

[The following is an account written in the late 1990's in which I tried to assess how my life and work are inter-twined. It is a personal and informal document. Please treat as such. Further reflections on these themes can be found under 'Life: Important Peoples', 'Life: Important Places', the autobiographical materials behind the 'Savage Wars of Peace' and elsewhere on the web-site.]

The personal and intellectual background to individualism (1977) and further developments.

In the few weeks before I sat down to write **Individualism** I wrote a letter to my mother which hinted at some of the institutional/material features of the background which were particularly important as **necessary**, if not sufficient, causes of the writing of that book. (See letters) I particularly drew attention to the fact that the barn was now converted and provided a wonderful place to layout my books/think great thoughts. The descriptions of that summer also suggest that the awful emotional tangles over the children were beginning to straighten themselves out also as we bonded in the caravan and Sarah began to relax and we built a home together. Thus 1977 summer was beautiful, relaxed and I was able to **concentrate** and dream and explore mentally in ways which had really not been possible ever since the upheavals of leaving Dent. Before that, work was a narcotic, a grind; now it could be a delight, a rapid flight of the mind. This shows how the emotional and also the **physical** conditions (the barn etc) need to be right to encourage that introspective and complex process of creative work. The powerful forces which I have described above were already present, but in a simplified way. It is perhaps worth reflecting on the situation in July 1977.

At that time the Japanese strand was, of course, missing, though I think I was dimly aware from Bloch, etc. that Japan's feudal and island nature made it a place I should look at. It floated right at the edge of my consciousness. The Nepal back-cloth, however, was almost as strong as now. My traumatic and deeply unhappy time in Nepal, 15 months from 1968-1970, is well recorded in diaries etc. Although the emotional involvement had been less intense, it had nevertheless given me in some ways an even deeper sense of the 'miseries'/difficulties of 'normal' pre-industrial societies. The physical conditions of fieldwork were **far** more primitive and the gap between Nepal and the miraculous west, to which I returned with a shock of relief in February 1970, were even greater than they are now. I had certainly found my 'other' world and it was almost all I could do to absorb it. I disciplined some of it into the dry tables and structure of **Resources and Population**, and tied up with the unhappiness of divorce, which was associated with it, tried to put it out of my mind. But currents are no less strong for being locked up deep underground, and in some ways what happened in 1977 can be seen, Coleridge-like, as partially a side-effect of the collision of the English evidence I was accumulating with what I had felt/seen in Nepal. Nepal, although not a true peasantry, certainly, showed up the alternative **contrast** to England.

Meanwhile the work on the English current was probably at its peak. In terms of personal experiences, I was trying to cope with two central English institutions - English family life, the setting up with Sarah of a very 'English' type of isolated, WASP, family life, rather different from my upbringing - a reigning in of emotion and spontaneity, a rationalization of personal life. This caused tensions which are worked out in **Individualism**. Secondly there was coming to terms with Cambridge. Of course I was familiar through long years at Oxford and elsewhere with much of the codes. But the 5 years or so when I had been at SOAS, Nepal and then in Yorkshire had distanced me from them. King's and much later the Department of Social Anthropology at the end of Meyer Fortes/Jack Goody's reign was a difficult place for a stranger to intrude on. One kept stepping on unexpected cracks in the pavement and bears would pop out. I had to learn to be a different kind of native - let alone to be a teaching anthropologist. These tensions and difficulties were part of the 'English' phase.

A second was in the research field. Sarah and I had come together by way of work on English historical documents. Parallel to my work in Thak, was an intense burst of activity learning to analyse and gather together vast amounts of material on the history of England and, in particular, of two English communities - Kirkby Lonsdale in Yorkshire and Earls Colne in Essex. Why did we work on this? Of course, in order to answer this question properly one would have to go into the whole evolution of English historiography, little bits of which I have discussed in **Reconstructing Historical Communities** and elsewhere. For example, the move away from centre to periphery, from political to social history, the re-organization of record offices and the wealth of materials they revealed. What one might call the W.G. Hoskins/Blake movement in English history, coupled with a parallel movement in demography with the development of family reconstitution etc. as well as funding opportunities and so on, made it seem both interesting and **right** to try a really intensive study of English villages. So we did so, and bonded round this process and an even more microscopic task - the editing of Josselin's diary.

Thus a vast amount of **data** had been accumulated on two fronts - from a Nepalese 'village study' and from two English village studies. They were explicitly linked in various projects as a three-way study, a comparison of East and West. The problem was how to analyse them, bring them into a common frame. In some ways this was the lurking problem lying unrecognized in my mind when I sat down to write what I thought would be a short article on English peasantry, which exploded in my mind. Thus **Individualism** could be seen as the collision of **two** tides or currents Assam/India/Nepal on one side and England on the other. **Individualism** described the miraculous escape of England from peasantry, using a method of contrast, ideal type models based on more than Nepal etc. The full account, in so far as I can reconstruct it, is in the preface and Appendix on method in **Culture of Capitalism**. My present book (**Savage Wars**) has a similar two tides flowing through it, each deepened with time. The English side now has far greater knowledge. Earls Colne is finished etc. Likewise the Nepalese side has been deepened by many visits/re-visits to Nepal, plus the experience of reconstructing yet another alternative, namely the Nagas, to which we devoted about 4 years or so in the period 1986-1990. Thus the contrast and clashes have been deepened. But the situation has been further complicated/enriched by the case of **Japan**, which fits on neither side of the contrast, neither ancient nor modern, western or eastern, us or them, capitalist or pre-capitalist. That is what is so intriguing about it. While **Individualism** sought to probe to the heart of English society, the central institution of private, individual, property, the present book is trying to do something similar, but in relation to **two** complex civilizations, namely England and Japan. It is hence a much more difficult book to write and think about. What added infrastructure was available as I sat down, once again, to approach the problem?

Absorption of energies 1977-1993; University, Computers, Garden etc.

Another improvement was in one's structural position in relation to the Department and King's. In 1977 I had just begun to become involved in University administration - at that time I was Secretary of the Faculty Board and found it a considerable strain since I did not understand the system. Between then and about July 1993, some 16 years, I was involved in a great deal of administration and anxiety over the Department. During Jack Goody's last few years, Jack increasingly tried to withdraw from administration and a certain amount of the burden fell on me. Ernest Gellner disliked administration and I again found myself being involved a good deal, informally at first, and then at the end, from about 1990, formally as Head of Department. The Department is particularly exhausting to run. It is too small to run on proper bureaucratic lines, too big to continue to run in the benevolent dictatorship way of Meyer Fortes. One has to lead by example - as did Jack and does Marilyn. The background anxiety of the 'buck stops here' variety, which I bore, as it seemed, for about half of the period between about 1978 and 1993, is very undermining to proper concentration. Occasionally one can switch off, especially

away from Cambridge. But while around, one is only one 'phone call away from some crisis. All this disappeared with the arrival of Marilyn Strathern in September 1993, who lifted all the burden off my shoulders.

Thus the books written between about 1978 and 1993 were written, so to speak with one eye looking over one's shoulder. The shorter essay was possible, with a week or two's concentration, and the surface, technical work such as **Reconstructing Historical Communities**. What was difficult was longer, brooding, creative work.

On top of this, there was a succession of Faculty Committees - e.g. **ad hominem**s etc. and a lot of time spent on ESRC national committees. At the worst point, almost a month a year was being lost to the ESRC postgraduate awards committee. It was all useful learning, but at a creative cost. The usual load of teaching - PhD and M.Phil supervision, undergraduate teaching and lecturing was no real problem as much of it feeds back directly into one's work and gave one a chance to try out ideas. But the Readership in 1981 and even more Professorship in 1991 reduced the teaching load very considerably.

A final enormous absorber of energies was advanced communications technologies. Between about 1973 and 1993 I was almost constantly involved in trying to develop new computer systems for the retrieval of information. At first it was relational databases with Charles Jardine and Tim King, later probabilistic systems and videodiscs with Martin Porter and Michael Bryant. It was all great fun, but several years of productive work were put into trying to adapt the MUSCAT system for ordinary use and to writing a manual for it. All very draining, and even more so for Sarah who bore the brunt of the data processing in all the projects.

Finally, a good deal of energy was absorbed between about 1981 and 1990 in setting up Bracton Books. It is difficult to remember how much time we both spent collecting books, moving them from shelf to shelf, finding them and so on. The situation again stabilized in about 1990, partly because the rapid period of growth and hence book-shelving ended, partly because Penny Lang came in and took over some of the searching and other work.

Another change was in the house and garden. Between our arrival in 1976 and about 1992, we were putting a great deal of energy into house and garden. The planting of trees, cutting back of woods, digging up and cultivating a **very** large vegetable garden, altering over time the various barns and sheds into work-places all these absorbed a lot of marginal energy - particularly on Sarah's part. (See the aerial photos, e.g. to see the changes in sheds). The last effort in this line was when the caravan was dismembered and contents of the shed behind the bindery removed to make the Morse house in the winter and spring of 1994. But the amount of time and effort had decreased considerably from about 1990 when we finished the main barns and had run down the vegetable garden. Combined with a desire not to mow the whole field, but just to mow **paths** through much of it (based on Sissinghurst), this cut gardening from an activity which used to take about 1 day a week and fill one with guilt, to an activity taking only about 2-3 hours a week, as one felt like it. One **relaxed**; even the previous desperate effort to store most of the apples disappeared and one let them drop and feed the birds. It was this letting go of the unessentials and concentration on the essentials that was most important here as in much of my work.

Involvement in the Department.

The other Cambridge world is the Department. Between about 1975 and 1993 this was the focus of both Sarah and my life, particularly because of the mainframe computer. For year after year, and particularly summer after summer, we would go in to input and organize huge masses of data - first for Earls Colne and later for the Nagas. We were working with small group projects, teams, from about 1973 through to about 1992. Part of this was the longest-running ESRC project of all time, devoted to the study of Earls

Colne in Essex, c.1972-1983. Later it was the Naga project, c.1986-1992, which again involved a team, this time with Julian Jacobs and Anita Herle. Being in the Department was fun, but again meant that a good deal of energy was side-tracked, for instance into dealing with things summer after summer when one's colleagues were away.

Since about 1992, however, the work in the Department has absorbed less time. Perhaps one can look at the watershed as the traumatic spring of 1992(?) when my room was completely gutted because mercury had been found in the building and everything was moved out and then back in. I was acting Head of Department then and 'camped' in the Professor's room. In an invisible way when I returned to my room - which had been beautifully recreated by Louise de la Gorgendiere from photographs, though it **looked** the same, it was a different room. It was now no longer **nature**, something which had evolved with Sarah and as a living shell and home for our various projects. It was now something slightly **alien** and artificial. Dis-assembled and then re-assembled. Slight alterations in the positions of filing-cabinets and books etc., a new carpet, all gave a sense of **distance** and re-invention of a tradition. Suddenly what had been a living home, felt more like an 'office'. It became increasingly the place from which I **organized** other things - contacted/arranged/answered mail/saw some people. Sarah also tended to use it only alongside her work as a magistrate. No doubt this will change again. But the time when we even spread down into the Rivers Archive in the basement began to recede somewhat. The close work with Humphrey Hilton also declined a bit, especially as he became ill and finally, tragically, died.

Bounded but leaky; the tension between creativity and data.

I wrote about the problems of this tension, the necessity for a 'bounded but leaky' situation as Gerry puts it, in more detail in my thoughts prompted by **Remains of the Day** by Ishiguro. Put in physical terms the Department is too **leaky** for connective thought. Constant data and interruptions is **stimulating** and important, but if it is unceasing, then nothing can grow. On the other hand, Lode or even my room in King's, if continuously inhabited, is **too** bounded. There is not enough data coming in or stimulus. As with many things mental, the idea is to get a balance. Parts of each day/week/month/year as bounded for creativity; other times, deliberate leaks. I try to do this at each of these levels, taking notice of Tocqueville's observations on the matter and others. At the day level, the morning is bounded, the afternoon leaky - whether spent seeing people or reading others work or whatever. The morning looks inward, the afternoon outwards. At the level of the week, after about five or six days of intense concentration, as in writing, one needs a break - a trip to Yorkshire to see Sarah's mother, a visit to London, a visit to a bookshop, or just a day off. During term there are **too** many of these days off, involved in committees etc. In the long vacations/sabbaticals there is a danger in the opposite direction - too much isolation.

The search for new data, creation of 'leaking' can occur in different ways. I can do it at Lode artificially in various ways - for instance by asking people to read and comment on drafts of my book - particularly Sarah. Too much leakiness and comment is distracting, none at all leaves me precariously isolated. Or I can do one of my periodic scouring of my and Bracton Books shelves to see what I have missed - often an extremely productive form of leak, revealing new data of a very rich kind. More drastic and often most productive is to go away from Cambridge altogether. Trips to Yorkshire or London or Hay are invigorating, but do not change the basic contours. Even trips to Denmark or Amsterdam only ruffle the surface. It is our longer trips to Nepal, India and Japan which are most valuable. They flood the mind with new data. It is not just a leak, but a **tide** sweeping into the subterranean reservoirs of the mind. It feeds the growing ideas for weeks to come, in totally unexpected ways.

Another form of 'leak', of course are children. While they were at home, the relationships with Inge and Astrid were a source of an enormous amount of extra 'data', some of which I still use quite explicitly in my kinship lectures. But they were, of course,

also a considerable consumer of time and energy - and at times, as a work-obsessed step-father, I did not give them enough of this. Now that they have been gone for some years, like the vegetable garden, running the Department, setting up home or whatsoever, one notices the **absence** and realizes that it has effects - more boundaries, less leakage. Fortunately, the emotional loss of human warmth is, for an academic, partly made up for by constant involvement in younger lives through teaching. And in our case is also recompensed by our family in Nepal. They constitute an almost perfectly bounded but leaky system. They are there and we here. So we do not worry about them all the time. But messages flow back and forth and once a year a great release of emotion occurs and we become **engaged** again. I am sure that this process is also extremely important. It is all too easy to become emotionally shrivelled up - with pursuit of power, wealth or even knowledge. Nepal puts all that in perspective and refreshes parts of the mind and body which neither England or Japan can touch. In particular it allows one to show love in an unguarded and innocent way, and to have this reciprocated, in a way which is becoming increasingly difficult in the west. Just to have children run up to one and hold one's hand, to see the pleasure on Bhuwansing's face, to delight in a dance or wedding, to be able to give and receive pleasure. All this is a great privilege. One has very complicated and ambivalent attitudes towards even one's closest relatives - mother, siblings, daughters. And Sarah and I differ in our attitudes because of our structural position. But with our Nepalese family we are united and it is not an ambivalent attitude. There is no tension or contradiction.

The feeding of the underground reservoir.

So where have I reached in this strange flow of unconsciousness? One way of putting it, in terms of the Xanadu metaphor, is as follows. I have so far been trying to explore two sets of conditions. The first is the flowing sets of data which have entered my consciousness/unconsciousness over the last thirty years or so, anthropology, Nepal, Cambridge, Japan and so on. These might be likened to rivers pouring into an underground reservoir. What happens then to this reservoir depends very much on various things - the nature of the wells, water pipes, etc. constructed on the surface. These are the things like retrieval systems, methods of ordering space and time, social relationships, family life, Penny's help, Sarah's enormous input of energy etc. which then direct the underground lake into productive or unproductive channels. Some of these can be explicitly improved - for instance by better organization, more care, hard work. Many are largely fortuitous - like meeting Gerry and his support. All one can do is to be open to improvements. In a rough diagram, one might have...

(See fig. showing various attempts to draw up, as creative acts - books etc. i.e. like wells. These and the connecting pipes are influenced by all those things noted above.)

For Wallace, Darwin, Tocqueville or others, the data streams were different. What was important was that they were varied, rich, numerous and exciting.

The accumulation and cross-indexing of data.

The **barn**, which had been crucial for **Individualism** was now a far 'richer' place. Just in terms of data it had been improved immeasurably in two principal ways. Firstly the **amount** of data available, that is to say the **number** of books/articles/xeroxes as between 1977 and 1993 had probably gone up by a factor of ten, from 2,000 to 20,000. No longer the need to hunt for classics by Adam Smith or Marx. They were all on the shelves. Furthermore, a great deal of this had been **absorbed** in one way or the other - by teaching it, reading it, discussing it. Tocqueville or Weber or Gellner or Marx or whatever were more deeply absorbed through various writings. Cambridge and England had become more internalized also.

The second enrichment was through methods of **recall**. For **Individualism** much of the work could be done off the top of one's head. For a wider work, one would have to draw, over the years, on numerous sources. The difficulty was one of storage memory recall. The familiar problem was that of the full glass - every new bit of evidence driving out an old one. It is a problem which has defeated almost all those with paper retrieval systems and at some point I shall document their fashions - whether Marrett, Acton, K. Thomas (or Brian Harrison?). This looked like my fate in the 1980s - more and more 'data', slipping away from one in a hand-indexing system that proved less and less wieldy over time. The solution to this problem, as always, was unexpected and unintended.

We originally designed and built up a relational database system for the Earls Colne project and spent immense effort on it; very little **directly** came of it, except in a subterranean way. Then we switched to the probabilistic system developed by Martin Porter for the Nagas. Again at first this seemed useful for something else. But this development towards the end took a different turn. This was again the result of various coincidences. I had invested an **enormous** effort in developing a useful **tool**, CDSI, and was loath to abandon it. I had been introduced to Gerry who put a great deal of support, financial and otherwise, into the final phases. Penny Lang was working part-time for Sarah and Clive and needed extra employment. So I thought that it would be interesting/useful to have the roughly 30,000 'cards' in my subject index put into a probabilistic database. This was started in ??? and by the end of 1993, when I was about to start my article on 'Population', the large bulk had been done. I thus had, by that time, about 40,000 'facts'/'relations' in accessible form and as links into my various books. In a way the database was only partly about what it seemed to be about, the data in books etc. At a deeper level, it represented accumulated interests and passions and observations and hints and guesses over the whole period from when I started it, in the second year of graduate work (or before) and the present. Even if, as with Earls Colne, it was not used **directly**, the construction of it, the themes in it, etc. had an invisible and powerful influence on my thoughts.

One thing it allowed was the breaking down of barriers. Books occupy physical space, as do xeroxes. They tend to be bounded by discipline, paradigm frame etc. But my database could lay across boundaries, linking disciplines, periods, insights, in the way a human mind works. I was creating a vast spider's web, which allowed one to cross otherwise empty spaces - to link, correct, guess, confirm.

To have all this available at the touch of a switch/button, was amazing - but possible thanks to Gerry, Penny, Sarah's book business etc. Like the indexing of my Thak films, it did not make the films - but it made the making of the films possible. I doubt whether I either **would** or **could** have set out to write **Savage Wars** without this data-rich and highly charged/integrated environment.

The atmosphere and resources of the barn was enhanced in various ways. As Orwell put it, he who controls the past controls the present, he who controls the present controls the future. It seems likely that another important element was the increasing control of my past through the creation of decent indexing/archiving systems both in the Department and, particularly, in our attic. Again I did not need constantly to go to all the accumulating papers and files, though occasionally an earlier draft or unanswered question was useful. It was the mental security and stimulus of having the past so well controlled and sorted out that was useful. Not just papers, but physical objects laid out in space, and not just in glass cabinets in the attic, but also in all our objects laid out in the house and elsewhere. The worry and confusion of moving, of not finding things, all was removed. Add to this Sarah's constant attention to financial detail, which relieved one both of the burden of managing money, and also all money worries, plus Gerry's generosity which made technical equipment (ample computers and later a xerox machine) no problem and again one can see that the situation had been deepened and made much richer.

Improving the use of time and space, 1970-1993.

I suppose one was gradually learning to separate out things and apply energy where, and only where, it was needed. For example, in relation to filing. Previously I had spent inordinate amounts of time trying not only to **keep** all documents, but to file them as I kept them. Now I developed (c.1990?) a new filing strategy which combined the filing of all very important/likely to be needed documents - basic financial papers, postgraduates, references, committee papers etc. But everything else which one did not want to throw away, but was hardly likely to need, was placed in various drawers and then periodically emptied into boxes dated x - y, for future excavation if needed. This saved a great deal of time.

Another thing I learnt as late as the 1990s was not to **rush** so much. Much of the tension of earlier life came out of a **fight** with time. But I began to realize the wisdom of the two adages - 'Work expands to fill the time available' - hence, work less, spend less time on it and more will seem to get done. And the variant on the Dickensian wisdom: 'Ten hours work, nine hours in which to do it - misery. Nine hours work, ten hours in which to do it - happiness.' In other words, always allow a little **extra** time - set out with a few minutes to spare, do not cram in **too** many people into an afternoon, allow time to dawdle and walk. One will then both **enjoy** life and do things better.

Another thing I discovered more and more was how not only to economize on time and effort, but also to organize **space** better. This has always interested me because I realized dimly that the way we arrange the space around us will have an enormous effect on our creativity in various mysterious ways. There are various aspects to this. One concerns work space. I cannot work in a clutter, so my desks are always book benches which, until I start work, are kept clear - but with all that is needed at hand. I increasingly developed different **places** where I did different kinds of work. My room in King's was basically for quiet **reading** -- of theses, essays etc., preparation of lectures, just before I gave them, and for meeting people and teaching. It is a white room with no 'phone, allowing complete concentration and allowing, in its ceremonial simplicity but impressive atmosphere, a sort of strange hierarchy. It gave me, and I hope students, a feeling of a **special** relationship out of space and time. Latterly I have been adding to this by giving visitors **tea** (or coffee) and a kind of mini tea-ceremony. (I notice Marilyn also does this to put people at ease). As well as my King's room, the King's **environs** are important to my thought processes. Before lectures I usually read through my notes and then walk along the Backs, or round King's garden, which allows me to reflect more widely and get the arguments better sorted out. I also go into the lecture fresh and eager to try out loud the argument (which I have been having in my mind) in a conversation with my students. This is in some ways a parallel to my walks round the garden at Lode. Thus King's, as an **ensemble**, is about **teaching** above all - and meeting, on neutral ground, visiting scholars, former students, and others. I also use the **outer** room of Gibbs, since Christopher Morris died, as a place for over-flow books from the library at Lode, with the hope that (unlike Needham and Keynes, who never saw their books re-united), one day they may all return to Lode...

Organization of space and time in Lode; the art of memory.

The organization of space at Lode became more complex. There were various areas. The house was for relaxing and entertaining. It should not be too cluttered. Housework and energies should be kept to a minimum. Re-thatching in c.1992 made it snug. The re-organization following the final departure of Astrid and Inge was given symbolic expression by putting wood in their rooms - wooden walls and ceilings and general refurbishment which turned them from little girls rooms into 'guest' rooms. The smaller became a poetry room. The larger housed large art books and particularly books on Japan. A simple edit suite for editing our Nepal videos, or rather indexing them, was set up for 'winter evenings' in the larger room, which also contained paper-back literature

from around the world. Our bedroom remained a place where hard-back literature and a collection of our writings is kept. The installation of a shower in c.1993 altered the pattern of time a little: the ideal pattern was news 9-9.30, shower etc. to c.9.50, reading for an hour in bed. Up at 7 a.m. and starting work, at Lode or Cambridge, at about 8. Coffee break at 11, simple 'bun' lunch at 1 p.m., working to about 3, something different, perhaps in the garden, 3-4.30 (including tea), then work 4.30-6.30, then to feed the fish, supper music and news.

The ritual of feeding the fish began to emerge after Ron made a fish-pond in c.May 1993. Again it was linked to our growing interest in Japan. Not only did it change the focus of our garden, pulling us down frequently to the far end, but it proved very therapeutic to watch them and all the pond life (frogs etc.) Sarah, in particular, found it absorbing. It was about this time, in fact, as the strain of work on the Naga project decreased, that Sarah noticeably relaxed. Part of her interest shifted to the garden and she spent much more time pruning, planting and watching. In fact we both, from this time, became more and more aware of the important effects of a beautiful 'paradise' or garden on one's creative work. The re-building of the barns had made a beautiful Mediterranean-style enclosed court-yard in which figs, grapes and roses flourished as never before, The discovery of a well and opening out of a 'patio' by the back door made it possible to live half out of doors through the increasingly hot summers. The explicit creation of a Darwinian 'thinking path' or Zen 'philosopher's path' winding through the wood, past the pond, up a narrow avenue of ash, round by the hazel nuts and back through the apple orchard and garden, were all parts of an increasing realization of the **integration** of spaces. Even the increased number of jig-saws on the barn roof, which took me into foreign lands by way of Breughel, were part of the re-construction. The creation of the Morse house, so cool and elegant and fresh, by Ron in the summer of 1994 was another modification with all sorts of implicit consequences. For instance, I now do much reading and writing there - and am indeed writing this sitting gazing out of it at the various trees even now!

Another aspect of space is related to Gerry's idea that all human activity is about the movement of atoms in space. Much of my life seems to be a matter of moving information about. Thus I have developed in each of my numerous workspaces - on a corner of a desk at King's; on a ledge of a filing cabinet in the Department, on the top of a book-case in the barn, on the top of a chest in the house, a place where I put things which need to move elsewhere. I look out for things there and they flow round and round until they sink into their natural home - waiting to be brought up to the surface as needed. Having little piles of tiny 'great thoughts' cards is an important part of this - I can quickly note that, in reverse, something needs to be **recalled** from where it now is - an income tax document from my room in the Department, a book from King's or whatever. This then moves down the system. It is like a constant, tiny, Kula ring system - objects moving one way - cards moving the other recalling objects. The designation of space and use of scraps takes away the pressure on the **mind** which does not have to spend its time worrying about these things - they 'pop up', almost automatically.

Suspended judgments and the composting of ideas.

Another important technique is the development of what one might call the 'pending tray' or method of 'suspended judgment'. Bertrand Russell, I think it was, who said that the 'suspended judgment' was the greatest invention of the twentieth century. All is provisional; because we do not **yet** know the answer, it does not mean that an answer is unavailable. An important distinction between science and religion. In my case this has both a practical and wider manifestation. In practical terms it means that 'choses en action' as the lawyers call it, things which are unresolved and cannot, now, be resolved, need to be put on one side, to be dealt with later. This can be anything from a request for sabbatical leave, which one knows one needs to make in the following term, to what sort of provision one will try to make to help with one's mother in years to come. Two strategies are needed. A physical 'pending tray', or a number of them, needs to be made

so that things can be put on one side, but do not completely disappear for ever. I have such 'pending' trays in my desk (top left drawer) in the barn, and the Department office (middle tray - as by convention). But at a deeper level, one needs such an approach to bigger problems - whether they are personal (as with family) or to do with work - how is one to explain this or that, or to use this or that material.

One aspect of this which is of interest is the concept of the **maturing** of ideas in the pending trays. The pending tray has here become more like a **cellar**, where the wine is maturing. Indeed I came across recently an amusing account, in relation to Judge Wendell Holmes in America. He had originally given his judgments too quickly and alarmed his fellow judges who called them 'superficial'. So he wrote the judgment out straight away, but then put it in a drawer and produced it several years later when it was hailed as 'brilliant'. This he ironically called maturing it 'in the wood' (as with wine) - the wooden drawer. My view is that, in fact, there **is** something more positive than this. When one looks at the article or problem again, after it has been composted/stored in the bin, there have been **chemical** changes. Partly the world has moved on and it looks different. Partly one has had new thoughts. Anyway, when it is taken out again, it all looks better. And often the problem has mysteriously disappeared.

Of course this approach has been much explored in terms of **short-term** pending of problems - putting them on one side at night and finding the solution the next morning. (See **Originality**). But what I am talking about is much **longer** term. In fact, a number of my books have **emerged** in this way. For example, the cases on which **Justice and Mare's Tale** were based were 'laid down' some ten or so years earlier. Likewise, what finally emerged as **Marriage and Love**, took some fifteen years or so to 'mature' from my M.Phil. thesis to the final book. One should not, and indeed cannot, rush these things. On a smaller scale, it is often the case that one knows that one has come as far as one can by purely logical and conscious thought. For example this was my case with the failure to understand why witchcraft/magic declined in the seventeenth century. I gave up the problem, as did Keith Thomas. But when I returned to it again about 20 years later, it all seemed fairly obvious. It had been maturing 'in the wood'. Or again, I gave up the problem of the origins of modern property in the Germanic woods at the end of **Individualism**. Only when, a few weeks ago, I sat down to write an essay for Chris Hann's collection, did I see how it could be re-arranged so that a much more satisfactory explanation could be put forward. In both cases, suspending the problem - in each case over a period of 15 or so years, gave the mind time to find a solution.

Even in my film-making it helps. I 'make-up' films very quickly. I look on them as 'drafts', one preliminary way of saying things - provisional and a sketch, to be improved on later. In many ways this approach, which is now possible because film-making technology has improved so much and the video and editing-suite has altered our relation to the finished product, is also true of writing and the computer. I can write all of this, in a rather higgledy-piggledy manner, moving in unexpected directions and leaping from personal to academic, or from trivial to less trivial, without worrying about it being near some final draft. It can go into a computer as a 'provisional' draft and then will be modified and go through draft after draft. It gives one a feeling of freedom and spontaneity.

Writing methods; from typewriter via computers to the pen. [this section also appears in the section on the background to the writing of 'Savage Wars' of peace]

Even in my method of writing, I have developed methods which try to preserve the spontaneity. Perhaps the break-through was in the writing of **Individualism**. The idea is to let the 'muse' take one where one will try not to spend **any** attention to the recording medium. **Individualism** was partly typed on my old electric portable typewriter. But only partly. Many of the most important things were added with coloured (felt-tip) pens. This allowed spontaneity - and gave intrigue and pleasure to the typist, Mary Wraith. The work became a sort of collage - a rapid application of paint around certain central

themes, with shading and amendments rapidly executed. The 'brush' and canvas are particularly important and I have found the tension between writing, typing and computing very productive.

Short reviews and articles can sometimes be typed into the computer. But more serious work, I find, needs to be written out in long-hand. For a while after **Individualism** I tried better **typing**, to speed up things. Thus **Justice** was typed on a I.B.M. and re-typed, a number of times. It worked, but an awful lot of energy was wasted in typing and re-writing. The result is that the book is only a partial success. There was too little **thought** and too much effort.

My next major book was **Marriage**. I tried typing this again and again and my filing cabinet has numerous lectures and drafts, all of them unsatisfactory. So finally, I sat down in the summer of 1986 and wrote the whole book, using my paper card system (the last book I wrote like that) by hand. Fortunately, Sarah was prepared to decipher my awful, miniscule, hand and to turn it into a typed text -no doubt cutting out a good deal on the way and unscrambling the logic, as my mother had done while I was away in Nepal and she was re-writing **Family Life of Ralph Josselin** for me in the Hebrides. I could, of course, have done it in due course myself. But teaching terms would have meant it took a number of years - and was less good. The writing in long-hand on sheets of paper with a pen means that **all** of one's attention goes on the **ideas**. Even with the best of computers and word-processors, part of one's attention is on the machine - fiddling with typing mistakes, worrying about losing the copy, trying to fit into decent-size paragraphs etc. etc.

I had thus moved from typing everything on an old typewriter, (**Witchcraft, Justice**), through a mixed mode of typing and hand-annotations (**Individualism**, to a certain extent **Culture**) to purely hand-written (**Marriage**) first drafts. (What happened later, once the ideas have crystallized, is slightly less important). Shorter articles of a different kind were increasingly written out by hand - and then re-typed.

The disadvantages of the pen is that it is **slower** (and requires someone or oneself to type the second draft). But this very slowness is perhaps an advantage. The **slowness** accommodates nicely the speed of one's thoughts and speed of writing. One is not tempted to try to keep up with one's hands/machine. It is a pleasant walk with one's companion (as Maitland's style was described), rather than a mad rush. Secondly, there is quite an **effort** in the writing. Each word **costs**. Thus one may be partially protected from that dangerous temptation to **prolixity**, which partially effects academics, and perhaps middle-aged male academics in particular. They are encouraged, through teaching, to like the sound of their own voices. Give them a word-processor and they can, like certain unnamed professors of sociology and anthropology, produce endless, fairly rapid, prose. Not exactly **worthless**, but not, **sub specie aeternitate**, adding greatly to the sum of human happiness.

The three actual writing techniques - all typed, mixed typing and annotation, all hand-written, has provided the basis for what seems to be an interesting development which occurred, without much thought, out of the situation I was faced with when writing **Savage Wars of Peace**, and which is different from all my previous techniques. I will briefly describe it here, both for the record and also because it will, no doubt, have influenced what I achieved, and failed to achieve.

It arose out of three pressures/opportunities. Firstly there was Penny - now used to my hand-writing, eager to help, a good typist. Secondly, there is the word-processor which makes it possible to modify, expand, contract and generally shape one's text in a way which has hitherto been impossible. Thirdly, there was my vast database of materials in the computer - facts, quotations, observations. How best to write using these three inter-secting advantages and covering a huge subject? (Another factor was the presence of the photo-copier Gerry had given me in 1993!).

The three previous solutions - all typed by me, was both inhibiting intellectually (given what I said about word processors) and wasted the help of Penny. All hand-written by me also wasted Penny to a certain extent and meant a boring process, which I **had** done with **Marriage**, of copying out endless quotations in long hand. This could be done, but was not the absolutely best use of my time. So how did I work/solve this problem?

The first draft of **Savage Wars**, some ten thousand or so words was written out, long-hand, sitting at a table in Dent. (Incidentally this desk and the house in Cumbria where my mother-in-law lived, Coat Faw, has often been the place where, away even from the minor pressures and chores of Cambridge for a few days, things have either come together or fresh beginnings have been made). The beauty, walks, good food and relaxation makes it an excellent place for short bursts of constructive work. In the case of **Individualism** I remember it as the place where, towards the middle/end of the writing, I read some of the great thinkers - Marx, Weber, Adam Smith - and absorbed them into my story. **I** was where I wrote bits of **Culture of Capitalism** (for example the earlier version of the chapter on 'Nature') and early drafts of my Radcliffe-Brown lecture.

So it was not a bad place to sit down, in December 1993, to spend a couple of weeks over Christmas making a start on a new topic, in this case what I thought would be a short article on the comparison of the demography of Japan and England, which I knew were both similar and dissimilar. After writing this out by hand, I then used the word-processor to start to expand it. At that time I think I had a printer and printed out bits from various books on Japanese demography which I was using - and then re-typed them. So I was moving again toward the mode of doing it all myself - expanding the skeleton in the word-processor.

In fact, now that I check my drafts, I see that I have mis-remembered all this and got it wrong! I let this stand as an example of the dangers of **ex post facto** memories of what happened. **In fact** what happened was that I **wrote** a short, five-page draft called 'Population in England and Japan' by hand. This was written, according to the sheets, on 3.11.93, though this may not be right, since the next day (4th) we went up to Dent and I may have written it there. Anyway the main point is that I started with a brief hand-written version. This was re-typed into the computer and expanded at Dent on the computer, with the title, 'A Comparative Essay on the Population of Japan and England', with bits and pieces of later thoughts - about ten thousand words in length. Various further drafts, using a word-processor, elaborated on this so that by about the end of March 1994 I had **typed** a smallish book of about 80,000 words or so and consisting of 14 chapters. (All this will be more fully documented).

I now had a sort of net or framework, created by conventional typing methods - creating a set of questions. I then spent a good deal of time from April to July collecting a lot more data, from libraries, my books and particularly the Cambridge group. I needed to find the 'state of the art' among medical historians and also learn about medicine. I shall go into this later. But what is relevant is that by July, and with a sabbatical leave leading to departure to Nepal in October, I had three months to put the flesh on the typed bones, with masses of more data. What I did was an innovation for me - but bears some resemblance, on a larger scale, to **Individualism**, namely to develop a mixed typing/wiring method. This was a sort of scissors and paste, taking quotations, ideas and various leads. These were clipped onto large sheets of paper. What was interesting was that in the **process of writing**, many of my ideas emerged. The physical process of planning chapters and sections, of sorting slips and writing around them, developed in a way which allowed maximum flexibility, minimal effort etc. This was the most creative time, probably, and by the end of September, when we went to Nepal, I handed over to Penny a very greatly expanded version. It was now more than double its original length and split into 29 chapters, rather than the 18 or so in May.

The mixed method by hand and putting slips in place which I developed then - some coming from the database, others as xeroxes - which both illustrated and stimulated thoughts, was developed at this time. It meant that in 3 months one could do an **enormous** amount, both new writing but, more importantly, new **thoughts**. I hope to trace all this in more detail. Here it is just important to note the process. A framework is created through typing. One then reads/researches directed by this framework. A vast set of new data is generated. This is ordered in a preliminary way - which is what we took to Nepal and Gerry and Sarah read - and also the two Emikos read in relation to the fertility section.

This was annotated very heavily by hand (green and other inks) and in Nepal I re-ordered various sections, left out others. So when I returned from Nepal I re-edited this. Then there was another period of further gathering of data and the same process on a smaller scale took place. In other ways I edited, **by hand**, the earlier version, and did some further chapters, often by hand - for instance a chapter on magic was written by hand. This expanded the book further to its maximum extent, about 300,000 words and 38 chapters. From then on it was a matter of refining, re-ordering, seeing where one had got, cutting. Whatever had been achieved had been done and the rest was refining and improving the central argument.

In sum, then, a number of different writing methods were employed. Some bits I typed in or edited. Others I wrote out fully by long-hand, others I used the new method of a kind of scissors and paste. The secret really is not to become obsessed with **one** method, and to use whatever makes one feel most comfortable and allows the mind to re-connect/dis-connect as it has to do. Anything that provides an obstacle to this, whether it is a computer screen, laziness, or whatever, should be avoided.