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From noted ‘phenomenon’ to ‘missing person’: a case of the historical construction of the *unter-journalist*

Michael Bromley

Abstract

Tim Hewat was celebrated during his tenure at Granada Television as one of the most influential journalists working in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century, but then largely forgotten for 30 years. This was a function of the specific historicisation of journalists. Hewat’s case indicates that journalists’ histories are shaped as reflections of the narrow sectarian values of journalism and the media. It has been recognised that this reductionism largely rendered the majority of women journalists historically invisible. The Hewat case signifies that this also applies to most male journalists. Without embracing more extensive categorisations of journalists, social (as opposed to media) history, and journalists’ own stories, the history of journalism is largely devoid of the lived experiences of the majority of its practitioners, and the process of historicisation creates a category of *unter-journalist*.

Key words: current affairs history journalist newspaper television

World in Action ... gained a reputation for unorthodox thought and campaigning journalism ... From the beginning ... the programme broke new ground in investigative techniques. ... Although the series’ lasting reputation is for its investigative work, it also led the way in introducing other techniques to mainstream TV.

... *WIA* helped to pioneer the current fashion for using miniature covert cameras, not just in investigative work ... but also in social documentary ... Among the leading journalists to work on *World In Action* were John Pilger; Dorothy Byrne, Head of News & Current Affairs at Channel 4; Nick Davies, Ed Vulliamy and David Leigh of *The Guardian*; Alasdair Palmer of the *Sunday Telegraph*; John Ware, now BBC *Panorama*’s leading investigative reporter; ... Donal MacIntyre, now of five tv; and Andrew Jennings, author of *Lords Of The Rings* ...

... Paul Greengrass, director of the feature films *United 93* and *The Bourne Supremacy* and of the drama-documentaries *Bloody Sunday* and *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence*, cut his directing teeth on the series, as did Michael Apted, director of *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Gorillas In The Mist* and the James Bond film *The World Is Not Enough*. John Smithson and David Darlow, who set up the production company responsible for *Touching The Void*, first worked together at *World In Action*. Leslie Woodhead, regarded by many as a founder of the drama-documentary movement, worked on the series as a producer and executive.

The British Cabinet Ministers, Jack Straw and Margaret Beckett, worked on *World In Action* as researchers. Chris Mullin, Labour MP ..., played a major role in the programme's campaign on behalf of the Birmingham Six. Gus Macdonald, now Baron Macdonald of Tradeston, and until recently a Government Minister, was an executive on the programme. (bibleocean.com)

This description of the current affairs series *World in Action* (*WiA*) was posted on the worldwide web in several versions in late 2007, nine years after the program last appeared on British television. It could have included in the list of illustrious alumni John Birt, director-general of the BBC; Jeremy Isaacs, the founding chief executive of Channel Four television; David Plowright, chairman of the broadcaster of *WiA*, Granada; Stuart Prebble, chief executive of the UK's Independent Television (ITV), and the broadcaster Michael Parkinson. It might be expected that the person behind such an apparent paragon of later twentieth century journalism would be equally eminent among journalists. Yet the man credited with 'inventing' *WiA*, the New Zealand-born Australian Tim Hewat (Isaacs 2005), remained a relatively obscure figure for 30 years up to his death.

Hewat's influence on British journalism over two decades was substantial and enduring (Jackson 2004; Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2001, 76-7; Hewat 2003, 199).¹ The trade periodical *Broadcast* (2005) listed him as one of 'the 50 most influential people in TV history'.² The Political Studies Association (2000, 19) gave *WiA* a 50th Anniversary Awards, noting: '*World in Action* came to be seen as hard-hitting investigative journalism at its best'. Hewat recruited to *WiA* many of its most 'remarkable' journalists (Granger

¹ *WiA*'s influence extended back to Australia through journalists such as the ABC's Quentin McDermott, Alex Mitchell of the Melbourne *Sun-Herald*, and John Joseph Maher, who directed Seven News in Melbourne for 18 years (Fitzgerald 2004; *Four Corners* 2004).

² Hewat was no. 44.

1996; Hodgson 2001; Sutherland 2003, 256-60; Woodhead 2007). As *WiA*'s first executive producer, he 'revolutionised' British current affairs television which was then dominated by the BBC's 'prim and proper programming, produced by well-intentioned middle-class persons for middle-class viewers' (Apted cited BFI 2006; Forman 2007, 17; Henry 1992; Holland 2006, 43-4).³ Hewat's brief was 'to bring a touch of tabloid investigation' to the genre (Collins 2000). *WiA* was 'the first weekly current affairs program in Britain to pioneer pictorial journalism on film' (Jones and Millington nd). It introduced consumerism and popular culture as topics for current affairs television. Hewat mandated the use of small, hand-held, 16mm, synchronised sound, cameras, and lights, which halved the size of film crews, and early practices in multi-skilling across journalism and film-making (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007; Isaacs 2007; Williams 1963). These developments allowed the methods of 'direct cinema' (*cinéma vérité*) to be brought to television (*televérité*) foreshadowing 'reality TV' (Sexton 2003). Under his direction *WiA* evolved the docu-drama genre (McBride 2005, 487; Woodhead 2005, 479), and Hewat initiated what was to become the *7 Up!* series of films as a *WiA* special in 1964 (Apted 2005).

Even before he began *WiA*, one contemporary critic believed that 'Granada's reputation for crisp, forthright, responsible social documentary has been very largely created by Hewat-produced programmes' (Robinson 1961, 125). He was involved in the development of a number of factual programming strands, including the long-running *What the Papers Say*,⁴ and co-produced the first television broadcast of a by-election in the UK (Leapman 1993; Robinson 1961, 121). He was publicly identified as a candidate for a number of high-level jobs at the BBC (Ardagh 1965; Williams 1963). Prior to his employment at Granada, he morphed from unemployed junior journalist to 'Fleet Street prodigy' at the *Daily Express*, then just giving way to the *Daily Mirror* as Britain's largest-selling daily newspaper (Tunstall 1983, 71; Williams 1963). He drew on his experiences at the *Express*, the successful tabloid journalism of the *Mirror* (in particular its social investigation supplement 'Mirrorscope') and the style of the American newsreel

³ In Apted's phrase 'what Hewat did at *World in Action* was kind of blow a fart across the whole system'.

⁴ *What the Papers Say* marked 50 years of broadcasting in 2006, having been transmitted successively by ITV, Channel 4 and BBC2 (BBC press release 30 October 2006).

of the 1930s and 1940s, *The March of Time*, to create a distinctively innovative form of television journalism (Hallam 2003, 19; Hewat 2003, 198; Isaacs 2007).

Hewat was fêted as a ‘phenomenon’ (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007; Purser 2004; Robinson 1961, 119). Isaacs (2005, 2007) said he was ‘brilliant’ and left ‘a lasting mark’. Paul Fox, who was chairman of the UK’s Independent Television News, regarded him as ‘one of the true greats’ of television (cited Purser 2004). Parkinson (2002) counted him among ‘a tribe of journalists who moved from Fleet Street into television ... and who taught the infant how to walk’. Apted (2005) argued that Hewat changed the nature of British TV, and *The Times* (2004) called him ‘one of television’s great producers’ and ‘the founding father of popular television journalism’. Nevertheless, when he died (after a car accident in Australia on 19 May 2004), no obituary was published for two weeks by Australia’s national daily, *The Australian*, where Hewat had briefly been features editor in the 1970s (Hedgcock 2004; Monks 2004). It was not until more than six months later that the *Sydney Morning Herald* (15 December 2004, p.33) and the FairfaxDigital web site (Hewat began his career in journalism as a cadet on Fairfax’s *The Age* in Melbourne) published a notice of his death, and then it was merely repurposed from *The Guardian* where it had appeared eleven days previously (Purser 2004).⁵ Meanwhile, Hewat merited no entry in *The Encyclopedia of the British Press* which recorded several thousand British journalists (Griffiths 1992), and unlike the American Ed Murrow, he was neither knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, nor the subject of either a biography or a bio-pic. While *WiA* entered the pantheon of ‘great British journalism’, its instigator became a ‘missing person’ of journalism’s history (Sterling and Keith 2006, 347).

In this paper it is argued that the explanation of that paradox lies in the ways in which journalists are historicised; that is, how historical ‘facts’ about *journalists* – as opposed to journalism and the media – are contextualised through the discursive regime of historiography, and enter into the collective memory (Gans 2002, 374). These contextual frameworks assign values to the ‘facts’ of history, and valorise history itself (Iggers

⁵ *The Times* obituary was published on 2 December. Apted included a posthumous dedication to Hewat in the credits of the most recent film in the *Up* series, *49 Up*, a year after his death (First Run Features 2005).

1973-4, 456-64; Roberts 1995, 136-43). As Jenkins (1995, 18) points out, ‘... the status of historical knowledge is not based for its truth/accuracy on its correspondence with the past *per se* but on the various historicisations of it, so that historiography always “stands in for” the past’. The historian, like the journalist (Anon 2007; Bromley 2003, 124), acts as a gatekeeper, ‘selecting and discarding pieces of information’ (Bishop 2005, 1006). While the contextual skew of the historian has many facets, one which has stimulated debate since the professionalisation of academic history in the nineteenth century is that of the temporal and cognitive location of the historian, particularly present-mindedness (reflecting ‘the influence of their times’ – Hardt 1995, 3) and teleology (Williams 2004, 337).⁶ The objective here is not to re-engage with the full range of these debates about ‘the nature of history’ (Marwick 1981, 184-90), but to argue for the salience of some of them to the historicisation of journalists around both ‘the career of a single individual, tracing its continuities and ruptures, its intellectual and journalistic contexts, and the range of ideas and styles it encompasses’ (Buckridge 1993, 21) and ‘the interplay between individual, team, institution and medium’, as well as ‘the audience as “the public”’, which together prescribe journalists’ occupational experiences (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2001, 88).

Hidden ‘facts’

The common starting-point for the process of historicisation is assembling what Barraclough (1955, 29-30) called the ‘fragmentary evidence’. Because the past is not observable, and can only be (partially) recreated, what is unknown or uncertain may be imagined, therefore (Collingwood 1946/1994, 256). Collingwood (1946/1994, 213-5; 240-1; 242-5) proposed that sense is made of the evidence (‘filling in the gaps’, resolving conflicts, extracting contemporaneous meaning) through interpolation, interrogation and re-enactment. Collingwood’s ideas are highly contested (for example, see Marwick 1981, 81-5), and the ‘facts’ remain the common orienting starting-point for historical analyses, as they do for journalism, but the impossibility of writing history ‘*Wie es*

⁶ For example, in Australia what are known as ‘the history wars’ became ‘an argument for control of the past’ in the interests of the present (Macintyre 2003), in which the participants sought ‘to claim that history is on their side’ through the histories they wrote (Gallop 2007).

eigentlich gewesen' is broadly acknowledged (Wien 2006, 6). In this way, histories of journalism have left women journalists 'hidden from view' (Marzolf 1997, vii); 'unknown' (Clarke 2004, 36); 'neglected' (Clarke 2004, 16); 'overlooked' (Wilmot Voss 2004, 198); covered by 'a veil of obscurity' (Coleman 2004, 135); 'peripheral' (Born cited Haller 2006, 2), and misrepresented (Murray 2003). For example, Haller (2006) noted, 'Considering the amount of literature written on the Vietnam War, it is confounding that female war correspondents have failed to make a significant entry into historical accounts of the conflict'.

Scholars (Beasley 2001; Burt 1998; Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004; Curry 1993; Steiner 1997, 5; Turner 1993, 126) have proposed a number of reasons why female journalists tended to disappear from journalism's histories:

- (a) the relative obscurity of women journalists in their own time – many published under pseudonyms and/or in less mainstream media;
- (b) a lack of documentary evidence – few left behind personal papers (see below);
- (c) the present-mindedness of historians which led to women journalists being dislocated from their times and subjected to *post facto* judgements;
- (d) a concentration on 'hard news' as the epitome of journalism – many women journalists worked outside this domain;
- (e) narrow definitions of who constituted a journalist – many women journalists did not fit with ideas of what were considered to be legitimate practitioners;⁷
- (f) measuring women journalists against a scientific paradigm of 'objective' investigation and reporting and thus reducing their history to a struggle to comply;
- (g) the 'disconnected [and] fragmentary' nature of women journalists' accounts of their own lives which were rarely 'complete, chronological ... [and] coherent';
- (g) the domination of journalism historiography by men.

⁷ For a contemporary example, see the case of Vanessa Leggett (Tatum 2001).

Women did not fit the preferred evolved image of the journalist as a hard-nosed, sensation-seeking, hero of 'free speech', and they were marginalised and ghetto-ised (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004, 231-2; Harp 2006, 211). Yet the factors which kept women journalists largely hidden from history applied more widely to all journalists when they failed to conform to predetermined types. Histories were shaped by a belief in

the linear progression of a particular set of practices inspired by the invention, endeavour and courage of individual men (and occasionally women) who intervened at key times, pitting their wits against forces intent on controlling what they do, to assist the forward 'march of journalism'. (Williams 2004, 337)

Journalism was equated to narrow notions of 'news' (Blanchard 1999; Chambers, Steiner and Fleming 2004, 180), and the reductionist belief that 'writing about people in public life – and writing for readers engaged in public life – is the core of real journalism' (Steiner 1997, 7). There was little acknowledgement of 'those who lost, failed, offered alternative ideas ... sold out, or were taken over': journalism's histories were predominantly written by winners (Sterling and Keith 2006, 355), and framed by 'assumptions, stereotypes, and predispositions, especially when considering unconventional journalistic figures' (Marmarelli 1981).

Journalists and history

Journalists, Schultz (1999, 259-60) observed, 'live in a permanent present', tied inexorably to the newness of 'news', and engendering

a truncated sense of understanding ... a view of the world that is simple ... uncluttered by different ways of seeing, remembering and imagining. ... The past is past and like a foreign country rarely revisited ... The past, the context, the precursors, easily fall into a deep pit where little is remembered – again, the permanent present is warily embraced at the expense of the complexity of the whole.

Journalists historicised themselves incidentally, accidentally, tangentially and, above all, informally and fragilely, through the mechanisms of individual memory, gossip and

‘shop talk’ (Breen 1998, 2-3; Schultz 1999, 260-1). As a consequence, the persistent and everyday experiences of journalists (and, therefore, the majority of journalists themselves) were assigned a separate, less visible history from that of the exceptional – ‘communities of decision makers ... media ownership and management ... [and] almost exclusively highly respected and well-known journalists’ (Hardt 1995, 7-8). Memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, notwithstanding their prevalence and considerable variety, essentially contributed to this class division of journalists, and enhanced it through mainly unjustifiable assumptions of celebrity and power (Bromley 1997, 331-2; Zelizer 2004, 92-5). That is not to say that these attempts at historicisation provided no insights into journalists’ generalised pasts, but they were chiefly characterised by ‘omissions, self-justifications and fallibilities’ (Bailey and Williams 1997, 375; Zelizer 2004, 95). Further, the history of journalism was conflated with the history of the media to the extent that ‘biographies of famous journalists became welcome celebrations of media institutions’ (Hardt 1995, 7-8). These pivoted around notions of ‘the freedom of the press’ which were somehow translated seamlessly and erroneously in to presumptions of freedom for individual journalists (Hardt 2000, 210; Schultz 1999, 264). Moreover, much of the history of the media themselves was written by journalists, ensuring that it reflected ‘the passions and self-interest that generally accompany individuals’ chronicling of their own professional lives’ (Zelizer 2004, 84). Journalists’ histories, then, were interwoven with and subsumed by the history of journalism, which was itself appropriated by institutional histories (Carey 1974 cited Zelizer 2004, 86).

Particularly problematical was the connection between the journalist and journalism’s texts. For much of the past authorship was simply not traceable (Dyas 1996, 150-1). Journalists regarded the texts they produced as both transitory and ephemeral (Bromley and O’Malley 1997, 3). They were reluctant to contribute and archive their papers (Dyas 1996, 152; 155-6). Both journalists, and even those scholars ‘who mined the press for data without sufficiently considering the processes by which news came to be’ considered published texts, rather than the ‘record of every aspect of human effort that goes into the compilation, production, and distribution’, to constitute the archive (Dyas 1996, 147-8; Zelizer 2004, 85). Where substantial papers were kept – for instance, in the Mitchell

Library in the State Library of New South Wales – they often betrayed the journalists’ ‘strong sense of their own importance in the world’ rather than any reflection on their relationships with their audiences (Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton 1993, 50). The connections between journalists and their audiences were inferred not demonstrated (Blanchard 1999). For the earlier periods little attempt was made to establish how, or even if, journalists related to their readers (Dooley 1990). When audience research was established in the twentieth century, it was initially driven by administrative concerns, and showed no interest in the historical contexts of journalists (Halloran 1974, 12). Subsequently, audience research has been almost wholly present-minded (see Section 10 of Boyd-Barrett and Newbold 1995). Historical linkages between journalists, the texts of journalism and their audiences tended to be substituted instead by, on the one hand, ‘tradition’ (Boyd-Barrett 1995, 270), and on the other hand, ideology – overwhelmingly, that of liberal, capitalist democracy. What Zelizer (1993/1997, 408-09) called ‘the durational mode of interpretation’ permitted journalists to recast their histories as both timely and timeless lessons in so-called free press ‘standards’. In this way, they generalised the particular, and particularised the general, shaping the past to the present and *vice versa*. Thus traditions were at one and the same time established, perpetuated and newly invented (Zelizer 1993/1997, 414-15).

Historians as a whole rarely considered journalists, and those who did viewed them chiefly as bit part actors in grand political dramas, or through the prism of political economy as malleable ‘invisible’ labour (Hardt 2000, 213-4; Lester 1995, 31; Schudson 1995, 39-40). There was little recognition that this sat uneasily with the idealisation of the liberal individualism of ‘the journalist-editor who cherished independence and editorial control’ (Cryle 1999, 84). A ‘history of the rank and file’ hardly exists (Hardt and Brennen 1995). Histories of collectivism, unionism and co-operation among journalists are not only quantitatively inferior to the outpouring of institutional studies, but have often fallen into the same approach. The institutions of the media were anthropomorphised and made to stand in for the journalists working within them (Lester

1995, 35).⁸ In turn, those media were routinely represented by ‘great men’ (Hardt 1995, 15). What the media said (texts), what audiences thought, and who journalists were and what they did could be inferred one from the other (Dooley 1990; Hardt 1995, 7). While the majority of histories have been published in the United States, they have been characterised by claims to universalism of place and time (Lester 1995, 36). Alternative versions have surfaced rarely, even in quite different domains where experiences on the ground appeared to be distinctive (Cryle 1999).

Over the past four decades many histories have re-engaged with those who have been ignored and silenced by the historicisation process, however (Thompson 1968, 13), and this momentum accelerated in the post-modernist era with the demise of meta-narratives (Liebes and Kampf 2004, 81-2). Nevertheless, journalism has exhibited ‘a strong culture of separation between insiders and outsiders’, based on a teleological understanding of who is considered to be a journalist (Hartley in press 2008, 9). This carried over internally into journalism where divisions existed between those who conformed to preferred historical types and those who didn’t and remained ‘distant’ (Pilger 1992, 12-13). These tendencies restricted the histories of journalists to ones of ‘builders of giant journalistic institutions, technological innovators and tough reporters of momentous events, like wars’ (Beasley 2001, 218), and reduced journalists to components in ‘the system of information gathering and news production’ without reference to their experiences of the conditions of their employment and the nature of their work (Plasencia 1999, 126). Moreover, the interest in the historiography of journalists appeared to wane ‘dramatically’ over the last quarter of the twentieth century accounting for only 2% of papers published in the journal *Journalism History* in the 1990s (Cloud 2000/2001).

Beasley (2001, 207; 210) argued for ‘a more comprehensive [hi]story’ and ‘a new synthesis’ which accounted for all experiences. This called for (a) a redefinition of ‘journalism’ which recognised the variety, rather than the rigidity, of forms, genres and modes – activist, popular, entertainment, newsletter – and of practices and practitioners

⁸ For example, Mansfield’s (1943) ‘Official history of the British National Union of Journalists’ was entitled “*Gentlemen, The Press!*”.

(pp.208-09; 218); (b) a greater systemic alignment with broad social history to locate and contextualise the identities, voices and ideas of groups and individuals (pp. 209; 213), and (c) a more expansive use of (auto)biography and oral history, and a subjective perspective, to reveal the nature of journalists' lived experiences (pp.209-11; 212; 216; 218). Curran (2002, 51) suggested that histories which were suitably contextualised countered simple 'linear narratives' based on binary opposites. Criticism of the historiography of journalism has its own extended history (from Peterson [1950] through Carey [1974] to Hardt [2000]) in denouncing the 'single perspective ... [of] the pervasive influence of the progressive tradition' (Atwood 1978, 3). This approach resulted in journalists being historicised in ways which were synchronic rather than diachronic, specific to place (western liberal democracies) rather than time; which emphasised continuity over change, and consensus over conflict; focused on the exceptional individual, who represented or was represented by media institutions, rather than shared experiences, and framed them teleologically (Lester 1995, 35; Zelizer 2004, 86-9). Such narratives failed to locate journalists historically as identifiable active participants in 'the creation of networks of [human] communication' (Dooley 1990, 461).

Rescuing the journalist

Hewat's status as a subaltern journalist (Curran 2002, 66) explained how he could be both widely recognised and, then later, rendered practically invisible, only to be rediscovered posthumously. His historical identity drew first on the rhetorical construction of Britain's Fleet Street which emphasised journalists' personal traits – male, white, 'tough' (hard drinking, swearing), supposedly classless (Aldridge 1998, 113-17; Winston 2005). He was 'colourful, brash, shocking' – 'a movie version of a newspaper man'; 'outlandish, flamboyant, uncouth' (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 19; Robinson 1961, 119). The possession of 'flair' was alone enough to indicate 'a first-rate journalist' (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 19; Robinson 1961, 125). These characteristics confirmed him as a member of the journalistic 'tribe' (Hartley in press 2008, 9), an insider. Behind this construction lay the projected purpose of the journalist to protect and promote the Fourth Estate role of the media by being 'inquiring, subordinate, incorrigible',

challenging authority and censorship (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 19-20). Hewat exhibited the classic characteristic of a journalist – ‘a nose for news’ (Henry 1992). He pursued an orthodox career, starting his cadetship as a 17-year-old, before joining the *Daily Express* as a reporter, then the Toronto *Globe & Mail*, and the *Express* again as a sub-editor, a foreign correspondent, northern editor and managing editor (Hewat 2003, 196). When he accepted a 50% cut in pay to join Granada as a production trainee (Robinson 1961, 120), he transferred to television his prior understanding of accepted 1950s newspaper journalism (Blake 2003, 186; Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 52), notably a commitment to investigations and ‘exposés’ (Hewat 2003, 196-7). He grafted on to this formula technical and creative innovation in the production of television current affairs, aligning novelty with convention (‘the most old-fashioned ... journalism imaginable’) (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 18; Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2001, 76; Hewat 2003, 196; Hewat cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 28).

This led to the formation of what was seen to be a new, timely, popular journalism supposedly combining in television form the thoroughness of *The Economist* with the accessibility of *Time* magazine (Heads cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 40). Appropriately for the period, Plowright called it ‘rock and roll news’ (cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 53). At the same time, the ethos of *WiA* was overwhelmingly ‘macho’ (Henry 1992; McDougall 2003, 79). Part of Hewat’s legacy was a *WiA* whose journalists were publicised as ‘the Green Berets of journalism, the hairy chested Hemmingways of current affairs, the hard men and women of television’; and were known as ‘The Wild Bunch’ and ‘The Death-Wish Brigade’ (cited Blake 2003, 184; Kewley 2003, 201). Hewat was at one and the same time a ‘dictator’ and the ‘Messiah’ (Williams 1963), and canonised as an imagined archetypal journalist (Blake 2003, 185; Henry 1992; Seddon 1965).

By 1967 Hewat had left Granada – in his own words, ‘on the brink of ... burnout’ (Hewat 2003, 199; also cited Walker 1998) – but the historicisation process around ideas of ‘pure Fleet Street c.1960s’ (Heald 2004) did not abate, and manufactured for him a

second, partially fictitious, career as a journalist. He returned to the *Daily Express* where he was appointed associate editor. Characterised as one of ‘the best editors the *Daily Express* never had’ (Jackson 2004), he was seen as a ‘deadly’ rival (a recurrent Fleet Street conceit; see Cole 2005) to David English, who was also an associate editor on the paper and later edited the *Daily Mail* for 21 years (Heald 2004; Heald 2007; PHS 1969). In this account of events, both men resigned in frustration, and the newspaper magnate Rupert Murdoch offered Hewat the founding editorship of *The Australian* (Jackson 2004; 2007). This had no basis in actuality, however: *The Australian* started publishing three years before Hewat left Granada. Moreover, Hewat’s muse at the *Express* seemed to be Arthur Christiansen, the long-time editor and progenitor of mid-century popular British journalism, but whose reputation was established chiefly in the 1930s and 1940s: they certainly shared the view that television held out the brightest promise for the future for their kind of journalism (Griffiths 1992, 154-5; Robinson 1961, 120-1). Hewat’s departure from the paper in 1957 coincided with Christiansen relinquishing the editorship due to ill health (Griffiths 1992, 465). Subsequently, and following the intervening decade at Granada (which is elided in this version of his-story), Hewat’s brief sojourn at the *Express* ended, in his own words ‘very amicably’ (PHS 1969). His return to journalism in Australia in January 1969 was anything but auspicious, however.

Hewat was appointed the inaugural editor of *Newsday*, intended as Victoria’s first Sunday paper, but ‘hastily’ converted to a tabloid evening title for its launch in September 1969, and then closed the following May (Harris 1979). Contemporaries classified the venture as a ‘debacle’ (Anon 1970; Monks 2004; Tidey 2005). Hewat appeared to be at odds with Graham Perkin, the editor-in-chief of David Syme and Co., the newspaper’s owner, and ill at ease in an organisation where journalists were required to be ‘suitably attired to attend a funeral’. His ‘imaginative and hardhitting (*sic*)’ approach was considered to be out of place in a stolid provincial city (Harris 1979; Hedgcock 2004). He was seen as a ‘high-pressure hotshot’ who had been parachuted into the local journalism culture (Aldridge 2004; Nolan 2005). During a subsequent short tenure as the features editor of *The Australian* Hewat proved to be ‘too active and demanding for the local newspaper pond’ (Hedgcock 2004). Although he continued to

edit, commentate, write and produce (Hedgcock 2004; Long 2002; *Melbourne Observer* 2004, 7; Monks 2004), he largely disappeared from journalism's historical view. Hewat was invited to participate in a special *This is Your Life* show to mark 25 years of ITV in 1979, but was ignored when *WiA* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary fourteen years later (Isaacs 2005; Mitchell 1993).

Meanwhile, changeability in mainstream journalism impacted, too, on the historicisation process (Hartley 1996, 28). Hewat's tenure as *WiA*'s executive producer lasted for less than two years, and he appeared to lose touch with the program and its developing journalistic interests in youth culture, 'direct cinema', and what he dismissed as 'flossy' topics (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 48-9; Macdonald 2003, 207). He was particularly uncomfortable with the emerging mainstay theme and style of current affairs television, entertainment (Hewat 2003, 198). At the same time, Hewat's 'tabloid' and 'populist' approach to journalism was itself on the fringes of the then accepted standards for television, and he was accused of sensationalism, superficiality and distortion (Birt 2003, 27-8; Macdonald 2003, 206; Robinson 1961, 125-7; Williams 1963). In its original form, *WiA* ran for only 100 episodes before being replaced in 1965-67 by Hewat's *The World Tonight/World Tomorrow*. When *WiA* returned, it bore little resemblance to Hewat's original (Corner, Goddard and Richardson 2007, 69). Denis Forman, who was chairman of Granada from 1974 to 1987, believed that the investigative 'gravitas and penetrative power' of *WiA* emerged *after* Hewat left the program (cited Liddiment 2006). His anti-aesthetic also contravened the emerging filmic values in television (Winston cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 37-8). The kind of 'middle of the road' popular journalism epitomised by Christiansen, and defined by his 'rule of news' made 'eye-catching', was already falling out of favour, a shift signalled by the emergence in 1969 of *The Sun* newspaper which became best known for its 'Page 3 girls' (Liddiment 2006; Page 2007).

On returning to Australia, Hewat found himself swept up in the post-news environment. After the failure of *Newsday* he joined the *Melbourne Observer*, at a time when it was 'a lurid semi-pornographic paper, much of it assembled from articles literally cut and pasted

from international papers',⁹ and a radio station heavily focused on rock music (Long 2001, 228; *Melbourne Observer* 2004, 8). Hewat's contributions to the *Observer*, which included a TV column, drew criticisms because he also produced programs for Network 9 commercial television which was headed by Clyde Packer, one of the newspaper's backers. These shows were far removed in style from *WiA* and included (*Australian's Most Wanted* (Evans cited *Melbourne Observer* 2006, 13; Johnson 1998).

Finally, Hewat's 'aggressive' style typified the self-image of the newspaper journalist of the period (Apted 2003, 76; Hewat cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 41; Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2001, 77; McDonald 2003, 58). When he moved to Granada, he imposed the culture of a Fleet Street newsroom on the television production office (Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 42; Williams 1963). With its close-knit relationships and relative secrecy, the *WiA* team approximated 'a private army within Granada' or even 'a movement' (Blake 2003, 185; Forman cited Goddard, Corner and Richardson 2007, 42; Sutherland 2003, 257; Williams 1963). The classlessness of journalists was also more artifice than achievement (Bromley 1997, 330; 332-3). The 1960s specifically brought an influx into journalism of graduates, many from the élite Oxford and Cambridge universities, and television was their primary destination: Granada actively pursued them to staff its factual programming (Apted 2003, 76; Ardagh 1962; Birt 2003, 26;-7; Blake 2003, 184; Bromley 1997, 339-41; McDougall 2003, 79). The grammar schoolboy, trained on the local newspaper, and adopting the *persona* of a hard-bitten Fleet Street hack, was ceasing to be the way British journalists saw themselves. Hewat had become an outsider.

His appearance and disappearance as a historical journalistic figure resulted from the reductionist historicisation of journalists. When he practised 'objective' and 'hard' news journalism within what were construed as Fourth Estate mainstream media institutions, he was highly visible and celebrated, even by association *post mortem*. This visibility was made manifest by the Granada archive which preserved a large amount of written material (production documentation, internal memos, correspondence, seminar

⁹ A typical 1970s headline was 'I WAS THE POPE'S BOYFRIEND!' (*Melbourne Observer* 2006, 13).

presentations, reports for the Board, memoirs, etc.) both by and relating to him (Goddard 2007). Such documentation ceased when he moved beyond narrow definitions of who was a journalist and valorised institutional locations. Socio-historical context – challenges in the 1970s to an Australian political, social and cultural conservatism in which journalists were centrally implicated often through tabloid journalism (Schultz 2002, 113) – was not considered to be relevant. He was not mentioned in a critical review of *The Age* of this period (Nolan 2001; 2005). In these circumstances Hewat’s own voice was muted: he was now, vaguely, a ‘seasoned journalist’ (Hewat 2002) or ‘a former television and publishing executive’ (Hewat 1996) for whom experiences as a *de jure* journalist increasingly faded into the past (H.R. Nicholls Society 1998). His career was invoked irregularly as a counterpoint to Granada’s supposed creative and editorial decline into the late 1990s as a TV company ‘run by a job-cutting former accountant’ (*Broadcast* 1996; Dunkley 1989; Henry 1992; Leapman 1993). Otherwise, he was remembered chiefly parenthetically as the distant originator of the *Up* series (for an example, see *Lateline* 1999). A search of several hundred newspaper and magazine articles produced evidence of only two interviews with Hewat conducted after 1970 (Johnson 1998; Walker 1998).¹⁰

Conclusion

Tusan (2004, 345) argued that ‘many voices contributed to the making of journalism as an important global cultural practice’. Locating those disparate voices has proved to be difficult not least because, as an occupational group, journalists have been notoriously inaccessible – both at the personal level (Morrison and Tumber 1988, viii) and collectively. Journalism is a loosely defined occupation; for example, nearly a third of the entries under ‘journalism’ in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* do not have ‘journalist’, ‘editor’ or ‘correspondent’ listed against their names.¹¹ This illustrates the

¹⁰ In addition to Boolean searches of Google, the archives of *The Times* and *The Guardian* and the database Factiva were searched. Mitchell, a former *WiA* staffer, who bemoaned Hewat’s omission from the program’s thirtieth anniversary program, interviewed Derek Granger but not Hewat (1993).

¹¹ Among the more unlikely occupations listed are *coachbuilder*, *gold fields pioneer*, *Baptist pastor*, *university teacher*, *nurse* and *fruit-grower*, and the more exotic include *showman*, *Bohemian*, *rebel*, *controversialist* and *lifelong larrikin*.

fragility of the self-determination of journalists as historical figures: journalists, as Buckridge (1993, 20) noted, ‘have been their own worst historians’. Yet much of the historicisation of journalists has occurred in this *ad hoc* way. A conscious historicisation of journalists would take into account wider definitions of the term ‘journalist’, reflecting the diversity of the journalist population; everyday contemporaneous social (as opposed to only present-minded institutional) contexts which allow for infinite varieties of lived experience, and journalists’ own subjective and sundry voices and assessments of their roles and work. The alternative is to create, reflecting Paul Thompson’s (1990, 6) identification of unrepresented ‘under-classes’, a *de facto* category of *unter-journalist* – those who don’t measure up to narrow teleological constructs of what a journalist ought to be. By recovering the whole extent of being a journalist, rather than a highly partial sample, historians can perhaps save the majority of journalists from, in E.P. Thompson’s (1968, 13) phrase, ‘the enormous condescension of posterity’.

The guiding principle for historians should be, to cite E.P. Thompson (1993, 320) again, that the journalists who are the objects of this historical attention ‘were for themselves and not for us’. In that case, Hewat would re-emerge, not just as the ‘phenomenon’ of Fleet Street and *WiA*, but equally as a columnist on a local weekly newspaper; a commentator on music radio; the editor of a company newsletter; the independent producer of ‘real TV’ programs, and the author of more than 40 non-fiction books – work that was integral to his experiences as a journalist but which is otherwise consigned, along with its creator, to the dustbin of history.

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