

The art of editing: Eric Hobsbawm and *Past & Present*

A public lecture by:
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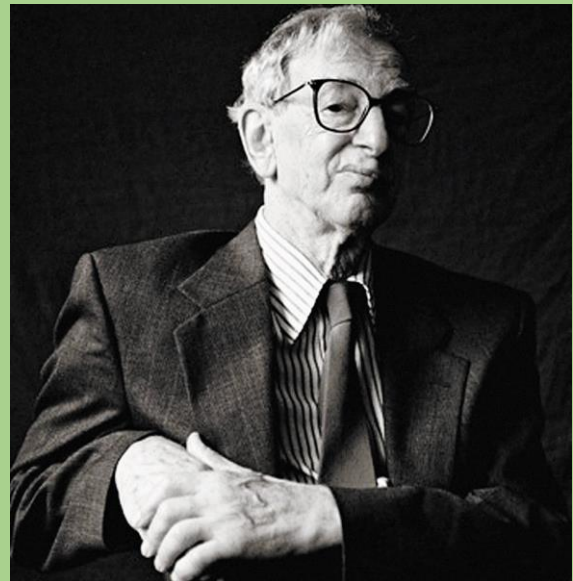
Date & Time: Tuesday, 2
April 2024 at 7pm

Venue: Royal Society of
Antiquaries of Ireland, 63
Merrion Square S, Dublin 2,
D02 X338

Price: Free

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The art of editing: Eric Hobsbawm and *Past & Present* Dr [Emile Chabal](#), University of Edinburgh

Surprisingly little has been written about the importance of editing to the intellectual life of academics in the humanities and social sciences. The task of commissioning, reading and commenting on other people's work is generally seen to be a necessary, if rather unglamorous, part of academic life. But editing is, in fact, central to our work life, and it is something we spend a remarkable amount of time doing. It is certainly worthy of scholarly attention, not least because it exposes the networks, intellectual character and even the political economy of our profession.

In this lecture, I want to explore some of these themes through the case study of one of the most famous historical journals in the Anglophone world, *Past & Present*, and one of its two founding members, Eric Hobsbawm. A close reading of *Past & Present* tells us a great deal about the intellectual culture of the postwar British left, as well as the primacy of an "Oxbridge model" of scholarship, the emerging internationalism of the English-speaking academy, and the sheer volume of work required to keep an academic journal afloat. For Hobsbawm specifically, *Past & Present* was a powerful scholarly legacy: while he never founded a "school" or trained disciples, he used *Past & Present* to push his own vision of historical scholarship to the very heart of the profession.