DISTRESS in the CITY

Racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education

Linden West

‘Linden West’s important book argues that “democratic education” – “informal and lifewide” – offers a unique antidote to the present toxicity of the rise of racism and fundamentalism, asking what the conditions are that allow humans to flourish. This case study, informed by a depth of historical knowledge, weaves personal experience with a wide range of stories of others to create a multi-layered portrait of Stoke-on-Trent, “the most working-class city in England” and a site of growing turmoil. Written in an engaging style, this is at once a scholarly and immensely engaging work, leading the reader to a place of imagining new possibilities, based on civic renewal – a glimmer of hope in hard times.’

Molly Andrews, Professor of Political Psychology,
University of East London

‘What a terrific book! In this timely and urgently needed work, Linden West draws on his rich experience working with narrative to explore how people learn ideologies of representative democracy and white supremacy and the ways in which these interrupt the possibility of loving relationships. Both deeply personal and replete with implications for fostering human communication, this is a must-read for anyone alarmed at the spread of totalitarianism, the extension of racism and the loss of democracy.’

Stephen Brookfield, John Ireland Endowed Chair,
University of St Thomas

Distress in the City

For the health and well-being of all the citizens of the city

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Linden West

Foreword by John Field

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Contents

List of figures

Foreword

Linden West's ambition is to tackle huge questions. How can we make a thriving democratic society, at a time of pervasive cynicism about politicians and withdrawal from the political process? Can we agree on shared norms and values when beliefs in national identity and religious faith are being mobilised as sources of violence, hatred and division? In a world of uncertainty and the rapid erosion of established forms of social support, how do we develop the resilience and confidence in the future that are needed to thrive?

Faced with such monumental challenges, it is all too easy to quail, or simply turn to something more manageable. West's strategy is to start with the local and the familiar, with the community in which he grew up and to which he returned for his research. He begins with autobiography, telling the story of his shock when a neo-Nazi party entered the council in his home town – a town whose voters had for many years supported the Labour Party, and whose trade union and cooperative movement had helped give birth to the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). How, he wants to know, did it come to this? And what is to be done about it?

This portrait is a sadly familiar one across much of Europe. Towns and cities that owe their origins and their shared identities to industrialisation and trade are now struggling to find new sources of wealth and pride; typically, their populations are ageing, mental health problems abound, and the established institutions of civic associational life are in decline. The young and well educated leave, as West did, to go to university and enter professional occupations elsewhere. Unlike most upwardly mobile men and women of his generation, though, West's concern is with those who stayed behind and those who have come since he left.

As we see in his title, West borrows a term that was common during the 1930s, describing this as a city in distress in varying but related senses: the city has been distressed (or disturbed) by forces largely outside its inhabitants' control, its citizens have few rational reasons for optimism about the future, many individuals experience mental distress. These are the far-from-hidden injuries of class, set against a wider culture that appears to find it natural to deride and stigmatise the most marginalised and vulnerable of its citizens. This is the context in which fundamentalisms – national, ethnic and religious – can take hold, as an assertion of pride and community that is rooted in hostility to a more or less explicitly identified other. He

explores these processes through auto/biographical research, interviewing over 50 citizens who include academics, politicians, members of faith communities, supporters of the British National Party, and community activists. Biographical research is not particularly unusual or new, but West brings a distinctive approach that is informed by his experience as a psychotherapist who is sensitive to the emotional and the unspoken, and is as interested in people's feelings and dreams as in the more prosaic and conventional data of lived experience.

The result is an extraordinary study of people's lives and emotions, hopes and fears, in one of our great, historic cities. It takes the reader behind the surface performances and the easy judgements, showing for example that a decent community activist judges her BNP councillor on the basis of personal knowledge and track record in office, as well as in contrast to the previous (Labour, long-standing) councillor. He engages with people of Asian origin who worry about youngsters who are struggling with their identity, are routinely challenged by a climate of aggressive racism, and who may seek recognition in fundamentalist circles. Political activists speak of their sense of loss as the labour movement changed and hollowed out: 'I daren't tell you what I think of the present situation,' says one former councillor and union activist.

For West, none of this is natural or desirable. He quotes John Dewey on the importance of engaging with those who are unlike us as a way of understanding and coming to terms with ourselves, as an essential precondition of what he calls democratic subjectivity. He is adamant that education, and adult education in particular, can provide a space where active citizens can develop the capabilities of engaging with and thriving in a diverse and changing social world. This involves West revising his earlier views, citing a 1972 paper whose modish dismissal of Tawney and the WEA tradition of liberal adult education he no longer shares. He is optimistic – surely rightly – about the mobilising potential of new social media; and while he is hopeful about the potential of universities to support new types of inclusive adult learning, he is realistic enough to recognise that vice-chancellors' minds are currently focused elsewhere.

West diagnoses ills; he also offers, if not a cure, at least some ways in which our communities can come to care for themselves rather better than they do at present. He links ideas about recognition, derived from Nancy Frazer and Axel Honneth, to his belief in transformative learning. His interest is in creating democratic ways of living in a diverse urban socio-scape. His final chapter is titled 'Beyond the fragments', evoking the book of that title by three feminists reflecting on the political lessons of the new

social movements of the 1970s. The first challenge of his vision is to find ways of sustaining spaces for learning over time, something that is likely to be difficult given the often ephemeral nature and dispersed organisational forms of most new social movements. The second challenge is to find ways of opening up new dialogical learning spaces in ways that are inclusive and engage the stigmatised and marginalised, something that the new social movements have largely failed to do.

After reading *Distress in the City*, no one can be in any doubt as to the scale and seriousness of the crises facing both individuals and communities. If learning offers a way out, it has to take a position that respects different individuals and repairs the damage that our communities have suffered. We need to adopt attractive and compelling answers to these challenges, and West's book is precisely one of the resources of hope that we need to pack in our rucksacks.

John Field, Professor Emeritus of Lifelong Learning,
University of Stirling

About the author

Linden West is Faculty Director of the PhD programme in Education at Canterbury Christ Church University, and is a registered psychoanalytic psychotherapist. He has an international reputation as an educator and researcher in education, formal and informal, life-wide and lifelong, using auto/biographical and narrative research methods and interdisciplinary psychosocial perspectives. His work encompasses studies of non-traditional adult learners in universities, professionals working in demanding social locations, guidance counsellors using narrative methods, and young families in programmes such as Sure Start.

Professor West's books include *Beyond Fragments: Adults, motivation and higher education – a biographical analysis*; *Doctors on the Edge: Healing and learning in the inner city*, and *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research* (with Barbara Merrill). He also co-edited *Psychoanalysis and Education: Minding the gap* with Alan Bainbridge and *Constructing Narratives of Continuity and Change: A transdisciplinary approach to researching lives* with Hazel Reid.

Introduction

Every new day seems to bring troubling news about the so-called 'Islamic State'; of young people from the United Kingdom, France and other countries being seduced by the idea of jihad; and there is barbarism on the streets of Paris and in the Yemen, Nigeria, Tunisia and the Middle and Far East. Interventions by the West often appear to make the situation worse rather than better, while the West itself is perplexed by these and related issues. There is not only concern about the radicalization of some young Muslims but of the desirability of multiculturalism itself compared with assimilating minority populations into 'mainstream' values more fully. There is increased racism and Islamophobia which can fuel such sentiments. How to begin to think about these issues can seem daunting and deeply contentious. In this context, some already question the West's dominant neoliberal individualistic ideology. Archbishop Justin Welby, Primate of the Anglican Church, and Pope Francis have called for a new, inclusive politics of citizenship and a renewed focus on the common good. Welby has particularly challenged the neglect of some 'post-industrial' cities of the north and midlands of England that once provided the material wealth from which society as a whole benefitted. He has warned of the danger such neglect brings in the form of increased racism and antagonism between different ethnic groups and religions. Such a view is that of a respectable Anglican cleric rather than what might be perceived as the usual suspects of the political left.

This is a book about one distressed post-industrial city, and the people who live there. It draws on the varied stories they tell. The city is taken as a particular location that is nonetheless emblematic of many communities in many places that are struggling in a discontented world in which racism and fundamentalism have found stronger purchase. The city is taken as representative of the wider problems – including Islamism – in Europe and beyond. I suggest that analytical links should be made between mental health, the problems of economic decline, democratic deficit and education on the one hand, and the rise of racism, Islamophobia and fundamentalism on the other. I see racism as a loose assemblage of ideas about the threatening other and fundamentalism as a more developed ideology used to justify why the other is corrupt and should be expunged.

At the core of the book is a series of in-depth narratives with different people living in this city, in the English Midlands of the United

Kingdom – narratives that are both historic and contemporary, of particular and general relevance. They are stories of people living at specific moments of history, in a particular place; stories of lost continuities and communities shaken by the profound economic, political and social changes of the 1980s and earlier. The general relevance of the stories lies in the way that they illuminate how racism and Islamophobia take hold, and how Islamic fundamentalism can seize young people's imaginations. Other themes pervade the book: democracy in crisis, increasing inequality and what critical theorists would call 'disrespect' in everyday life. Here, intuitive notions of justice and fair play for people in Muslim or white working-class communities get violated, whether in the mass media or on the street. Mental distress seems to increase in conditions of disrespect and associated hopelessness. But it is also important to remember that within the city, and of ubiquitous relevance, lie many resources of hope in forms of civic education, past and present. There is a project called *Lidice Shall Live*, an inspiring tale of ordinary working-class people's reaction to what Nazi fundamentalists, in retaliation against the assassination of the Reich Protector of Bohemia, Reinhard Heydrich, did in the Czech town of Lidice in 1942. The project is also a story of what is being done today to remember Lidice and what it represents and how schools and communities can learn from it. Educational programmes involving schools and the wider community of parents and grandparents learning together about local history have been developed. Regrettably, such work tends to be the exception rather than the norm.

The book also suggests that racism and fundamentalism represent processes that are deeply anti-educational, while what I call a democratic education relies on an openness to others, to difference and to engaging with diversity in the symbolic world. If it is essential to understand how and why racism and fundamentalism thrive, we also must think about what constitutes profounder forms of education and why these too are often the exception rather than the norm. There are many stories in the book that illuminate the challenge of democratic education, of the hope and recognition it needs to thrive and of struggles to build less dystopian, fairer and more inclusive communities. If the book derives its analysis and insights from a particular city, its message of the struggle between hope and hopelessness, education and fundamentalism, speaks generally to the peoples of other marginalized communities in Europe and the wider world.

The book can be read in conjunction with a number of other studies on inequality in recent years. It shares many concerns with *The Spirit Level*, by health epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, and of health geographer Danny Dorling, although a different methodology is used. In the

main such authors use statistically-based analysis to interrogate the effects of inequality on health and well-being and the correlation between certain social toxicities, mental health and wider economic and political policy. While they convincingly demonstrate statistical correlations between disease and what we might call the neoliberal experiment, this book illuminates mental distress and hopelessness in specific lives and particular places and their potentially toxic consequences.

The book also chronicles experiences as the fabric of democratic life has weakened, and relatedly, of the loss of older working-class self-help traditions. By democratic life, I am not thinking so much of parliaments or the formalities of representative democracy – although these have atrophied in disturbing ways – but rather of spaces in civil society where individuals might flourish together and 'learn' in active, fraternal association to dialogue and engage across difference. In such terms the book defines education as far more than schooling. It encompasses informal learning across lives and experiences in intimate relationships, families, and within many groups and communities. In its empirical and normative aspirations, the book specifically focuses on the past, present and possible futures of popular education (broadly defined) in nurturing more or less confident forms of democratic association and greater social equality, dialogue and understanding across differences. It engages with the crucial question of how resources of democratic hope can be generated in multicultural societies. Such processes are never complete but are part of a long, difficult revolution of educational and democratic experiment.

There are particular theoretical friends, as I term them, whose ideas have helped shape the book: John Dewey, the educationalist, Donald Winnicott, the psychoanalyst, and Axel Honneth, the critical theorist, as well as feminist writers who focus on the nature of the good, open and empathic group. Dewey especially taught about our need to engage with the other precisely because of the limitations, despite our best efforts, of what we can ever know. The other, in short, has an actual importance for the quality of our own psychological and symbolic life; diversity matters in the groups of which we are a part, whether scientific or community-based, not least for the quality of our thinking and actions, for the cultivation of what we can call democratic subjectivity – or the cosmopolitan psyche – as a prerequisite for human well-being. For good reasons, from the 1960s onwards, the focus has been on the politics of identity and difference, as marginalized peoples sought to define themselves and their histories in new, more sympathetic, even liberating ways. We might now need a new politics and education grounded in our shared humanity, in what we have in

common as well as how we differ – a politics and education focused on how we can live together in more creative and life-enhancing ways.

If the book is an outcome of engaging with many people's stories, it is also shaped by my own in a process termed auto/biography. It is the product of many years of diverse experience as a political activist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist, adult educator, historian, father, husband, mental health patient, university teacher and researcher working in marginalized communities. I was born at a particular moment of history, at the end of the Second World War, to working-class parents in a certain city: a time when social-democratic values were relatively strong, if accompanied by deeply gendered and racist assumptions. The political economy and culture immediately following the Second World War world embodied the idea of collective progress. They were a product of a violent struggle against fascism, in addition to the recognition of shared human frailty finding expression in the welfare state. This social settlement lasted until the late 1970s and during that time, in relatively affluent Western countries, many believed that the state and the collective were essential to well-being. They thought that healthcare, or education, as well as aspects of economic life, were best organized collectively, rather than relying on markets or individuals alone. Education of a challenging but popular kind – workers' education, forged in an alliance between progressive elements in universities and working-class organizations – mattered in this discourse. It provided a basis for new forms of understanding, challenging bigotry and cultivating the commons, for questioning historical truths like the inevitability of large-scale inequality.

The book is no nostalgic yearning for a lost idyll, however, although past struggles can teach us about new ways of cultivating experiments in democratic education. Clearly that older world has gone, and the institutions that sustained generations of working-class people – trade unions, cooperative societies, churches and other self-help agencies – have weakened. Instead the book is an attempt to think anew by engaging with disturbing and distressed aspects of the contemporary world, grounded in in-depth narrative enquiry. I enter some hearts of darkness while chronicling resources of hope.

My own struggle to understand the dynamics of hope and hopelessness is a product of many relationships and of diverse experience: of twenty years in analytic therapy and of loving yet challenging conversations with people, alive and dead. Thanks especially to Helen West, Wilma Fraser, Laura Formenti, Alan Bainbridge, Agnieszka Bron, Peter Alheit, Pierre Dominicé, Barbara Merrill, Adrienne Chan, John Field, Marianne Horsdal, Hazel Reid, Celia Hunt, Cheryl Hunt, Nod Miller, Michel Alhadeff,

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Linden West
Canterbury, August 2015

Chapter 1

Problems defined: The personal as political, and the political as personal

Introduction

In 2009 I was preparing my inaugural professorial lecture – new professors in British universities, and elsewhere, do this as part of a celebration of the conferment of the title 'professor' – when I heard news that particular working-class districts of the city where I was born and raised had elected representatives of the British National Party (BNP) to the City Council. The city, Stoke-on-Trent, in the English Midlands, has suffered a declining economy and high levels of unemployment for more than three decades, as well as a long period of dysfunctional politics (Latham, 2011). Three of the BNP councillors were elected to represent the estate I came from. This was a profound shock, personally and intellectually: racism was claiming space in a 'post-industrial' city once home to a relatively strong working-class social-democratic and educational tradition. It had been my home.

The shock evoked much introspection about past, present and possible futures for the city of my birth. It included revisiting my earlier historical research into workers' education in Stoke and more widely (West, 1972). Here I was, in 2009, in the place where I grew up, struggling to understand racism and Islamophobia, alongside small pockets – small, I stress, given the virulence of Islamophobia – of Islamic fundamentalism. I began to revisit the historical contribution of workers' education in the light of what seemed a disturbing present, and also because of what had been described as 'paradigm-shifting historical research' (Holford, 2013). Jonathan Rose's (2010) *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* was a revelation – it had been first published in 2002 but I came across it later. Rose was rescuing forms of workers' education and the autodidactic tradition of industrial working-class communities from the enormous condescension of a 1960s generation of mainly Marxist historians. They had concluded that workers' education, of the kind developed in Stoke, in alliance with 'progressive' elements in universities, provided an effective

antidote to any working-class radicalism and the wider democratization of the social and economic order. A potential source of fundamental challenge to that order was channelled into the quieter waters of university studies and a kind of national, reformist consensus. Rose, as I will illustrate, drew on varied life writing and personal testimony to illuminate, painstakingly, how and why this was a misreading. And how workers' education provided the means for many to challenge bigotry and discover a more radical, cosmopolitan spirit. Then as I was reading Rose's book in 2010, news came of a mosque being pipe-bombed and some violent demonstrations in parts of Stoke. At roughly the same time, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and other Conservative European leaders, pronounced that multiculturalism was dead: Muslim communities and others had to accept full assimilation into the mores of host cultures (Auestad, 2014). The idea of learning from each other, in mutual respect, and of negotiating new forms of co-existence seemed consigned to history. It thus became essential to seek to connect disparate strands together, historic and contemporary, economic and social, the personal and political, education, past and present, in order to understand how to build a more genuinely multicultural and democratic society and what gets in its way.

History, including personal history, and a toxic political present, merged in these moments. Such historical interrogation was taking place in the context of a much diminished welfare state and the decline of working-class self-help traditions. Or to put it slightly differently, the loss of space in which personal problems of ill health, including mental distress – which is an important sub-theme of the book – as well as unemployment, hopelessness and disillusion could be translated into a language of public deliberation and collective hope. Hope generated through interventions by the state, local and national, and the development of public services, as well as support for potentially myriad initiatives to regenerate communities economically and culturally via adult education. Space, in other words, where public solutions might be sought, negotiated and to an extent achieved. The problems of the present encompassed a rising tide of racism, and what seemed to be a collapse of hope, alongside growing mental distress, among many living in particular communities. How had this come to be? And what might be done about it, were obvious questions, as was the issue of how democracy itself – as a lived experience of equal, deliberative relationships, across difference, in diverse public spaces – might be renewed.

Other influences came into play as the book evolved. I had been engaged in debate with colleagues in North America and Europe about the nature and meaning of what has been called transformative learning

(TL) (West, 2014). I was wondering, with others, how notions of TL might apply to the complex circumstances of particular non-traditional learners in universities across Europe, and how they, or at least some, come to prosper and imagine new possibilities, despite the odds stacked against them (West, *et al.*, 2013; Finnegan *et al.*, 2014). I was concerned that TL was often perceived in overly individualistic and cognitive terms; in the context of the European research, derived from many and varied narratives, it became essential to connect cognitive processes with emotions, the individual with the group. Drawing on critical theory and psychoanalysis, I began to build more of an interdisciplinary, psychosocial understanding of profounder forms of learning, based on the concept of recognition and the work of the critical theorist Axel Honneth (2007; 2009). Honneth was engaged in what he termed a normative search for the emotional, intersubjective, symbolic and material prerequisites for human flourishing, as well as with questioning how the present neoliberal order, or dystopia, as he perceived it, came to be regarded as natural and without a convincing alternative.

Honneth developed the idea that experiences of self-recognition were central in human flourishing by which people find the means, collectively and individually, to question and challenge the taken for granted, and remain open to learning from others and otherness. He also explored what he termed the dynamics of disrespect. This was no abstract philosophical positioning by social actors but was rather rooted in everyday experience of intuitive notions of justice being violated. Being perpetually told, as an Asian taxi driver, for instance, to 'fuck off home', or that you and yours are scroungers and undeserving: these and other moments of disrespect might provide some of the fuel for mental suffering as well as various social pathologies. So too could feeling ignored, even abandoned, by the state and its agencies as projects come and go and everything seems short-term. Or people are ridiculed by elites as 'chavs', or 'plebs' and 'beyond the pale'. Might such psychosocial dynamics, in places like Stoke, constitute the core problem? I wanted to illuminate, culturally and psychologically, how racism and xenophobia find purchase in individual lives and across communities. I wanted to engage with those who might be experiencing such processes and to chronicle their stories as a basis for serious thinking. I wanted to think how democratic life and more collective forms of action might be reinvigorated. Could a more developed theory of recognition and disrespect, grounded in my work as an educator, historian and narrative researcher as well as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, assist in such a mammoth and important undertaking? These issues, and a normative quest for a better

society, constitute the human, intellectual and interdisciplinary heart of the book.

In the meantime, anxiety grows about the health of democracy across the Western world as well as about the prospects of building multicultural democracies (Alperovitz, 2004; Biesta, 2011; Auestad, 2014). Anxiety too surrounds the role of education in cultivating democratic sensibilities across cultural and ethnic difference. The idea of democratic sensibilities is about much more than learning particular skill sets or competences for the labour market, although these are not to be dismissed, or being taught about constitutions and the importance of voting and learning about 'British values'. Rather, it has to do with cultivating qualities of space that might nurture people's capacities, in multicultural communities, to remain open to difference. The study uses the lens of auto/biographical narrative enquiry to shed light on what happens, in lived experience, when such space is neglected or marginal in conditions of economic, social, political and mental distress. This is all at a moment when the state is in retreat under the pressure of 'austerity' and the influence of corporate elites (Friedman, 2013), and in a context of growing inequalities as well as a wider crisis of mental health (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Layard and Clark, 2014).

My basic argument is two-fold: first, that the potent mix of neoliberal ideology, including the stigmatization of specific communities and the hollowing out of representative democracy, in particular spaces, affects sociocultural, psychological and political health at one and the same time. Second, that human flourishing requires sufficient experience of recognition: of love and experiences of self-affirmation, at a number of levels. We need to feel loved, at the interpersonal and intimate level, but also recognized in groups and wider societies, which brings the sociopolitical into the equation. When we feel sufficiently recognized, we can better recognize others, and from this stronger social solidarities can flow. The personal is political and the political deeply personal in such terms.

To explore these dynamics of recognition or disrespect, I engaged with various people in a post-industrial city, with some who live and work on predominantly white social-housing estates and with some in Muslim communities. They may be unemployed, or activists, on benefits or suffering mentally. Some are professionals, politicians and ministers of religion. The descriptor 'auto/biographical', with the slash, acknowledges the presence of the researcher or biographer in chronicling and telling stories of others' lives, of how the biographer draws on others' lives to make sense of his or her own life and vice versa. Rather than ignoring or airbrushing out this self/other dynamic, I want to make it explicit – for example, when engaging

with mental health problems or the roots of fundamentalism. There is, of course, a risk here: of projecting on to the other what properly belongs to ourselves or vice versa. This is a perpetual problem in research, and in psychoanalysis for that matter. However, particular qualities of research space were created wherein my collaborators and I could think about such matters together, building an auto/biographical sensibility. The book is structured to reflect these dynamics.

The structure of the book

In the next chapter I present some reflections on education, in its broadest sense, and the problems of both democracy and the toxicity called fundamentalism. I then move imaginatively into a distressed, post-industrial city called Stoke. It has been described as the most working-class city in England (Jayne, 2004; Burnett, 2011). Historically, it was a place of pottery manufacture – employing, at one time, over 100,000 people – mining extraction and iron and steel production. It may also be a place that needs to reconcile itself with its past before any renewal can happen (Rice, 2010), a city where, in the nineteenth century, 70 per cent of global ceramic exports were manufactured, where mining and steel production thrived (Burnett, 2011), and where, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a vibrant, if contentious, workers' educational movement was forged and political activism stimulated. It is now a place where once busy factories lie derelict, where once vibrant centres of manufacture are gone and where mental and political distress can seem pervasive.

In chapter 3, I therefore present more fully the 'lost city' of Stoke-on-Trent, a phrase coined by historical geographer Mathew Rice (2010) as a kind of lament. Rice has written that in a post-industrial landscape, 'maybe Stoke-on-Trent, England's twelfth biggest city, is just one industrial city too many'. After all, the city has been seen as 'having the lowest quality of life in England, and is one of the least desirable places to live in Europe. It is a joke … a basket case, a hopeless situation' (2010: 17). Nowadays, on some measures, 20 per cent of the population has limiting long-term illness. Mental illness is rife, and only a small percentage has degrees, in comparison with the country as a whole. Long-term, intergenerational unemployment, poverty, violent crime, and ubiquitous food banks are prominent features of the landscape (Rice, 2010). In addition Stoke has been home to a dysfunctional 'representative democracy' (Latham, 2011).

In chapter 4, I explain the power of auto/biographical narrative enquiry to illuminate difficult, dark human spaces and potential resources of hope that other forms of research may get nowhere near. The study

draws on the stories of very different people to create a portrait of the contemporary city. The 50 plus stories are from 'ordinary' people from different ethnic groups – including the white working-class and South Asian communities – and politicians, ministers of religion, various community leaders and activists and professionals. There are stories from academics, too, from different disciplines. The methodology is distinct and has been developed over many years. My emphasis is on building trust in collaborative forms of longitudinal enquiry and being attentive to how researchers shape responses auto/biographically, to enable richer storytelling and reflexivity to develop. The approach involves working in a clinical style that is sensitive to emotional, unconscious and power dynamics and committed to involving subjects in analysing their narratives (West, 1996; 2001; Merrill and West, 2009). Moreover, the research can sometimes represent a form of democratic relationship in its own right: a space in which people feel listened to respectfully, and where lives can be engaged with reflexively, as resources of hope.

In chapter 5 I illuminate one predominantly white working-class estate. In such locations in Stoke there is a pattern of narratives of lost worlds and feelings of abandonment and disrespect by authority. In contrast stories are told of the BNP listening to local people and offering forceful as well as sensitive representation for ordinary people, of the kind that other parties failed to provide. There is evidence, too, of reaction against the widespread stigmatization of working-class lifestyles, expressed discursively through the derision, labelling and pathologizing of white working-class neighbourhoods. Moreover, the removal of powers from local government risks reducing local opportunity structures for civic action – and by implication, for 'civic learning' in public space. Here are stories of local government in Stoke being ineffective and in perpetual crisis, and of the abandonment by national government of attempts at regeneration – most poignantly of the 'Pathfinder' housing regeneration project, aborted halfway through. The physical scars of failed regeneration blot the townscape and the psychological scars of disrespect damage the human ecology.

In chapter 6, we enter a space of disrespect and of political education for the jihad among small groups of young men in Stoke. I chronicle aspects of the story of one young man, Raafe (not his real name), and his journey into Islamic fundamentalism. I compare xenophobia and racism with extreme Islamism. Materially, in marginalized Muslim communities in Stoke-on-Trent, the absence of occupational structures creates special problems of transition for vulnerable young men. Intergenerational discontinuities have also increased because of language barriers and poor

levels of education among some elders. Furthermore narratives about Bosnia and of 'Christian' neglect of white Muslims, inculcating the idea of Islamophobia as anti-religious rather than simply racist, have provided fertile ground for radicalization among some young Muslims. Seductive stories of humiliation, trauma and the need to fight back, have taken hold.

In chapter 7, *The History Man*, I chronicle historic dimensions of workers' education in Stoke, in the context of the different conditions of the first half of the last century. In doing so, we enter my personal history around struggles to negotiate the habitus of a university, as a working-class boy from a working-class city in the late 1960s. This includes mental distress and the difficult experience of a first job in university adult education. History, as I now see it, was written to be fashionable and designed to please key people – like my boss at the time, although I was barely conscious of it then. I wrote an article in 1972 disparaging earlier forms of workers' education. This was the fashion, especially among some Marxist historians, who thought, as noted, that particular forms of workers' education – especially the non-politically partisan alliance of workers' organizations with progressive elements in universities – served to de-radicalize working-class people. I revisit this 'experiment in democratic education' and how the autodidacts could learn and think in transformative ways, personally and politically.

Chapter 8 focuses specifically on the stories of two autodidacts. The tradition lingered into the twenty-first century, despite having largely disappeared after the Second World War and in the expansion of mainstream higher education. Mick Williams and Derek Tatton were schooled in the trade union movement and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Mick became a political activist, and was involved in the political turbulence in Stoke from the 1990s onwards. He felt passionately about democracy and what he saw as the control freakery that diminished it. He was a founder member of an organization called Democracy for Stoke (D4S), which fought a long campaign to reinvigorate representative democracy. He lamented the loss of the older experiment in democratic education and raised questions about autocratic and gendered practices among minority communities in the Labour Party. Derek Tatton played a key role in the history of adult education in Stoke as Warden of the Wedgwood Memorial College, the hub of an experiment in democratic education in the city and wider district. The College was recently closed down, as were other buildings that had been central to the history of adult education there. Derek's story evokes the extent of the loss yet also how the spirit of the tutorial class tradition can be renewed, via the Raymond Williams Foundation and the Philosophy in Pubs movement. These autodidacts have much to teach us about the

contemporary state of the city and wider world and how new resources of hope can be created.

In chapter 9 I focus on the idea of 'resources of hope', as cultural theorist and adult educator Raymond Williams framed it. Drawing on Derek Tatton's writing and a series of auto/biographical interviews with him, I examine some of Williams's ideas on the impact of neoliberalism and the deep economic changes that have engulfed cities like Stoke. The chapter illuminates how new processes of informal education are being created in pubs, residential adult education and within the WEA, an organization that has struggled to respond to present times but has sought to renew itself in imaginative ways through health programmes and social activism. Attention is also paid to the role of local universities and their relative neglect of a city like Stoke.

In chapter 10 I chronicle the story of one profound resource of hope under the banner of *Lidice Shall Live*. Reinhard Heydrich, author of *The Final Solution*, was assassinated in Prague on the 27th May 1942. In retaliation the Nazis chose a local mining town, Lidice, razed it to the ground and under the banner of 'Lidice Shall Die', murdered most of its people. In Stoke, a campaign began among the miners in 1942 under the slogan 'Lidice Shall Live', which pledged to rebuild the town and raised the resources to do so. As the 70th anniversary approached, a new campaign was launched to remind the city of the miners' historic role. This is an example of potential civic renewal and of what we can call a vibrant local curriculum, in contrast to the national prescriptions that often dominate English schools. The *Lidice* project connected past and present, children in primary schools with their grandparents, the grand stage of history and the most intimate of local experience. It enabled young children and families to discover pride in their city, and what their grandparents achieved. Two local Stoke people with a passionate interest in art organized the campaign to remember and honour this working-class movement against fascism. In 2012 the small numbers of survivors from Lidice were invited to Stoke and a forgotten history was brought to life. At the heart of the original campaign was a local family doctor named Barnett Stross, himself an immigrant to Stoke whose family had been forced to flee pogroms. He was my mother's doctor.

In the final chapter, *Beyond the Fragments*, I focus on what might constitute possibilities for building a new civics. Drawing on parallels with German history as well as an exhibition at the British Museum called *Living and Dying*, I note how thinking about distress or resilience is often fragmentary: as either a distinct psychological or mental health problem, for example, or related to schooling and character education. These fall

short of the scale of the holistic, psychosocial imagination that is required: people tend to think in fragments because it is hard to imagine and think through more holistic solutions, and there is ideological resistance to doing so in the wider society. To think can be deemed dangerously political. In such reductionism individuals get isolated from the historical and political context of their lives. Psyche is detached from society, and specific cultures and politics are disconnected from economics. In contrast I suggest that such issues are all of a piece, in the interplay of the global and the local, of neoliberalism and specific communities, and of the ideology of individualism and the collective condition of the polis. Education is also separated from democratic health, while important traditions of popular education have been forgotten.

I suggest that education – of an informal, life-wide kind – has an essential role to play in reinvigorating civil society, including its political dimensions. An education of the sort that found vital expression in what were called the tutorial classes and the wider workers' education movement and the lives of particular autodidacts. An education – as in the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign – that finds space in contemporary schools and in the wider community in informal ways such as Philosophy in Pubs and political campaigning using new digital technologies. Here universities could have a larger role to play if they can rediscover their local roots and reinvent themselves as more ecological institutions, concerned with the health, in the broadest terms, of the cities in which they are situated or that lie close by. This depends on more joined-up, interdisciplinary and normative thinking about the basis for human flourishing and the potential role of democratic education in such a challenging project.

Chapter 2

Spaces of discontent; education, democracy and fundamentalism

Introduction: Setting the scene

Problems about the past, present and potential role of education in strengthening democracy should be considered alongside the emergence of fundamentalism. The problems of democracy are well documented: there is abundant evidence of concern in many quarters about the health of representative democracies, including in 'post-industrial' contexts (Biesta, 2011; Alexander, 2014). There are indicators of increased alienation and cynicism among people towards conventional politics, which can be especially strong in marginalized, multicultural communities (Auestad, 2012; 2014; Friedman, 2013). If widespread citizen distrust or disenchantment with formal democratic institutions, local and national, is well chronicled, so too are patterns of minimal engagement in voting, especially in local elections, in the districts where poor people live (Goodwin, 2011).

While the most powerful in society get a great deal of support for their involvement in politics via access to education and in the corporate world, those with least power get little or none (Alexander, 2014). Alongside such trends is a decline in participation in a range of community and voluntary activities, especially in distressed areas struggling with high and persistent intergenerational unemployment, poverty, social fragmentation and an epidemic of mental disease (Li *et al.*, 2003; Latham, 2011; Layard and Clarke, 2014). There is associated anxiety about young people and their seeming lack of interest in and alienation from representative politics (Biesta *et al.*, 2014; Biesta *et al.*, 2009). Some of the concern finds expression under such labels as 'community cohesion', and there is fear that young Muslim people, especially in certain communities, have become alienated. From a different perspective, there can be hostility among the white working class towards immigrants and people not like themselves (Auestad, 2014). The rise of racism and xenophobia and sometimes violent organizations like

the English Defence League is well chronicled (McGhee, 2005; Harris and Young, 2009; Goodwin, 2011; Ford and Goodwin, 2014).

However, the explanations for the distress of democracy and the actual and possible roles of education in response to this vary. This partly depends, as always, on how people define what the problem actually is. From some perspectives political apathy is seen as a consequence of growing social and moral deviancy, of the decline of the family as a socializing and civilizing institution and of the failure of particular cultural groups to sufficiently embrace Western values (Peterson, 2011). Programmes of civic and character education in schools are seen as providing possible solutions in a more fragmented society (Peterson, 2011). The community cohesion narrative tends to focus on an absence of common values and the importance of inculcating 'British values' in schools. For some educators, this means that religious education, for instance, or building a Christian ethos, can help fill a moral vacuum in society (Arthur, 2010). The problem with such discourses is that the remedy is too easily limited to narrow notions of civic education or vague ideas about ethos. Andrew Peterson (2011) notes that civic education programmes easily degenerate into pupils collecting waste paper in schoolyards, as teachers struggle to make meaningful connections to children's lives and backgrounds or, as I observe, fail to find time in the overburdened, centrally prescribed curriculum of English schools.

The wider context of the school as a place with the potential for experiment in democratic relationships is forgotten or marginalized, as discourses of performativity and leadership colonize the space. Better leadership rather than more democracy is the prescription, while ideas of civic instruction tend to be driven by narratives of moral deficit. And teachers themselves can find it difficult to engage with controversial issues in multicultural classrooms (Harber, 2002; Mehmedbegović, 2011). Ralph Leighton (2011) notes that civic education can induce a passive acceptance of a set of givens rather than any more philosophically minded, radical questioning of why things might be as they are, and how life in the school – and more widely – could be different. Talking truth to power seems largely absent in most articulations of 'British values'.

Gert Biesta (2011; 2014) sees the problem of thinking about the education of citizens as stemming from a socialization concept of civic learning, in which learning is the vehicle by which children become part of an existing sociopolitical order. He offers an alternative concept of 'subjectification', which is to do with learning from and in, not about, experience. Here the challenge is to create spaces in which dialogue and respectfulness are encouraged and the right and power to challenge authority

are more evident. The socialization/moral character view of education is about learning about something that is to happen, of preparation for the future, rather than building understanding and action in the present. Learning from – rather than about – experience is a crucial psychoanalytic distinction in thinking about really significant or transformative learning, rather than the 'banking' concept of education in which empty heads should be filled with established wisdom. Biddy Youell (2006) suggests the difference is between amassing lots of information about a subject – in ways that lack any genuine emotional commitment to what is being studied – and learning from experience, where there can be a relatively strong emotional attachment because of the meaningfulness of the experience in the present.

Biesta (2011) talks of the stultified experience of citizenship in many schools and communities, of an absence of space where democracy might be learned and practised. We might broaden this further to encompass the making of democratic subjectivities in intimate as well as public space. Auto/biographical enquiry tends to challenge conventional boundaries between the intimate and the public – between the personal and the political – as educational and subjectification processes are themselves understood in life-wide as well as lifelong ways. This is Anthony Giddens's (1999) territory of the 'democracy of the emotions' – in which citizens experience relationships of respect – and more open forms of dialogue in families, schools and public space, as an alternative to the 'sedimented power of tradition'. There have to be some minimal conditions of trust and reciprocity for this kind of learning to flourish (Giddens, 1999: 61–5). We straddle sometimes overly rigid distinctions between public and private, between inner and outer worlds in cultivating democratic subjectivities, or cosmopolitan psyches, in which – to use the language of psychoanalytic object relations theory – a diversity of internal good objects mirrors the diversity without (Samuels, 1993).

Democracy represents much more than the right to vote, the rule of law or the freedoms of speech and association, important as these are. It represents more than what happens in representative institutions we call parliaments or Congress, although this is part of the concern (Freidman, 2013). The book therefore focuses on what might be needed in and for the perpetual experiment of learning democracy, philosophically rooted in the Republican, as well as the ancient ideal of an active citizenry, which practises and learns communicative competences across difference. Historically, adult education in the UK and elsewhere made a crucial contribution to building a relatively vibrant social and educated democracy, including across difference, which led to the post-Second World War settlement. That settlement, it has been argued, was largely the product of workers' education. Such historical

awareness has been forgotten or ignored in the UK and US, however, as recent studies have shown (Rose, 2010; Brookfield and Holst, 2011). Yet the important contribution of workers' education to the building of British social and political democracy, as well as similar processes in other countries, is becoming more recognized by drawing on the rich life writing of the autodidacts themselves (Rose, 2010). This historical restoration is taking place at a time when notions of adult education for citizenship have weakened and the focus is on narrower, more instrumental labour market ends (Biesta *et al.*, 2014).

I suggest that the health of states and parliaments in multicultural societies depends on the vitality of democratic life in spaces such as adult education, beyond the reach of the market and even, to an extent, the state (Honneth, 2007: 218–9). Indeed, the health and psychological well-being of citizens might rest on the existence of such space, an idea rooted in contemporary psychoanalytic, relational understanding of how selves come to be, and are sustained psychosocially (Frosh, 1991). Selves in such perspectives are deeply contingent, dependent on others for their realization, most famously – and this is also the territory of development psychologists like Trevarthan, (2010) – in the quality of the interaction between primary caregivers and infants and the wider emotional environment in which children are raised. Selves are constructed, in these terms, rather than given, created in the qualities of interaction with significant others and an environment. What is intersubjective becomes intra-subjective: the abused can become the abuser, or the loved, emotionally open child the activist for social justice.

Such selves may be agentic and political in quite a basic sense: the nurturing of children – or adults for that matter – is a political as well as an emotional act. It is about cultivating relationships in which individuals feel legitimate and are able to question the taken-for-granted without experiencing paralysing anxiety. This can be to experience the world as a place for imaginative play, including the playfulness of ideas, or – at the opposite end of a spectrum – to be overly defensive and avoid difficulty because it is too threatening to fragile relationships. Such individuals can don false mantles, needing to please or appease others for fear of displeasure or abandonment. The intimately personal is deeply political and potentially democratic. Axel Honneth points to Freud's anthropological idea of how we are born prematurely in comparison with other mammals and depend absolutely on the other for survival. Yet survival can come at the price of self-annihilation, if the other has constantly to be appeased. Honneth adds the sociocultural into these intersubjective dynamics of self-recognition.

This includes the role of groups in providing self-respect, through feeling accepted and having rights and also responsibilities towards others. Self-esteem is nurtured as individuals feel recognized as making important contributions to a group's well-being, and this in turn enables them to better recognize others (Honneth, 2009). Such processes of self-recognition create the possibility of recognizing different others and provide a basis for stronger social solidarities. The politics of diversity and difference have played a prominent and vitally needed role in cultivating individual and collective respect for marginalized people, but we might now urgently require a new politics of humanity grounded in relationships of recognition.

Some readers might worry about the application of psychoanalysis to education and democratic life, given what can be seen as its theoretical obscurantism and the insusceptibility of many of its core ideas to direct observation. Yet psychoanalytic concepts, alongside auto/biographical narrative enquiry, offer ways of thinking about the neglected world of human semantics as well as subjectivity or selves in the making. They take us into places where meaning is made between people, and potential agency or defensiveness in relationships – whether in families, educational institutions or more widely – are cultivated. Mainstream psychology has tended to neglect the formation of the human subject, and even subjectivity itself, in favour of a more objective search for a syntax or rules of human behaviour, constructed without any convincing reference to actual subjects at all (Bainbridge and West, 2012). Engaging with subjective worlds gives cause for concern but also optimism in the struggle for democratic education and psychological hybridity: change, reparation and new psychological life are almost always possible, even in a history of abuse, if new, 'good enough' and loving relationships are experienced (West, 2009).

However, alongside such optimism is the troubling thought that the public space in which deliberative forms of democratic self-experiment might be experienced, may have diminished with the rise of individualism, a core element of the neoliberal project. David Marquand (2004) suggests that public space has shrunk in the 'revenge of the private'. Public engagement is considered too demanding, best avoided, especially in confusing multicultural contexts, where there is no common agreement over the nature of the problems, let alone shared cultural assumptions. All of which can be accompanied by a neoliberal ideological imperative: that the private self should be omni-competent and omniscient, and in ways that serve to undermine and inhibit the practice of public deliberation and the possibility for democratic learning across civil society. Moreover, in its intellectual roots, the neoliberal project might bring with it anti-democratic and anti-

educational baggage, in that certain kinds of intellectual and aesthetic learning are thought to be the property of elites, while the majority have to be inculcated into a selfish, even narcissistic appetite for consumption, in the best interests of economic vitality and the freedom that material resources can bring (Lefebvre, 2008; Harvey, 2010; Couldry, 2012; Mirowski, 2013).

Introducing fundamentalism

This book is also concerned with the rise of fundamentalism as well as the decline of notions of the public. The word was coined in California and its origins lie in Protestant movements in the nineteenth century (Ruthven, 2007; Flemmen, 2014). These movements consisted of people who wanted to assert the inerrancy of the Bible – the direct creation of the world and humanity *ex nihilo* by God as opposed to Darwinian evolution – and the authenticity of miracles and the Virgin birth. Fundamentalism is a difficult, troubling term, encompassing what can be seen as very different phenomena, and yet, following Wittgenstein, the notion, heuristically, can be helpful in a search for similarities within seemingly disparate phenomena. Of course not every person we might term a fundamentalist reaches for a Kalashnikov or pipe bomb. However, broadly speaking, fundamentalism can be thought of as a defensive retreat from engagement with others and otherness, rooted, perhaps, in feelings of disrespect and marginalization. It also works at the level of discourse or metanarrative, in which the other is to blame or no alternative is available, as in the kind of market fundamentalism that pervades the contemporary world. In the case of racism and Islamism people may turn to those who think like themselves and hostility may develop towards the different other or ideas and experience that might challenge their view of the world.

Xenophobia can thus be defined as a negative attitude towards strangers or the unknown that gets embedded in a diffuse and often disorganized network of ideas. Islamism shares some aspects of this, yet goes further – as does some right-wing racist ideology. Islamism refers to a set of political ideas based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam (Varvin, 2012): the other is the problem that needs to be cleansed. Fundamentalism in Islam represents a more ideologically developed positioning than racism and xenophobia, combined with hostile attitudes to the stranger and a fear of pollution and loss of purity. All may draw energy from the psychosocial territory of defensiveness and fear of the unknown, or what can seem new and threatening. This is rooted in feelings of vulnerability or inferiority, and might, at an extreme, represent a reaction to the terror of appearing

vulnerable – in extreme fascistic organizations, for example – and horror at seeming feminine and unmanly (Flemmen, 2014).

Thus from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, critical theory and the work of John Dewey among others, the dynamics of fundamentalism could encompass processes that we can recognize at times in ourselves. Times when conditions of stress and uncertainty seem overwhelming, when we feel out of our depth and can't cope, and may grab at facts or certainties to help manage bewilderment. There are echoes of Theodor Adorno's 'authoritarian personality' (1950). Adorno and colleagues drew on psychoanalytic theory, including the role of an overdeveloped superego and a relatively weak ego struggling against strong id impulses, to explain how authoritarian personalities are created (*ibid.*). The intrapsychic conflict associated with these dynamics may evoke deep-seated insecurity, as the superego tends to drive the person to accept externally imposed norms. The outer world then gets divided into inferior others via processes of splitting and projection, while power and toughness become attractive as a way of shielding one's vulnerabilities. Alfred Adler (1927) went further, suggesting that particular personality types were neurotically driven to have power over others as a sort of aggressive compensation for feelings of inferiority and insignificance. There are obvious criticisms of such approaches, not least the idea that tendencies like these only exist on the right of the political spectrum (Kreml, 1977). Perhaps traits such as dogmatism, rigidity and a need for order and power, underpin a much wider psycho-political spectrum. And the need for external sources of absolute authority or truths, or for discourses of complete certainty – for texts that reveal the truth and nothing but the truth – is a widespread human phenomenon. So too is the tendency to project on to others what we most fear and dislike in ourselves.

We might also factor 'market fundamentalism' into our analysis, with its dogmatism, its tendency towards absolute truths and the disparagement of the poor as deviant and wholly responsible for their own condition. According to academic and psychoanalyst Paul Verhaeghe (2014), in this form of thinking anyone who fails to succeed must have something wrong with them. The pressure to achieve and be happy results in a warped view of the self, disorientation and despair. People are lonelier than ever before, he argues. Today's pay-for-performance mentality is turning institutions such as schools, universities and hospitals into businesses – even individuals are being made to think of themselves as one-person enterprises. Love may be increasingly hard to find in ubiquitously marketized relationships, and we can struggle to lead meaningful lives. Verhaeghe's main concern is how social change has led to what he calls a psychic crisis and altered the way we think

about ourselves. He has investigated the effects of 30 years of neoliberal fundamentalism involving free-market forces and privatization, and the relationship between our engineered society and individual identity. He finds out that who we are is, as always, determined by the context in which we live. From his clinical experience as a psychoanalyst Verhaeghe suggests the profound impact that social change may be having on mental health, including the nature of the disorders from which we suffer such as excessive narcissism. Here 'dependence is spineless' and we must make our mark, stand up for ourselves and do our own thing (2014: 13). Such individualism and the disintegration of collective notions of well-being in older working-class communities may bring a terrible price in suffering and distress. So too does the tendency to blame the poor for their condition and the negative stereotyping of whole communities and those who appear to fail.

A basic auto/biographical contention of this book is that we are all prone, at times, to fundamentalist responses, including in educational settings. In the history of workers' education and the autodidactic tradition, for instance, there could be expressions of dogmatism, which frustrated the difficult business of learning democracy and psychological hybridity. A leftist fundamentalist of, say, a rigid Communist Party kind would quote texts with quasi-religious fervor, as if they embodied the total truth. Thinking psychosocially, dogmatism like this can denote the very opposite of certainty – a fragile selfhood desperate for externally derived authority, for order and assurance. Yet adult education once offered resources of hope in creating democratic learning and more cosmopolitan psyches, and could again. Forms of intergenerational learning are possible too, when forgotten collective histories are recovered: of a proud tradition of working-class opposition to fascism and solidarity in the city with oppressed others in faraway lands. The histories of the miners of Stoke and of workers' education are important and can be used in schools as part of a process of connecting the big historical picture of fundamentalist toxicities and the damage they do, as in the Nazi era, with the city today and what grandparents and great-grandparents achieved yesterday. New forms of civic, intergenerational learning link primary-school children in Stoke with the stories of their parents and grandparents, as well as the stories of people from the Czech Republic, including school children and survivors of Nazi atrocities. The *Lidice Shall Live* campaign, as I show, is reborn in a new and profound democratic educational guise.

Chapter 3

Distress in the city: Connecting big and intimate worlds

Introduction: A lost city

I visited Stoke on many occasions in 2009, and subsequently, to do the research. I was preparing my inaugural professorial lecture that year and planned to make links between the research I was completing – in marginalized communities such as Margate on the Isle of Thanet, the extreme south eastern tip of England, as well as in East London – with Stoke and its troubles. My focus had become democracy in crisis, and, additionally, how to create opportunities to reinvigorate experiments in democratic education. I carefully chronicled how new space for learning and practising democracy had been created among young single parents struggling with mental health issues in a creative arts project in East London, and among young parents participating in Sure Start family support programmes (which are similar to programmes like Head Start in the United States or Best Start in Australia).

The Sure Start programmes were designed to provide inter-professional support to certain families with young children. Yet what surprised and intrigued me was their potential to make space for collective deliberation and action in relation to private troubles – difficulties with public services, for instance, or poor mental health and alienation from conventional politics – and to teach those who used them how to talk truth to power. Interestingly, programmes like Sure Start had been highly contentious. Some saw them as disciplining the morally feckless and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own lives and the well-being of their children. I found the projects inspiring, not least in the new forms of collective action (West, 2007; 2009). New educational spaces were created in women's groups, for example, and for advocacy work by the young parents in relation to local authorities.

My feelings about Stoke in 2009 were quite different. I was troubled by the racism and fundamentalism as well as the neglect of the city, and wanted to explore its psychosocial, cultural and political dynamics. In

auto/biographical narrative research in the imaginative spirit of the great American sociologist C. Wright Mills (2000), I thought it essential to connect larger historical or macro forces with the meso or intermediate dimensions of human experience, of what might be happening within institutions and local communities as well as at the intimate, micro level of lives. What, for instance, was the link between growing inequality and well-being? Between what could seem to be the pervasive individualistic mantra of how people should cope on their own with what was happening on the ground? I wanted to illuminate how and why xenophobia flourished and think seriously about antidotes. In 2009 the BNP and racism were on the rise (Burnett, 2011) and a mosque was pipe-bombed. Private security firms were employed to protect other mosques, according to the local Stoke newspaper, *The Sentinel*. Stoke-on-Trent City Council had nine BNP councillors and in 2008 on May 1st that year Labour polled 14,000 votes in 20 seats, and the BNP 8,000 in just ten (Barkham, 2008). In fact, the BNP percentage of the vote overtook Labour (Latham, 2011). All this happened after the period of dysfunctional local politics in which the city was placed in 'special measures', where the national government or its agencies took over the running of the city (Latham, 2011). It seemed that the far right would form the majority on the City Council by 2010, while many local people I talked to spoke of feeling abandoned by conventional politics (Barkham, 2008).

This was my city – a place I still thought of as home – and such developments and distress mattered greatly. The traditional economic base of the city – the mining industry, iron and steel production and by-product factories – had long gone. The pottery industry was much reduced and long-term structural unemployment remained stubbornly high (Burns, 2013; Burnett, 2011), and continues to be so. The financial crisis, post-2008 austerity and cuts in local government funding seemed to add to feelings of hopelessness. I went to housing estates I knew as a child, where half the residents might now be unemployed (Burnett, 2011). I visited Etruria, where, in the eighteenth century, Josiah Wedgwood built his second factory, which he named after the region of Italy whose ancient pottery so inspired him. Wedgwood's house is still there, part of a hotel chain, and there was new development, including the expanding headquarters of the betting giant, Bet365. All of which is located on what was once part of the 1981 National Garden Festival site. Yet dereliction still met the eye at the abandoned railway station, framed by a disused, vandalized factory site.

In the wider city, the Pathfinder regeneration project – a mix of public and private sector housing initiatives – had been aborted midstream by

national government. Whole areas of the city were left in limbo, cleared but never rebuilt. Abandonment seemed an appropriate metaphor as I drove the length of this twelve-mile linear conurbation and observed the disused potbanks and dilapidated buildings of the 'lost city' (Rice, 2010). In the South, the last pit had long since closed and a mining industry once employing 13,000 people, with a proud educational and civic tradition, had disappeared. This was a post-industrial landscape with a personal as well as a political edge.

Historical geographer Matthew Rice has written that 'maybe Stoke-on-Trent', England's twelfth biggest city, 'is just one industrial city too many' (2010: 17). Yet this city had been home to vibrant pottery, mining, and iron and steel industries. Hundreds of thousands of plates, cups and saucers, all packed safely with straw in barrels or wooden baskets, were sent to food markets in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America. In 1925, 100,000 workers were employed in the pottery industry. By 2009 the figure was about 9,000. 'The Potteries', as Rice observed, 'no longer equip the tables of Empire; in fact jobs have been exported instead. Factories in China and India are sending their cheap export ware to the city: Stoke is now the consumer' (*ibid*.: 57). Malaysia and Indonesia became attractive to employers and shareholders as sources of cheap labour and manufacturing was outsourced in the endless search for competitive edge and profit. The Spode factory moved 80 per cent of its production to Indonesia, while Wedgwood turned to Malaysia. Rice notes that wages were never high in Stoke, and cheap labour came to the area from places like Kashmir and the Punjab in Southern Asia in the 1960s. Low wages in Stoke equated to relatively high sources of income for migrant families – and there had been a long history of migration into the city. But when outsourcing gathered pace, many of the people whose grandparents had earlier migrated were left in a jobless limbo. Having a job matters for cultural as well as economic reasons, particularly for young Asian men: to be the head of the family and support its members is a strong cultural as well as economic imperative.

Big and intimate pictures

In 2009 my wife and I heard that the Spode Factory, where fine china had been manufactured since the eighteenth century, had closed down. We visited the abandoned site in the centre of Stoke town, peering through the windows of what was once the paint shop. Paint brushes were still there in mugs, and half empty cups of tea or coffee lay on benches. Spiders' webs proliferated

as the factory decayed: it seemed now to be manufacturing ghosts. Spode was once part of the Royal Doulton group, where my mother worked as a decorator in the interwar years and for a good while thereafter. She was a painter of fine china and this was a habitus she would have known. The scene evoked memories of a world in which I grew up: of full employment and of skilled labour, in contrast to low skills and mass production. Stoke town (or Stoke-upon-Trent as it is known to confuse outsiders), one of the six pottery towns that amalgamated into a city just before the First World War, looked down at heel: many shops were boarded up, some relatively recently.

There was evidence of regeneration too: Stoke City, newly promoted to the English Premier Football League, has as its chairman Peter Coates, a local boy made good. He owns Bet365 whose offices now proliferate. Stoke Church had been given a makeover (this is where Josiah Wedgwood is buried) and rebranded as Stoke Minster. The local indoor market was open, although the number of outlets was small and some were frankly tacky. I thought of the amalgamation of the six towns into the city from 1908–10 and how this preoccupied a number of students in the workers' education programmes that began there in 1908. They were deeply involved in the politics of the time, a number of them contesting local elections under the banner of the Independent Labour Party or the Social Democratic Federation (West, 1972).

As I engaged with the city afresh, resources of hope seemed sparse. Stoke, many people said, lacked a real centre, a heart, to generate economic recovery and inward business investment. In its core identity it remained a mix of insular small towns: the linear structure of the city, alongside its failed industries, was seen as central to the problem. This became the mantra of the City Council itself, in what it called its *Mandate for Change* (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2013a). The aim was to create a new business and retail hub in Hanley, the largest of the old pottery towns. This was where I spent much of my childhood, visiting the library and a bookshop called Webberleys, still open as an independent trader. I talked to the staff there and they admitted the business was struggling. The old library in which I was an avid reader had long gone. The 'new' library in Hanley was opened in the early 1970s, next to the Potteries Museum with its fine ceramic collection, as evidence of regeneration. Yet a fierce political battle raged around the building of a new civic centre in Hanley and the very idea of one big central business district. Representatives of some of the other towns were angry: the city appeared to be a place of six or more hearts beating disharmoniously.

Health and education: The big picture

The concern I felt in those moments was all-embracing: the economic, the political, the cultural, the educational and, it appeared, the scale of mental illness seemed interconnected. As an analytic psychotherapist and academic, I was aware of the statistical evidence that in the UK mental illness affects one in three families in marginalized communities (Layard and Clark, 2014). 'Mental illness', Layard and Clark write, 'is not only common, but it can be truly disabling through its impact on people's capacity to care for themselves … the World Health Organization measure the scale of illness and allow for its severity, they find that in rich countries mental illness accounts for 40 percent of all illness' (*ibid*.: 5). Mental distress seemed ubiquitously embedded within the new order in Stoke.

A number of statistically based studies have woven a picture of the consequences of economic decline and growing inequality, in declining levels of well-being across populations (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Dorling, 2012; 2013), although some of the conclusions are challenged, not least by free market organizations. Doubt is cast on the relationships in various graphs that suggest correlations between ill health and growing inequality. However, Wilkinson and Pickett insist that they and colleagues have written over 200 papers in peer-reviewed academic journals on testing the relationship in diverse settings between income inequality and health, and find the correlations compelling. Over 50 papers establish statistical links between violence and inequality, as well as between levels of social capital and well-being. 'Academic discussion among those who know the literature in the field is now very largely confined to how the relationships should be interpreted' (2009: 279), rather than any challenge to the basic picture emerging from the studies.

Political geographer Daniel Dorling weaves another dimension into the fabric:

> The scandal of our times is not that inequalities of health are now wider than they were in the 1920s or 1930s; it is that we allowed them to become this wide knowing all we do today … Today the gaps between the expected length of life, according to where you live and your access to wealth, have grown to be the greatest recorded for a century … (2014: 5)

Dorling (2012; 2013) has drilled down to the meso and micro level of cities like Sheffield, in the north of England; to institutions and families at the sharp end of poverty and the withering of the welfare state. His work

encompasses housing and health. He suggests, as do Wilkinson and Pickett, that inequalities of income and wealth reduce everyone's overall level of health and quality of life (Dorling, 2013: 5). Dorling brings together various statistics to suggest that inequality in income correlates with what he terms 'other insults'. The poor, he insists, smoke more and poorer members of ethnic minority groups are easier targets for racists. In the course of his writing Dorling revisited George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier,* to examine potential comparisons and differences between now and then. For him, it is not that inequalities of health are wider than they were in the 1920s or 30s, although the evidence is there: it is that this has been allowed to happen in a society where more is known about their effects. Today everyone lives longer, but the gaps between the life expectancy on the basis of where you live and your access to wealth are the widest they have been for a century. This is a political as much as a health issue, and evokes a cry for new thinking about 'post-industrial' communities.

A local outline

The data on physical and also mental health in Stoke paint a similar portrait, although the latter are fragmented. On various measures, health is better than it was in the 1920s and 30s, and certainly far better than when Karl Marx noted, in *Das Kapital,* the sheer horror of chest diseases, pneumonia, phthisis, bronchitis and asthma among pottery workers (Summerley, 1993). In coal mining, accidents, disabilities and death could result from the dust from coal and rock in the mining process, while the miners' working conditions often led to a progressive degeneration of the eye musculature and gradual blindness. There is no doubt that legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974, with its regulations to control hazardous substances, had a positive effect on the health of the local workforce (Summerley, 1993). Yet despite these changes, illness of mind and body still disproportionately affects the poor in a context of deindustrialization, growing inequality and, arguably, the rise of market fundamentalism.

On certain measures, 20 per cent of Stoke's population has limiting long-term illness. While life expectancy is increasing for both men and women, and death from the main killers of circulatory and respiratory disease and cancer has fallen, it remains below the national average for England by 2.4 years. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in Stoke (2013) indicates that the mortality rate remains significantly higher than that of the rest of England, for men rather than women, and for people aged 35–64. Furthermore, the City Profile (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2014a) states that 'infant mortality rates are rising, teenage pregnancy rates are

high, obesity is rising among children, whilst among adults, physical activity levels remain low, and alcohol related hospital admissions continue to increase.' Such factors inform the Council's policy and development plans: encouraging healthy eating, alcohol treatment and tackling the issue of teenage pregnancy. The evidence for such trends comes from a number of reports (see City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2013d; Network of Public Health Observatories, 2013; Public Health England, 2014). Issues of mental health, educational underachievement and deprivation (not always taken together) are the subject of many other reports and newsletters from various agencies, including the police, the director of Public Health, NHS Stoke-on-Trent, and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent.

The City Council in Stoke-on-Trent drew extensively on the 2011 Census in describing the context and composition of the city:

> Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived cities in England, and is ranked the 16th most deprived local authority (out of 326) in England. There are a number of areas locally that are ranked among the top 5% most deprived in the whole of England. These include areas around the wards of Tunstall, Burslem Central, Moorcroft, Etruria and Hanley (located in the north and west of the city), Abbey Hulton and Townsend, Bentilee and Ubberley (in the east) and Meir North and Meir South (in the south east).
>
> (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2013b)

Moreover, the director of Public Health's annual report, *Healthy Schools, Healthy Futures*, expressed the view that 'the economic downturn and welfare reforms will have an adverse impact on vulnerable groups in the City' (2013c: 5). It referred back to its own analysis of long-term conditions:

> Long-term conditions (LTCs) are found in three out of five people over 60, and account for around 85% of all deaths. Many Stoke-on-Trent residents have more than one LTC and this places a huge burden on families and carers. They also impose a massive impact on the economy, by reducing work opportunities and productivity in the individual and by accounting for around 70% of all healthcare spending.
>
> (*ibid.*)

The figures show that 825 children and young people under the age of 18 provide unpaid care, in a hidden ecology of suffering and support (JSNA, 2013). The number is thought to be a considerable underestimate, however, with 3,000 being the more likely figure. The report from Public Health

England, *Stoke-on-Trent Health Profile* (2014), comments that the overall health of people in Stoke-on-Trent is worse than the English average and that deprivation is higher than average, with about 27.5 per cent (13,000) of children living in poverty. Similarly, according to the *Community Mental Health Profile* (Department of Health, 2013b), Stoke is worse on five of the six indicators than the rest of England, and generally worse than its neighbours in comparable urban areas.

The *Community Mental Health Profile* (Department of Health, 2013b) paints a detailed picture of the state of mental health in the city. In the figures for 2011/12 the percentage of adults (18+) with depression is worse than the national average: 16.13 per cent compared with 11.68 per cent for England as a whole. This is the highest percentage among a group of similar authorities, with the exception of one, Telford and Wrekin (15.66). The profile compares Stoke, neighbouring authorities and the whole country on various indicators. Of 11 indicators for treatment Stoke is worse than England, and has a higher numbers of contacts, use of services etc. The city spends about the same on mental health per head (2011/12), however – £201 in comparison with £183 for England – but has a higher percentage of people using adult and elderly secondary mental health services. The Department of Health's own website provides details on how mental health problems are manifest among a significant proportion of the population: in depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive compulsive disorders. People can experience more than one mental and physical health problem and for many the economic downturn has increased the need for a variety of treatments. Moreover, physical health problems such as obesity or diabetes probably contain strong psychological elements. In fact a major problem with the statistics is that evidence of mental distress gets lost in a mass of figures in which priority is given to physical health.

Education in the city

The figures on education add to the portrait of the city's patterns of underachievement. According to the *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2014b), efforts are being made by educators to meet various targets. GCSE results – the exams normally taken by children at 16 – compare favourably with statistical neighbours, but less favourably with regard to children's performance in English and Maths. Exclusion rates from school because of unacceptable behaviour are higher than national levels, and those of similar communities. In 2011, 77 per cent of 19-year-olds achieved a full Level 2 qualification (like GCSE), against a national figure of 83.8 per cent. Yet as the Assessment notes, 'Stoke-on-Trent still

ranks … towards the bottom of the 152 local authorities in this particular measure' (*ibid.*). Compared with the national figure of 56.7 per cent, only 39.2 per cent of 19-year-olds achieved a Level 3 qualification, which opens the possibility of going to university. Compared with the country as a whole only a small percentage of the population has degrees, while the numbers entering full-time further education in colleges – essentially offering training for local employment – have fallen. In 2008 the participation rate in higher education was 23.6 per cent (Connexions Staffordshire, 2011). The national figure is 43 per cent (DBIS, 2014).

Moreover, the fall in relative participation rates is likely to continue in the wake of rising tuition fees and the abandonment of specific programmes – like Aimhigher – designed to encourage more people from under-represented groups to enter university. The numbers of young people not in employment, education or training at all is static, at about 10 per cent, and many live in families where long-term unemployment is the norm or there is a high proportion of teenage mothers and young offenders and those with learning difficulties. It is clear that cutting specific government support, such as giving young people maintenance grants for education, has made the situation worse.

The demand for apprenticeships among young people is increasing, but what is offered is described as lacking quality or permanence. Roughly one in four young people do not succeed in their apprenticeships. According to the Needs Assessment Report (2014) some of the apprenticeships 'are of questionable value, short term and low skilled, and do not support progression into more permanent and higher value options'. The percentage of 16 to 24-year-olds in Stoke with no formal qualifications remains at around 16 per cent, as the figure for England and Wales has decreased to 9.7 per cent. While education in general might be considered a potential resource of hope, the figures here suggest some degree of hopelessness.

The history of education in Stoke is nonetheless worth noting. Educationalist Tim Brighouse (1993) records the local pride in the development of grammar schools after the Second World War (from which I benefitted), which provided new kinds of opportunities, but only for a minority of children. The majority attended secondary modern schools, where expectations were lower and the route into low-skilled work clear. The grammar school cohort was about 20 per cent of the population, from which a tiny fraction went to university. However, until the 1980s, potbanks, iron and steel production and mining provided the unskilled or semi-skilled jobs for the majority. Brighouse charts the effects of local government reorganization and constant changes in the structures of

schooling. He argues that this has been part of the problem: 'Identities were lost, created and lost again' (*ibid*.: 270). The sense of municipal pride once fuelling Stoke's investment in education after the Second World War dissipated, like the economy. Schools themselves were increasingly freed from local authority 'control', or, to put it differently, from democratic accountability and support. Older generations of autodidactic politicians, schooled in workers' education and the struggle for social democracy and a proud municipalism, might now be turning in their graves.

Academic voices

The word distress found resonance in the research of academics I interviewed in the two local universities of Keele and Staffordshire. They talked of a 'distressed' or 'failed city'. At the University of Keele, political scientists, environmentalists and social psychologists were involved in an interdisciplinary research centre called SPIRE (the School of Philosophy, Politics, International Relations and the Environment). I interviewed economists and other academics in community arts and outreach work at Staffordshire University too. All the academics asked similar questions to mine: what were the factors leading to failure in the city and what might create success? I did a number of auto/biographical interviews with them, and the more I thought about notions of failure and distress, the more I thought it essential to challenge conventional boundaries between academic disciplines, the local and the general, mental health and the wider ecology of the city. The particulars of Stoke – economic, political and historical – are also examples of broader, global trends. The general lies in the particular, and particulars in the general. We need grounding in the local and particular lives and also a wider awareness of the bigger ideological and economic picture.

Phil Catney is a political scientist at Keele. Like me he comes from a working-class background and brings from this a strong social conviction that universities should exercise greater civic responsibility. The problem with Stoke, he said, is partly economic but also a result of failed politics:

> It's a failed city … So Stoke has got a long-term sick, illnesses; it has got a very poor employment base, because as a city it is very hard to just turn around on the head of a pin. Stoke has got real problems as do places like Doncaster or Hull, or Sunderland, the kind of cities that I am doing work on at the moment, looking at the medium-sized distressed cities, cities that are really struggling to break the cycle.

The city of Stoke-on-Trent consists of six pottery towns, despite Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*. It is a city, as Catney sees it, that lacks a heart:

> The centre of the city as well, has never been agreed, and this is part of the problem that Stoke has: it is a balkanized city … most people in the city don't recognize Stoke as a city. They say I come from wherever, but they refuse to see this as collective identity. Now that has psychological effects, but also has political effects from my perspective, in that the local areas never really had a leadership that's agreed where the centre of Stoke is in terms of concentrating money to regenerate. Whereas it's obvious in Manchester and Sheffield where the centre is, where is it in Stoke? Well Hanley ... we all suggest is the retail centre, but for years that wasn't recognized, and the consequence of that was it took a long time to get agreements that there could be a concentration of resources in the centre for a step change.

Geoff Pugh, an economist at Staffordshire University and one-time Labour activist and member of the Militant Tendency, a Trotskyist group, linked economic, cultural, political and educational strands together into an overarching narrative of 'calamity for a whole class of people':

> … and … culturally, I suppose it's … male, blue collar culture where there is a respect for skills but not for education. So it's commonly said to me … teachers now will tell you that their kids think … they will go to jobs round here that don't exist any longer. I mean it is utterly extraordinary … that this is not a culture that has any great respect for education … I think this is true for English working-class culture generally, there's no great respect for education and I think this is actually worse in Stoke … and on that note, the school system is very poor … so I think that's an important part of the mix … that kind of culture which came from that blue collar industrial working class; yet that culture is so dysfunctional now, from a perspective of earning a living anyway ... As for government and the local council, well what can you say … poor doesn't even begin to capture it.

An older working-class self-help culture had been replaced, in this view, by a dysfunctional underclass and dysfunctional local government.

Gavin Bailey recently completed his PhD at Keele. He was a local working-class boy from a mining community in the Stoke area. His research

focused on two specific Stoke communities that showed evidence of racism and the rise of radical Islamism. He talked of distress, from the 1990s and onwards, on a predominantly white working-class estate:

> … I don't know how much you know about the sort of burning of cars and … youth disorder, and there was a death in a racial incident, do you know about that? ... there was a shop, chip shop maybe, I can't remember, some kind of retail outlet was taken over by some brothers who could be described as Asian I guess, and they were getting a lot of abuse from local youth and I think they had a lot of windows smashed and were sort of attempted to be hounded out. I don't remember whether there was any arson – there may well have been – and then at some point on one of these occasions when they were being attacked, they fled in a van and ran over and killed one of the youths who was attacking them.

This was a story that was to reappear, time and again, on the estate.

Becoming 'post-industrial'

Quite how and why local industries declined in the way they did, and what, if anything, might have been done about it, is a matter of debate. Globalization and the search to limit the costs of production, primarily the costs of labour, is an old, ubiquitous tale across the Western world. The closure of the mining industry, after the failure of the 1984 British Miners' Strike, and the Thatcherite agenda to close pits and break the National Union of Mineworkers, is also well-chartered territory. Geoff Pugh describes Stoke as a classic area of deindustrialization and suggests what has survived is in fact highly productive and remains a considerable source of wealth creation, if no longer a mass employer. Every rise in productivity means, in fact, that more gets produced from less labour. Stoke, he pointed out, was always a low-wage area in comparison with cities like Coventry with its automobile industry. The productivity of the ceramics industry tended to be lower than other forms of manufacturing. The seeds of deindustrialization were sown long ago, Pugh suggests. It was partly fed by employers who did not want higher wages, in alliance – ironically perhaps – with the conservative Ceramic and Allied Trade Union (although this is disputed by other economists and industrial relations experts (Burchill, 2014)). Pugh states:

> Rootes [the car manufacturer] was prepared to move its production of the Hillman Imp here, circa 1960/61 – something like that – and they were refused by the council over planning

> permission; it was blocked. I mean imagine that now, a major industrial employer wanting to move to any Midland or northern city they'd roll out the red carpet wouldn't they? They would jump high; then it was oh no we don't want that, do we? … it goes back to the Second World War; there was even aerospace production in Stoke. It was under dispersion, you know the shadow factory system but … so we had a collection of manufacturing industries much of which was utterly unprepared for globalization and serious competition. … So what is left is pretty good but what is left is not sufficient to generate the kind of employment base … that existed as late as the 1960s or whatever; … that sort of process of deindustrialization was particularly acute here, because the industries were I suppose … lower tech, lower productivity industries …

Deindustrialization, in these terms, was partly a failure of political imagination.

The politics

Geoff Pugh spoke of continuing political failure:

> There is a catastrophic failure here of local leadership, and a lack of convincing engagement with a local university. What happened to research on ceramics or mining engineering: they went elsewhere. The City Council and local employers lacked initiative but were occasionally panicked into bringing in expensive outside consultants like Cambridge Econometrics or the Work Foundation, but without the local university and local expertise being mobilized.

Stoke had been home to a dysfunctional 'representative democracy' since the 1990s. The City, as observed, was placed into 'special measures' by national government in the early years of the twenty-first century, and the local Labour Party seemed to be in meltdown (Latham, 2011). Attempts at creating a US-style executive mayor and council manager model ended in failure. There were splits and fractiousness in the local party, and the then minister of local government appointed a Governance Commission in the hope of sorting out the disarray. The Commission's reports graphically describe disengagement from and disillusionment with politics among local people, while a struggle between 'Old Labour' – in the campaign Democracy for Stoke (D4S) – and regional and national officers of the Labour Party –

keen as the latter were to reintroduce some centrally imposed order on local politics – intensified. Labour officials were accused of 'control freakery' by an older guard. The crisis of representative politics in Stoke can, however, be seen within a broader canvas. Historically, Stoke had been a Labour stronghold. Arguably, the dramatic changes leading to the 2008 election result for the BNP and the evaporation of support for Labour were the consequence of the national Labour Party's neglect of white working-class voters. Certainly, Prime Ministers Blair and Brown went in search of centrist politics and votes in marginal constituencies. Jon Burnett, in a study for the Institute of Race Relations (2011), argues that the process of toxification was not simply from the lacuna created by local failure but derived from how mainstream politics shifted to the right at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This was to accommodate some of the far right's narrative on immigration and the threat of the other among working-class voters.

However, it is more complicated than Burnett suggests. How racist parties positioned themselves mattered in Stoke, as did the depth of the local lacuna. At one point there were only 20 Labour councillors, as various 'independents' won seats on the City Council from 2000 onwards. Catney insists that 'you could barely put a piece of cigarette paper between the extreme right and the independents on some of their views.' They were presenting themselves under a different name, to try and win approval and to avoid any stigma that could be attached to the BNP. However, Catney insists that the BNP in the city was effective at detoxifying itself. There were, he pointed out, a number of 'very savvy' BNP organizers, who created fear but also hope in the community. At the same time a number of leading Labour figures retired, some of whom were old-style autodidacts, schooled in the WEA and the Labour movement. Some of the newer councillors, it was said, could barely read the papers for meetings. Catney stated:

> I can get the data for deprivation, run it through the index, you can do it by unemployment, there's all these data sets you can run it by, but I can't help thinking, especially as a more policy social scientist that you have to tell an internal story ... Stoke as the extreme case ... or Stoke as an exception in this way, and then they tried to say well this is what BNP breakthroughs are like, but it takes a different form in different areas and they use different strategies, tactics, to position themselves in some areas than others ... When you look at Stoke-on-Trent's Labour Party and the way it's changed over the last 20 years … the absence of the big names in the area, ... who spent their life in the union movement, they

> were educated, they trained in the union movement, the political parts of Labour and the trade unionists were actually one and the same essentially in many respects and they were well trained … now you have had a stock of Labour Party people who've … not been any good, most of them are quite weak, so people in the communities have in a sense been reacting to actually the very … poor quality of leadership they have had.

This loss of older generations of working-class leaders, schooled in the WEA and the wider Labour movement, is part of a withering of a strong working-class culture generally. Li *et al.* (2003) and Savage (2012a; 2012b) note how participation in classical 'Labourist' institutions such as clubs and trade unions has declined overall. Geoff Pugh argues that this is the core of the problem:

> I think for all practical purposes the demise of the Labour movement, as an active participatory sub-culture … we are only just beginning to realize how much damage that has done … These days I would be more inclined I suppose, I would talk more about social capital but the decline of involvement and participation – and the shared values the norms that go with that – it's interesting enough I think it is really … some inkling of how wide ranging these effects have been … I think the problem comes in large part from the sense of the decline or part destruction of Labour movement organizations. And I think well adult education is, you know, one has already used the cliché, the lost continent; but that world of Labour movement activism, of solidarity, of participation of … selfless working for a common good, you know an alternative way of organizing things … I see virtually nothing to replace it … I mean people talk … of a huge decline in adherence to organized religion but compared to that I think the real decline in participation is actually not in the church you know, I think it's in the Labour movement; and perhaps political parties too. That kind of ethos and … institutional capacity no longer exists; and I think what was the working class has partly succeeded in being upwardly mobile in some respects but a large part of it has become a kind of an underclass ... you know, which is pretty much detached from the ability to earn a decent living and I think to participate in any meaningful way in democratic institutions.

Ironically, people like Geoff Pugh, as a member of the Militant Tendency, challenged the social-democratic Labour culture but now lamented its loss and squirmed when he read the historic educational research on how working-class children were being educated for working-class jobs: 'well I suspect that's better than schooling them to do nothing at all … you know wouldn't we just like a few semi-skilled factory jobs for several million of them right now? …' In Stoke, the relative absence of a new middle-class intelligentsia to fill some of the gap may also be important. Stoke lacks a substantial middle class across all its ethnic groups, including the white population.

Pugh talked of the lost continent of adult education. In 2009, the Workers' Educational Association, so strong in Stoke for many years, struggled with yet another financial crisis. It was forced to sell Cartwright House in Hanley, a building once home to the North Staffs District of the WEA (the building was named after the secretary of the first ever university/WEA tutorial class in Longton, a pottery town). Furthermore, Wedgwood Memorial College, a place described as the heart and soul of the adult education movement in Stoke and North Staffordshire, closed after a difficult, fractious period. The crisis for the College, as I show, partly resulted from local government reorganization as responsibility for education was transferred to Staffordshire County Council. Some of the latter's members knew or cared little about adult education. While some powers were subsequently restored to Stoke, this was at a time of increasing centralization of political, economic and educational decision-making across England, and the decline of meaningful local autonomy in the cities of the Midlands and North. A new kind of neoliberal consensus dominated instead, opening public services to private sector expertise, diminishing the role of local government and emphasizing, among other things, education for the labour market rather than for citizenship.

Next steps

Statistics, national or local, take us only so far in establishing nuanced connections between economic, political and cultural change and human suffering – as well as resilience. Nevertheless, the local data on mental and physical health and educational underachievement paint a picture of dysfunction. The personal is deeply political when a political economy is in disarray and individuals feel abandoned. The data add fuel to the necessity of forging a better understanding of the interplay of the big and small in human well-being; of neoliberalism, a malfunctioning democracy, the decline of working-class self-help traditions and the rise of mental illness,

racism and fundamentalism. In the next chapter, I explain how I sought to illuminate these micro, meso and macro dynamics in auto/biographical narrative research. This, I suggest, has an especial power to illuminate complex human motivations, whether in supporting the BNP or becoming radicalized as a jihadi.

Chapter 4

A power to illuminate: Auto/biographical narrative research

Beyond statistics: Humanity in research

Moving beyond the statistics and formal data from Stoke, important as these are in outlining aspects of a city in distress, I now present a rationale for auto/biographical narrative methods. I explain their power to illuminate the lives of particular people in Stoke in order to interrogate what is happening on the ground, such as the attraction of specific people to racism or fundamentalism, and why. Using an auto/biographical narrative methodology requires explanation, however. Research of this kind is problematic when viewed through the lens of conventional quantitative research that often dominates the academic imagination. The stories people tell are always a reconstruction of events, afterthoughts, rather than the events themselves, while the powerful discourses of a culture and unconscious processes of wanting to please or appease circulate in stories. They can be seen as of little relevance to any bigger picture of, for instance, democracy in crisis – 'fine meaningless detail', as one historian graphically framed it (Fieldhouse, 1996). Yet we can so much better understand the nuances of why particular people are attracted to the BNP, or radicalized, through the lifelong and life-wide lens of auto/biography. This is its especial power.

For one thing, the general – or bigger – picture is always in the particular, not least in the narrative resources people draw on to tell their stories. We are storied as well as storytellers. Stories may constrain as well as liberate, as a bigger picture – of neoliberal assumptions, say – grips particular accounts. And people can internalize the negativities about 'people like us', whether emanating from the mouths and projections of politicians, policymakers or the mass media. Those targeted may be struggling on benefits or single parents, as chronicled in my earlier work in other marginalized locations (Merrill and West, 2009). People can feel themselves to be the objects of society's disdain, caught in the gaze of the judgemental other and constantly needing to justify themselves. Those on the margins easily

internalize negative projections, or feel inadequate, despite their capacity to think about experience in new ways and build resilience and self-agency in the process, if given time, space and resources to do so (West, 2007; 2009). People are unused to being listened to or taken seriously, or of their stories being treated as significant evidence. 'Are you really interested in me and my story?', they often ask. They may at first seek to impress researchers, largely unconsciously, by giving answers they imagine the researcher wants to hear. Over time, however, they can think about the stories they tell in the company of a sympathetic other in new and even liberating ways.

Those on the edge have also had to learn to deal with many and varied authority figures day by day: the social worker, the Job Centre assessor, the headteacher, the health visitor and even researchers. They can have well-rehearsed tales to tell (West, 2009). Such tales might have helped them survive and 'keep on keeping on'. Yet narratives like these can also domesticate, failing to do justice to a person and their life: we get locked into old, demeaning family scripts, for instance, about never being good enough, or in broader narratives directed at people like us, an underclass, who should know their place. We might also imbibe the dismissiveness of metropolitan elites and their disdain of working-class chavs (Jones, 2010). Auto/biographical narrative research, on the other hand, encourages storytelling even if this is no easy soft option. It seeks to create a good enough space for people to share experience and think about what they say in a qualitatively different, supportive relationship. All of which requires an imaginative, empathic, reflexive engagement on the researcher's part, as well as an interdisciplinary theoretical repertoire, to do justice to the complexities of stories and the people who tell them.

I suggest that stories offer complex material that encompasses a dynamic of here and now, there and then, self and other, psyche and society, power and powerlessness. Such material can offer a nuanced representation of what it means to be human, in conditions of distress, as well as the potential place of democratic education in transforming lives; or of how Islamic radicalization works. In these terms auto/biographical narrative research is a serious business. It asks a great deal of the researcher – they have to think, for instance, about the interplay of their life and agenda in their encounter with the other. Thus to think about my place in relationships with others in the study becomes an interpretative and epistemological necessity.

The statistical narratives introduced in the last chapter suggest links between inequality, poverty, hopelessness and ill-being and the consequences of disparaging particular groups, like the white working-class or Muslims (Preston, 2007; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Dorling, 2013; McKenzie,

2015). Such general correlations take us only so far, however. The broad sweep of statistical studies may be poignant but the humanity within each dot of a scatterplot, each tick on a Likert scale, challenges us to flesh out the human detail and ask how and why this particular step, in this specific life, was taken and how it was understood by those involved. Not everyone takes hold of a Kalashnikov, joins the BNP or travels to join the Islamic 'state' in Syria. Statistics, and the patterns they suggest, need human form, as in understanding mental illness and what it represents personally as well as culturally. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2011) conclude, in response to critics of their research, that whether you class people by income, education or class, in a less equal society the less advantaged tend to be unhealthier in mind, body and spirit. When talking to actual people in Stoke such conclusions are irresistible, although causes are complicated. Some may be far from mentally unwell but stress, anxiety, depression and hopelessness pervade parts of the city, as they do in similar communities (Layard and Clark, 2014). Most obviously, where poverty itself is pervasive, racism, xenophobia and fundamentalism find greater, if not inevitable, purchase. There is a potential breeding ground of extremism within a political economy of hopelessness, suffering and everyday violations of intuitive notions of justice.

Life from the inside: Generating the good story

People are not simply aggregates of certain sociological or epidemiological variables. They are living beings with stories to tell of what it feels like to exist in particular conditions or in some of the stories, to experience disrespect. Their aspirations and narratives have validity in their own terms, however difficult and distasteful these might be. Understanding lives from the inside requires time and what I term a psychosocial, historical and educational imagination to interpret what people say. Such an imagination reminds us, potentially, that people are social agents rather than marionettes on a predetermined sociological stage. People make, as well as are made by, history. There is an analogy between auto/biographical narrative enquiry and the work of the medical doctor. They, too, seek to do their best by the people entering the clinic. They have to know the broad statistical picture of the effects of particular drugs or therapies, from randomized control trials and cohort studies, yet their work also requires a subtle, nuanced understanding of the particular individual, and what it is like to live in a specific family, in a given community with distinct problems. In the words of one medical researcher, herself a doctor, in such terms individuals are 'irremediably contextual and (seemingly) idiosyncratic' (Greenhalgh, 1998:

251). They live in families, in a street and a community. They have lives shaped but not determined by class, race, gender as well as the subtleties of the relationships in which they are embedded. A statistical sample is always an abstraction, from which contextual detail is erased. The idiosyncrasies of a particular person's narrative and their experience of disease are essential for good diagnostics (Greenhalgh, 1998) as well as good research: understanding is as important if not more so than measurement. Audrey Borenstein has written that from the outside, an observer might see a common condition, a daughter's life destroyed by drugs, or divorce, '… yet in interior life, what happens is unique … Life histories like snowflakes are never of the same design' (1978: 30). When we get close to people, the subtle differences appear startling alongside some of the commonalities.

What has been termed the biographical turn over the last 50 years or so was in part a reaction against the absence of the nuanced human subject in a social science modelled on the natural sciences (Plummer, 2001). Social science, including psychology – in the writings of Piaget, for example, and especially in neuroscience – has often striven to build a syntax of human behaviour, a language of probabilities and overarching theoretical explanation, a grammar of how things work. However, Piaget's notion of cognitive stages in human development was never fully grounded in the semantics of actual people in specific settings. His stages are abstractions, albeit useful ones. Neuroscience often strives to connect patterns of electrical activity in the brain or the characteristics of particular genes to specific behaviours, but in ways that tend to eliminate human choice and agency – the people whose actions and emotional experiences themselves trigger the complex firing of neurons and consequent chemical changes in the brain. Auto/biographical narrative research, like psychotherapy, offers an alternative to this by engaging with people and the semantics of their experience, with the meanings they themselves give to events: experiences of distress and their significance and of hope born of new ways of seeing.

In other words, if people are driven to respond to experience in particular ways – through defensiveness, depression, drugs, alcohol, community activism or even fundamentalism – we need to know as much as possible about the driver at the wheel, as Freud put it, as well as the shape and mechanics of vehicles. Unfortunately, doing so demands time and resources, and might be out of favour among contemporary researchers because of the pressure for quick-fix research, cheap and preferably numerical studies. Stephen Grosz (2012) reminds us of the too-often disparaged assumptions made of the psychoanalytic case study, which may take 25 years to accumulate, yet convincingly challenges the fiction of a final

psychological cure or any complete explanation of a life and its suffering. We are in murky, illusive, emotional, time-consuming, psychosocial and discursive territory, trying to understand human well-being or its antitheses through narratives of how more democratic and open forms of relationship may be learned in ourselves as well as the other. We therefore require a deeply grounded empiricism alongside a normative framework, like critical theory or psychoanalysis, to chronicle the problems of, and imagine the possibilities for, human flourishing.

The details of the study

This book is the outcome of an in-depth auto/biographical narrative enquiry over five years among more than 50 people in Stoke-on-Trent, in the spirit described above. It strives to shed light on the seductions and insecurities fuelling racism and fundamentalism, and how and why space once existed, and can be created again, for a never-complete experiment in democratic education. This kind of education happens, or is undermined, when viewed auto/biographically, in intimate and public space in schools, community groups, the workplace, college and university, or the Job Centre or encounters with the police or a taxi driver's abusive clients. The 50 or so participants in the study live and work in the city and are in the main 'ordinary' people from various ethnic groups. They are also politicians, ministers of religion, academics, community leaders and activists. The sample is what is termed opportunistic – in the first instance, I asked officers of the City Council for names of people that might be helpful to my work. The Council also helped me make contact with others. As the work developed, the sampling became more purposive or theoretical, as I sought to interview individuals who were attracted, say, to the BNP or Islamism.

Some people – eight to be exact – were interviewed up to three times, in research cycles lasting upwards of three years. Others were interviewed once, alone or in small group, such as Asian taxi drivers playing cricket in a Healthy Living class, under the auspices of the WEA (I joined in the game, despite a bad back). The study represents a journey, as in previous work, into the border country between research and therapy, reality and fiction, self and other, between illuminating, however partially, the distinctiveness of individual lives whilst recognizing the patterns that create categories of people. Auto/biographical methods have sometimes celebrated idiosyncrasy and atypicality in life in reaction to a highly reductive, generalized sociology (Plummer, 2001). Yet there are patterns among people as well as snowflakes: each of us is born prematurely compared with other mammals. We are vulnerable and dependent – we struggle to greater or lesser degrees

to separate from primary caregivers and we suffer loss and frustration in our lives. Most of us know to varying extents love, recognition, hate and disrespect, and we are ill and we die. We have to understand the idiosyncrasies and commonalities of being human and of how life might be lived more meaningfully, given good enough resources of hope at collective as well as individual levels.

The distinct methodology has been finely tuned over many years and pays attention to how we as researchers shape responses 'auto/biographically'. In conventional positivistic research, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are treated as suspicious phenomena that have to be carefully managed, minimized or even expunged by good technical procedures. This is part of the war against bias, lest data be contaminated and truths perverted. A desire for replicability haunts conventional research, even biographical methods (Merrill and West, 2009). The idea is that if another researcher asked the same or similar question, the answer would be more or less the same; and that there is the truth, objectively, to be found if we minimize the subjective research presence called 'us'. My approach is different: it is research in a clinical style, sensitive to and reflexive about how emotional, unconscious, intersubjective and power dynamics work between people – how we are present as researchers in the process, for better as well as worse. We seek to create the conditions for good, more inclusive and hopeful stories through our presence, when we listen seriously and feed ideas back in a digestible form. Donning the metaphorical mantle of the white-coated investigator risks silencing the other: we need our humanity and creativity in making research of this kind.

Like the dramatist we have constantly to be aware of what we do and how we represent others and what is not said or silent in representation. We also have to be aware of the effect of a story on us – on how we feel and think. Disturbance can disturb, which can provide insight into how the other might be feeling, if we choose to work with this reflexively in the counter-transference. Transference has to do with our effect on the other, while the counter-transference is the emotional effect of the other on us. The transference can represent the sum total of encounters with authority across a life, in memory in feeling, which is then present in research. The point is both to create a space in which stories can be told and then to think collaboratively about what is happening. If we are emotionally distant or not really present as witnesses, we can be seen through and our research may wither and die. Building a good enough space requires reflexivity as well as a clear explanation of our study in accessible language. We also have to manage our own anxieties in the process.

Use is also made of an ethical code, which, in the present study, included the right to say no to any question and be consulted over what was written. I explained to participants that attempts would be made to ensure confidentiality and anonymity but that this can never be truthfully guaranteed despite our best intent. We can strive to make material anonymous but that can never be fully assured. This had to be agonized over, at all stages of a study. In drafting the book I wrote to various people to check out my interpretations and how they felt about my representation of their lives.

Very early in the process, I said to everyone interviewed: 'I'm really interested to know more about you and your life, starting with whatever might come to mind. Maybe going back to where you were born or your schooling.' I said this in a manner that invited stories, rather than closing them down by being overly specific or asking closed questions, or adopting the wrong emotional tone. Involving subjects in analysing their narratives and building interpretations collaboratively also matters, although this is not always easy to achieve. Each interview is fully transcribed, using oral history conventions, and copies are sent to people for comment or additions, deletions or other forms of amendment. A further cycle of interviews asks both parties to consider themes and the quality of the experience, in what can become a more democratized form of research (West, 1996; 2001; Merrill and West, 2009; Bainbridge and West, 2012).

Storytelling can involve free association as much as logical thought. However, to be ethical requires the researcher to be aware of where not to go and why. A Pandora's box lurks in each pause or segment of an interview, which must be understood and managed. Such research methods, though not psychotherapy, are analogous, and can even be therapeutic as well as potentially disturbing. When a person feels listened to and understood, their emotional experience is likely to be good. We need to think beyond the technical language of research 'skills' and aim towards building qualities of shared humanity – even thinking of research as a kind of loving relationship. Coming alongside another, and using our experience and insights, can build a kind of transitional space for self-negotiation, as Winnicott avers (Winnicott, 1971; Schlater, 2004). It has to do with far more than 'skills' and is about seeking to create, in Martin Buber's words, an I/thou quality of interaction rather than I/it objectification (Buber, 2004). However, auto/biographical research is emphatically not analytic psychotherapy, even if it draws on many of its insights and procedures. It offers no long-term structure of support, and defences are respected rather than challenged. The actual experience of doing research is often troubled and troubling as well

as potentially empowering for the researcher and their subject. We need to be mindful of boundaries and limitations, in addition to the potential illuminative power of what we do.

A whole panoply of ethical questions is therefore raised in the doing and reporting of research. We should agonize over this, and about our own narcissistic investment as researchers and writers in the process (Josselson, 1996: 2010), such as the need to get it right, further a career, impress audiences or compose a convincing narrative from deeply complex tales in ways that are too reductive, whatever our best intents. We have to think hard about our own capacity to live in uncertainty as researchers without grabbing at facts or reaching premature conclusions. We do not have 25 years for this work and have to be cautious about what we claim. Our narrators can also be shocked to see their stories in print, even when we use various tropes to disguise them. Names have mostly been changed in the book, unless there were compelling reasons not to do so, while some details of place and particular interactions have been altered without, it is hoped, losing the essence of the stories. Drafts of chapters have sometimes been shared. There is difficult material in some of the case studies about mental distress, for example, given its negative cultural connotations, or with supporting the BNP, which some might have subsequently regretted. There might be anxiety that the research shows someone, or a whole community, in a negative light. Certain communities in Stoke are already targets of abuse, of Islamophobia and stereotyping, and matters can be made worse.

We also have to be aware of the tendency – poignant in this study – to seek to put right past wrongs through a kind of overcompensation: in telling new stories about parents, or the history of workers' education, that may be too idealized compared with an overly disdainful past. There is the danger, in the neoliberal moment, of a kind of lament for a lost social-democratic idyll that could pervade the script. It was never the idyll we might imagine. As a gay friend, the writer Steve Wakelam, said to me: 'you should have tried being gay in Doncaster in the '50s, '60s or '70s.' We too easily split stories and worlds into good pasts and bad presents, idealized historical moments and terrible contemporary times. Times are much messier, and they require openness and reflexivity that engage our minds, bodies, feelings and dreams to construct a particular and general historic imagination.

Analysing stories

I want to explain more about the process of analysis, although reference can be made to my writing with colleagues in previous research (Merrill and West, 2009; Bainbridge and West, 2012). Taking time for analysis matters

as much as creating space to generate stories, fully immersing ourselves in recordings and transcripts and allowing themes and reflections to emerge. Time is slowed down to re-experience moments and qualities of interaction, for instance, and what they might mean. Like in Mick William's story (chapter 8) of a democratic education, when at one point the tone changed worryingly and I wondered why. Was this a kind of zealotry, and what of its place in Mick's life? Then, because of his untimely death, it was impossible to talk about the moment and its meaning together.

I used a pro forma for all the case studies, developed in previous work (Merrill and West, 2009). It provides a kind of transitional, playful and textual space in which to identify and develop themes and consider the process, including its effect on me and the likely effect on collaborators. Note is made of the context or ethnography of the interview, whether conducted in a busy office where conversation might travel or somewhere relatively safe and secure, like the person's home. In completing the pro forma I drew on diverse academic literature, as readings came to mind and theoretical or imaginative friends helped me make sense of the material. I include specific literary or academic references as well as extracts from fiction, novels and poetry, as this resonates with the stories being told. Unlike grounded theory, the process is rooted in psychoanalytic awareness and some of the assumptions of German philosophical formalism (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). It requires attentiveness and the ability to wait for an overarching gestalt or unifying form to emerge, so as to make better sense of the fragments. The gestalt may have to do with particular family dynamics or family-like dynamics, or the interplay of the macro, meso and micro in a story of mental illness – as a coal mine is closed, a husband dies, and a woman whom I call Carol (chapter 5) enters the madness of institutionalized mental 'health', but who finds in the good group sufficient recognition to become a community activist, better able to recognize others (Merrill and West, 2009; West *et al.*, 2013; 2014). The gestalt might also have something to do with racism, which might play into disturbed family feelings, while fundamentalism might provide, however distortedly, meaning in a life.

An interdisciplinary imagination

Fragments of the social, cultural, psychic, the here and now and the there and then, are always present in stories. Understanding these and the interplay of inner and outer worlds especially has not been helped by the historic and at times deeply entrenched split between sociocultural and psychological levels of explanation (West, 1996; Merrill and West, 2009). There has been a tendency to explain stories in either/or terms: as

sociocultural – which includes the role of discourse in storytelling – *or* psychological phenomena. In the former, inner worlds and unconscious processes remain largely uncharted and un-theorized. Indeed there can be hostility towards, say, psychoanalytically inspired explanation, with its focus on emotions and the unconscious, as a kind of distraction from the bigger sociocultural canvas. Conversely, in some psychoanalytical work, including psychoanalytic case studies, the sociocultural and discursive get marginalized (Frosh, 1987). Auto/biographical research pushes us towards an interdisciplinary imagination, in the spirit of C. Wright Mills (2000). In his classic study *The Sociological Imagination*, Wright Mills wrote of the importance of connecting big historical trends with the most intimate of experience, the institutional worlds we encounter with the dynamics of families and inner worlds, structure and structuring processes with moments of agency. Engaging with the nuances of subjective life forces us towards a transgression of conventional academic delineations.

Authors such as Carolyn Steedman have challenged disciplinary solipsism in biographical work in compelling ways. Male biography, for instance, can miss the emotional dynamics of women's lives, including their political as well as intimate significance. Steedman considers her working-class mother's desire to wear nice clothes and dance with enthusiasm a political as much as a creative act. It is an act of defiance against cultural constraints at times when structures of thought and space for action were so limited for working-class women. Steedman combines the psychoanalytic, historical and sociological in telling two women's stories, her own and her mother's (Steedman, 1986). A similar sense of concern about absence has driven my own work: the neglect of emotion and the inner world in educational literature, the neglect of working-class experience – including of education and the turbulent crossing of class contours, where we may struggle to know who we are and where we belong. As it happens, my mother, like Carolyn's, loved ballroom dancing, which requires a nuanced reading of desire and frustration, in dynamic relationship, at a particular moment of history. Dancing can similarly be read as a form of defiance against emotional frustration and the rigidities of class and family. It brings with it the thought that had she been born later, she would probably have gone to university and her biographical trajectory would have been quite different.

Male biographies – including of working-class life – can be stolidly, psychologically the same, where the feeling of lives – women's or men's – is lost. Some biographical writing that centres on educational trajectories, for instance, lacks a convincing sense of loss and psychological turbulence in the

movement across educational landscapes. There are important exceptions in fictional form – in Raymond Williams's quasi autobiographical *Border Country*, for example, published in 1986. Here is a journey across the actual and imaginal border between England and Wales, between Cambridge and academic life, and the working-class culture of a railway family. It is a story of two men, a father and son, who could never fully connect even at the point of death. The story of my dad and I is similar. We also failed to connect in later life. I now understand more of my struggle to separate from working-class roots in the strange habitus of a late-1960s university, and of the need for recognition, (chapter 7), alongside the loss involved in the process.

Representing lives: Writing as enquiry and *écriture feminine*

Susan Krieger (1991) has also observed how many researchers, including an increasing number in the biographical community, have become dissatisfied with a tone of remote authority commonly used in social science writing and how the personality of the author – and even subjects – gets lost in textual representation. We have noted how social science has historically been premised on minimizing the researcher's self. We paint pictures in which we hope not to appear, or if we do, are nearly invisible. There is of course the opposite danger that through researcher narcissism the prime focus on the other and their story will be lost. Notwithstanding, feminist researchers especially have questioned the subordination and invisibility of self and subjectivity in writing and actively work to include these in their representations. Such forms of auto/biographical expression deliberately transgress the boundary between creative and academic writing, as well as self and other.

Writing is a creative act, an aesthetic effort to do justice both to the personal and the academic and bring narrative coherence and integrity to complex experience. It is an act of making meaning rather than simply the record of conclusions already drawn. This book is an attempt to create coherence from the messiness of experience and doing research. It is haunted by the impossibility, as Theodor Adorno (Honneth, 2009) observed, of squeezing everything into theoretical form. Absence can haunt life and people, including the researcher, as selves are not reducible to theory. We can only strive, imaginatively, to represent aspects of a totality, and find humility in the impossibility of encompassing everything. The shadow of not knowing, and what lies beyond, outside the frame, is always there.

I am aware, in the process, of straddling different identities: the novelist, maybe, diarist and social scientist. I am also conscious of working

in ways that are non-linear, or overly rational, and, in Hélène Cixous's compelling words, of walking as if naked into the text (see Chapman Hoult, 2012). The book has involved revisiting my childhood, as well as drawing on long periods in psychoanalysis. I have tried to evoke the spirit by which my life and those of others has been lived to understand why learning a democracy of the emotions is so difficult. I have sought to ask questions of my own life in asking questions of others and have occasionally been seduced by the grandiose fantasy of producing total narrative truth in the face of mess and uncertainty. A potential fundamentalist, in these terms, lurks in us all.

Feminism has been especially important in encouraging researchers to work in emotionally vibrant ways in their writing and to make use of literature to illuminate narrative themes (see for example, Chapman Hoult, 2012). In the development of her research on resilience, Elizabeth Chapman Hoult began with Bourdieu and Derrida as potential political as well as theoretical allies when exploring both her life and her mother's. But she found both were overly immersed in a philosophical form of discourse that lacked warmth and, ironically, in the case of Derrida, playfulness. She turned to Cixous and her *écriture féminine* because it allowed passion and compassion to enter the writing, while remaining part of the radical political project of challenging patriarchy in educational texts. Cixous, Chapman Hoult observes, enabled her to traverse conventional boundaries between the personal and the academic with confidence and fluidity.

The style of this present text captures something of lived experience in ways that, I hope, are reminiscent of the work of novelists like Edith Wharton, whom I much admire. Wharton explicitly drew on contemporary social theory as well as her autobiography in her fictional writing. She was a careful and systematic ethnographer of New York society in the 1870s, even drawing on theories of natural selection. Wharton wanted to be a historian of the present and she brings sharp distinctions between literature, academic and even scientific work into question (Lee, 2008). I have pursued a comparative aspiration by using Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* to interpret a particular kind of anxiety and fundamentalist tendency in my own life and examine why I once told dismissive stories about forms of workers' education.

Conclusion: A third space?

In conventional research we might be encouraged to assume distance and objectivity, to take ourselves out of the study, never recording a smile of happiness or a tear of sadness in our encounters with others. The writing

over the core set of chapters is, I hope, evocative of how and why life choices were made. It has required empathic connectedness as well as immersion in my collaborators' stories, engaging feelings as well as thoughts: my own past, present and desired future as well as theirs. Yet I have equally sought to cultivate a third space, or eye – one that sought to operate at a greater distance to view and think about what was happening in the other as they shared their stories with me. Our feelings as researchers can be a clue as to how the other is feeling about their story in relation to us. Some degree of analytic distancing is essential, if reflexively taxing, to process and better theorize what might be either distressing or inspiring, and to connect this to questions about the dynamics of racism and fundamentalism and their antidotes.

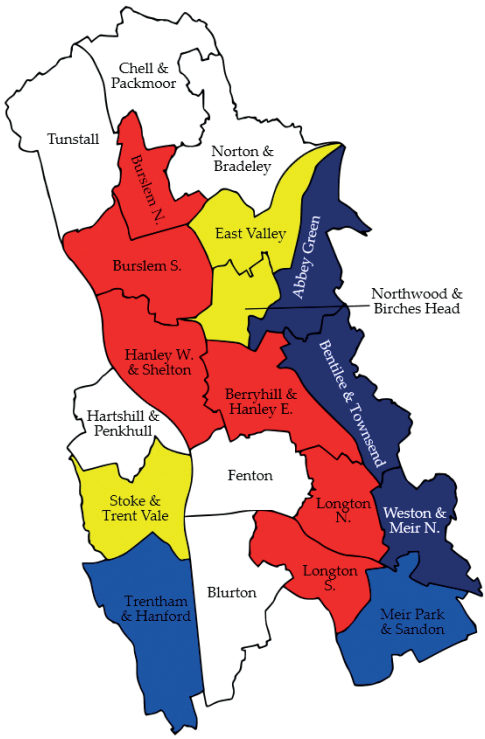

Figure 1: Map of the composition of the City of Stoke-on-Trent (image by permission of Andrew Teale)

Figure 2: Barnett Stross (image by permission of Sarah Curtis and courtesy of Fred Hughes)

Figure 3: *Lidice Shall Live* campaign poster (published by Czechoslovak British Friendship Club)

Figure 4: Lidice Memorial in January 2013 (image by Hannah West)

Figure 5: R.H. Tawney (image courtesy of LSE Library's collections, IMAGELIBRARY/1105)

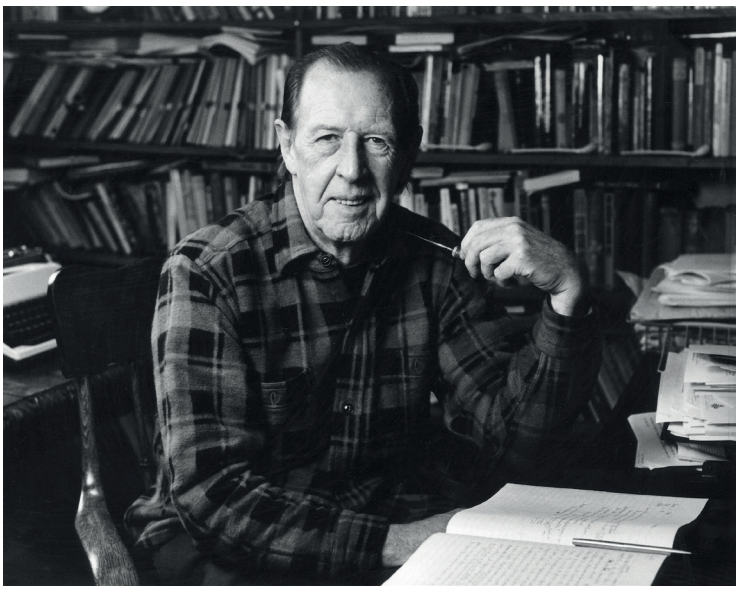

Figure 6: Raymond Williams
(image ©National Portrait Gallery, London)

Figures 7a, 7b, 7c: Wedgwood Memorial College in December 2013 (images by Helen West)

Figure 8: Wedgwood Memorial College in 1999 (image courtesy of Craig Thornber of Macclesfield)

Figure 9: Stoke City and Manchester City at Wembley in the 2011 FA Cup Final (image source: dewemblyaoldtrafford)

Figure 10: Demolition in Stoke-on-Trent (image ©Ploppy/Alamy Stock Photo)

Figure 11: The Regent Street Mosque
(image courtesy of Staffordshire Sentinel
News & Media)

Figure 12: The YMCA near Hanley Park
(image courtesy of YMCA North Staffordshire)

Chapter 5

Abandonment: The state of the estate

Introduction

Some of the stories from people on the predominantly white working-class estates in Stoke present patterns of lost worlds and feelings of abandonment, and what I term disrespect, both by authority and from within the wider culture. However, stories are told too of the BNP really listening and being attentive, and providing the effective representation for ordinary people other parties failed to offer. BNP activists took time with the people of the estate, giving recognition to 'small' everyday matters. At the same time, however, they also suggested connections between the state of the estate and the threatening other of immigration and asylum seekers. Goodwin notes that alongside Barking in East London, Stoke-on-Trent Central, the parliamentary constituency in which the estate is located, was a number one target seat for the BNP (Goodwin, 2011) – and for good reason. The disaffection with established political parties, and Labour in particular, reached new heights in 2008. The estate became prime territory for the BNP and it won the local election for the representative district or ward, although this was later overturned in the 2011 elections.

Many factors were in play. Changes in local government organization and New Labour's desire for more 'dynamic' leadership in local government, penetrated to the heart of Stoke and the estate. From the 1990s until 2011 – and still it festers – local politics was convulsed by argument over the nature of representative democracy and how to provide effective leadership to reinvigorate the city. On the one hand, New Labour advocated US-style elected mayors to revitalize local government and build a new civic culture of leadership to create energy and focus for economic regeneration. Mayors would have a clear mandate and legitimacy, in contrast to the allegedly tired, anachronistic structures of diffused leadership in traditional local government. Stoke entered a period of bitter political warfare, which for some constituted a crisis for elected councillors, who were marginalized in decision making as local government became managerialized. Although Stoke eventually rejected the mayoral option, it did choose, or had foisted upon it,

a cabinet structure, in which, according to some, local representatives had little say (Latham, 2011). Some councillors and ex-councillors on the estate felt embittered. They had worked hard in particular cases to invigorate the Labour Party's local representative structures – the ward or polling district, a space where locals could meet and problems be translated into collective deliberation and action – but councillors and wards were sidelined and activists fell away. From a different perspective, these older political spaces had already been emptied of life and legitimacy, colonized by cabals of political anoraks and extremists who had lost touch with local people.

This chapter is based on the narratives of three people and the time I spent, ethnographically, on the estate. There are two activists called Carol and Jimmy and a minister of religion, Andrew. Carol's story brings a central theme of the book into poignant reality: the need for qualities of space in civil society for learning activism, in which processes of recognition flourish at an intimate as well as group level. Axel Honneth (2007) notes how democratic life requires more than appeals to abstract ethical virtues, or an obsession with what can become empty proceduralism. It requires particular qualities of experience for people across civil society. These are experiences of democratic, or at least collective, possibility grounded in social cooperation, mutual support and recognition, and the exercise of democratic will-formation in which people feel able to shape events, however imperfectly, and the well-being of the communities in which they live.

Andrew, the minister of religion, works on the estate. Distress can affect even the most experienced of professionals as the spirit level falls. Living and working on an estate can grind people down, as hopelessness takes over. Andrew struggled, but his narrative ironically reveals the resources of hope created in a church's determination to meet the needs of the most marginalized. Food banks brought him feelings of hopefulness and renewal: in giving priority to the other, considering their plight, the self may be revitalized. Our routine encounters with people in need can restore our compassion and care in a spirit of fraternity (Freeman, 2014).

Carol's narrative covers the loss of an older industrial base and a husband who worked in the pits. Her story concerns the life of a community worker, and how austerity and reductions in public spending – the withdrawal of the state from the estate – bites into individual lives. The importance of others, including adult education, to people's well-being is at the core of her narrative and she relates how resources of well-being for local people get created. She refers to adult education of a recreational kind, frequently disparaged as inconsequential. Yet it may constitute a space to move away from distress and anomie into a social ecology of friendship,

stimulation, meaning and fraternity. The instrumentality and ordinariness of a sewing class may be considered at some distance from any serious education, but the psychosocial consequence of finding common purpose, cooperation and perhaps membership in such groups matters greatly. There is in fact debate about what constitutes the good group and the suggestion that the role of empathy and fraternity tends to be neglected. Fraternity, Dewey noted, is another name for the consciously appreciated goods that accrue from association in which we all share, and which gives direction to the conduct of each (Dewey, 1969). Feminist educators have suggested that normative readings of the good educational group can be overly rational and masculinist (Belenky and Stanton, 2000). Notions of ideal speech communities, for instance, drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas (Mezirow and Associates, 2000), rightly emphasize equality, respect and an open sharing of ideas as a basis for serious learning. But critical thinking can become competitive, more to do with exposing weaknesses in another's argument in disrespectful ways. It can develop into forms of 'separated' learning looking only for strengths and neglecting how we may learn from vulnerability, including our own. Connected learners, as in many women's groups, strive – in order to better understand – to engage empathically with vulnerability and why people might believe what they do, however self-defeating. This might generate collective and individual insight, which is important in group development. Carol travelled from mental despair following the death of her husband into empathic adult education groups and then into activism. However, although her community work helped in turn to strengthen the social fabric, it is now threatened, like adult education, as the wider polity withdraws resources in ill-considered ways.

Like Carol, Jimmy Stubbs has lived on the estate for most of his life. He was ill when we first met in 2011 but anxious to be interviewed and show me round part of the area and the youth centre he had helped establish. He died from a serious illness a year or so later. His narrative also encompasses the theme of abandonment in the loss of local structures of representative democracy, in particular the wards or polling districts. Such wards consisted of local trade unionists, members of the cooperative society and other organizations affiliated to the Labour Party, and local people who were paying-party members. The ward on the estate attracted an average of 50 or so people, Jimmy said, but there had been a falling away because of what he saw as disillusionment with New Labour. These local structures ceased to function, as democracy itself was hollowed out by the actions of political elites. They would no doubt view the problem differently from Jimmy, as being one element of a deep-seated crisis in which local ward

structures became vehicles for unrepresentative cliques. People have also turned away, they might point out, from historic forms of participation in local politics, as part of a more general withdrawal from civic participation and voluntarism. All may be factors in a wider phenomenon of social and tribal fragmentation, as the historically strong formations of class politics and working-class self-help traditions withered under the impact of deindustrialization.

In the urban life of the north and midlands of England and working-class cities in Scotland, local government and a once vibrant municipalism became increasingly marginal in British political life. This process, the backcloth to Carol and Jimmy's narratives, encompasses the 1970s oil crises and Thatcherism, as Whitehall exerted greater financial control and curtailed local authority power. A rhetoric of profligate, incompetent councils led by the 'loony left' became pervasive. Seyd and Whiteley (1992) warn, however, that the removal of powers from local government has risked reducing local opportunity structures for civic action – and by implication, for 'civic learning' in public space. Whatever the causes, and the prescription for building a new civics, local people like Carol and Jimmy talked of democracy in Stoke in troubled terms. They spoke of abandonment by the State of the estate under the auspices of neoliberalism (my words, not theirs, but drawing on their stories) in processes of collective neglect.

Abandonment

Carol was born in the late 1930s and wove connections between a particular past and present anxiety, as well as intimate life and the quality of public space. Her narrative was despairing about conventional politics and she spoke of the BNP filling a vacuum. However, it also illuminates how the fabric of community life is threatened and easily unravels for want of nurture or sympathetic understanding. Her story divides into two parts – a better past and a fragile present, a full employment economy and mass unemployment, jobs and relative material security and food banks and pay-day lenders – except the narrative is messier and less linear than that. Carol mourns the death of her husband, twelve years on, and the memory of subsequent mental illness and depression still haunt her. 'The shame of it, the stigma', she said. She lived an anxiety-ridden existence after his death, as her world retreated into 'black dog' depression where leaving the house was impossible. Until, with the help of others, she made it along the street, lamp post by lamp post, into an adult education sewing class. This proved a lifeline and she became chair of various local committees fighting for the estate whose condition distressed her. The BNP was present, attentive and

effective in friendly, 'human' ways, she said. Although she didn't like some of them, they were 'there for you', their members chaired school governor committees, doing small things well, such as dealing with 'druggies' or a housing problem or getting a gate mended. Small things mattered because people felt noticed.

Fragments of a life, and loneliness

Carol told her life history, describing her work on a potbank. In her first interview she spoke about the death of her husband and the loneliness she felt:

> ... I was married for a long time and then I lost my husband, we only had one child, a daughter … I don't like being a widow, it's very lonely, it's the loneliness that's the killer. I sit alone in the evening and just watch the telly because through the day you can come out and do things, but in the evening I am in. I go out with my daughter once a week on Wednesday and that's my week. But when my husband first died I had a nervous breakdown, I didn't come out for five years …

Carol talked of her mental health problems and the stigma she felt about it. People do not really understand or notice mental illness, she said. It was not obvious, like a physical ailment:

> I went into hospital, which I'm ashamed of ... I never thought I'd end up in somewhere like that, I thought I was a stronger person … and I wouldn't wish anyone to go in there, it was dreadful. I went in a dormitory and it had only just been made into the ladies, so say this was the dormitory, and I was up that corner with a great big radiator and I don't know for how many years, but the men had used that corner for the urinal, so you can imagine, I can't get that smell from out of my head … I couldn't look anybody in the face. I walked with my head down. I can remember you used to have to queue for your tablets, 11 o'clock at night, and I was coming out in my pyjamas and oh my god ... I used to go … the toilets and there would be men in there because they forgot they weren't on that floor they were upstairs. It was a dreadful time, I wouldn't wish it on anybody, I'm ashamed of that really. He [her husband] wouldn't have wanted this, but it just happened that way … I was only in for three weeks, but it was three weeks too long, and I lost such a lot of weight … it was

> dreadful ... I wasn't on this planet it was dreadful. But people don't think you are ill because they can't see a plaster or your paleness, or someat, but you don't know what's happening up here do you? ... I wouldn't wish it on anyone, it was terrible.

For Carol, mental pain was as real and intense as any physical pain. Layard and Clark (2014) have called for mental suffering to be recognized and treated more seriously, in a context where mental health services have tended always to be the Cinderella of the National Health Service and are now being cut back. Such pain, these authors note, is felt in the same areas of the brain as physical pain, yet can go unnoticed. And while physical illness can be seen as an act of the gods, mental illness is a person's own fault, a deficiency, as Carol herself implied. Her distress and 'weakness' provoked incarceration, shutting herself away out of sight – shut off, in a regime of drugs and the stench of urine. In those times there was no option of any talking cure on this estate.

Recreational adult education

Yet Carol's story is about how she picked herself up to become a community activist and found recognition at an intimate as well as group level. A journey from terror at leaving home to chairing committees and engaging with a wider world. A key stage in the process was joining the sewing class, encouraged by a friend who had started to take her for walks:

> I started going to the sewing class … because I just couldn't come through the door, just I had lost my confidence and everything, and when I started going … there was a lady there who I knew pretty well, and she had run this Community House so she said would I come and help on our committee? So, after a bit of argy-bargy, yes I went on and from there on; I just went to the partnership. They had event meetings which I used to go to every month, I just got really involved with everything and I enjoyed it. It's hard work, very tiring, but it keeps me out of mischief … Well a woman from sewing said will you come and help me do this tombola stall or do this that and the other and I just kept going everywhere and then they asked me ... I started with school children reading to me and helping the kids, and then they asked me to be a school governor it's just gone on from there, it's just snowballed.

Intimate threads of mental health were forged in the sewing class and new relationships. Listening to young people reading brought recognition too – a fragile social ecology of flourishing and a psychology of relative hope. There is in Carol's story the idea of serving a greater cause, beyond self, of reading to a child or helping on the tombola stall. The psychologist Mark Freeman (2014) terms this 'the priority of the other'. The fact of giving to others – be it in a charity shop, on committees, or to a child in her reading – provides energy, life, meaning and recognition for the self too. We need something outside ourselves for this to happen, for mental well-being to grow – an ethic of service and devotion that is easily lost in overly rationalist, psychologically 'lite' interpretations of the citizen-become-consumer. Moreover, the habit of service could spread:

> Oh yes. I had a man come live next door to me, he's been there two years now, signed on the Wednesday, made him a drink and what have you, saw him on the Saturday and said "oh are you moving in today? I'll make us some drinks". He said "we have slept here since Wednesday, we haven't got a thing!" And from this shop and people around me he had everything, within a couple of weeks he had got everything. So people are good here, they help one another, he got himself an electric cooker because he only wanted electric, but we got him everything else, curtains, bedding, everything …

A good and bigger society in the making emerges as Carol weaves into her story the energy of community activism and priority given to the other. In such a process we can conceive of how civil society is strengthened in myriad micro-level gestures of generosity rather than from some grand idea or abstract ethical principle:

> … I'm on the local fayre committee and if we didn't have it we couldn't have the carnival, and we have been having a Christmas tree on the square where the bus turns around for the last three years, it has been absolutely fantastic. And on the same night we put a gazebo up and dress it up as a grotto, and have a Santa Claus and last year I think we had 140 children who had free presents. What we raise between us here … I think five or six of us now are volunteers, but everything we get goes to the partnership and just goes back into the community. The things we do with the money, you wouldn't know we could stretch it that far … but you want to see our Carnival … It's lovely. We have the queen, and the girls

> dressed up … The Lord Mayor's coming to open it this year, plus Tristram Hunt [the local Labour Member of Parliament] is going to open it, and the Lord Mayor's going to christen the queen and then we have all kind of stalls: we've got a potter's wheel, three potters' wheels coming, climbing wall, we got bikes, and there's five of them joined together, and so the person behind has to go wherever, it's really good. We have stocks, a clown, everything, it's really good and I don't know where all the people come from, but I am pleased that they do come.

The energy in her story draws on fayres and carnivals, dressing up, and making an effort to bring people together. She describes a different quality of relational space to the solipsism of mental illness and the terror of going out of the home, or a view of citizens as selfish consumers. Mental well-being can be restored in relationships embedded within structures of opportunity, an antidote to hopelessness – relationships that offer recognition and a shared legitimacy of persons, with rights and responsibilities. These organic processes pose large questions about a wider political economy and ideology in which solitary individuals are in harsh competition with each other for survival and seeking pleasure in the market place. Carol's story reminds us of the necessity to think about human flourishing through the frame of our need for each other, the understanding of common vulnerability and the importance of doing ordinary things together. This, as the philosopher Mary Midgley maintains, is not a weakness but a strength, a kind of lifeline or passport to the world (Freeman, 2014).

The state of the estate

However, such psychosocial ecologies of recognition are fragile and undervalued in the ideological emphasis given to individualism and consumerism. For Carol, they represented beams of light in the gloom that could envelop the estate:

> … the young ones who are coming in, they don't care, and you have the druggies in … Well, you do see the young ones, cars pull up and their hands go in the window, you know what they are doing, I mean where I sit in my window … the place is facing me so they usually come in, you hear their cars 'peep peep' and you see the same people come, it's got to be for drugs, it's not right. As long as my grandchildren don't do it, that's the only thing what frightens me, I don't think they will because their dad's too strict, but you never know do you? You never know … Yes we've got

> quite a few from outside our area, we've got a lot who are from here, but there's no jobs, they've got no pride, and they've got nothing to strive for … I just wish some more of the young ones would come and join us, if they get involved that way, then you never know what it might lead to, do you?

The lack of jobs on the estate directly affected her family:

> Lack of jobs, that's the worst thing. So it's really bad people looking for jobs, I've got a grandson … he has done about 12 three or six-month jobs, there is just nothing. He has been to many places looking for work … he's worked in the bake shop, he's delivered the bread, the man is desperate for a job. … Now he wants to be an electrician, so he got this electrician training up on the computer, because I'm no good on computers, sends off for it because it's for Manchester, and this chap rings him up and says 'you do realize its Manchester and it's 14 weeks, three days a week?' Well how can he pay his bus fare up, down and two days lodgings? Because his mum's got sons besides … his dad can't work because he's had a bad neck problem, so I don't know what he's going to do because he has his heart set on being an electrician, but now he's put in for something else at college … I just feel so much disappointment for him ... Lack of jobs, that's the worst thing. Nobody has got any money ... I just wish there was more going on for us, especially for young people and I wish there was some way we could create jobs, get some industry back in.

This was fertile psychosocial territory for the BNP, where the outsider, the other, the asylum seeker (the estate was chosen as a location for resettling asylum seekers) or Asian families opening a shop might be deemed threatening and competitive in a limited labour or housing market (Beider, 2011). The BNP could employ a seductive rhetoric of people needing to look after their own, as the wider body politic distanced itself from everyday struggles to make things better on the estate or find jobs.

The BNP

The BNP filled a vacuum:

> I just don't know. I mean yes we did have the BNP, last year, the last three ... four years near enough, three or four … I didn't like their policies but they worked damned hard for us, they got a lot

> of stuff for us … and she [a BNP councillor] was one of the BNP members, she still comes and helps at the shop, she helps with the carnival, she comes to our meetings … So there's people who are absolutely great … Oh yes. They worked very hard for us, but I'll tell you what, I think with Labour … theirs was always such a safe seat, so even though I didn't agree with BNP policies, it sort of opened things and we've had a hell of a lot more things done since they've been in … It's hard to think, she as a councillor and since has done, she has done that much … and she is a governor as well as I am. She helps with all carnivals, she helps with all the shows we've had here, she came and supported us with Christmas things, she helped get the money to get the Christmas tree, everything, she just worked herself to death. She is a really good woman; I just wish she was a Labour councillor instead of a BNP … I didn't know nothing about them really, only what I'd read in the paper … but I think what it was, all the young people who had wanted them to come in, happened to be first-time voters and maybe they got them in. But as I say, they really, really work hard, because all the others were just oh yes we'll do this and we'll do that and we never heard anything about anybody, so I can only say that the four years they were in, they worked hard … Because they were really good, good for us anyway, and … I just didn't feel comfortable in some of the BNP company but I never felt like that with the BNP councillors ... they never lord it over you or nothing, and whatever you ask them to do, you can guarantee 90 per cent it'll be done and if they couldn't do it, they would still be trying to get that sorted, they really worked hard for us, I miss them …

The City Council invested resources into partnership work over a period of years. City councillors were given a budget to encourage local engagement under the umbrella of community development, but the local government cuts from 2008 onwards, in the age of austerity, threatened almost everything, including the local community centre. The centre was at the heart of Carol's present emotional life and a source of intimate and group recognition. She was angry with the local council and the threats to what had been achieved and feared for the future of the community hall:

> Well it's been made more difficult because there is no funding, but the hall itself is in jeopardy, we don't know how long this is going to be up, how it's going to manage. We want to try, quite

> a few of us have said we want to form a new committee but we are just getting no feedback. All they keep talking about, the two new councillors we have got now just keep telling us there is no money … now all we are getting is 'we don't know if it's going to be kept open or not'; so this is all in jeopardy, there's the bowlers who use it, the senior citizens, like the Sunshine Club coming in on a Thursday, there's four bowling clubs, there's us, there's bingo on a Tuesday night, and there's what used to be British Legion, which is now the Sport and Social: that's in the balance whether that's going to stay open. What are we going to have left? … We have had pantomimes … two pantomimes here at Christmas, but this year if we have anything it'll have to be artists who we use at the carnival, and there's someone who used to work for the Council, he'll come and sing for us. We sometimes put on a Christmas concert if we can get the hall, but if they don't let us have it free we can't have it: it's £120 to hire a room, it's a lot of money ... We won't make nothing off it, we just try and get something for the people …

Life-worlds were threatened and people like Carol made anxious, left wondering where things might lead. Drug dealers on the corner peddling cocaine to the young. Joblessness and struggles to get by penetrated to the heart of her family and those she loved. She might hear political voices on the national stage, although she did not say so, talking of voluntarism and the good society and how paternalistic and distant local government could be. Carol's story is nuanced, echoing older Labourist traditions of cooperation and fraternity, self-help and mutuality, localism and municipality, and communities sustained by partnership with the state and its agencies. A city council could act as a facilitator, but has tended to withdraw from this role. Such an idea of partnership is threatened by the demand for £120 a time for room hire and the loss of a city's presence, a product of wider neoliberal doctrine in which 'government' needs cutting down to size. In this narrative, the state is represented as the problem, its role needing to be reduced to free the human spirit and foster self-help. Or we might perceive the state abandoning notions of collective responsibility to create sustainable jobs and help build sustainable communities, and remember that this is an estate – like many others across the country – where mental illness is rife yet society persists in seeing it largely as a personal problem, while adult education is reduced to a purely personal good, without clear economic or social benefits.

Jimmy and the crisis of local democracy

Jimmy described himself as 'old working-class Labour'. He has lived on the estate for most of his life. He was ill with cancer when we met in 2011 and had also undergone a triple heart bypass operation. He died a year later. In 2011, he wanted to stand for the Council again: 'In fact I got papers to stand myself but my Mrs told me no, I've just had major operations, I've had a kidney removed from cancer and a triple bypass so …' Jimmy felt that the candidates who were standing lacked substance. And like Carol, he disliked the way the estate had declined and was used 'to dump problem families' on without thought or care for the resources and support they needed. He hated the gangs on the estate and the low-level violence of everyday life. He was aware that gang members roaming the estate were mainly out of work young men with time on their hands, who no doubt found meaning and recognition in their group. But Jimmy was an activist and his energies were channelled into establishing a youth centre, where young people's energies might be redirected in more positive ways. Jimmy was educated in an old Labour world and looked up to and respected some of the older councillors who belonged to the WEA/trade union education tradition. He thought of himself as someone who spoke up about local issues while others remained silent.

Born to the estate

Jimmy's parents were the second couple to move into a new home on the new estate in 1939. He talked of the street then, surrounded by fields where kids could play. Now he was unsure of the health of the community:

> I have times when I'm pessimistic and times when I'm optimistic … I see a lot of violence, drugs and vandalism on the estate: low level violence … I see quite a lot of it because of what I do, where I go. Down at the Youth Centre we're always very vigilant about the drugs that go on and there's burglaries that go on because of drugs …

He described how he became an activist and a councillor. It started through a campaign against the closure of a local school:

> I'd gone down there with my mate for a pint and I saw all these people going into the hall and I thought what's happening there and somebody said it's a council meeting: they want to close the school. I went in there and I found it enthralling because council officers and senior council people from the county didn't know

> what the blooming 'eck they were talking about. They were making comments that didn't seem to stand up in the light of day and they said they wouldn't need the school because there wouldn't be as many kids … they'd done a five-year check. What I did, I said 'the reason I've come here is because I've done a check of births and deaths and it shows me that the birth rate is going up: where've you got your figures from?' ... I didn't get an appropriate answer, one or two people jumped on that, you know one or two people in the audience and said 'that's a damned good question: where did you get your figures from? We want another meeting when you come with the proper figures and ...', you know the sort of thing ... I speared them up a bit and to be honest I enjoyed that. A chap came up to me and said are you in politics? He said 'would you be interested in coming to a meeting?' and that got me into politics.

Jimmy described himself as a person who did his homework and fully engaged with issues. He became a councillor and served on various committees, as well as being a Council representative on the YMCA and chairing a Homeless Persons' Unit. He felt that the Council he joined was full of strong people, educated in the Labour movement:

> … We'd got an old ... I say old ... he'd be younger than I am now … Ted Smith and I looked up to him because he was so strong. He was ... if you could convince him that what you were after and what you were doing was right you've won. Or at least you've got a damned good chance of winning because he was so forceful. The other was a chap who's dead now Gordon Tuck he was an immigrant from Newcastle upon Tyne. He was very strong willed … There was one or two councillors who you could sort of take your hat off to …

Here was an autodidactic world of 'self-help basically and listening to what was going on and hanging about with people who were educated' in a relatively vibrant Labour culture:

> ... I was once on the Parks, Parks and Fields Committee I think it was called, something like that, and the old councillor who was in charge was a very quiet chap but he knew everything, you couldn't pick him up on anything ... most of the issues that came up ... those were the sort of people you need around you to educate you ...

Democracy for Stoke

Jimmy thought of himself as a fighter who was determined to get a good deal for the community. He thought Labour had abandoned democracy and talked of 'fascist organizers from Birmingham' plotting against individuals who challenged the mayoral system for being undemocratic. The Party had been in disarray and colleagues, 'good colleagues', were excluded from the Party in 'a putsch':

> Well they wanted to get rid of people: they got rid of a mate of mine … and he appealed and got a barrister friend from down London came up and helped him with his appeal. The barrister came out and he says, 'I've never been in a court, it wasn't a court, it's so prejudiced, you've got no chance of winning' and he was right.

His friend was suspended for two years and meetings of the Party were heavily policed:

> … these fascists from down Birmingham way said you can't hold that meeting and I got a letter saying the meeting was cancelled. Now that wasn't a message that was sent to everybody, just some and I went up, I had to open the door of the community centre because I had the keys because the MP had his surgery there. So I went up and I said 'have you seen this?' 'No,' so he had to get in touch with everybody and say 'look we'll hold the meeting but we won't make any decisions, we'll just talk about the decisions'. Mick Williams got chucked out … he was the coordinator for Democracy 4 Stoke.

Jimmy eventually left the Party and joined D4S. He disliked the way the councillor's role had changed from being representative to more managerialist – from acting as a spokesperson for a community to being a funnel to explain the City Council's policies in *Mandate for Change*. He hated what he saw as the careerists who were involved for the money: local councillors got paid, in effect, rather than being given expenses and cover for losses in pay. In Jimmy's time, being a councillor had been a vocation within a wider movement.

He got involved in D4S and was passionately opposed to what he saw as the hollowing out of representative processes and 'the top-down, centre-knows-best' mentality. The mayoral system was rejected in a local

referendum but replaced by a cabinet system in which a small number of cabinet members controlled what went on:

> Mick Williams … got in touch with me and said 'would you be interested in joining this group?' Well we campaigned, I joined them and we campaigned, we got thousands of leaflets out because of that opportunity to get rid of the mayoral system and we were granted a referendum at the centre and they granted us the chance to have a referendum to see whether the people here wanted a mayor or not. We campaigned all over the show. I stood ... days at a time giving leaflets out to everybody. We signed petitions and I think I got 10,000 signatures to get rid of the mayor on petition. Problem is we had no choice on what was coming in its place and when they got rid of the mayor they brought in the cabinet system, which doesn't work … The system's changed now and it's a cabinet system ... trouble is the government have to take people who can do the job, well that's how it goes … from what I can see. Both the councillors from here are cabinet members and I wouldn't pay tuppence for them, I told them I wouldn't pay tuppence for them, they don't speak at the council, they don't speak at committee. That's why they've been picked in my opinion because they haven't got an opinion.

He thought there were only two strong people in the cabinet and they were largely unaccountable:

> ... the problem is the other members of the council don't get a chance to make decisions, they only get a chance to make arguments. If you passed – we're going to close down the local community centre for example – in the cabinet, I as a member on the floor, a backbench member, wouldn't have a chance to stop that. I'd vote against it and the others could vote against it, but if they make the decision they're not going to accept that vote … Democracy is in trouble and it's so precious they shouldn't mess about with it. In my opinion [Tony] Blair gave a lot of the power to the national and regional organizations ... and they come up and assert that power, they have their meetings that anyone can go from the Labour Party to the constituency but it isn't worth it … because they're changing the rules ... I'll give you a for instance ... we've got Tristram Hunt now … Yes Stoke Central. I went to his shortlisting. It wasn't a shortlisting, it was

> an action. There was quite a crowd in there and prior to that I'd had people coming here to visit me, contestants and there were some really good people around like a doctor … you know that sort of thing. When I went to the selection they'd been excluded from the selection but there was a taxi driver from Oxford and there was a London black fellow, I'm not being racist now, and there was Tristram that was it … It was a fiddle through and through … I'm not saying Tristram's no good; I haven't had time to test him yet …

The Party at the local level – the ward or polling district – ceased to exist. 'I mean this area now, this ward hasn't got a branch, it's gone, it's just been wiped out. The branch used to be 50 or 60. It's been wiped out, mostly by unelected Labour officers.'

The BNP

The BNP, along with various 'local fascists and racists', worried Jimmy:

> The Labour Party was seen as not representing the people … New Labour … and the vote dropped massively … Now here we'd got three independents, I don't know what they're independent of … they came with their stories and put out five or six leaflets where Labour Party didn't do anything … You know the story they're going to flood this place with Asians and they'll see that your kids won't get houses and you know, but there was racism here even before that, but not anything I was ever worried about, but they won on a very small turnout, a very low turnout ...

The BNP were voted out, in 2011, but 'they worked hard within the community – at least two of them did, Alby Walker, he was the leader of the BNP here and he was councillor here.' And 'he spoke well in council'.

Jimmy talked of the incident at the local Asian shop that was mentioned earlier:

> I mean we've got our own brand of fascists, you know, but just small amounts who don't know any better. Unemployed since they left school, probably will be until they're put away in the box like ... There was an Asian family that kept the Post Office at the shops …and they were nice people, any road they had a lot of trouble and they had their windows smashed in the Post Office and ... other things going on and I was fetched out one night, I went down and there was a gang of them, gang of youths

> outside with bricks and god knows what. Some lads who wanted to support them, local lads who wanted to support the Asians, come up with a plan. They were in the shop, but they would pretend to go out, on the pretence of going out for the evening … but they went round the corner and then these lads, fascists kicked off … When they came back there was a fight and what have you. A bloke tried to back up out of the way and ran over one of the yobbos and killed him. The only people that got sent to trial and to jail were the people that were trying to help the Asians, including two of the Asians … All the yobbos that were breaking windows ... and I went in into the shop where they had their windows ... So I went up and boarded the glass up. Twenty-three times they had to go up there and replace the shop and flat windows but none of those yobbos ever got hung. Not for that anyhow but they're all in the nick now for other issues like, but that was a nasty issue that stripped the community … It was nasty. The entire place … I went down to visit the old people who lived near the Post Office knocking on the door seeing if they were alright and they were sitting in their windows with buckets of water in case … they were scared to death.

The youth centre

Jimmy began a campaign to open a youth centre, as a better alternative. He managed to get money from a trust, the City Council and the National Lottery. He was proud of the centre:

> I'll take you down there. … So yes, I started it because I could … there was different groups like the boxers, the kickboxers, kendo, judo and all the other things that work in there … I've had to carry on fighting to keep the prices down. To get more people in for lower prices, rather than go for the higher prices and it seems to be working you know, for the last three years, it's been over seven years now, for the last three years we've had no subsidy at all. We've made enough money to ... you get the subsidy and pay it back like …

Another youth centre on a nearby estate closed, because of the cuts, and the youth centre on the estate got hold of some extra equipment. I spent time at the club, and the young people were solidly white, mainly male and working class, reflecting the ethnic composition of most of the estate.

Jimmy also talked of the English Defence League making inroads on the estate, among the gangs. It may be distance rather than proximity that feeds the frenzy of racism while the violence of gangs is rooted in hopelessness. Communities in Stoke have tended to evolve separately from one another, and if not ghettoes are nonetheless clearly demarcated ethnically, which makes building multicultural public space more difficult.

The spirit level

Andrew works as a minister of religion on the estate. He originates from the south of England but has worked in the community for some years. In the course of the study he was open about his struggles and their spiritual dimension. He worried about the church community and its role in an area of food banks and mental distress. He challenged the consumerism and individualistic politics of the last 30 years:

> I'm a child of the late 70s, early 80s and Margaret Thatcher and that, what I still see as devastation of whole communities and an arrogance that didn't seem to care for people in terms of increasing share ownership, you know, a great consumerism and capitalism that I don't feel to have been a good thing.

It was a time of particular despair, as racism increased and local facilities – like a community shop and centre – were threatened. Interestingly, Andrew found the research process itself to be therapeutic, a space to process things, including strongly negative thoughts about the community and some of its people, the difficulties of organizing regeneration initiatives because of rivalries and even the narcissism of certain individuals.

He wondered at times whether he really was the right person for the job:

> I said to you earlier about my predecessor being a bit of a fish out of water, you know ... just not the right person for the place, and I ask myself the same question because my family are stable: I have a strong marriage and family life, just being disconnected from many ... there are several households where that is not true ... One of the frustrations that I have is them standing up and saying people here are the best, and I always want to say well, 'how do you know?' Because you have never left here … And that's what frustrates me. Yes they have a lot to be proud of, and it is a friendly city but actually in terms of their thinking, it's very narrow, it's what they have been used to.

Andrew frequently felt like an outsider on the estate and struggled to make particular projects work:

> I'm still not an estate person; the way locals think ... So am I always going to be an outsider in people's eyes? Part of that is me as a personality, my character. I'm not a huge gregarious person, yes I'm sociable but actually not ... I'm not the person to be at the centre of a party … On Thursday it was the worst meeting I had been to … or have come away from … because not only is there that depression we can't do anything [about] because we haven't got enough people … there's also … the ridiculous notion that somehow we could put in a bid for £15,000 to try and lease the community centre for a year, or for a shop area … And I'm thinking well I've got the experience of running this place where I don't have to find the money for lease … and that's hard enough by itself. To then think we can rent out space to the police who have a surgery … It's not going to work so I wasn't going to say from the outset … and say well 'that's not going to work' 'cos I think well, people have got to find out for themselves …

When the BNP won seats to represent the estate on the City Council, Andrew reflected on their success. He thought much of it had to do with caring for local people:

> … then the BNP coming along and addressing people's very personal individual needs, and doing something about it, people don't care about the bigger picture of antisocial behaviour across the whole area, whole community, they say I have actually got some lad outside my gate, I want him shifted, and my understanding of the BNP, was that they worked with individual residents, they got their issues sorted out, whether it was a garden gate that didn't close, or whatever … a very tangible and personal issue that people faced … They were also community-minded in terms of contact with the residents … and again I thought 'well I don't like what you are standing for, but we'll work together on the projects', and I saw someone who was committed to causes within the area … I don't see the BNP as having anything good to offer long term, but as I say in terms of the selfish needs, the individual needs, yes good, but actually for a long term good community spirit, or ... and certainly for the city, their thinking just wouldn't be enough …

He eventually took three months out for 'spiritual refreshment' and to reflect on the role of the church in the community. In the final interview, he said:

> This is my eighth year … fundamental to all that I am here … is concern for the downtrodden or oppressed or whatever sort of language you use from the Bible: caring for widows and orphans and so on … the three months provided that opportunity to step back from your everyday nose to the grindstone experience to then do something that is much more your passion and good … There's a personal sense of faith … there's a strong conviction that when we do stuff like that, we can flourish. When we just seek to look after ourselves, well things are not so good in this horrible austerity time …

Ironically, it was participating in a new city-wide initiative to provide food banks that brought a new lease of life. Meeting basic needs helped renew his spirit:

> … what we do … is link in with the city-wide food bank where from across the city, food is donated … it's taken to a warehouse where it's accounted for, it's dated, it's sorted, it's distributed to centres like this and then we're doing it tonight … We'll be open for a couple of hours where people that are in crisis are given an amount of food. … I love the fact that, we are part of one cog within this set up. There are eight distribution centres … and they are looking to have more … They are around the city … For any one crisis they can have up to three handouts. At their first visit they might say: 'Oh I'm too wretched, I'm a failure'. It's a sense of … 'clearly if I can't get food on the table for me kids then, what sort of mother am I?' … I think it works well in the sense of just reassuring, consoling. Accepting there's no judgement, we are just here to give you some food. One of the key, one of the areas in which I'd like us to do better is in the interaction. The chatting … Not making friends and being long term buddies but just for people that have got, who have lost a lot … to have a listening ear, to be able to talk about things.

Andrew moved easily in and out of feelings of hopelessness. He felt worn down by his work at times. For him, the research occupied a border country between research and therapy, the personal and professional, storytelling and a deeply critical reflection on practice. He was open about his anxieties

and struggles and the uncertain place of a church in a community like this. He was able to talk about his messy, confused and contradictory feelings, and thought that space to consider these was essential to restoring some professional purpose. The food bank initiative helped to an extent to restore his faith in the city and what the church could do. All denominations and religious groups were involved. Trying new things was important, he said: 'I'm trying to do too much', he reflected, 'at times, and how do I prioritize, how can I make good choices and not wear myself out, in conditions that often feel very fragile?' Here was critical reflection at a raw, personal, social and even political edge.

'An estate where people speak English'

After seeing Jimmy and Andrew I drove round the estate and noticed two flags of St George in the street where I once lived. I passed by the house where I was born and it looked shabby and uncared for. I noticed there were no trees, despite being a prominent feature of the estate in my childhood. Many of the gardens were concreted over to provide space for cars. I looked at the house of a one-time neighbour where I used to go to make phone calls. The lady who lived there was good like that because telephones were still a rarity in the 1950s and 60s and she had a delightful black Bakelite phone that would connect you to an operator. She would insist, however, that I made a reverse charge or connect call. Now I saw a man at the gate and said hello, introduced myself and told him I was born round here. 'We moved in fairly recently', he said. 'I wanted my children to go to a school where they spoke English.' I said nothing, but accepted a cup of tea from his wife. The trees in the back garden were still there, although I could see there were none in my old home where the garden was bare and unkempt. They told me that they had moved from Shelton – where my mum was born – because of the Asians, and that the estate was for people like them or should be kept that way. He was unemployed and struggling to find work. She said nothing. Shelton is situated close to Hanley and it was in Hanley Park that mum and dad courted and played tennis. Until not so long ago the park was a delight but now it looked uncared for. The man in the house on the street asked what I thought about politics and the state of affairs. The BNP had been in retreat for a while and lost in the 2011 election as Labour sought to regain lost ground. 'Who speaks for people like us?' he asked. I said nothing, knowing what might come next.

I thought again of my parents and their politics: social democratic in a kind of Keynesian way, although they would never have used such words.

But they knew that the welfare state cared for people like them, working-class folk, and had provided a good environment in which to live. They were content, more negatively, with notions of British superiority, tested in the Second World War, and this was a powerful discourse in the stories they would tell. But they also worried about the decline of 'British' influence in the world. I thought of my own education, and of taking the old 11-plus examination which provided the route into an academic education for 20 per cent of the age cohort. I failed it, or at least was allocated a place at a 'technical high school' in the north of the city near Burslem, because the test had indicated that although I was 'bright', my bent was practical. Mum hated the idea, and thought a grammar school education was essential for her son. She lost no time contacting the local councillor, or 'alderman' as he was called (recalling the old Anglo-Saxon tradition of 'elders' that formed part of the City Council. New elders could be nominated by whoever was in political control of the city). Harold Clowes was his name and mum knew him well. He was from the old WEA tradition and was often seen on the estate. Mum wanted the decision overturned – and it was. Corrupt, perhaps, too cosy and open to abuse, maybe – but there was an active presence and councillors and aldermen were part of the community.

I remembered in those moments how racism could be intrinsic to working-class life, partly a hangover from imperialism. When Mrs Jones, a next-door neighbour died, mum was concerned lest blacks move in and a black family eventually did, in the 1970s. Their name was Crooks, and the two families got on well after a while. Garth was one of the sons who eventually played football for Stoke City, Tottenham Hotspur and England. When people get to know each other, find connections in common, when they understand more about the unique human beings living next door and their hybridity, then racism can retreat and negative projections lose potency (Husband *et al*., 2014). Back in 2011, I thanked the couple for letting me see their house, and for tea, and for the opportunity to look into the garden where I once played as a child.

But I felt depressed and the stories of the Asian shopkeepers kept coming to mind, as did the man's remark about moving to the estate because '… we wanted an area where our kids could speak English among people like us.' This was territory the BNP had exploited and where the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) will stake a claim. UKIP is a party made respectable, as some see it (Burnett, 2011), by the shift to the right of the mainstream parties, including Labour. Yet such rationalizations about national maneuvering seem insufficient to explain the state of the estate

and how racism can thrive. The neglect of the political, social and material fabric, and the disrespect towards, or maybe ignorance of, an older Labour fraternal tradition, could provide a fuller answer, as might an understanding of how the BNP worked to make themselves respectable and accepted by responding to immediate needs. Such local nuance can get lost in overly generalized, biographically and ethnographically distant levels of analysis.

Chapter 6

Disrespect and political education for the jihad

The threatening, energizing other

The fractured economy and mental distress affecting Stoke's predominantly white estates also trouble areas of the city in which people of predominantly South Asian origin live. Those of South Asian origin who settled in Stoke were mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and they now make up about 50 per cent of the city's ethnic minority population. In 2011 they numbered just over 9,000 (Burnett, 2011), at a time when the city's white population had in fact been in decline. In Burslem, in the north of the city, over 30 per cent of its residents are from ethnic minority communities (Burnett, 2011).

In the stories there is evidence of disrespect and everyday experiences of Islamophobia: among taxi drivers, for example, told frequently to 'fuck off home'. This sense is amplified by evidence of physical violence: Asian people are killed or injured and mosques damaged. The reality produces insecurity, vulnerability and defensiveness among some in the Asian population – paranoia even – and reinforces the tendency for people to congregate in particular areas among their own. People talked of an unwillingness to enter the predominantly white estates. A collective ethnic solipsism results – separate communities rarely engaging one with another, other than defensively. Running alongside this is the vacuum created by a dysfunctional political economy and intergenerational fracture, which is being filled, for some, by Islamic fundamentalism. Though Islamist groups are small in number and membership, and the vast majority of Muslims living in Stoke long for peace and tranquility, there is a problem.

Islamic fundamentalism has taken hold of certain young people in particular mosques. Small numbers, for sure, but they do exist, and the problem should be engaged with, insisted a number of my collaborators in the research. These 'radicalized' groups might in fact mirror the BNP or English Defence League: they offer recruits scapegoating narratives and the stereotyping of difference in the city. Here the perception of others becomes a self-motivated distortion accompanied by an idealization of self and one's own culture. There is a psychological splitting between good and bad across

cultures, in which unwanted parts of one's own collective identity – the pursuit of material wealth or pleasure, for instance, the sexualization of women or a capacity for violence – are projected on to the other of, say, the white estate. The role extreme groups fulfil in different ethnic communities can in fact be compared, which is not to suggest a simplistic equivalence between Islamic and racist groups given the ubiquity of Islamophobia. Such groups can, however, provide meaning, purpose, identity and recognition. They can also offer compelling, if warped, narratives of what the problem actually is.

Sverre Varvin (2012) has compared the rise of Islamic fundamentalism with xenophobia and racism of the kind illuminated in the last chapter. Xenophobia is a negative attitude towards strangers or the unknown that gets embedded in a loosely organized network of ideas. Islamism refers to a set of political ideologies based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Both, however, share hostile attitudes to the stranger and a fear of being negatively influenced. And importantly, both feed off and need the other in a bizarre dialectic. Such processes require the reality of a threatening other – the EDL or the jihadist – to give fundamentalism its potency, which works at individual as well as collective levels. Collective fantasies can dig deep into social anxieties and also what is termed the primitive, or early, vulnerable parts of psyche that can instinctively feel threatened and at risk. Both racism and fundamentalism offer an intoxicating conduit for such fears, totalizing narratives that act as a defence in the misrecognition of the other. This is psychological cleansing, where the faults lie firmly elsewhere in the other's religion or culture, and where what is most feared or troubling in self gets evacuated and projected on to other groups. Such a phenomenon is profoundly anti-educational: it avoids real human engagement across difference and thus potentially any better understanding of self and one's own cultural identity, in all its messy hybridity.

There is an important material as well as cultural aspect to these processes in Stoke. In marginalized Muslim communities of high unemployment, the absence of occupational structures creates special problems of transition for vulnerable young men. Culturally, as occupational structures have fractured, processes of transition from being a son to the head of a household, and thus finding some existential meaning and a purposeful role, have become problematic. Relationships between the generations suffer too, as male initiation rituals in the workplace are lost. Narratives of the 'Christian' neglect of white Muslims in the Bosnian conflict filled some of the economic and intergenerational vacuum. In the 1990s actions by the West were seen by some as primarily anti-Muslim rather than racist. Certain

young people heard and inwardly digested stories of Muslim humiliation, collective trauma and a need to fight back. This was then fuelled by the increasing toxicity of Islamophobia.

This chapter is partly structured around interviews with politicians, community activists and individuals involved with the so-called Prevent agenda, a national government initiative to tackle extremism under a rhetoric of community cohesion. I also use narrative material from individuals close to particular jihadists to paint a portrait of Raafe, a quasi-fictional composite derived from multiple narratives. Raafe, which in Arabic means 'companion', was radicalized and sought to radicalize others. I also interviewed several community educators and a group of Asian taxi drivers I met at a WEA healthy living session in the YMCA centre in Hanley, a building opposite the mosque that was pipe-bombed. The stories illustrate the interplay of global forces and parochial politics. Local issues matter in creating cultures of distress, but are part of a broader canvas. There are particularities in Stoke – compared with those in bigger cities like Leeds, certain imams could be 'unconfident' or 'under-educated' – or so it was claimed – for example, only able to teach the rudiments of Islamic faith. Some, certain participants said, could barely speak or understand English. They were seen by the older generations as good and supportive, but younger people could perceive them as inadequate, ignorant and out of touch. Particular mosques provided space and focus for radical activists apparently without the elders or imams knowing, becoming, in effect, a location for political 'education' of a fundamentalist kind.

The problems of the Prevent agenda

Stoke – its geography, history and discontents – was an important theme in many of the interviews. Its distinctiveness and parochialism were emphasized:

> Stoke is too far up in the North of the West Midlands for it to be ... to have some affinity with the likes of Manchester; it's not close enough to benefit ... from ... the regeneration background, where Salford and Oldham and Rochdale benefitted from the growth of Manchester. Stoke doesn't have that; it does not benefit directly from the success of Birmingham and Wolverhampton …

The six towns mentality still exists, I was told, by some of those involved in the Prevent programme, which made it difficult to pursue a 'cohesion' agenda. Ironically, the Prevent strategy had provoked feelings of competition for scarce resources and fears that others were favoured:

> … there's a sort of suspicion that other areas get more resources ... some comments like 'here they go again, the scroungers get it all'; so from a cohesion perspective something which I think is quite unique here because of the level of deprivation really and because of the different townships and linear structure, quite a kind of a long city. If you think about it people with some suspicion around well 'actually it's my area doesn't get the resources that another area does' …

Wider narratives of the undeserving poor, with its Victorian echoes, went like this: ' … it's because they don't work and we do, so they get it all … so there's undercurrent of suspicion that someone else … gets the resources, and we're left out, which is quite strong here given the linear structure.' It is important to remember that large-scale unemployment affects all of Stoke's communities, as do the insecurities generated by neoliberalism. Some of the people on the white estates talked of the privileged other – the asylum seeker, immigrant or Muslim, for example – who got access to housing and work that properly belonged to the 'indigenous population'. There were myths of mosques being constructed out of the public purse even though they were privately funded. In the Asian communities, the white estates could feel like no-go areas, locations of hostility and intolerance.

Driving taxis

Imran was born in Shelton, and drives a taxi. He told me of his experiences of racism and talked about particular incidents. He mentioned a story of someone of Indian origin being murdered on a white estate a couple of weeks before our interview:

> The Asian community has been here for over 30 years now, and there are still people in Shelton, Cobridge and other places which are populated mainly by Asians and people don't really want to go and live in white areas … because they feel threatened, they feel that they get racially abused ... I have worked as a taxi driver as well for about a year and I have had experiences of racism because of going to places like that. Most of the people who have caused me a lot of problems have been mostly drunken people, rarely people who are sober … there was a murder too on one of those estates …

Imran was anxious to add that it was only a minority in his own community who caused trouble. But he also felt integration was more advanced in cities

like Birmingham or Manchester: 'whereas in Stoke-on-Trent the community just stick to an area, and they just stare at me'. Stare, and make judgements that people like him should not even be here, after 40 years, and saying 'fuck off home, Paki.'

Bosnia

A community leader, who I call Aasif, was also born in Shelton, a district situated between Stoke Town and Hanley (where my mother was born):

> Yes I was born in the Shelton area, my parents from Pakistani origin moved into the UK in the 60s. My father came to Stoke to work in the pottery industry. He has stayed here ever since … so … that's a brief … history about myself …

Aasif was not particularly comfortable with talking about himself and his family, and wanted to discuss aspects of his work in relation to extremism. He acknowledged that extremism existed both on the white estates and in particular Muslim communities where, as he perceived it, it was directly linked to events in Bosnia in the 1990s:

> I would say Islamic extremism … I think the far right has always been there; it's a recent phenomenon. … you had groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir taking advantage of the situation in Bosnia … with what's happening with the Muslims ... arms not being allowed to get to the Muslims to defend themselves where Russia is providing the Christian Serbs; it was a them-against-us kind of debate with groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir … groups like this were very … you've got a group talking about the male Muslim section of Muslim community at that time; the youth, low education achievement, low aspiration … no job opportunity… perfect audience… you can recruit easy ... It's nothing to do with the colour of your skin; this is not racism; this is a target on the Muslim community because these Muslims are white … I can remember some of these Hizb ut-Tahrir members who in the early '90s, pulling the youth away from the parents as well …

From this perspective, Bosnia was a turning point. It was a trauma in which scales fell from the eyes: it led to increased politicization and provided a mythic rationale for fundamentalism (Varvin, 2012). A group like Hizb ut-Tahrir (or Liberation Party) – حزب التحرير, in the Arabic – could exploit such feelings. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamic political organization commonly associated with the goal of all Muslim countries

unifying into one Islamic state or caliphate, ruled by Islamic or sharia law with a Caliph elected by Muslims as the head of state. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1952 as part of a movement to create a new elite among Muslim youth. The writings of the group's founder, Shaikh Taqi al-Dine al-Nabahani, lay down detailed descriptions for a restored caliphate (Ruthven, 2012).

Another community leader, Aatif, talked of his fears of Islamism and the weakness of mosque management in relation to it:

> We shouldn't shy away from talking about extremism and radicalization; you know we shouldn't brush it under the carpet … al-Qaeda inspired or Islamic or far right, you know they never shy away from using weaknesses which they have identified to propel their own cause; and we are trying to impress on communities actually but you need to be separating them out and looking at some other issues you are facing; it's been a learning curve, we have had our difficult moments … because the mosque management wasn't aware of what this group was ... It was brought into Stoke by an individual with family links ... but he was an individual who had a very troubled upbringing ...

This was one of several references to Raafe. These interviews took place in 2011, in a context of a number of arrests being made in Stoke under anti-terrorism legislation. The 'radicalizers' as they were called, had targeted young people. Bosnia was central to the initial processes of radicalization, providing a compelling myth of the West's hostility towards Islam. I use the idea of the mythic narrative deliberately. The 'Christian world' had conspired against brother Muslims in Bosnia and people had been slaughtered as the West stood by. There is evidence that radicalization works by an emotional, imaginative appeal to the past constructed in the light of the present, and to the present in the gaze of the past. Jihad becomes constructed as a heavy responsibility that requires toughness, even brutality. The victory of the Muslim armies, against the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, and the Crusaders in the twelfth century's Battle of Hattin, is interpreted as the outcome of a long process of small-scale hard-hitting battles in various locations. Past struggles are reinterpreted in the light of the present and what may be needed in the struggle today against the new crusaders of the West and its client states. Heroism and martyrdom are called for in what is quite a different process from a rational, textual analysis of the Qu'ran and its meanings. Muslim clerics may speak in the language of theory; the jihadi groups act through stories and doing (Hassan and Weiss, 2015).

In the Bosnian conflict, ironically, the use of historical trauma and resistance, in mythologized form, was potent for the other side too. Milosevic, the Serbian leader, used stories about the slaughter of many of his people and the alleged murder of King Lazar by Ottoman Muslims in the Battle of Ksovo Poloje, to 'explain' present miseries and justify terrible actions against Muslim populations. This is a narrative of a humiliation that had to be avenged. Actual events may have been different but the myths of the murderous, threatening other play into individual and collective psyches, fuelling hate and the need to annihilate (Varvin, 2012).

Established authorities were seen as acquiescent in the face of Western policies and their attack on the Muslim religion. Aatif said:

> … to begin I suppose disadvantaged communities, Muslim community, are concerned about double standards … whether it's foreign policy in the West; how the West deals with dictators who have been toppled in the last year or so; and how democracy is good for certain people but not for others; about how freedom of expression is kind of trampled on when it comes to certain Muslim elements within those communities. And in fact the only way the only people standing up to these dictators are the extreme elements; so they are the only hope … if you've been downtrodden for 20 or 30 years you grasp on to anything.

The West had, after all, cultivated the dictators in the Middle East, I was told, but then objected to the Islamic forces that resisted them, in a kind of 'vicious circle'. Western objectives were also held to be tawdry and materialistic, barely disguised by democratic rhetoric and amounting to the pursuit of oil and economic colonialism.

For particular people this narrative linked to the problems of Kashmir, which remained a simmering issue. As Maheer, another community worker, said:

> Kashmir … the British left a legacy on purpose; you know to cause tension and trouble and a general undercurrent of, you know, things aren't always as they seem … they say one thing and do another; now that's kind of always bubbling under the surface … a couple of years before obviously 2001, you get the Afghan War, the invasion and you have America and others cropping up forming of groups, … and training, and a more austere version of Islam takes a hold which suits individuals well because they are able to fight the Soviets and the perception is very much as

> the job was done, the West then left … the Afghans to fend for themselves having created … warlords who are … you know suitcases full of money and gold bars and weapons and that is then exported from the West through to various individuals, freedom fighters …

Suitcases of money provided by the West helped create some of the 'monsters' it later proceeds to disparage. The division of Kashmir festered, and according to people like Maheer, each action by the West was all of a tawdry piece. I was told that in a sense it was the West, perversely, who created Hizb ut-Tahrir.

In the schools

Another community worker, Raheel, had worked in schools as a learning mentor. He was involved with 'challenging pupils', predominantly of Pakistani origin. They came, he said, with low aspirations and poor educational achievements. The effects of new 'radicalizing' activity had been noticeable to him, especially after 9/11:

> I spent time working in primary schools … and in a secondary school; about helping, it was working with … more challenging pupils predominantly male Pakistani boys; they come with low aspirations, very low educational achievement ... so it's trying to raise awareness, raise their achievement levels, raise their aspirations … you would get Muslim pupils asking challenging questions around terrorism, extremism; so I was noticing this kind of challenge coming from some of the pupils there … yes I can remember one incident where there was one pupil who was transferred from one school to the school I was working at because he let off fireworks on 9/11; that day at his previous school so he was transferred over to ours; and I was mentoring him, working with him, and it was just answering, and it was out of the blue, some questions; well I was helping with some of his GCSE work the question was, 'oh sir is suicide bombing … acceptable under Islamic law?' That threw me some.

Raheel talked to the head of the school about spending more time with the young people. The head agreed and Raheel decided on a particular approach:

> and it … was just basically showing him a picture of the aftermath of a suicide attack in I think it was in Pakistan; you couldn't see

> the picture, it wasn't very clear so the head was ok with showing that; you could just vaguely make out somebody, a deceased person on the ground … it was a police officer … And I asked him a question well … this is somebody … who is doing his job … innocent … he's lost his life; he may have had parents that relied on his income; possibly a wife, possibly children as well so with him getting no benefits system in Pakistan, children have lost an education because you pay for an education there … wife has lost … the main income provider; she may have to work … parents may have to work or resort to methods of other income … without going into faith, can you justify that now?

Raheel said he preferred to focus on the human, personal dimensions: that the dead policeman had a family, a wife and children, for example, rather than questions of faith. He also talked to some of the 'local scholars', which suggests a more complex picture than just undereducated imams, who helped him understand how and why 'suicide in Islam is forbidden'. But questions kept coming from the children: about Iraq, Afghanistan and what was happening in Kashmir. Kashmir was very close to home for some people in Stoke. 'Why isn't Kashmir being sorted out?', Raheel was asked, a question he also asked himself. Palestine and Israel figured in the equation too: 'The Western governments are desperate to sort out Afghanistan and Iraq and why isn't it the same with Palestine or Gaza?' Questions like these raised big and unresolved issues for many young people in the communities.

Weakness in the mosques

Stories of an authority vacuum and weaknesses in some mosques were frequent, as was anxiety about growing intergenerational rifts. The mosque management had sometimes been unaware of processes of radicalization. Maheer told me about the radical leader, Raafe, who evidently came from a troubled background:

> … Raafe didn't have a very good relationship with his father ... ended up in crime … was sent down to prison … Came out of prison and he was within a few weeks, he was, he had transformed into somebody who was a practising Muslim. Now to hear him … later on when we realized he was part of Hizb ut-Tahrir, but at that point to see somebody change so dramatically was wow, he made a real positive change ... you couldn't explain to your parents why you wanted to … your parents who came in the early 60s … came when they were young … so very little …

> religious education … so they didn't have … opportunity to question the imams and learn something; so they couldn't pass that religious knowledge on to the youth, to their children; so the parents relied upon the mosques to offer that … so that's where the communication barrier helped groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir. We can offer you Islamic information in your language, that's what attracted a lot of people in Stoke-on-Trent on topical issues …

Radicalization could transform the lives of individuals like Raafe, providing meaning and purpose. There were programmes of 'political education' in certain mosques, involving the use of stories and appeals to action, rather than textual hermeneutics. Narratives of twelfth-century victories supported a call for similar jihad now, one that would require toughness and heroism:

> … we are not sure, but Raafe came into the community he was using a lot of facilities because his father was in the mosque; so it was easy for him to use. He would have a few sessions in the mosque, some of which I attended … well it was in those sessions I picked up some kind of … chat that I wasn't happy with as a Muslim; these weren't things that we heard in the past; not heard this from the sessions I attended … I've not heard these from my Muslim community or my parents so it was going back to the imams and asking them questions, like that 'I've heard this. Is it correct?' 'No it's not', and then it's at that point when I had some friends who were at university that were slightly concerned about this group as well because they were getting on to campus.

Hizb ut-Tahrir and the EDL

Groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir took advantage, Maheer said, and had done so long before any Prevent agenda was in play:

> They offered the Muslim youth something the mosques at that time couldn't offer, that was discussions and debates in English … Bosnia definitely … My thoughts definitely were … you know, you know this is genocide you know pictures of men who you know this is not right and arms are being … stocked … I think some of these groups ... started jumping on the bandwagon …

'A lot of young men', according to Maheer, began to think that the international situation 'is not quite right' and they had no access to 'mainstream counter arguments'. The radicals were 'filling a void', Maheer

said, 'offering young people a serious rationale, an explanation for their troubles, and also purpose in life'. They were offering persuasive stories of past and present and appeals to the hearts and imaginations of young Muslim men, and more recently, perhaps, young women too.

Particular incidents served to fuel these tendencies, such as the attempt by members of the EDL to blow up a mosque:

> By three individuals who were associated with ex-army officials, yes that was a deliberate attempt to blow up the mosque … I think they were local … I can't say ... I think they were, they have been caught, they have been sentenced, they have got hard sentences, sending a very strong message to the community there, but there was a concerted effort to do that, and of course we've got the EDL essence here in Stoke-on-Trent … I think it's on the rise, they are growing ... we have a by-election coming up in the next few weeks in Stoke-on-Trent and already some intelligence has come in that there will be essentially EDL candidates coming in under the name of ... something 'British' ... I forget the name, but there is a new name for them. They had an EDL rally here in Stoke-on-Trent … And they are in the background. I mean the BNP and Nick Griffin saw Stoke-on-Trent as a prime breeding site, they have been exposed and they have been wiped out, but organizations like EDL and so on see this as well and they continue to try and find opportunities, and of course the existence of other organizations say in the Muslim communities as well who are equally vocal, and maybe their views can be considered as extreme, are a perfect recipe that they are looking for so that they can use that and say 'there you go'. We have had a few arrests here for instance under the terrorism act and as a consequence the EDL said 'well, they are living in your own streets'. That sent shock waves in the community and then the community starts thinking 'well, what's going on?'

Abbas was an experienced community leader living in a particularly troubled area. He was well aware of difficulties in certain mosques, at least historically:

> … things are changing now, there are imams in Stoke-on-Trent now who can speak English, who do use emails, who are computer literate and who are engaging with the youngsters. Traditionally what happened was ... I mean you have to look at the capacity of

> the community first of all, and then the people that are actually running the management committees of the mosques and then what their thinking is in terms of what kind of person they want to lead the prayers and to educate their children and that problem still exists unfortunately. There is often a lack of capacity within the management committees of the mosques, to the point that they are not able to really analyse what the problem is and what structures and what mechanisms they need to put in place to be able to deal with those problems.

The elders, he said, were peaceful people acting in good faith:

> The imams that they naively thought were the right people, would be a person that they'd seen back in their village at home who was a nice person, a holy man that you could trust. We want him, he comes in here and a great boost to his life as well in terms of economics of the move and they will happily carry on. The elder population would go to the mosque, pray; no issues there at all, peaceful people just practicing their religion. What they didn't see is the fact that their children are now growing in a society which is totally different to what they have ever encountered. Their children go to school and the language that they speak is English …

Abbas introduced a personal intergenerational and family dimension to his narrative:

> I'll give you an example from my children, my wife doesn't speak English at home very much, she speaks her native language, Punjabi; my son has never ever spoken to me in Punjabi, even when he's having a fluent conversation with his mother and I butt in, he will always answer me in English and my other son sometimes does, but the youngest son has never, ever engaged with me in any other language … I have tried my upmost to say what's going on here? Let's try and understand this, he wouldn't do it, so he is talking in Punjabi with his mum, I butt in, immediately he reverts to English and no matter how hard I've tried, he doesn't. That's an important message, that the mother-tongue of the youngsters born and bred here has become English. Those children are not going to be able to engage with an imam, with a teacher who does not speak English which is at least as good as theirs; their English is likely to be broken, in which case

> they would make fun of the English and say what's this? Or the imam would not understand the needs of those children, to say well hang on a second there is a cultural difference here, these children are being taught in school for you know, 35, 40 hours a week for ... on a different basis and I need to understand them to be able to provide the right kind of education for them. So over the years that gap has got wider and wider and wider.

Abbas said many educated youngsters were consequently in search of an identity. Some were caught between cultures of home and elders, and their own troubled world of conflicted subjectivities. They could well fall into the hands of certain groups, 'who have their own particular agendas and, you could say, extremist tendencies'. In the last couple of years, he said, 'particularly in the last couple of years', there was increasing fear amongst parents about where their children might end up. 'Whose hands would they end up in?' Unless, that is, something was done, 'to try to engage them in mainstream Muslim society':

> If I am honest I don't think we are still there in terms of trying to think the big picture and say if you are going to achieve anything, let's put these systems in place. There is still a question of just burying your head in the sand hoping the problem will go away. It's not going away, and it's becoming a bigger problem. The problem that some of the management committees have in trying to deal with some of those so-called extremist elements is that some of their own sons, daughters, their cousins, their nephews, they're involved in those kind of activities, so they are reluctant to challenge that kind of behaviour, and because they're all related, slowly, slowly, slowly they're coming on board.

Abbas talked of a controversy in one particular mosque. There were certain people 'who do not see eye to eye with the ethos of that mosque or the religious teachings of that mosque'. They are 'a sort of pain in the flesh of the mosque, and one day might take it over and run it'. When the authorities challenge and ask, 'do you know what these people are doing?', the response can be that 'they are just members of the community, they are just children'. There was a collective failure to see what an ultimate agenda might be:

> What I do see, is that unless there is a congruent strategy to narrow the gap between the young generation and the elders, particularly the imams, children will struggle with their identity and they could easily fall prey to some of the more extremist

> elements … Of course the danger then is that individuals and youngsters will have their own interpretation of Islam, rather than based on any foundation in terms of what the actual true meaning of Islam is … and because the so-called political organizations … disguise themselves under the banner of Islam, they have an ulterior motive and they know what the gaps are. The way the extremist organizations work is they wouldn't out right come and start talking about Islam, they would go and take part in youth groups and all the rest, wherever there are children they would go, and slowly, slowly, slowly, engage with them and bring them on board. I have seen with my own eyes children born in families which are of the traditional teaching of Islam then suddenly challenge their own parents and say well you're wrong and we're right.

That, Abbas continued, was understandable, 'because the parents are not educated, some of their ideas are very primitive and [they] haven't really got the mechanism to challenge that kind of behaviour from their children'. There is a kind of fantasy at work in some families: they believe that their own children are not involved, not really tempted by the extremists. Parents ignore the problem rather than doing anything about it, Abbas said. These were hardworking people struggling to know what to do or say: while their children can be 'continuously disengaged and fall into the wrong hands'.

Turbulence in the park

Battles of various kinds – involving the BNP, EDL and Islamic fundamentalists – were played out in particular incidents in the city. There was an incident over a flag in a park in the district of Cobridge. Abbas described it as follows. An 'independent' councillor with right-wing sympathies reacted against vandalism:

> … we had a park in the ward … and that was vandalized, often got vandalized. Because of all the other problems that we were having. So this councillor's brilliant idea she had, was to reclaim the park, what we are going to do is to put the union flag in it. The police were nervous, the City Council were nervous … I certainly felt the fact that there was an ulterior motive to this because this was going to create further problems. Eventually, she put it up, and overnight it got burnt, a huge amount ... and the media of course picked this up and now it became a really

> contentious issue, here is an Asian community who would not even allow a Union Jack.

Some people, including city councillors, thought that the way forward was to encourage the local Asian community to pay for the flag. And representatives of the community in a local mosque agreed to:

> ... at that point I felt really, really frustrated, obviously the mosques are run by people who sometimes don't know what the big picture is and they naively said yes okay we'll pay for it, just to calm things down, but my point was 'hang on a second, why is the community held responsible for this?' Whereas this is in fact an act of one or two individuals creating problems and you knew all the way along that if you put a union flag there this is a path that has vandalism associated with it on a daily basis, it's going to be burnt, what's so surprising now? If you live in an area where there are lots of burglaries, you don't leave your property wide open and go, because if you do, you will get burgled. All kinds of mischief was made, and there was a lack of a sense of community cohesion there …

The particular and the general

These stories connect the global and Middle East with local events and a public park in one district of Stoke. They connect the well-being and distress of communities with individual struggles and feelings of purposelessness and oppression. They illuminate some of the mythic appeal of the radicalizing agenda in stories of past trauma and resistance and eventual triumph over crusaders in the present. Mental health is difficult to talk about in such contexts, surrounded as it is by taboos, despite the evidence that poverty and exclusion, if combined with racism and xenophobia, have rampant consequences (Wilkinson and Picket, 2012). People who are suffering, or feel hopeless, may find salvation in the radical group and a totalizing narrative. The link between mental distress and radicalization may be tenuous but it is nonetheless part of the mix.

A number of young people in Stoke clearly found some recognition in radical groups. People like Raafe, now confident and eloquent, would pay attention to their troubles and offer potential purpose and narrative meaning in their lives, even divine mission. In some of the radicalization – although this is not clear in the narratives – there may have been an obsession with masculine strength and a fear of weakness and, perhaps,

the feminine, which is played on unconsciously and mirrors tendencies in extreme right and fascist groups (Flemmen, 2014). An overarching master narrative is provided in which everything is explained and complexity banished, and what seems on the surface to be descriptive is in fact deeply normative, bringing with it a particular agenda (Varvin, 2012; Flemmen, 2014). Not everyone, of course, participating in groups in specific mosques becomes a jihadi, takes hold of a Kalashnikov and enters the violent theatre of the Middle East or even begins proselytizing among other disaffected young people. But some have taken up arms, and others – like Raafe – have found an 'educative', radicalizing purpose in life.

Chapter 7

The History Man and 'an experiment in democratic education'

Back to the future

When the present is disturbing, as in the troubled lives chronicled in the last two chapters, history can offer some respite and ideas or resources of hope, in Raymond Williams's compelling words (Williams, 1989). The past can be a place where ideas, basic assumptions and how things were done were different: history matters in that it reminds us that the present is not immutable and things have changed before and can change again for better or, potentially, worse. Adult education had a role in the past in helping to build a culture of collective self-help and social purpose, as well as fraternity among many working-class people. It was a culture grounded more in religious ideals of the sacredness of the human person than in Marx and historical materialism. Embedded in the testimonies of many worker-students in adult education and trade union groups is the story of being understood by significant academic others, and finding friends and agency in the symbolic order as well as among fellow students. Workers' education could evoke fundamental questions as to who a person felt themselves to be, and who they might become. This chapter is concerned with the historical importance of workers' education in providing recognition for both personal and democratic transformation.

A mix of Enlightenment idealism, religious belief in the potential divinity in everyone and the aspirations of democratic socialism characterized much of workers' education in the UK. This was a tradition, a social movement, that played a key role in imagining and building the welfare state after the Second World War (Rose, 2010). Adult education could model in microcosm the good, fraternal and equal democratic society more generally, as distinguished adult educator and academic R.H. Tawney (1964) saw it. The adult classes represented a social and educational experiment open to the marginalized, with an equality of status between students that encouraged freedom of expression and enquiry, tolerance

and respect, if occasionally some turbulence. At their best these were communities of imaginative, caring, committed and thoughtful students, in which all could be teachers as well as learners. In the light of our present culture of excessive individualism and the commodification of education, a product to be bought and sold like any other, these ideals might seem anachronistic, pious or overly idealistic. Ideas of the collective good and the role of education to such an end, have become marginalized, penetrated as our contemporary culture is by social Darwinism. However, revisiting the history of workers' education offers glimpses of how previous generations of working-class people thought differently and achieved much. Their struggle has largely been forgotten by mainstream historians and frequently disparaged by some on the political left.

I was motivated to re-engage with the historical contribution of workers' education in Stoke by the shock of the rise of the BNP in 2008/9, and the apparent virulence of racism and xenophobia in the city. I revisited my own writing of the 1970s which in retrospect appears to be part of a general devaluation of particular forms of workers' education. The late nineteenth century witnessed the foundation of many organizations devoted to educating men and women for active participation in political and, increasingly, social democracy (Tawney, 1964; West, 2012). However, some historians concluded that workers' education of a non-politically partisan kind, in alliance with progressive elements in universities, served to neuter and de-radicalize working-class students (Macintyre, 1986; Fieldhouse, 1996b). From this perspective radical autodidactic passions were channelled into the calmer, more respectable waters of university learning and a hegemonic national culture. Furthermore, the story proceeded, workers' education could serve official state policy, and was correspondingly funded (Macintyre, 1986). Thus its role was about much more than the dispositions of individual teachers and students: it was functionally conservative in relation to the established order. This was powerful criticism and in diluted form, I was one such critic (West, 1972).

Why we tell specific stories at particular times, personally or academically, and how these stories and their authors change is a preoccupation in auto/biographical narrative research. The dynamic interplay of history and biographies, of the sociocultural and inner lives, of dominant discursive regimes, including fashionable academic theory, and the stories we tell is an important if under-interrogated territory. Crucially, reflexivity matters in research and in personal life, in cultivating a psychosocial sensibility. We need to get to the heart of questions about the genus and authority of our work and its truth claims, and how best to cultivate reflexivity and

interpretative integrity in our writing. What we mean by reflexivity is part of the problem. Does this lie in a rational, reasoned interrogation of outside influences, essentially historical, sociological and ideological, shaping the internal world and what we think and write? Or are we psychological beings too, forged in the nuances of intimate relationships and the anxiety, for instance, of crossing cultural frontiers, where unconscious narcissistic desires to be noticed distort our interpretation and writing? Psychoanalysis encourages us to interrogate the hidden influences in our writing.

The title of this chapter, *The History Man,* is taken from Malcolm Bradbury's 1975 campus novel. Its themes, emotions and characters resonate with thinking about the 1960s and its legacy. The plot of the novel is as follows: Howard Kirk is a lecturer in sociology at a local university. He is a 'theoretician of sociability'. The Kirks – Howard and his wife Barbara – are trendy lefties whose relationship is riddled with doubt and uncertainty. It is Barbara Kirk who notices most of this, whereas Howard tends to remain enthusiastic and self-assured. The Kirks are the kind of people who oppose traditional gender roles, but Howard produces academic books, while Barbara is left stranded with the housework and two little children.

The Kirks represent certain sorts of young working-class intellectuals who grew up in the 1950s, at a time of optimism and improved economic and educational opportunity located, ironically, in the relative securities of the welfare state, which the Kirks came to despise for its paternalism. Both were initially religious and working class, and could barely afford the necessities of life during their student years at the University of Leeds. Over time, the Kirks changed. Howard became a lecturer in a town in the south of England (based on Brighton). It is a relatively trendy, bohemian place in comparison with the North and has a trendy new university (modelled on Sussex). He began to associate with all kinds of radical people, and both he and Barbara smoked pot. Howard grew a beard and both had affairs. Howard also set his mind to radicalizing the town and the university.

It is interesting that Howard the lecturer shows zero tolerance towards non-Marxists, especially conservative students; and this leads him to persecute a male participant in one of his seminars. The student is a product of the 1950s and the repression, as the Kirks see it, they detest. He wears a university blazer and tie and wants to present his academic paper in a traditional Oxbridge way, without being interrupted or needing to answer questions before he has finished. In front of the others, Howard calls him 'anal', and dismisses his paper as repressed nonsense, without considering his own hypocrisy or the damage that might be done. A kind of cold, un-empathic rationality lurks here, and an absence of any 'inner grasp of …

full and equal humanity', as philosopher Martha Nussbaum puts it, which she sees as an unfortunate inheritance of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (Nussbaum, 2013). Such an absence of human connectedness found purchase in some of the Left's excesses in the 1960s, and this reveals another form of fundamentalism, represented by the Howard Kirks of this world.

The Kirks' home became a place of parties and Howard chose many sexual partners from the students and people who worked at the university, perhaps rationalized as a kind of liberated sociological enquiry into the intimate dimensions of sociability. Howard is told that his promiscuity could get him into trouble but he dismisses this as vague and repressive. At the end of the novel Howard and Barbara remain together and their friends appear to admire their stable yet open marriage. Howard has become a radical hero, at the forefront of the onward march of mind and history. According to Howard, the things he likes are just bound to happen in the process of historical inevitability, but Barbara attempts suicide during one of their parties. Her action can be seen as a protest against the hubris of her partner and the kind of intellectualism that turns others into objects of their own fantasies and narcissistic desire.

Bradbury's characters may be stereotypical but the novel touches on themes of un-empathic rationality, excessive narcissism and the absence of self-knowledge, together with a potential for fundamentalism on the left. The 1960s could be like that, a time when faith in a transcendental, potentially omniscient reason could be powerful. The outer struggle was too important for bourgeois psychologizing or any preoccupation with the internal world. The psychological was inconsequential in such sociology (although not always so, as with Marcuse). Nowadays, these ideas may seem grandiose and diminishing of humanity's complexity and the shadows that haunt human life. Yet the legacy of an emotionally detached, overweening rationality persists in particular sociological biographies of working-class life. There, the emotions and the internal world get short shrift and women's experience especially has been ignored, although this has been challenged in other biographical writing and research (Steedman, 1986; West, 1996; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). But as I realized when training as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, the opposite can apply: the sociocultural can be neglected in psychoanalytic case studies and in the primacy of the internal (Frosh, 1987). Maybe we need shocks, personal and political, to shake us out of such binaries and consider afresh the interplay of inner and outer worlds.

In fact a personal spectre haunts this chapter – Malcolm Bradbury got there before me: how do academic fashion and particular ideologies distort personal as well as academic judgement? My understanding of workers' education in the United Kingdom was partly a consequence of fashion but also stemmed from my being a working-class boy who went to university, and who felt lost and mentally unwell in the middle-class habitus. I wrote dismissive tales of workers' education in the hope of some recognition in the university. There are aspects of Howard Kirk in the Linden West of that time, even if I was never quite the 'shit', or the success, Kirk was. But changing times have provoked me to reassess my work and the whole contention about workers' education. Too little time was given to the diverse testimonies, in memoirs and dairies, school records and oral interviews, letters to newspaper editors and social surveys, of the autodidacts themselves and how they thought, felt and acted, personally and politically (Rose, 2010; Holford, 2013).

Tutorial classes

One form of workers' education in Stoke that became a target for criticism was the university workers' tutorial class. The first ever class took place in Longton, in the south of what became Stoke-on-Trent. Some 25 worker-students met each Friday evening over a period of years with their tutor, R.H. Tawney, representing the University of Oxford. The classes were free from prescribed curricula, and its members could explore issues in their working lives from the perspectives of history, politics, economics and literature. Fortnightly essays were required, and the standard of some of these was remarkably high, although by no means all (West, 1972; Goldman, 1995). There were no formal examinations or qualifications due to a desire to eliminate competition and vocationalism from the classroom (West, 1972; Rose, 2010).

In 1972 I wrote a paper on Tawney and the tutorial classes. Tawney's Longton class met in a university extension centre, owned by the borough council. It helped that the secretary of the class, E.S. Cartwright, worked as a clerk for the borough. The Marxist Social Democratic Federation made up the nucleus of the students: they were potters, miners, clerks, shop assistants and school teachers. The Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1884 and was led by a businessman named Henry Hyndman. The Federation was strongly opposed to the Liberal Party of the time, and its programme was progressive, calling for a 48-hour working week, the abolition of child labour, compulsory free secular education, equality for women and the

nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange by a democratic state.

Tawney was quite the opposite of Howard Kirk: upper middle class, privately educated, a committed Anglican and well-furbished with social and cultural capital (Holford, 2015). He was considered an inspirational tutorial class teacher. As one student wrote:

> The lecturer is the right man in the right place and is evidently experienced in dealing with audiences of workpeople. He was lucid and eminently pure-minded in his treatment of his subject, and possessed the faculty of being able to capture and hold the interest of his class.

Tawney thought the tutorial class 'movement' and the wider Workers' Educational Association (WEA) a successful 'experiment in democratic education', which had a profound influence on the development of British social democracy. According to Tawney, the WEA was founded on three core principles. First, the opposition to revolutionary violence: 'one may not do evil that good should come', in Cobbett's dictum of a century before. Second, no institution, however perfect in conception, could be made to work effectively by individuals whose morality was inadequate. Third, where a sound morality was lacking, this could be forged in a community of scholars seeking truth and the common good (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). This pre-1914 view of the world included a belief in the sacredness of the human person and its potential for good (as well as evil). Human beings mattered more than the *étatisme* of the Fabians, for whom modes of organization or institutional reform were the prime vehicle for improvement. Institutional change would not create the good society but, rather, more educated human beings. It was not so much the material conditions of social existence that determined consciousness but rather the social consciousness and a religious sensibility that determined how the good life might be achieved.

An Aristotelian ideal was at work here, as well as Oxford idealism (Goldman, 1995), an ideal of the fully developed person living in communities, building and sustaining virtue – communities cultivating not self- but other-regardedness, collectively directing themselves to higher aims than the purely egotistic or narcissistic (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). The idealists at Oxford who influenced Tawney were opposed to individualism, utilitarianism and social atomism. They drew on German philosophers, especially Kant and Hegel, and the notion that individuals could only be understood and realize their potential in the collective. Men and women were part of social and political communities from which they could not be

divorced for analytic or practical purposes. They were linked together by values and institutions rather than simply webs of economic relationships. There are curious contemporary echoes in discussions about the priority of the other and the contemporary tradition of thinking that looks to our relations with objects outside us – other people, art or God – to draw us beyond our own borders, towards kinship with others and the world (Freeman, 2014).

Unfashionable

Tawneyite ways of thinking became unfashionable after the Second World War. He himself had doubts about the tutorial classes, not least the intellectual and emotional effort required from the worker-students. Tawney was far from a naïve idealist and there were 'limits to his moralising', as Laurence Goldman notes (Goldman, 1995: 160). He was aware that the same spirit of non-conformity that drove some of the worker-students could narrow viewpoints and bring a tendency to over-proselytize that made it difficult to take on board different perspectives. He was also aware that the material mattered. Writing to Cartwright, who was to become a lifelong friend, in response to a first essay, he stated, 'our problem at the present day is to put economic activity in proper relation to the other elements of human life. But if we forget the economic motive altogether and overlook the material conditions on which the production of wealth depends, we become mere sentimentalists and dreamers' (Goldman, 1995: 160).

His views on the role of religious belief in economic development have also been disparaged by economic historians (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). As early as 1925, Trotsky dismissed any notion of social progress based on a Tawneyite Protestant piety and uncritical mystification of the working class. Much later, in the 1960s, the rise of critical sociology led to a renewed dismissiveness of Tawney and his work as 'bourgeois reformism'. His writings were overly descriptive, it was said, lacking a rigorous theoretical base, while his view of character and choice was naïve and idealistic. Tawney's notion of socialism and workers' education became derided as high-minded cliché, even by some who admired him like sociologist Richard Titmus (Dennis and Halsey, 1988).

The tutorial classes also went out of fashion, as universities gradually opened their doors to working-class students and older routes to higher education seemed redundant. By the 1970s, the tutorial class movement appeared exhausted and passé (West 1972; Goldman, 1995). By then, in North Staffordshire, over 80 per cent of working-class people claimed never to have heard of the WEA (Shaw, 1970). For some on the left, the

critique was part of a broader disdain for a paternalistic welfare state and the deference towards universities and high culture. In contrast to the overtly Marxist National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), educators like Tawney and the tutorial class movement were said to have castrated proletarian autodidactism (Macintyre, 1986). In one influential view the tutorial classes, and much of the WEA, offered 'about the best police expenditure …' that 'could be indulged in …' (Fieldhouse, 1996b: 176). They constituted a form of social control.

That was never quite my view, but I embraced the paternalistic critique, accusing key figures like Tawney and some students of a simplistic faith in the social-democratic project and university education. My own research acknowledged, if begrudgingly, aspects of Tawney's achievements and those of tutorial class students, but parts of the text, especially the conclusion, were dismissive of what was achieved and its relevance to renewing workers' education in the 1970s. I was young, ambitious and easily seduced by academic fashion. I was also slightly envious of those who seemed better able to play grand theoretical games – who were dismissive of purely descriptive studies or idealism – and especially the role of character in human betterment. I felt out of my depth, and needed time to learn to swim. I also wanted to please my new boss, Roy Shaw, who was by this time critical of the WEA. He was looking to establish a new impetus for serious workers' education, spearheaded by the recently established Department of Adult Education at the University of Keele (Shaw, 1970; Shaw and West, 1971).

In my account of the tutorial classes in Stoke, I observed how they offered space for different activists and provided impetus for new forms of democratic activism, stimulating an educational movement in mining communities across North Staffordshire:

> The Longton Tutorial Class [as one student recalled], attracted the political and union activist. Many of them were already leaders in various working-class organisations. One indication of political activity can be seen in the impact on class work of national and local elections … and the elections for the newly formed Country Borough of Stoke-on-Trent … the logic of their [the students'] attitude to education as an emancipating force [was that] by 1913–14, of the eighteen tutorial classes organized by Oxford, four were in the Potteries … As well as spreading the tutorial classes proper there were demands for the spreading of educational provision among the miners of North Staffordshire.

> The North Staffs Miners' Higher Education movement was an expression of this demand. Cartwright outlines the inspiration behind the movement as being 'to bring higher education of a humanistic type to those who had hitherto lain outside its range'. (West, 1972: 115–16)

Tutorial students themselves energetically took classes to remote areas. One course in the bleak moorland of North Staffordshire devoted to the French Revolution attracted 29 students and 41 essays were written. But, I concluded, 'Tawney's ideas were a product of an age very different from the Britain of 1972. It is time people ceased to cling so uncritically to what he stood for and the movement he helped shape' (West, 1972: 117). Some of that dismissiveness was no doubt a product of 1960s hubris: many of us tended to forget or disparage our parents' struggles and achievements. We could behave like good, radical bourgeois who were 'frankly contemptuous of a culturally conservative working class' (Rose, 2010: 462). Student cultures of drugs, vandalism, laziness and general disdain easily led to the exploitation of precisely the sorts of people who were to be the subjects of our putative revolution: the porters, cleaning ladies and kitchen staff who tidied up our mess.

Working-class people, as Rose notes, had long observed such behaviour among the exclusive castes of Bohemians: the students themselves, despite or perhaps because of their ideological socialism, looked forward to employment in the creative industries, and a little later in finance. Listening to them, one university porter observed, 'was like being in a mental hospital where everyone was pretending to be someone else' (Rose, 2010: 463), including acting as revolutionaries. There is now a wider questioning of what the 1960s 'did for us', in the light of the neoliberal fundamentalism that followed (Beckett, 2010). Lynne Segal (2013) has countered some of this revisionism, including the notion that student radicals rather than wider neoliberal forces were to blame for what subsequently transpired. However, this remains a matter of debate, not least because, as Jonathon Rose (2010) observes, cultural politics from the 1980s onwards were saturated by an obsessive individualistic and marketized spirit – everything had a price, and what was of inherent value got lost. The condescension towards the working class continued, as did ignorance of the contribution and perspectives of generations of working-class autodidacts.

It was easy for first-generation working-class students at university to get lost crossing the fine-grained contours of the English class system. I wanted to be accepted and acceptable. I patronized my parents, changed the

way I spoke and thought, opening an emotional and communication gap between us. A Potteries' accent, with its flat vowels, was replaced by a form of 'posh' Standard English, a kind of received pronunciation. While it was just becoming fashionable to speak with regional accents – Liverpudlian, for instance, thanks to the Beatles – this never applied to Stoke. A Stoke accent cut no ice, and could be ridiculed by the privately educated, poshly spoken characters I encountered at the University of Keele in 1965.

Mine is both a particular and more general story, elaborated in the literary and critical work of Raymond Williams, for example (Williams, 1988; West, 1996). Like Williams, I felt awkward with my working-class father and was never able to re-establish any close emotional relationship before he died. I struggled to know who I was and wanted to be. For one thing, I acted, largely unconsciously, as a standard bearer in my family to restore lost economic and social status (West, 1996). My family was part of Jackson and Marsden's (1966) sunken middle class who looked to education to restore the family fortune. There were further complications in my relationship with mother. She invested in my success as a kind of surrogate for her own frustrated desire. I became a repository, of sorts, for projective identification, not least because of how, as I see it now, the lives and feelings of a working-class woman like her were heavily prescribed. Structures of opportunity and feeling were limited, and university was way beyond her horizons. Dancing and looking classy were important for her, a kind of political and creative act. Looking classy was a statement in a world of frustrated desire and intellectual entrapment (Steedman, 1986). And if I could shine in education she might bask in some reflected glory.

Warwick

Unfortunately, I struggled to shine, or ever to be good enough. In 1969, I was a Masters student in the Centre for the Study of Social History at the University of Warwick, where, among other things, the Marxism of the French theorist Althusser met the less deterministic, more open and humane perspectives of Edward Thompson, author of *The Making of the English Working Class*. In his essay *The Poverty of Theory*, Thompson (1978) had explored the task of the historian and how we might best understand historical processes. Class, he observed, happens between people. Deference requires squires and labourers, experiencing and producing its character in everyday encounters. Thompson was in dispute with those versions of Marxism – such as Althusser's – that questioned whether people made history at all – and by implication whether oral history had any validity. Theory, like mathematics, required no external validation, asserted Althusser. It was

subject to its own verification, via rules of logic and subtlety of argument. In this view, experience was a low level of mediation of the social world, generating no more than practical common sense. Though the farmer knows, through experience, the seasons, or the sailor his seas, both can remain mystified by class or cosmology. It was the job of intellectuals to guide them towards enlightenment.

Thompson himself was a good teacher, open to a range of perspectives and the views of his students. He took a different view from the historical determinists, including those in the Centre, who exorcised the human subject from their narrative of historical progress. Thompson was himself a product of workers' education and relationships and understanding forged in dialogue with worker-students in tutorial classes. He resisted simplistic accounts of how history is made by larger forces. He worked in his classes with human beings to make sense of working-class experience, and how people both make and are made by history. Thompson was deeply critical of how class became an 'it', defined almost mathematically: so many people standing in a certain relation to the means of production. 'Once this is assumed', he wrote, 'it becomes possible to deduce the class-consciousness which 'it' ought to have … if 'it' was properly aware of its position and real interests' (Thompson, 1980: 9). Thompson wanted to rescue 'the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the utopian artisan … from the enormous condescension of posterity' (*ibid*.: 12) and the Howard Kirks of this world. He helps, too, in rescuing workers' education and the autodidacts.

I felt inadequate in the debate at the time when the ideas of Tawney and English ethical socialism were marginal. It was difficult to talk of moral purpose, fraternity or character in that climate, and in any case I lacked the solid intellectual ground from which to do so. I felt ill in my studies and as a close relationship ended, I was prescribed drugs, anti-depressants and anti-obsessionals, and felt dead inside as the chemicals policed my inner world. Nothing seemed to work in what became clinical depression.

Paradigm changing

Jonathan Rose's work has been central in rescuing workers' education from the condescension of posterity and my own re-evaluation (Rose, 2010). Rose chronicled the importance of relationship and recognition in workers' education: between tutors and students, among students, but also in relation to the symbolic world, in challenging bigotry and fascism, for instance, and cultivating agency at an individual and collective level. Such education offered working-class people avenues into leadership roles in local and national politics, and served to radicalize and motivate them in

personal as well as political ways. Lawrence Goldman's work in relation to Stoke supports this interpretation. Surveys of the students showed that most were taking part in trade union activity, cooperative societies, local authorities, religious and political bodies. They were also building a workers' education movement. Some, like Albert Emery, a potter, went to Oxford and later returned to Stoke as tutorial class teachers. Others, like Dorothy Robinson, who struggled against physical disability, were described as having a literary and poetic perception well beyond economics (Goldman, 1995). Robinson was to play a key role in the development of education more widely in Stoke. Much later, Tim Brighouse (1993) acknowledged the importance of educational development within the city, a consequence of the contributions of people like Robinson. Stoke was proud of its achievements: its investment in grammar schools and a sixth form college, plus a network of further education colleges ahead of their time. Of its time, such a system was inevitably elitist, but generations of students emerging from workers' education spent their lives extending opportunities to others.

There was constant debate about whether workers' education existed for the personal or collective good. The WEA was reluctant to support students like Emery attending Oxford as a full-time student as it might smack of individualism. Emery wrote that moving between Oxford and its culture, and Stoke and its dirt, was hard. He described Stoke as 'a city of dreadful night', of smoke and myriad chimneys, where 'the noise of machines drowns the cry of the helpless' (Goldman, 1995: 145). Oxford could be seductive but he found meaningful recognition there in new relationships with admired teachers. A psychological price was exacted, however. Emery got divorced and the struggles between his roots and education, and a new and old identity, were never fully resolved. Recognition can unsettle but Emery never felt politically de-radicalized by Oxford or in the tutorial classes. Many of the worker-students, including socialists and communists, told stories of forging self, agency, and a confident and critical engagement with the world of ideas and politics. Sheila Rowbotham (1981) noted that worker-students were not easily detached from their roots and beliefs and the experience of a summer school proved an important source and symbol of social solidarity.

Transitional and transformative space

The classes allowed the space to question and challenge racism and other forms of bigotry in transformational ways. In one telling account, Nancy Dobrin, born in 1914, writes that the study of literature had revolutionary consequences for her. She grew up in a home where learning was not valued,

where there was either 'a row or an order'. She read little but later joined a WEA class and read avidly, although she admitted that she went to the class partly in search of a man. She wrote:

> There is nothing like a bit of suffering to make a person feel for his fellow man. I warmed to old people who seemed to be out of breath. I was becoming a human being … My loneliness led me to the public library. I noticed some literature classes being advertised, run by the WEA. I hadn't a clue what the WEA was, but it was somewhere to go. Maybe there would be eligible males going too. I was thirty seven, the years were clocking up on me. I had my horoscope cast, everything was right except that I would have two marriages, but would have difficulties in both … The teacher arrived at the class wearing a vivid green coat, orange coloured hair and a face that looked as though the trams had criss-crossed utterly out of control. Before the session had finished I was hooked. To hell with fellows, this was interesting. ...We started with D.H. Lawrence. His first book *The White Peacock* was one of the books given to me by a friend who went to Brazil. I had read it, but I couldn't get home fast enough to read it again … From then on I was reading and learning, I read with new eyes, she talked of authors, what had prompted them to write … (Dobrin, 1980: 59)

Nancy became a writer herself. She described working for a German Jew during the Second World War, wondering what on earth he was doing in London, and why people like him couldn't go home. Later, in another class, she met her future husband, a German Jewish refugee who described himself as a Christian Communist. This was a relationship formed in the spaces of workers' education, where literature – especially Lawrence, Tolstoy and James Joyce – enabled her to question her own bigotry. Such experiences duly shaped her relationships with her children and family, and impelled her to question aspects of their schooling. Agency can take many forms: in the everyday, in families and on the wider democratic stage.

In certain respects Nancy's story resembles those of later adult students, such as Brenda, in my own research among adult students at university in the 1990s (West, 1996). She too found some recognition of her experience in certain tutors and students and literature. Brenda would relate to fictional characters, such as an abused but resilient woman in a novel by Maupassant. This indicates a process of projective identification – finding aspects of self in a fictional or actual other – and imaginatively experiencing

their lives and internalizing some of their resilience. Such dynamics can be incorporated into a more developed and nuanced theory of recognition that embraces the imaginal and the symbolic and actively engages emotion as well as mind. It suggests a developmental rather than fixed self that is projected into an imagined other with whom we identify. Their struggles, resilience and inspiration can then be introjected, providing narrative and emotional resources in struggles for self and agency. Such dynamics helped Brenda – and Nancy – build more dialogical and open relationships. Like Nancy, Brenda learned to play with ideas and feel valued for it. She also learned, like many other adult students, a more democratic sensibility or subjectification in the tutorial classes and later, which they describe in their own words (West, 1996; Rose, 2010: 274–5; West *et al.*, 2013).

Dogmatism and its roots

The dogmatism in the tutorial classes may have been rooted in human fragility, of the kind characterizing some later student radicals. Living in uncertainty and nuance, without prematurely grabbing at facts or hard ideology, is and has been difficult for us all (Meltzer and Williams, 1988). It is interesting that worker-students frequently admired tutors like Tawney, Raymond Williams and Edward Thompson, who remained steadfast as well as respectful and open minded even when harangued by a fundamentalist student. We can think of fundamentalism, like culture, as ordinary – when we feel out of our depth we grab at things that seem to offer narrative certainty, an answer to everything.

Leftist fundamentalists sometimes from the Communist Party, though not exclusively so, would quote from texts like *Das Capital* with religious fervour. The other students admired tutors like Tawney who remained respectful in the face of the agitation. One recalled a particular Marxist – the SDF could dominate the first tutorial classes – challenging point after point and referring to classic Marxist texts. Tawney took it in his stride but insisted that there might be other points of view. The student accused the tutor of hopping around from twig to twig, like a bird, and a sense of bad temper pervaded the room. Tawney insisted that everyone, including his challenger, take tea together afterwards and tell stories, read poetry and sing songs. This enabled the group to re-establish some shared humanity and its fraternity (Rewley House Papers, 1929; Rose, 2010: 266).

It is worth noting that a wider re-evaluation of Tawney's contribution to theorizing the role and practice of inclusive university education and the development of the more fraternal, egalitarian society and social cooperation as a basis for more effective political democracy

is taking place (Holford, 2015; Goldman, 2013). Tawney emphasized the moral and spiritual in human betterment, and this could be practised in the tutorial classes in ways that inspired wider communities and ideas of fellowship and service more generally. The aim of the tutorial classes was to make university education available to all people in their localities: this is very different to today's assumptions about the purpose of higher education for greater social mobility. Tawney was committed to a liberal and humane view of education for everyone, where citizens could acquire civic qualities and understanding in the struggle to create forms of social cooperation and mutual understanding rather than conflict and violence. Holford suggests Tawney offers a localist critique of the current emphasis on developing global skills and mobility. Communities should not be privileged or discounted because of their wealth or poverty and universities should be active agents in communities via, for instance, adult education. Moreover, Tawney represents a more constructivist view of knowledge, as do Williams and Thomson. The classes were classes, not lectures, and ideas were explored and developed in discussion. The processes of education were democratic – students engaged in research and discovery by using original source material like historical documents, rather than being the passive recipients of received wisdom (Holford, 2015).

Conclusion: Towards a theory of recognition

The testimony of the worker-students helps to develop Honneth's concept of recognition and an understanding of the role of the good group in such processes. In the tutorial classes, people talked of feeling listened to and understood: a process of recognition worked at intimate emotional as well as cognitive levels. Self-respect was generated which in turn evoked the capacity for mutual recognition, and an ethos of rights and responsibilities and solidarity across difference. The classes provided emotional, narrative and intellectual resources for understanding and action in intimate space and a wider political world, including the capacity for reciprocity towards others. This reinterpretation may be over-idealized but the dynamics of recognition and its democratizing spirit resonate across the narratives. Such a theory of recognition also has to encompass the symbolic world and literature: finding new theoretical friends as well as inspirational others, fictional or real, in largely unconscious, projective dynamics. Such a symbolic perspective tends to be absent or at least underdeveloped in Axel Honneth's existing work.

Taking tea after a tutorial class and restoring a sense of shared humanity is also echoed in a recent incident in York, in the north of

England. Such rituals matter in thinking about what we might call a politics of humanity, beyond the politics of difference that have characterized the years since the 1960s. In 2013, the racist English Defence League planned to demonstrate outside a particular mosque, threatening violence and disarray. The elders were troubled by this but wanted to avoid knee-jerk responses and megaphone diplomacy. They decided to invite some of the leaders of the League to take tea with them, to share concerns and discuss differences. Mohamed El-Gomati (2013), one of the elders, wrote, 'Tea, like many things we think of as English is adopted from other cultures.' He reminds us that George Bernard Shaw thought 'that if the world's problems were brought to the prophet Muhammad, he would solve them over a cup of tea'. El-Gomati wrote: 'When we listened to each other we realized the EDL thought we supported extremist behaviour and the Taliban.' In the storytelling that day people began to understand, however provisionally, what they had in common rather than what separated them and some of the uniqueness and hybridity of actual people. The EDL's racism and fundamentalism are recognizably and ubiquitously human, and they can – if with difficulty – be challenged in a spirit of fraternity, in actual engagement with the complexity of the other, rather than objectifying and dismissively classifying someone as Jew, Asylum Seeker, Christian, Muslim or Working Class. This old, toxic European tendency needs to be resisted, in part by taking tea together and telling stories, singing songs or sharing poetry as well as doing intellectual work. The tutorial classes did some of this remarkably well.

Chapter 8

The autodidacts

Close to home

The autodidactic tradition largely died out after the Second World War in a landscape of expanded educational opportunity. It had once been strong in Stoke, including in my family. My mother's brother, Jack, for instance, a potter and religious nonconformist, had definite views of the world as fallen and possibly beyond redemption, but he was widely, if eccentrically, read in literature, religion, history and even astrology. He was not afraid to express opinions either, or to quote with fervour from a range of texts. He was a WEA type: slightly awkward, opinionated and occasionally zealous, but determined to ask questions, find his own answers and challenge received wisdom. Then there was my mother's uncle Joe, also widely read, with a library I still see in my mind's eye whose books, like treasured artefacts – in psychoanalytic language, good objects – I lovingly embraced, and can still smell. Joe talked about religion, politics, history, astronomy and astrology.

Joe embodied the eclectic spirit of the autodidact, with his Victorian earnestness and nonconformist desire to work matters out on his own terms. Jack and Joe could sometimes seem bigoted, a mite intolerant, but they cared about ideas and characters in literature, and they wanted to share the treasures they found. Uncle Joe took visceral pleasure in opening his books and embraced certain works. William Blake's illustrations might hint at radicalism and a world beyond the taken for granted. I can imagine Joe talking, in his rich guttural Stoke accent, of Blake and the author's insistence, in the *Auguries of Innocence*, of the right to life and unquestioned freedom without qualification that united all creatures, large or small: 'a dog starved at his Master's Gate predicts the ruin of the State.' The spiritual realm was important to both Jack and Joe in a nonconformist way. They shared a religious sense of the divine in all things and the power of the divine to encourage personal educational projects. The language and inspiration of debates about socialism were impregnated by the ideal of building the Kingdom of God on Earth. Here was English ethical socialism manifest in particular lives, combining deep knowledge of the Bible with a personal and collective quest for a socially just society. Jack and Joe believed in challenging the elites rather than being fobbed off by talk of rich men in

their castles and poor men at the gate who should know their place. They decried education being confined to the elites while the rest were expected to conform.

The tradition lingered in Stoke, though by the beginning of the twenty-first century it was largely lost to the politicians, politics and the uncertain educational world of a distressed city. A tradition that had once invigorated the life and culture of Stoke was all but dead. There were exceptions in politics and education in the turbulence of the city, however – Mick Williams, for instance, or Red Mick as he styled himself in his email address. There was Derek Tatton who played a key role in the local WEA, as Warden of Wedgwood Memorial College especially, an institution close to the heart of workers' education in Stoke and North Staffordshire. Derek remains dedicated to the ideals of the tutorial class movement in the Philosophy in Pubs initiative, inspired by the writing of Raymond Williams. Both Mick and Derek benefitted from expansion of higher education after the Second World War and each progressed to university. However, both were rooted in working-class experience, the union movement and the WEA. Derek worked on the railways and as a mature student completed a doctorate at Cambridge, supervised by Raymond Williams. In their stories we might recognize the last rites of an autodidactic tradition but we can also learn from what they say about our culture and the struggle for democratic education. We might also discern the centrality of processes of recognition in their learning lives, which helped them build self-confidence, respect and self-esteem because of the attentiveness of significant others and the stimulation of a wide range of literature.

Red Mick

Class looms large in Mick Williams's storytelling and biography. He was born in the 1930s into a poor family, abandoned by his father and abused by a stepfather. But he was nurtured in working-class education, in a home with books and by a mother who encouraged his reading. His questioning of received wisdom drew on many influences. In the army he learned 'to work the system', as he put it. 'Not obviously an oppositionist', but 'not a lackey either – just learning how to use it!' He spent time as an official in the Post Office Engineering Union and in the WEA and at Fircroft Adult Education College. I first met Mick in 2011. His house was full of books, pamphlets and papers. He liked to keep up to date and alive to the controversies enveloping Stoke and the wider world. Reading and engaging with the world of ideas were essential to understanding the madness of the

present dystopia in Stoke and elsewhere, he thought, and in a struggle for something better.

Mick was a man of deep conviction and suspicion of authority. He was critical of the loss of workers' education and a particular kind of Labour Party. He died in 2013. An obituary said that Mick was concerned about 'the breaking of the working class'. A colleague Adam Coclough (2013) quoted Dylan Thomas and the dying of the light. At Mick's funeral oration he said the concern was not only with the dying of the light of physical potency but with the 'dying of an equally important light; that of democracy threatened by the ambition of cynics with careers to build and principles to jettison the moment they start getting in the way'. Mick, Coclough said, was not an easy person, which was his strength if also a weakness. Politics for Mick was an article of faith, of wanting to build a better world grounded in a clear set of principles for which he constantly fought.

Mick had been secretary of a local Labour ward party that was reputedly the strongest in Stoke, working with people, not managing them – as he framed it – in the manner of *Mandate for Change*. But he also raised difficult questions about the troubling, 'repressed place' of women in certain communities and British Asians in the Labour Party and their lack of grounding in the working-class movement. He also told stories of corruption from the 1970s onwards, with the 'cash nexus' involving payment of allowances to councillors. An ethic of voluntarism and public service had been lost, Mick insisted. In his first interview, he told the story of James Connolly to emphasize the class basis of his analysis:

> The quotation that I often use is from James Connolly who was born in Scotland and was most famous for his part in the Easter Rising in 1916, and the fact that he created the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. He said in 1908 the working class contains within itself all the material for its own emancipation. The part of any other section of the population in our movement is necessarily a subordinate one, not only in theory, but also in fact. To put anyone not of our class into a position of leadership is an admission of the inferiority of our class and a constant source of danger. That was some time ago … 103 years ago.

Mick thought the problem still prevailed in the superior attitudes of the national political class, which lacked an understanding of or empathy towards working-class life. He also questioned, like Jimmy (chapter 5) did,

the selection of historian Tristram Hunt, parachuted in by the national Labour Party, as a Member of Parliament for the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent Central. It represented, as he saw it, a detestable elitism, a lack of faith in local people and representative democracy itself. But he liked Hunt and was open to at least some of what he was seeking to achieve.

A poor background

Mick was born in Burslem, in the north of the city:

> … to an unemployed father, and a mum who worked as a decorator in the pottery industry when she could get work. I was born into a home that consisted of two rooms behind a chemist shop. That was a privilege because the chemist used to weigh me every week for free … In those days you had to pay … three halfpennies to have your child weighed so it could progress. Those are the sort of times we are talking about. Of course when the war came along in 1939 my dad joined up because there was no work basically.

When his dad went to war, leaving him and his mum behind, 'she basically took over the role of the significant other in the household.' As an only child he thought he probably had more attention than some of his peers, but they 'might have the benefit of siblings, so it was six of one, half a dozen of the other really':

> … But one thing that my mum did teach me to do pretty proficiently was to read. I was an avid reader and the word in the family was our Michael's always got his head stuck in a book … Yes. Her side of the family, the Bethels, were fairly political and also pretty active in the trade union movement. Her brother Tom Bethel was mayor of Newcastle [under Lyme] on three occasions.

Mick won a scholarship to grammar school, a result, he thought, of being encouraged to read a lot, 'and you read, you develop your own ideas, and you incorporate them into your answers in exams and you pass them.' He said:

> That was quite an achievement in those days … I was sitting the exam in '44 before the '45 Act came in and I was only able to go because my mum had got some friends who were in the dressmaking, tailoring industry and between them they managed to stitch together a school uniform for me, otherwise I wouldn't

> have been able to go. I am indebted to them and the grammar school education, except there was something a bit wrong about it in so far as I wasn't going ... ever going on to university. I was on the top four years on the trot, but I was never earmarked for university. My school certificate was way over matriculation requirements, so I could have gone on. I didn't even know about university at the time quite honestly, it was just another world.

Instead of entering higher education at this stage, Mick took 'a form of further education' as an apprentice to become a Post Office engineer:

> … I was then in the Post Office Engineering Union, set a great store by education and we used to do trade union courses, took basic and intermediate and a higher over three separate weeks and besides knowing about industrial relations, the organization of work, basic economics, stuff like that, we also went to the theatre to see what we could make of that particular play, all the time it was developing an insatiable curiosity in me and I decided then that I wanted to know more about it. So I progressed on with my engineering career and I got to a reasonable level there; and then I was also very much involved in the trade union movement, I was treasurer of the branch for many years, and that was a big branch … It had over 1,000 members, which includes quite a big number for a trade union in those days, but at the same time, and this is a key thing, Linden, because there was no such thing as deduction at source, we had a network of collectors. Every Friday you got your pay at this desk, and the next desk was the union man, and besides giving him your money, you could also tell him of any problems that arose. It was a fantastic network that actually did things … You go to union meetings and these issues are raised, and what are we going to do about it? And there was that sense of solidarity which ... well … I don't think it exists to the same extent.

Combining learning basic economics with visits to the theatre, and the humanities with interrogating the relations of production and how these might constrain thinking and the imagination, Mick was part of a vibrant wider network of working-class organization, connecting margins and centres, ordinary concerns with the potential for political action, private troubles with democratic process.

Rough treatment

By 1950, his mum had divorced. 'The war broke a lot of families', he said. His mum married someone who was 'a bit above us in the pecking order, social pecking order, he was an insurance agent who had a car':

> Being an insurance agent he got a special allowance of petrol to chug around, so he was quite a catch. Unfortunately he didn't like the idea of me carrying on with education and I got pretty rough treatment from him – he wasn't going to keep me in school as he put it.

At 18, Mick went off to do his national service. He talked more about his stepfather in a second interview, six months later:

> When I returned from the Far East I'd filled out a bit if you like and he wasn't able to bully me then. He only tried it once … and I turned and hit back and he wandered over to the phone box – nobody had phones then – and rang the police, and the police sergeant at the time came and – I can see him now – comes in through the door and I'm just sitting there waiting for him to come; and he [the police sergeant] says he's assaulted me ... So he [the stepfather] never offered violence against me again.

Playing the system

Doing national service was part of his education, remarked Mick. He found himself in Hong Kong where his engineering skills were useful after an attack on the local telephone exchange. He learned how to survive in what was a difficult environment:

> Anyone who has been in the forces knows that there is a system, and if you learn to play it you can survive quite comfortably, if you don't, you go out, get drunk, have a prostitute, and a tattoo, and that's your life, and that will determine your life from then on, but I was lucky, I got quite a few decent friends, we went and had a drink and that sort of thing, of course, that sort of thing but no tattoos …

'You observed how things worked', he said. 'If you conformed to the way things happened you were a toady, and if you rebelled against what was happening, you were a troublemaker.' He decided to don the mantle of apparent conformity, while finding ways to challenge the system:

> Now I'd seen the operation of class differences at school, and exactly the same thing happened in the army, because if you've been to public school, you have got a commission, that was it. I had been very active as a young man when I was an apprentice, I had been youth hostelling, climbing, cycling; all sorts but no chance of a commission because I was working class you see. I didn't particularly bother about that, I think I had far more fun and eventually made a very decent rank for a national serviceman, I mean I got to be Sergeant! But that was mainly technical ability and not brilliance at army procedures and being the right bloke in the right place at the right time. So that again gave me a bit more experience in how to deal with situations and coming out and pursuing that in the trade union movement meant that I was quite a valuable asset because I could look at situations and sum them up, and they used me quite a bit, and pushed me into trade union education. Coupled with that was the enrolment in the WEA.

Mick met people there who recognized and encouraged him:

> … the WEA was very much a major influence for me and we'd have people come in from various universities, and telling us about that discipline, that discipline, all sorts of things, and that was invaluable … Well I didn't know about it, but the POEU used tutors that were provided by the WEA and eventually I was working my way through ... what happened was I got more and more involved in politics … in 1970 ... The district secretary [of the WEA] for North Staffordshire was a man by the name of Eric Tams and he spotted talent, he spotted me and he pushed me. He really did push me, oh this has come up, can you get a week off? So when I became a councillor in 1970, I spent the first two years finding out how much I didn't know about politics and local politics especially and so I went and did a residential one-year course in Birmingham at Fircroft College … during that year, I realized just how necessary it was to have some sort of formal qualifications, so I applied to Keele and got a place … to do a degree in politics and sociology, which is very handy … I could live at home, I could get special leave, see, on no pay but I could work in the vacations at my own job. So I was able to keep the family … I was studying during the day, attending lectures …

> driving a taxi from six at night to six in the morning … because my family would have suffered otherwise …

Mick talked of the cosmopolitan mix of people at Fircroft and Keele. There were people there, he said, from different parts of the world: 'from London, there were people ... there was even a guy from the States on the one-year exchange course:

> I made one or two friendships there ... one guy, George Kampombo, from Malawi, who had become quite a highly placed civil servant. Because I picked him up from the station, and you know, made a friend of him during his time at Fircroft, he offered me a job … There was a chap there named Diddimus Mootasa, who went on to become Speaker of the Zimbabwe Parliament.

Mick also benefitted from the University of Keele. Like me, he completed the four-year degree course with its common foundation year. The latter was a key to much of his understanding, he said, encompassing as it did the study of everything from Plato to NATO, philosophy, the humanities and the social and natural sciences. It was a programme forged out of the adult education tradition in Stoke, and the idea that a broadly based education was a prerequisite for informed citizenship. It was a tradition that schooled, among others, Oxford academic A.D. (Sandy) Lindsay, the first Principal of the University College of North Staffordshire, which became the University of Keele. Lindsay was an adult education tutor in Stoke, who worked with Tawney. He thought the role of university adult education was to cultivate the educated citizen, who could bridge the gaps between social science and the humanities, natural science and philosophy, and think for themselves. Mick Williams expressed it in his own way:

> … that is the goodness of education, I think education is for life, training is for a living, but if you want to understand and relate to people and try to help them and make society cohesive, then you have got to know a lot more about them than just seeing them on the bus or working with them. You have got to know the background, you've got to know where they come from and why they behave this way, why they believe that ...

By the second time we met, Mick was quite unwell and unable to work in his garden. He was determined to engage the man helping out in the garden in our debate and discussion in a mini tutorial class! He drew him into our conversations about the BNP and Stoke's recent history. Mick was

still involved in weekly WEA-type discussion groups organized by Derek Tatton in Leek. The autodidactic spirit burned in him until the end, with his belief in the importance of public space to question and challenge prejudice and bigotry.

The politician in Stoke

Mick had been a city councillor in Stoke:

> … and it was quite a sacrifice to do that. Many of the miners that I was on the Council with made huge sacrifices. If they missed a shift because of Council meetings, so you lost that shift and that lost you your bonus shift for the week and other people … at the election ... they weren't paid for the time off, but of course it went against their pension entitlements as well so … there was a great deal of hardship and you had to be pretty committed to be a councillor. I daren't tell you what I think of the present situation.

He described the political education shaping and inspiring the better councillors:

> … I've got yearbooks going back to when I was first on the council in the 70s and in those yearbooks each councillor was listed … very significantly against their occupation and you could go through them and I can tell you the ones who've actually had experience of WEA education and trade union education and they tended to put the most constructive arguments forward …

Mick felt that the local structures of the Labour Party had once been crucial spaces for learning democracy: 'It was the ward structure that mattered', he said, the basic representative unit of political democracy that has withered in Stoke as elsewhere. He was secretary of a ward in 1968 and:

> within 18 months we'd got a kids' playground, within two years we had got a pedestrian crossing outside the Hayward Hospital which didn't exist before. Oh you will never do this; the MPs have been trying for years. We just got our heads together and we did it and that generated quite a powerhouse in that particular ward. We had over 200 members …

The politics of Stoke at the time was not militant, overall, although there were militant miners and others who brought grit and bite into the city's life:

> One of those features was the number of females employed in the (pottery) industry … many of whom were second earners. So that diluted any militancy … from the miners and steel workers … People on what was then the PMT (Potteries Motor Traction) Bus Company were often quite militant. There is a very influential president of the Trades Council, named O'Conner, who was a bus driver and he was what you would call a rough diamond, and he had this natural ability to talk, to hold an audience, and to get his points across … Roland Slater who was from the AEU Engineering Union and perhaps a bit more qualified in terms of organizing the necessary minutes and calling notices … and looking to agreements etc., between them they covered the lot, it was a good alliance.

Mick lamented the loss of older structures like these, without wishing to over-romanticize the past. There were always careerists, he said, who thought it useful to join the Labour Party, members of the local 'rich class of business men who worked the existing system' but lacked grounding in working-class history or socialist conviction. As a councillor, Mick worked hard to create educative, participative processes in the Party:

> ... In the 80s, '84 to '88, I was chair of housing and health … As a chair I went to every one of the 20 wards in the city and I have still … got [the] big flip charts … I said right, I want to know what you think and I'll make notes and these'll go up as a report to this policy conference. You will be there, you will be able to hear what other people are saying …

This representative system died or fell into disuse. Mick thought the problem was the rise in the City Council of an officer class and councillors serving as their agents in relation to the people who sent them there. The citizens – the people who paid for it all – lost out. Representative democracy was the victim of such managerialism, he thought. Councillors ceased to be tribunes and became joint managers of local populations. People had become the problem, and needed to be 'educated' in the right way to progress what had already been decided on their behalf. Roads to hell, Mick thought, were paved with such democratic perversion.

Racism and the Muslim communities

The gardener who joined our 'tutorial class' that morning complained that many people thought that outsiders – blacks, Asians and Eastern Europeans

– were 'taking our jobs, taking our houses, taking everything …' Mick insisted that 'that's not true, you know that's not true', and the debate became lively. He later observed that lots of people talked like the gardener:

> … a lot of the people that he mixes with think that and the Labour Party has assisted in this perception. I'll tell you how. Earlier this year we changed from having 60 members to 44 members and of the 44 candidates that Labour put to the election in Stoke, 19 were Asian, 19 out of 44: I think that's a bit over-representative because there's good solid research that shows ... surveys, questionnaires, all that sort of thing shows that the percentage of Asian background people in Stoke-on-Trent is 2.6. That's approximately one in 40. So if you have got 44 candidates to find, a true representation would be one, not 19. Okay they didn't all get in, but there are still 11 out of the 44 who are of Asian origin … if people take the trouble to find out, they might understand why the Muslim population is particularly attractive to Labour, because Labour has become, rather than a bottom-up democratic party, a top-down, 'you do as you are told' party. The evidence for this is … absolutely overwhelming. They'll deny until they're blue in the face, well they are blue in the face, but it's very attractive to them because it is a faith which relies quite a lot on a top-down power structure and the people who call the shots are the imams, they will determine ... they will determine how you vote …

Mick proffered an example from Shelton:

> Many members of the Labour Party who were Asian and Muslim as well, voted for another Muslim who happened to be a Lib Dem. That can be seen quite clearly in the results, you don't need high expertise in psephology to see that at all, you were there for the counts, you know the boxes that are coming in and you see the piles go up, you know where the votes come from, and who is mainly calling the shots.

He also talked about the position of Asian women in the Party:

> When I was a councillor, I was standing for the first time in Burslem Grange and I had a message from a local party member, would I go and take tea with him? I said I would be very pleased to, 'can I bring Rae Partridge?' 'Yes, yes, who's Rae Partridge?'

> I said a member of the Labour Party, very influential. 'Yes, yes certainly, certainly.' So I picked Rae up … We get there: 'oh Mick, come in, come in, come in, who's this? Rae Partridge?' 'No "Ray" is a man', the member said. I said 'no, this Rae is a woman, why?' 'Oh we don't really deal with women.' I said 'well you can say anything in front of her that you would say in front of me, I wouldn't hide anything from Rae, she's my agent ...', but the bottom line was he controlled 36 family votes and he would tell them all to vote for me because we can have some sort of understanding, he said, and I said 'what sort of understanding?' 'Well I'd like you to do things for us, you know.' 'I do things for everybody', I said, 'if I feel that they're properly generated and they are valid and they are within the law, within the moral compass.' 'Oh no, no, no, they have to come through me.' I said 'oh well no I'm sorry, I can't agree to that.' I said to him at the time, 'look, if any of your 36 family members want to speak to me, I hope you don't stand in their way' and he said 'we don't do things like that… Oh well really I don't like to discuss this …' and ... he doesn't say 'an infidel' but that's what he means: I'm an infidel, I'm a non-believer so that's me outside isn't it?

Taking tea, in this case, barely got beyond formalities and disconnects. Different worlds collided and issues remained unresolved. Public space to engage with such difficulties when different cultural assumptions meet – as in a good ward party, or a workers' education class – was absent and the friction uncontained.

Democracy4Stoke

Mick was central to the establishment of campaigning organization Democracy4Stoke (D4S). The organization was opposed to the privatization of local government services and the direction of new managerialism and privatization:

> … all these people who've got very, very greedy eyes on big fat local government contracts and we've just seen making complete and utter balls up of services. Stoke itself had participated in a JVC, a Joint Venture Company and the name of this in the city is absolute mud, absolute mud, no one's got a good word for them … they signed a contract for ten years for £40 million a year, they are writing the rules themselves; there's a current campaign on about fire doors on the council estates. You stop people and

> ask them 'have we done this?' … and the picture we get back is one of absolute confusion. … I've got the interim report from this organization that mentions that the dividend that they declared has been particularly good this year due to the very lucrative contract that was signed with Stoke-on-Trent City Council … it's actually rate payers' money.

D4S was launched in 2006, as a broad-based coalition mainly opposed to the idea of a US-style executive mayor. Mick was its first treasurer. Over 10,000 people signed a petition D4S organized, calling for a referendum. A working party met several times and D4S called for a decision-making committee system in which all representatives were actively involved. That option was never put to the local population. Mick thought that Labour was being driven to extinction by 'control freakery', aided by unelected paid officials at local and national level. By 2009, Mick was refused admission to the June AGM of the City Labour Party on the grounds that his nomination did not conform to a new procedure. Mick eventually left the Labour Party in 2010 to stand as an independent candidate in the May elections. There was a cull of other 'Old' Labour people in Stoke. Mick told me that the leader of the BNP, Nick Griffiths, thanked the Party for giving them a clear run in local elections. This was the nadir of the older political autodidactic tradition.

By the end of his second interview, at his home in Penkhull overlooking Stoke town, Mick spoke about his poor health and the interview was more disjointed than the first. He insisted that there was a need to provide leadership for working-class people rather than simply conforming to the populist mood. There was, perhaps, a glimpse of authoritarianism in this, some coldness in the voice, as I perceived it. The autodidacts could be opinionated, sometimes rigid, but this is only part of the story. Mick was the embodiment of a rich tradition of workers' education, in which being told what to think was anathema. He was deeply committed to a democratic, representative ideal and opposed to what he saw as its nadir. His biography encompasses personal abuse and disrespect, a mother's determination for him to read and recognition from specific adult educators like Eric Tams. He found self-respect and self-esteem in the wider Labour movement. At the end of his life, he was still writing letters and organizing: against elitism, the marginalization of local government and for a democratic education in the broadest sense. Mick feared that the withering away of the social purpose education he respected, and of local democracy, created a void in which organizations like the BNP and EDL could thrive.

Derek Tatton and resources of hope

Now in his 70s, Derek remains a passionate adult educator and autodidact. He was born into a working-class home and failed the 11 plus examination all children then had to take. Most failed and were labelled unsuitable for an academic education. Derek found no joy in schooling and little stimulation in a working-class home largely without books. However, his parents bought the costly *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in a symbolic gesture towards education. Like Mick Williams, it was the WEA and the trade union movement and attending a workers' college – Coleg Harlech in Wales – that provided moments of recognition and gave Derek the self-respect and self-esteem that enabled him to give to others. Building inclusive, educated communities lay at the heart of the workers' residential college Derek eventually led. It was located in Barlaston, close to the relocated Wedgwood factory.

A number of teachers in the WEA, at Coleg Harlech and later at Cambridge, Raymond Williams, are central in Derek's narrative. It was Williams who coined the phrase 'resources of hope', and upon whose inspiration Derek continues to draw. The spirit of the tutorial classes also informs his work with the Raymond Williams Foundation and the Philosophy in Pubs movement. We get glimpses in his story, like Mick's, of an older autodidactic and workers' education world, as well as the forces that diminished it: the rise of Thatcherism and the closure of Wedgwood Memorial College. But Derek constantly refused to accept that there was no alternative: if there is pessimism of the intellect, there is optimism of the will. He gives us insights into what can be done to create resources of hope in the distressed city.

The front room

Derek was born near Stoke in the town of Crewe, which remains an important railway junction:

> In some ways I begin in a front room in a house in Crewe where I was born and bred. And I left school at 15 as soon as I could and worked on the railway on platform 2 in the control office. I was a 'thin' controller. And that was fine. I'd got no qualifications whatsoever. … Well my father was a railway engine driver. First of all of course a fireman, as you probably know, engine driving was actually not as romantic a profession as it's often made out to be. Actually very hard work tough work, and particularly working as a fireman. And particularly at that time you went

> back to steam engines and my father was a really in many ways quite a weak man, health wise. He suffered stomach ulcers … and was often off work ill when I was growing up … And my mother and father were… not that ambitious for me, although they did encourage me. They bought the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for me, early on, which was quite interesting you know. We didn't have many books at home. We read, but not much.

Derek talked of failing the 11 plus:

> … On the day I learnt that I had failed the 11 plus we went to the Odeon on the Saturday morning. A classic Roy Rogers film was on there. And I can remember already some of those who had passed were being given bicycles and presents for being good … I can remember feeling a bit miffed about that. And in fact I got involved in a fight at the cinema, not directly related to that … But in certain ways maybe I was feeling a bit peeved and aggressive. … School was a bad experience on the whole. It was really, I mean some of the teachers were pretty brutal. The cane was rampant, slippering, beating … I didn't like that. I wasn't a particularly tough guy … You know I was fairly meek in certain ways, but because I was quite good at football I managed to hold my own with the tougher lads. But I didn't find school … a pleasant experience. One or two of the teachers were okay and quite encouraging … But … the level of teaching and learning was pretty poor really … I mean I didn't get beyond the Spanish Armada in terms of History … and we did the Vikings four times with different teachers ... very little science, hardly any science teaching …

CND and discovering the WEA

Derek became involved in his union and this led to Germany and engagement with a wider world. He became interested in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which provided a route into the WEA and a world of reading, questioning and fraternity. He met the local tutor organizer of the WEA, a man called Malcolm Pittock, through CND:

> … and I got interested in attending a WEA class which he was teaching. He was teaching literature. And I started this class in the front room of Mrs Hayden the class Secretary … I suddenly found I was very interested because it was quite bizarre. Mainly older,

> much older than me, men with a few women, and sitting around getting quite upset with each other over literature. Debating and arguing … Malcolm Pittock, quite a left-wing guy. One of the courses I attended was actually on war literature and he had a real difficulty with the group. Because he was attempting to argue a pacifist position and Mrs Hayden the redoubtable branch secretary was the widow of an army officer … So it got quite lively. And I really liked it and got involved and interested …

Conversations were passionate, touching important and troubling issues, using controversial literature that collided with strongly held opinions. Common interests were found in literature. The War Poets might evoke controversy, but the discussion kept going. The classes took place in local primary schools in the evening and it was here that Derek first came across Raymond Williams:

> Strange learning situations, some quite heavy people sitting on infants' chairs … With Malcolm at the front in a teacher's chair. And then there was Mr Morgan, a fitter from Crewe works who saw himself as a philosopher. He had attended lots of WEA philosophy courses. So he was asking philosophical questions, as it were. Mainly men but several of the women … Mrs Hayden I've mentioned to you. She impressed me really because of the earnestness, the value of the learning and teaching experience. Quite lively, discussing Dickens … *Hard Times*. And I was beginning to get interested then through this. Malcolm was quite an interesting tutor … a very particular approach, a thematic approach to the literature. Like the industrial novel, he was taking that straight from Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*. So I was quite inspired by that and then attended a second set of courses on rural literature as I told you; and that was really, very lively. … Norman Mailer's *The Naked and The Dead* which included the 'f' word which Mrs Liptrott and others objected to quite strongly. It was literally only the 'f' word if you see what I mean, with asterisks, but they objected to the language. You know bad language.

The WEA could be full of collisions and dispute but the classes generally continued. A good tutor like Malcolm Pittock held it together because he related well to everyone, transcending difference. He had reviewed Williams's *The Long Revolution* in the prestigious journal *Essays and Criticism*.

Pittock recognized Derek's potential and encouraged him in his reading and eventually to apply to the Welsh workers' college, Coleg Harlech. There Derek met others who inspired him to widen his reading:

> … the most outstanding … was the actual warden of the place Jeffrys-Jones. Extraordinary man, terribly dedicated. It killed him really, he died very young in his 50s. And I think just out of sheer tenacity and over work, dedication, and trying to take Coleg Harlech and everybody in it forward … he was an outstanding adult education tutor, teacher, educationalist. A very strange man in some ways, a mixture … He taught some sessions on Karl Marx and he made it very clear that this was informal, … it wasn't on the syllabus, but he felt it was important that everybody know something about Marx although he, Jeffrys-Jones, was certainly not a Marxist … he just felt that education should be about learning about everything. And Marx was so important, Marx and Marshal, that was the phrase he used … it wasn't on the syllabus ... he was obviously doing this in his own time … he pounded around the room lecturing us about Marx. He had a rather unorthodox lecturing style, he would sometimes pick up a chair and put it over his shoulder, as he was walking and he got carried away … it could be quite threatening with some of the hard-line CP people sitting there and challenging, he might throw a chair over his shoulder and hit them with it! But he wasn't aggressive; it was just an eccentric mannerism.

Raymond Williams

Derek was persuaded by Jones and others to apply to Cambridge, although his preference as a local lad was for Keele, not least because of the four-year course grounded in adult education traditions. But he chose Cambridge, where he met Williams, through CND:

> … and then I got to know Raymond Williams fairly well at Cambridge because I was active in CND and indeed I asked him if he would be my supervisor in my third year. Rather to my surprise he agreed because I was in another college … Which is quite an interesting point, because I don't know if you know but David Hare … criticized Williams [after he died] for being actually not a good teacher and not interested in teaching, he was too interested in writing his books and so on and he didn't want

> to teach undergraduates. And, I just know from my experience that just wasn't the case … I think … that … Raymond wasn't that interested in teaching David Hare, who was a young bright graduate coming through … the usual system. I mean Williams was really an adult education tutor who happened now to be in Cambridge. And he retained … his interest in adult education right through to the end … I asked him to be my supervisor for my third year which he agreed to do. …

Derek saw synchronicity across their biographies: both men were products of working-class backgrounds, sons of railway men, now at Cambridge, struggling with questions of identity and where they belonged and how education could be used in building a better world.

Wedgwood Memorial College

Derek eventually became Warden of Wedgwood Memorial College, one product of the vibrancy of adult education in and around Stoke:

> So in 1979 I move up there and I … am inheriting a college which has remarkably strong WEA, university, adult education traditions … still active in 1979, whereas in other parts of the country, I think already some of the very distinctive WEA education for social purpose, political education dimensions, were slipping away; and I remember quoting in my thesis somebody even writing in the 1950s, 'the middle class have invaded the WEA, they know a good thing when they see it'. With that was the implication … that many of the courses began to shift, nothing wrong with it in some ways, but shift towards the arts, crafts, literature, history and less directly on social, political, philosophical issues, but in Barlaston that tradition was still active. My predecessor … Dave Goodman … was actually in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War … he continued at Barlaston to help organize and promote courses within that perspective … the college at Barlaston would be at the hub of a network in North Staffordshire of non-residential centres like Cartwright House, Tawney House and others, not just in the city, but everywhere; and each would feed the other people attending the evening courses, day courses, outside, would be encouraged to come to Barlaston for day training or courses and so on. That vision did hold, in a way, remarkably, right through several decades where … it was dead … elsewhere.

Derek told the story of the College's demise. Just after he was appointed Warden, the district secretary of the WEA, Eric Tams, came to his house when Derek was suffering from flu. 'You better get out your bed and save the college', he said, as the County Council, which had by then taken over responsibility for education in the city, threatened to close it in a round of cuts. The College was saved but had to survive in a harsher financial climate, determined by people who know little of adult education. Les Fishman, an American professor of economics at Keele, was a great supporter of the College and offered advice:

> I was at a summer school with Les Fishman at Barlaston; he was teaching economics and there was another summer school on Women and Literature and Les gave me some advice about the programme. … He said, 'Derek, you want to organize language courses; language for everybody: Spanish, French, German, and charge them super-cost fees', that was his phrase, 'super-cost'. In other words, lift the fees for them, because there are people out there who will pay much more than the current going rate at Barlaston to come to those courses. Charge lower fees for your other courses where you want social, political, cultural education, where you know people are not so highly motivated.

In the early 1980s, the College had to change in other ways. It needed more casual staff, even on – in the language of the present – zero hours contracts. Derek negotiated this with the staff and the union. He argued that residential course booking was unpredictable and you might not need the same number all year. 'With Thatcherism and everything, to survive, the college at Barlaston had to do this; if it didn't do that it would simply fail to meet demands and be closed.' The College, he said, had been reflecting Wordsworth's ideal of 'high thinking and basic living', but this had to change as fees increased and en suite bedrooms became de rigueur:

> … the difficulty was, to hold on to the adult education traditions, whilst, at the same time, negotiating changes in all the aspects of the physical features of the College and including its ambience and food and so on. And I suppose the thing that really pleases me about the history of the place is that we did, and it was a 'we' because obviously many people were involved in this transition. I was at the head in terms of being Warden and later Principal, but clearly there were team issues on all of us, we did manage to hold on to the WEA university programmes of liberal adult education:

> social and political education, at the same time as effecting the changes I have outlined.

A sense of crisis was also enveloping the WEA in North Staffordshire. The district was eventually merged into a new West Mercia district, which was received with little enthusiasm locally.

The Arboretum

The Local Education Authority also decided that the College could no longer grow its own food in the grounds. It was not economic, they said, and cheaper to buy food in. However, an idea emerged that remains alive today. A College enthusiast, David Wright, was 'a tree man' and he and Derek planned on 'building on the existing collection of trees on the grounds, going back to the late Victorian period'. Many of them were prime specimens. So the Arboretum Project was launched and the 'adopt a tree' and 'buy a tree' schemes proved to be remarkably successful. Many people adopted trees, paying just enough to create a viable fund:

> … the good thing about trees is that virtually everyone is in favour of them and it is interesting that even now as the College stands empty, and if you like, condemned, the slight possibility that it might re-open is very much related to the trees because the Parish Council has put a preservation on the Arboretum; which means that any speculator out there, wanting to come in now and buy the College at a knock-down rate from the City Council to build houses, has got a problem, because of the trees. So it's worked, in a sense, decades later.

The Raymond Williams Memorial Fund

A Raymond Williams memorial fund was established when Williams died in 1988. It generated a good sum of money, about £7,000. The fund was used to subsidize individuals attending the College, and this helped fund residential weekends right through until Derek retired in 2003. Then there was a student called Dudley Pretty who had been coming to the College for many years:

> ... I first met him at a WEA annual conference … in 1983 … he was a motorbike courier. Very interesting trade unionist, also interested in a whole range of issues, the kind of classic, adult education student really, very knowledgeable about rock music, history, etc. Dudley lived in Essex but came to Barlaston very

> regularly … was rather dramatic himself, he was a big guy … he rather looked like Pluto, but with Popeye's body; big, heavy, swarthy … he wore black … when we first knew him he was very articulate, lively …

Sometime in the early–mid 90s Dudley had stopped attending and nothing was heard from him. Derek wrote and discovered he had had a stroke and been partially paralysed, but had now recovered. Dudley replied that it had had a big impact on him and he was very depressed. 'It was almost like seeing him in a suicide letter: "I don't know whether it's worth going on, whether it's worth living," and so on.' It was a very difficult letter to reply to, Derek said. Eventually, Erica, [Derek's wife] volunteered. She was quite tough with him: 'come on, with all your abilities and talents, why don't you come back up here and join a course and we'll have a chat with you, have a drink.'

Dudley came back, but was slower, heavier and in poor health:

> He came back, however, with a vengeance to Barlaston, he loved it and in a sense, it helped save his life, I think. So he enrolled for a whole range of courses and he indeed decided when his father died, to move, from Essex, to live in Stoke, near to the College, because it was his second home … he was a friend … bonds were formed and he continued until my retirement … What I didn't know was that he had written a will, because his health was beginning to deteriorate. He had bequeathed his whole estate to the Raymond Williams Memorial Fund. He died actually at the College, he was in one of the College's bedrooms; he died of a heart attack … only three weeks after I had retired … He had owned the bungalow where he lived in Stoke and also had money stashed away in stocks and shares. The value of the will was £200,000.

That was the beginning of a major battle, however. There was a question as to whether the money was donated to the Fund or the College. It became a difficult period and the dispute ended up at the High Court. Derek was advised of the strength of his case, and the Fund eventually won:

> So it ended up that the city of Stoke-on-Trent, council tax payers, having to pay the best part of £100,000, so that we get pretty near the full amount that, five years previously, well no – more than that, because the case had gone on for ever, that Dudley had intended. So we'd won, so now we've got the Raymond Williams

> Fund having leapt from a few thousand pounds to nearly £200,000, we decided, instead of calling it Raymond Williams Memorial Fund, we'd call it the Raymond Williams Foundation.

So the Foundation has enabled adult education to continue, in new and experimental ways, under the banner of Raymond Williams.

A ministry of enthusiasm

Workers' education like the above was described by William Temple, then Archbishop of Canterbury and the first ever President of the WEA, as a 'ministry of enthusiasm'. Temple was thinking of the various ministries of the early church, of teaching as well as healing, knowing that his allusion would be understood by leading lights in the movement (Roberts, 2003: 2). Derek, I think, felt something of a call to a secular ministry, to improve the well-being of society through adult education. He talked lovingly of teachers and their influence, and the need to read widely and engage with challenging thoughts. The experience shaped his conviction that many spaces were needed across civil society in which the most hard-line of people could learn openness and respect for each other and different perspectives. All partialities of opinion could enter in a spirit of intellectual challenge combined with respect and humanity. Workers' education was, in such terms, no easy, flabby or soft academic affair. It was a questioning, challenging and troubling space, in the company of people who, despite differences, could become friends. Communist Party people, said Derek, could 'relish good argument'. This was a culture, he thought, reminiscent of the best tutorial classes and Coleg Harlech. He sought to replicate it in the Philosophy in Pubs movement: 'All these decades later sitting round in the *Blue Mugge* with a discussion because of Jeffrys-Jones and his culture at Coleg Harlech.' Some of the new resources of hope Derek and others have sought to create are considered further in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Resources of hope? Raymond Williams, the WEA and universities

The death of a tradition

As Jonathan Rose (2010) observed, after 1945 the autodidactic tradition was marginal, a dying movement, like workers' education generally. According to Alan Tuckett (2005), one time director of the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education in England and Wales, it may well have gone the same way as the temperance movement in the early twentieth century. However, rumours of the final death of the autodidactic spirit might be slightly exaggerated. The idea of education as a fundamental element in the long democratic struggle, however difficult, in a post-industrial world, continues to inspire some people and new social movements. In their struggles, we can find new resources of hope. Derek Tatton remains determinedly committed, despite or perhaps because of the demise of Wedgwood Memorial College. He is, as I show, not alone – the WEA, though continuing to struggle, remains, and some of its organizers and voluntary activists are facilitating new forms of educational and political activism, often using social media.

We noted how the WEA almost disappeared from Stoke at the beginning of the new century: its headquarters, Cartwright House, in Hanley, was closed, and Tawney House in Longton abandoned, the closure of Wedgwood Memorial College following soon afterwards. However, some of its organizers found ideas and inspiration in the history of the movement. The Philosophy in Pubs movement and arts and health projects continue while the Creative Communities Unit at Staffordshire University plays an important role in community regeneration, despite limited resources and precarious finance and staffing. Meanwhile various other projects have withered under austerity and local government's financial crisis.

Resources of hope

Derek Tatton finds continuing inspiration in Raymond Williams's ideas. Williams was of the same broad tradition as Tawney, although of a later

generation and with a somewhat different political and pedagogic outlook. Both understood that the WEA's historic mission was far from over by the 1950s. If 'exceptional minds' from diverse backgrounds now go to university more easily, wrote Williams in a letter to WEA tutors, the remaining question was what about everyone else? Were they simply to be treated as rejects, suitable only for narrow vocational training? The WEA stood for something that even educational reformers tended to forget, obsessed as they might be with schooling: 'It stands for an educated democracy, not for a newly mobile and more varied élite', wrote Williams in 1961 (cited in Goldman, 1995: 252). Like Tawney, Williams was critical of people who presumed to deliver all the answers to ordinary people or ideological texts to shape their minds and actions, without requiring active engagement from those concerned. This kind of teaching was the antithesis of the spirit of a democratic education, as both Tawney and Williams understood it: it was demeaning, infantilizing and anti-educational to proffer conclusions – people needed to reach them on their own, however time consuming that might be.

A democratic education, as both Tawney and Williams saw it, was inclusive, dialogical and lifelong, rather than a one-off dose of medicine early in life. Teachers should be open to a range of perspectives, rather than simply there to initiate others into their own beliefs. There were differences: Williams criticized Tawney for making too much of impartiality and his refusal to take a stand – any stand (even against the zealot) – other than seeking to offer a different point of view. Both, however, shared a pedagogic faith in ordinary people and the importance of open enquiry, cultivating curiosity and challenging received wisdom. They agreed on the necessity of creating spaces into which all partialities of opinion were brought and considered in fraternal ways (Goldman, 1995). This was the central conviction of *The Long Revolution*, one of Williams's most important books. It argued that processes of democratization took time, were never complete and always difficult. Later, Williams wrote about the long counter-revolution: the rise of rampant individualism and the commodification of education, as well as growing inequality and poverty. The cultural and educational elites in the new culture calculated their own personal advantage and tended to forget what might happen to everyone else.

Derek Tatton (Tatton, undated; 2011) has been preoccupied with these trends, and in his own writing asks how 'in the face of them', the 'very concept of human reason and value' can be revitalized. He writes about the pessimism generated by conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Gaza and Palestine, and the widening gap between rich and poor and the deep ecological crisis,

to which could be added fundamentalism and fascistic violence in Paris, Pakistan, Madrid, Germany, Italy, Nigeria, Tunisia and other parts of Africa and in small pockets in Stoke and other post-industrial cities. Derek quotes Chomsky (Chomsky, 2010) in noting how the optimism of the 1950s and 60s was displaced by pessimism about the prospects of human betterment. The 1970s evoked growing feelings of hopelessness and despair among progressive forces. Chomsky thought the reversal of a centuries-long move towards industrialization was an important factor in the economic shift from productive enterprise to financial manipulation. In his book *Towards 2000* (1983) Williams wrote that he was troubled by an emerging self-consciousness among elites – political, cultural, military, and in the media – who constantly calculate their relative advantage over others in a war of appearance and display. This is Williams's *Plan X*: the narcissism and extreme individualism at the heart of neoliberalism, and the marginalization of ideas of the collective good.

As both Tatton and Williams observe, pessimism and even cynicism towards representative democracy marched hand in hand with these tendencies. Decreasing numbers of people exercise their right to vote, and:

> A tightly organised party system and parliament seems to have converted the national franchise into the election of a court. As individuals we cast one vote at intervals of several years on a range of policies and particular decisions towards which it is virtually impossible to have one single attitude. … From this … a court of ministers emerges … and then it is very difficult for any of us to feel even the smallest direct share in the government of our affairs.

Tatton quotes Williams to this end from *The Long Revolution* (Tatton, 2011).

Tatton also highlights Williams's concern over militaristic metaphors and the fetish of violent 'solutions' characterizing some on the left as well as the right. When power is monopolized by unresponsive elites, divisions open up among those who seek to oppose them, some of whom may find violence attractive. In the introduction to a new edition of *The Long Revolution*, Williams (2011) is quoted as being deeply uneasy about any language of short or violent responses to injustice. Metaphors of assaulting citadels, he observed, are of the wrong kind. The struggle had to be slow, democratic and non-violent. As organized working-class traditions waned, he saw potential in new forms of communication technologies and their capacity not only for political activity but for experimenting with and experiencing forms of self-government. The long revolution might, in short, be partly digital, in the

interplay of diverse communities, local and global, and a determination to occupy or reclaim parks, halls, schools, universities, churches, synagogues and mosques for building horizontal forms of dialogue, learning and decision making.

Philosophy in Pubs (PiPs)

PiPs might be one small step in building a new movement with which Derek is associated. It includes using a pub in Leek, a small town close to Stoke. The spirit is close to that of the tutorial classes and, as Derek sees it, the residential experience of Wedgwood Memorial College. In *The Blue Mugge* pub, there are informal weekly meetings on Tuesday evenings, linked to residential weekends supported by the Raymond Williams Foundation. There are no fees or tutors – all are tutors as well as students, recalling an old WEA mantra. About 12 people meet to consider a range of topics. A focus might include BBC radio programmes or other media resources or using a variety of websites to encourage engagement with wider thinking, new ideas and people in other places. I joined in one of the sessions, for which notes were provided. The focus was C.P. Snow's *The Two Cultures* and its relevance today: 'is there a worrying gap between the kind of critical, questioning and ethical spirit cultivated in the humanities and forms of dominant scientific thinking and research?', we were asked. We began to examine the money devoted to big science by large pharmaceutical companies, for instance, using randomized clinical trials to test the efficacy of drugs. This contrasted with the neglect of human psychological suffering and the lack of emphasis given to talking cures.

Much effort has gone into building links with similar initiatives, in the hope of creating new 'movements'. There are links with PiPs in Merseyside and discussion circles supported by the Raymond Williams Foundation, combined with spending weekends together at a residential college. Connections have been forged with the University of the Third Age and a range of informal educational programmes such as Café Philosophique or the Ragged University. The latter rests on the concept that everyone has a unique and distinct body of knowledge, and its events are designed for sharing and learning in informal social spaces – 'third places' such as pubs, cafes and libraries, spaces we all own. 'The common technology around us – talking, projectors, computers and so forth – is all we need to begin to facilitate communication and create knowledge landscapes' (Dunedin and Brown, 2012).

Connections were also made with the Tent City University – part of the Occupy movement at the bottom of St Paul's Cathedral's steps in

London – in 2012. Here academics freely gave their time to talk about ideas, questioning the shortcomings of particular academic disciplines like economics and its neglect of 'real world' problems of inequality, poverty and sustainability. Derek Tatton believes these constitute new experiments in democratic education, forged by combining local and global concerns and the creation of diverse 'mini publics and deliberative democracy' in spaces the public themselves own or can reclaim. This is to challenge a 'sclerotic representative democracy' and the power of the taken-for-granted (Tatton, undated; 2011).

Life continuing in the WEA

I did a number of auto/biographical narrative interviews with WEA organizers. One I call Kerry talked a great deal about her own family roots. She had studied the history of the WEA and made connections with the present. Like Derek, she was exercised by the question of how to build dedicated, sustained and inclusive space for working across difference. Kerry was mindful of the WEA's need to be impartial and sensitive about crossing boundaries between 'education' and political activism. She made connections in her own family narrative between an older world of workers' education, including Fircroft Workers' College in Birmingham, and new kinds of community activism using social media. She described finding Tawney's book, *Equality,* in a bookshop in the small town of Stone, to the south of Stoke. The book once belonged to Wedgwood Memorial College Library. She read the book and others from that period and made links in the interviews between the mental health problems at the heart of her family – in her father's disability and mental strife – politics and her own motivation. Her narrative also makes reference to some undesirable characteristics of the older WEA and Labour cultures: they could be exclusionary and 'very male' (and still were), lost in overly formal procedures and fractious debate that alienated younger people.

Kerry's narrative and those of other activists embodied sentiments similar to Derek Tatton's. Kerry operated within a world of ageing WEA branches and newer health groups, financed from specific funding streams including the National Lottery. Straddling these different elements could be difficult and there might be fraught relations between the old and the new. The question in the new work was how to build something sustained and broadly educative within specific health projects, given narrow targets of weight loss or participation in sport. New social media were one resource, with campaigns organized around the closure of a Victorian swimming pool

in the north of the city. Here white working-class women, rather than Asian women, were to the fore: the latter were more reticent, Kerry said, and sensitive about what their communities would think. Facebook became a vehicle for action. For some it was empowering, for others disillusioning. Other examples of new forms of community activism employing social media included the campaign for Christmas lights in one of the pottery towns and a march in Stoke against the City Council's *Mandate for Change*. Holding the line between political activism and WEA impartiality was difficult, but it was easier for volunteers than people employed by the City Council or colleges funded by the state. Space in the WEA, Kerry said, could be less constrained, if also fraught with the danger of accusations of being political.

Roots

Kerry's parents were Quakers who had met at a residential workers' college. A grandparent had been a teenager in Nazi Germany who fled the country, and who greatly appreciated the contact she had with Quakers during and after the war. The family moved to Stoke and her father worked in the pottery industry. Neither of her parents had 'what you would call stable jobs in Stoke', but Kerry was raised in a family of political consciousness.

Her father had suffered a bad accident and became involved in online campaigns:

> … my dad was … hospitalized several times … They were sort of lobbying about disability benefit tests … Basically the disability benefit test … he failed that hurdle … fell into the same trap as everybody else. Such as mental health issues but of course that is a hidden condition … he would look for work … but he can't work and, you know, he went to A&E enough times to prove it. But he can't access anything until retirement age so he was stuck in … that position … So they are sort of politicized but cynical about the establishment. My mum threw out her Labour card after the Iraq invasion …

Starting points

Kerry attempted to set up a local newspaper, to see if she could build a more democratic and 'horizontal' form of communication in the north of the city. She had been involved in a youth network, shaped by events in Rwanda, as the global and local intertwined:

> … a youth network called Never Again International which sort of ... inspired and shaped what I wanted to do … in my career … it was set up by … Jewish students and some Rwandan students who were horrified to learn about what had happened in Rwanda and couldn't understand why after the Holocaust 'Never again' hadn't become a reality …

Towards the end of university, she worked with Rwandan students from around the world, in an effort to bring young people together to discuss conflict and genocide. She insisted that young people in the West might learn a great deal about conflict and how racism becomes toxic, and even murderous, from their counterparts in Africa. It changed her view of the world and made her aware of the need for communication across difference to connect the local and global. Any new movement needed this kind of global as well as parochial connection.

Kerry became interested in health issues and how to bring people together in a shared space for specific ends that might then be broadened into addressing social problems beyond narrower health agendas. Obesity or depression were social as well as individual issues, both a consequence of hopelessness, she said. She felt people could make themselves healthier in groups, and then might become socially mobile and resilient by having access to other opportunities:

> … most people in Stoke are not gathering in such a social space so there are really very few ways for us to come together and talk … I had an interest in developing things that would try and do something about that. So as it turns out I now work with health and fitness tutors a lot which again I think is interesting in that we bring a slightly different perspective than the kind of traditional adult education, we are very much about … bringing people in and getting them involved in a fitness class first and foremost … but as we have worked with groups for longer other possibilities emerge …

Older, male worlds of bullying

Kerry and Annie, WEA activists, were critical of an older Labourist/leftist culture, which was generally dominated by men and alienating for younger people and women. Kerry had been involved in some of the political turmoil engulfing the city:

> … some of the factions and arguments and rows and the feeling you get when you walk into a lot of meetings that, that it's really … quite hostile … very, very off putting feeling … and I'm probably more confident in getting involved than other people, but I found it a movement that got quite dominated by bullying, and that really sort of did shift my willingness to get involved …

She wanted a more 'civil type of politics':

> We really have damaged each other and through some of these campaigns people have been giving me some of the history of just being socialists and the level of anger that they have got against each other is horrendous … vicious. And I'm … as a young activist I am somehow expected to take all that on, absorb it and they say you shouldn't speak to that person or that person … and they want me to have their history and trust their history and that bothers me a bit because that isn't my history. I never threw anyone out of the militant wing or all these different sects and that. And I think that is a huge problem. It is very male … a very masculine sort of thing ...

How then to build a new, more civil, perhaps feminized politics and education, beyond the narcissism of small differences or the performance of a rigid masculinity? One shaped by concerns for the personal and the well-being of others, rather than old-style macho competition? Annie expressed this in the following way:

> Whereas women participate like this, it [the masculinist stance] is just completely blinkered … if you don't see it on my side then you're against me. We have built up collaborations … campaigns where maybe we disagree with everything else but … we can agree on one thing, so let's stick to that. So that's what we've tried to do with the March on Stoke campaign, it is just to keep it very … focused. But also try and inject some moderation so on my [Facebook] pages it has been about, you know, trying to keep people to be civil to each other online, which people aren't always. … it's about trying to ride over some of the factions and just try and keep an opposition campaign together … people won't get involved with politics because it's so toxic, and it is toxic at the moment …

There had been a television programme on Stoke and its politics, which focused on the Council and councillors. Kerry and Annie thought this had only increased feelings of alienation and the sense that the Council was disconnected from local communities.

Abandonment: The story of Pathfinder

Such perceptions need to be set against the backcloth of the 'abandonment' by national government when it aborted the Pathfinder regeneration project mid-term in 2010.

Annie expressed this pointedly:

> We … feel abandoned … so there is a sense that they started demolition and started huge projects that the community weren't properly engaged in and then even worse than seeing through a project that people didn't necessarily agree with they then abandoned it ... I think five areas are areas of major intervention and they got to different stages; so here [referring to a particular area in the north of the city called Middleport] we had more progress with demolition building … they are basically still midway through demolition … I think as far as a lot of people … are concerned, they don't know where it's going, or they don't get consulted … The government pulled it just at the point where we felt that we were creating maximum energy for our area. We felt that they ignored us … nobody's talking to anyone, any more … a few weeks ago there was a piece about the Pathfinder scheme on television … What that brought out was this huge feeling of a kind of abandonment …

Alongside Pathfinder, gyms and community centres were closing in the time of austerity, as government retreated. People felt bitter, and the absence of public space for debate and deliberation mattered in this context. Annie said:

> We have the EDL, we had a march, we had a pipe bomb in the mosque that we have never explored. There has been no discussion, no debate, there was nothing, and I have spoken to members of the community about that: I said that to somebody just in passing, I said it's funny that in Norway there was a debate ... [here] there is no provision of it even being discussed particularly. We can ... we bring people together and that helps because people learn about each other's cultures, but I don't think we've had the bravery to do so.

The shadow of Anders Breivick's slaughter of the innocents in Norway was mentioned in some interviews, having happened at roughly the same time as a mosque in Stoke was pipe bombed. Breivick the terrorist, not unlike members of the EDL, took pleasure in posing in uniforms, and was inspired by a range of ultra-right contra-jihadist groups and, some suggest, a fear of all that is feminine and other – and possible contamination by it. Attack might have been a fragile masculinity's warped form of defence (Auestad, 2014).

Campaigns

Sandra, another organizer, moved to Stoke from a different part of the country. She liked the city and its people, though constantly felt like an outsider. She talked about several initiatives in the Asian communities, but assumptions about gender roles inhibited women from exercising leadership functions, while health groups could fragment along racial lines:

> … so we have got several women's groups, including a Sikh mixed group, around a Sikh temple; and then what we did which our sister project in Dudley did, is we then widened our scope out to the white communities … and there are a few groups where there is a little bit of mixture, but basically they will be either white or BME groups, but we have been able to bring those together a little bit ... we have a few men's groups … My own sense … is that women certainly don't have … frontline involvement, there are no Asian women councillors, all the councillors are men, which I think is of significance. Within our groups there are some within the Asian women groups, there are some reasons why they are very, very, very cautious about taking anything too far, there's a real fear of community judgements … we did have a group in one venue and all of the women stopped coming … because of their problems to do with other men in the venue, so ... any progress we make can quite quickly disappear …

Kerry thought the days of rigid committee structures in working-class education were disappearing and sought instead to build new kinds of learning circles. She envisaged potentially vibrant branches emerging from that, even if they might look different from the old WEA. The city's wider ethnic solipsism was present in these new initiatives, however. It was difficult to get women to mix.

New social media and a new civics

Annie noted that Facebook was encouraging activism at a community level. Facebook pages might grow to 2,000 members within five days, yet the medium was no guarantee of fraternity:

> So … I'm engaged with one group called My Town and that had about 800 members; that had a row between a few of the members and because that got so unpleasant they, some of the members formed a spin-off group called Our Town. So very fractional … it was traders not really seeing eye to eye but it got particularly unpleasant … what happened of course was these rows get very ugly because they are public so you've then everyone pitching in and taking sides. So the row itself may only have involved 10 or 12 people and would have been just like a pub row; except that it's on Facebook so what happened was most people went off and formed their own group.

March on Stoke group

Annie reported that other groups of white working-class people were being mobilized for new kinds of political engagement:

> Suddenly finding they have the logistical power and the confidence to go and raise this money; go to some businesses and raise some sponsorship. And again other people deciding that they were confident enough to have a march because of social media. So this whole civic thing, and the thing about the city centre, everybody who's been opposed to has been opposed but isolated, suddenly everybody realized that everybody felt the same …

A fairly small group quickly collected 3,000 signatures against the Council. But the potential for fractiousness was never far away:

> … the thing nearly split on people saying 'well I don't want a march behind a socialist banner' – that was the main thing – so what we decided, and I was sort of involved, 'cos I'd been involved with the one … about cuts as well ... This is the kind of arguments and this is why people got riled about it because of their involvement.

Using social media quickly raised the number of people involved in the debate. Decisions were taken to protest without any banners or logos. It

was difficult: 'every time something gets specifically on about party politics, it falls apart', Annie said:

> So we've had weekends of people fighting literally all night and that stays at the top of the Facebook group and looks awful. So all of the people coming in and saying 'I'm not a member of any party I'm just really angry about what they are doing …', puts off people. So the aim really is again to hold something together for long enough that we can voice this opposition and then if everyone decides to hate each other and never speak again that's fine because at least we would have coherently voiced our position for once.

All of this used what Annie called 'a secret Facebook group' of 2,000 members. She felt that collaboration like this worked and forced councillors to explain what they were doing because people were paying attention. Interestingly, from the WEA point of view, Annie remarked, debate was also organized round 'a course' on a specific local issue like *Mandate for Change*. 'We did it as a course to try to get more people confident in expressing themselves.'

But campaigns could fail and people became 'angrier' and disillusioned. She described the campaign against the closure of a swimming pool:

> We got involved … We were involved in the pool because we were doing … health and fitness classes … So they were very, very upset and at the same time we were running this project called Community Involvement which was about how people can express themselves and how people can protest against decisions. And we were being asked to write letters in protest at the decision. And again it was working out what that line was, you know, at what point are we lobbying for our learners and at what point does that put us in a difficult position? … We pulled people together and created that space. So we could get some of those people together to draft a letter and get our learners to sign the letter and we would show them the petition. And again as there was a march, much of that was organized online … People get involved. It wasn't a bad thing to do because most of our women feel that they need to keep their heads down.

The women were 'mostly white working class', said Annie. The WEA was anxious about its work being seen as 'too political', 'because they [the women] get very anxious about what the community would think if things

get too political', just as some of the Asian women did. These were white working-class people, mostly from non-union backgrounds. The majority still worked in the pottery industry and they too were frightened of politics. 'It was the first time they had protested over anything. There was an evaluation of the experience: some enjoyed it, not least because of doing something, some thought it a waste of time.' The pool closed at roughly the same time as Wedgwood Memorial College, but there had been campaigns and some of the women felt they had become more active learners as well as politicized.

The universities?

Questions arise, of course, about the contemporary role of universities and their civic responsibilities in the city. Historically, the alliance between workers' organizations and progressive elements in universities greatly contributed to the development of British social democracy. However, university extramural or adult education departments, once central to that history, were closed as ring fenced funding for university 'adult education' ended in the early 1990s, including at Keele. It was assumed their purpose was redundant in an era of mass higher education. One senior academic at Keele described the remnants of the older tradition as 'passé'.

So now a new educational vacuum has opened up for the 'rejects', those left behind by mass higher education. A.D. (Sandy) Lindsay, one-time Master of Balliol College and the first principal of what became the University of Keele, would have been concerned about this, steeped as he was in workers' education (Phillips, 1980). Keele grew directly out of the workers' education movement in Stoke and district. Lindsay wrote about the university's civic responsibility to whole populations via developing programmes of adult education in cooperation with workers' organizations. He thought the failure of universities in Germany to resist Nazism was important and that it was born out of their aloofness towards local communities and the obsessions of narrow academic specialization. Keele once invested in adult education and Lindsay had called for a 'real people's university' in North Staffordshire. However, some suggest this idea was an early casualty of the conflict between a working-class mission and wanting to emulate elitist aspects of Oxbridge in a new rural location (Hall, 1972). And now the adult education provision at Keele no longer exists.

One contemporary leader at the University of Keele dismissed the alliance between the older WEA and the university as anachronistic. Adult education at Keele came to be associated with a narrow range of 'arts subjects', he said, and the 'University more generally was considered to be

cut off and remote from the city and its concerns'. There were now, he continued, major investments by the University in health-related research, with a research centre creating expertise in primary care, arthritis and in the causes and management of strokes: 'if you stand a high chance of having a stroke in Stoke, you have a high chance of being given the best of treatment, given the excellence of the research taking place.' Keele University, I was told, had devised many other programmes to help pharmacists train in dispensing medication and providing advice on the treatment of hay fever and allergies. There were other examples of valuable local collaboration, but what was missing was any reference to Stoke as a city in wider distress and what the University's role might be, in collaboration with others, to address these wider issues in research or specific outreach programmes.

There are exceptions, and individual academics have worked with local groups in community psychological projects, for instance. Staffordshire University, located centrally in Stoke, also has a number of academics devoted to regeneration issues, based in the Creative Communities Unit. They engage with local communities encouraging active citizenship. The Unit's origins derive from contracts for small pieces of research for Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent. Short academic programmes were devised for people working in the voluntary or 'third' sector. However, its geographical compass was wide in terms of local authorities, covering the entire West Midlands, which inevitably limited possibilities in Stoke. On its website the Unit states that 'there is an increasing focus on the need to support the development of skills and learning for community regeneration', and that 'many voluntary organizations and public bodies are working alongside community groups … to make things happen locally.' The Unit's team is made up of academics with various specialist skills in community development, regeneration and youth work. It has a newsletter and training projects for 'community research' and brings together professionals and volunteers from Poland, Lithuania and Stoke to focus on creative approaches to health and community development.

From her WEA perspective, Kerry valued this work: 'I've seen the model of what they are doing in the community … I think I've seen them play a very valuable role, that kind of ability to slightly shift the dynamic and to facilitate the power of communities to strengthen themselves'. Unfortunately, the Unit's team had to recognize that because the Unit was so stretched and the scale of distress so great, needs in the city far outstripped their capacity to act. The trouble lay partly in short-termism, at both local and national government levels. The word 'pathfinder' reared

its ugly head again, although in relation to quite a different project. As one academic put it:

> Pathfinder was a three-year government-funded initiative in certain areas of the country specifically to fund Adult Active Learning Practice Citizenship; and we were the final phase of that in Stoke … Stoke City Council got quite a lot of money to then commission activities and projects aimed at supporting people to understand how to ... influence decision making and … encouraging them to do that. So that ranged from activities to teach young people about democracy and how to vote and why and … to get them to register and activities through to accredited … access-level courses for people who wanted to learn more about how to become a community leader, or how to speak up and influence decisions ... there was an e-petition service set up and ... A lot of work was done to support community groups through a self-assessment process, to measure their strengths in being democratic, being accountable, being open, being able to manage finances … and then training … to support them to develop wherever they said their weaknesses were; also training and support for staff working in multi-agency projects across the whole of the city, frontline and kind of middle line staff who have contact with communities … So the planning department or housing … so training for them in community development techniques and understanding of policy background and getting a kind of consistent approach encouraging people to … share resources around community engagement.

Sadly, the project ended in March 2011, just as momentum was building, at the same time as public sector cuts were biting so 'multi-agency and community engagement and local neighbourhood-based services were cut'. The description 'pathfinder' reminds me of the same name mass bombing campaign against Germany in the Second World War, except Germany was actually reconstructed. The problem now is of political short-termism, of not seeing projects through to completion and failing to give time to developing new work. The 'good stuff that was done' got lost, organizers said. Short-termism and the discouragement it can bring easily adds to the cynicism that others – the extreme right or Islamic radicalizers – can exploit. A new and interdisciplinary imagination is required, colleagues in the Unit insisted – one that focuses on economic, cultural and educational regeneration. Action research could help to build a more nuanced understanding of communities,

especially if there is a commitment to being fundamentally democratic and educative as well as long term in its processes. The University ought to give this some priority and government-guaranteed support. In the present ideological climate, however, this does not look possible in either the short- or the medium-term. Resources of hope have been and are nonetheless being created in the city, but this is *despite* rather than *because* of government and its agencies.

Chapter 10

Resources of hope: *Lidice Shall Live* – a local education curriculum

Present and past

This chapter is about a specific project in civic education, a resource of hope that involved building connections between aspects of Stoke's industrial past and an inspirational campaign led by local politicians and the miners against the barbarities of Nazi fundamentalism. It is a story of the recovery of a proud local history that had largely been forgotten, and how this invigorated the curriculum of particular schools and the life of certain ex-mining communities. It is a tale of how one local experiment in civic education enabled children to learn about fundamentalism and the barbarities carried out in its name; and how strangers need not be seen as a threat but can rather be rich resources for strengthening community life. I want to make connections here with wider debates about civic education in schools. This is too often reduced to socializing deficient children and their families into better behaviour, rather than understanding them and their communities in a wider context, and creating space for the practice of learning democracy and dialogue across difference.

Surprise at the YMCA

In the summer of 2012 I visited the relatively new red brick building housing the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Hanley, near Hanley Park. The park had been the product of municipal pride: the tradition of municipal socialism created a green lung in which people could breathe cleaner air to combat the dirt and grime produced by industry. I looked around the park that summer morning before going to the YMCA and saw preparations for the 2012 Olympic torch parade. Attempts were made to smarten the place up, including the once imposing building at the park's heart. It had been a café but was now abandoned and courtesy of G4S, the private security organization, emblazoned with warnings signs not to enter. G4S had won countless contracts from the government, most memorably

in 2012, to provide security services for the Olympics. It ended in chaos and the army was brought in to cover the calamity. The pavilion, indeed the whole park, needed attention; and the old 'Parky's' house – the home of a caretaker who lived on site – was closed and protected by a similar notice. The signs were like those at Wedgwood Memorial College. Here was a new industry born to protect empty, decaying relics of an honourable past. The park is close to a mosque, around which there has been much controversy, demonstrations and violence. I walked past it on my way to the YMCA.

I went to the YMCA to interview some Asian men who were playing cricket in the large modern sports hall, as part of a WEA health group. The reception area was throbbing with bustling school children, clearly on a mission. Except the accents were far from the throaty, Anglo-Saxon cadences of the Potteries, as a former colleague at Keele, John Levitt, once described them. You could hear the rhythms of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, said Levitt, in those clipped vowels that my mother thought got you nowhere in the world. But the accents that day were Eastern European, from the Czech Republic in fact. I asked the children where they were from: Lidice, they said, and pointed to a young man standing close by, who was one of their teachers. 'We are from Lidice', he stated, 'in the Czech Republic', and 'we are pleased to be here in Stoke-on-Trent, it's part of the 70th anniversary commemoration of the destruction of our town and we have always been grateful to the people of Stoke-on-Trent who supported us in the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign.' I felt a flush of pride and wanted to know more. Distant memories stirred in my head, but I couldn't recall anything precisely. Then I remembered more fragments and eventually engaged with the literature and websites, and talked to some of those closely involved. Lidice inspired workers in Stoke in the past and has now provided new resources of hope in teaching children about citizenship and racism.

If Stoke is a lost, distressed city, there are some inspiring examples of attempts at civic renewal and efforts to create resources of hope to counteract its reality. Here was an initiative enabling young children and their families to discover pride in the city and what their grand- or great-grandparents had done. This is an example of a genuinely local curriculum project helping pupils learn about their city and grandparents, the miners who took a stand against Nazi barbarities. It might be an example of local curriculum potential, which is easily lost or stifled in an over-centralized English school's curriculum.

Reinhard Heydrich, author of *The Final Solution of the Jewish Question*, was, we recalled, assassinated in Prague on 27 May 1942. In retaliation, squadrons of Nazi terror units entered the Czech mining

community of Lidice and shot dead all the men over 15. At the same time the women and children were rounded up and many were gassed, although not the few who looked sufficiently Aryan, who were deported to Germany to be raised by families of the Reich. Out of revenge for Heydrich's assassination, the Nazis declared that 'Lidice shall die for ever' and razed the mining town to the ground. The link between Stoke and Lidice was made through the Miners' Union and a local councillor and family doctor named Barnett Stross. In that summer of 1942, the miners and others in Stoke organized a great public rally, under the defiant banner 'Lidice Shall Live'. The rally was addressed by Stross, who became MP for Stoke Central in 1945. He was Jewish and his own family were refugees from Polish pogroms. He was also a WEA activist, tutor and a close friend of Tawney and helped organize a reunion in Longton in 1951 for the surviving members of Tawney's classes (Hughes, 2012).

Some 70 years after the massacre at Lidice, two local Stoke people – one from mining stock – organized a campaign to honour this working-class movement against fascism. The few remaining survivors were invited to Stoke in 2012, to commemorate the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign and remember how the people of Stoke showed moral leadership and gave money to help rebuild the town after the war. This was the best of people's history – a model of solidarity, internationalism and principle, forged in the workers' movement. Telling stories about Stoke's history was also about present agendas. In 2013 I interviewed some of those who were central to the new campaign in the town of Fenton, the one Arnold Bennett forgot.

Some Stoke schools had recently joined an international children's art movement, which began in Lidice and whose collections are now housed there in a purpose-built community centre. Medals in the shape of a Lidice rose are awarded to participants. Stoke is now linked to the project (Hughes, 2012) and the Lidice survivors came to the city in 2012, visiting local primary schools to tell their stories. The school children were asked to talk to grandparents and relatives to find out what they knew about the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign. Once asked, older people in Stoke began to tell their stories and a delicate thread of civic and familial pride – in the political activism and principles of previous generations – was woven. Barnett Stross is celebrated in the Czech Republic. He was my mother's GP. My youngest daughter, Hannah, who was working in Prague in 2013, went to visit Lidice after we had a conversation about its history in a synagogue in Prague's old Jewish quarter. We talked about what the people of Stoke had done. Hannah was moved by the Lidice memorial, its rose garden and the road

and museum venerating Barnett Stross's name. Over time the intimate and struggles against racism and fascism converged.

Ashes, tears and roses

Cheryl Gerrard runs an art gallery in Fenton with her partner Alan. She told me that neither of them could paint or draw but they saw the potential of art to evoke an understanding of their city, its history and industrial heritage, and explore how the place could be improved. They had walked past the buildings in the central square and recognized the potential one particular building had to be converted into a gallery. For Alan Gerrard, this was part of a broader political project of civic regeneration, using art to build a living history. Alan was angry at what had happened to Stoke and wanted to recover its traditions of solidarity to help renew the city. He was agitated about how it was stereotyped and the stigmatization of working-class people more widely:

> … there's a misconception that … local people … you know that they are sitting in front of the television watching football, you know they've got the Sky channels on and all that kind of stuff. But they do like art and it's local working-class people that are coming in and buying original pieces of artwork … the perception of Stoke-on-Trent is … It's portrayed as being worse by the councillors and the offices that run the city … people outside the city I think have a bad perception …

Such negative perceptions dug into Alan, They made him angry and he wanted to challenge them to the core – by re-engaging with the 1984 Miners' Strike, for instance:

> It was a couple of years ago now, 2010, obviously it was the 25th anniversary of the Miners' Strike, basically. I had been brought up the traditional way. Very disenfranchised with the Labour Party as it is today ... and there didn't seem to be anything going on to remember the Miners' Strike at all, so we had this idea to … and not just to commemorate it but actually … put on a *Question Time* debate. I've never actually seen politicians put under the spotlight about it; and yet it has been such a seismic event, you know, and the results and effect you know that you can see them all over the place … We got George Galloway, Ken Loach, Edwina Curry … David Hencke the writer …

A local lad

Alan was a child of Fenton and illness was a lifelong companion:

> I went to a local school … which has now been demolished … then moved on to the High school … very good boys' school … Got good grades at school … And during my time at secondary school … I did start getting symptoms of … epilepsy. I've always had symptoms … went to the open day at the sixth form college and at the time … I decided to go on to a YTS [Youth Training Scheme] and take an apprenticeship and got into the pottery industry … I graduated from there and went to work at Wedgwood's in Barlaston … And worked with my father … he was the factory manager there … But again the epilepsy was … a factor. And I had to move out of that work and decided to … go back to education. I took an access course at Staffordshire University.

He liked the University, and later completed an MA in economics.

Cheryl had worked in tourism, marketing the city:

> So it was travelling quite a bit overseas promoting the city … and you know, it was the heyday really. It was, we had the world's centre of ceramics. Completely unique product … so many factory tours, shopping … And visitors literally came from all over the world to Stoke-on-Trent. And strangely talking about perceptions … the perceptions overseas of Stoke-on-Trent were not negative at all, because … people saw this beautiful china. They just saw beautiful products, and even when they came to the city, and you know, there are horrible pockets in the city, and between the factory shops. Where people visit … It's like that didn't matter, they didn't notice that, because the end product was so beautiful.

A beauty in danger of being forgotten or missed: products of skill, ingenuity and aesthetic delight were made in the Potteries, alongside cheaper, mass-produced crockery. Even if the industry lost its way as it concentrated on goods for a mass market, in economically unsustainable ways, the beauty was real and some of the production remains. At the Wedgwood Factory, for example, and Emma Bridgewater's reclaimed potbank various new products have been developed. Beautiful chinaware is still produced in

Stoke, even though the industry could never be the mass employer it once was (see Rice, 2010).

Lidice and challenging daydreams

Alan told me a story about reading a book on the Second World War:

> … I was reading a book about the Gestapo and I … turned the page and I came across the episode of Lidice, the tragedy that happened there … after the assassination of Heydrich; and I couldn't believe what I was reading. I came across how the village was rebuilt: it started to explain the role of Stoke-on-Trent and the workers of Stoke-on-Trent and in a way I felt sort of betrayed, that all this information had been kept from me for all these years … 40 years … and … when you look at all the apathy and the disenfranchisement around the city … you know there are people walking around sort of in a daydream. Quite a lot of the people, you know … I just thought it was so wrong that people didn't know about this … and we decided to do something about that in the same way Barnett Stross decided to do something about the destruction of the village … I sent an email to Lidice to say, you know, this is Stoke-on-Trent calling … You know, we haven't forgot, you know. They sent one back saying 'oh this is wonderful …'… Talking about Barnett Stross they'd, they'd invited us over anyway to open a Barnett Stross exhibition … and then it all sort of began to snowball …

Stoke, for a long time, was disconnected from Lidice but the international arts competition helped re-establish the relationship:

> … There's never been any entries, any contributions and we thought again that's got to change and we thought we need to get out into the Stoke-on-Trent schools, tell the children the story, raise their aspirations make them see how proud they should be of this city, and their parents or grandparents, great-grandparents; and get them to enter the competition as a celebration of that …

Alan and Cheryl visited many schools, taking photographs and telling stories. Cheryl told me:

> We have lots of photographs and we have big … panels that we take in to school. And depending on the age that we are talking to we slightly tailor … the story. And … they feel incredibly proud

> they've learnt something about their history and their heritage which is really … important … I thought what was quite sad, actually, the majority of the children didn't even know what a coal mine was … and you know the city … was built on that … the Potteries came out of the coal mining because there was the abundance of coal to do the firing basically … that was a really key thing … And then the story of Lidice is extremely sad … and the children do get upset about that. But it's saying to them what people can do in response … we have very large photographs which we printed off and we will show them how Lidice looked and we will tell them … where it is and briefly … depending on their age group, about what was done in World War Two … how Heydrich was killed because people in Czechoslovakia were being hurt, we try and be as simple as possible but make them realize … the children that were killed, in Lidice, most of the children were gassed … and … we do a little thing with them … where everybody puts their hands up and then those with brown eyes, we say, put your hands down, those with brown hair put your hands down and so you end up with just a few blond haired people in the class and … you know who survived but the rest of us would have been … killed. And it kind of brings it home to them doesn't it? … To raise that kind of money in the middle of the War years was quite an amazing thing to do … we say to the children, look the whole world knew about this because the Nazis sent out film coverage … They filmed this atrocity. The whole world knew what they did in Lidice. But actually it was Stoke-on-Trent and only the people of Stoke-on-Trent that first decided to do something about it.

Teachers were briefed and there was considerable coverage in the local press. It was not simply about Lidice and the slaughter of innocents, but about creating new, living history, making what was distant and potentially boring come alive. The wider campaign included an appeal for people who knew of *Lidice Shall Live* and members of families who might have been involved to come forward. 'Did anyone remember Barnett Stross?', the local paper enquired. Various people made contact and Cheryl and Alan gathered together material. One woman named Muriel Stoddard told them that her father, Arthur Badley, had been secretary of the North Staffs Miners' Federation and had spoken, alongside Stross, at the rally in the Victoria Hall, in Hanley, that day.

Olympic year

I did these interviews in 2012 when the Olympic torch was to be paraded through Stoke-on-Trent. Alan and Cheryl used the opportunity to create more links. They buddied up some children from local schools with Czech children. There were 30 children in total, 15 from schools in the Czech Republic and 15 from Stoke, and they spent most of the Olympic torch week together. They participated in various activities at the YMCA and visited Staffordshire University and the City Council. They televised each other in the University's studios, asked questions and tried to teach each other their language, although most of the Czech children already spoke reasonable English. Some of their relationships have continued through Facebook. And three of the Lidice survivors who came to Stoke went to selected schools:

> … we arranged meetings, so for example the survivors went to a local school … in Fenton. Who actually … have celebrated this link, since they heard about it … Their Year 6 pupils have actually told the story to all the other year groups in our lady's school; and they enter the art competition and they have a whole day laid aside for it. So we actually went, we took the three survivors. The children of Lidice and they spoke – so there were three little groups – and that's really where we want to get to … Because they were telling their story of this that had happened to them as a child … A few of the Year 6 children actually told the story of Lidice and Stoke to the survivors, it was … really, really amazing.

About 40 children aged 9 to 11 were divided into three groups led by the three survivors. One lady, Marie, was the eldest child of Lidice, while the other two had been babies. All had been 'Germanized'. Now called the Children of Lidice they told their stories to the groups, each with a translator, and the teachers listened in too. After 15–20 minutes, the children relayed the stories to others in the school:

> And that certainly bought it home for the children, they were mesmerized by what they were hearing … so that, that was going on was cross-generational … and then for the children to have absorbed it all and tell it all back to them. And they started to talk about this area and the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign and what they used to do in the 1940s at the same time. They loved hearing that because they'd never heard that before … the story about the people of the city that had helped to rebuild Lidice.

What was important, Alan and Cheryl said, was not the survivors telling the stories but rather the children in Year 6 (about 11-years-old) learning the history and then telling it to other children and back to the survivors. This was how history was brought alive, they said, rather than coming from 'old fogies like us'. The older children could inspire younger ones, who in turn could tell their older relatives, and new energy was generated across families and communities. They were 'almost like teachers themselves'. They felt proud 'because it was actually their ancestors that helped this village'. Now more than a hundred local schools are entering a national art competition, which is part of a broader global project sponsored by UNESCO. There would be a commemorative event on 9 June and an award ceremony. They were planning for the children to sing, 'because this is what happens in Lidice. They have a formal event and then what they call the festival of light of school choirs performing'. The children's artwork exhibition was displayed for the whole of June in the National Memorial Arboretum, in the south of Staffordshire, where over 300,000 people visit each year.

Antiracism

Alan and Cheryl said that antiracism was a basic message in their work. Stross was Jewish, and his family fled from Poland. He came to England and was welcomed by people and in turn helped others as a healer. It was a process of recognition and the strengthening of human solidarity across difference. Alan and Cheryl would say to the children, 'Stross isn't a Stoke-on-Trent name is it? Where do you think it comes from?' So the children guessed, and learned, which helped break down some of the barriers between them and challenge the negative sides of parochialism:

> … By saying that people loved Barnett Strauss but he wasn't originally a Stoke-on-Trent man … And he was just a very private man by the sound of it … because Stoke-on-Trent was a hub for Czech immigrants as well at the time and Barnett Stross was instrumental in helping a lot of Czech's escape … many of them came to Shelton and he helped to house them. And Stoke-on-Trent City Council – at that time, Barnett Stross, would have been a councillor – actually agreed to have the children, from Czechoslovakia, as it was then, and they were actually homed in Penkhull Children's home in St Christopher's Avenue.

A wealthy businessman called Charles Stressor made contact with Alan and Cheryl. He told them he had been one of those children and spoke about his

memories of the house and how significant what others had done for him there had been throughout his life.

Football unites

Football can unite as well as divide. When Stoke City reached the English Cup Final in 2011, the children of Lidice watched on their televisions. 'Wow', a little Stoke boy said, as he heard about this, and he began to understand why people in another country might support his football team:

> So the kids in the Czech Republic watch the Final … when you tell children here that, all of a sudden it becomes real, real, it becomes … It's a connection, it's not just a story, it's not just in the past, it's not 70 years ago. It's now … And all the potential is suddenly realized. You know ... and it was wonderful.

Not everything was sweetness and light, however. Not all schools were interested in the project, as some headteachers, some said, were overly preoccupied with the English National Curriculum and the need to focus on Maths, English and science. Some teachers were not from Stoke, which made a difference, Alan and Cheryl thought, to appreciating the project's significance and potential. Or it came down to individual heads who said they had too much else to do. 'You know, because some headteachers are just like, oh no, we can't do that we've got far too much to do. Whereas other schools understand, that there's a value, value to that.' There was a perceived lack of support from the City Council to encourage more schools to join in. Alan and Cheryl said that not many officers were from the city, which did not help either. They tried to form a partnership with the Council as they needed civic recognition to sustain the project in the long term. For whatever reason this failed to happen, and Alan and Cheryl were disappointed. They described the process of telling all these stories to me as being 'like counselling really': a chance to process and give greater meaning to the entirety of the experience.

Schools and the education of citizens

What lessons can be learned from the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign in thinking about the role of schools in cultivating education for citizenship? In a number of countries the role of schools in creating informed, active citizens and teaching democratic values has been a matter for debate for more than the last two decades (Arthur, 2010; Peterson, 2011; Leighton, 2011). In England, there is a citiZED university-based organization, previously funded by the Teacher Training and Development Agency. A collaboration

between universities that provide initial teacher training, its aim is to develop resources and stimulate interest in the pedagogic and wider political issues involved. A variety of resources are available, as well as a range of academic papers on topics such as learning democracy in schools, universities and, interestingly, adult education. Community groups can be a prime focus, one author argues, for challenging social polarization, remembering that the most powerful in society receive extensive training and support for practical politics while the least powerful have little or none (Alexander, 2014).

Very different perspectives abound when we consider the role of schools in learning democracy. For some, the process is about pupils understanding the institutions of representative democracy better and nurturing the good, responsible citizen. The renewed interest in the education of citizens stems in fact from the apparent decline in young people's political awareness and understanding, but this can be informed by a more deficit model of people and communities and a discourse of moral deviance. It is young people themselves and their families who are at fault because they lack good character. A well-charted anxiety also exists within pluralistic, multicultural Western societies about the diversity of cultures in schools and the need to instruct pupils in Western or 'British' values. This is linked to young people's interaction with a complex sociocultural and globalizing world using new forms of social media. It can evoke moral panic in politicians and the mass media, as some young people in Muslim communities are groomed for violent jihad. They may of course be reacting to disrespect in their everyday lives and Islamophobia and Islamism can both have traction for these reasons. Other children and young people in white communities might find citizenship education in schools and talk of parliaments and voting largely meaningless.

Schools are nonetheless encouraged to nurture 'British values' and character education, although there tends to be little or no reference to ideas of social justice (Peterson, 2011). Attention is given to virtues, principles or traits – such as commitment to truth, wisdom, honesty, compassion, courage, diligence, perseverance and self-control (Peterson, 2011) – to help young people develop positive personal virtues (see, for instance, the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre for Character and Values). However, some of this emphasis may not be so positively appreciated by young British Asians in the face of the 'British values' of racism, ill-considered foreign policy adventures and the feelings of hopelessness that can pervade their communities. They may also be caught between the values of their parents and the wider 'British' culture they are surrounded by. The core issue might also be about creating respect and recognition for the people of the

white estate as well as the Muslim communities. The present *Lidice Shall Live* campaign was forged in reaction to the stigmatization of working-class communities and in the recovery of lost histories of solidarity and principled resistance to fundamentalism. Schools could provide more space and support for children and young people from different communities to learn about their identities and histories, building on what the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1962) called learning from experience. He made a crucial distinction between learning *from* rather than *about* experience. This is the difference between amassing information about a subject without a genuine emotional link with what is being studied. Schools can instruct children on the importance of certain virtues or parliaments but in disconnected ways.

It is difficult to think about democratic or respectful values in an abstract way, when lived experience is quite different and authority potentially abusive. The education of citizens is marginal in the National Curriculum in England, and teachers' difficulties in knowing what to do in relation to it are well documented (Leighton, 2011). Some teachers can feel ill-equipped, in many classrooms, where undercurrents of racism can make them feel out of their depth, especially when more experienced colleagues struggle to cope (West, 2009). The education of citizens disintegrates into litter collection and tidying up the school with little reference to the distress of certain communities and what children might actually be feeling.

Auto/biographical ideas for the curriculum

There are complex political pressures and priorities shaping the National Curriculum in England, alongside pedagogic challenges to creating foundations for more meaningful connections between different groups of children. Dina Mehmedbegović's work (2011) in London schools and more widely carries echoes of the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign. Mehmedbegović has focused on enabling children to learn about and share their different cultural heritage. Using things like photographs and family memorabilia, for example, she illustrates how providing structured classroom opportunities for children and adults to share their heritage and biographies, facilitates both intercultural learning and 'holds an affirmative mirror' to backgrounds (Cummins, 2001). Adults are included in this process because they act as models for children, but their inclusion is also important in creating a collaborative classroom where adults, as much as children, provide insights into identities and community histories. In processes of sharing their narratives with peers and teachers, children gain insights in very personal ways into the diversity of cultures and experiences. The Year 6 classroom in Stoke worked like this. Classrooms can become environments that work as

learning communities, encompassing a district and a whole city. A central display could include materials on 'where we come from', consisting of a map of the world with photos of pupils pasted on to different countries on different continents, highlighting diversity.

An auto/biographical approach can be used in a structured speaking and listening curriculum. In Mehmedbegović's work, a multimedia introduction is provided for teachers to model autobiographical writing and oral presentations using photographs, films, music and literature. Cummins's (2001) Maximum Identity Principle, which supports students' engagement with their family's wider backgrounds and the histories and the literary works of communities – important aspects of individual identities – underpins this approach. Exploring wider backgrounds can enrich students' understanding of themselves and their present-day circumstances. Following model lessons, students work with class teachers on researching their backgrounds, talking to members of their family, collecting multimedia records and developing a presentation based on a poster with written text and visual elements.

On the day scheduled for pupils' presentations, there may be guests in the classroom – to give the sense of a special occasion, with a real audience, as with the Children of Lidice. Mehmedbegović provides an example from a London school; however, the relevance of the idea is ubiquitous: a boy with German roots showed a photograph of Hamburg after its bombing in the Second World War. This opened up discussion about what happened in Germany and the role of the Hitler Youth. Another boy, from a Jewish background, showed a photograph of a Jewish ghetto. The discussions were not easy and yet identified common struggles for identity in a difficult world – how grandparents were forced to join the Hitler Youth and later spent time in a Russian labour camp. The Jewish boy talked about his family's experiences in a concentration camp and while there were clear differences, connections and understanding were built across difference.

Such curriculum experiment might be creatively linked to wider experiment in learning democracy, to thinking about the process in a whole school so that it includes schools councils, meeting rooms, diverse social spaces, laboratories, study areas, sports and athletic areas, public presentations and even dealing with suppliers. Schools can be places that inculcate dynamic and inclusive forms of lesson content, of inclusive assemblies, wall displays, social activities, website contents, which together build a school ethos grounded in a virtue called recognition, where actions speak louder than words. Too often, in the hidden curriculum, what is learned is a more or less unthinking respect for authority and hierarchy, and

there is disconnect between a child, their background and school (Leighton, 2011). At a more prosaic level, despite efforts to build new initiatives in the education of citizens in schools, there continues to be a grave shortage of teachers with specialist knowledge, while the subject of educating citizens continues to slip down the list of priorities in a narrowing, test-obsessed English education (Peterson, 2011).

Chapter 11

Beyond the fragments: Distress, recognition and a democratic education

Fragments of distress

This book has documented fragments of distress in the city that are usually considered in disconnected ways. One fragment is the alarming degree of mental ill-health affecting one in three families. We have borne witness to particular accounts of mental suffering by people like Carol, and there are indications in specific biographies that it has a role in the development of racism or Islamic fundamentalism. A further substantial fragment in the city is the failure of representative democracy, and even of the idea of representation itself, as those elected to office tend to function rather like managers and the spaces in which private problems can be translated into a shared language of public deliberation have atrophied. There are the fragments, too, of a fractured economy that once generated material wealth across society. The fracture is partly a consequence of globalization but also the grip of neoliberal fundamentalism – marketopia, we might call it – that fetishizes private, market solutions over the public realm, collective deliberation and the state. There are sharp, specific fragments of distress in feelings of abandonment as national government retreats and local government diminishes, austerity bites and projects close down.

There are the fragments of racism, fundamentalism and occasional violent acts against people or religious buildings. However, it is important to remember that these incidents easily catch the eye and are talked up by the media, while most people simply keep on keeping on in their lives while others strive to make the city a better place. But there is denial of problems too: the rise of Islamism and Islamophobia, and of turning blind eyes in the wider polity to poverty, food banks, cross-generational unemployment and the narrowing of the educational imagination. This narrowing may explain the failure to recognize the historical, actual and potential role of an organization like the Workers' Educational Association. Some in the universities are aware of the city's problems but in general are seen to be

remote from local populations – maybe forgetting their roots under pressures to perform according to business rather than civic criteria. Their focus can be progressive in recruiting local young people into degree programmes – Staffordshire University has done well in this regard – but this leaves behind the majority in local communities. Specific units and individual academics contribute to regeneration strategies and the broader debate, but they are often marginal within institutions. And the city government itself may be a basic part of the problem; it can be difficult to work with and may neglect potential resources close by in the universities. But once again, it is important to remember the marginalization of local government and the instability of its provision, which stems from national political and ideological choices. Most poignant of all, in sketching a portrait of the fragments of distress, might be the stories of local people in Asian communities, too frightened to visit let alone contemplate living on certain estates. There is a kind of de facto ethnic cleansing in the city, which creates psychosocial space for destructive, reductive fantasies of the other.

Certain problems are chronicled in fine detail, including the radicalization of young Muslims reacting to Islamophobia, feelings of hopelessness, mental distress and disrespect in everyday violations of intuitive notions of justice. I want to conclude the book by trying to connect these fragments together for analytical purposes and to consider constructive ways forward. There is a need for greater intellectual holism in our collective deliberations, and to understand more about why this is difficult to do. Mental distress is too easily reduced to a personal affair, disconnected from a fragmented economy, dysfunctional democracy and the disrespect and stigmatization of communities. It might in fact be easier for the polity to ignore certain problems altogether rather than engage imaginatively with them. Suffering may not even be recognized. Paul Hoggett (2010) and Susan Long (2008) write of a perverse 'as if' culture within contemporary capitalist societies in which words change meaning and problems are denied. Selfishness becomes generosity, consumerism is freedom, while for professionals, politicians' mantras of performance targets or particular forms of measurement get confused with complex reality. There may be a virtual reality that disguises the scale of distress, in which statistics of users and outcomes draw attention away from the experiences of real people. There can be a thick political and ideological skin between what the powerful believe is happening or acceptable and the reality of people's experiences on the ground.

This book has chronicled stories about lived experience in specific locations, to complement the broad brush strokes of the statistical work by

analysts like Dorling, Wilkinson and Pickett. It has illuminated the dynamic interplay of macro-level processes of history, globalization and ideology, the meso level of city authorities and educational institutions and the micro dimensions of people in their relationships. It has borne witness to these dynamics across the generations, in the struggles of local regeneration and partnership committees or within mosques. The macro, meso and micro are in fact all of a piece, as intimate lives are affected by the fracturing of economies or the actions of the West in the Middle East are seen as attacks on Islam, fuelled by everyday disrespect. The low-skilled jobs that led Asian people to migrate to the city have largely gone, as they have for the people on the white working-class estates. The rapid loss of industries, intergenerational continuities and local histories has affected these different communities in equivalent if not identical ways. Among certain young Muslim men and women meaninglessness, depression and hopelessness can act as recruiting agents for the jihad, while anomie on the estate leads some of their white peers to seek meaning, purpose and recognition in racist gangs. Note has also been made of the decline of working-class self-help traditions and the autodidacts who created and enriched spaces for learning democracy. Civic confidence has fractured as the autodidactic worker politicians disappeared at roughly the same moment in history that the doctrine of the small state and market solutions took hold. And this post-industrial city, like others, became the butt of bohemian disdain, derided as a basket case, a place of failure and the failed, an old industrial, collectivist, maybe masculinist and 'northern' world best forgotten in the era of financial and service industries, individualism, hyper-consumerism and intoxication with the global.

Dynamics of disrespect take many forms. There are the encounters of taxi drivers told to 'fuck off home' or the demonization of working-class people by elements of the mass media and populist politicians. The chavs, we are told, sit in front of their Sky television screens, lazy, indolent, obese and dependent on welfare benefits. Disrespect is there in the abandonment of cities like Stoke by elites in politics, economics, the media and the financial industries obsessed with their own self-advancement. The problems in such places, they might say, lie in a mix of stifled entrepreneurship, nostalgia, personal shortcoming and excessive dependence on the state; an outdated *dirigisme*. In this emotionally distant, neoliberal judgementalism, structural factors like poverty or the atrophy of representative politics, or the abused environments left by Pathfinder projects, are forgotten or ignored. Failure of any kind is easily disparaged in modern capitalism. Arnold Schwarzenegger, one-time Governor of California, declared to a group of high-school students that he hates losers: 'I despise them'. (The quotation comes from a

call for papers for an international conference on *The Failed Individual*, at Universität Mannheim, Germany, November 2015). Success and failure are seen to be a consequence of individual actions, and a lack of ambition and effort. Individual success is glorified as the only valuable way of being in the world and the primary goal of any worthwhile existence.

The price of such a highly individualized, social Darwinist world – where the future is imagined as an intensification of the present – could be high, especially for the poorer sections of society. The widely diffused public discourse about the 'underclass' allows structural and social forces to be read in terms of individual moral flaws that have encouraged the scapegoating of vulnerable sections of society (Bauman, 1998; Jones, 2011; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012; McKenzie, 2015). In her recent study of working-class communities, McKenzie notes how neoliberal ideology is used to rationalize harsh and cruel policies against some of the most vulnerable (McKenzie, 2015). This is accompanied by a redistribution of wealth to the elites while images of the feckless and disreputable poor justify growing inequality (Jones, 2011). In such terms the problems of Stoke are problems of a whole society.

However, the study has witnessed the creation of new resources of hope in efforts to reinvigorate adult education and its inclusive, fraternal, cooperative traditions. New social media are used to energize campaigns when a swimming bath is closed or people feel excluded from decisions about their city. Lost histories in mining communities are being recovered and the inspirational role of miners – and some of their descendants today – have been recognized in the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign. Such histories have the power to restore pride in the city and generate new forms of citizenship education. These positive elements, alongside the toxicities, constitute a struggle for the city's future: between experiments in dialogue and democratic education and creating public space for a learning, regenerating city on the one hand and a worsening of present trends – including escalating rates of mental illness, social fracture and violence – on the other. Children with mental health problems, for instance, are more likely to truant, be excluded from school, smoke or use drugs and self-harm. The struggle is about a specific city but the choice between engagement, dialogue and more connected thinking or objectification, neglect and atomism, is global.

Drugs

The book has provided ample evidence of mental distress and the response is most often to prescribe drugs. In their book *Thrive: The power of evidence-based therapies,* Layard and Clark remind us of the extent of mental

ill-health across countries like Britain. The results, they state, are truly 'striking' (2014: 64–5). Mental ill-health explains more of the misery in populations than physical illness does. Many people with mental disorders may not get treated at all, while face-to-face therapy or counselling is only available for a minority (*ibid*.). With stories like Carol's, we can think of mental pain as a matter of personal psychology to which psychotherapeutic intervention provides an answer. I work as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and understand the point of talking cures and how important these can be. But, as Layard and Clarke go on to observe, a more holistic understanding of deprivation is required, one that considers more than material poverty or individual psychology. 'Whatever financial means you have, you are deeply deprived if you do not have the psychological means to enjoy your life' (*ibid*.: 65).

Layard and Clark write of a clear and significant statistical relationship between mental suffering and levels of social support, freedom and corruption – or between what they call 'national well-being and trust'. 'In fact', they state, 'people at all income levels benefit from a civilized and caring community' (*ibid*.: 111). In these terms, the state of mental health in the city and beyond leads us back to questions about the health of communities, the ineffectiveness of democratic politics and the impact of abandonment by national politics, in which roads to recovery are closed to cities like Stoke that were once central to national prosperity, as the Archbishop of Canterbury so pointedly expresses it (Welby, 2015).

I was reminded of the scale of drug dependency and the prerequisites for human flourishing by an exhibit called *From Cradle to Grave* at the British Museum in January 2015. It was created by textile artist Susie Freeman, video artist David Critchley and Dr Liz Lee, a family doctor. The exhibit was devoted to the medical histories of 'the typical man and woman alive in Britain today'. Its central feature was two lengths of fabric stretched the full length of a large exhibition room. Displayed on it were the average number of drugs – 14,000 – prescribed for each person in the United Kingdom over the course of a lifetime. The fabric was framed, on all sides, by personal artefacts and memorabilia belonging to the two people concerned, and was designed to illuminate what enabled them to find moments of fulfilment and well-being in their lives. Although what is 'typical' is problematic, the exhibit evocatively exposed the current scale of drug use and dependence, which tends to be higher in cities like Stoke.

The explanatory material accompanying *From Cradle to Grave* drew on all the memorabilia – photographs, private correspondence, postcards

and mementoes of parents, grandparents, children, animals, work and holidays – to frame stories of what makes life worth living. When lives are examined in this way, it is clear that good enough relationships are central to building well-being and resilience. This includes the quality of relationships with significant others and in wider communities, with the animal world and with people's grandparents and great-grandparents, and with specific geographical locations like the seaside or a landscape that had been a source of pleasure and inspiration. Photographs were treasured. So were memories of special times and places, of good neighbours and friends, and the feeling of being part of a whole. This indicates the importance of a more relational, psychosocial, cultural and cooperative understanding of the basis for human well-being.

Our capacity for resilience partly depends on collective resources: in families, in a sewing or philosophy class, or in forms of community action in which self-confidence, respect and esteem grow. But the importance of the collective and the public realm are often lost in neoliberalism, and perhaps in bohemian disdain for older, fraternal, working-class self-help traditions. A Fabian instrumental rationalism and bohemian contempt have occasionally dominated British progressive political life and led to a neglect of the traditions, meanings and experiences of ordinary people themselves. Fabianism thought it possible to calculate needs and demands centrally – if you had a big enough computer, you could plan rationally for the future. This perspective viewed worker representation in enterprises or the local institutions built by people themselves as marginal. Under New Labour, Maurice Glasman argues, it was the centralized state that was going to make 'the fat thin, teenagers chaste, [and] bad people into good parents' (2013: 4). However, mediating organizations such as the WEA and new initiatives like Sure Start, tend to be ignored at least in regard to their democratizing and cultural potential. In these top-down perspectives, ordinary people's role in civic and cultural renewal, in creating new forms of localism – in which character, responsibility, vocation and hope can thrive – is neglected.

In struggles for human betterment, progressive movements may need to rediscover the importance of local politics and municipalism, fraternity, social cooperation and adult education. This could include local authority banks, financial services and credit unions, which can liberate people from dependence on loan sharks and begin to create new forms of attachment to local government (Welby, 2015). There could be partnerships with local industry and ordinary people might be involved in running enterprises, community development and a reinvigorated adult education. Universities,

hospitals and local government are often the largest local employers – as in Stoke – and given political will, could re-emphasize their service ethic and consider ways workers can feel more valued via systems of work teams, departmental representatives and less hierarchical and rigid forms of management. Local populations can be involved in new forms of devolved authority and decision making in which trust is nurtured. All of this is possible in a different ideological and intellectual climate – however hard it might be to create – and if we are unlikely to regain the benefits of the close-knit residential communities of the past, it is possible for people to feel more valued and find friendships, fraternity and hope, collectively, in varied forms of association (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). We should remember that it was an inclusive, local, democratized and hopeful form of civic culture that, as Maurice Glasman (2013) notes, created the welfare state settlement of 1945, even if it was subsequently neglected. The fragments that remain in Stoke might still have the potential for reinvigorating civil society.

Beyond more fragments

Taking centre stage at the British Museum that January day in 2015 was the much acclaimed exhibition entitled *Germany: Memories of a nation* (MacGregor, 2014). It was full of varied representations of Germany's historical memory, which included the defeat in 9AD of Roman legions in the depths of the Teutoburg Forest by the tribal leader Hermann. This has exercised a powerful mythic grip on the German imagination. Here was the birth of the nation, as one influential interpretation has it, forged in the destruction of a powerful Roman other, a nation that was reinvented or re-energized in the light of Napoleon and his mighty French legions. In the nineteenth century, a huge statue of Hermann was built in the forest to celebrate the Prussian victory over the French. The statue attracts thousands of visitors every year, despite – or maybe because of – how the Nazis manipulated the symbolism. The exhibition took us through other aspects of historical memory: the Holy Roman Empire, images of wild German landscapes that so captivated the Romantics, on to the Gutenberg Bible, Martin Luther and the founding of the German Empire in 1870, and then the First World War, defeat, reparations, the rise of Hitler and the demonization of Jewish people and those of other faiths, and of blacks, Roma and homosexuals.

Artefacts from the Nazi period were fewer, more understated, and yet still powerful. A demonic caricature of a Jew featured in a poster calling people to a Nazi party rally in 1938. In the next room was a representation of the entrance gate to Buchenwald, the concentration camp, with a sign

over it – *Jedem des Seine (To each what they are due)* – which proclaims an ideal of justice. The words are the German translation of the Roman legal maxim, *suum cuique*, which was incorporated into German law and legal systems across Europe. Johann Sebastian Bach set the words to music in a cantata first performed a few miles from Buchenwald in November 1715. In a book accompanying the exhibition Neil MacGregor (2014) asks how such artistic, ethical, political and intellectual achievement degenerated into horror. The camp actually boasted a plaque commemorating Goethe and Schiller. How could these humane traditions be overwhelmed? A brief note on an otherwise blank wall stated that this aspect of Germany's historical memory remained too difficult to encompass or summarize but that we have an ethical duty to continue to ask how and why it happened. Under the shadow of the Holocaust, Stoke may seem small fry but there are related and troubling questions about the attraction of racism and fundamentalism. What makes the English Defence League, the BNP, extreme Islamic cults or the Brown Shirts of the Third Reich, so seductive for some? There may be a common answer, across time and cultures: that the other is the problem, the source of pollution, and that reform, or cleansing, constitutes a final solution.

A fragment called school

Developing character education is one response to the crisis of a city like Stoke: cultivating virtues in children that are seen to be absent in families, thus putting to rights the recalcitrant youth of the estates. Character education is generally defined as placing the development of honour, courage, truthfulness, justice, respect and even love at the core of the curriculum. This is a good aspiration, although it can be entangled with a concern for 'British values'. There is a danger of narrow, nationalistic sentiments taking precedence in the entanglement. The 1984 Miners' Strike is ignored in the curriculum or taught according to the guidance notes in which trade unions were said to have become too powerful. *Lidice Shall Live* and local histories tend to be forgotten or excluded from the curriculum. Local teachers might in any case not know the history or lack encouragement to engage with the local, under pressure from a 'national curriculum'. There seems little room for radical history when interpreting British values: that it is important, if difficult, to speak truth to power and to connect this with local traditions that defied the status quo. Citizenship education is about more than the obligation to vote or collect litter. It needs to be grounded in an area's history and appreciation of the antagonism and myopia often shown by powerful elites.

Myopia tends to characterize policymaking. Myriad local initiatives from the director of public health or the primary health care trusts (now abolished) or the Healthy Schools project, focus on problems in the city. Children are encouraged to eat well and lead healthier lives. Schools, like directors of public health, generally try to do well by those they serve. However, as the City's Public Health Annual Report (2013) makes clear, larger political forces intrude into the heart of what they seek to do: 'there are concerns that the economic downturn and welfare reforms will have an adverse effect on vulnerable groups within the city … the performance of three indicators has worsened: children excluded (from secondary school), children in care and homelessness households …' (*ibid*.: 5). Such observations do encourage us to think beyond the fragments, and connect the dynamics of the larger political economy with local well-being, the health of particular children and families with poverty, the spirit level of whole communities with growing inequality and feelings of hopelessness with the cult of success and stigmatization of failure. However, to make such links leaves educators, healthcare workers and many others open to accusations of being political. The gaze of power can encourage disjointed thoughts.

Beyond Silos: Psychosocial perspectives

Auto/biographical narrative research pushes us beyond such fragments. The stories people tell yield glimpses of the way macro, meso and micro worlds collide. There is material that is economic in origin, concerning work or its absence, or socio-cultural, historic as well as psychological – in the mourning of lost worlds of security on the estate or the death of industries as well as of a husband. Some young Muslim men and women find narratives from the twelfth century compelling, because they work at a mythic, imaginative and emotional level. Narratives of heroic struggle against early crusaders and of success by small groups in barbaric skirmishes eventually wearing down a powerful enemy speak to the present. Such stories offer resources of hope, however perverted, and provide existential meaning and the promise of entry into Paradise. How then and why, to conclude, do such psychosocial and narrative processes work and what can be done about them?

We need a psychosocial imagination, to paraphrase C. Wright Mills (2000), in which the social and psychological aspects of being human are reconnected. Sociology has often neglected the psychological or inner world and human agency. Bradbury's Howard Kirk thought consciousness epiphenomenal and actual people of minimal significance in the grander unfolding of history. And psychology, in its repeated desire to emulate the natural sciences – a process which characterizes the history of psychoanalysis

too – can be reductive, eschewing the social and cultural in framing its objects of interest. The focus of psychologists gets even narrower in some of the analysis of brain neurons and synapses. But as Marianne Horsdal (2012) observes, new forms of neuropsychological thinking can resist the sharp distinction between physical and mental dimensions or the social and internal world. Experiences of interpersonal interactions, of love or becoming more agentic, may be central in the development of the brain and mind.

The concept of recognition helps us to think about the social, psychological, physical and even neurological levels of being human. New resources of hope can be created in intimate, group and wider social space. The concept also enables us to better understand how social solidarities and democratic health are created in civil society, on which the stability of representative democracy might depend. I want to finish the book by reference to a theory of recognition, and by interrogating what fundamentalism actually is and how it is deeply anti-education and anti-intellectual, despite offering forms of recognition and existential purpose to particular people and groups. I also ask where leadership lies in the contemporary city to create and strengthen resources of hope.

A theory of recognition

Note has been made of how recognition is generated in many spaces: in tutorial classes, PiPs, sewing or health groups or the *Lidice Shall Live* campaign. It arises in relationships, as Carol and her helpers walked arm in arm, lamp post by lamp post, towards better psychological health. Such a theory of recognition, informed by psychoanalysis, includes an understanding of our shared vulnerability and a common need for love, affirmation, respect and esteem. It was Axel Honneth who pointed out Freud's profound anthropological insight that human beings, relative to other mammals, are born prematurely and rely absolutely on others for survival and well-being (Honneth, 2009). Dependency is hardwired into us in what the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein called memory in feeling: our effort to transcend the anxiety associated with separation processes from the other or the group, or from an old but redundant idea, requires loving and challenging relationships. These primitive dimensions of recognition play out in later life, in a struggle to make a point in a tutorial class or engage in community action because we can feel exposed, vulnerable and in danger.

Processes of recognition encompass wider social dynamics too. Historically, workers' education afforded forms of recognition for ordinary

people, as people felt themselves accepted with a right to be heard and to fully participate. This is a right to be respected and listened to as mature and capable people with stories to tell and ideas to offer. And as people felt more recognized, they became more committed to caring for the group and different others. In such personal and collective self-assertion, the ability to participate in the rituals of discussion and question taken-for-granted assumptions can be considered essential. Recognition, in short, is more easily given when we ourselves feel recognized. And self-respect is not about having a good opinion of ourselves but rather emanates from the feeling of a shared dignity of persons who are morally responsible agents, capable of participating in public deliberation and action. The wider experience of being honored for one's contributions to a community fosters self-esteem. The autodidacts, Mick and Derek, and Nora in the tutorial class, illuminate these processes in their stories, which include recognition in the symbolic order. Classed or gendered aspects of lives became clearer, and new theoretical and literary friends joined inner conversations and were important in the making of more agentic, educated, confident selves. The central point is that people with higher self-esteem more readily acknowledge the contributions of others and from this more inclusive social solidarities and democratic vitality can grow.

Furthermore, narrative processes may consolidate virtuous circles of recognition. There may be a connection between auto/biographical research and processes of psychoanalysis, although they are very different in purpose, depth and longevity (West *et al.*, 2013). Revisiting Freud's work, Honneth critiqued the contemporary trend of moving away from the imperative to understand ourselves by reference to deep engagement with our past. He argued that psychoanalysis makes an important link between freedom, thinking and biographical work (2009, 126–56). Auto/biographical research, like psychoanalysis, can nurture the ability through reflexive activity to overcome 'the rupturedness of each individual' and 'only by a critical appropriation of her own process of formation does the human seize the opportunity provided to her for freedom of will' *(ibid.*: 127). Such appropriation is possible when people tell stories over time to empathic others. Honneth asks how freedom is attainable at all and suggests that we can re-appropriate our own will by means of recollective work. Auto/biographical narrative research is limited in comparison with psychoanalysis, but it can serve a related purpose – the power of storytelling, and of really feeling listened to, is great. It releases valid, but deeply repressed expressions of the possibilities as well as frustrations of our lives.

Groups and learning democracy

Groups, then, have a profound role in processes of recognition. But we need to distinguish clearly between the good group and the less desirable group: between a tutorial class and political education for jihadism. Drawing on John Dewey, Axel Honneth and particular feminist writers, we can distil certain qualities required for democratic, socially cooperative and potentially educative groups that include dialogue and thought across difference. We move beyond ideas of democracy as proceduralism or even republican notions of an active citizenry; or Habermas's ideal speech communities, free from abusive authority and rooted in equality, respect and the open interrogation of ideas. Habermas (1984) frames the good group in linguistic terms. But there are hints in his work of the importance of intersubjective, psychosocial processes of recognition in the good group.

John Dewey observed that the good citizen requires democratic association so as to realize what she might be: she finds herself by participating in family life, the economy and various artistic, cultural and political activities, in which there is free give and take. This fosters feelings of being understood and creating meaning and purpose in the company of others. Dewey suggests that good and intelligent solutions for society as a whole stem from open, inclusive and democratic types of association. In scientific research, for instance, the more scientists can freely introduce their own hypotheses, beliefs and intuitions, the better the eventual outcome. Dewey applied this idea to social learning as a whole: intelligent solutions are the result of the degree to which all those involved in groups participate fully without constraint and with equal rights. It is only when openly publicly debating issues, in inclusive ways, that societies really thrive (Honneth, 2007: 218–39). Unfortunately, there are opposite pressures at work in the contemporary city and beyond. Under new legislation in the United Kingdom parliament, schools and other educational institutions are obliged to have due regard of the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Jones (2015) reports on a state school in London largely catering for Muslim girls. Pupils suggest items to talk about in weekly discussion. After the *Charlie Hebdo* massacres in Paris, nothing was raised. When the teacher asked about this, the pupils replied that their families had told them not to talk about such matters, because it might mean being put on a register. Intemperate actions can have this effect, closing down communication and inhibiting the free and open discussion of ideas.

Belenky and Stanton (2000) argue that if the goal of the good group is communicative learning, in the spirit of Habermas and Jack Mezirow –

the ideal model for which Mezirow thought was the university seminar – this could represent a very male view of what is necessary to build social cooperation and mutual understanding. The goal, according to Habermas, is to reach consensus and the best judgement the group can make with the information available, using critical thinking for analysing weaknesses in arguments. However, this might, if not inevitably so, take the form of 'separated' learning. Separated learners tend to look for strengths whereas connected learners, as in many women's groups, strive empathically to engage with the other, to seek to understand the world through their eyes, in an effort to help. There were aspects of connectedness like this in the sewing class. Such processes also resemble good auto/biographical narrative research in a desire to understand the world of the other, through their stories, without judgement or dismissiveness.

But nagging doubts remain about how easy it is to actually learn democracy or embrace the other. The good enough dialogical group is often elusive. Psychoanalysis teaches us that not all may be what it seems – not least in ourselves – and that the good speech or compelling argument in democratic exchange can be fuelled by narcissistic manipulation and the need to be noticed, as much as by enlightenment or concern for someone else. It can also be driven by envy of another, leading to destructive attacks on what may be a good idea or contribution. Kerry talked about the darker side of progressive politics, of the narcissism of small difference, where if you disagree with me you are my enemy. The history of the left is riddled with hate and destructiveness, of a kind of unreconstructed, aggressive masculinity that is intimidating. Adult educators like Tawney were aware of these darker sides of humanity, despite our best efforts, in tutorial classes and beyond. He wrote about the difficulties of creating and maintaining a good society, and of the time when, as Sergeant Tawney, he led his men into the Battle of the Somme during the First World War. People and societies, he observed, walk between precipices and do not know the rottenness within them until they crack (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). We need to acknowledge our capacity for destructiveness, hate and narcissistic excess. Raymond Williams chose exactly the right expression in 'the long revolution' so as to engage with our darker angels, illusions and conceits.

Fundamentalism as anti-democratic education

A long, never complete struggle has to be fought against fundamentalism. Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips (2012) has considered the relationship between the internal world and the appeal of fundamentalism. Drawing on clinical work over many years, he discusses the problems of 'not getting it' in

intimate or wider social life. Not getting it, feeling confused, misunderstood or inadequate can have devastating effects in early life. We don false mantles in the hope of gaining the other's attention and regard. Getting it – feeling understood by a powerful other – means potentially not feeling humiliated or diminished. Not getting it, however – not understanding what is going on and feeling lost and frantic, like the child who struggles to understand a mother's depression – is a widespread human experience. What we may then long for is a gang and a mythic narrative of our own. A dream of like-mindedness is the dream in which the possibility of not getting it disappears. We can be attracted to groups of the like-minded because the issue of not getting it is resolved in the abolition of complexity. The defence against not getting it, or not knowing, evokes the seduction of certainty. Hannah Arendt (1958) observed how opinion can solidify into ideology and fundamentalism, which demand assent and certainty.

The process involves creating rigid boundaries between us and them, and between our self of present understanding and a potential self of a different way of seeing. Fundamentalist groups offer compelling 'truths' of how the other is to blame – whether in the moral corruption of the West or the greedy Jew – and how 'our' group is good. The trouble is that this involves the projection on to the other of aspects we most dislike in ourselves. No really hard work is required in this anti-education, because the fault lies elsewhere. We are made to feel part of something essential to creating a purified world. Education, however, gives us choice – to decide or not whether we love the world enough to wish to seek to understand and take responsibility for it (Nixon, 2015).

If we are accustomed to thinking that the personal is political in potentially liberating ways, the political is deeply and dangerously personal in such terms. John Dewey (Honneth, 2007: 227) used the example of the robber band to show the attraction of particular groups but also how they constrain democratic learning. The individual becomes a member, but at the cost of repression of diverse possibilities for self. The turn to fundamentalism, old and new, brings for its disciples feelings of getting it, of belonging, of recognition in a grand but delusional way.

So there are patterns in fundamentalism, across its many guises. Wittgenstein thought it important to play with similarities in the use of a word: a word like games, for instance, in its various guises. Ball games, word games, Olympic Games are all different but there can be family resemblances (Ruthven, 2007). Perhaps something similar applies to the word fundamentalism. There may be resemblances between market and Islamic fundamentalism or between the zealot in a tutorial class and a

Howard Kirk. Islamic fundamentalism may, like forms of leftist ideology, exploit the power of trauma and myth in processes of radicalization. If Islam is full of narratives of mercy and tolerance, as Christianity and socialism are, there is a darker side too (Hassan and Weiss, 2015). The dark side is revealed in the worship of violence: the degeneration of the ideals of the French Revolution into slaughter and the grotesque narcissism of small differences continue to haunt the progressive imagination.

There may also be a gendered dimension to cults of violence, as there is to destructive behaviour in a political or adult education group. Writing about the right-wing Norwegian extremist, Breivik, Lene Auestad (2014) draws attention to the power of a defensive phallic masculinity. Dressing up in uniforms might be about the fear of not being man enough. Images of mass persuasion play on fears of inadequacy as a man, extolling forms of consumption and display that fill the gap, however illusorily, and provide the potential to lord it over women even as they are feared. In fundamentalist Islam the role of woman is to remain in domestic space, in rigidly defined roles, to satisfy men. The education of women, other than in specific Islamic values and only up to age 14, is frowned upon by the fundamentalists of Islamic State, for instance. The dynamic of outer and inner worlds evokes a fundamentalist split, in which the other of the feminine is to be controlled. At the time of my study, the jihadist groups in Stoke appeared all male – young men who felt threatened.

Market fundamentalism might appear quite different with regards to violence. But it too employs powerful mythology, grounded in social Darwinism and the cult of success, in ways that have penetrated to the heart of modern Western societies. The market is sovereign and can provide for all human needs: consumption is crucial, as is the consumer (rather than the citizen). It works through appealing, via instruments of persuasion, to a desire for status, triumph, power and performance (Verhaeghe, 2014). It may also, in its manipulation of images, employ violence in video games or social media to sell products, using heroes, myths and triumphal conquest to make its pitch. Thus Mirowski (2013), drawing on Hayek's free market ideas, argues that neoliberalism can be profoundly anti-educational in its assumptions and practices: encouraging the prioritization of the market and consumption as the only good. Too much education of a questioning kind is antithetical to the efficient functioning of markets and the cultivation of desire, discontent and the illusions on which conspicuous consumption depends.

I suggest that the importance for human flourishing of the diverse social group mirrors the psychoanalytic stress on the cosmopolitan,

democratic psyche or Biesta's normative subjectification. A diverse internal world mirrors Dewey's inclusive, heterogeneous group. Andrew Samuels (1993) has written that the cultural diversity of the population is not a disaster, but a challenge and opportunity for healthy internal life. How to remain open to others and acknowledge and learn from difference, rather than seeing it as a threat to our self, is the central issue. The metaphor of psyche as theatre helps to comprehend this idea: internal worlds are constituted and peopled by varied 'objects' drawn from intersubjective relationships – objects that encourage or constrain, or enable us to take risks with the unknown and the other.

The city and university

Stoke has been taken as a case-study that is symbolic of a wider malaise across post-industrial communities. The malaise includes struggles to regenerate economically and culturally. It encompasses managerialist or top-down 'democracy' that has colonized traditional representative processes. New Members of Parliament, however decent, have been parachuted in by national elites, while local party structures barely function. Yet there are also new discourses of localism in play in Stoke's – and England's – politics, which challenge the extent to which power – not least the capacity to generate and utilize financial resources independently – is too firmly held by the central UK Treasury.

The role of cities is under scrutiny in ways that can allow local communities to have more say, after a long hegemony of centralization, in economic and social development, housing, education, transport or health services. Over three or four decades, the role of local government in Britain has withered and some of its functions – like education – have been both nationalized and marketized. This has been done through a combination of 'autonomous' schools operating in a mixed economy of private sector, faith communities and municipalities, while financial support is provided by both national government and private sector sponsors. Cities have lost responsibilities in relation to post-compulsory education, and their role in health service provision. Those like Stoke struggle against nationally imposed austerity and a shrinking population and thus a reduced financial base. Services have been pared down to the bone. It is interesting that the staffing of the local Prevent strategy – designed to tackle the rise of extremism – was unstable during the time of the study: experienced officers left and others were on temporary contracts. This amounts to haphazard, inconsistent and even counter-productive policymaking and application.

One difficulty, as noted, to do with the new discourse of localism is that it tends to focus on bigger cities like Manchester, in the north west of England, with traditions of relatively strong governance, while smaller places like Stoke are ignored. Nonetheless, under the rhetoric of 'the big society' or the leftist version, 'Blue Labour', there is concern for the health of civil society in post-industrial cities. The older and successful experiment in democratic education was founded on the ideal of the active participation of informed citizens in the polis and inclusive policymaking rather than things being done to people. The University of Keele grew out of this tradition. We noted how the first principal of the then University College of North Staffordshire, A.D. 'Sandy' Lindsay, was deeply involved in workers' education in Stoke and its environs. From 1947 he also served on the Commission into German Universities, investigating their problems in the light of the War and Nazism. The Commission explored the contribution universities and colleges could make to the development of a democratic society and education (Phillips, 1980). As Master of Balliol College in Oxford before the War, Lindsay encountered many German Jews fleeing persecution and had wondered why universities had done relatively little to resist the rise of a virulent fundamentalism.

The minutes of the Commission note how Lindsay attempted to define the problem as to do with adult education, using his university and wider education experience. The problem, he thought, was partly to do with elitism and the disconnection of universities from ordinary Germans. He wanted to open the academy to a wide range of people from all backgrounds and build stronger relationships between universities and local communities (Phillips, 1980). He encouraged people to think beyond the fragments of the polis and the academy, towards a dynamic notion of democratic education in which universities were centrally involved. The function of the university, he asserted, was not simply to produce a society of specialists, in research or teaching, but also 'to awaken social understanding' (*ibid*.: 96). For this reason, universities should take over responsibilities for adult education. 'A country can only be democratic if all its men and women can be active citizens' (*ibid*.: 97). Lindsay worried about how academics easily become divorced from ordinary life and the needs of society, most of all, as Williams and Tawney saw it, from those citizens left behind by selection processes.

Lindsay was influenced by the WEA but also by the concept of the Scottish University, with its long democratic tradition, as well as Christian socialism. He thought universities should cultivate in their students a developed sense of moral and political responsibility. Such sentiments, like Tawney's, may seem out of place in a modern, secular, disenchanted

university world and they may have struggled to find space at Keele, in earlier times, as one involved commentator has suggested (Hall, 1972). Lindsay wrestled with various influences in the founding of Keele, and Hall detects ambivalence in some of his attitudes towards Stoke. The man who in 1925 had called for 'a real people's university', and was in 1947 struggling to achieve it, was by 1948 tending more towards opposition to specialism and the importance of a residential institution than the more inclusive university. The very title of the University of Keele expressed distance from the city.

Lindsay's rhetoric, like Tawney's, might be of another age, and universities are products of the times in which they are located. The idea of civic responsibility has tended to give way over the last few decades to the notion of the business university, with the government mobilizing a discourse of economic crisis to stress that the university is a servant of the economy. This has to be done partly by producing forms of knowledge that can be translated into new goods, services and patents, and providing courses that students pay for and exchange for employment (Facer, 2012). Yet in the face of neoliberalism and in the light of xenophobia, counter forces re-emphasize the idea of the civic and even critical university.

David Watson (2014) and others make the case that universities are important resources to address in new ways the very real economic and social needs of local communities. He concludes that the UK has got things badly wrong in its state-sponsored, brittle, nationalistic, politically colonized view of the education of citizens. It moves too easily from rights to duties, and a presumption that obedience and patriotism are inviolable (*ibid.*: 54). And it neglects the experiences of groups across the population, and ignores the impact of exclusionary and plain nasty 'British values' like Islamophobia on the streets. The university, Watson concludes, has thus neglected its civic responsibilities and local communities in ways that echo disturbing periods in other countries.

Ronald Barnett (2011) similarly challenges the absence in many universities of any clear commitment to the well-being of local communities and the interconnectedness of different aspects of the environment. Barnett sees the various ecological levels of the environment, social relationships and human subjectivity and expresses an ethical concern for them all and the importance of academics recognizing their interconnectivity. This is some way from the rhetoric of the conventional business university and the struggles of university leaders to ensure institutional survival. But it may well be that in the rediscovery of the connection between the local and the global, between the health and sustainability of their local communities, and

the problems and possibilities of elsewhere, that institutions can rediscover a stronger sense of civic responsibility.

So a struggle is on to mobilize resources for local people and for democratic experiment. It may well be a long revolution. The old potbank and mass production, like workers' education, have gone, but they can give us pause for thought and inspiration in a fragmented, ill-at-ease world. Ideas for new alliances between civic, university and popular movements are possible. New economic models are needed too and may be appearing in processes of popular engagement. Take social enterprises, such as Building Blogs, located in post-industrial spaces in north London, an area that used to be an economic powerhouse. 'Against a backcloth of dead-end criminality and plastic consumerism', Aditya Chakrabortty writes, 'the people inside the factory are not on an assembly line churning out the same goods, but instead are freelancers who pay so much a day to hire a bench and get access to all the tools and collective know-how' (2015: 2). It is called a maker space, a non-profit collaborative workplace of a kind that is spreading across America. Of its 70 members, around 40 per cent are running self-sustaining businesses. It struggles to keep going in the face of suspicion by government and the large banks, but it is full of innovation. Stoke needs an investment of new ideas and space in which people might learn together both to think, do and make a living.

The success of designers like Emma Bridgewater demonstrates how the pottery industry can be reinvented in new, high-value, high-skill, if less labour intensive, ways. However, it is regrettable that she has been reluctant to recognize trade unions, as they provide an essential space for popular engagement and democratic learning as well as for creative models of partnership with employers (Biggs, 2015). Within frameworks of greater employee ownership and control of the purposes of work, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) argue that if you witness some aspect of design or manufacture that could damage people's health or maybe a product for children that might be dangerous, you are more likely to challenge this and engage with colleagues in thinking about the matter and what should be done. 'Nor would you be able to shrug it off, dismissing it as none of your business' (*ibid*.: 263), or worry that you could lose your job if you spoke out. There would not be the same kind of cultural pressure to keep things solely to yourself. We need not remain stuck in rigid, hierarchical forms of organization or moral paralysis. There is opportunity, given willingness by thoughtful employers and employees, to experiment in more egalitarian and ethical practices – even in forms of democratic ownership and informal education in the workplace.

At another level, ceramic research could have a bigger role in the university, in developing new design and learning about practices in other countries. Above all the people of the white estate and Asian communities could find universities working with them, alongside bodies like the WEA or a *Lidice Shall Live*-type campaign. Working to build more and better spaces for learning and research across difference, bringing together socially committed academics, clerics, artists, schools and students – maybe even to create new forms of university settlement: this could be part of a larger exercise of re-envisioning the city.

In his book *Equality*, Tawney thought democracy to be unstable as long as it remained a mere political system (Holford, 2015), instead of being connected to forms of society and ways of life in harmony with its aspirations. This necessitated challenging special privilege whether educational, social or economic. Economic power had to be made more of the servant of society and education needed to be democratized. Ways of life should include finding space and time to take tea – literally and metaphorically – together. Taking tea, when there is fracture and enmity, can teach everyone about the shared desire for all families to thrive, to feel materially and psychologically secure and both welcomed and valued as citizens. Ways of educational life can engage with issues about the role of women in different cultures. There could be an opportunity to reflect together on the sexualization of women in Western culture and also women's position in Islam. There could be space to talk about neoliberalism and ugly forms of usury, which cripple so many on the estates. And there could be time to discuss renewing the city in all its material, cultural, social, ecological, political and psychological dimensions. It might be possible over time to think about the terms and values by which we presently live together and how we can do so more harmoniously in a new politics of humanity. Multiculturalism has sometimes involved a politically correct avoidance of anything that might give offence, thus preventing people engaging with the difficulties that get in the way of collective well-being. The older tradition of workers' education was about engaging with the difficult and potentially divisive, often with success, if the occasional failure. The alternative to this can be hurling bombs, verbal or actual, at each other, an old, destructive tendency in Europe and the wider world. It really is time to take more tea together and think hard about a workable multiculturalism, so as to understand and nurture our shared humanity and the value of difference while thinking seriously about ways of life that may trouble and divide us.

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Index