

Politics, Geographies and Histories in Workers' Education

I have very few experiences of the joys of childhood or the games of the early years. From the time I learned to read, reading became my only occupation and the charm of all moments. I felt a vague desire to experience and know everything. God and religion had aroused my attention most of all, but the mobility of my ideas kept me from focussing on the same object for long. Tired of searching without understanding I compared and related what was said to me and what my books and fairy tales taught me. Still too young to grasp my social position, I was happy. The future seemed bright and genial. I saw myself rich with the treasures of knowledge, unique object of my wishes, but these flattering dreams would soon faint. The necessity of work, made me understand that deprived of wealth, I had to renounce knowledge, happiness, I resigned to myself. A secret hope still delighted me. I said to myself: I will meet a philosopher as poor as myself in worldly goods but rich in knowledge, ugly as Aesop but loving and virtuous. He will share with me the gifts of knowledge, I will repay him with love and gratitude. Linked by a holly bond, we will console each other for the sorrows of life. But still I had to abandon these sweet chimeras.¹

In this moving section from her *Profession of Faith*, a rich and powerful text sent to the Saint-Simonian newspaper, the *Globe* in around 1832 Jeanne Deroin (1805-1894) forcefully expressed her love and passion for knowledge, as well as her disappointment for not being able to get an education. Deroin was born and grew up in Paris as a proletarian girl. She worked as a seamstress to earn her living, but she eventually became a self-taught worker intellectual; through her involvement in the romantic socialist movements of nineteenth century Europe she realised her dream of becoming a teacher and a journalist. Her love and passion for education was at the heart of everything she did, first in France and later in life in London, as a political exile.² It is the passion for education and its catalytic force in changing and revolutionising women workers' lives that this book is about.

As Deroin's early testament reveals education has always been a project and a dream at the heart of many workers' lives both men and women from the beginning of industrialization. And yet workers' education has become a contested field since 'national histories, social systems, trade union developments, political attitudes, general educational policies and economic pressures have all intersected to produce around the world many different concepts [...] and many different practical expressions' Philip Hopkins has noted (1985, 2). It is the contested notions, porous boundaries, diverse practices, as well as the material and discursive entanglements of workers' education that I want to map in the first section of this introductory chapter.

Mapping Workers' Education

Derooin's passionate love for education and her deep conviction that it was a dream she could aspire to had not emerged out of the blue. Although the movement for workers' education was mostly an early twentieth century project, its trails go back to the early nineteenth century on both sides of the channel and the Atlantic. There was a strong movement for public education in France in the beginning of the July Monarchy³, which culminated in 1833 when the *Loi Guizot* establishing state primary schools in all communities was implemented. Women workers, who were active in the romantic socialist movements of the era, such as Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism and Owenism, grasped the opportunity to campaign for women's right to education during this period.⁴ As Marie-Reine Guindorf (1812-1836), the editor of the first autonomous feminist newspaper in France wrote in February 1833:

Public education is a question that at the moment preoccupies all advanced people, reasonably so, because the future of society depends on its solution. It is education that will transform gross and ignorant people to human beings who are calm, know their duties and their rights and accomplish the first so as to have the right to demand the latter. In this important question I think that it is useful that women should make their voice heard.⁵

Despite women's fierce campaigns however, the *Loi Guizot* was a disappointment for workers in general and working women in particular: primary education was not made compulsory and was only free for children of very poor families, whose parents had to undergo the embarrassment of being certified as destitute. Even worse there was no provision for girls, whose education was dependent on whether there was 'free space' in the local communities. Girls had to wait for the *Loi Duruy* in 1867 to be granted the same educational opportunities as boys (see Anderson 1975). Guindorf was too young and too revolutionary at the time to wait for a state solution to the problem of proletarian women's education. Although working hard as a seamstress during the day, she joined the *Association of People's Education* and she devoted her free time in the evenings to the education of 'the daughters of the people'.⁶

The project of 'people's education' in France in the first half of the nineteenth century was inherited from the 1789 revolution and it included both the education of the children of the people, as well the education and training of adults. Although it was initially dominated by philanthropic discourses that aimed to moralize, instruct and discipline 'the working poor' it soon took a life of its own, particularly under the influence of the romantic socialist movements. It thus developed as a socio-political and cultural movement aiming to educate the people in general and the workers in particular about their right to work, their right to enjoy life both materially and intellectually, as well as their right to participate in the political formations and processes of their time. It is not surprising that many of the members of the *Association of People's Education* were persecuted and exiled and the Association itself was forced to change its name and constitution many times during the repressive regime of the July monarchy.⁷

The movement for people's education in France had its hey day during the February 1848 revolution and the early years of the Second Republic. During this period many eminent academics delivered lectures at highly esteemed educational institutions, such as the

Sorbonne and the *Collège de France*. The historian Jules Michelet was amongst them; during his *Collège de France* lectures between December 1847 and February 1848, he had highlighted the role of theatre in people's education, arguing that 'a truly popular theatre where the people played the people [...] is the most efficient form of national education' (Michelet 1899, 241). Although Michelet's lectures were interrupted by the intervention of the French ministry of education, his ideas were expanded and advanced after the February 1848 revolution, this time including women in the project of universal education. Ernest Legouvé introduced and taught a course on *Women's History* at the Collège de France, which became very popular amongst women in general and women workers in particular, as we know from the enthusiastic articles that they wrote about it in their daily newspaper, *La Voix des Femmes*.⁸

The role of intellectuals throughout the second half of the nineteenth century was further instrumental in a wider movement that sprang in Paris at the turn of the century, the *Universitaires Populaires*, the people's universities. Most arrondissements in Paris had their own university and there might be more than one in working-class areas. Moreover, political parties and movements had direct links with such educational institutions: 'The cells of organizers — many with anarchist leanings though in principle independent — made a real attempt to include workers at the lower levels of administration and management' Mary Ellen Poole has noted (1997, 233). She further added that anarchist groups met regularly and organized fund-raising and other events at the premises of the *Université Populaire* du Faubourg Saint Antoine, a Parisian working-class neighbourhood par excellence.

It was in the context of political interventions in people's education that the composer Gustave Charpentier's founded the *Conservatoire Populaire de Mimi Pinson*⁹ in 1902. Its purpose was to teach the Parisian working women voice, piano, harp, dance, and choral singing without any fees. Charpentier had actually persuaded some very famous professors to come and teach to his conservatoire, thus contributing to a wider philanthropic project of a series of concerts and performances that the *midinettes* — as they called the young Parisian seamstresses — would take part in, once they had completed their musical education. As Poole has noted, the *Conservatoire Populaire de Mimi Pinson* was an effect of the romantic socialist movements of the 19th century and particularly the Fourierist vision of 'art for the masses' as 'a didactic, morally uplifting, and pleasure-giving force' (1997, 231). What the popularity of the *Mimi Pinson* movement revealed was a wider interest in the importance of opening up cultural and educational opportunities for working class women, a theme that I will take up again in Chapter 3. The movement for people's education in France was thus embedded in the overall project for a national system of education realizing the dreams of the *philosophes*. The state and its duties as educator of the citizens was central in this system, a feature that made it very different from the British movement for workers' education, which was very much embedded in the voluntary sector as I will further discuss in the next section.

Adventures in working-class education in the UK

There were two major institutional movements in the UK, the *Mechanics Institutes* and what came to be known as the *Workers' Educational Association*. The *London Mechanics Institute* was founded in 1823 and its purpose was to provide vocational scientific instruction that would help workers to adapt to the demands of the industrial revolution that was much more advanced in the UK than in France. In around the same time that the *Loi Guizot* was debated in France there were around 7,000 students enrolled in the Mechanics Institute, while their number had risen to 200,000 by 1860 (see Jefferson 1964, 346). However, there was nothing from the spirit of 'people's education' in this movement and it was rather attended by aspiring members of the lower middle classes since the British proletarians 'were practically illiterate and quite unable to benefit from the courses offered', Carter Jefferson has noted (*ibid.*).

It was in the context of grappling with such problems that the London Working Men's Association (LWMA) published its 'Address on Education, issued to the Working Classes', in 1837. Their project included a national system of public education for both sexes on four levels: a) infant schools, b) preparatory schools, c) high schools and finally d) finishing schools or colleges (Lovett 1876, 145). These colleges 'should be gratuitously opened for all who choose to cultivate the highest branches of knowledge' (*ibid.*, 148), and they should therefore offer evening classes. The LWMA was a mass movement with radical ideas about social change and social justice: 'poverty, inequality and political injustice are involved in giving to one portion of society the blessings of education and leaving the other in ignorance' (*ibid.*, 139), they highlighted in their address. Their overall project for equal opportunities in education prepared the grounds for a wider project with concrete institutional structures, activities and literature to emerge in 1903 when the *Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men* was founded in the parlour of a clerical worker, Albert Mansbridge, in Battersea, London. Its title disturbed its women members from the very beginning and in 1905 it was renamed as *Workers' Educational Association* (WEA), 'the largest and most successful provider of educational courses for adults in the voluntary sector of the United Kingdom' to our own days, Stephen Roberts (2003, 1) has noted. The movement soon developed and expanded as a national and international network of educational activities: its Australian branch was founded in 1914, while in 1918 the Commonwealth WEA was set up. By 1923 Associations had been formed in India, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Tasmania.

The workers' educational movement in the UK was initially driven by the ambition for preparing workers for university studies. It was thus organised along a three-year tutorial class of around thirty students taught by a professor and monitored and examined by a system of regular essay writing. However tutorial classes were just one of many methods and practices that the different local and international WEA branches adopted over the years. Lectures and shorter courses were added and the topics ranged from a wide range in the social sciences and humanities, including economics, government and literature. Over the years there have been many historical studies about the WEA's constitution and activities, covering its foundation and early years of its development, as well as looking at the specificities of its different local and international branches and collaborations.¹⁰ What

has remained a grey area in this vibrant body of literature however is women's involvement in the WEA educational activities and programmes.

'We know surprisingly little about the numbers of women who attended WEA classes', Zoë Munby has noted (2003, 216). Women's engagement was not statistically interesting, since the short courses or occasional lectures they would usually take up did not attract funding as the three-year tutorial classes, which were meticulously recorded. Within the tutorial classes there were nevertheless 9% women students between 1910-11, while the percentage rose to 32% in 1919-20 but dropped again in the 30s (Munby 2003, 216). It is not difficult to see why: tutorial classes demanded a long term commitment, which was simply impossible for women workers with family duties and double and triple domestic and emotional labour shifts. Such classes could only be accessed by young women who were trying to imagine a different life and shape a new form of self, no matter whether such dreams would eventually come true.

Trade union classes on the other hand were both boring and irrelevant for many women workers. They were clever enough to understand that even if they took such classes they would never survive the sexist hierarchies and structures of the trade unions. There were very few women who had made it in the men's world and they were only able to do that by sacrificing personal desires or family plans. As Margaret Bondfield wrote in her autobiography: 'I just lived for the Trade Union Movement. I concentrated on my job. This concentration was undisturbed by love affairs. I had seen too much — too early — to have the least desire to join the pitiful scramble of my workmates' (1949, 36-37). Through her early experiences as a textile worker in Yorkshire and well before she became the first female cabinet minister in British politics, Bondfield had understood that being in love and having a family were not compatible with being involved in agonistic politics.

Few as they were, women tutorial students were passionately engaged in their study; this is how Maude Royden, an Oxford lecturer remembers women mill workers at Oldham studying Shakespeare in the class of 1908-9:

They not only stayed the course but, at the close of each class, accompanied me down the street to the railway station still arguing and discussing, stood on the platform while I, my head out of the carriage window, continued the class, and made their last contribution to the discussion in shouts above the roar of the train as it pulled out of the station. Can you beat it?¹¹

Despite the lack of figures, a careful study of the WEA annual reports, as well as articles in its influential monthly magazine, *The Highway* shows that apart from the tutorial classes as well as the trade union courses, women workers overtook men in all other short courses, lectures and outreach activities (Munby 2003, 217). More than being students, women workers were also involved in teaching courses they were passionate about. Although the names of women who organised and taught in women's education courses have largely been lost, the case of Sophie Green stands out as exceptional. Green was a garment worker at the Kettering Co-op clothing factory and despite her lack of formal educational qualifications — apart from her tutorial classes — she was appointed as tutor organiser in Kettering in 1919. For twenty years she organised and taught a rich programme of studies that included tutorial classes, shorter courses, as well as community and outreach work with young people. As outlined in the WEA Eastern's district annual report for 1928-29:

throughout the past winter Miss Green has run a Social on alternate Saturday evenings, to which the young people have come [...] it has done a good deal for young women working in Kettering, but living away from home, who have been brought in touch with a new group of people. Though it may be difficult to express it on paper, there is considerable evidence that Miss Green is a source of power and strength in and around Kettering (cited in Munby 2003, 225).

Not only was 'Miss Green' a source of power, but also an exemplary case of how women workers' education went far beyond strictly learning outcomes and objectives. It was the force of education to encourage workers to imagine a different world and to develop a sense of collective belonging that made it so attractive to women who were oppressed by capitalist and patriarchal intersections. What Green's case also powerfully demonstrates is the idea that workers' education should be from and for the workers, an argument that Fannia Mary Cohn, a leading figure in workers' education in the US would firmly maintain, as I will further discuss in Chapter 1. Green must have been influenced by the ideas of the workers' education movement in the US, as she had won a scholarship for the famous Bryn Mawr summer school for women workers in Philadelphia, which I will further discuss in Chapter 1.

International connections and exchange programmes became possible in the interwar period since the WEA activities soon expanded not only to the Commonwealth countries, as we have seen above, but also to other European countries and the US. The organic relations of the workers' education movement with national and international trade unions and consequently with the International Labour Organization (ILO) played a crucial role in the project of internationalism. As Arthur Greenwood, member of the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (WETUC) wrote in *The Highway*: 'it is probable that direct association with educational labour movements in other countries would increase our prestige and strengthen our position with the labour movement in this country'¹².

It was in the context of internationalization that WEA delegates attended the first Conference on Labour Education that was held in Brussels on 16 and 17 August 1922. It was organized by the *Belgian Committee on Labour Education (Centrale d' Education Ouvrière)* and it was an excellent opportunity for participants from all over the world to exchange experiences and views on workers' education. Three important resolutions were adopted at this conference: a) an exchange scheme of students between Labour Colleges across countries and continents; b) the idea of an 'independent working class education' in the struggle against national and international capital;¹³ c) a request addressed to the *Belgian Centrale d' Education Ouvrière* to maintain and co-ordinate relations between the organization during the period leading to the second conference, which was eventually held at Ruskin College in Oxford in August 15-17, 1924. It was then that the *International Federation of Labour Organizations* concerned with workers' education was established.¹⁴ Its aim was to make preparatory work for an *International Workers' Education Federation*, but it was only in 1945 that this project was eventually realized with the creation of the *International Federation of Workers' Education Associations* (IFWEA).

Looking at WEA's history between 1918-1939 John Atkins has critically observed that despite some efforts for internationalism, such as Greenwood's statement in *The Highway* above, as well as its members' involvement in the international conferences on workers' education, there is overall 'a glaring absence of internationalism and international perspectives' in WEA's documentation concerning its educational and organizational

policy (2003, 125). And yet the WEA's overall vision, its democratic principles of education and most importantly its unique tutorial system profoundly influenced the workers' education movement in the US in the first half of the twentieth century.

Women workers' education in the UK was largely shaped by the WEA educational programmes and projects but was not solely restricted within it. The history of Hillcroft College is a different paradigm. The idea for a Residential College for working women emerged after the Great War and the changes it brought regarding women's role in society. The YWCA National Education Committee made the initial proposal for such a scheme, but it was through voluntary subscriptions, students' contributions, as well as bursaries provided by individuals, companies, as well as universities and schools that the 'National Residential College for Women', as it was initially called, was founded in 1920. According to its 1920 Annual Report the aim of the college was 'to enlarge the vision of its students, to develop their latent capacities for leadership and service and to stimulate their mental and spiritual growth'¹⁵. The report highlighted the fact that vocational training was not amongst its objectives. The college's council included 17 members, 6 of them from the YWCA, 2 from the National Federation of Women Workers and the University of London and one from the Educational Settlement Association, the Kent Education Committee, the National Adult School Union, the National Organization of Girls' Clubs, the Old Students' Association, the WEA and the World Association for Adult Education. The college was initially housed in 'the Holt', a rented building in Beckenham Kent, but in 1925 it moved to the area of Surbiton in South London in its own premises, 'the Gables'. This was a red brick listed building, which was surrounded by 6 acres of land and could offer accommodation for 28 students. It was then that its name changed to 'Hillcroft College'.

The College adopted the motto 'Through Rough Ways to the Stars' and its curriculum included the following subjects: Bible Study, English Composition, The English Novel, English Constitution, Industrial History, Psychology, Biology, Mathematics, Economics, Physiology, French, Music and Handwork. Visiting lecturers from various London Colleges and Schools did most of the teaching. The College also organized a lectures series with invited speakers with topics such as, 'The Value of Economics in developing a Social Sense', lecture given by Miss Christie, senior tutor at the London School of Economics; 'Psychology of Play' by Dr Jane Reany; and 'The Value of Philosophy in Life' by E.S. Hooper, MA, amongst others. Finally the students were taken to several field trips to places such as the Guildhall, the British Museum, St Paul's and the Houses of Parliament. They also visited other colleges and schools and even attended, concerts, operas and theatres in London.¹⁶

When it first opened in February 1920, the College admitted 11 students aged between 18 and 35 years old. Among this first cohort there were a dressmaker and a shop assistant with full bursaries from Debenham's, a domestic worker and a lace mender funded by Reading and Royal Holloway, a jam tester funded by J.E Robertson and Sons and a clerk funded by Notting Hill High School, in total 6 full bursaries. The rest of the group were students who were partly funded by organizations but also contributed to their fees.¹⁷ Apart from the Principal, Fanny Street, there were two members of staff: Ruth Hinder who was a resident tutor and Maber Birtles, the bursar. They were both responsible for the internal management of the college, which was co-operative in nature. According to the 1920 Annual report, all domestic issues were discussed by the House Committee, composed of all members of the College, while the Students' Council was a forum for

students to express their opinion on general policies of the College.¹⁸ The College's first annual report also highlighted the importance of visitors from all over the world, who contributed to the creation of strong international sympathies and understanding. Over the years the College developed and strengthened such international relations particularly with the summer residential schools for women workers in the US. Despite its many influences from the WEA tradition and policy, as well as its connections with educational programmes and institutions outside the WEA, there were two distinctive features for the workers' education movement in the US: strong ties with the American trade unions, as well as women labour organizers' active involvement, as I will further discuss in the next section.

The Politics of Workers' Education in the US

The first signs of workers' education on the other side of the Atlantic emerged in 1845 when the Lowell Female Reform Association was founded in the context of women workers' industrial actions and organization in New England (see Dublin 1994, Walker 2009). The Association launched a wide range of educational and cultural activities including evening courses and public lectures on a variety of topics on science, literature and art, as announced and advertised in their journal, *The Voice of Industry*.¹⁹ Given the richness and vitality of New England's working class intellectual culture, it is no surprise that there was a vibrant literary movement and a rich body of fiction around women workers' in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States, which Sylvia Cook has meticulously studied (2008). Despite the 'Mill Girls' pioneering industrial, educational and cultural activities, the first school for workers, *The Working Men's Institute* was established at John's Hopkins University in 1879. But when in 1901, Walter Vrooman, one of the founders of Ruskin College in the UK proposed the establishment of a similar institution in the US to the American Federation of Labor (AFoL), they did not show any interest. However, the Socialist Party took the challenge and in 1906 the Rand School of Social Science was founded in New York City. It is no surprise that socialism was at the heart of the school's vision and objectives, while politics deeply coloured the directions of the workers' education movement in the US from the very beginning. The Rand School of Social Sciences offered educational programmes for two major trade unions in the US garment industry in the beginning of the twentieth century: the *International Ladies Garment Workers' Union* (ILGWU) and the *Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Association* (ACWA). Both unions soon established their own educational structures and in 1917 ILGWU's educational department became the first recognized institution of workers' education in the US, followed by ACWA two years later. What also emerged in the first decade of the century was the *Women's Trade Union League* (WTUL) whose activities were very much directed to the education of working class women with particular emphasis on their civil and labour rights. As I will discuss throughout the book women active in the US labour movement would move in between the ranks and leading positions of these unions; their involvement was crucial not only in how the movement for workers' education developed, but also in how connections were forged with the UK, France and other countries around the globe.

Thus, unlike France and the UK, where universities had a formative role—through university lectures in France and extra-mural departments and tutorial classes in the UK—it was the trade unions that took the front seat in the US. Their educational programmes included workers' universities, labour colleges, evening and weekend classes,

summer schools, as well as more informal educational activities such as reading groups and writing workshops that I will discuss in detail in Chapter 1. This is not to deny that universities as institutions or through the involvement of their academics did not play a crucial role in the US, but that all such activities were organized, funded and administered by the trade unions, although the Federal government eventually came to support workers' education. In the words of Arthur Gleason, a radical intellectual and journalist who supported workers' education from its very beginning: 'The heart of workers' education [...] the class, financed on trade union money, the teacher a comrade, the method discussion, the subject the social sciences, the aim an understanding of life and the remolding of the scheme of things (1927, 5). This 'dream of a better world' was for Gleason a condition sine qua non of the movement for worker's education, which otherwise 'would fade away in the loneliness and rigor of the effort' (1927, 5).

Gleason's ideas were largely influential in the 1920's boom time for workers' education in the US when more than 300 labour colleges emerged. In this context, 1921 was a particularly outstanding year: the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry opened its doors to its first students; the Brookwood Labor College started a two years' residence programme in Katonah, New York and the Workers' Education Bureau of America (WEB) was formed in New York City. In addition the University of California started a programme specifically designed for workers, an initiative followed by a number of schools for workers at Barnard College, the University of Wisconsin, as well as the *Southern Summer School*, which organized courses at various university campuses throughout the South.

As I will further discuss in Chapter 1 these summer schools and courses went through a range of organizational changes to survive financial, ideological and political pressures that unavoidably erupted through the radical programmes and subversive organizational structures that they adopted. In 1927, the summer schools of Bryn Mawr, Barnard and Wisconsin formed the *Affiliated Summer Schools for Women Workers*. They joined forces to co-ordinate recruitment and fund-raising from the trade unions and the government and to stop competing with each other. However they all suffered from the Depression years, as well as from political antagonisms. Such conflicts emerged from the fact that social change was central in the vision, programmes and directions of workers' education in the US, its ultimate aim being to inspire workers 'to change economic and social conditions so that those who produce shall own the product of their labor',²⁰ as Cohn wrote in the socialist newspaper *Justice* on January 5, 1923.

As an ILGWU labour organizer Cohn was a central figure in the development of the workers' education in the US; her ideas and practices shaped the curricula, literature and overall activities of ILGWU's educational department, the first recognized institution of workers' education in the US. This book has been designed and organized around themes that emerged from my archival research with Cohn's papers at the New York Public Library in the summer of 2012.²¹ While workers' education has been the object of numerous studies, what I argue in this book is that a narrative and auto/biographical approach to the archives of the movement throws fresh light in understanding the subtleties and nuances of its development and directions, particularly highlighting women's involvement and contribution to the intellectual life of the working classes in the first half of the twentieth century.

Education as Action, The Adventure of Education

'Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for each', Hannah Arendt wrote in her essay 'The Crisis in Education' (2006, 193). Although education was never her research field, it was very much at the backdrop of everything she thought and wrote about, given her overall interest in the relation between individuals and human communities. What has historically emerged as a crisis of the human condition for Arendt is not the Marxist alienation of human beings from their labour, but the human alienation from the world. We live in a world that does not feel any more as a home to us, she repeatedly argued throughout her work, since our involvement in the web of human relations and therefore in action is the only way we can feel again 'at home in this world' (1998, 135). It is in this process of 'feeling at home in the world' that education becomes so crucial. Its aim is to enable human beings to know and come in terms with their past, understand their present through an awareness of what their involvement in the web of human relation means and in this way turn a creative eye to the future. After all, human existence for Arendt is an 'everlasting Becoming' (1996, 63) and education is instrumental in its multiple formations, particularly as it becomes the motor for acting and thinking. Thinking and acting are indeed inextricably linked for Arendt and their relation is horizontal rather than vertical: 'my use of the term *vita activa* presupposes that the concern underlying all its activities is not the same as and is neither superior nor inferior to the central concern of the *vita contemplativa*' Arendt has written (1981, 17). What she has highlighted as a problem however is 'the absence of thinking', the fact that very often we have neither the time or the inclination 'to stop and think' (1981, 4). Education thus becomes crucial as a social and cultural milieu where thinking can be cultivated and supported not as a passive state of the mind but as praxis in-the-world-with-others. In this light, understanding as the aim of education is an unending process for Arendt, it both involves and thinking, but it is also the inevitable result of human action, the effect of what human beings do to carve a place for themselves in the world.

Given Arendt's thesis on existence as 'everlasting Becoming' (1996, 63), as well as her interest in the never ending process of understanding as a prerequisite for action, it is not surprising that early on in her work she reflected and drew upon the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher of process: 'in the place of the concept of Being we now find the concept of Process', she emphatically noted in the *Human Condition* (1998, 296). Drawing on the utilitarian philosophical tradition that he was obviously well versed in, Whitehead made the link between the usefulness of understanding and the usefulness of education: 'if education is not useful, what is it?' (1929a, 2) he asked in his essay *The Aims of Education* that was first delivered as an address to the Educational Section of the International Congress of Mathematicians meeting at Cambridge in 1912. But hand in hand with utilitarianism went a concept of education as a process of joy and discovery, immanently entangled in the process of life itself. 'Education is discipline for the adventure of life' he wrote, while research is in itself intellectual adventure. In this context educational spaces should become 'homes of adventure' (1929b, 98) and imaginative learning: 'The combination of imagination and learning normally requires some leisure, freedom from restraint, freedom from harassing worry, some variety of experiences and the stimulation of other minds diverse in opinion and diverse in equipment' (1929b, 97.). Adventure was indeed a crucial concept for Whitehead, figuring prominently in the title of one of his last books: *Adventures of Ideas* (1967). Thus while Arendt highlighted responsibility and love as two components of the educational praxis, Whitehead

configured education as an art and an adventure and argued that its aim should be to enable students understand Life in all its manifestations.

Whitehead's thought was formative in John Dewey's educational philosophy highlighting the importance of experience in engaging with the world and its problems (see Dewey 1937). Dewey's ideas of education as an open platform cultivating the ability to think as a condition for democratic and participatory action, underpinned the overall movement for workers' education in Europe and the US in the first half of the twentieth century. It was not only through his writings and ideas that Dewey influenced the development of workers' education. In the context of his philosophical pragmatism, he actively participated in the governing bodies and advisory boards of the various US educational institutions for workers that erupted in the 1920's. Dewey intervened in several crises that the workers' education movement went through, defending the left-labour organizers' right to free speech and expression.

Cohn was in frequent correspondence with Dewey and drew on his ideas when organizing the ILGUEW's educational and cultural activities. But Dewey was also a comrade who she would ask to come and talk at the conferences she was organizing or wider events she was contributing to. On January 19, 1932 she wrote a letter to invite him to the Washington Pardon Tom Mooney²² Mass Meeting and Conference: 'Your presence can be so helpful at this juncture that we feel certain you will attend the conference. Should you find it impossible to be present, would you send a message to be read at the conference?'²³ she asked. From his part Dewey wrote to Cohn on February 7, 1933 to invite her to a conference 'to discuss the problem of independent political action'²⁴ at Brookwood College, during a turbulent period that the college was under attack on allegations of indoctrinating its students into Marxism and communism, as I will further discuss in Chapter 1.

Political action was thus at the heart of the movement for workers' education in France, the UK, the US and elsewhere in Europe and across the globe, although there were different manifestations of the political within different national borders and traditions. But as already discussed above, it was not only action but also adventure that overall shaped the conceptual framework of workers' education. It is thus around these two important notions that the analysis of Cohn's public and personal documents revolves. More specifically, Chapter 1 examines the importance of an Arendtian approach to the analysis of women workers' personal and political narratives in bringing together, work, stories and action. In fleshing out the narrative and auto/biographical approach, Chapter 2 draws on Cohn's personal letters highlighting three particular bodies of correspondence with her friends and comrades, Evelyn Preston and Theresa Wolfson in the US, as well as Marion Phillips in the UK. Chapter 3 focuses on the importance of ethics, aesthetics and politics in women workers' education, as well as in their wider intellectual and cultural lives. Drawing on a range of very interesting photographs in Cohn's papers, Chapter 4 discusses insights that emerge from an imaged based research in the history of women workers' education. In the Conclusion I bring together the analytical themes of the book particularly highlight women workers' 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) within the assemblage of workers' education.

Read on! The adventure of women workers' education is about to begin.

¹ Bibliothèque Nationale de France/ Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal/ Fonds Enfantin ou Fonds Saint-Simonien/ MS7608/ Correspondance du Globe (Dames)/ Deroin (Mme)/ Profession de foi/22 (1-44), (BnF/BdA/FE/MS7608/CdG/Deroin/22). Also, transcribed in Riot-Sarcey 1992, 128.

² I have discussed Deroin's life and work at length in my study of nineteenth century Parisian seamstresses (Tamboukou 2015). See also Pilbeam 2003; Serrière 1981, Ranvier 1897.

³ Also known as the 'bourgeois monarchy', this is the period of the reign of Louis-Philippe (1830–1848) who was brought to the throne after the 1830 July revolution that led to the abdication of Charles X and the fall of the Bourbon monarchy. For historical studies about the July Monarchy 1830–1848, see among others: Pinkney 1973; Pilbeam 1983; Popkin 2010.

⁴ There have been many historical studies on these movements, whose influences on women workers' lives I have reviewed and discussed elsewhere in my work (see Tamboukou 2015).

⁵ Guindorf, 'Response' in *Apostolat des Femmes-La Femme Nouvelle* 1(12), 144-47, February 1833.

⁶ Suzanne Voilquin, *Tribune des Femmes-La Femme Nouvelle*, 2 (11), 182, April 1834.

⁷ For an extended discussion of the movement for popular education in France, see Jaquet-Francillon 1995, Christen 2013.

⁸ See article on the success of Legouvé's course, *La Voix des Femmes* (5), 2, March 25, 1848. Legouvé's lectures were eventually published in a volume entitled *Histoire morale des femmes* (1864).

⁹ Mimi Pinson was the title of a poem, by Alfred de Musset first published in 1845. It later inspired an operetta in 1915 and a film in 1924. Its heroine was Mimi Pinson, a Parisian working class girl who sings beautifully and makes men fall in love with her.

¹⁰ See amongst others, Mansbridge 1920, Price 1924, Stocks 1953, Jennings 1978, Fieldhouse et al., 1996, Roberts 2003.

¹¹ Agnes Maude Royden Papers, NA412, Women's Library@ LSE. Cited in Munby (2003, 217).

¹² *The Highway* xi, no.10, July 1919, 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, xv, no 1, October 1922, 12.

¹⁴ *World workers' education; embodying report of the second International conference on workers' education held at Oxford from August 15th to 17th, 1924*, 51. Published in Amsterdam in 1925 by the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU).

¹⁵ College's First Annual Report, p.13 available at:

http://www.hillcroft.ac.uk/media/documents/Annual_Report_1920.pdf [Accessed 20-3-2016].

¹⁶ For a full list of these lectures and visits, see the College's First Annual Report, p.3.

¹⁷ See Annual Report, 5.

¹⁸ See Annual Report, 3.

¹⁹ See for example: <http://www.industrialrevolution.org/lectures-and-learning.html#topoflecturesandlearning> [Accessed 3-12-2015].

²⁰ 'New Year Thoughts', *Justice*, January 5, 1923, 10.

²¹ I am grateful to the British Academy for a small grant [SG112079] that enabled me to conduct this research.

²² Tom Mooney was a political activist and labour leader who was wrongly convicted of the 1916 San Francisco bombing and served 22 years in prison before he was eventually pardoned in 1939 (see Ward 1983).

²³ Cohn to Dewey, letter dated January 19, 1932. Fannia Mary Cohn papers, MssCol 588, Correspondence. Manuscripts and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. (FCP/NYPL/Cor.).

²⁴ Dewey to Cohn, letter dated February 7, 1933 (*ibid.*).