

Renewing Left-Wing Ideas in Late Twentieth-Century Britain:

Marxism Today, c. 1977-1994

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Short Abstract

This thesis explores how the political thought of left-wing authors based around the journal *Marxism Today* transformed between the late 1970s and the 1990s. Under the editorship of Martin Jacques, the journal became a site of major debates on the British left over the course of the period and its contributors came from a wide variety of intellectual, social and political backgrounds. I trace their changing approaches to a number of themes, assessing whether their revisionism was characterised by ideological capitulation to their political opponents on the right. Their reception of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci; attitudes to the boundaries of the state; debates about class, identity and new social movements; shifting perspectives on European integration; and the communitarian political thought of Geoff Mulgan are all charted and analysed in this thesis. Notwithstanding the preoccupation with ‘Thatcherism’ among the journal’s authors, this thesis complements recent revisionist historical scholarship which seeks to de-centre Thatcher’s government from histories of the 1980s and which complicates descriptions of the final decades of the twentieth century as an age of neo-liberal revolution. I illustrate the specific dynamics that shaped left-wing debate in the 1980s, arguing that these years were consequential to the revision of left-wing ideas and that the authors of *Marxism Today* departed significantly from dominant forms of twentieth-century British socialism. In examining the interventions made within the journal, in addition to a wide range of contemporary publications and archival material, I place the more famous essays and debates in their historical context where other historians and commentators have failed to pay due regard to the status of the journal’s articles as primary sources. Through the systematic treatment of *Marxism Today* from a history of political thought perspective, I demonstrate that the left was not a passive, defeated force in the period.

Long Abstract

This thesis concerns a broad and diverse group of authors based around the journal *Marxism Today* from the late 1970s to the 1990s, which was officially the theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). It is a history of political thought, examining ideological change within this group and how they sought to renew left-wing ideas in response to the political, social and economic upheavals of the late twentieth century. I offer a reinterpretation of the journal, setting some of its most well-known debates in context and exploring the less famous interventions made in its pages. Ideological change was not the product simply of capitulation to their ideological opponents, namely Margaret Thatcher's government, but was mostly a product of creative adaptation. I ultimately demonstrate that the left was not a passive, conquered force in the period.

Despite its relatively small nationwide circulation, the journal achieved a surprising degree of notoriety over the period, and it became a site for broader revisionist discussions on the left, not simply those involving the politics of the CPGB. This was the result of the ecumenical approach of Martin Jacques, who was editor from November 1977 until its final issue in December 1991. The authors writing within the journal had intellectual, social and political origins in a range of overlapping movements and groups such as the New Left, cultural studies, the new social movements (such as the women's liberation movement), Ken Livingstone's Labour-controlled Greater London Council (GLC), and the CPGB itself. Though not ideologically homogenous, those writing in *Marxism Today* generally opposed the hard left/'Bennite' wing of the Labour Party, moderate 'social democracy' as represented by the governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, as well as authoritarian Soviet communism. Due to the political diversity of its authors, examining *Marxism Today* therefore provides a valuable insight into left-wing ideological change in Britain in the late twentieth century.

Historians have not been unaware of *Marxism Today*, largely as a result of influential interventions made within the journal by the cultural theorist Stuart Hall and the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm; its widely-discussed analysis of ‘Thatcherism’; and the renowned ‘new times’ project of the late 1980s. However, they have largely understood the journal through the lens of other political formations – such as the CPGB, the New Left or through the later New Labour, in which some of the journal’s contributors were involved – or they have failed to treat the essays published in *Marxism Today* sufficiently as primary sources, as historical interventions in the political debates of the time. Informed by Quentin Skinner, Michael Freeden and recent revisionist approaches to late twentieth century British history, this thesis examines the journal systematically from a history of political thought perspective. Each chapter is an essay covering a significant dimension of left-wing ideological transformation in the period. The first four chapters concern the period from *c.* 1977 to *c.* 1991, whereas the final chapter treats the years 1988 to 1994.

The first chapter examines the reception of the political thought of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci among the authors of *Marxism Today*, focusing in particular on the appropriation of his ideas by Stuart Hall. Gramsci’s ideas had been influential on the British left since the early 1960s, particularly among those involved in the anti-Stalinist ‘Eurocommunist’ branch of the CPGB and the New Left. Hall and others in *Marxism Today* continued to draw on his ideas in their analyses of politics and society from the late 1970s onwards. Their reading of Gramsci informed their embrace of conjunctural analysis, through which ‘Thatcherism’ was understood as an ideological project aimed at ‘hegemony’ – political and moral leadership of society based on consent, not simply coercion. Hall claimed that an alternative left project could succeed if it operated on the ‘conjunctural’ level, like the Thatcherites, recognising deeper shifts in the socio-economic structure such as the shift in capitalist production towards ‘post-Fordism’. Gramsci, moreover, led many of these thinkers to take culture and civil society more seriously. The left, they claimed, needed to operate on the ground of everyday life, including popular

culture – culture itself was a potential site for the subversion of hegemony. Gramsci’s notion of the ‘war of position’ underscored the importance of civil society, defined as non-economic social relationships beyond the state. A counter-hegemonic project would need to fight on multiple fronts within society, recognising that civil society had expanded enormously in recent decades and that power was spread throughout society – politics could no longer be about capturing the state. Additionally, Gramsci informed this group’s stress on building broad alliances, especially with the new social movements, whose emphasis on subjectivity held relevance to Gramsci’s ideas about politics and ideology. Overall, this reading of Gramsci was controversial but reflected a genuine engagement with his concepts. Many contemporary and historiographical understandings of Thatcherism and the 1980s are informed by Hall’s Gramscian analyses, but his analyses need to be understood as political interventions. Thatcherism was a lot messier than the term ‘hegemonic project’ suggested.

The second chapter considers changing attitudes to the boundaries of the state in debates about markets, consumerism, the constitution and individual rights. While few on the left, and particularly those based around *Marxism Today*, believed the state was benevolent or omniscient at the start of the period, these years saw the emergence of new emphases and different discussions about the proper limits of government. Thatcher’s government was interpreted early on as a significant break with previous administrations and as informed by a project of both the free economy and the strong state – defined both by its market liberalism, as the British branch of a global free-market ideological project, and by its authoritarianism. The authors of *Marxism Today* responded to both of these dimensions, and the popularity of ‘Thatcherism’, arguing that Thatcherite critiques of ‘statism’ resonated at the level of everyday life, and, by the late 1980s, they claimed that Thatcherism itself had an element of ‘rationality’ to it. Public ownership was both questioned and defended within the journal, though all agreed on a departure from practices of the post-war social democratic state. The appropriate role of the state was increasingly reconceptualised as a facilitator: left-wing politics and policy needed to

incorporate markets, the consumer relationship and civil society. The fall of state communism served to confirm these views. However, constitutional reform including an individual rights agenda also became progressively more attractive to the journal's authors. Notions of a bill of rights and empowering the judiciary were deeply suspect to many on the left early in the period, and would continue to be for some, but the experience of Thatcher's government led many to lend their support to political and democratic arguments over limiting the state. The big state centralism of the government in certain spheres exposed further the deficiencies of the uncodified British constitution. The boundaries of the state were therefore re-imagined not simply in relation to market liberalism.

Debates over class, identity and the new social movements are explored in the third chapter. Over the period, traditional left-wing ideas about the working class, the left's social base and other identities and movements were challenged within *Marxism Today*. Many observed in the late 1970s and early 1980s that economic, social and occupational shifts meant that the manual working class was a declining fraction of British society, in turn provoking much debate on the left, focused around Eric Hobsbawm's 1978 lecture and essay 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?'. Feminist thinkers and other writers also claimed that the left's dominant conception of class politics was unrepresentative of women and minorities. The seriousness of updating the left's approach to class was underscored by the Labour Party's defeat in the 1983 general election. Hobsbawm argued that Labour needed to be a *people's* party, not just a class party, and others contended that the left was not keeping pace with cultural change. Divisions between Hobsbawm and others become stark in the mid-1980s, as many within the journal celebrated, if with qualifications, the attempt of Livingstone's GLC to combine class politics with identity politics. It was in the late 1980s when the primacy of 'class' was most clearly undermined, reflective partly of the influence of postmodernist debates but also due to broader ideas about social change relating to individualism and the new social movements. Many in *Marxism Today* argued that the left needed to address and involve a broad range of 'progressive'

forces in society. However, despite the de-prioritisation of class, there remained a concern for inequality, poverty and social stratification and the language of inequality was used to suggest the continuing relevance of class. Despite adopting similar assessments of how society had changed, the attendant political suggestions about how to respond to such changes differed among these various authors – Hobsbawm did not consider identity politics to be ‘progressive’ at all.

The fourth chapter addresses shifting attitudes to European integration. Notions of the EC as fundamentally anti-socialist and deeply reactionary were strong within *Marxism Today* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, even in these early years, some were beginning to re-think their position on the Community. Western European economic interdependence and the problems of multinational capital limited the capacity of the British nation state to pull its traditional economic policy levers, and many were beginning to suggest that socialist cooperation could take place on a regional, European level. In the mid-1980s, the failed reflation attempt of François Mitterrand’s government in France, together with mounting evidence of European economic interdependence, served to expose the limits placed upon nation states. Britain being part of the EC was considered increasingly as a way of maintaining control over the country’s destiny, and some of the authors of *Marxism Today* suggested that sovereignty needed to be reconceptualised to match the realities of the modern world. Reasons emerged in favour of active *enthusiasm* for European integration, however, as the European Court of Justice delivered rights protections over the heads of Thatcher’s government and the ‘Social Europe’ agenda demonstrated that there could be a social dimension to integration. In the late 1980s, the EC’s regional policy and workers’ rights initiatives developed further the overlap between debates over reforming the British state and those over European integration. The EC was also seen as offering a different *variety* of capitalism to Anglo-American market liberalism and of providing a chance for democratic politics to tame market forces, even if the authors acknowledged explicitly the limits placed by the EC on traditional ‘socialist’ economic policy at the level of the nation

state. The left's political geography ultimately transformed over the 1980s, with Europe emerging as the space for the development of progressive politics and geopolitical independence.

Finally, the last chapter concerns the political thought of Geoff Mulgan from 1988 to c. 1994. Mulgan was a latecomer to *Marxism Today* who eventually co-founded (with Jacques) the think-tank Demos and then served as head of Tony Blair's Downing Street Policy Unit. Despite later defending New Labour in 1998 when many other of the journal's former contributors strongly dismissed the new government, Mulgan was very much a product of *Marxism Today*. He, additionally, engaged critically with market liberal ideas and accepted some of the free-market criticisms of democratic politics and the state. However, he criticised the market liberal politics of Thatcherism and Reaganism for their irresponsibility, and argued that the needs of the 'community' were as important as those of the individual consumer. Mulgan developed a communitarianism, emphasising the individual's place and actualisation within a community. I take seriously Mulgan's ideas of community where other scholars have rejected serious examination of the ideas of such 'political movement' communitarians. His emphasis on responsibility was distinct from Thatcherite individualist ideas about responsibility, and he used a range of metaphors derived from idiosyncratic sources to underscore both the complexity and interdependence of society and the modern world. Also fundamental to his conception of modernity were ideas about the 'knowledge economy' and human capital. Mulgan claimed that resources within individuals – their creativity, skills and knowledge – were the foundation of the new economy and that this capital within people needed to be harnessed and developed by governments. Such an analysis, his emphasis on 'community' and his determinism all chimed with the ideas and rhetoric of Labour modernisers, with whom he would eventually join in government at the end of the 1990s.

In each of these chapters I demonstrate that there was no straightforward rightward ideological shift among the broad range of authors based around *Marxism Today* from the late 1970s to the 1990s. They did not simply absorb the ideas of their ideological opponents

passively, and their response to the left's repeated electoral defeat was fundamentally creative, even as they sought to engage seriously with the intellectual challenge of market liberal and Thatcherite arguments, and with the meaning of the left's electoral defeats. Nevertheless, while this was not an uncomplicated story of ideological surrender, there was a substantial revision of traditional left-wing ideas over these years, and ultimately a significant departure from dominant forms of twentieth-century British socialism. It is in this sense, and not just through Mulgan or Charlie Leadbeater, that *Marxism Today* helped to prepare the ground for the modernised social democracy of the late twentieth century. The journal was a significant part of a broader revisionist milieu in which attitudes to left-wing strategy, the boundaries of the state, social change, and the European Community transformed fundamentally over the 1980s. However, this should not be exaggerated – internal dynamics within the Labour Party explain New Labour more directly – and these were separate political formations. Jacques, Hall and Hobsbawm each eventually claimed that New Labour failed to move on from Thatcherite and 'neo-liberal' terrain.

Even though those based around *Marxism Today* were preoccupied with Thatcher's government, this thesis shows that 'Thatcherism' did not overdetermine their ideological trajectory, thus contributing to recent scholarship seeking to displace Thatcher and Thatcher's government as the starting-points for historical analysis of the period. Indeed, it shows partly how those on the left helped to formulate the very terms of political debate such as 'Thatcherism'. To describe the late twentieth century, moreover, as an age of 'neo-liberal revolution' masks a wide range of dynamics impacting upon ideological transformation in the period. Left-wing actors in this period drew on a number of resources in their attempt to construct a politics adapted to the late twentieth century. They did not resign themselves to circumstances beyond their control, offering little in the way of solutions. On the contrary, they were not a defeated force but rather active agents, renewing traditional ideas to produce an alternative politics of the left.

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Emphasis in quotations is always in the original unless stated otherwise.

List of Abbreviations

AES – Alternative Economic Strategy

BL – British Library, London

BT – British Telecom

CCCS – Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

CRL – Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham

EC – European Community

ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights

ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights

ECJ – European Court of Justice

GLC – Greater London Council

GLF – Gay Liberation Front

GP – General Practitioner

IEA – Institute of Economic Affairs

LHASC – Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Manchester

MP – Member of Parliament

MRC – Modern Records Centre, Warwick University

NCCL – National Council for Civil Liberties

NHS – National Health Service

PCI – Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)

RAF – Royal Air Force

RCP – Revolutionary Communist Party

SDP – Social Democratic Party

SEA – Single European Act 1986

TASS – Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section

TGWU – Transport and General Workers’ Union

TUC – Trades Union Congress

Introduction

How did the left in Britain respond to the political, social and economic upheavals of the late twentieth century? How did it mediate political defeat while continuing to hold on to certain socialist principles? Did it, in fact, capitulate to its ideological rival, Thatcherism? This thesis explores these questions through examining the debates within the journal *Marxism Today* between the late 1970s and early 1990s. It is a history of political thought, tracing the trajectory of a fragment of the British left over these years, showing how and why left-wing attitudes towards a number of themes shifted over the course of the 1980s. In this sense it is a history of the broad and diverse *Marxism Today* left, as well as a history of the left in Britain *through* the journal. It is the first systematic treatment of *Marxism Today* from a history of political thought perspective, setting some of the most influential debates from the journal in their context. It offers a reinterpretation of *Marxism Today*, illuminating both some of the ideological roots of the modernised social democracy of the 1990s as well as the alternative currents, programmes and ‘roads not taken’ exhibited in the pages of the journal.¹ In 1989, the radical left sociologist Michael Rustin criticised both the Labour Party and *Marxism Today* for, under the ‘pressure’ of Thatcherism and the desire to defeat it, adapting themselves excessively to ‘certain powerful Thatcherite assumptions’.² In this thesis, I show on the contrary that many on the left were far from passive in these years. This is an account of the agency of the British left, of how they transformed their ideas to negotiate with the developments of the troubling and tumultuous late twentieth century.

¹ M. Hilton, C. Moores and F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘*New Times* Revisited: Britain in the 1980s’, *Contemporary British History*, 31/2 (2017), p. 151.

² M. Rustin, ‘The Trouble with ‘New Times’’, in S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds.), *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (London, 1989), p. 313 – this essay was based on Rustin’s ‘The Politics of Post-Fordism: Or, the Trouble with ‘New Times’’, *New Left Review*, 1/175, May-June 1989, pp. 54-77.

What was *Marxism Today*?

Marxism Today was officially the theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), published monthly since 1957. As a result of it being a ‘party’ journal, it was supported financially by the CPGB, which paid for its overheads and its significant, sustained operating deficit.³ The CPGB itself was funded by its membership dues but also – unknown to its members and many of its leadership – by secret payments from the Soviet Union, as was revealed by *The Sunday Times* in late 1991.⁴ From 1976, the journal and the party were based at 6-9 Cynthia Street in Islington, North London.⁵ At the centre of the production of *Marxism Today* was its editorial board, which met to discuss practical concerns such as distribution and the journal’s finances, in addition to substantial political matters and the broad intellectual direction of the journal. Though the journal was funded by the party, the editorial board was afforded a large degree of independence.

In November 1977, after the death of James Klugmann, Martin Jacques (born 1945, in Coventry) became editor of *Marxism Today*. Jacques effectively grew up within the CPGB – his parents were both members of the party – and he himself became a member as an undergraduate, even joining its Executive Committee in 1967 at the age of 22.⁶ This was partly in recognition of his participation and leadership within the radical student politics of the 1960s – a politics in which he was active both as an undergraduate and master’s student at the University

³ Martin Jacques in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 27 January 1990, Labour History Archive and Study Centre [hereafter LHASC], Papers of the Communist Party of Great Britain [hereafter CPGB papers], CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 5.

⁴ M. Chittenden, J. Davison, J. Blitz, ‘Kremlin cash bankrolled British strikes’, *The Sunday Times*, 17 November 1991. These secret payments were made to the party’s former assistant general secretary, Reuben Falber.

⁵ K. Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain. Dissent, Decline and Re-emergence 1945-c.2000* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 149.

⁶ Interview with Martin Jacques, conducted by Alan Macfarlane, King’s College, Cambridge, 20 September 2011, <https://upload.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1261058> (2 November 2020); Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, p. 108.

of Manchester, and then as a doctoral student at King's College, Cambridge.⁷ After Cambridge, he became a full-time lecturer in economic history at the University of Bristol from 1971 to 1977.⁸ Over the course of the 1970s, Jacques became firmly associated with the anti-Stalinist 'Eurocommunist' current within the CPGB, which was developing and promoting its ideas each summer at its 'Communist University of London' ideas festival, as well as more broadly seeking to shape the direction of the party.⁹ When Jacques was asked to edit *Marxism Today*, this was at precisely the moment when the Eurocommunist wing of the CPGB was starting to secure its ascendancy within the party.¹⁰ Having left a secure academic job, he was determined to reform the journal and to use it as a platform to promote his ideas.¹¹

When Jacques became editor, the journal was a small publication mainly read by CPGB members. Over the course of the 1980s, however, it broke out of this 'leftwing ghetto', entering newsagents in 1981 and maintaining generally steady increases in sales over the decade.¹² Yet, its circulation (rising from 4,000 to 15,000 over the 1980s) was still much lower than its competitors, such as the *New Statesman*, but it nevertheless managed to provoke a great deal of interest and discussion.¹³ Scholars have noted this peculiarity: its level of influence has been said to be 'surprising' given its circulation and 'affiliation to a dying political party'; the significance of the debate in the journal 'extended far beyond internal CPGB debates'; and the 'intellectual calibre' of its contributors was 'extraordinarily high', with left and right drawing 'freely on its insights' in the period.¹⁴ How did a small CPGB publication become a platform for authors

⁷ G. Andrews, *Endgames and New Times. The Final Years of British Communism 1964-1991* (London, 2004), p. 53; Interview with Jacques, <https://upload.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1261058>.

⁸ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, p. 108.

⁹ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, p. 108.

¹⁰ Andrews, *Endgame and New Times*, pp. 144-5.

¹¹ Interview with Jacques, <https://upload.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1261058>.

¹² Willie Thompson in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 9; Mark Perryman in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 2.

¹³ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p. 311.

¹⁴ A. Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour* (London, 2003), p. 116; M. Davis, 'The Marxism of the British New Left', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11/3 (2006), p. 352; B. Jackson and R. Saunders, 'Introduction: Varieties of Thatcherism', in B. Jackson and R. Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 13. See also R. Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain. The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era* (London, 2009), p. 311.

inspiring national debate? In many respects, this was because of Jacques. In his desire to ‘shatter old assumptions’ on the left, Jacques adopted an ‘ecumenical’ approach to contributing authors, providing a significant space for a range of voices in what Ross McKibbin described as a ‘generous, “democratic” approach’.¹⁵ This open, ‘promiscuous’ attitude gave the journal a broader appeal and, fundamentally, brought in influential writers from outside the orbit of the CPGB, including many non-Marxists.¹⁶ Jacques and the editorial board of *Marxism Today* envisioned the journal as ‘project’, aiming to lay claim to a particular ‘political territory’.¹⁷

While Jacques and many other contributors emerged out of the CPGB’s ‘Eurocommunist’ wing, *Marxism Today*’s writers were a broad range of academics, journalists and political activists associated with other places and spaces. These included Ken Livingstone’s Greater London Council (GLC),¹⁸ the New Left, cultural studies, as well as the new social movements such as feminism, the peace movement, and gay and lesbian politics – and indeed, authors often had intellectual and political origins in a combination of these, sometimes involving the CPGB. Many involved in *Marxism Today* were concerned with constructing a new politics for changed circumstances – one which they hoped would move away from moderate ‘social democracy’, the ‘Bennite’ left, as well as from authoritarian Soviet communism. As Alan Finlayson remarks, the journal’s ‘distinctive agenda’ for the left’s renewal ‘brought together a number of political currents dissatisfied with the old left and sharing a similar view of the problems needing to be addressed’.¹⁹ All of this meant that it appealed broadly, so much so that some scholars have referred to *Marxism Today* as the ‘primary intellectual organ of the British left’

¹⁵ A. Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism from New Left to New Times’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2016), p. 177; R. McKibbin, ‘The Way We Live Now’, *London Review of Books*, 12/1, 11 January 1990, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v12/n01/ross-mckibbin/the-way-we-live-now> (15 June 2020).

¹⁶ See Geoff Mulgan, Donald Sassoon and Sarah Benton in ‘Vox Populi: What Did *Marxism Today* Mean to You?’, *Public Policy Research*, 18/3 (2011), pp. 141-3, quotation (Mulgan) at p. 142.

¹⁷ Stuart Hall in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, pp. 3, 4. See also Jon Bloomfield in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 14 October 1989, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 3 and Mark Perryman in ‘Vox Populi’, p. 142.

¹⁸ Livingstone was Leader of the GLC when it was under the control of Labour from 1981 until its abolition in 1986.

¹⁹ Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p. 116.

in the 1980s.²⁰ Certainly, many in the Labour Party read and engaged with debates in *Marxism Today*, to the point where Rustin claimed that it had become, by 1989, ‘more or less the theoretical organ of Labour revisionism’.²¹ The journal has continued to inspire calls for ideological re-thinking on the left well into the twenty-first century.²²

In this respect, the interventions made within *Marxism Today* represented a broad and influential cross-section of the British left. Apart from its most famous essays,²³ many of the interventions contained within the pages of the journal remain under-explored by historians. This thesis treats *Marxism Today* as akin to one of Lawrence Black’s ‘core samples’ in his 2010 text *Redefining British Politics*. It was similarly the site and host of ‘bigger debates’. Therefore, while *Marxism Today* was certainly not representative of the entire British left it has nevertheless not been selected arbitrarily.²⁴ Much like Chris Moores’ study of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), *Marxism Today* can be examined additionally as a ‘prism through which political, cultural and social change’ can be examined.²⁵ The journal was not a straightforward bellwether for the British left as a whole, but it can be used as a site to explore some of the major debates on the left; to examine what kinds of questions were asked and what kinds of solutions were proposed on the left over the 1980s; and to track disagreement and convergence.

²⁰ C. Thorpe, ‘Participation as Post-Fordist Politics: Demos, New Labour and Science Policy’, *Minerva*, 48/4 (2010), p. 392.

²¹ D. Payling, ‘Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire’: Grassroots Activism and Left-Wing Solidarity in 1980s Sheffield’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 25/4 (2014), p. 607; Rustin, ‘Trouble with ‘New Times’’, p. 608. See also clipping of article by Mike Freeman and Gemma Forest, ‘Old Ideas for New Times’, *Living Marxism*, November 1988, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/COMM/07/03, p. 18 and A. McRobbie, ‘Reviews’, *Feminist Review*, 36 (1990), p. 128.

²² See J. Harris, ‘Marxism Today: The Forgotten Visionaries Whose Ideas Could Save Labour’, *The Guardian*, 29 September 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/sep/29/marxism-today-forgotten-visionaries-whose-ideas-could-save-labour> (15 June 2020); J. Cowley, ‘The World According to Martin Jacques, the Return of the State, and the New “New Times”’, *New Statesman*, 23-29 September 2016, p. 9 (see also the rest of the issue, which was a ‘New Times’ special issue, as well as *New Statesman*, 17-27 February 2017); and the Editors, ‘Bad New Times – The Future of *New Socialist*’, 6 March 2020, <https://newsocialist.org.uk/bad-new-times/> (15 June 2020) – though this latter project evokes ‘new times’ ironically.

²³ The two most notable of which are E. Hobsbawm, ‘The Forward March of Labour Halted?’, *Marxism Today*, September 1978, pp. 279-86 and S. Hall, ‘The Great Moving Right Show’, in S. Hall, *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, eds. S. Davison, D. Featherstone, M. Rustin and B. Schwarz (London, 2017), pp. 172-86 [originally published in *Marxism Today*, January 1979, pp. 14-20].

²⁴ L. Black, *Redefining British Politics. Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 2.

²⁵ C. Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 2.

Historiography and commentary on *Marxism Today*

There is little extended historical analysis of *Marxism Today* and the journal has not been systematically examined from a history of political thought perspective. However, it has featured in a number of histories and commentaries about other left-wing groups and movements. Keith Laybourn and Geoff Andrews have examined the journal as part of their respective histories of the CPGB in the post-war period.²⁶ These works view *Marxism Today* as a product of the CPGB's Eurocommunist wing: the anti-Stalinist, revisionist members of the party who were opposed deeply to Soviet authoritarianism. These divisions had emerged as early as 1956, the year of the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and Nikita Krushchev's 'Secret Speech', and hence the year which marks the start of the New Left as well. Some CPGB traditionalists left the party in 1977 to form the New Communist Party and more were expelled in 1988 and they formed the Communist Party of Britain.²⁷ Both the CPGB and Eurocommunism, indeed, were important to *Marxism Today* – as Jacques acknowledged in 1990, the CPGB not only provided financial support but also a 'political context and framework within which to work and develop its project', in addition to providing "'left" credibility and belonging'.²⁸ Even members of the editorial board who were not members of the CPGB concurred that the party had provided an 'anchoring' which distinguished *Marxism Today*.²⁹ However, the problem with examining the journal through the lens of the CPGB is that it prioritises the importance of the party and of

²⁶ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*; Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*.

²⁷ E. Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition in Contemporary British Politics: Past Politics and Present Histories* (Manchester, 2012), pp. 158, 159, 155; Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*, pp. 168-9.

²⁸ Martin Jacques in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 5 – although Jacques here also argues such a context had become less significant since the mid-1980s, p. 5.

²⁹ Stuart Hall in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 7.

Eurocommunism to, as outlined, a fairly diverse ideological project. This journal did not toe the party line, even when this line was of a more pluralist, Eurocommunist type.³⁰ Laybourn, for instance, considers the journal and its ideological transformation as part of the broader CPGB's 'rightward' transformation across the 1980s, under the influence of Eurocommunism.³¹ This thesis does consider contemporary and scholarly suggestions of a rightward shift in *Marxism Today* – whether it 'water[ed] down socialist principles' – but it considers Eurocommunism and the CPGB context as just one influence among many on those writing in the journal.³² Andrews does acknowledge the autonomy of *Marxism Today* but, partly because of his membership of the CPGB, similarly examines the journal through the prism of the Party.³³ Under Jacques, the journal was an 'officially tolerated samizdat', as Richard Vinen remarks, and historians should take this aspect of the journal seriously.³⁴

In addition, analysis of *Marxism Today* features in histories of the New Left, cultural studies and radical historiography. Lin Chun and Michael Kenny briefly assess the journal towards the end of their analyses of the New Left, drawing parallels between the journal and the concerns of the New Left in the 1950s and 1960s, but they again regard it as a Eurocommunist affair, albeit mindful of the importance of the New Left intellectual and cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1932-2014) to this later project.³⁵ Kenny rightly questions the notion of *Marxism Today* as a 'direct successor' of the 'first' New Left – arguing that the latter's legacy was 'both complex and plural', and that other left-wing publications such as *Socialist Register* were 'equally heir' to New Left politics – but neglects the pluralism and complexity of *Marxism Today*.³⁶ Dennis Dworkin, in

³⁰ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p. 312.

³¹ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, pp. 108, 135, 146-7.

³² D. Alderson, *Sex, Needs and Queer Culture: From Liberation to the Post-gay* (London, 2016), p. 6 and Gordon McLennan, General Secretary of the CPGB 1975-1990, in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 23 July 1988, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 7.

³³ Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*, p. 219.

³⁴ R. Vinen, *The Long '68. Radical Protest and its Enemies* (London, 2018), p. 303.

³⁵ L. Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 190-1; M. Kenny, *The First New Left. British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London, 1995), pp. 203-5.

³⁶ Kenny, *First New Left*, pp. 204, 205. For the complex nature of the New Left's legacy, see also M. Davis, 'Labourism' and the New Left', in J. Callaghan, S. Fielding and S. Ludlam (eds.), *Interpreting the Labour Party* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 39-56.

his history of the British tradition of cultural Marxism, which operated through the work of socialist historians and cultural scholars, similarly only discusses *Marxism Today* briefly and largely with regard to Hall, the analysis of Thatcherism, and the journal's 'new times' project of the late 1980s.³⁷ In viewing such analyses as extending 'the tradition of cultural studies and radical historiography', which were in turn inspired by the New Left's 'socialist-humanist philosophy and commitment to cultural politics', Dworkin separates the debates over Thatcherism and 'new times' from their precise intellectual context in the 1980s.³⁸ The cultural Marxist tradition was undoubtedly important to Hall in particular, and this is further explored in the first chapter, but this thesis takes *Marxism Today* out of the postscript and the conclusion, and recovers the immediate context of its debates from the late 1970s to the early 1990s.

Alexandre Campsie has provided the most systematic and sophisticated treatment of *Marxism Today* out of the body of scholarship on the New Left and its aftermath.³⁹ Campsie situates the 'new times' debates in *Marxism Today* within a broader context of British New Left analysis, showing how other left-wing analyses of social change were produced by academics around *History Workshop Journal* and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Hall's analyses may have been 'eye-catching', he argues, but they presented a more 'reductive' and ultimately more pessimistic account of politics. Too readily they 'bought in to the power of the capitalist state', implying the left was 'imprisoned' in the new, reactionary order brought about by Thatcherism.⁴⁰ Writing of the late 1980s, Campsie dismisses the broader output of *Marxism Today* as equally reductive, focusing on the 'most strikingly modern forms' in society, culture and politics in order to renew the publishing fortunes of the journal.⁴¹ Notwithstanding Campsie's subtle treatment of

³⁷ D. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain. History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC, 1997).

³⁸ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 248, 8.

³⁹ A. Campsie, "Socialism will never be the same again". Re-imagining British Left-wing Ideas for the 'New Times', *Contemporary British History*, 31/2 (2017), pp. 166-88; Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 127-90.

⁴⁰ Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 12, 193.

⁴¹ Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 190, 154, 164. Indeed, *Marxism Today* was often in financial difficulties – see Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 3; Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 23 April 1988, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 1;

its ideas, he nevertheless fails to treat sufficiently the analyses of *Marxism Today* as historical *interventions* in a political debate. It is not considered *why* Hall's account appears more pessimistic. In the effort of rightly situating *Marxism Today* in part of its social and institutional context – a commercial project – Campsie neglects the intellectual context: there was a reason why those 'stylised' images of modernity were chosen, why an iconoclastic set of ideas was considered *plausible* and influential. Without being uncritical, this thesis takes seriously Jacques' comment that *Marxism Today* was 'a project, not just a product'.⁴² Furthermore, I ultimately complicate Campsie's view that the journal abandoned the desire of its contemporaries to 'first understand the complex nature of contemporary society before devising political solutions'.⁴³

The contributors of *Marxism Today* are also especially famous for their analysis of Thatcherism. The term 'Thatcherism' was widely used in political discourse prior to the publication of Hall's renowned essay 'The Great Moving Right Show' in the journal in January 1979.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the journal is well-known for popularising the term and more broadly as the source of the concept of Thatcherism as a distinctive ideology and as a hegemonic project – as a pioneer in the wider body of scholarship seeking to understand the ideology underpinning Thatcher's government.⁴⁵ In this literature, however, *Marxism Today* is often cited without any sustained consideration, and its analysis of Thatcherism is rarely placed in its historical or intellectual context.⁴⁶ Essentially, the journal is treated predominantly as a secondary source by scholars of Thatcherism and of modern Britain. For instance, James Vernon wrote that Hall's

Minutes, 14 October 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06; and Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 4.

⁴² Jacques in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 6.

⁴³ Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', p. 14.

⁴⁴ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p. 4; Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show'.

⁴⁵ See for instance, P. Clarke, 'The Rise and Fall of Thatcherism', *Historical Research*, 72/179 (1999), p. 310; E. J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, 3rd edn (London, 2013), p. 29; Jackson and Saunders, 'Introduction', p. 13. As well as Hall's 1979 essay, often cited as a pioneering analysis of Thatcherism is A. Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke, 1988), of which a second edition was produced in 1994. For the broader literature on Thatcher and Thatcherism, see also B. Jessop, K. Bonnett, S. Bromley and T. Ling, *Thatcherism: A Tale of Two Nations* (Cambridge, 1988); R. Skidelsky (ed.), *Thatcherism* (Oxford, 1988); D. Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1990); P. Riddell, *The Thatcher Era and its Legacy*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1991); E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 214-39; E. H. H. Green, *Thatcher* (London, 2006); Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*.

⁴⁶ An exception is Jackson and Saunders, 'Introduction', p. 13 – but even in this case the discussion is brief.

1979 essay ‘helped me comprehend what was happening to the world around me’.⁴⁷ However, as Vinen notes, many books and articles about Thatcherism ought to be treated as primary sources, as they were intended as interventions in political discussion.⁴⁸ In this thesis I historicise the journal’s analysis of Thatcherism.

Scholarly commentary also focuses on the analysis of ‘post-Fordism’ during the ‘new times’ era of *Marxism Today*. In the late 1980s, the analysis of the supposed shift to post-Fordism was placed at the forefront of debate in the journal, which is discussed in detail in Chapter One. David Edgerton has dismissed the ‘classic vulgar-Marxist technological determinism’ of the post-Fordist thesis and, much like contemporaries, showed persuasively how the realities of the British economy were ‘rather different’ than that described by the GLC chief economic adviser Robin Murray and others within the journal.⁴⁹ However, to focus on ‘new times’/post-Fordism neglects the extent to which the authors in *Marxism Today* also recognised and sought to understand the other socio-economic changes described by Edgerton, such as transformations in the character of the labour force and to trade unionism.⁵⁰ The ‘new times’ debate was significant and influential, but it represents a fragment of the journal’s intellectual output in the 1980s. Additionally, once again, this thesis seeks to historicise the interventions in the journal, not to focus simply on what they failed to register properly, as well as to show the broad range of arguments within the journal before this late 1980s moment. In order to really understand *Marxism Today*, scholars must treat those in the journal as *historical* actors, while also avoiding a hagiographic approach.

⁴⁷ J. Vernon, ‘When Stuart Hall Was White’, *Public Books*, 23 January 2017, <https://www.publicbooks.org/when-stuart-hall-was-white/> (9 July 2020). The influence of Hall’s analyses of Thatcherism and of the 1980s is dealt with in further detail in Chapter One.

⁴⁸ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 308.

⁴⁹ D. Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth-century History* (London, 2018), p. 497; R. Murray, ‘Benetton Britain’, in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, pp. 56-7 [originally published as ‘Benetton Britain: The New Economic Order’ in *Marxism Today*, November 1985, pp. 28-32]; see also R. Murray, ‘Fordism and Post-Fordism’, in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, pp. 38-53 [originally published as ‘Life After Henry (Ford)’], *Marxism Today*, October 1988, pp. 8-13]. For contemporary critiques of the post-Fordism thesis, see Rustin, ‘Trouble with ‘New Times’ and McKibbin, ‘Way We Live Now’.

⁵⁰ Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, pp. 498-9.

The connections between *Marxism Today* and New Labour have also inspired some commentary on the journal. Indeed, both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown wrote in *Marxism Today*.⁵¹ Through Demos, Jacques and two of the journal's frequent contributors, Geoff Mulgan and Charles (Charlie) Leadbeater, would form part of the network of think-tank gurus with close connections to New Labour in the mid-1990s,⁵² and ultimately, Mulgan and Leadbeater became advisers to New Labour in government, with Mulgan eventually serving as director of the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit and then head of the Downing Street Policy Unit. As a result of these links, the broader iconoclasm of *Marxism Today* (also directed at an 'old left'), and a shared concern for image and style, commentators have suggested there was significant intellectual influence of the journal upon New Labour.⁵³ For instance, Alan Finlayson claims that, in addition to *Marxism Today*'s underlying theme of modernisation, New Labour also 'inherited' the idea that an overarching 'guiding theme' was required to effectively critique the present, shape an alternative and transform politics.⁵⁴ Additionally, New Labour may have departed from the 'ontological and ethical commitments of socialism' typical in the thought of figures such as Hall, argues Finlayson, but it adopted and adapted the post-Fordist *sociological* analysis of 'new times'.⁵⁵ Finlayson presents a nuanced understanding of *Marxism Today*, appreciating its diversity, and yet the journal is once again interpreted as a means of explaining another political formation. Too often, moreover, commentators view *Marxism Today* as a proto-New Labour, a 'precursor' to the third way, and hence they fail to properly appreciate the complexity of *Marxism Today* and the subtle and substantial ways it differed from New Labour.⁵⁶ As Andrews notes, in striving to

⁵¹ Gordon Brown in 'Debate: Smaller Worlds', *Marxism Today*, November 1989, pp. 37-9; T. Blair, 'Forging A New Agenda', *Marxism Today*, October 1991, pp. 32-4.

⁵² See Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 187-9.

⁵³ For the suggestion of Hobsbawm's interventions 'prepar[ing] the ground' for New Labour in this period, through an attack on an 'unrealistic' programme of the traditional see H. F. Pimlott, 'From "Old Left" to "New Labour"?' Eric Hobsbawm and the Rhetoric of "Realistic Marxism", *Labour/Le Travail*, 56 (2005), pp. 175-97, quotation at p. 197. *Marxism Today* was often criticised for promoting 'designer socialism' – McRobbie, 'Reviews', p. 128.

⁵⁴ Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp. 107, 71, 117.

⁵⁵ Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, pp. 123-4.

⁵⁶ A. Beckett, 'The Death of Consensus: How Conflict Came Back to Politics', *The Guardian*, 20 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/20/the-death-of-consensus-how-conflict-came-back-to-politics> (16 June 2020); S. L. Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented. Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), p.

connect the journal and New Labour, commentators ignore the broader history and context of ‘new times’ and focus unduly on relative latecomers to the journal, Mulgan and Leadbeater.⁵⁷

This thesis examines the debates in *Marxism Today* without the lens of other political formations. It also historicises this broad group of writers in the 1980s, taking their ideas seriously and situating them in context, not simply focusing on the journal’s most famous essays, authors or its influential ‘new times’ project. The predominant source base of this thesis is *Marxism Today* itself, augmented by a wide range of other contemporary materials such as other left-wing periodicals, monographs, essay collections, academic journal articles, speeches, and pamphlets. I also examine archival material, mainly from the papers of the CPGB, including those documents which illuminate the debates of the editorial board of *Marxism Today*.

Methodology and approach

To take the contributions to *Marxism Today* seriously as *interventions* by historical actors is to appreciate the insight of Quentin Skinner’s injunction to ‘see things their way’.⁵⁸ Intellectual historians must realise that the subjects of their analyses are always ‘doing something as well as saying something’, and in order to understand what they were doing, we have to understand their context.⁵⁹ What was the debate in which they were intervening? What were their intentions? Studying the discursive context can reveal how what might seem irrational to us might have been rational to our historical subjects. Even with such recent history, historical actors were concerned with very different questions and problems to those troubling historians and socialists in the twenty-first century. Historians have found that Skinner’s now-familiar dicta can be

340. These differences emerged most clearly with the special issue of *Marxism Today* in 1998, as discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

⁵⁷ Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*, p. 237.

⁵⁸ Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (3 vols, Cambridge, 2002), i, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i, p. 2.

successfully integrated with those of the political scientist Michael Freedon,⁶⁰ who contends that political ideologies, such as socialism or liberalism, should be imagined as ‘constantly fluctuating combinations of concepts and ideas, incapable of being reduced to a simple list of characteristics’.⁶¹ Accordingly, I do not apply ‘coherent *a priori* models’ of socialism, liberalism or social democracy, for instance, to my subjects.⁶² A Freedonite approach appreciates the extent to which ‘[i]deologies are also formed through adversity’, that engaging with and attempting to mark out similarities and differences with ideological opponents is not necessarily an indication of intellectual surrender.⁶³ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite has also criticised historians for conceptualising ‘socialism’ and ‘social democracy’ as ‘ideologies which can be given timeless definitions’. Not only is this ahistorical, she argues, but it also ‘misses the fact that key battles were *fought over* and *through* the meanings of “socialism” and “social democracy”’.⁶⁴ Clearly there were limits as to what could be labelled as such, and this thesis concerns how these boundaries were tested, expanded and questioned, but it uses the insights of Skinner, Freedon and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite to present a thoroughly *historical* approach to assessing left-wing ideological change in the late twentieth century.

Skinner remarks, furthermore, that while language shapes and constrains action, it is also a ‘resource’ which can be used to ‘shape our world’.⁶⁵ This sense that language and ideas are tools

⁶⁰ See B. Jackson, *Equality and the British Left: A Study in Progressive Political Thought, 1900-64* (Manchester, 2007), especially pp. 3-4 and E. Robinson, *The Language of Progressive Politics in Modern Britain* (London, 2017), especially pp. 9, 10.

⁶¹ M. Freedon, ‘The Stranger at the Feast: Ideology and Public Policy in Twentieth Century Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 1/1 (1990), p. 11; see also D. Miller, ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 6/2 (1989), p. 52, M. Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, 1996); J. Harris, *William Beveridge. A Biography*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997), p. 482 and J. Harris, ‘Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy’, *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), pp. 116-41.

⁶² Freedon, ‘Stranger at the Feast’, p. 11.

⁶³ S. Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies. Hayek and the Left* (London, 2014), p. 135 – Griffiths describes his approach to ideology as ‘greatly indebted’ to Freedon, p. 28.

⁶⁴ F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘“Class” in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology, 1983-1997’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 53 (2013), pp. 330-1. Of course, just because ideologies should not be given timeless definitions does not mean that ideologies, and ideological families, do not exist. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite was elsewhere informed by Freedon in her assessment of Thatcherism as a *bona fide* ‘ideology’ in ‘Neo-liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy’, *Historical Journal*, 55/2 (2012), pp. 497-520.

⁶⁵ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i, p. 7.

which actors *use* runs throughout this thesis. It is through the desire to explore this concept that this thesis focuses overwhelmingly on the *public* pronouncements of those associated with *Marxism Today*. Not only do magazine articles ‘deserve the tag “primary source”’ as much as private letters and memoranda,⁶⁶ but they were also interventions made in order to influence, in this case, broader debate on the left. Political theorists have written about the need to understand ideas as ‘projectiles’, deliberately employed to shape the debate and narratives in which political actors are articulating their arguments. Speech ought to be conceived of as ‘the strategic re-appropriation of a situation’.⁶⁷ Not many of the authors discussed in this thesis were politicians but their interventions in *Marxism Today* are considered just as much an exercise in rhetoric as the speech of a politician. These authors ‘engage[d] in a creative dialogue with the world around them, narrating their context so as to reorder the scope for political action’, through these articles.⁶⁸ As such, this thesis digs deeper than other analyses of *Marxism Today*, attempting to understand the contributions of its authors as attempts to shape, as well as to describe, the world around them.

In addition to treating my subjects as political actors seeking to influence debate and politics, this thesis also examines their ideas as a way of exploring how these individuals dealt with the social, cultural, political and economic upheavals of the late twentieth century. Ben Jackson recently defended the discipline of intellectual history in his argument that ‘the study of ideology is itself one important way of documenting wider social and economic change’. The traditional texts of intellectual history, while generally representative of elites, can nevertheless illuminate clearly major debates and dilemmas which may ‘otherwise remain implicit or inchoate

⁶⁶ Freedman, ‘Stranger at the Feast’, p. 13.

⁶⁷ J. Martin, ‘Situating Speech: A Rhetorical Approach to Political Strategy’, *Political Studies*, 63/1 (2015), p. 26. See also J. Martin, *Politics and Rhetoric: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford, 2013) and, for historical accounts focusing on rhetoric, see P. Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999) and R. Saunders, ‘Crisis? What Crisis?’ Thatcherism and the Seventies’, in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, pp. 25-42.

⁶⁸ Saunders, ‘Crisis? What Crisis?’, p. 26.

in popular discourse'.⁶⁹ Through an assessment of the material in *Marxism Today*, it is possible to uncover some of the ways in which traditional socialist ideas fell out of favour more generally, as well as how certain ideas and political programmes became intellectually discredited. This approach is, additionally, consistent with the insight described above in which language is seen as a *resource*. As Jackson notes, 'it is only through language that social change can itself be interpreted'. I am concerned on the one hand, with how these authors registered change, and, on the other, how they created narratives in order to properly address their diagnoses.⁷⁰

In terms of approach, this thesis is informed by and seeks to contribute to a recent wave of revisionist scholarship on the 1980s and on post-war British history more broadly. Part of this has used *Marxism Today*, and particularly 'new times', as a launching pad for their discussion. Stephen Brooke calls for historians to avoid identifying the 1980s with the politics of Thatcher and her government, and to appreciate 'the *multiple* trajectories, the other guiding spirits transecting the 1980s and animating it in complex and ambiguous ways'.⁷¹ Matthew Hilton, Chris Moores and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite later introduced a special issue of *Contemporary British History* which featured research aimed at 'de-centring "Thatcherism" from accounts of the 1980s'. Just as Hall and Jacques wished to separate 'Thatcherism' from the 'new times', Hilton *et al.* suggested that much of what happened in the 1980s was the result of 'bigger, long-term historical processes' beyond Thatcherism or neo-liberalism. Even the *politics* of the 1980s 'need not be overdetermined by "Thatcherism"'.⁷² Longer-term processes identified by historians have included the decline of deference and the rise of 'popular individualism', defined as the desire for

⁶⁹ B. Jackson, 'Intellectual Histories of Neo-Liberalism and their Limits', in A. Davies, B. Jackson and F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *The Neoliberal Age? Politics, Economics, Society and Culture in Late Twentieth Century Britain* (London, forthcoming, 2021).

⁷⁰ Jackson, 'Intellectual Histories'. See also S. Moyn, 'Imaginary Intellectual History', in D. M. McMahon and S. Moyn (eds.), *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 112-26, especially p. 117.

⁷¹ S. Brooke, 'Living in 'New Times': Historicizing 1980s Britain', *History Compass*, 12/1 (2014), [doi: 10.1111/hic3.12126], p. 21.

⁷² Hilton *et al.*, 'New Times Revisited', pp. 151, 157, 146; Campsie, "Socialism will never be the same again"; D. Payling, 'City Limits: Sexual Politics and the New Urban Left in 1980s Sheffield', *Contemporary British History*, 31/2 (2017), pp. 256-73.

‘greater personal autonomy and self-determination’, which became ‘pervasive’ by the 1970s.⁷³ To Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson, Thatcherism was not popular individualism’s architect and nor did popular individualism ‘lead in a straight line to Thatcherism’ – hence, we cannot understand individualism in the 1980s solely by reference to Thatcherism.⁷⁴ This thesis historicises not only the group that has informed some of this re-thinking on the 1980s but also contributes to these historians’ call for a re-conceptualisation of the decade by considering the alternative currents, influences and pressures impacting on the left beyond that of Thatcherism and neo-liberalism. Indeed, it demonstrates how categories such as ‘Thatcherism’ were just as much constructed by these *Marxism Today* authors as they were external entities to which the left responded. Thus, while the preoccupation with Thatcherism among these authors occupies much of the analysis in this thesis, it nevertheless avoids positioning Thatcherism as the ‘... “guiding force” of the decade... as the central analytical category’.⁷⁵

This revisionist scholarship has also rejected problematic periodisations of post-war British history. Such periodisations occur in the scholarship of James Vernon, who referred in 2010 to the ‘brief life of social democracy’ in post-war British history, defined as state management of the mixed economy, universal welfare and the goal of full employment. Social democracy, he claims, was a ‘brief interlude confined to a few decades after the Second World War’.⁷⁶ Elsewhere, including in his recent history of modern Britain, he extends this social democratic period back to the 1930s but maintains that the final quarter of the twentieth century

⁷³ F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968-2000* (Oxford, 2018); E. Robinson, C. Schofield, F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and N. Thomlinson, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain: Popular Individualism and the ‘Crisis’ of the 1970s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 28/2 (2017), pp. 302, 272. See also J. Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The Search for Community in Post-war England* (Oxford, 2019) – Lawrence argues that individualism was neither new nor ‘all-pervasive’ in 1980s but that social and cultural life had altered in such a way that it was ‘harder to sustain communal and solidaristic strategies for forging a better life’, p. 194.

⁷⁴ Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’, pp. 272, 275.

⁷⁵ Hilton *et al.*, ‘*New Times* Revisited’, p. 147.

⁷⁶ J. Vernon, ‘The Local, the Imperial and the Global: Repositioning Twentieth-century Britain and the Brief Life of its Social Democracy’, as part of ‘Roundtable: Twentieth-century British History in North America’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21/3 (2010), pp. 408, 409.

was characterised by a dramatic shift away from social democracy, that it was an age of ‘neoliberal revolution’ which ‘swept’ Britain. Vernon’s periodisations are a reflection of the aforementioned influence of Hall upon his understanding of late twentieth century British history.⁷⁷ Clearly, Vernon is correct that something changed in late twentieth century Britain.⁷⁸ As Guy Ortolano writes, historians can speak broadly of ‘a shift from a social democratic politics to an age of market liberalism’.⁷⁹ However, Ortolano and others have argued that examining the final decades of the twentieth century through the lens of neo-liberal supremacy obscures those ‘foreclosed efforts to sustain an alternative settlement’, as well as how such a ‘great epochal shift’ appears ‘a lot messier when seen from below’.⁸⁰ Not even Thatcherism and the policies of Thatcher’s government, moreover, can be categorised as straightforwardly ‘neo-liberal’, and clearly (diverse) neo-liberal ideology itself came up against constraints and limits, ‘established norms and practices’.⁸¹ Ultimately, many of these historians seek to uncover the evidence of a ‘dynamic social democracy’ which has been obscured and how social democrats were not ‘ignorant’ or ‘fatalistic’ in response to socio-economic change.⁸² Aled Davies, moreover, usefully

⁷⁷ J. Vernon, *Modern Britain, 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 477; J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007). In *Modern Britain*, Vernon takes the term ‘neoliberal revolution’ from a 2011 essay by Hall – see ‘The Neoliberal Revolution’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 317-35 [originally published in *Soundings*, 48 (2011), pp. 9-28]. See also, A. Glyn, *Social Democracy in Neoliberal Times: The Left and Economic Policy Since 1980* (Oxford, 2001).

⁷⁸ For a summary of changes relating to the economy and to the rise of individualism, decoupled from a ‘neo-liberal revolution’ narrative, see F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite in ‘Reviews: Roundtable’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 30/2 (2019), pp. 264-8.

⁷⁹ G. Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress. From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism through an English New Town* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 18.

⁸⁰ Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress*, p. 21; Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me?*, p. 12. See A. Davies, *The City of London and Social Democracy. The Political Economy of Finance in Britain, 1959-1979* (Oxford, 2017), especially p. 2; Hilton *et al.*, ‘New Times Revisited’, pp. 148-9 and Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’, pp. 303-4; Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*; A. Davies, ‘The Financialisation of Britain, c. 1960-2000’ (unpublished paper, delivered 21 February 2019, Modern British History Seminar, University of Oxford); F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Neoliberalism as a Category in Contemporary British History’ (unpublished paper, delivered 9 November 2017, Modern British History Seminar, University of Oxford).

⁸¹ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*; A. Davies, ‘Pension Funds and the Politics of Ownership in Britain, c. 1970-86’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 30/1 (2019), p. 107. Neo-liberalism is understood in this thesis as an ideology which has had at its centre the belief that ‘the decentralized and pluralistic allocation of resources by market transactions is preferable to... the [perceived] uniformity and coercion inherent in the political allocation of resources through democratic votes’ – B. Jackson, ‘Neoliberalism: Wanted, Dead or Alive’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 35 (2014), p. 194.

⁸² Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress*, p. 21 and Davies, *City of London and Social Democracy*, p. 2. See also D. Cowan, ‘The Politics of the Past in Britain, c. 1939-1990’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 2019).

distinguishes between ‘social democracy’ as an ideology and strategy and the ‘social democratic state’ to refer to the ‘more rigid’ assumptions and practices of the post-war British state – the former surviving until the end of the twentieth century and beyond, the latter facing ‘total rejection’ by Thatcher’s governments.⁸³ This thesis likewise problematises the view that the last quarter of the twentieth century can be easily defined as a ‘neo-liberal age’.⁸⁴

Many if not most of the subjects examined in this thesis, however, did not identify as ‘social democrats’ from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, in contrast to the subjects of the analyses of Ortolano and Davies, but I seek to similarly uncover the evidence of left-wing dynamism in the face of political defeat, and social, economic and political upheaval. They were not passive in the face of triumphant Thatcherite ideology or neo-liberalism – they did not become straightforwardly ‘neoliberalized’.⁸⁵

Marxism Today in context

To what extent were the authors examined in this thesis a coherent group? This thesis examines *Marxism Today* primarily because it was an important site for the development and debate of new ideas on the left from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. There was, however, a discernible ‘*Marxism Today* left’. The journal held its own significance beyond that of its individual contributors. In addition to those on the editorial board who conceived of the journal as a project, contemporaries believed it made sense to criticise ‘*Marxism Today*’, using the title as

⁸³ Davies, *City of London and Social Democracy*, pp. 5, 18. Davies, however, for the purposes of his analysis, defines ‘social democracy’ as the ideology and strategy of the Labour Party. See also B. Jackson, ‘Social Democracy’, in M. Freeden and M. Stears (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford, 2013), p. 348 where Jackson defines social democracy as an ideology which ‘prescribes the use of democratic collective action to extend the principles of freedom and equality valued by democrats in the political sphere to the organization of the economy and society, chiefly by opposing the inequality and oppression created by laissez-faire capitalism.’

⁸⁴ See Davies, Jackson and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite (eds.), *The Neoliberal Age?*

⁸⁵ Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented*, p. xvi.

shorthand for certain tendencies of argument on the left, and scholars have referred to a ‘*Marxism Today* approach’ and a ‘typical *Marxism Today* style’.⁸⁶ Kenny, moreover, describes the emergence on the left of a ‘revisionist milieu’ based around *Marxism Today*.⁸⁷ There was something coherent about the journal.⁸⁸

However, this is heavily qualified: the *Marxism Today* left was a broad and diverse network of authors who had different social, intellectual and political backgrounds. Authors did not always share the same opinion on matters, and this thesis illustrates these distinctions. Pieces were published in order to build debate around particular issues.⁸⁹ Some did not only write in *Marxism Today*, and many of its authors used other periodicals to criticise interventions made within the journal. The *Marxism Today* left overlapped with many different movements, currents, tendencies. Even those who criticised ‘*Marxism Today*’ as a group nevertheless contributed to the journal.⁹⁰ To some extent, one can distinguish between those who were part of a fairly defined collective – for instance, those frequent contributors who also served on its editorial board – and those who were more peripheral, part of a broader revisionist network. Although even those serving on the editorial board sometimes disagreed vehemently. As well as these significant differences, however, this thesis seeks to examine ideological similarities, tendencies within this network, and convergences of opinion. Much like the various authors of the conservative magazine *Salisbury Review*,⁹¹ these authors held themes and motifs in common, shared the same intellectual interests, and thought about politics in similar ways. In this sense, when I use the term ‘*Marxism Today* left’ I do not imply ideological uniformity but rather seek to speak to that

⁸⁶ A. Sivanandan, ‘All That Melts Into Air Is Solid: The Hokum of New Times’, *Race & Class*, 31/3 (1989), see, for instance, p. 2; Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition*, pp. 162, 175.

⁸⁷ Kenny, *First New Left*, pp. 203-4. See also R. Miliband, ‘The New Revisionism in Britain’, *New Left Review*, I/150, March-April 1985, p. 6.

⁸⁸ See ‘Vox Populi’, p. 143, where *Marxism Today* is referred to as a ‘collective’ by the editors of *Public Policy Research*.

⁸⁹ For instance, see E. Hobsbawm, *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (London, 1981) which collects responses to his 1978 lecture/essay.

⁹⁰ For instance, Rustin, who forgot about writing for *Marxism Today* in an interview with Sally Davison and Jeremy Gilbert, ‘The New Left and Its Legacies’, *Soundings*, 74 (2020), p. 150 – here he does note, however, that he was ‘very engaged in its debates’.

⁹¹ J. Stapleton, ‘Religion, Civilisation and the Nation: the Conservatism of *The Salisbury Review*’ (unpublished paper, delivered 21 September 2017, Decentring Conservatism Conference, University of Oxford).

which did unite these diverse thinkers.⁹² Ultimately, there was a reason why contemporaries believed it made sense to criticise the journal *as a whole*, but those associated with *Marxism Today* were far from ideologically homogenous.

This thesis therefore concerns a broad range of individuals. However, there are some key figures who were all at some stage members of the journal's editorial board. The aforementioned Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born cultural theorist with roots in the New Left, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (or CCCS, of which he was Director between 1968 and 1979). He was not a member of the CPGB. The renowned Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) is another important figure in this thesis. He had 'Popular Front roots', joining the CPGB in 1936 at a time when communist parties across Europe called for broad alliances to defeat fascism.⁹³ By the late 1970s, it had been a long time since Hobsbawm had involved himself in the 'everyday politics' of the CPGB – his main involvement with the party was through *Marxism Today*.⁹⁴ Beatrix Campbell (born 1947) grew up in a trade unionist and communist family and had roots in the women's liberation movement, CND and in the socialist feminist magazine *Red Rag*.⁹⁵ In 1985, each of these figures were listed as proponents of a 'new revisionism' by the Marxist sociologist Ralph Miliband, who founded and edited, along with historian John Saville, the previously-mentioned *Socialist Register*. He noted how they did not necessarily agree on certain key concerns, but that they nevertheless did work within an 'identifiable spectrum of thought': they held 'marked similarities of approach, of disposition and concern, and, no less important, certain common

⁹² Campsie similarly seeks to draw out similarities among a diverse range of non-aligned left-wing thinkers from the 1930s to the 1950s in 'Mass-Observation, Left Intellectuals and the Politics of Everyday Life', *English Historical Review*, 131/548 (2016), pp. 92-121.

⁹³ See Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 255.

⁹⁴ D. Sassoon, 'Remember Us With Forbearance: The Unrepentant Eric Hobsbawm, An Obituary', 15 October 2012, <https://www.berfrois.com/2012/10/hobsbawm-and-the-cpgb/> (8 July 2020).

⁹⁵ Interview with Beatrix Campbell, conducted by Margaretta Jolly, interviewee's home in London, 6-7 September 2010, British Library [hereafter BL], Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project.

repudiations'.⁹⁶ This thesis concerns the contribution of the authors of *Marxism Today* to this diverse 'new revisionism'.

The forum of the journal provided a space for individuals to develop and form their ideas. Of course, *Marxism Today* was not the only site for the development of new ideas on the left in the final decades of the twentieth century – Campsie has shown how the CCCS, History Workshop and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee provided vibrant forums for revising socialist ideas.⁹⁷ The Labour Party itself also supplied such a space.⁹⁸ This thesis concerns only a section of the 'ideological constellation' of the British left in the 1980s, and indeed only a section of the revisionist cluster of this constellation.⁹⁹ However, as previously discussed, *Marxism Today* was a particularly important organ for ideological re-thinking for the British left as a whole – it was not simply the home for CPGB revisionism. Overall, I seek to complement the historical scholarship on left-wing ideological change in the period, while simultaneously revising certain accounts of *Marxism Today* within this body of research.

Marxism Today had a complicated relationship to the broader left. The journal was a forum for a diverse range of views but was broadly suspicious of the 'Bennite' left throughout the decade, and by the late 1980s, there was a sense of a 'hardening line' dividing the journal from this section of the left.¹⁰⁰ Many of those in *Marxism Today* were keen to distinguish their positions from those of Trotskyists and ultra-leftists, including those of the so-called 'second' New Left involved in *New Left Review* such as Tariq Ali and Ernest Mandel.¹⁰¹ Members of this

⁹⁶ Miliband, 'The New Revisionism in Britain', p. 6. Miliband also listed a number of other individuals, such as Bob Rowthorn, Gareth Stedman Jones, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau whose ideas are also discussed in this thesis, and argued that other journals, such as *New Socialist* and *New Statesman* were representative of this new revisionism.

⁹⁷ Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 127-60.

⁹⁸ See, for example, S. Fielding, *The Labour Party: Continuity and Change in the Making of 'New' Labour* (Basingstoke, 2002); J. E. Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts. The Labour Party and its Discontents* (Harlow, 2004); Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "'Class" in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology'; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 173-202.

⁹⁹ Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Cynthia Cockburn in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 28 April 1989, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Interview with Campbell, BL, Sisterhood and After; B. Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', *Marxism Today*, December 1984, pp. 22-7 and B. Campbell and M. Jacques, 'Goodbye to the GLC', *Marxism Today*, April 1986, p. 10. Campsie has demonstrated, however, how such a neat 'binary distinction' between a 'first'

broad network generally distinguished themselves from the ‘hard left’.¹⁰² Yet, they were equally eager to criticise and differentiate themselves from moderate tendencies within the Labour Party. The governments of James Callaghan and Harold Wilson had disappointed vast swathes of the left due to a perceived lack of radicalism and an inability to deal with British ‘decline’.¹⁰³ Within the New Left, there had been a long-standing analysis of the Labour Party through the lens of ‘labourism’, and despite the nuances of the term’s use, it was broadly employed to denote ‘the limitations placed upon the party by its particular history, ideology and structure, and above all... its “devotion to the parliamentary system”...’¹⁰⁴ Hall was particularly critical of the Labour Party and Neil Kinnock for their inability to overcome ‘labourism’.¹⁰⁵ However, *Marxism Today* involved those such as Hobsbawm who was, as Patrick Diamond and Karl Pike remark, ‘relative to Hall, the loyal Labour man’.¹⁰⁶ He was criticised by contemporaries for his allegedly uncritical ‘labourism’, and for his ‘craven back-sliding into the arms of Old Mother Labour...’ during the Kinnock years.¹⁰⁷ Even those critical of the Labour Party in the journal, however, invested great energies in how the party should respond to economic, social and political change. Labour, though questionable, was something to take seriously. Ultimately, those writing in *Marxism Today* were seeking to influence the Labour Party, indeed the whole left in Britain, attempting to carve

New Left and a ‘second’ New Left is problematic – ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, especially pp. 15-126.

¹⁰² Campbell and Jacques, ‘Goodbye to the GLC’, p. 10; R. Brunt, ‘The Left’s Hallelujah Chorus’, *Marxism Today*, December 1987, pp. 32-5.

¹⁰³ See, for instance, Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 285 and Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, pp. 45, 47. For a compelling critique of declinist narratives, see J. Tomlinson, ‘De-industrialization Not Decline: A New Meta-narrative for Post-war British History’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27/1 (2016), pp. 76-99.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 42 – here Davis is quoting R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*, 2nd edn (London, 1972), p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ S. Hall, ‘The Crisis of Labourism’, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 207-22 [originally published in J. Curran (ed), *The Future of the Left* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 23-36. The text in *Selected Political Writings* is both abridged and based on revisions made by Hall in 1988].

¹⁰⁶ P. Diamond and K. Pike, ‘A Very Useful Comrade? Eric Hobsbawm, the Labour Party, and the Role of Intellectuals in British Politics’ (unpublished paper, March 2020, copy in possession of Dr Karl Pike, Queen Mary, University of London), p. 17. See also R. Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History* (London, 2019), pp. 508-23.

¹⁰⁷ Clipping of Tom Nairn, ‘Eric, or Little by Little’, *The Guardian*, 25 October 1984, Modern Records Centre [hereafter MRC], Papers of Eric Hobsbawm [hereafter Hobsbawm papers], 937/6/4/7. See also D. Massey, L. Segal and H. Wainwright, ‘And Now for the Good News’, in Curran (ed.), *Future of the Left*, pp. 211-27.

out a distinctive intellectual space on the left, avoiding the supposed pitfalls of the hard left as well as those of Labour moderates.

The *Marxism Today* left, moreover, was fairly unrepresentative of society. Both women and men on its editorial board repeatedly commented on its ‘dreadful’ gender balance, with one member commenting on how in four months of issues in 1990, the ratio of female to male feature writers was 5:1.¹⁰⁸ Despite the self-awareness about the lack of representation of women, and the presence of several feminists, there was an ‘overtly masculine atmosphere’ at *Marxism Today*.¹⁰⁹ The lack of representation was thought to result from the fact that *Marxism Today*’s authors were ‘too much located in the [top] 2/3 rather than the [bottom] 1/3 of society’ – few were from the ‘periphery’ of society, where ‘more women and black people inhabit’.¹¹⁰

Marxism Today was also most closely connected to the London left. The offices of the CPGB and, by extension, *Marxism Today* were based in London. Many of its contributors worked or had close links with London institutions such as the GLC, *Time Out* and *City Limits* – figures such as Campbell, Murray and Doreen Massey overlapped with a London ‘new left’ which had established itself in the capital in the early 1970s.¹¹¹ Although the journal regularly featured contributors from authors based across Britain (and beyond), some writers were concerned about a London-bias among the ‘closed circle’ of frequent *Marxism Today* contributors and on the journal’s cultural listings.¹¹² This point should not be exaggerated, however: *Marxism Today* sold nationwide, covered national and international issues and included an array of authors based across the United Kingdom. Overall, however, those represented in the pages of *Marxism Today*

¹⁰⁸ Betty Matthews in Minutes, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 3; Mark Perryman in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 3 November 1990, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 176-7.

¹¹⁰ Steve Hart in Minutes, 14 October 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 2.

¹¹¹ See J. Davis, ‘From GLC to GLA: London Politics From Then to Now’, in J. Kerr and A. Gibson (eds.), *London: From Punk to Blair*, 2nd edn (London, 2012), pp. 98-102 and J. Davis, ‘Community and the Labour Left in 1970s London’, in C. Williams and A. Edwards (eds.), *The Art of the Possible. Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885-1997: Essays in Memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 207-20.

¹¹² Steve Hart, Katy Gardner and Martin Jacques in Minutes, 23 July 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 6; Mark Perryman in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 2 February 1991, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/08, p. 2.

were overwhelmingly male, white, educated and based in London. This is another way in which this thesis concerns only a fragment of the left in Britain.

In addition, the subjects of this thesis were part of a left-liberal intelligentsia in which hostility to Thatcher and the broader new right was 'intellectually fashionable'.¹¹³ In turn, Thatcher and her supporters believed that many of the disciplines in which the academic authors of *Marxism Today* were based – particularly sociology – had been 'taken over' by radical left-wing ideology, and sought accordingly to reduce their funding in higher education.¹¹⁴ The intellectuals of *Marxism Today* were therefore engaged in something of a culture war with Thatcher's government, with material implications. However, these authors were among those intellectuals who felt that there was a 'stimulus' to Thatcher's political presence – they did not simply dismiss Thatcher and Thatcherism.¹¹⁵ Indeed, central to a lot of the interest in *Marxism Today* was the sense that the left was, unlike the right, failing to keep up with the times: as the New Left intellectual and Charter 88 activist Anthony Barnett reflected in 1997, the originality of the journal's analyses were that they recognised the elements of 'modernity' of Thatcherism.¹¹⁶ The New Left historian Raphael Samuel wrote after Thatcher's resignation that she had 'forced the left into defining its own position' and had kept the left 'on our ideological toes'.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the authors of *Marxism Today*, while deeply opposed to the government, were nevertheless fascinated by it.

This sense that the left was losing its grip on the future was a product of the fact that the period was one of significant electoral defeat for the British left, which both intensified the need for a revived left-wing politics as well as heightening the anger and frustration of left-wing

¹¹³ B. Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5/2 (1994), p. 221.

¹¹⁴ M. Grimley, 'You Got an Ology? The Backlash against Sociology in Britain, c.1945-90', in L. Goldman (ed.), *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain Since 1870: Essays in Honour of Jose Harris* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 189-91. As Grimley shows, the attempt to radically overhaul funding to sociology by Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education and Science from 1981 to 1986, was not wholly successful.

¹¹⁵ Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', p. 245.

¹¹⁶ A. Barnett, *This Time: Our Constitutional Revolution* (London, 1997), p. 264.

¹¹⁷ R. Samuel, 'The History Woman', *The Times*, 4 July 1991, p. 18, as quoted by Harrison, 'Mrs Thatcher and the Intellectuals', p. 245. For an example of Samuel's interest in Thatcher's ideas, see R. Samuel, 'Mrs Thatcher's Return to Victorian Values', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 78 (1992), pp. 9-29.

debate. As Emily Robinson contends, one of the ‘defining characteristics’ of left-wing debate between the late 1970s and early 1990s was an anxiety that the right had caught the ‘very spirit of the times’.¹¹⁸ Yet, not everyone concurred with the need to revise left-wing ideas. Hence, the political mood of the 1980s was ‘embittered’.¹¹⁹ Political debate was personal. Rosalind Brunt, a cultural studies theorist and feminist, recounted to the rest of the *Marxism Today* editorial board, for instance, her experience of a ‘very bloody meeting’ about the future of the left in 1988, characterised by bitter arguments.¹²⁰ These debates were profoundly *lived out* and the emotive way in which members of the *Marxism Today* nexus described them demonstrates their cultural and social significance beyond the realm of ideas: the search for new ideas was described as ‘painful’; rethinking and renewal were going to be ‘difficult’ and ‘disturbing’; but those on the left needed to ‘see beyond their fear of change’.¹²¹ Such painful emotions were seen as necessary for the revision of left-wing ideas.¹²²

Structure and argument

Each chapter in this thesis is a thematic essay covering an important dimension of left-wing analysis and ideological change in the 1980s. Most chapters concern the period from the

¹¹⁸ Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, p. 243.

¹¹⁹ Mulgan in ‘Vox Populi’, p. 142.

¹²⁰ Rosalind Brunt in Minutes of *Marxism Today* Editorial Board Meeting, 22 October 1988, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 7: it is not clear what precisely this meeting was, e.g. a Constituency Labour Party meeting.

¹²¹ Stuart Hall in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 7; Steve Hart and Beatrix Campbell in Minutes, 23 July 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 6; Rosalind Brunt in Minutes, 22 October 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 7.

¹²² James E. Cronin also describes the process of revision within the Labour Party in the 1980s and 1990s as ‘painful’ – *New Labour’s Pasts*, p. 408. For scholarship addressing the interaction of the political and the emotional in twentieth century British history, see S. Brooke, ‘Space, Emotions and the Everyday: The Affective Ecology of 1980s London’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 28/1 (2017), pp. 110-42; C. Langhamer, ‘Mass Observing the Atom Bomb: The Emotional Politics of August 1945’, *Contemporary British History*, 33/2 (2019), pp. 208-25; Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition*, pp. 153-76.

beginning of Martin Jacques' tenure as editor in November 1977 through to its final issue in December 1991, although the final chapter concerns the years 1988 to 1994.

The first chapter examines the reception of the political thought of Antonio Gramsci among the authors of *Marxism Today* and fundamentally concerns strategy. It provides a broad context for the rest of the thesis. As Finlayson writes, a proper understanding of the analyses of *Marxism Today* requires the acknowledgement that many of them were 'developed by people working within the Marxist tradition', and that the most important part of this tradition to them was Gramsci.¹²³ Spearheaded by Stuart Hall,¹²⁴ new analyses of politics and society were based upon an interpretation of Gramsci. This reading contributed to their adoption of the method of conjunctural analysis; their acknowledgement of the realms of culture and civil society as important terrains for politics; and their emphasis on the importance of building broad alliances, including with the new social movements. This chapter provides the background to many current understandings of Thatcherism and of the 1980s, which are heavily influenced by Gramscian analyses developed by Hall and others affiliated with the journal, and I make attendant historiographical suggestions.

The second chapter concerns how attitudes to the state, the market, individualism, and rights transformed over the decade within the journal, and as such it deals with quite abstract discussions about the boundaries of the state. It demonstrates how Thatcherism was interpreted as a break with 'social democracy', and as an ideology of the free economy and the strong state. It shows how re-thinking regarding the state was driven by an acknowledgment of a degree of rationality to the Thatcherite assault on statism and that the social democratic state had been utterly discredited. However, it shows that equally important to these authors was a concern for the authoritarianism of the British state and of Thatcher's government. Calls for constitutional reform and an individual rights agenda emerged as attractive solutions on the left as a result –

¹²³ Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p. 117.

¹²⁴ The focus on Hall in this chapter is partly in recognition of the fact that 'black Britons at this time were leading new political thinking' – C. Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 270.

political and democratic arguments about the boundaries of the state rose in significance. In each case, the boundaries of the state were reconceptualised partly as a means of addressing individualism in British society.

The debate about class, identity and new social movements is the subject of the third chapter – it concerns how ‘class’ as an analytical category was contested over the decade, about how traditional understandings of the working class were complicated and how other group identities and movements based around such identities disturbed traditional class politics. Class was ultimately not abandoned by the broad range of authors in *Marxism Today*, but other identities and new social movements were treated more seriously such that class held less priority. However, this chapter also shows how and why Hobsbawm in particular was more sceptical of ‘identity politics’. Despite a shared critique for traditional class politics, authors in *Marxism Today* were divided as to how to adapt to social change.

Fourthly, this thesis grapples with changing attitudes to European integration through the European Community (EC). I show how traditional left-wing anti-EC arguments came under assault over the 1980s, and how much of this revolved around a sense that the nation state was, in the late twentieth century, constrained immensely by globalisation and interdependence. Traditional economic policies were not constrained simply by the Treaty of Rome, but by the restraints of global capitalism. However, this chapter also shows how, over the 1980s, many on the left became actively *enthusiastic* about the EC. The ‘Social Europe’ agenda, the opportunity of bringing market forces under democratic control, and the protection of rights offered by EC institutions emerged as reasons for the left to take up Europeanism with passion. Ultimately, the left’s political geography altered drastically in the 1980s: Europe was re-imagined as a site for the development of progressive politics and as offering an alternative to Thatcherite market liberalism.

The final chapter examines the writings of Geoff Mulgan from the late 1980s to c. 1994. Adopting a thematic approach much like the first chapter, it shows how this latecomer to

Marxism Today, and eventual adviser to Blair, developed a communitarianism based upon a critique of Thatcherism, market liberalism and rights-based individualism. Mulgan engaged directly with market liberal ideas, including those of Friedrich Hayek, but also stressed the importance of ‘community’ to the left’s agenda for the 1990s. I illustrate the range of metaphors he deployed to present the modern world as complex and interdependent, as well as his discourse on the ‘knowledge economy’ and human capital. Mulgan is examined in depth because of his connection to New Labour and hence to the Labour Party’s revised social democracy of the late twentieth century, illuminating some of its more explicit origins.

This thesis does not examine in detail a number of other important themes. Debates about the Cold War; imperialism; the nation and nationalism (whether British, English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish); the Global South; and religion and morality, for example, do not form large parts of this account, but not because they are considered less important historical subjects. The five themes – strategy (through an analysis of the reception of Gramsci); the boundaries of the state; class, identity and new social movements; European integration; communitarianism (through Mulgan’s example) – have been selected because they all touch on important ways in which left-wing thought transformed profoundly over the 1980s, particularly within the *Marxism Today* network. This study is thus limited but its thematic case studies illuminate how and why many on the left changed their minds over these years, and they each provide an opportunity to test notions of rightward ideological shifts among the journal’s contributors and to assess the trajectory of left-wing thought in the age of the so-called neo-liberal revolution. This thesis adds texture to assumptions about the British left in the late twentieth century.

The picture which emerges is that of an active left: it was not simply a defeated force in these years, capitulating to Thatcherite ideology or neo-liberalism. There was certainly a departure from predominant forms of socialism in twentieth-century Britain, the journal was absolutely iconoclastic, and its authors indeed sought to learn from the success of their ideological opponents. However, in the face of political defeat, those writing in *Marxism Today*

did not resign themselves simply to intellectual defeat. Their engagement with political, social and economic transformation was fundamentally creative. They salvaged a range of alternatives from the upheavals of the late twentieth century, seeking to maintain a sense of agency in the strange 'new times'.

Chapter One – Stuart Hall, *Marxism Today* and their reception of Antonio Gramsci

In June 1987, writing in *Marxism Today*, the theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Stuart Hall began his attempt to explain the relevance of the ideas of an Italian thinker of the 1920s and 1930s, to ‘us’, the left in Britain, with a note of caution:

I do not claim that, in any simple way, Gramsci “has the answers” or “holds the key” to our present troubles ... We can’t pluck up this “Sardinian” from his specific and unique political formation, beam him down at the end of the twentieth century, and ask him to solve our problems for us ...

With this qualification, he went on to argue that Gramsci’s pertinence lay in the fact that he was a thinker of the period following the ‘proletarian moment’ of the early twentieth century, when the Russian Revolution of 1917 failed to give way to a revolutionary epoch. Gramsci’s ‘question’ emerged:

... with the recognition that history was not going to go that way, especially in the advanced industrial capitalist societies of Western Europe. Gramsci had to confront the turning back, the failure, of that moment: the fact that such a moment, having passed, would never return to its old form [...] The terrain changes. You are in a new moment. You have to attend, “violently”, with all the “pessimism of the intellect” at your command, to the “discipline of the conjuncture”.¹

Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) was the source of both ‘inspiration’ and ‘validation’ to many British thinkers from the early 1960s onwards, and those connected to *Marxism Today* were no exception.² Gramsci was a significant influence upon many of the authors in the broad and diverse *Marxism Today* network. Just as the Italian Marxist and politician has attracted recent

¹ S. Hall, ‘Gramsci and Us’, *Marxism Today*, June 1987, p. 16. Much of the material for this chapter was published as M. Shock, “To address ourselves “violently” towards the present as it is’: Stuart Hall, *Marxism Today* and their reception of Antonio Gramsci in the long 1980s’, *Contemporary British History*, 34/2 (2020), pp. 251-72.

² N. Davidson, *Holding Fast to an Image of the Past: Explorations in the Marxist Tradition* (Chicago, 2014), p. 259.

interest from commentators on the left,³ he was deeply important to how these thinkers of the 1980s approached their own context: both for understanding Thatcherism as a hegemonic project, and for how the left should respond to a new political terrain. Gramsci also provided a number of concepts and emphases that worked their way into these authors' strategic suggestions, and which shaped their ideological transformation over the 1980s.

The following chapter concerns just one appropriation of Gramsci by the left in the 1980s, focused in turn on Hall, whose particular interpretation proved highly influential among the network of writers associated with *Marxism Today* in this period.⁴ In this respect, it provides an account of a relatively elite, intellectual use of Gramsci's thought, in contrast to more practical debates about Gramsci's strategic suggestions among activists concerning struggles such as the miners' strike.⁵ The chapter concerns others involved in *Marxism Today*, in order to both demonstrate Hall's influence as well as exposing other, similar, but distinct, interpretations of Gramsci. Despite Hall's appropriation being the most extensive and sophisticated within the group examined here, Gramsci was not just important to Hall, but to the *Marxism Today* milieu as a whole, even if they did not always draw the same conclusions.

Gramsci was a key part of the attempt to articulate a new, left-wing politics. While recent research has demonstrated how the reception of thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek were crucial to the rethinking of many left-wing actors in this period,⁶ those concerned with the question of the supposed rightward shift or neo-liberalisation on the left have not focused explicitly on the appropriation of Gramsci. Crucial though these neo-liberal texts were in the 1980s and 1990s,

³ See, for example, G. Eaton, 'Why Antonio Gramsci is the Marxist Thinker for Our Times', *New Statesman*, 5 February 2018, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/observations/2018/02/why-antonio-gramsci-marxist-thinker-our-times> (20 February 2018) and P. Mason, 'Jeremy Corbyn Has Won the First Battle in the Long War Against the Ruling Elite', *The Guardian*, 12 June 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/commentisfree/2017/jun/12/paul-mason-jeremy-corbyn-defeat-ruling-elite-antonio-gramsci> (31 August 2017). For commentaries on the use (and abuse) of Gramsci, see C. Green, 'Poor Gramsci', *New Socialist*, 8 July 2017, www.newsocialist.org.uk/poor-gramsci (20 July 2017) and A. Nagle, *Kill All Normies. Online Culture Wars from 4chan to Trump and the Alt-Right* (London, 2017), pp. 40-53.

⁴ On centrality of Hall see P. Anderson, *English Questions* (London, 1992), pp. 8-9.

⁵ P. Ackers, 'Gramsci at the Miners' Strike: Remembering the 1984-1985 Eurocommunist Alternative Industrial Relations Strategy', *Labor History*, 55/2 (2014), pp. 151-72, especially p. 155.

⁶ Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies*.

considering – as this chapter does – the appropriation of a Marxist theorist by a group alleged to have drifted to the right in this period can provide a valuable test for simplistic assumptions about the left and ideological change in these years. Providing an account of this and other such receptions can help to contribute to the task, outlined in the introduction, of de-centring Thatcherism from histories of the 1980s, as well as helping to problematise the notion of an omnipotent neo-liberalism in the 1980s – other ideas held purchase.⁷ This chapter provides an account which counters the image of Thatcherism or neo-liberalism as a hegemonic ideological powerhouse: an image produced partly by the authors examined in this chapter, as I illustrate later.⁸ Far from Thatcherism ‘overdetermining’ politics, I will demonstrate the significance of ‘internal’ dynamics within the left in the period: and so, the debates about and between other members of the left and their texts, contributing to the messy process of the left’s ideological transformation over the 1980s.⁹ In this sense, engaging with Gramsci and his concepts may have played a role in helping to sustain some elements of traditional left-wing analysis, while these thinkers were engaging in profound revision to traditional socialist ideas. Considering the influence of non-British and European ideas, other than those of Hayek, the wider Austrian School and those of Milton Friedman, also shows how foreign ideas disrupted just as much as they helped to intellectually reinforce the new right, as well as exhibiting how British intellectual discourse in the late twentieth century has been profoundly shaped by non-native ideas.

Although this group could have simply harnessed right-wing and reformist arguments to Gramsci – and indeed, Neil Davidson has commented that *Marxism Today* turned Gramsci into a ‘vulgar liberal’ – this article will, on the contrary, demonstrate the analytical sophistication and complexity of their engagement.¹⁰ A particular Gramsci, distinct from the Gramsci that held a

⁷ Hilton *et al.*, ‘*New Times Revisited*’, pp. 151-2.

⁸ See also J. Lawrence, ‘The People’s History and the Politics of Everyday Life since 1945’, in J. Arnold, M. Hilton and J. Rüger (eds.), *History after Hobsbawm: Writing the past for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, 2017), p. 275 where Lawrence, citing Hall, criticises analyses of Thatcherism which ‘presupposed the collapse of social democracy’.

⁹ Hilton *et al.*, ‘*New Times Revisited*’, p. 146.

¹⁰ Davidson, *Holding Fast*, pp. 278, 285.

‘proletarian revolutionary party’ at the centre of his project, was constructed by this network; but their Gramscianism nevertheless engaged closely with his concepts and distinctions.¹¹

What follows, firstly, is a brief introduction to the Gramscian concepts most significant to the authors associated with *Marxism Today*. I then provide an account of the translation, transmission and history of Gramsci’s reception in Britain, alongside an explanation of Gramsci’s attractiveness in an intellectual and socio-cultural sense. Following this, I begin to consider Gramsci’s precise impact, considering initially Hall’s development of conjunctural analysis, succeeded by an account of his reception of the concept of the ‘war of position’ and its relationship to an understanding of culture and civil society. I go on to examine the relevance of this reception to the appreciation of the new social movements by those involved in *Marxism Today*, and how Gramscian ideas were more broadly drawn upon in making the case for the left to open itself up to non-traditional social constituencies. Throughout the analysis, I suggest how this specific reception of Gramsci has great significance to contemporary historiographical and broader political understandings of Thatcherism, neo-liberalism, the 1980s, and post-war British history. I suggest ultimately that such rigid and systematic approaches to these themes are problematic, obscuring more than they illuminate. I do not argue, however, that Hall’s (and therefore, Gramsci’s) influence has been silent or unnoticed; instead, I illuminate what is often asserted and what has not been sufficiently substantiated or explained.

Gramsci and his concepts

Gramsci was a founder and leader of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (the Communist Party of Italy, or *PCI*) until he was imprisoned by the Fascist regime in 1926, a state in which he spent

¹¹ T. Steele, ‘Hey Jimmy! The Legacy of Gramsci in British Cultural Politics’, in G. Andrews, R. Cockett, A. Hooper and M. Williams (eds.), *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously* (London, 1999), p. 26.

most of the remainder of his life until his death in 1936. While imprisoned, Gramsci wrote in over thirty notebooks, known collectively as the *Prison Notebooks*. They are Gramsci's most influential texts, particularly with regard to the group based around *Marxism Today* and to the British left as a whole in the 1980s.

In these writings, Gramsci elucidated and developed a number of concepts and I briefly outline here those which are most relevant to Stuart Hall and his associates at *Marxism Today*. Most famously, Gramsci devoted a lot of attention to constructing a theory of 'hegemony' and to an understanding of the operation of power in modern societies. The ruling class, he believed, achieved control over other groups through a combination of force and consent, and it was the latter which he connected to his concept of hegemony. Essentially, the ruling class achieved hegemony by creating consent, from the dominated groups, for their rule.¹²

Closely connected to the concept of hegemony was Gramsci's distinction between revolutionary strategy in the East and the West. In the West, civil society was far more developed than it had been in Tsarist Russia in 1917 (the East). As a result, to subvert the domination of the ruling class, a 'war of position' was necessary for revolutionary strategy in the West, and not, at least not immediately, a 'war of manoeuvre' (an outright military event aimed at the seizure of state power by force).¹³ A war of position involved securing consent through 'the exercise of political, moral and intellectual leadership' – and therefore it involved targeting civil society, where the ruling class predominantly exercised its hegemony.¹⁴ Gramsci's usage of 'civil society' in his writings tends to be distinct from Hegel's conception of civil society, in that it is mainly

¹² This passage and the following summary in this section of the chapter draws on my reading of: A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (London, 1971), as well as the analyses of J. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford, 1987); A. Showstack Sassoon (ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci* (London, 1982); and K. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense. Inequality and its Narratives* (Durham, NC, 2016).

¹³ In Gramsci's writings, the 'war of position' and the 'war of manoeuvre' are 'two forms of a single war' – in practice, this meant that the latter would always follow the former in his vision: Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, p. 206.

¹⁴ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 238-9; R. Simon, 'Gramsci: A Glossary of Revolution', in Gramsci supplement, *Marxism Today*, April 1987, p. v. It is important to note, however, how the war of position in the *Prison Notebooks* is 'by no means a consistent or univocal concept in Gramsci's writing' – Hoare and Nowell Smith in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 46, 207.

used to signify ‘those noneconomic social relationships that are outside the state’, which included trade unions, media, and the education system, for instance. Though Gramsci sometimes adopted the Hegelian usage (and so, included economic relations in his definition), the writers examined in this chapter understood Gramsci’s usage as being primarily non-economic and, by contrast, fundamentally cultural.¹⁵ Also significant here is Gramsci’s emphasis on human agency – influenced by Benedetto Croce – in the revolutionary struggle and, therefore, in history itself more broadly.¹⁶ The realm of civil society, the emphasis on active ideological struggle and a role for human agency were central to Gramsci’s vision of hegemony and of hegemonic strategy.

Another key Gramscian set of ideas for *Marxism Today* was his account of ‘Fordism’. Gramsci, in the *Prison Notebooks*, wrote of the transition to ‘Americanism and Fordism’, which he described as the shift in capitalist production in Europe to American productive methods and styles associated with Henry Ford (and thus, assembly line mass production, standardised products, and scientific management of the workers or ‘Taylorism’). Gramsci considered the arrival of this shift in production in Italy as a ‘high point of capitalist development, the abolition of the last residues of feudalism’, and so it was a shift in capitalist accumulation as opposed to a wholesale, epochal sweep beyond capitalism.¹⁷ As I will show, those in *Marxism Today* attempted to describe a similar process occurring within capitalism – post-Fordism – in the late twentieth century.

Finally, Gramsci’s related concepts of an ‘historical bloc’ and the ‘national-popular’ were central for *Marxism Today*. Alliances or ‘blocs’ were key to a hegemonic strategy, whereby the proletariat would be the leader in a ‘system of alliances’, instrumental to the war of position and the broader revolutionary struggle.¹⁸ Gramsci’s concept of the ‘national-popular’ was understood

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood and tr. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1991); Davidson, *Holding Fast*, p. 275; Hoare and Nowell Smith in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 208-9. See also J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), pp. 117, 142-3.

¹⁶ G. Claeys, *Marx and Marxism* (London, 2018), p. 389; Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, pp. 61-129.

¹⁷ Hoare and Nowell Smith in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 277.

¹⁸ Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, pp. 192-3.

by these authors to suggest that a party cannot achieve hegemony if it focused on the issues of just one class, and instead, a range of ‘popular and democratic’ issues needed to be addressed.¹⁹

The concepts elucidated above are by no means all of Gramsci’s most central concepts but are instead those which are most important for understanding the appropriation of Gramsci by Hall and others associated with *Marxism Today*. Why these specific concepts and sets of ideas in particular proved most influential is suggested below.

Why Gramsci?

The first English translation of Gramsci’s work was Lawrence and Wishart’s *The Modern Prince*, published in 1957.²⁰ New Left intellectuals Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson could read Italian, and so could draw on Gramsci directly,²¹ but the broader reception in Britain emerged in the early 1960s as a result of this translation, and due to commentaries on Gramsci’s thought produced by other New Left figures such as Gwyn A. Williams, a Welsh historian. He explained Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in English and how the application of this concept could be strategically useful for the left in modern, industrialised and affluent societies where the dominant class achieved a high level of popular consent.²² Hall likely first engaged with Gramscian ideas directly at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the mid-1960s.²³ In

¹⁹ Simon, ‘Gramsci: A Glossary of Revolution’, p. v; the ‘national’ in Gramsci’s concept of the ‘national-popular’ was not particularly unpacked by Hall and the broader *Marxism Today* left, and is ‘effaced’ by the popular, as argued by P. Anderson in *The H-Word: The Peripeteia of Hegemony* (London, 2017), p. 90.

²⁰ A. Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, tr. L. Marks (London, 1957).

²¹ Accordingly, much like the authors discussed in this chapter, Anderson stressed the importance of a socialist strategy based within civil society and culture – see Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 50.

²² G. A. Williams, ‘The Concept of ‘egemonia’ in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 21/4 (1960), pp. 586-99; S. Hall, ‘In Praise of the Peculiar’, in Gramsci supplement, *Marxism Today*, April 1987, p. vi; Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*, p. 142; P. Anderson, ‘The Heirs of Gramsci’, *New Left Review*, II/100, July-August 2016, p. 73; Kenny, *The First New Left*, pp. 209-10.

²³ See P. Anderson, ‘Origins of the Present Crisis’, *New Left Review*, I/23, January-February 1964, p. 39 ff.; Anderson, *English Questions*, pp. 2-3; G. Eley, ‘Reading Gramsci in English: Observations on the Reception of Antonio Gramsci in the English-speaking World 1957-82’, *European History Quarterly*, 14/4 (1984), p. 445.

1964, the Italian cultural theorist Lidia Curti began her studies at the Centre, bringing a copy of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in their original language with her, around the same time as when Hall arrived as a research fellow and when Gramsci was still 'little known' in the United Kingdom.²⁴ Fundamentally, however, the most important English translation of Gramsci's thought was *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith and published by Lawrence and Wishart in 1971: from this point onwards, Gramsci became particularly prominent in British left-wing debate. Significant to the transmission of Gramscian ideas in the 1970s was the 'Eurocommunist' wing of the CPGB, from which Martin Jacques emerged.²⁵ This strand of the CPGB, fiercely anti-Stalinist and remembered by David Aaronovitch as being '[s]chooled in the politics of the trendy dead Antonio Gramsci', held the aforementioned ideas festival, the 'Communist University of London', each summer, and was hence responsible for some of the awareness of Gramsci on the left in the period, particularly amongst activists within or adjacent to the CPGB.²⁶

Consequently, many of those interested in Gramsci and producing analyses on his political thought were those seeking to dismantle economic determinism and orthodox forms of Marxism. The authors of *Marxism Today* were reading Gramsci in an intellectual context where traditional forms of Marxism had lost credibility.²⁷ This particular history of translation, transmission and commentary helps to elucidate the specific appropriation of Gramsci outlined presently.

²⁴ L. Curti, 'The Elsewhere of Cultural Studies: A Personal Remembrance', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 18/2 (2017), p. 175; Handwritten draft of address given at Lidia Curti's retirement 16-17 June 2006, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham [hereafter CRL], Papers of Stuart Hall [hereafter Hall papers], US121, Box 64.

²⁵ Campsie refers to Jacques as a 'pioneer amidst the British Left's strong tradition of Gramscianism...' in "Socialism will never be the same again", p. 170.

²⁶ D. Aaronovitch, *Party Animals: My Family and Other Communists* (London, 2017), pp. 190-2.

²⁷ See D. Forgacs, 'Hegemony in Print', in Gramsci supplement, *Marxism Today*, April 1987, p. vi. While more deterministic forms of Marxism were being criticised, Marxism as a whole had, in the early 1980s, been through a 'remarkable, but lop-sided and uneven revival' since the 1950s and 1960s – S. Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology – Marxism without Guarantees', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10/2 (1986), p. 28.

Although it is difficult to assess precisely *why* this network engaged with Gramsci, since this chapter also demonstrates that Gramsci had *an effect* on their political thought,²⁸ there were several intellectual reasons as to why this Italian Marxist proved so attractive. Since the late 1950s, left-wing intellectuals had attempted to deconstruct the base/superstructure metaphor and, as a result of the experience of Soviet brutality in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and in the Prague Spring of 1968, to construct a non-authoritarian version of socialism.²⁹ Gramsci appeared to provide a model for such revisionism, offering a vision of the revolutionary process which was non-Stalinist and one which supposedly had a role for ‘popular participation and free discussion’.³⁰ Hall, moreover, believed that strong similarities could be drawn between Gramsci’s context in the 1930s and that of 1980s Britain:

Gramsci was conducting this exercise in very similar political circumstances for the left – retreat and retrenchment of the working-class movement, ascendancy of fascism, a new surge of capital “with its intensified economic exploitation and authoritarian cultural expression”.³¹

Gramscian concepts were thus believed to bear ‘directly on local experience’ – Gramsci was significant because he was a thinker of the 1930s, writing in an age that also engendered ‘profound pessimism’ for those on the left.³²

Yet, as Dennis Dworkin noted, Hall did not simply transplant Gramsci’s observations and declarations about inter-war Italy onto Britain in the 1980s – and, as discussed above,

²⁸ And it is not always possible, moreover, to determine when these authors first read Gramsci or even first read an account of his ideas.

²⁹ Steele, ‘Hey Jimmy!’, p. 35; D. Forgacs, ‘Gramsci and Marxism in Britain’, *New Left Review*, I/176, July-August 1989, p. 74; T. Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London, 1998), pp. 81-2 as cited by Davidson, *Holding Fast*, p. 283; Williams, ‘Concept of ‘egemonia’’, p. 595.

³⁰ Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 190. For a clear statement of there still being a demand for such left-wing thought and revisionism, see for example S. Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 223-37, especially pp. 232, 234 [originally published in *Marxism Today*, November 1984, pp. 24-9]. Eric Hobsbawm suggested Gramsci was key to a socialist politics that found a role for democracy and the involvement of ‘the mass of the population in the political process’ in his ‘Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory’, in Showstack Sassoon (ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci*, pp. 20, 35.

³¹ S. Hall, ‘The Meaning of New Times’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, p. 256 [originally published as ‘Brave New World’, *Marxism Today*, October 1988, pp. 24-9]. Here Hall is quoting Hoare and Nowell Smith’s introduction to ‘Americanism and Fordism’ in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 278.

³² Anderson, ‘Heirs of Gramsci’, p. 75; Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 6. However, there were a diversity of popular memories of the interwar period and hence the 1930s, and while a narrative of a decade of hardship had cohered by the late twentieth century, it was never all-pervasive – see Cowan, ‘Politics of the Past’.

actually argued against this kind of appropriation – but instead, Hall was concerned with *how* Gramsci advanced problems and *how* he sought to solve them.³³ Gramsci therefore appealed because he was ultimately seen to be preoccupied with the resolution of specific, context-bound problems: with questions of strategy that also concerned a left which, in the 1980s, encountered several defeats, most clearly in the case of the Labour Party repeatedly failing to win general elections. This emphasis on strategy no doubt resonated: many of the discussions of the editorial board of *Marxism Today* involved the ‘strategic view’ of the journal and one of its members even described strategy as the journal’s *raison d’être*, rather than daily coverage, for instance.³⁴ The journal was intended to be a site for interventions which would help to shape the direction of the left. Ultimately, as Peter Ghosh concluded, Gramsci was ‘really a political activist’ instead of a theorist, and was effectively forced into the latter role because of his arrest and imprisonment by the Italian fascist regime.³⁵ Hall and the other authors discussed here had good reason, therefore, to see the Italian Marxist as an aid in their search for an appropriate left-wing strategy. Gramsci was also considered a role model for iconoclastic thinking, confidently addressing the contradictions of his own, difficult time.³⁶ For instance, Hall wrote that any modern attempt to re-create the catalogue of ‘questions’ which Gramsci constructed in response to social change in his time would be greeted with derision and ‘the usual cries of ‘sell-out!’³⁷ Revealed in this comment, however, was the importance of Gramsci as a prestigious figure of the Marxist tradition – as such he could make revisionism and rethinking seem more palatable and acceptable within left-wing political cultures in the 1980s. As outlined in the introduction, debate on the left was tense and bitter in these years of electoral defeat for the left. To these authors,

³³ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 255.

³⁴ Stuart Hall in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 4; Fred Steward in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 8.

³⁵ P. Ghosh, ‘Gramscian Hegemony: An Absolutely Historicist Approach’, *History of European Ideas*, 27/1 (2001), p. 43. Hall had a similar assessment in ‘Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity’, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10/2 (1986), pp. 5-6.

³⁶ Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, p. 257.

³⁷ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 279-80; Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, p. 257.

Gramsci's role was to prove that profound re-thinking on the left had occurred before and that such a process was necessary in order to rejuvenate left politics for new contexts. Appropriating Gramsci was therefore attractive not simply on an intellectual level: drawing on this past thinker was a way for these actors to negotiate claims of ideological surrender.

Conjunctural analysis: 'Thatcherism', left-wing renewal and post-Fordism

To turn to Gramsci's effect on this group, an ideal point of departure is Stuart Hall's development of conjunctural analysis and its relevance to his analysis of Thatcherism and to his suggestions, across the decade, for left-wing renewal and hegemony. Though Hall arrived at the notion of a 'conjuncture' through Louis Althusser, Dworkin notes that Hall's analysis still owed a 'theoretical' and 'even spiritual' debt to Gramsci, which I believe is evident in Hall's use of conjunctural analysis in his accounts of the late 1970s and 1980s.³⁸ Conjunctural analysis is characterised simply by viewing a present or historical context as 'composed of, and constituted by' a range of different processes and elements, each with different histories and levels of significance; thus allowing for the possibility of locating the most significant social forces and forms at any one time, and their characteristics.³⁹ The effect is to emphasise 'historical variability' which is ordinarily obscured or masked by 'mechanical categories and standardized methods' as in, for instance, more scientific forms of Marxism.⁴⁰

This approach, informed by Gramsci, is credited by Dworkin for Hall's far-reaching analysis of Thatcherism, which rejected seeing it as some 'temporary shift' or 'swing' in politics.⁴¹ In 'The Great Moving Right Show', written in 1979, Hall rejected that the 'swing to the right'

³⁸ S. Davison, D. Featherstone and B. Schwarz, 'Introduction: Redefining the Political', in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 2-3; Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 255.

³⁹ Davison *et al.*, 'Introduction', p. 2.

⁴⁰ Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, pp. 80-1.

⁴¹ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 256; Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show', p. 172.

was a simple expression of the economic crisis at the time. Rejecting economic determinism, Hall stated that the ‘conjunctural’ was defined not only by economic conditions, but – quoting Gramsci – those ‘incessant and persistent’ ideological efforts which are made by those in power in order to maintain hegemony.⁴² Essentially, Hall dismissed the notion that Thatcherism and a broad swing towards ‘authoritarian populism’ was a reflection of the crisis, but was in fact a response to it.⁴³ Gramsci was a key influence on this *separating out* of the political moment in 1979, aiding in the process of constructing ‘Thatcherism’ as not only evidence of the importance of the ideological, but also as, in itself, something distinctly new. By 1987, Thatcherism was defined explicitly by Hall as a ‘project’, and so a deliberate, implicitly coherent, intervention on the conjunctural terrain.⁴⁴

Contained within, and a product of, this analysis of Thatcherism were the positive political suggestions made by Hall and others in *Marxism Today*, which also drew on Gramsci’s notion of a conjuncture. Finishing off his 1979 essay, Hall argued that the right was currently defining ‘the “conjunctural”’, and that this was the terrain on which those forces opposed to Thatcherism must operate if they were to have any chance of success – in other words, of attaining hegemonic power.⁴⁵ Hence, through the analysis of Thatcherism lay a notion of how the left could renew itself, even though an explicit counter-project by these authors did not emerge until 1988, in the form of the ‘new times’ project. Commenting in the month of the journal’s special ‘new times’ edition in October 1988, Fred Steward (then an environmental activist and management academic at Aston University) acknowledged that *Marxism Today*’s previous project had been an analysis of Thatcherism, but that their current project now ‘gets to the roots of the period of change to which Thatcherism has been the predominant response’.⁴⁶

⁴² Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’, pp. 173, 175; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 178. For Hall’s sustained critique, using Gramsci, of economic reductionism in some currents of Marxism, see his ‘Problem of Ideology’, p. 41 ff.

⁴³ Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’, p. 174.

⁴⁴ Hall, ‘Gramsci and Us’, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’, p. 186.

⁴⁶ Fred Steward in Minutes, 22 October 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 6.

Hall likewise wrote at this time that the ‘histories and time-scale’ of Thatcherism and of ‘new times’ had coincided, but that they nonetheless ‘belong[ed] to different temporalities’. In viewing his context in such a way – trying to unpack and isolate different sets of processes and ideological forms, each with different histories – Hall placed Gramscian conjunctural analysis at the centre of his contribution to the ‘new times’ project. What this analysis meant in practice was that the left should examine what was the ‘Thatcherite’ response, on the one hand, and the deeper aspects of their present conjuncture, on the other; and ultimately attempt to build a hegemonic politics on the terrain of the latter.⁴⁷

To many authors in *Marxism Today*, an important part of this new terrain was the supposed shift to post-Fordism. Most obviously, their emphasis on how the ‘new times’ were defined by this process clearly originated out of Gramsci’s ‘Americanism and Fordism’. As Robin Murray wrote, post-Fordism was the supposed shift away from Fordism to a system of ‘flexible specialisation’; the application of computer technology to production; specialised and differentiated products; and the decentralisation of production.⁴⁸ Hall’s writings on post-Fordism followed Gramsci’s account of the move to Fordism in two ways. Firstly, he suggested that the shift to post-Fordism was a change in capitalist accumulation rather than a wholesale, epochal sweep beyond capitalism, and, secondly, he claimed that post-Fordism should be read as a cultural and social (as well as economic) process, just as Gramsci rejected the notion that Fordism was a ‘mere phenomenon of the economic base’.⁴⁹ Whether or not Hall succeeded in departing from the base/superstructure metaphor in this case is debateable, yet clearly Gramsci’s case study of a conjunctural analysis in the form of his account of Fordism had a large impact on what Hall perceived to be the base ‘terrain’ for a positive political programme and strategy in the

⁴⁷ Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, pp. 257-8.

⁴⁸ Murray, ‘Benetton Britain’, pp. 56-7; see also Murray, ‘Fordism and Post-Fordism’.

⁴⁹ Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, pp. 258, 261.

1980s.⁵⁰ This differentiation of conjunctural elements, informed by Gramsci, was key to the attempt to distinguish their project from a Thatcherite vision.

The cultural scholar David Forgacs urged in 1989 that adaptations of Gramsci's conjunctural analysis must not lose sight of the 'socialist and revolutionary' vision at the centre of it, and A. Sivanandan, of *Race & Class*, suggested in 1990 that the analytical framework adopted by Hall and *Marxism Today*, which posited that the 'vicissitudes of the subject have their own histories' that operated in different social worlds, served to undermine the centrality of class and the overall socialist 'struggle to change the world'.⁵¹ Despite these challenging criticisms, which show how deeply contested interpretations of Gramsci were in the period, the close adoption of conjunctural analysis by Hall demonstrates engagement and genuine influence, as opposed to some superficial deployment of a prestigious Marxist.

Gramscian conjunctural analysis, as developed by Hall, therefore had a large role in his conceptualisation of 'Thatcherism' and in his articulation of the alleged radically-new paradigm of the 1980s. Receiving Gramscian ideas thus helped Hall to *construct* 'Thatcherism', rather than just *respond* to it. This construction was to 'serve a purpose' – that of resisting and removing the Conservative government and eroding its hegemony – and yet Hall's writings on the 1980s and post-war British history are often taken by twenty-first century commentators in isolation from this purpose.⁵² As Alexandre Campsie has identified, Hall's analysis is often approvingly cited by historians of the 1980s in their accounts of the period. Campsie notes how Geoff Eley, for instance, 'consciously adopts Hall's Gramscian paradigms' in his history of the European Left after the Second World War.⁵³ The authors of a 2016 introduction to Gramsci's thought similarly describe how Thatcherism was 'very persuasively analysed through a Gramscian lens by Stuart

⁵⁰ Some of these concerns originated within this milieu: Alan Hunt in Minutes, 22 October 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 7.

⁵¹ Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain', pp. 87-8; Sivanandan, 'All That Melts Into Air', p. 19.

⁵² Anderson, *The H-Word*, p. 89.

⁵³ Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', pp. 128-9 – Campsie here cites G. Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford, 2002).

Hall'.⁵⁴ Even recent historians who have problematised how historians predominantly view the 1980s stress that they do not wish to 'ignore' the frameworks established by Hall regarding Thatcher and Thatcherism.⁵⁵

These remarks suggest that Hall's appropriation of Gramscian conjunctural analysis has considerable relevance to the way contemporary historians understand this period and post-war British history. For some, Hall's approach, *via* Gramsci, seems to lend intellectual credibility to the notion of a clean break from a post-war social democratic era occurring at some point in the 1970s, emphasising the changes over the significant continuities of the post-war era into the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁶ While there is much sophistication to such historical analyses, which do not employ Hall and his Gramscian concepts completely uncritically, it is worth considering how a specific reception of Gramscian analysis has helped to construct contemporary ideas of both Thatcherism and post-war British history, including those ideas beyond the discipline of history and the broader academe.

The notion, moreover, that 'Thatcherism' was an effective intervention on the conjunctural level could lead to the suggestion that it was a coherent *project*: David Alderson, for instance, wrote in a 2011 article that the Thatcher government 'knew' in 1979 that it had to win against the National Union of Mineworkers 'if its neoliberal project was to succeed'.⁵⁷ Richard Vinen has been sceptical of viewing 'Thatcherism' in such terms, recently stating his objection to the 'Gramscian emphasis on ideological hegemony' characterising much of the historical analysis on Thatcherism – in his account of the government's preparation for the miners' strike of 1984-1985, he argues that there were not long-term, extensive, intensely ideologically-informed plans

⁵⁴ G. Hoare and N. Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci. His Life, Thought and Legacy* (London, 2016), pp. 174, 178-9.

⁵⁵ Brooke, 'Living in 'New Times'', p. 21.

⁵⁶ Campsie, for instance, suggests that Eley uses Hall's 'political journalism' in such a manner: 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', p. 129. Eley remarks, '[t]o use a Gramscian adage', that in the late twentieth century 'the old was dying, but the new had yet to be born' – *Forging Democracy*, p. 404.

⁵⁷ D. Alderson, 'Making Electricity: Narrating Gender, Sexuality, and the Neoliberal Transition in *Billy Elliot*', *Camera Obscura*, 25/3 (2011), p. 3.

to take on the miners.⁵⁸ Vinen elsewhere argued that Thatcher's government itself transformed over the 1980s and that the very term 'Thatcherism' had a range of discursive meanings throughout Thatcher's premiership and beyond.⁵⁹ Rejecting the notion of 'Thatcherism' as an ideology *tout court* would be misguided – Vinen notes that his argument should not be taken to suggest that 'Thatcherism' was without meaning – but appreciating the historical roots of the contemporary notion of Thatcherism as a project, and of the 1980s as an entirely new 'conjuncture', can help to shed light on what such interpretations miss in their lack of complexity.⁶⁰

Hall's analysis was nuanced, however. As shown above, he and others argued that the 1980s were *not* explained simply by reference to neo-liberalism and Thatcherism, but mainly to deeper conjunctural processes and shifts. As stated previously, historians have started to clarify this.⁶¹

Culture, civil society and the war of position

Gramsci also led many of these thinkers to take culture and civil society seriously. Many of those writing in *Marxism Today* were academics in the field of cultural studies – most notably Hall but also others such as Rosalind Brunt. The centrality of culture to the political texts of these authors was thus partly a reflection of their professional lives. But this discipline, in turn, was influenced by Gramsci: cultural studies was the location of one of the most profound

⁵⁸ R. Vinen, 'A War of Position? The Thatcher Government's Preparation for the 1984 Miners' Strike', *English Historical Review*, 134/566 (2019), pp. 121-50, quotation at p. 124 – in this sense, the title is 'slightly mischievous'.

⁵⁹ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp. 4-5, 180-1, 275-6. For an example of an analysis which views Thatcherism as a concerted project, see, for instance, Hoare and Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, pp. 189-90 – here Thatcher and Thatcherites are described as 'skilful' at disseminating their 'social market' values. The term 'project' is also used in Robinson *et al.* in 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain', pp. 274-5.

⁶⁰ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-liberalism and Morality'; Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p. 276.

⁶¹ Robinson *et al.*, 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain'; Hilton *et al.*, 'New Times Revisited'.

appropriations of Gramsci, as argued by Madeleine Davis.⁶² I will show below how this cultural emphasis worked its way into Hall's political journalism. Moreover, 'civil society', as a concept, had had a long-standing place within the history of political thought prior to Gramsci, as well as a broader resonance in public discourse, and so attention to this category cannot be accounted for wholly by their reading of his texts. Nevertheless, they engaged directly with Gramsci's meditations on civil society and sought to update them for the late twentieth century. Culture and civil society were understood by Hall and the broader set of authors writing in *Marxism Today* to be central to a Gramscian hegemonic strategy.⁶³

Critical in Hall's account of the radical right's 'populism' in 1979 was the fact that, far from fooling people, it had engaged with 'real problems, real and lived experiences, real contradictions ...' Thatcherism had, in this conception, accomplished political restructuring and ideological change by working 'on the ground': on the level of social practice and 'lived' ideologies.⁶⁴ Similarly, towards the end of that same year, after the general election, Andrew Gamble (a University of Sheffield political scientist with a Marxist background, who contributed frequently to *Marxism Today*) argued that Thatcherism's strength lay in its ability to 'translate' its ideas into 'slogans and ideas' which could 'tap the popular discontent' against the *status quo*. This discontent, he wrote, was a result of humdrum, everyday frustrations, such as the 'inefficiencies and arbitrary decisions' of state bureaucracies and the nationalised industries. An ideology based on self-help and personal responsibility was 'skilfully allied' by the Conservatives to demands to punish and regulate everyday folk devils: 'strikers, muggers, students, vandals, dope peddlers, gipsies, immigrants...'⁶⁵ This was the sense in which, both Hall and Gamble suggested,

⁶² Davis, 'Marxism of the British New Left', p. 351.

⁶³ Hall and the *Marxism Today* left were not the first group to use Gramsci to stress the importance of culture: see Davidson, *Holding Fast*, pp. 265-6.

⁶⁴ Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show', pp. 185-6.

⁶⁵ A. Gamble, 'The Decline of the Conservative Party', *Marxism Today*, November 1979, pp. 9, 10. Gamble would later outline his understanding of Thatcherism as a hegemonic project most substantially in *The Free Economy and the Strong State*.

Thatcherism was a hegemonic project – deliberately targeting this cultural, everyday level, and being very adept at doing so.

Hall believed that addressing the plane of everyday life was crucial for the left: he contended that Rock Against Racism in 1976, a campaign run by musicians to discourage young people from joining the National Front, was an example of one of the left's own successful 'intervention[s]' on this cultural level and that it was a model for further interventions.⁶⁶ In another essay from 1984 – which similarly emphasised the importance of 'everyday' life – Hall identified co-operatively-run magazines like *City Limits*, Gay Sweatshop (a theatre group) and History Workshop (with its local chapters) as important left-wing initiatives operating on this everyday, cultural plane. These all constituted a left-wing 'libertarianism' which, while operating on the level of everyday life, simultaneously *transformed* this plane, changing attitudes, particularly those of the young.⁶⁷ This attitude towards popular culture also explained the initial enthusiasm Hall and Jacques held for Band Aid (and its later manifestations, Live Aid and Sport Aid) in 1986, which they interpreted as delivering a 'severe blow' to an 'ideology of selfishness' – in their view one of the cornerstones of Thatcherism.⁶⁸ Fundamentally, to Hall, and the broader British cultural Marxist tradition, culture was 'contradictory' and hence, the potential site for subversion: an 'arena of consent and resistance'.⁶⁹ Yet, cultural 'experience' had to be ideologically defined in order for it to be tied to a counter-hegemonic project and thus, implicitly, an element of selection was necessary, just as had apparently been so in the case of the Thatcherites' cultural-hegemonic project.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show', p. 174.

⁶⁷ Hall, 'The State: Socialism's Old Caretaker', pp. 233-4.

⁶⁸ S. Hall and M. Jacques, 'People Aid: A New Politics Sweeps the Land', *Marxism Today*, July 1986, p. 10. See A. Jones, 'Band Aid Revisited: Humanitarianism, Consumption and Philanthropy in the 1980s', *Contemporary British History*, 31/2 (2017), pp. 189-209 and Campsie, "Socialism will never be the same again", p. 174.

⁶⁹ Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, pp. 4-5; S. Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing "The Popular"', in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), p. 239. See also Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance', pp. 23, 26.

⁷⁰ S. Hall, 'Blue Election, Election Blues', in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, p. 241.

Gramsci's concept of the 'war of position' helped supply the intellectual detail for this process of ideological definition, by underscoring the significance of civil society.⁷¹ It was in civil society where Hall and his associates at *Marxism Today* believed this important cultural and political-ideological struggle was to be won.⁷² Hall's focus throughout the 1980s on the moral dimensions of Thatcherism – indeed, as Matthew Grimley notes, he was one of few contemporaries to assess these aspects of it – demonstrated that Gramsci's call to take ideology seriously did not go unheeded.⁷³ After all, Hall believed Gramsci was seminally important in showing how, 'in particular historical situations', ideology and not just material conditions could organise and set the parameters for action and consciousness.⁷⁴

In Hall's conception, precisely what constituted an ideal *left-wing* ideological struggle, based on this notion of a cultural struggle or war of position, had a degree of precision. He wrote, at the end of the 1980s, that civil society had expanded enormously through the emergence of new social movements and the politicisation of issues such as sexuality, the family and the body, and that consequently a politics which was 'always "positional" ...' was required.⁷⁵ In this metaphor, the notion of different 'fronts' was particularly important. In an essay regarding the 'crisis of labourism' from 1984, Hall asserted that the Labour Party was too 'economistic' and that it had 'never heard' of the strategy of the 'war of position', which involved taking the lead over a wide range of different 'fronts' and taking ideological struggle seriously.⁷⁶ Other intellectuals across Europe and North America at this time were conceptualising power as 'fragmented and diffused', and in this vein Hall believed that Gramsci's understanding of power as 'pluri-centred' was one of the greatest strengths of his writings.⁷⁷ Yet, Gramsci seemed to offer these thinkers something much more strategically precise, as he:

⁷¹ Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, pp. 229-30.

⁷² Hall, 'Problem of Ideology', p. 41; Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance', p. 21.

⁷³ M. Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, p. 79.

⁷⁴ Hall, 'Problem of Ideology', p. 40 – here Hall cites Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 377.

⁷⁵ Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', p. 261.

⁷⁶ Hall, 'Crisis of Labourism', p. 219-20.

⁷⁷ D. T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA, 2011) p. 110; Hall, 'In Praise of the Peculiar', p. vii.

... advanced the profound idea that hegemony is not constituted only by the state, but in the multiple centres of civil society. It follows that an alternative conception of socialism must embrace this struggle to democratise power across all the centres of social activity – in private as well as public life, in personal associations as well as in compulsory obligations, in the family and the neighbourhood and the nursery and the shopping centre as well as in the public office or at the point of production. If the struggle for socialism in modern societies is a war of position, then our conception of socialism must be of a society of *positions* – different places from which we can all begin the reconstruction of society for which the state is only the anachronistic caretaker.⁷⁸

In practice, this meant that the left should fight on multiple fronts within civil society: against racism, against patriarchy, as well as against employer exploitation, for instance – not simply focusing on capturing state power and passing legislation. In another essay from the mid-1980s, Hall defined the ‘associations, relations and institutions’ of civil society as comprising not just the familiar – such as schools, the family, churches – but also ‘so-called private relations, gender, sexual and ethnic identities, etc.’⁷⁹ Hall here therefore expanded Gramsci’s conception of civil society to critique an economistic, statist labourism which addressed insufficiently the diffusion of power throughout civil society.

Hence, though modified, Hall interpreted Gramsci’s war of position as suggesting that the struggle of the left should be well-embedded in culture and civil society – an insight which explained his and other *Marxism Today* contributors’ fondness for Italian communism throughout the period. Hall described the British left as ‘non-hegemonic’, and so it was not able to transform ‘bourgeois culture’ in its own way.⁸⁰ By contrast, the *PCI* was widely admired among the *Marxism Today* left. To Hobsbawm, the *PCI* was attractive for its wide-ranging cultural resonance in Italy, arising out of its deep roots in civil society; it was a non-Soviet communism (or ‘Eurocommunism’) which seemed to embody a Gramscian war of position.⁸¹ Hall claimed

⁷⁸ Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, p. 237.

⁷⁹ Hall, ‘Gramsci’s Relevance’, pp. 18, 20.

⁸⁰ S. Hall, ‘A Long Haul’, *Marxism Today*, November 1982, p. 20.

⁸¹ See E. Hobsbawm and G. Napolitano, *The Italian Road to Socialism*, trans. J. Cammett and V. DeGrazia (Westport, CT, 1977); E. Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, *Marxism Today*, October 1983, p. 12. In the same year as Hobsbawm’s publication, the *PCI* received nearly thirty per cent of the popular vote in the Italian general election and had comparable success throughout the 1970s. Hobsbawm much earlier praised the French Communist Party for being one of the few ‘mass’ communist parties in the West – ‘French Communism’, *New Left Review*, I/31, May-June 1965, p. 96.

that there was ‘no popular occasion, no popular festival, no issue or cause about which the masses feel and no emergent movement in mass society’ to which the *PCI* did not make itself ‘present’.⁸² Paul Corrigan, a CPGB member, wrote that the *PCI*’s participation ‘from below’ was what defined Gramscian hegemony, enabling the Italian communists to ‘shield’ the working class from the full extent of capitalist individualism.⁸³ Throughout this period, there were other calls for the British left to insinuate itself similarly within civil society.⁸⁴

The reception of Gramsci thus further entrenched the significance of culture and the sphere of civil society as locations for political struggle. Gramsci was credited by Hall for expanding the ‘limited definition’ of the state, and for recognising how the ruling class operated beyond the structures normally placed under this traditional definition, within culture and civil society.⁸⁵ Gramscian ideas had been applied previously by Perry Anderson in the mid-1960s to underscore the importance of these realms,⁸⁶ but in Hall’s application there was a specific relevance with regard to Thatcherism. There was a need for a targeted, ideological project, which Hall in particular thought was the essence of ‘Thatcherism’ and its success. In consequence, Gramsci’s influence seems to have further entrenched the conception of Thatcher’s government as in possession of a specific project. Additionally, not only were Hall and others suggesting a high degree of coherence to Thatcherism, Sivanandan argued that *Marxism Today* had been ‘so quick to construct’ the notion that Thatcher’s government had also *achieved* ideological hegemony through its project.⁸⁷ Indeed, not only was there much to what came to be labelled as ‘Thatcherism’

⁸² S. Hall, ‘The Culture Gap’, *Marxism Today*, January 1984, p. 22.

⁸³ P. Corrigan, ‘Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy’, *Marxism Today*, December 1979, p. 17. Corrigan was later involved in the GLC and became an adviser to Tony Blair.

⁸⁴ B. Campbell, M. Darke, T. Davis, D. Green, J. de Groot, R. Halverson, S. Hart, M. Jacques, C. Leadbeater, B. Pearce, J. Rodrigues, M. Stewart and N. Temple, *Manifesto for New Times* (London, 1989), p. 17 – members of the CPGB Executive Committee also made amendments to the *Manifesto*, though what these were is unspecified.

⁸⁵ Hall, ‘Gramsci’s Relevance’, p. 18 ff.

⁸⁶ P. Anderson, ‘Problems of Socialist Strategy’, in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn (eds.), *Towards Socialism* (London, 1965), pp. 221-90, as cited by Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 50.

⁸⁷ Sivanandan, ‘All That Melts Into Air’, p. 2.

which ‘emerged’ gradually over the 1980s,⁸⁸ its success as an ideology was also limited.⁸⁹ I argue that it would serve historians of the recent past to appreciate how far Thatcher and her government luckily ‘stumbled’ on discourses and policies which were popular, and to rethink the extent of this popularity itself.⁹⁰ Assessing Thatcherism and the left’s positive political project through the lens of Gramsci’s war of position, in which hegemony is built on the level of culture and civil society, thus produced a specific conception of their ideological opponents. Far from a set of sometimes incoherent ideas and practices, responding to circumstances as it went along, Thatcherism was a coherent ‘project’, and the left needed to ape it.

Constructing a historical bloc

Conjunctural analysis and the emphasis placed on culture and civil society, together with Gramsci’s notion of a ‘historical bloc’, informed many of these authors’ interest and support for reaching out to a broad range of social groups and to the new social movements, such as the feminist movement, movements based around the politics of race and sexuality, as well as the peace and environmentalist movements. These movements were seen as key to the alliances or ‘blocs’ that were supposedly crucial to a Gramscian hegemonic strategy.

In April 1987, a special supplement on Gramsci was produced with that month’s issue of *Marxism Today*, demonstrating the extent to which this author was important not just to Hall, but to the broader range of actors involved in *Marxism Today* in this period, and especially to the editor, Jacques. One of the features in this supplement was an introduction to various concepts and terms used by Gramsci, written by Roger Simon, then a writer and former secretary of the

⁸⁸ A. Gamble, ‘Europe and America’, in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, pp. 218, 229.

⁸⁹ I. Crewe, ‘Values: The Crusade That Failed’, in D. Kavanagh and A. Seldon (eds.), *The Thatcher Effect: A Decade of Change* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 239-50.

⁹⁰ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 11. See also Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’, p. 272, where the word ‘luck’ is used.

Labour Research Department.⁹¹ Fundamental to Gramscian hegemony, he claimed, was the ‘building of alliances’ with other classes and social groups.⁹²

Across the 1980s, many authors in *Marxism Today* stressed the importance of mobilising a wide range of groups as key to a hegemonic strategy. For instance, Jacques celebrated the 1981 Peoples’ March for Jobs for bringing together the labour movement (it was organised by three regional TUCs) with women’s organisations, religious groups, community organisations and ethnic minority community groups. For bringing together the ‘widest possible sections of people’, he believed it pointed the way for ‘new forms of unity and alliance’ in the resistance against the policies of Thatcher’s government.⁹³ This was the basic sense in which Gramsci’s call for alliances could be realised, constructing a social ‘bloc’ made up of a range of social groups and interests in order to effect social and political change. After all, the ‘project’ of Thatcherism was thought to have created such a social bloc, collating a range of social constituencies often with different socio-economic positions and interests to each other.⁹⁴ Jacques wrote that Thatcher’s coalition, in an essay littered with the word ‘hegemony’, was composed of the ‘diverse forces of the “backlash”...’ These forces were agitating against allegedly overmighty trade unions, permissiveness and Women’s Liberation, for instance, and included ‘sections of the middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class together with key elements of big capital’.⁹⁵ Key to Thatcherism as a hegemonic project was its capacity to unite diverse groups under its umbrella.

The new social movements, by contrast, were envisioned as the left’s own allies in many of the *Marxism Today* network’s specific vision of a Gramscian historical bloc. The authors of the CPGB’s *Manifesto for New Times* of 1989, many of whom served on the journal’s editorial board, for instance wrote that both ‘progressive’ political parties and new social movements would have

⁹¹ This is a trade union-based research organisation, independent from the Labour Party.

⁹² Simon, ‘Gramsci: A Glossary of Revolution’, p. v.

⁹³ M. Jacques, ‘The Peoples’ March for Jobs’, *Marxism Today*, May 1981, p. 2.

⁹⁴ M. Rustin, ‘Afterword’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, p. 345; Hall, ‘Blue Election, Election Blues’, p. 241.

⁹⁵ M. Jacques, ‘Thatcherism – The Impasse Broken?’, *Marxism Today*, October 1979, p. 10.

a significant function in creating a 'bloc' of 'social forces for progressive change' in the 'new times'.⁹⁶ Beyond the basic call for bringing in a wide range of groups together in an alliance, some of these movements were seen also as critical in light of Gramsci's call for a politics which held relevance at the level of individual subjectivities.⁹⁷ Gramsci was considered particularly 'acute' on 'how to make a politics that was subjectively relevant' and was commended for his recognition of 'the "plurality" of selves or identities of which the so-called "subject" of thought or ideas is composed'.⁹⁸ Brunt described Gramsci's notion of 'critical awareness' as having 'as its first injunction the ancient Delphic wisdom, "Know thyself".' If revolutionaries wanted to construct a clear conception of the world they sought to transform, they needed to understand 'how people experienced the world as it was, how they got by and coped with it on a daily basis'. However, the starting point for this critical awareness was to address one's own 'personal history', to gain consciousness of, as Gramsci wrote, 'what one really is'.⁹⁹ Hence, the politics of identity, such as in the case of the women's movement with its emphasis on consciousness-raising, were seen as key to such a critical awareness.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps anticipating the suggestion that this and other such readings of Gramsci were inward-looking and individualistic, Hall deployed Gramsci's remark that '[t]o the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is "psychological" ...' – thus, to Hall, to ignore identity and the self was to misunderstand ideology and its operation.¹⁰¹ Significant here was that (Marxist) Gramsci was used by some involved in *Marxism Today* to bolster a postmodern vision of identity and the self. Indeed, the postmodern emphasis was particularly stark within the journal in its late 1980s 'new

⁹⁶ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 13. Similar attitudes to the new social movements are dealt with in detail in Chapter Three.

⁹⁷ See Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 323-5.

⁹⁸ R. Brunt, 'The Politics of Identity', in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, p. 153 [an earlier version of this essay was printed as 'Bones in the Closet' in *Marxism Today*, October 1988, pp. 20-3]; Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance', p. 22.

⁹⁹ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', pp. 153-4; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 324.

¹⁰⁰ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 154.

¹⁰¹ Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', p. 251; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 377.

times' era, even if, as the cultural theorist Dick Hebdige wrote in 1989, this did not entail the end of the hope and possibility of 'articulat[ing] a new kind of socialism'.¹⁰²

Certainly, other interpreters of Gramsci in the 1980s were, in contrast, explicitly 'post-Marxist'.¹⁰³ In their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, first published in 1985, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe drew out their understanding of the implications of post-structuralism and the new social movements on Marxism, and used Gramsci and his conception of hegemony, critically, in reaching their conclusions. Much more stridently than Hall, who in 1989 'remain[ed] marxist',¹⁰⁴ Laclau and Mouffe stressed that their project was one of 'radical democracy', de-emphasising 'socialism' in their text, even if they did not dispense with terms such as 'the left' and stressed the importance of their origins in, and dialogue with, Marxism.¹⁰⁵ Hall in comparison appears much more materialist, but his reading of Gramsci in this case suggests an attempt to produce a synthesis: a socialism which spoke to the new social movements and the social changes associated with postmodernity.

However, reading Gramsci did not lead Hobsbawm to embrace identity politics. While he agreed that the British left, much like the *PCI*, needed to reach out to 'new social strata and groups',¹⁰⁶ he was deeply suspicious of the role of identity politics within a hegemonic bloc. Later he claimed that the left was 'for everybody', whereas the movements based around group identity were 'for the members of a specific group only'.¹⁰⁷ They could not therefore form the basis of a national and popular appeal. Despite both drawing on Gramsci and sharing a sense of the left's central issues in the late twentieth century, Hall and Hobsbawm did not share an optimism over the new social movements: there were clearly limits to Hall's influence among

¹⁰² D. Hebdige, 'After the Masses', *Marxism Today*, January 1989, p. 53

¹⁰³ E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd edn (London, 2014), p. xxiv.

¹⁰⁴ Hall made this remark in a discussion at the State University of New York in 1989 – see D. Morley and K.-H. Chen, 'Introduction', in S. Hall, *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. D. Morley and K.-H. Chen (London, 1996), p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pp. xxiii, xxiv. See also Anderson, *The H-Word*, pp. 93-4.

¹⁰⁶ Hobsbawm, 'Labour's Lost Millions', p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ E. Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left', *New Left Review*, I/217, May-June 1996, p. 43.

these diverse figures. These issues, including differences between Hall and Hobsbawm, are explored in further detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

Ultimately, Gramsci was a significant intellectual resource on which some drew in making the case that a vision of socialism must focus ‘on our personal relations and identities’.¹⁰⁸ Clearly the notion of a historical bloc as conceived by those involved in *Marxism Today* was imagined as much more than an ‘electoral marriage of convenience’.¹⁰⁹ Instead, identity was taken much more seriously: for instance, Hall’s engagement with Gramsci on the question of race and ethnicity in 1985 has been described as a ‘turning-point’ in his intellectual production.¹¹⁰ Hall’s emergence in the 1990s as a postcolonial critic and black intellectual, with his insistence on non-essentialist conceptions of race and ethnicity, inspired by Gramsci’s conjunctural approach to class formations,¹¹¹ is how he is most famously known across the globe today.

Conclusion

Gramsci’s writings clearly left a deep imprint on *Marxism Today* and served to resolve dilemmas for this left-wing group in a time of dramatic re-thinking. Hall contended that Gramsci ‘revised, renovated and sophisticated’ the Marxist theoretical paradigm to make it more ‘relevant’ for the twentieth century – an ‘electrifying’ impact.¹¹²

Many others on the left disagreed vehemently with the way Hall and others involved in *Marxism Today* appropriated Gramsci. For instance, Forgacs commented that Hall’s appropriation and other similar readings clearly recast Gramscian concepts.¹¹³ Others were

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Hall in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Hall, ‘Crisis of Labourism’, p. 213

¹¹⁰ Morley and Chen, ‘Introduction’, pp. 8, 17; Hall, ‘Gramsci’s Relevance’.

¹¹¹ Morley and Chen, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

¹¹² Hall, ‘Gramsci’s Relevance’, pp. 5, 20.

¹¹³ Forgacs, ‘Gramsci and Marxism in Britain’, p. 86.

sceptical of the perceived over-emphasis on ideological struggles at the expense of Gramsci's analysis – and indeed, direct experience of – state coercion.¹¹⁴ But perhaps any reception involves and reflects contemporary 'needs' and 'gaps', and any individual or group is likely to put their thinker into 'modern clothes' – to put this into Geoff Eley's terms, '[e]very one, it seems, has their own Gramsci...'¹¹⁵ Part of the difficulty in assessing distortion is that much of the most sophisticated exegesis of Gramsci was written in this period and was thus bound up in its politics (for instance, Eley remarked that Anne Showstack Sassoon's edited collection *Approaches to Gramsci* was dominated by a 'Eurocommunist' reading).¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Gramsci did possess intense animosity towards 'bourgeois state power' and found a role for violent insurrectionism in the revolutionary process, and though Hall and the *Marxism Today* left used his concepts to appreciate the pluralism of liberal capitalism, Gramsci had such an appreciation only in order to ultimately bring about socialism, together with an altogether different kind of civil society.¹¹⁷ Indeed, some creativity was involved in their reading of Gramsci, a fact aided by the *Prison Notebooks*' ambiguities and the fact that Gramsci did not make a 'fetish' of defining terms.¹¹⁸ Hall, however, defended his approach by criticising those who held up Gramsci as some kind of 'prophet' and was keen to stress how his adoption of Gramsci was political, not 'scholastic'.¹¹⁹

This issue of distortion leads naturally onto the question of whether Gramsci simply reinforced pre-existing beliefs or, more critically, provided *ex post facto* rationalisations for ideological capitulation. Undoubtedly, Gramsci quite clearly reinforced ideas or bodies of ideas – such as a humanistic, non-deterministic Marxism – that had developed over many decades in

¹¹⁴ Clipping of article by Judith Williamson, 'Even New Times Change', *New Statesman & Society*, 1989, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/COMM/08/04, p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain', pp. 70, 72; Eley, 'Reading Gramsci in English', p. 441.

¹¹⁶ Eley, 'Reading Gramsci in English', p. 446 – see Showstack Sassoon (ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci*. In this collection Hobsbawm, however, distances himself from the Eurocommunist reading ('Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory', p. 33).

¹¹⁷ Hoare and Nowell Smith in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 207. See also, Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, pp. 208, 216; Davidson, *Holding Fast*, pp. 259, 278; P. Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, 1/100, November-December 1976; Forgacs, 'Gramsci and Marxism in Britain', pp. 86, 87.

¹¹⁸ Ghosh, 'Gramscian Hegemony', p. 1; Anderson, 'Heirs of Gramsci', p. 72.

¹¹⁹ Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', p. 16; Hall, 'In Praise of the Peculiar', p. vi. Hobsbawm also recommended reading Gramsci 'as a thinker and a guide and not as a dogmatic authority' in 'Gramsci and Marxist Political Theory', p. 21.

different movements, places and spaces, influencing the broad revisionist milieu around *Marxism Today*. In turn, however, Gramsci may have helped to articulate diffuse ideas emerging from these influences. Eley suggested that though the radical intellectual and social currents of the 1960s led to an interest in thinkers such as Gramsci, the ‘unruly’ nature of these diverse milieux meant that Gramscian terminology was needed in order to ‘order and rationalize’ these experiences and sets of ideas; a notion repeated by Hall in the posthumous memoir *Familiar Stranger*, in which he commented that, during his time writing and editing *Universities and Left Review* in the 1950s, ‘there was a notion of hegemony operating there already’ despite the fact that ‘none of us’ had yet read Gramsci.¹²⁰ Gramsci resonated with these figures.

A more extreme view, however, is that Gramsci was simply used as ‘left cover’ for the desertion of revolutionary socialism, as Paul Wood asserted in a critique of the dominant interpretation of Gramsci in the 1980s.¹²¹ Perhaps, much like Quentin Skinner’s capitalists of early-modern Europe sought to legitimise their conduct through using and manipulating evaluative-descriptive terms (many associated with Protestantism), Hall and others used Gramsci – due to his status as a Marxist – to sanction a less class-based, reformist and even right-wing ideology.¹²² On this reading, devoting attention to this group’s appropriation of Gramsci would be a distraction.

Yet, the language of Gramsci, most clearly that of ‘hegemony’, permeated their analyses, and that these terms found such wide applicability in the 1980s among these writers should not be ignored. More abstractly, the employment of Gramsci’s language, dependent as it was upon the prevailing mores, discourses and cultural behaviours both of wider society and of these particular left-wing groupings in the 1980s, restricted as much as it allowed for the possibility of ideological and social change. This restraint was what Skinner suggested was at work in the case

¹²⁰ Eley, ‘Reading Gramsci in English’, p. 461; S. Hall and B. Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London, 2017), p. 247.

¹²¹ Paul Wood, ‘The Dotage of Authenticity: Realism(s) and National Culture(s)’, *Edinburgh Review* 80/81 (1988), p. 53 as cited by Davidson, *Holding Fast*, pp. 279-80.

¹²² Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i, pp. 145-57.

of the early capitalists. The employment of a particular language is not purely a manipulative process. It cannot be a cynical exercise: it has to be credible to be legitimate, to consist of rationally-defensible arguments. Consequently, in this way, Gramsci's language and concepts were resources, but they also limited what was possible to argue, acting as 'key determinants' of the behaviour and ideological production of Hall and others of the *Marxism Today* left.¹²³ Certainly, Gramscian conjunctural analysis has been suggested as important for keeping 'deconstruction at bay' in the case of Hall, and so pulling him away from an extreme poststructuralism and, additionally, I would argue it was also important for deterring Hall away from a 'naïve humanism'.¹²⁴

Certainly, following Michael Freeden's conception of ideologies, whereby independent concepts help to define and supply meaning to the other concepts within a given ideology, it is plausible to see how the constraints of Gramsci's language contributed towards the *Marxism Today* left's sustained commitment to 'a reading of ideology as conditioned by material interests'.¹²⁵ This commitment was shown in their aforementioned failure to sufficiently reject the base/superstructure metaphor in their discussion of post-Fordism, in spite of the fact that Hall used Gramsci mainly to argue against more vulgar forms of economic Marxist materialism.¹²⁶ Indeed, Gramsci was not a straightforward idealist, despite the nuance of his writings, and gave priority to productive forces in the motion of history.¹²⁷ In any case, even if Hall and others in *Marxism Today* were cynically appropriating Gramsci, that language and

¹²³ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i, p. 156.

¹²⁴ Davison *et al.*, 'Introduction', p. 4; S. Hall, 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, 2/1 (1980), p. 67. See also Hall's 'Problem of Ideology', p. 28 ff. for Hall distinguishing himself from the 'deconstructionists', including Michel Foucault.

¹²⁵ Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*; Jackson and Saunders, 'Introduction', p. 13; Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance', p. 10.

¹²⁶ See Hall, 'Problem of Ideology'. Michael Rustin criticised the supposed tendency of 'neo-Gramscian thinking' to fall into methodological idealism, 'a preference for the level of culture over that of structure', but he acknowledged that this was 'the obverse of its great power to illuminate the ideological sphere' – 'Trouble with 'New Times'', p. 317.

¹²⁷ Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, pp. 101, 116-17, 126-7; Hoare and Nowell Smith in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p. 277.

concepts have this determinative role still warrants an account of this specific appropriation of Gramsci.

Ultimately, the appropriation of Gramsci was an important part of this section of the left's ideological transformation, aiding in the construction of both the Other of 'Thatcherism' as well as in the creation of a revived left-wing politics. I have also suggested that conceiving of Thatcherism as a 'project' has a history rooted in the left-wing struggle for a new politics in the 1980s, and as such, these political origins may be obscuring the actual messy nature of 'Thatcherism', which was not coherent or deliberate enough to be termed a 'project'. To accord such skill and strength to Thatcherism, as many of these authors did, amounts to a misinterpretation, as argued by other contemporary analysts of Thatcherism in *New Left Review*.¹²⁸ However, scholars have rightly emphasised the contingent and even 'cautious' nature of Thatcher's government and its success.¹²⁹ Indeed, on this question of strength, this chapter demonstrates that instead of envisioning the left in the 1980s and the post-war period as simply a passive force, only *responding* to their ideological opponents, we ought to conceive of it as possessing agency, helping to construct the meanings of the very categories of political debate, such as 'Thatcherism'.

Finally, it is crucial that while Hall envisioned Thatcherism as a project, he argued that it was a project responding to deeper, shifting material and ideological processes – and hence, politics could be drawn in a leftward direction if the left constructed a similar conjunctural 'project'. This nuance – that Thatcherism was *not* the new paradigm in the late twentieth century, but a response to it – has been distorted in both scholarly and political-journalistic accounts, such that both neo-liberalism and Thatcherism are accorded much more agency than necessarily follows from the complete set of arguments made by Hall and others writing in *Marxism Today* in

¹²⁸ See K. Bonnett, S. Bromley, B. Jessop and T. Ling, 'Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations, and Thatcherism', *New Left Review*, I/147, September-October 1984, p. 33.

¹²⁹ See Vinen, 'A War of Position?'

the 1980s.¹³⁰ Hall and Jacques commented in 1989 that *Marxism Today*'s arguments earlier on in the period did indeed conflate Thatcherism with 'the way the world had changed', and hence contributed to an assessment of the new right as overwhelmingly strong.¹³¹ Perhaps the imprecise use of Hall's and others' ideas has arisen as a result of insufficient attention paid both to more subtle analyses from the 1980s, as well as to the status of these and other writings as fundamentally *political* interventions.¹³² Of course, neither *Marxism Today* nor those influenced by the authors connected to the journal are responsible entirely for schematic understandings of Thatcher's Britain, but this chapter has demonstrated the contribution of a particular appropriation of the thought of Antonio Gramsci to these problematic notions about recent history.

¹³⁰ As stated in the thesis introduction, I am responding here to Vernon, *Modern Britain*, pp. 475-516, as well as others that characterise the late twentieth century as a 'neoliberal revolution' – see Hoare and Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci*, p. 175; S. Metcalf, 'Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed The World', *The Guardian*, 18 August 2017, www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/18/neoliberalism-the-idea-that-changed-the-world (21 June 2018).

¹³¹ S. Hall and M. Jacques, 'Introduction' in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, p. 15. In the December 1990 issue, published before Thatcher's resignation, they claimed that 'Thatcherism's hegemonic position in society' was 'melting away' and that this had become evident at some point in 1989 – S. Hall and M. Jacques, 'March Without Vision', *Marxism Today*, December 1990, p. 26.

¹³² See, as discussed in the thesis introduction, the importance of Hall's 'Great Moving Right Show' to Vernon in 'When Stuart Hall Was White'. In Hall's 2011 essay on 'the neoliberal revolution', also influential to Vernon (see *Modern Britain*, p. 477), Hall wrote that he was sympathetic to critiques of the term 'neoliberal' as reductive, but that 'naming neoliberalism is *politically* necessary, to give resistance content, focus and a cutting edge' – Hall, 'Neoliberal Revolution', p. 318. Perhaps Vernon sees his adoption of the term as equivalently political, but effective politics requires nuanced accounts of contemporary society and recent history.

Chapter Two – Re-thinking the boundaries of the state: the individual, the market and the rights agenda

This chapter concerns changing attitudes towards the state among the authors writing in *Marxism Today* from 1977 to 1991, paying particular regard to debates over the interaction of the state with the market, over consumerism, and over constitutionalism and individual rights. I show how traditional socialist ideas concerning the boundaries of the state became increasingly discredited but also how a concern for authoritarianism and Thatcher's 'elective dictatorship' led to increased support for an individual rights agenda and constitutionalism.¹ At the end of the period, the *Marxism Today* left accepted a more limited and less powerful role for the state together with an increased concern for the individual: for their everyday, personal experience and for their status as citizens with rights. In essence, this chapter demonstrates how political and democratic, as opposed to just economic, arguments regarding the boundaries of the central state became attractive among this section of the left over the course of the 1980s.

In these years the Conservatives attempted to decouple the notion of 'progressive' politics from an emphasis on the strong social democratic state, and to exploit a broad scepticism of the 'politicised, interventionist state' in British society so as to increase support for the 'comparative neutrality' of markets in determining social outcomes.² The free-market policies of the Conservative governments were thought to have broken from the so-called post-war consensus in the economic sphere through their toleration of poverty, inequality and mass unemployment; through privatisation; and through the general extension of market mechanisms

¹ This term was popularised in late twentieth-century Britain by the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, in the BBC's Richard Dimbleby Lecture in 1976.

² Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, p. 243; J. Lawrence and F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics', in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, p. 143.

into more and more areas of public life. Also concerning those on the left, however, was the authoritarian dimension to Thatcher's government. Perceived attacks on civil liberties, authoritarian approaches towards policing, local government and industrial action, together with the Conservatives' repeated electoral dominance compounded a pre-existing scepticism regarding the benevolence of the British state among broad sections of the left. Approaches to the state in *Marxism Today* responded both to the market liberal and authoritarian dimensions of Thatcher's government – to the retreat of the state in some spheres, as well as to the Thatcherites' big state centralism.³ Hence, this chapter considers arguments in *Marxism Today* regarding the role of the state in the allocation of resources together with arguments over the constitution and individual rights. As Ben Jackson outlines, a 'full' account of late twentieth-century Britain has to consider the impact not just of neo-liberalism, but also other 'politically powerful ideas', and their interaction with market liberal ideas.⁴ The state was and is perceived to be central to the left, and the discrediting of the state in the late twentieth century is seen as when the left in Britain 'lost its grip on the future'.⁵ Yet, I examine what rejections of 'statism' in the 1980s involved, precisely, and how this rejection was an *active*, rather than passive, process for the broad *Marxism Today* left.⁶ The popularity of Thatcherism, therefore, had a double impact: its attempt to build a popular capitalism forced a lot of re-thinking regarding left-wing attitudes to the market,⁷ but its repeated electoral success and use of the state alerted the left to the British state's constitutional deficiencies. Why, in an age of Thatcherism limiting collective

³ Otto Saumarez Smith has recently shown how inner-city policy, for instance, was little guided by free market ideology and much was driven by antagonism towards local authorities (an antagonism which was particularly troubling to those writing in *Marxism Today*) – 'Action for Cities: The Thatcher Government and Inner-city Policy', *Urban History*, 47/2 (2020), pp. 274-91. See also K. D. Ewing and C. A. Gearty, *Freedom Under Thatcher. Civil Liberties in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1990); A. Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001) and J. Wills, *Locating Localism: Statecraft, Citizenship and Democracy* (Bristol, 2016), pp. 29-30.

⁴ Jackson, 'Intellectual Histories'.

⁵ Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, p. 201.

⁶ In this respect, I acknowledge the longer heritage, most relevantly within earlier New Left analyses, of anti-statist arguments – this chapter concerns anti-statist discourse in the 1980s, and how it shifted over the decade.

⁷ This chapter is partly about how those in *Marxism Today* approached the market and market liberalism at the level of ideas, and hence how they approached 'the market' as a fairly abstract concept. It does not deal in detail with globalisation or how the journal's authors considered the state to be limited by international processes – more practical questions regarding the operation of the nation state in the global economy and economic policy are dealt with in Chapter Four.

freedoms, did parts of the left come to support individual rights? I historicise this question, showing how these actors were attempting to grapple with the Thatcherites' authoritarian use of the state, not straightforwardly surrendering to the individualism of their ideological opponents.

Nevertheless, there was a connection between, on the one hand, a growing sense that traditional socialist and social democratic ideas were firmly discredited and, on the other, an increased interest and support for a programme of constitutional reform and individual rights. In some respects, this programme filled the gap left by an unfashionable and allegedly out-dated socialism, even if individual rights were not quite seen as a new 'utopia' to replace the lost promise of traditional forms of socialism.⁸ In other ways, however, it was a pragmatic approach to repeated electoral defeat, to the extensive powers granted to the executive by the uncodified British constitution, and to the authoritarianism of Thatcher's government. Additionally, individualism and individuals were increasingly seen as important elements of politics with which to engage; I demonstrate the scope and limits of this increased appreciation in the context of these debates about the state. Ultimately, the state, its benevolence and its interaction with individuals, society and the economy were drastically re-imagined in the pages of *Marxism Today*.

Thatcherism's break with the past, the social democratic state, and authoritarianism,

1977-1982

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, key interventions regarding the nature of Thatcher's government by *Marxism Today* contributors all shared the view that Thatcherism was a break with how previous Conservative and Labour governments approached the state. Summarising the arguments of a range of authors in the journal and his own thesis, Hall wrote in early 1980

⁸ See S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), p. 8.

that the emerging view on ‘Thatcherism’ was that it was ‘qualitatively new’, radical, ‘global’ (in this case meaning it possessed hegemonic aspirations) and that it had penetrated into the ‘very heartland of Labour’s support’.⁹ As discussed in Chapter One, the Thatcherites were a force to take seriously, ideologically – the left needed to recognise the ‘scale’ of ‘Thatcherism’ as a project.¹⁰

Its market liberal doctrine, in particular, was seen as an important break with the past. According to the journal’s contributors, what defined the new Conservatism was its concept of the ‘social market economy’, involving the abandonment of Keynesian demand management and many kinds of government intervention in favour of monetarism, and altogether this was an attempt to restore ‘capitalist imperatives’.¹¹ These authors believed that these ideas had emerged out of a network of intellectuals and activists based in think-tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), and by various leader writers and commentators in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*.¹² Friedrich Hayek and, in particular, Milton Friedman were considered to have inspired Thatcherite economic policy by a number of authors.¹³ Therefore, they considered Thatcherism a part of a ‘global ideological counter-offensive’, the British local chapter of neo-liberalism,¹⁴ and the British electorate had now delivered it to government. Some continuation with the previous Labour government, for

⁹ S. Hall, ‘Thatcherism – A New Stage?’, *Marxism Today*, February 1980, p. 26; Jacques, ‘Thatcherism – The Impasse Broken?’; Gamble, ‘The Decline of the Conservative Party’; P. Leonard, ‘Restructuring the Welfare State’, *Marxism Today*, December 1979, pp. 7-13; Corrigan, ‘Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy’.

¹⁰ Jackson and Saunders, ‘Introduction’, p. 13.

¹¹ Gamble, ‘Decline of the Conservative Party’, p. 7; S. Hall, ‘The ‘Little Caesars’ of Social Democracy’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, p. 189. The term ‘social market economy’ is now more associated with more interventionist, German approaches to the market but the term was taken up by Thatcherites in the 1970s as part of their critique of Britain’s social democratic state – see K. Joseph, *Why Britain Needs a Social Market Economy* (Chichester, 1973).

¹² Gamble, ‘Decline of the Conservative Party’, p. 7.

¹³ Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’, p. 179; T. Benn, ‘Democracy and Marxism’, *Marxism Today*, May 1982, p. 7; T. Nairn, ‘Britain’s Living Legacy’, *Marxism Today*, July 1982, p. 14; and A. Barnett, ‘Shackleton’s Dream Islands’, *Marxism Today*, November 1982, p. 14.

¹⁴ A. Gamble, ‘The Free Economy and the Strong State’, in R. Miliband and J. Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register*, 16 (London, 1979), p. 2 (where he uses the term ‘neo-liberal’); Jackson, ‘Intellectual Histories’. It should be noted, however, that ‘neo-liberal’ did not have a stable meaning among these authors in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and some possessed rather idiosyncratic uses of the term – for example, Eric Hobsbawm contrasts ‘neo-liberal capitalism’ with ‘free market competition’, and suggests planning in the 1950s and 1960s provided a viable basis for the former, in ‘1968 – A Retrospect’, *Marxism Today*, May 1978, pp. 131-2.

example regarding the control of the money supply and a broad deflationary policy, was noted, but what was truly significant was that a break with ‘social democratic politics’ was now ‘explicitly acknowledged’.¹⁵ Despite this, Gamble claimed that Thatcherism was an ideological programme of the ‘strong state’, as well as the ‘free economy’, and that, in order to maintain conditions for markets to function properly, there needed to be a ‘redirection’ of the state’s energies and goals, as well as ‘constant vigilance’.¹⁶ To Gamble, Thatcherism broke with social democratic consensus, but it did not envision a small or non-interventionist role for the state, despite the rhetoric about ‘roll[ing] back the frontiers of the state’.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the post-war social democratic state was, at the beginning of the period, already considered deeply discredited among broad swathes of the left and this critique continued into the 1980s, reinforced by Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 election victory.¹⁸ Pat Devine, an economist at Manchester University and a member of the North West District Committee of the CPGB, opined that there was a sense in the 1979 general election that ‘traditional socialist democracy had for some time been running into the sand’. The Labour Party seemed to be able to offer only ‘bureaucratic, corporatist management, relying on statist measures’, whereas the Conservatives managed to ‘tun[e] into an increasingly pervasive desire on the part of the people for greater control over their lives’, albeit directing this in an ‘individualistic’ direction. This statism, Devine claimed, meant that the Labour Party was widely regarded as part of the ‘establishment’. What was required were ‘participatory’ forms of socio-economic and political organisation at grass roots level which would extend ‘democratic control’ over workplaces,

¹⁵ Gamble, ‘Decline of the Conservative Party’, p. 10; A. Gamble, ‘Thatcher – Make or Break’, *Marxism Today*, November 1980, pp. 14, 18, 19. As also recognised by Green in *Ideologies of Conservatism*, p. 216.

¹⁶ Gamble, ‘Thatcher – Make or Break’, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ This precise quotation is from M. Thatcher, speech to the College of Europe (‘The Bruges Speech’), 20 September 1988, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107332> (8 July 2020), but Thatcherite rhetoric in the 1970s stressed that it was a project to reduce the scope of the state – see M. Thatcher, speech at Kensington Town Hall, 19 January 1976, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102939> (8 July 2020).

¹⁸ In criticising the post-war social democratic state, these authors often used the term ‘social democracy’ as a shorthand for the governing purposes and practices of the post-war British state. As noted in the introduction, Aled Davies has distinguished sensibly between the social democratic state, which was this more fixed post-war set of assumptions and practices, and ‘social democracy’ as a ‘dynamic and changing political project’ which adapted to the sweeping upheavals of the late twentieth century – Davies, *The City of London and Social Democracy*, p. 5.

services and communities.¹⁹ This sense that traditional, post-war ‘social democracy’ had lost the argument was shared among a range of writers with diverse political backgrounds within the left. This included many within the Labour Party, from liberal revisionists on the right-wing of the Party, such as Roy Jenkins and John Mackintosh, as well as those on the left of the party. The former Labour MP for Ashfield, David Marquand, of the former category, wrote that Keynesian, Fabian ‘welfare-state social democracy’ as practised in Britain since the Second World War had ‘ran out of moral steam’.²⁰ Gamble argued, moreover, that because growth could no longer be expected in the world economy, as a result of the economic shocks of the 1970s, ‘whole bases’ of social democratic politics had been undermined.²¹ In 1981, Hall argued that the social democratic approach to the decline of British capitalism – Keynesianism, corporatism, incomes policies – was ‘deeply discredited’ and, echoing Devine, argued that by 1979 Labour ‘seemed much the same as Big Brother’. Corporatism in the 1970s, whereby business, the trade unions and government were involved in economic decision-making, was ‘rightly’ seen as a style of political management ‘against the people’ even while it incorporated them through their representatives.²² The post-war social democratic state was hence considered an intellectually discredited programme and, critically, an establishment programme at odds with popular sentiments and ‘the people’.

However, Gamble wrote that what ‘panic[ked]’ the left with regard to Thatcherism was this very fact that left-wingers had *also* struggled against the post-war social democratic state and knew that much of it was now ‘indefensible’.²³ Prior to Thatcher’s election victory, Hall noted how the state was ‘increasingly encountered and experienced by ordinary people’ as a ‘powerful,

¹⁹ P. Devine, ‘The Labour Party – Why the Decline?’, *Marxism Today*, January 1980, p. 16. Devine believed Tony Benn had recently outlined a positive vision for socialism in T. Benn, *Arguments for Socialism* (London, 1979).

²⁰ D. Marquand, ‘Inquest on a Movement’, *Encounter*, July 1979, p. 9. Between 1977 and 1978, Marquand had also worked with Roy Jenkins during his time as President of the European Commission.

²¹ Gamble, ‘Thatcher – Make or Break’, p. 15.

²² Hall, ‘Little Caesars’, pp. 189, 196.

²³ Gamble, ‘Thatcher – Make or Break’, p. 14. See Vernon, *Modern Britain*, pp. 458-64 for how women, lesbian and gay people, and ethnic minorities challenged the social democratic state prior to the 1980s, as well as Chapter Three of this thesis.

bureaucratic imposition'.²⁴ The impersonality and sense of distance of the welfare state from its citizens was a particular emphasis of this critique, lasting into the 1980s. In 1980, Hall contended that Thatcherism had tapped into the genuine problem of individuals experiencing the state as a 'centralised bureaucracy' run by 'experts', and that people were treated as 'recipients' or 'clients' in such a manner which ultimately served to *discipline* them, despite claims of the state to represent them. Exacerbating the problem of statism, Hall argued, was the fact that there were parts of the left which considered such a doctrine as central to their definition of 'socialism'.²⁵ Of course, sections of the left since the 1960s had criticised the welfare state, for example, for its lack of 'community participation', or for being insufficiently egalitarian, as in the case of the social policy academics associated with Richard Titmuss.²⁶ Feminist authors in *Marxism Today* also noted how, in civil society, women's health groups and childcare projects had helped to develop a now long-standing feminist critique of the welfare state, exposing its gaps.²⁷ However, in the face of Thatcherite attacks on the welfare state, themes of a lack of public participation and the sense of the welfare state's disconnection from its users adopted a new significance. There was now a sense that, because the Labour Party and the left as a whole had held fast to this statism, offering no democratic alternative, the public had ultimately rejected them for a political programme that gave voice to their sense of alienation from the bureaucratic state. These authors claimed that because post-war social democracy approached policy from a top-down perspective, it had made itself 'vulnerable' to Thatcher's 'militant individualism' and 'revived neo-liberalism'.²⁸

²⁴ Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show', p. 180.

²⁵ Hall, 'Thatcherism – A New Stage?', p. 27.

²⁶ Leonard, 'Restructuring the Welfare State', p. 9; Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, pp. 205-8. See also L. Butler, 'Michael Young, the Institute of Community Studies, and the Politics of Kinship', *Twentieth Century British History*, 26/2 (2015), pp. 203-24, especially pp. 220-1. For the debate between Titmuss and the neo-liberal Institute of Economic Affairs, see B. Jackson, 'Richard Titmuss Versus the IEA: The Transition from Idealism to Neo-Liberalism in British Social Policy', in Goldman (ed.), *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain Since 1870*, pp. 147-61.

²⁷ T. Davis and C. Hall, 'The Forward Face of Feminism', *Marxism Today*, October 1980, p. 17. See also H. Wainwright, 'Discussion: The Forward Face of Feminism', *Marxism Today*, December 1980, p. 28.

²⁸ Corrigan, 'Popular Consciousness and Social Democracy', p. 17 and Hall, 'A Long Haul', p. 17.

Of course, while the policies and rhetoric of the Thatcher government were considered a significant break from the politics of the post-war period, in these early years, those involved in *Marxism Today* did not think that the government had completely transformed British society. Gamble wrote that there was ‘no genuine anti-state movement’ and Hall claimed that despite the Thatcherites’ success in shifting the ‘balance of forces’ to the right, they had failed to ‘flush out the social democratic vestiges’.²⁹ In addition, despite being popular, these authors stressed the fact that the content of the Thatcherites’ policy programme was ‘completely inappropriate’ for tackling the ‘chronic and historic character of Britain’s crisis’.³⁰ The answers for left-wing politics did not lie, moreover, in the politics of the SDP which formed in 1981. For Hall, such a project rooted in eschewing supposed political extremes and occupying the middle ground failed to understand that traditional social democracy, which had emphatically ‘failed’, had *also* attempted to situate its politics within a ‘mythical’ political centre. To Hall, despite acknowledging the new party’s ‘real and deep’ breaks with the Labour tradition, it was simply the ‘restoration of the old through the appearance of something new’.³¹ Perhaps the New Left historian Raphael Samuel more accurately understood the SDP as the expression of changes within the middle class and the emergence of a ‘new political class’ – and hence, unlike Hall, as a truly new political phenomenon.³² Right from the start, additionally, the SDP was advocating for radical political reform involving electoral reform, decentralisation of the state through regional devolution and reform of the House of Lords, and incorporation of the ECHR within a Bill of Rights.³³ In spite of this, for Hall and others writing in *Marxism Today*, the left needed to make a break with its

²⁹ Gamble, ‘Thatcher – Make or Break’, p. 19; Hall, ‘Little Caesars’, pp. 189-90.

³⁰ Jacques, ‘Thatcherism – The Impasse Broken?’, p. 11; see also P. Levine, ‘Import Controls – On the Left’s Terms’, *Marxism Today*, December 1980, p. 17.

³¹ Hall, ‘Little Caesars’, p. 192, 195.

³² R. Samuel, ‘The SDP and the New Middle Class’, in *Theatres of Memory* (2 vols, London, 1998), ii, pp. 256-71, quotation at p. 256 [originally published in *New Society*, 22 April 1982]. For a similar diagnosis of the SDP, emphasising its roots in a particular class fragment, see M. Rustin, ‘Power to the Provinces!’, *Marxism Today*, January 1983, pp. 24-31.

³³ W. Finnie, ‘The SDP’s Plans for Britain’s Constitution’, *Political Quarterly*, 54/1 (1983), p. 32.

discredited statist past in such a way which avoided the politics of the ‘neo-liberal’ right as well as that of the political ‘centre’.

As well as grappling with Thatcherism’s market liberalism and the perception that the social democratic state had been utterly discredited, however, those writing in *Marxism Today* were also fundamentally concerned with the authoritarianism of the British state. Among the New Left, there had been long-running critiques of the British state by Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson which argued that Britain’s crisis emerged from its archaic, pre-modern constitutional arrangements, to which the British left had been incapable of responding due to its suffocating ‘labourism’.³⁴ Events over the course of the 1970s had only strengthened this perception of the British state. Writing in *Marxism Today* in 1982, shortly after the end of the Falklands War (itself an attempt to restore ‘Britain’s degenerating conservative state’),³⁵ Nairn wrote that British policy towards Northern Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s had exacerbated worries about the coercive power of the British state. By the 1970s, violence in Northern Ireland had become ‘routine’ and, as Nairn suggested, ‘[a]nti-guerilla warfare became permanent in Ulster’, combined with the construction of a ‘monstrous apparatus’ of military-police surveillance.³⁶ The Westminster government, moreover, had brought in such measures as non-jury Diplock courts, introduced in 1973 for alleged political and terrorism offences, rendered only more egregious due to evidence of coerced confessions.³⁷ Additionally, in the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decision *Ireland v United Kingdom* of 1978, the UK was found to have violated article three of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), freedom from torture, for interrogation

³⁴ See, for example, Anderson, ‘Origins of the Present Crisis’; T. Nairn, ‘The Nature of the Labour Party – 1’, *New Left Review*, I/27, September-October 1964, pp. 38-65; T. Nairn, ‘The Nature of the Labour Party – 2’, *New Left Review*, I/28, November-December 1964, pp. 33-62; T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977) and for a scholarly account of the New Left and ‘labourism’ see Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’. See also R. Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London, 1969).

³⁵ Nairn, ‘Britain’s Living Legacy’, p. 15.

³⁶ M. Mulholland, ‘How It Began, What Might Have Been? Political Memoirs of Northern Ireland in the 1960s’, *Irish Political Studies*, 33/2 (2018), p. 231; Nairn, ‘Britain’s Living Legacy’, p. 14.

³⁷ M. Mulholland, ‘Just another country?’ The Irish Question in the Thatcher Years’, in Jackson and Saunders (eds.), *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 187.

techniques used in 1971 (known as the ‘five techniques’).³⁸ This set of authoritarian policies, ‘next door to the metropolitan territory itself’ heightened fears that such an apparatus could be ‘imported’ to quell domestic opposition – indeed, others writing in *Marxism Today* observed how aspects of this military-style policing in Northern Ireland had been introduced in Britain’s ethnically-diverse inner cities in the mid-1970s.³⁹ Of course, while Nairn claimed to speak for broader shifts in attitudes on the British left, he clearly held the authoritarian and ‘extremely secretive’ British state in contempt himself.⁴⁰ Even before Thatcher’s government, many intellectuals on the left were deeply critical of the coercive and authoritarian practices of the British state.

This concern for the authoritarian state had been amplified by the Thatcherites’ ‘authoritarian populism’. Hall and others from the CCCS argued that there had been an authoritarian turn in British politics in the 1970s, most notably shown in the concern for ‘law and order’ – a way for a state, in a crisis of hegemony, to ‘strike back’ by seeking to legitimate ‘recourse to the law, to constraint and statutory power’ to manage dissent and social unrest.⁴¹ This authoritarianism was ‘populist’ in that it played on everyday fears about youth culture, crime and the threat of racial ‘anarchy’ (most notably advanced by Enoch Powell) in order to bolster the power of the state, to re-assert state hegemony during the crisis of the ‘postwar settlement’.⁴² A key component of ‘Thatcherism’ was this ‘authoritarian populism’.⁴³ While Thatcher’s

³⁸ F. Klug, K. Starmer and S. Weir, *The Three Pillars of Liberty. Political Rights and Freedoms in the United Kingdom* (London, 1996), p. 48; *Ireland v United Kingdom* [1978] 1 WLUK 793.

³⁹ Nairn, ‘Britain’s Living Legacy’, p. 14; M. Kettle, ‘The Drift to Law and Order’, *Marxism Today*, October 1980, pp. 23-4; B. Kirsch, ‘Brixton and After’, *Marxism Today*, July 1981, p. 8; L. Bridges and P. Gilroy, ‘Striking Back’, *Marxism Today*, June 1982, pp. 34-5.

⁴⁰ Nairn, ‘Britain’s Living Legacy’, p. 14. Duncan Campbell, one of the journalists accused of breaching the Official Secrets Act in the ‘ABC trial’ of 1978 also criticised the secrecy of the British state in ‘Official Secrecy and British Libertarianism’, in Miliband and Saville (eds.), *The Socialist Register*, 16 (1979), pp. 75-88.

⁴¹ S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke and B. Roberts, ‘1970: Birth of the Law and Order Society’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 163, 166, 170 [originally published as ‘1970: Selsdon Man: Birth of the Law and Order Society’, in S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke and B. Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London, 1978), pp. 273-282]; Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’.

⁴² Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*, pp. 12, 264.

⁴³ Hall, ‘Great Moving Right Show’, p. 174; Gamble, ‘The Free Economy and the Strong State’, p. 6. Hall acknowledged the importance of Greek sociologist Nicos Poulantzas to his concept of ‘authoritarian populism’ in S. Hall, ‘Authoritarian Populism: A Reply’, *New Left Review*, I/151, May-June 1985, pp. 116-17 – see N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, tr. P. Camiller (London, 1978).

government may have proclaimed the importance of the Falklanders' right of self-determination, back home it was 'pallid in its endorsement of democratic rights'.⁴⁴ Gamble remarked, moreover, upon the distinction drawn between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in the writings of neo-liberal authors, such as Friedman, who he believed had been so influential on this new right. He noted how the destruction of political freedom in certain regimes was considered 'regrettable' by these authors but not as serious as the loss of economic freedom.⁴⁵ The insight that Gamble drew was that free markets and restrictions on political freedom and civil liberties could co-exist – as shown in the case of Augusto Pinochet's Chile, in which trade unions were disbanded, for instance, while foreign investment and private capital were allowed to operate with light-touch regulation.⁴⁶ This new right could theoretically accommodate extremely severe curbs on political and democratic freedom, even while extending freedoms in the economic sphere.

In this context of an authoritarian state and government, what solutions were sought? Nairn implied that what rendered the British state archaic was the lack of a 'modern, formal constitution', but to some extent, his writings at this time stress instead the notion that the 'British disease' could only be cured by a significant 'rupture', such as through peripheral nationalism breaking up the United Kingdom or a split in the Labour Party to finally kill 'labourism'.⁴⁷ Indeed, neither wide-scale constitutional reform nor an individual rights agenda were deemed especially attractive in these early years. Tony Benn, often the subject of criticism within *Marxism Today*, did however write in the journal in 1982 in favour of 'rights' as a moral basis for the left. He claimed that, in a 'formal' sense, Britain was insufficiently democratic because it did not entrench its citizens' 'rights' in 'written constitutional safeguards'. A weakness of Marxism was its denial of 'inherent human rights', as well as 'moral values and obligations',

⁴⁴ Nairn, 'Britain's Living Legacy', p. 15.

⁴⁵ Gamble, 'The Free Economy and the Strong State', pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶ Gamble, 'The Free Economy and the Strong State', pp. 9, 10. Pinochet violently deposed Salvador Allende's democratically elected government in 1973.

⁴⁷ Nairn, 'Britain's Living Legacy', p. 14; Davis, 'Labourism' and the New Left', p. 49.

hence leaving socialism without any ‘moral force’ behind it.⁴⁸ Ultimately, however, Benn did not develop any substantial arguments for wide-scale constitutional reform including a programme of rights. In the same article, Benn actually defended parliamentary democracy because of its supposedly critical function in delivering ‘economic democracy’ and equality.⁴⁹ While contemporaries such as Tariq Ali and Quintin Hoare of *New Left Review* invested hope in ‘Bennism’ as a way of potentially breaking up ‘labourism’, Madeleine Davis has noted how Bennism was ultimately both a product of ‘labourist’ contradictions as well as emphatically committed to the Westminster model.⁵⁰ In the early 1980s, there was not widespread support on the left for constitutional reform and the individual rights agenda.

This lack of support can be explained by a widespread scepticism regarding both individual rights’ agendas and the judiciary (the branch of government in which these rights would be argued and protected), both of which were considered conservative and reactionary. One of the most notable constitutional reform proposals put forward at the time was that of the Conservative peer Lord Hailsham, whose programme of constitutional reform included a bill of rights, as in the 1976 text *The Dilemma of Democracy*.⁵¹ The socialist legal scholar J. A. G. Griffith described Hailsham’s proposals as ‘mistaken’ and ‘positively dangerous’ and more broadly considered such rights declarations as an attempt to depoliticise conflicts which were fundamentally political.⁵² Griffith believed that political decisions should be made by politicians,

⁴⁸ Benn, ‘Democracy and Marxism’, pp. 8-9, 11. Benn argued that his socialism had a strong moral code behind it, derived from Christianity.

⁴⁹ Benn, ‘Democracy and Marxism’, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 53.

⁵¹ Lord Hailsham, *The Dilemma of Democracy: Diagnosis and Prescription* (London, 1978). Lord Hailsham, or Quintin Hogg, was Lord Chancellor between 1970 and 1974 under Edward Heath, and then from 1979 to 1987 under Thatcher. This text was also where Lord Hailsham outlined his opposition to Britain’s ‘elective dictatorship’.

⁵² J. A. G. Griffith, ‘The Political Constitution’, *Modern Law Review*, 42/1 (1979), p. 16; Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, pp. 241-2. Griffith was educated in the 1930s at the London School of Economics, and was taught by public lawyers Ivor Jennings and William A. Robson. These legal scholars were informed by the democratic socialism of Harold Laski (who also taught Griffith), R. H. Tawney, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Jennings and Robson promoted a ‘conception of rights that remained relative to function and were adamant that the common law judiciary wedded to *laissez-faire* and protection of property rights was unsuited to discharge the task of rights adjudication’ – M. Loughlin, ‘What Would John Griffith Have Made of Jonathan Sumption’s Reith Lectures?’, *Political Quarterly*, 90/4 (2019), p. 785. Griffith was also a member of the NCCL.

and was against any ‘further judicialisation of the administrative process’.⁵³ In a *Marxism Today* essay regarding the House of Lords judgment on the legality of the Labour-led GLC’s ‘Fares Fair’ low public transport cost policy – in which the policy was declared unlawful by the Law Lords – Griffith complained that the decision of courts to delve into ‘political battlegrounds’ was a problem due to the narrow social background of the overwhelming majority of judges. The ‘great wave of judicial interventionism’ since the early 1960s had meant that any future socialist government’s policies could end up ‘submerge[d]’, even if they were to apply ‘even the moderate measure of Ken Livingstone’s socialism’.⁵⁴ There was thus no argument for increasing the judiciary’s power through an individual rights agenda, enforceable by the courts.

Much of this suspicion on the left arose also from the history of courts curtailing the actions and rights of the labour movement. Indeed, the desire to reverse the Taff Vale decision of 1901, which held that unions could be sued for damages as a result of strike action, was a major catalyst for the initial parliamentary success of the Labour Party.⁵⁵ The judiciary was not seen as the left’s ally. The aforementioned period of alleged judicial interventionism began with, as Stephen Sedley argued in *Marxism Today*, the ‘anti-union’ judgment *Rookes v Barnard* in 1964 in which the House of Lords found against a union by arguing it was liable for the tort of intimidation, citing an obscure case from 1793.⁵⁶ There was a predominant sense that rights declarations and the courts protected *individual*, rather than collective or group, rights.⁵⁷ Certainly, Conservative rhetoric around legislation such as the Employment Act 1980 – which restricted the right to picket and introduced ballots for closed shops – had claimed to promote specifically

⁵³ Griffith, ‘The Political Constitution’, p. 19.

⁵⁴ J. A. G. Griffith, ‘The Law Lords and the GLC’, *Marxism Today*, February 1982, p. 31; *Bromley London Borough Council v Greater London Council* [1981] 2 WLR 62. Livingstone’s GLC was notable for its attempts to reverse economic decline in London through the Greater London Enterprise Board; its grants policy to community and voluntary groups; and this programme of public transport subsidy – Davis, ‘From GLC to GLA’, p. 100.

⁵⁵ A. Gamble, ‘A Labour of Sisyphus: The Quest for a Great Labour Party’, in H. Schattle and J. Nuttall (eds.), *Making Social Democrats. Citizens, Mindsets, Realities: Essays for David Marquand* (Manchester, 2018), p. 97; *Taff Vale Railway Co v Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants* [1901] AC 426.

⁵⁶ S. Sedley, review of Roy Lewis and Bob Simpson’s *Striking a Balance? Employment Law after the 1980 Act* (Oxford, 1981), *Marxism Today*, March 1982, p. 37; *Rookes v Barnard* [1964] AC 1129.

⁵⁷ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, pp. 246-7.

individual rights, and one of the perceived architects of Thatcherism, Keith Joseph, had lent support to a bill of rights in order to protect individual rights.⁵⁸ Rights agendas were thus associated with the political right and its opposition to trade unions.

The NCCL, at that time closely-linked to the left, rejected many bill of rights proposals in the 1960s and 1970s for both the potential restrictions on the closed shop and for the fact that many of these suggestions came from the right.⁵⁹ Some bill of rights proposals involved incorporation of the ECHR into UK law, such as that proposed by the Liberal peer Baron Wade, but again this was rejected by the NCCL.⁶⁰ Certainly, in 1981, the ECtHR ruled in *Young, James and Webster v United Kingdom* that the closed shop violated the ECHR.⁶¹ This judgment was not discussed in *Marxism Today*, perhaps because the ECHR's relationship to UK law was not widely appreciated and for the fact that – due to the lack of incorporation into UK law – even conservative judges held that Acts of Parliament permitting the closed shop held precedence in deciding such employment dispute cases.⁶² However, the case nevertheless demonstrated the grounds upon which many on the left, including those who were lawyers and legal scholars, deeply distrusted both courts and rights agendas. Certainly, the ECHR had its origins in a 'conservative human rights revolution'. The historian Marco Duranti has shown how French and British conservatives in the mid-twentieth century intended the Convention to act as a restraint on left-wing governments, and he accounts for the Labour Party's suspicion of the Convention

⁵⁸ Sedley, review of Lewis and Simpson's *Striking a Balance?*, p. 39; Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 245; Green, *Thatcher*. Conservatives had attacked the closed shop from an individual rights perspective since the 1950s – see R. Whiting, 'Trade Unions: Voluntary Associations and Individual Rights', in P. Ackers and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 45; P. Dorey, *British Conservatism and Trade Unionism, 1945-1964* (Abingdon, 2016), especially pp. 88-90.

⁵⁹ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 245. It should be stressed that not all bill of rights proposals came from the political right in the 1960s and 1970s – see, for example A. Lester, *Democracy and Individual Rights* (London, 1969), a Fabian publication and J. MacDonald, *Bill of Rights* (London, 1969), a Liberal Party publication.

⁶⁰ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 246.

⁶¹ *Young, James and Webster v United Kingdom* [1981] 6 WLUK 247. See Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 240 for detail on how this case was supported by right-wing, anti-trade union interest group, the National Association for Freedom.

⁶² Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 240; Klug, Starmer and Weir, *Three Pillars of Liberty*, p. 23.

and its support for parliamentary sovereignty as rooted in this fact.⁶³ For this and the reasons stated above, in these years ‘rights’ were not deemed to be as straightforwardly ‘progressive’ as they are in twenty-first century Britain. Indeed, Martin Kettle (a journalist and former NCCL research officer) argued in 1980 that the fact that Thatcher’s government had *not* moved towards establishing a bill of rights proved that there were limits to its ‘law and order’ authoritarianism.⁶⁴ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, an individual rights agenda was therefore not considered the remedy for either the British state or Thatcherite authoritarianism.

Therefore, in the face of a government supposedly breaking dramatically with the discredited ‘social democratic’ past, in control of the archaic and authoritarian British state, and characterised by ‘authoritarian populism’, those writing in *Marxism Today* offered little in the way of solutions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They recognised the profound intellectual and political challenge of the Thatcher government’s market liberalism as well as its authoritarianism but very few of their interventions sought to re-think attitudes to the state in concrete ways.

Re-thinking markets, consumerism and rights, 1983-1987

In 1984, Gamble wrote that in recent years Britain had been ‘moving both towards a freer, more competitive, more open economy and towards a more repressive, more authoritarian state’.⁶⁵ The government had implemented its monetarist economic strategy; the first tranche of its privatisation programme was over; unemployment increased from just below one and a half million unemployed persons in July 1979 to over three million in December 1982 (where it

⁶³ M. Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 4, 7; M. Duranti, ‘Curbing Labour’s Totalitarian Temptation’, *Humanity*, 3/3 (2012), pp. 361-83.

⁶⁴ Kettle, ‘The Drift to Law and Order’, p. 21. Kettle also wrote in the magazine *New Society* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He was the son of CPGB activists Margot and Arnold Kettle, and was later an important journalist for *The Guardian*, serving as chief leader writer during the Tony Blair years.

⁶⁵ A. Gamble, ‘This Lady’s Not for Turning: Thatcherism Mark III’, *Marxism Today*, June 1984, p. 8.

would not fall below three million until 1988);⁶⁶ and the Housing Act 1980 had granted five million council house tenants the ‘right to buy’ their council house. The Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 had restricted trade union immunities, secondary picketing and required 80-85% of workers in a given industry to approve of a closed shop (this latter provision coming into force in 1984). Militarized policing, as noted above, was increasingly used within the imperial metropole within the inner cities and would be used during the miners’ strike. Another way in which this new right broke with ‘consensus’, Gamble claimed, was through the restriction of civil liberties and through the extension of police powers and surveillance techniques.⁶⁷ Thatcher’s rhetoric, moreover, promoted the idea that there were ‘enem[ies] within’.⁶⁸ This section concerns how authors in *Marxism Today* responded to both Thatcherism’s market liberalism and its ‘authoritarian’ style of government in the mid-1980s, and how they started to re-think more systematically markets, public ownership and individual rights. These authors engaged with the intellectual challenge of Thatcher’s government through considering how its market liberalism appealed on the everyday, personal and individual level, and through contemplating ways to address the deficiencies of the British state thrown up by the government by changing the ‘rules of the game’ *via* constitutional reform.⁶⁹

In the mid-1980s, those associated with *Marxism Today* tried to explain why Thatcherism’s ‘neoliberalism’ appeared to resonate with so many people in British society.⁷⁰ Hall claimed that the experience of the market and of personal consumption was reflected in Thatcherite ideology. Writing abstractly, Hall noted that market exchange was the ‘part of the

⁶⁶ D. Butler and G. Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts 1900-2000*, 8th edn (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 401.

⁶⁷ Gamble, ‘This Lady’s Not for Turning’, pp. 8-9. E.g. the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 extended a number of powers to the police – R. J. Terrill, ‘Margaret Thatcher’s Law and Order Agenda’, *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 37/3 (1989), p. 443.

⁶⁸ M. Thatcher, Speech to 1922 Committee (“the enemy within”), 19 July 1984, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105563> (2 June 2020).

⁶⁹ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 18.

⁷⁰ In the mid-1980s, the description of the Thatcher government’s market liberalism and of the broader free-market intellectual movement became fixed as ‘neo-liberal’ among those in the *Marxism Today* left – see A. Gamble, ‘Smashing the State: Thatcher’s Radical Crusade’, *Marxism Today*, June 1985, p. 22 and Hall, ‘Problem of Ideology’, p. 35.

capitalist circuit which everyone can plainly see, the bit we all experience daily'. This market experience was the most 'immediate, daily and universal experience' of capitalism – as such, Thatcherism did not emerge out of thin air, but was a way of thinking about the market economy connected to everyday life.⁷¹ Not appreciating the importance of everyday life and consumption had, Hall wrote elsewhere in 1984, caused difficulties for the left in the 1950s and 1960s. In approaching 'affluence', the left was driven into an 'untenable – but "correct" – corner' in its scepticism of and concern about consumerism and increased material wealth. Mass participation 'through personal consumption in the mass market' in the 1950s and 1950s had 'undoubtedly strengthened the daily experience of "the market as provider"...' and the market emerged as a 'popular mass experience'.⁷² Not appreciating 'affluence', and specifically consumerism, meant the left was accordingly punished by the people, and Hall feared that this was happening once again.⁷³ Gamble likewise claimed that Thatcherism was rooted in the 'universal experience of being a commodity owner in a capitalist society' and thus had a firm appeal. To Hall and Gamble, the left needed to construct an equivalent 'vision' which spoke to this everyday level.⁷⁴ As discussed in Chapter One, many associated with *Marxism Today* believed that Thatcherism addressed genuine desires on the part of ordinary women and men.

Yet, it was not simply a matter of the *form* of the appeal of Thatcherism (appealing to the level of everyday life) but to some extent the *content* as well – appealing to the desire for choice and freedom which people experienced in the market. Hall argued that an emerging individualism and a 'more loosely-textured, more diffuse and diverse daily experience' since the

⁷¹ Hall, 'Problem of Ideology', pp. 34, 35, 38.

⁷² Hall, 'Culture Gap', pp. 18, 19, 22.

⁷³ Contemporary historians of the 1950s and 1960s share a similar view, see L. Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-1964: Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 109-23 – Black argues that socialism's 'gender traditionalism, puritanism and *dirigiste* sympathies and language' meant the Conservatives could seize the initiative on consumerism (p. 118). These and other arguments have been challenged by Stuart Middleton who has illuminated the range of meanings to which 'affluence' was put in the period, suggesting that 'affluence' was not a 'determinate socio-economic condition which demanded a distinctive political response'. Instead the term is best understood as a 'conceptual field' – "Affluence" and the Left in Britain, c. 1958-1974, *English Historical Review*, 129/536 (2014), pp. 107-38, quotations at p. 109.

⁷⁴ Gamble, 'This Lady's Not for Turning', p. 10.

1950s contributed over time to the ‘resistance to the more *statist* features of welfare-state socialism’. In using the welfare state, its users were expected to be grateful, in stark contrast to the experience in the market for consumer goods: in Tesco or Sainsbury’s ‘... you aren’t required to tug your forelock and look “deserving” as you approach the till.’⁷⁵ This specific critique bore striking resemblance to arguments made by neo-liberal thinkers such as Arthur Seldon, the Editorial Director of the IEA, who in 1966 suggested that individuals were ‘treated like lords and ladies at their grocer’s, the hairdresser’s and on the plane to their fortnight in Spain,’ but ‘treated as servile, cap-in-hand supplicants’ when accessing public education or the NHS.⁷⁶ Both Hall and Seldon suggested that the state was experienced by many as ‘intrusive, managerial, bureaucratic’, at odds with their experience in the market for consumer goods and services.⁷⁷ Of course, Hall arrived at this view from a ‘radically different route’,⁷⁸ and he warned against going too far down ‘*that particular road*’, lest one were to make the same arguments as ‘the free market “hot gossellers”...’ The precise issue was that ‘dissatisfactions’ with the state were ‘real and authentic enough’, it was just that Thatcherism ‘mis-describe[d]’ and ‘mis-explain[ed]’ them.⁷⁹ The thrust of Hall’s argument was to instil the idea that the Thatcherites did not invent these problems of the state. Subtly, however, he was also trying to stress the importance of ‘liberty’ and ‘choice’, and he rejected the idea that the latter in particular was a right-wing idea. A state which ‘govern[ed] society *in place of* the people’, as he believed was characteristic of the post-war social democratic state, was incompatible with socialism – advancing choice and freedom as political ideals was not an invitation to ‘learn to love the free market’, he argued, but rather was an appeal to realise that ‘the passage of power from the state *into* society’ was what marked out ‘the advance towards socialism’. Hall did not set out specific policies in line with this vision, but he noted that the

⁷⁵ Hall, ‘Culture Gap’, p. 19.

⁷⁶ A. Seldon, ‘What Kind of Welfare’, *The Spectator*, 18 March 1966, pp. 320-1, as quoted in Jackson, ‘Richard Titmuss Versus the IEA’, p. 154.

⁷⁷ Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, p. 225.

⁷⁸ N. Thompson, ‘Hollowing Out the State: Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy’, *Contemporary British History*, 22/3 (2008), p. 362.

⁷⁹ Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, pp. 231-2.

GLC had, through its grants policy to civil society organisations, passed power ‘on to the constituencies’, rather than monopolising power for itself as a local manifestation of the state.⁸⁰ Livingstone’s Labour-controlled GLC had a ‘liberal’ grant policy aimed at fostering the development of community and voluntary groups in London.⁸¹ Hall considered this against the grain of the state’s normal ‘tendency’ to concentrate power, acting as a ‘barrier’ to socialism.⁸² The emphasis was on providing people with freedom, choice and power, and not necessarily only that offered by the market.

Beatrix Campbell developed some of these themes but did not consider the consumer relationship as empowering. She claimed that, apart from in the GLC, the Labour Party in local government reproduced the same alienation felt by people with regard to national public services. In the post-war period and enduring into Thatcher’s Britain, Labour in local government, acting as a landlord, treated its ‘working-class electors’ as its ‘clients’ and hence denied their ability for collective and democratic control. It feared such participation, Campbell argued, because of a labourist chauvinism – the Labour Party clung to a belief that it was the ‘*only* representative of the people’.⁸³ Campbell believed that direct democracy in housing, functioning alongside representative democracy, would remove this sense of ‘alienation’ – whereby tenants would be directly involved in architectural, financial and political decisions regarding council housing. Because it did not include the people in its decision-making process, ‘social democracy’ had left people ‘with the pain of their own powerlessness’. Notably, Campbell remarked that a feeling of powerlessness came from being ‘reduced’ to ‘consumers’ – consumerism was, in fact, the problem. Nevertheless, the right was able to ‘set the political agenda’ because they spoke to this ‘experience’ of alienation and offered tenants empowerment through the right to buy.⁸⁴ For Campbell, the consumer relationship was not necessarily empowering but nor even was

⁸⁰ Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, pp. 232-3, 234, 235-6.

⁸¹ Davis, ‘From GLC to GLA’, p. 100.

⁸² Hall, ‘The State: Socialism’s Old Caretaker’, p. 237.

⁸³ B. Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited. Poverty and Politics in the 80s* (London, 1984), pp. 46, 55.

⁸⁴ B. Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, *Marxism Today*, April 1984, pp. 18, 19.

individual ownership. Writing anecdotally, she suggested that most council estate residents did not actually want to own their own homes, but rather that they simply wanted more control: they desired self-determination, ‘not so much by *individual* property ownership’ but by ‘*collective* control of their immediate environment’ through, for instance, community organisations advocating with the council on their behalf.⁸⁵ Council house sales, and their popularity, certainly presented a challenge for those writing in *Marxism Today*. Gamble wrote that the Conservatives set out to enact policies which were ‘irreversible’ and he seemed to concur that, as regards the right to buy, they had been largely successful: a Labour government might try to build more council houses, but it could ‘never’ seek to repossess the houses already sold.⁸⁶

Similarly to Hall, Campbell – writing with Martin Jacques – praised the GLC for demonstrating an alternative way of approaching the state-society relationship in such a way which offered ‘self-determination’. The grants policy was seen again as not only an effective form of redistribution, but also a successful way of allowing civil society (that sphere of society so important to a Gramscian hegemonic strategy) to flourish, recognising that it was preferable to ‘allow groups to organise their own nurseries’, for instance, but to provide them with the necessary financial support.⁸⁷ Campbell and Jacques were suggesting a state’s role could be as a *facilitator*, rather than a *director*, and that this could be egalitarian too. The Morrisonian model dominant on the left (named after the Labour politician, Herbert Morrison, a former leader of London County Council and Deputy Prime Minister under Clement Attlee) was ‘authoritarian and undemocratic’, whereas the GLC’s approach managed to reconcile being ‘pro-state’ and ‘pro-voluntary sector’, creating a ‘pro-state, pro-public solution’ through the symbiotic relationship apparently forged between the GLC and London civil society. This was a great way

⁸⁵ Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, pp. 34-5, p. 51.

⁸⁶ Gamble, ‘This Lady’s Not for Turning’, p. 9.

⁸⁷ Campbell and Jacques, ‘Goodbye to the GLC’, p. 8. See also, for the GLC support for bookshops and the lively activist cultures formed around them, L. Delap, ‘Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women’s Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974-2000’, *History Workshop Journal*, 81/1 (2016), pp. 175, 188-9.

of tackling Thatcherism, the authors held, because it ‘denied’ to the Thatcherites the ‘high ground’ in arguments over ‘initiative, enterprise and decentralisation’.⁸⁸

Re-thinking the relationship between state and society also entailed some reconsideration of public ownership. The Cambridge historian Gareth Stedman Jones argued in *Marxism Today* that socialism had always been something greater than statism.⁸⁹ Neither British Rail nor the National Coal Board were necessarily socialist, and he celebrated once again the GLC for its ‘Fares Fair’ policy which, he claimed, attempted to rejuvenate inner city life while avoiding the addition of ‘yet another bureaucratic tier’. Although it was important not to abandon the principle of public ownership overall, Stedman Jones contended that the left needed to imagine ‘new and democratic forms for it’, rejecting paternalist forms of the state. Socialism was about the ‘socialisation’ of the means of production and exchange, not ownership coordinated by a central state, and he was in turn attracted to ‘reconsider[ing]’ nineteenth-century visions of ‘a commonwealth of locally based co-operatives’.⁹⁰ But how were such visions of an associational society *socialist*? Stedman Jones argued that *equality* was also important to socialism and hence, concentrations of wealth and power in the form of multinational corporations – for example – also needed to be tackled by the left.⁹¹ Nevertheless, he invited his left-wing audience to reclaim the libertarian heritage now appropriated by the Thatcherite right: hostility to ‘cosy corporatism’ and ‘large, distant and deaf bureaucracies’ was the ‘ideological property’ of the left.⁹² Socialism and public ownership needed to be decoupled. The left needed to explore creative ways of maintaining *social* control over the market, but it needed to reclaim its anti-statist heritage.

Much of this thinking was inspired by his historical research. In his famed essay ‘Rethinking Chartism’, Stedman Jones suggested that historians had dismissed the extent to

⁸⁸ Campbell and Jacques, ‘Goodbye to the GLC’, pp. 6, 7, 8.

⁸⁹ Stedman Jones also emerged out of the New Left and was educated in Oxford throughout the 1960s, moving to Cambridge in 1974.

⁹⁰ G. Stedman Jones, ‘Paternalism Revisited’, *Marxism Today*, July 1985, pp. 26, 27.

⁹¹ Stedman Jones, ‘Paternalism Revisited’, p. 28.

⁹² Stedman Jones, ‘Paternalism Revisited’, p. 28.

which Chartism, a mid-nineteenth century working-class male suffrage movement, was a *political* movement with its own ‘political language’. The significant democratic arguments of the Chartists, rooted in a tradition of radicalism, had been ignored.⁹³ The implication for British left-wing politics in the 1980s was, accordingly, that the left needed to take political and democratic arguments much more seriously, and hence re-think its traditional ideological commitments to state ownership.⁹⁴

However, Robin Murray, writing four months after the GLC was dissolved by the Thatcher government through the Local Government Act 1985, for which he had been chief economic adviser, mounted a defence of state ownership. Murray was influenced by Stuart Holland (both overlapped with each other through their respective involvements in the GLC and London Labour), who in the 1970s advocated for an expansion of state ownership and intervention in response to the rise of multinational capital.⁹⁵ Murray agreed with others in *Marxism Today* that the oppressive Morrisonian model was dead and that the market and the ‘laws of capital accumulation’ genuinely limited what public and social enterprises could do (indeed they limited whole socialist economies), but public ownership as a whole should not be rejected.⁹⁶ Murray attempted to address the shift in the intellectual climate on the left but he wanted to articulate precisely what public ownership offered as an instrument for a left-wing government. He argued against a ‘strand in social-democratic economics’ which held that markets can be controlled through labour law, regulators, incentives and the labour movement. It was only public ownership which allowed for *direct* changes to workplace relations, the quality of work, and discrimination in employment, whereas these other tools of government, while necessary, could only offer indirect influences upon private capital to make these changes:

⁹³ G. Stedman Jones, ‘Rethinking Chartism’, in his *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 90-178.

⁹⁴ See also ‘Why is the Labour Party in a Mess?’, in *Languages of Class*, pp. 239-56, especially p. 253.

⁹⁵ Thanks to Nick Garland for this point. See Interview with Stuart Holland, ‘Hope Amidst Despair?’, conducted by Martin O’Neill, *Renewal*, 25/3-4 (2017), p. 91; S. Holland, *The Socialist Challenge* (London, 1975). See Chapter Four for further discussion of Holland.

⁹⁶ R. Murray, ‘Public Sector Possibilities’, *Marxism Today*, July 1986, p. 28.

‘[h]owever extensive the inspectorate, the initiative always lies with the private firm and the pressures of the market’. Social control through co-operatives or municipal enterprises, moreover, was critical but not sufficient for ‘achieving the social goals of alternative production’.⁹⁷ At the time Murray was writing, large companies employing thousands of people had been privatised, such as British Telecom (BT) and Jaguar. He stressed that those on the left should be wary of considering such changes as ‘irreversible’. Renationalisation could and should be a goal for the left.⁹⁸

However, the *popularity* of privatisation presented these authors with an intractable problem. Charlie Leadbeater (born 1959), a journalist and young newcomer to *Marxism Today*, wrote about the tensions involved in the left’s approach to ownership and the Thatcherite privatisation programme. To Leadbeater, the programme was an attempt to ‘create a “popular capitalism”, so embedded in everyday life that it renders socialism irrelevant’. The most recent ‘Tell Sid’ advertising campaign for British Gas privatisation had been a skilful part of this.⁹⁹ There was a real risk that people could become ‘more thoroughly co-opted’ on to the side of capital through the ‘identification’ created through share ownership.¹⁰⁰ He thus echoed similar emphases to Hall and others regarding the resonance of Thatcherite policies on an everyday, personal level, even at the level of identity. While there were good reasons to be suspicious of *individual* share ownership, the left’s objections would be stronger – he claimed – if they presented an ‘alternative’. The Swedish Meidner Plan was seen by Leadbeater as such a *social* alternative.¹⁰¹ In the 1970s, the social democratic economist Rudolf Meidner proposed that firms

⁹⁷ Murray, ‘Public Sector Possibilities’, pp. 30-1.

⁹⁸ Murray, ‘Public Sector Possibilities’, p. 32.

⁹⁹ C. Leadbeater, ‘The Sid In Us All’, *Marxism Today*, January 1987, p. 18. Historians, such as Jon Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, have argued that the ‘Tell Sid’ campaign for British Gas privatisation was ‘as much to promote the idea of “popular capitalism” as to sell shares in a utility company’ – ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 146. Amy Edwards has demonstrated, through a study of the pressure group the Wider Share Ownership Council, how the approach of Thatcherism to privatisation prioritised certain interests within the financial services sector over the interests of the individual consumer – ‘Manufacturing Capitalists’: The Wider Share Ownership Council and the Problem of ‘Popular Capitalism’, 1958-92’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27/1 (2016), pp. 100-23.

¹⁰⁰ Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’, p. 18.

¹⁰¹ Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’, p. 21.

should be compelled to channel part of their profits into collective social funds administered by unions and operating on behalf of employees. As Jackson notes, it was an attempt to socialise capital as well as to place investment decisions under democratic scrutiny.¹⁰² The Meidner Plan was eventually defeated and never implemented in its full form,¹⁰³ but Leadbeater praised Swedish ideas of local and regional investment funds, ‘citizen controlled’ and decentralised, and thereby ‘outside the scope of the state’, ultimately using the profits from capital towards social ends and delivering each person with a tangible, material benefit in the form of a dividend.¹⁰⁴ The left needed an answer to the popularity of share ownership. Indeed, others on the left agreed: in 1987, the Labour MP and Shadow Cabinet member Bryan Gould proposed that employee share ownership should be expanded throughout the private sector to much dismay among parts of the left.¹⁰⁵

Leadbeater stressed, moreover, that if the Labour Party renationalised BT, it would need to make it clear that the party would *also* ‘stand on the side of the consumer against the monopoly’.¹⁰⁶ How would it do this? First and foremost, it was important to treat people as *consumers* and thus allow for competition and deregulation in the telecommunications market so that, for instance, individuals could choose which telephone they used. More fundamentally, however, Labour in government would have to adopt a combative approach to such ‘giant state corporation[s]’, constantly attacking them ‘for the sake of the consumer’. Its ‘rich tradition’ of popular policies had had a ‘strong base in the everyday’ – in order to win back hearts and minds for (re)nationalisation, Labour could not just rely on economic arguments, but appeal to this level of the everyday and the consumer experience, recognising the ‘Sid In Us All’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Jackson, ‘Social Democracy’, p. 358.

¹⁰³ Jackson, ‘Social Democracy’, p. 358. See also R. Meidner, ‘Why Did the Swedish Model Fail?’, in R. Miliband and L. Panitch (eds.), *The Socialist Register*, 29 (London, 1993), pp. 211-28.

¹⁰⁴ Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’, pp. 21-2.

¹⁰⁵ Bryan Gould, as quoted in Brunt, ‘Left’s Hallelujah Chorus’, p. 35. Brunt was implicitly open to Gould’s suggestion.

¹⁰⁶ Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷ Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’, pp. 22, 23.

In the mid-1980s, therefore, the consumer relationship; the importance of the everyday and the personal; and a continued critique of bureaucracy and the alienation it engendered, all emerged as major themes in the pages of *Marxism Today*. However, as demonstrated, there was no unity of opinion – to Campbell, the consumer relationship was what typified socialist statism, whereas for Leadbeater, reproducing this relationship with regard to public services was a way of getting away from statism. Others on the left at this time agreed that ‘traditional socialism’ had lost its intellectual validity but, in contrast to those discussed above, tried systematically to argue that planning and markets were not diametrically opposed – that ‘market socialism’ was not only feasible but desirable.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, however, the thrust of the response in *Marxism Today* to Thatcherite market liberalism was a creative and active re-thinking about the relationship between state and society and the individual.

Additionally, despite the belief that Thatcherism had appropriated an element of libertarianism, these authors continued to consider the Thatcher government as deeply authoritarian. The ‘unstable’ combination that was Thatcherism combined an economic individualism with the ‘authoritarian state’ in social and political affairs.¹⁰⁹ Michael Rustin, the radical left sociologist, declared in 1983 that the Thatcher government was a ‘militantly centralising force’, and had deployed its financial and political powers against disobedient, left-wing local government. These socialist city governments were no match against a hostile central government.¹¹⁰ Indeed, two years later, such local authorities in London, South Yorkshire, the West Midlands and elsewhere were abolished by the aforementioned Local Government Act 1985. In that same year, Gamble argued this was consistent with its doctrine of the ‘free economy and the strong state’. Keynesianism and collectivism could not be ‘turned off like a

¹⁰⁸ I. Forbes, ‘Introduction’, in I. Forbes (ed.), *Market Socialism: Whose Choice?*, Fabian Society Pamphlet No. 516 (London, 1986), LHASC, Papers of Hilary Wainwright, Box 2, WAIN/2/2 pp. 1-2; D. Miller and S. Estrin, ‘Market socialism: a policy for socialists’, in Forbes (ed.), *Market Socialism*, LHASC, WAIN/2/2, pp. 3, 10. See also A. Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (London, 1983).

¹⁰⁹ Hall, ‘Crisis of Labourism’, p. 210.

¹¹⁰ Rustin, ‘Power to the Provinces!’, pp. 24, 25.

switch' – the unwillingness of local authorities to operate under new spending limits, in accordance with monetarist policies at the national level, meant that the Thatcherites had to restrict the autonomy of local government. In addition, new powers given to the police, the intelligence agencies and the judiciary (implied here to be, still, a reactionary force) were thought to have 'further increased' the 'repressive potential' of the state.¹¹¹ Again in service of the 'free economy', the government had resolved to treat the miners' strike of 1984-1985 as a problem of 'law and order', so that 'all the powers of the authoritarian populist consensus can then be enlisted on the Government's side'.¹¹² The 'Battle of Orgreave' in June 1984 during the miners' strike would see six thousand picketers met with an even greater number of police officers 'in full riot gear who "kettled" and flanked the pickets'. The police would repeat such tactics in breaking the pickets of the Wapping dispute in 1986.¹¹³ Thatcher's government had also increased its majority in the 1983 election in a decisive victory.

At this time there was still much scepticism towards the notion of individual rights. In 1984, Sedley and Alan Hunt (a Marxist legal scholar at Middlesex Polytechnic) interviewed the new General Secretary of the NCCL, the American Larry Gostin. The interview is significant for exposing the tensions operating at this time between a 'pure' civil liberties position and a more recognisably left-wing, radical approach which had been a hallmark of the NCCL in the 1970s.¹¹⁴ Sedley and Hunt challenged Gostin's recent initiative of a Charter of Rights, and contended that this was evidence of the organisation swinging to the right.¹¹⁵ In some respects, their fears had some basis. The more moderate sections of the press had praised the more liberal outlook of Gostin and his Charter.¹¹⁶ Gostin also stated in the interview that the NCCL would be 'stronger' if it did not favour the closed shop as well as arguing that, while it would defend the right to

¹¹¹ Gamble, 'Smashing the State', pp. 24, 26.

¹¹² Gamble, 'This Lady's Not for Turning', pp. 13-14.

¹¹³ Vernon, *Modern Britain*, pp. 498-9.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Larry Gostin, by Alan Hunt and Stephen Sedley, 'Taking Liberties', *Marxism Today*, May 1984, pp. 14-17; Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 227.

¹¹⁵ Sedley and Hunt in 'Taking Liberties', p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 227.

demonstrate dissent, it was better for the NCCL to not ‘get involved in industrial disputes’ such as the miners’ strike taking place at the time.¹¹⁷ The real core of the disagreement visible in the interview was the fact that Sedley and Hunt believed that civil libertarians gave ‘scant regard’ for collective rights and that if individual and collective rights came into conflict, civil libertarians such as Gostin would always prioritise those rights of the individual.¹¹⁸ This latter issue had been exposed through the fact that the NCCL had, under Gostin, offered legal advice to the National Front – the individual right to free speech disgracefully, as Sedley and Hunt asserted, trumping the collective right of black and Asian people to respect, dignity and safety.¹¹⁹ Socialists and liberals ultimately possessed ‘different conceptions’ of civil liberties.¹²⁰

In 1984, an NCCL report, while mainly a criticism of the policing of the miners’ strike, also denounced the miners for their behaviour towards strike breakers, arguing that a civil liberties challenge came from the striking miners as well and not only from the state.¹²¹ Civil liberties and individual rights agendas in the 1980s therefore still did not sit easily with the labour movement and the left as a whole.¹²² Those associated with *Marxism Today* shared in common with those in the NCCL the sense that procedural justice had been dismissed or undermined in the miners’ strike. Significantly, however, it was only after the failure of the strike that many of these authors were candid on this point. In amendments made in 1988 to an essay originally written in 1984, Hall wrote that the absence of a ballot together with the ‘contempt’ which many miners displayed for ‘the very idea of the “bourgeois” deviation of a vote’ was both an error of

¹¹⁷ Gostin in ‘Taking Liberties’, pp. 16, 17.

¹¹⁸ Sedley and Hunt in ‘Taking Liberties’, p. 17. Gostin would go on to argue that individual and collective rights could co-exist in ‘Towards Resolving the Conflict’, in L. Gostin (ed.), *Civil Liberties in Crisis* (London, 1988), pp. 7-20, as cited by Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 230.

¹¹⁹ Sedley and Hunt in ‘Taking Liberties’, p. 15. Previous to the publication of the interview, Sedley (an NCCL) proposed two motions during the NCCL’s 1984 Annual General Meeting, protesting against the support offered to National Front members – Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 229.

¹²⁰ Sedley and Hunt in ‘Taking Liberties’, p. 14.

¹²¹ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 229 – the report was NCCL, *Civil Liberties and the Miners’ Dispute: First Report of the Independent Inquiry* (London, 1984).

¹²² There was a similar tension in the 1970s among Labour Party revisionists. There were divisions between those such as Jenkins, who emphasised the rule of law in issues such as the rebel Clay Cross councillors, and others such as Anthony Crosland who lifted penalties on the councillors, as well as over broader issues regarding industrial relations policy and trade union reform – see S. Meredith, *Labours Old and New. The Parliamentary Right of the British Labour Party 1970-79 and the Roots of New Labour* (Manchester, 2008), pp. 103-36, especially p. 121.

tactic and of principle. A ‘ritualistic commitment’ to block vote class politics meant that the miners’ strike was ‘fought and lost imprisoned in the categories and strategies of the past’.¹²³ Campbell, in oral testimony from 2010, remembered that there were many on the left who believed that there should have been a ballot, and that there was great difficulty in questioning the legitimacy of the strike in such a way which did not ‘give aid’ to the miners’ ‘enemies’.¹²⁴ Although the authoritarian handling of the strike by the Thatcherite state was of lasting great concern to many writing in *Marxism Today*,¹²⁵ there was also concern about the democratic basis of the strike.¹²⁶

In the summer of 1986, *Marxism Today* published a series of articles debating a bill of rights. A bill which would have enshrined the ECHR into UK law had passed through the House of Lords and the NCCL was preparing for its own debate on the issue in the autumn. The ‘growth of authoritarianism under the Thatcher government’ was said to have ‘concentrated minds on the need for individual and community safeguards in law’, and this was coming up against the left’s scepticism of such constitutional reform, in turn a result of the perceived threat posed by strengthening the authority of an ‘already powerful judiciary’ and the attendant assault upon parliamentary sovereignty.¹²⁷

The Oxford legal scholar Nicola Lacey argued that the left had been ‘too quick’ to dismiss the advantages of a bill of rights. Its orthodox view that state, quasi-governmental and private power could be countered effectively by the ‘traditional constitutional safeguards’ of ministerial responsibility, Parliament, convention and elections had been ‘seriously undermined’ after seven years of Thatcherism – this was a political leadership which both ‘rejected and indeed

¹²³ Hall, ‘Crisis of Labourism’, pp. 215, 217.

¹²⁴ Interview with Campbell, BL, Sisterhood and After.

¹²⁵ See Roundtable Discussion, ‘The Miners’ Strike: A Balance Sheet’, *Marxism Today*, April 1985, pp. 21-7.

¹²⁶ Once again, this was not the first time on the left that the principles and practices of trade unionism, and their place within internal Labour Party democracy, were criticised for being insufficiently democratic – see J. P. Mackintosh, ‘Socialism or Social Democracy? The Choice for the Labour Party’, *Political Quarterly*, 43/4 (1972), pp. 482-3. The claim of this chapter is that events such as the miners’ strike in the 1980s brought up such questions for members of the *Marxism Today* left.

¹²⁷ Editorial content for Viewpoint: ‘Constitutional Rumbblings’, *Marxism Today*, August 1986, p. 28.

exposed' the vulnerable nature of British government's 'consensus-orientated style'.¹²⁸ Lacey and others in *Marxism Today* thus shared the notion that Thatcherism was a considerable break with previous governments. Like other contributors, Lacey drew attention to the 'emasculatation of local government', a branch of government which had had an important role in protecting 'fundamental rights' with regard to education and housing. As Simon Griffiths notes, it was the abolition of the GLC in particular which led many on the left in the 1980s to 'question more explicitly' their optimism about central state benevolence.¹²⁹ To many radical cultures in this period, the local manifestations of the state were a source of support,¹³⁰ but Thatcher's government had shown that control at Westminster granted the power to simply abolish recalcitrant local government. Other potential checks on the power of the state, Lacey argued, were also not enough. Membership of the European Community was not sufficient because the amount of Community law relevant to 'human rights' applicable directly in British courts was very small, and the fact that Britain was a signatory of the ECHR was also not enough because British citizens could only access the Strasbourg court after all domestic remedies had been exhausted. Entrenching the ECHR in domestic law would represent an advance: the 'great gap' between domestic law and the protections offered by the ECHR was clear in the fact that the UK was found to have violated the ECHR in twelve of fourteen cases brought to the ECtHR by British citizens up to that point. However, Lacey argued that the ECHR was a 'fairly standard' list of political and civil rights and that a British bill of rights would require additional social and economic rights (such as a minimum standard of subsistence). More broadly, a bill of rights would have to be just one part of a wider programme of constitutional reform – including a codified constitution, electoral reform, and freedom of information legislation – but it would be

¹²⁸ N. Lacey, 'A Bill of Rights', as part of Viewpoint, *Marxism Today*, August 1986, pp. 28-9.

¹²⁹ Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies*, p. 126.

¹³⁰ Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops', p. 192.

crucial for providing robust ‘background conditions’ for wider social goals.¹³¹ A bill of rights would not be a panacea, therefore, but a crucial component for any left-wing reform of the state.

J. A. G. Griffith, in a letter to *Marxism Today*, wrote that Lacey’s view was of the ‘extreme centre’ and argued that there had never been an orthodox view on the left in favour of current constitutional structures of the British state – left-wing authors, from Marx to Ralph Miliband, had recognised that capitalist governments threatened individual and community interests.¹³² This echoed Benn’s claim two years previously that there was no such thing as ‘Thatcherism’. On the contrary he argued: ‘[w]hat’s wrong with Britain today is capitalism and oppression’.¹³³ Griffith noted additionally that Lord Hailsham and Hayek also advocated for a bill of rights as part of a codified constitution, seriously doubting the socialist credentials of such proposals.¹³⁴ In her essay Lacey had anticipated such a critique and argued forcefully that ‘we cannot escape the fact that the law will in any case be used by the powerful’ and therefore that if there was no such reform in the law to protect individual rights, then ‘we’ will have failed in ‘our political duty as socialists’.¹³⁵ Griffith was very critical of such a programme, and the judiciary which would protect it, but admitted that he was ‘an unreformed socialist of the 1930s’.¹³⁶ There was indeed a generational aspect to this debate, and the differences in social, intellectual and political contexts and experience were bound up with generational differences.

Parts of the left and particularly the trade union movement remained similarly hesitant of an individual rights agenda in the mid-1980s. Hall argued in 1985 that the ‘fundamentalist left’ was often ‘scornful’ of civil liberties ‘until they find themselves badly in need of some’.¹³⁷ A cleavage was developing on the left on the question of civil liberties and individual rights. In a

¹³¹ Lacey, ‘A Bill of Rights’, pp. 28-9.

¹³² J. A. G. Griffith, ‘Out of Touch’, letter to *Marxism Today*, September 1986, p. 43.

¹³³ Tony Benn in interview with Beatrix Campbell, *City Limits*, 120, January 1984, as quoted in Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 21.

¹³⁴ Griffith, ‘Out of Touch’, p. 43.

¹³⁵ Lacey, ‘A Bill of Rights’, p. 29.

¹³⁶ Griffith, ‘Out of Touch’, p. 43.

¹³⁷ Hall, ‘Authoritarian Populism: A Reply’, p. 117.

report on the first of many Chesterfield conferences – organised by the Socialist Society, the Conference of Socialist Economists and the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs (of which Benn was a founding member, the group having split from the Tribune Group in 1982) – Rosalind Brunt complained about the fundamentalism of the audience and the proceedings. When Audrey Wise MP, a member of the Campaign Group, attempted to suggest that individual and collective rights could co-exist, she was apparently denounced to ‘loud applause’, because – to the Chesterfield audience – ‘individual rights mean[t] scabbing’.¹³⁸ At an NCCL conference in 1987 regarding the incorporation of the ECHR into British law, those opposed included Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and the trade union lawyer Tess Gill,¹³⁹ whereas in favour were figures such as the barrister Geoffrey Robertson, the judge Lord Scarman and the Labour MP Austin Mitchell. Gill argued that the ECHR was unambitious, neglecting rights in relation to women and minorities, and Morris insisted the judiciary’s record on trade union rights was no reason to give them more power.¹⁴⁰ Views on the left were not uniform, therefore, but the fact that *Marxism Today* devoted space to such a debate on the bill of rights demonstrated how far it had emerged as a potential remedy to Thatcherite authoritarianism, even if was very much still a debate between lawyers within the pages of the journal.¹⁴¹ It was beginning to be seen as a lasting solution to the weaknesses of the British constitution exposed by Thatcherism.

Writing in the aftermath of the 1987 general election defeat, Eric Hobsbawm encapsulated many of the key themes of the left’s re-thinking with regard to the state in the mid-1980s. He wrote that Labour needed a credible but transformative vision, a socially responsible

¹³⁸ Brunt, ‘Left’s Hallelujah Chorus’, p. 35.

¹³⁹ Morris later became General Secretary of the TGWU between 1992 and 2003, the first black leader of a major British union.

¹⁴⁰ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 247.

¹⁴¹ Some of these lawyers appeared to be changing their minds on the judiciary as well. Stephen Sedley wrote that the judiciary taking over ‘territory’ previously claimed by the government was, while done for reactionary motivations, not a ‘retrograde’ step because now citizens had more constitutional avenues to challenge public authorities and tribunals. This was because the law had to operate on neutral principles. He did, however, remind his readers of the anti-socialist record of the judiciary – ‘Administrative Law: A Tsar is Born?’, *Marxism Today*, March 1984, pp. 14, 15, 17.

modernisation, as had happened in Scandinavia and Austria, using both markets and planning. The free market, no matter what the Thatcherites may have argued, did not achieve anything alone – the government still needed to control, plan, incentivise, and place penalties.¹⁴² There was still a role for the state and this needed to be defended, even if there were some lessons to be drawn about the popularity of ‘Thatcherism’ and the experience to which it spoke. The role of states as *facilitators* chimed with Neil Kinnock’s notion of an ‘enabling state’.¹⁴³ However, another lesson of Thatcherism was its underscoring of the fact that the British political system afforded ‘theoretically unlimited central power... an absolutism for governments with unshakeable majorities’. There was no codified constitution, supreme court or federal counterbalance to this. The guarantee of British freedom, including ‘both civil and personal liberties and those of local communities and authorities’, all rested on ‘politically calculated self-restraint’. In 1987, however, Hobsbawm argued that there was no longer a government that believed in such self-restraint, and it had just won another significant majority.¹⁴⁴ This dimension, of the threat posed by Thatcherism’s authoritarianism, was as significant as its market liberalism to changed perspectives on the left regarding the state.

Progressive individualism and citizenship, 1988-1991

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, those connected to *Marxism Today* continued to reconceptualise the boundaries of the state. The ‘free economy and the strong state’ interpretation of Thatcherism was set out in greater detail in Gamble’s 1988 book of the same name, emphasising again its place within a global neo-liberal politics. Thatcherism, on this

¹⁴² E. Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, *Marxism Today*, October 1987, p. 19.

¹⁴³ N. Kinnock, Labour Party Conference Speech in Bournemouth, 1985, as quoted in M. J. Smith, ‘Tony Blair and the Transition to New Labour’, in B. Brivati and R. Heffernan (eds.), *The Labour Party. A Centenary History* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 152.

¹⁴⁴ Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, p. 15.

reading, possessed an ideology and statecraft which aimed to promote these two goals.¹⁴⁵ In the ‘new times’ era of *Marxism Today*, its contributors sought to find ways to resist the government’s attempts to undermine ‘collectivism’ as well as ways to engage with individualism.¹⁴⁶ Of course, at the end of 1990, John Major replaced Thatcher as prime minister, but for those associated with *Marxism Today* this was not quite considered the end of ‘Thatcherism’ or indeed the ‘spell’ it had cast over British society.¹⁴⁷ Even after his departure, Conservative market liberalism was still regarded as a phenomenon with which to grapple. It was in these years, moreover, that liberal capitalism was said by some to have triumphed with the fall of communism in eastern Europe (together with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991), and in spite of the fact that such ‘end of history’ narratives were resisted by those involved in *Marxism Today*, the events of these years certainly amplified the sense in which ‘the whole socialist project’ was ‘in question’.¹⁴⁸

Early in 1988, Hall declared privately to fellow members of the *Marxism Today* editorial board that Thatcherism had a ‘rational core’. The failure to recognise this was precisely why the left was in such a quagmire. In its approach to the NHS, for instance, the left possessed neither a strategy nor a critique of its own. Hall rejected the idea that the Thatcherites wanted ‘complete annihilation’ of the NHS, and argued that they instead desired to place mainstream healthcare arrangements ‘under the discipline of the market’, with the NHS as a safety net.¹⁴⁹ He called for analytical precision but he also contended that the left must try to understand the rationalism behind their approach. The Conservative policy was a (problematic) solution to bureaucracy and

¹⁴⁵ Gamble, *Free Economy and the Strong State*, pp. x, 25.

¹⁴⁶ Jon Bloomfield in Minutes, 23 April 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ A. Gamble, ‘Following the Leader’, *Marxism Today*, January 1991, pp. 15, 18. Gamble did however argue that while ‘[h]er departure does not mean that Thatcherism comes to an abrupt halt’, Major was much less ideological.

¹⁴⁸ See Bob Rowthorn and Bert Pearce in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 10. For the famous articulation of the ‘end of history’ thesis, see F. Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18 and his later *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992). Eric Hobsbawm also criticised the fact that the collapse of communism ‘diverted attention from the troubles of our [capitalist] system’ in ‘We’ve Got Problems Too...’, *Marxism Today*, December 1991, pp. 16-18.

¹⁴⁹ Stuart Hall Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, pp. 4-5. Indeed, the Conservatives would introduce an internal market within the NHS in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

inefficiency, and the left's imprecision meant that it did not speak to the fact that the Thatcherite critique 'touches concerns in us all'.¹⁵⁰ This was its rationality. These were similar ideas to his writings earlier in the 1980s, but the directness with which he declared that there was a 'rational core' to the ideology of his opponents was a departure. Recognising such rationality, after its three election victories, was key to constructing a majoritarian politics – the left had to identify 'common ground' in the Thatcherite critique of the NHS, because, after all, there was 'Thatcherism in us all'.¹⁵¹

Others in *Marxism Today* concurred with Hall that Thatcherism had a 'rational core' and that the left needed to address the fact that many people had experienced material improvements to their lives as a result of the Thatcher government's policies.¹⁵² In an article entitled, 'You've Never Had It So Good – Again!', invoking Harold Macmillan's remark in 1957, the cultural historians Frank Mort and Nicholas Green wrote that there was a 'politics of prosperity' with which the left had to engage. At the level of 'popular experiences', personal consumption had seemingly 'become a very potent emblem of national recovery'. Having an 'extra quid' in the weekly pay packet or being able to take out a loan had 'a way of saying symbolically that things must be all right in the country'.¹⁵³ Over the course of the 1980s, further deregulation of credit markets meant that, by 1988, forty per cent of households used a credit card, and the deregulation of the mortgage market between 1979 and 1986 meant that many more people were able to borrow, sometimes as much as one hundred per cent of the value of their home.¹⁵⁴ Despite wage inequality rising throughout the 1980s, there were, furthermore, steady increases in real wages in the British labour market – the very richest in society saw faster growth in their wages compared to those at the middle and bottom of the wage distribution, but there were no

¹⁵⁰ Hall in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ Hall in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/04/05, pp. 5, 7.

¹⁵² See Steve Hart in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/04/05, p. 7; F. Mort and N. Green, 'You've Never Had It So Good – Again!', *Marxism Today*, May 1988, pp. 30-3.

¹⁵³ Mort and Green, 'You've Never Had It So Good – Again!', p. 31.

¹⁵⁴ Vernon, *Modern Britain*, p. 493.

real wage falls across the distribution.¹⁵⁵ Unemployment, though far higher than during the period between the Second World War and the late 1970s, fell in the late 1980s.¹⁵⁶ For Mort and Green, these trends indicated that ‘affluence’ was back. This ‘buoyant consumer economy’, they argued, had delivered ‘at the level of popular commonsense’. They suggested that left-wing distaste and scorn for consumerism was foolish when there was ‘nothing innately Thatcherite about shopping or consuming’, just as there was nothing ‘intrinsically socialist’ about the state.¹⁵⁷ This was, again, a *cultural* question – Mort and Green were ultimately claiming that there was a mismatch between everyday experience and attitudes on the left. Bryan Gould had demonstrated a way of engaging with the ‘cultural politics of prosperity’ through his ideas about wider share ownership and public sector choice, ‘engaging ideologically with consumer aspirations’.¹⁵⁸ People liked being consumers. They needed to be treated as consumers.

To the cultural studies academic Judith Williamson, writing in *New Statesman & Society*, such arguments within *Marxism Today* failed to realise that the ‘obvious problem’ of consumerism was ‘unequal distribution of the means to do it’.¹⁵⁹ However, a more critical engagement with themes of individualism and consumerism was taken up by Leadbeater at a time when *Marxism Today* was deliberately trying to engage with consumerism.¹⁶⁰ In 1988, he distinguished Thatcherite individualism from a societal ‘desire for autonomy, choice, responsibility, freedom from the state’, to which the left needed to appeal by advocating for an ‘alternative, progressive individualism’. This alternative should involve ‘a culture of individual citizenship’ rather than ‘individual consumerism’, as consumer choice was not the same as consumer power.¹⁶¹ Significantly, more directly than before, these debates were linked to

¹⁵⁵ See figure 1 in P. Gregg, S. Machin and M. Fernández-Salgado, ‘Real Wages and Unemployment in the Big Squeeze’, *The Economic Journal*, 124 (2014), p. 409.

¹⁵⁶ Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts*, p. 401. It would, however, begin to rise again in the early 1990s.

¹⁵⁷ Mort and Green, ‘You’ve Never Had It So Good – Again!’, p. 31.

¹⁵⁸ Mort and Green, ‘You’ve Never Had It So Good – Again!’, p. 33.

¹⁵⁹ Williamson, ‘Even New Times Change’, LHASC, CP/CENT/COMM/08/04, p. 33.

¹⁶⁰ Paula Lanning in Minutes, 23 April 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/04/05, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ C. Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, *Marxism Today*, May 1988, pp. 14, 18.

individual rights discourse. Leadbeater urged socialism to adopt the new ‘index’ of progress in the expansion of the sphere of individual rights and responsibilities, an index able to react to the disintegration of the ‘old social-democratic order of Fordism’. Binding this was the concept of citizenship – the left needed to offer a more expansive set of rights and entitlements, not through the market, but ‘delivered as part of citizenship’. Ultimately, ‘universal individual rights’ and a ‘plurality of lifestyles’ could not be offered by the market.¹⁶² Leadbeater remained abstract in his discussion of such a ‘progressive’, ‘democratic’ individualism – or indeed, blurring concepts, an ‘individually-based collectivism’ – but he insisted that the answer to Thatcherite consumerism could not be purely an alternative consumerism but a politics of *citizenship*.¹⁶³

However, Leadbeater did accept some elements of consumerism and market liberalism. Political and civil rights were to be offered ‘as well as’ the right to buy. The need for a left-wing government to offer ‘choice in consumption’ meant that the market would play ‘an important role’ in its economic strategy, as the market and competition were ‘useful’ economic tools in delivering choice. The public sector needed to become ‘consumer-oriented’.¹⁶⁴ Yet, though this was certainly a concession to elements of the Thatcherite programme and chimed with certain neo-liberal ideas of consumer ‘sovereignty’ and ‘choice’,¹⁶⁵ it was far from an uncomplicated capitulation. For example, he stressed that just because a public service was ‘collectively guaranteed and financed’ did not mean it had to be provided by the state.¹⁶⁶ Developing his reasoning, he used the following analogy:

The image of the state’s role should be founded on the public park: a publicly provided, regulated space, in which a range of private activities are possible. Some the state will provide directly (boats on lakes); many others may involve companies (ice-cream vans) or simply individuals doing what they want with the state’s help (sunbathing). The state is vital to ensuring a space continues to exist and is developed; but beyond that its direct role depends on whether it is the most efficient provider of services.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, pp. 14, 15, 18.

¹⁶³ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, p. 18.

¹⁶⁴ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, pp. 14, 18.

¹⁶⁵ Thompson, ‘Hollowing Out the State’.

¹⁶⁶ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, p. 19.

¹⁶⁷ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, p. 19.

Of course, as argued by Gamble throughout this period, there was still a very significant *role* for the state in Thatcherism: its coercive power was justified when interests threatened the ‘free economy’.¹⁶⁸ That Leadbeater envisioned a role for the state is not what made his intervention creative and active instead of a passive concession. Rather, key in Leadbeater’s analogy were the sunbathers. These were the non-state, non-market ‘autonomous collectives’ whose creation the left needed to foster – childcare provision, for instance, built up ‘from the informal networks which abound among women’. Power and responsibility needed to be devolved to such collectives – which, he stressed, ‘deliver[ed] an individual right’ – where the role of the state was to contract out and regulate.¹⁶⁹ The space for civil society in Leadbeater’s vision of the state-society relationship was significant. Overall, the left needed to construct an ideological vision which had ‘individual desires and demands’ at its foundation.¹⁷⁰

Despite this nuance, there was a degree to which market liberal policies were seen as consistent with such an alternative vision. Leadbeater created *Marxism Today*’s ‘Manifesto for the Public Sector’ in 1991, in which he advocated for ‘competitive tendering, franchising, licensing and subcontracting’; internal markets in public services (as introduced in the NHS in 1990); voucher schemes ‘to allow greater consumer choice’; and breaking up the ‘worst aspects of trade union culture’ in the public sector.¹⁷¹ To some extent this reflected a broader sense across broad swathes of the left that traditional socialist policies were simply economically illiterate. The philosopher David Miller, an exponent of the aforementioned ‘market socialism’, wrote in 1989 that extensive nationalisation was ‘outdated’ and continued to contend that markets were both ‘economically essential’ as well as ‘ethically acceptable’ components of a ‘viable’ socialism.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Gamble, *Free Economy and the Strong State*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁹ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ Leadbeater, ‘Power to the Person’, p. 18.

¹⁷¹ C. Leadbeater, ‘*Marxism Today* Presents its Manifesto For the Public Sector’, *Marxism Today*, May 1991, pp. 20-1. Milton Friedman advocated for vouchers in education – see A. Burgin, *The Great Persuasion. Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), p. 183.

¹⁷² Miller, ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’, pp. 51-2, 57. See also, J. Le Grand and S. Estrin (eds.), *Market Socialism* (Oxford, 1989) and D. Miller, *Market, State and Community* (Oxford, 1989); Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies*, pp. 23-47; and Freedman, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, pp. 477-80.

Market socialists aimed to decouple ‘markets’ from ‘capitalism’.¹⁷³ There had been a real shift in thinking on the left in terms of the viability, in the modern world, of traditional socialist ideas, and this should not be under-estimated. To Hall, cultural changes associated with post-Fordism and the expansion of civil society meant that the ‘all-encompassing state’ could no longer order and regulate society.¹⁷⁴ For this, he and others in *Marxism Today* were castigated in *Living Marxism*, the journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), for using post-Fordist discourse to justify the ‘redefinition of socialism in terms which accept the capitalist market’.¹⁷⁵ Hall, however, regarded certain problems such as the environment as incapable of being solved by ‘the market’.¹⁷⁶ Hall and others in *Marxism Today* therefore did not advocate a kind of market fundamentalism or even market socialism, but these arguments were representative of a broader notion among parts of the British left about state socialism’s *incompatibility* with the modern world.

Of course, at the time such interventions were made, state communism was disintegrating in eastern Europe. This international dimension was very significant and although those writing in *Marxism Today* had long rejected Soviet-style communism, the collapse of these regimes served to clarify the alleged bankruptcy of statist projects.¹⁷⁷ In an essay for the final issue of *Marxism Today* in 1991, Hall argued that the left could no longer support the ‘simplifying, essentialising collectivism’ on which it had relied in the past:

It is not simply that the old styles of state ownership and management of the public sector are politically out of favour for the time being... Nor is this simply because they

¹⁷³ S. Estrin and J. Le Grand, ‘Market Socialism’, in Le Grand and Estrin (eds.), *Market Socialism*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, p. 261.

¹⁷⁵ Freeman and Forest, ‘Old ideas for New Times’, LHASC, CP/CENT/COMM/07/03, p. 18. The RCP was a Trotskyite group, unconnected to the CPGB, which became a right-wing libertarian group in the 1990s. It is now associated with *Spiked* and the Institute of Ideas, and a former member, Munira Mirza, is currently director of the Number 10 Policy Unit – see J. Turner, ‘Who Are They?’, *London Review of Books*, 32/13 (8 July 2010), <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v32/n13/jenny-turner/who-are-they> (11 July 2020).

¹⁷⁶ Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, pp. 262-3.

¹⁷⁷ The collapse also induced feelings of profound discomfort, sadness and loss on the left – see for instance G. A. Cohen, ‘The Future of a Disillusion’, *New Left Review*, I/190, November-December 1991, pp. 5-20 and, for an account of those within the CPGB, see Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition*, pp. 153-76. Speaking to the editorial board of *Marxism Today*, Hall remarked that 1989 had ‘changed the terms of everything’, and that this had some negative consequences for the journal. Despite the fact that ‘we’ve been waiting for this to happen’, Hall argued that they were now ‘made to feel culpable, guilty in some way’ – in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 7.

were bureaucratic and inefficient as well as unwieldy, defensive and undemocratic to their “clients”: as we have seen with the collapse of the communist experiment, the flaws of the state-managed economy and society are profound and extensive, and any left alternative cannot now avoid that historic failure.¹⁷⁸

The Soviet economic model had palpably failed, and it proved once again the need for the left to establish a clean break with its statist past. Whereas in 1978 he argued that parallels between statism in the East and West were ‘superficial’,¹⁷⁹ he now claimed that the collapse of state socialism in the former communist bloc had significant implications for the left in the West. Perhaps addressing market socialism, Hall warned against an ‘uncritical acceptance of “markets”’, but his sense of the project of the state in the twentieth century having starkly *failed* was very significant.¹⁸⁰ Hall not only believed, as he did in the 1970s, that the post-war social democratic state and the communist regimes were discredited projects, but also that the collapse of Soviet-style regimes had thrown into relief the entire notion of state management. This was not quite in line with Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’, a declaration of the triumph of liberal, capitalist democracy, but it represented a profound scepticism of the state.¹⁸¹

Additionally, in these years, the Labour Party was also reconsidering its conception of the relationship between state and society, and between state and market, as part of its Policy Review which began in 1987. Leadbeater wrote with approval that its 1990 policy statement *Looking to the Future* envisioned the state as ‘more regulator and facilitator than provider and director’.¹⁸² Such ways of imagining the state’s role were seen as key to departing from statism. Writer and CPGB Executive Committee member Jon Bloomfield wrote that a ‘viable socialist model’ of the state’s role would envision it as a ‘regulator’ and a ‘guarantor’, ‘standard setting, conserving, preventing, and above all *responding* and interacting with consumers and producers’.¹⁸³ At this moment those in *Marxism Today* such as Leadbeater considered themselves to be, and to some extent were,

¹⁷⁸ S. Hall, ‘And Not A Shot Fired’, in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 273-4.

¹⁷⁹ S. Hall, ‘Classified Democracy’, *New Internationalist*, 60, February 1968, CRL, Hall papers, US121, Box 35, p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ Hall, ‘And Not A Shot Fired’, p. 274.

¹⁸¹ And, indeed, Hall was much more pessimistic about liberal capitalism.

¹⁸² C. Leadbeater, ‘A Head Without A Heart’, *Marxism Today*, July 1990, p. 16.

¹⁸³ Jon Bloomfield in Minutes, 23 January 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 6.

thinking in line with modernising voices within the Labour Party. There were also important shifts in thinking in the Labour Party regarding individual rights, another way in which the party sought to distance itself from its 'statist past'.¹⁸⁴ Leadbeater noted how the policy statement was 'stronger' with regard to individual rights and Gordon Brown, as part of a *Marxism Today* debate, argued that 'the new popular socialism' ought to 'guarantee individual rights and choice'.¹⁸⁵ More broadly, Labour was becoming much less conservative about constitutional reform.¹⁸⁶

Indeed, constitutional reform had been catapulted on to the political agenda in the late 1980s by the pressure group Charter 88, in its demand for a more democratic and codified constitution. Formed in 1988, it was comprised of a range of lawyers, academics, writers, New Left intellectuals such as Anthony Barnett,¹⁸⁷ and even radical left-wing musicians such as Billy Bragg, and they published in a range of newspapers a charter of demands for political reform, including codification of the constitution, enshrining a number of civil liberties and freedoms in a bill of rights, and electoral reform.¹⁸⁸ It had, in part, 'socialist origins', beginning in a special edition of *New Statesman & Society* – a publication which was steadily becoming known for its coverage of constitutional issues and debates.¹⁸⁹ The historian Stephen Howe acknowledges the role of the CPGB in providing personnel for Charter 88, but he claims that the 'main intellectual energies' of the CPGB and its 'surprisingly influential' journal, *Marxism Today*, were channelled

¹⁸⁴ S. Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford, 2011), p. 228.

¹⁸⁵ Leadbeater, 'Head Without A Heart', p. 17; Gordon Brown in 'Debate: Smaller Worlds', p. 39 – here Brown also emphasised the importance of *participation* with regard to rights and that economic rights required strengthening just as much as socio-political rights.

¹⁸⁶ Leadbeater, 'Head Without A Heart', p. 17.

¹⁸⁷ Barnett was on the editorial committee of *New Left Review* and indeed Charter 88 was in part a product of New Left ferments. Stephen Howe, emphasising the diverse origins of Charter 88, remarks that the 'lines of intellectual descent' from the Nairn-Anderson theses were 'evident if often subterranean', and he stresses the fact that very few of those involved in Charter 88 were sympathetic with the revolutionary socialism of these particular New Left authors – S. Howe, 'Some Intellectual Origins of Charter 88', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62/4 (2009), pp. 556-7. Like Howe, Stuart White describes Charter 88 as based on a 'coming together of the political centre and radical democratic currents from the New Lefts...' in 'A Marquandian Moment? The Civic Republican Political Theory of David Marquand', in Schattle and Nuttall (eds.), *Making Social Democrats*, p. 141.

¹⁸⁸ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, pp. 251-2.

¹⁸⁹ G. Andrews, 'Universal Principles', *Marxism Today*, August 1990, p.16; Jon Bloomfield in Minutes, 28 April 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 2. See also M. Evans, *Charter 88: A Successful Challenge to the British Political Tradition?* (Aldershot, 1995).

into its ‘implicitly antagonistic’ project for ‘new times’.¹⁹⁰ In fact, many of those associated with the journal were beginning to lend their support to the constitutional reform agenda – many were even signatories, such as Stuart Hall. Neither the CPGB nor *Marxism Today* as a whole were in opposition to Charter 88, even though they were not uncritical about the constitutional reform movement. There had been another change in the intellectual climate on the left around these issues and, as was evident in *Marxism Today*, Charter 88 can be credited for bringing the debate about bills of rights and constitutional reform beyond the preserve of lawyers and legal scholars.

For instance, Hall and David Held, a political scientist and co-founder (along with Anthony Giddens) of the Polity Press, wrote a significant essay in 1989 which argued that the concept of ‘citizenship’ needed to lie at the centre of a new socialist politics. Ten years of Thatcher’s government had left its mark. The dismantling of the welfare state, growing centralisation of power, and the attacks on local government, free speech, trade union and ‘other civil rights’ had pushed questions of rights and citizenship into the centre of political debate. Hall and Held noted that it used to be fashionable on the left to disregard rights as a ‘bourgeois fraud’, but both Thatcherism and ‘Stalinism in the East’ had exposed the moral bankruptcy of such a position. They argued that ten years of “‘elective dictatorship” under Mrs Thatcher’ had made many on the left question whether there should be restrictions on the power of majorities to alter political circumstances for everyone, especially in light of the deficiencies of first-past-the-post. While access to European Courts had provided a ‘critical bulwark’ for UK citizens against the ‘steady erosion of civil liberties’, it was not enough. ‘[R]ecent history’ had demonstrated how the argument for constitutions and bills of rights setting out the limits of government – what the authors termed a ‘procedural approach’ – was ‘fundamental’ to democracy.¹⁹¹ As a concept, democracy required layers and texture, and the state needed to be reformed accordingly.

¹⁹⁰ Howe, ‘Some Intellectual Origins of Charter 88’, p. 565 n5.

¹⁹¹ S. Hall and D. Held, ‘Left and Rights’, *Marxism Today*, June 1989, pp. 16, 21, 23.

It was not only the perceived authoritarianism of their ideological opponents, however, that led Hall and Held to their conclusions about the limits of the state. They conceded that the new right had exposed the ‘ambiguous results’ of the welfare state and how distributive justice could generate ‘bureaucracy, surveillance and the excessive infringement of individual options’ – and not just in eastern Europe.¹⁹² In spite of this, the authors dismissed Hayek’s critique of state intervention, claiming that a ‘proper’ understanding of citizenship could not be secured ‘without the intervention of the state’. The citizen needed to be protected against the powers of property and capital too.¹⁹³ It was Geoffrey Foote who remarked that Thatcherism contained a ‘republican commitment to citizenship in the market’,¹⁹⁴ but for Hall and Held, this was hollow. Nevertheless, in turn, the citizen needed to be protected against ‘arbitrary overweening exercise of state power’.¹⁹⁵ They argued that this had been missed by those on the left, such as Roy Hattersley, who believed that the extension of ‘popular democracy’ was sufficient. Hattersley was sceptical about constitutional reform, and described Charter 88 as a ‘charter of despair’, which Hall and Held believed represented a naïve faith that, with a broad democratic advance, ‘specific questions of citizenship and the difficulty of defining particular rights will take care of themselves’.¹⁹⁶ They also questioned whether “‘the people’” could be relied upon to be ‘just’ to minorities and unpopular interests.¹⁹⁷

How could a ‘proper’ conception of citizenship be secured? Hall and Held lent their support to a bill of rights. They contended that a formal definition of individual rights, in the form of a constitution or a bill of rights, would not be a ‘matter of “mere form”’ – rights must be ‘defined and specified’ so that their loss could be detected and challenged. However, left-wing

¹⁹² Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 21.

¹⁹³ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 19.

¹⁹⁴ G. Foote, *The Republican Transformation of Modern British Politics* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 172, as quoted by Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, p. 222.

¹⁹⁵ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 19.

¹⁹⁶ As quoted in S. Weir, ‘We Stopped Boadicea’s Chariot’, *New Statesman* (27 November 1998), <https://www.newstatesman.com/we-stopped-boadiceas-chariot> (4 June 2020); Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, pp. 19-21.

¹⁹⁷ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 21.

critics of Charter 88 and the language of rights, of the language of *individual* entitlements, were correct that citizens needed to be able to have their rights ‘practically enacted and realised’. In response, the authors argued that social and economic rights together with specifications of how each right could be achieved practically could both shore up the overall system of rights. A guaranteed minimum income, regardless of whether one was engaged in wage or household-labour, could offer practical realisation of the system of rights – being able to choose freely between a set of actions required redistribution of wealth and income.¹⁹⁸ Hall and Held acknowledged that such a bill of rights as well as a larger programme of constitutional reform would enhance the ability of citizens to take action against the state, including a socialist state, so they could seek redress for ‘unreasonable encroachments on liberties’. In consequence, the judiciary would become more powerful but, as shown in the case of the ECtHR, courts provided essential protection of civil liberties.¹⁹⁹ Increased power to the judiciary would simply be a consequence of empowering citizens.

Therefore, while Charter 88’s more limited programme was not sufficient for people to ‘establish themselves in their capacity as citizens’, Hall and Held nevertheless accepted the basic premise that citizens required codification and protection of individual rights, in turn limiting the boundaries of the state.²⁰⁰ Others in *Marxism Today* held qualified support for Charter 88 and the broader constitutional reform movement. Geoff Andrews, one of the Charter’s signatories and a CPGB member,²⁰¹ argued that Charter 88 was an essentially middle-class initiative and he disliked how social rights (such as entitlement to welfare or a minimum wage) had moved ‘backstage’. For socialist Chartists like himself, Andrews perceived a certain irony in the

¹⁹⁸ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, pp. 17, 19, 23 – this argument for a universal basic income was not expanded upon, and the authors noted that such a right had to be treated with ‘caution’ due to its impact on ‘collective or societal wealth-creation’. The idea of a basic income did, however, resonate with the ‘new politics of “citizenship”’ of the late 1980s and *Marxism Today*’s ‘new times’ project – see P. Sloman, *Transfer State: The Idea of a Guaranteed Income and the Politics of Redistribution in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 233-4.

¹⁹⁹ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 23.

²⁰⁰ Hall and Held, ‘Left and Rights’, p. 23.

²⁰¹ Later the author of Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*.

‘undiluted, uncompromising’ nature of Charter 88’s belief that the good society could be delivered simply through constitutional reform, just as anti-capitalism had been the panacea for the left of the past.²⁰² Sarah Benton (*Marxism Today* columnist, feminist activist and editor of the CPGB’s internal magazine *Comment*), wrote that the cause of constitutional reform needed to be ‘rescued from the withering touch of the lawyers’, even where it incorporated social and economic rights, as in the case of the Institute for Public Policy Research’s draft constitution. Constitutional reform was not ‘innately conservative’ but it had been too scared to address subjects such as sexual harassment, immigration, or gay and lesbian parenthood. The cause was being championed by a fragment of the upper echelons of society, those who had been excluded from public life by the Conservative government’s selective anti-Establishment agenda: ‘rulers-in-waiting, or rather, the rulers who are tired of waiting’. Immigrants, poll tax defaulters, those on the margins of society might make for a ‘messier’ politics of constitutional reform, Benton argued, but they would bring dynamism to the ‘very proper and genteel’ movement.²⁰³ In spite of all these criticisms, again, each agreed with the pressing need for constitutional reform, including a bill of rights.

One of the ‘key leaders and instigators’ of Charter 88,²⁰⁴ David Marquand, contributed a number of articles to *Marxism Today* in its latter years. He was one of the more left-liberal authors brought in as part of the attempt of Martin Jacques and the editorial board to use the journal as the expression of a broad ‘anti-Thatcher alliance’.²⁰⁵ Close to Roy Jenkins, he was a founding member of the SDP in 1981 and then a member of the Liberal Democrats after the SDP and the Liberal Party formally merged in 1988. Inspired by New Left thinking, Marquand regarded the British state’s ‘gradual’ evolution as having left the country without robust constitutional

²⁰² Andrews, ‘Universal Principles’, pp. 16, 19.

²⁰³ S. Benton, ‘Radical Restraint’, *Marxism Today*, November 1991, p. 9.

²⁰⁴ D. Erdos, ‘Charter 88 and the Constitutional Reform Movement: A Retrospective’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62/4 (2009), p. 541.

²⁰⁵ Paula Lanning in Minutes, 23 April 1988, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/05, p. 2.

safeguards against the abuse and concentration of power at Westminster.²⁰⁶ The ‘bankrupt’ traditional institutions of the British state were incapable of solving Britain’s relative economic ‘decline’ and its inequality – indeed, its economic plight was a product of its adversarial political system which had at its helm the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty.²⁰⁷ In contrast to others writing in *Marxism Today*, Marquand made an explicit link between constitutional modernisation and egalitarianism. The political arrangements of Scandinavia and central Europe, characterised by ‘negotiation, compromise, consensus and power-sharing’, provided their citizens with ‘a fairer and more civilised life... than any other kind of political economy in human history’ – Britain did not have a ‘developmental state’ able to foster cooperation between different groups in society in pursuit of the common good, as shown in the fact that its industrial relations, for instance, were characterised by immense antagonism.²⁰⁸ Much like Hobsbawm earlier, to Marquand these countries offered a different *variety* of capitalism.²⁰⁹ ‘Social democracy’, as practised in these European countries, was the ‘much-sought “third way”’ between Anglo-American ‘casino capitalism’ and the ‘now-collapsing command economies’ of the Soviet bloc.²¹⁰ Key to this more humane and egalitarian capitalism, however, was a ‘new constitutional settlement’, based on proportional representation, a bill of rights and decentralisation of government.²¹¹ This was yet another way in which a constitutionalist programme offered an alternative to the Conservatives’ political vision. Liberals and more resolutely left-wing figures such as Stuart Hall were coalescing around a shared desire to alter radically Britain’s

²⁰⁶ D. Marquand, ‘Twelve Into One Will Go’, *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 25.

²⁰⁷ D. Marquand, ‘The Silent Road To Power’, *Marxism Today*, May 1990, p. 13; D. Marquand, ‘Spot The Radical’, *Marxism Today*, July 1988, p. 12; D. Marquand, *The Unprincipled Society: New Demands and Old Politics* (London, 1988), pp. 9-10. For a later, similar argument see W. Hutton, *The State We’re In* (London, 1995).

²⁰⁸ Marquand, ‘Silent Road To Power’, p. 13; Marquand, *Unprincipled Society*, pp. 10, 13, 107; White, ‘A Marquandian Moment?’, p. 140.

²⁰⁹ See P. A. Hall and D. Soskice (eds.), *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford, 2001), which distinguishes between Anglo-American economies and the coordinated market economies of Scandinavia, Germany, the low countries and Austria. In many respects this book was the crystallisation of inchoate debates throughout the late twentieth century.

²¹⁰ Marquand, ‘Silent Road To Power’, p. 13. It is significant that ‘social democracy’ celebrated here was not the same type of ‘social democracy’ criticised by Marquand earlier in 1979 – Marquand had not reversed his position but rather the meaning he ascribed to the term had transformed.

²¹¹ David Marquand in ‘Debate: New Times For Old’, *Marxism Today*, September 1989, p. 37.

constitutional arrangement. Marquand's particular argument, connecting political reform with economic egalitarianism, was unique within *Marxism Today* and it demonstrated the degree to which liberal and left convergence was not simply driven by the left finding liberal arguments increasingly attractive, but also by the radicalism of those such as Marquand.

By the early 1990s, therefore, in an attempt to grapple with the 'Thatcherites' agenda of 'the free economy and the strong state', those writing in *Marxism Today* embraced a political agenda which found a role for the market and civil society as well as the state; which appreciated individualism and consumerism as important social phenomena with which to engage and even with which to identify; and which emphasised the importance of individual rights protections and constitutional reform as important bases for citizenship. Contemporary critics from a range of intellectual and political backgrounds criticised *Marxism Today* and the 'new times' thesis for failing to recognise the fact that Thatcherism had mobilised the state for its own ends. The Conservatives were claimed to have used the state to 'build new classes and new allegiances',²¹² to limit the very civil society prized by *Marxism Today* through undermining local government,²¹³ and to impose a crisis in the NHS from above.²¹⁴ However, those such as Gamble were aware of the new right's use of both democratic politics and the interventionist state to 'reverse the process of creeping socialism', despite its contradictory rhetoric about these instruments.²¹⁵ Certainly, the support for an individual rights agenda among these diverse authors was rooted partly in the awareness of the Thatcherism's centralist and 'strong state' tendencies. More accurately, underlying such disagreement were the role and limits imagined for the state by those in *Marxism Today*. For these authors, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the state was 'far from

²¹² McKibbin, 'Way We Live Now'.

²¹³ Sivanandan, 'All That Melts Into Air', pp. 17-18.

²¹⁴ Rustin, 'Trouble with 'New Times'', p. 315.

²¹⁵ Gamble, *Free Economy and the Strong State*, p. 32.

finished', but the question was now what form it should take and how its power should be limited.²¹⁶

Conclusion

There were therefore a number of different strands to the reconceptualisation of the state among the authors of *Marxism Today* from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Few on the left believed the state was wholly omniscient or benevolent at the start of the period – from Marx to New Left thought in the 1950s and 1960s, the left had never been uncritical about the state. The long-standing critique of the post-war social democratic state remained in the pages of the journal over the period, but new emphases emerged about the proper boundaries of the state in light of Thatcherism, political defeat and the events of the decade.

These authors interpreted Thatcherism's market liberalism as a significant break with the post-war Keynesian social democratic 'consensus',²¹⁷ and argued that a new left politics needed to engage with this hegemonic project. These authors increasingly believed that Thatcherism had an element of 'rationality' to it – Thatcher's government had managed to resonate with genuine, everyday experience of individual participation in the market and encounters with the state. The left needed to address the fact that the state was often an unwelcome incursion into people's lives through the inclusion of markets, the consumer relationship and civil society within its politics. The success of the Thatcherites was key here – these new Conservatives were considered to have tapped into a popular discontent with the state and its bureaucracies; there

²¹⁶ R. Murray, 'The State After Henry', *Marxism Today*, May 1991, p. 22.

²¹⁷ In fact, divisions of the post-war period into 'Keynesian' prior to the 1970s, and 'post-Keynesian' for after, in addition to broader notions of 'consensus', are dubious – see J. Tomlinson, 'Tale of a Death Exaggerated: How Keynesian Policies Survived the 1970s', *Contemporary British History*, 21/4 (2007), pp. 429-48 and for the influence of New Keynesianism on Labour modernisers, see W. Hutton, 'New Keynesianism and New Labour', *The Political Quarterly*, 70/1 (2002), pp. 97-102.

was something liberating about being a consumer in the market; and the consumer relationship was something to take seriously.²¹⁸ Much like the early British New Left (of which, of course, Hall was a part), these authors provided a ‘creative’ response to consumerism: there were limits to the relevance of consumerism in some areas of public life but it was important to engage with the politics of consumption.²¹⁹ The state’s role was re-imagined as facilitator, symbiotically interacting with the market and, significantly, civil society too. Social ownership was more important than public ownership, though not all of those within *Marxism Today* agreed precisely on this point. The collapse of state communism in eastern Europe, moreover, was significant in consolidating these broad attitudes, though these authors did not believe this marked the triumph of liberal capitalism – indeed there were varieties of capitalism, with some European nations providing alternatives to Anglo-American market liberalism.

However, use of the state by Thatcher’s government represented another dimension of state malevolence: a key component of Thatcherism was its authoritarianism, its essence distilled as a project of both ‘the free economy’ and ‘the strong state’. The Thatcher years, these authors recognised, did not see the rolling back of the frontiers of the state when it came to decentralisation to local government or the protection of civil liberties. Constitutional reform, and particularly an individual rights agenda, limiting the power of the central state, rose in credibility – initiatives which, these authors believed, spoke to the importance of popular individualism running through British society as well as remedying the deficiencies of the British constitutional arrangement which had been thrown into relief by Thatcher’s government.²²⁰ Courts were eventually imagined by some not as reactionary, but as providing important

²¹⁸ Although, as shown, Campbell considered consumer relationships to be the disempowering relationships typifying the social democratic state.

²¹⁹ M. Davis, ‘Arguing Affluence: New Left Contributions to the Socialist Debate 1957-63’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 23/4 (2012), p. 523-6. Market socialists such as Julian Le Grand would end up making much more straightforward concessions to public choice theory – see his ‘Knights, Knaves or Pawns? Human Behaviour and Social Policy’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 26/2 (1997), pp. 149-169 and for public choice see D. Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe. Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), pp. 126-33; Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, pp. 86-7, 109; and Burgin, *Great Persuasion*, pp. 118, 172.

²²⁰ For popular individualism, see Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’.

protection for rights and freedoms. This chapter has therefore corroborated Simon Griffiths' claim that one of the ways in which the left 'move[d] away from the benevolent state' was through the importance placed in 'civil and civic rights', and that this became widespread in the late 1980s.²²¹ In this respect, left-wing opinion – at least as represented in *Marxism Today* – converged with liberal opinion as regards constitutional reform. Certainly, this chapter has illuminated a number of dimensions to what Peter Sloman describes as the 'slow convergence' in opinion between liberals and left-wingers over the second half of the twentieth century.²²² The acceptance of limitations on the state's power, the support for an individual rights agenda, and the conception of the role of government as essentially 'enabling' were beliefs held in common by the early 1990s.²²³

Moreover, while it is partly true that – as Samuel Moyn argues in *The Last Utopia* with regard to the human rights movement in the late twentieth century – support for individual rights emerged in the context of the perceived collapse of the socialist project across the globe,²²⁴ it was also a response to something more local and specific. Chris Moores illustrates how British civil liberties activists in the 1980s steadily realised they could not rely on the ballot box as the 'ultimate guardian of political and civil freedoms' due to the repeated electoral success of the Conservatives, coupled with the government's 'intransigent' approach to civil liberties activism. In this respect, he contends that human rights were more of a 'last resort' than a 'last utopia'.²²⁵ For those in *Marxism Today*, with notable exceptions such as J. A. G. Griffith, a bill of rights was a way of providing protection against government authoritarianism, and constitutional reform was a way of breaking up the seemingly unlimited power granted to the executive by the British constitution. In this respect, increasing interest in these constitutional questions may not have

²²¹ Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies*, p. 125.

²²² P. Sloman, 'Partners in Progress? British Liberals and the Labour Party since 1918', *Political Studies Review*, 12 (2014), p. 47.

²²³ See Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, p. 501.

²²⁴ Moyn, *Last Utopia*, pp. 8, 13, 27.

²²⁵ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 222, 237, 224.

been so much of a last resort, but rather proof of agency on the left. Moores does also argue that languages and mechanisms of rights provided tools for the NCCL to be 'less responsive and passive' in responding to Thatcher's government.²²⁶ In a more abstract sense, Moyn and Moores are therefore in agreement: individual rights were a way of negotiating a way forward in the face of political failure.

This chapter has also demonstrated divergence between members of this broad *Marxism Today* left and some trade unionist and more hard left figures, who remained deeply sceptical about an individual rights agenda. Was such an agenda a narrowing of political horizons, or even a capitulation to the new right and capitalism? Moyn has shown how 'human rights came to the world amid the ruins of equality', and that human rights ideals have been too 'accommodating' with inequality and market fundamentalism.²²⁷ Did those in *Marxism Today* come to prioritise rights *at the expense of* egalitarianism or social justice? Of course, as demonstrated, social and economic rights, as well as material inequality, were of great concern to those writing in *Marxism Today* in support of an individual rights agenda. Historians have also identified a non-statist and pluralist tradition running through the British labour movement in the twentieth century and in British history more generally – rejecting statism does not mean these authors necessarily gave up 'socialism', itself a contested term.²²⁸ However, *political* democracy, guaranteed by a bill of rights and constitutional reform, was certainly considered by these authors to be a more straightforward and less discredited project than the goal of *economic* democracy directed by the state. Conceptions of democracy became more textured and sophisticated (as with regard to procedural justice), and questions of economic inequality and power were never disregarded. Yet, many of the authors of *Marxism Today* nevertheless perceived that individualism and even the irreversible nature of certain Thatcherite policies made the task of democratising the economy

²²⁶ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 249.

²²⁷ S. Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), pp. 9, 10.

²²⁸ Ackers and Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain*; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

more difficult. This was the sense in which, as Campsie argues, these authors presented the left as ‘imprisoned’.²²⁹

Scholars of the 1960s and the New Left in both Britain and the United States have, furthermore, identified parallels between such libertarian left groups and movements, and the new right in the late twentieth century. In the assault on the traditional left and the post-war Keynesian, bureaucratic state, the New Left is suggested to have prepared the ground for the new right by providing penetrating criticisms of mainstream statism, as well as having fostered an intellectual climate in which group rights were gradually rejected by the courts in favour of individual rights, ultimately to the disadvantage of trade unions.²³⁰ Parallels in language and even of critique, however, were precisely that: parallels. The New Left and the new right ultimately made very different interventions, despite surface-level similarities.²³¹ Leonard Williams argued persuasively that such resemblances between the American New Left and new right emerged because they both addressed similar ‘problems’ of advanced industrial society and both, correctly, identified the fact that the prevailing orthodoxy on the centre and left ‘reproduced the unfreedom found in the larger society’.²³² Both the Thatcherites and *Marxism Today* sought to respond to some, though not all, of the same ‘problems’ that had emerged in late twentieth-century Britain: social, economic, political, demographic, institutional and cultural structural limits which did not necessarily entail one, ‘correct’ political response but which nevertheless limited what was rationally defensible, plausible and popular at the level of ideas.²³³ In this sense,

²²⁹ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, p. 193 – Campsie criticises Hall for such an interpretation, arguing that he ‘too readily bought into the power of the capitalist state’.

²³⁰ Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 54; J. L. Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In. The Political Revitalization of Market Liberalism* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 97-8; R. E. Schiller, ‘From Group Rights to Individual Liberties: Post-War Labor Law, Liberalism, and the Waning of Union Strength’, *Berkeley Journal of Employment and Labor Law*, 20/1 (1999), pp. 1-73; and R. E. Schiller, *Forging Rivals: Race, Class, Law, and the Collapse of Postwar Liberalism* (New York, 2015). See also R. Cockett, ‘The New Right and the 1960s: the Dialectics of Liberation’, in G. Andrews, R. Cockett, A. Hooper and M. Williams (eds.), *New Left, New Right and Beyond. Taking the Sixties Seriously* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 85-105 and S. Brittan, *Capitalism and the Permissive Society* (London, 1973).

²³¹ As recognised by some of those on the right at the time – Kelley, *Bringing the Market Back In*, p. 97.

²³² L. Williams, ‘Ideological Parallels Between the New Left and the New Right’, *The Social Science Journal*, 24/3 (1987), pp. 317-27, quotations at p. 317 and p. 318.

²³³ See Jackson, ‘Intellectual Histories’. I am also inspired by the approach of Stuart Middleton in ‘Affluence’ and the Left in Britain’.

the Thatcherite stress on 'individual rights' in discussions about the closed shop and the liberal-left advocacy for a bill of rights were both attempts to address individualism in British society. Both sets of actors used the same language and even the same political concept, but ultimately these were bound up in completely different ideologies, with different ends conceived, and other important principles helping to define the concept of 'individual rights'. While Hall argued that the left did need to figure out where it held common ground with Thatcherism in, as illustrated above, its critique of the NHS, this was an invitation for the left to also speak to the alienation felt by people with regard to public services, rather than an argument for Thatcherite social policy.

Therefore, attitudes to the state certainly transformed over the course of the 1980s but this was not simply a passive response to the Thatcherites and political defeat. The new set of approaches to the state arose both from a desire to beat 'Thatcherism' at its own game as well as from a wish to change the rules of the game entirely. The members of this broad cross-section of the left possessed agency in developing new ideas about the relationship of state and society.

Chapter Three – Debating class, identity and new social movements

This chapter concerns how ‘class’, as an analytical category and a frame for left-wing politics, was unsettled from the late 1970s to the early 1990s within *Marxism Today*. It is about both how traditional understandings of the ‘working class’ were complicated and how other group identities and the movements based around them disturbed traditional thinking on the left. I demonstrate that, among the broad section of the left represented in *Marxism Today*, class politics was not abandoned, but other social groups and their social movements were indeed taken more seriously, and consequently the primacy of class faded.

This chapter concerns two entangled developments: on the one hand, how the new social movements and a concern for women, ethnic minorities, and lesbian and gay people became central to many within the *Marxism Today* left, and, on the other, how the significance of class within their ideology diminished over the period – even if it was not disregarded. Central to both of these developments was the issue of *representation*. Did the left and the labour movement adequately represent the working class in its complete form? Was it representing all ‘progressive’ groups? How could it appeal to a broad coalition of people in society? Who *should* the left stand for? The notion that segments of society ‘other than the industrial working class’ might assist in the construction of a ‘socialist future’ had long been a feature of New Left analyses prior to the period under examination.¹ The desire to integrate class politics with the politics of identity in the 1980s was also not a new enterprise.² However, this chapter explores the specific dynamics

¹ Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 54.

² See S. Rowbotham, L. Segal and H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments. Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London, 1979), as discussed later, and L. Robinson, ‘The Bermondsey By-Election and Leftist Attitudes to Homosexuality’, in M. McCormack (ed.), *Public Men. Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 168, for the case of the Gay Left Collective in the mid-1970s.

impacting upon these questions from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, as well as illustrating how some authors in *Marxism Today* distinguished between the ‘socialist’ project and separate emancipatory, ‘progressive’ projects.

I show how the term ‘working class’ was contested in the period, providing an account of how the working class was reimagined in response to social change. Certain subjectivities based upon race, gender and sexuality were believed by the authors to be newly-emboldened and consequential forces in society, and I am also concerned with how these groups and the new social movements – feminism, movements based around marginalised racial and ethnic identities, as well as lesbian and gay politics – forced new thinking on the left.³ The politics of gender, race and sexuality seemed to threaten most directly both labourist and workerist ideologies based upon the centrality of the white, heterosexual, skilled, male manual worker, and that is why their movements are central to this account.⁴ In this respect, I illustrate in further detail the argument made by these authors for the left to broaden its appeal and to build hegemonic alliances, as discussed in Chapter One.

Both contemporaries and scholars have claimed that several of the authors writing in *Marxism Today* abandoned or watered down class politics in the 1980s, shifting to the right in the process. The Trotskyite, Alex Callinicos, wrote in 1983 that Eric Hobsbawm’s commentaries on social change were made in order to justify a ‘shift to the right’.⁵ The historian Keith Laybourn,

³ In this chapter I use the term ‘lesbian and gay politics’, instead of ‘LGBTQ’ politics, as this was the predominant label used in *Marxism Today* and in broader public discourse. However, as Martha Robinson Rhodes has shown, many involved in gay liberation politics in the late twentieth century experienced attraction to multiple genders, or identified as ‘queer’, although many of them described a sense of alienation from organised gay politics – ‘Bisexuality, Multiple-Gender Attraction, and Gay Liberation Politics in the 1970s’, *Twentieth Century British History* (published online 10 June 2020), [doi: 10.1093/tcbh/hwaa018], pp. 1-24. There were also trans people involved in such movements – see L. Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles: An Oral History of the Gay Liberation Front 1970-1973* (London, 1995).

⁴ Other social movements, such as the green movement or the peace movement are not discussed in this chapter, as they concerned less directly these questions of identity and subjectivity. However, these social movements overlapped in some cases, as in the case of the Greenham Women’s Peace Camp, which employed feminist theory in its manner of protest – see C. Moores, ‘Opposition to the Greenham Women’s Peace Camps in 1980s Britain: RAGE Against the ‘Obscene’, *History Workshop Journal*, 78/1 (2014), p. 206; S. Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: the Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London, 2000).

⁵ Clipping of A. Callinicos, ‘Guru on the Wrong Road’, *Socialist Worker*, 15 October 1983, p. 10, MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7. Trotskyites at this time also opposed the ‘personalisation of the political’ and believed that the

in addition, asserted that Martin Jacques and other CPGB Eurocommunists were ‘attempting to abandon the class approach to politics in what was a rightward move away from the leftward class politics of the old Communists’. He specifically contrasted ‘Jacques’ “broad democratic alliance”, of the working class, the middle class, women, gays, ethnic minorities and intellectuals’ to the ‘class warrior approach’ of the *Morning Star*, its editor Tony Chater and older ‘pro-Moscow’ members of the CPGB.⁶ Revising an approach to class and seeking to broaden the appeal of the left to women and minorities was (and is still) associated with abandoning left-wing politics overall. I argue that, among the authors writing in *Marxism Today*, there was not such a straightforward rightward shift – instead, they were attempting to respond to social change by developing a more sophisticated political approach. In any case, their changing approach to class did not signal a reduced concern for *inequality*, whereas their ideological adversaries, the Thatcherites, saw unequal distribution of wealth as ‘vital’.⁷ And, indeed, what made their revised ideology more refined was an acknowledgment of the multiple vectors of alienation and marginalisation beyond just those relating to traditional social class categories, and so entailed an appreciation of how inequality was not purely economic and how economic inequality itself was inflected by other forms of disadvantage.

However, was an embrace of the new social movements an example of the more specific notion that the left generally abandoned collectivism? Was the collective struggle of the working class disregarded in pursuit of identity politics? Was this all part of a broader acceptance of Thatcherite or neo-liberal individualism? A challenge in assessing such questions emerges out of the fact that both neo-liberalism and movements like feminism were ‘child[ren] of the 1960s’, together with the fact that Thatcherism had a complicated relationship to the individualist and

working class’s ‘revolutionary potential’ would only be diluted by notions of oppression based upon identity – Robinson, ‘Bermondsey By-Election’, p. 171 and see also Andrews, *Endgames and New Times*, p. 202.

⁶ Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain*, pp. 108, 115.

⁷ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 148.

non-deferential currents of the 1960s,⁸ notwithstanding its place within a broader reaction against permissiveness.⁹ In addition to the fact that other scholars have identified a strong strain of individualism in British working-class culture in the twentieth century (and hence, working-class politics was never straightforwardly collectivist),¹⁰ this chapter rejects the notion that the thinkers of the *Marxism Today* milieu simply abandoned collectivism for individualism. Certainly, despite the obvious connections between a sense of personal identity and individualism, the claim that new social movements were *purely* individualist can be rejected almost *a priori*. As Lucy Robinson notes, the gay liberation movement emerged because individual gay people ‘from a variety of backgrounds shared a sense of collective oppression from which to organise’.¹¹ Nevertheless, I provide an account of this debate and the different meanings these authors gave to the new social movements. In essence, collectivism was not abandoned, but there was a departure from dominant forms of British socialism both in an appreciation of the importance of identity to politics, and in the imagined base for a collective politics.

In addition, despite his concern for constructing a new politics based upon social change, Hobsbawm did not follow others – such as Stuart Hall and Beatrix Campbell – in their appreciation of the new social movements, as noted in Chapter One. However, Madeleine Davis asserts that Hobsbawm’s late 1970s interventions set the ball rolling for the ‘resignation’ of vast stretches of the left ‘to the “broad democratic alliance” sponsored by *Marxism Today*’.¹² This claim simplifies differences between Hobsbawm and others writing in the journal, and also does

⁸ B. Jackson, ‘Free Markets and Feminism: The Neo-liberal Defence of the Male Breadwinner Model in Britain, c. 1980-1997’, *Women’s History Review*, 28/2 (2019), p. 311 – here Jackson cites N. Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-managed Capitalism to Neo-liberal Crisis* (London, 2013), pp. 224-6; Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’; and Cockett, ‘The New Right and the 1960s’.

⁹ Grimley, ‘Thatcherism, Morality and Religion’.

¹⁰ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 14-33; J. Davis, ‘The London Cabbie and the Rise of Essex Man’, in C. V. J. Griffiths, J. J. Nott and W. Whyte (eds.), *Classes, Cultures, and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 102-18; Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me?*; J. Lawrence, ‘Class, ‘Affluence’ and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64’, *Cultural and Social History*, 10/2 (2013), pp. 273-99. See also M. Savage, ‘Sociology, Class and Male Manual Work Cultures’, in J. McLroy, N. Fishman and A. Campbell (eds.), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics* (2 vols, Aldershot, 1999), ii, pp. 23-42 and R. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour* (Oxford, 1984), as discussed by Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite in ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 138-9.

¹¹ Robinson, ‘Bermondsey By-Election’, p. 168.

¹² Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 50.

not recognise the degree of enthusiasm within the latter group for identity politics. Those contributing to *Marxism Today* shared similar assumptions about both the extent of social change and the scope of the required revision to left-wing politics, but they did not agree on the solution for the left. I illustrate how more pluralist approaches did not develop in a straight line from Hobsbawm's 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?' in 1978.¹³

Just as with Margaret Thatcher in the 1970s, '[n]ecessity, as much as vision,' drove *Marxism Today's* eager searching and support for new constituencies for the left from the late 1970s to the early 1990s.¹⁴ The 'death of class' did not occur, sociologically speaking, but there were important changes to 'understandings' and 'meanings' that people assigned to terms such as 'working class' and 'middle class' over the course of the late twentieth century.¹⁵ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite demonstrates how, in the late twentieth century, fewer and fewer ordinary people were assured in claiming a working-class identity: such an identity was often upheld by particular environments (such as the trade union movement and 'traditional' working-class communities) which were themselves breaking down in the period. Common in these decades was an increasing sense of ambivalence about class and an increasing emphasis on ordinariness and authenticity, linked to a sense of individualism. Working-class identities did not die out, but they were hardly stable. In addition, many in society by the 1980s believed that old class distinctions had been 'blurred' and that they were part of a broad 'middling' mass.¹⁶ The broader revisionist branch of late twentieth century British social history argues that the period is better understood through the 'lens' of the decline of deference and through the expansion of a 'popular, aspirational form of individualism in post-war Britain', which had its 'key moment' in

¹³ Hobsbawm, 'Forward March'.

¹⁴ Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics', p. 147.

¹⁵ Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics', p. 134; F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Discourses of 'Class' in Britain in 'New Times', *Contemporary British History*, 31/2 (2017), p. 297; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁶ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, especially pp. 187, 204-5. Even those such as Avner Offer, who argues for the continuity of 'proletarian culture' in the late twentieth century, concede that its 'material correlates' did not endure – 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, c. 1950-2000', *Contemporary British History*, 22/4 (2008), p. 559.

the 1970s.¹⁷ Rapid shifting social change, together with the failure of the Labour Party to win elections, called for a broader re-think of the left's traditional class politics.

Many of the authors assessed in this chapter were ostensibly trying to offer objective descriptions of changes to the social structure. Yet, as Trevor Blackwell and Jeremy Seabrook admit in their 1985 account of the 'reconstruction' of the working class in the post-war period: in seeking to 'make sense of everyday experience', they were simultaneously 'taking up positions in a political controversy'.¹⁸ As such, seemingly distant and scientific analyses of social change were often intended to have, and were often received as possessing, political meanings. In this chapter, I uncover how different inferences were made from similar understandings of social transformation – problems produced by social change did not have simply one political remedy.¹⁹ Indeed, social scientists and all parts of the left were engaged in debates about class in this period, including across all sections of the Labour Party where, by the early 1980s, the supposed rise of a 'new working class' and class dealignment had ignited debate within the party.²⁰ I illustrate the diverse approaches of *Marxism Today* to social change.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the period from c. 1978 to just before the 1983 general election, illustrating the concern over the fragmentation of the left's traditional political base, together with how feminism and minorities posed a challenge to the left's traditional class politics. In the second section, I examine the years between the 1983 general election up to the end of 1987 – detailing the impact of the 1983 defeat on the approach to class politics; the emphasis on cultural change in these years; the critique of labourism as exclusionary; and the impact of the politics of the Labour-controlled GLC. Finally, the third

¹⁷ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 8; Robinson *et al.*, 'Telling Stories about Post-war Britain', p. 304.

¹⁸ T. Blackwell and J. Seabrook, *A World Still to Win. The Reconstruction of the Post-War Working Class* (London, 1985), pp. 11, 18.

¹⁹ Just as 'affluence' was a contested concept in the late 1950s and 1960s – Middleton, 'Affluence' and the Left in Britain'.

²⁰ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 179. See B. Särilvik and I. Crewe, *Decade of Dealignment. The Conservative Victory of 1979 and Electoral Trends in the 1970s* (Cambridge, 1983).

section concerns the ‘new times’ era of *Marxism Today* from 1988 and into the early 1990s, demonstrating how identity politics was considered a key part of the ‘new times’; how postmodernist ideas impacted upon the left’s traditional prioritisation of class; but also how a concern for inequality, and indeed class, remained in this late period.

A concern for women, minorities and the new social movements, and the politics of identity, did de-prioritise class, and certainly a particular conception of the working class, in the ideology of these left-wing authors. Yet, this chapter provides an account of the thinkers who believed that such an intellectual shift was necessary in an age when the old class politics of the left – based on a white, male, heterosexual imaginary as well as an industrial working class – was increasingly irrelevant in British society, and inadequate to the task of tackling injustices relating to race, sexuality and gender.

The recomposition of the working class and the position of women and minorities c.

1977-1983

In the 1970s, languages of class were a strong feature of British political discourse and were perhaps even stronger than they had been in the 1960s.²¹ Long-standing ammunition was in place for resisting revisionism over traditional understandings of class in left-wing politics, such as John Goldthorpe’s and David Lockwood’s challenge to the theory of *embourgeoisement* – the idea that when workers become more affluent, they become more middle class in terms of attitudes and lifestyle.²² Given this context, it is unsurprising that, despite distancing themselves from ‘over-simplified notions of “class” and “class forces”’, many authors in *Marxism Today* in

²¹ Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 132. For an example of right-wing employment of class war discourse and attitudes, see P. Hutber, *The Decline and Fall of the Middle Class: And How It Can Fight Back* (London, 1976).

²² J. H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechhofer and J. Platt, *The Affluent Worker* (3 vols, London and Cambridge, 1968-9); Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 137.

the late 1970s envisioned a leading role for the working class, believed in the primacy of class struggle, and straightforwardly described the left as the ‘working-class movement’.²³ Additionally, how the working class was imagined in popular culture and in sociology in the 1950s and 1960s was often highly stereotyped, and these images and ideas lasted into the 1970s: there was a sense in social realist literature and films, for instance, that ‘only men could be wholly and authentically “working-class”’.²⁴ Tendencies prizing the male manual worker thus had powerful cultural images from which to back up their conceptions of the working class. Yet, in the 1970s, issues of sexuality, gender and race had risen to prominence due to the efforts of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF); the women’s liberation movement; as well as movements and organisations based around racial identities – including black nationalism, the organisation of Asian immigrant women in the Grunwick dispute (1976-1978), and local black and Asian community organisations.²⁵ Alongside these discourses of class were thus newly-assertive identities in society seeking social and political change, sometimes with regard to economic and employment issues, but other times mobilising around non-economic issues. Social movements had become prominent across the Western world. The American political scientist Ronald Inglehart wrote in 1977 that new social movements indicated that the ‘values’ of individuals in Western societies had shifted away from material concerns towards ‘greater emphasis on quality of life’. As a result, ‘post-material’ issues such as ‘ideology, ethnicity, life-style’ were to become more important, in contrast to those related to the ‘stratification system of industrial society’.²⁶ Of course, to claim that these former issues were purely non-material, or ‘post-material’ was contentious – as will be

²³ A. Hunt, ‘Class Structure and Political Strategy’, *Marxism Today*, July 1977, p. 217; K. Beauchamp, ‘Discussion: Class Structure and Political Strategy’, *Marxism Today*, October 1977, pp. 320-1; F. Steward, ‘Review Article: Radical Critiques of Science’, *Marxism Today*, January 1978, p. 22.

²⁴ Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 136; S. Brooke, ‘Screening the Post-War World: British Film in the Fifties’, *Journal of British Studies*, 44/3 (2005), pp. 562-9; and S. Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life, 1957-1964* (Basingstoke, 1986).

²⁵ For the GLF, see Power, *No Bath but Plenty of Bubbles*; for the Grunwick dispute, see J. Dromey and G. Taylor, *Grunwick: The Workers’ Story* (London, 1978); and for black nationalism, see A. B. Hassan, *Revolutionary Black Nationalism. Unity and Struggle Against Domination* (London, 1977) and, from the secondary literature, R. Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985* (Oakland, CA, 2019), especially pp. 165-208.

²⁶ R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), pp. 3, 12-13.

shown – but Inglehart nevertheless captured the sense that there had been a real cultural shift in Western societies, demonstrated partly through the emergence of social movements.

This was the immediate context for the authors of *Marxism Today* in the final few years of the 1970s and the early 1980s. As shown in this section, traditional approaches to class and conceptions of the left's core constituency were problematised in this early period in two ways: firstly, the social structure was believed to have experienced and was going through major changes; and, secondly, the left's politics was thought to be excluding women and minorities. Even before the 1979 election result, and then prior to the more devastating 1983 election defeat, those writing in *Marxism Today* were advocating for radical rethinking.

Perhaps *Marxism Today*'s most famous essay was Hobsbawm's 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', published in the September 1978 issue. This posited that the 'forward march' of labour and the labour movement had come to a halt at some point in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Both the working class and the labour movement in Britain were in a state of 'crisis', simultaneously with British capitalism's own crisis. Hobsbawm was eager to stress from what position he was coming: this was a 'Marxist analysis' and he made clear that fellow 'Marxists' were his intended audience.²⁷ Hobsbawm knew what his lecture was about to ignite.

He wrote with concern about the decline of manual workers as a proportion of the wage-earning population since the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly since the early 1960s. The percentage of technical proletarians (those who sold their labour for a wage) had actually increased since 1911, he noted, but those who 'got their hands dirty', manual workers, were a diminishing feature of the British labour market.²⁸ In its place was a growing 'white-collar stratum', which Hobsbawm considered part of the 'working class', which had recently (since

²⁷ Hobsbawm, 'Forward March', pp. 279, 286.

²⁸ Hobsbawm, 'Forward March', pp. 279-80.

approximately the late 1950s) organised itself into trade unions and had turned left, politically.²⁹ Another change ‘within’ the working class was the increased female proportion of the workforce: Hobsbawm noted that, since 1951, the proportion of married women occupied in wage-labour had increased from approximately twenty per cent to fifty per cent. This amounted to a ‘major change in the composition of the working class’.³⁰ Thus, the working class and class itself were not disappearing, but the former was becoming less typified by male, manual workers. Such changes were negative for labour’s ‘forward march’: for instance, he believed a sense of ‘class solidarity’ might be eroded further due to the fact that a family’s income no longer depended on a ‘worker’s own job alone’. He saw evidence for a decline in class consciousness in Britain in the fact that a low proportion of the workforce were in trade unions relative to other northern and western European countries, and that there had been a decline in the proportion of those voting for Labour and the CPGB.³¹

The working class, Hobsbawm claimed, was also more divided than it had been in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and especially since the turn of the century. Nationalism in Scotland and Wales, white working-class racism and, seemingly fundamental, sectional differences were all signs of a fragmented working class. Modern industrial development had led to ‘a growing division of workers into sections and groups, each pursuing its own economic interests irrespective of the rest’. An ‘economist militancy’ in the trade union movement epitomised this, whereby workers went on strike ‘not minding the effect on the rest’, hence failing to ‘establish wider patterns of solidarity’ and thus threatening further the coherence of the working class and the labour movement. The growth of public sector employment within

²⁹ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 282. Perry Anderson in 1965 had argued that a hegemonic socialist party needed to include such technical and white-collar workers – ‘Problems of Socialist Strategy’, as cited by Davis, ‘Labourism’ and the New Left’, p. 50. Davis here claims that Anderson ‘anticipated the contours of later discussion of strategic options on the British Left’, and notes the similarities between Hobsbawm’s analysis in the late 1970s and arguments of Anderson in the mid-1960s. Davis is accurate to describe this relationship as one of anticipation rather than one of direct influence.

³⁰ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 282.

³¹ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, pp. 284, 285. For an account of how women’s paid work altered power relations within marriages in the 1950s and 1960s, see H. McCarthy, ‘Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain’, *Women’s History Review*, 26/1 (2017), pp. 46-61

a ‘state-monopoly capitalist system’, moreover, meant that the strength of a group of workers was rooted in the disruption caused to the public – ‘i.e. to other workers’ – rather than to the profits of private employers.³² A significant element of this essay, but little discussed in the historiography, was Hobsbawm’s description of another fragment of the working class: ‘the poor’. Another division within the working class was that between those who had benefited greatly from the post-war social democratic state, and those who did not. This latter group of people were in low-paid work, were not organised in trade unions, depended on the welfare state, and also tended to rent in the private sector (‘the poor who live worse and pay more’).³³

Hobsbawm was essentially announcing the death of the (always idealised) ‘selfless, solidaristic, and instinctively socialist’ working class that had been constructed rhetorically by Labour leaders in post-war Britain.³⁴ The working class still existed but it had undergone a process of recomposition and fragmentation. The attendant crisis was not inevitable, however. He wrote that the labour movement and the Labour Party needed to offer both manual workers and ‘growing strata’ outside of this group ‘a lead and a policy’ – something which they failed to offer during the disappointing Harold Wilson years.³⁵ The emphasis on ‘growing strata’ beyond the manual working class implied that Labour’s appeal needed to extend beyond its traditional base, but Hobsbawm’s concern in this essay was mostly in sketching out these trends and warning against ‘complacency’ in the labour movement, rather than setting out explicit remedies.³⁶

There was an explosive response to Hobsbawm’s essay.³⁷ The trade unionist, Ken Gill, at the time General Secretary of TASS, argued at the end of 1978 that recent industrial militancy

³² Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, pp. 283-4, 286.

³³ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 284.

³⁴ J. Lawrence, ‘Paternalism, Class and the British Path to Modernity’, in S. Gunn and J. Vernon (eds.), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley, CA, 2011), p. 161.

³⁵ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 285-6.

³⁶ Hobsbawm, ‘Forward March’, p. 284.

³⁷ Responses to Hobsbawm’s essay among trade union leaders (such as Jack Jones and Ken Gill), CPGB activists, intellectuals, Labour MPs (Stan Newens, Tony Benn), were compiled in Hobsbawm, *Forward March*.

was not ‘narrow-minded economism’ but was instead working-class mobilisation. He claimed there was now breadth to the ‘working class struggle’, and if the central task of the labour movement was to ‘establish the working class as the leading force in British society’, then the events of the 1970s had demonstrated ‘substantial advances’ in line with this goal.³⁸ This represented a hard-line, left-wing trade union approach to Hobsbawm’s arguments. The approach of Jacques characterised another response, predominant within *Marxism Today*, which was to take up Hobsbawm’s appraisal of trade union militancy in the 1970s. Writing after the 1979 general election, Jacques remarked that this defeat was a product of ‘underlying trends’ that the left had treated with complacency. He accepted that some of the instances of ‘working class militancy’ in the 1970s were not all ‘narrowly “economic”’, and that they raised ‘wider issues’, but he said that this should not ‘blind us’ to the broader process of ‘fragmentation, erosion and realignment’. He concurred with Hobsbawm that there was evidently no automatic relationship between trade union militancy and the transformation of working-class consciousness in a ‘leftward’ direction: the ‘bonds’ uniting the labour movement were genuinely now much weaker.³⁹

The aforementioned Trotskyite Callinicos, responding to the ‘Forward March’ thesis and later interventions made by Hobsbawm,⁴⁰ argued in *Socialist Worker* that while there was indeed an expanding white-collar segment of the population, there was a need to be precise about which sections *within* this segment were properly middle class or working class, and therefore whether they were worth mobilising for the left. Within the white-collar population, there was, on the one hand, the well-paid ‘new middle class’, and, on the other, there were low-paid routine workers in, for example, clerical roles. The former had ‘interests in common with capital’, whereas the latter had shown instances of real militancy through trade union activity – as a result, they were

³⁸ K. Gill, ‘Discussion: The Forward March of Labour Halted?’, *Marxism Today*, December 1978, p. 396.

³⁹ Jacques, ‘Thatcherism – The Impasse Broken?’, pp. 8, 9, 12.

⁴⁰ See E. Hobsbawm, ‘The State of the Left in Western Europe’, *Marxism Today*, October 1982, pp. 14, 15, where Hobsbawm repeats themes from ‘Forward March’.

considered ‘part of the working class’.⁴¹ For Callinicos, proof of working class strength was militancy, whereas Hobsbawm saw this as divisive and evidence of fragmentation. Hobsbawm’s call for a broader appeal, and an imprecision about the emerging social strata, were taken as evidence of right-wing capitulation.

Another distinct response was that of the historian Gareth Stedman Jones. He contended that Hobsbawm’s analysis failed to account for the difference between the political outcome of the miners’ strikes of the early 1970s and outcome of industrial action in the so-called ‘winter of discontent’ of 1978/9. The former set of strikes affected the labour movement and the public much more than those in the winter of discontent, but the outcome worked out ultimately in the left’s favour. Sectionalism and growing public sector employment, therefore, did not automatically produce the Labour Party’s ‘mess’.⁴² Stedman Jones’s approach was informed by his broader notion that social change did not automatically foster the marginalisation of certain political and class identities, but that, instead, politicians had failed to foster such identities through discourse – his *Languages of Class* was a ‘political as well as intellectual move’.⁴³ Politics, including politics on the left, was not a ‘passive victim’ of social change – Hobsbawm and others ultimately underestimated the importance of political discourse to the fortunes of the left.⁴⁴

In 1983, after nearly four years of Thatcher’s government, the radical geographer Doreen Massey published an essay within *Marxism Today* on the ‘social map’ of Britain, with similar scope to that produced by Hobsbawm in 1978.⁴⁵ Jim Tomlinson referred to the period between 1979 and 1982 as the ‘crescendo’ of British de-industrialisation, a process which began in the 1950s

⁴¹ Callinicos, ‘Guru on the Wrong Road’, MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7, p. 10.

⁴² Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 242-3. These comments were made in the essay ‘Why is the Labour Party in a Mess?’, originally published in *New Socialist*, 3, January-February 1982.

⁴³ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Discourses of ‘Class’’, p. 297.

⁴⁴ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 252-3.

⁴⁵ D. Massey, ‘The Shape of Things to Come’, *Marxism Today*, April 1983, p. 18. Massey was also involved in Ken Livingstone’s GLC, with Hilary Wainwright and Robin Murray. After its abolition, a group of former participants met in Massey’s flat in Kilburn, named the Ariel Road group, to continue discussions – see D. Featherstone, ‘Doreen Massey Obituary’, *The Guardian*, 27 March 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/27/doreen-massey-obituary> (13 July 2020).

but which was exacerbated by the government's monetary policy.⁴⁶ As a result of the spatial distribution of manufacturing and basic industries like coal mining, and the growing service sector, Britain was becoming 'even more spatially segregated by class' in the 1980s.⁴⁷ Massey recognised such trends at the time, arguing that the British labour force was undergoing a 'joint social and geographical restructuring'.⁴⁸

Massey reiterated a number of Hobsbawm's themes. The labour force was very different to what it had been in the 1960s: the proportion of women in the workforce had increased and the absolute number of manufacturing jobs had fallen for almost twenty-five years up to 1983. Though Thatcherism had thrown this latter change into 'high relief' through its acceleration of de-industrialisation, she acknowledged that the decline of industry was a long-term process.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the working class had not disappeared as a result of these trends: rather, Massey contended that both the working class and the labour force more generally were undergoing 'structural changes in composition'.⁵⁰ Like Hobsbawm she stressed, however, that these compositional changes meant that the left's traditional base was eroding, and hence there was a need for the labour movement to 'restructure itself', 'recognise the shifts' and 'address new questions'.⁵¹ Distinct to Hobsbawm's analysis was Massey's emphasis on the geographical dimension to economic and occupational change. Working class jobs were decreasingly clustered around town and cities, and not only were the 'basic industries' and manufacturing industries collapsing, capital was also reorganising, decentralising away from urban centres, and exploiting different kinds of labour.⁵² She considered the deindustrialisation of urban areas to be particularly troubling, as they had been a traditional source of strength for the labour movement: urban workers in manufacturing industries tended to be better organised than those in 'out-of-

⁴⁶ Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization Not Decline', pp. 87, 77.

⁴⁷ Offer, 'British Manual Workers', p. 561.

⁴⁸ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', pp. 27.

⁴⁹ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', pp. 18, 19-20,

⁵⁰ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', p. 18.

⁵¹ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', p. 18.

⁵² Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', pp. 18, 24.

town' locations, and this strata was rapidly shrinking.⁵³ Even when industry remained in Britain, the fact that it was decentralising away from the cities posed a particular problem for the labour movement.

Tomlinson situated Massey within part of the academic literature on de-industrialisation which focused on industrial closures and their effects. He argues that such accounts 'reflected an understandable anger and despair' but were too bound up in the politics at the time, and were hence insufficiently historical in their account of de-industrialisation.⁵⁴ He contends that Massey and others 'effectively re-introduce notions of "decline" by the back door', seeing loss of industry as evidence of broader economic malaise. Such declinist narratives, he suggests, encourage nostalgia and wrongly imply the 'innate superiority of the industrial world we have lost'.⁵⁵ It is true that the notion of 'decline' framed Massey's analysis, but her argument was far more nuanced and ambivalent than Tomlinson suggests. As shown, she acknowledged the long-term nature of the changes she described, and she explicitly declared that '[i]t is not just decline that is going on; it is recomposition'.⁵⁶ Massey also disavowed simplistic nostalgia, particularly in light of gender relations. Coalfield areas might have been heavily working class and unionised, but they were also 'extremely *male*'. Because of this, the ideology of the sexual division of labour was 'probably... more firmly entrenched' in these areas than elsewhere in the country. As a result, she cautioned against the 'now-mourned homogeneity of the labour movement' in these areas, as it was based around women's subjugation. Certainly, she went so far as to suggest that this firm division of labour rendered these areas vulnerable to exploitation: women in these areas, with little or no prior experience of paid work, nor of 'capitalist wage relations', became a

⁵³ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', p. 21.

⁵⁴ Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization Not Decline', p. 88. Tomlinson cites D. Massey and R. Meegan, *The Anatomy of Job Loss: The How, Where and Why of Employment Decline* (London, 1982).

⁵⁵ J. Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization: Strengths and Weaknesses as a Key Concept for Understanding Post-war British History', *Urban History*, 47/2 (2020), pp. 217-18. Tomlinson once again cites Massey and Meegan, *The Anatomy of Job Loss*.

⁵⁶ Massey, 'Shape of Things to Come', p. 27.

reserve of labour, and were hence ‘real “green labour”’.⁵⁷ To capital, women were considered very much part of the working class – the labour movement failed to appreciate this.

Massey stated that not all of these changes were to be accepted, and not all of these changes were ‘politically inevitable’. What was required was simply a change of approach. Organising workers in multi-regional companies was going to be difficult but ‘it wasn’t so simple to build unity on the coalfields either’, she argued. The cities may have de-industrialised, but they were emerging as ‘seedbeds’ for a ‘new kind of politics, based around new coalitions’. And it was not just the cities: women workers in ‘the regions’ were organising, as in the case of the occupation by 220 female workers of the Bathgate plant of Plessey Capacitors, a multinational employer, in West Lothian in 1982. Old bases, both social and geographical, were not to be abandoned, but new bases ‘must be constructed’ in expanding elements of the labour force and in new areas of the country.⁵⁸ Like Hobsbawm, Massey stressed the importance of registering change and the problems involved in the strong identification of the left with the ‘old’ working class.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, another aspect of social change related to the political mobilisation of women around feminism. How and whether to integrate feminism with the left was a hotly-debated topic, particularly among those who were part of such currents. Such debates had a great impact, in these early years, on problematising the centrality of the white, male, manual worker to left-wing politics.

The women’s liberation movement emerged out of the 1960s but by the late 1970s, the movement had fragmented into different ‘position[s] and ‘identities’, including socialist feminism, revolutionary feminism and radical feminism.⁵⁹ The authors writing in *Marxism Today* were self-defined socialist feminists: for instance, Beatrix Campbell and other Marxists within the

⁵⁷ Massey, ‘Shape of Things to Come’, pp. 24, 25, 26.

⁵⁸ Massey, ‘Shape of Things to Come’, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Davis and Hall, ‘Forward Face of Feminism’, p. 15; Interview with Campbell, BL, Sisterhood and After.

women's liberation movement produced *Red Rag* magazine from 1972 to 1980. This and the 1978 text *Beyond the Fragments*, by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, were attempts to negotiate socialism with feminism in ways that did not subordinate feminism to traditional class politics.⁶⁰ These authors dismissed prioritising either class or gender in their call for an alliance between socialism and feminism. Yet, as Nicholas Owen writes, while socialist feminists were dismissive of the notion of 'separate struggle', they were strongly committed to autonomy.⁶¹ In the introduction to *Beyond the Fragments*, Wainwright wrote that there needed to be 'more than just *ad hoc* contact between the different movements', but:

Neither is the merging of the movements any solution; there are good reasons for each movement preserving its autonomy, controlling its own organization. For women, blacks, trade unionists, gays, youth, and national minorities have specific interests which may sometimes be antagonistic to each other both now and probably in a socialist society. The solution lies in bringing together all those involved in the different movements and campaigns who agree on a wider programme of socialist change...⁶²

Wainwright thus opposed collapsing social movements into the socialist movement but suggested a commitment to socialist change could be a unifying principle for an alliance. The feminist historians Catherine Hall and Tricia Davis concurred, contending later, in 1980, that both anti-capitalist new social movements *and* a feminist, anti-racist and pro-gay labour movement needed to be constructed, while maintaining their respective autonomy.⁶³ Linking the new social movements with the left was about trying to negotiate equally legitimate movements and identities. However, there was not always agreement on the specific nature of cooperation: Davis and Hall were sceptical of Rowbotham's suggestion that a new 'basically humanist' movement, which placed the resistance against all forms of social oppression at its centre, could form the basis of unity. Instead, their solution, albeit 'difficult', lay in defining socialism in

⁶⁰ S. Rowbotham, L. Segal and H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments. Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London, 1979).

⁶¹ N. Owen, 'Men and the 1970s British Women's Liberation Movement', *Historical Journal*, 56/3 (2013), p. 806.

⁶² H. Wainwright, 'Introduction', in Rowbotham *et al.*, *Beyond the Fragments*, pp. 5-6.

⁶³ Davis and Hall, 'Forward Face of Feminism', pp. 14, 17. Davis was also a social worker and a member of the CPGB – later in the 1980s, she was a trade union official and a member of the *Marxism Today* editorial board. Catherine Hall had been involved in CND and the women's liberation movement; she was also married to Stuart Hall.

relation to feminism and *vice versa*.⁶⁴ Certainly, Thatcher's government meant that cooperation between the movements had become more urgent. Refuges for women fleeing domestic violence, for instance, were forced into closing due to cuts to local government spending and to the Urban Aid programme.⁶⁵ Cuts were a feminist issue; hence the need for 'joint projects' with an explicit socialist purpose.⁶⁶

But how did traditional economic concerns relate to feminist arguments? The economist Jean Gardiner and the trade unionist Sheila Smith noted in 1981 that women faced low pay; unequal access to employment and training; 'hidden' unemployment; financial dependence on men; and a disproportionate share of unpaid work.⁶⁷ They noted that female employment in the early 1980s was actually lower than in the mid-1960s: this was partly because between 1977 and 1980, approximately half of women had left the labour market, which in turn Gardiner and Smith argued was due to the fact that women were more vulnerable to unemployment as a result of their concentration in 'unskilled' and part-time employment.⁶⁸ As Campbell noted, women had re-entered the labour market after the Second World War on an immense scale, but they had entered 'a more intensively segregated jobs market'. There was an 'apartheid' between men and women as regards the jobs they actually performed.⁶⁹ Women's unequal economic position was a major source of concern to these socialist feminists.

Moreover, these feminist writers stressed how social change was eroding the stereotype of the male breadwinner model, which was in turn central to left-wing politics. Because of the rise in the proportion of mothers in paid work, far fewer male workers were lone family breadwinners – Gardiner and Smith noted in 1981 how a similar proportion of women (thirty-eight per cent) as men (forty per cent) in the labour force had responsibilities for dependent

⁶⁴ Davis and Hall, 'Forward Face of Feminism', p. 16. See S. Rowbotham 'The Trouble with Patriarchy' in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981), pp. 364-70 [originally published in *New Statesman* in 1979].

⁶⁵ David and Hall, 'Forward Face of Feminism', p. 17.

⁶⁶ Wainwright, 'Discussion: The Forward Face of Feminism', p. 28.

⁶⁷ J. Gardiner and S. Smith, 'Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy', *Marxism Today*, October 1981, p. 24.

⁶⁸ Gardiner and Smith, 'Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 25.

⁶⁹ B. Campbell, 'Women: Not What They Bargained For', *Marxism Today*, March 1982, p. 20.

children.⁷⁰ Increasing divorce rates, a rise in single parent families, an expansion of cohabitation and the growth of male unemployment were other factors breaking down the male breadwinner model.⁷¹ This model had been central to mid-twentieth century social democracy (as it was to neo-liberalism)⁷² and gender norms more broadly had been ‘encoded’ into the post-First World War system of social rights and into post-Second World War responses to unemployment, sustained by a patriarchal ideal embedded in labour politics.⁷³ These feminists were resisting the notion that men ‘as a group [were] entitled to a family wage, because of their financial responsibilities’: whereby a man’s wage, based on the male breadwinner model, would be sufficient for the entire family.⁷⁴ This ideology did not match reality and nor was it fair to women. Campbell criticised unions for upholding the ideology of the family wage in recent years, as in the period of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (1968-1971), therefore upholding the notion of ‘women’s subordination within the family’. She argued that the labour movement needed to realise that a commitment to equal pay was mutually exclusive with a commitment to a ‘family wage’.⁷⁵ Yet, this ideology ran through the labour movement – hence collective bargaining practices as they existed also failed to account for women’s interests.⁷⁶

From the socialist feminist perspective, the left was far too dismissive of feminist concerns. There were plentiful examples of such rejection in the early 1980s: at the 1982 Labour Party Conference, for instance, Gwyneth Dunwoody MP dismissed feminists within Labour (who were pushing for greater policy-making roles in the party) as middle class, and eventually

⁷⁰ Gardiner and Smith, ‘Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 25.

⁷¹ Jackson, ‘Free Markets and Feminism’, p. 298.

⁷² See Jackson, ‘Free Markets and Feminism’.

⁷³ Lawrence, ‘Paternalism, Class and the British Path to Modernity’, p. 152; S. Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State, Britain and France 1914-1945* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁷⁴ Gardiner and Smith, ‘Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 25. For the debate in the early 1980s in socialist and feminist circles over the family wage, see H. Land, ‘The Family Wage’, *Feminist Review*, 6 (1980), pp. 55-77; M. Barrett and M. McIntosh, ‘The ‘Family Wage’: Some Problems for Socialists and Feminists’, *Capital & Class* 4/2 (1980), pp. 51-72; and J. Coussins and A. Coote, *The Family in the Firing Line* (London, 1981).

⁷⁵ Campbell, ‘Women’, pp. 21-2.

⁷⁶ See also Gardiner and Smith, ‘Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 27 and J. Coussins, ‘Equality for Women: Have the Laws Worked?’, *Marxism Today*, January 1980, p.11.

the trade union block vote was used to veto their proposals.⁷⁷ Indeed, it was true that many feminists and other activists who entered the party from the later 1970s were middle class,⁷⁸ often on their own admission, but both the revolutionary left and the right wing of the Labour Party clearly employed this fact to dismiss feminist and activist concerns *tout court*.⁷⁹ Socialist feminists denounced the ‘economism’ of British Marxism as well, which they claimed placed undue significance on workplace struggle, refusing to recognise that issues such as the sexual division of labour were also ‘political’ issues.⁸⁰ Fundamentally, the broad left did not recognise the validity of feminism or women’s issues. As Wainwright contended, the remedy for exploitation and alienation did not lie solely in ‘Clause IV or nationalisation of the 200 monopolies’: there were ‘different oppressions’ requiring different solutions.⁸¹

Many of these authors argued that the left’s attitudes towards women’s issues and feminism reflected a broader ‘macho’ culture on the left which possessed ‘butch standards’.⁸² One of Campbell’s interventions in 1982 attacked those who would invoke the need for left-wing ‘unity’ in reaction to the demands of women and minorities, and suggested it was used to avoid accountability for ignoring the ‘sexual or racial divisions within the [working] class’. The ‘class struggle’ had been ‘waged for too long too much in the image of “me Tarzan, you Jane” – crude, conservative and chauvinist’.⁸³ Therefore, in Campbell’s conception, divisions *within* the working class had been ignored: women or racial minorities within the class were being represented inadequately. Moreover, Gardiner and Smith described their object of concern as ‘the distribution of resources and relations within the working population’ – contending that it was not simply the divide between capital and (male) labour with which the left ought to concern

⁷⁷ See Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 20 and K. Livingstone and T. Ali, ‘Why Labour Lost’, *New Left Review*, I/140, July-Aug 1983, p. 39.

⁷⁸ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘“Class” in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology’, p. 354

⁷⁹ See F. Rickford, ‘The Development of the Women’s Movement’, *Marxism Today*, July 1978, p. 232.

⁸⁰ Rickford, ‘Development of the Women’s Movement’, p. 233.

⁸¹ Wainwright, ‘Discussion: Forward Face of Feminism’, p. 28, 29.

⁸² Campbell, ‘Women’, p. 23.

⁸³ Campbell, ‘Women’, p. 18.

itself.⁸⁴ Campbell similarly declared that what women workers desired was ‘a redistribution within the working class, as much as redistribution between classes’.⁸⁵ In this respect, the left was not adequately representing the *working class as a whole* through its chauvinism.

Given this belief in the entangled nature of women’s and class issues, how did these authors describe the relationship between feminism and class struggle? To Jean Coussins, a former Women’s Rights Officer at the NCCL, women’s liberation was an ‘integral’ element of the ‘class struggle’.⁸⁶ Campbell, likewise, wrote that feminism had ‘something to say’ which struck ‘deep at the heart of what class struggle is about’.⁸⁷ This was not quite subsuming feminist issues under the overarching goal of class struggle and socialism – it was instead suggestive of a desire to integrate properly class politics and feminism. Campbell, however, remembered something subtly different in her oral testimony from 2010:

... class politics was part of our problem. And even though we all thought you couldn’t not think that class was a vital category... [it] didn’t exhaust our agenda. Of course not, otherwise, why a women’s liberation movement? Women’s liberation... was a critique of where class politics had got to, and where it was never likely to get to.⁸⁸

Class politics was thus conceived as, in contrast, a central obstacle to many feminists, including socialist feminists. However, her memories are consistent with her writings in these years in that class was still ‘vital’ and in the general idea that the left’s dominant approach to class politics was limited. Indeed, perhaps her and Coussins’ comments regarding the class struggle were important rhetorically, for two reasons: firstly, much of women’s subordination, they argued, was related to economic and employment issues and, secondly, their audience was a broader left who, as they had contended, prioritised class. They wanted to persuade as well as to challenge.

Similarly, authors in *Marxism Today* also claimed that the politics of the left was failing to account for the experience of racial minorities. In 1981, Brenda Kirsch, a white racial equality

⁸⁴ Gardiner and Smith, ‘Feminism and the Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 24.

⁸⁵ Campbell, ‘Women’, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Coussins, ‘Equality for Women’, p. 11.

⁸⁷ Campbell, ‘Women’, p. 18.

⁸⁸ Interview with Campbell, BL, *Sisterhood and After*.

activist and editor of *Labour Research*,⁸⁹ argued that the left failed to recognise the specific experience of Britain's black community and the new black political consciousness. In reacting to the Brixton riot of 1981, Kirsch, who was also a member of Lambeth council's Inquiry into Police-Community Relations, observed how many left-wing commentators connected the 'anger' of black youth to government cuts.⁹⁰ In response, Kirsch argued:

Although cuts have not helped to regenerate Brixton and alleviate the problems which spark off discontent, to reduce the black reaction to the question of fighting the cuts does not help forge alliances with the black community. The translation of the black experience into what sections of the Left tend to identify as "real" politics is to do a disservice to the black community and its specific oppression.⁹¹

Much like the socialist feminists, Kirsch suggested that the left was too narrowly economic: the specific concerns of women and minorities were not considered genuine politics, and protest by black people was dismissed as rooted in purely or mainly economic concerns. The academics Lee Bridges, who is white, and Paul Gilroy, who is black, claimed in 1982 that there were 'fractions of the working class' – black people – who endured specific problems such as police 'malpractice' *as part of* their daily experience of unemployment and poverty.⁹² As in the case of feminist arguments with respect to women, these commentators suggested that black women and men were both part of the working class, and that they had a specific experience which the left failed to recognise.

Furthermore, though there was little sustained discussion of lesbian and gay politics in *Marxism Today* in the late 1970s and early 1980s,⁹³ queer people at this time were also coming into conflict with traditional labourist and workerist notions of class. Lucy Robinson noted how

⁸⁹ The monthly publication of the Labour Research Department, the independent, trade union-based research organisation.

⁹⁰ Kirsch, 'Brixton and After', p. 10. Lambeth council created its inquiry in reaction to the death of Blair Peach, who was killed by a Special Patrol Group officer at an anti-racism demonstration in Southall – J. Bourne, 'The Political Legacy of Blair Peach', 23 April 2009, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-political-legacy-of-blair-peach/> (15 July 2020).

⁹¹ Kirsch, 'Brixton and After', p. 10.

⁹² Bridges and Gilroy, 'Striking Back', p. 35.

⁹³ This might have been due to the lack of editorial connections to lesbian and gay activists and authors in these early years, whereas perhaps an increasing desire to engage with issues of sexuality over the decade increased the journal's coverage.

Peter Tatchell, a former GLF member who ran as the Labour Party candidate in the Bermondsey by-election of February 1983, was considered ‘innately bourgeois’ by broad sections of the left because of his sexuality and therefore out-of-touch with the ‘authentic’ working class in Bermondsey, who were in turn imagined by the left as ‘coherently heterosexual and wholly resistant to distractions from the bourgeois politics of sexuality’. Politicising homosexuality was deemed to threaten the ‘primacy’ of a traditional kind of class politics.⁹⁴ Indeed, others such as Daisy Payling have noted how even in cases of the left’s accommodation to the new social movements in the 1980s, gay politics was where this adjustment found its ‘limits’,⁹⁵ altogether illuminating the sheer strength of the left’s dominant imagination of its working-class constituency, which each of these authors in *Marxism Today* excoriated. Each author was pushing for a conception of the working class and for a left-wing politics that were more inclusive of women and minorities, and their issues.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, class politics was not abandoned but what traditionally constituted this form of politics was put under pressure through a range of interventions within *Marxism Today*. The entire structure of British society had changed, and the working class had been recomposed. Women and minorities were also troubling traditional ideas on the left, both of what constituted the working class and of how the left ought to interact with social forces beyond the labour movement and with issues beyond the world of work. ‘Class politics’ was only undermined insofar as if this is defined as a politics which prioritises class over gender and other categories. These authors did not draw the same conclusions, but they all agreed social change was something to take seriously.

Stuart Hall also represented this new thinking on the left in this early period. He maintained a deep concern for the working class as central to left-wing politics but also called for

⁹⁴ Robinson, ‘Bermondsey By-Election’, pp. 166, 168, 169, 179.

⁹⁵ Payling, ‘City Limits’, pp. 256, 268.

the construction of an 'alliance' to counter Thatcherism. The left had to recognise, however, that the 'radical Right' across the world had succeeded in responding to 'antagonisms' which did not have an 'immediate class character', and to 'deep social struggles' which were deeply defined by class relations but which were not 'reducible to them'.⁹⁶ Class was not everything, but it was still critical. In 1982, he wrote that there had been 'changes in structure and composition of the working class', and so there were great risks to the labour movement only having roots in the 'declining sections of a class'. The labour movement, compounding the problem, provided an inhospitable environment to 'cultures of the [working] class' which were organised around different values to those of the white, male, manual working class, such as those created by black and Asian urban cultures.⁹⁷ Traditional ideas of the working class failed to recognise both the diversity of its composition and the extent to which it had changed over the course of the century.

At this time, more abstract theoretical debates about the categories of left-wing thought were occurring across Europe. The Austrian-French intellectual André Gorz and East German dissident Rudolf Bahro declared 'farewell' to the working class and envisioned socialism's new central agent as that of the new social movements overall.⁹⁸ Such thinkers were reviewed relatively favourably in *Marxism Today*, with one reviewer asking: '[h]ow can we deny the truth of the changes described by these authors?'.⁹⁹ Yet, by contrast, most of those writing in *Marxism Today* retained a substantive commitment to class in these early years. Indeed, many feminist arguments essentially argued that the left was not doing class politics well, failing to represent all relevant issues and identities.

⁹⁶ Hall, 'Thatcherism – A New Stage?', p. 28.

⁹⁷ Hall, 'A Long Haul', pp. 17-18, 19, 20, 21.

⁹⁸ See A. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*, tr. M. Sonenscher (London, 1982) and R. Bahro, *Socialism and Survival: Articles, Essays and Talks, 1979-1982*, tr. D. Fernbach (London, 1982). For other interventions in socialist theory in this period which problematised the primacy of the working class as a category in socialist theory, see A. Cutler, B. Hindess, P. Hirst and A. Hussain, *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today* (2 vols, London, 1977-8) and G. Kitching, *Rethinking Socialism: A Theory for a Better Practice* (London, 1983).

⁹⁹ J. Fisher, Review of Andre Gorz's *Farewell to the Working Class* and Rudolf Bahro's *Socialism and Survival*, *Marxism Today*, May 1983, p. 43.

Broadening the left's appeal: cultural change, labourism and the GLC, 1983-1987

In the wake of the 1983 general election defeat, the left's discussion around class, identity and the new social movements intensified. The need for the left to broaden its appeal seemed to have been confirmed. Although the miners' strike of 1984 to 1985 provided a powerful example of 'traditional class consciousness', this was simultaneously when such class consciousness was, as Geoff Eley notes, 'becoming increasingly decoupled and disavowed'.¹⁰⁰ Among those associated with *Marxism Today*, there was a continued commitment to class politics but there were stronger claims made about the need for the left to broaden its appeal and to keep up with cultural change. Part of this involved envisioning women, minorities and their movements more abstractly, as representative of consequential social forces and of concerns beyond those relating to class. In these years, moreover, divisions between Hobsbawm and others involved in *Marxism Today* became more sharply evident.

After the election, Hobsbawm refined his arguments made earlier in the period, which were proving more persuasive after this second defeat for the left.¹⁰¹ In an October 1983 essay entitled 'Labour's Lost Millions', he called attention to the fact that the Labour Party had suffered from a 'massive defection of supporters of *all* classes, ages and genders' earlier that year, and that there were towns in southern England which 'we had once won and should have won'.¹⁰² The need for change was hence pressing. He argued that, 'of course', the Labour Party must regain the support of the 'working class as a whole' but it must also become 'the party of *all* who want democracy... irrespective of the class pigeon-hole into which pollsters and market researchers put them...' Hobsbawm was linking more forcefully the same thinking in his 1978 intervention with a demand for Labour to be more than '*only* a class party', and thus for it to be

¹⁰⁰ Eley, *Forging Democracy*, p. 467.

¹⁰¹ Murphy, 'Rainbow Alliance' or the Focus Group?', p. 1.

¹⁰² Hobsbawm, 'Labour's Lost Million', p. 7.

‘the party of the people’ as well as the party of the working class.¹⁰³ Hobsbawm contended that Labour had previously ‘marched forward’ by assembling a ‘wide coalition of forces’ and, as discussed in Chapter One, he believed that the Italian communist party was a model for such a strategy.¹⁰⁴ James Curran, editor of the *New Socialist*, criticised Hobsbawm in 1984 for apparently suggesting that Labour was in decline due to social change, as left-wing parties across non-Communist Europe had ‘romped home with more than 50 per cent of the vote’ in the face of similar social upheavals.¹⁰⁵ Yet, this was precisely what Hobsbawm recognised in the PCP’s success – his intention was to influence the Labour Party into transforming itself in order to succeed in ways similar to these other European left parties. The problem was that the Labour Party asked ‘the masses’ to ‘come to us on our terms’ – instead, Hobsbawm believed it should do the opposite.¹⁰⁶

Hobsbawm made clear his opposition to the idea of Labour and the left switching their core constituency to an ‘alliance of the dispossessed’. Ken Livingstone had made statements in this regard as leader of the GLC,¹⁰⁷ which the Labour Party had controlled since 1981. Hobsbawm criticised Livingstone for his suggestion that he would prefer not to represent a constituency composed of mainly skilled white working-class people, and that he would instead favour a more diverse seat. The labour movement’s strength, Hobsbawm insisted, was rooted in the fact that it could represent ‘*all* parts of the working class – both Stepney and the Fife coalfield – and did not discriminate against any.’¹⁰⁸ Hobsbawm was provoking Labour into broadening its appeal, while simultaneously displaying scepticism towards the notion of a coalition of minorities forming an adequate basis for electoral victory or broader hegemony.

¹⁰³ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, pp. 9, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, pp. 10, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Clipping of James Curran, ‘Why Kinnock Must Take A Chance’, *The Times*, 2 October 1984, page unknown, MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7.

¹⁰⁶ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ See Campbell, ‘Politics, Pyramids and People’, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, p. 11.

This 1983 intervention generated much discussion, and in early 1984 a debate with the same name was held involving politicians, activists and intellectuals in London.¹⁰⁹ Much of the ire regarding ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’ centred around his suggestion of an ‘electoral arrangement’ of the Labour Party with the SDP/Liberal Alliance but many others debated his comments regarding class and identity politics.¹¹⁰ Many of these latter responses to Hobsbawm’s essay were collated in an edited collection brought together by Curran. One of these was authored by Massey, Segal and Wainwright, who argued that Hobsbawm ‘completely ignore[d] the radical message of feminism’ and that his arguments represented a part of the labour movement they described as the ‘Great-Moving-Right-Male-Left-Show’.¹¹¹ Others, such as Curran himself, suggested that the purpose of Hobsbawm’s argument was to get the Labour Party to drop ‘its traditional emphasis on class politics’, and the Marxist sociologist John Westergaard wrote that Hobsbawm’s interventions were just re-hashed versions of the *embourgeoisement* thesis of the 1950s: that Hobsbawm was suggesting that the working class was disappearing in all but name, as society was being re-cast in a ‘middle-class mould’.¹¹²

In 1984, Hobsbawm responded to these various arguments. He argued that he did not think the political mobilisation of women was a simple ‘sub-department’ of the ‘working-class struggle’ and that he was not ‘anti-feminist’ in any sense.¹¹³ However, in explaining his support for the *PCP*’s programme in ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, Hobsbawm had noted that it had managed to mobilise forces around ‘its essential core of the organised working class’ – Massey *et al.* were accurate in claiming that Hobsbawm did not envision the feminist movement or the mobilisation of women as quite equal partners in a hegemonic left project.¹¹⁴ Regarding class, Hobsbawm noted that even his critic Westergaard believed that the Labour Party could no longer simply

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, p. 9.

¹¹¹ Massey, Segal and Wainwright, ‘And Now for the Good News’, pp. 214, 225.

¹¹² Curran, ‘Why Kinnock Must Take A Chance’, MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7; J. Westergaard, ‘The Once and Future Class’ in Curran (ed.), *Future of the Left*, p. 77.

¹¹³ E. Hobsbawm, ‘Labour: Rump or Rebirth?’, *Marxism Today*, March 1984, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, p. 12.

appeal to class loyalties in order to win a majority. While other critics such as Labour MPs Eric Heffer and Tony Benn may have accepted that the manual working class had declined, Hobsbawm argued that this was not followed by a corresponding change in political approach. He believed they relied on the comfortable, but simplistic, notion that the working class was still a technical majority of the population and that this meant Labour could just continue ‘plugging on in the old way’.¹¹⁵ Both ‘old and new’ sections of the employed needed to be mobilised, and it was no longer possible to rely on the formula: ‘class=support for the workers’ party=being against capitalism=for socialism’.¹¹⁶ Hobsbawm, on the one hand, rejected the supposed promise of the new social movements and of making gender a central plank of left-wing politics, and, on the other, maintained a commitment to the working class, albeit stressing the extent to which the latter had been transformed utterly as well as the need for Labour to be the people’s party, not just that of the working class.

So what did Hobsbawm mean when he implied that Labour should not be only a class party? Clearly, he was sceptical about mobilisations around race and gender, and identity politics in general – he doubted their capacity to satisfy the demands of majoritarian politics. Rather, Hobsbawm suggested that cross-class or non-class issues needed to be addressed by the left – the Labour Party needed to resonate with ‘home-owners, people who are dissatisfied with their children’s schooling, or worried about law and order’. Among these bodies of people included ‘a lot of workers’, and Labour had managed to mobilise such a wide coalition of people in 1945. This would mean that Labour would become a party of the ‘majority of the working class’, instead of having a ‘modest future’ as a ‘coalition of minority pressure groups and interests’ and ‘social forces on the decline’. It would therefore be able to win back areas such as Stevenage,

¹¹⁵ Hobsbawm, ‘Rump or Rebirth?’, p. 9. Here he is responding to E. Heffer, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions II’, *Marxism Today*, December 1983, pp. 50-2, especially p. 51 and T. Benn in *City Limits*, 20-26 January 1984. Hobsbawm believed Westergaard was more robust on this issue.

¹¹⁶ Hobsbawm, ‘Rump or Rebirth?’, pp. 9, 11.

Harlow, Swindon and Slough, areas believed to be representative of emerging strata in society.¹¹⁷ Ironically, given his criticism of market researchers in ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, their new techniques were one of several tools that Labour modernisers used in the 1980s and 1990s to make sense of social change, often producing conclusions that resonated with Hobsbawm’s call for lost voters outside of Scotland, Wales and northern England (and warning against Livingstone-style rainbow alliances).¹¹⁸ Class clearly still held relevance for Hobsbawm, but left-wing politics could no longer be defined by the manual working class and, more broadly, the Labour Party needed to speak to the concerns of a wide cross-section of society.

But how did other thinkers based around *Marxism Today* approach the working class and understand how this class had changed and was changing in the mid-1980s? In 1984, Campbell’s *Wigan Pier Revisited* was published. Following a similar journey to that made by George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, she sought to describe ‘working-class experiences of poverty and politics’ in several of the same cities visited by Orwell in the 1930s.¹¹⁹ Campbell wrote how, unlike Orwell, she was ‘from the working class’, but that her left-wing and feminist politics placed her in an ‘awkward relationship with my own class’. The journey had shown, Campbell claimed, that men and masculinity at the level of everyday life ‘constitute[d] a systematic bloc of resistance to the women of their own community and class... [b]oth individual men and the political movements men have made within the working class are culpable.’ As a result, she believed that her politics possessed its own ‘critique of working-class life and institutions’.¹²⁰ Campbell affirmed the importance of women as part of the working class. Most of the working-class radicals she met were women, and it was they who were ‘most reflective and imaginative... who affirmed democratic ways of working... who affirmed egalitarianism’ – and whom the ‘men’s

¹¹⁷ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, pp. 9-10; Stedman Jones suggested that Hobsbawm was overly nostalgic for the 1940s in G. Stedman Jones, ‘Marching into History?’, in Curran (ed.), *Future of the Left*, pp. 3-22.

¹¹⁸ See Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 175 and Murphy, ‘Rainbow Alliance’ or the Focus Group?, p. 25

¹¹⁹ G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1937); Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, pp. 5-6. Carolyn Steedman also believed her politics placed her in an equally awkward relationship with her class in *Landscape for a Good Woman. A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986).

movement', however, continued to ignore.¹²¹ The labour movement's sexism, entangled in the sexism of everyday working-class life, meant that the left was failing to represent adequately the working class as a whole.

Also significant was her account of unemployed and homeless people, most of whom in the book were men. Just as Hobsbawm described 'the poor' in 1978, Campbell wrote of how the poorest in society were not being adequately served by society at large or by the labour movement – for many, the politics they had participated in when employed, the labour movement, no longer offered a support network and so they were forced to rely on a charitable sector infused with 'punitive and puritanical morality'. They, along with single mothers, were victims of a cross-class and cross-party assault on 'skivers' and 'scroungers'. The Labour Party was thus implicated in this 'political realignment' of wage-earners against the wage-less.¹²² There was a sense among these authors of a group of people at the bottom of society who were not adequately represented within and by the labour movement. Later, in 1986, Campbell wrote about how 'poor men and women' in the late 1960s and 1970s, together with black people more recently, had unsettled the 'butch economism and corporatism' of the labour movement.¹²³ Still, however, these groups remained marginal.

Traditional labourist class politics was considered too male and more broadly unrepresentative. Like Hobsbawm, Campbell also criticised Eric Heffer in 1984, but in her case it was for the implication that the Labour Party was the only 'agent' of change, to the exclusion of the new social movements, and for Heffer's suggestion that the Labour Party's renewal had been completed, to which she retorted: 'tell that to the women and the black comrades in your party'.¹²⁴ Campbell contended that women's room for manoeuvre in the party was restricted

¹²¹ Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, pp. 233-4.

¹²² Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited*, pp. 21, 22, 24.

¹²³ B. Campbell, 'Causes Without A Rebel', *Marxism Today*, October 1986, p. 9.

¹²⁴ Campbell, 'How the Other Half Lives', p. 23; Heffer, 'Labour's Lost Millions II'. The Labour Party saw the development of Black Sections, made of black supporters, develop in the party from 1983. There was a roundtable discussion of these issues in *Marxism Today* – see 'Black Sections: Radical Demand... or Distraction?', *Marxism Today*, September 1985, pp. 31-6.

according to ‘men’s permission’. Recalling the previously-noted 1982 conference, she wrote that the union block vote, ‘not for the first time’, was used ‘like a B-52’ to ‘blast’ the demands put to the conference by the women’s conference.¹²⁵ Jon Lawrence referred to the ‘anti-individualist logic’ of the trade union block vote – an example of the survival of conceptions of the self as corporate in twentieth-century Britain, in his account of paternalism and British modernity.¹²⁶ Yet, it would be a mistake to regard Campbell’s argument as purely part of a growing *individualist* attack on the block vote. Instead, she considered the block vote to have, in this case, obstructed a more inclusive and representative corporate conception of the self, and to have limited women, *as a group*, rather than as purely individuals. Labour was neglecting ‘working class women’s sex and class’ – it needed to give up on its ‘conservative politics of everyday life’ and engage with women’s issues and feminism.¹²⁷ Engaging with feminism would need to avoid superficiality, however. Campbell wrote that genuine alliances were ‘the political space in which different political and social forces encounter each other, enter into dialogue, and are transformed by each other.’ Even Livingstone, deemed by Campbell to be ‘among the most sensitive Labour politicians around’, still held an ‘instrumental’ view of alliances – an insufficient departure from labourist ‘party chauvinism’.¹²⁸

Fundamentally, Campbell believed Labour upheld an ‘old sexual consensus’ which was ‘already exploding’, and so Labour was ‘*lagging behind* changes in the culture and in the people’.¹²⁹ Stuart Hall made a similar charge regarding the left’s attitude to cultural change based on patterns of consumption. Hall claimed that the left had not kept at pace with ‘enormous cultural changes’ which had taken place since the 1950s, another example of how authors in this period

¹²⁵ Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 19.

¹²⁶ Lawrence, ‘Paternalism, Class and the British Path to Modernity’, p. 152.

¹²⁷ Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 20. To some extent, attitudes in the party were changing, if slowly – Payling, “Socialist Republic”, pp. 617-18.

¹²⁸ Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, p. 22-3. Livingstone, however, was far from sensitive in his attitude towards Jewish people. In addition to more recent insensitive comments, from 1981 Livingstone co-edited the *Labour Herald* which produced a number of anti-Semitic articles and cartoons in the 1980s.

¹²⁹ Campbell, ‘How the Other Half Lives’, pp. 20, 21, 23.

rooted their analyses in changes occurring before Thatcher's government and in decades previous to the 1980s.¹³⁰ He rejected the *embourgeoisement* thesis, claiming that class relations did not 'disappear' when 'the particular historic cultural forms in which class is "lived" and experienced at a particular period, change'. Yet, this did not mean that nothing had changed or 'could change': consumer capitalism's televisions, fridges, cars, washing machines and magazines had, in fact, 'refashion[ed] and 'reshape[d]' social relations and culture deeply and irreversibly. Mass consumption did not erode barriers of class, but it did 'modify everyday life-patterns' and the experience and aspirations of the 'majority' of ordinary people. And these changes were in part beneficial: 'many working class (and other) women' were able to enter the labour market and had been freed from the most arduous forms of domestic labour, for example.¹³¹ Class had not disappeared but the culture in which class relations were experienced had changed dramatically.

In many respects, Hall was repeating ideas expressed as early as 1958 in *Universities & Left Review*, where he argued that cultural change relating to consumption could create a *false* sense of 'classlessness' among the working class. Yet, Hall in 1984 was much less invested in 'throw[ing] over the system', even if he maintained that class remained relevant.¹³² As part of this later argument, Hall castigated '[m]iddle class socialists' for preferring their working class 'poor but *pure*: unsullied by contact with the market'.¹³³ It is significant that Hall employed this language of class to discredit his opponents on the left, perhaps anticipating an accusation of selling out: indeed, Hall's argument was an attempt to accommodate individualism and consumerism with class politics.¹³⁴ Daniel T. Rodgers suggested that the arguments made by Hall and others in the 1980s were part of a broader intellectual shift in the West whereby '[a]s the concept of class

¹³⁰ Hall, 'Culture Gap', p. 18.

¹³¹ Hall, 'Culture Gap', pp. 18, 19.

¹³² S. Hall, 'A Sense of Classlessness', in Hall, *Selected Political Writings*, p. 42 [originally published in *Universities & Left Review*, 5, Autumn 1958, pp. 26-32].

¹³³ Hall, 'Culture Gap', p. 19.

¹³⁴ See Chapter Two.

proved a more fragile vessel than had been imagined.... the domain of culture seemed to loom increasingly large'.¹³⁵ Hall clearly maintained the validity of class as a category, but he was indeed suggesting that such a category was impacted by cultural change – in this case, changes related to lifestyle, individualism and consumerism. Hall contended that addressing these cultural transformations would enable the left to resonate with those 'less depressed' parts of London or of the south east, not just those strongholds of 'Brixton or Clydeside'.¹³⁶ Much like Hobsbawm, Hall argued that the left needed to broaden its appeal and understand cultural change, even if it need not reject the validity of class.

However, a concrete form of negotiating social change in politics and exciting much interest in *Marxism Today* in the mid-1980s was Livingstone's Labour-controlled GLC. Historians have argued that Labour in local government in London in the 1980s provided a space where 'class and identity politics operated together'.¹³⁷ The GLC's grants policy, as discussed in Chapter Two, also offered financial support to women's, black and ethnic minority, and gay and lesbian groups, as well as to peace organisations such as 'Babies against the Bomb'. The media frenzy around this policy to some extent distorted a much broader attempt to connect municipal government with civil society in general,¹³⁸ but the attempt by the GLC to support the organisations of women and minorities, as well as the new social movements, was significant. Indeed, as Lucy Delap suggested, such local government support was very important to many of the 'radical projects' of the 1980s.¹³⁹ The GLC was itself the site of 'new left coalitions', and the demands of 'feminists, black activists and lesbians and gays were granted an unprecedented degree of legitimacy...'¹⁴⁰ It was, as Campbell wrote after its abolition in 1986, considered by many in *Marxism Today* as 'the progressive paradigm'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, p. 98.

¹³⁶ Hall, 'Culture Gap', pp. 21, 22.

¹³⁷ Eley, *Forging Democracy*, p. 461; Payling, "Socialist Republic", pp. 603, 604; See also Payling, 'City Limits'.

¹³⁸ Davis, 'From GLC to GLA', p. 101.

¹³⁹ Delap, 'Feminist Bookshops', p. 189.

¹⁴⁰ A. M. Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality. Britain, 1968-1990* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 185.

¹⁴¹ Campbell, 'Causes Without A Rebel', p. 9.

Discussions about the GLC were proxies for wider debates about class politics, as well as those between different sections of the left. Campbell prefaced her 1984 celebration of the GLC's approach with the claim that her argument was 'not about abandoning class struggle, but about reclaiming it and renewing it'.¹⁴² She again asserted that her intervention was about not only adapting the notion of class struggle but, through this notion of reclamation, implying also that the left's dominant conception of it was insufficiently representative of all those in the class. She ultimately believed Livingstone was placing the 'cultural revolution happening in civil society' into the centre of the political arena.¹⁴³ She denounced, however, the 'promiscuous alliance' Livingstone had made with Trotskyites such as Tariq Ali and Ernest Mandel. Not only did they promote a suspect intellectual vanguardism, but they also, together with Tony Chater of the *Morning Star*, possessed 'unreconstructed' views on class and politics, which seemingly reduced everything to a 'class question'.¹⁴⁴ Crucially, she argued that the legitimacy of the women's movement and other movements as 'progressive' did not stem ultimately from a 'concept of class'.¹⁴⁵ Campbell thus separated the concept of 'progressive' from that of class politics – the latter could of course be part of the former, but a class analysis was not a necessary condition of being 'progressive'. Livingstone was in dubious company, moreover, because these members of the 'far Left/Tribunites' fundamentally held the same views as Neil Kinnock on the topic of 'feminism, blacks and queers', and all shared problematic assumptions about 'what the working class is, who and what is important within it'.¹⁴⁶ Notwithstanding a shared scepticism towards the hard left, Campbell's views were at odds with Hobsbawm as regards identity politics as well as with Kinnock, to whom Hobsbawm was seen as a close 'guru'.¹⁴⁷ Campbell also did

¹⁴² Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', p. 22.

¹⁴³ Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', pp. 25, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', p. 26.

¹⁴⁶ Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', p. 26. Campbell was later proved correct that Kinnock, his closest advisers (such as his press secretary Patricia Hewitt), and other modernisers were deeply sceptical about full and open support for issues taken up by the GLC – Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts*, p. 283; Fielding, *The Labour Party*, p. 139; Murphy, 'Rainbow Alliance' or the Focus Group?', pp. 5, 10.

¹⁴⁷ Curran, 'Why Kinnock Must Take A Chance', MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7; Callinicos, 'Guru on the Wrong Road', MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/6/4/7, p. 10; and Davis, 'Labourism' and the New Left', p. 50.

not hold Livingstone's concept of the 'alliance of the dispossessed' in high regard: she re-stated her conception of alliances as 'political processes which transform the constituent parts in their encounter with each other' and suggested Livingstone's ideas rendered relationships with movements, women and minorities as if they were a question of 'arithmetic... adding them up so that they become a majority'.¹⁴⁸ She once again repudiated an instrumental approach to these social groups and their movements.

Yet, of course, the GLC was eventually abolished in 1986. Jacques and Campbell wrote in *Marxism Today* praising the GLC's efforts in identifying and celebrating 'new constituencies' while remaining committed to the working class. For instance, the GLC demonstrated a concern for economic inequality through its 'Fares Fair' policy of 1981, which Jacques and Campbell argued had rendered London 'a place which working class people who live ten miles from the city centre can enjoy'.¹⁴⁹ Importantly, however, they also argued that the GLC made Labour 'more representative' of Londoners through its policies on women and minorities – the concept of *representation* was explicit here.¹⁵⁰ Campbell and Jacques argued Labour had had 'no choice' but to search for and establish new constituencies in response to the decline of Labour's 'traditional support base':

The traditional labour movement and its old core constituencies are very weak in London. The manufacturing base is very small. The major sources of employment are increasingly the finance, administrative, service and cultural sectors. There now are but a handful of dockers. The printworkers face a not so dissimilar future. The old labour movement, in that sense, is becoming increasingly marginal.¹⁵¹

Despite Campbell's previous criticisms of the GLC's approach to women and minorities, she and Jacques now praised the fact that it had taken on 'responsibility' for 'new' priorities around

Hobsbawm, however, rejected such labels and, indeed, they had only met twice in person, once at the 1983 Labour Party conference and again for a *Marxism Today* interview in October 1984. However, Diamond and Pike describe persuasively his influence on Kinnock as 'significant', providing a 'powerful contribution to the political ambience on the British left' – 'A Very Useful Comrade?', p. 1. See also Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*, pp. 517-23.

¹⁴⁸ Campbell, 'Politics, Pyramids and People', p. 26. Eley suggested that councils did indeed have such an instrumental and arithmetical approach to these identities and movement – *Forging Democracy*, pp. 467-9.

¹⁴⁹ Campbell and Jacques, 'Goodbye to the GLC', p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Campbell and Jacques, 'Goodbye to the GLC', p. 8.

¹⁵¹ Campbell and Jacques, 'Goodbye to the GLC', pp. 8, 9.

gender, race and sexuality.¹⁵² Certainly, others contributing to *Marxism Today*, such as Paud Hegarty, a gay rights campaigner and manager of the London bookshop ‘Gay’s the Word’, remarked that the GLC had, through its funding of community spaces for lesbian and gay people, ‘brought gay politics on to the political agenda in London... [s]pending money on gays is no longer outrageous’. And this was in the context of ‘entrenched homophobia’ on the left and within the trade union movement.¹⁵³ The emphasis on the GLC in particular was because it was in many respects an outlier with respect to local government elsewhere: as Payling showed, the GLC was not representative of all new urban left Labour-controlled councils in the 1980s – local politicians in Sheffield and Liverpool subordinated women’s and race issues, and other forms of ‘lifestyle politics’, to class-based politics.¹⁵⁴ Certainly, Campbell and Jacques recognised that it was only the GLC which had transformed, not the labour movement as a whole.¹⁵⁵

Hobsbawm believed differently. The 1987 general election served to clarify but not drastically alter his views. He claimed the election confirmed the loss of majority support among the working class, as barely more than one in three ‘skilled’ workers voted Labour; sixty per cent of trade unionists voted for other parties; eighty per cent of white-collar workers did not vote Labour; and less than half of ‘semi-skilled’ and ‘unskilled’ workers voted for ‘the party of the working class’.¹⁵⁶ How had this happened? Hobsbawm surmised that Thatcherism had used its strength to erode Labour’s ‘base’: through the right to buy, privatisation, and making ‘worker-buyers identify with capitalism’, *via* policies and campaigns on share ownership.¹⁵⁷ As a result, the task for Labour was two-fold. Firstly, it had to consider which ‘social forces’ were capable of forming the base for a ‘progressive government’. Hobsbawm rejected the so-called ‘loony left’

¹⁵² Campbell and Jacques, ‘Goodbye to the GLC’, p. 8.

¹⁵³ P. Hegarty, ‘The AIDS Scare’, *Marxism Today*, May 1986, p. 15. Spending money on the lesbian and gay community remained, however, controversial, and was bound up with ‘loony left’ discourse – see Smith, *New Right Discourse*, pp. 185-91.

¹⁵⁴ Payling, ‘Socialist Republic’, p. 617. See Davis, ‘From GLC to GLA’, p. 99.

¹⁵⁵ Campbell and Jacques, ‘Goodbye to the GLC’, p. 10.

¹⁵⁶ Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, p. 15. See also, Leadbeater, ‘Sid In Us All’.

politics of the new urban left as capable of alienating both the ‘progressive’ middle classes and the ‘workers’. The ‘social coalition’ he envisioned, therefore, was one which connected people within and across classes, based upon ‘*interests and attitudes*’ – fundamentally, all ‘major classes’ were now utterly divided and so a ‘simple class appeal’ would not work.¹⁵⁸ It no longer made sense to focus on just reclaiming ‘the working-class vote’ as Heffer suggested.¹⁵⁹ In different ways, the ‘loony left’, the Bennites and Arthur Scargill were each mistaken. The second aspect of Hobsbawm’s task for the Labour Party, additionally, was to provide a transformative vision of society which was ‘credible’ as well as ‘attractive’. This would broaden Labour’s appeal beyond its traditional base, and, in any case, ‘class politics could no longer be credibly counterposed to “people’s politics”’.¹⁶⁰ Kinnock’s reorientation of the Labour Party, opposing the hard left and the Bennites, and abandoning unpopular policies, was a step in the right direction.¹⁶¹ For Hobsbawm, a majoritarian strategy was to be found more clearly in a cross-class, popular programme than one based upon seeking to negotiate identity politics with class politics.

Overall, by 1987, class politics was not disregarded by those writing in *Marxism Today*, but there was a continued desire to deconstruct a particular, traditional understanding of the working class. Those such as Campbell sought, once again, to claim that the category of the working class was more *representative* if it included women and minorities, and if the left engaged properly with their movements. The left also needed to keep up with changes in culture, many of which concerned these newly-assertive groups in society, as well as to broader changes to lifestyle, consumption and everyday life which mediated the experience of class. Movements, women and minorities were viewed as the source of the left’s potential new set of constituencies

¹⁵⁸ Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, pp. 15-17.

¹⁵⁹ E. Heffer in *The Guardian*, 23 June 1987, as quoted in *Marxism Today*, October 1987, p. 17.

¹⁶⁰ Hobsbawm, ‘Out of the Wilderness’, p. 17.

¹⁶¹ Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*, pp. 520-3.

and as being at the forefront of social and cultural change.¹⁶² To many, the GLC constituted an imperfect version of an approach which sought to blend class politics with identity politics. Hobsbawm, however, emerges as an outlier with regard to others writing in *Marxism Today* in these years – he was now a clear sceptic of identity politics and notions of alliances of the ‘dispossessed’.

In *Marxism Today*, these debates in the mid-1980s were largely empirical ruminations on social change or grounded in personal experience of social movements, in contrast to more abstract philosophical discussions about the categories of socialist theory also occurring at this time. As discussed briefly in Chapter One, Laclau and Mouffe published *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985. This challenged the supremacy of the working class in socialist theory and advocated for a left-wing strategy for ‘radical democracy’ which incorporated a number of autonomous movements.¹⁶³ Laclau reiterated his position in the *Marxism Today* in 1987: the working class was ‘a social agent limited in its objectives and possibilities’ and hence not the universal class it was thought to be in traditional Marxist theory. It was not ‘the *necessary* agent of global human emancipation’.¹⁶⁴ There were clearly similarities between Laclau and Mouffe and some aspects of the rethinking happening in *Marxism Today*. David Forgacs, broadly more radical than most writing in the journal, reviewed Laclau and Mouffe critically, suggesting their revisionism ‘raises as many problems as it solves’. He asked: ‘[i]n crude terms, what is one actually going to *do* about the private property of one’s middle-class partners in a hegemonic alliance?’¹⁶⁵ Yet, perhaps symptomatic of the general unease with traditional left-wing class politics, even Forgacs believed that *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ‘deserve[d] a wide audience’.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Wainwright even went so far to say that these movements, together with various community campaigns, peace activists and militant trade unionists, were ‘a party in waiting’ – H. Wainwright, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (London, 1987).

¹⁶³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. For a critique of this and other positions see E. M. Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New ‘True’ Socialism* (London, 1986).

¹⁶⁴ E. Laclau, ‘Class War and After’, *Marxism Today*, April 1987, p. 30.

¹⁶⁵ D. Forgacs, ‘Dethroning the Working Class?’, *Marxism Today*, May 1985, p. 43.

¹⁶⁶ Forgacs, ‘Dethroning the Working Class?’, p. 43.

Laclau and Mouffe were not as invested as many of the *Marxism Today* authors in arguing for a more representative conception of the 'working class', and they did not shape the interventions made in the journal in the mid-1980s, but they demonstrate how the primacy of class was being challenged on multiple levels of abstraction at this time.

Individualism vs. collectivism, postmodernism, and inequality: class and identity politics
in the 'new times' era, 1988-91

At the end of the 1980s, the authors in *Marxism Today* reflected on two phenomena of the past decade. The 'changing sociology of class relations', and the left's failure to adapt accordingly, explained partly why the Conservatives had been the 'dominant power' of the decade.¹⁶⁷ But, in addition, in the 1980s the Labour Party and the left had become the 'magnet' for movements emerging out of the 1960s and 1970s, and integrating such currents had been another source of 'agony'.¹⁶⁸ The left had had to grapple with both class and the movements of newly-mobilised identity groups. Hall, who had stressed the importance of attracting the support of women and minorities and of the strength and vigour of their movements in the early 1980s,¹⁶⁹ was beginning to show concern about the capacity of these new constituencies to form the basis of a majoritarian politics. In 1988, he remarked that the lesson of the decade had so far been that it was 'not easy to convert those different minorities into a political majority'.¹⁷⁰ However, unlike Hobsbawm and in spite of this observation, Hall and others in *Marxism Today* did not reject identity politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in fact the new social

¹⁶⁷ S. Benton, 'The Party Is Over', *Marxism Today*, March 1989, pp. 35, 37.

¹⁶⁸ J. Weeks, 'Values For Many', *Marxism Today*, December 1989, p. 30.

¹⁶⁹ Hall, 'Thatcherism – A New Stage?', p. 28; Hall, "Little Caesars", p. 195.

¹⁷⁰ S. Hall, *The Voluntary Sector Under Attack?* (London, 1989), p. 19, as quoted by Payling, "Socialist Republic", pp. 624-5 – Hall made these remarks in a Question and Answer session following a talk at the Islington Voluntary Action Council in 1988.

movements and broader questions of ‘identity’ were argued to be central to the ‘new times’. It was in these final years of the journal that many of these authors clearly de-prioritised class as part of their politics. However, class as a category was never completely rejected, and some believed that new social movements and a politics of identity could be bound up with a left-wing, collectivist project. In this respect, I dissent from Jenny Andersson’s suggestion that all authors in *Marxism Today* in the new times era believed that ‘[c]ollective projects were dead’.¹⁷¹ In any case, a concern for inequality was maintained in this period, and the language of inequality provided a means of articulating issues of poverty and social stratification in British society, as well as to suggest the continuing relevance of class.

By the mid- to late 1980s, parts of the left were becoming slightly more receptive to identity politics.¹⁷² For instance, the Labour Party formally committed itself to equal rights for lesbian and gay people in 1985. Yet, more positive left-wing attitudes and action on gender, sexual and racial politics did not emerge in a linear and all-encompassing fashion. For instance, Sheffield Labour’s increased receptivity to identity politics was only when it could be brought comfortably into ‘traditional class issues’ that, Payling argued, were aimed at the ‘material’ needs of its ‘mainly working class’ constituents.¹⁷³ ‘Loony left’ political and media discourse, and the attendant public reaction, placed a question mark over local government funding for minority groups.¹⁷⁴ By the end of the 1980s, moreover, Labour modernisers rejected notions of a rainbow alliance due to the foregrounding of ‘loony left’ discourse as electorally burdensome in their use of qualitative opinion research techniques.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ J. Andersson, *The Library and the Workshop. Social Democracy and Capitalism in the Knowledge Age* (Stanford, CA, 2010), p. 49.

¹⁷² Payling, “Socialist Republic”, pp. 605, 623.

¹⁷³ Payling, “Socialist Republic”, pp. 612-13.

¹⁷⁴ Payling, ‘City Limits’, pp. 258, 266 and Brooke, *Sexual Politics*, pp. 241, 248.

¹⁷⁵ Murphy, “Rainbow Alliance’ or the Focus Group?”, p. 25.

The playwright David Edgar believed all this was mistaken. In Birmingham, he wrote, opposition to women's and equalities committees in local government came from the advocates of traditional 'right-wing labourism': the 'white men' of the 'dreary old Right' of the Labour Party.¹⁷⁶ Edgar wrote that what these parts of the left misunderstood was the fact that the 'new social movements' had 'the potential to address an increasing proportion of the actual labour force' as was then developing in the 'real world'. Proportionately more black people and more women were in work, and due to geographical mobility within Britain, many individuals were now defining themselves according to sexuality, race or culture, instead of family, geography and 'even class'.¹⁷⁷ Edgar believed that the left was not, therefore, recognising and acting on social and cultural change. They were failing to attend to 'the reality of the social and industrial structure' as it was.¹⁷⁸ Subtle but still evident, additionally, was a suggestion that class had become less important.

Others agreed that the socio-economic structure was changing, and that class was less important, but were more pessimistic about what this meant for left-wing politics. Writing in the October 1988 issue of *Marxism Today*, which launched the 'new times' project, the sociologist John Urry suggested that new social movements were evidence of an increasingly individualistic society associated with the shift towards 'disorganised capitalism'.¹⁷⁹ Under 'organised capitalism', which characterised Western societies in the twentieth century up to the 1950s and 1960s, politics had been structured by social class, whereas under disorganised capitalism, 'personal identity' and 'individual self-assertion' became highly-revered aspirations in Western societies.¹⁸⁰ This 'radical individualism' had the consequence of challenging structures of authority such as the family or the monarchy, as well as questioning the premise for joining and

¹⁷⁶ D. Edgar, 'When The Hardline Is Right', *Marxism Today*, February 1988, p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ Edgar, 'When The Hardline Is Right', p. 30.

¹⁷⁸ Edgar, 'When The Hardline Is Right', p. 30.

¹⁷⁹ J. Urry, 'Disorganised Capitalism', *Marxism Today*, October 1988, pp. 30-3.

¹⁸⁰ Urry, 'Disorganised Capitalism', pp. 30, 31.

participating in ‘collective organisations’ such as trade unions.¹⁸¹ Urry was influenced by the New Left intellectual and historian Raphael Samuel, who had written in a 1985 *New Left Review* article that ‘collectivity’ had been discredited by the new radical individualism, particularly those concepts of ‘working-class collectivism’.¹⁸² This individualist ferment, Urry wrote, had produced not only the new social movements, but ‘anti-state neo-liberalism’ and he regretted the long-gone ‘optimism and certainties’ of organised capitalism.¹⁸³ Neo-liberalism and the new social movements were bedfellows to him. In addition, these social movements were also closely associated with the development of a ‘powerful middle or service class’.¹⁸⁴ Notable here is the implication that new social movements were fundamentally middle class, in addition to the suggestion that the growing number of service workers were not parts of a new working class (as claimed previously by authors in *Marxism Today*) but were actually just straightforwardly middle class.

However, not all those writing in the journal agreed with such a thesis. The Swedish-born sociologist Göran Therborn wrote that the women’s and environmental movements were actually tendencies of ‘universalism’, the former challenging ‘male particularisms’ in conceptions of freedom, equality, solidarity and in socialism itself. He did not deny ‘radical individualism’ as an aspect of feminism but claimed that it managed to combine this with ‘collective action and solidarity’.¹⁸⁵ To describe such movements as purely individualist, therefore, was to misinterpret their nature. Therborn also littered his essay with references to the ‘progressive’ women’s movement; that movements based around environmentalism and human rights issues were

¹⁸¹ Urry, ‘Disorganised Capitalism’, p. 31. In this respect, Urry recognised the importance of ‘popular individualism’ and of the decline of deference to his own time that has been identified in Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’ and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*. Of course, however, Urry did not appreciate how class remained important in ‘complex and often contradictory’ ways in late twentieth-century Britain, in spite of and as a result of popular individualism and the decline of deference, as these authors recognise – see Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Discourses of “Class”’, p. 310.

¹⁸² Urry, ‘Disorganised Capitalism’, p. 31; R. Samuel, ‘The Lost World of British Communism’, *New Left Review*, I/154, November-December 1985, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸³ Urry, ‘Disorganised Capitalism’, p. 33.

¹⁸⁴ Urry, ‘Disorganised Capitalism’, p. 33.

¹⁸⁵ G. Therborn, ‘Vorsprung Durch Rethink’, *Marxism Today*, February 1989, p. 30.

‘progressive forces’; and that his intention was to map out the duties of ‘radical (socialist, progressive, humanist, democratic) politics’.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps because these movements were not considered traditionally to be core elements of ‘socialism’, unlike the labour movement and the working class, the term ‘progressive’ was employed to make the case for the new social movements as universalist and (at least partially) collectivist, and hence relevant for a left-wing politics. Indeed, the authors of the *Manifesto for New Times* wrote that, as well as class, ‘other sources of collective identity among women and black people’ will be central to ‘progressive politics’ in the 1990s. A ‘common sense of purpose’ would only develop among these diverse social groups if they saw that there was a ‘common ideological home for progressive politics’.¹⁸⁷ Emily Robinson has noted how the notion of the ‘new times’ project as ‘progressive’ was ‘central to its identity’ and illuminated how such language was criticised from within the CPGB for seemingly vaguely gesturing towards left-wing principles ‘in the place of rigorous socialist analysis’.¹⁸⁸ The term, however, possessed an important rhetorical role in the effort to persuade others on the left of the centrality of women, minorities and their movements to a renewed left project. To these authors, in contrast to Urry, social movements were not the antithesis to a collective project and, with an inclusivity-oriented left, could unite under the one umbrella of ‘progressive’ politics.

The academic and activist Anna Marie Smith, however, believed that the term ‘progressive’ was symptomatic of how some parts of the left all too often retained the form, if not the content, of ‘class reductionism’. Smith wrote in 1991 that many feminists, lesbian and gay people, black people, and ‘greens’ were beginning to regard the ‘rainbow coalition’ strategy with suspicion. She described her experience of a protest against section 28 she attended in

¹⁸⁶ Therborn, ‘Vorsprung Durch Rethink’, pp. 29, 31.

¹⁸⁷ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁸ Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, pp. 244-5.

Manchester in 1988.¹⁸⁹ Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prohibited the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality by local government.¹⁹⁰ At the protest, a Labour Party spokesperson had tried to suggest that protestors were there also in response to the poll tax, which was due to be introduced in Scotland in 1989, and in England and Wales in 1990. Smith believed that underlying the comments was an assumption, shared by much of the left, of politics as ‘a struggle between two camps: the “progressive” movements and the socialists versus the Right’.¹⁹¹ Influencing Smith was Laclau and Mouffe’s critique of ‘class reductionism’, which likewise criticised Marxist accounts of politics as a battle between two camps: the class nature of political actors determining whether they were ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’.¹⁹² Smith was objecting to a tendency indeed of many of those writing in *Marxism Today* to assume that new social movements simply needed to be led by socialists to their ‘natural location in a coalition against the Right’. These movements were not necessarily ‘progressive’ and were also not homogenous: debates over pornography among feminists, for instance, demonstrated that there was not a ‘singular’ women’s movement.¹⁹³ Smith called for a more sensitive and sophisticated approach to the new social movements, using ‘an ongoing process of decision-making’ or – as expressed by the post-colonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha – ‘the politics of negotiation’.¹⁹⁴ Such an awareness would enable a ‘truly equal learning process’, where both the left and the movements would transform each other.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ A. M. Smith, ‘The End of the Rainbow’, *Marxism Today*, February 1991, p. 24. This is the same Anna Marie Smith that wrote *New Right Discourse* – at the time, Smith was a member of Feminists Against Censorship, an organisation set up in opposition to the censorship of pornography.

¹⁹⁰ The influence of ‘loony left’ local government discourse meant that the precise location of section 28 in law was ‘not accidental’ – Smith, *New Right Discourse*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹¹ Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 24.

¹⁹² Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 24. Laclau and Mouffe believed that class reductionism was located in the tradition of the ‘Jacobin imaginary’ initiated by the French Revolution – see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. xxii.

¹⁹³ Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 25 – see also A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women’s Liberation*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1987) where the authors write in the preface to this second edition how, by 1986, they were ‘writing about something that was no longer with us in the same form: women’s liberation as a self-contained and singular movement had become part of our recent history’ (p. vii).

¹⁹⁴ Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 25 – see H. K. Bhabha, ‘The Third Space’, in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, 1990), pp. 207-21.

¹⁹⁵ Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 25.

Those associated with *Marxism Today* and the Eurocommunist currents within the CPGB had advocated a similar politics of negotiation in the latter years of the journal and the party, in spite of their descriptions of new social movements as ‘progressive’. The *Manifesto for New Times* called for differences between movements and the socialist movement to be ‘acknowledged and constantly renegotiated’ – they could not simply be ‘subsumed within a spurious unity on the Left’.¹⁹⁶ Comments such as these arose as a result of the influence of those such as Campbell. Commenting on amendments to the draft manifesto, she wrote that ‘we should avoid militaristic or domineering language’, as they were ‘describing movements and relationships between movements and people’.¹⁹⁷ Among many in *Marxism Today*, an instrumental approach to the new social movements was ardently rejected.

Smith’s essay was additionally representative of the de-prioritisation of class issues in this late period. She praised supposedly non-reductionist forms of Marxism where class was treated like ‘any other identity’, in the sense that a given working-class identity was ‘not taken as a guarantee of a “progressive” tendency’.¹⁹⁸ Not only was Smith implying that class was just part of a whole range of identities – and therefore not the most important, transcending the others as a result of its universality – she was also de-coupling the working class from the notion that it was always progressive.

The influence of postmodernist ideas also served to reduce the importance of class to these authors, similarly suggesting how class was just one other identity, just one other dimension of power. In the ‘new times’ era, theories of postmodernity were the topic of much discussion within *Marxism Today* and it was recognised that such theories posed a fundamental challenge to the left.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, many drew insights from this body of thought as part of their revisionism. Rosalind Brunt claimed in 1989 that an important idea from the first volume

¹⁹⁶ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ Beatrix Campbell in ‘Amendments to Draft Party Programme’, c. April 1989, LHASC, CPGB papers, CP/CENT/COMM/07/07, p. 38.

¹⁹⁸ Smith, ‘End of the Rainbow’, p. 24.

¹⁹⁹ Hebdige, ‘After the Masses’, pp. 48-9.

of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* was the notion that 'power is everywhere'. It operated horizontally 'as much as' vertically, it did not come from a 'singly-directed source', and nor was it 'governed by one particular set of people, the ruling class'.²⁰⁰ Power spread widely and deeply meant, additionally, that there were multiple points of resistance in society. An identity, such as that of 'the homosexual', could be re-claimed and rendered more empowering as, indeed, it had been by queer groups in the twentieth century.²⁰¹ For Brunt, this understanding meant that politics was 'radically altered': it no longer made 'sense' to 'talk in any simple way of "the priorities" or "the main thing", against which other struggles are subordinated, marginalised, or, as we know, infinitely postponed'.²⁰² Implicit here was disdain for a traditional politics on the left which subordinated other struggles to the class struggle. Brunt also claimed elsewhere in this essay that, when an individual was born, they were stamped with 'a colour, a gender, a class, a nationality and "belonging" to a family'.²⁰³ Class was simply one of a range of identities assigned to people by discourses of power. Addressing accusations that the 'new times' debate had abandoned class and loss of faith in the working class, Brunt argued that a politics of identity could in fact help to foster a 'more rigorous and dynamic concept of class'.²⁰⁴ Clearly, however, this understanding of class was one which, in essence, rendered it less important – even if it was not disregarded.

Furthermore, Hall was also influenced by postmodernism, and while he was not uncritical about these ideas, this body of thought did influence his thinking on identity. In a 1988 essay, Hall described how theories of post-Fordism, of which he was sympathetic, signalled social pluralism as well as fragmentation, and the 'weakening of older collective solidarities and block identities and the emergence of new identities'. The collective social subjects of class, nation and ethnic group had become more 'segmented and "pluralised"', as the 'individual

²⁰⁰ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 157; M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (3 vols, New York, 1978-86), i.

²⁰¹ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 157.

²⁰² Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 157.

²⁰³ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 153.

²⁰⁴ Brunt, 'Politics of Identity', p. 150.

subject' has become more important.²⁰⁵ Hence, class had not evaporated but it had thoroughly altered. Hall agreed with the Marxist philosopher Marshall Berman, similarly sceptical of *extreme* postmodernism, who had written about how modern 'environments and experiences' cut across the boundaries of categories such as class, 'not destroying them entirely' but undermining them nevertheless.²⁰⁶ Hall therefore believed that the theorists of postmodernism, such as Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, were extreme deconstructionists, but he also believed they spoke to genuine transformations associated with post-Fordism: the now more important individual subject was composed of multiple 'selves' or identities, 'differently placed or *positioned* by different discourses and practices.'²⁰⁷ Hall was not completely despairing about this state of affairs, and in line with Brunt and Foucault, he believed that this did not mean there was no longer resistance to the 'system'. Instead, as discussed in Chapter One, he claimed there had been a 'proliferation' of new sites of opposition, namely those associated with the new social movements which had generalised politics into spheres 'hitherto the left assumed to be apolitical', such as the family and sexuality. There was no single 'power game' but 'more a network of strategies and powers and their articulations'.²⁰⁸ Hence, politics was not all about the class struggle. Payling suggested that after the 1987 general election defeat for Labour, Hall was 'forced to take a different tone', and so he became fixated on the subjectivity of politics.²⁰⁹ It is unclear whether the 1987 election was the key driver of this, but it is accurate to describe the ideas outlined above as a shift in Hall's thought – more interested in *identities*, more (tentatively) post-modern, and suggesting that identities of race and gender were as fragmented as those of class.²¹⁰ In 1992, he would describe identity in the modern world as 'always an open, complex,

²⁰⁵ Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', pp. 250, 251.

²⁰⁶ M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York, 1982), as quoted by Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', p. 251.

²⁰⁷ Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', pp. 251-2 and, for Hall on Baudrillard, p. 262. Hall cites in this essay J. Baudrillard *The Mirror of Production*, tr. M. Poster (St Louis, MO, 1979) and J.-F. Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report of Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester, 1984).

²⁰⁸ Hall, 'Meaning of New Times', p. 261.

²⁰⁹ Payling, "Socialist Republic", p. 625.

²¹⁰ Eley, *Forging Democracy*, p. 473.

unfinished game – always under construction’, and would stress the need to ‘live with difference’.²¹¹ Identities were in this respect not straightforwardly determined by socio-economic conditions.

This postmodern emphasis and the broader context of the de-emphasis of class, together with the notion that postmodernism had brought down the meta-narrative of class struggle,²¹² were the materials marshalled by critics of *Marxism Today* in the late 1980s to suggest that they had abandoned class politics and the working class.²¹³ Michael Rustin, in a wide-ranging critique of ‘new times’, argued that at a time when government policy was aimed at a great ‘restratification of British society’, it was an ‘odd time’ to be discussing the ‘obsolescence’ of class. Moreover, Rustin considered post-Fordism to be a global strategy of the capitalist class, whereby ‘Fordism’ was simply moving elsewhere across the globe. The prioritisation of ‘emergent social strata’ by *Marxism Today* was, in addition, ‘too much too soon’: post-Fordist models did not account for how much of the old world was still there.²¹⁴ Essentially, Rustin maintained that class was still relevant because Thatcherism was a class project; post-Fordism was part of capital’s global project; and society had not changed as much as the ‘new times’ discourse suggested it had. To Rustin, the enthusiasm for identity and individualism was thus a key part of how both the Labour Party and *Marxism Today* had capitulated to Thatcherism, failing to recognise the importance of class-based collectivism. He suggested that their general outlook was a result of the class position of many in *Marxism Today* – yet more evidence for the continuing salience of class.²¹⁵

²¹¹ S. Hall, ‘Our mongrel selves’, in Borderlands supplement, *New Statesman & Society*, 19 June 1992, CRL, Hall papers, US121, Box 20, p. 8.

²¹² Hebdige, ‘After the Masses’, p. 49. See Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*.

²¹³ Sivanandan, ‘All That Melts Into Air’, pp. 3, 18, 23.

²¹⁴ Rustin, ‘Trouble with ‘New Times’, pp. 308, 310, 315, 320.

²¹⁵ Rustin, ‘Trouble with ‘New Times’, pp. 315, 311-13. Rustin made a similar class-based assessment of the SDP in ‘Power to the Provinces!’, which in turn bears similarities to Raphael Samuel’s examination of the SDP in ‘The SDP and the New Middle Class’.

These writers were, however, self-aware about the extent to which their arguments were iconoclastic, but they believed this was a corrective to an exclusionary and unrepresentative form of class politics. As Sarah Benton wrote, power in society had now ‘fractured’, and the alleged ‘one-time unity of the working class’ was one which had been established by the ‘dominance’ of the ‘skilled, white male worker’.²¹⁶ Campbell argued that ‘new times’ was about appreciating people, including these workers, ‘in all their dimensions and identities’.²¹⁷ These authors were attacking both the primacy of class and claimed a traditional version of class politics was reductive and out-dated. As a result, as the authors of the *Manifesto for New Times* wrote, a new political language needed to be constructed in which ‘it would be natural to talk of class, gender and race together, rather than as separate strands...’²¹⁸

Those writing in *Marxism Today* in the late 1980s, furthermore, certainly did not lose their concern for economic inequality, poverty and social stratification. Over the 1980s, economic inequality ‘rocketed’, due in part to the long-term processes of deindustrialisation and the shift to a service economy,²¹⁹ but exacerbated by the Thatcher government’s economic policies, which involved tax cuts on upper-income earners and cuts to social spending.²²⁰ As Massey wrote in 1988, inequality had increased under Thatcherism to such an extent that ‘[t]here is talk of the Brazilianisation of Britain, of the shoe-shine economy, of the two-thirds:one-third society, of the super-rich and of an underclass’.²²¹ Conceptualising society in such a manner hence allowed discussion of those who seemingly benefited from Thatcherism as well as those left behind.

²¹⁶ Benton, ‘Party Is Over’, pp. 35-7.

²¹⁷ B. Campbell, ‘New Times Towns’, in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, p. 280 – this essay was originally published in parts in *The Guardian* between August and September 1989, as part of her series ‘Campbell’s Kingdom’.

²¹⁸ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 15.

²¹⁹ F. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Equality in Historical Context’, *Renewal*, 25/2 (2017), pp. 41-2ff.

²²⁰ The top rate of tax on earned income fell from 83 per cent to 60 per cent on Thatcher taking office in 1979 and was reduced further in 1988 to 40 per cent. As Tony Atkinson argues, these cuts alone may not have been responsible for driving inequality, but he suggests tax cuts do affect inequality, given his advocacy for an increase in the top tax rate to 65 per cent – *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), pp. 181-5.

²²¹ D. Massey, ‘A New Class of Geography’, *Marxism Today*, May 1988, p. 12. The ‘two-thirds/one-third’ thesis was first expounded by Therborn – see G. Therborn, ‘The Two-Thirds, One-Third Society’, in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, pp. 103-115 – this essay was published as ‘West on the Dole’, in *Marxism Today*, June 1985, pp. 6-10 and much of this material appeared in G. Therborn, *Why Some Peoples Are More Unemployed Than Others* (London, 1986).

Discourses of socio-economic inequality were also used to justify the continuing relevance of class – the reason why class remained central to British politics, the authors of the *Manifesto for New Times* argued, was because of the ‘enormous gulf’ between the ‘increasingly concentrated’ and wealthy ruling class and the ‘majority’ of working people. Britain was not becoming a classless society because it had actually become a ‘more unequal, more exploitative society’.²²² The *Manifesto* also claimed, again, that Britain was becoming a ‘two-thirds/one-third society’ in which an ‘affluent majority’ was increasingly separated, socially and economically, from the excluded minority – Thatcher’s government had accelerated and taken advantage of the divisions ‘within’ the working class.²²³ Those on the losing side of the government’s policies were said to have been ‘permanently excluded from the affluence’ it touted, ‘ostracised as “scroungers” or “whingers”’.²²⁴ This notion of an excluded bottom section of society was increasingly conceptualised as an ‘underclass’ or a set of ‘underclasses’ by those writing in and about *Marxism Today* in these latter years of the journal,²²⁵ which was paralleled in political, cultural and vernacular discourses of class at the time and further into the 1990s.²²⁶

In 1991, Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset suggested that ‘new forms of social stratification’ were developing, but class was an ‘increasingly outmoded concept’.²²⁷ The sociologists Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, writing in 1996, similarly wrote that ‘advanced societies are riven by unacceptable divisions of inequality’, but class was no longer a robust sociological category.²²⁸ In the late 1980s and 1990s, the majority of the authors of *Marxism Today*

²²² Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 14.

²²³ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 14.

²²⁴ Campbell *et al.*, *Manifesto for New Times*, p. 9.

²²⁵ Rustin, ‘Trouble with ‘New Times’’, p. 318; Hall, ‘Meaning of New Times’, p. 250.

²²⁶ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, especially p. 129 - See J. Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded* (London, 2006); O. Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London, 2011) and R. E. Jones, *Clampdown: Pop-Cultural Wars on Class and Gender* (London, 2013), all cited on p. 129. Beatrix Campbell would later reject the term as a form of demonising the poorest in society – B. Campbell, ‘Britain’s Dangerous Places’, *New Times*, 19 February 1994, LHASC, Papers of the Democratic Left, Box 13B, pp. 2-3.

²²⁷ T. N. Clark and S. M. Lipset, ‘Are Social Classes Dying?’, *International Sociology*, 6/4 (1991), p. 397.

²²⁸ J. Pakulski and M. Waters, *The Death of Class* (London, 1996), p. vii, viii.

did not reach such extreme conclusions. Class was not dead. Just as in vernacular discourses,²²⁹ there remained concerns about structural inequality, and they tied this language of inequality explicitly to languages of class. The ideas of Urry and others writing in *Marxism Today* during its ‘new times’ era are responsible for the perception that the journal over-simplified and exaggerated trends regarding the role of class in British society, and that it suggested other identities were taking the place of class.²³⁰ As demonstrated, however, Urry was somewhat of an exception – many of those associated with *Marxism Today* continued to believe that class was relevant and important.

Yet, authors in the journal more stridently argued against the *primacy* of class in these years, while continuing to defend the validity of other identities and concerns. While there was disagreement within *Marxism Today*, many believed new social movements could be part of a collectivist, ‘progressive’ project, and that they were not purely individualist. A postmodern emphasis, in addition, was stark in this period, further problematising the dominance of class as a concept on the left. And finally, a concern for inequality remained, and the language of inequality was used to discuss poverty and social hierarchy while also serving as a means to justify the continuing relevance of ‘class’.

Hobsbawm, of course, was another outlier within the *Marxism Today* milieu. In the 1990s, he would re-state both privately and publicly his scepticism about new social movements and identity politics. In a letter to the historian and former Marxist Eugene Genovese in 1992, Hobsbawm wrote that the working class had ‘ceased to be what Marx and we thought it should be’. There was also no agent to replace it: the new social movements ‘have objects that have nothing to do with those of socialists’, and in any case, ‘majorities’ or ‘peoples’ could never be made up out of ‘coalitions of selfregarding minorities; even when one of those minorities claims to represent half the population’. The new social movements were ‘basically’ individualist, and

²²⁹ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Discourses of ‘Class’’, p. 310.

²³⁰ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Discourses of ‘Class’’, pp. 294, 310.

their heritage was a combination of ‘consumer individualism’ and the ‘antinomian counterculture’ of 1968, which provided ‘no basis for progressive politics’. Hobsbawm agreed with his interlocutor that, in actual fact, these tendencies were ‘dangerous’, ‘socially and culturally disastrous’ and that he wanted to ‘eliminate them as far as possible from the left’.²³¹ Later, in his 1996 *New Left Review* article, he claimed that identity politics of a proletarian kind had characterised the labour movement of the 1970s, and that had led to isolation, division and defeat. To win a majority, the left would need to do more than to simply add up a range of minorities.²³² Hobsbawm shared, and indeed contributed towards, the notions of class fragmentation of his fellow contributors to *Marxism Today*, but he did not even accept the new social movements reluctantly, believing they were anathema to ‘progressive’ politics.

Conclusion

The conventional account of the left in the late twentieth century and beyond is that identity politics won, and class politics lost: LGBTQ rights were secured, for instance, but neo-liberalism became entrenched.²³³ There are elements of truth to this narrative, but there is a need to be exact. As Lucy Robinson noted, the left in Britain has indeed shifted its thinking from class as the ‘sole organising model’ and has moved towards identity groups;²³⁴ and this chapter corroborates her precise description of the left’s general shift, demonstrating how this played out among most of the diverse members of the *Marxism Today* left. What changed was the priority accorded to class. Perhaps the conventional account of the rejection of class applies to some

²³¹ Letter from Eric Hobsbawm to Eugene Genovese, undated 1992, MRC, Hobsbawm papers, 937/1/6/3, pp. 1-2.

²³² Hobsbawm, ‘Identity Politics and the Left’, pp. 43, 44.

²³³ See J. Curran, I. Gaber and J. Petley, *Culture Wars: The Media and the British Left* (Edinburgh, 2005) as cited by Payling, ‘Socialist Republic’, p. 603. See also Payling’s discussion of the 2014 Matthew Warchus film *Pride*, in ‘City Limits’, pp. 256-7.

²³⁴ Robinson, ‘Bermondsey By-Election’, p. 183.

elements of the left in the late twentieth century, but even among the obvious targets – Labour modernisers in the 1980s and 1990s – historians have shown that changing approaches to class, identity and the new social movements were more complex than simple betrayals of the working class.²³⁵ Ultimately, a form of class politics survived among most of the authors in *Marxism Today*, in the sense that ‘class’ still held validity, relevance and importance. In contrast to their ideological opponents on the right, they did not believe that class held no objective meaning and their rhetoric continued to be infused with the language of class throughout the period.²³⁶ Rather, these thinkers believed that the working class had been transformed and that newly-assertive minorities and women, and their movements, meant that the left needed to adapt itself to social change.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many contributors to the journal suggested that there had been important changes to the economic and occupational structure of British society. Given their historic connection to the labour movement, the decline in the proportion of manual workers heralded much reflection on the left. As a result of these changes, but also in response to the political organisation of women and minorities, the left’s class politics was seen as increasingly *unrepresentative*. Those with close relationships to the new social movements especially called for an alliance of autonomous movements with the labour movement. A predominant view was that movements such as feminism could enhance conceptions of ‘class struggle’.

The 1983 general election was significant for bringing a sense of urgency to these debates – those such as Hobsbawm became more emphatic about the need for Labour to be a people’s party, not only a class party. Many in the journal, especially Stuart Hall, were concerned that the left was not keeping up with specifically *cultural* change, both with regard to identity but also with respect to the changing contours of everyday life among the working class. Women and

²³⁵ See, for instance, Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, Chapter 8.

²³⁶ Lawrence and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Margaret Thatcher and the Decline of Class Politics’, p. 134.

minorities were considered key constituencies for the left to include – many saw in the GLC an imperfect and limited version of the attempt to blend class politics with identity politics.²³⁷ It was in the mid-1980s that differences between Hobsbawm and others in *Marxism Today* began to emerge clearly on the question of the movements, women and minorities.

In the late 1980s, a more wide-ranging approach to identity, influenced by theories of postmodernism, materialised in these years, and attracted severe criticism. Debates about the individualist nature of the new social movements also demonstrated some divisions among those contributing to the journal, and those positive about the movements described them as ‘progressive’, though this label had been applied in the mid-1980s, albeit less commonly. Class remained a concern, but it was in this ‘new times’ era where class’s primacy on the left and in analysis was problematised most starkly: it was not disregarded but it was rendered explicitly less important. However, there continued to be a concern for economic inequality, poverty and social stratification, and the language of inequality became a way to express a continued commitment to class politics. In many ways, this concern for inequality reflected analyses in *Marxism Today* earlier on in the period, such as those of Hobsbawm and Campbell, which suggested that there was a group at the very bottom of society, the poor – defined by low-paid work, unemployment, welfare ‘dependency’ – who were also served inadequately by the left.

This chapter has, furthermore, outlined how a range of socialists pushed for ‘progressive’ alliances which did not centre or privilege the labour movement. This was another example of convergence with Liberal and SDP opinion.²³⁸ Of course, much of this concerned the new social movements, but sometimes this actually involved the SDP-Liberal Alliance/the Liberal Democrats. Hobsbawm’s call in 1983 for an ‘electoral arrangement’ was matched by Tricia Davis’s and David Green’s (the London district secretary of the CPGB) argument for an

²³⁷ See also, for a reflection on the GLC, Interview with Hilary Wainwright, ‘Municipal Feminism Then and Now’, conducted by Jo Littler, *Soundings*, 74 (2020), pp. 12-15.

²³⁸ See, for instance, Interview with Michael Meadowcroft, ‘The New (Liberal) Left’, by Paul Olive and Sarah Benton, *Marxism Today*, February 1984, pp. 14-18 and Marquand, ‘Spot the Radical’.

‘electoral agreement’ in 1989, deemed to be essential to defeat Thatcherism.²³⁹ This was controversial and even prompted the resignation of CPGB writer Monty Johnstone from the editorial board of *Marxism Today* – it was seen as another example of the general ‘rightward’ direction of the journal which was ‘making it ever-harder to identify with’.²⁴⁰ However, the broader sense that Thatcherism needed to be tackled by a broad alliance was an important way in which those on the left came to converge in opinion with those from more liberal and centrist traditions.

But if the left came to value broad alliances with the new social movements, themselves evidence of a powerful popular individualism,²⁴¹ was this ultimately a rejection of the working class and of collectivism more generally? Reuel E. Schiller claimed that, by the end of the 1970s, American liberalism had transformed – a greater interest in women, minorities, and their movements was part of a broader lack of faith in collectivism. This was shown, he argued, in the fact that approaches to workplace regulation, for instance, no longer focused on union rights and industrial bargaining, but on the protection of *individuals* not to be discriminated against ‘because of their race, sex, or other immutable characteristics.’²⁴² Was a similar emphasis among these British left-wing revisionists in the 1980s ultimately informed by the loss of faith in collective projects? I argue that this was not the case. Many of these authors were desperately trying to find a political language and conceptual apparatus that could address social change. They sought to render their political categories more representative, to involve new social constituencies and their movements in non-instrumental ways within the politics of the left, and to incorporate individualism with the left’s collective project. This desire to adapt and update their politics, moreover, was evidence of their lack of passivity in the face of social change. Additionally, I reject the notion that these new social movements were *purely* individualist, and it is important

²³⁹ Hobsbawm, ‘Labour’s Lost Millions’, p. 9; T. Davis and D. Green, ‘Labour’s One Hope’, *Marxism Today*, February 1989, pp. 12-13.

²⁴⁰ See Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 13.

²⁴¹ Robinson *et al.*, ‘Telling Stories about Post-war Britain’.

²⁴² Schiller, *Forging Rivals*, pp. 222, 240.

for historians to recognise that such descriptions were contested – as I have shown, others considered these movements to be tendencies of universalism perfectly compatible with collectivism, even while recognising their origins in the explosion of individualism in the late twentieth century.

There is a broader need for analytical precision when providing historical accounts of changing approaches to class politics and the politics of group identity, and about the working class and other groups. Accepting that these categories are completely formally distinct not only ignores the insight of the framework of intersectionality,²⁴³ but it also obscures the extent to which definitions of groups such as the ‘working class’ were contested in recent history, as I have demonstrated in this chapter. Payling, for instance, appeared to agree with the subjects of her analysis, the leaders of local government in Sheffield, in assuming that more radical identity politics would have alienated ‘core working class voters’ in Sheffield in the 1980s.²⁴⁴ Some of these working class voters, however, may have been ethnic or sexual minorities, or even simply amenable to identity politics. She also asserted that, because Sheffield did not have a high population of professionals or black and minority ethnic people, it was less willing to tolerate identity politics.²⁴⁵ Elsewhere, moreover, Payling referred to the ‘middle class’ nature of gay subculture.²⁴⁶ It is true that, for example, some of those involved in identity politics in the 1980s did believe their involvement in such a politics troubled traditional class categories,²⁴⁷ but Payling’s claims require substantiation and justification: otherwise, the working class remains imagined as homogenous, and the new social movements, or even queer and ethnic identities themselves, are assumed to be middle class and even *bourgeois*. These assumptions were the very same that many of those associated with *Marxism Today* were trying to resist. Commentators and

²⁴³ See, for instance, the foundational text for this body of thought: K. Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1 (1989), pp. 139-67.

²⁴⁴ Payling, “Socialist Republic”, p. 605.

²⁴⁵ Payling, “Socialist Republic”, p. 611.

²⁴⁶ Payling, ‘City Limits’, p. 259.

²⁴⁷ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘Discourses of ‘Class’’, p. 308.

historians alike should examine their assumptions about working-class people, past and present. Lawrence recently suggested that while pollsters' 'trigger questions' on issues such as immigration and LGBTQ rights may produce generally more illiberal responses from working-class Labour voters compared to their middle-class counterparts, this does not mean that the former are 'instinctively illiberal'.²⁴⁸ Indeed, some of these working-class Labour voters may also be members of these minority communities.

²⁴⁸ Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me?*, p. 17.

Chapter Four – Becoming European internationalists

In an article entitled ‘Farewell Nation State’ in the December 1988 issue of *Marxism*

Today, the political scientist David Held wrote:

The issue the Left needs to consider more and more is how it should participate in, and seek to shape, the new international order that is emerging. This order cannot be run away from; it cannot be pretended that it doesn’t exist. Nor can it be pretended that Britain will again ever enjoy pre-eminence on the world stage. The question is: what is the appropriate form of national and international politics for the Left to develop now?¹

By the late 1980s, much of the British left, including the Labour Party, had come to embrace the European Community as a way to negotiate the ‘new international order’ to which Held was referring.² From a position of outright hostility – with many on the left campaigning for the United Kingdom to leave the European Community in the 1975 referendum, and with the Labour Party having a commitment to withdraw from the Community in their 1983 election manifesto – the left had generally moved to a position of great enthusiasm for the Community by the 1990s.³

This chapter provides an account of this shift among a range of authors writing in *Marxism Today*, showing how many on the left came to see the European Community as a solution to the problems posed by globalisation and, crucially, how they came to view the Community as an arena for the development of politics and policy which could challenge Thatcher’s government and market liberalism. This was not a passive, reluctant acceptance of the

¹ D. Held, ‘Farewell Nation State’, *Marxism Today*, December 1988, p. 17.

² As noted by Robert Saunders, the ‘European Community’ did not technically exist before 1993 (the European Economic Community (EEC) was officially renamed as such by the Maastricht Treaty, and, in turn this treaty established the European Union (EU)), but the term was commonly used to denote the three European Communities (the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom); and the EEC) which since 1967 were organised under the same set of institutions. In this chapter, I adopt this usage. See R. Saunders, *Yes to Europe! The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 24-5.

³ For an account of the Labour Party’s shift in this regard, see S. Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market: Labour and the European Community’, *Political Quarterly*, 63/3 (1992), pp. 276-300. Stephen Tindale was Research Officer at the Fabian Society at this time and he would go on to work for Chris Smith when he was Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment and as an adviser to Michael Meacher when he was Minister of State for the Environment in the New Labour government. Tindale ultimately became Executive Director of Greenpeace.

EC. While arguments for the European Community were often framed in terms of realistic adaptation to apparently irreversible or uncontrollable global processes – and a related abandonment of traditional socialist economic policies – I argue that these authors were pulled as well as pushed into appreciating the EC. As Stephen Tindale argued in 1992 with regard to the Labour Party’s shift, its ‘[r]econversion to social democracy’, its laying to rest of the desire to ‘move to a socialist economy’, made a positive European policy ‘possible, but not inevitable’.⁴ For the authors I examine, this was also the case: whether it provided rights protections; whether it offered geopolitical independence; or whether it supplied a means to overcome the inadequacies of the British state, the Community was seen to offer left politics a great opportunity. I therefore exhibit another example of the ‘tendency to look to Europe’ as a means of opposing Thatcherism and constructing an alternative in the 1980s.⁵ Most relevantly to the Conservative government’s market liberalism, the EC was seen as an important instrument in bringing market forces under democratic control and in showing that there were different *varieties* of capitalism. Overall, examining this debate over the 1980s demonstrates that an important question for those writing in *Marxism Today* was not simply ‘what is our alternative?’ but also, ‘where is our alternative?’.

Since the 2016 referendum on Britain’s EU membership, historians of late twentieth-century Britain are beginning to appreciate the great lacunae in our understanding of the place of the European Community and the EU in recent British history and, related to this, how attitudes have shifted among a range of groups, within broader society and among political traditions. While the Labour Party’s shift to pro-Europeanism has been documented patchily, the broader left’s approach to Europe from the 1970s until the 1990s has been even more neglected.

Responding to this lack of coverage, this chapter provides an account and assessment of the European Community debate conducted by the fragment of the left based around *Marxism*

⁴ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 278.

⁵ Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 241. See also Brooke, ‘Living in ‘New Times’’, p. 23.

Today. It deals with a broader range of authors compared to previous chapters, including radical economists and, towards the end of the period, more left-liberal writers and journalists. I show how the turn to the EC among the writers contributing to the journal was the product of serious intellectual re-thinking among those on the British left, and that it was not just an opportunistic response to emerging divisions within the Conservative Party.⁶ Just as in 1975, the European debate was both intersected and shaped by other ‘issues and controversies’ in the period: throughout, I exhibit how ideas about independence, destiny, socialism and sovereignty were contested.⁷ I will illustrate, moreover, the extent to which debates about the international arena were highly significant to the transformation of left-wing ideologies in this period.

It must be stressed that the turn towards the European Community in this period was part of a wider turn towards appreciating the supposed opportunities involved in cooperation with Europe, especially western Europe, which did not *necessarily* include fondness for the EC. ‘Europe’ did not mean the same as ‘the European Community’.⁸ However, in practice, whether making economic, political or foreign policy-based arguments for European cooperation and integration, these authors mainly saw the EC as central or integral to these efforts.⁹ Therefore, this chapter focuses on the Community, but this was just a part, even if the largest and most substantial, of a broader ‘Europeanism’ which was developing in the period.

This chapter is composed of three parts, which each deal with distinct periods of thinking on the left relating to the EC: 1979-83; 1983-88; and 1989-91. Overall, I detail how those writing in *Marxism Today* gradually came to see the EC as a tool to deal with the changes wrought by globalisation. I thus show that it was not the sociologist and ‘guru of the Third Way’,

⁶ Leadbeater accused the Labour Party of such opportunism in ‘Head Without A Heart’, p. 17. Tindale shows that pragmatism and opportunism did have a role to play in the Labour Party’s turn towards Europe, but that ‘theoretical development’ also explains the Party’s shifts in the period – ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 287.

⁷ Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 23.

⁸ See Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 24.

⁹ The economists Stuart Holland (discussed later) and Francis Cripps (of the Cambridge Economic Policy Group, and former adviser to Tony Benn), however, did attempt in this period to construct an alternative to the EC, in the form of a forum of European socialist parties and governments, within and without the EC – see S. Holland, *Out of Crisis: A Project for European Recovery* (Nottingham, 1983) and S. Holland, ‘Out of Crisis – International Economic Recovery’, in Curran (ed.), *Future of the Left*, pp. 243-64. Thanks to Colm Murphy for this point.

Anthony Giddens, who was the first to interpret the EC in this manner in the late 1990s, as suggested by Anne Deighton.¹⁰ This thinking has a much longer history.

‘... even though the question of withdrawal must remain on the agenda’: economic interdependence and the prospect for European cooperation, c. 1979-83

The United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1973, and in the 1975 referendum on membership, two-thirds of the electorate voted to stay in the Community. Despite this, there remained a sense that Britain still had to find a role in the world after its ‘steady decline as a world power’,¹¹ and the question of withdrawal from the EC was still very salient on the left in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In some respects, this was understandable: following the referendum, economic conditions in Britain had worsened and it seemed credible at the time that membership of the Community would only accelerate the process of deindustrialisation.¹² Britain had entered the Community just as the ‘long boom’ of the post-war years were coming to an end, and so membership became linked by some to unemployment and inflation.¹³ In turn, the early 1980s were a ‘time of stagnation’ in the European Community, and its programme was dominated by the dispute over Britain’s budget contribution, in which Margaret Thatcher demanded the UK’s ‘own money back’.¹⁴ Benefits of Britain’s membership of the EC, therefore, had yet to prove themselves and this was reflected in a number of anti-EC interventions in *Marxism Today*. And yet, even before the 1983 general election defeat in which

¹⁰ A. Deighton, ‘The Past in the Present: British Imperial Memories and the European Question’, in J.-W. Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 116. Indeed, in light of David Held’s interventions examined throughout this chapter and the fact that Held and Giddens were close colleagues in the 1980s and 1990s, it is more accurate to say that Giddens’ view (expounded in his *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge, 1998), especially pp. 141-2) emerged out of this broad, left-wing revisionist milieu.

¹¹ Gamble, ‘Decline of the Conservative Party’, p. 7.

¹² Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 371.

¹³ D. Currie, ‘The EEC: What It’s Done for Britain and Can We Get Out?’, *Marxism Today*, April 1979, p. 112.

¹⁴ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 292; M. Thatcher, ‘Press Conference after Dublin European Council’, 30 November 1979, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104180> (11 September 2018).

the Labour Party proposed withdrawal, many were beginning to make the case for continued membership within the journal as well. These contributions often went against a still common suspicion of the Community's supposed 'capitalist credentials' – a long-standing allegation.¹⁵

The anti-EC case rested on the assumption that a range of expansive national economic policies were still plausible and necessary courses of action for left-wing governments. In 1979, Dave Currie, an economist at Queen Mary College, London and a member of the CPGB's Economic Committee,¹⁶ wrote in *Marxism Today* that the then Labour government needed to revitalise the British economy 'on terms favourable to the working class'. This entailed tackling unemployment, expanding aggregate demand, raising real wages, expanding the public sector (where it had been cut) and higher levels of investment in industry.¹⁷ In order to carry out such a set of policies, known at the time as the left's 'alternative economic strategy' (AES),¹⁸ Currie argued that there would need to be import, investment and price controls. These controls, however, would be in 'direct contravention' to the Treaty of Rome and so Currie advocated withdrawal from the EC 'in its present form.'¹⁹ Another economist, Paul Levine, a lecturer at South Bank Polytechnic, wrote similarly in 1980 that Britain needed urgently to reflate the economy, which could be achieved with import controls. Once again, Levine noted how a government introducing such policies would be legally constrained, as the Treaty of Rome only allowed for EC member states to protect their balance of payments in a sudden crisis – and thus broad-based, long-lasting import controls to solve the '*long standing* weakness' of the British economy were not permitted. As a result, a future Labour government would need to either 'take

¹⁵ Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 58: see, for example, A. Lomas, *The Common Market: Why We Should Keep OUT* (London, 1970), pp. 5-6, as cited by Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 401, fn 108 and Labour Research Department, *The Common Market. In or Out* (London, 1975), p. 5.

¹⁶ Now Queen Mary, University of London.

¹⁷ Currie, 'The EEC', p. 117.

¹⁸ For literature on the AES, see R. Jobson, 'A New Hope for an Old Britain? Nostalgia and the British Labour Party's Alternative Economic Strategy, 1970-1983', *Journal of Policy History*, 27/4 (2015), pp. 670-94; M. Wickham-Jones, *Economic Strategy and the Labour Party: Politics and Policy-making, 1970-83* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 53-84; Cronin, *New Labour's Past*, especially p. 350.

¹⁹ Currie, 'The EEC', pp. 117, 112.

on' the EC, or leave.²⁰ Fundamentally, these authors believed that the EC placed 'the unleashing of market forces' at the forefront of policy – as in the case of its limitations on the ability of national governments to aid depressed industries.²¹ Therefore, being a part of the European Community placed markets outside of the realm of democratic control.

Crucially, both of these authors qualified their positions. Currie suggested that there was the possibility, working with other left forces (particularly in France and Italy), of political struggle within EC institutions and that the Community was only a 'contributory factor' to, and not an important cause of, Britain's economic woes.²² Levine likewise contended that general import controls put in place by Britain could, instead of British withdrawal, force a shift in EC policy away from free trade, towards greater regulation of trade in favour of economically-weaker member states.²³ Nevertheless, since many on the left supported the AES, and because of the Treaty of Rome's perceived restrictions on enacting such a strategy,²⁴ withdrawal from the EC was seen as an obvious course of action for many left-wingers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Within the pages of *Marxism Today*, however, many authors during this time were starting to make the case *for* membership. These arguments often stressed the extent to which the British economy was interdependent with the rest of western Europe. Charging that the British left had failed to construct 'a genuine international perspective as part of its alternative strategy', the Cambridge economist and CPGB member Bob Rowthorn argued in 1982 that there needed to be a recognition of the extent to which the British economy was integrated into that of western Europe.²⁵ Rowthorn noted that western Europe accounted for three-fifths of Britain's foreign

²⁰ Levine, 'Import Controls', p. 17. Levine also had connections to Queen Mary College, having carried out postgraduate study there in the late 1970s.

²¹ Currie, 'The EEC', p. 116.

²² Currie, 'The EEC', pp. 117, 118.

²³ Levine, 'Import Controls', p. 17.

²⁴ For an assessment which problematises the view of EU law as 'neoliberal', including how the Treaty of Rome provided the scope for significant state intervention, see A. Tarrant and A. Biondi, 'Brexit and Labour's Political Economy: Labour's Programme and EU Law', *Renewal*, 25/3-4 (2017), pp. 66-89, especially p. 69.

²⁵ B. Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', *Marxism Today*, May 1982, p. 25. Now commonly known as Robert Rowthorn. Rowthorn was also Sheila Rowbotham's partner; a friend and contemporary of Gareth Stedman Jones at

trade, and that the EC countries provided one sixth of all manufactured goods consumed in Britain, and in turn purchased one eighth of Britain's own output from manufacturing.²⁶ Critical to his argument was his view that Britain's membership of the EC was an *expression* of economic integration, rather than its cause: a rapid increase in imports from the EC dated to more than a decade before Britain's entry in 1973.²⁷ This fact was recognised by anti-EC economists, such as Currie, who blamed this import penetration on the removal of tariff barriers in the post-war period, but even these critics of Britain's membership of the Community were aware of the large degree of interdependence.²⁸ The difference was that Rowthorn believed that such integration was irreversible and that the left's attitude towards these and other capitalist countries was negative and 'backward-looking'.²⁹ Criticising the AES for its failure to recognise British and western European interdependence, he contended elsewhere in 1981 that simply being against the EC was not enough, and that an 'alternative form of cooperation' in Europe needed to be imagined in its place.³⁰ While he believed that withdrawal 'must remain on the agenda', perhaps demonstrating the constraints upon what it was possible to argue within the Marxist British left in the early 1980s, he remained clear that the left needed to address itself to the 'new situation and these new possibilities'.³¹

But what were these possibilities? Of great concern on the left for many years was the growing importance of multinational companies, which presented a challenge to traditional socialist economic policy at the level of the nation state. These concerns had been elaborated most notably in Britain by Stuart Holland in 1975 in *The Socialist Challenge*, in which he claimed that multinationals were a 'challenge to national sovereignty' that required 'countervailance in the

Nuffield College, Oxford (and eventually at King's College, Cambridge too); and was associated with the New Left paper *New University* along with Stedman Jones and Michael Rustin – Campsie, 'A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism', p. 75, 77, 79.

²⁶ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 25.

²⁷ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 26.

²⁸ Currie, 'The EEC', p. 116.

²⁹ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 25.

³⁰ B. Rowthorn, 'The Politics of the Alternative Economic Strategy', *Marxism Today*, January 1981, p. 8.

³¹ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', pp. 25, 31.

public interest' at both a national and European level.³² The scale of this problem was recognised by others on the left in the 1980s. Indeed, because national economic controls could be evaded by multinationals by moving production and investment to another country, Rowthorn suggested that an 'international struggle' was required, with a view to producing international regulation to combat specifically this problem, tackling issues of taxation, working conditions and the location of investment. In the long view, this international struggle would result in a 'complete takeover' of such multinationals, and the instalment of 'their democratic administration on an all-European level'.³³ While Rowthorn did not flesh out this vision of democratic control, it is notable that he provided both a critique of the nation state's capacity to control the economy and that he argued international action ought to occur specifically on a *European*, regional, level. Rowthorn implied that these companies simply represented the 'new international division of labour' which the left needed to accept – hence his call to establish control at the international, rather than national, level.³⁴

Although Rowthorn departed from the emphasis on intervention and ownership at the national level in *The Socialist Challenge*, in previous decades Holland had advanced similar ideas about Europe-wide action to tackle economic issues. Around the time of Britain's second application to join the EC in 1967, those on the left such as Holland were making the case, at governmental level, for joint macroeconomic policies (aimed to reduce pressure on sterling), a European Technology Community, and planning at the European level – the latter of which was thought of as an opportunity to relaunch Harold Wilson's failed National Plan, 'writ Europe-

³² Holland, *Socialist Challenge*, p. 361; S. Holland, 'Alternative European and Economic Strategies', in L. Black, H. Pemberton and P. Thane (eds.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 107, 111. Holland was another architect of the AES, arguing for great expansion of state ownership and intervention in order to counteract multinational power, but unusually for someone associated with such a firmly left-wing programme, he had a much more nuanced approach to European cooperation than others associated with the AES. He had been an advisor to Prime Minister Harold Wilson on Europe and, more broadly, had a keen interest in the European context – see, for instance, his *Uncommon Market: Capital, Class and Power in the European Community* (London, 1980).

³³ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 31. For more evidence of growing awareness that multinational companies limited the effectiveness of such tools of national economic control as import controls, see J. Wilson, 'Discussion: Import Controls – on the Left's terms', *Marxism Today*, February 1981, p. 26.

³⁴ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 31; Rowthorn, 'Politics of the Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 8.

wide' this time and in a 'more credible' international framework.³⁵ Of course, such ideas on the left were obscured and overpowered by an antipathy not only to the Community but even to continental European ideas on economic management: Holland recently described how Tony Benn would routinely remove his references to examples of European and Japanese planning in draft economic statements of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee well into the early 1980s.³⁶ Those on the left who had interest in such forms of European internationalism were therefore battling a zealous economic nationalism on the left – and indeed, the very fact that Holland wished to learn from Continental planning models showed that extensive economic intervention at the national level was, in fact, permitted under the 'Treaty of Rome'.³⁷ In the imagination of many of those on the left in this early period, however, continental Europe and the Community were imagined as deeply reactionary.

Despite this, cooperation at the European level was seen as more plausible after the election of François Mitterrand as President of France in 1981, accompanied by the *Parti socialiste* obtaining an absolute parliamentary majority in the National Assembly. Eric Hobsbawm claimed in 1982 that the victory represented 'dramatic proof that far-reaching political changes were possible'. Hobsbawm linked this to the EC debate explicitly, contending that anti-Community arguments made a decade previously – of how the left looked like it would be a 'permanent and powerless minority' within the Community – were now far less compelling.³⁸ Rowthorn likewise argued that a socialist government in Britain could work with the French government, 'acting together for socialist objectives', transforming the European Community and hence, European economic development. The argument that the EC could block socialist advance in Britain independently – and hence the bedrock of the case for immediate withdrawal – was seen to have, in line with Hobsbawm, 'lost some of its original force'.³⁹

³⁵ Holland, 'Alternative European and Economic Strategies', pp. 97-9, 102.

³⁶ Holland, 'Alternative European and Economic Strategies', p. 107.

³⁷ Holland, 'Alternative European and Economic Strategies', p. 112.

³⁸ Hobsbawm, 'State of the Left in Western Europe', p. 8.

³⁹ Rowthorn, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 31.

These still quite tentative arguments for the EC were, of course, subject to harsh critique. Bert Ramelson, the former CPGB National Industrial Organiser, noted in the journal his regret that Rowthorn had changed his position since the 1975 referendum. He even questioned Rowthorn's Marxism, asserting that no scholar of this tradition should treat economic integration within western Europe as irreversible.⁴⁰ Rowthorn's optimism regarding Mitterrand was described as 'naïve', because of the power of West Germany within the EC, which he considered to be a deeply anti-socialist and reactionary force.⁴¹ Making arguments in favour of the EC was thus seen by others on the left as theoretically unsophisticated and even treacherous – a testament of the extent to which personal and professional relationships were at stake in such debates. Ramelson insisted that a left government had to retain its 'sovereign power' to pursue socialist policies.⁴²

Therefore, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, anti-EC arguments, based on viewing the EC as anti-socialist, still held a lot of weight. The Community and Europe were still both imagined by many as reactionary forces in the world. The Labour Party's 1983 election manifesto claimed that the policy on withdrawal was in response to the Treaty of Rome's limits on national economic policies, not that Labour had abandoned internationalism.⁴³ However, it is clear that many on the left were undergoing some profound revision regarding the EC question, joining others on the left (such as Roy Jenkins and Tom Nairn)⁴⁴ who had embraced such a European internationalism during the 1975 referendum and long before. Contrary to Tindale's neat contention that the first phase of positive Europeanism was sparked off after the 1983 general

⁴⁰ B. Ramelson, 'Britain and Western Europe', *Marxism Today*, July 1982, p. 40.

⁴¹ Ramelson, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 41. It is significant, moreover, that West Germany was conceptualised as a reactionary, conservative force in world politics at this point in the early 1980s. This attitude of the left towards Germany would change radically over the 1980s.

⁴² Ramelson, 'Britain and Western Europe', p. 41.

⁴³ Deighton, 'The Past in the Present', p. 114.

⁴⁴ See T. Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe?', *New Left Review*, 1/75, September-October 1972, pp. 5-120.

election defeat, many on the left were re-thinking their positions on Europe well before this.⁴⁵ There were opportunities within the EC.

The historian John Callaghan argues, in a survey of left-wing attitudes to the international context in the 1980s which draws heavily on material in *Marxism Today*, that '[a]lready by 1981 there was a sense that capitalist logic was the only form of economic reason available in practical politics'.⁴⁶ Yet, while the problematics thrown up by changes in global capitalism, such as multinational companies, were clearly a cause behind a revised left-wing attitude towards the international context and the EC in the early 1980s, this was not the same as accepting capitalist logic. An attempt was made to negotiate a path for left-wing economic objectives in a nation which was enmeshed firmly in the economies of western Europe: there was altogether a more thoughtful approach to the international context. These arguments were, however, far from enthusiastic defences of the Community. They were also, clearly, almost exclusively economic arguments; a product of the predominance of the AES in left-wing discussions at the time.

Sovereignty, the dangers of going it alone and the 'haven of progressive ideas', 1983-88

In the mid- to late-1980s, arguments regarding Britain's EC membership transformed in response to changes within and to the Community itself. In these years, those writing in *Marxism Today* tried to situate their more favourable ideas regarding Europe within a distinctive intellectual space, suggesting that the EC provided the opportunity for the development of a specifically left-wing agenda. Increasingly, not only was participation in the EC seen as an effective response to global economic change, the Community itself was also conceptualised as

⁴⁵ Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 277 – although admittedly his claims regards only the Labour Party.

⁴⁶ J. Callaghan, 'The International Context: End of an Era', in J. Davis and R. McWilliams (eds.), *Labour and the Left in the 1980s* (Manchester, 2018), p. 135.

providing an alternative, ‘progressive’ politics, and indeed a check on the power of Thatcher’s government.

In an article from 1986, reflecting on the AES, Sam Aaronovitch wrote that those on the left who still argued for withdrawal should now have ‘second thoughts’.⁴⁷ Aaronovitch was another South Bank Polytechnic economist and one of the key architects of the AES, as well as a prominent member of the CPGB’s Eurocommunist wing and thus strongly aligned to the Marxist tradition.⁴⁸ He was an important radical left-wing node in the network connecting the CPGB and *Marxism Today* to the Labour Party, and now he was arguing the case for the EC. Aaronovitch claimed that, far from losing sovereignty, Britain’s sovereignty would be more constrained if it was outside of the EC than within it. The EC was the only bloc in the world where Britain could play a key role, and the alternative was to be ‘at the mercy’ of the Community’s decisions, or indeed those of the United States. Acting at this level was seen as critical, given that Britain could not ‘opt out’ of the international economy – ‘nor should it’ – but it *could*, within the Community, negotiate a place in the world economy.⁴⁹ In this respect, Aaronovitch was suggesting that many on the left needed to conceive of sovereignty in a new way, and that they needed to recognise that withdrawing to the nation state was hopeless. This reformulation of sovereignty was developed more systematically by the aforementioned David Held, who wrote in 1988 that the EC had, in some regards, empowered the nation state’s ability to act both ‘at home and abroad’.⁵⁰ In recognition of this, sovereignty could not be understood as an ‘illimitable and indivisible form of public power’; it was instead something which was divided among a range of actors – whether national, international and transnational. While actors such as the EC imposed restraints on nations, Held claimed that they also created ‘new forms of

⁴⁷ S. Aaronovitch, ‘The Alternative Economic Strategy: Goodbye to All That?’, *Marxism Today*, February 1986, p. 26.

⁴⁸ See S. Aaronovitch, *The Road from Thatcherism – The Alternative Economic Strategy* (London, 1981). Aaronovitch and Levine had previously collaborated on research together in the 1970s.

⁴⁹ Aaronovitch, ‘The Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Held, ‘Farewell Nation State’, p. 15.

political participation and intervention' to those that were members of them.⁵¹ And, in any case, Britain was already and irrevocably integrated within a 'tight network' of international relations and organisations which constrained its sovereignty.⁵² These arguments of Held and Aaronovitch as a whole were similar to arguments made around the time of the 1975 referendum: as Robert Saunders demonstrates, what mattered to 'pro-Marketeers' was not really sovereignty but *power*, which he defines as 'the capacity to make – and implement – effective decisions over one's own destiny.' Sovereignty was envisioned as a 'currency', spent in order to 'purchase power'.⁵³ Both Held and Aaronovitch contended that sovereignty, as a concept, required rethinking, and therefore that Britain could better control its destiny *within* the European Community.

These arguments had been developed after those on the left in Britain had witnessed the difficulties of the French Socialists' attempt to 'reflate on their own' earlier in the decade and the eventual capitulation through the adoption of an austerity programme.⁵⁴ Mitterrand and the *Parti socialiste* carried out nationalisations, raised taxes, increased domestic demand, and increased support for small and medium-sized businesses. Public expenditure was also increased by twenty-seven per cent.⁵⁵ All this, however, resulted in an investment strike, a trade deficit, a weak franc and inflation, leading to a full 'U-turn' over the course of 1983-4, where inflation became the primary target of the government's economic policy.⁵⁶ There were also political consequences, as a right-wing coalition went on to win a majority in the National Assembly in the French legislative elections of 1986. Writing in the same year, Aaronovitch stated that the experience of Mitterrand's government 'seemed to confirm the view that no second rank state

⁵¹ Held, 'Farewell Nation State', p. 16; for a related elaboration of the pluralist idea of sovereignty, see P. Hirst, *From Statism to Pluralism* (London, 1997). Hirst believed there was a pluralist tradition to the British left which had been submerged in the mid-twentieth century by the rise of the big, social-democratic state. While pluralism was a large part of 1960s socialist debate in Britain (particularly with regard to workers' democracy), in the 1980s the focus shifted to *constitutional* democracy and pluralism. Hirst was also a critic of *Marxism Today* during the 'new times' era – see P. Hirst, 'After Henry', in Hall and Jacques (eds.), *New Times*, pp. 321-9 [originally published in *New Statesman & Society*, 21 July 1989].

⁵² Held, 'Farewell Nation State', p. 12.

⁵³ Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, pp. 246-7.

⁵⁴ D. Sassoon, 'Europe's Left: A New Continental Blend', *Marxism Today*, May 1986, p. 24.

⁵⁵ Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 283.

⁵⁶ Callaghan, 'The International Context', pp. 139-41.

could go it alone' in implementing such economic policies. The difficulty was that 'industrial and financial capital' now operated globally – as a result, the real sacrifice would be made ultimately by 'working people' if these policies were attempted unilaterally, just as had been the case in France.⁵⁷ That the Labour government had been forced to borrow from the International Monetary Fund in 1976 undoubtedly preyed on the mind as these left-wing British authors watched Mitterrand's efforts flounder. France's reflation episode, additionally, seemed to prove that 'informal co-operation between like-minded governments had been shown to be a chimera', as the German Social Democrats had not co-operated with the French request for joint reflation, in line with, much more unsurprisingly, Thatcher's market liberal government in Britain.⁵⁸ It was claimed in *Marxism Today* in 1990 that Mitterrand's reflation had proved that it was simply not possible to 'climb into the safety of the nation-state and pitch away the ladder.'⁵⁹ For Tindale, writing in 1992, it demonstrated the importance of having an institutional framework for co-ordinated, left-wing action of any kind.⁶⁰

The issue of multinational corporations once again fuelled the shift in thinking over the Community in the mid-1980s. In 1983, there had been a threat that Nissan would relocate from Britain to continental Europe if Labour won the 1983 general election. As a result, Neil Kinnock made much of the challenge these companies posed, in order to legitimate his own change in position on the EC: '[i]n the age of multinational capital, democracy must be multinational too', he declared.⁶¹ Aaronovitch, in his previously-discussed reflection on the AES, wrote that while its authors in the 1970s had been aware of the growing power of multinationals, over the last decade a 'privatised international monetary system' had emerged which further threatened the 'autonomy' of national economic policy.⁶² Though there were some actions a British government

⁵⁷ Aaronovitch, 'The Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 22.

⁵⁸ Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 285.

⁵⁹ D. Bell, 'French Lessons', *Europhile*, *Marxism Today*, November 1990, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 285.

⁶¹ Neil Kinnock as quoted by Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 284.

⁶² Aaronovitch, 'The Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 21.

could take against the multinationals, such as threatening to limit access to the UK market or making use of the public sector's purchasing power,⁶³ many on the left now saw action beyond the nation state as essential for containing the power of these firms. The authors of a document named 'Facing Up to the Future', which formed the basis for the later *Manifesto for New Times*, wrote that there were no equivalent 'democratic institutions', other than those of the EC, that could control these companies, which currently operated freely within a 'political void'. What was required were 'strong European economic institutions', and the authors blamed the Conservative government's reluctant Europeanism for failing to tackle the issue of multinational capital.⁶⁴ The EC itself was beginning to attempt to tackle the issue of multinational companies in the 1980s: for instance, the Vredeling Directive (never adopted due to resistance from the British government) proposed to protect employees of a European branch of a multinational company from the impact of unannounced actions taken by the parent company.⁶⁵ In essence, these individuals came to the conclusion that a multinational problem required a multinational solution, and the EC was gradually being seen as, and tentatively demonstrated as, potentially that very solution.

Modern technological revolution and changes in capitalist production also seemed to point towards European cooperation. The writer and CPGB Executive Committee member Jon Bloomfield (who served on *Marxism Today's* editorial board) wrote in 1985 that the left needed to engage with the 'realities' of Europeanisation. In order to keep pace with modern technology – where, for example, 'computer-controlled methods of production and distribution' were integrating national economies – it was necessary for the European nations to 'club together'.⁶⁶ Action beyond the nation state was thus conceived on a continental level. But why was

⁶³ Aaronovitch, 'The Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 23.

⁶⁴ B. Campbell, M. Darke, B. Innes, M. Jacques, M. Johnstone, P. Lanning, C. Leadbeater and J. Rodrigues (with Margaret Woddis as secretary), 'Facing Up to the Future', supplement to *Marxism Today*, September 1988, p. 11.

⁶⁵ W.L.D. II, 'The Proposed Vredeling Directive: A Modest Proposal or the Exportation of Industrial Democracy?', *Virginia Law Review*, 70/7 (1984), p. 1470. The Directive was initially proposed in 1980 but was subsequently amended and re-drafted in July 1983.

⁶⁶ J. Bloomfield, 'Europe Flexes Its Muscles', *Marxism Today*, December 1985, pp. 16, 22.

economic and technological cooperation envisioned on a regional, rather than global, or at least multi-regional, level? Those opposed to the European Community in post-war Britain had often criticised the ‘narrow’ regionalism of the EC,⁶⁷ against a growing intellectual ‘cliché’ – established by 1975 – that the geopolitical future would be based around regions and continents.⁶⁸ Though Bloomfield did not address explicitly this question, he acknowledged the ‘swift integration of the West European economy’, whereby major companies were increasingly and irreversibly manufacturing for a European market.⁶⁹ Bloomfield and others associated with *Marxism Today* believed that technological changes meant that the economy was no longer national, but it was also not quite global: it was European. Through mergers with as well as trade between European firms, large businesses were becoming ‘Europeanised’, it was claimed.⁷⁰ Aaronovitch correspondingly wrote of the ‘major redirection’ of Britain’s trade which had taken place in the period of its membership of the EC, particularly in the fields of high technology, aerospace and weaponry. He claimed that the EC was the only bloc in which Britain could play an ‘important’ role, a consequence of this economic entanglement.⁷¹ Crucially, in all of these analyses – sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit – was the notion that such economic integration in western Europe could not be reversed, and nor would such a reverse be desirable.

Just as the left had found further reasons to reconcile themselves to the EC in the mid-1980s, however, the Community was having perhaps its most market liberal moment up to that point in its history. The Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 of the European Parliament had set about creating a single market for goods, services, capital and labour in the Community by the end of 1992, which, as Callaghan writes ‘fused the priorities of British neo-liberals with those of continental enthusiasts for federalism’.⁷² The creation of a single market involved the dismantling

⁶⁷ See Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 18 and Deighton, ‘The Past in the Present’, p. 110.

⁶⁸ Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 265.

⁶⁹ Bloomfield, ‘Europe Flexes Its Muscles’, 19.

⁷⁰ Campbell *et al.*, ‘Facing Up to the Future’, pp. 10-11.

⁷¹ Aaronovitch, ‘The Alternative Economic Strategy’, p. 26.

⁷² Callaghan, ‘The International Context’, p. 143.

of non-tariff barriers to trade and mutual recognition of standards between members states; one measure of which, for instance, involved deregulating the financial services sector. The Act also introduced qualified majority voting in the European Council, as opposed to unanimity, for laws involved in this attempt to create a single market. To veteran sceptics of the EC, such as Benn, this was a fundamentally anti-worker initiative and one which proved yet again the Community's capitalist agenda and desire to restrict the ability of nation states to plan their national economies.⁷³ Thatcher's enthusiasm and the acceptance of the Act by Eurosceptic free-marketeers in the Conservative Party (such as MPs Bill Cash, Michael Spicer and Nicholas Budgen), no doubt fuelled this left-wing antipathy.⁷⁴ Another Queen Mary College economist, John Grahl, wrote in *Marxism Today* in 1989, that around the time of the SEA it did appear as if 'the doctrines of the free-market Right were setting the EC agenda.'⁷⁵

However, at this time, a framework for a *social* dimension to European integration known as 'Social Europe' was developing. This agenda was articulated most famously by Jacques Delors (another French Socialist) who became President of the European Commission in 1985. In 1988, Delors addressed the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Bournemouth laying out his plan for the 'Social Dimension' to the 1992 project. In this, Delors spoke of the need to 'pool our efforts', to have a 'broader framework' for co-operative action, in order to preserve the 'uniquely European model of society' and to 'again become masters of our destiny'. He tried to re-assure his audience that Europe – as a result of the formation of the single market – would not 'become a source of social regression'.⁷⁶ The influence of Delors' speech to the TUC in 1988 has been exaggerated both by contemporaries and historians alike – indeed, as demonstrated, before 1988 the EC was

⁷³ A. Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics: Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties since 1945* (London, 2002), p. 72. Although broadly opposed to European integration throughout his political career, in a diary entry from 31 December 1971, Benn described his position then as 'ambivalent' – T. Benn, *The Benn Diaries* (London, 1995), p. 251.

⁷⁴ See for example, M. Thatcher, 'TV interview for TV-AM (London European Council)', 6 December 1986, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106211> (9 January 2018); Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 79.

⁷⁵ J. Grahl, '1992 and All That', *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 11.

⁷⁶ J. Delors, 'Speech to the TUC ("1992 – The Social Dimension")', 8 September 1988, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/113686> (12 September 2018), pp. 3, 5, 8.

well in the way of being re-conceptualised in the imagination of those writing in *Marxism Today*.⁷⁷ However, he was significant for suggesting there could be a ‘social dimension’ to the integration of 1992. A concrete part of this was the Social Charter (proposed by the Commission shortly after the signing of the SEA), which Delors proposed and promoted in a high-profile manner. The Charter sought to guarantee a number of rights relating to freedom of movement, wages, working conditions, welfare provision and freedom of association.⁷⁸ At this stage, however, the Social Charter was only a non-binding declaration. Nevertheless, while the 1992 programme promoted ‘integration by purely market methods’, the European Commission was at least beginning to spearhead more ‘interventionist’ policies as part of integration.⁷⁹ As shown later, authors writing in *Marxism Today* only started to engage more concretely with this ‘social dimension’ to European integration in the final years of the 1980s.

Beyond Delors, however, in the mid- to late 1980s, the EC was delivering rights to British citizens over the heads of Thatcher’s government – something which, as Tindale suggested, was important in winning over some ‘previously hostile left-wingers’.⁸⁰ In 1986 there were two important rulings by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) relating to women’s rights.⁸¹ In the so-called Helen Marshall case, the Court ruled that it was a violation of the Community’s Equal Treatment Directive 1976 to set different retirement ages based on sex.⁸² In the same year, in the Jackie Drake case, the ECJ ruled that it was again against EC law – which established equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security – that married women in Britain were excluded from a welfare benefit (the Carer’s Allowance) paid to single women and men.⁸³ These

⁷⁷ For an exaggeration of Delors’ TUC speech’s importance, see Callaghan, ‘The International Context’, p. 143. and M. Kettle, ‘Ignorance Is Bliss’, Europhile column, *Marxism Today*, December 1989.

⁷⁸ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, pp. 279, 293.

⁷⁹ Grahl, ‘1992 and All That’, p. 11. Grahl notes, for instance, how a Commission proposal to introduce restrictions on employment practices was dropped and instead the Council adopted a ‘British-inspired’ document emphasising flexibility in the labour market.

⁸⁰ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 295.

⁸¹ Not to be confused with the European Court of Human Rights.

⁸² And therefore, that Helen Marshall’s termination of employment by the Southampton Health Authority was an act of unlawful discrimination based on sex – *Marshall v Southampton Health Authority* [1986] QB 401.

⁸³ *Jacqueline Drake v. Chief Adjudication Officer* [1986] 2 WLR 1005.

two cases, the political scientist Catherine Hoskyns remarked in 1986, illustrated the ‘power’ which the EC was beginning to have on issues relating to gender equality. The Community was proving itself to be a ‘progressive force’ which was causing the Thatcher government to retreat on a range of fronts.⁸⁴ At the time, Hoskyns was a member of a transnational feminist network called the European Forum of Left Feminists, which sought to connect feminists in order to construct a pan-European feminist agenda. She wrote that the ECJ cases demonstrated how women’s rights issues were being ‘internationalised’, and that, as a result, the women’s movement now needed to show an awareness of the ‘transnational level’. Hoskyns emphasised the fact that the British government had taken action at this transnational, European level – vetoing legislation in the Council of Ministers on parental leave and part-time work, which would have benefited women – and so European women as a whole needed to think and act transnationally. They needed to foster co-operation with each other, in order to ‘form a more effective lobby’ within the EC.⁸⁵ The EC was thus envisioned as an arena through which to challenge Thatcher’s government and had provided British citizens with rights protections. As the Labour MP Chris Smith noted, compared to the ‘reactionary’ British government, ‘the EC began to appear as a haven of progressive ideas’.⁸⁶

With regard to civil, social and ecological rights, the European Community was simply seen as more advanced than Britain. Michael Rustin even compared the situation of Britain’s lost sovereignty in the EC to the action of the United States federal government against its individual states during the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s – Britain was similarly reactionary and needed an effective check on its authoritarianism.⁸⁷ Rustin and his simile were particularly notable. Here was a significant figure of the radical left, tied to the *New Left Review* at the time –

⁸⁴ C. Hoskyns, ‘The Community of Women’, *Marxism Today*, January 1987, p. 34; see also C. Hoskyns, ‘Women, European Law and Transnational Politics’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 14 (1986), pp. 229-315.

⁸⁵ Hoskyns, ‘The Community of Women’, p. 37.

⁸⁶ As quoted by Tindale ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 295 (interview with author).

⁸⁷ M. Rustin, ‘Flexing Europe’s Muscles’, as part of ‘Viewpoint: The Reluctant European’, *Marxism Today*, January 1986, p. 34.

and hence, emerging out of a firmly Marxist tradition – suggesting that the loss of British sovereignty would be justified if it meant the broader extension of rights. In the face of a national government uninterested in questions of rights, those writing in *Marxism Today* set their sights abroad.⁸⁸ Held called for both the strengthening of the ‘European human rights programme’ (referring to the ECHR and its court, separate from the Community) and the ‘further development’ of the European courts system in the EC, so that individuals and groups had the means to sue their governments in order to enact and protect ‘key civic, political, economic and social rights’.⁸⁹ The geography for left-wing political action in the imagination of these authors was thus being altered, both in the sense of *where* such political action could occur and *on what scale* it can and should take place.

In addition, a significant element to the developing Europeanism of those writing in *Marxism Today* was, of course, the Cold War and the desire for independence from both the Soviet Union and the United States. In the early- to mid-1980s, military and defence issues had taken on great prominence as the British government had allowed American cruise missiles to be stored in RAF Greenham Common in Berkshire, which had attracted a series of protests and the eventual establishment of the Greenham Women’s Peace Camp. Bloomfield described this state of affairs as evidence of the ‘subordinate’ special relationship with the United States and contrasted it to a not yet fully-realised vision of British participation in a ‘more independent’ western Europe.⁹⁰ Some, such as Rustin, again expressing a desire for European independence, even suggested a nuclear capability in western Europe operating under a ‘joint European command’.⁹¹ American global leadership had come further into question in the 1970s in Britain with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and a perception that the United States was

⁸⁸ This idea was paralleled, for instance, within the women’s rights work of the NCCL – Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights*, p. 241.

⁸⁹ Held, ‘Farewell Nation State’, p. 17.

⁹⁰ Bloomfield, ‘Europe Flexes Its Muscles’, p. 19.

⁹¹ M. Rustin, *For a Pluralist Socialism* (London, 1985) p. 254 as quoted by Bloomfield, ‘Europe Flexes Its Muscles’, p. 23. Rustin also wrote that western Europe ‘will only become independent’ of the United States once its anxieties about security are allayed through European military cooperation in ‘Flexing Europe’s Muscles’, p. 34

retreating into isolationism – there was consequently a notion that the collective ‘Europe’ needed to explore a degree of self-sufficiency with regards to defence.⁹² Now, however, Ronald Reagan (whose presidency began in 1981) was regarded as damaging further the case for Atlanticism: the United States government now seemed determined to ‘restore US world power’ through escalating the Cold War, further endangering Europe.⁹³ Increasingly, Europeanisation was seen by authors based around *Marxism Today* as a chance to achieve a degree of autonomy away from the United States, ‘untrammelled’ by its aggressive foreign policy.⁹⁴ What was significant here was how this desire to be independent from the United States coincided with a sleight of hand in which ‘Europe’, not just ‘Britain’, needed to be autonomous. ‘Europe’, as a category – and as a unit to be defended against American incursion – seemed much more coherent by the mid-1980s.⁹⁵

Yet, it is important to distinguish the decline of Atlanticism and the rise of Europeanism as distinct from the specific form of Europeanism manifested in increased support for the EC. For example, Dan Smith, an elected officer of the CND, contended that the Labour Party needed a ‘long-term vision of Europe’ in which would lie an alternative to Atlanticism, and argued for a ‘cohesive and distinctive western European position’. He stressed, however, that this was not ‘Europeanist’ in the sense of the ‘devotees of the European Community’.⁹⁶ Indeed, the idea of using the Community as a means of asserting European independence was generally a French, high-political phenomenon for most of the 1980s.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that, in another stream of left-wing discourse in this decade, ‘Europe’ was emerging as the preferred option in the left’s political geography (in contrast to an aggressive United States) – and, crucially, Britain belonged within this category of ‘Europe’. No longer was it the nation state,

⁹² See, for example, Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 14.

⁹³ D. Smith, ‘After Atlanticism’, *Marxism Today*, July 1986, p. 22.

⁹⁴ Campbell *et al.*, ‘Facing Up to the Future’, p. 11.

⁹⁵ It must be stressed that ‘Europe’ often meant western Europe, in practice.

⁹⁶ Smith, ‘After Atlanticism’, pp. 23, 26.

⁹⁷ Gamble, ‘Europe and America’, p. 221.

Britain, which needed to remain sovereign or to be independent, but Europe as a whole: Europe needed to establish its ‘independent voice’, as Held wrote, and consider forming such arrangements as ‘a “NATO” without the USA’ which could contribute to ‘breaking up the current division of the world by the two hegemonic powers’.⁹⁸ The Cold War was thus undoubtedly a significant dimension to the broader reimagination of ‘Europe’ within the imagination of this broad and diverse section of the British left.

To some extent, the rise in prestige of the category of ‘Europe’ in leftist discourse was partly reflective of a sense, however limited, of European identity. Bloomfield littered his call for greater European cooperation and integration with references to a ‘European identity’, which was, contradictorily in his essay, both ‘taking shape’ and an ‘objective fact’ causing strains in western Europe’s relationship with the United States.⁹⁹ The authors of the aforementioned ‘Facing Up to the Future’ wrote somewhat similarly of the need for an ‘internationalisation’ of Britain’s national identity, which they described as an understanding of its place in the world.¹⁰⁰ However, that these authors and Bloomfield described this identity as either emerging or something which needed to develop – as well as writing about an international or European identity with a degree of academic distance – revealed that they ultimately did not *fully* embody these more international, European identities. Certainly, Bloomfield wrote that such an internationalist outlook ‘should not lead socialists to believe that nation states will or can wither away easily’, and hence suggested that some power needed to be retained at the level of the nation state.¹⁰¹ Although others such as Rustin maintained that if each nation state held on to existing powers, joint action (whether economic, social, ecological) would be stifled,¹⁰² overall, the notion of a European *identity* among these authors was far from stable. Perhaps aware of this being the case across broad sections of the British left, while promoting the European model of

⁹⁸ Held, ‘Farewell Nation State’, p. 17.

⁹⁹ Bloomfield, ‘Europe Flexes Its Muscles’, pp. 19, 20, 22

¹⁰⁰ Campbell *et al.*, ‘Facing Up to the Future’, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Bloomfield, ‘Europe Flexes Its Muscles’, p. 22.

¹⁰² Rustin, ‘Flexing Europe’s Muscles’, p. 34.

society and ‘our European identity’, Delors in his speech to the TUC in 1988 stressed to his audience that they would ‘remain British’.¹⁰³

Attitudes to European integration had clearly shifted but EC-critical voices remained in the pages of *Marxism Today* in the mid- to late-1980s. Responding to Aaronovitch’s criticism of the AES and his relatively newfound enthusiasm for the EC, Gerry Pocock (an elected official in the CPGB at the time) wrote that scepticism of the Community was justified on the basis of its ‘grandiose but anti-democratic plans for supranational policymaking’. While admitting to the need for ‘overhaul’ in the workings of British parliamentary democracy, he maintained that elevating and strengthening the European Parliament would only ‘remove decision-making even further away’.¹⁰⁴

However, for the historian Donald Sassoon, the left’s traditional statism neglected not only the potential for decentralisation within the nation state, but also the potential for left politics at the supranational level. In a survey of the western European left in *Marxism Today* in 1986, Sassoon identified a ‘Europeanist option’ that was emerging within European left politics, which sat between the traditionalists (reliant on old Keynesian assumptions) and the centrists (who allegedly capitulated to the free market). The Europeanists were more aware of the limitations of the nation state and understood the ‘structural changes’ emanating out of global economic and technological change.¹⁰⁵ Clearly favouring this Europeanist option, although acknowledging that it could not be imported easily onto the British political landscape, Sassoon was here attempting to carve out an ideological space for left-wing appreciation of the European Community.¹⁰⁶ A similar attempt was made by Rustin, who wrote that European cooperation was particularly favourable due to the ‘balance of class forces’ in western Europe, as compared

¹⁰³ Delors, Speech to the TUC, pp. 5, 10.

¹⁰⁴ G. Pocock, ‘Steady As You Are’, as part of ‘Viewpoint: Goodbye to All That?’, *Marxism Today*, March 1986, pp. 38-9.

¹⁰⁵ Sassoon, ‘Europe’s Left’, pp. 22, 24.

¹⁰⁶ Callaghan, ‘The International Context’, p. 142; Sassoon, ‘Europe’s left’, p. 26.

to the United States. Here was an attempt to weld class analysis onto arguments for the EC. To Rustin, the ‘Mitterrand experiment’ had, as to others, proven the dim prospects of unilateral reflation, and Europe was seen as the most likely arena for potential ‘progressive’ class compromises on the same scale as those on which the national reconstructions after the Second World War were based.¹⁰⁷ Europe was being re-imagined as not only a site for the development of left or ‘progressive’ politics, but also the most relevant site, to Britain, in the face of global change.

Overall, the growing appreciation for the EC was, as shown above, taking on new dimensions and was not just based upon a reluctant acceptance of the EC as the last resort with which to deal with the challenges and sweeping changes of the late twentieth century. There were reasons to be actively enthusiastic about British membership of the European Community. Europe was seemingly becoming more coherent, and preferable, as a category in the political imagination of those contributing to *Marxism Today*, and Britain’s place in the world was being conceptualised further as belonging firmly within it. The image of Europe for these left-wing authors was becoming progressively more positive.

To 1992: the British state, Social Europe, and democracy

At the very end of the 1980s, from the perspective of the British left, the EC itself and its relationship with Britain were starkly different to the more negative picture in the early 1980s. The ‘running sore’ of Britain’s budget contribution had settled and the upcoming programme for further integration was said to be moving in the direction of ‘welfare capitalism’ under the banner of Social Europe.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, the enthusiasm for the EC was affirmed, but these

¹⁰⁷ Rustin, ‘Flexing Europe’s Muscles’, p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ Tindale, ‘Leaning to Love the Market’, p. 292.

years also saw some acknowledgement of the flaws in the EC project. Overall, however, most of these criticisms were made in the context of pro-Community arguments: the enthusiasm for the EC among the authors of *Marxism Today* was consolidated in this period, with a range of new arguments emerging in favour of the Community.

One such argument related to the crisis of the British state. As Tindale noted, the defence of the 'traditional unitary British state' had been a central part of the anti-EC argument.¹⁰⁹ Nairn suggested as early as 1972 that the British left's hostility to the Community was based upon a foolish 'infatuation' with parliamentary democracy.¹¹⁰ As constitutionalist arguments became more attractive to many writing in *Marxism Today* across the 1980s, as shown in Chapter Two, a potential solution to the archaic British state and authoritarian Thatcherism was also sought through the EC. The Welsh historian Gwyn A. Williams suggested that the EC offered the hope of decentralisation away from the 'grotesque British state structure'. For instance, in light of a resolution passed in 1989 by the European Parliament which suggested the creation of a second chamber or 'senate of the regions', Williams suggested that the EC could be the source for 'real power to pass to the regions of Europe'.¹¹¹ There was a developing sense that the Conservative government's resistance both to the devolution of powers to regions and local communities *within* Britain, and to the transfer of power to the EC, emerged out of the same unjustifiable defence of the 'authoritarian British state'. To Williams, the invasion of civil liberties and the dismantling of local government went hand-in-hand with the 'determined resistance' to Social Europe, a 'real parliament' for Europe, and disarmament.¹¹² Andrew Gamble similarly wrote that such obstinance on the part of the Conservatives towards the EC was rooted in the desire to protect 'the formal trappings of sovereignty enjoyed by the Westminster parliament'.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 287.

¹¹⁰ Nairn, 'The Left Against Europe?', p. 42.

¹¹¹ G. A. Williams, 'Little and Large', *Marxism Today*, April 1989, pp. 49, 51 – this article was a revised version of an address to the launch meeting of the Campaign for a Welsh Assembly in November 1988.

¹¹² Williams, 'Little and Large', pp. 50-1.

¹¹³ A. Gamble, 'The Great Divide', *Marxism Today*, October 1990, p. 37.

At times, whether these individuals on the broader left and liberal-left admired, on the one hand, the political arrangements of other member states, and, on the other, the possibilities of decentralisation offered by the EC itself, was not always clear. Those involved in Charter 88 claimed their support for European integration through the EC was grounded in the fact that fellow member states had more pluralist and more democratic political systems, which ultimately exposed the inadequacies of the Britain's constitutional arrangement.¹¹⁴ Williams seemed similarly envious of the fact that many member states in the EC were either federations or had granted significant autonomy to minority peoples and regions.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, clearly European integration through the EC was part of a broader constitutional reform project being proposed by the left in the 1980s and 1990s. Williams urged socialists in Britain to drop their 'obsession' with using the 'state power' of their own nation; this was now 'inadequate'. Instead, he urged them to lend their support to the 'dedicated Europeans' drive for their "social Europe", which offered 'genuine' regional self-government to balance the increased power at the centre of the EC.¹¹⁶

Social Europe had certainly taken on great prominence as the contributors of *Marxism Today* engaged further with the 1992 single market initiative in these final years of the 1980s, but there was much to suspect about 1992. In April 1989, Martin Jacques claimed that Social Europe was 'still more of a dream than a reality', and that a lot was at stake in this, given the irreversible nature of the closer integration through the single market.¹¹⁷ Grahl feared that harmonisation across the EC would lead to lower tax rates for the rich, higher levels of tax evasion, as well as more intense competition which could threaten jobs in Britain as firms opted to 'rationalis[e]'

¹¹⁴ D. Erdos, 'Charter 88, Democratic Constitutionalism and Europeanisation: Ambiguous Relationships?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62/4 (2009), p. 583.

¹¹⁵ Williams, 'Little and Large', p. 51.

¹¹⁶ Williams, 'Little and Large', p. 50.

¹¹⁷ M. Jacques, 'Coming In from the Cold', *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 55; Marquand, 'Twelve Into One Will Go', p. 23 – Marquand suggested that it was irreversible given that much of the EC's private sector and most member state governments were 'solidly behind it'.

their affairs.¹¹⁸ It seemed like the free-marketeters had achieved much of what they wanted already, as many external trade obstacles (between the EC and countries like the United States and Japan) were planned to be removed, in addition to those within the EC.¹¹⁹

EC regional policy, however, allayed many of the left's fears about closer European integration.¹²⁰ That 1992 posed the threat of 'yet greater centralisation of corporate power', was precisely why 'social Europe' was gathering 'such power and momentum', Williams insisted.¹²¹ In February 1988, agreement was reached to double the size of the structural funds in the EC dedicated to the economically-weaker regions, which David Marquand believed was a sign that the Community had 'accepted at least a partial responsibility for the distributional consequences' of increased economic integration.¹²² Marquand was an academic and former Labour MP, but he was representative of a more left-liberal, as opposed to Marxist, tradition than many of these other authors: he had worked as an adviser to Roy Jenkins during his time as President of the European Commission between 1977 and 1981, and had left the Labour Party to join the Social Democratic Party (SDP) when it was founded in 1981. Community attention towards the regions of its member states, however, was yet another factor leading to a convergence of opinion between left-liberals and those coming out of more radical contexts. EC regional policy was now thought to be, among these diverse authors, 'moving beyond token level'.¹²³

Likewise, EC policy on workers' rights was another example of a more tangible dimension to Social Europe. The journalist Martin Kettle claimed that the December 1989 adoption of the Community Charter on the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers – signed by all member states with the exception of the United Kingdom – had legitimised the British left's

¹¹⁸ Grahl, '1992 and All That', p. 9.

¹¹⁹ Grahl, '1992 and All That', p. 11.

¹²⁰ Indeed, Grahl argued not for withdrawal as a result of his 1992 fears, but for the institutions of the EC to be strengthened – '1992 and All That', p. 13.

¹²¹ Williams, 'Little and Large', p. 50.

¹²² Tindale, 'Learning to Love the Market', p. 295; Marquand, 'Twelve Into One Will Go', p. 21.

¹²³ Grahl, '1992 and All That', p. 13.

‘U-turn’ on the European project.¹²⁴ Not everyone had such praise for the Charter. The writer Neal Ascherson claimed that ‘for all its modest virtues’, it was a *skilled* workers’ charter, not a charter for all workers.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, such an initiative engendered the notion that the EC was providing a concrete alternative to the market liberalism of Thatcher’s government – so much so that Thatcher’s government was beginning to worry about the potential of the EC to allow ‘socialism’ in ‘by the back door’.¹²⁶ These were individual workers’ rights, as opposed to collective trade union rights, but there was a sense among others on the left that such a programme was more feasible in the late 1980s. Alan Tuffin, of the Communication Workers Union, argued that Thatcherism had, after eleven years in government, created an ‘entirely new terrain’. In recognition of this, he remarked, the labour movement was now taking a ‘leap forward’ into the ‘new era of positive rights entitling every worker to certain minimum terms and conditions’.¹²⁷ This ‘European model’ of workers’ rights was seen as a *credible* alternative to Thatcherite market liberalism, which sought to deny both these individual workers’ rights and trade union rights.¹²⁸ As an editorial within *Marxism Today* noted, the EC had always had social policy objectives, but under Delors the Commission was now providing the ‘political impetus’ to establish a social framework to protect against the ‘sweeping’ economic change that was to come with the creation of the single market.¹²⁹

While the Conservatives were worrying about the effect that Delors and the social agenda would have on Britain, many pro-Community voices in *Marxism Today* were being much more forthright about the limits placed by the EC on traditional socialist economic policy. The former editor of the *New Statesman* and *Financial Times* journalist John Lloyd wrote that it was

¹²⁴ Kettle, ‘Ignorance Is Bliss’, p. 9.

¹²⁵ N. Ascherson, ‘Oh! To Be In Europe’, *Marxism Today*, December 1991, p. 47.

¹²⁶ Gamble, ‘The Great Divide’, p. 37.

¹²⁷ A. Tuffin, speech to Fabian Society business conference, November 1990, as quoted by Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, pp. 291-2.

¹²⁸ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 291.

¹²⁹ Editorial content for ‘Renaissance Europe’, special European issue, *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 4.

largely correct that the EC was an ‘organised conspiracy against the achievement of socialism’.¹³⁰ Gamble likewise suggested that the Conservatives should have nothing to fear from European political union as it would have been an effective means of preventing socialism in Britain.¹³¹ Marquand put it more bluntly when he said that the 1992 programme would ‘demolish’ many of the instruments nation states traditionally used to implement industrial policies, making *national* industrial policies ‘virtually impossible’.¹³² Such matter-of-fact commentary was perhaps a product of the fact that it was no longer so incendiary both to support Britain’s membership of the EC and to recognise the limitations placed by the EC upon enacting extensive traditional left-wing economic policies within the nation state. These limitations were accepted by these authors, however, due to the fact that national economic policy was believed to be *already* limited by changes that had occurred within global capitalism. ‘[W]ider and deeper areas’ of Britain’s national life, Lloyd claimed, were ‘effectively predetermined’ by external forces and agents.¹³³

Hobsbawm described the limits thus:

Since the second world war, but especially since the 1960s, the role of “national economies” has been undermined or even brought into question by the major transformations in the international division of labour, whose basic units are transnational or multinational enterprises of all sizes, and by the corresponding development of international centres and networks of economic transactions which are, for practical purposes, outside the control of state governments.¹³⁴

Naming such processes as ‘internationalisation’ and ‘globalisation’, Jacques argued that they, in turn, increased the economic interdependence of national economies, which overall meant that it was no longer possible for ‘the average European nation-state’ to enact nation economic policies in the ‘old way’. Indeed, there was no point for the left to resist the ‘trend’ towards

¹³⁰ J. Lloyd, ‘Europeans by Default’, *Marxism Today*, October 1990, pp. 38, 40.

¹³¹ Gamble, ‘The Great Divide’, p. 37.

¹³² Marquand, ‘Twelve Into One Will Go’, p. 21. See also, Grahl, ‘1992 And All That’, p. 13.

¹³³ Lloyd, ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 41.

¹³⁴ E. Hobsbawm, ‘State of the Nations’, *Marxism Today*, June 1990, p. 35.

internationalisation – instead it needed to accept the (implicitly irreversible and unstoppable) process, so that the outcome can be ‘progressive’ rather than ‘reactionary’.¹³⁵

Of course, the constraints placed upon nation states recognised by these authors were, they argued, precisely why nation states needed to share their power with supranational bodies such as the EC and think about democratic control on this level.¹³⁶ As Jacques suggested, for instance, ‘[t]he socialisation of the international firm, whatever this might precisely mean in practise, has to be thought of in regional or even global terms.’¹³⁷ And while these authors admitted that the 1992 initiative was essentially integration through market forces, Grahl for instance suggested that the EC itself was not an inherently market fundamentalist organisation and that the influence of free-marketeers had waned since 1986.¹³⁸ These authors shared the idea that were competing visions of the EC, and the market liberal vision of Europe as a ‘monolithic market place’ was simply one of them.¹³⁹

Furthermore, in the final years of the 1980s and early 1990s, ideas of sovereignty, destiny and independence were once again invoked in discussions over the EC within *Marxism Today*. Common was an admission that Britain had surrendered a degree of sovereignty for the sake of the ‘common good’ by being a member of the EC.¹⁴⁰ Essentially, most of these authors accepted that further integration involved the ‘loss’ of national sovereignty.¹⁴¹ However, there was again an idea that such a loss of sovereignty allowed for greater power. In the editorial introduction to the special ‘Renaissance Europe’ issue of *Marxism Today* in April 1989 (in which most articles celebrated European integration), it was declared that the European Community was ‘here to stay and we are a part of it’. As a result, the left needed to engage with the EC in order to have

¹³⁵ Jacques, ‘Coming In from The Cold’, pp. 52, 53. It was Grahl, however, who used the term ‘unstoppable’ with regard to the ‘internationalisation of our economic life’ and, consequently, European political integration: ‘1992 And All That’, p. 13.

¹³⁶ Marquand, ‘Twelve Into One Will Go’, p. 18.

¹³⁷ Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 54.

¹³⁸ Grahl, ‘1992 And All That’, p. 13.

¹³⁹ J. Keane, ‘Identikit Europe’, *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 31; D. Marquand, ‘Born Again Europe’, *Marxism Today*, February 1991, p. 28; Ascherson, ‘Oh! To Be In Europe’, p. 47; Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ Burke, ‘The Turning Green Tide’, p. 45.

¹⁴¹ D. Sassoon, ‘Fawltly Logic’, *Marxism Today*, August 1990, p. 3.

some influence over the ‘destiny’ of Britain itself.¹⁴² Yet, there was in turn a suggestion, again as argued in the mid-1980s, that sovereignty needed to be re-conceptualised: as Marquand wrote, fundamental to the EC were the notions of power-sharing and ‘divided sovereignty’, in contrast to the British tradition of ‘Westminster absolutism’.¹⁴³ Elsewhere he wrote of the ‘language of national sovereignty’ being ‘less applicable’ than it was previously, and gradually having ‘even less to do with the real world’.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, much like the pro-Marketees of the 1970s, as Saunders describes, these pro-EC voices in *Marxism Today* accepted that formal national sovereignty was limited by the Community, and reconciled themselves to this view by either claiming that Britain could achieve greater *power* by surrendering its sovereignty, ‘enlarging Britain’s scope for independent action’, or that sovereignty as a concept itself required intellectual rejuvenation, to be updated for the modern world.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Marquand suggested that such a model for reconceptualising the concept had been provided by the power-sharing EC itself.

Arguments about geopolitical independence, that independence could be realised through Europe as a collective, were connected more closely to the EC in these later years. Kinnock’s economic adviser, John Eatwell, wrote that there was truth to the suggestion that the single market could create ‘a far more prosperous and far more independent Europe’ within the current geopolitical world system.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Jacques wrote that one could feel the genuine ‘growing independence and power’ of western Europe at the end of the 1980s, and the EC was key to this.¹⁴⁷ Britain’s role in the world was now part of an independent Europe. The end of the Cold War only enhanced this notion: Jacques wrote that the breakdown of the ‘bipolar world’ meant that the assumption of Britain’s ‘integral’ if not ‘senior’ role in NATO now meant little in

¹⁴² Editorial content for ‘Renaissance Europe’, p. 3.

¹⁴³ D. Marquand, ‘A Frail Constitution’, *Marxism Today*, May 1991, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Marquand, ‘Twelve Into One Will Go’, p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p. 244.

¹⁴⁶ J. Eatwell, ‘Socialising the Single Market’, *New Socialist*, August 1989 as cited by Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 297.

¹⁴⁷ Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 53.

the context of a Soviet threat which was ‘palpably disappearing before our very eyes’.¹⁴⁸ The liberal German-British academic and politician Ralf Dahrendorf mocked the ‘dream’ of a federal Europe which could ‘hold its own in some imaginary superpower game’ in the post-Cold War environment, but he nevertheless guarded against insularity just as much against ‘Euro-idealism’.¹⁴⁹ Hence, in the eyes of these authors, Britain’s geopolitical future – whether more powerful through the EC, giving up its sovereignty for the sake of realistic adaptation to the modern world, or participating in a more ‘independent’ Europe – was tied firmly to the EC.

The notion that Britain’s membership of the EC impacted on a sense of national identity also started to be discussed in *Marxism Today* in this later period. Dahrendorf wrote that Europe was ‘not a substitute for the feelings associated with one’s home town or even home country’. It was not a ‘supernation.’ He did not believe that the British had any sense of emotional connection to the EC in the way that they did for the nation, as shown in attitudes towards, for instance, ‘the Queen’s image on banknotes.’¹⁵⁰ Lloyd acknowledged, moreover, that there was a tension between the necessity of European integration and the immense fear of waking the ‘slumbering patriots’ of the nation.¹⁵¹

Indeed, the authors of *Marxism Today* were a self-consciously cosmopolitan internationalist group, and this certainly informed their attitude towards the EC. In the early 1990s, in discussions about the future direction of the journal, members of its editorial board spoke of the need to ‘Europeanise ourselves’ and for contributors to be ‘Europeanised’.¹⁵² There was even some exploration of the new journal which was to replace *Marxism Today* having a

¹⁴⁸ Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 53.

¹⁴⁹ R. Dahrendorf, ‘Making Sense of Europe’, *Marxism Today*, December 1990, pp. 16, 14. Dahrendorf and Marquand were close associates and friends – see D. Marquand, ‘From Bodmin Moor to Cardiff Bay: A European Education?’, in Schattle and Nuttall (eds.), *Making Social Democrats*, p. 288.

¹⁵⁰ Dahrendorf, ‘Making Sense of Europe’, p. 16.

¹⁵¹ Lloyd, ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 41.

¹⁵² Martin Jacques in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 6; Mark Perryman in Minutes, 3 November 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 2.

‘European angle reflected in business structure as well as content’.¹⁵³ Jacques contended that a serious problem for the left with regard to Europe was the fact that, culturally, it remained ‘deeply national in character’. Capital, by contrast, was cosmopolitan and had learned the benefits of international cooperation.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Jacques’ comment betrayed the fact that their attitude towards the EC was also shaped by their desire to distance themselves from cultures of the ‘old left’. They did this, as Campsie argues, through ‘champion[ing] a quite tightly-bounded image of the global, modern progressive culture that was seemingly sweeping the nation.’¹⁵⁵ Jacques and many others involved in *Marxism Today* emerging out of the Eurocommunist tradition in the CPGB were also very much familiar with looking beyond Britain to Europe for intellectual inspiration. The overall sense among this broad and diverse network of authors that any nationalism (and national identity itself) was deeply unfashionable certainly served to bolster this growing Europeanism.¹⁵⁶

Some authors in *Marxism Today* described an ‘identity crisis’ or ‘crisis of national identity’ caused by Britain’s membership of the EC.¹⁵⁷ These were seen, however, as something that Britain needed to overcome. For Marquand in 1991, the choice was between being part of an ‘evolving’ European Union, or, on the one hand, being like the ‘rather shop-soiled Sweden’ (which only acceded to the EU in 1995), or on the other hand, ‘an increasingly junior partner’ to an increasingly isolationist and declining United States.¹⁵⁸ It was understood that Britain was, culturally, very different to other European countries: Marquand wrote that the Anglican church,

¹⁵³ See Minutes, 2 February 1991, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/08, pp. 3-4. There was no direct successor for *Marxism Today*, but the successor to the CPGB, the Democratic Left, published a monthly magazine called *New Times*.

¹⁵⁴ Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 55.

¹⁵⁵ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 172-3 – Campsie emphasises in particular an essay on Continental café culture vs. pub culture by Ian Flemming: ‘A Mood for Mocha’, *Marxism Today*, April 1989, pp. 32-3.

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, disgust towards a particular kind of nationalism was represented on other parts of the British left. See R. Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism. The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (3 vols, London, 1989), i – see, for instance, p. x where Samuel described a general ‘consternation’ at the failure of the ‘anti-War’ half of the nation to contest the unbridled patriotism around and after the time of the Falklands War.

¹⁵⁷ Marquand, ‘Born Again Europe’, p. 29; W. Wallace, ‘Pride and Prejudice’, *Marxism Today*, October 1991, p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Marquand, ‘Born Again Europe’, p. 29.

the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty and military victories against enemies such as Napoleon and Hitler set Britain apart. Yet, he wrote, 'we *are* part of Europe, all the same... [n]or can we be excluded from any European Union worthy of the name.'¹⁵⁹ There was thus an awareness of the difficulties involved in being part of the EC, with regard to national identity, but this did not undermine the broad support for European integration.

Additionally, in these years, many authors within *Marxism Today* began to discuss the Community's democratic deficit, though again this was not seen as a reason to limit integration. Jacques argued that there needed to be a solution to the EC institutions' 'unaccountable nature' and the 'increasingly important democratic problem', especially if these institutions were to gain more powers as a result of the 1992 process.¹⁶⁰ Lloyd wrote that these issues could be solved through a stronger European Parliament,¹⁶¹ and Jacques similarly made the case for a more powerful Parliament and an elected Commission.¹⁶² The democratic deficit, therefore, could be solved through strengthening EC institutions and Marquand even suggested that 'something much more reminiscent of federalism', as opposed to the intergovernmentalism that characterised the Community, would be one other such remedy.¹⁶³ Withdrawal was not countenanced. Indeed, many of these authors characterised the EC as a force *for* democracy, while acknowledging the democratic deficit of its institutions. The environmentalist Tom Burke praised the EC as 'the only democratic supranational law-making body in the world', a democratic body crucial for the enormous public endeavour of tackling the late twentieth century's environmental problems.¹⁶⁴ Marquand, in turn, argued that the left's 'central purpose'

¹⁵⁹ Marquand, 'Born Again Europe', p. 29.

¹⁶⁰ Jacques, 'Coming In from the Cold', p. 55.

¹⁶¹ Lloyd, 'Europeans By Default', p. 39. See also Williams, 'Little and Large', p. 49.

¹⁶² Jacques, 'Coming In from the Cold', p. 55. See also Held, 'Farewell Nation State', p. 17 and Sassoon, 'Fawly Logic', p. 3 – Sassoon suggested a more democratic, integrated EC could act as a check on 'German economic preponderance' post-reunification.

¹⁶³ Marquand, 'Twelve Into One Will Go', p. 25. Marquand, additionally, was not being inconsistent as regards his position on the over-centralised British state: he argued that '[f]ederalism does not mean centralisation, any more than intergovernmentalism means decentralisation.' Instead, federalism was a method of separating powers, and could allow (within the EC) functions to pass to the lowest possible level.

¹⁶⁴ T. Burke, 'The Turning Green Tide', *Marxism Today*, April 1989, p. 45.

for over a century had been ‘to make democratic politics the master, rather than the servant, of market forces’. That this was no longer possible at the level of the nation state was why democratising the EC was so important – it offered a credible opportunity for democracy to once again tame the market.¹⁶⁵

Another criticism of the EC in the pages of *Marxism Today*, however, concerned the Community’s relationship with the Global South.¹⁶⁶ Even the largely celebratory special European issue tackled this dimension of the EC critically within its editorial introduction. It argued that while the EC had combatted the ‘worst excesses’ of surplus production under the Common Agricultural Policy, unwanted produce was still being ‘dumped’ on the international market at ‘rock-bottom prices’ which meant that, in many cases, the nations of the Global South were giving up their own agricultural development for the sake of a ‘gift-horse’ (in other words, cheap food).¹⁶⁷ To many of these left-wing authors, this impact on the Global South was made all the more egregious by the fact that (even if implicit), the Community’s intention was ‘to keep the world’s poor outwith its walls...’ and that it currently existed for the benefit of its own ‘natives’, as Ascherson claimed.¹⁶⁸ Stuart Hall wrote that this was all related to the fact that, just as Europe ‘consolidate[d] and converge[d]’, it was also marking out the boundaries of ‘Europe’ with regard to its ‘Third World “Others”’. One manner in which this operated, Hall believed, was through the distinction made in European political discourse between ‘political refugees’ and ‘economic migrants’, where only the former deserved refuge in Europe, the ‘home of liberty’. Despite the fact that ‘economic migrants’ had, quite rationally, sought prosperity in Europe, all of a sudden, European prosperity was now ‘a strictly European affair’ – constructed only for

¹⁶⁵ Marquand, ‘Born Again Europe’, p. 26. Marquand also uses this metaphor, again arguing to strengthen the EC (namely through democratising its institutions), in ‘Twelve Into One Will Go’, p. 25..

¹⁶⁶ Within the *Marxism Today* editorial board there was equally disquiet about the lack of ‘3rd world’ coverage and that fact that ‘[w]e’re obsessed with Europe now’ – Cynthia Cockburn in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Editorial content for ‘Renaissance Europe’, p. 5.

¹⁶⁸ Ascherson, ‘Oh! To Be In Europe’, p. 47.

what ‘every self-respecting Euro-politician is calling “our populations”.’¹⁶⁹ Thus, in the 1990s, there remained a critique of the EC and a broader Euro-centrism, based upon its relations with the Global South and with migrants originating from there, despite the general shift in favour of the Community among the authors of *Marxism Today*. For Jacques, however, though the European Community had ‘largely avoided’ attempting to help solve the ‘problem of North-South’, he believed it had immense capacity to contribute towards solving global inequalities.¹⁷⁰ The EC was an institution to reform, not something from which to withdraw.

Ultimately the milestone for European integration in these years was the Maastricht Treaty, drafted just as *Marxism Today* published its final issue in December 1991. The veteran Eurosceptic Labour MP Denzil Davies described that:

... at the heart of the treaty lies an economic ideology which would be anathema to everything Labour has stood for. Maastricht incorporates a monetary and deflationary ideology into the domestic law of Britain...¹⁷¹

Yet, the hostility towards the EC displayed by Davies had become, both in the Labour Party and in the pages of *Marxism Today*, much rarer over the course of the 1980s.¹⁷² By the early 1990s, the British left had transformed: the debate was now not whether to withdraw or not, but rather, what could be made of the opportunity of supranational action to counteract both the British state and its current government, and to take action on issues which transcended the nation state. Indeed, some authors such as Dahrendorf and Grahl went so far as to lend a degree of support for European monetary union.¹⁷³ Callaghan described Labour’s pro-European stance by

¹⁶⁹ S. Hall, ‘Europe’s Other Self’, *Marxism Today*, August 1991, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ Jacques, ‘Coming In from the Cold’, p. 55.

¹⁷¹ Denzil Davies as quoted by Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 95. Held, by contrast, described the Social Chapter of the Treaty as genuinely embodying ‘principles and rules’ compatible with ‘restructuring’ aspects of markets, even if the agreement as a whole ‘fell far short of what is ultimately necessary’ – ‘The Timid Tendency’, p. 26.

¹⁷² With regards to the Labour Party, Forster suggests that Labour anti-EC views appeared ‘less relevant’ as the party underwent its Policy Review in the late 1980s, as the hunt for an electorally-popular policy ‘watered down’ Labour scepticism on Europe – *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, pp. 72, 81.

¹⁷³ Dahrendorf, ‘Making Sense of Europe’, p. 16; J. Grahl, ‘Hard Terms’, *Marxism Today*, November 1990, p. 17. Lloyd, by contrast, did think that full economic and monetary union would ‘considerably constrain’ the operation of

the end of the 1980s as ‘brief and unstable opportunism’ – yet, both for Labour and the broader left, there was clearly something more substantial behind the shift in favour of the EC.¹⁷⁴

Indeed, far from superficially hitching themselves to the bandwagon of Europe, an entire shift in the left’s political geography had taken place. Europe offered an alternative political programme to the ‘deeply un-European ideology’ of Thatcherism.¹⁷⁵ As Vinen remarks, Thatcher’s ideological opponents came to believe that ‘anti-Europeanism was hardwired into Thatcherism’.¹⁷⁶ A contrast was drawn between Anglo-Saxon market fundamentalism and a social European approach to capitalism, even if both varieties of capitalism shared the notion of an irreversible and unstoppable tide of globalisation. In 1990, Lloyd argued that it was impossible – ‘*except for a real socialist*’, not afraid to deride his opponents – to present the EC as some ‘reactionary grouping’.¹⁷⁷ Lloyd claimed that:

[the EC’s] rapidly developing politics have fitted themselves round the contours of the only Left-Right struggle which still means something: that between social democrats, or leftist liberals, and the various forms of right-wing politics such as Christian democracy and the various faintly nationalist movements...¹⁷⁸

Inextricably intertwined with his appreciation for the EC, therefore, was the notion that left-wing Eurosceptic ideas, and traditional ‘socialism’ more broadly, were completely discredited. Changing attitudes to European integration were thus entangled with changing attitudes towards the capacity of the nation state to enact traditional socialist economic policies. For those, such as Lloyd, who believed globalisation had rendered such policies unworkable and irrelevant, it was time to let go of old nostrums and realise the opportunity offered by the EC.

future Labour chancellors – ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 40. The Labour MP Bryan Gould made a similar argument to that of Lloyd – Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 95.

¹⁷⁴ Callaghan, ‘The International Context’, p. 143. Contemporaries did, however, share in this view regarding the Labour Party – e.g., Lloyd, ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 38.

¹⁷⁵ Ascherson, ‘Oh! To Be In Europe’, p. 46.

¹⁷⁶ Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 246.

¹⁷⁷ Lloyd, ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 39.

¹⁷⁸ Lloyd, ‘Europeans By Default’, p. 39.

Conclusion

Where was an alternative, then? The answer increasingly given in the pages of *Marxism Today* was the European Community. Over time, there was a sense that the left needed to think outside the nation state, partly as a response to the British state and Thatcher's government, but also in light of the fact of Britain's interdependence with Europe and its entanglement within processes of global socio-economic change. The EC was believed to offer a 'progressive' alternative.

In making the case for the EC, the authors often framed this as coming to terms with a set of 'realities' and that '[r]ealistically', the Community was the only manner through which to achieve certain left-wing goals.¹⁷⁹ After decolonisation, and then in the age of global economic entanglement, there was 'no other choice' but to accept such 'long-term historic' realities.¹⁸⁰ The British electorate had also rejected withdrawal, explicitly once and indirectly another time in 1983: the left had to learn from these defeats. Those representing the EC itself, such as Delors, spoke in the 1980s of a 'peaceful revolution' occurring, 'in which we must all participate', in which '[w]e must all adapt.'¹⁸¹ Those writing in *Marxism Today* largely agreed, and suggested the alternative was 'irrelevance'.¹⁸² This polemical language appeared mostly in the mid- to late-1980s, but the basic concept – that European integration was simply realistic adaptation to irreversible change – was also there within earlier tentatively pro-EC interventions published in *Marxism Today*.

Britain was integrated firmly with western European economies, as well as being part of a global network of interdependence, and the EC offered the hope of once more placing

¹⁷⁹ Bloomfield, 'Europe Flexes Its Muscles', p. 22; Aaronovitch, 'The Alternative Economic Strategy', p. 26.

¹⁸⁰ Gamble, 'The Great Divide', p. 37; Jacques 'Coming In from the Cold', p. 53. Others on the left/liberal-left spoke about the EC in these terms, see Erdos, 'Charter 88, Democratic Constitutionalism and Europeanisation', p. 584.

¹⁸¹ Delors, Speech to the TUC, p. 2.

¹⁸² Lloyd, 'Europeans By Default', p. 39.

economic forces under democratic control. Part of accepting the EC, therefore, entailed a concomitant interpretation of the restraints imposed by the global economy: using the nation state for old socialist purposes was simply not feasible or credible anymore. There were, moreover, *positive* reasons for European integration. Through the Social Europe agenda, the Community was seen as the site for the development of a left-wing politics adapted to the late twentieth century – instead of predicting joint action through the EC as leading to action of ‘lowest common denominator’,¹⁸³ these writers were profoundly hopeful about the EC as a space to develop an alternative politics.

Ultimately, Tindale argued that acceptance for the EC within the Labour Party was related to an abandonment of traditional socialist policies, and its steady adoption, after 1983, of ‘gradualist social democracy’.¹⁸⁴ The authors discussed in this chapter similarly lost hope in the capacity of the nation state to deliver traditional left-wing economic policies. However, some were keen to stress that their European internationalism was perfectly compatible with ‘socialism’. Williams, for instance, still regarded his ideology as ‘socialism’, arguing that it was simply a socialism that ‘develops the openness, flexibility, initiative and will’ to share power with ‘a dozen countries on the continent’.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, a departure from a sense of optimism about economic nationalist policies was a necessary, although not sufficient, condition of enthusiasm for the EC. Policy programmes such as the AES had more broadly lost credibility: as Beatrix Campbell recalled, ‘economic strategies existed in the Seventies, and Governments planned them, and trade unions participated in them, and they were part of the national conversation, which within a decade they weren’t’.¹⁸⁶

But why *this* European Community? Why did these authors not present a vision of an alternative union of nation states, which could in theory enact a Mitterrand-style policy

¹⁸³ Holland, *The Socialist Challenge*, p. 359.

¹⁸⁴ Tindale, ‘Learning to Love the Market’, p. 276.

¹⁸⁵ Williams, ‘Little and Large’, p. 50.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Campbell, BL, Sisterhood and After.

programme to take on global capital effectively?¹⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the obvious practical difficulties involved in constructing such an alternative union, these authors came to appreciate the EC for reasons beyond the domain of economic policy. The ECJ was offering rights protections to British citizens over the heads of Thatcher's government. The EC's regional policy offered the promise of genuine devolution of power to the regions within the United Kingdom. It offered a different model of sovereignty. In this sense, debates on the left over the Community overlapped with debates over reforming the British state and how to engage with authoritarian Thatcherism.

This chapter has also demonstrated the convergence of the radical left and the liberal centre around the ideas of pluralism and a specifically European internationalism: left-liberals such as David Marquand were making similar arguments over the EC as those representing the Marxist tradition, such as Gwyn A. Williams, Sam Aaronovitch and Martin Jacques. These two groups were both opposed to an insular, labourist tendency within the British left which was less interested in these issues, and indeed was thought to have held back progress, especially in this international sphere. Both shared a belief that there needed to be a reckoning both with the Labour Party's traditional approach and with the British constitution.¹⁸⁸

Of course, the authors discussed in this chapter do not represent all on the British left in these years. The pro-EC voices were generally younger than those advocating withdrawal, although many of those older authors (such as Aaronovitch) did change their mind. As Anthony Forster noted, in addition, Labour Party voters were far less likely to support EC membership than the Party's MPs.¹⁸⁹ For reasons of scope, this chapter has ultimately not examined the thought of the British left as a whole in this period, including those whose passion for the

¹⁸⁷ Much like Stuart Holland, as noted earlier – although his alternative vision for Europe never took off and he eventually went to work for Delors and the European Commission in 1991, see Cronin, *New Labour's Past*, p. 353.

¹⁸⁸ See Chapter Two.

¹⁸⁹ Forster, *Euro-scepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 79.

European Union, in 2016, lay at around ‘seven, or seven and a half out of ten’.¹⁹⁰ A residual Euroscepticism was, indeed, another important dimension to the British left in the late twentieth century, especially as Euroscepticism in the 1990s became associated more famously with a radical, free-market, right-wing ‘post-Thatcherite’ philosophy.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, a broad spectrum of left to liberal-left opinion, representative of the progressive alliance that Jacques wished to embody through the journal, has been examined.

Andrew Gamble, writing in 2012, contended that in the 1980s, political actors in this period held ‘images’ of Europe and America which changed, which in turn served to transform their ideologies – the subject of his case being Thatcherism. These images were neither fixed nor ‘free-floating’, but dynamic in response to change and events.¹⁹² In the present case, this analogy of images is also useful. Gradually, the ‘image’ of Europe among many on the British left changed in this period. Individual nations’ images also changed. Germany turned from being a reactionary, capitalist force in world affairs to a partner in the European social project. The image of the United States as a deeply conservative force in the world became entrenched much further due to Reagan, a free-market, right-wing populist much like Thatcher,¹⁹³ demonstrating the need for Britain to be geopolitically independent within an autonomous Europe.¹⁹⁴ And while there were visions of Europe which were deeply conservative, such as the market liberal Thatcherite vision, these authors argued that an alternative *social* dimension to European integration was possible. In addition, crucially, Britain became increasingly part of the ‘image’ of Europe in the imagination of the authors of *Marxism Today*: Britain was European, even if they

¹⁹⁰ As Jeremy Corbyn stated prior to the referendum in June 2016 on the Channel Four television programme ‘The Last Leg’.

¹⁹¹ Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics*, p. 104.

¹⁹² Gamble, ‘Europe and America’, p. 219.

¹⁹³ P. Fox, ‘Appeal of Reaganism’, *Marxism Today*, October 1984, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ For another historical account of the importance of stylised ideas of other nations in the imagination of the British left, in this case of the ‘Scandinavian example’ for policy-makers in the 1950s and 1960s, see G. O’Hara, *Governing Post-War Britain: The Paradoxes of Progress, 1951-1973* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 28-49.

also appreciated the limits of this conception. These images changed as a result of the left's changing ideological preoccupations and as a result of their response to specific events.

Another way of putting this, as I have earlier in this chapter, is that the left's sense of political geography altered: Europe rose as a symbol of the 'progressive' future. Gamble claimed that Thatcherism's changing images shaped British politics,¹⁹⁵ and, likewise, I argue that the left's changing images of Europe, or the changing place of Europe within the left's political geography, in turn shaped the British left. This is shown ultimately in early cases of these authors wanting to learn from the economic policy of other EC member states, as well as in the later years of the 1980s where some of these figures were admiring European political arrangements or considering the need for feminist activism at a European-wide level. The arguments made by the authors discussed in this chapter demonstrate both the importance placed upon the international dimension by this section of the left in this period, but also how this dimension shaped their ideological transformation profoundly over the 1980s.

Related to these changing images was the emerging idea of different varieties of capitalism,¹⁹⁶ as discussed in Chapter Two. Over the decade, the distinction between 'Anglo-Saxon' market capitalism and a 'European social model' became much clearer, as demonstrated by Delors referring to a particular, European, model of society, as well as in the writings of these authors themselves – particularly in their desire to both learn from Europe and the European Community, and in their denunciation of Thatcherism as something un-European.¹⁹⁷ This attempt to construct and adhere to a different model of capitalism should be seen as an attempt by these authors to engage with and accommodate to globalisation, while simultaneously repudiating 'Thatcherism' and neo-liberalism – in this sense, the EC was a critical part of the attempt of the contributors to *Marxism Today* to distinguish themselves from their ideological opponents. Social Europe became important for the left because it offered a clear alternative to

¹⁹⁵ Gamble, 'Europe and America', p. 230.

¹⁹⁶ See Hall and Soskice (eds.), *Varieties of Capitalism*.

¹⁹⁷ See also Gamble, 'Europe and America', pp. 228-9.

Thatcherism, when traditional forms of socialism seemed to have collapsed as a viable option, as coherent alternatives to capitalism. This attempt to find something beyond both traditional left-wing politics and Thatcherism explains why so many authors emerging out of Marxism ended up concurring with liberals.

The revision of the British left's ideologies over the course of the 1980s was thus not a simplistic reflex to Thatcherism, a capitulation to Anglo-Saxon market liberalism. It was, instead, a grappling around for an alternative. In the attempt to negotiate the challenges of the late twentieth century, the European Community was one resource used by those writing in *Marxism Today* to create a new politics for the late twentieth century and beyond.

Chapter Five – Geoff Mulgan: markets, communitarianism and the knowledge economy

In 1998, seven years after its closure, a special issue of *Marxism Today* was printed, edited by Martin Jacques and featuring a range of articles from a broad cross-section of writers, including some of the journal's former regular contributors. The cover featured a photograph of Prime Minister Tony Blair, emblazoned with the word 'Wrong' in bright red letters. Within the issue, Stuart Hall, Eric Hobsbawm and a range of authors criticised the New Labour government but also inside was a piece by Geoff Mulgan (born 1961) which criticised the 'position of scholastic isolation' taken by these other writers. He argued that:

It would have been interesting if instead of tilting at windmills, Hall and Hobsbawm had attempted a more serious analysis of New Labour's political strategy. There is a serious argument to be had about whether New Labour is right in its gradualist strategy of creating new political space, winning over new constituencies, and testing out ideas...

But critique was now no longer enough:

During the 1980s the left had had to come to terms with a changing world. During the 1990s it had to prepare for power. It was no longer enough for arguments to be interesting or eloquent: they also had to be realistic and practical.¹

Encapsulated in this and the rest of his piece was a vestigial anchoring in *Marxism Today*, with its concern for 'new constituencies'; its appeal for 'more serious analysis' to precede political and strategic prescriptions; and its rhetorical demand for realism in the face of changed circumstances. Mulgan was someone rooted in *Marxism Today* who nevertheless ended up celebrating New Labour and indeed working in Blair's government. This chapter provides an account of his political writings from 1988 to 1994 – in *Marxism Today* and beyond – illuminating

¹ G. Mulgan, 'Whinge and a Prayer', *Marxism Today*, November/December 1998, p. 16.

the development of his communitarianism and how he sought to broker an alternative left-wing politics.

By the end of the 1990s, a clear division had emerged between a range of former contributors to *Marxism Today*. Alan Finlayson and Charles Thorpe refer to the cleavage as between the ‘Demos tendency’, of which Mulgan was a part (co-founding the think tank in 1993 with Jacques), and the ‘Gramscians’, of which Hall was its most notable member.² Those involved in the Demos tendency, whether through the work of the think tank or through directly serving in the administration, would become associated with New Labour.

Examining Mulgan, therefore, as someone who joined *Marxism Today* in the late 1980s and who then went on to serve as head of the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit and then as the Director of Policy at the No. 10 Policy Unit under Blair,³ provides the opportunity to investigate the most direct connection between *Marxism Today* and New Labour, as well as illuminating some of the ideological origins of the modernised social democracy at the end of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Mulgan and Demos are considered to be important in the development of British ‘third way’ thought.⁴ Indeed, the writer most famously associated with the ‘third way’, Anthony Giddens, wrote in his 1998 text *The Third Way* that the book emerged out of several informal evening discussions with Mulgan and Ian Hargreaves.⁵ While the ‘third way’ was largely an *ex post facto* term to group together a range of different revisionist intellectual currents in the 1980s and 1990s, this chapter provides some context for this later discussion.⁶ It is for these reasons that I have dedicated an entire chapter to the elaboration of Mulgan’s thought.

² Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p. 124; Thorpe, ‘Participation as Post-Fordist Politics’, p. 396.

³ Certainly, in these roles, Mulgan had a ‘direct impact’ on New Labour policy in these early years – Thorpe, ‘Participation as Post-Fordist Politics’, p. 392.

⁴ Cronin, *New Labour’s Pasts*, p. 393; Thorpe, ‘Participation as Post-Fordist Politics’, p. 392.

⁵ Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. ix. Hargreaves was a former editor of the *New Statesman* and *The Independent*.

⁶ Stuart White convincingly argued that there were a range of ‘third way’ projects and ‘[n]ot one third way, but many’, drawing on Steven Lukes’ description of the ‘third way’ as a ‘rhetorically defined space’ rather than an ideology – S. White, ‘The Ambiguities of the Third Way’, in S. White (ed.), *New Labour: The Progressive Future?* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 3-4, 11 and S. Lukes, ‘The Last Word on the Third Way’, *The Review*, Social Market Foundation, March 1999, pp. 3-4, as cited.

Mulgan was connected to a range of groups and institutions in the world of the British left in the late twentieth century. Following his education at Oxford, Mulgan started work at the Greater London Enterprise Board of Ken Livingstone's GLC, nine days prior to the announcement of its abolition. Mulgan also helped to found Red Wedge, the collective of musicians seeking to engage young people with politics and the Labour Party in the mid-1980s. Mulgan then pursued a Ph.D. in telecommunications at Central London Polytechnic, and spent time in the United States at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, at one point working for the Democrats at the Iowa Primary of 1987. By the late 1980s, he was a writer for a range of publications, including the *Financial Times* and the *New Statesman*, and, of course, he was a frequent contributor to *Marxism Today* and served on its editorial board. After his involvement in *Marxism Today*, he was an adviser to Gordon Brown MP and then ran Demos until the late 1990s, prior to his involvement in the New Labour government.⁷

In his late twenties when involved in *Marxism Today*, Mulgan was from a younger generation of its writers. He came to the journal in its 'new times' era, and was enthusiastic about the project, arguing in an editorial board meeting that resistance to it from within the Labour Party was partly due to sectarianism, as 'new times' had exposed the 'lack of imagination' of the Labour Party's rethinking through its Policy Review.⁸ As I illustrate in this chapter, however, Mulgan's views ran increasingly with the grain of those 'modernisers' in the Labour Party, even though the precise currents influencing his thought differed from those influencing ideological revision within Labour. Much like the modernisers and most of those in *Marxism Today*, Mulgan aimed to renew left-wing ideas in order to depart from both the 'Bennite' left' and post-war

⁷ This paragraph is a summary of the biographical detail provided in C. Handy, *The New Alchemists* (London, 1999), pp. 186-9 and J. Walljasper, J. Spayde and the editors of *Utne Reader, Visionaries. People & Ideas to Change Your Life* (Gabriola Island, BC, 2001), pp. 127-31.

⁸ Geoff Mulgan in Minutes, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 8. Elsewhere, Mulgan claimed that Labour's Policy Review documents (passed at the Labour Party conference in October 1989) were 'an attempt to translate the analysis pioneered by *Marxism Today* and others into concrete policies for a national government' – G. Mulgan, 'The Vision Thing', *Marxism Today*, August 1989, p. 28.

Keynesian social democracy, within a context of repeated political defeat for the Labour Party against the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

To Mulgan, such a renewal lay in a politics based around ‘community’ – a communitarianism. Firstly, I draw out briefly similarities and differences between Mulgan and others in *Marxism Today*. I then go on to examine his engagement with market liberal ideas – while Mulgan did adopt the logic of some of these arguments, he was anxious to distinguish his prescriptions and analysis from what he believed to be the vulgar, selfish ideology of the new right. Following this, I historicise communitarianism in its philosophical and political contexts, and then expound on the form and content of Mulgan’s communitarianism and his discourse on responsibility, taking this aspect of political communitarianism seriously where other scholars have dismissed it. Mulgan was also influenced by a range of distinctive bodies of thought which reinforced the importance of ‘community’ in his thought and I illustrate this precise impact. Mulgan’s writings in this period also relate to an emerging debate over the ‘knowledge economy’ and the importance of human capital, and I will demonstrate how his vision of modernity had a strong vein of what Jenny Andersson calls a ‘discursive logic of capitalization’, in which human potential is seen as the ‘raw material’ of the new economy.⁹

What emerges from this analysis is how clearly Mulgan was *active* in the shaping of his ideology, not simply a passive force accepting the logic of his ideological opponents. However, Mulgan’s texts have been criticised by Alexandre Campsie for their determinism, and for their part in promoting *Marxism Today*’s ‘tightly-bounded’ image of modernity, which was perhaps a product of the degree of pessimism also evident within them.¹⁰ Yet, these features in turn need to be placed into historical context: Mulgan’s determinism and ambivalent, irregular pessimism were rhetorical tools in order to make his particular interventions – namely his outline of a

⁹ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 24. In context, Andersson argues that ‘third way’ ideology is informed by this logic, whereby ‘social democracy identifies human potential – human knowledge, talent, creativity – as economic goods and ultimately new forms of capital’.

¹⁰ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, p. 173 – Campsie makes this remark as representative of *Marxism Today* in the late 1980s, not just of Mulgan.

communitarian vision – out as the true alternative to Thatcherism and market liberalism at the end of the twentieth century. Historians must be alert to the *function* of such determinism and pessimism within intellectual contexts, rather than assessing historical interventions purely on whether they accurately or sensitively addressed social change. We must appreciate that descriptions of the world are bound inextricably to a desire to shape that very reality.

Mulgan, *Marxism Today* and modernisation

This chapter concerns Mulgan’s rather idiosyncratic communitarian ideas and their expression outside, as well as inside, *Marxism Today* – but it is important to note that he shared much in common with others connected to the journal. This included similar opinions as well as shared intellectual motifs. For instance, Mulgan spoke the Gramsci-inspired language of hegemony, remarking at the start of 1990 that the left in Europe could once again ‘become hegemonic’ if it adopted a ‘mild and cautious social-democratic form’.¹¹ Linked to this was his view that Thatcherism was a hegemonic project and that the right had succeeded in ‘setting the political agenda of the 1980s’.¹² Additionally, while he told the journal’s editorial board ‘post-Fordism’ was ‘very poor terminology’,¹³ he appeared elsewhere to accept the basic tenets of the post-Fordist thesis and used the term without qualification.¹⁴ He was also very critical of ‘labourism’ and, writing at the time of John Smith’s leadership, believed that the ‘underlying culture of the party’ needed to be remade profoundly in order to enact lasting policy change among modernising lines.¹⁵

¹¹ G. Mulgan, ‘Dark Side of the Decade’, *Marxism Today*, January 1990, p. 33.

¹² G. Mulgan, ‘The Power of the Weak’, *Marxism Today*, December 1988, p. 30.

¹³ Geoff Mulgan in Minutes, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 6.

¹⁴ G. Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, *Marxism Today*, May 1991, p. 18; G. Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, *Marxism Today*, September 1989, p. 33 and Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’.

¹⁵ G. Mulgan, ‘Creating an Enabling Party’, *Renewal*, 1/1, January 1993, p. 66 as quoted by Cronin, *New Labour’s Past*, p. 349.

In common with others in *Marxism Today*, Mulgan was fundamentally urban and cosmopolitan in outlook. In an article from 1991, Mulgan wrote that Thatcher had ‘joined the pantheon of failed modernisers’ after her resignation as Prime Minister and Conservative party leader in November 1990. He claimed that Thatcherism was always going to be an ‘unlikely philosophy of change’ due to its roots in the ‘more parochial parts of English life, the small town and the suburb’.¹⁶ Mulgan in an earlier article idealised the urban space, in contrast, not only as dynamic and modern but also because the political right had ‘never felt at home with the city’—for the ‘new’ right, cities were where their ‘narrow individualism and denial of society seem[ed] most out of place’.¹⁷ Campsie contends that in the 1980s socialists ‘came to feel that the more creative, progressive and “modern” urban landscape in which they moved’ could serve as a space in which to resist Thatcher’s ‘aggressive nationalism and petty-bourgeois moralising’.¹⁸ Stephen Brooke, likewise, showed how many of those involved in the GLC in the decade idealised the urban space as an arena in which to create, through various policies, ‘a different emotional world’ to that created by Thatcher’s government.¹⁹ In this respect, Mulgan was typical of his left-wing contemporaries in considering the urban space as a site to both resist and develop an alternative to Thatcherism.²⁰ In addition, Mulgan was clearly, much like others in *Marxism Today*, preoccupied with Thatcherism and the new right, both as ideologies with which to define oneself against (he remarked once that Thatcherism was ‘actually a barrier to change’)²¹ and as a successful project from which the left could learn.

¹⁶ G. Mulgan, ‘Shock of the New’, *Marxism Today*, July 1991, p. 5. Mulgan’s assessment of Thatcherism as simultaneously modernising and traditionalist chimes with Hall’s earlier description of Thatcherism as a project of ‘regressive modernisation’ – ‘Gramsci and Us’, p. 17.

¹⁷ G. Mulgan, ‘A Tale of New Cities’, *Marxism Today*, March 1989, p. 18.

¹⁸ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 151, 173.

¹⁹ Brooke, ‘Space, Emotions and the Everyday’, p. 137.

²⁰ Though, as Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite shows, modernisers in the Labour Party in the 1980s and 1990s were trying to underscore the importance of responding to and taking an interest in those living in suburban England, who were seen as key to the Labour Party’s electoral fortunes – Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘“Class” in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology’, p. 345.

²¹ Geoff Mulgan in Minutes, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 6.

The emphasis on adaptation and modernisation, of the need to recognise the irreversible nature of change, was a major point of similarity with others in the journal. For example, he argued that Labour's agenda in the 1970s offered a profound shift in the balance of wealth and power towards 'working people' and the promise of a more egalitarian economy. But now, Mulgan wrote in August 1989, 'politics is elsewhere' – it was still possible to be radical at the local level, in culture, in social policy, he claimed, 'but not in the Treasury or in the control of the commanding heights'.²² Implicit, therefore, was not the more hopeful suggestion that egalitarian solutions can be delivered not *just* at the level of the central state, but that it was no longer credible to offer any kind of radicalism at this level. As shown, Mulgan was, however, more stridently deterministic than others in *Marxism Today* and was generally more pessimistic about the scope for left-wing manoeuvre. In the same year, he wrote that the left was now most effective in playing a 'defensive role', 'protecting people from the dangers of this world, rather than promising a new one'. 'Limits', he suggested, were an 'inherent part of the world'.²³

In his approach to class, social stratification and new social constituencies, Mulgan also stressed the need for pragmatism in the face of permanent and sweeping change. He wrote in 1989 that Labour, while maintaining its values of 'social obligation' and 'community', nevertheless had to 'reach out' to a 'prosperous' majority because '[t]he arithmetical logic of the new social fault lines precludes any other politics for left parties seeking electoral hegemony'. A rainbow alliance and traditional, non-modernised, socialist parties would never be able to win more than a quarter of the electorate, thus excluding them from power.²⁴ Because these prosperous members of society were in the majority, the left needed to have a majoritarian strategy that appealed to this section of society. In this respect he was much like Eric Hobsbawm in his attitude to the left's social constituencies, but he went one step further in suggesting that

²² Mulgan, 'Vision Thing', p. 28.

²³ Mulgan, 'That Certain Feeling', pp. 27, 29.

²⁴ Mulgan, 'Vision Thing', pp. 28-9.

occupational shifts and a decline in deference had rendered ‘class’ broadly irrelevant.²⁵ Notable also was the mathematical framing of this problem: the left had just one option.

This combination of determinism together with a political prescription was found, likewise, in his attitude towards the European Community. He argued that the Labour Party had ‘little choice’ but to ‘go European’ – the Policy Review, which dropped the policy of withdrawal from the European Community in 1989, was simply a ‘necessary’ repositioning of party policy to reflect ‘changed realities’. Once again, Mulgan appealed to a vision of modernity against a backward, tradition-bound nostalgia: the shift on European policy was a ‘decisive break’ with the British left’s ‘traditions of national chauvinism’, and he praised the Review for ‘symbolis[ing] the half-complete transformation’ of the party away from its ‘distinctively British, labourist roots’, into a European, social-democratic party.²⁶ Regarding the creation of the single market by the end of 1992, moreover, Mulgan claimed in 1989 that it was no longer possible for national governments to ‘challenge the logic of 1992’.²⁷ Therefore, the form of Mulgan’s interventions was often, firstly, to suggest that there had been unalterable changes and, secondly, to persuade the left to adapt accordingly, to reject nostalgia and modernise. In this respect, he was like many others in *Marxism Today*, but he was much more sharply deterministic, far more polemical and seemingly much more pessimistic, in his various claims of there being only *one* progressive solution to irreversible change.

²⁵ G. Mulgan and R. Murray, *Reconnecting Taxation* (London, 1993), pp. 8-10; G. Mulgan, ‘Primordial Politics’, *New Statesman & Society*, 16 July 1993, p. 18; G. Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 12.

²⁶ Mulgan, ‘Vision Thing’, pp. 28-9.

²⁷ Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 29. He does note in the same article, however, that it is not now possible for national governments to ‘challenge the logic of 1992’, p. 28.

Markets, consumers and community

In acknowledging how the free market right had set the political agenda, how much of this involved an acceptance of its conception of the world? Ultimately, while Mulgan's texts do not reveal a total capitulation to free-market and neo-liberal arguments, as well as an eagerness to distance his interventions from the new right, he engaged seriously with free market arguments about markets, consumerism and public choice, and believed they exposed genuine failures of democratic politics.

Mulgan believed that a characteristic of the 'new times' was 'uncertainty', and that the scope for control was accordingly limited.²⁸ Influencing this view was a reading of Friedrich Hayek, who Mulgan believed gave the right's anti-statism its most coherent form. According to Hayek, on an epistemological level, effective planning by the state was not possible because it could not collect properly all the information necessary to make robust and productive decisions. Hayek distinguished between 'scientific' knowledge and 'tacit' knowledge, where he defined 'tacit' knowledge as 'the knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place', which, due to its very nature, could not be obtained by a central planner.²⁹ Writing in a 1988 essay on 'weak power structures', Mulgan argued that Hayek was correct in his assessment of states as incapable of collecting all relevant information: the interests of fifty-five million different people could not be 'represented' realistically through the state and compounding this was the increasing differentiation of societies into groups with 'very different needs and interests'. As a result, Hayek's critique assumed 'greater weight' and the changes brought about by post-Fordism – where capitalism had learnt the 'virtues' of 'flexible specialisation, differentiation and of more

²⁸ Mulgan, 'That Certain Feeling', p. 26.

²⁹ B. Caldwell, 'Hayek and Socialism', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 35 (1997), pp. 1865-6; F. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago, 1948), p. 80, as quoted by Griffiths, *Engaging Enemies*, p. 76.

subtle, multi-dimensional market research techniques’ – meant his argument, forty years later, was now ‘devastating’.³⁰

In consequence, Mulgan even went so far to critique ‘the formal institutions of democracy’ with respect to the market. Contending that the ‘new times’ were increasingly characterised by ‘weak forms of power control’, he noted that the ‘ideal market’ could be seen as such a structure, ‘instantly responding to the changing needs of consumers’, contrary to a ‘simplifying, standardising and remote’ state. He wrote:

... in the market everyone at least exerts an influence, whereas in the democracy the choices of almost 60% of the population may be completely ignored as in Britain. The democratic election offers at best a handful of choices, while the market, at least in theory, offers an almost infinite array of choice for those with the money to exercise it.³¹

Though an ‘ideal’ market, working in this way only theoretically, and only for those with purchasing power, the core of Mulgan’s argument was that the market sometimes trumps democracy – and though he argued that these were not arguments ‘against democracy’, but instead ‘arguments against the idea that democracy is any more a universal panacea than the market’,³² the criticism of democracy amounted to a significant departure from those writing in *Marxism Today* at this time.³³ However, Mulgan would go on, in 1994, to criticise Hayek’s opposition to ‘a politics of constructed orders’, arguing that the absence of such orders under the ‘spontaneous order of markets’ would be ‘intolerable’: markets also did not connect people into beneficial ‘relationships of obligation’.³⁴ Even in same 1988 essay quoted at length above, he opposed the ‘fetishization’ of the market.³⁵ Nevertheless Mulgan’s approving engagement with Hayek and his critique of democratic politics in the late 1980s demonstrated his acceptance of certain elements of Hayekian neo-liberalism. He also accepted certain elements of the free

³⁰ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 29.

³¹ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 29.

³² Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 30.

³³ Compare, for instance, to the arguments presented in Chapter Four by David Marquand, whose stated aim was for democracy to, once again, become the master of market forces – and even those such as Stuart Hall and Charlie Leadbeater, whose iconoclastic attitudes to the market were discussed in Chapter Two, did not develop a critique of democracy.

³⁴ Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age*, p. 34.

³⁵ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 30.

market right's conception of economic literacy, which also involved a critique of democratic politics. In 1990, Mulgan wrote that '[s]elf-restraint' in economic policy was essential if the left was 'successfully to answer' those such as David Stockman, Director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Reagan Administration 1981-1985, who had declared his desire to turn the state into a 'spare and stingy creature'.³⁶ Mulgan argued that a successful 'answer' involved restraining the state's power to create money, to spend in the short term, and to 'respond too readily to the upward bidding of democratic politics'.³⁷ Democratic politics was sometimes the enemy of responsible government.

Mulgan was also interested in the consumer relationship and its place within public services. Underlying all this was, much like as discussed in Chapter Two, politics. Thatcher's government had been successful because, in valorising the market, they offered the promise of 'control': 'the private control of the sovereign consumer can be portrayed as real, visible and tangible'. The Conservatives had offered control at the level of the individual through policies on homeownership and parental choice in education, but also control over larger institutions, through owning shares in BT, for instance.³⁸ He, moreover, contended that there were both costs and benefits to market mechanisms and 'consumerism' in the public sector.³⁹ The introduction of the internal market within the NHS in 1990 included the establishment of GP fund-holding, whereby GPs were provided with budgets to purchase services for their patients from hospitals or other providers. Mulgan wrote in an article in 1991 that NHS doctors were hence being turned into 'full-time utilitarian philosophers', instructed to 'weigh up the relative virtues of dialysis and hip replacements'. Yet, he claimed that such reforms aimed at delivering 'greater internal transparency' and had much to admire: clearer ideas about the costs involved in

³⁶ G. Mulgan, 'The Buck Stops Here', *Marxism Today*, September 1990, p. 26. Stockman made these remarks in D. Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York, 1986).

³⁷ Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', p. 26.

³⁸ Mulgan, 'Power of the Weak', pp. 29-30. Mulgan is here referring to the 'right to buy' established by the Housing Act 1980 and the Education Reform Act 1988 which allowed parents to indicate their preferred choice of school for their children.

³⁹ Mulgan, 'Power to the Public', p. 16.

public services could help to ensure that public goals were achieved more effectively.⁴⁰ Not all recent reforms to the NHS served the public, however. He was eager to criticise the ‘imbalance of power’ between user and provider involved in the introduction of contracts within the NHS: providers, rather than users, found it easier to opt-out, as shown in GPs closing lists to “‘costly” patients’.⁴¹ Consumerism and markets in public services were not inherently beneficial.

At this time, many on the free-market right were making the case for contractualism in public services, such as Graham Mather of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). Mather claimed that enforceable contracts within the public sector between the provider and the end user would ‘improve service standards, set explicit performance standards, and improve customer entitlements...’⁴² Mulgan concurred that Mather’s programme could ‘empower the consumer’, providing them with ‘genuinely enforceable powers’, rather than relying on democratic channels for accountability. Yet, he stated that a weakness was that it introduced market models into ‘areas where their relevance is at best limited’. A problem with recent school reforms, for instance, was the ease with which schools could reject children with learning difficulties.⁴³ And so while Mulgan believed the consumer relationship was potentially empowering, he was wary of ignoring the operations of power under consumerist and contractualist models: there were ‘very real informational barriers to the exercise of genuine consumer sovereignty’ in the case of schooling and with GPs. The left adopting a consumerist approach, emphasising end user rights, compensation, and ombudsmen, had much to commend, but an *exclusively* consumerist approach was mistaken: instead, the left needed to ‘move beyond consumerism’.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 16.

⁴¹ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 16.

⁴² G. Mather, *Government by Contract*, IEA Inquiry No. 25 (London, 1991), p. 8, as quoted by D. Scott and R. Usher (eds.), *Understanding Educational Research* (London, 1996), p. 98.

⁴³ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 17.

Such an alternative approach for the public sector involved, according to Mulgan, one which balanced empowering the consumer with the needs of both providers and the ‘community’, and in consequence not only was technocratic reform important to public sector reform, but so was ‘the revitalisation of ethical and communitarian arguments’. He contended that what divided much of the left from the modern right was whether it was appropriate to treat people ‘only’ as individuals or whether these same people had interests as ‘members of a community’.⁴⁵ He described the way forward as ‘public sector pluralism’. In this, different models of ‘social organisation’ needed to be incorporated into reform, and hence there needed to be an appreciation of the fact that ‘common public goals’ could be achieved through the state and through the work of ‘voluntary and private bodies’.⁴⁶ Pluralism could also be encouraged within the state: Mulgan gave the example of School District Four in Harlem, New York City, where the local authority granted teachers the ability to create different specialisations for their schools, from which children could choose.⁴⁷ A position *between* market-based consumerism and one which ‘overemphasises the democratic process’ was necessary, Mulgan believed.⁴⁸

Thus, once again Mulgan attempted to balance an argument which seriously questioned the democratic process in the allocation of resources (a feature of neo-liberal ideology)⁴⁹ and which emphasised the importance of consumer/public choice,⁵⁰ with one which dismissed ‘naïve faith’ in liberal markets.⁵¹ The emphasis on community shown above, moreover, explained why Mulgan appeared elsewhere as quite traditional in approach. In a Demos pamphlet from 1993

⁴⁵ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁶ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, pp. 17, 18, 19.

⁴⁷ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 18. See P. W. Cookson, *School Choice: The Struggle for the Soul of American Education* (New Haven, CT, 1994), pp. 52-5.

⁴⁸ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 19.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, B. Jackson, ‘Currents of Neo-Liberalism: British Political Ideologies and the New Right, c. 1955-1979’, *English Historical Review*, 131/551 (2016), p. 835; see also Jackson, ‘Neoliberalism: Wanted, Dead or Alive’, pp. 194.

⁵⁰ Mulgan clearly found ideas of public/consumer choice to be irresistible. Noel Thompson suggests that the reception of public choice theory, which sought to enhance ‘consumer sovereignty’ through initiatives such as tax rebates and vouchers, in Britain was particularly devastating to Keynesian social democracy, and much more so than the reception of monetarist or Austrian School ideas – ‘Hollowing Out the State’, pp. 355-82, quotation at p. 374.

⁵¹ Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 29.

about taxation, Mulgan and Robin Murray produced a defence of universality in the welfare state. By abandoning such a principle, the authors argued that ‘the middle class will be left paying for benefits they no longer receive’, hastening the ‘fragmentation of societies into mutually insulated worlds’, the loss of ‘connexity’, and of ‘shared experience’.⁵² Mulgan, though engaging with Hayek and those connected to the IEA, did not succumb entirely to their arguments. Mulgan’s interest in markets and the consumer relationship as an empowering relationship aligned him with others within *Marxism Today*, such as Stuart Hall and Charlie Leadbeater,⁵³ but he departed significantly from them and others with respect to his explicit critique of democratic politics.

He did insist, however, on his opposition to, and difference from, Thatcherism and ‘neo-liberalism’.⁵⁴ He wrote in 1990 that the *Wall Street Journal*’s philosophy of ‘gung-ho chaos, deregulation and greed being good’ had ‘reached its limits’.⁵⁵ In 1991, he claimed that the age was gone when ‘markets expanded to take advantage of decaying older structures’, when ‘corporate assertiveness, greed and self-control’, all merged to make conservatism seem ‘modern and alive’.⁵⁶ Free-market capitalism was no longer modern. Crucial to his effort to distinguish his arguments from those of his ideological opponents, however, was his emphasis on community.

Communitarianism in context

How to make sense of Mulgan’s ideology in this period? How did he join all these positions together into something coherent, especially when he considered traditional left-wing

⁵² Mulgan and Murray, *Reconnecting Taxation*, pp. 9-10. The authors note, on p. 48, that the term ‘connexity’ was first coined by Andre Levi Gourhan in *Le Geste et le Parole* (Paris, 1964). Mulgan wrote a book later in the 1990s using this term in its title – *Connexity: How to Live in a Connected World* (London, 1997).

⁵³ See Chapter Two.

⁵⁴ Mulgan used the term ‘neo-liberalism’ – see, e.g., ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 29.

⁵⁵ Mulgan, ‘Dark Side’, p. 30.

⁵⁶ G. Mulgan. ‘Built to Last’, *Marxism Today*, December 1991, p. 53.

and Marxist approaches to be outdated? This is where ‘community’ and interdependence emerge as important concepts in Mulgan’s writings, and they were key to his attempt to distinguish a modern left-wing politics from the new right. Before examining Mulgan’s communitarianism, I outline the political and philosophical context of communitarianism in the late twentieth century.

In the 1990s, ‘community’ emerged as an important term in high political discourse. Those involved in New Labour were a major part of this. Blair, writing in *Marxism Today* in 1991, argued that ‘citizenship’ was distinguished from ‘individualism’ by an ‘insistence that a citizen is part of a wider community’, and that a conception of citizenship ‘without community’ was vacuous.⁵⁷ Other New Labour figures suggested in the early- to mid-1990s that a cornerstone of modern socialism was a concern for the capacity of the community to act together to enable individual flourishing.⁵⁸ Andersson notes that the concept was placed at the centre of Labour ideology in the rewriting of the party’s constitution in 1994, which she argued encapsulated its ‘quest for social harmony’,⁵⁹ and towards the end of the decade, Giddens wrote that ‘community’ was fundamental to the ‘new politics’ of the British social democratic left.⁶⁰ The predominance of ‘community’ also found its way into the rhetoric of Conservatives in the Major era, in reaction to the Labour leadership’s enthusiasm for the term.⁶¹ Ultimately, ‘community’ held great purchase and the political philosopher, David Miller, suggested that societal preoccupation with crime, drugs, homelessness and social decay in the 1990s meant that this community discourse appeared to capture ‘the spirit of the age’.⁶²

However, political ideas and political practice based around the concept of ‘community’ had had a long history in twentieth-century British politics. ‘Community’ had been a concern on

⁵⁷ Blair, ‘Forging a New Agenda’, pp. 32, 33.

⁵⁸ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘“Class” in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology’, p. 358.

⁵⁹ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 99.

⁶⁰ Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 79.

⁶¹ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 170. However, Sutcliffe-Braithwaite notes that ‘community’ did have a place within Thatcherite discourse in relation to individualism: ‘rational self-interest’ allowed to flourish would lead to ‘responsibility and community-mindedness’ (p. 156).

⁶² D. Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 97.

the British left throughout the twentieth century, in the sense of an aspiration to ‘foster a society characterised by co-operation rather than competition’.⁶³ In addition, in the late 1960s and 1970s, a ‘community politics’ movement emerged, which has also been labelled as ‘communitarian’.

This movement arose out of the radicalism associated with 1968, a part of libertarian New Left currents which sought to construct a ‘grass-roots radical politics’ with the working-class community at its foundation. In London, these radicals sought to develop solutions based around community to housing shortages and deindustrialisation by, for instance, fostering community opposition to regeneration projects in the inner city.⁶⁴ The youth branch of the Liberal Party, the Young Liberals, was another political formation investing great hope in community-based radical action.⁶⁵ In this sense, ‘community’ *re*-emerged in politics at the end of the twentieth century, and it was also not new for a politics of ‘community’ to be used as a means of constructing an alternative to both the post-war social democratic state and to free market, right-wing politics.

A set of ideas labelled as ‘communitarianism’ also emerged by the mid-1980s as a significant strand within academic political philosophy.⁶⁶ Associated with communitarianism as a branch of contemporary political philosophy were those such as Michael Walzer, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor, who each sought to respond to the individualism espoused by John Rawls.⁶⁷ Walzer, MacIntyre and Taylor were all involved in New Left currents in the 1950s and 1960s, the latter two having contributed to *Universities & Left Review* alongside Stuart Hall in the 1950s.⁶⁸ Communitarian political theory thus had origins in the New Left’s

⁶³ Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, p. 183.

⁶⁴ Davis, ‘Community and the Labour left in 1970s London’, pp. 207, 214. See also Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 104-15.

⁶⁵ See Davis, ‘Reshaping the Welfare State?’, p. 210 and Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 111-13.

⁶⁶ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 97.

⁶⁷ See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA, 1971). John Macmurray is another philosopher normally included under the banner of communitarianism, but he was from an older strand of communitarian thought and he died in 1976.

⁶⁸ Indeed, Madeleine Davis argues that the New Left held a ‘communitarian’, and democratic, critique of capitalism in ‘Arguing Affluence’, p. 502 – see also Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, pp. 185-6. Walzer would go on to co-edit the American magazine *Dissent*.

socialist humanism.⁶⁹ None of these political philosophers were enthusiastic about the description of themselves as ‘communitarians’, and Miller described communitarianism as a ‘political anthropology’ rather than a doctrine in itself, with a variety of forms (left, right, and centre) which are united by an anti-individualism, as opposed to an anti-liberalism.⁷⁰ Particularly in its left and centre forms, communitarianism was a response to the perceived waning viability of socialist theory, and, in the 1990s, to socialism’s ‘political collapse’ globally,⁷¹ even though Miller himself believed that there was nothing incoherent about socialism and communitarianism.⁷² Thinkers associated with these strands of communitarianism were trying to illuminate the ‘social preconditions’ necessary for goods such as individual agency – that there were ‘social origins’ to individuality itself.⁷³

Another *Marxism Today* contributor, David Marquand, engaged explicitly with these philosophers and he aligned his views with communitarian critiques, for instance engaging with MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* in his 1988 text *The Unprincipled Society*.⁷⁴ He used MacIntyre here to reason that ‘[a] society built on self-interest would be built on a chasm’.⁷⁵ Marquand thus also promoted a kind of communitarianism. He argued that the dominant mode of citizenship within the British state was problematic because it emphasised a citizen’s rights and services from the state, but not ‘what one properly owes to the community’.⁷⁶ In the late 1990s, he claimed that the work of Sandel and Walzer was informed by a left-wing communitarianism or republicanism which rendered their work representative of a ‘better’ liberalism than a rights-centred liberalism.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ See, for the British context, M. Davis, ‘Reappraising British Socialist Humanism’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 18/1 (2013), pp. 57-81.

⁷⁰ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, pp. 98, 100, 101.

⁷¹ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 97.

⁷² Miller, ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’, p. 73.

⁷³ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 101; Miller, ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’, p. 51.

⁷⁴ Marquand, *Unprincipled Society*, pp. 214-16, 220 – see A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edn (London, 1985).

⁷⁵ Marquand, *Unprincipled Society*, p. 216.

⁷⁶ White, ‘A Marquandian Moment?’, p. 141.

⁷⁷ D. Marquand, *The New Reckoning: Capitalism, States and Citizens* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 86, as cited by White, ‘A Marquandian Moment?’, p. 144. See M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford, 1983) and M. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

Stuart White ultimately describes Marquand's conception of deliberative democracy as elaborated throughout his career as 'retain[ing] a "communitarian" quality', in that it conceives of the common good as something which must 'touch on the nature of the "good life" itself', rather than what each citizen defines for themselves as the good.⁷⁸

Mulgan is, by contrast, associated with what Miller terms the 'political movement' of communitarians.⁷⁹ Central to this was the American and Israeli sociologist Amitai Etzioni, who founded the Communitarian Network, centred in Washington, D.C., and connected to other liberal democracies in Europe and elsewhere.⁸⁰ Both Miller and Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite note how centre-left 'modernizers' in the United States and Britain used Etzioni to bolster their arguments, to add a sense of academic credibility,⁸¹ and White considered Etzioni to be part of the communitarian axis of the 'putative third way'.⁸² Mulgan, moreover, is credited for bringing Etzioni to the attention of New Labour but the content of the thought and the legacy of the communitarian 'political movement' are not seen as worthy of examination in parts of the scholarship. Sarah Hale claims that, despite his popularisation of the term, Etzioni is 'misleadingly' associated with communitarian *philosophy*, and his work amounts to a 'narrow and unsatisfactory' sociology.⁸³ Miller asserted that the communitarian political movement addressed none of the problems faced by left communitarians (such as 'how to defend equal citizenship in the face of economic inequality') and ended up looking 'little more than a moral appeal to us all to behave better'.⁸⁴ In their introduction to the so-called 'liberal-communitarian debate', Stephen

⁷⁸ White, 'A Marquandian Moment?', p. 149. For that which Marquand opposes, see J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, 1993).

⁷⁹ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 97.

⁸⁰ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 97. Etzioni's central text is *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda* (New York, 1993).

⁸¹ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 195-6; Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 193. Then as Demos director, Mulgan argued additionally that MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor and Walzer were influencing the Labour Party's communitarian shift, providing it with an 'intellectual backbone' – as quoted in S. Hale, 'The Communitarian 'Philosophy' of New Labour', in S. Hale, W. Leggett and L. Martell (eds.), *The Third Way and Beyond. Criticisms, Futures, Alternatives* (Manchester, 2004), p. 89.

⁸² White, 'Ambiguities of the Third Way', p. 13.

⁸³ Hale, 'The Communitarian 'Philosophy' of New Labour', p. 87. Hale also argues here that there is little connection between communitarian political philosophy and New Labour policy and discourse – see also, S. Hale, *Blair's Community: Communitarian Thought and New Labour* (Manchester, 2006).

⁸⁴ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 109.

Mulhall and Adam Swift regard it as challenging to find ‘anything more than very vague and general connections’ in Etzioni’s work to the political philosophers discussed in their text.⁸⁵

In consequence, Etzioni and his associates such as Mulgan are generally marginalised in accounts about ‘community’ in recent political thought. Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift stated, in 1996, that they did not even ‘pretend to engage directly with the debate about community’ as was carried out at the time ‘among politicians and journalists’, and, with the exception of Hale and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite in regard to New Labour politicians,⁸⁶ other scholars have followed suit. In this chapter I show below that, in the case of Mulgan, ‘community’ played a very important role in his ideology as a way to distinguish his thought from the new right. Mulgan also possessed an anti-individualist anthropology, even if his conception of community was not as robust as that found in the works of the political philosophers.

Responsibility

‘Responsibility’ was central to Mulgan’s thought in these years,⁸⁷ and it was mainly responsibility towards one’s community which he sought to promote. In this sense, though nuanced, it was not an individualist conception of responsibility and was thus central to his intention of distinguishing his thought from right-wing thought and policy.

Mulgan, like many other commentators from the late 1980s onwards,⁸⁸ argued that the Thatcher government’s market liberalism had fostered an irresponsible society. Mulgan wrote in 1990 that both Thatcherism and Reaganism had done ‘[f]ar from ushering in a responsible society’ and that they had, instead, provided fertile ground for ‘greed, indifference and

⁸⁵ S. Mulhall and A. Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1996), p. xiv.

⁸⁶ See Hale, *Blair’s Community*; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, especially pp. 195-6.

⁸⁷ As it was more generally within the value framework of the ‘third way’ and hence to many others on the left in the 1990s – White, ‘Ambiguities of the Third Way’, p. 5.

⁸⁸ Grimley, ‘Thatcherism, Morality and Religion’, p. 93.

carelessness' to flourish. Douglas Hurd MP's rhetoric of 'active citizenship' and Chris Patten MP's recent unsuccessful bid for green taxes were proof that even Conservatives themselves were becoming aware of the 'irresponsibility of 1980s Thatcherism'. The markets the Thatcherites allowed to develop enabled individuals to 'evade' responsibilities, and shifted costs of goods such as health, training and the environment 'out on to the community'. The complex global interconnections of markets also meant it was now difficult to connect investment and business decisions with outcomes, rendering modern capitalism opaque and undermining its 'claim' to responsibility.⁸⁹ Mulgan contended that, whereas in the past, capitalism's irrationality and unfairness were its greatest weaknesses, now its greatest flaw was its 'irresponsibility'.⁹⁰

However, Mulgan declared that the left hardly occupied 'the moral high ground' in considering questions of responsibility and indeed lacked a 'moral centre'. It demurred from an ethos of 'individual' responsibility and was more content 'concentrating responsibility in the hands of the state and of remote collective institutions'. As a result, he claimed that some of the most 'magnetic' ideas emanating out of 'the East' were those which asserted an obligation of the individual and community 'to truth and responsibility', such as those of the Czech former dissident Václav Havel, then President of Czechoslovakia.⁹¹ The right was irresponsible, especially given its market fundamentalism and its cosiness with globalised capitalism, but so was the left. Both neglected the need for 'moral bonds'.⁹²

An emphasis on responsibility, however, was famously a part of Thatcherite rhetoric. Thatcher herself and advisers around her such as Alfred Sherman and Keith Joseph expressed a deep concern for responsibility, and claimed that a limited welfare state and free markets were important not only for economic reasons, but primarily for moral reasons, enabling individuals to take responsibility for themselves and, crucially, their families.⁹³ Clearly, Mulgan distanced

⁸⁹ Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', pp. 22, 23, 26

⁹⁰ Mulgan, 'Dark Side', p. 30.

⁹¹ Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', pp. 22, 23.

⁹² Mulgan, 'Dark Side', p. 31.

⁹³ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-liberalism and Morality', pp. 512, 513, 517.

himself rhetorically from Thatcherism, but to what extent was his vision of responsibility ‘strongly individualised’ in the manner in which it was within Thatcherite ideology,⁹⁴ and therefore, how far does it complicate the suggestion that Mulgan possessed an anti-individualist political anthropology, the hallmark of communitarianism?

Mulgan insisted that responsibility did need to be brought back ‘to a more human scale’ and often this meant back towards the level of the individual.⁹⁵ Briefly commenting on the green movement, he wrote that one of the great appeals of the movement’s ideas was the notion that ‘the individual can act in practical, everyday ways, rather than waiting for states to find collective solutions’.⁹⁶ But while Mulgan accepted the level of the individual as a valid site for political and social action, this individual was always embedded in, and responsible to, a ‘community’ – and indeed, individuals acting to improve the environment implied a responsibility to a wider community beyond the individual. Mulgan claimed that the world’s ‘deficits of responsibility’ could be solved through reconciling a ‘strong individual ethic’ with an affirmation of ‘what it means to live as part of a community’.⁹⁷ Mulgan argued that responsibility itself could not be understood without reference to the community:

[r]esponsibility is both etymologically and philosophically a social concept. It means, literally, ‘answerability’. It is an idea born of the assumption that people live in communities and that they answer to each other. It fits much better in a worldview that recognises that collectivities have identities, aspirations and memories, a worldview that accepts that there is such a thing as society, than it does in a philosophy founded on the separate and selfish individual.⁹⁸

The individual was thus never atomised, and always bound to their community, not just their families. His conception of individualism tied in with that expressed in later New Labour rhetoric: this vision was not one of ‘unfettered individuals’, as Andersson remarks, but ‘of people

⁹⁴ Grimley, ‘Thatcherism, Morality and Religion’, p. 89 – here Grimley concurs with Sutcliffe-Braithwaite that, due to the importance of the family to Thatcherites, their morality was not an ‘atomistic’ individualism.

⁹⁵ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 27.

⁹⁶ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 22.

⁹⁷ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 22.

⁹⁸ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 26. Mulgan was referencing M. Thatcher, ‘Interview for *Woman’s Own* (“no such thing as society”’, 23 September 1987, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689> (22 July 2019).

enabled by the social web'.⁹⁹ Because of this, Mulgan does fit the definition of communitarianism provided by the very scholars that scorn Mulgan and other members of the communitarian 'political movement'. For instance, Mulhall and Swift noted that the communitarian philosophers' understanding of the person opposes what they call the 'classic liberal emphasis' upon individual autonomy, 'by stressing the degree and extent of that individual's necessary dependence upon that community'.¹⁰⁰ Miller, as noted previously, suggested that the diverse philosophers who are called communitarians were united by a political anthropology whereby 'the self cannot be understood apart from the social relations in which it is embedded.'¹⁰¹ Mulgan's vision of the community and responsibility may not have been as philosophically robust as those of Walzer or Sandel, but it makes sense to describe his thought as communitarian, and he was certainly not straightforwardly individualist.

Much like Marquand, he believed that citizenship could not simply be 'a package of rights without obligations', where relationships are merely 'contingent' and 'undemanding'.¹⁰² In this respect, Mulgan's responsibility discourse placed him in opposition not only to the Thatcherites but also to a purely rights-based, 'procedural' programme described as 'bastard liberalism' by Marquand at the end of the 1990s.¹⁰³ People had bonds of obligation to each other, and were not just rights-possessing individuals – citizenship was more meaningful than that. Mulgan elsewhere went so far as to deploy MacIntyre's suggestion that every attempt to provide reasons for believing in natural rights so far had failed.¹⁰⁴ Mulgan was aware of how these visions of responsibility and citizenship could come up against strong strains of individualism within British culture:

... if the 1990s are to be a decade of good citizenship then it has to be said that it remains unclear just how stable a more restrained and responsible culture will be. It

⁹⁹ Andersson, *Library and The Workshop*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁰ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, p. 163.

¹⁰¹ Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, p. 99.

¹⁰² Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', p.

¹⁰³ Marquand, *New Reckoning*, p. 86, as quoted by White, 'A Marquandian Moment?', p. 144.

¹⁰⁴ Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age*, p. 53; see MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 69.

certainly grates with a deep current of (sometimes bolshy) individualism that is particularly strong in the English-speaking world.¹⁰⁵

Mulgan also used a concept of responsibility to defend the state and centralised decision-making, further distinguishing his thought from others on the left and liberal-left. The left's problematic approach towards responsibility was not solved, he contended, in the left's recent departure from an 'inflexible statism' towards a 'more libertarian and permissive' position. Decentralisation, for instance, would only in a very problematic sense solve the state's deep and severe legitimisation crisis – it would allow government to 'absolve itself of responsibility'. Devolving power could actually compound problems, as regional autonomy over economic decision-making could 'rapidly lead to heightened inequalities'.¹⁰⁶ Further displaying his idiosyncrasy, particularly compared with others in *Marxism Today*,¹⁰⁷ Mulgan made a defence of the centralised state based upon this conception of responsibility. He considered this 'competition to wither away the state' from both the Labour Party and the Conservatives, 'certainly novel historically', but a fundamentally uneasy situation.¹⁰⁸

How far was this emphasis on personal responsibility socially conservative? Mulgan claimed in 1990, approvingly, that there was a developing consensus that 'society' was 'no longer to blame either for the mugger or the insider-trader', and that a stronger notion of individual responsibility was taking root. A 'permissive libertarianism' was losing favour.¹⁰⁹ That Mulgan chose the term 'mugger' for this *Marxism Today* article was all the more significant given the suggestion of Hall and others from the CCCS in 1978 that this term and the general moral panic over 'mugging' in 1972-3 in Britain was part of a strategy of building an authoritarian consensus to 'police' the crisis of the state, and hence to police the working class.¹¹⁰ Mulgan scorned more nuanced, radical and sociological attitudes towards crime. Although, however socially

¹⁰⁵ Mulgan, 'Dark Side', p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', pp. 23, 24, 26.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁸ Mulgan, 'Buck Stops', p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ Mulgan, 'Dark Side', p. 31.

¹¹⁰ See Hall *et al.*, *Policing the Crisis*.

conservative such a vision of individual criminal responsibility was, it was seen by other revisionists as compatible with left-wing politics. For instance, modernisers in the Labour Party in the 1980s and 1990s also rejected more liberal attitudes towards crime: they called attention to rising crime rates in Thatcher's Britain, suggesting that traditional forms of social bonds were broken down by an ideology and political programme which 'destroyed community'.¹¹¹ In consequence, New Labour made crime a centrepiece of their modernised agenda, arguing it was socialist to be 'tough on crime'.¹¹² From another perspective, therefore, Mulgan and New Labour's view of community, responsibility and crime could be seen as 'individualism as a force for the common good', but this element of his thought undoubtedly distinguished Mulgan from Hall.¹¹³

Ultimately, Mulgan's discourse of responsibility was an attempt to undermine Thatcherite individualism and rights-based liberalism, stressing the importance of the community, and individuals' obligations within such a community. While 'responsibility' was taken up by a range of political actors on the right, Mulgan's conception was distinct from his ideological opponents' individualism based around the family. This particular communitarian critique of right-based liberalism situates him in close proximity to republicanism, as espoused by Marquand and others, but Mulgan did not expound to the same extent the virtues of, for instance, deliberative democracy or active citizenship.¹¹⁴ In this respect, Mulgan's conception of responsibility was similar to New Labour 'rights and responsibilities' discourse: his concept of responsibility was not defined by notions of democracy as deliberation and nor did it involve the decentralisation and pluralisation of power necessary to bring about the kind of deliberation and active

¹¹¹ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 193.

¹¹² Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 190, 192 – see T. Blair, 'Power for a Purpose', *Renewal*, 3 (1995), p. 12.

¹¹³ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, pp. 100-1 – Andersson believes New Labour had this conception of individualism, and that was how it could be distinguished from neo-liberalism.

¹¹⁴ White, 'A Marquandian Moment?', pp. 148-52 and, for example, Q. Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), pp. 237-68 and Q. Skinner, 'Freedom as the Absence of Arbitrary Power', in C. Laborde and J. Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Malden, MA, 2008), pp. 83-101.

citizenship promoted commonly in republican political theory.¹¹⁵ This emphasis on ‘responsibility’ in Mulgan’s writings would last: for instance, in 2000, he argued that third sector institutions can play a ‘crucial role in fostering habits of responsibility and cultures of co-operation’ in society,¹¹⁶ and re-stated his conception of citizenship as involving responsibilities as well as rights.¹¹⁷ ‘Responsibility’ was central to Mulgan’s communitarianism.

Systems, spheres, organic metaphors and networks

In his 1991 book *Communication and Control*, Mulgan proclaimed that the world in the late twentieth century was ‘covered by a lattice of networks’. Some of these were public, others were private; some civil, others military; some open, others closed.¹¹⁸ Market economies were built on a ‘new geography of nodes and hubs, processing and control centres’. A ‘world built on networks’ had emerged, challenging ‘traditional’ intellectual frameworks and analytical categories, and problematising older ideas about ‘space’ and ‘power’.¹¹⁹ Underpinning Mulgan’s ideology was an understanding of the modern world as a series of systems, spheres and networks. He was deeply influenced by metaphors which accounted for different spheres within society and for individuals, but also for interdependence – visions of ‘decentralized mutuality’.¹²⁰ In the late 1980s and 1990s, Mulgan drew on such metaphors in seeking to illuminate the ‘complexities’ of

¹¹⁵ For Blair’s ‘rights and responsibilities’ discourse, see for example his speech to Labour Party conference, 28 September 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/1999/sep/28/labourconference.labour14> (25 June 2020). See also S. White, ‘Rights and Responsibilities’: A Social Democratic Perspective’, *Political Quarterly*, 70, Special Issue 1 (1999), pp. 166-80.

¹¹⁶ G. Mulgan, ‘Government and the Third Sector: Building a More Equal Partnership’, in H. Anheier (ed.), *Third Way-Third Sector. Report No. 1*. (London, 2000), as quoted in H. Anheier, ‘Third Sector-Third Way: Comparative Perspectives and Policy Reflections’, in J. Lewis and R. Surender (eds.), *Welfare State Change. Towards a Third Way?* (Oxford, 2004), p. 112.

¹¹⁷ Anheier, ‘Third Sector-Third Way’, p. 112.

¹¹⁸ G. Mulgan, *Communication and Control: Networks and the New Economies of Communication* (Oxford, 1991), p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Mulgan, *Communication and Control*, pp. 1-3.

¹²⁰ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 49 – though Andersson states this with regard to ‘the New Times group’ as opposed to just Mulgan, whose significance, according to her, is bringing this vision into the ‘communitarianism’ of New Labour.

the modern world, for which he claimed there was not yet a ‘fully formed communitarian theory’.¹²¹ Some of these ideas he absorbed from idiosyncratic sources, such as the ‘extraordinary explosion of ideas’ around ecology, biology and the study of organizations, from which he believed there had been sadly ‘little borrowing’ in political writing.¹²² Within this conception of society, however, was the recurring motif of determinism and a limited role for the state.

In 1989, in making the case for ‘plural solutions’ against a classic socialist reliance on the state, he stated that his view was ‘corroborated by evidence from systems theory’. He described how cybernetic theory illustrated how ‘any controlling mechanism requires as much variety as the system it seeks to control’, and that the ‘law of requisite variety’, as outlined by W. Ross Ashby, held that it was ‘impossible to control a complex system without an equally complex set of tools’.¹²³ The consequence for government, Mulgan claimed, was that control must be ‘devolved and spread’, although not necessarily to local and regional forms of the state, in light of his previously-noted comments about irresponsible decentralisation.¹²⁴ If society and the economy were increasingly complex systems, then old-fashioned statism was inappropriate.

Likewise, in his 1988 essay on the rise of ‘weak power structures’, a term derived from engineering, he suggested that the left needed to embrace such structures and reject a dependence on the ‘pyramid-like’ structures of the bureaucratic public institution, the central plan, and ‘hierarchical’ trade unions. In engineering theory, according to Mulgan, strong power controls used vast amounts of energy in proportion to the processes they coordinated, whereas weak power controls used very little. Hence, weak power structures ‘usually work[ed] better’, and Mulgan argued they were actually ‘closer to the spirit of socialism and democracy’, with their history in co-operatives, mutual aid organisations and guilds.¹²⁵ He claimed that in the ‘new times’, strong power controls were being replaced increasingly by weak power forms: ‘units and

¹²¹ Mulgan, ‘Power to the Public’, p. 18.

¹²² Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age*, p. 4.

¹²³ Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 31. See W. R. Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics* (London, 1956).

¹²⁴ Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 31.

¹²⁵ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, pp. 24

cells' that tended to regulate themselves rather than 'governed' by rules flowing from above, and which were better at managing the 'complexity' which was at the 'heart' of the post-Fordist 'new times'.¹²⁶ Mulgan argued weak power structures were developing most rapidly on the 'leading edges' of capitalism, which had mobilised 'a small army of management consultants, business schools, think-tanks, theorists and corporate strategists' to improve productivity and efficiency. Large firms were now adopting the character of 'networks of independent units', and areas such as Silicon Valley were also operating 'like networks', linking – in one industrial district – inventors, entrepreneurs, academics and investors who were all dependent on each other.¹²⁷ Society, moreover, was differentiating, becoming an 'interdependent web of specialist groups'.¹²⁸ Mulgan suggested that the left had to learn from capitalism, and had to appreciate how regulating capitalism itself was now more difficult as a result of this emerging complexity.¹²⁹

Hence, the left needed to reappraise its approach to how society and the economy were governed. Elsewhere Mulgan wrote that the task of the state was now 'overseeing the balance between systems' as it could no longer engage in 'social engineering'. Within the economy such 'competing systems' included private and socialised firms, consumer and worker co-operatives and individual traders, 'each with a differently structured relationship to capital markets and consumers'.¹³⁰ Likewise, he argued in another essay that a '[g]enuine' pluralism depended upon 'many different modes of social organisation' coexisting beside each other.¹³¹ There was a clear connection between these comments and his later statement in 2000 that 'a good society' was one founded on a 'balance between the interests of business, government and the voluntary sector'.¹³² However society was envisioned by Mulgan using these diverse metaphors, his point

¹²⁶ Mulgan, 'Power of the Weak', pp. 24, 29.

¹²⁷ Mulgan, 'Power of the Weak', pp. 24, 25.

¹²⁸ Mulgan, 'Power of the Weak', p. 29.

¹²⁹ Mulgan, 'Power of the Weak', p. 30.

¹³⁰ Mulgan, 'That Certain Feeling', p. 31.

¹³¹ Mulgan, 'Power to the Public', p. 18 – here Mulgan cites Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*.

¹³² Mulgan, 'Government and the Third Sector' p. 18, as cited by Anheier, 'Third Sector-Third Way', p. 112. See also Mulgan 'Whinge and a Prayer', p. 16.

was to emphasise complexity – that there were a range of systems or spheres in the modern world that demanded a degree of autonomy or which contributed towards the common good, but also, crucially, that these different systems were networked and interdependent. The point was to protect against imbalance, from ‘any one set of powers or interests’ becoming overmighty, and for government to thus allow for ‘multiple structures of control’.¹³³ In practice this meant ‘market-type controls’ as well as democratic forms of control existing together.¹³⁴

However, such a conception of society entailed a critique of market liberalism. Mulgan and Murray claimed in 1993 that the economy was becoming ‘increasingly systemic’, and so ‘the whole depends on the effective functioning of each of its parts’.¹³⁵ New right economists failed to consider this aspect of the modern world. In order to attract ‘footloose’ industries in a globalised world, low wages and taxes could not be the only consideration; there had to be a concern also for the ‘quality of the economic environment’, and so an effective infrastructure, ‘social stability’ and education were important too. If ‘cities without bombs’ and ‘neighbourhoods without fear’ were crucial aspects of a fruitful economic environment, then ‘effective public provision’ needed to be assured – something which the free-market right failed to offer.¹³⁶ The state overseeing the balance between systems and managing society’s interdependence therefore entailed a role for state intervention.

This notion of interdependence running through this discourse was what made Mulgan’s conception of society and the world relevant to his communitarianism: indeed, Etzioni also often defined ‘the social’ as a kind of ‘web’.¹³⁷ This interdependence, moreover, had relevance at the level of the individual. Individuals depended on the whole, and biological and network

¹³³ Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 31; Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 30.

¹³⁴ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 30.

¹³⁵ Mulgan and Murray, *Reconnecting Taxation*, p. 16.

¹³⁶ Mulgan and Murray, *Reconnecting Taxation*, p. 16. Mulgan elsewhere, citing Etzioni, took aim at orthodox economics from a communitarian standpoint, claiming that it had ‘no model’ for how ethics motivated people, whether that involved working in the public sector or in the public voting ‘consistently’ for its redistributive impact – ‘Power to the Public’, p. 17, where cited is A. Etzioni, *The Moral Dimension* (New York, 1988).

¹³⁷ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 101.

metaphors were employed to underline the importance of community for individuals. As

Andersson describes, in Mulgan's 1997 book *Connexity*, 'community' was defined as:

... individuals striving for self-expression but dependent on their inclusion into a social network for the full realization of their being. To Mulgan, "connexity" was a logical stage of the evolution of social life and a social structure similar to other organic systems, such as the *Gaia*, the biosphere or the electronic network, all systems built on complex interdependence and dependent on their order for their survival.¹³⁸

Andersson claims that this and other such organic metaphors were 'radically different' from traditional ideas of social struggle found within social democratic thought.¹³⁹ However, organic metaphors were not new in the history of the British left. From the new liberals to Ramsay MacDonald to Richard Titmuss, organic metaphors had been employed because of their capacity to simultaneously evoke the whole of society as well as its constitutive individuals, and hence to suggest the sense of interdependence key to the collective politics of the left.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, while Mulgan certainly broke with class struggle understandings of society, this was not a departure from the tradition of the British left *as a whole*.

A corollary to Mulgan's various metaphors was a kind of determinism. The social – an organism, a system of networks, a web – had its own internal forces driving its shape, direction and activity. Were his conceptions of society therefore ultimately pessimistic? Mulgan also contended that the 'new times' were characterised by an uncertainty in which it was impossible to plan. He insisted that 'socialism' needed to learn from evolutionary theory (once again comparing the social to an organism), where the 'end point' of planning was unknown, and where the 'process' was more important than any blueprint. In allowing for a 'variety in all the forms of social life', societies could better respond to shocks such as 'a dramatic shift in the climate, to super computers... or to new, virulent diseases' – a 'well-known' fact from biology.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 101. Andersson draws on Mulgan, *Connexity*, p. 35 in making this précis.

¹³⁹ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁰ M. Freeden, 'True Blood or False Genealogy: New Labour and British Social Democratic Thought', *Political Quarterly*, 70, Special Issue 1 (1999), pp. 156, 159; M. Freeden, 'The Ideology of New Labour', *Political Quarterly*, 70/1 (1999), p. 45. See also Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, pp. 186-95.

¹⁴¹ Mulgan, 'That Certain Feeling', pp. 31-3.

Utopias were rejected, not only because they tended to emphasise freedom over responsibility,¹⁴² but because society was constantly shifting, ‘knowledge’ changing everything: ‘so there can’t possibly be a vision of an endpoint’.¹⁴³ Mulgan’s conception of society and ‘new times’ therefore envisioned a role for politics as simply *managing* the complexity and uncertainty of society, and balancing its systems, rather than delivering radical change. Helmut Anheier wrote, using Mulgan as an example, that in ‘third way’ thought, the role of the state changed from ‘welfare provider’ to ‘risk manager and enabler’, which he describes as amounting to a ‘fundamental redefinition’ of the social democratic state.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Mulgan was, in these highly abstract discussions, essentially arguing that there was limited scope for control and that, consequently, coordination by the state was in many cases undesirable.

Clearly, however, these ideas were not derived purely from an engagement with Thatcherite and neo-liberal ideas, but rather from a range of diverse and distinctive sources. Running through these visions of the social as a web, an organism, or a system of spheres, was also a notion of interdependence, and hence community, involving a critique of both the new right and the left.

The knowledge economy

Another aspect of Mulgan’s communitarianism involved a discourse over the knowledge economy and human capital – Mulgan believed that interdependence was particularly important in the transition to the ‘knowledge-based economy’.¹⁴⁵ Mulgan was one of many in the 1990s who believed that advanced capitalist economies, and indeed the global economy, were

¹⁴² Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 24.

¹⁴³ Interview with Geoff Mulgan, conducted by Jenny Andersson, Institute of Community Studies, 4 April 2005, as quoted in Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁴ Anheier, ‘Third Sector-Third Way’, p. 112 – here Anheier cites Mulgan, ‘Government and the Third Sector’.

¹⁴⁵ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 25.

transitioning into knowledge economies – and so economies which relied heavily on ‘intellectual capabilities’ as opposed to natural resources or physical inputs.¹⁴⁶ These ideas were central to Mulgan’s vision of modernity.

Mulgan claimed that knowledge and creativity were becoming more important in ‘advanced economies’.¹⁴⁷ Again admiring the leading edges of capitalism, he argued that the investment of significant amounts of capital into promoting ‘permanent innovation’ was one of the ‘striking lessons’ of modern industry. Investment in firms had been directed at knowledge-based initiatives, such as ‘discovering new needs’, ‘encouraging the active “envisionment” of change’, and, less abstractly, returning managers and ‘technologists’ to study, rendering entire organisations ‘porous’ to innovative thinking.¹⁴⁸ Some governments, Mulgan remarked, were beginning to recognise similarly the ‘economic value’ of ‘acclimatising’ their populations to the future – as shown in the case of the Mitterrand government’s ‘science cities’, fostering spaces for the development of scientific and information-based industries.¹⁴⁹ Knowledge and innovation were ways of adapting to the future. Capital and some governments had demonstrated their ‘ease with change’, and hence their ‘modernity’, through investing in knowledge.¹⁵⁰

Key to this set of ideas was the notion of human capital, in which knowledge was envisioned as ‘a kind of capital within people’.¹⁵¹ Among the chief proponents of human capital theory were neo-liberal economists such as Gary Becker of the Chicago School, who published *Human Capital* in 1964, examining the influence of education and in-work learning on wages.¹⁵² Despite this, Mulgan asserted that notions of human capital could be attached to a left-wing agenda. In his hopeful essay in the last issue of *Marxism Today* in 1991, Mulgan declared that the

¹⁴⁶ W. W. Powell and K. Snellman, ‘The Knowledge Economy’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30 (2004), p. 199.

¹⁴⁷ Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Mulgan, ‘Shock of the New’, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Mulgan, ‘Shock of the New’, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Mulgan, ‘Shock of the New’, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 25.

¹⁵² Y. Weiss, ‘Gary Becker on Human Capital’, *Journal of Demographic Economics*, 81 (2015), pp. 27-31. See G. Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (New York, 1964).

‘transition towards an era of human capital’ would be a source of ‘new energy’ that a revitalised left would need to tap. Human capital was defined as the skills and knowledge possessed by individuals and he re-stated how this ‘capital’ was being exploited in the ‘very heart’ of modern capitalist organisation. Capital in the past shifted from merchant to industrial capital, and then on to finance capital, but now the ‘epochal shift’ was in the direction of human capital.¹⁵³ Yet again, Mulgan presented an unavoidable and sweeping shift, coupled with an injunction for the left to recognise such change as an opportunity. He reasoned, however, that the shift towards human capital actually pertained to older socialist ideas of ‘co-operation’ and ‘the rights of the producer to control over his or her work’. There was therefore a fresh opportunity to democratise economic life – socialism’s ‘unfinished business’ – but this time democracy would not act as a ‘fetter’ on capitalism, but as a means of eradicating the ‘barriers to its future development’.¹⁵⁴ Within his human capital discourse, therefore, capitalism was not something to be constrained or restricted by democracy, but rather democracy would enable capitalism’s progress along its determined path.

In her account of social democratic approaches to the ‘knowledge economy’ in the late twentieth century and twenty-first century, Andersson emphasises the appeal of growth to this vision: a ‘silent’ presumption that human capital would be the source of an ‘unprecedented productivity expansion’, overcoming the economic turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵⁵ Mulgan had a similarly optimistic account of the knowledge economy – yet, as shown above, he did not only imply the economic value of developing human capital (and hence, the promised growth), but he also suggested it was commensurate with left-wing politics. As well as highly deterministic visions, another aspect of Mulgan’s rhetoric was an attempt to ground his visions of the future in an appeal to ‘democracy’ and ‘socialism’.

¹⁵³ Mulgan, ‘Built To Last’, p. 55.

¹⁵⁴ Mulgan, ‘Built To Last’, p. 55.

¹⁵⁵ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, pp. 27-8. See C. Leadbeater, *The New Economy: Living on Thin Air* (London, 1999).

Human capital provided, moreover, a means to assess welfare reform. In considering changes to the welfare state, Mulgan stressed in 1990 the importance of reforms which genuinely created the circumstances for people to ‘escape dependency’.¹⁵⁶ ‘Workfare’ – where recipients of benefit payments had to train, volunteer or undertake subsidised work – had existed in some loose form in Britain since 1986 in the Conservative government’s ‘Restart’ programme, where unemployed welfare recipients were interviewed about their job search every six months.¹⁵⁷ He accepted that many such ‘Workfare’ schemes were indeed simply inspired by a desire to cut public expenditure.¹⁵⁸ However, he also stated that if welfare reforms ‘enhance[d] people’s human capital’, and granted them independence and ‘responsibility’, as well as the ability to use these qualities, then they were worthy of support.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps his notion of ‘dependency’ as the analytical framing for his comments on welfare reform proves, once again, the limitations of what he thought was necessary in order to successfully ‘answer’ to the new right, but his concern for human capital was significant. It was an alternative object of concern to those held by the right arguing for welfare ‘reform’.

But what were the key social constituencies bound up in this vision of the knowledge economy? Campsie criticises *Marxism Today*, and particularly Mulgan, for possessing a ‘foreshortened’ understanding of the political. Part of this view is informed by Mulgan’s injunction to those on the left to forge connections with those ‘designers, researchers and inventors’ that were supposedly at the forefront of the new global economy at the end of the

¹⁵⁶ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 26.

¹⁵⁷ More stringent questionnaires regarding availability to work were introduced in the same year, and in 1989 recipients who refused a ‘reasonable’ job offer would no longer receive payments, even in the case of job offering lower pay than in the recipient’s previous employment – see D. G. Blanchflower and R. B. Freeman, ‘Did Thatcher Reforms Change British Labour Market Performance?’, 1 April 1993, <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~blnchflr/papers/Thatcher.pdf> (3 January 2020), p. 35. ‘Workfare’ itself was first coined in the United States. Other examples of ‘Workfare’ initiatives in Britain include Major’s ‘Community Action’ and ‘Project Work’ schemes, in 1993 and 1996 respectively, as well as New Labour’s ‘New Deal’ programme, introduced in 1998.

¹⁵⁸ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 26.

¹⁵⁹ Mulgan, ‘Buck Stops’, p. 26.

twentieth century.¹⁶⁰ In other words, Mulgan is criticised for suggesting that it was elite knowledge creators, such as the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, who were the political decision makers in the post-Cold War era. This was the ‘cadre of international experts’ who, it is claimed, Martin Jacques and Mulgan considered to hold the ‘most power’ within the global economy.¹⁶¹ The implication is that a global, professional elite was prioritised in this vision of the future. Campsie’s argument is persuasive: for instance, he notes that Mulgan and Jacques’ fundraising launch for Demos in September 1992 involved nearly one hundred elite figures from the City, business, academia and the media.¹⁶² Yet, Mulgan’s vision of the knowledge economy and human capital were, as demonstrated, also about whole societies and the ‘resources of skill, ingenuity and creativity’ of individuals making up society. It therefore involved theoretically each individual within society as a ‘learning individual’ – although this was certainly a break with traditional socialist and Marxist positions, Mulgan’s discourse on the knowledge economy was not focused only on an educated elite.¹⁶³

Many of these attitudes towards the knowledge economy and human capital also emerged among Labour Party modernisers concurrently in the 1990s and later in government. In 1994, the final report of the Commission on Social Justice, run by the Institute for Public Policy Research,¹⁶⁴ outlined three approaches to the welfare state, one of which was defined as the approach of ‘investors’. Clearly a preference for the authors of the report, this approach attempted to reconcile an ethical commitment to ‘community’ with a dynamic market economy. Strong families, social institutions and communities were key to the investors’ approach, and education was central – themes progressively advanced more and more by Brown and Blair at

¹⁶⁰ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 184-5 – quoted is Mulgan, ‘Power of the Weak’, p. 27.

¹⁶¹ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 184-5.

¹⁶² Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, p. 187.

¹⁶³ Andersson considers Mulgan and the ‘third way’ to have made a break not only with traditional socialist ideas but also with social democratic notions on ‘the role of the collective to free the potential of all’, despite their communitarianism. The ‘learning individual’, meritocratically breaking free from their circumstances, was simply a substitute for the entrepreneur found in neo-liberal ideology – *Library and the Workshop*, pp. 133-4.

¹⁶⁴ This was a think-tank set up in the late 1980s and had Patricia Hewitt as its deputy director.

this time.¹⁶⁵ Much like Mulgan, therefore, the modernisers shared a concern for building human capital (through education) alongside a concern for community, and the authors of the Commission on Social Justice's final report were also eager to distinguish their approach from those of the Conservatives ('the deregulators') as well as from traditional left-wing approaches ('the levellers').¹⁶⁶ There was, likewise, an affinity between Mulgan's deterministic visions of the knowledge economy and Blair's rhetoric on globalisation in the mid-2000s. In the annual conference speech as party leader, Blair declared in 2005 that:

The pace of change can either overwhelm us, or make our lives better and our country stronger. What we can't do is pretend it is not happening. I hear people say we have to stop and debate globalisation. You might as well debate whether autumn should follow summer. They're not debating it in China and India. They are seizing its possibilities, in a way that will transform their lives and ours... [S]ocial solidarity remains the only way to secure the future of a country like Britain. However, today its purpose is not to resist the force of globalisation but to prepare for it, and to garner its vast potential benefits. That's why education is government's number one priority... the only secure economic future for Britain lies in one thing: not low wages, not old-fashioned conflict, but knowledge – skills, intelligence, the talent Britain has in abundance if only we set them free.¹⁶⁷

Of course, Mulgan and Blair were not engaging in exactly the same debates, but in terms of content and particularly form there is great similarity. Much like Mulgan, Blair's deterministic vision had an important rhetorical function – there was no alternative to his way forward. Examining Mulgan's discourse on the knowledge economy illuminates some clear ideological origins to later social democratic rhetoric and policy.

Mulgan thus argued that the emerging knowledge economy was a certainty to which the left needed to adapt rapidly. Socialists and social democrats needed to recognise the opportunities involved in exploiting human capital. Certainly, neo-liberalism is not an 'adequate' concept to describe these ideas.¹⁶⁸ However, surveying this discourse has illustrated the tension

¹⁶⁵ Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts*, pp. 340-2; see Commission on Social Justice, *Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal* (London, 1994). Andersson notes (*Library and the Workshop*, pp. 120-1) that the British notion of 'social investment' originated in this report and was subsequently adopted by Giddens in *The Third Way*.

¹⁶⁶ Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts*, pp. 341-2.

¹⁶⁷ T. Blair, speech to Labour Party conference, 27 September 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/sep/27/labourconference.speeches> (10 Jan. 2020). Mulgan also used the term 'social solidarity' in 'Tale of New Cities', p. 25 and 'Dark Side', p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 27.

within social democracy between the strategies of ‘socializing capital’ and ‘capitalizing the social’, and Mulgan displayed a clear preoccupation for the latter.¹⁶⁹ Andersson observes that, through the discourse on the knowledge economy, social democracy in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century did not ‘rid itself of utopian reasoning’, but rather displaced it to the ‘individual sphere of self-improvement’ in its stress on human capital.¹⁷⁰ Mulgan did not dispense completely with a utopian vision, in spite of his denunciation of utopian blueprints throughout his writings.

Conclusion

Mulgan’s political thought in the late 1980s and 1990s reveals again how the left was an *active* force in these years, rather than passive in reaction to their ideological opponents. Mulgan indeed engaged with neo-liberal ideas and did accept some of their notions about the limits of democratic politics, but this engagement was critical, and he argued that market mechanisms were not always the most appropriate model for resource allocation. He, moreover, developed a communitarianism based upon a critique of the irresponsibility of Thatcherite individualism and rights-based liberalism. Just like ordinary people in their everyday lives in post-war England,¹⁷¹ Mulgan attempted to accommodate individualism with ‘community’. Informing all this was a conception of the modern world using a range of metaphors, from a range of idiosyncratic sources, in order to underscore its complexity, the need for a balance of different ‘spheres’ within society, as well as the interdependence of each constituent part. Modernity, additionally,

¹⁶⁹ These phrases derive from Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, especially pp. 103-4. Andersson argues that *social* capital discourse in the ‘third way’ has also been less preoccupied with ‘socializing’ capitalism, and more concerned with questions such as economic efficiency and economic growth (p. 104).

¹⁷⁰ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, p. 133.

¹⁷¹ Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me?*, p. 2 – in this respect, I have shown that even within ‘social theory’, individualism and community were not ‘polar opposites’.

was defined by Mulgan through the notions of the knowledge economy and human capital. Mulgan ultimately sought to produce a communitarianism and a left-wing agenda fit for the late twentieth century, carving out an alternative to Thatcherism and neo-liberalism – an alternative which would inform the renewed social democracy in Britain in the 1990s and beyond.

Whereas Mulgan largely dismissed Marxism as lacking credibility and relevance,¹⁷² he did describe his interventions as seeking to shape ‘socialism’, and he argued in 1991 that, in a revised form, ‘socialism’ would last.¹⁷³ Much like other modernisers in these years – such as Blair – Mulgan was attempting to redefine this term.¹⁷⁴ He wrote, again in the final issue of *Marxism Today*, that ‘the socialist tradition has always seen the community as something positive and enabling’. However, from the end of the First World War, the left had ‘sold short’ its own tradition, underestimating the ‘ethical foundations’ on which he claimed it was established.¹⁷⁵ Mulgan was ultimately trying to suggest that socialism had been and could be about a politics of community and mutuality, rather than increasingly ineffective and undesirable state intervention. In Mulgan’s case, perhaps ‘socialism’, as a term denoting a vast array of different traditions and concepts, was far easier a label on which to cling – Marxism, by contrast, denoted a much more coherent system of thought, even if the heterogeneity of those calling themselves ‘Marxists’ should not be disregarded. ‘Community’ was another term possessing such linguistic flexibility. Gordon Brown argued for the importance of ‘community’ as a moral grounding in the introduction to his and Tony Wright’s 1995 anthology of ‘socialist’ texts. In this book were no Marxists, and so, as James E. Cronin suggests, ‘[a]dvocates of class struggle had been erased and replaced in the lore of British socialism by those yearning for a lost sense of community’.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² See, for example, Mulgan, ‘That Certain Feeling’, p. 26 and Mulgan, ‘Built To Last’, p. 54.

¹⁷³ Mulgan, ‘Built To Last’.

¹⁷⁴ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 192.

¹⁷⁵ Mulgan, ‘Built To Last’, p. 54 – Mulgan here also seeks to reclaim Chartist and ethical socialist thought as important foundations for the left. Modernisers in the Labour Party also sought to reintegrate the ‘ethical socialist’ tradition – Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 192.

¹⁷⁶ G. Brown and T. Wright, *Values, Visions and Voices: An Anthology of Socialism* (Edinburgh, 1995), as cited by Cronin, *New Labour’s Pasts*, pp. 394-5.

Cronin contends that ‘community’ was an effective concept for marking out the differences between Labour’s modernised agenda and a Thatcherite conservatism which glorified the market and scorned ‘society’.¹⁷⁷ Both Labour modernisers and Mulgan sought to intervene within debates specifically on the left, and hence they required a set of terms for which there was semantic space in which to practise ideological revision. With regard to some of his fellow *Marxism Today* authors, this process would lead Mulgan to a very different place, ideologically, in 1998.

As well as somewhat idiosyncratic within the *Marxism Today* left, Mulgan was also an unorthodox communitarian, despite also possessing a broad anti-individualist political anthropology. Communitarians have tended to conceive of ‘communities’ as small, close-knit localities, sometimes going even so far to suggest that face-to-face relationships or very strong cultural ties were what constituted real communities.¹⁷⁸ Mulgan’s affinity with the cosmopolitan urban space also distinguishes him from those on the left associated with ‘Blue Labour’, who have promoted the virtues of ‘community’ together with a much more socially conservative and anti-cosmopolitan agenda.¹⁷⁹ This divergence arises from different intellectual contexts – Mulgan and ‘Blue Labour’ were engaging in different arguments. In Mulgan’s case, ‘community’ was a way to distinguish oneself from the new right after collapse of the credibility of traditional socialism, whereas for Blue Labour, invoking ‘community’ is a way of critiquing globalisation and multiculturalism.

Of course, one can question whether communitarianism, both Mulgan’s version of it and that of the communitarian political philosophers, was an effective response to the collapse in credibility of traditional left-wing ideas. Even if they were distinct from Thatcherism or market liberalism, were the implications of communitarianism any different from liberalism? Miller

¹⁷⁷ Cronin, *New Labour’s Pasts*, pp. 360-1, 394.

¹⁷⁸ See Miller on Sandel in ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’, especially pp. 65-66.

¹⁷⁹ See M. Glasman, J. Rutherford, M. Stears and S. White (eds.), *The Labour Tradition and the Politics of Paradox. The Oxford London Seminars 2010-11* (London, 2011) and R. Davis, *Tangled Up in Blue: Blue Labour and the Struggle for Labour’s Soul* (London, 2011).

recognised in 1989 how the differences between philosophical liberalism and communitarianism may be more radical at the level of 'basic premises' than in the policies either recommend.¹⁸⁰

Mulhall and Swift also noted that communitarian philosophers do not outright reject the importance of individual autonomy, but rather the attractiveness and worth which liberals accord to this good.¹⁸¹ White, moreover, contended that there were versions of the 'third way', such as a centrist communitarianism, which were not 'genuinely social democratic', and Andersson suggests that an emphasis on community in New Labour meant that there was less significance ascribed to 'structural factors'.¹⁸² Where does this leave Mulgan's communitarianism? How radical was it?

Mulgan, as well as Marquand, was critical of rights-based liberalism, which is significant, but I have already argued that Mulgan, in his conception of the knowledge economy, prioritised the 'capitalisation of the social' over 'socialising capital'. While this does not mean he could not be considered a social democrat, it does call into question the radicalism of his ideology. However, this prioritisation must be contextualised, intellectually and politically: for those modernisers on the left, broadly construed, an emphasis on capitalising the social was seen as a correction to a perceived imbalance within left-wing politics, in which socialising capital (through public ownership, redistribution of wealth and state intervention) was over-valued. Nevertheless, despite a strain of optimism visible in Mulgan's neo-philia, his visions were broadly about accepting an inevitable future which dramatically limited the scope for political action. Emily Robinson noted how in some elements of 'progressive' positioning in political discourse, change is suggested to be a 'matter of inevitability, of keeping up with the times'. In consequence, 'good politics' is constituted simply by 'managing the impersonal forces of change'.¹⁸³ Indeed,

¹⁸⁰ Miller, 'In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?', p. 72.

¹⁸¹ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, pp. 163-4.

¹⁸² White, 'Ambiguities of the Third Way', p. 13; Andersson, *The Library and the Workshop*, p. 104. Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, however, argues that 'community' was a proxy for talking about class, poverty and inequality of opportunity and was thus 'more than a buzzword' – see Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "'Class' in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology', pp. 358-60 and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, p. 199.

¹⁸³ Robinson, *Language of Progressive Politics*, pp. 6-7.

sometimes Mulgan adopted such a technocratic approach, asserting in 1994 that the era of drawing policy conclusions from ‘ideological principles’ was over, and that in future, the focus will be on ‘an accumulation of evidence about what works’ – anticipating the later New Labour catch-phrase ‘what matters is what works’.¹⁸⁴ Clearly, what counts as something ‘working’ was and is always contested intensely on the level of ideology.¹⁸⁵

As noted, Campsie criticises *Marxism Today*, particularly in relation to Mulgan, for its determinism, its lack of ‘sociological rootedness’ compared to earlier left-wing analysis, and hence its failing to grapple with the ‘complex shape of British society as it was’.¹⁸⁶ He draws on contemporary criticisms from Gareth Stedman Jones and Sarah Benton in making this claim, who suggested that Mulgan failed to find a role for agency in his account of change and that he possessed a ‘romantic’ conception of socio-economic change.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the academic and feminist Cynthia Cockburn, who was involved in the aforementioned community politics currents of the 1970s,¹⁸⁸ also suggested Mulgan’s analyses lacked nuance – she stated that the ‘old power’ was still very much alive in the ‘new times’, and questioned whether Mulgan’s idea of weak power was actually just ‘clever power used by the strong’.¹⁸⁹

Mulgan’s determinism and lack of nuance needs to be considered, however, as a rhetorical technique. In creating these visions of unavoidable change and combining them with injunctions for the left to adapt, Mulgan was trying to wed people to his point of view. By adopting a critical pose, notwithstanding the validity of contemporary criticisms as interventions themselves, it is sometimes possible for historians to lose sight of what these actors were trying

¹⁸⁴ Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age*, pp. 33-4. See E. Shaw, ‘What Matters Is What Works: The Third Way and the Case of the Private Finance Initiative’, in Hale, Leggett and Martell (eds.), *The Third Way and Beyond*, pp. 64-82.

¹⁸⁵ H. Pemberton, ‘What Matters Is What Works’: Labour’s Journey from ‘National Superannuation’ to ‘Personal Accounts’, *British Politics*, 5/1 (2010), pp. 41-64.

¹⁸⁶ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, pp. 173, 188. Andersson also believed that *Marxism Today*, in its new times era, ‘leaned towards a highly determinist account’, despite the more nuanced approaches from Hall and others – *Library and the Workshop*, p. 48.

¹⁸⁷ G. Stedman Jones, ‘Communism In Crisis’, *Marxism Today*, July 1989, p. 11 and Benton, ‘Party is Over’, p. 37, as cited by Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, p. 179.

¹⁸⁸ See C. Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People* (London, 1977).

¹⁸⁹ Cynthia Cockburn in Minutes, 4 February 1989, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/06, p. 6.

to *do* in their interventions. In this respect, Mulgan's texts should not be read as interventions in academic sociology or history— this misses the point. Instead, they should be seen as forms of rhetoric, seeking to shape the discussion around how the left ought to adapt at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ See Martin, *Politics and Rhetoric* and Martin, 'Situating Speech'.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how a range of left-wing actors associated with *Marxism Today* attempted to address the challenges of the political, social and economic upheavals of the late twentieth century. It has shown how they tried to articulate individualism with the left's collective project; social change with class politics; and democracy with globalisation. As Ralph Miliband argued in *New Left Review* in 1985, this 'new revisionism', represented partly by those writing in *Marxism Today*, marked 'a very pronounced retreat from some fundamental socialist positions'.¹ I have claimed that the ideological trajectory of the *Marxism Today* left cannot be described straightforwardly as a rightward shift, but I have also suggested that the 1980s was a consequential decade, where left-wing politics and 'socialism' were redefined profoundly by those associated with the journal.

Richard Vinen contended that this group's 'day-to-day analysis of Thatcherism seems to have gone with a declining interest in Marxist theory',² and whilst the first chapter of this thesis on the reception of Antonio Gramsci demonstrates that this was not quite the complete picture, there was indeed a general shift away from 'Marxism'. In January 1990, members of the journal's editorial board debated the future of *Marxism Today*, including a name change. Martin Jacques remarked that its title held 'legitimacy' and 'bestow[ed] an authentic "leftness"' which had been 'of critical importance... during the 80s' era of left critique'. It was now, however, an 'albatross', it was misleading, and the events of 1989, he claimed, meant that there was now 'popular expectation' that the journal's name would change.³ Another editorial board member asserted that the need for change was 'urgent', so that the journal did not seem 'anachronistic'.⁴ In the

¹ Miliband, 'The New Revisionism in Britain', p. 6.

² Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p. 312.

³ Martin Jacques in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 5.

⁴ Fred Steward in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 8.

same year, Geoff Mulgan stated that though ‘underlying’ egalitarian and co-operative impulses would never disappear, the forms that they adopted in the twentieth century – as ‘Marxist/materialist ideologies’ – would inevitably ‘fall away’.⁵ In many ways, all this was the immediate impact of the fall of state communism,⁶ but such arguments were representative of the broader sense, developing over the period, that the traditional forms of left-wing politics – whether Marxism, labourism, or workerism – were out-dated and problematic. There were, however, limits to this sentiment. Pushing against Jacques’ suggestion of a journal which was ‘less evidently “of the left”’,⁷ Stuart Hall contended that any new project of the *Marxism Today* left had to be ‘directed to, or survive for a “Left” of some description’, or else there was ‘no reason to exist’.⁸ Those connected to *Marxism Today* believed that left-wing and ‘progressive’ politics would survive the twentieth century.

Ultimately, however, there was no name change and as the CPGB dissolved to form the Democratic Left in November 1991, *Marxism Today* also disbanded in December of the same year. This marked the disintegration of a close collective which had formed around the journal over the course of the 1980s, though its members kept in contact and collaborated in various projects into the 1990s, such as Jacques and Mulgan co-founding Demos in 1993. Many of the same themes developed in *Marxism Today* were applied to the politics of the 1990s. For instance, Hall charged that the Labour Party’s defeat in the general election of 1992 was due to its lack of a ‘concrete vision’; that Labour had not found an effective manner of speaking to ‘changed realities’; and that Neil Kinnock represented exactly that which the ‘new working class’ was ‘trying its damndest to escape from’. The party had not shifted its ‘old Labour image’, and its new leader, John Smith, was likewise unlikely to transform the ‘culture of Labourism’ within the

⁵ Mulgan, ‘Dark Side’, p. 33.

⁶ The impact of this on the left should not be underestimated – see Robinson, *History, Heritage and Tradition*, pp. 164–5; Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, p. 251; Mulgan, *Politics in an Antipolitical Age*, p. 3; Cohen, ‘Future of a Disillusion’, p. 11.

⁷ Martin Jacques in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 6.

⁸ Stuart Hall in Minutes, 27 January 1990, LHASC, CP/CENT/PUB/04/07, p. 7.

party.⁹ Tony Blair's New Labour, however, was also considered an unsuitable approach. Hall argued in 1995 that while '[n]o one should underestimate' the achievement of Blair in 'blasting the party free' of some of its labourist 'encrustations', New Labour's strategy was essentially one of 'accommodation', failing to recognise that the *correct* lesson of Thatcherism was to develop a distinctive left-wing analysis and programme: an alternative.¹⁰ Shortly before the 1997 general election, he claimed with Jacques that Blair 'embodies the ultimate pessimism – that there is only one version of modernity, the one elaborated by the Conservatives over the last 18 years'.¹¹ In their view, there could not be just any departure from the old left.

Eventually, as discussed previously, many of *Marxism Today's* former contributors would return to give their verdict on New Labour in the special issue of the journal in late 1998. This issue was the product of a weekend seminar involving, in addition to Hall and Jacques, former contributors such as Anthony Barnett, David Edgar, David Held, Eric Hobsbawm, John Lloyd, Doreen Massey, Geoff Mulgan, Robin Murray, Tom Nairn and Michael Rustin.¹² Informing Hall and Hobsbawm's critical essays on New Labour in the issue was the notion that Thatcherism embodied 'neo-liberalism'; that Blair failed to break with this ideology; and that it was precisely this neo-liberal consensus which was falling apart in light of the late 1990s financial crises in East Asia and Russia. They argued that while globalisation and social change had indeed occurred, and the left had had to adapt to these processes, the New Labour government imagined its room for manoeuvre far too narrowly.¹³ As we have seen, Mulgan defended the government in the issue, and he suggested its reforms had already 'far exceed[ed] the early achievements of the Thatcher government that the *Marxism Today* authors so admire', later maintaining that the

⁹ S. Hall, 'No New Vision, No New Votes', *New Statesman & Society*, 17 April 1992, CRL, Hall papers, US121, Box 20, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰ S. Hall, 'Son of Margaret?', *New Statesman & Society*, 6 October 1995, CRL, Hall papers, US121, Box 20, pp. 24, 25.

¹¹ S. Hall and M. Jacques, 'Tony Blair: The Greatest Tory Since Thatcher?', *The Observer*, 13 April 1997, p. 31, as quoted by Harris, 'Marxism Today'.

¹² Note on participants for MT Weekend Seminar, 4-6 September 1998, CRL, Hall papers, US121, Box 63.

¹³ E. Hobsbawm, 'The Death of Neo-Liberalism', *Marxism Today*, November-December 1998, pp. 4-8 and S. Hall, 'The Great Moving Nowhere Show', *Marxism Today*, November-December 1998, pp. 9-14. David Edgerton cites these two essays in making his claim that New Labour was not a 'response to Thatcherism but its child' – *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, p. 506.

special issue was typified by ‘spluttering incoherence’.¹⁴ To Mulgan, New Labour was perfectly in line with the original analysis of *Marxism Today*.¹⁵ However, for most of the rest of the journal’s former contributors, Blair had ‘learned some of the words’ but, ‘sadly’, he had ‘forgotten the music’.¹⁶

Despite this, and notwithstanding those from the journal who served in the New Labour government, to what extent did *Marxism Today* ‘open the door’ to New Labour, providing ‘fertile ground’ for the Labour Party’s ideological revision in the 1990s?¹⁷ Often connections are drawn in order to discredit New Labour, as in the trade unionist John Cooper’s suggestion that ‘Blairism’ owed ‘more to *Marxism Today* and Eurocommunism than the trade union movement’.¹⁸ The historian Donald Sassoon, moreover, suggested that the journal ‘may have helped New Labour to think that “radical rethinking” was synonymous with “let’s be more like the Tories”’.¹⁹ Rather than stimulating an ‘authentic renewal’ of the left, *Marxism Today* and particularly its ‘new times’ project are held by some to be a ‘1980s staging post’ on the road to bankrupt Blairism.²⁰ However, others such as David Blunkett have argued that it was ‘New Labour before the term had been invented’.²¹ The perception that the journal sanctioned New Labour is widespread. Hall, in spite of his acerbic criticisms of New Labour, acknowledged in 1997 the transplantation and transmogrification of ideas from *Marxism Today* into New Labour:

I feel a peculiar responsibility for the Blair phenomenon. Blair was quite close to *Marxism Today* at one stage as a reader. We launched the modernisation programme which Blair took up. We mean different things by it but we are implicated in some of the shifts because we’ve always argued that Labour could not just go back to its old stamping

¹⁴ Mulgan, ‘Whinge and a Prayer’, p. 16; Mulgan in ‘Vox Populi’, p. 142.

¹⁵ C. Hay, *The Political Economy of New Labour* (Manchester, 1999), p. 11.

¹⁶ Hall, ‘Great Moving Nowhere Show’, p. 14.

¹⁷ A. Callinicos, ‘Tony Cliff Matters for Socialists Today’, *Socialist Worker*, 23 May 2017, <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/44652/Tony+Cliff+matters+for+socialists+today> (4 August 2020); C. Marsden and J. Hyland, ‘Britain’s Compass Group: Former Blair Acolytes Seek to Rescue New Labour’, <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2006/05/comp-m17.html> (4 August 2020); and H. Davis, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (London, 2004), p. 157.

¹⁸ J. Cooper, ‘Where Next for the Labour Right?’, *Jacobin* (14 November 2017), <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/11/labour-party-jeremy-corbyn-blair-unions> (2 January 2020).

¹⁹ Donald Sassoon in ‘Vox Populi’, p. 142.

²⁰ A. Kundnani, ‘Introduction’, in A. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance. Writing on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London, 2019), p. xviii. See also Rustin interview, ‘The New Left and Its Legacies’, pp. 150-1.

²¹ David Blunkett in ‘Vox Populi’, p. 141.

ground and reaffirm the past. In a funny way, then, we're responsible for launching some of these new ideas which have then been appropriated cosmetically and installed in a different kind of project.²²

Indeed, the *Marxism Today* group broadly claimed that left-wing strategy had to be adapted to Western socio-economic conditions; it criticised 'statism' and adopted a programme that accommodated the market and individual rights; it also felt uneasy about 'the style of "class politics" of the hard left' and engaged seriously with the claims of women, minorities and their movements;²³ and it was actively enthusiastic about European integration through the European Community. The journal also shared New Labour's neo-philia,²⁴ and it is clear that it helped to 'introduce the themes' that would later become part of New Labour's 'platform' in the 1990s.²⁵ *Marxism Today* contributed to the emergence of new political languages within a broad revisionist milieu, languages which were later drawn upon by New Labour in order to justify their policies and decisions. However, *Marxism Today* and New Labour were different political formations, and comparisons tend to obscure as much as they illuminate. As John Harris suggested, most of the journal's ideas were 'lost', due to the 'realities of power' and the fact that Blair and Gordon Brown were in many ways quite traditional political leaders.²⁶ More fundamentally, there were simply more relevant dynamics driving ideological revision within the Labour Party in the 1980s and 1990s, sometimes producing political outcomes opposed to those suggested in the pages of *Marxism Today*.²⁷

Perhaps the journal and New Labour were symptoms of a broader process. The cultural theorist Mark Fisher wrote in the final years of the New Labour era that it was in the 1980s that

²² S. Hall in L. Terry, 'Travelling the Hard Road to Renewal: A Continuing Conversation with Stuart Hall', *Arena Journal*, 8 (1997), p. 55, as quoted by Hay, *Political Economy of New Labour*, p. 10.

²³ Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "'Class" in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology', p. 357

²⁴ Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, p. 506.

²⁵ Andersson, *Library and the Workshop*, pp. 48, 52; Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p. 119.

²⁶ Harris, 'Marxism Today'.

²⁷ See, for example, E. Shaw, *The Labour Party Since 1979* (London, 1994); Fielding, *The Labour Party*; Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*; Cronin, *New Labour's Pasts*; D. Coates, *Prolonged Labour: The Slow Birth of New Labour Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005); Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, "'Class" in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology'; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics, and the Decline of Deference*, pp. 173-202; Murphy, "'Rainbow Alliance' or the Focus Group?'

‘capitalist realism’ – the idea that ‘there is no alternative’ – was ‘fought for and established’.²⁸ In many ways, in the search for a feasible and credible left-wing agenda for the late twentieth century and beyond, those writing in *Marxism Today* came to abandon many ideas about constraining, and certainly about overthrowing, capital. In accommodating markets, in seeking to learn from the ‘leading edges’ of capital, or through the suggestion that there were more humane *varieties* of capitalism, this broad group were not anti-capitalist. They did not, however, believe there was no alternative and they did not abandon a critique of capitalism.²⁹ As Stuart White and Susan Giaimo wrote, revisionism ‘always carries with it a risk of excessive accommodation to changed circumstances’, exemplified either by the rejection of a ‘distinctive long-term vision’ or by the ‘stretching or dilution’ of core principles.³⁰ On the first test, *Marxism Today* did not capitulate to their ideological opponents – increasingly over the period, the interventions made within the journal were aimed precisely at constructing a long-term alternative to Thatcherism and market liberalism. On the second, the journal’s contributors undoubtedly diluted traditional principles of the left, but their claim – most notably in the commitment to class politics – was that such a dilution was necessary in order to fulfil other core, left-wing values that had been neglected as a result of unrepresentative or out-dated categories and notions found within dominant forms of twentieth-century British socialism. New ideas about individual rights served to clarify, and add texture to, notions of ‘democracy’ and ‘equality’, as well as providing new ambitions for left-wing politics. In this process, therefore, much like the revisionists of the 1950s, these authors were ‘revising the ends as well as the means of socialism’,³¹ but many of the ends remained the same.

²⁸ M. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism. Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley, 2009), p. 8.

²⁹ See Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour*, p. 119.

³⁰ S. White and S. Giaimo, ‘Conclusion: New Labour and the Uncertain Future of Progressive Politics’, in White (ed.), *New Labour*, p. 217.

³¹ Jackson, *Equality and the British Left*, p. 222.

G. A. Cohen wrote in 1991 that many on the left at that time were ‘succumbing’ to the ‘temptation’ of ‘Adaptive Preference Formation’.³² First suggested by the political theorist Jon Elster,³³ this is the (irrational) process by which individuals come to prefer one option or goal over another, when the former is deemed to be more feasible or available than the latter. It is irrational, Cohen claimed, because individuals who go through Adaptive Preference Formation would fail to register ‘the goodness of the goal’ they originally sought if it were to ‘come within reach’.³⁴ The problem with Cohen’s assessment of the left was that it relied on this counterfactual – that if the original option or goal became available, they would nevertheless reject it. There is no way of knowing whether those based around *Marxism Today* would have rejected, for instance, a programme of reflation coordinated by the nation state, based around extensive nationalisation, if it was objectively more feasible. Or, indeed, a revolutionary, insurrectionist strategy if it was seen as genuinely offering freedom, democracy and equality. In renewing left-wing ideas, the authors of *Marxism Today* were seeking to present an alternative to their ideological opponents and to the *status quo*, while attempting to grapple with the meaning of defeat and what was viable in the late twentieth century.

In this respect, contrary to scholarly opinion, those within *Marxism Today* did not have ‘curiously little’ to say about how the left could shape the structures of the world around them, or believe that it was ‘impossible to do anything’ about neo-liberalism or Thatcherism.³⁵ In spite of the determinism, the emphasis on irreversibility, and the claims regarding the hegemonic strength of ‘Thatcherism’, the authors of the journal were much less pessimistic than has been claimed and were trying to figure out exactly how the left could maintain agency in the late twentieth century. Even for this group that was obsessed with their ideological opponents, this thesis has demonstrated that Thatcherism was not the lone ‘guiding force’ by which we should

³² Cohen, ‘Future of a Disillusion’, p. 9.

³³ J. Elster, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge, 1983).

³⁴ Cohen, ‘Future of a Disillusion’, p. 14.

³⁵ Campsie, ‘A Social and Intellectual History of British Socialism’, p. 129 and Brooke, ‘Living in ‘New Times’’, p. 26.

understand their ideological trajectory or, indeed, the 1980s as a whole.³⁶ Left-wing writers were *resourceful* in this period. They were creative in these years. Ultimately, they were not a passive and defeated force.

³⁶ Hilton *et al.*, 'New Times Revisited', p. 146.

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