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Jolting Memory: *Nightcleaners* Recalled

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I want to sketch for you the background to a particular film made in Britain during the first half of the 1970s *Nightcleaners*. Thinking about the film and its making provides a clue to several kinds of amnesia which have affected how the 1970s have been remembered.

Nightcleaners was directed by Marc Karlin working as part of a group of left wing film-makers, the Berwick Street Collective. *Nightcleaners* documents the working lives of women who clean office buildings at night in London. Filmed in black and white it takes a slow, unrelenting look at the repetitive monotony of domestic labour under the contract system of casualised employment through which the women's working conditions were set apart from what then was the mainstream of regulated employment and trade union rights. The camera captures the isolation of women vacuuming, dusting, polishing, wiping, in large tower blocks in a deserted dark city. They are occluded both by their unregulated status as workers and by the darkness. The film stretches beyond the work-place taking us to the women's homes and communities where they are still working, looking after their homes and caring for children and husbands. Its focus moves closer in to portray individual aspirations and dreams- a rare insight into the experiences of a group of women who even within the working class have little visibility as historical subjects.

While the working class women are the central players, the film also charts the efforts of women's liberation members to recruit cleaners into trade unions in order to improve their wages and conditions. So *Nightcleaners* documents feminist activism at a time of political and economic upheaval, showing the ferment of mass working class rebellion against attempts to curb union power. The challenge to attempts to make workers bear the brunt of economic crisis was overwhelmingly male and the cleaners' defiance is tiny in contrast. Nevertheless they acquired a symbolic significance as the voice of the most exploited section of the work force. There was a resistance against the odds, a signal of hope from a group of workers who possessed only a fragile history of struggle .

In looking back into the past the most elusive aspects are assumptions and attitudes which seemed quite obvious at the time, for these are the tacit unexplained 'givens' which no one thinks it necessary to explain. So I will begin by giving you three early 1970s notions which seemed quite obvious within the radical cultural milieu in which the film was conceived and made.

Firstly each specific struggle or campaign was considered to be part of a broader project of social transformation however vaguely conceived or defined. It seemed that there was a left *movement* acting within society despite many conflicting sectarian strands and new growths such as the women's liberation movement. So, for the majority of women who created small groups from 1969, a connection to the labour movement seemed self-evident. Indeed when we held our first conference at Ruskin College, a trade union college in Oxford early in 1970, those of us who organised it laboriously contacted women in trade unions. Of course only a minority came, but the links persisted. This lived political reality of the first half of the 1970s would be buried during the 1980s when 'new social movement' theory viewed the

new movements as separate from and opposed to an 'old left' of labour. Instead many participants of women's liberation sought *both* to complement and change labour organising *and* to create new forms of organising.

In the early 1970s 'real work' still tended to be regarded as factory based and, as far as the labour movement was concerned, 'real workers' were white men. A confident generation of young working class men who had only known post-war full employment were to clash head-on with both Conservative and Labour governments. Their outlook was one of spontaneous syndicalism and they stressed strength at the workplace. However this approach did not fit the circumstances of most women workers, who tended to be in more vulnerable positions in private industry and were also concentrated in the public sector where strikes necessarily affected people dependent on welfare services. The influence of feminism would contribute to a sustained questioning of how work was to be seen and how workers could take action. Hence what came to be known as 'The Night Cleaners' Campaign' was part of a wider attempt to foreground women workers and challenge trade union complacency about women's subordination.

Secondly the energy and enthusiasm which made it seem evident to several hundred, mainly young, women who turned up for the first conference at Ruskin that new forms of organising around inequalities, needs, feelings of oppression, discomfort in personal relationships was possible, derived from the utopian upheavals of 1968. Politics it seemed was expanding into all aspects of life. It was not just about voting, or belonging to parties, or about state power or the art of the possible. It was about direct action, participatory politics, about transforming daily existence and all aspects of relationships, about demanding the impossible and living against the grain. These ideas were pervading the new left formed by the late 60s and they were taken

into the women's liberation groups by women linked to both. After the first women's liberation movement conference, groups mushroomed at an extraordinary speed reaching many women who had not had any contact with the radical movements of the 60s or whose contact had been peripheral. Nevertheless up until the mid 1970s many of the attitudes and assumptions of the left persisted within the movement in which socialist feminism was the strongest wing. Women's liberation, many of us believed, was part of something bigger. Ours was an ambitious outlook which took intense activism for granted. In the effort to extend politics into all aspects of daily life, politics became a way of life for many young activists, women and men alike. Many of us packed into old houses in declining inner city suburbs in London and other big cities, living in communal chaos and planning to change the world much to the bemusement of our working class neighbours.¹

One aspect of this enthusiastic expansion of politics was the interconnecting of life and art. Though this had been emerging during the 1960s, it became collectively visible in the 1968 May Events in France when creative workers of all kinds were drawn into the rebellion of students and workers. In Britain art students, poets, actors, musicians and film makers were radicalised by the student movement and the campaign against the Vietnam war. Individual self-expression was a powerful motive force of the 1960s, however by the early 1970s it was being tempered by an equally strong commitment to collectivity. Creative workers formed small 'collectives' intent on reclaiming art from the capitalist market place. The aim was not simply to change the content but to develop forms which could jolt a new consciousness into being. The collectives set out to communicate outside the mainstream media and to find ways of showing their work directly. For artists and actors this could mean literally taking to the streets, while left film-makers, turned mobile heading off in vans to

attach themselves to working class struggles and finding outlets for their work in meetings.

My friend Roberta Hunter Henderson who moved around with radical artists and musicians, causing a stir when John Lennon arrived to see her at Warwick University, was a characteristic late 1960s rebel. It was she who brought Marc Karlin to the communal house in which I was living in Hackney, North East London in the late summer of 1969 and then departed to do an anthropology MA at Oxford, leaving him with some of her books and clothes in her former room. Brilliant at logic and unworldly about daily life, Roberta would be one of the key organisers, with Sally Alexander, of the Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin . Marc would stay for several years becoming a key figure in the emergence of the network of small independent film collectives or 'workshops' which sprouted during the 1970s.

During May 1968 he had been in Paris and, when the film technicians announced they would only develop films made about workers set off to film a railway worker. When the trains stopped because of widespread strikes they were stranded together and Marc, who knew little of working conditions learned first-hand of the effects of alienating labour. The result would be a film *Dead Man's Wheels*. This chance meeting in the midst of turmoil left a profound impression, as did his encounter with the film-maker Chris Marker, with whom he later collaborated. Marker's enthusiasm for the Soviet director Medvedkin stimulated Marc Karlin's interest in how to make films which would startle audiences into questioning the status quo. He was drawn into the profound process of politicisation which was affecting film-makers around the world. Jean-Luc Godard also would decide to stop making commercial films and devoted himself for several years to producing agitational films.²

When I met Marc he was involved with a film group Cinema Action. This was a group which formed around the left wing German film-maker Gustav Schlacke and Ann Lamche who was part French, part English. They started by showing a French student film about the May Events to Ford workers in 1968.³ By 1969 an informal group had evolved showing radical films in factories and on the docks. Then they began making films about the conflict in Ireland and workers' strikes and occupations in Britain. Cinema Action revealed to Marc a Britain he had never known- the North. From a Russian Jewish émigré family, brought up by his grandmother in France until he was ten, when he was suddenly catapulted into a British public school and then drama school, he retained a capacity to be amazed by the bizarre vagaries of the English. Touring with Cinema Action, after the manner of the early Soviet film-makers, he found himself embroiled with the tiny schismatic Trotskyist groups they encountered on their travels and respectfully bewildered by the Northern working class.

In 1971 Marc Karlin, along with Humphrey Trevelyan and Richard Mordaunt, split off to set up the Berwick Street Film Collective, which later became Lusitania Films.⁴ They wanted to make films that did not simply inform or instruct the viewer through a particular political perspective. Instead they sought to release the imagination and allow space for considered thought. However the tradition established by Cinema Action of co-operative working practices persisted. Not only were democratic structures maintained but equipment was loaned in a co-operative manner between the groups. The new collectives also found themselves in friendly collaboration with an older generation of Communist Party film makers. Despite political differences they were linked by being outside the commercial mainstream.

The inspiration for *Nightcleaners* came from the women's liberation movement which had grown rapidly throughout the country and was particularly numerous in London where the small groups had affiliated into an organisation, the Women's Liberation Workshop, with each group producing first a newsletter and then later a magazine printed in offset litho. Defiantly we adopted the derisive word for stropky women 'Shrew' as its name. Among these groups was the Night Cleaners Campaign which had begun in my room just underneath Marc's in the communal house in which we lived. In autumn 1970, a former cleaner, May Hobbs, who had become angry at the conditions imposed on contract cleaners, came to ask for help in leafleting the buildings where the women worked. She had initially made contact with members of the International Socialists (IS) (now the Socialist Workers' Party), a Trotskyist group and friends in IS asked me to put a note round through the Women's Liberation Workshop newsletter. Around fifteen women and one man arrived and the Campaign had begun.

Following the American model of consciousness raising, we were committed to talking about our own personal experiences in the Women's Liberation Workshop groups. Nevertheless after a while of this, many of us felt just talking about our own feelings of oppression was not enough. We wanted to involve working class women and *do things* about women's oppression rather than just discussing it. With very little concept of the difficulties involved we were inclined to look towards the poorest and least organised women; the Women's Liberation Workshop had already embarked on a survey of homeworkers. Consequently May Hobbs found willing recruits for her campaign to bring cleaners into the Transport and General Workers Union which was led by the left-winger and former Spanish Civil War veteran, Jack Jones. Among the early leafleters were Sally Alexander, who had finished studying at

Ruskin College and lived in West London, along with Mary Kelly who would later become a well known artist. After a few months they decided to focus on two large Shell buildings. With a friend from my Women's Liberation group, Liz Waugh, I set out each Tuesday night at 10 pm into the deserted streets of the City, London's financial district. We would prowl the streets looking for weary-looking women clutching their belongings in carrier bags and accost them with, 'Excuse me are you a night cleaner?'

It was all exceedingly haphazard. Our aim, once we made contact, was to find out where they worked and follow up by recruiting the whole building. The vague assumption was that we would gradually unionise the whole of London's cleaning force. But the cleaners worked often spasmodically and were moved around to different buildings. Some were happy to remain invisible and off the books, because they were claiming social security. Most of the women we approached were middle aged and looked older. The accumulated exhaustion of working at night and looking after their families in the day, had marked their faces. Moreover a sizable minority were immigrants from the Caribbean and exceedingly nervous. They needed the money, little as it was, most desperately, moreover they were contending with racism in working class communities as well as in the job market.

Unions were remote entities to many of the women we approached. Indeed sometimes we found ourselves explaining what unions were. We began to supplement the blue and yellow recruiting forms from the T& G with our own hand-written ones produced on duplicators (early ancestors of the photocopier). 'Why do night cleaners get less pay than day cleaners? Do night work for such low pay? Why don't cleaners get full cover money? Work on understaffed buildings? Get no Sunday bonus? Often no holiday pay? Have no security? Can be sacked without notice? (cleaners Action

Group 1971, unpublished leaflet) The answer to this series of staccato questions was written at bottom of the leaflet -the union.⁵ It was somewhat glib, for our apprehension of what a union was and could do was abstract and theoretical. We were unprepared for the labyrinthine bureaucracy of the T&G and shocked when union officials were disinclined to come out at 1 in the morning to talk with the cleaners during their break. We quickly discovered there was a gap between our idealistic rhetoric about what unions should be and the reality of day to day union working practices.

Equally a class gulf existed between our lives and those of the cleaners. We were nearly all young, bouncy, in our twenties and filled with zeal. The reality of the women's lives was remote from us. Remarkably a few of the night cleaners did come on the first ever Women's Liberation demonstration in March 1971, when 5,000 women with male supporters strode through the sleet and snow singing 'Stay Young and Beautiful'. Among them was May Hobbs, bearing a placard 'The Cleaners' Action Group'. May, who was a natural orator, addressed the crowd in Trafalgar Square calling for 'the self-organisation of women at their workplaces.'⁶ The Women's Liberation Movement had increased dramatically from the first 500 who had attended the Ruskin Conference a year before and the cheers rang out. Our leafleting of cleaners, in contrast, proved much heavier going. By the autumn of 1971 we were only able to cajole a small group of women to a meeting addressed by the dynamic and charismatic MP from Ireland Bernadette Devlin.⁷ May Hobbs' husband Chris brought some in his battered old car. The more courageous cleaners were ferried to and fro by Liz Waugh on the back of her somewhat unreliable motor bike. Morale was sinking and leafletters dwindling and it was left to about six of us to produce the Nightcleaners' *Shrew* that December.

Nevertheless Marc Karlin's little group, now joined by Mary Kelly, had begun filming us leafleting. Moreover we had made some important contacts with cleaners who would become mainstays in the campaign. In East London Liz Waugh and I had met a resourceful woman from the Isle of Dogs in the East End, Jean Wright. Round, genial and astute with her grey curls covered by a little gauze scarf, she was a fount of calm resolve and humour. She had been a supervisor and understood the contract system extremely well, but she preferred the autonomy of cleaning a medium sized office building ostensibly alone. In fact her husband, a dustbin man and her teenage son would turn up to help her so she could be through by early morning. On leafleting nights Liz and I would join them discussing strategy as we wiped and cleaned. We learned a great deal from Jean.⁸

Sally Alexander meanwhile had found another Jean, Jean Mormont, ready to protest against the conditions on the Shell building where she worked and trusted by the women on the building. From a large family of 18 and the mother of seven children she had known poverty and hard work through out her life, but somehow she had retained a spirit of openness to new encounters and a capacity to imagine which made her gravitate towards the young women leafleters and the idealistic filmmakers. A tiny, slim, dark-haired woman her face had an angular beauty. When the T&G official came to talk to the cleaners with Sally Alexander and Mary Kelly in a pub, Jean Mormont's face was caught on the film with dark-ringed eyes struggling to concentrate on his monotone. Eventually, however, the music on the juke box wins and she fades away into its rhythm.

By 1972 our relationship with the T&G had deteriorated. May Hobbs had become impatient at the officials' lack of enthusiasm for our rather meagre and fluctuating members. Somehow she had got hold of Jack Jones' home number and

took to ringing his wife to complain. She was also much quoted in the liberal media denouncing the union. Then she had a brainwave. We should henceforth concentrate on government buildings where the Civil Service Union (CSU) organised. Until 1968 cleaners in the civil service had all been directly employed and not part of the contract cleaning firms that had expanded after World War Two. But, in 1968, a Labour government in search of an easy way to reduce civil service jobs had cut 4,000 cleaners and put their work out to contract.⁹ Nevertheless, the CSU, with a militant rank and file were ready to campaign actively for the cleaners in the union journal called *The Whip* and the young official was happy to zoom down in his sports car during the night to talk with the women. Once members of the CSU, they were also entitled to £10 a week strike pay. This was a munificent sum for women whose pay averaged around £12 a week. In the summer of 1972 two strikes started at the Ministry of Defense building Empire State and the Old Admiralty.¹⁰

The strikes received sympathetic press coverage and considerable trade union support. Lorry drivers refused to cross the picket lines to deliver supplies to the Ministry. Post office workers refused to bring in mail; printers, railway workers and clothing workers sent money and solidarity. A friendly Italian restaurant owner near the Empress State building in Fulham let the film-makers plug into his electricity supply and they began to show radical films to the pickets. Most memorable was Harold Biberman's 1953 masterpiece *Salt of the Earth*, which depicts a strike in a New Mexican mining community in which the women play a crucial part. It had been the target of McCarthyism, causing Biberman to be blacklisted and the Mexican actress Rosaura Revueltas to be repatriated as a result.¹¹ But the film had been rediscovered from the late 1960s and shown over and over again at meetings. On the cleaners' picket line it contributed to a carnival atmosphere which culminated in the

first victory of the campaign when the CSU was able to get the contractors to accept the union. The strikers gained a rise of £2.50 a week and a 50 pence night allowance. Their wages reached what then seemed like the dizzy sum of £21 a week.¹² These gains however were lost when it was time for the contract to be renewed. Under British employment law there was no way of getting round the problem that an agreement made between the union and a contractor was no longer valid if the contractor changed.

Towards the end of 1972 the momentum of the campaign declined. The effort which went into the strikes had exhausted our resources of energy. The difficulties in organising over a sustained period while working ourselves were compounded by internal tensions between the women's liberation and socialist women campaigners. There were problems among the cleaners too. May Hobbs, who was a brilliant rouser of action, was impatient about details and increasingly in demand as a speaker around the country. Jean Mormont and Jean Wright had been the ones who followed through with the women cleaners, reassuring and building morale, but were not so central after the switch to the Civil Service Union. We staggered on through 1973. After that, though spasmodic attempts to organise cleaners occurred about the country, the London campaign ended. We had succeeded in raising the profile of the cleaners in the media and in the trade unions but not in materially improving their conditions. Indeed while we could not know it the unregulated casualised pattern of their employment was to pervade many more aspects of the British labour market. By the time the film-makers completed *Nightcleaners* at the end of 1975, the campaign had fizzled out, though groups of cleaners gathered to watch it and it was shown at labour, socialist and women's meetings around the country.

The film was part of a wider social and cultural context . The decade saw many instances of working class women taking action amidst the widespread militancy of the 1970s. They participated in strikes in the public sector and in private industry, demanding higher pay and in some unorganised workplaces union recognition. They resisted government attempts to weaken unions and were involved in occupying and running workplaces when unemployment threatened. They also took action for equal pay and opposed racism among the employers and the trade unions. The Night Cleaners' Campaign was but one of many example of links between feminists and women workers. Members of women's liberation groups, along with socialist women in left groups supported women workers around Britain, not simply in London. And, in 1974 the Working Women's Charter was drawn up with a programme of demands for the trade union movement around pay, equal opportunities, training, maternity leave and child care. Women activists began to question the cultural manifestations of male dominance in the unions and to argue that the scope of trade unionism needed to extend into life outside work.¹³ An important shift would be the Trade Union Congress support for abortion rights by the end of the decade. Women were beginning to play a new role in the trade union movement and feminism was making an impact on the labour movement.

Alongside the trade union struggles, community projects, initiated during the 1960s, became increasingly numerous. They were accompanied by a flourishing alternative culture of centres, bookshops publishing pamphlets of local peoples' memories, radical local newspapers, bookshops and community arts. Radical photography and design, artists, theatre groups, cabaret, comedians as well as film workshops emerged and took a foothold.¹⁴ They also started to network. The Association of Community Artists and the Independent Film-makers Association

were formed in 1974. By the end of the decade community arts were being partly funded by the Arts Council and by local councils.

The film-makers, however, who required a significant amount of capital to work faced severe problems. On its inception the Berwick Street Film Collective had funded its left films with a bizarre range of other work which ranged from Martini advertisements to a home movie about polo for an oil-rich sheik. By the time *Nightcleaners* was launched in 1976 and Berwick Street Film Collective had become Lusitania Films, other groups had sprung up working in a similar ad hoc way. As well as the London-based Cinema Action and the Film Makers' Co-op there was, for instance, a co-operative in Newcastle called Amber Films which was deeply linked with the local working class community.¹⁵ Moreover by the second half of the 1970s the political and economic situation had begun to shift. Hopes of a wider transformation were being put on hold, and forced onto the defensive, both the left and the women's movement had settled in for a long, slow process of resistance. The small film workshops linked together nationally in the Independent Film-makers Association were looking for strategies of survival. When an attempt to create a network for distributing films through the Other Cinema, a cinema and distribution outlet for left films failed, they began looking in earnest for alternatives. Marc Karlin saw the possibilities which a new Fourth Channel could bring and he began to lobby for what would become Channel 4.¹⁶ From 1981 Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department headed by Alan Fountain did enable radical and experimental work to be shown up until the early 1990s when the Channel's remit changed.¹⁷

Marc Karlin died suddenly of a heart attack in 1999. His work, including *Nightcleaners*, remains relatively unknown outside the world of radical documentary-makers of the 1970s and 1980s. In an obituary in the *Guardian*, John Ellis described

him as 'a film-makers's film-maker'.¹⁸ Indeed in the summer of 1999 an issue of the radical film journal *Vertigo* was devoted to his contribution. Brand Thurmim, who worked with Marc Karlin as an editor summed up his passionate, obsessive approach to film-making in which the content was inseparable from the manner in which the customary forms of documentary film-making were subverted, 'Marc was like an explorer. Each time he began work on one of these films he was like someone embarking on a journey, taking a group of people with him... The films explored ideas, themes, histories, and physical realities. They drew portraits and told stories.'¹⁹ Humphrey Trevelyan, who was one of the collaborators on the lengthy exploratory process of making *Nightcleaners* would later stress that this was 'an organic process' rather than an abstract theoretical imposition²⁰.

May Hobbs was exasperated because instead of the short campaign film she had expected, the film was long, many-layered and far from celebratory. Instead it revealed, often painfully, the difficulties of organising and the gap between desire and reality. Marc Karlin himself in an interview with Patrick Wright just before he died, observed 'The film was about distances'.²¹ The effort to communicate across the gulf of class and political aspiration appears in the relationship between the cleaners and the leafletters and between the women and the film-makers. It is there painfully and courageously in the dialogue between Marc, Jean Mormont and her friend Ann:

'Marc: Let's say there's a factory. The factory is controlled by the people who work in it. The man does half a week and the wife does half a week, how would you feel about that?

Women: (together) Yeh, yeh

Jean: ..very good..

Ann:..definitely...

Marc: Now I'm asking you again, what would then Socialism mean to you?

Ann: Ohh that, definitely. (laughs)

Marc: What, what?

Ann: Better life for the...

Jean:...for the people...

Ann:...yeh better life for the working class people, if that was possible, but that couldn't be, could it? That couldn't be...

Marc: ..why not?

Ann: Oh,it's like asking for the moon isn't it?

Jean: If people were strong enough. This is the thing isn't it, you've got to be strong enough.'²²

The distance which was so hard to overcome in the day to day, nitty gritty of life and organising could, however, close momentarily during moments of contact and celebration. The film visually captures a transcendent sense of other possibilities arising both individually and collectively among the cleaners. Hence it does not simply chart the resistance of a group of women excluded from the dominant versions of the history of the era, it also enables the viewer to glimpse them warily coming to a wider awareness. We see from the film how the cleaners are cautious because hoping for another order is a luxury. Aspiration causes pain because it requires energy and survival is what they have been compelled to focus upon. The film also symbolically demonstrates how the wider working class rebellion of the 1970s carried a sense of new relating, new ways of being. On a march against an attempt to curb the unions, two miners in overalls and helmets break ranks and dance in each others arms smiling at the camera. Struggle does not follow set scripts

anymore than the forms in which Marc Karlin tried to communicate how workers in Britain reached out to touch what might be. Resistance flows over boundaries.

Because Marc Karlin refused the format of a tidy campaign film, it can convey, to a viewer prepared to stay with its slow unfolding of a lost world long ago, a deeper human meaning. It captivated a nineteen year old Chinese student when she discovered it through a course I taught at Manchester University in 2007. Somehow it was suggestive of what she knew of China. Her response would have pleased Marc Karlin.

From the late 1980s it was as if a safety curtain had fallen, obscuring the imaginative sources of the political militancy of the late 1960s and 1970s from view. The main reason was, of course, the rise of Margaret Thatcher to power and the repeated political defeats suffered by both the Labour Party and the labour movement in Britain. In the new circumstances, values and aspirations which had driven radical politics were regarded with embarrassment, even from within the left. Contemplating defeat is not pleasant and the discomfort was cloaked in derision. From the late 1980s, up-to-the-minute radicals were inclined to turn away from efforts to rethink class economically, socially and politically and focus instead on issues of culture. A preoccupation with labour was presumed to be outdated, and social movements were increasingly conceived as its antithesis rather than its complement. Not only was the utopianism which had imagined a broader alternative derided, creative efforts to break with the market system were dismissed with a yawn as 'earnest'. Efforts to readjust how the 1970s have been seen have tended to be either ignored or sneered at as 'nostalgia'.

Marc Karlin resisted the resulting amnesia and the corrosion of hope which accompanied it until his death in 1999. But while New Labour picked up on scraps of

radical rhetoric from the 1960s and 1970s with its talk of participation and choice and its readiness to take on board aspects of the women's and gay movements, it was essentially a softer version of the Thatcherite right when issues of distribution and class inequality were concerned.²³

Three decades on however there are signs that the radical endeavours of the 1970s are moving back into the frame. Curiosity and interest in what was attempted have revived. Over the last decade new movements of the rebellious and the dispossessed have asserted themselves globally and are themselves seeking ways to express creatively what is wrong and what might be. They have been protesting now long enough to wonder and enquire. Hence the radical movements and culture of the 1970s, which seemed to have no significance during the 1990s are being surveyed with renewed interest. What were they about? What did they think they were doing? What did they try? What worked? What did not? The *Nightcleaners* film represents a marker, a jolt which enables other and wider histories which have been sidelined to come into view. Despite such changed circumstances, the present has a past and it is important to know that the course of that past was contested.

¹ Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble: Life and Politics*, Serpent's Tail, London 2006, pp.74-82.

² Margaret Dickinson, *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-90*, British Film Institute, London, 1999, p.105; Sheila Rowbotham and Huw Beynon (eds), *Looking at Class: Film Television and the Working Class*, Rivers Oram, London, 2001, p.p.144-145; Alan Fountain, 'A Visionary Life', *Red Pepper*, March 1999, pp.28-29. Alan Fountain, 'Now I Know Why I Did It', *Vertigo*, Volume 1, Number 9, Summer 1999, p.14. On the background in the visual arts see John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain*, I.B.Tauris, London, 2002.

³ Dickinson, *Rogue Reels*, pp.263-283.

⁴ Rowbotham and Beynon, *Looking at Class*, pp. 143-158.

⁵ Cleaners' Action Group, unpublished leaflet, 1971.

⁶ Irene Bruegel, 'Women marchers stress need for union action over equal pay', *Socialist Worker* 13 March 1971, p.7.

⁷ Anon. Bernadette Devlin speaks to cleaners, *Shrew*, December 1971, p.6.

⁸ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Cleaners' Organizing in Britain from the 1970s: A Personal Account', *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, Volume 38, Number 3, June 2006, p.611.

⁹ Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History*, Virago, London, 1994, p.263.

¹⁰ Anon, 'Something to smile about', *The Whip: The Civil Service Union Journal*, September, 1972, p.1.

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- ¹¹ John Pym (ed) *Time Out Film Guide*, Penguin Books, London, 2000,pp.959-960.
- ¹² Anon, 'Something to smile about', *The Whip*, September, 1972, p. 1; Alexander, *Becoming a Woman*, p.262
- ¹³ Beatrix Campbell and Sheila Rowbotham, 'Women Workers and the Class Struggle', *Radical America*, Volume 8, Number 5, September-October, 1974,pp.55-76.
- ¹⁴ Jessica Evans,(ed) *The Camerawork Essays: Context and Meaning in Photography*, Rivers OramPress, London, 1997, pp.21-23
- ¹⁵ Fountain, 'A Visionary Life', *Red Pepper*, March 1999, p.28
- ¹⁶ John Ellis,'Conscience of radicals', *Guardian*, January 25, 1999, p.13.
- ¹⁷ Fountain, ' A Visionary Life', *Red Pepper*, March 1999,p.29.
- ¹⁸ Ellis, 'Conscience of Radicals', *Guardian*, January 25, 1999,p.13.
- ¹⁹ Brand Thumim, 'Patterns and Connections', *Vertigo* Volume 1,Number 9, Summer 1999, p.12.
- ²⁰ Humphrey Trevelyan quoted in Dickinson, *Rogue Reels*, p.53.
- ²¹ Marc Karlin Interviewed by Patrick Wright, 'A Passion for Images', *Vertigo*, Volume 1, Number 9, Summer 1999, p.5.
- ²² Kate Hepburn and Marc Karlin, 'The Nightcleaners Book', (Unpublished Manuscript) in *Vertigo*, Volume 1,Number 9, Summer 1999, p. 5.
- ²³ Hilary Wainwright, *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy*, Verso Books, London 2003, pp.192-195.