
Editorial

Public History as a concept, though not as a practice, is only slowly gaining ground in Germany. In Britain, by contrast, it has been practised, acknowledged, and studied for a long time. A loose definition of the term 'public history' may read history *for* the public, *by* the public, and *about* the public. History *for* the public refers to two different sets of practices. Regarding the first of these, the phrase can be taken as synonymous with popular history, designed for, and consumed by, a mass audience. Visitor-friendly museum displays involving a great deal of hands-on experience, often specifically targeted at children, and which abound in Britain, spring to mind. Beyond the places at which history has traditionally been put on show, there is now a multitude of forms in which history is packaged and made attractive for the general public. There is fictionalized history, in print and on screen, pseudo-'medieval faires', battle re-enactment, Second World War computer games of the 'shoot 'em up' variety, to name just some of the most popular. This is history as entertainment, produced chiefly for commercial purposes. The second set of practices labelled history *for* the public involves official representations of a nation's history, such as monuments and other sites of memory, or commemorations of past events deemed significant. In this guise public history has played a vital role in the formation of nations by constructing legitimizing lineages and legacies.

History *by* the public denotes the multifarious practices engaged in by non-professional historians, who might research anything from the history of their family, their neighbourhood, their town or village to a personality or event of particular interest to them. These amateur endeavours, which, in Britain, look back upon a long tradition of self-education on the part of those marginalized by established educational institutions, have been greatly facilitated in recent years by the increasing number of relevant sources becoming available on the internet, often as part of a particular archive's deliberate policy of

making its resources as widely and easily accessible as possible.

In another sense, the phrase 'history *by* the public' draws attention to everybody's involvement in the making of history. This is where history *by* the people interconnects with history *about* the people. The latter term denotes relatively recent developments in the discipline of history, such as Oral History or the History of Everyday Life. Both involve the deliberate shifting of historians' focus away from the high and mighty to ordinary people. As these are unlikely to leave written records behind, their oral testimony is sought in an attempt to capture how they make sense of the times they have lived through. The accounts and views obtained in this manner can be used to complement, either critically or affirmatively, the written material that forms historians' standard fare. Moreover, these interviews have kindled historians' interest in the mundane and commonplace, giving rise to the History of Everyday Life. Both the new method of collecting, indeed creating, source material and the novel subject matter deemed worthy of serious investigation used to be frowned upon by many established members of the German historical profession for arising from a practice that allegedly failed to meet the standards of scholarly research. Likewise, they have only recently begun to acknowledge the great popularity enjoyed with the general public by forms of presenting history other than in tomes of academic writing. Yet their acknowledgement of popular history, usually viewed as an exercise in dumbing down, is suffused with great concern about the threat it poses to their monopoly on the interpretation of history. They clearly see popular history as being juxtaposed to the history practised within the academy and perceive no way of bridging this seeming divide.

In Britain, by contrast, 'history from below', as Oral History and the History of Everyday Life quickly came to be dubbed, was accepted far more readily, though by no means universally. This is partly because the boundary between

professional and so-called amateur historians has never been drawn as hard and fast as in Germany. More importantly, from the 1960s onwards, radical historians of the New Left, who had an explicit interest in labour history or social history more generally, actively engaged with non-professionals. There were at least three factors underlying this shift in the practice of history. One was a broader understanding of the subject matter worthy of study by historians. They deliberately shifted the focus of both labour and social history from institutions and their members to ordinary people and their everyday experience of work, both paid and unpaid, family life, the neighbourhood in which they lived, the church, or more often the chapel, at which they worshipped, the local pub where they had their regular pint. This was complemented by a wider conception of historical agency, which emphasizes everybody's involvement in the making of history. Thirdly, and closely connected to the latter, there was a political motivation inspiring socialist historians' academic practice. They actively sought to bring together professional and non-professional practitioners to facilitate learning from each other. This kind of communication, based as it is on mutual respect, required relinquishing jargon and other forms of elitism that act as barriers between academic historians and members of the general public. Putting professionals and non-professionals on a par with each other has been deemed crucial to the political project pursued by socialist historians: to encourage people to develop an awareness of their own part in the making of history so as to bring about a transformation of society. What they felt was needed was a usable past, a past, that is, which empowers people successfully to wage political struggles in the present. History Workshop was the movement which, with its conferences, provided the venues for professionals and non-professionals to come together and exchange ideas. From this emerged, in 1976, *History Workshop*, subtitled *A Journal for Socialist Historians*, which subsequently became *A Journal for*

Socialist and Feminist Historians. Although the History Workshop movement served as an inspiration to some in Germany, the German movement was smaller and more short-lived than its British counterpart.

One of the historians at the forefront of History Workshop, the late Raphael Samuel, was tutor at Ruskin College, Oxford, committed since its foundation to making higher education available to working-class adults. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the college was the first in Britain to set up a course in Public History. It has been running since 1996 and is inspired by the non-elitist understanding of history, which was the hallmark of History Workshop.

The Ruskin approach to public history is well represented in this issue of *Hard Times*, informing, to different degrees, the contributions by Hilda Kean, Toby Butler, and Paul Martin. Katherine Bradley has written about the transformation process required by turning research findings into a guided city tour for the general public. Reinhold Wandel, finally, demonstrates that live re-enactment of the past, once deemed the hallmark of museums in Britain, has been on offer at German school museums for quite some time. In sum, the articles, it is hoped, will give readers some idea of the multi-faceted phenomenon that is public history.

Jutta Schwarzkopf

Danksagung

Wir bedanken uns herzlich bei Sandra Müller für das Layout.

Inhalt/Contents

Hilda Kean Public History in Britain Today: A Country Obsessed with Reinventions of the Past	2
Toby Butler Digital History: How Memoryscapes Can Change the Way We See the World	9
Paul Martin Can You Feel the Beat? Compiling and Reissuing Marginal Pop Music of the 1960s	15
Katherine Bradley A Suffrage Walk in Oxford: "The March of the Women"	20
Reinhold Wandel Victorian Lessons – Unterricht wie zu Kaisers Zeiten Ein Beispiel für nacherlebte Geschichte	25
Frauke Hofmeister Voted for Change? British Parties after the General Election	31
Lars Eckstein M.I.A.'s "Born Free" and the Ambivalent Politics of Authenticity and Provocation	34
Peter Bennett Nu-Folk	38
Jürgen Enkemann Reel News	41
Sandra Müller and Gesa Stedman News from the Literary Field in the UK	45
Back Issues and Impressum	48
Matthias Dietzke The English Theatre Berlin	49

Die deutsch-englische Zeitschrift *HARD TIMES* erscheint zwei Mal im Jahr. Ihre Beiträge befassen sich kritisch mit kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Entwicklungen in Großbritannien, in Irland und gelegentlich auch in anderen englischsprachigen Ländern. Die Hefte haben jeweils – neben einzelnen verstreuten Artikeln – Themenschwerpunkte. Vorrang haben Themen, die um aktuelle Probleme, Konflikte und Theorien kreisen, sowie solche, die demokratische, soziale, ökologische, antirassistische, feministische und andere emanzipatorische Bewegungen und diskriminierte Gruppen in den Blick rücken.

HARD TIMES wurde 1994 mit dem Journalistenpreis des Verbandes deutscher Anglisten („Anglistentag“) ausgezeichnet.