



Past & Present
A qualitative and quantitative analysis
2006-2010

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Introduction

Most historians have a tendency to present their research both in monographs as well as in sustainable, scientific articles in historical journals. It is within these journals that they are able to attend a historical debate directly or that they can publish parts of their research within their own field of interest. In this paper a critical analysis of a scientific historical journal, the renowned *Past & Present*, will be presented. This British journal was founded in 1952 by John Morris and Eric Hobsbawm, both English, Marxist historians. In the fifties, the journal of approximately 100 pages was published two times a year. From the sixties onwards, the journal was published four times a year. Nowadays the journal contains approximately 7 articles in every issue of roughly 250 pages. Moreover, from 2006 onwards, a supplement in which a specific theme is discussed, is published every year. Recently, it has been ranked as an A-journal in the European Reference Index for Humanities by the European Science Foundation. On journal-ranking.com, the journal has achieved to obtain the fourth place on a ranking of historical journals.

In this paper I attempt to analyze *Past & Present*, by examining the articles that were published within the journal between 2006 and 2010. In order to understand the initial aims and development of the journal, I will start with an analysis of some articles about the journal itself, published in the first issue, the 100th issue in 1952 and in 2002, when the journal celebrated its 50th anniversary. In the second chapter I will make some general comments on the articles that were published between 2006 and 2010. I will question the structure of the journal, the themes, the periods, the authors and the debates respectively. It is within these chapters that I will critically examine if the aims of the journal which I analyze in the first chapter, are correctly applied between 2006 and 2010. I will also include a small chapter about the supplements. In the last chapter I will present my remarks and overall conclusions.



1. Aims and development of the journal 1952-2002

“This journal has come into being, not so much because its founders think there is room for more periodicals in which serious historical work in non-technical language may be published, but because there is room for concern about the state of historical research and discussion at the present.”¹

Past & Present was founded by a group of English Marxist historians, who were all members of the British Communist Party at the time. Most of them were around their thirties and worked at several British universities. According to some members of the original editorial board, the founders had a bond of a common past (they all consciously experienced WWII), a common political commitment, a passion for history and they had regular contact at meetings with the Historians’ Group. It was at these meetings that they were able to discuss a Marxist interpretation of historical problems.²

The introduction of the first issue of *Past & Present* of the editorial board poses some interesting views on the initial aims of the journal. It becomes clear that they considered the status of the historical discipline as problematic in these years. The editors had the opinion that the task of the historian was to record and explain ‘the transformations that society undergoes by its very nature.’ However, the editors questioned the use of methodology by most historians in their days. Although they believed that there were laws of historical development, they rejected the ‘fashionable’, but oversimplifying attempts to understand history in terms of the changes that were central to the natural sciences. The editors neither approved the school of thought that denies any scientific or rational approach to history. History can be rationally studied according to John Morris and his fellow editors, as long as the historian bears in mind that irrational forces, the impact of the unique and the background of the historian are incontestable features within the discipline. It is therefore that the founders of the journal

¹ James Morris, Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction’, *Past and Present* (1952) i-iv, i.

² Christopher Hill, R.H. Hilton, Erik Hobsbawm, ‘Origins and early years’ *Past and Present* (1983) 3-14, 3.



are of the opinion that the possibilities of history and the role of the historian are neither represented in a ‘positivist’ approach, nor in a complete subjectivist approach towards history. Methods of reason and science are as applicable to history as to other sciences, ‘although the process of change among humans is immensely more complex.’³

In which way do the editors want to make a contribution to the discipline with *Past & Present*? In the first place they declare that history has a meaning in the present; the historical discipline is an instrument that ‘enables us to face coming events with confidence.’ This doesn’t mean that there is no room for different views on the meaning of the past. Therefore, it is emphasized that contributors of the journal are studying different periods and different aspects of history and have different views on the past. In the second place, the journal should be more directed towards discovery instead of confirming answers to traditional historical questions. More importantly, the journal aims to broaden the somewhat narrow horizon of the discipline in the English-speaking world and bring knowledge about the non-western world to specialist and non-specialist readers. Historical work of historians written in other languages should also become more available within the journal, both for scholars and for those who have a special interest in history.⁴

Some general comments on the meaning and themes of the journal are made by members of the editorial board in the 100th issue of *Past & Present*. It is said that although the journal initially didn’t want to restrict itself to a specific theme, it was oriented towards social history.⁵ From the start, sociological articles were frequently published and sociologists became members of the board. The editorial board of 1983 also referred to the initial Marxist character of the journal. Although all members of the editorial board were Marxists, they didn’t directly refer to Marxism as an ideological foundation for the journal in the introduction. In fact, non-Marxist scholars were prepared to publish their articles in the journal, although the journal was labeled ‘communist’ in a period in which fear of public association with communists was at the very height.

³ Morris, Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction’, iii.

⁴ Ibidem, iv.

⁵ Hill, Hilton, Hobsbawm, ‘Origins and early years’, 6.



Moreover, they were able to engage a board of foreign advisers of whom eminent *Annales*-historian Georges Levebvre was a member. Articles of foreign historians were quite frequently published from the start. In 1958, marked as a ‘breakthrough’ year, the board was broadened with non-communist members. From this moment on, the journal became ‘one of the liveliest historical journals of the country,’ open to all kinds of historians.⁶

Interestingly enough they asked the French *Annales*-historian Jacques le Goff to write a comment on the development of the journal between 1959 and 1983. Both *Past & Present* and the *Annales* had similar aims; however Le Goff, as co-director of the French journal, was not connected to the English journal at all. He does admit that he is not very close to the journal, although he is an admirer and reader from the beginning. He, as an outsider, identified five characteristics of the journal: (1) the wish to exemplify a historical problem instead of presenting a ‘chunk’ of history, (2) a concern to make as many articles as possible the focus of a debate, (3) the dominance of social history, (4) an emphasis on the ‘history from below’ (inspired by anthropology) and (5) an interest in culture and education.⁷

Le Goff based his opinion about the journal on some quantitative research. In first instance, he was moderately positive about the journals’ success. He emphasized its continuity (the board and the character of the journal didn’t actually change in these 30 years) and connected this to a strengthening of the journal. Furthermore, the selectivity of the journal in its choice of articles, reviews, even obituaries, was impressive according to Le Goff.⁸ In his commentary on the periods that are best represented in the journal, he was more critical. The stress of the journal is particularly placed on the early modern period, including the nineteenth century. Medieval history has been given a proper place within the journal, but articles on the ancient and modern world were only published on occasion. Le Goff recognized this problem, since the *Annales* has been criticized for the same reasons, and blames this on the difficulties to establish a well-defined methodology

⁶ Ibidem, 11.

⁷ Jacques Le Goff, ‘Later Years’, *Past and Present* (1983) 14-28, 26-27.

⁸ Le Goff, ‘Later Years’, 16.



in the study of these periods. However, if the journal aims to be known because of its broad character, it should pay more attention to these periods or to the methodology to study them.

Concerning the chosen subjects of the articles, Le Goff was surprised about the lack of geographical spread. Most space was devoted to Europe and, more particularly, to the British Isles. These facts didn't correspond with the initial aim of the journal to explore the history of the world and to pass on knowledge about the non-western world. Moreover, most authors seemed to represent the English-speaking world (he included scholars from the US). Again, the journal did not live up to its claims. However, Le Goff concludes that the journal is a valuable contribution to the discipline. Not only it is 'free of dogmatism', but *Past & Present* makes room for historical debates and reflections on the discipline. In a time in which the 'new history'⁹ flourished (early eighties), these characteristics were determining the quality of the journal.

In 2002 editors Lyndal Roper and Chris Wickham declared that the initial aims of the journal essentially have been remained the same. They still wanted the whole history to be accessible and interesting for their readers and that the articles would stimulate both non-specialists and experts. Thematically, there were published more articles with a 'micro-historical'¹⁰ character. These articles unlocked the workings of a society and represented the fertile interaction between anthropology and history.¹¹ Furthermore, more cultural and gender history has been published and, as a consequence, less emphasis has been placed on social history. The editors still did not aim to propagate a specific preference for a historical period, theme or tradition in the journal; their main goal was to demonstrate the possibilities of historical debate in general. They are proud of some of

⁹ Le Goff is probably referring to the 'New Cultural History' and the enormous influence of the narrative approach in the historical discipline.

¹⁰ According to historian G.I. Iggers, there has been a shift in historiography of the past twenty years from social structures and processes to culture in the broad sense of everyday life. A school of historians sought to replace the study of macrohistorical structures and processes with microhistory. Within this school more attention has been given to common individuals and small social units, consisting of individuals. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific objectivity to the postmodern challenge* (Middletown 2005) 14.

¹¹ Lyndal Roper, Chris Wickham, 'Past and Present after fifty years', *Past and Present* (2002) 3-6, 4.



these debates, especially about the ‘Brenner debate’¹² of 1976-1982, the ‘Ranters debate’¹³ of 1990-1993, the debate on history and postmodernism of 1991-1992 and the ‘feudal revolution debate’ of 1994-1997. The editors conclude that their journal, in a time in which history as a discipline still lacks self-reflection, should be stimulating historical debate, new approaches and new forms of historical writing. Above all, the journal should always be questioning the historical discipline. Once more, the initial aims of the founders of *Past & Present* were supported by the present board.

2. Past & Present 2006-2010

In the 200th issue of *Past & Present* (2008), a short note about the journal itself was included. In this article the editors claim that the aims and content of the journal have remained the same as they have been in 2002.¹⁴ Therefore, they only ask attention for the book series. As a result, a critical analysis of the development of the journal within these last decades is missing. In the following chapters, I will make an attempt to analyze the issues that were published these last five years (this year, 2011, not included).

Organization of the journal

The organization of the journal is uncomplicated and straightforward. The front matter of every issue has remained the same since 1952 and introduces the titles and authors of the articles of that particular issue. The third page contains the names of the members of the *Past & Present Society*, the editorial board and the editors. After this page, the articles in this issue are published without any interruptions, except (possibly) a white page. Every issue contains a minimum of six and a maximum of nine articles. Only those issues, in which a debate, an obituary or an editorial note is included, are made up of more than six or seven articles. Most articles are ‘regular’ historical articles of a minimum of 20, to a

¹² In the ‘Brenner debate’ the transition from feudalism to capitalism is discussed by several economic historians.

¹³ In the ‘Ranters debate’ it is discussed whether the Ranters, an alleged sekt in in the 17th century, regarded as heretical by the Church, actually existed. Some historians are of the opinion that the Conservatives created a myth of the Ranters as the ‘other’ to endorse traditional values.

¹⁴ Lyndal Roper, Chris Wickham, ‘Past & Present 200th issue’, *Past and Present* (2008), 3-4, 3.

maximum of 50 pages. Notes appear on every page and are not compiled on the last pages.

The journal does not include book reviews. Between 2006 and 2010, only three review articles appeared. These articles do have the same length as the ‘regular’ articles that are published in the journal and tend to be a general review of the historiography within a certain theme. Debates that occurred in the journal were also presented in articles. Between 2006 and 2010 only two debates took place. The debate in the issue of August 2007 contained two articles about the Rump; the debate that was published in 2009 was shaped by four articles on Charles I and the way he is presented in history.

Number of articles:

2006:	26 articles (one obituary, one short editorial note)
2007:	30 articles (one conference note of one page)
2008:	26 articles (one short article about P&P 200 th issue)
2009:	29 articles
2010:	28 articles (two obituaries)
Total:	139 articles

NB. I have chosen to not include the editorial notes and the short conference note in my analysis. As a result, 136 articles will be taken into account. In certain specific chapters, the obituaries are not incorporated as well. In that case, only 133 articles will be examined.

Number of pages:

2006:	907 pages
2007:	1063 pages
2008:	952 pages
2009:	954 pages

2010:	1031 pages
Total:	4907 pages

Percentages of articles, debates and reviews, according to their number of pages:

Debate:	111 pages	2,3 %
Review:	60 pages	1,2 %
Other:	18 pages	0,36 %
Articles:	4718 pages	96 %

Editors, the editorial board and the Past & Present Society

The *Past & Present Society* has its home base at Oxford University in Great Britain. It produces the journal, publishes its own book series and sponsors occasional conferences. Membership is restricted to present and former members of the editorial board. The president of the society is the eminent (Marxist) historian Eric Hobsbawm.

The journal *Past & Present* has two main editors: Lyndal Roper, who is professor Early Modern History at Oxford University and, from 2009 onwards, Steve Smith, professor of history of Eastern Europe and China (19th & 20th century) at the European University Institute in Florence. Smith replaced Chris Wickham, professor Medieval History at Oxford University. In every issue, they are assisted by an assistant-editor and a sub-editor, who are both historians. The editorial board, which slightly changes every year, consists of 25 to 28 historians. Most of them are employed at different British universities, by which Oxford University is by far the best represented university. The minority of the members of the editorial board are working at American universities or (western) European universities. Noticeable members are Judith Pollmann, who is the only Dutch historian in the board and Gadi Algazi, who works at the Tel Aviv University. Scholars from non-western universities are not attending the editorial board.



Themes

The journal claims to offer a ‘wide variety of scholarly and original articles on historical, social and cultural change in all parts of the world.’¹⁵ Between 2006 and 2010 the journal did publish a great variety of articles on different themes and different regions. However, it is questionable whether nonwestern history is equally represented as western history, or that articles about cultural history are as much available as articles about social history. I have used the following labels in my analysis: cultural history (CH), history of political culture (HPC), economic and social history (ESH), historiography and theory (HIST) and nonwestern history (NWH). From these categories, the category of CH is the most difficult to identify. I have chosen to mark the history of religion, church history, history of sexuality, gender history and the history of violence as CH. Both HPC and ESH are easier to define, but they represent a wide range of topics. In fact, articles representing ‘classical’ political history, which I define as history of the (nation) state, of political leaders, kings or parliaments are not commonly published in the journal. Instead, *Past & Present* publishes pieces from a ‘history from below’ perspective, about popular politics, journalism/news and politics, public sphere and the consequences of certain policies. The concepts of nationalism, national consciousness and identity are also recurring themes in several papers. Moreover, there are certain authors who understand the private sphere in terms of power relations that involve every day life. This approach leads towards a political perspective of the social sphere.¹⁶ Although I thematically classify these articles as ESH, they are thus inspired by a political approach.

ESH on the other hand, is more and more influenced by cultural approaches. For example, the concept of ‘class’ is not considered to be exclusively socio-economic anymore; it also involves concepts of culture.¹⁷ As a result, historical themes have become more complex and less easy to recognize. This trend has clearly been carried out by the journal, as most articles could be categorized according to several themes. Finally,

¹⁵ Quote from the website of the journal.

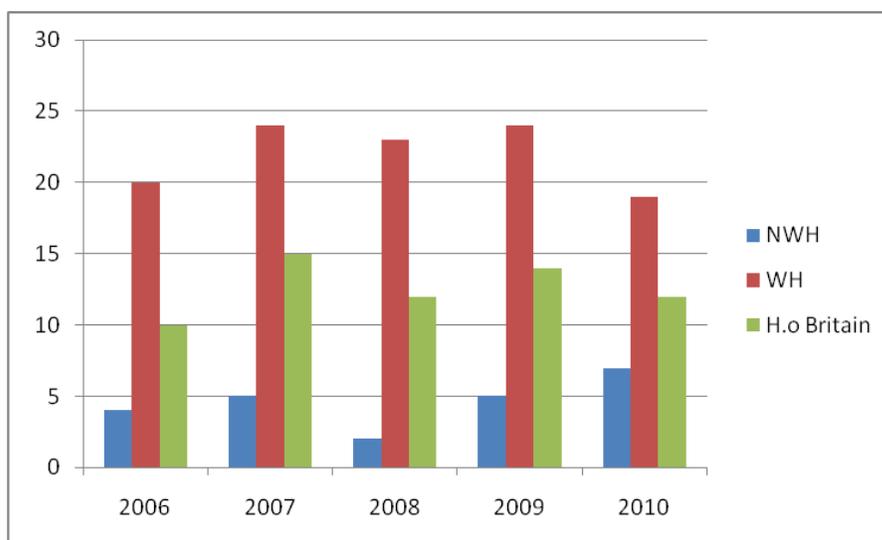
¹⁶ I ‘borrowed’ this definition from Iggers and his analysis of the historiography in the twentieth century: G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific objectivity to the postmodern challenge* (Middletown 2005) 152.

¹⁷ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 151.

a certain amount of articles are written from a historiographical or theoretical perspective. Although some of them are specifically dealing with a certain theme or period, they are written from a different perception than ‘regular’ articles. Therefore, I consider these articles a separate category.

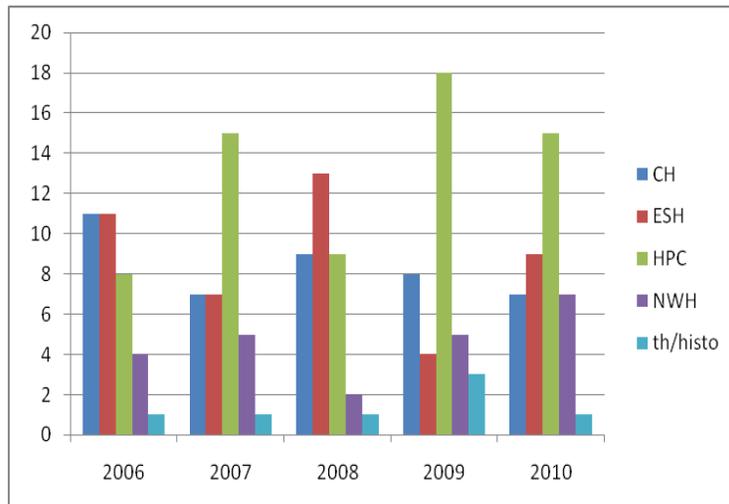
In the first place, the relation between NWH and western history is worth a closer look. There are 22 out of 133 articles that are dealing with the history of non-western countries. That is a percentage of (roughly) 17 percent. However, there are several items that intend to describe or examine western influence in these areas. Although I label these as NWH, it is just as justifiable as to classify them as western history. There are only eight articles that are written from the non-western perspective. I included those that are discussing the history of the Ottoman Empire.

Moreover, I compared the ratios of NWH and WH with the number of articles in which the history of Britain is presented. With this, I included those articles that are dealing with the history of the British Empire and Scotland. From the 110 WH-articles, I label 63 articles ‘history of Britain, which is a percentage of 57 percent. The majority of the articles are thus discussing the history of English regions, while the aim of the journal was to open up the narrow horizon of the English speaking world.



In my experience it was no easy task to classify the articles thematically. Most of them represent different thematic approaches. As a consequence, those articles could not be labeled according to a specific theme. They have been given several labels, which I have

all counted. As a consequence, a total number of 181 thematically approaches are counted. A comparison of themes that appear every year has resulted in the following outcomes:



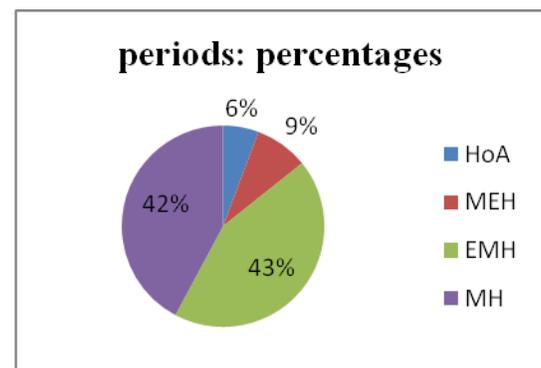
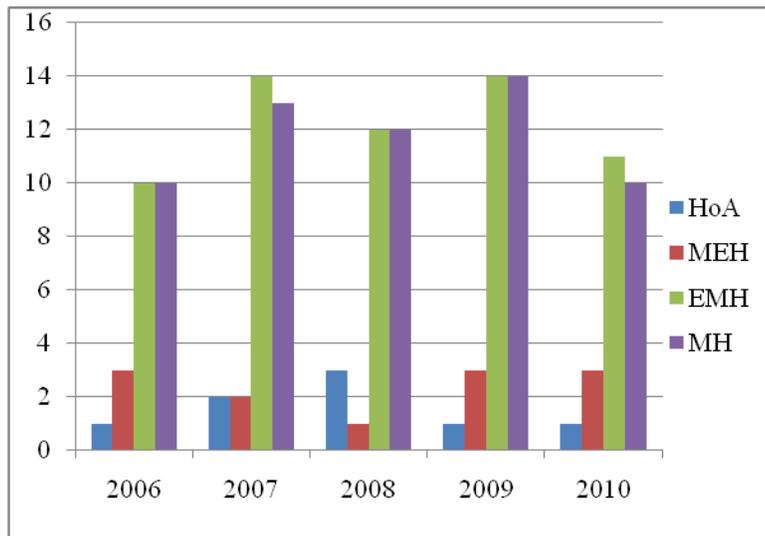
It becomes clear that the theme HPC is best presented. CH and ESH are equally available in the journal, followed by NWH and history/theory. These outcomes are in a sense surprising if one takes in mind that respectively social history and cultural history were considered to be essential in the development of the journal. However, the history of political culture cannot be essentially compared to political history in its classical form. It has incorporated several elements of social and cultural history to such an extent, that it could not be regarded as a distinctive thematic approach. Although HPC's point of departure is determined by the analysis of political behaviour, its methodology is comparable to ESH and CH.

Periods

As I mentioned before, the journal did not intend to restrict itself to certain specific periods. Again, its aim is to present history in its broadest sense. However, although this implicitly suggests that every period is equally represented in the journal, it could be questioned if *Past & Present* actually lives up to this claim. In my analysis of the articles that are published between 2006 and 2010, I distinguished the following periods: Antiquity (HoA) (until 500), Medieval History (MEH) (500-1500), Early Modern History

(EMH) (1500-1800) and Modern History (MH) (1800-2000). I applied these categories to my analysis as they are defined at the department of history of the University of Groningen. Therefore, I consider the nineteenth century as part of the category MH.

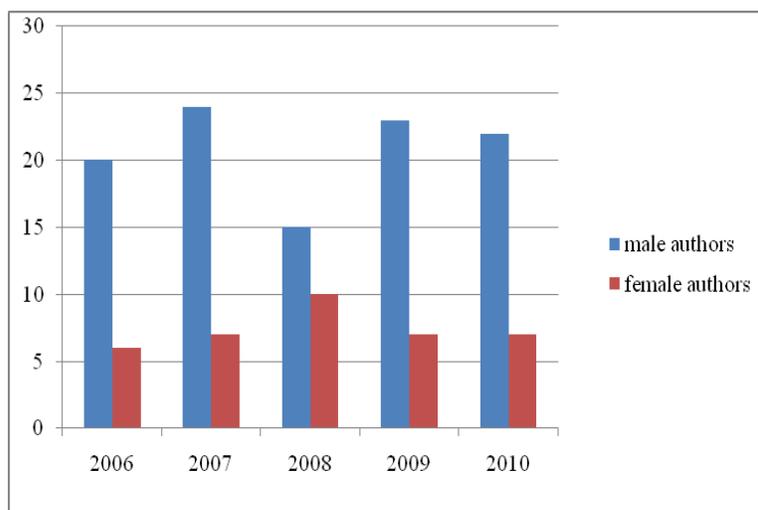
With the exclusion of editorial notes, obituaries and one article that specifically discuss the concepts and theory of social history, a total number of 132 articles are analyzed. Some of the articles refer to different periods, especially when long-term developments are analyzed. Therefore, I counted 4 articles, both of which correspond with EMH and MH, twice and two articles, which correspond with HoA, MEH and EMH, three times. From an analysis of 140 articles, the outcomes are:



If the numbers of articles on the different periods are compared, it becomes clear that the history of Antiquity and Medieval History are underrepresented. The majority of the articles still concern the early modern period, just as Le Goff already noticed in 1983. Modern history is almost equally presented in the journal as EMH, but it is striking that most articles are concerned with nineteenth and early twentieth history. There are 33 of 59 articles in which the history of 20th century is (partially) under examination. However, most of them concern the history of the first two decades of the 20th century. There are only six articles dealing with 20th century history after WWII. As a consequence, modern and especially contemporary history are still of minor importance in the contents of the journal.

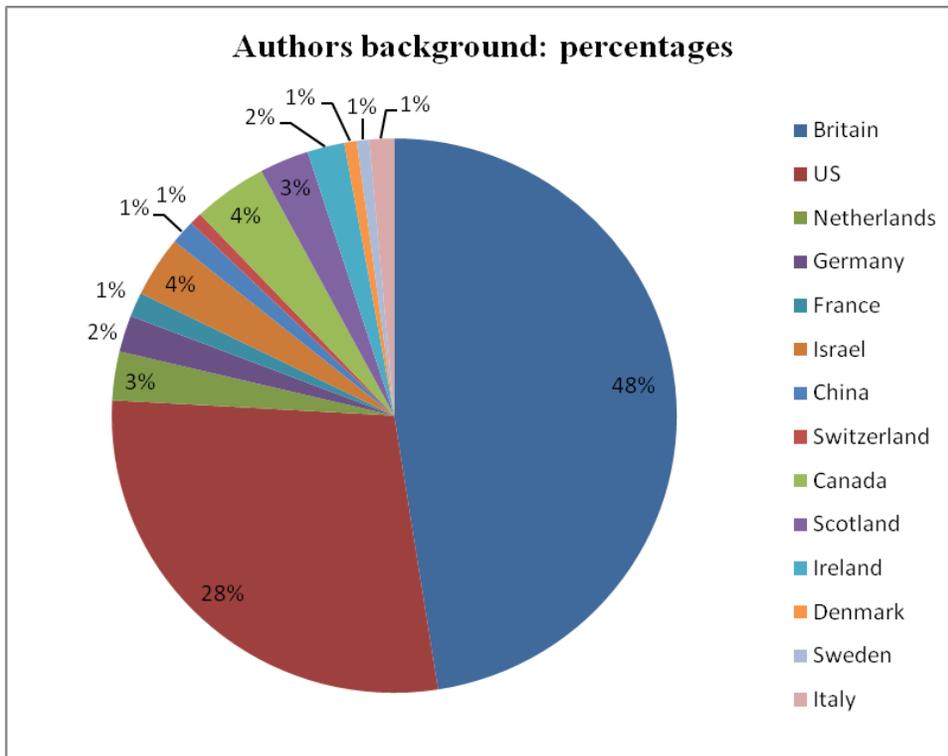
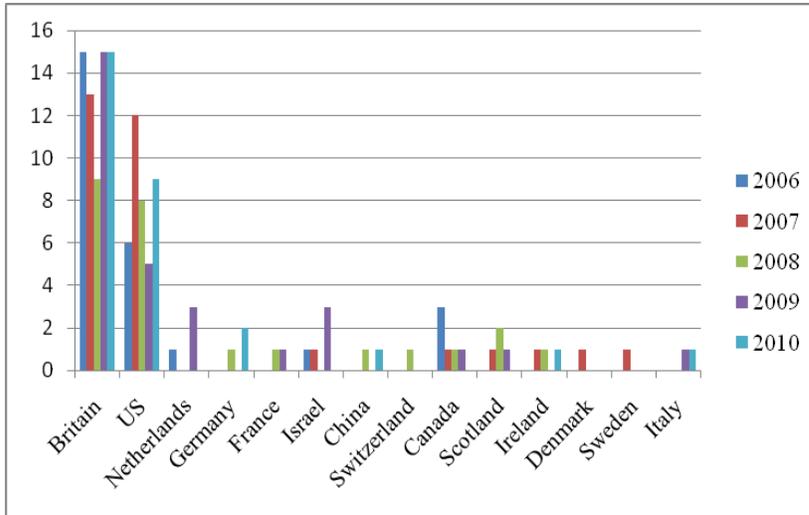
Authors

Concerning the authors of the journal, two questions are important. The first question that comes in mind is whether gender relations are rightly represented by the journal. What is the ratio between female and male authors? There are five articles written by two authors, leading to a count of a total number of 141 authors. From the results, we can conclude that the majority of roughly 75 percent of the authors are male. Male and female authors are not equally represented by the journal, but women do get a proper place in almost every issue. However, without a comparison between several historical journals, it is quite hard to give some meaning to these results. I would argue that gender ratios are rightly represented by the journal, especially compared to the historical discipline in general, which is still dominated by male historians.



In the second place, the author's background should be considered important. In the mission statements of *Past & Present*, the editors do not refer extensively to the authors they want to attract. In their aspirations to broaden the historical discipline and to give room for history of the non-English speaking world, they implicitly state that it is their purpose to attract historians from all over the world. After all, if their aim is to open up the somewhat narrow horizon of the discipline, it is quite reasonable that they attract authors from different countries, universities and different backgrounds. Therefore, it is

useful to question which countries the authors do represent. My research resulted in the following outcomes:



From the results, it becomes clear that authors from the English-speaking world are dominating the journal. Moreover, those authors who are related to an Italian or Chinese university (only EUI in Florence and Hong Kong University) do have an English



background. Non-western universities are not represented at all, and only a handful of western universities are competing with English and American universities. Although most authors within the journal are related to the English-speaking world, it occurred to me that the names of several historians do presume that they are possibly from a different origin. Some of them, especially those who write about India, do have Indian surnames. However, they are all related to western universities and probably lived in Britain or the US for several years. Therefore, I am of the opinion that they represent the western world.

Debates

Between 2006 and 2010 only two debates were published in the journal. The first was presented in two articles by the English historians Angela McShane and Mark Jenner in 2007. McShane responded to an article by Jenner, about political symbolism in literary and ritual representations of the collapse of republican government in England, which was published in *Past & Present* in 2002. He focused on the meanings of the Rump, a popular term referring to the parliament and the republicans, in texts and street festivity between 1659 and 1662. McShane is of the opinion that Jenner overestimated the political and social impact of the historical moment he described. Moreover, he ignores other perceptions of politics as they appeared in more traditional ballads. However, she is especially concerned about the methodology used by Jenner and other scholars of literary sources and popular politics. In the first place, the difference between elite culture and popular culture should always be taken into account. Popular culture cannot be considered a unifying category. More importantly, the quite usual use of reprints (Jenner used a reprint of the ballads from 1847), always leads to certain loss of contact with the past. Therefore, a more systematic, empiric approach of this kind of sources is necessary according to McShane. Jenner himself responded to her comments in his 'reply' article. He claims that he did not aim to provide an analysis of popular political ballads in general. In fact, he emphasized the particular nature of the Rump-texts. McShane not only misinterpreted his claims, but also wrongly assumed that his use of methodology was thoughtless. The debate between these authors thus mainly served as a discussion about the use of methodology in the study of popular politics in the early modern period.



The second debate is more extensive than the first. In four articles the politics of the British king Charles I (1600-1649) are discussed. The authors all responded to a piece of the American historian Mark Kishlansky, published in *Past & Present* in 2005. He presented a distinctive picture of the English king; the traditional picture of Charles I implied a king who was 'lazy, deceitful, inept and reclusive and who tried to compensate by a crude authoritarianism.' Kishlansky on the other hand presented a king who was flexible, compromising, strove to keep his promises and made himself visible and accessible.¹⁸ In the debate, three British historians each criticized a specific part of Kishlansky's paper. In the fourth article, Kishlansky himself responded to the commentaries. He declared that all of them contributed to the general debate about Charles I. In fact, it was his initial aim to open up the debate and bring at light some aspects of the king which were at variance with his traditional, conventional historic image. He did not aim to restore the image of the king, but simply asked for a more critical approach to a specific historical case. Again, although within this debate certain specific historical facts are discussed, it was intended to question the use and interpretation of historical evidence. Therefore I am of the opinion that the problematic nature of the historical discipline is implicitly disputed in both debates. In this case the journal is to a certain extent able to live up to its claims.

Notable trends

Although the journal aims to publish articles on every period, every theme and every region, there are some recurring themes that I define as certain trends within the journal. Small trends, based on two or three articles, are related to gender history, history of sexuality or medical history. Moreover, there are recurring trends which are more substantial:

¹⁸ Richard Cust, 'III', *Past & Present* (2009) 201-212, 201-202.

Jewish history:

I found it very interesting that Israelian authors were quite substantively represented in the category ‘authors.’ Although not all of them are dealing with Jewish history, several articles about Jews, their history, religion and their position in Europe were published between 2006 and 2010. It is impossible to categorize them according to themes or periods, but they could be connected to ‘Jewish’ history in general. The essays are specifically dealing with the persecution of the Jews in Medieval Europe, Jewish heresies and the influence of Hebrew Studies among Protestant scholars in early modern Europe. Another article aims to investigate the role Jews as agents in the Victorian age of imperialism.

History of journalism and printing culture:

In one of the debates, the relation between printing culture and popular politics has been discussed. This is no coincidence; the influence of printing culture in society, culture and politics has been a concern in quite a few articles. It is specifically analyzed in an article about the concept of public sphere, ‘invented’ by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, who was of the opinion that it emerged from the rise of the bourgeoisie in the 18th century. More specific examples are the analyses of the production of political poster in the 19th century in Britain, of the secret printing in the Civil War in Britain, of the influence of libels in 17th century England and of the culture of information in the American civil war. Certain other articles about popular politics also refer to concepts of public sphere and history of journalism.

‘Marxist’ inspired history:

Although Marxist history is no primary focus of *Past & Present* anymore or in historiography in general, its approaches are still apparent in the articles of the journal. One paper intends to explain the Terror in 1793-1794, based on an interpretation of Marx and the nature of trauma. Several other articles are analyzing class relations, class consciousness or the concept of a ‘class complex’. Economic interpretations of historical events, periods or phenomenon’s are clearly present as well in the journal. For example,



the origins of Dutch cleanliness are studied from an economic perspective, just as the decline of the city York in the Middle Ages. Articles concerning peasant revolts and popular protests are also inspired by Marxism, just as the historiographical paper about the status of social history.

Mexican history:

A relatively small trend within the category of ‘non-western history’ of the journal could be defined as Mexican history. Again, it is difficult to recognize a particular topic or theme within these particular articles, but it appears to be an inspirational country for several historians. Specific issues include the ordinary Mexican view on the Church in early 20th century, a micro history of an Irishman in Mexico in the 16th century, a history of a Mexican leading politician after the Mexican revolution in 1910, and the historical perception of the Mexican Revolution in the 20th century.

History of religion/Church:

The most obvious trend within the journal appears to be the history of religion or, in other words, church history. No less than 22 articles are dealing with several aspects of religion, church and the relations between politics, people and church. Obviously, Protestantism and Reformation are recurring themes in an English journal in which early modern history and the history of Britain are dominant. Other examples contain an analysis of Waldensianism (a heretical sect comparable to the Cathars), of the Assumptionist order in 19th century France, a discussion about the concepts of ‘profane’ and ‘sacred’, the influence of books on the culture of Protestantism, an examination of the role of Angels in God’s relation with human beings and of heretics and martyrdom in Medieval Europe. The link between Church, religion, politics and nationalism has been made in several papers, for example in an article about public worship in Britain the 19th century.

Supplements

From 2006 onwards, a supplement has been published by the *Past & Present Society* every year. I consider these supplements as separate issues from the ‘regular’ editions of



the journal, mainly because of their distinctive length in pages, their number of articles and organization. The editors note that the themes of the supplements will be ones that will ‘relate to the interests of our readers.’ Central to every supplement is a specific theme that is discussed at a particularly conference organized by the *Past & Present Society*. In contrast to the journal, the supplements thus do offer a certain theme, period or historical approach. The first volume deals with gender and history in Europe between 1450 and 2000. It celebrates the achievements of the historian Olwen Hufton, who studied women’s history based on the concept of *longe durée* developments and a comparative approach. Every article attempts to analyze the overall theme, ‘the art of survival’ according to the same approach as Hufton did. The concept of survival is not only related to ‘material reality’, but also to cultural legacies that one generation passes on to the other. Logically, the ratio between female and male authors differs from the normal percentages in this issue about women’s history. From a total of nine authors, seven female authors contributed to the supplement.

The second supplement has a similar approach as the first issue of 2006. In honour of the Marxist social historian Rodney Hilton (1916-2002), its aim is to examine the Middle Ages following Hilton’s style and approaches. The articles are based on a conference held by Hilton’s own research students, colleagues, friends and young research students who are studying the same subjects as the historian did. Twelve male authors and six female authors contributed to an extensive supplement of 341 pages. Although most of these authors are related to American and English universities, there are several contributions of scholars from Spain, Israel, France, Norway and the Netherlands.

The third, fourth and fifth supplement are not dedicated to an eminent historian, but to a certain theme. The third issue is inspired by the concept of superstition, or, in other words, ‘irrational belief’. It has been studied from a non-Christian and Christian perspective. Moreover, its influence in the modern world has been analyzed. Twelve articles by nine male authors and three female authors are published in this issue. Most of them are, again, related to English and US-universities. The fourth issue has been contributed to the popular theme of body politics. It is argued that the way people present



themselves in manner, deportment and gesture mark out particular spaces and time. This supplement consists of 13 articles, written by eight male authors and five female authors, of whom most are related to a British university. In the 2010-issue, the concept of relics and its remains has been examined in a broad comparative and chronological perspective. The volume followed from a conference held by anthropologists, archeologists and scholars of religion in 2008. However, historians are in the majority in the list of contributors. Most of the authors are male (10) and all of them represent English and American universities.

Achievements

Although it is quite difficult to measure the achievements of the journal, there is the opportunity to examine the number of citations of the articles published between 2006 and 2010. After all, citation is considered to be an important feature in almost every journal-ranking. I have used the website of Sciverse Scopus, a database for abstracts and citations of peer-reviewed literature and quality web sources, and the Web of Science to obtain data for my own analysis. It should be taken in mind that it normally takes a couple of years (approximately 2 or 3) to be able to publish an article. Possibly, several articles did cite certain articles of *Past & Present*, but are not published yet. This also becomes clear from the results of the collected facts. While most of the articles from 2006 and 2007 are cited, articles published in 2009 and 2010 have not been quoted at all. It is also questionable whether the amount of citations does determine the successfulness of the journal. Most articles are cited once or twice, only a couple of them are cited four to ten times. The most cited article is written by Jon Lawrence, about the transformation of public politics. It has struck me that the most cited articles are dealing with a certain concept. Articles written from a micro historical perspective do not get as much attention as articles written from a broad perspective.

Concluding remarks

From its establishment, *Past & Present* has been a lively historical journal. Over the past 58 years it has been publishing articles on almost every aspect of the historical discipline,



gave room to some influential debates and introduced some new methodological approaches. Essentially, nothing really changed over the past five years. The journal still offers a wide range of topics, several debates and certain critical analyses of historical methods. It is no coincidence that the aims of the journal are essentially the same as they have been in 1952. The journal simply does not want to restrict itself to a certain theme, period or approach, but aims to contribute to the historical discipline in all its aspects. However, due to its lack of a particular perspective, it is quite difficult to define its position or importance within the historical discipline. It is still not clear to me to which extent the journal is considered to be just as pioneering as it probably was in the fifties and sixties.

The claims of the journal are quite admirable, but not easy to live up to. Already in 1982, Le Goff formulated some critical remarks about the aims of the journal which are still useful today. In the first place, he argued that the journal is essentially publishing articles of scholars from the English-speaking world. This has not changed. In fact, I was quite surprised about the lack of geographical spread of the authors. An overwhelming majority of the authors are affiliated to a British or American university. Moreover, most articles concern British history. Although it could be argued that Britain has been dominating the western and non-western world for a long time, the enormous interest in its history is incompatible with the principles of the journal. The same argument goes for the periods that are available in the journal. The journal is providing articles concerning every period, however, early modern history and 19th century history are still dominating. Thematically, the journal mainly contains articles on cultural history, history of the political culture and economic and social history. Besides of the minor trends I mentioned before, there are no specific kinds of thematic approaches which define the character of the journal. I can only argue that over the last five years, the journal published all kinds of articles, mostly written from a micro historical and a 'history from below' perspective. Classical historical interpretations are still not offered by the journal. However, I would argue that the methods, themes and approaches that are considered to be essential for the journal, are just as accepted as classical interpretations of history by most historians.



From the analysis of the articles published between 2006 and 2010, it could be concluded that the journal is not able to fulfill its aims. The focus of the journal is mainly western European, by which the history of Britain is especially dominant. Articles dealing with non-western history are an exception on the rule, while it is one of the key-aims of the journal to open up the ‘narrow’ horizon of the historical discipline in the western world. If the journal really wants to live up to its claims, it should release itself from its Anglo-Saxon nature.

Literature

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