Critical Sociology

Article

The Essence of 'the People': Citizenship, Class Accommodation and the Construction of Political Identities in Britain, c. 1640–1850

Critical Sociology
37(6) 797–815

DOI: 10.1177/0896920510380065
crs.sagepub.com
SAGE

Luis M. Pozo
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Abstract

'The people' is an ever present feature of modern politics. This essay offers a historico-sociological assessment of that political identity as fundamental for bourgeois hegemony. English populism is crucially important because the meaning of 'the people' was shaped during the English Revolution to allow the bourgeoisie to challenge the old ruling class while achieving hegemony over the masses. This 17th-century populism is the original model on which the basic structure of populist mobilization (the undifferentiated 'people' against the 'elite') has been patterned subsequently; and, in the 19th century, it thoroughly shaped the political outlook of the first proletariat in the first industrial nation, thus setting an example of immense historical relevance.

Keywords

citizenship, class accommodation, hegemony, historical sociology, nation, people, political identity

We, the people...
(The constitution of the United States)
[The people in general?] Who is that?

(Friedrich Engels, n.d. [1891]: 22)

Introduction

Modern political orders are characterized by a peculiar form of attaining legitimacy. They rest on the ultimate moral bedrock of 'the people'. Since the English Revolution of the 17th century, virtually all political regimes have buttressed their authority by appealing to that elusive subject-object, 'the people'. Polities are framed in accordance with the alleged desires and interests of 'the people'. 'Instead of supernatural forces or legendary heroes, it is now [asserted] that state power is ultimately backed by "the people", and rests with a mandate from "the people".' (Cohen, 1988: 8–9)

Corresponding author:
Luis M. Pozo, Los Gremios 20, 40408, Navas de San Antonio, Spain
Email: dospozos2@netscape.net

The basis for order and the right to authority have moved from the supernatural to a popular mandate representing the legitimate aspirations of 'the people' (Bendix, 1978: 8–9). To legitimate the modern state and its alienated politics special ideas were required, according to which 'abstract citizens' participate in an 'abstract community' predicated on the notion of 'the people's will' (Manicas, 1988: 174, 178). 'The people' now 'legitimates almost all modern states – and so is seen unreservedly and universally as a good and moral collectivity' (Mann, 1999: 21). In the modern world 'the people' emerges as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity and national identity (Greenfeld, 1992: 3). The milestones in this transformation have been located in the English Revolution of the 17th century and the American and French ones of the 18th.[1]

'People', like 'nation', is an ever present feature of modern politics. Politicians in liberal democracies, increasingly allergic to class interpellations, resort to inclusive categories like 'the people' with rejuvenated enthusiasm. In such an environment, it is no wonder that populist movements resurface in times of social and political strain, as a glance at the press makes plain. Populism is a recurrent brand of cross-class politics which tend to appear in social formations undergoing capitalist modernization and industrialization. Reviled by some and dear to others, populism recurs in Latin America, and it is now a prominent feature of European politics of left and right, east and west. 'The people' authorizes vaguely progressive or mildly reformist movements and regimes in Latin America, and so is cherished by the left as a 'good and moral' entity. Disturbingly, the right often matches the left's enthusiasm for 'the people', whether in its fascist *völkisch* incarnation or its neo-liberal avatar. 'What is decisively new about Thatcherism', it has been claimed, 'is its populism' (O'Shea, 1984: 22). In either case populist mobilization follows the same basic structure: the whole community against the 'elite'. Its central characteristic is the absence of specific class politics, which is, of course, a tendency of modern politics in any bourgeois regime, whether liberal-democratic or authoritarian. Scholars have paid scant attention to the fact that 'the people' may be the central object of loyalty and the ultimate sovereign power, and *at the same time* a collection of the wretched of the Earth in need of salvation.[2] When assessing the strategies for social change through cross-class mobilization, or the prospects of contemporary populist movements of left and right, it would be useful to ascertain the precise nature of the populist kernel and the limitations entailed in eschewing class politics in favour of such ambiguous, unreliable identity.

Populism has been studied mainly in relation to political traditions of romantic anti-capitalism (like the American People's Party or the Russian *narodnichestvo*), or populist examples taken from peripheral areas confronting imperialism on a multi-class nationalist basis (especially Latin America as exemplified by Perón's Argentina). Surprisingly, though populism is a recurrent feature of recent history and contemporary politics, studies of Britain as the cradle of the populist idiom have been largely inexistent. Many left historians have stressed the oppositional side of 'the people', or have resorted to Gramscian hegemony, claiming bourgeois hegemony impaired working-class politics, but failing to understand, or even mention, 'the people' as the necessary bedrock for any bourgeois hegemonic project. English populism is crucial for two reasons. It was the 17th-century *Urheimat* of populism, the original model on which the basic structure of populist mobilization (the undifferentiated 'people' against the 'elite') has been patterned subsequently in different geographical settings. Secondly, it was thoroughly implicated in shaping the political outlook of the first proletariat ever formed, in the decisive conjuncture of the early 1800s, thus constituting the first example of the populist-nationalist confinement of working-class politics. An understanding of this archetypical 'people' and its politics enables us to confront a political/cultural idiom of enormous significance to this day.

To achieve this understanding I explore 'the people' through the concept of hegemony. Hegemony secures political domination through 'hegemonic principles' that elicit the consent of subordinate classes by acting as a 'nexus' between leaders and led that becomes 'popular religion'. Gramsci believed that the 'ethico-political element' effecting the unity of leaders and led was embodied in the person of the king or emperor before the ascent of the bourgeoisie, which prompted the emergence of another 'hegemonic principle', 'the concept of fatherland and of nation' (Gramsci, 1975: 1084, 1236–1237). I consider 'the people' to be a *mechanism of class accommodation,* one of those 'hegemonic principles' necessary to ground hegemony, referring to myths of community positing the identity of interests between dominant and subordinate in order to render classness politically irrelevant.[3] The purpose of this essay is to highlight that necessary connection between hegemony and the people-nation. Hegemony and 'the people' are historically intertwined because capitalist modernization brought about the installation of 'the people' as a mechanism to ground bourgeois hegemony over the historical bloc confronting the landed elite in the 17th-century Revolution. The meaning of 'the people' came to represent that bloc as a natural fact, a conflict-free haven of class harmony, pervaded by the identity of interests. In order to blur the political import of class difference within this supposedly egalitarian community, the notion of popular sovereignty required mechanisms of representation and the definition of citizenship. By the 19th century, populism had become a 'popular religion', just when a modern proletariat and its politics were emerging for the first time in history.

In undertaking a historico-sociological assessment of 'the people' as a political identity, I intend to explain its sociological and political ambiguity and expose its role in class accommodation. For that purpose, I examine the construction of 'the people' in the 17th century as a means of grounding bourgeois hegemony. I show the forms in which it was de-classed through a politics of citizenship and pervaded political culture in the following century. Finally, I highlight the ways in which the construction of this hegemonic mechanism decisively constrained the political stance of the first proletariat in the first industrial nation, thus setting an example of immense historical relevance.

Constructing 'the People': 'Multitudes of Several Conditions'

The meaning of the term *populus* or equivalents in Antiquity and the Middle Ages had no political import, in contrast to its modern one coupled with the rise of capitalism and its concomitant mass politics. Kings and estates often couched their rivalries with some reference to 'the people' they claimed to represent, yet that took no part in political life. *Populus* meant the whole society with its political structure, and did not imply any specific distribution of power within it, much like 'nation' today (Pozo, 2006). Bendix notes the 'ineradicable ambiguity of this term in medieval society', ambiguity not yet eradicated (1996 [1964]: 41, note 2). This sweeping generality and ambiguity of the concept held accommodative potential, and it was consequently selected in the new socio-political environment that nurtured the 'country' ideology in England. The term 'country', denoting public spirit and concern, appeared between 1620 and 1640 in discussions over the rights and privileges to be accorded to king and 'country', being a synonym for 'county'. The authority of kings was made dependent on the mandate of 'the people' (Bendix, 1978: 303, 307). The symbol of the 'nation', formerly embodied in its ruler-king as 'head' and 'father', buttressed by the myth of divine-right monarchy, was first ascribed to king and parliament jointly. Then each knight or burgess was seen as acting for all the common people of the entire realm, transforming parliament into a *national* assembly representing the 'nation-people' as a single body or corporation with interests. The mystic body of the king became the mystic representative body of parliament, in which deputies derived their powers from the people in general. In his *Institutes* (1628–1644), Edward Coke

claimed that the knights and burgesses represented 'all the commons of the whole realm', and the House of Commons was 'the representative body of the whole kingdom'. As Edmund Burke was to put it in 1774, Parliament became an assembly 'of *one* nation with *one* interest, that of the whole' (Bendix, 1978: 314–317, 1996 [1964]: 40–41; Manicas, 1988: 181–182; Morgan, 1988: chapter 2; Pitkin, 1989: 138–139). The inclusive (cross-class) inflections of this idiom were selected by rising classes in the course of social and political struggles, which explains why it can be argued that the language of parliamentary debate contained 'a core of radicalism' despite 'its very real conservatism' (Bendix, 1978: 314; also Finn, 1993: 40). The socio-political context of 1640 was a situation of financial distress, 'and a new social situation, with many of the middling sort getting richer and more self-confident just when MPs needed to demonstrate that they represented the people of England' (Hill, 1981: 113). The growing power of the 'upper yeomanry', rising tradesmen and skilled craftsmen getting richer at the expense of smallholders and labourers, underpinned social change and ultimately explains the Civil War. 'In villages and towns new and sharper class divisions were rising – no longer setting gentry against the rest but gentry, some yeomen, some merchants, some artisans, against the rest' (Hill, 1981: 118–119).[4] It is in the context of the ascendancy of these new classes and the growing differentiation within the mass of the population that the selection of certain integrative themes of the country/people ideology must be assessed.

The ambiguity of 'the people' authorized a narrow reference to citizens of certain 'elite' status. According to Glover (1999: 51–52), 'early modern republican thinkers' agreed that republicanism meant government by the people, but not over who constituted 'the people', being generally believed that they were 'the virtuous – men of independent means', property holders or masters of households or businesses. 'The people', referred to 'those who owned property and enjoyed representation in Parliament' (Bendix, 1978: 309). The word used to embrace the rising 'upper yeomanry', Hill notes, was precisely 'the people', whom Harrington alluded to when saying that by 1640 the bulk of the land had passed from crown, church and aristocracy to 'the people', contrasted to the poor or the 'rude multitude'. 'In that sense, the House of Commons represented "the people".' (1981: 120) Talk of 'the people', however, easily slipped into overarching identifications, because its meaning was not only contested but open, protean in its capacity to include/exclude at the will of the powerful. This all-inclusive sense was selected and fixed as normative. The notion of 'the people' as sovereign power implies the whole population of the state. 'The people' included everyone, except the 'privileged' enemy, or those like 'the populace' or 'the rabble' who did not conform to the mythic ideal, infused with bourgeois notions of cleanliness, respectability, hardworking ethic, orderly behaviour, religious piety, and so forth. The evidence suggests that this integrative sense was functional and became hegemonic, usually overruling the elite quality sometimes ascribed to 'the people'.

Since its inception, the language of 'the people' has never consistently referred to any specific segment of the population. The spokesmen of 'the country' imagined themselves as the representatives of 'the people', and justified the privileges of Parliament on that basis. Phrases like 'we are entrusted for our country', or 'let us remember that England sent us' abounded, which implies that the notion of the country/people included far more than property holders.

Dominant classes expected and feared upheavals by subordinate ones, and alluded to 'the people' in that context. I do not see how threats of popular uprisings can be made on account of the fury of the upper yeomanry alone. Thus, when MPs in 1621 insisted that they feared to 'be made subjects of the people's fury', they were not fearing the upper yeomanry's fury. Likewise, in 1622 Simonds D'Ewes expected a 'hoped-for rebellion', and Sherland in 1625 a 'commotion among the people' (quoted in Hill, 1981: 112, 115). Even peaceful and orderly demonstrations in 1640 were seen by Clarendon as 'an insurrection (for it was no better) and frenzy of the people', but according to him

the crowd consisted of 'multitudes of people of several conditions', including 'many citizens of good estates' (quoted in Manning, 1978: 15). Both camps in the fight were aware of the dangers of appealing to the common people. Sir John Potts wrote to D'Ewes about the dangerous necessity of using the multitude. Overton imagined the parliamentary leaders pondering the necessity of engaging 'the generality of the people', without letting power slip into their hands (Hill, 1983 [1972]: 12, 17, 21, 26). When the Petition of Right was presented, the Commons, anxious about 'the humours of the people' warned that 'the people are discontented'. The Petition was printed, 'discussed up and down the country, in alehouses as well as in manor houses' (Hill, 1981: 116–117). A royalist alluded to the Remonstrance of 1641 as 'that appeal to the people', and he was right, because it was printed and distributed to the whole country, and discussed in taverns and alehouses (Hill, 1983 [1972]: 11; Manning, 1978: 62–63). The Commons were said to represent 'the free people in general'. Even 'the populace', the poor of the cities with no fixed abode, by their very existence, signalled the existence of 'the people' as everyone who was orderly, virtuous, good fellow and good Christian. 'The people' came clearly to be fixed as an all-inclusive category, ranging from the representatives in the Commons and the upper yeomanry ('citizens of good estates') to simple labourers (after all, who gathers regularly in alehouses?).

Nedham wrote in 1652 that when they talked about the people, they were not referring to the 'confuse and promiscuous' people as a whole, yet it was simply a warning that 'the people' had gradations within their ranks. The general mood among property holders regarding 'the people' is well summed up in expressions such as Monck's 'the largest part of the people is not the better part' (Hill, 1983 [1972]: 336) (incidentally positing the existence of a whole by alluding to its parts). The ideological construction of the people was tension-ridden. The ideas conceived to fight the court party were used to persuade the people to support an armed rebellion, implying an identity of interests between anti-establishment elites and common folk. Yet certain 'democratic' implications were not to be taken seriously. 'Sovereignty' implied equality as citizens before the law. 'I am far from the monster of democracy', Edward Bowles said (Hill, 1983 [1972]: 49–50; Manning, 1978: 242–243). The constitutional leaders of the levellers were in the main in agreement with the type of capitalist society and bourgeois 'democracy' the Revolution was producing. In this, they anticipated Locke.

Democracy does not necessarily entail representative institutions, but the fact that political authorities claim to speak in the name of 'the people' does. This stirred political elites to formulate and implement mechanisms of representation in order to foster the illusion of participation by the masses in an essentially elitist affair, thus making class rule compatible with all-inclusive categories like people-nation. The definition of the sovereign body was managed through the notion of 'citizenship'.

The foundational act in discussions over citizenship and popular sovereignty were the Putney Debates of 1647, between two different strands of republicanism: an oligarchic one championed by Ireton, Cromwell and the officers of the New Model Army, and a 'popular' one advocated by the soldiers' representatives or 'agitators', demanding universal manhood suffrage (a quarrel re-enacted by Sieyès and Robespierre in France). But when noting that Harrington, Milton or even Nedham excluded 'the common people from meaningful participation in government' (Glover 1999: 51–52), the adjective *common* needs to be stressed. 'The people' was fixed as 'the whole population of the country' (or at least the *male* population), regardless of class, because this sense was fitting, and was consequently selected, for the purposes of the new classes seeking power.[5] By 1688 the source of authority, 'the people', was well established, but on the issue of a democratic franchise, the masses remained excluded. Crucially, in according centrality to citizenship rights in political discussion, bourgeois elites set the only acceptable framework within which politics could

proceed: politics was to be subsequently a matter of 'the people' and their rights, not of class and social inequality.

The 18th Century: Class Struggle without Class

The 18th century saw the consolidation of the classic hegemonic situation in which a dominant culture becomes the 'common sense of the age'. The all-encompassing people became ubiquitous in political rhetoric. In France the meaning of 'the people' matched that of 'nation': "the mass of persons who live in one country, who compose a nation"'. By the 1770s, 'the people' were described as 'sober, just, loyal and religious … the largest and the most important part of the nation' (Greenfeld, 1992: 161–162). Incarnated in 'the Third Estate', they were the whole population of the country 'minus a trivial two hundred thousand heads', the nobility (Sieyès). New elites delimited the contours of the citizenry by positing diverse kinds of rights. They distinguished equality before the law from the right to vote (or 'civic' from 'political' rights), espousing a form of mediated representation that ruled out participatory or direct democracy. In the new American nation Madison stated that natural differences produced the 'rights of property' and differences in property resulted in diverse classes whose harmony could only be assured through *representative* democracy, in which the people 'in their collective capacity' are excluded from any share in government.[6] Sieyès distinguished between active and passive citizenship, championing a limited franchise restricted to 'active', that is, affluent citizens (Bendix, 1978: 365–371; Woloch, 1993: 22–23). For him the 'natural' inequalities that divided the people (wealth, ability, age) did not alter the equality of citizenship, yet legitimated the leadership of property holders (Bendix, 1978: 366–367).

Unlike France, where the feudal juridical framework was abolished and the political weight of the surviving nobility was negligible, Britain retained some remnants of the old regime, especially at the level of state power.[7] In this environment, 'the people', the fundamental oppositional force to the symbols of the old order, were routinely invoked in political contestation, given that, apparently, the old 'feudal' aristocracy continued to exist. Consequently, the language of radicalism in the 18th century has been considered a form of constitutionalist rhetoric using precedents to imagine an *organic community* by elaborating a mythical history of England intended to ground the claims to rights of the English people (Jones, 1989 [1983]: 121). Radical discourse by 1790 was a brand of communitarian populism reinforced by the reaction to incipient industrialism but heir to a tradition of political radicalism forged in the Civil War (Calhoun, 1988: 143; Finn, 1993: 34–50). Its definition of 'the people' emphasized personhood, not property. Accordingly, populist radicalism was a language of political exclusion whatever the social character of the excluded, and could not be the ideology of a specific class (Calhoun, 1988: 138; Jones, 1989 [1983]: 99). That language sanctified established conventions (not least private property). Once entangled in such constitutional debates, radicals became entrapped in the trivialities of piecemeal constitutional reform: the condition for a 'plebeian' movement to emerge was the complete rejection of constitutionalism (Thompson, 1963: 88). Surprisingly, however, the fact that the populist idiom was crucial in hegemonizing subordinate classes has escaped the attention of historians, who, when they manage to mention it, seem bent on stressing its 'shared' character.

Throughout the 18th century, Wilson contends, cultural forms and artefacts were shared by different social groups, which attached different meanings to them depending on context. 'The people' and 'the nation', consequently, were 'invented communities' with interests (potentially) dichotomous to those in power.[8] For many 'the people' were 'the citizens', people of standing and education. For others they were rather 'the mob'. 'The people' surfaced in the arguments of propagandists and in the self-representation of a variety of contending groups through the 1780s.

> At stake in these disputes about the composition and significance of 'the people' were not only the meanings and conventions of political language, but also the legitimation of constellations of power and authority – that is, access to, or control over, one of the most compelling 'master fictions' of the day that justified the distribution of power in the English state: popular consent.

The mythical role of 'the people' in the constitution authorized various strands of populist discourse that were crucial in constructing national identity and consciousness. Ruling class authority was predicated on the protection and promotion of the properties and interests of all English people, hence governing elites were eager to claim the people's sanction for their policies, defining the people as the respectable and virtuous, and excluding the seditious rabble, the feminine, etc. (Wilson, 1995: 13, 17–18).

Political reasoning, 'both elite and popular', remained framed by a discourse about the 'real' meaning of the English constitution and history. The language of early 19th-century radicalism was permeated by 'popular constitutionalism'.

> For working-class radicals to have abandoned the constitutionalist idiom would have meant discarding a 'shared' language of political legitimation. Conversely, to embrace [it] was to participate in a powerful national myth structure, to evoke the authoritative force of a 'master fiction' of British society [rooted in the 17th century], and one that possessed oppositional as well as integrative potential. (Epstein, 1989: 85)

'In reality', however, the constitutional victories of the 17th century 'were highly ambiguous': radicals and governing classes manoeuvred around the 'myth' of popular sovereignty.[9] As a result, by the early 1800s the 'apparent incongruity' of radicals appropriating the 'dominant terms of national political discourse' and parodying the 'loyalist regard for the British constitution' offered a tension-ridden means of opposing a nationalist discourse to the loyalist national consciousness, which constituted a means of mediating between class and nation (Epstein, 1989: 83–85, 118). In other words, a means of accommodating class into nation.

Populist politics throughout the 18th century, therefore, was blind to the actual configuration of class power anchored in socioeconomic relations. 'The people' assisted elites, whether ruling or aspiring, in their search for mass support, and subaltern classes in their drive to resist. Ironically, a discourse of legitimation served *at the same time* for 'dichotomous' purposes in a society with marked inequalities in power and resources. For Wilson, different groups had apparently the same power to set the available range of meanings (limited anyway) of cultural forms. This fails to interrogate the hegemonic dimension of the politics of 'the people', overlooking the ways in which the dominant classes were framing the repertoire of acceptable forms of political activity. A hegemonic culture is, of course, a culture 'shared' by dominant and subordinate, leaders and led: that is what class accommodation is all about. Certainly, subordinate classes were not passive recipients of hegemony. They explored the possibilities opened up by this political language, and appropriated some notions to fight back, something of crucial importance in the early 19th century, when a modern proletariat was taking shape, articulating a political outlook around Chartism. But their failure to clearly break with populist discourse and develop an independent and unambiguously oppositional one, significantly weakened their self-awareness and ability to sharpen social contradictions. The net effect was to make easier and smoother the diffusion of bourgeois hegemonic views. In other words, the 'integrative' potential of the 'master fiction' held the upper hand over the 'oppositional' one. Here lies the real significance of the hegemonic diffusion of the language of the people since the Revolution: by the time of the formation of a modern proletariat, that idiom had become, in Gramscian terms, a 'popular religion'

whose ritual invocations and conventions were pervasive and acted as an inescapable political straitjacket.

I will next illustrate this point, showing the ways in which 'the people' were crucially implicated in translating (working) class politics into a populist politics of citizenship in 19th-century Britain.

A People, not a Class: Peoplehood, Citizenship, Accommodation

With the progressive dissolution of pre-capitalist remnants and the increasing importance of industrial manufacture, further social change swept the country, stirring literate elites to search for accommodative themes that could alleviate the acute sense of social disintegration (Belchem, 1990: 145). The aspiring commercial and manufacturing bourgeoisie was forced to address class conciliation while opposing a state and financial elite gripped by quasi-feudal interests. Accommodative notions, old and new, were stressed, in competition with new ideas and idioms of class.

> Regional and national capitalist labour markets inserted the great majority of [workers] into wage contracts unsoftened by the older bonds of Tory paternalism and mutual obligation. In this epoch, a language of class grew up alongside, and in some instances supplanted, the older discourse of trades. The 18th-century world of class struggle without class existed no longer (Katznelson, 1992: 181).

Class imagery intruded even in the old language, demonstrating that the concern was less the negation of class than the assertion of its irrelevance. The traditional social vision of the bishop of Norwich held the middle classes to be 'links in that great chain by which the higher classes of society and the lower are connected together' (quoted in Crossick, 1991: 153). Cobbett talked about 'the chain of connection' between rich and poor, and Southey about 'the bond of attachment' (Belchem, 1990: 145; Briggs, 1983: 5; Seed, 1982: 24). They drew on the old paternalism predicated on fictive kinship conveying notions of duty, deference, dependence, but also charity and affection between hierarchically placed individuals. Connection and attachment were deemed fitting to fight the horrific consequences of the 'cash nexus'. The country seemed bound to fall apart into two opposing communities, as Disraeli believed, that should be reunited into one (Briggs, 1983: 7).[10] In this environment, the growing self-affirmation of the middle class abruptly changed the terms of social evaluation. Adam Smith's argument that 'the landed interest', unlike the manufacturing one, had a direct concern 'in the affairs of society as a whole' (Briggs, 1983: 16), or that 'the hereditary nobility is the great security of the people's liberty' (Perelman, 2000: 188), was overturned. In the years of the campaign for economic liberalism, the anti-Corn Law agitation, the landlords were described as selfish monopolists using the corn laws against the interests of the community. The landed class was portrayed as the 'selfish' or 'sinister' interest, while the Anti-Corn Law League stood for a class portrayed as having the same interest as all the producers and consumers, thus the whole community. As Cobden was to say, according to his biographer Morley, the middle class 'have no interest opposed to the general good, while, on the contrary, the feudal governing class exists only by a violation of sound principles of political economy', thus overturning the old notion that the aristocracy stood for the general interest. The middle classes developed a sense of the importance of portraying their interests as communitarian ones. In Morley's words, 'class-interest widened into the consciousness of a commanding national interest' (quoted in Perkin, 1969: 369–373). Until this communitarian mythology was widespread enough, paradoxically but understandably, 'the cause of free trade made little progress', as recognized a biographer of Peel in 1842 (Briggs, 1983: 17, note 63). There was by then a blunt recognition that capitalist social relations and the market imperative could be quite unpopular by themselves. They would have to

be 'reinforced by cultural hegemony' in order to secure the reproduction of the system (Seed, 1982: 24).[11] In fact, the tensions provoked by the breakthrough of mature industrial capitalism within the still predominant agrarian-capitalist/feudal mixture in society and state produced in some authors a sort of 'divided consciousness' well before the anti-Corn Law agitation. For Adam Smith was a sort of populist who contradicted himself on the nobility, averring that 'all for ourselves and nothing for the people, seem … to have been the vile maxims of the masters of mankind', and that 'the people can never have security of person or estate till the nobility be crushed' (quoted in Perelman, 2000: 103, 180). In this way, he pioneered the 19th-century re-enactment, in changed circumstances, of the historical bloc that had pitted the people against the elite in the 17th century. He endowed the nobility with greed, selfishness, cowardice and immorality, stripping them of the heroic virtues he now bestowed upon the small man. His hero was precisely 'the people', a notional identity fancied with the virtues of the petty bourgeoisie, 'skilled artisans, small merchants and manufacturers, as well as supposedly self-made intellectuals like himself'. Smith's ruminations resemble populism, in that they reveal fears of being crushed by either the working class or the high bourgeoisie and aristocracy, in the form of social unrest or elitist machinations like paper money schemes or monopolies. 'Although laissez-faire is not usually associated with populism, it probably should be [and] the purportedly Ricardian socialists should be considered populists.' (Perelman, 2000: 196–228)

The utility of representing dominant classes' actions as the expression of the will of the whole body social was so pervasively felt that Lord Russell proposed to convert the Commons 'from an assembly of representatives of small classes and particular interests' into 'a body of men who represent the people' (Briggs, 1983: 13, note 47). And Sir James Graham recommended the landlords to unite as 'the manufacturing and commercial body' had done, and to frame their actions in accordance with 'public opinion' and 'the interests of the community' (Briggs, 1983: 14, note 51).

This community was to be the imaginary one of ideal orderly citizens that we have witnessed repeatedly. This is the real meaning of the equation of 'the people' with the middle class, in the hope of attaching 'numbers to property and good order'. As Brougham said: 'By the people I mean the middle classes, the wealth and intelligence of the country, the glory of the British name.' (Briggs, 1983: 13; Crossick, 1991: 156) The accommodative discourses produced by the 'middling sort' (petty producers, retailers, tradesmen, professionals and writers) resonated with similar themes, even when constructing 'oppositional' ideologies like Philosophic Radicalism. Though they claimed to represent the whole people, their ideology appealed mainly to those sectors (Neale, 1972: 22–26).[12] The Philosophic Radicals were, according to Neale, the vanguard of 'the people', which was really 'a middling class which was still neither middle class nor working class'. The image of 'the people' was 'dominated by their own self-image and by their image of the industrious and literate workman and shopkeeper'. The 'people' addressed by Roebuck and others in their *Pamphlets for the People* were 'rational, literate and respectable' and the concept 'was meant to include everyone' except the aristocracy. They were 'the mob or the masses after having been provided with the means of economic independence and after their transformation into respectable members of the middling set of people' through education (1972: 27).[13] As in the 17th century, 19th-century ruling elites and reformers alike feared or threatened revolutionary upheavals of 'the people' who were to 'frighten their rulers into compliance', driven by their 'explosive temper' (Perkin, 1969: 367). Obviously 'the people' included the broad mass of the population. Like the 'populace' in the 17th century, the 'residuum' of street-folk set the lower limit of 'the people' in the 19th; the aristocracy set the upper one (Belchem, 1990: 149). 'The people' is said to have narrowed its meaning in the 1840s, so as increasingly to denote 'the working class'. Jones depicts 'the people' as increasingly the exclusive property of the working class in the 1830s and 1840s (though this did

not change populist ideology itself). By 1832, he claims, the working class *became* 'the people', which is a defining characteristic of Chartism (1989 [1983]: 98–100, 169). His own evidence suggests that this was not so straightforward. The social composition of 'the people' was always an uncharted terrain fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. In 1838–9, and 1842, Chartist strategy still depended on the union of all the 'productive classes' against the corrupt state (1989 [1983]: 157–160). This ideology never entirely shook off the sense of the cause of the people, *whatever the source of their income*, against their oppressors. On the one hand '"The people" could be evoked … as an alternative to class, in an attempt to draw together working class and bourgeoisie'. Thomas Attwood, founder of the 'General Political Union of the Lower and Middle Classes of the People', for example, talked about 'the masses' (the working class), which became 'the people' when the productive element of the middle class was added. On the other, as an act of class assertiveness, universalizing the concerns of the working class as those of the nation (Crossick, 1991: 157–158).[14] But how were the concerns of the working class to be defined, and by whom?

The producerist ideology, a staple of populism historically and worldwide, began its career in this setting. It posited a division between 'the industrious classes' and the numerically insignificant rest. It was popular in utopian schemes like those of St. Simon, Owen and Gray. For them, the industrious classes equated with 'the body of the people more generally', comprising the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat. The same applies to non-utopian schemes like Attwood's Birmingham Political Union (Briggs, 1983: 8–10), something usually explained by claiming that early 19th-century British industry remained within the discourse of class conciliation found in traditional artisanal workshops. Behagg (1986) argues that this claim is an exercise in ideological reproduction. Besides pre-industrial workshops not being so harmonious, since factories resembled a collection of workshops under a common roof and larger firms controlled the work of small ones through credit and marketing facilities, any claim that work remained within the parameters of artisanal production is delusional. Labour developed a set of values and idioms antithetical to those of the bourgeoisie, which evinced a clear awareness of opposing interests (1986). Yet it was also forced to project images of consensus to gain respectability within bourgeois hegemonic terms. Attwood's producerist ideology was an attempt to secure an image of social cohesion at the political level. He introduced the accommodative principle of symbolic equality by averring that since the interests of masters and workers were the same, the former could represent the latter and universal suffrage was not necessary. This ideology was pervasive outside the ranks of the aristocracy, and was to inform the Gladstonian organic views of the classless inter-dependence of men defined through citizenship (Joyce, 1991: 56–57).[15] No wonder that John Fielden, one of the foremost northern cotton industrialists, was one of the most salient radicals, his and similar individuals' actions lending credibility to the political vision of Radicalism (Jones, 1989 [1983]: 166).

Unsurprisingly, the producerist ideology of 'the people' infected Chartism from top to bottom. Similar notions of cross-class unity were common in the ideology of syndicalism, Owenism and Ricardian socialism. Syndicalism displayed the tensions emerging within 'the people', but did not oppose the idea of 'the people' of Radicalism. The enemy was not the masters as a class, but tyrannical and despotic masters. Owenism considered the feudal and money aristocracy the staunch enemies of the 'industrious classes' (Jones, 1989 [1983]: 112, 115–116). Owenism and cooperativism shared with currents of middle-class romanticism the criticism of competition as the enemy of 'community'. Even the concept of class of the National Union of the Working Classes was 'within Radical parameters': it posited a polarization between working and idle classes, not between working and middle ones. In the Ricardian socialist press the accent on 'capitalism' and 'the capitalists' never departed from Radical assumptions nor sanctioned class hostility against the masters. 'Capitalists' were oppressors as 'parasites' and the world was

depicted as a harmonious universe inhabited by workers and masters oppressed by an unjust political system (Crossick, 1991: 156; Jones, 1989 [1983]: 117, 124, 126, 129, 132).

In this context, the idea that class collaboration in the name of 'the people' was the hallmark of radicalism against political oppression and *therefore* a spontaneous expression of working-class activity misses the point. 'The people', established as the cornerstone of ruling classes' hegemony since the 17th century, had come to pervade the whole political culture: it was invoked by any movement whatever its social base, in demands usually couched in terms of the political regeneration of the nation, not of a fundamental restructuring of social relations. The constitution, unbalanced and sick, could only recuperate its health by resorting to 'the people' (Jones, 1989 [1983]: 99). Revealingly, this backward-looking, 'reactionary' radicalism (Calhoun, 1988: 138–139) recalls the conservative-but-radical country ideology of the 17th century and speaks volumes about the ambiguous political outlook of populism in general. 'The people' had oppositional viability only because there were significant sectors of the dominant classes eager to press their interests upon state policy, and there were petty bourgeois and professionals willing to see their anxieties relieved. They needed the support of the working class for their oppositional endeavours, but on condition that class relations remain intact. As Cobden admitted in a circular to the Anti-Corn Law League in 1842, their task was to 'show the working men that the question of wages [has nothing to do with party politics] ... that if we had the Charter tomorrow the principles which govern the relations between masters and men would be precisely the same as they are now' (Perkin, 1969: 371). After all, as Samuel Smiles, an admirer of Cobden, averred in 1839, 'the interests of capitalists and labourers are identical' (Crossick, 1991: 158).

To the extent that Jones is right and the growing awareness of the opposition between the middle and working classes reveals itself in the appropriation of 'the people' by the latter, this contradicts his main thesis that Chartism was not a class movement.[16] Chartism is best described as the meeting point of two traditions: 'a people's politics of cross-class coalition where the interests and outlooks of the middle classes usually dominated' and 'a workers' politics where, although middle-class people might participate and even lead, workers' participation and interests came to the fore' (Charlton, 1997: 62–63). However, we must recognize first the very real influence of populism over Chartism, and the extent of bourgeois hegemony this entails. Second, the ways in which populism limited and weakened not only the movement itself, but also the capacity of the working class to develop an alternative political consciousness that could form the basis for an independent socialist movement in the second half of the 19th century. The 'constitutional strategy', inevitable within the parameters of populist politics, had fatal flaws, because in overlooking the very real divisions within 'the people', it depended on an unreachable level of unity and consensus of the whole population; ultimately upon 'the creation of a quite unrealistic and unattainable degree of national unity' (Sykes, 1985: 235). The emphasis on 'the people' implied that the state was backed by a parasitic class so tiny as to be insignificant. The experience of growing divisions within 'the people' revealed 'a gap between radical ideology and social reality'. When reality inevitably conflicted with this fantasy of class collaboration, 'the people' could no longer function as an oppositional force.

> For Chartists to admit the reality of the uneven nature of their popular support, and the strength of the forces opposing them, meant undermining the moral strength they derived from claiming the overwhelming majority of the population had an interest in supporting them, that it really was 99 to 1. Such an admission of weakness [risked] destroying the credibility of the movement ... given its prior emphasis on the ideological and tactical necessity of mobilising the entire 'people'. Yet the Chartist failure to face this social reality led to growing tactical confusion and ultimately to their very real strength in the industrial areas being dissipated in the summer of 1839. (Sykes, 1985: 223–224)

The National Holiday remained in conception and implementation within populist terms, which was a major flaw. The basic framework of Radicalism in Chartism had not changed by 1842, and appeals to the middle classes for assistance were routinely issued, and produced confusion when, understandably, they were not heeded. 'After 1848', Sykes concludes, 'the blatant tactical bankruptcy was a very important factor in the subsequent demise of Chartism' (1985: 236). The hegemonic weight of the languages and practices of Radicalism inhibited the formation of an independent working class activism rooted in an analysis of political economy whose beginnings were already there (Thompson, 1984). This near absence of anything approaching a theory of capitalist exploitation 'seriously limited the scope of working-class radicalism after the 1850s.' (Saville, 1987: 216)

'One Happy Family': Chartism and Beyond

Chartism may have failed as a radical strategy, but the fears it provoked in the dominant classes (including the fractions supporting the Charter) and their organic intellectuals stirred the search for accommodation. The family became the moral bedrock on which to build a regenerated community, organic and harmonious. As in France before, propertied classes returned to the family for a model on which to ground their visions of the good society as a conflict-free community banning the threatening facts of market competition and class struggle. Paternalism, a weaker version of patron-clientage rooted in fictive kinship, was back with a vengeance, intended to permeate all spheres of life. Vertical social ties were reconstituted in the 1830s and 1840s as a defensive response by employers, who dwelled on past traditions of social binding (Price, 1984: 219). In Manchester, for example, the tensions inherent in the bourgeois model of society were played out in sermons and speeches. The public was equated with competition and depersonalization, the cash nexus and profit; the private with paternalism, cooperation, personal and emotional interaction. Unitarian ministers were advocates of laissez-faire, and their sermons reproduced in religious form the ethic of political economy and individualism. But they were organic intellectuals, and tried to counter-pose the values of the religious family to the impersonal, worldly sphere where class antagonisms prevailed. The quintessential accommodative practice of symbolical juxtaposition of different classes found its expression in the paternalistic concern for the poor. 'Direct personal communication between individuals of different classes became the panacea for countering class hostility', with the intention of establishing '"friendly intercourse" between the classes' (Seed, 1982: 20–23). Just as conservatives appropriated aspects of liberal culture, liberals appropriated themes of conservative culture – gothic architecture, the language of organic ties and patriarchal authority, paternalist philanthropy. The family, as in the past, offered an ideological model of class relations as a haven of social harmony. Paternalist or romantic ideologies were not external to liberal culture, but a means to negotiate the contradictions and tensions present in society (Seed, 1982: 25; cf. Joyce, 1991: 61–62).[17]

Beginning in the 1830s, reformers and educationalists sought to investigate and intervene in working-class communities and families. The new statistical societies pioneered the survey of 'the other nation'. Salvation, was their conclusion, involved philanthropy and paternalism in the tracks of Disraelian ruminations. In rural areas, the gentry supervised popular fetes and other revived festivities, recreating a hierarchical 'pseudo-*gemeinschaft*' through patronage. Sunday Schools and the increasing intervention of the state in education aimed to create, in the words of the secretary of the Committee of the Privy Council for Education, a 'new race of working people – respectful, cheerful, hardworking, loyal, pacific and religious' (Belchem, 1990: 146–148): 'the people' in their pure essence.

And the essence of 'the people' was class accommodation. As Joyce observes, 'class' is economy-related, socially exclusive and connotes conflict, whereas 'populism' defines a set of discourses and identities that are extra-economic, inclusive and universalizing (1991: 11). 'The key expression in the populist vocabulary was "the people", a useful term because of its essential ambiguity' and lack of sinister connotations, in contrast to 'the masses' or 'class' (McWilliam, 1998: 56–57). According to Joyce, class distinctions were widely recognized as real in Britain, but the 'negative', divisive aspects of class were anathematized 'by all classes'. 'Popular Liberalism' and 'Popular Toryism' were about 'the union of the classes against class' (1991: 56). But Joyce's tenet that class conciliation themes were spontaneously developed 'from below' is quite problematic. For how can this be surmised, in the context of the continuous reproduction of hegemonic accommodative themes since the 17th century? Since he shares Jones' view that even the Chartists espoused a variant of 18th-century Radicalism, it is not clear in what sense the populist-producerist view can be considered 'autonomous' or 'spontaneous'. He seems to be myopically selective. Appeals to 'the people' or class harmony were spontaneous for him, but the languages and practices of Chartism were not. The whole of workers' radicalism was alien, but workers' conservatism and moderation were entirely theirs. The problem is more complicated, for he in fact attributes to workers two attitudes, one oppositional ('class identity' with 'overtones of independence and conflict'), the other conciliatory, without bothering to explain the fact (Joyce, 1991: 58). This seems an exercise in ideological reproduction akin to those denounced by Behagg. By taking at face value ideologies and practices of class collaboration without exploring their historical background, and their mediating role as foundations for hegemony in class-divided societies, by taking them for granted, he reproduces the very assumptions those hegemonic moves try to foster in the first place.[18]

Even unintentionally, Joyce supplies a good deal of information about the playing out of accommodative themes required for hegemony, showing how the suasions of 'the people' came to pervade the whole political culture, from Toryism to Liberalism to more 'conspiracist' versions of populism to socialism. This is important, for the major weakness of Chartism was its proximity to Popular Liberalism with its versions of reform and practicable programmes couched in popular constitutional format and the same Chartist language (Belchem, 1990: 114). In the new educational offensive to make Britons, once and for all, into a people and a nation (*one* nation), Fox exalted 'the people', an undifferentiated collection of citizens imagined, not surprisingly, as 'a single family' on whose harmony depended progress and happiness. 'Tories and Liberals joined together to extol Palmerston's forward foreign policy [and] anti-aristocratic politics [was] fused with patriotism … In linking the people's crusade against Privilege with national identity, class boundaries were still further dissolved'. Toryism emphasized church and state as the embodiments of a nationally unified people. Tories accentuated nation more than Liberals did, but ideologies of class union were equally salient in both parties. Popular Liberalism fancied the union of rich and poor as 'one happy family', emphasizing the universalist idiom of 'people', 'brotherhood', and of 'the people as the nation' (not as a class). This was a phenomenon of a national scale.[19] Popular Liberals like Henry Vincent expressed the irrelevance of class divisions which, nonetheless, were recognized. Classes for him were also moral entities bound by ties of duty and obligation (Joyce, 1991: 60, 61–62, 64). As Disraeli understood quite well, the inclusion of a non-revolutionary working class was of the utmost importance. In 1840 he noted that the union between the Conservative Party and the 'Radical masses' represented the only means of preserving the Empire, assailed by a 'miserable minority under the specious name of the People'. Their interests were 'identical'. United they formed 'the nation'. Impressed by the effects of individualism and political economy on workers

(the creation of 'the two nations'), he set out to achieve the reunion of the classes as his foremost political objective (Smith, 1967: 14–15).

Different strands of populism pervaded the socio-political landscape of the 1840s and beyond, being remarkably similar to those of Radicalism and Popular Liberalism. Inadvertently hinting at the instrumental accommodative role of 'the people', Joyce shows how 'the very success of Bright and Gladstone in creating a sense of social inclusion among a virtuous and embattled "people" paradoxically depended on playing to and keeping alive the very sense of exclusion itself'. The tenets of a 'classical' populism, anti-establishment and conspiracist, could be found, revealingly, 'in all political parties and in none' (1991, 70). Like Toryism, it appealed 'to a wide range of social levels, including those beyond the rank of workers', playing the card of 'the rich' versus 'the poor'. While ignoring the evidence to the contrary (including charges of xenophobia by himself) Joyce admonishes that for this populist culture 'the conservative label just will not do … If conservatives often embrace populism for what it is not (conservative), then liberals and socialists reject it on equally false grounds, as … "irrational" and contrary to the manifest destiny of the proletariat.' (1991: 73–74; also Allen, 1997). Ironically, too many allegedly leftist populisms end up being remarkably rightist. Fascism, for instance, which on some accounts was 'from the left' but was mysteriously 'embraced' by the right.[20]

It has been claimed that 'the history of British politics after 1850 is eloquent testimony to the success of hegemony in the sense used by Gramsci' (Saville, 1987: 220), the capacity of a dominant ideology 'to inhibit and confuse the development of the counter-ideology of a subordinate class' (Bottomore, quoted in Saville, 1987: 226). Surprisingly enough, this conclusion is reached without paying any attention to the founding parameters of that hegemonic drive before 1850, namely, the mechanisms of class accommodation predicated upon organic unity and harmony, and especially 'the people' with its promethean capacity to erase classness from the political activity of the subordinate classes. The present essay has been an attempt to redress this fault.

The venerable British constitution rooted in the fiction of the mandate of 'the people' asserted itself as the event-horizon of all politics and all visions of the desirable polity. Thus, a leader in *The Times* could claim gleefully in 1848 that the institutions of the country had 'thrown themselves into the arms of the people' who feel that 'they have a voice in the government of the country', wisely made impervious to the horrors of revolution (Saville, 1987: 228–229). Eloquent testimony, indeed, to the continuing power of 'the people' to accommodate class into the political nation and render it irrelevant.

Conclusion

This essay has highlighted the ways in which capitalist elites achieved hegemony over the masses during the revolutionary breakthrough of the 17th century through constructing 'the people' as the inclusive sovereign will animating the polity. While the old order faded away, mixed agrarian-capitalist and quasi-feudal interests weighed heavily upon the state. There remained the hated aristocratic gentry whom 'the people' could attack, to redress the grievances of excluded elites, especially the ascendant manufacturer bourgeoisie from the late 18th century onwards. Any contestation of the 'feudal' ruling bloc was doomed to repeat the populist performance (the people versus the court party) bequeathed by the Revolution and to involve a politics of citizen rights, as any in-depth challenge to the new pattern of social relations was likely to be resisted by *all* social forces (whether controlling the state or not) benefiting from it. This may explain why it was still possible for dissident movements to present 'the people' as an oppositional force. But since 'the people' were well established as a hegemonic subject from which any legitimacy issued, any

oppositional movement claiming to act in their name was bound to be rather blunted. The necessity of imagining politics as involving the whole people effectively discarded the possibility of a politics of class. In an environment where the ruling classes invoked 'the people' to legitimate their actions, populist movements were bound to conjecture a simplistic ruler/ruled polarity, essentially reformist. Furthermore, they could only be multi-class movements led, ideologically and politically, by a class fraction of the dominant classes either alone or jointly with a section of the middle 'strata', unstably accommodating the aspirations of conflicting social forces whose interests, beyond opposition to ill-defined corrupt elites, were diametrically divergent. Hence the paradoxical character of this politics, looking back to a mythic past but trying to push democratic demands forward, though only to the extent deemed acceptable by the bourgeois fractions hegemonizing 'the people'. The emerging working class was accommodated into that identity just when its political outlook was in its formative stage, which proved of the utmost importance for the British proletariat, whose class politics was straitjacketed into populist politics. All this may explain the 'ineradicable ambiguity' of the notion of 'the people' in sociological or political terms, which it has never lost. It also illuminates the irrepressible tendency of modern politics to be populist politics, whether the insipid variety of liberal democracies, the harsh kind of fascist regimes or the genuine brand replicating the original model in modernizing, industrializing areas like Latin America. The reason is always the same. 'The people' subsumes class and makes it irrelevant.

Acknowledgements

I thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on a previous draft of this essay. Usual disclaimers apply.

Notes

1 'The French Revolution of 1789 was the principal turning point in the transition from the authority of kings to the mandate of the people', though 'the idea of government by consent, ultimately derived from a mandate of the people, was advanced during the [English Revolution of the] 17th century' (Bendix, 1978: 320–321, cf. 596). See also Morgan (1988), and Woloch (1993: 22–23)

2 Some may say that all concepts are 'contested', that their meaning is 'free-floating', dependent on the 'articulation' of discourse which makes them conjuncturally meaningful, that different people attach different meanings to the same notions according to their circumstances and interests, etc. There is, probably, *some* truth to this. But it is problematic when used to assess the role of ideology in social struggles. As Mouzelis (1978: 53) asserts, rightly criticizing Laclau (1978 [1977]) there *must* be a limit to the 'free-floating' capacity of ideological elements and to the ability of different groups to 'appropriate' concepts of a 'shared' discourse. The feudal aristocracy is unlikely to have produced a socialist ideology, or to find it useful. Besides, the notion of different groups fighting over the meaning of shared ideas and values absurdly overlooks questions such as who and with what purposes created those elements in the first place, and which social forces are more likely, in terms of power and resources, to set the available and acceptable meanings.

3 For a full discussion of Gramsci and the people-nation see Pozo (2007).

4 Brenner (2001) has shown the importance of a new class of capitalist merchants for the parliamentary camp.

5 The distinction between *populus* ('people') and *plebs* ('common people') was sometimes noticed. For example, the main leveller spokesman, John Wildman, resting on Cicero, expressed the formula: *Imperium in magistratibus, authoritatem* [sic] *in senatum, potestatem in plebe, majestatem in populo*, which he translated as meaning that power was to be in 'the meniall people' and majesty 'in the people in generall'. Elsewhere he asserted '*Supremam potestatem esse in populo*, the Supreame power to be in

the people' (Glover, 1999: 63–64). The levellers often expressed their belief that sovereignty was in the hands of the *plebs*, whether they made the necessary distinction between them and 'the people' or not. The 'Grandees' at Putney agreed on the meaning of 'the people', they only disagreed over the extent of the right to vote (they denied it to the *plebs* or 'the multitude').

6 Federalist Papers 10 and 63, *The Federalist* (1788), online at the Library of Congress website, available (consulted 6 November 2009) at: http.//memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/constRedir.html

7 For the British social structure in the 18th century see Neale (1983: 277–280). Agrarian capitalism co-existed with copyholding, lifeholding and small freeholding, characteristic of pre-capitalist modes of production. Agrarian capitalists were also parasitic on the crown, depending on it for winning administrative posts in the state apparatus and property rights in place at court, resilient forms of pre-capitalist appropriation of surplus: 'political and other pensions, places and sinecures, correctly named "offices of profit under the crown"' (Hobsbawm, 1993: 129). Competition structured by this melange of pre-capitalist property relations, Neale claims, was a source of friction for the propertied classes in this epoch.

8 Colley (1986: 116–117, 1992) has similarly played down the extent of ruling class involvement in the nationalist-patriotic encroachment of politics. For her the national initiatives in civil society were voluntary and spontaneous, reflecting sectional self-interest and a drive to 'wider civic recognition'.

9 Chartism inherited this suffocating myth structure. As Thomis and Holt have poignantly put it, when radical leaders requested people to be prepared to withdraw their money from the banks and violently defend 'the laws and constitutional privileges of their ancestors', these people were 'dealing in myths, for they had no constitutional privileges and no money' (1977: 116).

10 Cf. 'Labour and capital are coming into collision – the operative and the master are at issue, and the peace and well being of the kingdom are at stake' (Gaskell, quoted in Briggs, 1983: 20).

11 Even liberal theorists, 'the absolute apostles of free trade', felt the need to ensure that commercial society had 'positive rather than accidental sources of social cohesion' and searched for noble and altruistic motives (Hall, 1994: 29). The concept of public interest, shaped by individualistic liberal concerns (individual goods make up the general good) did not negate the primacy of the community. 'Instead, the proponents of private concerns aligned themselves with the supposed interest of the great mass of the people. Far from discarding the familiar injunctions to prefer the common good, they tried to bring themselves within its terms' (Gunn, 1989: 199).

12 Neale considers this array of 'strata' a unified social class in its own right, with a class consciousness 'highly individuated and non-deferential'. I disagree, but they could certainly display the features of a real class depending on the conjuncture, in the sense articulated by Mayer (1975), and Crossick and Haupt (1995). I would rather stress the accommodative outlook of their visions. Elements of a discussion of these problematics are to be found in, for example, Mayer (1975), Burris (1986: 322, 324, 326), Hobsbawm (1993: 279, 301–303), Crossick and Haupt (1995: 5–10, 147–148).

13 Neale's subsequent comment that 'the people' was never meant to include the mob is thus gratuitous in his own terms, though he is right that the concept excluded half the population, for it excluded women.

14 Crossick mentions the concept's narrowing meaning. However, expressions such as James Mill's 'the class of the people who are below the middle rank' or continuous references to 'the *common* people' imply the continuing belief in an all-inclusive 'people' throughout this period (Briggs, 1983: 20–21).

15 Cf. a declaration (by Cobbett) 'on the rights to sustenance and suffrage, the reciprocities between men and state, and the inevitable inequalities of a class society' which highlights 'several key themes in the protean concept of citizenship' (Steinberg, 1995: 19) and which concludes thus: 'Remember that poverty is decreed by the very nature of man ... It is necessary to the very existence of mankind, that a very large proportion of every people should live by manual labour'.

16 For a critique see Kirk (1987). According to Pickering (1986) an independent working-class political culture was developing and clashing with the middle-class leadership and the cross-class ideology of Radicalism.

17 For the family as the core of older patterns of accommodation see Pozo (2006). For an account that reveals the limits of paternalism in this context see Dutton and King (1982).

18 Indeed, it is remarkable the similitude Joyce's (and Jones's) account bears with those of conservative scholars like Bendix, grounded on structural functionalism and modernization theory. He viewed class conflict as alien to workers' culture, or aiming at incorporation into the political community as respectable citizens. The masses, according to Bendix, 'retained their loyalty to the established order', evident in the 'numerous references to the real and imaginary rights enjoyed during the old order. Populist protest based on such references meant ... the demand for equality of citizenship ... The rising awareness of the working class ... reflects an experience of *political alienation*, a sense of not having a recognized position in the civic community.' Nationalism was so powerful because 'it could appeal directly to this longing of the common people for civic respectability' (1996 [1964]: 426, cf. 76, 80–81, 85, 433). For a virtually identical narrative see Vernon (1993).

19 In highlighting the differences between London and provincial England, he notes employers' paternalist practices and the effects of hegemonic moves by a 'radical reforming bourgeoisie bent on the politics of class union' (1991: 66–67).

20 'Fascist ideology was without doubt that best qualified to attract the malcontents who found no place in the world as it was, despised the conformism of left and right, and yet felt much closer to their enemies the communists – as the communists did to the rebels – than to the bourgeoisie which however, at the critical moment, and under the pressure of events, was to become their ally' (Sternhell, 1979: 362). Astonishing phrase, well suited to serve as the plot of a Rocambole novel.

References

Allen R (1997) The battle for the common: politics and populism in mid-Victorian Kentish London. *Social History* 22(1): 61–77.

Behagg C (1986) Myths of cohesion: capital and compromise in the historiography of 19th-century Birmingham. *Social History* 11(3): 375–384.

Belchem J (1990) *Industrialization and the Working Class: The English Experience, 1750–1900*. Aldershot: Scholar Press.

Bendix R (1978) *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule.* Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Bendix R (1996 [1964]) *Nation-building and Citizenship: Studies of Our Changing Social Order.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Brenner R (2001) *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict and London Overseas Traders 1550–1653.* London: Verso.

Briggs A (1983) The languages of class in early 19th-century England. In: Neale RS (ed.) *History and Class*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2–29.

Burris V (1986) The discovery of the new middle class. *Theory and Society* 15: 317–349.

Calhoun CJ (1988) The radicalism of tradition and the question of class struggle. In: Taylor M (ed.) *Rationality and Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 129–175.

Charlton J (1997) *The Chartists: The First National Workers' Movement*. London and Chicago, IL: Pluto.

Cohen R (1988) Introduction. In: Cohen R and Toland JD (eds) *State Formation and Political Legitimacy.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1–22.

Colley L (1986) Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830. *Past and Present* 113(1): 97–117.

Colley L (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.

Crossick G (1991) From gentlemen to the residuum: languages of social description in Victorian Britain. In: Corfield PJ (ed.) *Language, History and Class*. Oxford: Blackwell, 150–178.

Crossick G and Haupt H-G (1995) *The Petit Bourgeoisie in Europe 1780–1914*. London: Routledge.

Dutton HI and King JE (1982) The limits of paternalism: the cotton tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836–54. *Social History* 7(1): 59–74.

Engels F (n.d. [1891]) *A Contribution to the Critique of the Social Democratic Draft Programme of 1891*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

Epstein J (1989) Understanding the cap of liberty: symbolic practice and social conflict in early 19th-century England. *Past and Present* 122(1): 75–118.

Finn MC (1993) *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848–1874*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glover SD (1999) The Putney debates: popular versus elite republicanism. *Past and Present* 164(August): 47–80.

Gramsci A (1975) *Quaderni del Carcere.* Torino: Einaudi.

Greenfeld L (1992) *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gunn JAW (1989) Public interest. In Ball T et al. (eds) *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 194–210.

Hall JA (1994) *Coercion and Consent: Studies on the Modern State*. Cambridge: Polity/Blackwell.

Hill C (1981) Parliament and people in seventeeth-century England. *Past and Present* 92(1): 100–124.

Hill C (1983 [1972]) *El mundo trastornado: el ideario popular extremista en la revolución inglesa del siglo diecisiete*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.

Hobsbawm E (1993) The example of the English middle class. In: Kocka J and Mitchell A (eds) *Bourgeois Society in 19th-century Europe*. Oxford and Providence, RI: Berg, 127–150.

Jones GS (1989 [1983]) Reconsideración del cartismo. In: *Lenguajes de clase: estudios sobre la historia de la clase obrera inglesa, 1832–1982*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 86–174.

Joyce P (1991) *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Katznelson I (1992) *Marxism and the City*. Oxford: Oxford University Clarendon Press.

Kirk N (1987) In defense of class: a critique of recent revisionist writings upon the 19th-century English working class. *International Review of Social History* 32(1): 2–47.

Laclau E (1978 [1977]) *Política e ideología en la teoría marxista: capitalismo, fascismo, populismo.* Madrid: Siglo XXI.

McWilliam R (1998) *Popular Politics in 19th-century England*. London: Routledge.

Manicas PT (1988) The legitimation of the modern state: a historical and structural account. In Cohen R and Toland JD (eds) *State Formation and Political Legitimacy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 173–197.

Mann M (1999) The dark side of democracy: the modern tradition of ethnic and political cleansing. *New Left Review* 235: 18–45.

Manning B (1978) *The English People and the English Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mayer AJ (1975) The lower middle class as historical problem. *Journal of Modern History* 47(3): 409–436.

Morgan ES (1988) *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America.* New York, NY: Norton.

Mouzelis N (1978) Ideology and Class Politics: A Critique of Ernesto Laclau. *New Left Review* 11: 45–61.

Neale RS (1972) *Class and Ideology in the 19th Century.* London and Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Neale RS (1983) Afterword. In: Neale RS (ed.) *History and Class*. Oxford: Blackwell, 271–309.
O'Shea A (1984) Trusting the people: how does Thatcherism work? In: Bennett T et al. (eds) *Formations of Nation and People*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 19–41.
Perelman M (2000) *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
Perkin H (1969) *The Origins of Modern English Society*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Pickering PA (1986) Class without words: symbolic communication in the Chartist movement. *Past and Present* 112(1): 144–162.
Pitkin HF (1989) Representation. In: Ball T et al. (eds) *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 132–154.
Pozo LM (2006) The mechanisms of class accommodation in pre-capitalist Europe: a study in hegemony. *Review* 29(3): 227–269.
Pozo LM (2007) The roots of hegemony: the mechanisms of class accommodation and the emergence of the nation-people. *Capital and Class* 31(1): 55–88.
Price R (1984) Conflict and cooperation: a reply to Patrick Joyce. *Social History* 9(2): 217–224.
Saville J (1987) *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Seed J (1982) Unitarianism, political economy, and the antinomies of liberal culture in Manchester, 1830–50. *Social History* 7(1): 1–25.
Smith P (1967) *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Steinberg MW (1995) 'The great end of all government...': working people's construction of citizenship claims in early 19th-century England and the matter of class. *International Review of Social History* 40, Supplement 3: 19–50.
Sternhell Z (1979) Fascist Ideology. In: Laqueur W (ed.) *Fascism: A Readers' Guide*. New York, NY: Pelican Books.
Sykes R (1985) Physical force Chartism: the cotton district and the Chartist crisis of 1839. *International Review of Social History* 30(2): 207–236.
Thomis MI and Holt P (1977) *Threats of Revolution in Britain, 1789–1848*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books.
Thompson EP (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Victor Gollancz.
Thompson N (1984) *The People's Science: The Popular Political Economy of Exploitation and Crisis, 1816–1834.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Vernon J (1993) *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wilson K (1995) *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Woloch I (1993) *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order.* New York, NY: Norton.