

THE MANCHESTER REGION HISTORY REVIEW: THE SHAPE OF THE NEXT DECADE?

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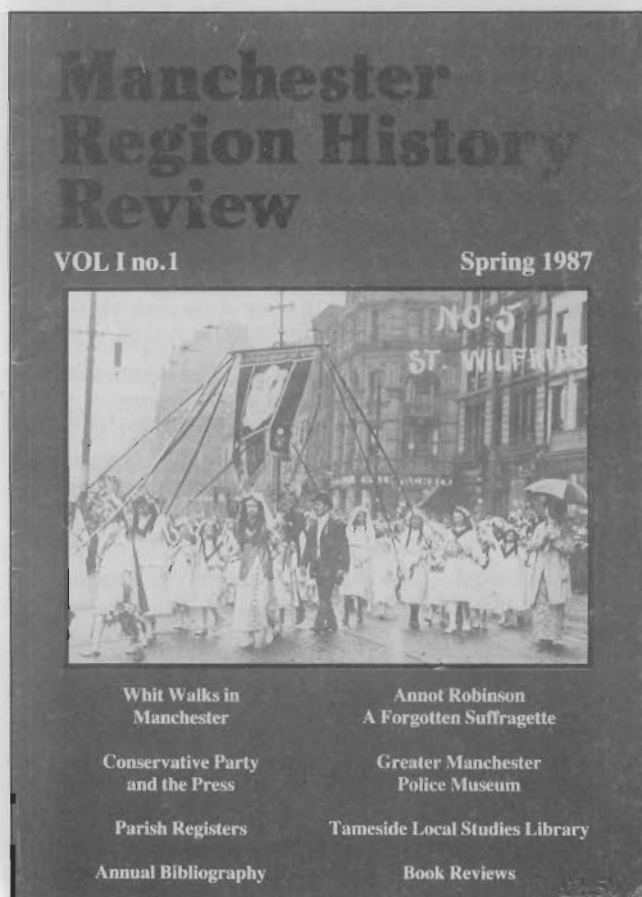
Historical prediction is a notoriously tricky business. A writer can attempt to extrapolate from some known tendencies within a given journal or its field, and he can also play for safety by assuming that the journal, and its editors, will pursue much the same policies as in the past. This line of approach, however, has the disadvantage of being rather unmannerly by giving the impression that boldness and enterprise on the part of the editors are altogether likely to disappear, perhaps never to surface again. As is implied here, the present discussion relates to the journal itself, not history-in-general. But it does have much to say about local history in particular.

What shapes will the latter take in years to come? Yet, other forms of risk, not to say discourtesy, are bred by didacticism, heavy advice and moralising. This article, which was invited by the editors, will steer an uneasy path between one extreme and the other, reasonably assuming that the editors will show as much enterprise as in the past (and perhaps even more), and, on the didacticism front, drawing attention to some observable tendencies in local and regional history which are likely to provide material for a new and developing agenda. Some of the agenda-forming influences are of course quite unpredictable in themselves, even though it will not be merely cynical to

see some past influences substantially reproduced; one has to assume, for example, that working conditions in academic life will remain pretty well unchanged, which means that the enterprising idea carries a heavier ball and chain than it otherwise would. Then, as we have often been told, 'history is present politics', and exciting changes in the British political field, egalitarian, libertarian and constitutional, would surely create more of a new climate for historical experiment than would more of the same dreary old politics as before. Not only this; a campaign for root-and-branch constitutional change would have profound repercussions for the study of regions, in that if we are to have devolved government, we must necessarily have suitable regions to devolve such government to. Historians alone cannot define these suitable regions, of course, but they can sometimes explain why a given territory is to all intents and purposes unsuitable, in that people in the past have shown no indication of either liking it or wishing to belong to it.

Manchester Region or North-West Region?

It will be noticed that the moment one poses a question like 'Manchester Region or North-West Region?', a dust-storm of ideas and arguments leaps into view – only to become something suspiciously like a mirage, indeed, for the writing of local governmental history can be, and usually is, foully and unrelentingly dull, and the writer can base this comment on experience.¹ Yet it does not have to stay thus. There is quite a story in Liverpool's contests with Manchester, and in the willingness of both emergent city-regions to detach themselves from the trunk of the old Lancashire – and, with such an example in mind, readers will learn to hate the thoughtless stupidity that wishes to place the wind-torn territories involved in a 'region' that calls itself the North-West, whether the stupidity emerges from Whitehall or Walworth Road.² Here, then, is a putative idea for the future agenda of this *Review*. The editors, indeed, will insist on observations which are at least readable, and the writings concerned will, following the established policy of the *Manchester Region History Review*, be intelligible to a broader public as well as to academic readers. This prescription may deter some specialists in local government. The *Review*, meanwhile, need not worry itself too much about the definition of regions, for its sympathetic contemporary, the *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, has given some space to this field,³ and the theoretical side of the subject is best left alone unless protagonists spice it with polemic and immediately relevant argument. One hastens to add that historians of local government, like John Garrard in this *Review* (1988-9), can be both witty and thoroughly readable, and fellow-students of local themes should examine Garrard's story of a Victorian and upwardly mobile municipal gas manager in the Salford context,⁴ with a view to learning and digesting the lesson. (The writer once noted that Sir Harcourt Clare, the second Clerk of the Lancashire County Council, appreciably increased his salary by creating areas of paid work and bodies for which he was responsible, and not for nothing was Lady Clare regarded as the best-dressed woman in Lancashire. Upward mobility can take many forms.⁵)



Are such exhibitions of human frailty important? It is a weakness of local history that it often ignores the characteristics and motivations of decision-making and decision-makers. The social history which is so strongly represented in the *Review* seeks often for a common denominator of human experience, even in a very localised framework; but it is also necessary to show the nature of the actions which shaped people's lives. Social history is vastly important, but so is the occasionally inspired piece of business history which shows the hidden hand not of the market but of the lever-puller.

Importance of Recent History

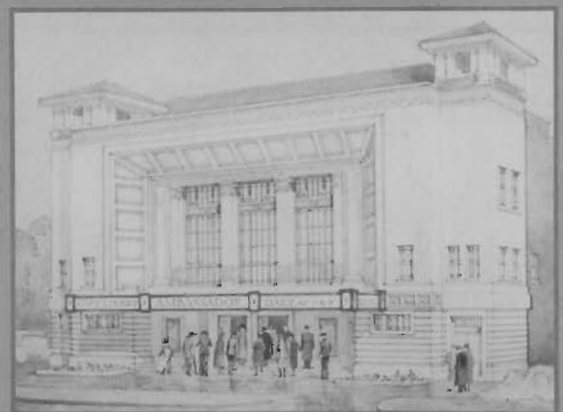
And there is an all too large general lacuna hereabouts; for reasons which will be ponderable, very recent urban history and local history alike are little examined in print, and the middle and late twentieth century is attached as a hasty postscript to many a historical survey of a town or village. The *Review* cannot of itself alter this tendency, but its reviewers can give encouragement in the right places, and they should be aware of the evident weaknesses of local history in general. For this reason, some new approaches to the latter are discussed below, bearing in mind that both conservatism and antiquarianism are associated with the work of present-day enthusiasts. Because there are not a few such enthusiasts among its readers, the *Review* will not wish to alienate them, and one cannot shout into an empty space. However, there is reason to believe that major controversy will be upon us in the months and years to come, and one can deduce this without recourse to the predictive powers of Old Moore.

But, before engaging on a trip across this dangerous but exciting territory, let us look at a few items for a future agenda which will at the same time be forced by circumstances into our consideration. By the actions of producing an up to date regional bibliography, and reviewing ground, the *Manchester Region History Review* is also providing a potential framework of reference for local (and regional) historians. This regional framework of received history is of the utmost importance, for no 'good' or fully effective local history can be developed without it. But over the years, local historians have been taught and trained in a way that is essentially document-centred; it has been thought that if our fellow-seekers learn to use documents, then everything else will follow easily and naturally. Now, even the *Review*, by giving otherwise perfectly proper prominence to archival collections and their uses, seems to be saying the same thing. But, of course, it is not true that the documents will yield anything but a recitation of antiquarian facts-for-their-own-sake, unless the seeker is asking questions of himself and of his sources in general, and unless he has an agenda of his own, one which is designed to answer some overriding questions – such as 'how many other nearby places were like this one, and why?' In this respect, the most constructive contribution of the *Review* could be that of publishing some outstanding pieces of comparative local history, whereby several places are examined in their regional context, and the compulsion to publish such outstanding and ingenious works, based upon printed as well as documentary sources, will undoubtedly force itself on the editors in the next decade. If such articles could be written by leisure-time historians (and there have been some excellent ones on local history diploma courses), then so much the better. For, as this writer has long appreciated, the *Manchester Region History Review* is a sounding board for many things that are lively, alert and creative in recent historiography, and if such a

compulsion does not seize hold of the editors then the non-event will be a sign that the *Review* really is on its last legs, or that evil, negative or destructive forces have finally triumphed in one major area of historical writing.

It is of the utmost importance that academic and leisure-time historians work together, and the main reason for this assertion will become evident. For the present, it will be enough to say that many readers instinctively dislike élitism, but that they enjoy discussing relevant matters with persons who have made a special study of a field that interests them. Moreover, good local history,⁶ of a kind that sets high standards and solves real problems, is still fairly rare, and intelligent men and women of whatever calling will ultimately grow tired of the kind of searching that does not seem to lead anywhere. Furthermore – and this is not always realised even among historical specialists – the organised study of local history is *cumulative*, in that it grows and develops in scope and depth over generations, through the contributions of many people. A further key word here is *organised*. And the *Review* clearly plays an essential role in systematically listing and reviewing books on the region and its parts. However, the pressures and debates of the next decade will probably take the journal into the discussion not just of books, archives and sources, but of how archives are used to deal with given themes, and of how they are used by given authors. In this way the *Review* will help to supplement the valuable work already done in local history training courses provided by regional universities. And, since the diploma, certificate and master's degree courses are plainly here to stay, then any supplementary work will gain in value. For the rest, the *Review* is here seen as encouraging the products of such courses to publish their work; and it must here be admitted that some genuine 'amateurs' could see their researches brought into the light of day through its good offices.

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Unique Training Ground

It will be noticed that the academic view of history as a unique training ground is here taken for granted. But is there not a vast amateur field, with rather different assumptions, for which the *Review* also caters? The comment here is that the *Review* will certainly build on the interests of this wide public, and that it will be sympathetic to non-academic readers; indeed, it will wish to make its columns attractive to an even greater field of activity than that of the local historian, namely that of the family historian. However, the significance of family history, which has burgeoned enormously in the past thirty years, will appear to be altogether more crucial than some readers would otherwise expect. After all, it was dismissed by many historians as a form of antiquarian indulgence, and there will be raised eyebrows over the question of this apparent elevation of the genealogist.

The likelihood of controversy has been much strengthened by the strenuous argument in the first volume of Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso, 1994),⁷ which represents the culmination of that historian's on the whole sympathetic search through History Workshop and other discussions,⁸ for the nature and purpose of local historical study. Samuel has discovered a multitude of people enjoying themselves through the study of what he calls 'resurrectionism' (the exhuming of the past generally), whether through collections of photographs and postcards, or through the savouring of almost any relic of the past, be it a castle or a canal boat or a factory.

He is able to point to the great popularity of museums, history trails and heritage displays of almost any kind, but his main argument rests on the sheer breadth of activity to which these displays are related. There is clearly a popular

passion for the past, but there has also been a powerful instinct among humble people for the creation of their own folk-views of the past, and Samuel concludes that in this world of resurrectionism he has discovered the real People's History, a thriving and warmly enjoyable thing as measured against the (by comparison) narrow and censorious view of history as seen by academics. He dismisses altogether the critiques of Heritage as put forward by Robert Hewison and Patrick Wright,⁹ arguing that there is a strong element of conspiracy theory in the attitudes of such authors, who too conveniently link Thatcherite Britain and its decline to the 'Heritage Industry'.

The New Populism?

This stark summary gives a broadly fair impression of Samuel's main argument, which is widely and heavily documented – for an anti-academic historian he produces a rich prolixity of note references – and the main virtue of his writing lies in the forthrightness of his challenge rather than in the apparent total surrender to postmodernist relativism, with an accompanying all-embracing populism, that his volume represents. Yet, he will find many who partly agree with him, (provided that they themselves are not expected to surrender all accepted standards in their own writing and research). The *Manchester Region History Review*, which has been part of a growing movement in the promotion of well-researched local and social history, is also situated in Samuel's field of fire in that it adheres to well-established historical standards in the use of evidence and presentation. But it, too, reaches benevolently outwards towards a mass of do-it-yourself local historical activity, at the same time not appearing too élitist or detached from the interests and insecurities of ordinary mortals, or seeming too lost in academic dryness. Samuel extols the subtlety and vividness of the messages conveyed by old photograph,¹⁰ and the *Review* makes full use of such sources, and, of course, it uses powerful, striking and vivid cover designs. Samuel praises the use and enrichment of the senses represented by colourful re-creations of the past for children and adults alike, and he is wholly in support of every kind of museum and art display which does the same,¹¹ while, of course, the *Review* gives detailed examinations of museums and art galleries in its region;¹² astonishingly few historical journals do this, or interest themselves in the publicly available channels through which history is learnt. It goes without saying that the *Review* will maintain this enlightening and enlightened policy.


But does this mean that its keen-witted and contentious readers will swallow the much larger argument for the total acceptance of Heritage, and all the forms of antiquarianism connected with the latter, that is part of Raphael Samuel's package? Professional historians, whose work also carries them into the so-called amateur field, have been able to ignore the vast challenges and problems that the latter throws out by (in part rightly) assuming that it should be enough to write and talk interestingly and responsibly about local history and its interpretations, setting some kind of example at the right time. Unfortunately or otherwise, the chips are now down, and there will be fewer chances to evade the issues that Samuel thrusts forward. At the same time, the problems of the part-time student have to be handled delicately and tactfully, as the *Review's* contributors will know well enough, and antiquarianism can best be nullified by putting the inexperienced student into contact with genuinely exciting history and research, in matters that concern the student and his or her life experiences.

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Meanwhile, it will be well to remember that many local historians are parents or grandparents, and we should be aware that the designers of the History sections of the National Curriculum have laid down, in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, that true historical method is conveyed to pupils, and that the latter is seen by the historians concerned as a means of helping boys and girls to understand historical evidence.¹³ If local history societies and organisations, which often concern themselves with school history, realise that the inculcation of basic method is a main educational purpose of such history, then the former bodies may also understand that local societies should not be undoing the work of teachers by attempting to turn their young charges into antiquaries – and a useful debate may begin. But, of course, someone has to spell out, with telling examples, how antiquarianism has originated, and how, nationally and regionally, history in the true sense evolved from the antiquarian studies of our Victorian forbears. Antiquarianism is concerned with the past as exemplified in buildings, artefacts, and individual items or traces of all kinds; history takes us beyond the past as a mere fact, and tries to understand how human beings and their (local) societies have evolved. It must be conceded that at least a modicum of this kind of understanding should be seen as the young citizen's birthright in a democratic society – otherwise democratic values themselves cannot be safeguarded, and terms of critical reference will go by default. And, of course, the issues that are here discussed will not go away, and they will return repeatedly to challenge us.

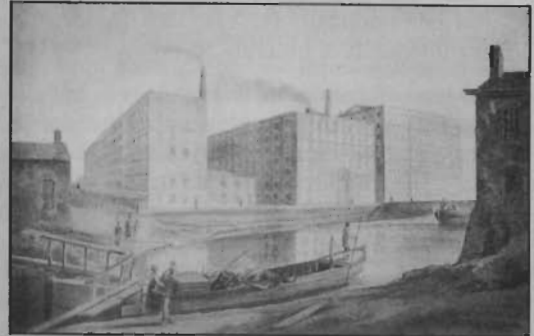
And a word of warning. The *Review* follows what may be a good policy in keeping editorial information down to a minimum, but, in a decade which is likely to contain so many profoundly controversial matters, is it wise to leave oneself without a tongue? Occasional editorial articles may have much to be said for them, and so may not too frequent surveys of reader opinion. *The Local Historian*, one of our better journals devoted to interests not unlike those of the *Review*, has for many years run an editorial section, and in the present media-dominated world, editors and readers would be running with the grain of history if they built up contacts one with the other.

Role of Family History

So far, all that has been said is what, in other circumstances, the gypsy might have said – there is trouble ahead. But there are yet more solid extrapolations to be made. Family history was mentioned as a major factor in local and regional study; and it is often overlooked that such history, with its immense appeal to hundreds of part-time researchers, male and female, does not have to be antiquarian or mind-numbing. The antiquary is in many cases concerned with objects rather than with people; the family historian, on the contrary, is concerned with the pursuit and study of people, his or her ancestors. Moreover, the latter has another advantage in that he commences his study in the present, that is in the most concrete way possible, and works backwards. Much of the time the family researcher is simply tracing, recording and collecting. Yet, the very nature of the study prompts questions about these ancestors. What were their jobs, in what sort of society? Why did they move from one part of the country to another? Why did the children die so young? In what sorts of housing did they live?

Then, why do so many people find themselves drawn to such searches? It is often held that in seeking family roots, the searchers are also engaged in a quest for a strengthening of their own identities. Yet, the same can be said about the

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quest for local history; the sense of place and the sense of identity work in tandem, and to these two senses or forces may be added another, the sense of community in a given place, which may also in modern industrial conditions be a sense of class. (The members of a family will move about a region, and then develop a very strong sense of regional awareness, like many Lancastrians). Perhaps the most important function of local historical and family study lies in the strengthening of this awareness of identity, or place, or class, which is psychologically a man or a woman's most precious possession. Help a man or a woman towards an understanding of his or her own past, seen against the wider or collective local past, and one has helped that person towards a realisation that is inestimably valuable.

It follows that a student ends this work by looking at more-than-family, and that he or she has to interpret wider history through a family framework. Such a task is not easy, but what are progressive and humane historical journals for? Assistance can be given.

By contrast, antiquarianism works in a reverse direction; it may be immensely absorbing to those who are engaged in it, but it is overwhelmingly concerned with fragments of the past, rather than history in an organised sense, and the practitioner is thereby precluded from looking at a place in a systematic way. Both the family historian and the antiquary commence their work at the same level, that of collection, but whereas the latter has no idea in mind save more collection, the family historian's work falls into an inevitable and retrospective pattern, and it is then that the key questions flood in. More and more family researchers, too, are using the techniques of oral history in questioning their immediate forbears, and it is through such work that the ideas of local social history begin to form. The significance of such developments was long ago recognised by the pioneers of

the Manchester Studies Unit, and important co-operative community ventures could well be based on the work of groups of family historians in a given locality. The *Review* should be in an especially good position to give advice and encouragement, and to advertise the work of study groups and day schools.

Problems of 'Community'

'Community'; this is a concept that has exercised sociologists,¹⁴ and it is easy to see why local historians ignore its finer implications. Yet, like Heritage and the Samuel arguments, it is unlikely to go away.

The *Review* has in fact invaded this territory in its thoroughly organised and remarkable symposium on Ancoats (1993), and one of the contributors referred to 'the rhetoric of community'.¹⁵ But the germ of an interesting idea is not given further life, and we certainly do not learn, save by implication, what identity-sense and awareness of place alike was held by the inhabitants as a settled group, or what really was an 'external' influence. Since the symposium was in itself a striking achievement, it will be unfair to say more, except that the testimony of the late Malcolm Lynch was exactly the kind of information that should have been collected on a larger scale by oral recording. Meanwhile, Steve Little's contribution on the conservation of Ancoats, a thorough and thoughtful one, raised a multitude of questions on conservation as an aid to history (or to Heritage), and on what attitudes we should take to the historical environment. How far is the last essential to real insight?

The other notable symposium, on Peterloo (1989), was guilty of ignoring the regional or the sub-regional dimension; that we should have a national framework of events (provided by John Belchem) was right and proper, but the

question of the local origins of the Peterloo contingents of demonstrators was skirted. Perhaps the information is almost impossible to extract, but the choice of subject might in future allow more regional latitude, which would be served if a topic like Chartism was explored; there are considerable chunks of local history in the *Northern Star*, but local enthusiasts will learn to look at the regional as well as the local picture. This is of course a reasonable hope, and is not offered as a prediction. Many other aspects of labour history can and will be dealt with in one of two ways; by studying the relationship of a labour movement to its milieu and local background, and by a wider regional survey of interrelated aspects of the movement.

Meanwhile, the point of such symposia will become even clearer; they will strive towards the type of synthesis which should, ultimately, be the localist's and the regionalist's most notable contribution to historiography. These workers will rightly see the many-sided approach to a place, an event or a movement as a means of illuminating the history of a region. For the immediate future, however, the editors will undoubtedly find themselves encouraging any well written comparative local history which tackles such themes by using the historical illustration available in two or more places. The importance of labour movements has been touched upon, and there are many other aspects of social life and civil society which can be treated in this way; attitudes to poverty in several towns, the selected effects of war conditions on groups of people within an area, and the examination of the rise and fall of traditional activities like the young people's 'monkey runs' (or parades) which once flourished in our towns;¹⁶ all of these call for comparative attention, and, where possible, explanation. This last is more difficult than it should be, because few reliable economic and social histories of small or large towns are available, and researchers have to exhume the basic characteristics of places for themselves. Meanwhile, there is real scope for a survey of so-called factory villages, as symbols of employer control but also of political and social communities – surely the last word on these has not been said, by Patrick Joyce or others?¹⁷

The *Review* will properly ignore the type of local and town history that the late Raymond Williams called 'official', the dreary chronicle of supposed local achievement and respectability. Even so, examples of this genre may be worth holding up for inspection as a prelude to careful and critical discussion. The future may indeed bring something much more interesting, historical surveys of respectability itself, which may be seen in turn to throw real light on Lancashire life; there is, for example, a large band of East Lancashire housing which has asserted itself through the application of stick-on leaded lights to front bay or other windows. The writer, who along with many colleagues lived in such a residence, had to have it pointed out to him that he was dwelling inside a statement of social arrival. Yet, there was much more to working-class respectability than this, for its manifestations often symbolised resistance to a degrading environment, like the acts of scrubbing doorsteps and ochring window-sills.

Making Knowledge Accessible

There is, meanwhile, a corpus of work that remains largely neglected, in the form of theses and dissertations covering part or whole of the Manchester Region, and this is so serious a matter that some action will undoubtedly be called for in the future – perhaps in the form of the provision of selected abstracts, just to remind local historians that this work is there to be used and that it is available to

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the bona fide researcher. However, since one of the editors of the *Review* has himself published a list of these works,¹⁸ one is reminded that there are limits to endeavour. It is alarming, nevertheless, to find that members of local history societies are sometimes unaware that their own territory has been examined by not one but several theses and dissertations. Just as it is worrying that when the societies are duly aware of such sources, their members nevertheless feel unable to travel to a university library to take notes. The future will undoubtedly bring more discussion of these essential works, now to be counted in hundreds regionally, and not enough use has been made of them in published articles (and books). If capable contributors use and discuss them, then leisure-time historians will follow. Meanwhile, analyses not only of published works, but also of unpublished studies of the kind mentioned, will show what gaps there are in our present knowledge, and the *Manchester Region History Review* can give a vital lead in this respect.

It has often been argued that leisure-time researchers for pleasure need not worry about a failure to follow academic research, because it is the enjoyment of doing something that counts. Raphael Samuel's general thesis (in *Theatres of Memory*) does indeed seem to extol local and popular history-making activity as a form of mass hedonism, and it will be made to follow from this that critics of Samuel's position are urging that there shall be no more cakes and ale for the multitude who are thus interested. This argument conveniently ignores the fact that a more purposive history, one built on challenges and insights into the lives of our forbears, can also be deeply stimulating; and there are also innumerable cases whereby apparently antiquarian activity can be turned into something more significant in teaching and research. Those associated with the *Review* will be thoroughly aware of the uses of an otherwise inert environment which a good teacher will make. On the other hand, Samuel seems to be extolling chaos in the local historical field, and in some important senses he has all the

big battalions on his side. The last thirty years have seen a revolution in communications, and we can be sure that regional and other journalists and broadcasters and presenters will now disseminate historical judgements and assumptions that have little or no weight of expertise behind them, if only for the reason that every Jack or Jill can now be his or her own historian, and can garner praise in the local newspaper.

What is a regional historical journal to do in such a case? It seems to the writer that we should, as regards the coming decade, invoke General William Booth's dictum and refuse to let the devil have all the best tunes – in other words, we have to show that our writing and discussion can be exciting and relevant to the experiences of a much larger group of people. Every contributor should be made to read George Orwell on the writing of plain English (and I wonder how many historians realise how meaningless their jargon is to a wider public?), but, more than this, history which is both good and alive should itself be helped to seize positions in suitable places in the media. The present writer has written local history articles for North Lancashire and Furness regional newspapers over many years, and has used local radio. If there is to be anything called 'people's history', it must find outlets where people are, and it was perhaps an unwillingness to come to terms with this condition that caused History Workshop to abandon its attempt to further such history.

The implications of this for the *Review* seem to be that it should carry on the search for a popular but penetrating history, encouraging writers and researchers who bring the local past to genuine life, and building up relationships with persons who have access to the media. Otherwise those of us who have its work at heart will, as virtuously as may be, find themselves by-passed and isolated. This undoubtedly represents a reality for the forthcoming decade. Perhaps, too, these observations carry a message for the wider academic community.

NOTES

- 1 Marshall (ed.), *The History of Lancashire County Council, 1889 to 1974*, (Martin Robertson, London, 1977). Not all the contributions to this volume were 'dull', despite the inherent problems of the subject-matter, and some of the county's leading figures appear three-dimensionally. Nor was the volume the deferential kind of 'official history', as Mr. William Amos noticed; *Lancashire Life*, February 1978, p. 56.
- 2 Although regional government has been promised by, *inter alia*, John Prescott, the thoroughgoing kind appears to have been placed on the back burner by Jack Straw's PLP Committee on Devolution (summer 1995). Interest in this subject is very keen, especially in the north of England, but there has been little real debate, and this omission is used as an excuse for postponement of action.
- 3 See especially *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, issue devoted to symposium, 'Are British Regions Neglected?', Vol. 10, No. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 1-58; but also *JORALS*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (1985); Vol. 6, No. 1, (1986). This Journal is obtainable from Dr. Philip Swan, School of Humanities and Communications, Humberside University, Hull HU6 7LU.
- 4 John Garrard, 'The Salford Gas Scandal of 1887', *Manchester Region History Review (MRHR)*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn/Winter 1988/9, pp. 12-24.
- 5 See Marshall, *History of Lancashire County Council*, pp. 18-19.
- 6 'Good local history' is of course a matter of the reactions of the beholder (or reader); in this context, the phrase means 'local history which has the effect of illuminating the life or development of a given neighbourhood, suburb or town'. In the case of *MRHR*, some highly competent articles, one feels, are really footnotes to a national discussion. But this is not always the case: Frank Neal, on 'Manchester Origins of the English Orange Order' (*MRHR*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1990-1), throws light on regional sectarian history and puts his topic firmly into context by using the abstract and summary at the beginning – while also showing its more general significance, and giving plenty of detail. This is the sort of article which gives real guidance to local historians looking at more restricted areas. Steve Fielding on Manchester Whit Walks (Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1987) supplies fascinating detail on working-class culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but such a study needs to be broadened to other towns (and probably has been); otherwise one can learn only a little about the sectarian and ethnic strains within local societies. We are already accumulating knowledge of Manchester and Bolton cinemas and cinema-going, and on leisure culture of a more recent kind (Rigby on Bolton Cinemas, *MRHR IV*, 2, 1990-1; Shenton on Manchester Cinemas, (V, 2, 1991-2). The problem with such articles lies in the way in which they offer, or fail to offer, hand-holds to other related topics; wages, leisure, shift working, food – the cinema is related to fish and chips – dress and dressing up, reading (film mags were working class staples), press puffs and the star system, oral history in general. Even the best articles adhere so single-mindedly to their topics, through academic training, that they are made (unjustly) to seem myopic. There are often significantly few citations of recent comprehensive work, published or unpublished, on the localities concerned (few these are noted), although this situation is improving. Hence, in sum, the topic is developed, but the locality is illuminated only incidentally and narrowly. These criticisms apply with greater force to many articles in the otherwise excellent *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, which is a trend-setter for county learned bodies in that it deals extensively with late modern history, as of course does this *Review*. To that extent, both are spared the worst excesses of antiquarianism.

- 7 Samuel's volume is evidently the first in a series, and is to that extent even more important; its somewhat uncritical exploration of the hydra-headed manifestations of Heritage is a service nevertheless, and perhaps these sections could not have been written without passionate enthusiasm.
- 8 For parts of an earlier discussion, see R. Samuel, 'Local history and oral history', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 1, Spring 1976, p. 195 and 95.; and for an interesting outline of History Workshop discussions of local and people's history in the nineteen-seventies, Mike Savage, 'The rise of the Labour Party in local perspective', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, Vol. 10, No.1, Summer 1990, esp: pp. 8-10. *History Workshop* seems to have lost interest in local history by 1981.
- 9 Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry; Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London, 1987); Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country* (London, 1987).
- 10 Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, pp. 337-77.
- 11 *Theatres of Memory*, p. 260 and *passim*. It is true to say that Samuel is relatively unconcerned with museums as centres of local scholarship, and he is most interested in those museums which re-enact experiences.
- 12 The *MRHR* runs sections on museums and art galleries as regular features, and is, of course concerned with such institutions as aids to research.
- 13 Department of Education and Science, *History in the National Curriculum (England); Key Stages 2, 3, and 4* (H.M.S.O., 1991), pp. 31, 50, 52.
- 14 There are extensive writings on 'community', but the most adroit and accessible summary of the main arguments affecting local historians is to be found in Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies: an introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London, 1971). Since that time, geographers (rather than sociologists) have added to the subject by close examinations of political organisation and the significance of 'place'; see, for example, J.A. Agnew, *Place and Politics* (Boston, 1987). Both geographers and sociologists have since explored the idea of 'locality'; cf., for example, the comments of Ward, Duncan, Savage, Massie, Cooke, Cox, Mair and others in the *Journal Antipode* over the last fifteen years.
- Our point here, of course, is that neither 'community' nor 'place' should be used loosely. Community is used nowadays to describe almost any settlement, district or neighbourhood which is thought to have some kind of common interest – as in 'community school'.
- 15 *MRHR*, Vol. 7, 1993, which is devoted to the symposium on Ancoats; the contribution by Cooter and Pickstone is the only one which refers explicitly to the idea of community. There were probably several 'communities' in Ancoats.
- 16 The present writer must be one of the small band of elderly readers who has taken part in such an institution (1935-9); they were rowdy and great fun.
- 17 Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (Hassocks, Sussex, 1980); but see the critical comments by John Walton, *Lancashire; A Social History* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 132-3, 248-9, 263-4.
- 18 See Terry Wyke (compiler), *A Checklist of Theses on the History of Lancashire* (Manchester Polytechnic); Unity R.E. Lawler, *North-West Theses and Dissertations, 1950-1978* (Centre for N. W. Regional Studies, Univ. of Lancaster, Occasional Paper No. 8, 1981); W.R. Clark, L. C. Kirtley, M. E. McClintock (compilers), *North-West Theses and Dissertations* (Centre for N. W. Regional Studies, Resource Paper, 1988).

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