[0:00:00]

Kieran Connell: I'm only really interested in just hearing your general memories really of what it was like working with various centre people, because I know you were involved in at least three books that I can tell.

Claire L'Enfant: Yes, indeed. I think it was actually my then colleague, Rob Shreeny (?) who set up the contract with the centre. I think we had something like a three or five book deal with them, published (inaudible 00:01:20) and Rob I think then left to go to McMillan so I became their contact person. And it is very interesting, working with them when they were in their collective mode was quite challenging because I would go up to Birmingham and they would be all sitting round the table, whoever was the graduate students at the time plus usually Richard and Michael who was a little, not lofty exactly but he kind of removed themselves from the fray quite often, and I definitely had the impression that they felt that working with a publisher was a kind of necessarily puzzle (?) and that we were part of the sort of evil capitalist hierarchy and they'd rather not really engage with us, but then on the other hand it was good for their relationship and it was all (inaudible 00:03:29). So those kind of collective meetings as I remember them were fairly daunting, but then actually working with individuals on the individual collection was not like that at all and was actually extremely enjoyable, because we did put into the contracts that we wanted sort of one contract for each book rather than trying to deal with the collective, and so as individuals they were all lovely, and came across quite differently, but I do remember I had a feeling of slight panic as I got on the train to Birmingham because one of these collective meetings.

Kieran Connell: Had you ever encountered that way of working previously or subsequently, that kind of collective approach to intellectual work?

Claire L'Enfant: Yes, actually, I worked with...I'm going to struggle to remember her name, a collective of (inaudible 00:04:36) collectives and we published a series with them, and that was very similar actually, as a collective they were fairly daunting and not (inaudible 00:05:56) aggressive in meetings but then individually they would be much more human.

Kieran Connell: Yeah.

Claire L'Enfant: I think it may be something which happens when people who have very strong political beliefs get together as a group. That comes across in their dealings with publishers.

Kieran Connell: What kind of challenges did that way of working present to you as an editor?

Claire L'Enfant: Well, it meant that sometimes decisions took quite a long time, because even if you were working with one person as a representative of the group obviously they needed to go and consult with the group as a whole. But I mean that wasn't necessarily a problem at all. A lot of problems would arise over things like covers which were obviously exceptionally important to the group and were equally important for us, and we often had very different views about what would be a good cover for a book. So that would take some negotiating. But it was really a question of sort of patience and trying to explain what our reasons were and they were trying to explain what their reasons were and we would usually reach a compromise.

Kieran Connell: And as a publisher, what was the attraction of the centre’s work? What was appealing about producing these collections of jointly authored –

Claire L'Enfant: Well because they were doing exceptionally interesting and innovative work, and I think that's what has always attracted me and of course many other academic publishers to (inaudible 00:08:11) but also to other kinds of innovative academic work. It's nothing to do with having a particular political slant, you just want to make sure you're representing the best of the stuff that's (inaudible 00:12:15).

Kieran Connell: And do you have any memories of the way the work was received when it first went to press? Did the series do well for Hutchinson?
Claire L'Enfant: Yes, it did, and we were incredibly pleased to have those books on the list, and in fact in various forms I think that they are still available. Because I had a (inaudible 00:13:47) experience when I left Hutchinson I went to Hymans(?) and I was in there for a year, but then I moved on to Rutledge, Rutledge bought Hymans. When I went to Hyman it was because they bought the academic list from Hutchinson, and then when I’d gone to Rutledge after I’d been there a year, they in turn bought the academic (inaudible 00:14:47) Hymans, so basically the book that we worked on is now with Rutledge. And we’ve kept those books in print in various forms, I think they’re available in paperback and hardback still now, so apart from them doing well in their own right I think it’s also attracted other authors and it’s meant that we’ve had a wonderful pool of extremely good people coming to us via a particular book. Many of the people who have worked on collective papers or individual books as they became even went on to publish books by them as individuals. So people like Bill Swartz, Mary Langman, Paul Gilroy, John Clark, and those are just a few, so it was an incredibly productive relationship overall.

Kieran Connell: Then just finally, Clare, I was going to ask about your reflections on the way the publishing industry and the relationship with academic work has changed since those times. Do you think that there’s a space now in your industry or in the way that universities now operate, is there a space for the kind of works that Hutchinson were producing with the centre in the late ’70s and 1980s?

Claire L'Enfant: Are you saying would we still do that kind of work?

Kieran Connell: Yeah. I mean how has the industry changed?

Claire L'Enfant: Well the industry’s changed but I believe that what has really noticeably changed is the opportunity to do that kind of work within universities. It seems to me that those opportunities have narrowed down very significantly with all these sort of extraordinary pressures that people now have and the demands on them to be productive in very specific ways, people being directed, you can’t do this kind of book, you must do that kind of book, you must do this kind of article, you must publish in these journals. That seems to me to have clamped down on that kind of exciting, innovative approach to working.

Kieran Connell: And do you think that’s a bad thing in general for the relationship between publishers and universities?

Claire L'Enfant: Well I think academic publishers have to respond to whatever is going on in universities, so there’s still plenty of exciting work going on and things to publish, it’s just different to how it was then.

Kieran Connell: Great.