

[0:00:00]

Kieran Connell: Ok, so ... -

Tom Wengraf: You mean you've only got one tape recorder? What happens if the battery runs out?

Kieran Connell: I know. It's a bit of a risk isn't it?

Tom Wengraf: Okay.

Kieran Connell: I was going to ask first then, if you can remember what brought you to the Centre in the first instance?

Tom Wengraf: Okay. Well I was involved, it depends if you want a long story ... What sort of timespan are you thinking of for this interview?

Kieran Connell: Oh I mean, if you've got a broader timespan in terms of intellectual formations and the kind of intellectual baggage that you ended up arriving with at this interview?

Tom Wengraf: Okay. Well I'll give you ... and if it's starting to look as though it's too long do cut me.

Kieran Connell: Okay.

Tom Wengraf: Because people can ... how long is a piece of string?

Kieran Connell: Yes, exactly.

Tom Wengraf: So, let's think. I was ... okay it does sound very peculiar, it's as though I was making a heavy speech. Anyway, I'll make it a heavy speech. I was born in '39 of the son of Jewish refugees from Vienna who came to England in '38, just after the Anschluss when the Nazis marched into Austria. And then they went to London, I was born in 1939; symbolically, I am sure, on 1st May, but what the hell. You can't claim everything. And I suppose I became political round about the time, 1954, 5, 6. CND ... I'm not a joiner, I very rarely join movements. Yeah, I very rarely join movements but what I read was ... so I've been more connected to intellectual movements rather than social organisation or mass movements. So how did it go? I went to Oxford in 1957, I reckon, and before I went ... I think I picked up at Cambridge where I went to see some people from my school who had gone to be undergraduates there. I picked up a copy of the first Universities and Left Review; anyway I could talk about that a bit. But anyway, and I was really (inaudible 00:02:12) by that. I thought, 'Ah, a breath of oxygen.' And then I picked up, and I'm not sure of the timespan on this, I'm not sure if it was before or after, also a copy of the New Reasoner. I don't know if you ... do you know? I imagine you know these things if you know ... whatever.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: Okay. So I was really impressed by both of them.

Kieran Connell: What was it that impressed you about them?

Tom Wengraf: Well I think ... what impressed me about them? Well basically, they cut through ... I remember particularly an article by Edward Thomson which was called probably something like Inside the War, and it was talking about NATO and how you were looked inside the belly of NATO. And all around you was a NATO-politan culture. I mean Edward wrote brilliantly, he was a very good writer. Sometimes he was completely the wrong issue. But anyway he wrote very well whatever he wrote, when he was being polemical.

[00:03:14]

Tom Wengraf: And he just ... well, you know, 'I'm inside basically I'm a horrific imperialist, warmongering power and I always thought it a nice place to be.'

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: So it was a very powerful demystification. So there was the sort of hard political economy of people like Edward and yes, most I'd imagine, I can't remember their names any longer, of the New Reasoner. And also the rather softer ... the softer, more bigger ... bigger tent(? 00:03:52) type thing of Universities and Left Review. And I went up to Oxford and the Business of Manager of Universities and Left Review was at my college, at Magdalen College, a man called Rod Prince. So I made contact with him and he (inaudible 00:04:07) a particularly charismatic figure. But somehow got into that and so I was a member of a thing called The (inaudible 00:04:15), it was very risky, I went to the Labour Club. You know, Labour Club, 'Wow, Labour Party, that's a bit left wing isn't it?' And then I went, and it was funny, there was a man at the back taking names, I always remember that. And I was ... clearly inducted without realising into Cold War paranoia. And everyone was, 'Yeah. Of course he always comes, he always takes names. We don't take any notice of him.' So in the end, we just, 'Okay, they're from Special Branch and takes names and what the fuck, carry on.' And so I remember it felt, it was quite (inaudible 00:04:48) to let that happen and in retrospect I hadn't realised how much I'd internalised, don't have anything to do ... read Marxist stuff if you like but don't go into a place where there are dangerous activities. So, it's safe, nobody can check the inside of your mind but activity is a bit different. Anyway, so I did the risky thing of going to a Labour Party group on Sundays. And then there was a Socialist Group and that was a very tiny group in Baliol. And they were actually not just Labour Party, but also actually Marxists and they were ... some of them were Communists of a sort. Anyway, so –

Kieran Connell: So you went even more risky?

Tom Wengraf: I went to more risky. That's right.

(laughter).

Tom Wengraf: But it was only I think about ten people or something. And anyway so that was sort of like a reference point and I remember I was doing Modern History and I was trying to become a Marxist, whatever that would mean. You know, sort of a rather mythical beast from the jungle, what was a Marxist? So we read lots of Marx, a small group of us read a lot of Maurice Daub and a variety of rather, not terribly exciting economic historians.

Kieran Connell: Right.

Tom Wengraf: But you know, trying to become one of those things. How do you do it? How do you think Marxistically? How do you research, etc., etc.? And then I left Oxford and went to the LSE for three years because I didn't do my Oxford history exams. I was writing a denunciation of Oxford history for a journal called New University and that's what I did, I spent the last year writing.

Kieran Connell: So rather than doing the exams?

Tom Wengraf: Rather than doing the exams I just –

Kieran Connell: You just denounced the whole process?

Tom Wengraf: Yeah. I denounced it ... well, yeah I denounced the Oxford history. I mean if you're interested I could show you the two articles. But they're not from a Marxistic point of view. But later on that whole critique of ... of university disciplines as bourgeois crap basically. Friends of mine, Perry Anderson, Robin Blackburn and others wrote a thing called Student Power. But that was later. I'd never (inaudible 00:07:17) the denunciation of a university course before. I had sort of invented it for myself basically.

[00:07:24]

Kieran Connell: I mean, was there a sense of alienation then from Oxford?

Tom Wengraf: Oh, completely yes. I thought it was ... how did I put it? Well basically it was for training higher civil servants to man the Home Office in order to put down popular uprisings. My special (inaudible 00:07:43) artists, 1841–'46 and I could see what it was doing. Everybody took the point of, 'How do we deal with these dangerous people?' I'm exaggerating slightly but that's the mind-set that you are inducted in and a lot of people did go into the Home Office and so I thought this was pernicious, very pernicious indeed. And so that alienated me ... I mean, yeah, it's not that I rejected history as such but that sort of history. I suppose it would now be a proponent of history of resistance rather than history of social control. But at that time it was just what you did and what you studied and it was the study of the rebels and their suppression. You could of course take any political point you did but the overwhelming point of view in the documents and everything else you were studying, not the only documents but the overwhelming thing was about managers of the Tudor period onwards. Anyway, that's –

Kieran Connell: So you (inaudible 00:08:49) denunciation and then went to the LSE.

Tom Wengraf: I went to the LSE yes. I'd already fixed up to go to the LSE because I decided Oxford history (inaudible 00:08:57) was dangerous, pernicious sort of ideological stuff and the LSE had Tom Bottomore who taught Marxism ... we he was a scholar who knew about Marxism, he probably wasn't Marxist. But anyway, you could have theory, you weren't ... the point about sociology was that it was explicitly theoretical so that ... whereas Oxford history was explicitly, 'We're just looking at the facts and seeing what's there.'

Kieran Connell: That's a neutral kind of ...

Tom Wengraf: That's neutral. And there was a thing call the Philosophy of History course but all it was was designed to immunise you against Marxism, that's all it did. Whereas sociology at LSE, for all its demerits it did have Milliband, it had a variety of people left and right but including the left and it was explicitly theoretical or at least there was an explicit theory course in which you learned how, didn't just deduce from the facts, you actually selected your facts and depending on your theory you made different ... that sort of stuff which is now, which became, I suppose got incarnated respectably in academia in Thomas Coombe's Structure of Scientific Revolution. But when I was at Oxford it was all sheer inductivism as the ... there wasn't even the theory of it, it was that's what you did and what it (inaudible 00:10:18). So anyway I went to the LSE, did sociology and ... can't remember who was ... anyway I could go on about it for ages but anyway, that gave me space to do the thinking I wanted, it allowed me to explicitly refer to theory, to argue against, have viewpoints and talk about different viewpoints in sociology and stuff like that. It was a pluralistic course as a whole and I'm sure of the tutors hate each other; extreme right wingers and extreme left wingers, but it gave you the freedom to think there are extreme left wingers and they more or less say so. And then by that time –

Kieran Connell: That would have what? Roughly when?

Tom Wengraf: This was '60 to '63.

Kieran Connell: Okay.

Tom Wengraf: And that was the period in which Stewart Hall took up ... The New Left Review appeared. There was the University's New Reasoner, Left Review, then it was the New Reasoner. They came together under Stewart in 1960 and then in 1962, and I maybe wrong by a year in all these dates, but in my recollection in 1962 Stewart ... the NLR was getting into trouble and Perry Anderson bought with post-colonial money or colonial money, or whatever it was. And I was part of the team, I knew Perry and Robin and all those people from Oxford and anyway they wanted me to be on the team because of something I'd written in something or other at Oxford and so I did. And it was an Oxford group basically plus others.

Kieran Connell: Right.

Tom Wengraf

[00:11:55]

Tom Wengraf: And I stayed on New Left Review from about '62 probably till about '65 or '66.

Kieran Connell: In the period that Stewart would have left?

Tom Wengraf: Stewart had already left. Stewart left in '62.

Kieran Connell: Right.

Tom Wengraf: So I wasn't ... and I ... what did I think? I was quite cross with some of the aspects of Perry's New Left Review and I still am. (Inaudible 00:12:21) and he did do quite interesting work. I think of him as the mandarin left of the Establishment. At a deeper level I think he saved it by destroying it. He saved it as an intellectual journal and he destroyed it as a journal that could have been the journal of a social movement. And he was (inaudible 00:12:47), we're only interested in library subscriptions so what we have to do is get lots and lots of library subscriptions and he removed the ... there used to be in the old NLR ... have you looked at the NLR history?

Kieran Connell: Yeah. I know it, I know it.

Tom Wengraf: Yeah, okay. Well anyway it removed all the references to left clubs and everything else, the advertisements you ever saw in it were for academic books. So it was deliberately de-movementised, together with going towards extreme radical rhetoric about this, that and the other. So formally its politics were probably to the left of Stewart's I would say, if that meant anything.

Kieran Connell: But in the actual practice –

Tom Wengraf: But the actual practice was deeply much less anti-hegemonic. It fitted in the ... it became part of what we now call the academic left I suppose. Anyway, an academic left deviation I would now describe it, having been and continuing to be. And obviously it then became more Trotskyist with Tariq and anyway, there's a whole history there which we won't go into.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: So in the end I left it because it became implicitly quite Stalinist while ... anyway long story, you can ask me about it later.

Kieran Connell: So when did you leave then?

Tom Wengraf: I probably emotionally emigrated by about '64 and then I think at some point they accepted my letter of resignation which I hadn't sent and I wrote back and resigned and said, 'Well you shits, don't ...' whatever and they said, 'Okay, well no you haven't resigned, we accept that.' And so I said, 'Okay, well now I resign.'

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: I wouldn't like to be part of a manipulative organisation like the one that you are. And obviously I felt ambivalent about it but basically I think it was the left wing of the Establishment or the Mandarin wing of the academic left. And although I think they're doing good work in a minute ... in a sort of way, actually that's never ... yeah, I think ... politically they haven't helped.

Kieran Connell: Right.

Tom Wengraf: No. They've helped their own careers very well.

Kieran Connell: Between the –

[00:14:58]

Tom Wengraf

Tom Wengraf: So at that stage I was connected up with Mike, Mike Rustin. Do you know Mike?

Kieran Connell: Of him.

Tom Wengraf: You know of him? Okay. Well I think Mike was never at the Centre I don't think so as part of the history of the British New Left he's terribly important as, if you like, Stewart's more practical side man. I mean this is very crude stuff, I know I wouldn't like to be defending this in public. But Mike was the secretary for example of the May Day Manifesto and I'm sure he did the organisational running while Raymond was the sort of guru of the movement. Mike has got an amazing capacity for hard practical mobilised work, mobilising intellectuals. Anyway, that's his forte. And so let's think ... okay, getting to the Centre ...

Kieran Connell: So '64 or mid-sixties you'd left the –

Tom Wengraf: I'd left, I stopped being proactively involved and then I formally left NLR, I don't know, at '65 or '66 or something like that.

Kieran Connell: So where, from there, how did you get from there to - ?

Tom Wengraf: The Centre.

Kieran Connell: The Centre.

Tom Wengraf: Okay. Let's just think ... it's funny, funny trajectory. How did I get from there to the Centre ...?

Kieran Connell: I mean maybe you –

Tom Wengraf: Okay, right ... Sorry? In '68 I wasn't involved in that at all, I didn't do anything in '68, though I read all the stuff with great interest. I was part ... by '66 I had joined what became Enfield College of Technology, which became Middlesex Polytechnic, which became Middlesex University and stayed there all my working life, moving around and doing different things on different sites. But in '68, if that's when it was, I sat in on the Hornsey College sit-in. I don't know if you know about that at all? Well there was a Hornsey College of Art and they had a massive sit-in and it was the most educational sit-in I have been through and it was really working hard on art education. It was down the road actually, at Crouch End. And it then became a trade union college, I don't know what it is now. And that was quite an education in mass self-education mobilisation or practice. It stood at the other end of the extreme from (inaudible 00:17:25). But I didn't do very much. I went to France, was in contact with different sorts of left intellectuals. So let me just think ... I suppose, it's funny I've never thought, your questions ...

Kieran Connell: You don't -

Tom Wengraf: No, no. I should be able to trace the thing. Oh, I know what happened, some of what happened, and I'll probably remember more of it, you know you need two bites of this cherry, you need to go away and ask the questions and then ask me again tomorrow. But I was involved in a group called the Conference of Socialist Economists, which was mostly rather boring Marxist economists and a lot of interesting historians and sociologists who were trying to be more, more ... let's think, when did they start? Must have started shortly after '68 or in '68, I'd have to check that out.

Kieran Connell: Right.

[00:18:26]

Tom Wengraf: And I started working, as it were, in my own time on the Marxist theory of the state and so who was the CSE? There was ... I can't remember how it happened but basically I remember that at some point or other Stewart invited me to give a talk on the Marxist theory of the state or that sort of thing, at the Centre. At the Centre, yes.

Kieran Connell: At the Centre.

Tom Wengraf: Yes. And that was ... so if I went, let's think, God terrible ... Anyway –

Kieran Connell: Sometime ...-

Tom Wengraf: Sometime in the 70s.

Kieran Connell: The 70s, early 70s.

Tom Wengraf: Yes. CSE started, must have been around '70, '71. It was influenced by the Women's Movement later on, first as an MME and then as a, they did the Political Economy of Housework, so most –

Kieran Connell: So you had that contact from being there –

Tom Wengraf: I had that contact yes. And I knew Stewart, and because of the May '68 thing, I don't think Stewart was directly ... sorry the May Day Manifesto. I think the May Day Manifesto with Raymond, who obviously was very important for Stewart at one point and Mike Rustin who was brother law to Stewart because he married ... anyway.

Kieran Connell: Cut.

Tom Wengraf: Cut. Yeah, okay. So I can't remember all that but somehow it was a bit of a nexus and most people knew each other and Stewart at some point must have invited me to give a talk on the Marxist theory of the state at the Centre. Or maybe even several, I don't remember. But anyway I can remember talking at the Centre, I think it would have been about the Marxist theory of the state but I couldn't swear to it. And I was really impressed by the Centre –

Kieran Connell: Can you remember what your impressions were? Just from your initial first ...?

Tom Wengraf: Well the main thing I suppose is perhaps ... well ones of the collective mode of work, that's what I was impressed by. I mean the people, the questions were very good and all the rest of it. Yeah, I enjoyed myself, but I tend to enjoy myself (inaudible 00:20:31) a good discussion develops. But the thing I thought was that I was very interested in ... I suppose I was a (inaudible 00:20:41) at that time and interested in the organisation of hegemony encounter, hegemony. And I thought that the system of collective work and the system of producing gestetners like this and just putting them in and whatever, I thought it was an amazing ... yeah, I mean I don't, it probably came from somewhere else; it may be did or it may be didn't, it didn't bother me. I just thought it was working brilliantly. If one wanted a centre ... a left wing intellectual centre to work then Stewart had cracked it all, they had cracked it. And then what happened ... what happened after that? This is terribly patchy ...

Kieran Connell: No, it's fine.

Tom Wengraf: That's how I'm remembering it.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: Then I was Chair of the University Trade Union, NATFE? I think it was called NATFE at the time and I was also getting quite tired of my colleagues in Sociology. So I decided, and it was also the year that my father died, and I decided I wanted a break. And also I'd be teaching since 1966 to 19 ... let's say it was '79. I can't remember the dates.

[00:21:54]

Tom Wengraf: So I'd been teaching for about 13 years and I mean organising, writing new courses and doing an immense amount of work. And I was just tired and I thought I needed to recharge my batteries, I need a break from this. And the university was very pleased to give me a break, get me off ... my Deans said, 'Provided you don't come back for a year we'll be very happy.'

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: 'And you have to promise', and that was the interesting thing, 'when you go back you won't be teaching Sociology on the Enfield campus.' Which was a very left campus, but you will teach something or other, Cultural Studies over in Cathill to art students. Or, 'Just go away, somewhere else where you'll be less political trouble.' And I thought, 'Well you can do politics wherever you are.' And I would be quite pleased to be somewhere else teaching a new course. So I said, 'Okay.' So we went off, I went off for a year and at the end of my first week I wrote the text that you saw.

Kieran Connell: Right. But can you remember ... did you have to apply? Was there an interview or anything like that?

Tom Wengraf: Okay, let me just think. Let me just think. I certainly had to apply.

Kieran Connell: Yes. (inaudible 00:23:13) of your previous case?

Tom Wengraf: No. No. But obviously I was a known trivial figure, so to speak, or whatever. So I think I must have written to Stewart. I didn't write formally to the Centre. I wrote to Stewart and said, 'I'd like to do the MA at the Centre.' And did I have an interview ...?

Kieran Connell: Because I know some people remember it because, the same sort of practice that a lot of the students would sit on the interview panels –

Tom Wengraf: Yes. I don't remember that ... It might well have happened but in my mind ... Was there an interview? There might have been an interview. Yes, there might have been an interview. Yes, there was an interview. (inaudible 00:24:07) about this. There was an interview and Stewart wasn't on it I don't think. I think it was either Richard or Michael or both of them, plus some students, that's right.

Kieran Connell: No problem if you ...

Tom Wengraf: I didn't have a sense of a problem.

Kieran Connell: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tom Wengraf: I mean they would know me, well the students who'd been there, I think I must have taught this course about two years before and the main person I remember was Lucy Bland and I'm sure there are others. Yeah, I'm only just about managing to remember the thing but ...-

Kieran Connell: Well it's a long time ago isn't it.

Tom Wengraf: Basically I didn't, I was probably uncertain, I didn't know what the competition was. It wasn't as if I couldn't go and apply for another course, as I said the university would have sent me on a tiddlywinks course to get rid ... No, that's not fair at all because actually they did want, well somebody who wanted to do a contemporary cultural studies course, in fact, what was the sequence ...? Maybe I'd already helped him co-design it and he had never done ... I was the only person who was in a position to have done or to do the contemporary cultural studies course. They were doing it, they liked it, they read the stuff ... some of them did anyway and he was called Mike Dorney but he really did ... he was a philosopher and the weakness of his intellectual position became clearer later. But anyway, so he supported it because he wanted to be ... it made for it to be accredited to have somebody on it, a teacher on it, who'd done the course.

Kieran Connell: Right.

[00:25:53]

Tom Wengraf: Yes, I think that's right. So ...

Kieran Connell: What are your recollections of the ... once you did the interview and you were involved in the course in Birmingham, what was your recollection of the atmosphere there? I mean this memo from

(inaudible 00:26:07) it kind of hinted, well it talks about the alienation of being like ... because I'm sure a lot of people that I've spoken to have already actually spoken about feeling a similar way but never actually put down on paper.

Tom Wengraf: Right, okay.

Kieran Connell: You talk about a lot of people, a lot of the subgroups were already formed –

Tom Wengraf: Well the subgroups had already formed because you see ... I mean that's one of the strengths of the Centre in a way, was the continuity of subgroups. What happened was, I mean my theory of it is, I think I had evidence about it, was that it worked because there were a lot of PhD students, the PhD fees were quite low at the time and they all got jobs teaching in further education or schools or somewhere or other, to carry on being there for a long time. So they could use, provided you lived at a student level in cheap housing and everything else, you could hang about and be involved in writing the papers or being part of workgroups or whatever without any terrible stress. There wasn't like there is now where you've got to do it in four years and by the way you've taken out a £30,000 loan to do it, etc., etc. It was a completely different sort of atmosphere. So because there was this economic base of, call it further education, before (inaudible 00:27:25) when you talk about this, and she said, 'Well actually after that period quite soon, further education got much more professionalised. And also it's because we're now basically '79/'80, we're into Thatcher. So actually after I left so to speak, the economic basis of easy-going further and higher education –

Kieran Connell: A gentleman's college being able to do what they want.

Tom Wengraf: That's right. Yes –

Kieran Connell: It came to an abrupt end.

Tom Wengraf: It came to an abrupt end and it moved towards the audit culture where it's all designed by Americans for profit. Anyway, whatever it is. So I think I was probably in the end of that period but it didn't feel like the end of that period it felt like this is how it is and I'd no reason to think it would stop. So it must have been '78 then. I don't think ... –

Kieran Connell: I think it is because one (inaudible 00:28:13) the date in '78. The next one's '79.

Tom Wengraf: Right. So I must ... when was the General Election? Probably in the autumn of '79.

Kieran Connell: Or was it May?

Tom Wengraf: Or May. Anyway, whatever it was somehow Thatcherism hadn't arrived yet.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: Certainly it hadn't arrived in practice in further and higher education at Birmingham, or at all I think.

Kieran Connell: So the groups were already formed?

Tom Wengraf: The groups were formed and then they had their own history and they were –

Kieran Connell: And were you, as a student, a new student, aware of the subculture work that was being done?

[00:28:47]

Tom Wengraf: Yes. I mean I knew about the writings that had been produced. I can't remember which had been produced when. But I mean I read all the Centre stuff and enjoyed it very much and thought it was ... well I mean obviously it was an even quality of work but I just thought it was amazing all this work was being produced. If you like a consistently very good politico-intellectual quality. Judged purely politically, sometimes it wasn't that good. Judged purely academically, it sometimes wasn't that good. But judged politico-intellectually it was amazing. And I suppose I'm talking more of the books

probably than the papers, and I did see quite a lot of the occasional papers. Anyway, it just seemed an amazing streak of production.

Kieran Connell: Is that what you were looking for, ultimately? Is a politico-intellectual –

Tom Wengraf: Oh yes, absolutely. It's the sort of thing, in my mind, the New Left Review should have been doing but actually stopped doing, I mean before Perry took over, so up to '62 if you like there had been spontaneously lots of left clubs and political education things ... well education things politico-intellectual stuff. And they were fading obviously because that particular movement and that particular generation was fading. I could talk about it some more but I haven't really thought about it much. But basically it would need quite a lot of very firm politico-intellectual leadership of a Gramsci sort, is how I put it to myself, to keep it going and build on it. And Perry couldn't give a fuck really. I mean, that's it, he was very impressed by Gramsci and all the rest of it but the New Left Review was going to be an (inaudible 00:30:39) and Marxist journal and it wasn't going to be anything like that. I don't he even knew what he ... I'm not sure he ... he knew what I would call how he was portraying Gramsci, I mean to put it in melodramatic terms. But that's what he did. And the result was that Stewart, who had a much more Gramscian project, moved to the Richard Hoggart Centre, I don't know (inaudible 00:31:06) all that at all. And tried to do it, not in terms of movement, creating a movement, but in terms of as I see it, of continuing that politico-intellectual task with, if you like, the PhD students he had to hand, would have to hand. So I have immense respect for the work that he did.

Kieran Connell: How, if at all, did the atmosphere once you arrived match your preconceptions?

Tom Wengraf: Oh, it matched it in the sense of the amount of work that was being done and peoples commitment to their particular workgroups. It was exactly what I thought. What I obviously hadn't realised as an occasional, once or perhaps twice, I can't remember what lecture from the outside, that the social relations were quite peculiar. They were -

Kieran Connell: In what way?

Tom Wengraf: Well I think what had happened, and you'll know this ... this is my fantasy about what happened because I didn't follow the internal history of the Centre at all, I only looked at its external stuff. And Stewart has always been quite a difficult person to talk to, he's not a model of emotionally open transparency, despite his amazing merits in other respects. And so I think what had happened Stewart, a bit like Eric Hobsbawm had been pretty resistant to feminism, not formally speaking, Eric was a shit. I mean Eric was a friend of my family's so I know him quite well and I also know people who realised that Eric quite early on he was a male chauvinist ...

Kieran Connell: Whatever.

Tom Wengraf: Whatever. You know. Which again, I have great respect for Eric and I think Stewart had similar ... it was not that he was against it in principle, being married to Cat I think it would have been rather tough to be against it in principle, but in practice I think the women had to fight very hard to get, if you like, feminism in practice into the Centre as opposed to in theory. And I think that just reflects the generation he was. Anyway people like Perry and Stewart and all the rest of it, they weren't instinctively feminists and democratic in their practice, well they weren't ... Stewart was democratic in his practice, sort of, but he certainly wasn't feminist in his spontaneous whatever.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

[00:33:39]

Tom Wengraf: So I think there was a terrible ... –

Kieran Connell: Ruck.

Tom Wengraf: Ruck. There was a ruck basically which I would say at some level or other, and probably I would put Michael Green, who I don't know at all, into the same category, in which they were forced to be much more feminist than they would spontaneously ever had been.

Kieran Connell: Yeah.

Tom Wengraf: I don't know if that –

Kieran Connell: Yeah, that makes sense. Because you mentioned and it's really interesting, in that document that the space for a collective or certain forms of collective practices, emotional relations, were sort of taken up, you felt, solely by the women.

Tom Wengraf: Yes. That's right.

Kieran Connell: And men retained quite a traditional –

Tom Wengraf: Absolutely.

Kieran Connell: Did you find ...?

Tom Wengraf: I mean that was very ... there were always, I think there were more women than men, or certainly ... well this is a schemer which I don't know what you find when you talk to other people, but the schemer in my head was that there had been, quite recently before I went, something like a decisive feministification of the Centre's practice. And I don't know anything about that but my feeling was that that's what had happened. So like looking at a battlefield and trying to understand what was the battle, you know? What was that battle? And so what had happened was the women were full of massive self-confidence because they'd won. And that the men, whether they were people like me who'd just arrived or if you like, battered, were in quite a bad state.

Kieran Connell: Licking their wounds, if you like?

Tom Wengraf: They're licking their wounds, and rethinking their position, partly because they had to because somehow the Centre had been won for feminism. I mean, this is very crass, okay -

Kieran Connell: On a broad level.

Tom Wengraf: Yes, all this is really (inaudible 00:35:32) okay. And they were also really genuinely trying to think their position. Now I came from London where ... let's think, what year are we? We're in '68 ... no, where are we? We're in '79.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: Okay. So I had been somewhat involved in mild versions, I think this is true and it might not be true, but the feeling is that I'd been aware of, either because I'd already been involved in mild versions of a men's consciousness raising, post-feminist men's consciousness raising.

Kieran Connell: So feminism had impacted on you in some way?

[00:36:10]:

Tom Wengraf: It had impacted on me in some way and I can't without ...-

Kieran Connell: But you were a bit more sort of, you weren't coming into this situation at the Centre kind of cold?

Tom Wengraf: No, not at all. No, no. I remember feeling really pleased ... My girlfriend at the time was in fact a feminist and she went there, we decided to go together and then just before she went, we'd agreed that we would look for a flat together and she then went, said, 'No. I don't want to take a flat with you.' And it's as though her feminist duty not to live with me. I've never understood that. Came out of the blue for me and obviously relations break up but there was some politico, a politico-moral

imperative that came from somewhere. And whether she'd been in contact with women at the Centre who had said, 'Look, you can't. You can't be one of us when you come here if you're living with man.' I've no idea what –

Kieran Connell: Did she end up going to the Centre?

Tom Wengraf: Oh she went to the Centre, yes.

Kieran Connell: So (inaudible 00:37:11)?

Tom Wengraf: She was called Sue Mackintosh.

Kieran Connell: Sue Mackintosh. I know the name.

Tom Wengraf: Yeah.

Kieran Connell: Okay. So that must have difficult –

Tom Wengraf: Oh, that was very difficult. Because I think her father had died ... well was dying from about two months before I went to the Centre and died about a month and a half after I joined. So there was this –

Kieran Connell: Yeah. (inaudible 00:37:33)?

Tom Wengraf: Peculiar, I think it was peculiar but it didn't arise out of conflicts or anything, it was just ... yeah, anyway. So that happened. So I was in a shaky emotional state and obviously I wasn't in a place where I'd learned how to teach and I knew what I was doing and I was, if you like, a respected intellectual figure in a tiny way. Suddenly I was going to have to learn the whole, go back to school, learn new subjects, be with people, I was a student, not a member of staff. You name it. Obviously I'd chosen that and so it wasn't as if this was forced on me. But nonetheless it's a reversal of roles and so in terms of the organisation of work it was exactly as good as I thought it would be and I did a lot of it, I can't –

Kieran Connell: Do you remember vaguely what sort of groups or ...?

Tom Wengraf: Gosh. Do you have a list of groups? I might remember then.

Kieran Connell: Things like the State Group, the Marx Group, the History Group ...?

Tom Wengraf: I'm sure I was in the history ... no I can't –

Kieran Connell: That was (inaudible 00:38:39), an education group?

[00:38:40]

Tom Wengraf: Yes. I really can't remember because in a way there were two sorts of people there. There were the PhD students and they were definitely the working figures. And then there were MA students of which I was one who basically were doing the MA and they joined groups as well. So I wasn't ... all I remember, I think I was a correspondent, I got the gestetner and copies from a large number of groups and that was always fascinating. And I did go to some meetings, I'm sure I was in the State Group but I really can't remember ... –

Kieran Connell: Do you remember, because I know the Centre general meeting which was when ... the weekly meetings where they discussed the policies –

Tom Wengraf: I remember that that was awkward. I felt, as I say I think the social relations at the Centre ... can I just go a step back a bit?

Kieran Connell: Sure.

Tom Wengraf

Tom Wengraf: Back to the, if you like, the dominance of the women's group and the men's relationship to that. And so the women's group won its victory, I don't know the details, but it was clear for all to see. And I remember wanting to start a men's group because I'd done that or joined that or done that or whatever ... had the idea from. I can't now remember. I mean afterwards I certainly was in a men's group in London, but I can't remember ... I don't know whether I was also in one before or not. What was quite amazing was the anxiety of the men about joining such a group and they said the women wouldn't like it. And I thought, 'For God's sake.' But, a) I was really surprised to hear they wouldn't like it, which was probably naive of me. And I was really surprised that the men were afraid of being disapproved of by the women. And I thought ... so I remember ... I can't actually remember their names. I remember there was one man who said, 'Well I would like to join but it's too dangerous. So I won't join. But it's not because I'm not sympathetic to what you're trying to do. It's almost ... politically it's too dangerous.' It was like living in a totalitarian state. 'The secret feminist police will get me.' I mean he didn't say that obviously, but it was that sort of atmosphere. And even in Communist Party, I mean I've never been a Communist myself, and it was that sort of level of fear and anxiety that was dangerous to be ... it would be dangerous to be a known member of a men's group. Now –

Kieran Connell: (inaudible 00:41:36).

Tom Wengraf: Oh, I thought ... well I didn't and then I got into it and I found that actually a number of women said, 'Yes.' I can't quite remember if I talked to them directly, I've feeling as if I did somehow or other. Or maybe I talked to Sue and she translated from the inner circles. And it was about, 'No, women are the suppressed class under patriarchy. And women should organise, the workers should organise. But men are the ruling class.' I mean it was pretty much, not using quite those terms but men are dominant and therefore if they unite and form a men's group then actually this is counterrevolution. Do you see what I mean?

Kieran Connell: Yes I see what you mean.

Tom Wengraf: I mean that's a very schematic emotionally heightened thing. And nobody ever talked quite like that –

Kieran Connell: That was a kind of –

Tom Wengraf: I would say that's the background mythology and the women's fear that if a men's group were allowed this would be a reaction against the women's group and that therefore men should be discouraged from doing it. So what I thought was total paranoid bollocks from this guy, actually now I realise there was that ... a sort of reign of feminist terror.

Kieran Connell: So you weren't able to ever establish the group?

[00:42:53]

Tom Wengraf: No. No. I realised it was, I think two or three people said they might come but it was clear ... yeah, I just decided it wasn't worth it. And also there was one group, there was one guy, I've never forgotten that, he said, 'I'll join the group as long as we don't discuss anything personal.' And I thought ... (laughter). I mean I could hardly believe my ears because actually there had been a lot of talk about, I don't know if they had at the Centre, but about groups and consciousness raising and how the personal ... and name anybody, women who had been writing, when did the fragments come out? Anyway -

Kieran Connell: In that period –

Tom Wengraf: You had those groups because you talked personal, because the personal is political. And for this guy to say, 'Well I will join this men's group provided we didn't talk about anything personal.' (laughter).

Kieran Connell: And where you say in the paper it's actually quite a conservative –

Tom Wengraf: Yeah. Absolutely. Well it's conservative. I don't know if it was conservative. I think it was just totally ... no it's not fair to say totally, but at least some of the men ... yeah, they weren't ready for a men's group. In one sense, they weren't ready for a, what I would a feminist consciousness raising men's groups, which doesn't mean accepting women's definition of what reality is. You know, they just weren't ready for it. And they were frightened that they would be seen being in an anti-feminist men's group. They thought it would be seen as anti-feminist and might even find themselves discussing something personal. So anyway (laughter).

(overspeaking)

Kieran Connell: Did these kind of relations affect the form of collective work that was going on (inaudible 00:44:44)?

Tom Wengraf: I don't know. I know that ... what it reminds me of it something not at the Centre. I was on a steering group or something of the Conference of Socialist Economists and there were quite a lot of female economists, Jean Gardiner and Sue Himnel. Anyway a number of them, okay, and they set up at one stage within the CSE framework, there were lots of again working groups within the CSE framework, they set up a political economy of housework, I think that's what it was called. And there were various pamphlets, CLR James' widow. And there was a whole political economy of housework component to the women's movement and so within SE there was a large group. But anyway I wasn't in it, but whatever. So I remember there was a CSE conference and I can't remember when this was. Oh, it must have been at the beginning, early '70s There was a CSE conference and a list of where the working groups were and one of them was the Political Economy of Housework, which I knew nothing ... well I'd read about it, but I'd only read articles about it and I thought, 'Well that's good and really interesting.' So I remember going along to the room, J47, whatever it was, opening the door and there was this group of women, all hard work, looking at me with unbelievable frosty eye. They did not want a man in that group. It was absolutely clear. The vibrations were absolutely unmistakable. So I closed the door and went somewhere else. I wasn't making a political point, I was completely staggered. Anyway I was quite naive about all that. But anyway so my feeling is that I don't remember a similar occasion at the Centre but it may be that by then, it would be interesting to look at the personnel, yes, the members of the working group, which you probably don't have because I doubt whether the list would have survived. –

Kieran Connell: Some bits. But the women's group would clearly ... –

Tom Wengraf: Yes. The (inaudible 00:47:08). And whether other groups de-facto women's groups or de-facto men's groups, I don't know, I wasn't thinking about it like that.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

[00:47:20]

Tom Wengraf: And obviously I wouldn't have thought of going to the women's group. But the deviancy group, there was a deviancy group I'm sure, now who wrote the subcultures ... –

Kieran Connell: People like John Clark and Tony Jefferson.

Tom Wengraf: Right.

Kieran Connell: Dick Hedbush.

Tom Wengraf: Dick Hedbush, that's the guy I'm thinking of. I had a feeling that there were de-facto men's groups, i.e. I mean for example on deviancy and subcultures, what's here name? Angela McGrobbie was involved but I think they came in almost as honorary boys. I don't know. This is real emotional fantasy type stuff but I remember thinking, yes so John Clark and –

Kieran Connell: Charles Cruickshank.

Tom Wengraf: Yeah, that's right. They were old timers, so to speak, in the sense that these groups, or some of these groups to a large extent were where the boys could get away from the dominant girls. I don't know, this is –

Kieran Connell: Yeah, of course –

Tom Wengraf: This is just feelings.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: And if other people have memories like this it would start moving towards evidence. But at the moment it's just a hypothesis. And that somehow the work that the men ... I can't remember what it was anymore. But anyway I had this feeling that some of the work, and John Clark ... Charles Cruickshank I didn't know so much, Dick Hedbush, I don't know whether he was there, I think he might have left earlier or something. But somehow it functioned as a place where Stewart and his male friends and his male bondings would have a sort of ... a den, away from the women's group. And that felt peculiar too. I would say that at that time, and it may have just been under the shock of this great glorious feminist revolution of whenever it was, which is mostly my fantasy. But anyway, that under the impact of that the social relations of groups in which men were involved were peculiarly defensive and unemancipated. There was a lot of going to pubs and stuff like that, which I don't do anyway. I don't know, at the moment, there was a boy's group and a girl's group and I suppose I didn't identify with either. –

Kieran Connell: Did class come into it?

Tom Wengraf: I didn't think of it as doing that. That was not, if you like, I mean maybe it really did but at the non-logical level of feeling, no I didn't feel it was a class thing. No I felt it was a gender thing and perhaps ... I felt that it was a gender thing. It was interesting that, well there was Richard and there was Stewart, then Stewart hired Michael and Richard Johnson and I think while I was there one woman was hired.

Kieran Connell: Maureen McNeill, would that be?

Tom Wengraf: Maureen McNeill, that's right.-

Kieran Connell: But Stewart left, didn't he?

Tom Wengraf: Yes, that's right.

(overspeaking)

[00:50:46]

Tom Wengraf: I remember. He left at the end of the academic year and I remember talking to him and he was interesting, it was only time he really wanted to talk to me. And that was surprising. Anyway, I don't know, Stewart is a funny bloke, he always has been. But anyway, I think he wanted to have a chat with me and he told me that he'd been offered ... either he was offered or he was going for or he could go for, I don't remember quite what the timing was, this job at the Open University and what did I think? And I remember what I said to him was, 'Well you've done a very good year.' I mean I didn't know that Thatcher could have come to power at this point so I thought, 'Okay, this is a setup, a good set up. It's been well set up, no reason why it should ... You know you've done your job of, if you like, creating this very innovative and powerful politico-intellectual organisation and if you're offered a job ... you can't do anything round here anymore.' I don't think I said that the sort of feminists ... you know, I didn't feel that. I felt that the feminists were working for all the antiquated gender struggle, primitive hatred type of stuff between, all that, that was working well and that he'd done his job of setting it up, basically, getting it running and –

Kieran Connell: Getting the conditions ready for someone else to go and –

Tom Wengraf: Yes. Take over. And obviously he could stay but he wouldn't be doing anything new. Whereas if he became Professor of Sociology at the Open University then he could, in an sense, take a bigger ... he would be working with a bigger thing to reorganise and innovative in. If you like, I don't know if I've said, but I was thinking that basically he'd found out a fantastically way of doing politico-intellectual work, organisation, and if he became Professor of Sociology at the Open University that would be the pilot run and then he could ... I mean obviously I didn't know what he did do at the Open University and I'm sure he was much more constrained. But that's –

Kieran Connell: What's your sense of, talking about Stewart, what's your sense ... because obviously on the one hand the Centre had this commitment to a democratic collective means of working where the staff and the students worked really very closely together.

Tom Wengraf: Right.

Kieran Connell: But what was your sense on the influence of all the staff, Stewart and also Michael, Richard and then obviously later Maureen? Was Stewart the leader?

Tom Wengraf: I don't know. I think my guess would be, I mean he wasn't very prominent ... I mean he obviously was there in the general meetings I think, but basically I think my guess would be ... but I don't know how he did it before. So anyway, two things are possible, I don't think he directly and ostentatiously and publicly led. I think he might very well have done that earlier on but by the time of my fantasised feminist coup that stopped him doing it because it would be the male patriarch was running things. So either he never led in a dominant imperial fashion or after –

Kieran Connell: That period.

Tom Wengraf: That period he didn't do it. And if he'd tried to do it I think there would have been trouble. There was quite a lot of ... I remember there was some hostility, by Lucy actually, to me as a sort of, was this Stewart trying to get in one of his heavy patriarchal friends? I mean it were never said like that but (overspeaking) but this is the sense that I've got. And it have proved to be, if you talked to Lucy and Lucy said, 'What crap.' You know, 'We were overjoyed that Wengraf came.' Or whatever. Fine, maybe that's true but my sense was that either that Stewart had never led in that. I didn't think about the question but thinking about it, no I don't ... he was not an ostentatious leader at the time that I was there. The leaders were more Michael who, if you're friends with him I'm sorry to say this, but my sense was he was a bit of a weathercock, he didn't have a very strong position of his own, he tacked. And I liked Michael but I didn't think of him as a sort of serious intellectual weight. Richard is quite different and Richard I think was, and is I'm sure a serious intellectual weight who was quite a soft and gentle sort at one level but quite, he has his position and he will say it and do it. And I would say that if I had a sense of leadership at that moment as far as outside the staff team was concerned it was Richard and not Stewart.

[00:56:04]

Kieran Connell: Right.

Tom Wengraf: But I don't think anybody ... so how long that ... that was how I experienced it. It may be that in the staff team Stewart wrote the script for Richard, I don't think so because I don't think Richard would have done it.

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: So I don't know what the internal relations were. But in terms of the experience of myself as a MA student there I would say that Richard was the leader and Richard's style is not to be domineering. I suspect that style, spontaneous style is a rather covert intellectual dominance, not through putting institutional weight at all but just having a better brighter view of everything, rather like Perry actually.

Kieran Connell: Yeah.

Tom Wengraf: Yeah anyway

Tom Wengraf

Kieran Connell: You mention institutions. Did you have an inkling whilst you were there of the Centre's relationship with the University of Birmingham? And how fraught it was?

Tom Wengraf: No. No, I didn't. I'm not sure, perhaps it was terribly fraught, let me just think ... did I have a sense of that? ... The trouble is I can't remember when discussions were had which is difficult. But I do remember at some point there was a discussion, not with Stewart, but with Richard and Michael and myself and maybe others, I have no idea, about how they had to change ... I'm trying to think how it would have been ... It would only have been at the end of my year there. It would have been the year in which Stewart ... that would have been Stewart's final year, and I have a feeling of a ... it's very difficult, because I might have had this conversation. I have to backtrack slightly. After I went back to Middlesex University I worked with somebody called Michael who was the leader of the Cultural Studies, the MA in Contemporary Cultural Studies. And Michael was a good friend of Michael Green. Mike Dorney was a good friend of Michael Green. So I'm no longer certain whether it was a discussion that Mike Dorney had had with Michael Green and then Mike Dorney and I talked, he relayed it to me and we talked about it. Or if there was a discussion with me present between myself, not Mike Dorney, myself, Richard and Michael and Mavis but not Stewart, because I'm always aware when Stewart is in the room because he's not a presence you could forget. So I can't answer that question right but either at the time or in the following year, let's say, there was a sense of being under pressure. I think it was a question of who would replace Stewart, I don't know how he was replaced, Richard was ...

Kieran Connell: Well Richard was then Director and then Maureen came in as a third member of staff. Maureen McNeill.

Tom Wengraf: Right. Wasn't Maureen there before?

Kieran Connell: Well it may have been a transitional period ... But –

Tom Wengraf: I think if she had been there, there was –

Kieran Connell: She ended up replacing Stewart because Stewart then decamped to the Open University.

Tom Wengraf: Right. Okay. I can't remember how that worked. I do remember meeting her but she didn't play a very significant figure at least for the MA I was on or the workgroups I was sort of in. And I remember at one stage they had to agree to run an undergraduate (inaudible 01:00:10). I don't whether that was at that time or something and it felt a bit like the kiss of death on the grounds that all the energies would be depleted by teaching large numbers of undergraduates who weren't that interested anyway. And that would drain energy away from the PhD, the real PhD based research that the Centre was there to do, so to speak. I mean the MA was a sort of bread and butter thing for the PhD students to survive on and the Centre to have readily for the University.

[01:00:45]

Tom Wengraf: And then at some point the undergraduate teaching was brought in and that really drew the energy away even more, much more decisive –

Kieran Connell: From a political side of things?

Tom Wengraf: From the politico-intellectual project, let's call it the occasional papers and the publications. I think, and obviously they may have gone to meetings and things like that, but for me the visible signs of the Centre as a politico-intellectual presence were the occasional papers and the books like (overspeaking).

Kieran Connell: Did you see those publications as being a crucial part of that?

Tom Wengraf: Yes. From my point of view –

Kieran Connell: In what way? Was it doing something that you hoped that the NLR was doing?

Tom Wengraf

Tom Wengraf: Yes. No, I did. It was the sort of thing that, as it were, I mean put it in a silly way, had ... no, you can only work with caricatures. If Stewart had remained as editor of NLR then that would have been the sort of thing that somebody like Stewart would have been the intellectual working powerhouse of New Left Review's main focus. As it was it was separate and Stewart left to do that but he no longer had the NLR as a journal. And then Perry's NLR was not interested in that sort of politico-intellectual ... in principle it was, but in practice it was trying to get into every library in the Anglo speaking, English speaking world. And it produces an eclectic mix on Belgium today and poetry there. And basically a Mandarin journal, the strengths of Mandarinism but certainly if you tried to understand British society and be in touch with what was going on in British society you sure as hell wouldn't read NLR.

Kieran Connell: Because (inaudible 01:02:35) the Centre's papers is that they also ended up into every English speaking –

Tom Wengraf: Yes, they did. Yes.

Kieran Connell: Was the motivation behind it, did you feel there was a different motivation behind it?

Tom Wengraf: Oh, I think yes. I think ... well put it this way, obviously New Left Review, and I suppose I've been longer in touch with New Left Review than I have been with the Centre.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: But New Left Review was if you like Gramscian in theory but unrelated, they're all public schoolboys basically. Yeah, they're all public schoolboys, a couple of public schoolgirls go along with them. And Stewart was, if you like, a Gramscianism in practice in Britain in particular. So Perry now has been living in California for years and half the stuff comes from California. It's sort of an unlocated Atlantic Mandarin Marxist journal. Which is not to sneeze at, it does very good work. But in terms of anything like a politico-intellectual movement in Britain, mobilisation of politico-intellectual workers in Britain, it's nowhere. Yeah, you look at it, there's the occasional interesting article but that's what you do with it. And it happens to be published in England as a matter, that's where it started off, but it moved to California or if it moved to Moscow or it moved to wherever nobody would make any difference at all.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: It is worldwide in that sense and it's equally irrelevant to every social movement in any particular country at the same time. Whereas Stewart's thing was very much, as I read it, a ... yes, a cosmopolitanly informed Gramscian project for producing what Gramsci called the organic intellectuals.

[01:04:31]

Kieran Connell: Well that's ... I don't want to take up too much more of your time –

Tom Wengraf: That's okay.

Kieran Connell: But this whole notion or organic intellectuals was at the forefront in terms of –

Tom Wengraf: Yes. That's right.

Kieran Connell: Of what the Centre was trying to do.

Tom Wengraf: And I think that's what it largely, it did much better than any other left wing organisation that I know about and that's why I liked it so much. The fact that there were these bad social relations at this time of the just-achieved smashing patriarchy and the rise of feminists generally. I don't know, my guess would be that in two or three years' time, and I don't know what happened afterwards, I had other fish to fry so to speak, in two or three years' time that would have settled down and the boys groups and the girls groups thing, the terror of the men of incurring the wrath of the women would

have evaporated or got modified or there would have been a sort of developing mutual tolerance or whatever. But I was at a period, I think, in my fantasy, of just after the feminist coup d'état.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: And at that time the work went on but the social relations from my point of view were unbelievably ...

Kieran Connell: Difficult.

Tom Wengraf: They were difficult. They were difficult.

Kieran Connell: And is that what the other document that you wrote ... are you in a sense of reacting to that kind of divide by trying to say. 'look there are other subjective positions that also age.'

Tom Wengraf: Did I write that?

Kieran Connell: There's a piece. I did send it to you but you might not have got it ...

Tom Wengraf: I haven't got it, no.

Kieran Connell: There's a piece here where you talk about in the subjects and –

Tom Wengraf: Can I have a look at it?

Kieran Connell: Here, where you've raised, aged, financed ...

Tom Wengraf: Oh right. What would now be called intersectionality.

Kieran Connell: Yes. That was '79. That was a few months after you issued -

Tom Wengraf: That's right. Well I came in September, October ...

Kieran Connell: And the contradiction is a debate that was had in 1979 at the Centre.

Tom Wengraf: Right. Right, okay.

Kieran Connell: About presumably some of what you've been talking about.

Tom Wengraf: Yes. That's right. Okay, let me just have a look at it. And so the structuralism end of fairy story. Good God. Oh.

[01:06:38]

Kieran Connell: You're welcome to have that.

Tom Wengraf: Okay. Thanks very much. Right basically I suppose what it would now be called and would be much more acceptable the notion of people have multiplied their (overspeaking) or identity. What does Nero call it? Intersectionality? Something like that. Anyway, so we have to find the one and only important essential identity. It is class or is it gender? And I'm just saying no ... oh, gosh ... Oh, that's quite interesting. Quite thoughtful really.

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: I think I'd like to meet the guy who wrote it. Fight against the heresy of multiplism. Upstart, the historical block of gender and class from categorists to more complex accounts. Okay, subjects all raced and passported, aged, financed, located, study moded and so on. Is that six? I see to have missed out five. One, two, three, four, five, six. Oh, and then there's ...

Kieran Connell: Oh is it ...?

Tom Wengraf

Tom Wengraf: There's another page. Oh, that's quite fun.

(laughter)

Tom Wengraf: Humanism versus anti-humanism. Insurrectionism, (inaudible 01:07:57). Right. Yeah, basically if you like in that sense it's very ideological and sometimes it's the ideology of the Centre as a whole at a point and sometimes it's the ideology and I'm a Gramscian in that sense, I suppose the dominant faction within the ruling elite, or whatever it would be. There is now and normally has been in the past a changing orthodox of centrality of which those who are negatively placed are acutely aware and those who are more or less positively placed normally deny or underplay. (inaudible 01:08:35), physical disability or its absence. There was one guy there who was quite severely handicapped.

Kieran Connell: Bob Findlay?

Tom Wengraf: That's it, yeah. Self-righteous or self-doubting, generalisations ... yeah, that's not bad at all.

Kieran Connell: So in a sense that was ... you can have that. But it has a sense of like an attempt to move beyond that?

Tom Wengraf: Yes. Yes. It was basically trying to relax the terrified struggle for total power and the subordination of any insurgent category that you didn't like or weren't. I don't know, I'm exaggerating. But interesting, I'd forgotten that, it's nice to see it there.

Kieran Connell: And just finally then, I was going to ask probably a hopelessly broad question, but what do you think from a Gramscian or from any other perspective were the structures? And we kind of touched on this a little bit in the sense of the transition from higher education from being a space where you could experiment to a highly regimented disciplined space. And what are the structures that made the Centre, would you say, possible? What were the structures?

Tom Wengraf: Okay. So why was it possible then?

Kieran Connell: Then. And what changed? It's hopelessly broad I know.

Tom Wengraf: (inaudible 01:09:49) or the conditions of possibility.

Kieran Connell: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

[01:09:52]

Tom Wengraf: Well I touched on them to some extent. I've talked about the economic foundation which I think was very important for these, you can carry on doing your low fee PhD for an unlimited time and you can subsidise that by pretty freely available work in FE, I think its sixth forms, I'm not sure about that. Or other stuff. And I suppose people ... I don't get the sense that people were very anxious or in a rush to find a permanent job. Partly because they weren't carrying debt and I'm sure that's immensely important. And partly I think, at least in academia, until Thatcher came to power and even shortly afterwards higher education was expanding. You'll need to check that but that's my concept. And therefore people were pretty much (inaudible 01:11:03). And particularly if they had a good research publications record. Yeah, why wouldn't you get a job eventually? So there was no hurry to get it. And that's one set of conditions of possibility for each. The other ones ... okay it's difficult because I wasn't ... in '79 it was already (inaudible 01:11:29) Polytechnic. But again it was before the (inaudible 01:11:34), the bringing everybody together and under control of the universities and polytechnics. I mean I think we were still a polytechnic then. So they had different missions. Polytechnics were there basically to teach and when I was interviewed for my job at what became Middlesex Polytechnic I was known as somebody who had been at the LSE and the person, I didn't realise it, they looked very young, and he came in and he said, 'Are you in research?' And I said, 'No. Absolutely not. I'm only interested in designing good courses and teaching them.' And I think that's why I got the job because –

Kieran Connell: That's where you wanted to go.

Tom Wengraf: That's why I wanted the job and that's what I wanted to do and that's what I did. And when the polytechnics were forced into becoming universities and the universities were forced into a new mode of being a university, it was a disaster ... well not a disaster because it happens. But yeah, that started the denaturing of both organisations and their subordination to what we now call the audit culture. But at that time I think universities had a pretty free hand and actually departments in the university a pretty free hand. And provided they brought in, I suppose, enough income to equal their outgoings, there wasn't a great pressure on them and the Centre produced a very high rate of informal publication and probably theses and all those other indicators of research, which is what universities were largely ... the old universities and universities implicitly in principle were supposed to be doing, which was the research side. So ... yeah, I'm only speaking, I haven't got anything more interesting to say about it because I can no longer remember the details of how things were run.

Kieran Connell: Of course.

Tom Wengraf: But I know that ... because I came from Middlesex Polytechnic that became Middlesex University and clearly Birmingham University was an older modern university or a modern older university and I don't know what the dynamics of that were. But I think Stewart would have been pretty prestigious and there wasn't an overwhelming motivation to get rid of him. I don't think so. He never mentioned that. What he did say ... actually it doesn't matter. I'm not sure we should publish it without Stewart saying okay. But what Stewart did say after he got the job, he said that the Open University, I don't know if I'm boring you talking about this, but anyway the Open University offered him the job and he (inaudible 01:14:40). And what happened was that the then Minister of Education, or Higher Education rang him up and talked to him for a long time and Stewart wouldn't say what he talked to him about. But it was made very clear that if he was a trouble maker there would be trouble. I can't quite remember what the phrase was-

Kieran Connell: Right. Along those lines. Yeah.

Tom Wengraf: But the authorities were watching and Stewart was a known left winger and they didn't feel strong enough or prepared and Thatcher had only just ... and I don't know whether they tried to or not, but they certainly wanted Stewart to know that they were watching. And I thought that's really interesting.

Kieran Connell: And signals the sort of shifts that you've just been talking about.

[01:15:27]

Tom Wengraf: That's right. So it's not that one doesn't know that there are pressures. I mean you might have come across Warwick University Limited by Edward Thomson?

Kieran Connell: Yeah.

Tom Wengraf: I mean they were never as bad and brutal as in ... well they were. But anyway, I never had a sense of it being as powerful and brutal and extreme as it is in the States where if you disapprove or some business leader on your Board wants you out, you're out. Or you don't get tenure or whatever it is. But it was just interesting ... well I've been involved in a sit-in at my own university so ... But it was ... anyway I was interested by that. I was interested. Of course it fitted my paranoid Marxist theory of the ruling class.

Kieran Connell: Yes.

Tom Wengraf: So I can't really, I think ... did I write any of this up at all? I'm sure I must have done. Sorry, if you want to close the window do close it. No reason why you shouldn't go out frozen. No I haven't got anything ... I must have written somewhere, but not while I was at the Centre, about ... because did I go back and become Chair of NATFE again?

Kieran Connell: Well if anything comes to you ...

Tom Wengraf: But I remember at one stage ... no anyway, forget it. So it's not that I didn't work on this and how is all this happening, because I think I did as either Chair or ex-Chair or about to be Chair or whatever it was for NATFE, which is the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. That's right. But I didn't write on it for publication particularly. I just worked on it as it were so that it would be a common discourse among the Union Committee and whatever.

Kieran Connell: Yeah. Well that was really interesting. Thank you very much.

[End of Transcript]