ruskin itself. The early Workshops were thus carefully shaped – generally over a long period by Samuel together with students and ex-students – in order to push particular threads or themes, both within the College and beyond.⁹¹ For example 'A Day with the Chartists' (1967) – the first Workshop open to those 'outside' the College – was conceived first and foremost as a 'day school' and a forum for the College's history students both to share their research with a wider audience (and accordingly have it recognized and heralded by the outside world), and to share an equal platform with professional academics such as Hill and Thompson. This also plugged into the CPHG's notion of historical research as a co-operative enterprise.⁹² While on the one hand such connections between amateur and professional historians underpinned the idea of democratizing the production of history, it was also hoped that such a platform would force the College authorities to acknowledge the legitimacy of the students' assembly by admitting the genuine scholarship of their work. Accordingly, up until the early 1970s, work by Ruskin students typically constituted around half of Workshop presentations.⁹³ Similar motivation lay behind the early Workshop's embracing of secondary-school students and teachers: many liberal teachers welcomed the idea of the Workshops as an opportunity for students to participate, and some made class trips for the weekend.⁹⁴

The History Workshop pamphlets were based on the same set of ideals. Their origins combined romantic perceptions of nineteenth-century radical pamphlets with ideas being thrown around within Ruskin (from both staff and students) of publishing 'Occasional Papers' which, it was believed,

would enhance the College's standing in the labour movement.⁹⁵ Concrete action emerged with the acclaimed second Workshop – 'Education and the Working Class' – devised as a platform for Ruskin tutors and students to present collaborative research on 'Proletarian Oxfordshire'.⁹⁶ Published between 1970 and 1974, the pamphlets served a number of roles. Firstly, they were to change people's idea of what history was – or could be – about, with subjects chosen in relation to the large questions of individual experience and social living, rather than being determined by the sectarian preoccupations of academic and school history. Such subjects were typically suggested by sociology and anthropology – kinship, marriage, childhood, the role and status of women, popular culture, popular religion, social crime, social class, authority and workers. Secondly, the pamphlets were to bring past and present into dialogue with one another – some in order to make more emphatic the difference between the two, and so help the reader to appreciate the novelty and comparative impermanence of both, while others deliberately attempted to destroy the barriers of time, and treat past and present as contemporaneous. Most importantly, Samuel's intention was that they would be subversive of and dead-set against the burdensome inheritance of academic history, while at the same time commanding respect from scholars by originality of subject and by depth and dedication of research.⁹⁷

Finally, innovative as Samuel's ideas here were, it is important to note that the Workshop and its pedagogical framework were not unique, but were part of a wider contemporary shift towards social history, and liberalization of the history syllabus, then taking place in the British tertiary sector. Driving this were figures such as Asa Briggs, Gwyn Williams, and Edward Thompson – individuals who at newer universities such as Sussex, York and Warwick were taking especially innovative approaches to both research and the teaching of history. The older universities were generally resistant to this 'new history'. Indeed, as Keith Thomas – the primary advocate of social history at Oxford – found in 1957 when he ran a course of lectures on relations between the sexes in England since the reformation, the general reaction was one of 'bewildered amusement'.⁹⁸ Similarly, when a few years later the seventy-six members of Oxford's history faculty were asked to propose areas of study with which history's relationship could be developed, only two people regarded either sociology or anthropology as potential candidates.⁹⁹ It was perhaps no surprise then that when two of Samuel's Nuffield History Group colleagues – Tim Mason and Brian Harrison, both of whom were now Fellows at Oxford colleges – sought to establish a social-history unit at Corpus Christi College in 1968, the idea was torpedoed by its governing body on the basis that the scheme 'smelt too much of E. P. Thompson, and what was going on at Warwick'.¹⁰⁰ Both Mason and Harrison had been pushing for such change for some time, Mason having started to campaign in the early 1960s while still an undergraduate.¹⁰¹ Influenced by Mason's enthusiasm, in 1966 Harrison

co-authored *History at the Universities* – a book outlining the state of the history curriculum across the British tertiary sector which it was hoped would prove a conduit for change, and which presented a picture of many of the older universities as outmoded and left for dust by new universities with their more progressive ideas.¹⁰² In the new universities students were being exposed to subjects closely related to history; this gave rise to new types of questions and the growth of ‘world’ history and comparative studies, and paved the way for greater attention to race, social class, gender, technology and local history (the latter thanks mainly to the efforts of William Hoskins, H. P. R. Finberg, and John Vincent) in place of the earlier focus on religion, political theory, and diplomacy. Other universities had adopted the seminar as the main vehicle of teaching – borrowing, as Samuel did, from Tawney’s long-held view that the workshop atmosphere broke through the textbook approach and gave students the feeling that they and their teachers were engaged in joint inquiry. A far more public – if less tactful – airing of the state of historical study in Britain came with the publication in April 1966 of the provocative *Times Literary Supplement* edition devoted to ‘New Ways in History’, in which Thomas, Thompson and Hobsbawm (amongst others) charged British historians with being decades behind their colleagues in France and the United States, and Thompson prophesied the inevitable rise of social history.

For Samuel such publications were a call to arms. In showing how far social history and alternative educational practice had been embraced by many universities, Harrison in particular had also unwittingly highlighted how the so-called ‘progressive’ Ruskin – with its socialist and labourist heritage – was being left behind. Indeed, when he noted that despite the uptake of social history, no university had yet developed a syllabus which responded fully to the innovations in labour history made by the likes of George Rudé and Hobsbawm – integrating the study of riots, trade unions and social movements with the study of industrial relations and sociology – Harrison was outlining the very curriculum which Samuel envisaged for a Workshop centred Ruskin.

Yet movement in this direction was taking place at Ruskin too, beginning in early 1967 with changes that allowed students to undertake primary research in place of taught papers, and with a growing call for wider curriculum reform and student involvement in college governance – which, it was argued should be geared towards the creation of a Ruskin community.¹⁰³ Sweeping changes were also made to the curriculum, starting with the introduction of a new Labour Studies Diploma in 1968. Intended to meet the needs of those who saw their future in the labour movement, it permitted far greater flexibility in its course of study and replaced traditional forms of assessment with modes that were to simulate real-world employment situations.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps most importantly from the perspective of advocates, this ‘new diploma’ was governed by Ruskin, not the University. Diplomas in development studies, literature, and history soon followed.¹⁰⁵

The lack of a social-studies diploma, however – the area of study viewed as most central to the Ruskin ideology – was seen by the RSA and a number of the College's tutors, including Samuel, as harming Ruskin by altering what students felt should be the 'proper orientation of the College'. Establishing first a 'Dissatisfaction Committee' in the hope of forcing the College's hand, the student body – with the support of Samuel and other tutors – then took the very Pleb-inspired action of pledging 'non-cooperation' with the committee (headed by the eminent industrial-relations expert and disillusioned Communist Hugh Clegg) charged with reviewing the College's curriculum, assessment and operations.

* * *

Drawing heavily upon a range of radical pedagogical influences and heritages, Samuel's humanism – with its emphasis on the public intellectual and working-class radicalism – evoked much of the radicalism and intellectual vigour of the early Workshop's approach to 'history from below' as a strongly normative project. Distinguished as much by its politics of knowledge as by its object and methods of inquiry, its origins lay in the idea of history as a political tool – one which could both foreground the exploited and marginalized whose lives had been 'hidden from history', and affirm the resilience of ordinary people as agents with powers to resist their domination. While Samuel saw this as a battle of both national and global dimensions, it was also one far closer to home, based around Ruskin's historical connections to working-class radicalism, and the nature of its relationship to the University. More specifically, it was about Samuel's perceptions of this heritage and connection – both what they had historically been, and what he believed they could be once again. Indeed, the establishment of the Workshop and much of the associated change at Ruskin can in many ways be seen as the consequence of Samuel's personal quest – a quest to re-establish an idealized working-class radicalism as exemplified by the Plebs League. This would be a constant theme of the early Workshop's profoundly anti-authoritarian outlook and of Samuel's support (if not provocation) for the revival of labour militancy.

Yet for all of his success in influencing a generation of historians, Samuel's idealism could also be counterproductive to his aim of extending the influence of people's history. This was the case with his non-participation in the Clegg Committee's review of the College curriculum – a decision which ultimately harmed the Workshop's cause by denying them a voice in the review, all the more so as the decidedly reformist Clegg was himself somewhat unsympathetic to the revolutionary element in the British labour movement. While Samuel's non-participation made a clear political statement, a number of the committee's lesser members were meanwhile pushing the Workshop idea as something that should be encouraged, and a good influence on Oxford more broadly. However, they were left

unsupported to rebut Clegg's dismissive view of social history in the curriculum, and in the final hand economic and political history came out trumps.¹⁰⁶

Kynan Gentry is a post-doctoral fellow in history at the Australian National University. Prior to this he worked as a public historian for the New Zealand government, and as an independent heritage consultant in Australia. His published work so far has focused on the social role of history and heritage in society, and the wider 'use and abuse' of historical narrative. He is also currently completing a manuscript for Manchester University Press which explores the emergence of historical consciousness and interest in heritage in colonial societies.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Many thanks to the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust for its assistance in funding this research.

1 See, for example, Raphael Samuel, 'History Workshop, 1966–80', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, London, 1981, pp. 410–17; Harold Pollins, *The History of Ruskin College*, Ruskin College Library, 1984; *History Workshop: a Collectanea 1967–1991*, ed. Raphael Samuel, Oxford: History Workshop, 1991; Bill Schwarz, 'History on the Move: Reflections on History Workshop', *Radical History Review* 57, 1993, pp. 202–20; *Ruskin College: Contesting Knowledge, Dissenting Politics*, ed. Geoff Andrew, Hilda Kean and Jane Thompson, London, 1999.

2 Raphael Samuel, 'Unpublished notes for "Ten Years of HWJ"', undated, RS7/063, Ruskin College (henceforth RC) (for actual editorial see *HWJ* 20, autumn 1985). Samuel played up this narrative in a number of instances. See, for example, Samuel, 'History Workshop, 1966–80', p. 410; Samuel, 'On the Methods of History Workshop: a Reply', *History Workshop Journal* (henceforth *HWJ*) 9, spring 1980, pp. 162–76; *History Workshop: a Collectanea*, ed. Samuel, pp. 67–70.

3 Though this was typically done on a small scale and outside of normal Diploma teaching.

4 H. D. Hughes, 'History Workshop', *HWJ* 11, spring 1981, p. 199.

5 Harold Pollins, 'History Workshop: the Making of a Myth', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 42, 1981, pp. 16–18.

6 Minutes of Ruskin staff meeting, 10 March 1970, RS7/001, RC; Minutes of History Workshop Meeting, 3 Feb. 1971, RS7/016, RC. When David Selbourne became involved in the debate, he argued that both parties had overplayed their arguments. Interestingly, he also noted a degree of meanness in the response of some College staff, which he put down principally to the enthusiasm the Workshop generated, as well as to a 'ludicrous' level of alarm at the prospect of large gatherings of historians – 'who were variously held to constitute a health risk, a fire risk, and God knows what else': David Selbourne, 'The Question of Method', *HWJ* 13, spring 1982, pp. 189–90.

7 For the expectations of the journal, see the editorial 'History Workshop Journal', *HWJ* 1, spring 1976, pp. 1–3. Also see Samuel, 'Unpublished notes for the editorial "Ten Years of HWJ"', undated, RS7/063, RC; Alun Howkins, 'A Past for the People', *New Statesman*, 27 Jan. 1995, p. 36; Michael Berlin, 'History Workshop: History beyond the Academy', *European Review of History* 3: 1, spring 1996, pp. 131–6.

8 To give but two examples, both the 'feminist incursion' and the establishment of the journal were major points of fracture within the movement. While there was clear sympathy with feminist objectives, some of the Workshop's early advocates took issue with what they saw as the sectarian tone of feminism's approach to historical and practical issues. Similarly, for many from the 'people's history' trend and from the organized 'hard left', the establishment of the journal amounted to 'selling out'. In part this was about the perceived political credentials and relative cheapness of the pamphlets (which had typically sold for fifty to sixty pence each), while the journal was attacked as expensive, academic and elitist. Others criticized *HWJ*

for remoteness from the movement, while at the more basic level Workshop supporters and journal subscribers were by no means the same group. (See Barbara Taylor, 'History Workshop Journal', <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/HWJ.html>, accessed 15 Aug. 2011.) For a typical 'singular' representation of the History Workshop, see the entry on 'History Workshop' in *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, ed. Kelly Boyd, London, 1999, pp. 544–5.

9 I must acknowledge Brian Harrison for coining this phrase.

10 On the history of *Annales* see André Burguière, *The Annales School: an Intellectual History*, transl. Jane Marie Todd, Ithaca, 2009; Peter Burke, *The French Historical Tradition: the Annales School, 1929–89*, Stanford, 1990.

11 *Village Life and Labour*, ed. Raphael Samuel, London, 1975, pp. xiii–xxi; Samuel, 'On the Methods of History Workshop: a Reply', p. 163. In *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism* (1977), Tom Nairn described this aspect of the Workshop perspective as a romantic and radical version of English cultural nationalism, offering 'something like a collective, endless "epic poem" of popular... achievement': pp. 303–4.

12 In *People's History and Socialist Theory*, for example, Samuel points out that his preface to *Pit Life in County Durham* by Dave Douglass (1972) was written from the picket line at Didcot Power Station during the national miners' strike of 1972, and that the 'Workers' Control in Nineteenth-Century England' Workshop preceded the Upper Clyde sit-in by some months. *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Samuel, p. 413. Further discussion of this can be found in 'Brian Harrison: Confidential discussion with Raphael Samuel', 23 Oct. 1979, British Library, C608.

13 Quoted without source by John Prescott in his obituary of Raphael Samuel, *Guardian*, 11 Dec. 1996 (reprinted in *Raphael Samuel 1934–1996*, 1997).

14 Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement, 1870–1920*, London, 1965, pp. 319–20.

15 See *Plebs*, June 1957, pp. 130–1; Lawrence Goldman, *Dons and Workers: Oxford and Adult Education since 1850*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 165–83; Andy Miles, 'Workers' Education: the Communist Party and the Plebs League in the 1920s', *HWJ* 18, autumn 1984, pp. 102–14; Geoff Brown, 'Educational Values and Working Class Residential Adult Education', in *Residential Adult Education Values, Policies and Problems*, ed. Bob Houlton, Society of Industrial Tutors, Middlesex, 1977, pp. 13–36. For the Plebs account of the Ruskin debate, see *The Burning Question of Education... Being an account of Ruskin College dispute, its cause and consequences*, etc, ed. W. H. Seed, Oxford, 1909.

16 This was still the dominant perspective in the years around History Workshop's establishment. Billy Hughes – College Principal 1950–79 – noted in the late 1970s that 'We do not give our students a pre-set idea, but rather we give them their independence of mind to operate effectively in their work': *Oxford Mail*, 13 Nov. 1978.

17 William White Craik and Sydney Hill, *The Central Labour College, 1909–1929: a Chapter in the History of Adult Working-class Education*, London, 1964.

18 Pollins, *History of Ruskin College*, pp. 46–7. By 1970 the DES grant had grown to 47.5 percent: *Oxford Magazine*, 13 Feb. 1970, p. 154.

19 Ruskin Education Committee Minutes, 28 June 1964, RC.

20 Stuart Hall, Obituary, *New Left Review* (henceforth *NLR*) 221, Jan.–Feb. 1997, p. 119, (reprinted in *Raphael Samuel 1934–1996*, 1997, p. 47).

21 Raphael Samuel, 'Staying Power: the Lost World of British Communism, Part II', *New Left Review* 156, March–April, 1986, p. 70.

22 For the heterogeneity of ULR, see Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, Durham NC and London, 1997, pp. 54–6.

23 During his time at Balliol, Ruskin students had for this very reason been primary targets for recruitment – 'We'd always worked very hard for Ruskin [recruits]... We would think of our ideal recruits as being from Ruskin': 'Raphael Samuel: confidential discussion with Brian Harrison on 18 September 1987', British Library, C608.

24 Raphael Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', unpublished paper, 29 May 1968, pp. 1–2, RS1/408, RC.

25 Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', p. 1. Interestingly, Samuel makes a similar reference to Denis Butt (co-editor on the early *NLR*), 'a wool sorter from the West Riding', in his note on himself for the 'Notes on the editors', *History Workshop Journal* 1, spring 1976, p. 284.

26 Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', pp. 1–2.

27 Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', p. 7.

28 Indeed, this view of the 'responsibility' not to buy into the capitalist system, that socialists apparently had, meant that the Party was dead-set against careerism – a key factor in Samuel's own abandonment of his PhD. At the same time, in his undergraduate studies he had been expected to get a first-class degree to show that Communists excelled. (Thanks to Anna Davin for pointing this out.)

29 Raphael Samuel, 'unpublished notes', undated, RS1/405, RC.

30 'Raphael Samuel: confidential discussion with Brian Harrison on 18 September 1987'.

31 'Raphael Samuel: confidential discussion with Brian Harrison on 18 September 1987'. Eric Hobsbawm recalled that the Group grew out of discussions immediately after the Second World War to plan a conference on A. L. Morton's *A People's History of England* (1938), which would serve as a model for the Group's interpretation of English history. See Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party', in *Rebels and their Causes: Essays in Honour of A. L. Morton*, ed. Maurice Cornforth, London, 1978, pp. 21–48. See also Bill Schwarz, "'The People' in History: the Communist Party Historians' Group, 1946–56", in *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, ed. Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz and David Sutton, London, 1982, pp. 44–95, and 'An Interview with Eric Hobsbawm', *Radical History Review* 19, winter 1978–9, pp. 111–31.

32 Madeleine Davis flips this on its head, suggesting that rather than anglicizing Marxism, the CPHG set out to 'Marxise' the native intellectual culture; Madeleine Davis, 'The Marxism of the British New Left', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11: 3, October 2006, p. 348.

33 For more on this see Antony Howe, 'The Past is Ours: the Political Usage of English History by the British Communist Party, and the role of Dona Torr in the creation of its Historians' Group, 1930–56', PhD, University of Sydney, 2004, and also his article of the same name in *Communist History Network Newsletter* 17, autumn 2004.

34 Two examples of attempts to do this were E. P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, London, 1955, and Dona Torr's *Tom Mann and his Times*, London, 1956.

35 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, London: Chatto, 1958, pp. 265–84.

36 Concern about the cultural influence of America was behind the organization of a conference in 1951 on 'The American Threat to British Culture': Rodney Hilton, 'The Historians' Group and the British Tradition', undated, Samuel/331, Bishopsgate Institute (BI).

37 Torr had a profound influence on the younger CPHG historians in their development of 'people's history' as 'history from the bottom up'. For more on this and on Torr's legacy, see Harvey Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians*, New York, 1995, pp. 1–22; *Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr*, ed. John Saville, London, 1954; David Renton, 'Opening the Books: the Personal Papers of Dona Torr', *HWJ* 52, autumn 2001, pp. 236–45.

38 *CPHG Local History Bulletin* 1, October 1950, Samuel/331, BI. History was also seen by the Party to be important as it offered the credentials for existence as a revolutionary organization – a sort of symbolic reassurance.

39 *CPHG Local History Bulletin* 1.

40 A similar argument had been made by W. G. Hoskins in 'The Writing of Local History', *History Today* 2: 7, July 1952, pp. 487–91.

41 Samuel to Charles Taylor, 28 Oct. 1961, RS1/018, RC; Samuel to Norman Birnbaum, 22 Nov. 1961, RS1/019, RC; Samuel to Claude Bourdet, 10 Nov. 1961, RS1/019, RC; Samuel to Jean McCrindle, 15 Nov. 1961, RS1/019, RC.

42 Samuel to Edward Thompson, 1 Nov. 1961, RS1/019, RC; Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1963, p. 12.

43 Robin Blackburn, 'Raphael Samuel: the Politics of Thick Description', *New Left Review* 221, January–February 1997, pp. 135–6.

44 Thompson's work, for example, was heavily influenced by that of J. L. and Barbara Hammond. For more on this see David Sutton, 'Radical Liberalism, Fabianism and Social History', in *Making Histories*, ed. Johnson and others, pp. 15–43.

45 For a History Workshop perspective on the link between history and sociology, see Raphael Samuel and Gareth Stedman Jones's editorial, 'Sociology and History', *HWJ* 1, spring 1976, pp. 6–7.

46 Samuel, 'On the Methods of History Workshop: a Reply', pp. 162–76.

47 E. P. Thompson, 'Responses to reality', *New Society*, 4 October 1973.

48 *Village Life and Labour*, ed. Samuel, p. xix.

49 *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Samuel, p. xvi; Raphael Samuel, 'The Experience of Protection', unpublished manuscript, Samuel/206, BI.

50 Keith Thomas, 'New Ways Revisited', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 Oct. 2006, p. 3.

51 The spread of 'learning by doing' in England was initially linked to the relaxation of government control over the school curriculum after 1926, which also saw the spread of child-centred education as a progressive ideal.

52 As for that matter had been Richard Tawney's *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1912.

53 Edward Thompson, 'History from Below', *TLS*, 7 April 1966, pp. 279–80.

54 Iris Murdoch, 'The House of Theory', in *Conviction*, ed. Norman Mackenzie, London, 1958, pp. 298–315. David Forgacs has argued that the appropriation of Gramsci went further in Britain than in any other country outside Italy, but that it was also selective, employing ideas of his that complemented and augmented pre-existing concerns of the British New Left: Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain', *New Left Review* 176, July/August 1989, p. 72.

55 While the Communist Party press had earlier ignored Gramsci's works owing to the incompatibility of many of his ideas with CP orthodoxy, from the late 1950s both the First and Second New Left rapidly engaged with his work – *New Left Review* discussed or at least referenced both Gramsci and his work in almost every issue during its first decade of existence. See for example E. P. Thompson, 'Socialism and the Intellectuals', *Universities and Left Review* 1, spring 1957, pp. 31–6 (and for a savage review of this, Perry Anderson, 'Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism', *NLR* 35, January–February 1966, pp. 2–42); Lelio Basso, 'The Italian Left', *Universities and Left Review* 2, summer 1957, pp. 23–6; Christopher Hill, 'Antonio Gramsci', *New Reasoner* (henceforth *NR*) 4, spring 1958, pp. 107–13; Peter Worsley, 'Further Letters of Gramsci', *NR* 10, autumn 1959, pp. 123–8.

56 This was something that Gwyn Williams recognized: see 'The Concept of "Egemonia" in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21: 4, 1960, pp. 586–99. Critical pedagogy, based in Marxist theory, is described by the cultural critic Henry Giroux as an 'educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action': Giroux, 'Lessons From Paulo Freire', *Chronicle of Higher Education* 57: 9, 27 Oct. 2010. For Gramsci's own views on this, see 'In Search of the Educational Principle', *New Left Review* 32, July–August 1965, pp. 55–62.

57 See, for example, Donald F. Swift, 'Intelligence and Education', *NR* 9, summer 1959, pp. 110–12; Peter Ibbotson, 'Labour's Educational Policy', *NR* 6, autumn 1958, pp. 92–104; Albert H. Halsey, 'Inequalities in Education', *NR* 8, spring 1959, pp. 102–103; Michael Armstrong, 'Schools, Class, Society', *Universities and Left Review* 1: 1, spring 1957, pp. 63–5; John Dixon and Sidney Lubin, 'Discussion, Schools, Class, Society', *ULR* 1: 2, summer 1957, pp. 64–5.

58 See, for example, Anthony Weaver, 'Jug and Clay, or Flower?', *Anarchy* 21, November 1962; John Ellerby, 'The Community Workshop', *Anarchy* 30, August 1963; 'After School – Dilemmas of Future Education', *Anarchy* 53, July 1965; 'The Free School Idea', *Anarchy* 73, March 1967; Antony Fleming, 'The Machinery of Conformity', *Anarchy* 94, December 1968.

59 Samuel to unknown, 1 Dec. 1956, RS1/001, RC.

60 For further information, see John Kelly, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions: Allan Flanders and British Industrial Relations Reform*, London, 2010; Hugh Clegg, *The Oxford School of Industrial Relations*, Warwick Papers in Industrial Relations no. 31, University of Warwick, 1990.

61 Samuel 'Nineteenth-Century popular culture', unpublished notes, RS1/405, RC.

62 'Brian Harrison: Confidential discussion with Raphael Samuel', 23 Oct. 1979; Raphael Samuel, draft 'Editorial Introduction', undated, Samuel/081, BI.

63 See Raphael Samuel, 'Ruskin Historians' in *History Workshop: a Collectanea*, ed. Samuel, pp. 67–70.

64 In this capacity the Workshop model was also inspired by Ewan MacColl and Joan Littlewood's experimental 'Theatre Workshop' of the 1940s and 1950s – a link referenced by Samuel's use of 'workshop' in the name.

65 Samuel to Edward Thompson, 21 June 1966, RS1/405, RC.

66 Brian Harrison, 'Oxford and the Labour Movement', *Twentieth Century British History* 2: 3, 1991, p. 231.

67 *Guideline '73: a policy for Ruskin College*, Ruskin Students' Association, Oxford, 1973, p. 5.

68 Jay Blumler, 'The Effects of Long-term Residential Adult Education in Postwar Britain (with particular reference to Ruskin College)', PhD, Oxford, 1962, pp. 208–11, 383–5.

69 Ruskin Education Committee Minutes, 9 Oct. 1964, RC. For figures on Ruskin students going on to further study, see *The Robbins Report (1963): Higher Education: Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins*, London, 1963, pp. 147–69.

70 See Blumler, 'Long-term Residential Adult Education'.

71 Al Nash, *Ruskin College: a Challenge to Adult and Labor Education*, New York, 1981, pp. 2, 24–37, 38–47, 49–55.

72 Pollins, *The History of Ruskin College*, p. 49.

73 William E. Williams and Archie E. Heath, *Learn and Live: the Consumer's View of Adult Education*, London, 1936, pp. 7–10; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, New Haven, 2001, pp. 282–92.

74 Samuel to unknown, 21 June 1966, RS1/405, RC.

75 Raphael Samuel, 'People's History', *TLS*, 2 May 1975.

76 Raphael Samuel, 'Popular Radicalism in the Nineteenth-Century', unpublished notes, 1967, RS1/509, RC.

77 Samuel, 'People's History', *TLS*, 2 May 1975.

78 Samuel to unknown, 21 June 1966, RS1/405, RC.

79 *Guideline '73: a Policy for Ruskin College*, Ruskin Students' Association, 1973, unpagged.

80 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 3, London, 1874, p. 217. For Ruskin's views on education see Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals*, Aldershot, 2011.

81 Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', RS/408, RS, p. 3.

82 Samuel, 'The Future of Ruskin', p. 4.

83 Sally Alexander, *St Giles's Fair, 1830–1914: Popular Culture and the Industrial Revolution in 19th century Oxford*, History Workshop Pamphlet no. 2, Oxford, c. 1970. It was also the case of course that for the study of 'ordinary people' traditional sources were decidedly unhelpful. Ordinary people rarely spoke through the traditional archival record.

84 The nineteenth-century countryside, for instance, had received little consideration apart from discussion of the enclosures at the beginning of the century, the Corn Laws and Joseph Arch (first president of the Agricultural Workers' Union).

85 Sheila Rowbotham later made similar observations, noting that

An important part of [the appeal of the early Workshops] was the sense of reaching back and identifying with the rebels of yesteryear. . . . They were political as well as historical gatherings, for we engaged with a past which spoke to a mood in the present. History from below made sense in the context of a ground floor, grass-roots, rank-and-file socialism.

Rowbotham, 'Some Memories of Raphael', *NLR* 221, January–February 1997, p. 130.

86 *Village Life and Labour*, ed. Samuel, p. xv.

87 Raphael Samuel, 'Local History and Oral History', *HWJ* 1, spring 1976, p. 201.

88 Here Samuel's politicization saw him encourage Workshop historians to take seriously Thompson's contention that the working class made its own history, while neglecting Thompson's warning that working people also were subject to 'conditioning'. For more on the critique of the Workshop approach and method, see David Selbourne, 'On the Methods of History Workshop', *HWJ* 9, spring 1980, pp. 150–61; Samuel, 'On the Methods of History Workshop: a Reply'; David Selbourne, 'The Question of Method', *HWJ* 13, spring 1982, pp. 189–90; Mary Nolan, 'New Perspectives on Social History', *Socialist Review* 39, May–June 1978, pp. 124–35; Peter Burke, 'People's History or Total History', in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Samuel, pp. 4–9; Luisa Passerini, 'Debate on Method', *HWJ* 11, spring 1981, pp. 201–3.

89 A few years later Mary Prior led a particularly important walk which explored Oxford's waterways and their inhabitants.

90 For 'the real Christminster life' and 'the smoothly shaven historians', see Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, London, 1896, part II 'At Christminster'.

91 Raphael Samuel 'Thoughts about the future organization of the national History Workshop', unpublished notes, 28 July 1980, RS7/005, RC.

92 Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party', p. 45.

93 The numbers of presenters from Ruskin at the early History Workshops were: Workshop 1, six of thirteen; Workshop 4, twelve of twenty-one; Workshop 5, eight of fifteen; Workshop 6, twelve of twenty-seven; Workshop 7, ten of twenty-one. Workshop 2 was an exception, with only two student papers. Student participation began to drop significantly from History Workshop 13, as Workshops became increasingly professionalized, and participants were increasingly drawn from the academy: RS7/008, RC.

94 See, for example, Betty Cameron to Samuel, 9 Nov. 1969, RS7/014, RC; Michael Downing to Samuel, 10 Nov. 1969, RS7/014, RC; A. K. Wilson to Samuel, 20 Nov. 1969, RS7/014, RC.

95 David Selbourne, 'Untitled', 4 April 1967, RS1/405, RC.

96 All but one of the pamphlets began life as pedagogical exercises – typically undertaken outside of College work – the exception being Sally Alexander's *St. Giles's Fair*. This was a College thesis, undertaken as a research project for the History Diploma.

97 Samuel to Martin Lightfoot, 2 Aug. 1970, RS4/102, RC.

98 Thomas, 'New Ways Revisited', p. 3.

99 Thomas, 'The Tools and The Job', pp. 275–6.

100 'Brian Harrison: confidential telephone interview with Kynan Gentry', 24 July 2011.

101 Mason was no doubt himself also influenced by the earlier protests at Oxford by Samuel and others in the mid 1950s when Oxford Marxists and existentialists formed a Popular Front against Oxford philosophy.

102 George Barlow with George Harrison, *History at the Universities: a Comparative and Analytical Guide to History Syllabuses at Universities in the United Kingdom*, Historical Association, 1966.

103 Raphael Samuel and David Selbourne, 'Admissions procedures', undated, RS1/408, RC.

104 Pollins, 'History Workshop: the making of a myth', pp. 16–18.

105 The History Diploma was heavily weighted towards nineteenth and twentieth-century history, seen to be necessary for the proper teaching of imperialism, the rise of the Labour Party and the response to poverty. It also gave greater space to primary research and assessment methods more appropriate to the Ruskin situation, to questions of historiography and historical method, and to a move away from the traditional 'overview' courses, which encouraged superficiality 'rather than real understanding, imagination and depth': Brian Harrison to Raphael Samuel, 25 Nov. 1968, RS1/511, RC.

106 Harrison to Victor Treadwell and Samuel, 19 March 1973, RS1/415, RC, p. 12. For the final version, see 'Report of the Ruskin College Diploma Review Board, pp. 10–12, RS1/415, RC.